



The Buddha Speaks The Brahma Net Sutra

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SUTRA:

THE FORTY-SECOND PRECEPT PROHIBITS SPEAKING THE PRECEPTS IN FRONT OF EVIL INDIVIDUALS. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT FOR THE SAKE OF PERSONAL BENEFIT OR OFFERINGS RECITE THE GREAT PRECEPTS OF THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS, TO EXTERNALISTS, OR TO EVIL PEOPLE, NOR MAY HE RECITE THEM FOR ANYONE WHO ADHERES TO DEVIANT VIEWS. HE MAY NOT SPEAK THE PRECEPTS TO ANY SUCH PEOPLE WITH THE EXCEPTIONS OF KINGS. UNWHOLESOME PEOPLE WILL NOT ACCEPT THE BUDDHA'S PRECEPTS. THEIR BEHAVIOR IS ESSENTIALLY ANIMALISTIC AND THEY WILL PASS THROUGH MANY LIVES WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING THE TRIPLE JEWEL. EXTERNALISTS ARE AS SENSELESS AS TREES AND STONES. PEOPLE OF DEVIANT VIEWS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN WOODEN STUMPS. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA RECITES THE INSTRUCTIONAL PRECEPTS OF THE SEVEN BUDDHAS FOR SUCH UNWHOLESOME INDIVIDUALS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

FORTY-SECOND PRECEPT PROHIBITS SPEAKING THE PRECEPTS IN FRONT OF EVIL INDIVIDUALS. "Evil individuals" means that they aren't good people. One cannot recite the Precepts in the presence of such people. "Reciting the Precepts" in this case does not mean lecturing them or talking about them. It specifically refers to the bi-monthly recitation of the Precepts.

A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT FOR THE SAKE OF PERSONAL BENEFIT OR OFFERINGS RECITE THE GREAT PRECEPTS OF THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS, TO EXTERNALISTS, OR TO EVIL PEOPLE, NOR MAY HE RECITE THEM FOR ANYONE WHO ADHERES TO DEVIANT VIEWS. HE MAY NOT SPEAK THE PRECEPTS TO ANY SUCH PEOPLE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KINGS. An exception is made in the case of kings. Why is this? It's because even

when the Buddha was in the world he entrusted the Buddhadharma to kings, emperors, and other rulers of the countries. For this reason, one can recite the Precepts before kings.

UNWHOLESOME PEOPLE WILL NOT ACCEPT THE BUDDHA'S PRECEPTS. THEIR BEHAVIOR IS ESSENTIALLY ANIMALISTIC AND THEY WILL PASS THROUGH MANY LIVES WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING THE TRIPLE JEWEL. EXTERNALISTS ARE AS SENSELESS AS TREES AND STONES. PEOPLE OF DEVIANT VIEWS ARE NO DIFFERENT THEN WOODEN STUMPS. They are really stubborn and completely witless. There's no way to get through to them. They are oblivious to everything, so they are likened to wood and stones. Such people of externalist ways turn their backs upon enlightenment and unite with the dust. They live outside of principle, they're outside the Way and therefore called "externalists." They never understand true principle.

HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA RECITES THE INSTRUCTIONAL PRECEPTS OF THE SEVEN BUDDHAS FOR SUCH UNWHOLESOME INDIVIDUALS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

This Precept is one of restraint, which means it pertains to people who have received the Precepts. The reason for not reciting them in the presence of such individuals is that they will not be duly earnest and reverent. If such people hear the Precepts before they have received them, it's to be feared they will not revere them. And then if they do receive them in the future, they won't be respectful of them. For this reason, when the bi-monthly Precept Recitation Ceremony occurs those who haven't received the great Precepts are always asked to leave.

There are four conditions that constitute an offense:

- 1) The person is somebody who hasn't received the Precepts. One can't recite the Bodhisattva Precepts in the presence of somebody who hasn't received them.
- 2) One is aware that the other person hasn't received the Precepts.
- 3) One still recites the Precepts in his presence for the sake of self-benefit, or with the hope of getting offerings. That is, one has an ulterior motive. Perhaps one wants to become famous or to receive offerings or benefit.
- 4) The person hears and understands.

If these four conditions are met, then one has violated this Precept.

SUTRA:

THE FORTY-THIRD MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS DELIBERATE VIOLATION OF THE PROHIBITIONS. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA LEAVES HOME BECAUSE OF GENUINE BELIEF AND ACCEPTS THE BUDDHA'S ORTHODOX PRECEPTS. IF HE DELIBERATELY VIOLATES THE SAGELY PRECEPTS, THEN HE DOESN'T DESERVE TO ACCEPT ANY OFFERINGS WHATSOEVER FROM DONORS AND DOESN'T DESERVE TO WALK ON THE SOIL OF HIS COUNTRY, OR TO DRINK ITS WATER. A HORDE OF FIVE THOUSAND GREAT GHOSTS CONSTANTLY BLOCK HIS PASSAGE, DENOUNCING HIM AS A WICKED

