

Buddhist Precepts
a Guide for Western Buddhist
Practitioners

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Buddhist Precepts

a Guide for Western Buddhist
Lay Practitioners

Written by

Wonji Dharma

Third Edition



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Understanding the Chinese Vinaya



**An Examination into the sources
of Buddhist Lay Precepts:
Five Precepts, Ten Precepts, Sixteen Precepts and
the Forty-eight Bodhisattva Precepts**

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Dedication



This book is dedicated to all the Bodhisattvas who have endeavored to abandon their own self centered path in lieu of the aspiration to save this world from suffering.

Foreword



There is considerable underlying confusion for Western Zen students who begin to study the tremendous wealth of Asian knowledge that has been translated into English from China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan over the last seventy years. In most large bookstores there is a section reserved for books on Buddhism, or if the store is smaller it might be Eastern Philosophy, and on those shelves there will be found literally hundreds of titles from various sources and authors. A Zen aspirant browsing through the brightly bound covers may find an interesting book such as **The Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu**¹ on the shelf; however, if that Zen aspirant starts to leaf through the contents, he or she will discover that the author actually refers to the book's subject, Zen Master Joshu, as Zen Master Chao-chou within the contents of his book. The aspirant may then start leafing through another book, say **The Compass of Zen**², only to discover that Zen Master Joshu in the last book is referred to as Zen Master Joju in this book. The next text might be the **Book of Serenity—One Hundred Zen Dialogues**³ in which the aspirant will find more stories about the same teacher, only this time his name is Romanized as Zhàozhōu.

We now have only leafed through the contents of three books and are left with four Romanization's for one single Zen Master's name which are Joshu, Chao-chou, Joju and Zhàozhōu. If the aspirant then begins to read more books that refer to the hundreds of other Asian teachers the complexity of keeping all of this straight going from book to book can be at times overwhelming. The Japanese Teachers who came to the west were literally using the Japanese way of pronouncing Chinese logographs for a particular person, place or thing. Furthermore, the Korean Teachers who came to the West were using their Korean way of pronunciation. Although

originally not a problem because there were so few books on the subject when they arrived, the cultures that were created by the founding Asian teachers have yet to find a common English voice.

Joshu is the Japanese Romanization of the characters 趙州從諗. Joju is the Korean Romanization that was invented by the Kwan Um School of Zen⁴ and Zen Master Sūngsan⁵ (Seung Sahn); however, the student may also encounter different romanizations from other Korean sources. Chao-chou is the older Wade-Giles⁶ method for romanization of the Chinese logographs, while Zhào zhōu is the newer Pinyin method of romanization for the same logographs.

Prior to China opening its borders to the west in 1979 the principal form of Chinese Romanization was the Wade-Giles method, although the curious Zen aspirant will eventually come across even older works that might employ the Yale system in lieu of the other two aforementioned methods. The Pinyin⁷ Romanization method appeared when the People's Republic of China adopted its own system in 1979 and all official Chinese uses of Romanization now employ the Pinyin method; furthermore, this standard is becoming more popular as China's influence in the world increases.

Prior to 1979 the capital of China was popularly known as Peking; today the entire world refers to the capitol of China as Beijing. Another problem with the Wade-Giles versus Pinyin debate shows up when one visits a Chinese Restaurant. I have yet to find a Restaurant in the West that serves Beijing Duck; this unique dish is still referred to as Peking Duck at most Chinese restaurants. On the many trips that I have made to China each place that I visited utilized the Pinyin method for maps, signs, menus, newspapers, etc.

Yet, another determining factor for choosing a methodology of Romanization is the advent of new computer software programs. Microsoft Word 2003/2007 now has numerous language functions that will transliterate Romanized Pinyin into Unicode Chinese logographs as well

as almost every other language/alphabet in the world. Babelfish and Google have internet sites that will also make rough attempts at translating other web sites, paragraphs and words from one language to another. Following the advent of uni-code, along with its two byte segments, and the subsequent upgrade of the world's databases, the rendering of Chinese, Korean and Japanese logographs has become easier than ever.

The Korean government has tried to take the cue put forth by the Chinese by adopting an official Romanization methodology for Korean; however, major changes, additions and deletions have taken place over the last twenty five years. Furthermore, each of the officially sanctioned systems themselves have been totally replaced several times in that same existing time frame. There is conscientious debate about the proper use of western characters in the pronunciation of Hangul and many scholars still disagree with all of the methods put forth to date. We consulted several of the most renowned Western Scholars of Korean Buddhism and have chosen, as they have, to employ the McCune-Reishauer⁸ system to romanize Korean names. This does not follow the methods used by the Kwan Um School of Zen, of which we share the same root teacher; but their methodology doesn't conform to any system used by any other group in the world. Their Romanization system appears to have been invented and has evolved over time internally by members with no formal language training within the organization. It might also be noted that that the Jogye Order of Buddhism, which is the largest single Buddhist Order in Korea has recently adopted the current Korean Government's method of transliteration. The problem is that the method utilizes stringing multiple vowels together in an effort to emulate certain sounds that totally do not exist in the Western Latin languages.

Based upon all of this information, where does this leave us in this discussion? After lengthy debate with Zen Master

Robert Moore we have decided to utilize the Romanization of a person or place based upon the country of origin. Additionally, as Pinyin has begun to circumvent the use of the Wade–Giles and Yale methods we have decided to use Pinyin for Chinese Romanization. We hope that other authors and information databases will eventually follow this method making it easier on the beginning Students of Zen. A final note of the romanizations utilized within this book. Because of the ease of use of our new uni-code databases and fonts we have chosen to employ the use of diacritical marks, and we have also chosen to render common Sanskrit names, terms and places utilizing their technical forms. The reason is that the proper pronunciation of these words is not intuitively obvious to the unseasoned reader, so additionally we have included a pronunciation chart in the index section of this book. Lastly, I want to state that any mistakes or omissions made within this text are purely my own.

Editor
Paul Lynch, JDPSN
Golden Wind Zen Order
Long Beach, CA 2006

The History of Buddhist Precepts

The Buddhist Precepts



Taking refuge in the Three Jewels (*the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha*) is the initial step in formally becoming a Buddhist and following the precepts forms the foundation of all Buddhist paths. Buddhist practitioners throughout the world observe various levels of precepts, depending upon each individual's level of commitment to the path they have chosen. Consequently, the initial refuge in the Three Jewels signifies the starting point on the path of the eradication of suffering and the awakening of not just one's own self but all sentient beings. Taking precepts can be compared to military personnel adhering to the rules of military law or citizens of a particular country abiding by the common law of their society. The difference between the first two approaches and the Buddhist approach is that the military rules or the common laws are external restrictions whereas the Buddhist precepts spring forth from a practice of self-discipline which eventually can become self regulated.

Precepts are sometimes divided into lay precepts and monastic precepts, or Mahayana (*the Great Vehicle*) precepts and Theravadan (*the Way of the Elders*) precepts. The lay precepts of Theravadan practice usually include: the five precepts, the eight precepts and the ten precepts. The lay precepts in Mahayana practice include: the five precepts, the ten precepts, the sixteen precepts and the forty-eight bodhisattva precepts. This examination will only concern itself with the precepts taken by lay practitioners of Buddhism. Within this specific context, this exploration also endeavors to explain the various cannon's of thought, including the Theravadan approach, and the Mahayana approach as well as the derivate Mahayana practices of Zen and Vajrayana as well.

The First Five Precepts involve:

- Not to take life
- Not to steal
- Not to indulge in sexual misconduct
- Not to lie or be dishonest
- Not to consume intoxicants with the intent to produce heedlessness

According to Chapter thirty-three of the Samyuktagama Sutra: “*The perfection of the upasaka⁹ precepts is to stay away from taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and taking intoxicants to produce heedlessness.*” It is generally accepted that the Five Precepts are the essential ground of practice for all lay practitioners of Buddhism. There are distinctly different advanced precepts and even further specific precepts for a monastic practitioner; however, it is important to note that all of the precepts, in every form of Buddhist practice, all begin with the Five Precepts. This is why the first five precepts are also known as the “*Foundation Precepts.*”

Examination of the Five Precepts

Not killing literally means not harming or terminating another’s life. This precept incorporates not killing human beings, cockroaches, mice, fish, birds, worms, insects, and even mosquitoes as they are biting your skin. Buddhism and Buddhist Philosophy evolved into an anthropocentric religion, which means that all of theology is based upon a view of life through the eyes of a human being and is limited by the human’s inability to remove his or herself from the philosophy and their corresponding self centered view of life. So, this first precept is mainly directed towards not killing another human being, and it is an unforgivable or parajika (*major*) offense,

such that even repentance will not decrease the severity of the consequence of this violation. While killing a mosquito is still a duskṛta (*minor*) offense, it is considered less severe when compared to killing another human being.

However, wasting time or destroying resources is also considered a form of killing because Buddha taught that any kind of life can be viewed as an accumulation of time; therefore, transforming materials or raw materials requires the investment of time and effort, so wasting time squanders limited resources and thus can also be considered a form of killing.

The essential meaning of the first precept is to develop an open sense of compassion. Buddha is quoted in the Nirvana Sutra as saying: *“Eating meat roots out the seeds of our compassion and a meat eater’s every action can terrify other sentient beings from the meat eater’s body odor carrying the scent of meat.”* However, at this juncture it should be noted that the Nirvana Sutra is a text from the Mahayana canon, and as a collection the Mahayana texts seem to consistently urge the Buddhist practitioner towards a life of vegetarianism. Conversely, the Theravada canon has never expressly urged its followers towards a vegetarian lifestyle. Along these lines there are five distinct forms of animals which can not be consumed by the follower of the Theravada canon, and there are specific prohibitions to the method of an animal’s demise; generally a Theravada Buddhist doesn’t worry about vegetarianism as a major influence in their practice. Theravada monks and nuns still beg for every meal that they eat; however, in China, the monasteries became self sufficient by planting and harvesting crops which allowed the followers to choose the types of food they would and could consume.

The second precept refers to not stealing and means to not encroach upon another’s property or wealth. Simply put, taking something that does not belong to oneself (*either privately or publicly owned*) without the owner’s permission constitutes stealing. To rob someone in broad daylight (*under*

their nose as it were) is also a form of theft. Stealing is a violation of a basic and important precept. Taking a towel from a hotel or company stationery for personal use or borrowing an item and then forgetting to return it may not be a violation of the precept but is considered an impure act in Buddhism and inevitably, one will have to face the consequences of their accumulated karma (*cause and effect.*) Out of all the precepts, not to steal is one of the most difficult precepts to observe.

Not indulging in sexual misconduct means to be cognizant of any activities that might occur which violate a trust between two people or violate an individual's right to choose. Thus, actions such as rape, prostitution, bigamy, pedophilia, slave trade in human beings, or even obstructing the happiness of another's family life, are all considered violations of this precept. Sexual misconduct can lead to an unsettled society, and not considering the effects of one's personal actions because of momentary lust can upset the foundation of an otherwise fruitful and stable life. This precept is about considering the consequences of our actions beyond the short term thoughts of want and desire; however, once these urges can be controlled they lead to personal insights and fulfilling relationships which might not have been possible had the practitioner followed their raw desires and acted out in a moment of passion.

The precept about not lying, besides its obvious meaning of untruthfulness, also means not using frivolous words so as to slander, demean, or upset another human. Exaggeration is also considered a violation of this precept in Buddhism. Buddhist philosophers have generally divided this precept into major lies, minor lies, and lies of convenience.

- i. Major lies—individuals who claim to have achieved enlightenment or supernatural powers but in fact do not have these qualities have severely violated this precept. Another serious infringement of this precept is criticizing the four categories of Buddhist disciples.

- ii. Minor lies—individuals who bear false witness, or misrepresent and conceal the truth, or fabricate stories to protect themselves are all contained in the category of minor lies.
- iii. Lies of convenience—this is sometimes known as good intentioned misrepresentation. For example, a doctor may hide the truth from a patient who is diagnosed with terminal illness in order to protect the patient’s emotional well-being. All lies told for the benefit of other people are called lies of convenience.

The last precept about not consuming intoxicants to produce heedless behavior means that consumption of mood altering substances should not be misused or abused for the sake of an internal desire. For example, using marijuana, morphine, or amphetamines, if prescribed to alleviate other symptoms or suffering are OK; it is the abuse of these substances to escape a particular emotional or personal experience that is prohibited in Buddhism. Having a glass of wine with dinner is fine, as long as it is for the sole purpose of enjoying the taste, the company and experience of the situation. To use any substance as a replacement or a surrogate emotional suppressant or stimulant should be carefully monitored. This can also include innocuous things like chocolate or even ice cream.

An example of not paying attention to proper consumption was given by the Buddha in the Mahavibhasa Sutra; *“there was once a layman who, after drinking too much wine, realized that he was hungry and decided to steal a chicken from his neighbor’s farm which was a violation of the precept on stealing. After stealing the chicken he killed it for a good meal to go with his wine which was a violation of the precept on taking life. When his neighbor realized that one of her chickens was missing she started to look the chicken. She asked her neighbor if he had seen the missing chicken and the man lied to her by saying that he had not seen it which was a*

violation of the precept on lying. During this conversation he realized how beautiful his neighbor was and tried to convince her to have sexual relations with him which was a violation of the precept on sexual misconduct.” Drinking dulls one’s awareness of shame and conscience, and because of drinking, the precepts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying were all violated. Therefore, it is important to abstain from drinking to produce heedlessness. Buddhism is a religion that emphasizes wisdom and it is by not drinking that one remains sober, clear minded and wise.

The Meaning of the Five Precepts

Even though there are five separate precepts, their basic principle is to live in harmony and to not offend others. When one does not offend others and shows respect, that person is free. For example, not killing means to not cause harm to another; not stealing means one does not invade another’s property; no sexual misconduct means not offending another’s honor and integrity; not lying means not offending another’s good name; and not heedlessly consuming intoxicants means not offending one’s own intellect and consequently not offending another.

Sometimes new practitioners have a misconception that taking precepts are about tying oneself down, and they ask: “*Why observe precepts? It is only a burden!*” The fact is that if we look at others whose lives are problematic, most of them have most likely violated one or more of these five precepts. Murder, corruption, embezzlement, stealing, theft, robbery, kidnapping, abduction, rape, prostitution, seduction, bigamy, libel, defamation, breaking a promise, falsifying evidence, intimidation, drug trafficking, and excess consumption of intoxicants are all violations of the precepts. Therefore, we can say that those who observe the five precepts and those who have a clear understanding of these precepts will be among those who enjoy true freedom which is the real

meaning of precepts. Precepts ultimately mean freedom, and are not a burden.

The Roots of the Chinese Vinaya

Lu (律) is the transliterated Chinese word for the Sanskrit word Vinaya and means the code of monastic discipline, which is one leg of the Buddhist Tripitaka (*three baskets*.) Lutsung (律宗) is the name of the Vinaya Sect which developed about the same time as the Ch'an (Zen) sect developed in China. The sect is also known as the Nanshan Tsung Sect (南山宗) which was founded by Vinaya Master, Daoshuan (道宣) who lived in Zhongnan Shan (終南山).

Development

In the Dynasty of Disunities, there were many Chinese masters who were specialized in Vinaya and each of them made significant commentaries on the Four-category Vinaya, which was the generally accepted reference text at that time. Eventually, as Mahayana Buddhism became more popular during the Tang Dynasty, Lutsung was begun to be viewed as a Theravadan practice. However, a highly respected Mahayana master named Daoshuan became extremely interested in establishing a school which would study and implement the teachings within the Vinaya texts. At the same time he attempted to interpret the texts within the doctrines of Mahayana Buddhism, and was able to adopt the respective practices and fruition in cultivation.

The Vinaya is the common teaching for all Buddhists, whether they are Mahayana or Theravada, whether they are ordained or lay practitioners, they all follow the Vinaya. The Lu sect also provides the source of monastic disciplines for all the other sects in China. Thus, Lutsung is the basis for practice for all of the various orders of Chinese Buddhism which evolved within the historical development of Buddhism in that continent.

Principal Texts

The foundation of Lutsung is based upon the four-category Vinaya (四分律). The original text was compiled by Dharmagupta (曇無德) in Ceylon in 400 CE, and was translated into Chinese by Buddhayasas (佛陀耶舍) consisting of sixty fascicles. Though there were numerous other Vinaya texts circulated in China, such as Ten-category Vinaya (十誦律) by the Sarvastivada School known as the Samghika Vinaya (僧祇律) or the five-category Vinaya (五部律), they were less influential in the overall development of Chinese Buddhism.

