

Braham Net Sutra

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SUTRA:

THE FIFTEENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS BIASED TEACHINGS. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST TEACH DISCIPLES OF THE BUDDHA, EVIL MINDED EXTERNALISTS, THE SIX TYPES OF CLOSE RELATIVES AND GOOD KNOWING ADVISORS--ONE AND ALL--TO RECEIVE AND UPHOLD THE GREAT VEHICLE SUTRAS AND MORAL LAWS. HE MUST TEACH THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES THEREIN, CAUSING THEM TO BRING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE, TO PROGRESS THROUGH THE TEN MINDS OF ADVANCEMENT, THE TEN MINDS OF DEVELOPMENT, AND THE TEN VAJRA MINDS, SO THAT IN EACH OF THOSE THIRTY MINDS THEY UNDERSTAND THE ORDER AND FUNCTION OF DHARMAS. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA WITH EVIL OR HATEFUL INTENTIONS PERVERSELY OFFERS INSTRUCTION IN THE SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES OF THE TWO VEHICLES, OF THE SOUND HEARERS, OR IN THE DISCOURSES OF EXTERNALISTS AND THOSE OF DEVIANT VIEWS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE FIFTEENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS BIASED OR DEVIANT TEACHINGS. "Biased" means being prejudiced or oblique, not teaching in a proper way.

A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST TEACH DISCIPLES OF THE BUDDHA, EVIL MINDED EXTERNALISTS, THE SIX TYPES OF CLOSE RELATIVES, AND GOOD KNOWING ADVISORS--ONE AND ALL--TO RECEIVE AND UPHOLD THE GREAT VEHICLE SUTRAS AND MORAL LAWS. "Disciples of the Buddha" here refers to those within the Sangha--the bhikshus and bhikshunis. "Evil-minded externalists" means people of external sects and cults--those outside Buddhism. "The six types of close relatives" includes people from both those groups. "Good Knowing Advisors" here means people one sees and draws close to often. For example, people who come to the temple often.

HE MUST TEACH THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES THEREIN, CAUSING THEM TO BRING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE, TO PROGRESS THROUGH THE TEN MINDS OF ADVANCEMENT, THE TEN MINDS OF DEVELOPMENT, AND THE TEN VAJRA MINDS, SO THAT IN EACH OF THOSE THIRTY MINDS THEY UNDERSTAND THE ORDER AND FUNCTION OF DHARMAS. One should teach these people to receive and uphold the Great Vehicle Sutras and moral codes, and to understand the principles in them so they will bring forth a Bodhi mind. If one doesn't even understand the principles, one cannot bring forth the Bodhi resolve. One is simply cultivating and practicing blindly. On the other hand, if one only understands the meanings but does not bring forth the resolve, then one becomes infused with "insane wisdom"--a perverted type of intelligence. One gets arrogant and feels that nobody's knowledge is up to one's own. On the other

hand, if one brings forth the resolve but does not understand principle, then ignorance increases and one becomes really confused in one's cultivation. Therefore, a Bodhisattva has to teach those people to develop true understanding and true cultivation. Then their lives will not pass by in vain. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA WITH EVIL OR HATEFUL INTENTIONS PERVERSELY OFFERS INSTRUCTION IN THE SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES OF THE TWO VEHICLES, OF THE SOUND HEARERS, OR IN THE DISCOURSES OF EXTERNALISTS AND THOSE OF DEVIANT VIEWS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. Having an "evil intention" means that one deliberately wants to lead the other person astray. One wants the other person to follow a deviant or biased path. It also says "a hateful intention," which means that one deliberately wishes to harm another person. One deliberately teaches that person something deviant so he won't learn the Proper Dharma. The Precept says that one shouldn't perversely teach others about the Two Vehicle teachings. "Perversely" means to go against the faculty of the nature of that person. For example, a person has good roots, but one deliberately goes against the grain and does not teach him the Buddhadharma. By doing this, one fails to "observe the opportunity to dispense the teaching," and fails to "dispense the medicine according to the sickness." This is not the proper way to teach. If one teaches externalist views, that's considered to be a violation against the nature and a violation of restraint. If one teaches the views of the Two Vehicles, that's considered a violation of restraint.

