



## *Brahma Net Sutra*

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SUTRA:

THE EIGHTH MAJOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS STINGINESS AND INSULT. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT ACT IN A STINGY MANNER, ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO, OR INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THE CAUSES, CONDITIONS, METHODS, OR KARMA OF STINGINESS. WHEN A BODHISATTVA ENCOUNTERS ANY POOR OR DESTITUTE PERSON WHO HAS COME TO BEG, HE SHOULD GIVE THAT PERSON ANYTHING HE NEEDS. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DIRECTS EVIL OR HATEFUL THOUGHTS AT SUCH A PERSON OR REFUSES TO GIVE HIM EVEN A PENNY, A NEEDLE, OR A BLADE OF GRASS, OR TO SPEAK EVEN A SENTENCE, A VERSE, OR A DUSTMOTE'S WORTH OF DHARMA FOR ONE WHO SEEKS DHARMA, AND IF HE, FURTHER, SCOLDS AND HUMILIATES SUCH A PERSON, HE THEREBY COMMITS A BODHISATTVA PARAJIKA OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE EIGHTH MAJOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS STINGINESS AND INSULT. This precept prohibits one from indulging in stinginess and from leveling insults at others. "Stinginess" means not being willing to part with either one's wealth, possessions, or Dharma. "Insult" means that when people come to ask for something, not only does one not give it to them, but one beats, scolds, or insults them. As a result of one's stinginess, one ends up abusing people, and because of the harm that can be incurred, this is considered a major precept.

A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT ACT IN A STINGY MANNER. If a person is poor and approaches one for money, then one should give it to him. If a person doesn't understand Dharma and seeks to study it, one should speak Dharma for him. Not only should a Bodhisattva not act in a stingy manner himself, he must not ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO. This means that one must not tell another to refuse the seeker and slander the seeker for one. If one instructs another to speak to the seeker on one's behalf saying, "Don't bother him; he doesn't have anything to give you," that's a major offense. If one teaches others to be stingy on their own account, and not for one's own benefit,

that's a lighter offense. For instance, if one teaches people saying, "If someone comes to seek the Dharma, just don't give anything to them," that's a lighter offense than if one tells others to prevent seekers of Dharma from approaching oneself.

...OR INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THE CAUSES... The "causes" of stinginess means a mind that is mean and petty. The CONDITIONS for stinginess refers to the expedients one devises to facilitate one's stinginess. For example, one may put on a show of being really poor, as if to say, "Look at me, I'm so poor, how can I give anything to you?" The METHODS of stinginess refer to the ways in which one acts; for example, on top of appearing very poor, one might beat and scold a person seeking something from one. Not only does one not speak Dharma for them, but one may look so mean that it scares people away, or one may say some really harsh words to discourage them.

...OR KARMA OF STINGINESS. "Karma" is created if the other party has to endure all of this. WHEN A BODHISATTVA ENCOUNTERS ANY POOR OR DESTITUTE PERSON WHO HAS COME TO BEG, HE SHOULD GIVE THAT PERSON ANYTHING HE NEEDS. A "poor or destitute person" refers to one who is poor in wealth or poor in Dharma. If someone is penniless and has no way to survive, that's to be poor in wealth. If someone does not know anything, if he doesn't know how to cultivate, that's to be poor in Dharma.

A further distinction can be made between "poor" and "destitute." If one only lacks Dharma, one is said to be "poor." But if one lacks material goods, to the point that one is without a place of one's own to stand, that is to be "destitute."

The precept says one should give the person "anything he needs." If it happens that he needs wealth, then you should give him however much he needs, be it a little or a lot. One cannot let him leave empty-handed. The giving of Dharma must be done in accord with what the person needs. The Dharma given may be a great Dharma or a small Dharma--one may speak a Great Vehicle Dharma, or perhaps simply explain the Five Lay Precepts and the Ten Good Acts. One may even give a worldly dharma. But, if one doesn't speak at all for the person in need, then that's being stingy.

HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DIRECTS EVIL OR HATEFUL THOUGHTS AT SUCH A PERSON, OR REFUSES TO GIVE HIM EVEN A PENNY, A NEEDLE, OR A BLADE OF GRASS, OR TO SPEAK EVEN A SENTENCE, A VERSE. OR DUSTMOTE'S WORTH OF DHARMA FOR ONE WHO SEEKS DHARMA, AND IF HE FURTHER SCOLDS AND HUMILIATES SUCH A PERSON, HE THEREBY COMMITS A BODHISATTVA PARAJIKA OFFENSE. "Evil thoughts" here means being terribly stingy and mean. "Hateful thoughts," means giving rise to dislike for the person who has come to ask for wealth or Dharma. An exception, of course, is if one refuses to give something to someone in order to help subdue a fault or bad habit the person has. Mencius said,

In teaching there are many methods. For example, if I am unwilling to teach a certain person, that in itself is teaching him.