Generally, the Vinaya covers the procedure for ordination, lists of major and minor offenses and punishments, rules of seniority, and rules observed by the monastic communities. In the four-category Vinaya, there were listed precepts for monks and nuns, the precepts of confessing one's offenses, the precepts taken in the residence in monastery, etc.

The Importance of Vinaya

Vinaya is one leg of the Tripitaka in Buddhist teaching. When Shakyamuni Buddha was about to enter Nirvana (i.e. to die), he told his disciple Ananda that the Sangha should take the precepts as their teacher following his death. The Buddha also reiterated the importance of taking precepts, which is the first step in the Three Studies, which are, upholding the precepts, meditation and wisdom. A follower who does not uphold the precepts may never attain Arhatship or Buddhahood.

The word for precept is written as Sila (尸羅) in Sanskrit, and can be loosely translated as 'cool'. Sila reflects that our bad karma is the main cause of our suffering and afflictions, similar to the hot fires burning in our minds. Sila is the right prescription to calm and cool it down. Another Sanskrit word Vinaya (毘尼, 毘奈耶), means '*to extinguish*' or '*manage kindly*'. The Vinaya is observed to manage the practitioner's

bad karma seriously and to ultimately extinguish the bad effect incurred.

There are other Sanskrit words used to describe the precepts, such as Upalaksana (優波羅讖) and Pratimoksa (波羅提木叉). The former bears the literal meaning as the rules, discipline and law, while the latter as the alternative to emancipate, or emancipate everywhere. Pratimoksa is sometimes referred to the two hundred and fifty commandments observed by an ordained Buddhist monk.

In short, the precepts or commandments adopted by Shakyamuni Buddha could be generally categorized into two groups, one was 'not-to-do' and the other was 'to-do'. By upholding 'not-to-do' precepts, one would stop doing evil, and by upholding 'to-do' precepts, one would do whatever is wholesome, kind and good.

Precepts for the Seven Assemblies

In China the status of the seven assemblies is determined by the precepts that each assembly upholds.

1. The Upasaka (優婆塞) or Upasika (優婆夷) are the male and female lay Buddhists who uphold the Five Precepts:
 1. not to kill
 2. not to steal
 3. not to commit adultery
 4. not to make false speech
 5. not to abuse intoxicants
2. The Sramanera (沙彌) or Sramaneraika (沙彌尼) are the male and female ordained Buddhists under the age of sixteen, who uphold the Ten Precepts:
 6. not to use adornments of flowers nor perfumes
 7. not to perform as an actor, juggler, acrobat, or go to watch and hear them
 8. not to sit on elevated, broad and large bed

9. not to eat except in regulated hours
10. not to possess money, gold, silver or precious things.
3. The Siksamana (式叉摩那) is a female ordained Buddhist between eighteen and twenty years of age, who upholds the Six Precepts, i.e. the five precepts, plus one not to eat except at regulated hours.
4. The Bhiksu (比丘) is the male ordained Buddhist, or monk who upholds the full two hundred and fifty precepts.
5. The Bhiksuni (比丘尼) is the female ordained Buddhist, or nun who upholds the full three hundred and forty eight precepts.

There are other supplementary precepts in China for Buddhists to observe and uphold, such as:

Mahayana Bodhisattva Precepts (大乘菩薩戒)

There are six major precepts and twenty–eight minor precepts as the enhanced ones for lay practitioners, as well as ten major precepts and forty–eight minor precepts, as stipulated in Brahm Net Sutra. Since the Brahm Net Sutra is regarded as a text for the Mahayana Dharmakaya Sect (*i.e. all things arise from Bhutatathata or the Dharma Realm, and all phenomena are of the same essence as the noumenon*), those precepts are also known as the Mahayana Dharmakaya precepts.

Yoga Bodhisattva Precepts (瑜伽菩薩戒)

These are supplementary precepts for followers who wish to practice in Bodhisattva's conduct, as stipulated in Yogacaryabhumi Shastra. The shastra is regarded as the core text for Dharmalaksana Sect (*i.e. all things of monad nature but differ in form, thus the noumenon will be reflected by specific characteristics, marks or criteria of all existence/ phenomena*),

those precepts are also called Mahayana Dharmalakṣaṇa precepts.

Eight and Fasting Precepts (八關齋戒)

Actually these are the first eight precepts of the ten precepts, plus a ninth precept regarding fasting, and are upheld by all seven assemblies for a certain period of time, even if it is just one day and night.

Intermediate and Differentiated Precepts

There are two types of precepts, one is called intermediate precepts, and the other is called differentiated precepts. Intermediate precepts (通戒) are also known as three cumulative pure precepts (三聚淨戒), which are three kinds of precepts leading us to the perfection in cultivating Buddhahood:

(1) precepts of rules and disciplines (攝律儀戒) – precepts that prevent us from doing evil, such as the five precepts, the ten precepts, etc,

(2) precepts of morality (攝善法戒) – precepts that encourage us to do good for oneself, and

(3) precepts of mercy and benevolence (攝眾生戒) – precepts that beneficial to other sentient beings, who are liberated from suffering and salvaged. The differentiated precepts (別戒) generally refer to the precepts observed and upheld by monks and nuns, i.e. full and perfect precepts.

Four Classifications of Precepts

There are four classifications of every precept:

1. Precept law (戒法) – all the precepts prescribed by Shakyamuni Buddha, e.g. not to kill, not to steal.
2. Precept dogma (戒體) – those ‘*not-to-do*’ precepts.
3. Precept behavior (戒行) – the precept dogma in accord with the conditions, which are upheld through the body, mouth and mind.
4. Precept form (戒相) – precepts upheld by the seven assemblies, such as the five precepts, the ten precepts, etc.

Four Different Stages in Cultivation

It is obvious that upholding the precepts is fundamental in studying Buddhism. By upholding precepts, one can meditate correctly. By meditation, one can gain wisdom, thus enlightenment. Therefore, upholding precepts, meditation and wisdom are known as three non-outflow studies in Buddhism. The Lu sect divided four different stages in cultivation of Buddhahood within the Vinaya:

1. The stage of vow and joy (願樂位)
It takes one asamkhyeya kalpa to achieve by practicing ten faith, ten dwelling, ten conduct, ten transference, etc.
2. The stage of visualization (見位)
It is equivalent to the first stage of Bodhisattva, in which the way or the truth is visualized.
3. The stage of cultivation (修位)
It is equivalent to the second to seventh stage of bodhisattva, in which the practitioner cultivates the way. It takes another asamkhyeya kalpa to achieve the above two stages.

4. The Stage of Eternity (究竟位)

It also takes one asamkhyeya kalpa to achieve. It is equivalent to the eighth and the tenth stage of bodhisattva.

The Lu Sect Influence on Mahayana Buddhism

As the real mark of all dharmas is finally realized in the last stage of cultivation through upholding the precepts, the teaching of the Lu sect is regarded as Mahayana. The founder of Lu Sect, Master Daoshuan, established three different systems of precepts for the three different schools in Buddhism: (1) precepts based on the matter dharma for the *'existence'* schools, (2) precepts based on non-matter-and-non-mind dharma for the *'emptiness'* schools, and (3) precepts based on mind dharma for the *'middle way'* schools. As there are specific precepts set for the benevolence and the salvation to other sentient beings in the three cumulative pure precepts, the Lu sect was eventually said to be Mahayana in China.

Excerpts from the Anguttara Nikaya
concerning the precepts for Lay Practitioners

Anguttara Nikaya



This is a collection of discourses from the Pali Cannon, which is known as the Anguttara Nikaya, and contains nine thousand five hundred and fifty–seven short sutras that are divided into eleven divisions known as nipatas. Each nipata is further divided into sub-groups called vaggas which usually contain ten sutras. The discourses were arranged in numeric order, with each nipata containing sutras with specific rules of dharma, beginning with one rule and moving up by units of one till there were eleven items of dharma in each sutra of the last nipata. This is the reason for the name Anguttara which means *increasing by one*. All Buddhist precepts and the entire Vinaya is based upon this sutra; although, the Chinese augmented the Vinaya with the Brahma Net Sutra in the fifth century CE. It is interesting to note that all precepts, with the exception of the Bodhisattva Precepts, come from the Theravadan Cannon and not the Mahayana collection.

Abhisanda Sutra—Rewards



Disciples, there are these eight rewards of merit, rewards of skillfulness, nourishments of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, and appealing, to welfare and happiness. Which eight?

There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Buddha for refuge. This is the first reward of merit, reward of skillfulness, nourishment of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, and appealing; to welfare and to happiness.

Furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Dharma for refuge. This is the second reward of merit; furthermore, the disciple of the noble ones has gone to the Sangha for refuge. This is the third reward of merit. Now, there are these five gifts, five great gifts—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are faultless by knowledgeable contemplatives and priests. Which five?

There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the first gift, the first great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to

suspicion, and is faultless by knowledgeable contemplatives and priests. And this is the fourth reward of merit...

Furthermore, abandoning taking what is not given (stealing), the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the second gift, the second great gift... and this is the fifth reward of merit...

Furthermore, abandoning illicit sex, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the third gift, the third great gift... and this is the sixth reward of merit...

Furthermore, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fourth gift, the fourth great gift... and this is the seventh reward of merit...

Furthermore, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of

beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is faultless by knowledgeable contemplatives and priests. And this is the eighth reward of merit, reward of skillfulness, nourishment of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, and appealing; to welfare and to happiness.

The Five Precepts pañca-sīla

These basic training rules are observed by all practicing Buddhist lay men and women. The precepts are often recited after reciting the formula for taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

The five precepts

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.

Five faultless gifts

There are these five gifts, five great gifts—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, and unadulterated from the beginning of time—that are not open to doubt, will never be open to doubt, and are free from all fault by knowledgeable contemplatives and priests of the dharma. To clarify these five gifts, I will now seek to explain their essence.

There is the case where a disciple of the dharma, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking any life. In doing so, the disciple nurtures freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to countless numbers of beings. In fostering freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, the practitioner gains a share in this limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the first gift, the first great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, and unadulterated from the beginning of time—that is not open to doubt, will never be open to uncertainty, and is faultless by knowledgeable contemplatives and priests of the dharma.

Furthermore, by abandoning the taking of what is not given (stealing), the disciple of the dharma abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, the disciple fosters freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In fostering freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, the practitioner gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the second great gift of freedom.

Furthermore, through abandoning illicit sex, the disciple of the dharma abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, the disciple nurtures freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In fostering freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, the practitioner gains a share in limitless freedom

from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the third great gift of freedom.

Furthermore, through the abandonment of lying, the disciple of the dharma abstains from lying. In doing so, the disciple nurtures freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In fostering freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, the practitioner gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fourth great gift of freedom.

Furthermore, through abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the dharma abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, the disciple nurtures freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In fostering freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, the practitioner gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, and unadulterated from the beginning of time—that is not open to doubt, will never be open to uncertainty, and is faultless by knowledgeable contemplatives and priests of the dharma. And this is the eighth reward of merit, reward of skillfulness, nourishment of happiness, celestial, resulting in happiness, leading to heaven, leading to what is desirable, pleasurable, and appealing; to welfare and to happiness.

Vipaka Sutra—Results



Disciples of the dharma, the taking of life—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from the taking of life is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to a short life span.

Disciples of the dharma, the act of taking that which is not given—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from stealing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the loss of one’s wealth.

Disciples of the dharma, improper sexual behavior—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from illicit sexual behavior is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to rivalry and revenge.

Disciples of the dharma, the telling falsehoods—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from telling falsehoods is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to being falsely accused.

Disciples of the dharma, divisive tale-bearing—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from divisive tale-bearing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the breaking of one’s friendships.

Disciples of the dharma, the harsh speech—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from harsh speech is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds.

Disciples of the dharma, frivolous chattering—when indulged in, developed, or pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from frivolous chattering is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to words that aren't worth taking to heart.

Disciples of the dharma, the drinking of fermented and distilled liquors—when indulged in, developed, and pursued—is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, or leads to the realm of the hungry ghosts. The slightest of all the results coming from drinking fermented and distilled liquors is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to mental derangement.

Uposatha Sutra—the lunar observance



Thus have I heard: at one time Shakyamuni Buddha was residing in Jetavana, at the monastery of Anathapindika, near Savatthi. At that time the Blessed One, having called all his disciples together, addressed them thus: “*Disciples!*” The disciples answered in assent: “*Teacher!*” (The disciples then prepared themselves for the following teaching.) Shakyamuni Buddha then gave the following teaching on the lunar observance.

The lunar observance is comprised of eight factors which the Buddhist disciple observes, the observation of which brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit. What is the lunar observance which, observed by the Buddhist disciples, brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit?

1. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up the intentional taking of life. The club and sword have been laid down. They have shame (of doing evil) and are compassionate towards all beings. All of you have given up the intentional taking of life, have put down all weapons, are possessed of shame (of doing evil) and are compassionate towards all beings. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the first factor of the lunar observance.
2. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up taking what has not been given. They take only what is given, are intent on taking only what is given. They are not thieves. Their behavior is spotless. All of you have given up the taking of what has not been given, are ones

who do not take what is not given, are intent on taking only what is given, and are not thieves. Your behavior is spotless. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the second factor of the lunar observance.

3. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up that which is an obstacle to the Brahma-faring. Their practice is like that of a Brahma. They are far from sexual intercourse, which is a practice of lay people. All of you have given up that which is an obstacle to the Brahma-faring and behave like a Brahma. Your behavior is far from sexual intercourse. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the third factor of the lunar observance.
4. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up the telling of lies. They utter only the truth and are intent on the truth. Their speech is firm and is composed of reason. Their speech does not waver from that which is a mainstay for the world. All of you have given up the telling of lies. You speak only the truth and are intent only on that which is true. Your speech is firm and with reason. Your speech does not waver from that which is a mainstay for the world. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the fourth factor of the lunar observance.
5. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up the taking of liquors and intoxicants, of that which intoxicates, causing carelessness. They are far from

intoxicants. All of you have given up the taking of liquors and intoxicants. You abstain from drink which causes carelessness. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the fifth factor of the lunar observance.

6. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, eat at one time only and do not partake of food in the evening. They abstain from food at the wrong time. All of you eat at one time only and do not partake of food in the evening. You abstain from food at the *wrong time*. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the sixth factor of the lunar observance.
7. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments and the watching of entertainments, which are stumbling blocks to that which is wholesome. Nor do they bedeck themselves with ornaments, flowers or perfume. All of you have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments and the watching of entertainments, which are stumbling blocks to that which is wholesome. You do not bedeck yourselves with ornaments, flowers or perfume. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the seventh factor of the lunar observance.
8. All Arhats, for as long as life lasts, have given up lying on large or high beds. They are content with low beds or bedding made of grass. All of you have given up

lying on large or high beds. You are content with low beds or beds made of grass. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arhats and the lunar observance will have been observed by you. This is the eighth factor of the lunar observance.

The lunar observance is comprised of these eight factors which the Buddhist disciple observes, and it is of great and glorious fruit and benefit. Thus Shakyamuni Buddha spoke on the lunar observance. The disciples were delighted and rejoiced at his words.

Visakhuposatha Sutra



discourse to Visakha on the lunar observance with the Eight Practices

Thus have I heard: at one time Shakyamuni Buddha was staying near Savatthi at the Eastern monastery in the mansion donated by Migara's mother. Then Visakha, Migara's mother, approached the Exalted One; having approached and performed her prostrations she sat down in a suitable place. When she was seated Shakyamuni Buddha spoke thus to Visakha.

Visakha, when the lunar observance undertaken with its eight component practices, is entered on, it is of great fruit, of great advantage, of great splendor, of great range. And how, Visakha, is the lunar observance undertaken with its eight component practices, entered on, is of great fruit, great advantage, great splendor and great range?

