



THE BUDDHA SPEAKS THE BRAHMA NET SUTRA

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SUTRA:

THE FORTY-SIXTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS SPEAKING DHARMA IN AN IMPROPER MANNER. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA SHOULD ALWAYS TEACH AND TRANSFORM BEINGS AND GIVE RISE TO A MIND OF GREAT COMPASSION. WHEN VISITING THE HOMES OF DONORS OR ARISTOCRATS OR WHEN ADDRESSING ANY ASSEMBLY, HE MUST NOT STAND UP WHILE SPEAKING DHARMA TO LAYPEOPLE, BUT SHOULD OCCUPY A HIGH SEAT POSITIONED IN FRONT OF THE ASSEMBLY. BHIKSHUS SERVING AS DHARMA INSTRUCTORS MUST NOT SIT IN A LOW POSITION OR STAND UP WHILE SPEAKING DHARMA FOR THE FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO SPEAK DHARMA, THE DHARMA MASTER MUST BE ESCORTED TO A HIGH SEAT AND PRESENTED WITH OFFERINGS OF INCENSE AND FLOWERS. THE FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY MUST LISTEN ATTENTIVELY FROM LOWER SEATS. THEIR BEHAVIOR SHOULD BE CHARACTERISTIC OF FILIAL PIETY SHOWN TO PARENTS. THEIR RESPECT FOR AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE TEACHING OF DHARMA MASTERS SHOULD BE LIKE THE DUTIFULNESS OF FIRE-WORSHIPPING BRAHMANS. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA SPEAKS DHARMA IN A MANNER WHICH DOES NOT ACCORD WITH THIS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE FORTY-SIXTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS SPEAKING DHARMA IN AN IMPROPER MANNER. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA SHOULD ALWAYS TEACH AND TRANSFORM BEINGS AND GIVE RISE TO A MIND OF GREAT COMPASSION. WHEN VISITING THE HOMES OF DONORS OR ARISTOCRATS OR WHEN ADDRESSING ANY ASSEMBLY, HE MUST NOT STAND UP WHILE SPEAKING DHARMA TO LAYPEOPLE, BUT SHOULD OCCUPY A HIGH SEAT POSITIONED IN FRONT OF THE ASSEMBLY. One has to speak Dharma in a proper manner. One should be on a high seat as opposed to a low seat. An "improper manner" means that one does not comply with correct comportment. "Speaking in an improper manner" here does not mean speaking in an upside-down way. It just means speaking with improper comportment.

BHIKSHUS SERVING AS DHARMA INSTRUCTORS MUST NOT SIT IN A LOW POSITION OR STAND UP WHILE SPEAKING DHARMA FOR THE FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY. WHEN IT IS TIME TO SPEAK DHARMA, THE DHARMA MASTER MUST BE ESCORTED TO HIGH SEAT AND PRESENTED WITH OFFERINGS OF INCENSE AND FLOWERS. THE FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY MUST LISTEN ATTENTIVELY FROM LOWER SEATS. THEIR BEHAVIOR

SHOULD BE CHARACTERISTIC OF FILIAL PIETY SHOWN TO PARENTS. THEIR RESPECT FOR AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE TEACHING OF DHARMA MASTERS SHOULD BE LIKE THE DUTIFULNESS OF FIRE-WORSHIPPING BRAHMANS. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA SPEAKS DHARMA IN A MANNER WHICH DOES NOT ACCORD WITH THIS, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. This is a Precept of restraint. There are three conditions that make up the offense:

- 1) It is not in accord with Dharma.
- 2) One knows that it's not in accord with Dharma.
- 3) One actually speaks in this way.

There are exceptions to this rule. In the *SANGHIKA VINYANA* it says, "A Bhikshu may be running chores and performing affairs for the stupa, the temple, or the Sangha. When he goes to the King or sees the Lords of Estates, and if he should say to him, 'Bhikshu, will you please speak the Dharma for me?' at this time the Bhikshu can't insist that the King sit on a lower seat while he sits on a high chair." He can't immediately force that type of situation. He can't hold to the letter of the law. This is an exception to the rule.