His meaning is that he used that method to help them subdue themselves.

In the *Sutra of the Decisive Vinaya*, it says, "A lay Bodhisattva should practice two types of giving." A Bodhisattva can be found in any of the nine realms of existence, and so, of course, there are Bodhisattvas who are laypeople. The two kinds of giving are:

1. The giving of wealth.
2. The giving of Dharma.

A left-home Bodhisattva who doesn't have any money practices four types of giving:

1. Paper.
2. Ink.
3. Pen or Brush.
4. Dharma.

This means he writes out the Sutras, thereby helping people understand the Dharma. A Bodhisattva who has attained the power of patience can practice three types of giving:

He can give up,

1. The position of kingship.
2. Wives and children.
3. His head, eyes, skin and bones.

An ordinary Bodhisattva, one who hasn't attained the Fruition, should give wealth or Dharma according to the conditions. If he completely refuses, then he has committed this offense.

To break this precept is a violation of the nature. It is also a precept of restraint. If a wealthy family refuses to give away a single cent, even the laws of a country would not approve of such people. And, within the Buddhadharma, it is also a precept of restraint. There are five conditions that constitute an offense.

- 1) The person seeking is a living being.
- 2) One knows that he is a living being.
- 3) One has the intent to be stingy and to insult that person.
- 4) One appears to have the right to be stingy and insulting. For example, one says, "I am so poor myself, I'm not going to give anything to you."
- 5) The person understands what is being said to him.

SUTRA:

THE NINTH MAJOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS DELIBERATE HATEFULNESS AND REFUSAL TO ACCEPT REPENTANCE. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT BECOME HATEFUL, ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO, OR INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THE CAUSES, CONDITIONS, METHODS, OR KARMA OF HATEFULNESS. HE SHOULD LEAD ALL BEINGS TO ESTABLISH WHOLESOME ROOTS AND REMAIN FREE OF CONTENTIOUSNESS. HE SHOULD ALWAYS MAINTAIN A MIND OF KINDNESS, COMPASSION, AND FILIAL COMPLIANCE. IF INSTEAD A BODHISATTVA ABUSES SENTIENT OR

INSENTIENT BEINGS WITH HARSH SPEECH, BY GOING SO FAR AS TO ATTACK THEM WITH HIS FISTS, KNIFE, OR CLUB, BY CONTINUING TO MAINTAIN RELENTLESS HATRED, OR BY REFUSING TO SET ASIDE HIS GRUDGE EVEN WHEN THE OBJECT OF HIS ENMITY WITH SINCERE WORDS CONFESSES, REPENTS, AND SEEKS FORGIVENESS, HE THEREBY COMMITS A BODHISATTVA PARAJIKA OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE NINTH MAJOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS DELIBERATE HATEFULNESS AND REFUSAL TO ACCEPT REPENTANCE. This is the ninth of the Ten Major Bodhisattva Precepts. Basically, it means to harbor a grudge. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT BECOME HATEFUL, ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO, OR INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THE CAUSES, CONDITIONS, METHODS, OR KARMA OF HATEFULNESS. The "causes" of hatred are a mind of vengeance and a refusal to get along with others. One blocks oneself from the other party. This means one is very angry and refuses to establish contact or renounce one's grudge. Even if people try to make peace, one won't accept it. The "conditions" are the things one does to facilitate both the anger and the separation. They are the expedients one uses to maintain one's anger and refusal to make peace with the other party. The "methods" refer to either facial expressions or words that create bad mouth-karma. The "methods" are the appearance of bad mouth-karma--the negative things one says when one opens one's mouth. The "karma" is created when the other party understands. If one has scolded him, he knows what one is talking about. A Bodhisattva should lead all beings to establish good roots and remain free of contention.

The precept also specifies insentient beings. Basically, an insentient being is something without any feeling or awareness, so if one were to attack it, what would it matter? "Insentient" beings are actually elusive transformations. Even though they are said to be insentient, if one directs hatred toward them as if they were sentient beings, then that's also an offense, although a lighter one than it would be if directed toward a sentient being.

This precept prohibits a violation of the nature and also is a precept of restraint. There are five conditions which constitute a major offense.