Here, Visakha, a noble disciple considers thus: For all their lives the Arhats dwell having abandoned killing living beings, refrain from killing living beings, they have laid down their staffs, laid down their weapons, they are conscientious, sympathetic, compassionate for the good of all living beings; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned killing living beings, refraining from killing living beings, I am one who has laid down my staff, laid down my weapon, I am conscientious, sympathetic, compassionate for the good of all living beings. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this first practice. For all their lives the Arhats dwell having abandoned taking what is not given, refrain from taking what is not given, they are takers of what is given, those who expect only what is given, themselves become clean without thieving; so today I dwell, for this night

and day, having abandoned taking what is not given, refraining from taking what is not given. I am a taker of what is given; one who expects only what is given, by myself become clean without thieving. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this second practice. For all their lives the Arhats dwell having abandoned unchaste conduct, they are of chaste conduct, living aloof, refrain from sex which is the way of common society; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned unchaste conduct, I am of chaste conduct, living aloof, refraining from sex which is the common way of society. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this third practice. For all their lives the Arhats dwell having abandoned false speech, refrain from false speech, they are speakers of truth, joiners of truth, firm-in-truth, grounded-on-truth, not speakers of lies to the world; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned false speech, refraining from false speech, a speaker of truth, a joiner of truth, firm-in-truth, grounded-on-truth, not a speaker of lies to the world. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this fourth practice. For all their lives the Arhats dwell having abandoned distilled and fermented intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness and refrain from them; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned distilled and fermented intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness, refraining from them. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this fifth practice. For all their lives the Arhats are one-mealers, refrain from eating outside the time, desisting at night, so today I am a one-mealer, refraining from eating outside the time, desisting at night. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this sixth practice. For all their lives the Arhats refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garments, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics; so today I refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing ornaments, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics. By this practice, following after the Arhats, the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this seventh practice. For all their lives the Arhats having abandoned high beds and large beds, refraining from high beds and large beds, they make use of a low sleeping place, a (hard) bed or a strewing of grass; so today I have abandoned high beds and large beds, refraining from high beds and large beds, I make use of a low sleeping place, a (hard) bed or a strewing of grass. By this practice, following after the Arhats the lunar observance will be entered on by me.

It is undertaken by this eighth practice. Thus indeed, Visakha, is the lunar observance entered on and undertaken with its eight component practices, of great fruit, of great advantage, of great splendor, of great range. *“How great a fruit? How great an advantage? How great a splendor? How great a range?”*

Just as though, Visakha, one might have power, dominion and kingship over sixteen great countries abounding in the seven treasures—that is to say, Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vansa, Kure, Pancala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboja, yet it is not worth a sixteenth part of the lunar observance undertaken with its eight practices. For what reason? Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

That which among men is fifty years, Visakha, is one night and day of the devas of the Four Great Kings, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the devas of the Four Great Kings is five hundred of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the lunar observance undertaken with its

eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the devas of the Four Great Kings—such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

That which among men is a hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the devas of the Thirty–three, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the devas of the Thirty–three is one thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the lunar observance undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the devas of the Thirty–three—such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

That which among men is two hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Yama devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Yama devas is two thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the lunar observance undertaken with the eight practices, at the break–up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Yama devas—such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

That which among men is four hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Tusita devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Tusita devas is four thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the lunar observance undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Tusita devas—such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

That which among men is eight hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Nimmanarati devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Nimmanarati devas is eight thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the lunar observance undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death may arise to fellowship with the Nimmanarati devas—such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

That which among men is sixteen hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas is sixteen thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the lunar observance undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Paranimmitavasavatti devas—such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

Kill no life, nor take what is not given, speak no lie, nor be an alcoholic, refrain from sex and unchaste conduct, at night do not eat out-of-time food, neither bear garlands nor indulge with perfume, and make your bed a mat upon the ground: this indeed is called the eight-part lunar observance taught by the Buddha gone to dukkha's end. The radiance of the sun and moon, both beautiful to see, follow on from each other, dispelling the darkness as they go through the heavens, illumining the sky and brightening the quarters and the treasure found between them: pearls and crystals and auspicious turquoises, gold nuggets and the gold called "*ore*," monetary gold with gold dust carried down—compared with the eight-part lunar observance, though they are enjoyed, are not a sixteenth part—as the shining of the moon in all the groups of

stars. Hence indeed the woman and the man who are virtuous enter on the lunar observance having eight parts and having made merits bringing forth happiness blameless they obtain heavenly abodes.

The Eight Precepts attha–sila

These training rules are observed by laypeople during periods of intensive meditation practice and during lunar observance days. The eight precepts are based on the five precepts, with the third precept extended to prohibit all sexual activity and an additional three precepts that are especially supportive to meditation practice.

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual activity.
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.
6. I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at the forbidden time (i.e., after noon).
7. I undertake the precept to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics.
8. I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.

The Ten Precepts dasa–sila

These training rules are observed by novice monks and nuns. They are derived from the Eight Precepts by splitting the

precept concerning entertainments into two parts and by adding one rule prohibiting the handling of money. A fully-ordained monk (bhiksu) observes the two hundred and twenty seven rules of the bhiksu Patimoksha; a fully ordained nun (Bhikshuni) would observe the three hundred and eleven rules of the Bhikshuni Patimoksha.

1. I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.
2. I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.
3. I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual activity.
4. I undertake the precept to refrain from incorrect speech.
5. I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.
6. I undertake the precept to refrain from eating at the forbidden time (i.e., after noon).
7. I undertake the precept to refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments.
8. I undertake the precept to refrain from wearing garlands, using perfumes, and beautifying the body with cosmetics.
9. I undertake the precept to refrain from lying on a high or luxurious sleeping place.
10. I undertake the precept to refrain from accepting gold and silver (money).

Brahmajala Sutra
Fanwang Jing

梵
網
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序

About the Dharma Net Sutra



The translation of The Sutra of Brahma's Net comes from the oldest version of this text extant and was translated by Kumārajīva 鳩摩 and titled the Fanwang jing, 梵網經 (Kor. Pōmmang gyōng) in the fifth century ACE. Kumārajīva was from a noble family of Kucha, and as a scholar—priest, he first studied the Theravada 小乘 teachings and later became a Mahayana 大乘 adherent, and a specialist in the Madhyamika 中觀派 doctrine of Nāgārjuna. He traveled to Changan, China in 402, and with the aid of numerous collaborators and assistants, became one of the most prolific translators of Buddhist texts in history, rendering some seventy two Sanskrit texts into Chinese. Among the most important of these are the Diamond Sutra 金剛經, Amitābha sutra, Lotus Sutra 法華經, Vimalakīrti nirde'sa sutra 維摩經, Mādhyamaka kārika and the Maha Prajñāpāramitā Śāstra. His translation was distinctive in a flowing smoothness that is the result of his prioritization on the conveyance of the meaning as opposed to precise literal rendering. Because of this, his renderings of seminal Mahayana texts have often remained more popular than later, more exact translations. The Sutra of Brahma's Net was translated from a Sanskrit text. A Tibetan translation is also extant, confirming the Indian origin of the Sutra. Master Kumārajīva's translation bureau was reportedly composed of some three thousand priests.

The Sutra of Brahma's Net is a two-fascicle sutra translated into Chinese in A.C.E. 406 by Kumārajīva of the Later Chin dynasty. According to the preface written by his disciple Sengchao, this text corresponds to the tenth chapter of a much longer Sanskrit original consisting of one hundred twenty fascicles comprising sixty-one chapters. The first fascicle expounds forty stages of Bodhisattva practice. The

second sets forth ten major and forty-eight minor precepts. This sutra was highly valued in China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan as a work detailing precepts for Bodhisattvas, and many commentaries were written on it.

Please note that the Mahayana Sutra of Brahma' Net, and the Bodhisattva precepts contained therein, is a different text from the sutra of the same name found in the Digha Nikāya of the Pali (Theravada) canon. These Bodhisattva precepts are traditionally taken by Mahayana priests and nuns a few days (or sometimes immediately) after they take their precepts of ordination as a Bhikṣu or Bhikṣuṇī. The Bodhisattva precepts are also given on these occasions to advanced lay practitioners. Although the Sutra of Brahma's Net can be high in tone and demanding of practitioners, readers should not be scared away or discouraged. They should not, however, expect to grasp the full significance of the injunctions without developing the bodhi-mind and engaging in serious practice.

The Śrāvaka precepts were established by the Buddha to correct problems as they occurred. For example, during the alms rounds, young priests would receive less food than older ones and so would sometimes go hungry. Therefore, the Buddha established the rule that donations should be pooled and shared equally among all priests. The Bodhisattva precepts, on the other hand, are based on eternal truths inherent in the self-nature (i.e., the precepts on generosity). Thus, while the Sravaka precepts are practical rules, the Bodhisattva precepts are independent of time and space, but part of the self-nature—the mind.

Preface to Brahma Net Sutra



In the ancient sutras, the story is told of a group of 500 seafaring merchants who, having reached a treasure trove of immense proportions opted to return home empty-handed. This feeling has at times been our own, as over the last few years, we have attended several precept-giving ceremonies—lay as well as Bodhisattva—and noticed a certain reluctance among the participants to take these precepts.

In later conversations, we realized that this feeling stemmed from two causes: lack of understanding of the precepts and fear of not being able to live up to them.

Although the second reason—the fear of breaking the precepts once received—is genuine, it is largely unwarranted. In the first place, according to many teachers, the lay and Bodhisattva precepts may be taken selectively, with the disciple himself choosing which to take and which to omit. Secondly, these fears are no different from those of a promising student who dreams of becoming a doctor yet refuses to register for medical school lest he fail. Still, even if he was to fail, he could always try again, and in any case, he would be exposed to medical knowledge useful to him in later life. Thus, he could only benefit and would have nothing to lose, nothing to fear.

The other reason for the participants' hesitation is more difficult to address. How can a person agree to abide by something he does not know, except perhaps out of overwhelming faith, a rare gift in today's world, to say the least! It is in part to address that need that we have undertaken the present translation of the Sutra of Brahma's Net, a major Mahayana text that explains the Bodhisattva precepts. These are the most altruistic and most exalted of all precepts—they are the precepts of the Mind itself. To keep these precepts is to transcend greed, anger and delusion and return to our self—

nature true mind—all wisdom and all compassion. The healthy, happy, innocent life that is our birthright will then materialize. This liberating message underlies the entire Sutra of Brahma's Net.

Here then is the full text of the Sutra of Brahma's Net. We hope that by studying it, perhaps a few readers may discover karmic affinities with the Bodhisattva precepts and resolve to accept them. Observing these precepts, they may develop, in time, samadhi and wisdom—this is the universal path of cultivation laid down by the Buddha. Failing that, perhaps the sutra can awaken in the reader the compassionate ideals of the Bodhisattvas, those true heirs of the dharma, as they go about their silent work of rescuing sentient beings and cultivating the bodhi mind—the resolve to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all.

A disciple of the Buddha should always teach the Bodhisattva precepts to save and protect sentient beings. On the day his father, mother, and siblings die, or on the anniversary of their death, he should invite dharma masters to explain the Bodhisattva sutras and precepts. This will generate merits and virtues and help the deceased either to achieve rebirth in the pure lands and see the Buddhas or to secure a good rebirth in the human or celestial realms.

Introduction



After the passing of the historical Buddha more than two thousand five hundred years ago, his teachings were codified in the Tripitaka, or *three baskets*: sutras, commentaries and precepts. The Sutra of Brahma's Net is part of both the basket of sutras and the basket of precepts, and contains the Bodhisattva precepts, the highest moral code in Mahayana. The essence of this code, indeed, the very thread that links all the seemingly disparate precepts, is compassion—compassion toward all sentient beings. This love is the great compassion that motivates the Bodhisattvas to lead all sentient beings to Buddhahood. It is compassion beyond all attachment and discrimination—the supreme compassion of Buddhism.

Transmission of the Sutra

According to tradition, around the time that Bodhidharma arrived in China, the Indian Yogacara Master Paramartha, who was residing in China, heard about the existence of a text that taught the moral code of the Bodhisattvas. He immediately returned to India and succeeded in acquiring the entire Sutra of Brahma's Net—all sixty-one chapters, comprised of 120 fascicles. However, as Paramartha was sailing toward China with his treasure, a sudden storm arose and his ship began to sink. Piece by piece, all baggage was thrown overboard, but to no avail. Finally, Paramartha had no choice but to let go of the Sutra of Brahma's Net—after, which the ship miraculously righted itself. Paramartha then realized the sad truth: the people of the Eastern Kingdom were not yet ready for the Sutra of Brahma's Net. The current version of the sutra dates from the fifth century. It was one of the major works of Kumārajīva a pre-eminent translator of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Chinese, who himself

intoned the Bodhisattva precepts every day as part of his cultivation. He recited the sutra aloud and with the assistance of his translation bureau, rendered it into Chinese. The Sutra of Brahma's Net as presented in this book is the second part of the tenth chapter of the Sanskrit text.

Characteristics of the Sutra

The Sutra of Brahma's Net belongs to the same period as the Avatamsaka Sutra, the first teaching period of the Buddha, immediately following his enlightenment. It is part of the Sudden teaching preached to Bodhisattvas and other advanced beings while He was in samadhi. T'ien-t'ai Patriarch Chih-i called the Brahma Net "*the capping text of the Avatamsaka Sutra.*"

Mind and mind-ground

The Sutra of Brahma's Net represents the highest moral code of the Mahayana canon. It is the highest because keeping the Bodhisattva precepts liberates the practitioner from greed, anger and delusion and returns him to his Self-Nature or True Mind-to Buddhahood.

That mind, which self-nature is non-discriminating, all accepting, all sustaining just like the ground, which receives and accepts all kinds of abuse and sustains all living beings. The Bodhisattva precepts are therefore called the precepts of the mind, or the precepts of the mind-ground.

Bodhisattva and Arhat

Who then are those disciples of the Buddha who take upon themselves the inconceivable task of rescuing and protecting all sentient beings? In the Mahayana tradition, they are called Bodhisattvas. The word immediately brings to mind the most exalted figures in Buddhism—Mañjuśrī,

Samantabhadra, and Avalokiteśvara. On a more mundane level, the word Bodhisattva designates any being that has developed the bodhi mind—the determination to achieve Buddhahood for the good of all sentient beings. The term thus applies to anyone who has taken the Bodhisattva precepts.

The essence of Bodhisattvahood is an unequivocal affirmation of the social, altruistic nature of humankind. Whatever enlightenment one gains, it must be shared by one's fellow-beings. The Bodhisattva is a disciple of "*inexhaustible vows*." Without these, the practitioner cannot possibly find their true self. To save the world, to bring all his fellow-beings up to the same level of thought and feeling where he himself is, and not to rest, not to enter into Nirvana until this is accomplished, however infinitely long and however inexpressively arduous the task may be.

In the Sutra of Brahma's Net, the compassionate figure of the Bodhisattva is contrasted with the "*followers of the Two Vehicles*" (Sravakas and Pratyeka-Buddhas), whose goal is to achieve personal liberation and Enlightenment.

Arhats are usually depicted as elderly shaven-headed priests, clad in Buddhist robes, holding a begging-bowl or a staff; they stand stiffly, with compressed lips, and their attitude seems not altogether free from strain. The Bodhisattvas, by way of contrast, are all beautiful young princes. Gem-studded tiaras sparkle on their brows, while their nobly proportioned limbs are clad in light garments of colored silk. They wear gold bracelets and strings of jewels, and round their necks hang garlands of fragrant flowers. Their expression is smiling, their poses graceful and easy. These splendors symbolize their status as heirs of the Buddha, the King of the Dharma, and the untold spiritual riches to which they will one day succeed.

The Precepts

In Buddhism, all precepts are vows of moral conduct taken by the laity as well as the ordained practitioners and are grouped into two major categories: the Śrāvaka precepts of lay practitioners, priests and nuns; and the Bodhisattva precepts, which is the exalted code above the Śrāvaka precepts. All these precepts are derived from three root precepts that form the basis of all Buddhist practice: do not what is evil, do what is good and be of benefit to all sentient beings.

The Śrāvaka precepts center on the first root precept, “do not what is evil.” The Bodhisattva precepts, by contrast, cover all three root precepts, with the emphasis on the third, “be of benefit to all sentient beings.” To take the Bodhisattva precepts, therefore, is to develop and nurture the bodhi mind—the determination to attain Buddhahood for the good of all.

If the Sutra of Brahma’s Net time and again passionately assails the teachings and practices of the Two Vehicles, it is because the vehicles of the Sravakas and the Pratyeka-Buddhas are conceived as self-centered, focused on personal Enlightenment and not leading to Buddhahood. In the sutra such views are considered limited, biased and unwholesome—unworthy of the Bodhisattvas. In disparaging their goal, the Buddha intended to wake them up and open their minds to the supreme goal of Buddhahood.

