



Brahma Net Sutra

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THE FOURTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS EATING THE FIVE KINDS OF PUNGENT PLANTS. A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT EAT ANY OF THE FIVE CLASSES OF PUNGENT PLANTS EVEN WHEN THEY OCCUR ONLY AS AN INCIDENTAL INGREDIENT IN HIS FOOD. THIS REFERS TO PLANTS SUCH AS GARLIC, CHIVES, LEEKS, SHALLOTS, ONIONS, AND SO FORTH. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA DELIBERATELY EATS ANY OF THE PUNGENT PLANTS IN ANY FORM, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE FOURTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS EATING THE FIVE KINDS OF PUNGENT PLANTS. "The five pungent plants" are also called the "five turbid plants." A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA MUST NOT EAT ANY OF THE FIVE CLASSES OF PUNGENT PLANTS EVEN WHEN THEY OCCUR ONLY AS AN INCIDENTAL INGREDIENT IN HIS FOOD. One should not eat these things. THIS REFERS TO PLANTS SUCH AS GARLIC, CHIVES, LEEKS, SHALLOTS, ONIONS, AND SO FORTH. The original list of plants contains a variety not found in China or America, but it suffices to say that it includes such plants as "garlic, chives, leeks, shallots, onion, and so forth." There are areas of the world where the consumption of these plants is particularly prevalent. Often they are used to enhance the flavors of dishes. But the Precepts prohibit eating them, "even when they occur only as an incidental ingredient in his food." Obviously it is even less acceptable to eat them outright. Why are they prohibited? One reason is that they smell bad. Their odor is offensive and violates pure Dharmas. The Shurangama Sutra says:

If these five are eaten cooked, they increase one's sexual desire; if they are eaten raw, they increase one's anger.

Take a look sometime: a person who eats a lot of onions and the like usually has red eyes and a flushed face, similar to the appearance of one who consumes intoxicants. Pungent plants stir up the fire in one's body and increase one's rage and thoughts of anger. That's why it is said that it violates pure Dharmas. People who recite Sutras and hold Mantras most absolutely must not eat those five kinds of plants: the flavor of the plants is so undesirable that it creates an impeding effect on the recitation. In the *Shurangama Sutra* it states that the Dharma protectors and good spirits stay far away from those who consume the five pungent plants and that hungry ghosts draw near to such a person. The ghosts like this odor and kiss the lips of the person who emits such an odor. That's why these plants are so undesirable, especially for those who recite Sutras and Mantras.

There are four conditions which together constitute it as an offense.

- 1) It is a pungent plant.
- 2) One knows it is a pungent plant.
- 3) One has the intent to eat it.
- 4) Once it enters one's mouth, every swallow is a separate offense.

There are exceptions. For instance, if a person has an illness that requires one of the five pungent plants as part of the cure, then it is permissible to consume them. However, one must comply to a special method set up for this unusual occasion. One must dwell in separate living quarters, away from the rest of the community. When one is eating any of the five pungent plants, one is not allowed to enter the Buddha stupas, the great hall, the sangha dwellings, or the sangha bathhouse, to the point that one must use separate toilet facilities. One cannot use the public toilets. This prohibition continues for one week after one finishes eating the pungent plants, by which time the smell will have left the body. Then one must bathe and change to fresh clothing before rejoining the assembly.

SUTRA:

THE FIFTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS FAILURE TO TEACH REPENTANCE. WHENEVER A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA SEES ANY BEING VIOLATE ONE OF THE EIGHT PRECEPTS, THE FIVE PRECEPTS, THE TEN PRECEPTS, BREAKING ANY OTHER OR ALL PROHIBITIONS, OR SEES HIM COMMIT ONE OF THE SEVEN REBELLIOUS ACTS OR ANY OFFENSE WHICH CALLS FORTH THE EIGHT DIFFICULTIES AS RETRIBUTION--WHENEVER HE SEES ANY VIOLATION OF PRECEPTS WHATEVER--HE SHOULD INSTRUCT THE OFFENDER TO REPENT AND REFORM. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA FAILS TO INSTRUCT AN OFFENDER TO REPENT AND REFORM, AND IF SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL CONTINUES TO DWELL WITH THE ASSEMBLY, TO SHARE THE SANGHA'S OFFERINGS, OR TO PARTICIPATE IN A SINGLE UPAVASATHA ASSEMBLY WHERE THE PRECEPTS ARE SPOKEN, AND YET THAT BODHISATTVA STILL FAILS TO BRING FORTH THAT PERSON'S OFFENSES, TEACHING HIM TO REPENT AND REFORM, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE FIFTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS FAILURE TO TEACH REPENTANCE. This Precept teaches people to instruct those with whom they dwell, who have committed offenses, to seek repentance and reform. To fail to do so is a violation of this Precept.