The exception to this Precept is if one *is* according with the conditions of that person. For example, that person belongs to a heterodox sect, so in teaching him, one speaks his language in order to accord with the situation. In that case, although one is speaking the language of external ways, it is only an expedient way of bestowing the proper teaching.

Another exception is when one manifests as a member of an external way. For example, in India there were many external ways, and Bodhisattvas would deliberately manifest as practitioners of those heterodox ways so they would seem to be just like them, for it was much easier to teach them that way. Otherwise it would have been very difficult to influence them.

SUTRA:

THE SIXTEENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS PERVERSE EXPLANATION OF THE DHARMA OUT OF DESIRE FOR PERSONAL BENEFIT. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST FIRST WITH A WHOLESOME ATTITUDE STUDY THE AWESOME COMPORIMENT, SUTRAS, AND MORAL CODES OF THE GREAT VEHICLE AND EXTENSIVELY FATHOM THEIR PRINCIPLES. THEREAFTER, WHENEVER NEWLY STUDYING BODHISATTVAS COME FROM THIRTY OR THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY SEEKING INSTRUCTION IN THE GREAT VEHICLE SUTRAS AND MORAL LAWS, ONE SHOULD DESCRIBE THE ASCETIC PRACTICES IN ACCORD WITH THE DHARMA, STRESSING THAT A BODHISATTVA MUST BE WILLING TO BURN HIS ENTIRE BODY, AN ARM, OR A FINGER AS AN OFFERING TO THE BUDDHAS, OR ELSE HE IS NOT TRULY A BODHISATTVA SANGHIN. ONE SHOULD BE WILLING TO FORSAKE ONE'S ENTIRE BODY, 'ONE'S FLESH, HANDS AND FEET AS AN OFFERING TO STARVING TIGERS, WOLVES, LIONS, AND HUNGRY GHOSTS. THEN ONE SHOULD EXPLAIN THE PROPER DHARMA IN AN ORDERLY FASHION, CAUSING THEIR MINDS TO DEVELOP A PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING. HENCE IF A BODHISATTVA, FOR THE SAKE OF PERSONAL BENEFIT AND OFFERINGS, REFUSES TO RESPOND WHEN HE SHOULD RESPOND, OR IF HE

TEACHES THE SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES IN A PERVERSE MANNER BY DISCUSSING PASSAGES OUT OF CONTEXT, OR SPEAKS IN A MANNER WHICH SLANDERS THE TRIPLE JEWEL, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

The previous Precept prohibited biased teaching; this Precept prohibits perverse teaching. THE SIXTEENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS PERVERSE EXPLANATION OF THE DHARMA OUT OF DESIRE FOR PERSONAL BENEFIT. One may not speak in a perverse manner in order to gain personal benefit. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST FIRST WITH A WHOLESOME ATTITUDE STUDY THE AWESOME COMPORMENT, SUTRAS, AND MORAL CODES OF THE GREAT VEHICLE AND EXTENSIVELY FATHOM THEIR PRINCIPLES. "A wholesome attitude" means that above one seeks the Buddha's Way and below one seeks to transform living beings. The Precept says one should study the Great Vehicle teachings oneself. That's because people who leave the home-life are motivated by a desire to benefit self and benefit others. In order to do this, they must first have a grounding in the Great Vehicle teachings. "Awesome Compartment" refers to the standard guidelines for teaching and transforming. "Sutras and Moral Codes" are the doors to progressive cultivation. In other words, if one wishes to enter the door and cultivate, one must study the Sutras and the moral codes. To "extensively fathom the principles" is, as they say in the Confucian school, "including the immense and great, and exhausting the fine and subtle." One must learn to expand the teachings so they become vast and boundless, but one must delve into the extremely subtle and fine aspects as well. This does not refer to superficial or coarse understanding, nor does it mean that one is sloppy when trying to understand things.