THIEF. THEY FOLLOW HIM INTO EVERY HOUSE, CITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD, HAUNTING HIS EVERY STEP. WHENEVER THE COMMON PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SEE HIM, THEY CURSE AND SCOLD HIM AS A THIEF WITHIN THE BUDDHADHARMA AND BEINGS DO NOT EVEN WISH TO LAY EYES ON HIM. A VIOLATOR OF PRECEPTS IS NO DIFFERENT FROM AN ANIMAL OR A PIECE OF DEAD WOOD. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DELIBERATELY VIOLATES ANY OF THE ORTHODOX PRECEPTS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE FORTY-THIRD MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS DELIBERATE VIOLATION OF THE PROHIBITIONS. This Precept is referring to people who deliberately decide to break the Precepts. It prohibits the intent to violate the Precepts before one has actually violated them.

A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA LEAVES HOME BECAUSE OF GENUINE BELIEF AND ACCEPTS THE BUDDHA'S ORTHODOX PRECEPTS. This Precept particularly applies to people who have left the home life. Basically, people leave the home life because they have true faith. They take the Precepts and should be worthy of all offerings.

If one has sincere faith in the Buddhadharma and receives the Precepts, then one is worthy of offerings from both humans and gods. For example, often heavenly beings make offerings to high monks. Those who have left home also deserve to be venerated by people, gods, ghosts, and spirits. When people make offerings to us, we can see them, but what about gods, ghosts, or spirits who make offerings. Do we see them?

Here's a story of a case in point. In the T'ang Dynasty there was Dhyana Master Tung Shan. One day a person came to seek instruction from him and that person had very deep insights into the Dharma. But after he received instructions, he left. The Dhyana Master thought, "Well, where did this person go?" He looked in the Ch'an hall and in the guest lodge, but the person was nowhere to be found. Then he went up to the mountain to look for this person and found him living in a thatched hut. There, every day, the gods came from the heavens to deliver offerings to him. Most people would figure that if you had gods coming to make offerings to you, you must be pretty special. But Dhyana Master Tung Shan scolded that person. He said, "I thought you were really intelligent, but it turns out you're just like this!" As soon as the person heard that, he realized he was being admonished by a truly wise person. He felt great shame because he knew he wasn't right. In what way? He was getting too attached to appearances. He hadn't gotten rid of his attachment to self. He brought forth great shame and immediately made another step in the development of his skill. He kept on living in the thatched hut, but the next time the gods came to make offerings, they couldn't find him. Why is this?

It's because when he advanced a further step in his skill he emptied the attachment to self. In the *HEART SUTRA* it says, the "Bodhisattva illumined the five skandhas, and saw that they were all empty." The first skandha is the form skandha, and if you have emptied that skandha, then you are devoid of marks; there are no more physical appearances. That's why the gods couldn't find him. So, it's true that people who receive the Precepts should be worthy of offerings from humans and gods, but if someone decides to deliberately violate the Precepts, then he does not deserve any offerings.

IF HE DELIBERATELY VIOLATES THE SAGELY PRECEPTS, THEN HE DOESN'T DESERVE TO ACCEPT ANY OFFERINGS WHATSOEVER FROM DONORS AND DOESN'T DESERVE TO

WALK ON THE SOIL OF HIS COUNTRY OR TO DRINK ITS WATER. They are scorned by both worldly people, ghosts, and spirits. This passage emphasized that Precepts just cannot be violated. Why would anybody decide to deliberately violate the Precepts? By merely bringing forth the intent to transgress the Precepts, one has already violated this one. A HORDE OF FIVE THOUSAND GREAT GHOSTS CONSTANTLY BLOCK HIS PASSAGE, DENOUNCING HIM AS A WICKED THIEF. THEY FOLLOW HIM INTO EVERY HOUSE, CITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD, HAUNTING HIS EVERY STEP. WHENEVER THE COMMON PEOPLE OF THE WORLD SEE HIM, THEY CURSE AND SCOLD HIM AS A THIEF WITHIN THE BUDDHADHARMA AND BEINGS DO NOT EVEN WISH TO LAY EYES ON HIM. A VIOLATOR OF PRECEPTS IS NO DIFFERENT FROM AN ANIMAL OR A PIECE OF DEAD WOOD. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DELIBERATELY VIOLATES ANY OF THE ORTHODOX PRECEPTS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

Whereas the previous Precept was a Precept of restraint only, this Precept is a violation against the nature, and it's also a Precept of restraint. It doesn't matter whether a person has received the Precepts or not, but if in his mind he is planning to violate them, he's already creating an offense. Such an attitude goes against the very nature of things. It shows his disregard and contempt for the Precepts.

There are three conditions necessary for an offense to have been committed:

- 1) It is a violation. One knows that it is a violation.
- 2) One has the intention to commit a violation.
- 3) One decides to transgress. Every single thought constitutes a defiling offense. Every time one brings forth a thought to deliberately make a transgression, that's an offense. There are no exceptions to this rule. *-continued next issue*