WHENEVER A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA SEES ANY BEING VIOLATE ONE OF THE EIGHT PRECEPTS, THE FIVE PRECEPTS, THE TEN PRECEPTS, OR BREAKING ANY OTHER PROHIBITIONS, OR SEES HIM COMMIT ONE OF THE SEVEN REBELLIOUS ACTS OR ANY OFFENSE WHICH CALLS FORTH THE EIGHT DIFFICULTIES AS RETRIBUTION--WHENEVER HE SEES ANY VIOLATION OF PRECEPTS WHATEVER--HE SHOULD INSTRUCT THE OFFENDER TO REPENT AND REFORM. The Five Precepts and the Eight Precepts are familiar, but what are the Ten Precepts? They refer to the Ten Goods, which prohibit the Ten Evils. They also refer to the Ten Precepts of a Shramanera, or to the Ten Major Precepts of the Bodhisattva, as set forth in the *Brahma Net Sutra*. "Breaking any other prohibitions" refers to the violation of any Precept which has been set up by any of the Buddhas of the three periods of time. "The eight difficulties" are not precepts in themselves, but the retribution for those who have violated the Precepts. These are:

- 1) being born in the hells;
- 2) being born as a hungry ghost;
- 3) being born as an animal;
- 4) being born in the Northern Continent;
- 5) being born in the Long-life Heaven;
- 6) being born at a time before or after a Buddha is in the world;
- 7) being born with impaired faculties;
- 8) being endowed with worldly intelligence and argumentative intelligence.

"Any violation of Precepts whatsoever" means whether the offense is big or little, a Great Vehicle Precept or a Small Vehicle Precept, a heavy offense or a light one, a cause for violation or the violation itself, one must teach repentance. If one sees a person violate a Precept, if one hears that someone has violated a Precept, or if one suspects that someone has violated a Precept, one should teach that person to repent and reform--to renounce his faults and turn toward the good.

"Repentance" actually refers to the Sanskrit word *kshama* and means to ask for forgiveness, indicating one has committed deeds in the past that should be repented of. To "reform" means to change. One resolves not to commit an offense again. It implies that one will cultivate goodness in the future.

HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA FAILS TO INSTRUCT AN OFFENDER TO REPENT AND REFORM, AND IF SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL CONTINUES TO DWELL WITH THE ASSEMBLY, TO SHARE THE SANGHA'S OFFERINGS, OR TO PARTICIPATE IN A SINGLE UPASATHA ASSEMBLY WHERE THE PRECEPTS ARE SPOKEN, AND YET THAT BODHISATTVA STILL FAILS TO BRING FORTH

THAT PERSON'S OFFENSES, TEACHING HIM TO REPENT AND REFORM, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. The Precept refers to the individual continuing "to dwell with the assembly and share the Sangha's offerings." This refers to partaking of food with everyone else. "To participate in a single Upasatha assembly" means to partake of the Dharma with everyone else. Upasatha refers to the recitation of the Precepts. It translates as "increasing and growing" and as "dwelling purely."

This is a Precept of restraint. There are four conditions that make up a violation:

- 1) There is an offense.
- 2) One knows that the person has committed an offense.
- 3) One does not teach that person to repent and reform.
- 4) One continues to dwell together with that person without speaking of his offense.

SUTRA:

THE SIXTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS FAILURE TO MAKE OFFERINGS AND FAILURE TO REQUEST DHARMA. WHENEVER A GREAT VEHICLE DHARMA MASTER, GREAT VEHICLE DHARMA PEER, OR A FELLOW CULTIVATOR OF LIKE VIEWS AND LIKE PRACTICE COMES FROM A HUNDRED OR THOUSAND *LIS* AWAY TO A TEMPLE, HOUSEHOLD, OR CITY, A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA SHOULD WELCOME HIM AS HE ARRIVES AND ESCORT HIM OFF AS HE LEAVES. HE SHOULD BOW AND MAKE OFFERINGS TO THE VISITING DHARMA MASTER THREE TIMES A DAY AND PREPARE MEALS EACH DAY WHICH MAY BE WORTH AS MUCH AS THREE OUNCES OF GOLD AND WHICH CONSIST OF ALL THE VARIOUS FLAVORS OF FOOD AND DRINK. HE SHOULD MAKE OFFERINGS OF BEDDING, SITTING MATS, AND MEDICINES AND GIVE HIM EVERYTHING HE NEEDS. HE SHOULD ALWAYS REQUEST THE DHARMA MASTER TO SPEAK DHARMA THREE TIMES EACH DAY, BY BOWING RESPECTFULLY AND NEVER BECOME RESENTFUL OR AFFLICTED. HE SHOULD BE WILLING TO RELINQUISH HIS BODY FOR THE SAKE OF THE DHARMA AND NEVER BE LAX IN REQUESTING IT. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA FAILS TO ACT IN THIS MANNER, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE SIXTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS FAILURE TO MAKE OFFERINGS AND FAILURE TO REQUEST DHARMA. WHENEVER A GREAT VEHICLE DHARMA MASTER, GREAT VEHICLE DHARMA PEER, OR A FELLOW CULTIVATOR OF LIKE VIEWS AND LIKE PRACTICE COMES FROM A HUNDRED OR THOUSAND *LIS* AWAY TO A TEMPLE, HOUSEHOLD, OR CITY, A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA SHOULD WELCOME HIM AS HE ARRIVES AND