THEREAFTER, WHENEVER NEWLY STUDYING BODHISATTVAS COME FROM THIRTY OR THREE HUNDRED MILES AWAY SEEKING INSTRUCTION IN THE GREAT VEHICLE SUTRAS AND MORAL LAWS, ONE SHOULD DESCRIBE THE ASCETIC PRACTICES IN ACCORD WITH THE DHARMA, STRESSING THAT A BODHISATTVA MUST BE WILLING TO BURN HIS ENTIRE BODY, AN ARM, OR A FINGER AS AN OFFERING TO THE BUDDHAS. OR ELSE HE IS NOT TRULY A BODHISATTVA SANGHIN. When the Precept says one should stress that the Bodhisattva "must be willing to burn his entire body, an arm or a finger as an offering," it means that one should be willing to make the ultimate gesture in seeking the Buddha's Way, while being one with all living beings in asking for the Buddha's sympathy. Burning a part of one's body as an offering to the Buddhas is the utmost way to seek the Buddha's Path.

ONE SHOULD BE WILLING TO FORSAKE ONE'S ENTIRE BODY, ONE'S FLESH, HANDS AND FEET AS AN OFFERING TO STARVING TIGERS, WOLVES, LIONS, AND HUNGRY GHOSTS. The second part says that "he should be willing to forsake his entire body, his flesh, his hands and feet as an offering to starving tigers, roaring lions, and hungry ghosts." This is the ultimate gesture of transforming living beings, while being one with the Buddhas in the power of compassion. The Bodhisattva wants to seek the Buddha's Way above and transform living beings below.

THEN ONE SHOULD EXPLAIN THE PROPER DHARMA IN AN ORDERLY FASHION, CAUSING THEIR MINDS TO DEVELOP A PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING. First and foremost one should speak Dharma for living beings, specifically that of cultivating ascetic practices in accord

with Dharma. One speaks like this so as to strengthen their resolve and vows and to expand the measure of their hearts. When requested, one must speak the Proper Dharma "in an orderly fashion." This means one should respond according to what one is asked. One cannot answer inappropriately.

HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA, FOR THE SAKE OF PERSONAL BENEFIT AND OFFERINGS, REFUSES TO RESPOND WHEN HE SHOULD RESPOND, OR IF HE TEACHES THE SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES IN A PERVERSE MANNER BY DISCUSSING PASSAGES OUT OF CONTEXT, OR SPEAKS IN A MANNER WHICH SLANDERS THE TRIPLE JEWEL, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. By not speaking "in a perverse manner," or "discussing passages out of context," one can cause them to understand. A Bodhisattva who has already studied must bear this in mind when he speaks Dharma for living beings. If one refuses to respond when he should respond, then that's not speaking in an orderly fashion. Speaking in a perverse manner means not speaking in proper context. If one slanders the Triple Jewel, that is not in accord with the Proper Dharma.

This is a Precept of restraint. If one fails to first study the Sutras oneself, that is considered one offense. If one does not speak properly, that's another offense.

There are exceptions to the rule. If one knows that speaking in this way will not benefit the person, then it's all right not to speak. For example, those who are mistakenly obsessed with cultivating deviant livelihoods, should be cautioned against the evils of unbeneficial practices. What's meant by deviant livelihoods? Some people are motivated to do ascetic practices out of greed for name or profit. For example, they burn their fingers or burn their bodies, but only in order to get famous. If one brings forth a Bodhi resolve for the sake of reputation or gain, one's resolve is not proper, but is relegated to the level of a deviant livelihood.

All the Precepts that we're learning about are concerned with nothing other than the means of curbing greed, hatred, and stupidity. For example, the Minor Precept against collecting deadly weapons is to counteract hatred; the Precept that prohibits speaking Dharma for personal benefit is to counteract greed; and the Precept that prohibits deviant views is to counteract stupidity. You can see that the myriad kinds of offenses are not apart from the Three Poisons. Both the Great Vehicle and the lesser vehicles are very concerned about guarding against the Three Poisons.