SUTRA:

THE FORTY-SEVENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS WHICH CONTRADICT THE DHARMA. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA RECEIVES THE BUDDHA'S PRECEPTS BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IN THEM. HENCE, WHETHER HE IS A KING, PRINCE, OFFICIAL, OR MEMBER OF THE FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY OF DISCIPLES, HE MUST NOT ABUSE HIS HONORABLE POSITION TO DESTROY THE MORAL REGULATIONS OF THE BUDDHADHARMA, NOR MAY HE ESTABLISH REGULATIONS WHICH DO NOT PERMIT MEMBERS OF MY FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY OF DISCIPLES TO LEAVE HOME OR PRACTICE THE WAY. HE MAY NOT PROHIBIT THE MAKING OF BUDDHA IMAGES, ERECTING STUPAS, AND PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTING COPIES OF SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES, NOR MAY HE ESTABLISH GOVERNMENTAL REGULATIONS TO RESTRICT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSEMBLED SANGHA. IF A BODHISATTVA BHIKSHU STANDS UP WHEN SPEAKING THE DHARMA, WHILE THE LAITY IS SEATED ON A HIGH SEAT, THIS IS A PRACTICE THAT FLAGRANTLY CONTRADICTS THE DHARMA, FOR IT IS NO DIFFERENT THAN THE SYSTEM OF THE MILITARY OR SERFDOM. A BODHISATTVA SHOULD RIGHTEOUSLY RECEIVE OFFERINGS FROM ALL PEOPLE. IF INSTEAD HE IS TREATED LIKE A SERVANT TO MINISTERS OR OFFICIALS, THIS CONTRADICTS THE DHARMA AND THE VINAYA. THEREFORE, KINGS OR THE VARIOUS MINISTERS SHOULD RECEIVE THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS WITH A WHOLESOME ATTITUDE AND AVOID BECOMING ENGAGED IN OFFENSES THAT DESTROY THE TRIPLE JEWEL. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DELIBERATELY SETS OUT TO DESTROY THE DHARMA, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE FORTY-SEVENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS WHICH CONTRADICT THE DHARMA. This Precept prohibits establishing regulations which contradict the Dharma, or laws which create a lot of inconvenience for the Buddha's disciples. This Precept is directed at officials or other influential people who have received the Bodhisattva Precepts, but who might then pass legislation in order to obstruct the Dharma. Government Officials in the country who don't know anything about Buddhism will probably not meddle in the business of Buddhism. This Precept applies to somebody who understands about Buddhism and then creates all sorts of inconveniences for the Buddha's disciples.

A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA RECEIVES THE BUDDHA'S PRECEPTS BECAUSE HE BELIEVES IN THEM. Whether he is a king, prince, official, a minister, or member of the fourfold assembly, he took the Precepts because he had faith. The four assemblies are Bhikshus, Bhikshunis, Upasakas, and Upasikas. HENCE, WHETHER HE IS A KING, PRINCE, OFFICIAL, OR MEMBER OF THE FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY OF DISCIPLES, HE MUST NOT ABUSE HIS HONORABLE POSITION TO DESTROY THE MORAL REGULATIONS OF THE BUDDHADHARMA, NOR MAY HE ESTABLISH REGULATIONS WHICH DO NOT PERMIT MEMBERS OF MY FOURFOLD ASSEMBLY OF DISCIPLES TO LEAVE HOME OR PRACTICE THE WAY. Since he took the Precepts in good faith, he should not then abuse his position or exercise his power to make laws that restrict the Buddha's disciples. He must not destroy the moral regulations of the Buddhadharmā, nor may he enforce statutes or issue commands that forbid the members of the fourfold assembly to leave the home life.