Legacy of the Sutra

Over a century ago, in his French translation and extensive commentary, the Dutch clergyman Rev. J. J. M. de Groot concluded that the Sutra of Brahma’s Net had played a pivotal role in shaping every aspect of traditional monastic life as well as Buddhist lay practice throughout China. Because Chinese monastic rules and lay practice spread into its surrounding countries, this is also true of Korea and Japan.

The teaching of the Sutra of the Brahma Net is the canon against which the keeping and commentaries of all the vinaya have been measured since the 8th century the Tendai

and many other schools insist that its full observance is necessary.

Among the many legacies of the sutra, the most noteworthy are: the practice of vegetarianism; the compassionate duty to rescue sentient beings in danger and guide them to enlightenment; and perhaps most importantly, the concept of compassion toward our parents throughout the endless kalpas—toward all sentient beings.

A disciple of the Buddha must connect to their own mind-ground of compassion and cultivate the practice of liberating all sentient beings.

It is no wonder, then, that the Sutra of Brahma's Net has long been a favorite among Mahayana Buddhists in Asia, who see in the Bodhisattva precepts a natural complement to their aspiration to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

The Bodhisattva Precepts Ceremony



Incense Gatha

The incense has been lit and placed
in the incense burner, its fragrance
Permeates the entire Dharma realm;
My mind is filled with sincerity and respect;
May the Buddhas compassionately be my witnesses.
Homage to Vairocana Buddha,
Lord of the Brahma Net.

Upon Opening the Sutra

The Dharma incomparably profound and exquisite Is rarely met with, even in hundreds of thousands of millions of eons I am now able to see, listen, accept and hold it; I vow to understand the true meaning of the Tathāgatas' wonderful teachings.

I. Homage to our Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha.

*Assembly of precept-holders, Please listen attentively!
I take refuge in Vairocana Buddha
I take refuge in the Diamond Buddhas
of the Ten Directions
I bow to the Bodhisattva Maitreya,
who will descend to earth and become a Buddha.
I shall now recite the Three Root Precepts
All Bodhisattvas should pay heed.
The precepts are a light shining brightly
Dispelling the darkness of the night.
The precepts are a precious mirror
Clearly reflecting one and all.
The precepts are a wish-fulfilling gem ⁽²⁾*

*Showering treasures upon the destitute.
To escape suffering and attain Buddhahood swiftly
These precepts are the supreme way.
Therefore, Bodhisattvas
Should keep them steadfastly.*

II. Most Virtuous Ones!

It is now time for introspection and dedication of our precepts. Old age and death weigh upon us. The Dharma will soon disappear. Most Virtuous Ones! To attain enlightenment, practice diligently and single-mindedly. By practicing diligently and single-mindedly, all the Buddhas attain anuttarā samyak sambodhi—not to mention other virtues.

Seek the dharma diligently while young and healthy. How can you fail to seek the way and, unguarded, let old age overtake you? What pleasures are you still awaiting? The day is done. Life dwindles with it. For fish stranded in shallow water, what joy is there?

III. Question: Is the sangha assembled?
(by the precepts teacher).

Answer: Yes, they are.
(by the head dharma teacher).

Question: Is the sangha united and harmonious?

Answer: Yes, they are united and harmonious.

Question: Why has the sangha gathered?

Answer: To recite the Bodhisattva precepts.

Question: Have those who have not taken the precepts and those who are not qualified left this assembly?

Answer: In this assembly, there is no one who has not taken the precepts, and no one who is not qualified. (If there are, they should be asked to leave and the head dharma teacher should say: *“Those who have not received the precepts and those who are not qualified have left.”*)

Question: How many are there of pure mind who wish to attend but cannot and have asked others to represent them?

Answer: In this assembly, there is no one of pure mind who wishes to attend but cannot and is represented by another (or, if there is, the representative should step forward to state his name and that of the absent priest and confirm that the absent priest is pure and would have wished to be in attendance.)

IV. Most Virtuous Ones! Join your palms together in hapchang and listen attentively! I am now about to recite the preamble to the great precepts of the Buddhas. Most Virtuous Ones! Be silent and attentive. In this assembly, those who are aware that they have transgressed should repent. With repentance, peace of mind is restored. Without repentance, your transgressions will become heavier. Those who have not transgressed may remain silent. By your silence, I know that you have kept the precepts.

Most Virtuous Ones! Listen attentively: In this dharma-ending age following the demise of the Buddha, we should reverently keep the Pratimokṣa. The Pratimokṣa is none other than these precepts. Those who keep these precepts are like wanderers in the dark stumbling upon a light, like the destitute coming upon a treasure, like the sick finding a cure, like prisoners set free, like wanderers

discovering the way home. Let it be understood that the precepts are a worthy teacher to us all, as though the Buddha were still here among us.

If we do not fear transgressions, it is difficult to develop a wholesome mind. Therefore, the sutras contain this teaching: Do not regard a minor misdeed as inconsequential. In time, drops of water may fill a large vessel. Offenses committed in a moment, may result in eons of suffering in the hells. Once the human state is lost, it may not be regained for myriads of lifetimes.

Youth is like a galloping horse. Our life is more fleeting than the waters of a mountain stream. Today we are alive; tomorrow, who knows? Let each of us practice diligently and single-mindedly. Do not be lax; guard against laziness. Do not indulge in rest and sleep. During the night, single-mindedly recite the Buddha's name and meditate. You should never while away the time, causing deep regret in the future.

Members of the assembly! Keep these precepts single-mindedly and respectfully; study them and cultivate in accordance with the Dharma.

Most Virtuous Ones! Today is the fifteenth (or fourteenth) day of the month; the moon is full (or is not full). We are holding the Uposatha service, reciting the Bodhisattva precepts. Members of the assembly should listen attentively.

Whoever has transgressed, confess now. Otherwise, remain silent. By your silence, I shall know that this assembly is pure and may recite the precepts.

Now that I have finished the preamble to the Bodhisattva precepts, I ask you once more, members of the assembly, are you pure? (three times)

Members of the assembly, by your silence I know that you are pure. This is something of which you should all be aware.

Homage to the Brahma Net Assembly of Bodhisattvas
and Buddhas (three times).

Bodhisattva Mind–Ground



Vairocana Buddha¹⁰

At that time, Vairocana Buddha began speaking in general about the mind–ground for the benefit of the Great Assembly. What he said represents but an infinitesimal part, the tip of a hair, of His innumerable teachings—as numerous as the grains of sand in the river Ganges.

He concluded: *“The mind–ground¹¹ has been explained, is being explained and will be explained by all the Buddhas—past, present, and future. It is also the dharma door (cultivation method) that all the Bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future have studied, are studying and will study.”*

“I have cultivated this mind–ground dharma door for hundreds of eons. My name is Vairocana. I request all Buddhas to transmit my words to all sentient beings, so as to open this path of cultivation to all.”

At that time, from his Lion’s Throne in the Lotus Treasury World,¹² Vairocana Buddha emitted rays of light. A voice among the rays is heard telling the Buddhas seated on thousands of lotus petals, *“You should practice and uphold the mind–ground dharma door and transmit it to the innumerable Shakyamuni Buddhas,¹³ one after another, as well as to all sentient beings. Everyone should uphold, read, recite, and single–mindedly put its teachings into practice.”*

After receiving the dharma–door of the mind–ground, the Buddhas seated atop the thousands of lotus flowers along with the innumerable Shakyamuni Buddhas all arose from their Lion seats, their bodies emitting innumerable rays of light. In each of these rays appeared innumerable Buddhas who simultaneously made offerings of green, yellow, red and white celestial flowers to Vairocana Buddha. They then slowly took their leave.

The Buddhas then disappeared from the Lotus Treasury World, entered the Essence–Nature Empty Space Floral Brilliance Samadhi and returned to their former places under the Bodhi–tree in this world of Jambudvipa. They then arose from their samadhi, sat on their Diamond Thrones in Jambudvipa¹⁴ and the Heaven of the Four Kings, and preached the Dharma of the “*Ten Oceans of Worlds.*”

Thereupon, they ascended to Lord Shakya’s palace and expounded the “*Ten Dwellings,*” proceeded to the Suyama Heaven and taught the “*Ten Practices,*” proceeded further to the Fourth Heaven and taught the “*Ten Dedications,*” proceeded further to the Transformation of Bliss Heaven and taught the “*Ten Dhyana Samadhi,*” proceeded further to the Heaven of Comfort From Others’ Emanations and taught the “*Ten Grounds,*” proceeded further to the First Dhyana Heaven and taught the “*Ten Vajra*¹⁵ *Stages,*” proceeded further to the Second Dhyana Heaven and taught the “*Ten Patiences,*” and proceeded further to the Third Dhyana Heaven and taught the “*Ten Vows.*” Finally, in the Fourth Dhyana Heaven, at Lord Brahma’s Palace, they taught the “*mind–ground Dharma–Door*” chapter, which Vairocana Buddha, in the numberless kalpas of the past, expounded in the Lotus Treasury World.

All the other innumerable transformation Shakyamuni Buddhas did likewise in their respective worlds as the chapter “*Auspicious Kalpa*” has explained.

Sakyamuni Buddha



At that time, Sakyamuni Buddha, after first appearing in the Lotus Treasury World, proceeded to the east and appeared in the Heavenly King's palace to teach the "*Demon Transforming Sutra*." He then descended to Jambudvīpa to be born in Kapilavastu—his name being Siddhartha and his father's name Suddhodana. His mother was Queen Maya. He achieved enlightenment at the age of thirty, after seven years of cultivation, under the name of Shakyamuni Buddha.¹⁶

The Buddha spoke in ten assemblies from the Diamond Seat at Bodhgaya to the palace of Brahma. At that time, he contemplated the wonderful jewel net¹⁷ hung in Lord Brahma's palace and preached the Sutra of Brahma's Net for the Great Assembly.

He said: "*The innumerable worlds in the cosmos are like the eyes of the net. Each and every world is different, its variety infinite. So too are the dharma doors (methods of cultivation) taught by the Buddhas.*"

"I have come to this world eight thousand times.¹⁸ Based in this saha world, seated upon the Jeweled Diamond Seat in Bodhgaya and all the way up to the palace of the Brahma King, I have spoken in general about the mind-ground dharma door for the benefit of the great multitude."

"Thereafter, I descended from the Brahma King's palace to Jambudvīpa, the Human World. I have preached the diamond illuminated jeweled precepts (the Bodhisattva precepts) from beneath the bodhi-tree for the sake of all sentient beings on earth, however dull and ignorant they may be. These precepts were customarily recited by Vairocana Buddha when he first developed the bodhi mind¹⁹ in the causal stages. They are precisely the original source of all Buddhas and all Bodhisattvas as well as the seed of the Buddha Nature.²⁰"

“All sentient beings possess this Buddha Nature. All with consciousness, form, and mind are encompassed by the precepts of the Buddha Nature. Sentient beings possess the correct cause of the Buddha Nature and therefore they will assuredly attain the ever-present dharma body.”

“For this reason, the ten Pratimoksa²¹ (Bodhisattva) precepts came into being in this world. These precepts belong to the true dharma. They are received and upheld in utmost reverence by all sentient beings of the three periods of time—past, present and future.”

“Once again, I shall preach for the Great Assembly the chapter on the inexhaustible precept treasury. These are the precepts of all sentient beings, the source of the pure self-nature.”

*Now, I, Vairocana Buddha
Am sitting atop a lotus pedestal;
Upon the thousand flowers surrounding me
Are a thousand Shakyamuni Buddhas.
Each flower supports a hundred million worlds;
In each world a Shakyamuni Buddha appears.
All are seated beneath a bodhi-tree,
All simultaneously attain Buddhahood.
All these innumerable Buddhas
Have Vairocana as their original body.
These countless Shakyamuni Buddhas
All bring followers along—as numerous as
motes of dust.
They all proceed to my lotus pedestal
To listen to the Buddha’s precepts.
I now preach the dharma, this exquisite nectar.
Afterward, the countless Buddhas return to
their respective worlds
And, under a bodhi-tree, proclaim these
major and minor precepts
Of Vairocana, the original Buddha.*

*The precepts are like the radiant sun and moon,
Like a shining necklace of gems,
Bodhisattvas as numerous as motes of dust
Uphold them and attain Buddhahood.
These precepts are recited by Vairocana,
These precepts I recite as well.
You novice Bodhisattvas
Should reverently accept and uphold them.
And once you have done so,
Transmit and teach them to sentient beings.²²
Now listen attentively as I recite*

The Bodhisattva Pratimoksa—the source of all precepts in the Buddha dharma.

*All of you in the Great Assembly should firmly believe
That you are the Buddhas of the future,
While I am a Buddha already accomplished.
If you should have such faith at all times,
Then this precept code is fulfilled.²³
All beings with resolve
Should accept and uphold the Buddha's precepts.
Sentient beings on receiving them
Join forthwith the ranks of Buddhas.
They are in essence equal to the Buddhas,
They are the true offspring of the Buddhas.
Therefore, great assembly,
Listen with utmost reverence
As I proclaim the Bodhisattva moral code.*

The Buddha Reciting the Bodhisattva Precepts



At that time, when Shakyamuni Buddha first attained supreme enlightenment under the bodhi tree, he explained the Bodhisattva precepts. The Buddha taught devotion toward one's parents,²⁴ elder masters and the Triple Jewel.²⁵ Devotion and obedience, he said, are the ultimate path.²⁶ Devotion is called the precepts—and it means restraint and cessation.²⁷

The Buddha then emitted limitless lights from his mouth. Thereupon, the whole great assembly, consisting of innumerable Bodhisattvas, the gods of the eighteen Brahma heavens, the gods of the six desire heavens, and the rulers of the sixteen great kingdoms all joined their palms and listened single-mindedly to the Buddha recite the Mahayana precepts.

The Buddha then said to the Bodhisattvas, *“Twice a month I recite the precepts observed by all Buddhas. All Bodhisattvas, from those who have just developed the bodhi mind to the Bodhisattvas of the ten dwellings, the ten practices, the ten dedications, and the ten grounds also recite them. Therefore, this precept-light shines forth from my mouth. It does not arise without a cause. This light is neither blue, yellow, red, white, nor black. It is neither form, nor thought. It is neither existent nor nonexistent, neither cause nor effect.²⁸ This precept-light is precisely the original source of all Buddhas and all members of this great assembly. Therefore, all you disciples of the Buddha should receive and observe, read, recite and study these precepts with utmost attention.”*

“Disciples of the Buddha, listen attentively! Whoever can understand and accept a dharma master's words of transmission can receive the Bodhisattva precepts and be called foremost in purity. This is true whether that person is a king, a prince, an official, a priest, a nun, or a god of the eighteen Brahma heavens, a god of the six desire heavens, or a human, a eunuch, a libertine, a prostitute, a slave, or a

member of the Eight Divisions of Divinities, a Vajra spirit, an animal, or even a transformation-being.²⁹“

The Ten Major Precepts



The Buddhas said to his disciples, *“There are ten major Bodhisattva precepts. If one receives the precepts but fails to recite them, he is not a Bodhisattva, nor is he a seed of Buddhahood. I, too, recite these precepts.”*

“All Bodhisattvas have studied them in the past, will study in the future, and are studying them now. I have explained the main characteristics of the Bodhisattva precepts. You should study and observe them with all your heart.”

The Buddha continued:

1. I vow to abstain from taking any life

A disciple of the Buddha shall not kill,³⁰ encourage others to kill, kill by expedient means, praise killing, rejoice at witnessing killing, or kill through incantation or deviant mantras. The disciple must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of killing, and shall not intentionally kill any living creature.

As a Buddha’s disciple, they should nurture a mind of compassion and devotion, always devising expedient means³¹ to rescue and protect all beings. If instead, the disciple fails to restrain themselves and kills a sentient being without mercy, then they commit a Parajika³² offense requiring repentance.

2. I vow to abstain from taking things not given.

A disciple of the Buddha must not steal³³ or encourage others to steal, steal by expedient means,³⁴ and steal by means of incantation or deviant mantras. They should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stealing. No valuables or possessions, even those belonging to ghosts and spirits or thieves and robbers, be they as small as a needle or blade of grass, may be stolen.

As a Buddha's disciple, the disciple ought to have a mind of mercy, compassion, and devotion—always helping people earn merits and achieve happiness. If instead, they steal the possessions of others, they are committing a major offense requiring repentance.