Therefore, one of the initial practices used in Buddhism involves five contemplations used to stop the mind.

These Five Contemplations can stop the flow of false thoughts:

1. If one has much greed, use the contemplation of impurity.
2. If one has much anger, use the contemplation of compassion.
3. If one has much stupidity, use the contemplation of causes and conditions.
4. If one's mind is very scattered, one can use the contemplation of counting the breath.
5. If one has much obstruction, use the contemplation of Mindfulness of the Buddha.

If you can get rid of those problems, if you can tame and subdue the mad mind, then it's easy to go ahead and cultivate. In the world, people's dispositions are all different: some have heavy greed, some

anger, some stupidity, and others are scattered. When the Buddha was in the world, he knew how to observe conditions and dispense the teaching. He knew about people's former causes and so he could suggest the proper methods for them to cultivate. But since the Buddha is no longer in the world, we might not know what Dharma is best suited for us. However, if we think about what type of habit we're most afflicted with, then we can use the corresponding method among these five practices.

How do greed, anger, and stupidity come about? They come about from a saturation of conditions through past lives. This means that no matter what conditions one happens to meet with, one is saturated by those habits and so one reacts out of habit. The habit-pattern has gradually matured to the point that one can no longer control it. Different people have different habits, but they will develop in the same way--by gradual infusion.

Greed, anger, and stupidity come about from the environment one is in. If we wish to change the habits that are entrenched in our natures, we have to use expedient methods. First, if one has too much greed, contemplate impurity. There are nine types of impurity that one can contemplate. One can do this hypothetically. Imagine a corpse in the tropics during its nine stages of decomposition:

1. A few days after death the body swells;
2. the body turns blue;
3. it starts to rot;
4. blood comes out;
5. puss comes out,;
6. worms begin to gnaw at it;
7. the body disintegrates;
8. only bones remain;
9. the bones are burned and the ashes are scattered in the wind and disperse, returning to emptiness.

If one can be constantly mindful of these nine types of impurity, one can put a stop to one's greedy mind.

Next, one who has a great deal of anger can use the contemplation of compassion. Sometimes people get afflicted with anger to the point that they blow up and don't care about anything. This is a habit caused by environmental conditions from past lives. In this case they need to contemplate compassion. For example, if a person happens to rub you the wrong way and you get really angry at him, just think, "This person must have been my parent, brother, or sister--one of the six types of close relatives--in former lives. Since this is the case, this person must have been kind to me in the past, and so no matter how badly he treats me now, I just *can't* get angry." There are three aspects to the contemplation of compassion.

1) The kindness and compassion of condition with all living beings; that is, this kindness and compassion is directed toward all living beings: you regard all living beings as your parents or other close relatives of past lives.

2) The kindness and compassion of conditions of dharmas. What are dharmas? Dharmas here refer to phenomena that are produced and destroyed from causes and conditions. They are produced and yet not produced, destroyed and yet not destroyed. All dharmas that are formed from causes and conditions are fundamentally empty.

3) The kindness and compassion toward those with whom one has no conditions. This last contemplation is used to get rid of all sense of discrimination. That is, you don't even consider whether living beings have affinities with you or not. You consider all living beings as though they were your parents in your past lives. It is like the great sun which shines on the earth and doesn't make any distinctions. It dispenses its warmth and light to all alike. It is also like empty space, which contains everything without discrimination. It doesn't say, "This is good, and so I'll accept it, but if it's bad I'm going to reject it and put it outside of empty space."

Accomplishing the first contemplation of compassion enables one to attain patience with production. Accomplishing the second contemplation enables one to attain patience with the production of dharmas. Accomplishing the third contemplation enables one to attain patience with the non-production of dharmas.