ESCORT HIM OFF AS HE LEAVES. This Precept refers to a High Sanghan or wise cultivator who arrives at the place where a Bodhisattva is, either to pay a visit or to stay temporarily. Should such a person have come from far away, that increases the import of maintaining this Precept. A Bodhisattva should greet him and see him off.

HE SHOULD BOW AND MAKE OFFERINGS TO THE VISITING DHARMA MASTER THREE TIMES A DAY AND PREPARE MEALS EACH DAY WHICH MAY BE WORTH AS MUCH AS THREE OUNCES OF GOLD AND WHICH CONSIST OF ALL THE VARIOUS FLAVORS OF FOOD AND DRINK. HE SHOULD MAKE OFFERINGS OF BEDDING, SITTING MATS, AND MEDICINES AND GIVE HIM EVERYTHING HE NEEDS. HE SHOULD ALWAYS REQUEST THE DHARMA MASTER TO SPEAK DHARMA THREE TIMES EACH DAY, BY BOWING RESPECTFULLY AND NEVER BECOME RESENTFUL OR AFFLICTED. If the Bodhisattva does not bow to him three times a day and request the Dharma from him as often, if instead he becomes upset and afflicted by the visitor, then he commits a violation of this Precept.

The mention of "three ounces of gold" implies that the Bodhisattva should exhaust his resources in providing for the visitor. It doesn't have to be taken literally. The "three times" refer to morning, afternoon, and evening. "Resentful" means that one gets irritated with the Dharma Master. "Afflicted" means that one fears the visiting Dharma Master will use up too many provisions.

HE SHOULD BE WILLING TO RELINQUISH HIS BODY FOR THE SAKE OF THE DHARMA AND NEVER BE LAX IN REQUESTING IT. HENCE, IF A BODHISATTVA FAILS TO ACT IN THIS MANNER, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. If a person really venerates the Dharma, then when a Dharma Master comes, one is willing to "relinquish his body for the sake of the Dharma."

This is a Precept of restraint and there are four conditions that together constitute a violation:

- 1) The visitor is a Dharma Master.
- 2) One knows he is a Dharma Master.
- 3) One does not request Dharma from him.
- 4) One remains silent and lets the time go by in vain.

During the Ming Dynasty, the Great Master, Chin Yueh, who fits the category of Dharma Master described in this Precept, went to visit a temple. It was morning, and he simply pushed aside the gate and entered the grounds. He went to where the morning meal was being prepared, but no one paid the least bit of attention to him. They didn't even invite him to sit down. So he started helping the person who was tending the fire. When the meal was ready, the host sat down at the table and began to help himself to the food. Great Master Chin Yueh also helped himself, but when he did so, the host exclaimed,

"What kind of person are you anyway? You haven't even been invited to eat, and you just dive right in!"

Great Master Chin Yueh replied, "What kind of person are you anyway? A guest comes, and you don't even offer them anything but just help yourself!" At which point, the host saw that the visitor was pretty sharp and so invited him to the meal and asked if there was anyone else with him, which in fact there was.

So if it hadn't been for the Dharma Master's quick reply, both he and his companion would have gone hungry, for their host hated to make offerings.

Here is another public record on the violation of this Precept. In Bei Ching, Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh, who was going to hold a transmission of Precepts at his own temple, went to a large temple in Shan Hsi to ask for aid, but the temple did not permit visitors. So Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh sat down outside the gate. The Manager then instructed two young novices to throw water at the visitor to drive him away. The two young monks were in a fix. They didn't really want to throw water on the Dharma Master, but on the other hand, they dared not disobey their teacher's instructions. So they did as they were told.

"Ah, in former lives I didn't establish conditions with these people," was Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh's reaction as he left.