- 1) It is a living being.
- 2) One is aware it is a living being.
- 3) One's mind has anger and obstructiveness. That is, one does not want to make peace.
- 4) One manifests an appearance of not wanting to accept a gesture of repentance or make peace.
- 5) The person understands what you mean.

SUTRA:

THE TENTH MAJOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS SLANDER OF THE TRIPLE JEWEL. A disciple of the Buddha must not himself slander the Triple Jewel, encourage others to do so, or become involved in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of slandering the

Triple Jewel. Whenever a Bodhisattva hears an externalist or evil-minded person direct even a single slanderous word at the Buddha, he experiences pain like that inflicted by three hundred spears piercing his heart. How then could he possibly utter slanderous words himself or fail to maintain a mind of faith and filial compliance. Hence, if a Bodhisattva fails to produce a mind of faith or filial compliance, assists evil people or people of deviant views in slandering the Triple Jewel, he thereby commits a Bodhisattva parajika offense.

#### COMMENTARY:

THE TENTH MAJOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS SLANDER OF THE TRIPLE JEWEL. This precept is also called the precept against deviant views and deviant speech. Slander means to speak in an abusive or opposing way. Slander also occurs when one's explanations lack principle and one's words have no real basis. It amounts to bizarre explanations and bizarre speech. That's all considered slander.

A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT HIMSELF SLANDER THE TRIPLE JEWEL, ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO, OR BECOME INVOLVED IN THE CAUSES, CONDITIONS, METHODS, OR KARMA OF SLANDERING THE TRIPLE JEWEL. The "causes" of slander are deviant views. The "conditions" are various approaches to facilitate deviant speech. The "methods" are different forms of speech or writings. That is, anything a person may say in public or print as literature which is deviant. Karma is created when the words that are spoken or read are understood by the one hearing or reading. This precept involves the nature and restraint. A violation involves deviant views and the creation of bad-mouth karma. Even in society, if one harbors deviant views and utters slanderous words, that's also considered an offense. There are five conditions that constitute a major offense.

- 1) The person one is speaking to is a living being.
- 2) One knows it is a living being.
- 3) One has the intent to slander the Triple Jewel.
- 4) One speaks the words of slander.
- 5) The other person understands.

Although there are many types of deviant views, in general they can be grouped into four classes.

- 1) The upper grade of deviant views. That is, denying cause and effect.
- 2) The medium grade of deviant views. That is, saying that the Triple Jewel is no match for the various kinds of outside ways; in other words, saying that outside ways are superior to the Triple Jewel.
- 3) The lower grade of deviant views. That is, to forsake the Great to go towards the Small. This refers to those who turn their back on learning the Great Vehicle but go and learn the Small Vehicle, instead.
- 4) Miscellaneous deviant views refers to such things as prejudice or confused beliefs where one accepts any doctrine and lacks a real focus, or is attached to the Small Vehicle.

If one can separate from deviant views, there are ten merit and virtues that one reaps:

1) One obtains true goodness and joy--a real joy--and wholesome companions, like one's teachers and fellow cultivators who are really good people.

2) One develops a deep belief in cause and effect. As a result, one won't go down the wrong path. So it also says, "One is willing to give up one's life rather than to ever make a transgression." You are willing to give up your life, but you are not willing to make a mistake and commit evil.

3) One would only take refuge in the Buddha--that is, the Triple Jewel--and not take refuge in any of the heavens. You won't take refuge with the heavenly demons or outside ways.

4) One has a straight mind and proper views, and one can forever separate from all worry and misfortune and be freed from the nets of doubt. Possessed of a straight mind and proper views, one is forever apart from the net of doubt that is concerned with fortune or misfortune and all worldly pursuits.

5) One is always born among humans and gods and will never fall into the three evil paths.

6) One will reap limitless blessings and wisdom which will continually grow and become increasingly sublime. When you have proper views, your blessings and wisdom will only increase; they will never decrease.

7) One is forever apart from deviant paths and will only practice sagely paths.

8) One will not give rise to views of the body and will renounce all evil karma. For example, the adherents to some outside ways in India are afflicted with views of a body.

9) One will dwell in unobstructed views. Unobstructed views means views that have no impediment; they're proper.

10) One won't fall into all the difficulties; that is, the Eight Difficulties.

The precepts have four aspects to them:

- 1) Upholding;
- 2) Restraint;
- 3) Exception;
- 4) Violation;

When one upholds a precept, it means that one does not violate the principle expressed in the precept. A restraint refers to precepts which are prohibitions within Buddhism. An exception means that in certain circumstances one can make an exception to the precept. If, for example, one ends up obstructing something constructive by not making that exception, then an exception can be made. Violation means that one fails to hold the precepts.

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