3. I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust.

A disciple of the Buddha must not engage in licentious acts or encourage others to do so. As a lay practitioner or an ordained practitioner they should not have sexual relations with any person—be they a human, animal, deity or spirit—nor create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of such misconduct. Indeed, no disciples of Buddha must engage in improper sexual conduct with anyone.

A Buddha's disciple ought to have a mind of devotion—rescuing all sentient beings and instructing them in the dharma of purity and chastity. If instead, they lack compassion and encourage others to engage in sexual relations promiscuously, including with animals and even their mothers, daughters, sisters, or other close relatives, they commit a major offense requiring repentance.³⁵

4. I vow to abstain from lying and false speech

A disciple of the Buddha must not use false words and speech, or encourage others to lie or lie by expedient means. They should not involve themselves in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of lying, saying that they have seen what they have not seen or stating the opposite. The Buddhist disciple should no lie implicitly through physical or mental means.³⁶

As a Buddha's disciple, the disciple ought to maintain right speech and right views always, leading all others to maintain them as well. If instead, the disciple causes wrong speech, wrong views or evil karma in others, they commit a major offense requiring repentance.

5. I vow not to sell intoxicating substances

A disciple of the Buddha must not trade in intoxicating substances³⁷ or encourage others to do so. They should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of selling any intoxicant whatsoever, for intoxicants are the causes and conditions of all kinds of offenses.

As a Buddha's disciple, they should help all sentient beings achieve clear wisdom. If instead, the disciple causes them to have upside-down, topsy-turvy thinking, and commits a major offense requiring repentance.

6. I vow not to broadcast the faults of the assembly

A disciple of the Buddha must not broadcast the misdeeds or infractions of Bodhisattva clerics or Bodhisattva laypersons, or of bhiksus and bhiksunis—nor encourage others to do so. They must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of discussing the offenses of the assembly.

As a Buddha's disciple, whenever they hear evil persons, externalists³⁸ or followers of the two vehicles³⁹ speak of practices contrary to the Dharma or contrary to the precepts within the Buddhist community; the disciple should instruct them with a compassionate mind and lead them to develop wholesome faith in the Mahayana.⁴⁰

If instead, they discuss the faults and misdeeds that occur within the assembly, they are committing a major offense requiring repentance.

7. I vow not to praise myself while disparaging others

A disciple of the Buddha shall not praise him or herself nor speak ill of others,⁴¹ nor encourage others to do so. They must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of personal praise and disparaging others.

As a disciple of the Buddha, they should be willing to stand in for all sentient beings and endure humiliation and slander—accepting blame and letting sentient beings have all the glory. If instead, the disciple displays personal virtues and

conceals the good points of others, thus causing them to suffer slander, they commit a major offense requiring repentance.

8. I vow not to be covetous and to be generous

A disciple of the Buddha must not be stingy or encourage others to be stingy. They should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stinginess. As a Bodhisattva, whenever a destitute person comes for help, the disciple should give that person what is needed. If instead, out of anger and resentment,⁴² they deny all assistance—refusing to help with even a penny, a needle, a blade of grass, even a single sentence or verse or a phrase of Dharma, but instead scolds and abuses that person—they have committed a major offense requiring repentance.

9. I vow not to give way to anger and to be harmonious

A disciple of the Buddha shall not harbor anger or encourage others to be angry. The Bodhisattva should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of anger.⁴³

As a disciple of the Buddha, they should be compassionate and devoted, helping all sentient beings develop the good roots of non-contention. If instead, the disciple insults and abuses sentient beings, or even transformation beings such as deities and spirits, with harsh words, hitting them with his fists or feet, or attacking them with a knife or club—or harbors grudges even when the victim confesses their mistakes and humbly seeks forgiveness in a soft, conciliatory voice—the disciple commits a major offense requiring repentance.

10. I vow not to slander the Triple Jewel (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha)

A Buddha's disciple shall not himself speak ill of the Triple Jewel or encourage others to do so. They must not create the causes, conditions, methods or karma of slander. If a disciple hears but a single word of slander against the Buddha

from externalists or evil beings, the disciple experiences a pain similar to that of three hundred spears piercing their heart. How then could they possibly slander the Triple Jewel themselves?

Hence, if a disciple lacks faith and devotion towards the Triple Jewel, and even assists evil persons or those of aberrant views to slander the Triple Jewel, they commit a major offense requiring repentance.⁴⁴

Conclusion: The Ten Major Precepts

As a disciple of the Buddha, you should study these ten parajika precepts and not break any one of them in even the slightest way—much less break all of them! Anyone guilty of doing so cannot develop the bodhi–mind in this current life and will lose whatever high position they may have attained, be it that of an emperor, Wheel–Turning King,⁴⁵ Bhiksu, Bhiksuni—as well as whatever level of Bodhisattva–hood they may have reached, whether the ten dwellings, the ten practices, the ten dedications, the ten grounds—and all the fruits of the eternal Buddha Nature. The disciple will lose all of those levels of attainment and descend into the three evil realms,⁴⁶ unable to hear the words “*parents*” or Triple Jewel for numberless kalpas! Therefore, Buddha’s disciples should avoid breaking any one of these major precepts.⁴⁷ All of you Bodhisattvas should study and observe the ten precepts, which have been observed, are being observed, and will be observed by all Bodhisattvas. They were explained in detail in the chapter, “*The Eighty Thousand Rules of Conduct.*”⁴⁸

The Forty–eight Secondary Precepts



Then the Buddha told the Bodhisattvas, “*Now that I have explained the Ten Major Precepts, I will speak about the forty–eight secondary precepts.*”

1. I vow to respect my teachers and friends in the Dharma

A disciple of the Buddha who is destined to become an emperor, a Wheel–Turning Ruler, or high official should first receive the Bodhisattva precepts. They will then be under the protection of all guardian deities and spirits, and the Buddhas will be pleased.⁴⁹

Once they have received the precepts, the disciple should develop a mind of devotion and respect. Whenever meeting an elder master, a priest, or a fellow cultivator of like views and like conduct, they should rise and greet the visitor with respect. The disciple must then respectfully make offerings to the guest–priests, in accord with the dharma;⁵⁰ and should be willing to pledge themselves, their family, as well as their kingdom, cities, jewels and other possessions.

If instead, the disciple should develop conceit or arrogance, delusion or anger, refusing to rise, greet guests, and make offerings to them respectfully, in accordance with the dharma, they have committed a secondary offense.

2. I vow to abstain from consuming intoxicating substances

A disciple of the Buddha should not intentionally consume intoxicating substances, as they are the source of countless offenses. If they even offer a single glass of wine to another person, the retribution will be to have no hands for five hundred lifetimes.⁵¹ How could the disciple then consume intoxicating substances themselves! Indeed, a Bodhisattva should not encourage any person or any other sentient being to consume intoxicating substances; much less take any

intoxicating substances themselves.⁵² A disciple should not partake in any intoxicating substances whatsoever. If instead, the disciple deliberately does so or encourages others to do so; they are committing a secondary offense.

3. I vow to abstain from eating meat

A disciple of the Buddha must not deliberately eat meat. They should not eat the flesh of any sentient being. The meat-eater forfeits the seed of great compassion, severs the seed of the Buddha nature and causes animals and transcendental beings to avoid them. Those who do so are guilty of countless offenses. Therefore, Bodhisattvas should not eat the flesh of any sentient beings whatsoever. If instead, they deliberately eat meat, the Bodhisattva commits a secondary offense.⁵³

4. I vow to abstain from consuming the five pungent herbs

A disciple of the Buddha should not eat the five pungent herbs—garlic, chives, leeks, onions, and asafoetida.⁵⁴ This is so even if they are added as flavoring to other main dishes.⁵⁵ Hence, if they deliberately do so, the disciple commits a secondary offense.

5. I vow to urge followers who have transgressed to repent their transgressions⁵⁶

If a disciple of the Buddha should see any being violate the five precepts, the eight precepts, the ten precepts, other prohibitions, or commit any of the seven principal prohibitions or any offense which leads to the eight adversities⁵⁷—any violations of the precepts whatever—they should counsel the offender to repent and reform.

Hence, if a Bodhisattva does not do so and furthermore continues to live together in the assembly with the offender, share in the offerings of the laity, participate in the same Uposatha⁵⁸ ceremony and recite the precepts—while failing to bring up that person's offense, enjoining them to repent—the disciple commits a secondary offense.

6. I vow to request the Dharma and make offerings to visiting sangha members

If an Elder Master, a Mahayana priest or fellow cultivator of like views and practice should visit from far away to the temple, residence, city or village of a disciple of the Buddha, the disciple should respectfully welcome the fellow cultivator as well as see them on their way safely. The disciple should minister to the visitors needs at all times, though doing so may cost as much as three taels of gold! Moreover, the disciple of the Buddha should respectfully request the guest–master to preach the Dharma three times a day by bowing without a single thought of resentment or weariness.⁵⁹ The Buddha’s disciple should be willing to sacrifice him or herself for the dharma and never be lax in requesting it. If they do not act in this manner, they have committed a secondary offense.

7. I vow to always make an effort to attend Dharma lectures

A Bodhisattva disciple who is new to the Order should take copies of the appropriate sutras or precept codes to all places where such sutras, commentaries, or moral codes are being explained, to listen, study, and inquire about the dharma. The disciple should go anywhere, be it in a house, beneath a tree, in a temple, in the forests or mountains, or elsewhere. If they fail to do so, they have committed a secondary offense.⁶⁰

8. I vow not to divide the Dharma into separate doctrines

If a disciple of the Buddha disavows the eternal Mahayana sutras and moral codes, declaring that they were not actually taught by the Buddha, and instead follows and observes those of the Two Vehicles and deluded externalists, they commit a secondary offense.⁶¹

9. I vow to always give care to the sick and the needy

If a disciple of the Buddha should see anyone who is sick, that disciple should wholeheartedly provide for that person's needs just as they would for a Buddha. Of the eight fields of blessings,⁶² looking after the sick is the most important. A Buddha's disciple should take care of father, mother, dharma teacher or disciple—regardless of whether the latter are disabled or suffering from various kinds of diseases.⁶³

If instead, they become angry and resentful and fail to do so, or refuse to rescue the sick or disabled in temples, cities and towns, forests and mountains, or along the road, they commit a secondary offense.

10. I vow to abstain from the storing of weapons used to destroy life

A disciple of the Buddha should not store weapons such as knives, clubs, bows, arrows, spears, axes or any other weapons, nor may he keep nets, traps or any such devices used in destroying life.⁶⁴

As a disciple of the Buddha, they must not even avenge the death of their parents—let alone kill sentient beings!⁶⁵ The Bodhisattva should not store any weapons or devices that can be used to kill sentient beings. If deliberately doing so, they have committed a secondary offense.

The first ten secondary precepts have just been described. Disciples of the Buddha should study and respectfully observe them. They are explained in detail in the six chapters (*now lost*) following these precepts.

11. I vow to abstain from serving as an emissary of the military

A disciple of the Buddha shall not, out of personal benefit or evil intentions, act as a country's emissary to foster military confrontation and war causing the slaughter of countless sentient beings. As a disciple of the Buddha, they should not be involved in military affairs, or serve as a courier between armies, much less act as a willing catalyst for war. If

they deliberately do so, the disciple commits a secondary offense.⁶⁶

12. I vow to abstain from businesses which limits the freedom of others

A disciple of the Buddha must not deliberately trade in slaves or sell anyone into servitude, nor should they trade in domestic animals, coffins or wood for caskets. The Bodhisattva cannot engage in these types of business much less encourage others to do so. Otherwise, they have committed a secondary offense.⁶⁷

13. I vow to abstain from slanderous and libelous speech

A disciple of the Buddha must not, without cause and with evil intentions, slander virtuous people, such as elder masters, priests or nuns, kings, princes or other upright persons, saying that they have committed the seven principal prohibitions or broken the ten major Bodhisattva precepts. The disciple should be compassionate and devoted and treat all virtuous people as if they were a father, mother, siblings or other close relatives. If instead, they slander and harm them, they are committing a secondary offense.⁶⁸

14. I vow to abstain from acts, such as clear burning, that may injure or kill living creatures

A disciple of the Buddha shall not, out of evil intentions, start wildfires to clear forests and burn vegetation on mountains and plains, during the fourth to the ninth months of the lunar year. Such fires are particularly injurious to animals during that period and may spread to people's homes, towns and villages, temples and monasteries, fields and groves, as well as the unseen dwellings and possessions of deities and ghosts. They must not intentionally set fire to any place where there is life. If deliberately doing so, they are committing a secondary offense.⁶⁹

15. I vow to only teach doctrines that lead to developing the bodhi–mind

A disciple of the Buddha must teach one and all, from fellow disciples, relatives and spiritual friends, to externalists and evil beings, how to receive and observe the Mahayana sutras and moral codes. The Bodhisattva should teach the Mahayana principles to them and help them develop the bodhi mind—as well as the ten dwellings, the ten practices and the ten dedications, explaining the order and function of each of these thirty levels.

If instead, the disciple, with evil, hateful intentions, perversely teaches them the sutras and moral codes of the two–vehicle tradition as well as the commentaries of deluded externalists, they thereby commit a secondary offense.⁷⁰

16. I vow to, first fully understand, and then to clearly teach the Dharma

A Bodhisattva Dharma Master must first, with a wholesome mind, study the rules of deportment, as well as sutras and moral codes of the Mahayana tradition, and understand their meanings in depth. Then, whenever novices come from afar to seek instruction, the Master should explain, according to the Dharma, all the Bodhisattva renunciation practices, such as burning one’s body, arm, or finger as the ultimate act in the quest for supreme enlightenment. If a novice is not prepared to follow these practices as an offering to the Buddhas, they are not a Bodhisattva priest. Moreover, a Bodhisattva priest should be willing to sacrifice body and limbs for starving beasts and hungry ghosts as the ultimate act of compassion in rescuing sentient beings.⁷¹

After these explanations, the Bodhisattva Dharma Master should teach the novices in an orderly way, to awaken their minds. If instead, for personal gain, they refuse to teach or teach in a confused manner, quoting passages out of order

and context, or teach in a manner disparaging the triple jewel, they are committing a secondary offense.

17. I vow to abstain from personal gain when teaching the Dharma

A disciple of the Buddha must not, for the sake of food, drink, money, possessions or fame, approach and befriend kings, princes, or high officials and on the strength of such relationships, exact money, goods or other advantages. Nor may they encourage others to do so. These actions are called untoward, excessive demands and lack compassion and devotion. Such a disciple commits a secondary offense.⁷²

18. I vow to always serve as an adequate master

A disciple of the Buddha should study the twelve divisions of the Dharma⁷³ and recite the Bodhisattva precepts frequently. They should strictly observe these precepts in the six periods of the day and night and fully understand their meaning and principles as well as the essence of their Buddha Nature.⁷⁴

If instead, the disciple of the Buddha fails to understand even a sentence or a verse of the moral code or the causes and conditions related to the precepts, but pretend to understand them, they are deceiving all beings. A disciple who understands nothing of the Dharma, yet acts as a teacher transmitting the precepts, commits a secondary offense.

19. I vow to abstain from double-tongued speech

A disciple of the Buddha must not, with malicious intent gossip or spread rumors and slander, create discord and disdain for virtuous people. An example is the disparaging of a priest who observes the Bodhisattva precepts, as they make offerings to the Buddhas by holding a stick of incense to their forehead.⁷⁵ A disciple of the Buddha who does so commits a secondary offense.

20. I vow to liberate all sentient beings

A disciple of the Buddha should have a mind of compassion and cultivate the practice of liberating sentient beings. He must reflect thus: throughout the eons of time, all male sentient beings have been my father, all female sentient beings my mother. I was born of them,⁷⁶ now I slaughter them, I would be slaughtering my parents as well as eating flesh that was once my own. This is so because all elemental earth, water, fire and air—the four constituents of all life—have previously been part of my body, part of my substance. I must therefore always cultivate the practice of liberating sentient beings and enjoin others to do likewise—as sentient beings are forever reborn, repeatedly, lifetime after lifetime. If a Bodhisattva sees an animal on the verge of being killed, he must devise a way to rescue and protect it, helping it to escape suffering and death. The disciple should always teach the Bodhisattva precepts to rescue and deliver sentient beings.⁷⁷

On the day his father, mother, and siblings die, he should invite dharma masters to explain the Bodhisattva sutras and precepts. This will generate merits and virtues and help the deceased either to achieve rebirth in the pure lands and meet the Buddhas or to secure rebirth in the human or celestial realms.⁷⁸ If instead, a disciple fails to do so, he commits a secondary offense. You should study and respectfully observe the above ten precepts. Each of them is explained in detail in the chapter “*Expiating Offenses*.”