But as things would have it, when it came time for the transmission of Precepts at Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh's temple, who do you suppose showed up but the two young novices. Realizing who they were, Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh instructed the Guest Prefect, "Those two young monks should be given special food and not eat with the rest of the assembly. They can eat every day with the Teachers of Department. But when the time comes to receive the Precepts, they will get them just like the rest." The fifty-three days passed, and the Precepts Platform was completed. Then, Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh called in the two young monks and asked, "Do you recognize me?"

"You look familiar," they replied.

"Do you remember the time when a visitor came to your temple and your Master told you to throw water on him? Wasn't that me?"

The young monks were thoroughly embarrassed. When they got back to their own temple, they related the incident to their teacher. "To have not even permitted Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh to stay here is truly a case of failure to invite High Sanghans to speak the Dharma. Even the King and High Officials are his disciples. Throughout China, if people go on a pilgrimage to Wu T'ai Mountain and on their way there fail to pay their respects to Dharma Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh, they consider their trip to have been in vain. How could we have treated such a High Sanghan in such a horrible way and not even let him stay the night?" At that point, their teacher began to weep. After that, he opened his doors to all monks. He was really moved by the magnanimous behavior of Dharma

Master Ch'ing Fwo Yeh. After all, he could have simply refused to administer the Precepts to the young monks and sent them back to their temple. But he used virtue to counteract their animosity. In that way, he influenced a change in the person who had wronged him.

SUTRA:

THE SEVENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS FAILURE TO LISTEN TO EXPLANATION OF THE SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES. AT ALL PLACES WHERE THE DHARMA, VINAYA, SUTRAS, OR MORAL CODES ARE LECTURED, THE NEWLY-STUDYING BODHISATTVA SHOULD TAKE A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE SUTRA TEXT OR MORAL CODES AND GO TO THE DHARMA MASTER'S PLACE, WHEREUPON HE SHOULD LISTEN TO, ACCEPT, AND INQUIRE ABOUT THE DHARMA. WHETHER BENEATH A TREE IN THE MOUNTAIN FORESTS OR WITHIN THE DWELLING OF THE SANGHA, THE BODHISATTVA SHOULD ATTEND AND LISTEN AT ALL PLACES WHERE THE DHARMA IS SPOKEN. IF HE FAILS TO GO TO SUCH A PLACE, ATTEND, LISTEN TO, AND ACCEPT AND INQUIRE ABOUT THE DHARMA, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE.

COMMENTARY:

THE SEVENTH MINOR PRECEPT PROHIBITS FAILURE TO LISTEN TO EXPLANATIONS OF THE SUTRAS AND MORAL CODES. AT ALL PLACES WHERE THE DHARMA, VINAYA, SUTRAS, OR MORAL CODES ARE LECTURED, THE NEWLY-STUDYING BODHISATTVA SHOULD TAKE A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE SUTRA TEXT OR MORAL CODE AND GO TO THE DHARMA MASTER'S PLACE, WHEREUPON HE SHOULD LISTEN TO, ACCEPT, AND INQUIRE ABOUT THE DHARMA. WHETHER BENEATH A TREE IN THE MOUNTAIN FORESTS OR WITHIN THE DWELLING OF THE SANGHA, THE BODHISATTVA SHOULD ATTEND AND LISTEN AT ALL PLACES WHERE THE DHARMA IS SPOKEN. IF HE FAILS TO GO TO SUCH A PLACE, ATTEND, LISTEN TO AND ACCEPT, AND INQUIRE ABOUT THE DHARMA, HE THEREBY VIOLATES THIS MINOR PRECEPT AND COMMITS A DEFILING OFFENSE. "All places" includes Sangha dwellings, as well as worldly places. Dharma means a "guiding rule." Vinaya means "wiping out." The Dharma refers to the Sutras, the Vinaya to the moral codes. "Wiping out" means wiping out evil and giving rise to good. The Vinaya and Sutras contain the Dharma which can be explained. The Sutras explain the Dharma and the Vinaya explains the moral codes.

This is a Precept of restraint. It is not a violation against the nature. There are four conditions which together constitute an offense:

- 1) The Dharma or Vinaya is being explained.
- 2) One knows that the Dharma and Vinaya are being explained.

- 3) One does not intend to go to listen.
- 4) One does not go to listen.

Exceptions would be if there is no explanation going on or if one does not understand the language being used to explain the texts. Or a person is so sick he cannot go. Or, perhaps one does not have the strength to go. One may also not attend if it is a text that one has heard explained many times and that one already has received and upholds--one thoroughly understands the meanings being explained. Under those circumstances it is excusable not to go. Otherwise it is not.