HE MAY NOT PROHIBIT THE MAKING OF BUDDHA IMAGES, ERECTING STUPAS, AND PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTING COPIES OF SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES, NOR MAY HE ESTABLISH GOVERNMENTAL REGULATIONS TO RESTRICT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ASSEMBLED SANGHA. A person should not prohibit the making of Buddha or Bodhisattva images, or the erecting of stupas, or the printing and distributing of copies of Sutras and moral codes. Nor should one forbid people to write out the Sutras. One may not establish a special department and appoint a minister to limit or curtail the activities of the Sangha.

IF A BODHISATTVA BHIKSHU STANDS UP WHEN SPEAKING THE DHARMA, WHILE THE LAITY IS SEATED ON A HIGH SEAT, THIS IS A PRACTICE THAT FLAGRANTLY CONTRADICTS THE DHARMA, FOR IT IS NO DIFFERENT THAN THE SYSTEM OF THE MILITARY OR SERFDOM. A BODHISATTVA SHOULD RIGHTEOUSLY RECEIVE OFFERINGS FROM ALL PEOPLE. IF INSTEAD HE IS TREATED LIKE A SERVANT TO MINISTERS OR OFFICIALS, THIS CONTRADICTS THE DHARMA AND THE VINAYA. To submit to standing while the laity sits is in contradiction to the Dharma. If you look at the military, that's how it is--soldiers don't get to sit when they face their chiefs or anybody above them; they have to stand up. Slaves can't sit down in the presence of their masters, either. So if a government official starts to enforce rules like this for left-home people, it completely contradicts the Dharma. Actually, left-home people are worthy of the offerings of gods and humans. To set up rules whereby the Sangha is treated with other than due respect goes against the Dharma and the Vinaya.

THEREFORE, KINGS OR THE VARIOUS MINISTERS SHOULD RECEIVE THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS WITH A WHOLESOME ATTITUDE AND AVOID BECOMING ENGAGED IN OFFENSES THAT DESTROY THE TRIPLE JEWEL. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DELIBERATELY SETS OUT TO DESTROY THE DHARMA, HE THEREBY

VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. They should absolutely avoid creating this type of offense. If one deliberately sets out to destroy the Dharma, one commits this defiling offense. If one does not permit people to leave home, then one is cutting off the Sangha Jewel. If one does not allow Buddha images to be made, then one is cutting off the Buddha Jewel. If people don't get to see any images of the Buddha, eventually the Buddha Jewel will become extinct. If one forbids the printing or distributing of the Sutras, then that's cutting off the Dharma Jewel. Setting up unprincipled regulations can undermine the Triple Jewel--the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.--to the point that they disappear from the face of the earth.

Breaking this Precept is a violation of the nature. It's also a Precept of restraint. It is a violation against the nature because whether one has received the Precepts or not, if one did this, it would still be an offense. It is a violation so basic that it not only applies to people who have taken the Precepts, in which case it would only be a Precept of restraint, but it also applies to those who haven't taken the Precepts. Such activity obstructs wholesome dharmas.

There are four conditions that make up the offense:

- 1) It is an affair within the Triple Jewel. That is, the restriction concerns the Triple Jewel.
- 2) One knows that it concerns the Triple Jewel.
- 3) One has the intent to enforce regulations.
- 4) One enforces the regulations.

Following upon that, the establishment of each regulation counts as a separate offense.

However, there are exceptions. For example, in distant kalpas past, when Maitreya Bodhisattva was a king of a country, he provisionally set up some restrictions on the Dharma. But they were just a provisional method, an expedient device, and not real restrictions.

There is another case related in the *AVATAMSAKA SUTRA* about the King No Satiation. He was one of the fifty-three Good Knowing Advisors of the Youth Good Wealth. When Good Wealth drew near him, he saw the King being extremely violent and ruthless with some criminals. He executed them and subjected them to every cruel torture possible. But actually he didn't really kill them. He employed the spiritual power of all being like an illusion. All those cruel punishments and deaths were merely transformations conjured up by his power; they were not real. It was the only way he could instill fear in the people to cause them to be good. So this was an exception. But if one truly did such things, one would be obstructing the disciples of the Triple Jewel, and that would be an offense.

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