21. I vow to abstain from violence and vengefulness

A disciple of the Buddha must not return anger for anger, blow for blow. He should not seek revenge, even if his father, mother, siblings, or close relatives are killed—nor should he do so if the ruler or king of his country is murdered. To take the life of one being in order to avenge the killing of another is contrary to devotion as we are all related through the eons of birth and rebirth.⁷⁹

Furthermore, he should not keep others in servitude, much less beat or abuse them, creating evil karma of mind, speech and body day after day—particularly the offenses of speech. How much less should he deliberately commit the Seven Principal Prohibitions? Therefore, if a Bodhisattva priest lacks compassion and deliberately seeks revenge, even for an injustice done to his close relatives, he commits a secondary offense.

22. I vow to abstain from arrogance and will always follow the Dharma

A disciple of the Buddha who has only recently left home and is still a novice in the Dharma should not be conceited. He must not refuse instruction on the sutras and moral codes from Dharma Masters because of his own intelligence, worldly learning, high position, advanced age, noble lineage, vast understanding, great merits, extensive wealth and possessions, etc. Although these Masters may be of humble birth, young in age, poor, or suffering physical disabilities, they may still have genuine virtue and deep understanding of sutras and moral codes.

The novice Bodhisattva should not judge Dharma Masters based on their family background and refuse to seek instructions on the Mahayana truths from them. If he does so, he commits a secondary offense.⁸⁰

23. I vow to teach the Dharma with generosity and an open heart

After my passing, if a disciple should, with a wholesome mind, wish to receive the Bodhisattva precepts, he may make a vow to do so before the images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and practice repentance before these images for seven days. If he then experiences a vision, he has received the precepts. If he does not, he should continue doing so for fourteen days, twenty-one days, or even a whole year, seeking to witness an auspicious sign. After witnessing such a sign, he

could, in front of images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, formally receive the precepts. If he has not witnessed such a sign, although he may have accepted the precepts before the Buddha images, he has not actually received the precepts.

However, the witnessing of auspicious signs is not necessary if the disciple receives the precepts directly from a Dharma Master who has himself received the precepts. Why is this so? It is because this is a case of transmission from Master to Master and therefore all that is required is a mind of utter sincerity and respect on the part of the disciple.

If, within a radius of some three hundred fifty miles, a disciple cannot find a Master capable of conferring the Bodhisattva precepts, he may seek to receive them in front of Buddha or Bodhisattva images. However, he must witness an auspicious sign.

If a Dharma Master, because of his extensive knowledge of sutras and Mahayana moral codes as well as his close relationship with kings, princes, and high officials, refuses to give appropriate answers to student–Bodhisattvas seeking the meaning of sutras and moral codes, or does so grudgingly, with resentment and arrogance, he commits a secondary offense.

24. I vow to practice the teachings of the Buddha-Dharma

If a disciple of the Buddha fails to study Mahayana sutras and moral codes assiduously and cultivate correct views, correct nature and the correct dharma Body, it is like abandoning the seven precious jewels⁸¹ for mere stones: worldly texts and the two–vehicle or externalist commentaries.⁸² To do so is to create the causes and conditions that obstruct the Path to Enlightenment and cut himself off from his Buddha Nature. It is a failure to follow the Bodhisattva path. If a disciple intentionally acts in such a manner, he commits a secondary offense.

25. I vow to be a skilled leader of the assembly

After my passing, if a disciple should serve as an abbot, elder Dharma Master, Precept Master, Meditation Master, or Guest Prefect, he must develop a compassionate mind and peacefully settle differences within the Assembly—skillfully administering the resources of the Three Jewels, spending frugally and not treating them as his own property.⁸³ If instead, he were to create disorder, provoke quarrels and disputes or squander the resources of the Assembly, he would commit a secondary offense.

26. I vow to share all offerings made to the dharma or the sangha

Once a disciple of the Buddha has settled down in a temple, if visiting Bodhisattva Priests should arrive at the temple precincts, the guest quarters established by the king, or even the summer retreat quarters, or the quarters of the Great Assembly, the disciple should welcome the visiting priests and see them off. He should provide them with such essentials as food and drink, a place to live, beds, chairs, and the like. If the host does not have the necessary means, he should be willing to pawn himself or cut off and sell his own flesh.⁸⁴

Whenever there are meal offerings and ceremonies at a layman's home, visiting priests should be given a fair share of the offerings. The abbot should send the priests, whether residents or guests, to the donor's place in turn according to their sacerdotal age or merits and virtues.⁸⁵ If only resident priests are allowed to accept invitations and not visiting priests, the abbot is committing a grievous offense and is behaving no differently than an animal. He is unworthy of being a priest or a son of the Buddha, and is guilty of a secondary offense.

27. I vow not to accept discriminatory invitations which are unfair or biased

A disciple of the Buddha must not accept personal invitations nor appropriate the offerings for himself. Such offerings rightly belong to the Sangha—the whole community

of priests and nuns of the Ten Directions. To accept personal offerings is to steal the possessions of the Sangha of the Ten Directions. It is tantamount to stealing what belongs to the Eight Fields of Blessings: Buddhas, Sages, Dharma Masters, Precept Masters, priests/nuns, mothers, fathers, the sick. Such a disciple commits a secondary offense.⁸⁶

28. I vow not to issue discriminatory invitations

A disciple of the Buddha either a Bodhisattva priest, a lay practitioner, or other donor, should, when inviting other high ranking practitioners to conduct a prayer session, come to the temple and inform the priest in charge. The priest will then tell him: *“Inviting members of the Sangha according to the proper order is tantamount to inviting the Arhats of the Ten Directions. To offer a discriminatory special invitation to such a worthy group as five hundred Arhats or Bodhisattva priests will not generate as much merit as inviting one ordinary priest, if it is his turn.”*⁸⁷

There is no provision in the teachings of the Seven Buddhas⁸⁸ for discriminatory invitations. To do so is to follow externalist practices and to contradict devotion toward all sentient beings. If a disciple deliberately issues a discriminatory invitation, he commits a secondary offense.

29. I vow not to engage in improper livelihoods

A disciple of the Buddha should not, for the sake of gain or with evil intentions, engage in the business of prostitution, selling the favors and charms of men and women. He must also not cook for himself, milling and pounding grain. Neither may he act as a fortune-teller predicting the gender of children, reading dreams and the like. Nor shall he practice sorcery, work as a trainer of falcons or hunting dogs, nor make a living concocting hundreds and thousands of poisons from deadly snakes, insects, or from gold and silver. Such occupations lack mercy, compassion, and devotion toward

sentient beings. Therefore, if a Bodhisattva intentionally engages in these occupations, he commits a secondary offense.

30. I vow to remain neutral in the affairs of the sangha

A disciple of the Buddha must not, with evil intentions, slander the Triple Jewel while pretending to be their close adherent—preaching the Truth of Emptiness while his actions are in the realm of Existence. Furthermore, he must not handle worldly affairs for the laity, acting as a go-between or matchmaker—creating the karma of attachment. Moreover, during the six days of fasting each month and the three months of fasting each year, a disciple should strictly observe all precepts, particularly against killing, stealing and the rules against breaking the fast. Otherwise, the disciple commits a secondary offense.

A Bodhisattva should respectfully study and observe the ten preceding precepts. They are explained in detail in the Chapter on “*prohibitions*.”

31. I vow to rescue clerics along with sacred objects of the dharma

After my passing, in the evil periods that will follow, there will be externalists, evil persons, thieves and robbers who steal and sell statues and paintings of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and those to whom respect is due such as their parents. They may even peddle copies of sutras and moral codes, or sell priests, nuns or those who follow the Bodhisattva Path or have developed the bodhi-mind to serve as retainers or servants to officials and others.

A disciple of the Buddha, upon witnessing such pitiful events, must develop a mind of compassion and find ways to rescue and protect all persons and valuables, raising funds wherever he can for this purpose. If a Bodhisattva does not act in this manner, he commits a secondary offense.

32. I vow equanimity and to not harm any sentient being

A disciple of the Buddha must not sell knives, clubs, bows, arrows, other life-taking devices, nor keep altered scales or measuring devices. He should not abuse his governmental position to confiscate people's possessions, nor should he, with malice at heart, restrain or imprison others or sabotage their success. In addition, he should not raise cats, dogs, foxes, pigs and other such animals. If he intentionally does such things, he commits a secondary offense.

33. I vow not to participate in activities which are intended to induce lustful behavior

A disciple of the Buddha must not, with evil intentions, watch people fighting or the battling of armies, rebels, gangs and the like, should not listen to the sounds of conch shells, drums, horns, guitars, flutes, lutes, songs or other music, nor should he be party to any form of gambling, whether dice, checkers, or the like. Furthermore, he should not practice fortune telling or divination nor should he be an accomplice to thieves and bandits. He must not participate in any of these activities. If instead, he intentionally does so, he commits a secondary offense.

34. I vow to always keep the bodhi-mind

A disciple of the Buddha should observe the Bodhisattva precepts every day, whether walking, standing, reclining or seated—reading and reciting them day and night. He should be resolute in keeping the precepts, as strong as a diamond, as desperate as a shipwrecked person clinging to a small log while attempting to cross the ocean, or as principled as the *“Monk bound by reeds.”* Furthermore, he should always have a wholesome faith in the teachings of the Mahayana. Conscious that sentient beings are Buddhas-to-be while the Buddhas are realized Buddhas; he should develop the bodhi-mind and maintain it in each and every thought, without retrogression.

If a Bodhisattva has but a single thought in the direction of the Two Vehicles or externalist teachings, he commits a secondary offense.

35. I vow to make great vows

A Bodhisattva must make many great vows—to be devoted to his parents and Dharma teachers, to meet good spiritual advisors, friends, and colleagues who will keep teaching him the Mahayana sutras and moral codes as well as the Stages of Bodhisattva Practice (the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Dedications, and the Ten Grounds). He should further vow to understand these teachings clearly, so that he can practice according to the Dharma while resolutely keeping the precepts of the Buddhas. If necessary, he should lay down his life rather than abandon this resolve for even a single moment. If a Bodhisattva does not make such vows, he commits a secondary offense.

36. I vow to make firm resolutions

Once a Bodhisattva has made these Great Vows, he should strictly keep the precepts of the Buddhas and make the following resolutions:

1. I would rather jump into a raging blaze, a deep abyss, or into a mountain of knives, than engage in impure actions with any woman, thus violating the sutras and moral codes of the Buddhas of the Three Periods of Time.
2. I would rather wrap myself a thousand times with a red-hot iron net, than let this body, should it break the precepts, wear clothing provided by the faithful. I would rather swallow red-hot iron pellets and drink molten iron for hundreds of thousands of eons, than let this mouth, should it break the precepts, consume food and drink provided by the faithful. I would rather lie on a bonfire or a burning iron net than let this body, should it break the precepts, rest on bedding, blankets and mats

supplied by the faithful. I would rather be impaled for eons by hundreds of spears, than let this body, should it break the precepts, receive medications from the faithful. I would rather jump into a cauldron of boiling oil and roast for hundreds of thousands of eons, than let this body, should it break the precepts, receive shelter, groves, gardens, or fields from the faithful.

3. I would rather be pulverized from head to toe by an iron sledgehammer, than let this body, should it break the precepts, accept respect and reverence from the faithful.
4. I would rather have both eyes blinded by hundreds of thousands of swords and spears, rather than break the precepts by looking at beautiful forms. In the same vein, I shall keep my mind from being sullied by exquisite sounds, fragrances, food and sensations.
5. I further vow that all sentient beings will achieve Buddhahood.
- 6.

If a disciple of the Buddha does not make the preceding great resolutions, he commits a secondary offense.

37. I vow to avoid traveling in dangerous places

As a cleric, a disciple of the Buddha should engage in ascetic practices twice each year. He should sit in meditation, winter and summer, and observe the summer retreat. During those periods, he should always carry eighteen essentials such as a willow branch (for a toothbrush), ash-water (for soap), the traditional three clerical robes, an incense burner, a begging bowl, a sitting mat, a water filter, bedding, copies of sutras and moral codes as well as statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

When practicing austerities and when traveling, be it for thirty miles or three hundred miles, a cleric should always have the eighteen essentials with him. The two periods of austerities are from the 15th of the first lunar month to the 15th of the third month, and from the 15th of the eighth lunar month to the 15th of the tenth month. During the periods of austerities,

he requires these eighteen essentials just as a bird needs its two wings.

Twice each month, the novice Bodhisattva should attend the Uposattha ceremony and recite the Ten Major and Forty-eight Secondary Precepts. Such recitations should be done before images of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. If only one person attends the ceremony, then he should do the reciting. If two, three, or even hundreds of thousands attend the ceremony, still only one person should recite. Everyone else should listen in silence. The one reciting should sit on a higher level than the audience, and everyone should be dressed in clerical robes. During the summer retreat, each and every activity should be managed in accordance with the Dharma.

When practicing the austerities, the Buddhist disciple should avoid dangerous areas, unstable kingdoms, countries ruled by evil kings, precipitous terrains, remote wildernesses, regions inhabited by bandits, thieves, or lions, tigers, wolves, poisonous snakes, or areas subject to hurricanes, floods and fires. The disciple should avoid all such dangerous areas when practicing the austerities and also when observing the summer retreat. Otherwise, he commits a secondary offense.

38. I vow to respect the hierarchical order of the sangha

A disciple of the Buddha should sit in the proper order when in the Assembly. Those who received the Bodhisattva precepts first sit first; those who received the precepts afterwards should sit behind. Whether old or young, a Bhiksu or Bhiksuni, a person of status, a king, a prince, a eunuch, or a servant, etc., each should sit according to the order in which he received the precepts. Disciples of the Buddha should not be like externalists or deluded people who base their order on age or sit without any order at all—in barbarian fashion. In my Dharma, the order of sitting is based on seniority of ordination.

Therefore, if a Bodhisattva does not follow the order of sitting according to the Dharma, he commits a secondary offense.

39. I vow to cultivate merits and wisdom

A disciple of the Buddha should constantly counsel and teach all people to establish monasteries, temples and pagodas in mountains and forests, gardens and fields. He should also construct stupas for the Buddhas and buildings for winter and summer retreats. All facilities required for the practice of the Dharma should be established.

Moreover, a disciple of the Buddha should explain Mahayana sutras and the Bodhisattva precepts to all sentient beings. In times of sickness, national calamities, impending warfare or upon the death of one's parents, brothers and sisters, Dharma Masters and Precept Masters, a Bodhisattva should lecture and explain Mahayana sutras and the Bodhisattva precepts weekly for up to seven weeks.

The disciple should read, recite, and explain the Mahayana sutras and the Bodhisattva precepts in all prayer gatherings, in his business undertakings and during periods of calamity—fire, flood, storms, ships lost at sea in turbulent waters or stalked by demons ... In the same vein, he should do so in order to transcend evil karma, the Three Evil Realms, the Eight Difficulties, the Seven Principal Prohibitions, all forms of imprisonment, or excessive sexual desire, anger, delusion, and illness.

If a novice Bodhisattva fails to act as indicated, he commits a secondary offense.

The Bodhisattva should study and respectfully observe the nine precepts just mentioned above, as explained in the "*Brahma Altar*" chapter.

40. I vow not to discriminate in conferring the precepts

A disciple of the Buddha should not be selective and show preference in conferring the Bodhisattva precepts. Each and every person can receive the precepts—kings, princes, high officials, Bhiksus, Bhiksunis, laymen, laywomen, libertines,

prostitutes, the gods in the eighteen Brahma Heavens or the six Desire Heavens, asexual persons, bisexual persons, eunuchs, slaves, or demons and ghosts of all types. Buddhist disciples should be instructed to wear robes and sleep on cloth of a neutral color, formed by blending blue, yellow, red, black and purple dyes all together.

The clothing of priests should, in all countries, be different from those worn by ordinary persons. Before someone is allowed to receive the Bodhisattva precepts, he should be asked: "*have you committed any of the Principal Prohibitions?*" The Precept Master should not allow those who have committed such prohibitions to receive the precepts.

Here are the Seven Principal Prohibitions: shedding the Buddha's blood, murdering an Arhat, killing one's father, killing one's mother, murdering a Dharma Teacher, murdering a Precept Master or disrupting the harmony of the Sangha.