The first two of the Three Poisons--greed and hatred--are easy to detect. The third of the Three Poisons--that is, stupidity--is harder to recognize. In Buddhism, when we talk about stupidity, we don't mean being dumb. It means not being clear about cause and effect. Because one doesn't understand cause and effect, one does anything one pleases. To cure this, one uses the contemplation of causes and conditions, that is, the Twelve Causal Links.

1. ignorance conditions activity/
2. activity conditions consciousness/
3. consciousness conditions name and form/
4. name and form conditions the six entrances/
5. the six entrances condition contact/
6. contact conditions feeling/
7. feeling conditions craving/
8. craving conditions grasping/
9. grasping conditions becoming/
10. becoming conditions birth/

11. birth conditions old age and death.

12. old age and death from ignorance.

With these Twelve Causal Links, one can truly understand cause and effect.

The Fourth type of contemplation is to remedy scatteredness. In this case, one performs the contemplation of counting one's breaths. One counts the spaces in between the inhalation and exhalation. This contemplation is quite effective in curbing false thoughts. The contemplations of the nine impurities and of counting one's breath are commonly used together by cultivators, and they are called the Two Doors of Sweet Dew. If one can stop one's false thoughts and greed by way of those

two doors, then one is not too far from the Way. Vinaya Master Tao Hsuan suggested a way to do this. He said that young people should count the exhalation and older people should count the inhalation because counting the in-breath aids digestion and counting the out-breaths raises the energy. Others say to count the breath whichever way one likes.

The fifth contemplation is for people who have a lot of obstructions. In that case, one can use the contemplation of mindfulness of the Buddha. There are three kinds of obstruction:

1. the obstruction of drowsiness--being sluggish and subdued.
2. the obstruction of evil intentions or evil thoughts.
3. the obstruction of oppressive states or environmental conditions.

To counteract these, one can use three different types of mindfulness of the Buddha. Being mindful of the Buddha in this case does not refer to reciting the Buddha's name. It is the type of mindfulness that uses reflection or concentration.

If one is afflicted with the first type of obstruction, one contemplates the Response Body which is replete with the thirty-two marks and eighty minor characteristics. One should actually reflect on each of the different marks. Once one's mind starts working with those differentiations, then one's drowsiness disappears. The reason sleepiness occurs in the first place is because one has lost one's sense of differentiation. This contemplation counteracts that problem.

The second obstruction is that of evil thoughts or intentions. For this, one can apply the contemplation of the Reward Body Buddha, which has limitless characteristics, each of which further has limitless fine marks. Every single fine characteristic comes from the accomplishment of much merit and virtue. For a hundred kalpas the Buddha planted the causes for those fine marks, and each fine mark came about through the accomplishment of a myriad merits and virtues. Once you start contemplating along this line, your evil thoughts will come to a stop. If you don't use this method, then these evil thoughts will keep popping up in your mind, and even if you want to stop them you won't be able to. People's minds cannot go in two separate directions at the same time, and by using wholesome thoughts one can stop evil thoughts which might turn one away from the proper path.

The third obstruction is that of an oppressive environment. When the environment is oppressive, one can get so distressed one does not even want to live. This happens when a person has a petty mind to

begin with, and so when certain states arise he can't take it. During times like this, one should be mindful of the Dharma Body Buddha, which is without shape and form, pervades everywhere, and contains everything. In this way, one can expand the measure of one's heart so that one can endure oppressive environments or opposing states.

If one doesn't use methods like these three but instead lets one's thoughts run wild, it's very dangerous indeed! The following two verses were spoken by Dharma Master Yung Ming Shou.

Evil arises from emotion, like rust forms on iron,
Which then returns to destroy the iron.
Goodness wells from the heart, just like a pearl emits light,
Which then goes back to illumine the pearl's substance.

"Evil arises from emotion." Evil comes from the states that arise before you, just like rust forms on iron. And the rust "returns to destroy the iron." The rust will finally destroy the iron itself. "Goodness wells from the heart, just like a pearl emits light, which then goes back to illumine the pearl's substance." This means that not only does one benefit oneself, but one can also benefit others.

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