Except for those who have committed the Principal Prohibitions, everyone can receive the Bodhisattva precepts.

The Dharma rules of the Buddhist Order prohibit priests and nuns from bowing down before rulers, parents, relatives, demons and ghosts.

Anyone who understands the explanations of the Precept Master can receive the Bodhisattva precepts. Therefore, if a person were to come from thirty to three hundred miles away seeking the Dharma and the Precept Master, out of meanness and anger, does not promptly confer these precepts, he commits a secondary offense.

41. I vow never to teach for the sake of profit

If a disciple of the Buddha, when teaching others and developing their faith in the Mahayana, should discover that a particular person wishes to receive the Bodhisattva precepts, he should act as a teaching master and instruct that person to seek out two Masters, a Dharma Master and a Precept Master.

These two Masters should ask the Precept candidate whether he has committed any of the Seven Principal

Prohibitions in this life. If he has, he cannot receive the precepts. If not, he may receive the precepts.

If he has broken any of the Ten Major Precepts, he should be instructed to repent before the statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. He should do so six times a day and recite the Ten Major and Forty–eight Minor Precepts, paying respect with utter sincerity to the Buddhas of the Three Periods of Time. He should continue in this manner until he receives an auspicious response, which could occur after seven days, fourteen days, twenty–one days, or even a year. Examples of auspicious signs include: experiencing the Buddhas rub the crown of one’s head, or seeing lights, halos, flowers and other such rare phenomena.

The witnessing of an auspicious sign indicates that the candidate’s karma has been dissipated. Otherwise, although he has repented, it was of no avail. He still has not received the precepts. However, the merits accrued will increase his chances of receiving the precepts in a future lifetime.

Unlike the case of a major Bodhisattva precept, if a candidate has violated any of the Forty–eight Secondary Precepts, he can confess his infraction and sincerely repent before Bodhisattva priests or nuns. After that, his offense will be eradicated.

The officiating Master, however, must fully understand the Mahayana sutras and moral codes, the secondary as well as the major Bodhisattva precepts, what constitutes an offense and what does not, the truth of Primary Meaning, as well as the various Bodhisattva cultivation stages—the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Dedications, the Ten Grounds, and Equal and Wonderful Enlightenment.

He should also know the type and degree of contemplation required for entering and exiting these stages and be familiar with the Ten Limbs of Enlightenment as well as a variety of other contemplations.

If he is not familiar with the above and, out of greed for fame, disciples or offerings, he makes a pretense of

understanding the sutras and moral codes, he is deceiving himself as well as others. Hence, if he intentionally acts as Precept Master, transmitting the precepts to others, he commits a secondary offense.

42. I vow not to give the precepts to evil persons

A disciple of the Buddha should not, with a greedy motive, expound the great precepts of the Buddhas before those who have not received them, externalists or persons with heterodox views. Except in the case of kings or supreme rulers, he may not expound the precepts before any such person.

Persons who hold heterodox views and do not accept the precepts of the Buddhas are untamed in nature. They will not, lifetime after lifetime, encounter the Triple Jewel. They are as mindless as trees and stones; they are no different from wooden stumps. Hence, if a disciple of the Buddha expounds the precepts of the Seven Buddhas before such persons, he commits a secondary offense.

43. I vow not to think of violating the precepts

If a disciple of the Buddha joins the Order out of pure faith, receives the correct precepts of the Buddhas, but then develops thoughts of violating the precepts, he is unworthy of receiving any offerings from the faithful, unworthy of walking on the ground of his motherland, unworthy of drinking its water.

Five thousand guardian spirits constantly block his way, calling him "*Evil thief!*" These spirits always follow him into people's homes, villages and towns, sweeping away his very footprints. Everyone curses such a disciple, calling him a "*Thief within the Dharma.*" All sentient beings avert their eyes, not wishing to see him.

A disciple of the Buddha who breaks the precepts is no different from an animal or a wooden stump. Hence, if a disciple intentionally violates the correct precepts, he commits a secondary offense.

44. I vow to honor the sutras and moral codes

A disciple of the Buddha should always single-mindedly receive, observe, read and recite the Mahayana sutras and moral codes. He should copy the sutras and moral codes onto bark, paper, fine cloth, or bamboo slats and not hesitate to use his own skin as paper, draw his own blood for ink and his marrow for ink solvent, or split his bones for use as pens. He should use precious gems, priceless incense, flowers, and other precious things to make and adorn covers and cases to store the sutras and codes.

Hence, if he does not make offerings to the sutras and moral codes, in accordance with the Dharma, he commits a secondary offense.

45. I vow to teach all sentient beings

A disciple of the Buddha should develop a mind of Great Compassion. Whenever he enters people's homes, villages, cities or towns, and sees sentient beings, he should say aloud, "*You sentient beings should all take the Three Refuges and receive the Ten Major Bodhisattva Precepts.*" Should he come across cows, pigs, horses, sheep and other kinds of animals, he should concentrate and say aloud, "*You are now animals; you should develop the bodhi-mind.*" A Bodhisattva, wherever he goes, be it climbing a mountain, entering a forest, crossing a river, or walking through a field should help all sentient beings develop the bodhi-mind.

If a disciple of the Buddha does not wholeheartedly teach and rescue sentient beings in such a manner, he commits a secondary offense.

46. I vow to never preach in an inappropriate manner

A disciple of the Buddha should always have a mind of Great Compassion to teach and transform sentient beings. Whether visiting wealthy and aristocratic donors or addressing Dharma gatherings, he should not remain standing while explaining the Dharma to laymen, but should occupy a raised seat in front of the lay assembly.

A Bhikṣu serving as Dharma instructor must not be standing while lecturing to the Fourfold Assembly. During such lectures, the Dharma Master should sit on a raised seat amidst flowers and incense, while the Fourfold Assembly must listen from lower seats. The Assembly must respect and follow the Master like devoted sons obeying their parents or Brahmans worshipping fire. If a Dharma Master does not follow these rules while preaching the Dharma, he commits a secondary offense.

47. I vow constant support of the Dharma

A disciple of the Buddha who has accepted the precepts of the Buddhas with a faithful mind, must not use his high official position (as a king, prince, official, etc.) to undermine the moral code of the Buddhas. He may not establish rules and regulations preventing the four kinds of lay disciples from joining the Order and practicing the Way, nor may he prohibit the making of Buddha or Bodhisattva images, statues and stupas, or the printing and distribution of sutras and codes. Likewise, he must not establish rules and regulations placing controls on the Fourfold Assembly. If highly placed lay disciples engage in actions contrary to the Dharma, they are no different from vassals in the service of illegitimate rulers.

A Bodhisattva should rightfully receive respect and offerings from all. If instead, he is forced to defer to officials, this is contrary to the Dharma, contrary to the moral code.

Hence, if a king or official has received the Bodhisattva precepts with a wholesome mind, he should avoid offenses that harm the Three Jewels. If instead, he intentionally commits such acts, he is guilty of a secondary offense.

48. I vow to never destroy the Buddha–Dharma

A disciple of the Buddha who becomes a priest with wholesome intentions must not, for fame or profit, explain the precepts to kings or officials in such a way as to cause priests, nuns or laymen who have received the Bodhisattva precepts to be tied up, thrown into prison or forcefully conscripted. If a Bodhisattva acts in such a manner, he is no different from a worm in a lion's body, eating away at the lion's flesh. This is not something a worm living outside the lion can do. Likewise, only disciples of the Buddhas can bring down the Dharma—no externalist or demon can do so.

Those who have received the precepts of the Buddha should protect and observe them just as a mother would care for her only child or a devoted son his parents. They must not break the precepts.

If a Bodhisattva hears externalists or evil-minded persons speak ill of, or disparage, the precepts of the Buddhas, he should feel as though his heart were pierced by three hundred spears, or his body stabbed with a thousand knives or thrashed with a thousand clubs. He would rather suffer in the hells himself for a hundred eons than hear evil beings disparage the precepts of the Buddha. How much worse it would be if the disciple were to break the precepts himself or incite others to do so! This is indeed an undevoted mind! Hence, if he violates the precepts intentionally, he commits a secondary offense. The preceding nine precepts should be studied and respectfully observed with utmost faith.

Conclusion



The Buddha said, *“All of you disciples! These are the Forty-eight Secondary Precepts that you should observe. Bodhisattvas of the past have recited them, those of the future will recite them, those of the present are now reciting them.”*

“Disciples of the Buddha! You should all listen! These Ten Major and Forty-eight Secondary Precepts are recited by all Buddhas of the Three Periods of Time—past, present, and future. I now recite them as well.”

Epilogue



The Buddha continued: *“Everyone in the Assembly—kings, princes, officials, Bhiksus, Bhiksunis, laymen, laywomen and those who have received the Bodhisattva precepts—should receive and observe, read and recite, explain and copy these precepts of the eternal Buddha Nature so that they can circulate without interruption for the edification of all sentient beings. They will then encounter the Buddhas and receive the teachings from each one in succession. Lifetime after lifetime, they will escape the Three Evil Paths and the Eight Difficulties and will always be reborn in the human and celestial realms.”*

I have concluded a general explanation of the precepts of the Buddhas beneath this Bodhi Tree. All in this Assembly should single-mindedly study the Pratimoksa precepts and joyfully observe them.

These precepts are explained in detail in the exhortation section of the *“Mark less Celestial King”* chapter.

At that time, the Bodhisattvas of the Three Thousand World System (cosmos) sat listening with utmost reverence to the Buddha reciting the precepts. They then joyously received and observed them.

As Buddha Shakyamuni finished explaining the Ten Inexhaustible Precepts of the *“mind-ground Dharma Door”* chapter, (which Vairocana Buddha had previously proclaimed in the Lotus Flower Treasury World), countless other Shakyamuni Buddhas did the same.

As Shakyamuni Buddha preached in ten different places, from the Mahesvara Heaven Palace to the Bodhi Tree, for the benefit of countless Bodhisattvas and other beings, all the countless Buddhas in the infinite lands of the Lotus Treasury World did the same.

They explained the Buddha’s Mind Treasury (the Thirty Minds), Ground Treasury, Precept Treasury, Infinite

Actions and Vows Treasury, the Treasury of the Ever–Present Buddha Nature as Cause and Effect of Buddhahood. Thus, all the Buddhas completed their expositions of the countless Dharma Treasuries.

All sentient beings throughout the billions of worlds gladly receive and observe these Teachings.

The characteristics of the mind–ground are explained in greater detail in the chapter “*Seven Forms of Conduct of the Buddha Floral Brilliance King.*”

Verses of Praise



*The sages with great samadhi and wisdom
Can observe this teaching;
Even before reaching Buddhahood
They are blessed with five benefits:
First, the Buddhas of the Ten Directions
Always keep them in mind and protect them.
Secondly, at the time of death
They hold correct views with a joyous mind.
Third, wherever they are reborn,
The Bodhisattvas are their friends.
Fourth, merits and virtues abound as
The Paramita of Precepts is accomplished.
Fifth, in this life and in succeeding ones,
Observing all precepts, they are filled with
merits and wisdom.*

*Such disciples are sons of the Buddha.
Wise people should ponder this well.
Common beings clinging to marks and self
Cannot obtain this teaching.
Nor can followers of the Two Vehicles,
abiding in quietude,*

*Plant their seeds within it.
To nurture the sprouts of Bodhi,
To illuminate the world with wisdom,
You should carefully observe
The True Mark of all dharmas:
Neither born nor unborn,
Neither eternal nor extinct,
Neither the same nor different,
Neither coming nor going.*

*In that single-minded state
The disciple should diligently cultivate
And adorn the Bodhisattva's practices and deeds
In sequential order.
Between the teachings of study and non-study,
One should not develop thoughts of discrimination.
This is the Foremost Path—
Also known as Mahayana.
All offenses of idle speculation and meaningless debate
Invariably disappear at this juncture;
The Buddha's omniscient wisdom
Also arises from this.
Therefore, all disciples of the Buddha
Should develop great resolve,
And strictly observe the Buddha's precepts
As though they were brilliant gems.
All Bodhisattvas of the past
Have studied these precepts;
Those of the future will also study them.
Those of the present study them as well.
This is the path walked by the Buddhas,
And praised by the Buddhas.
I have now finished explaining the precepts,
The body of immense merit and virtue.
I now transfer them all to sentient beings;
May they all attain Supreme Wisdom;
May the sentient beings who hear this Dharma
All attain Buddhahood.*

Verses of Dedication



In the Lotus Treasury World, Vairocana explained an infinitesimal part of the mind-ground Door,

*Transmitting it to the Shakyamunis:
Major and minor precepts are clearly delineated,
All sentient beings receive immense benefits.*

Precepts for the
Golden Wind Zen Order
a Mazu Daoyi Ancestral Chan Order

Precepts



General Information

Precepts are given in a formal Precepts ceremony which usually coincides with a retreat or special event. All categories of precepts may be given at every ceremony. The postulant (a student seeking precepts) should already be a supporting member of their Zen Center and in good standing as an active participant.

Precepts are only given by Zen or Dharma Masters as they are formal representatives of their respective Dharma lineages. A Dharma Holder of three years standing, with the approval of the guiding teacher, may give precepts to prisoners following the rules for each precepts category.

It is a traditional Buddhist custom to show gratitude to the teacher leading the precepts ceremony (who may or may not be your guiding teacher) with a small monetary gift. At the time of the ceremony, you should leave a sealed envelope containing the donation on the altar, with the name of the precepts teacher on it (and your own if you would like to). A personal note or card is always welcome along with the gift. (If you wish to make a gift by check, it should be made out to the precepts teacher personally, not to the Zen Center.)

During the precepts ceremony, all students taking precepts will receive a small burn on the inside of their left forearm. This is a traditional Buddhist custom from China, modified in Korea. The burn itself is very small and relatively painless; the significance of this custom is expressed in the repentance ritual: *“May all my offenses, accumulated during hundreds of kalpas, now be totally consumed, in an instant, as fire burns dry grass, extinguishing all things until nothing remains.”* The *“instant”* when fire touches the student’s skin is an all-consuming

moment in which opinions and ideas disappear, and only the direct experience of burning sensation remains. Zen practice is to return again and again to each moment of direct experience. In experiencing what is occurring in each moment, all transgressions and defilements are extinguished. The chain of karmic residue is broken.

Precepts—Lay Students

The student who decides to dedicate him or herself to Zen practice does so by taking five precepts in a ceremony at the Zen Center. The formal student–teacher relationship is reserved for those who are concerned with “*the great question of birth and death,*” have a genuine spiritual aspiration to come to awakening, are willing to exert themselves in their practice including retreat attendance, and feel a genuine rapport with the Guiding Teacher. Entering into a student–teacher relationship is not necessarily a lifelong commitment, but nevertheless represents a deep level of commitment to working together spiritually on the part of both the student and the Guiding Teacher.

Five Precepts—Lay Practitioner (haengja)

1. I vow to abstain from taking life.
2. I vow to abstain from taking things not given.
3. I vow to abstain from misconduct done in lust.
4. I vow to abstain from lying.
5. I vow to abstain from intoxicants, taken to induce heedlessness.

When taking five precepts, the postulant will receive a Buddhist name from their new Guiding Teacher. Taking the five precepts means recognizing the importance of practicing, and making it part of everyday life. It means joining a family of other people who have made the same decision, practicing

with them and support. If students live near a Zen Center, they can frequently join others in formal meditation and will find great support practicing within a community of other Zen students. If students live at a distance from the Zen Center, they will find it helpful to come to intensive retreats periodically.

In order to take the five precepts, the postulant must be at least eighteen years of age and have participated in at least four days of retreat time at the Zen Center they are about to join. If the postulant doesn't already have his or her own short gray robe, they must obtain one before taking five precepts. The new student will also need a brown *kāsa*, which is an elaborately sewn cloth, representative of Buddha's robe, which is worn over the robe. See the local Executive Director to arrange the purchase of robes and *kāsa*.

Prisoners may take the five precepts after six months of regular practice, as determined by the precepts teacher. The retreat requirement is waived and it is not necessary to have a robe or *kāsa*.

Ten Precepts—Dharma Practitioner (pōp haengja)

6. I vow not to talk about the faults of the assembly.
7. I vow not to praise myself and disparage others.
8. I vow not to be covetous and to be generous.
9. I vow not to give way to anger and to be harmonious.
10. I vow not to slander the three jewels. (Buddha, Sangha, and Dharma)

There are two important aspects of becoming a Dharma Practitioner. The first is demonstrating an intention to live in a clear, generous, and compassionate way through the example of the students everyday life. The second is realizing the responsibility and relationship to the Sangha by giving back to the Sangha. This is fulfilled through giving talks, instruction and helping the Zen Center with unique skills and energy.

Dharma Practitioner Qualifications

- Maintain an ongoing relationship with the Zen Center's guiding teacher.
- Attend at least four regular yongmaeng chōngjins each year. If not enough group retreats are available in a particular location, solo retreats are permissible. The retreat requirement is waived for prisoners.
- Continue to be an active member of the Zen Center, as determined by the guiding teacher.
- Become proficient in all aspects of the formal practice. The first few years of training is to be devoted to studying the practice forms; the next few years to performing work with the zen center that develops a better understanding of Buddhism and Zen.
- Practice giving dharma talks, and learn to teach meditation and practice forms to others.
- Read books as recommended by the guiding teacher.
- Stay current with the Zen Center dues and training.
- If a Dharma Practitioner should resign or is dropped from the training program, in order to become active again the student must receive the permission of their guiding teacher and retake the ten precepts at a ceremony.

A Lay Practitioner may apply to become a Dharma Practitioner after a minimum of two years of active participation.

Lay Ordination—Golden Wind Order



The Golden Wind Order is a Mazu Daoyi Ancestral Chan Buddhist religious order that has been developed within the Zen Group. The student ordains in the Golden Wind Order as a Priest. There are two levels of commitment and precepts within this category but all are reserved for only the very serious students. The requirements for entrance into this order are rigorous and the ongoing responsibilities of ordained members are demanding. Membership in the Golden Wind Order represents the highest commitment that one can make at our Center to realizing the Buddha–dharma and to live out of that clear understanding for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Members of the Golden Wind Order work with the Guiding Teacher to develop training forms and lead the Sangha in spiritual practice at the Center. In addition to their own personal practice duties, ordained members lead ceremonies and may be asked by the Guiding Teacher to answer questions at Dharma talks. Dharma Priests also make themselves available to perform wedding ceremonies, birth ceremonies and memorial ceremonies for the general public as their faith moves them. Lay ordination in the Golden Wind Order involves a lifelong commitment to the practice and realization of the Dharma within the context of the life of the householder.

The entry into the Golden Wind Order evolves from a committed relationship with the Guiding Teacher. The Dharma Priest program is similar to becoming a Novice Monk and is an opportunity to deepen the commitment to practice and to live the vow to help others. It encourages its members to widen their focus from being largely a questioner and receiver, to being also able to guide, inspire, and educate others. As a Dharma Priest, the relationship to the teacher and the Zen Center will have the opportunity to mature.

Sixteen Precepts—Dharma Priest (pöḥ haech'o)

11. I vow homage to the Buddha.
12. I vow homage to the Dharma.
13. I vow homage to the Sangha.
14. I vow generosity to people.
15. I vow compassionate speech and compassionate action toward people.
16. I vow together action with people and to become one and to attain the Buddha way.

After a member has been actively participating at the center for sixty months as a Dharma Practitioner, and if both the applicant and the Zen Center's guiding teacher feel that the postulant priest has the acumen and the right commitment to a lifelong dedication to Zen practice, he or she may apply to become a dharma priest at a precepts ceremony. The postulant priest will take the sixteen precepts at this ceremony, and this publicly marks an entry into the Golden Wind Order program.

The guiding teacher's approval attests to the postulant's ability to lead practice, a knowledge of the teaching and its forms, and a willingness to take more responsibility at the center or group. Because all students are not interested in ordination or in the path of teaching, it is never assumed that a member will become a dharma priest; therefore, it is necessary to submit an application to the Senior Board to make the situation clear about one's aspiration towards a path of service with the local Zen community. The process should be kept confidential between the guiding teacher and the student, and then eventually to the Senior Board. This confidentiality is required because all who may aspire may not be accepted, and this will save any embarrassment one might have with not being able to achieve their goals.

When a postulant priest becomes a Dharma Priest, he or she must obtain a small black kāsa, and a ceremonial (large)

black kăsa which they will wear instead of the small black kasa at formal ceremonies and events. See the local Zen Center Executive Director to arrange the purchase of your kăsas.

Forty–Eight Precepts—Bodhisattva Priest (bŏsal haech’o)

If the Dharma Priest is so inclined to make even a further commitment to Zen Buddhism, becoming a Bodhisattva priest is as close as leaving one’s household, without physically doing it. Bodhisattva priests make the ultimate visible commitment to the teacher, the teachings and practices of the sangha. This position signifies that they are a senior elder of the community and are looked upon much as a Kun–sŏnim (honored monk) within the Golden Wind Order. Many students who become bodhisattva teachers feel a connection to the dedication of traditional monks and nuns, and because of their life situations may never be able to take that path. To become a bodhisattva priest, the applicant must have been actively practicing as a dharma priest for at least twenty four months. The first requirement is that they should dedicate all of their extra energy to helping the Zen Center by volunteering in every capacity required there; and must have the approval of the Zen Center’s guiding teacher. Bodhisattva priests wear a small blue kăsa as well as a special blue ceremonial kăsa, which is worn at ceremonies and special events. The honorific of Venerable is used before the name or when speaking of or referring to a Bodhisattva Priest. The precepts which a Bodhisattva Priest takes have their origin in the Pŏmmang gyŏng (Brahma Net Sutra) and have been handed down since at least the time of Kumarajiva and have always been for lay practitioners of the dharma.

1. I vow to respect my teachers and friends in the Dharma
2. I vow to abstain from consuming intoxicating substances

3. I vow to abstain from eating meat
4. I vow to abstain from consuming the five pungent herbs
5. I vow to urge other followers who have transgressed to truly repent their transgressions
6. I vow to always request the Dharma and make offerings to visiting sangha members
7. I vow to always make an effort to attend Dharma lectures
8. I vow not to divide the Dharma into separate doctrines
9. I vow to always give care to the sick and the needy
10. I vow to abstain from the storing of weapons used to destroy life
11. I vow to abstain from serving as an emissary of the military
12. I vow to abstain from businesses which limits the freedom of others
13. I vow to abstain from slanderous and libelous speech
14. I vow to abstain from acts, such as clear burning, that may injure or kill living creatures
15. I vow to only teach doctrines that lead to developing the bodhi-mind
16. I vow to, first fully understand, and then to clearly teach the Dharma
17. I vow to abstain from personal gain when teaching the Dharma
18. I vow to always serve as an adequate master
19. I vow to abstain from double-tongued speech
20. I vow to liberate all sentient beings
21. I vow to abstain from violence and vengefulness
22. I vow to abstain from arrogance and will always follow the Dharma
23. I vow to teach the Dharma with generosity and an open heart
24. I vow to practice the teachings of the Buddha-Dharma
25. I vow to be a skilled leader of the assembly

26. I vow to share all offerings made to the dharma or the sangha
27. I vow not to accept discriminatory invitations which are unfair or biased
28. I vow not to issue discriminatory invitations
29. I vow not to engage in improper livelihoods
30. I vow to remain neutral in the affairs of the sangha
31. I vow to rescue clerics along with sacred objects of the dharma
32. I vow equanimity and to not harm any sentient being
33. I vow not to participate in activities which are intended to induce lustful behavior
34. I vow to always keep the bodhi–mind
35. I vow to make great vows
36. I vow to make firm resolutions
37. I vow to avoid traveling in dangerous places
38. I vow to respect the hierarchical order of the sangha
39. I vow to cultivate merits and wisdom
40. I vow not to discriminate in conferring the precepts
41. I vow never to teach for the sake of profit
42. I vow not to give the precepts to evil persons
43. I vow not to think of violating the precepts
44. I vow to honor the sutras and moral codes
45. I vow to teach all sentient beings
46. I vow to never preach in an inappropriate manner
47. I vow constant support of the Dharma
48. I vow to never destroy the Buddha–Dharma

About the Authors

Zen Master Robert Moore



Founder of the Golden Wind Zen Order Seventy Ninth Ancestor

Moore Sōnsa-nim began as a Zen student in the late sixties practicing with various Zen Teachers; he continued seeking out a teacher until he met Zen Master Sūngsan at a lecture at Yale University in 1974. In 1985, Zen Master Moore, was granted Inka, the seal of Zen Master Sūngsan's approval and authorization to lead retreats and teach kong'an practice. Moore, Sōnsa-nim continued to work hard and practiced with Zen Master Sūngsan. He then received Dharma Transmission, (Chōnbōp) in April of 1997 and was given the name Jibong Sōnsa-nim (Wisdom Peak, Honored Zen Master) and then became the seventy-ninth Ancestor in the Sōn lineage of Korean Mazu-Linji Buddhism.

Moore Sōnsa-nim has founded the New Haven Zen Center in Connecticut, Aikido Ai Zen Center in Whittier, and Ocean Eyes Zen Center in Huntington Beach. Following in the footsteps of the Ancient Chán Masters, in January of 2005, Moore Sōnsa-nim founded the Golden Wind Zen Order, which is a teaching organization that allows him to eventually transmit the Dharma to his future successors. There are currently four Zen Centers that have teacher's sanctioned by Moore Sōnsa-nim, two are in Southern California and two are located in the Greater Seattle area of Washington State.

Paul Lynch, JDPSN



Abbot of the Golden Wind Zen Order Eightieth Ancestor

Paul Lynch, JDPSN received Inka, which is his teacher's approval to teach koans and lead retreats, from Zen Master Moore on April 9, 2006. His title, Jido pōpsa-nim means Honored Dharma Master and is the equivalent to the title of Sensei bestowed in Japanese Lineages. Pōpsa-nim has been the Abbot of the Zen Center since 1993 and began practicing with Moore sōnsa-nim in the late eighties. Before coming to Zen Paul practiced Vipassana Buddhist Meditation for several years with a teacher in Escondido.

Pōpsa-nim has written several other books; including Cold Heart Thawing, a collection of his earlier poetry, A Path to Christ Consciousness was co-authored with Robert Harwood and Exposed in the Golden Wind which was co-authored with his teacher Zen Master Robert Moore. These books are available from the Zen Center, beforethought.com or any of your local booksellers.

Footnotes

¹ **Recorded Sayings of Zen Master Joshu** (Paperback) by James Green (Translator,) Paperback: 208 pages, Publisher: Shambhala (September 18, 2001.) Language: English, ISBN: 157062870X

² **The Compass of Zen** (Shambhala Dragon Editions) (Paperback) by Seung Sahn, Paperback: 416 pages, Publisher: Shambhala; 1st ed edition (October 28, 1997.) Language: English, ISBN: 1570623295

³ **The Book of Serenity: One Hundred Zen Dialogues** (Paperback) by Thomas Cleary, Paperback: 512 pages, Publisher: Shambhala; Reprint edition (March 22, 2005), Language: English, ISBN: 1590302494

⁴ **Kwan Um School of Zen**: The Kwan Um School of Zen is an international organization of more than a hundred centers and groups founded by Zen Master Seung Sahn, among the first wave of Korean Zen Masters to live and teach in the West. The School's purpose is to make this practice of Zen Buddhism available to an ever-growing number of students throughout the world. The heart of the Kwan Um School of Zen is the daily practice, which goes on in its Zen centers and groups. Students and visitors eat together, work together, and meditate together – gradually attaining a clear compassionate mind, which moment to moment is able to help all beings. They offer training in Zen meditation through meditation instruction, daily morning and evening practice, public talks, teaching interviews, sittings, retreats and workshops. Their programs are open to anyone regardless of previous experience and are often offered at no cost.

⁵ **Sūngsan sōnsa** (1927-2004) (KUSZ: Seung Sahn Soen-sa) was a Korean Zen master born in Seun Choen, North Korea. In 1973 he founded the Kwan Um School of Zen in Providence, Rhode Island. Zen Master Sūngsan died in at Hwage'sa in Seoul, South Korea. Some of his Zen teachings were recorded in several books, including *The Compass of Zen*, *Only Don't Know: Selected Teaching Letters of Zen Master Seung Sahn*, and *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* which was his first book actually was the labor of Stephen Mitchell, an early student of Zen Master Sūngsan. Zen Master Sūngsan also bestowed the title of *Taesōnsa-nim* (KUSZ: Dae Soen Sa Nim) upon himself as a celebration for his sixtieth birthday, which mean 'Great Honored Zen Master.'

⁶ **Wade-Giles** (Simplified Chinese: 威妥玛拼音 or 韦氏拼音), sometimes abbreviated Wade, is a Romanization system (phonetic notation and transliteration) for the Chinese language based on the form of Mandarin used in Beijing. It developed from a system produced by Thomas Wade in the mid-19th century, and reached settled form with Herbert Giles's Chinese-English dictionary of 1892. Wade-Giles was the main system of transliteration in the English-speaking world for most of the 20th century, replacing the Nanjing-based romanization systems that had been common until late in the 19th century. It has mostly been replaced by the pinyin system today, but remains in use in the Republic of China (Taiwan).

⁷ **Pinyin** is a system of romanization (phonemic notation and transcription to Roman script) for Standard Mandarin, where pin means "spell" and yin means "sound". The most common variant of pinyin in use is called Hanyu Pinyin (Simplified Chinese: 汉语拼音方案; Traditional Chinese: 漢語拼音方案; pinyin: Hànyǔ Pīnyīn fāng'àn), also known as scheme

of the Chinese phonetic alphabet ((Simplified Chinese: 汉语拼音; Traditional Chinese: 漢語拼音; pinyin: Hànyǔ Pīnyīn).

⁸ **McCune-Reischauer** is a romanization system of the Korean language, created in 1937 by two Americans: George M. McCune and Edwin O. Reischauer. It does not attempt to transliterate Hangŭl but rather to represent the phonetic pronunciation. North Korea and many Western countries use this system while South Korea replaced it with a new romanization system that was created by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Revised Romanization of Korean. A third system—the Yale romanization system, which is a one-to-one transliteration system—exists, but is only used in academic literature, especially in linguistics. During the period of Russian interest in Korea at the beginning of the 20th century, attempts were also made at representing Korean in Cyrillic. The McCune-Reischauer system is basically friendly to Westerners.

The Buddhist Precepts Footnotes:

⁹ (Sanskrit) a male follower of Buddhism who has taken five precepts.

¹⁰ The Dharmakaya of Sakyamuni Buddha, his Sambhogakaya being called Locana and Nirmanakaya, Sakyamuni. The ‘first Buddha’ in the ancient past at the beginning of the present cosmic kalpa; used to symbolize the Buddha–mind beyond space and time, reality prior to anything within our experience.

¹¹ Another term for the mind. The mind is compared to the ground, which has two characteristics: all beings, animate or inanimate, are sustained by it; it does not discriminate—accepting and absorbing everything equally—pure and dirty water alike. Likewise, all precepts and virtues are sustained by the mind; the mind of the Bodhisattva does not discriminate between auspicious or untoward events, praise or ridicule.

¹² The universe as purified by the vows and deeds of Vairocana Buddha, the cosmic aspect of Buddha Sakyamuni. By extension, the Lotus Treasury World represents our True Mind, or Buddha Nature, which encompasses the whole world, yet, like the lotus flower, is untouched by mud or defilements. The world in the Brahma Net Sutra is the thousand–petal lotus. Each of the thousand petals is a world in itself, consisting of ten billion smaller worlds, each with a sun, a moon, a Mt. Sumeru and four continents. Vairocana Buddha sits in the center of the Lotus. On each of the thousand petals dwells a Shakyamuni Buddha, a transformation of Vairocana Buddha.

¹³ In Mahayana texts, the word “*Sakyamuni*” can have two different meanings, either a greatly compassionate being or an ascetic who has calmed their mind. Throughout the cosmos, there are an infinite number of such sages—an infinite number of Sakyamuni Buddhas.

¹⁴ This literally means the human world, the world in which we find ourselves living, right now. It is also the ancient name for the continent of India. Jambudvīpa is a small part of the saha world, which is the realm of the Sakyamuni Buddha.

¹⁵The thunderbolt symbol used in Buddhist art and ritual. Vajra is literally translated from Sanskrit as a diamond, and within its Buddhist context is usually a symbol of the indestructible nature of Buddha's wisdom. The vajra, therefore is a diamond thunderbolt used to conquer demons and protect Buddhism.

¹⁶ This refers to the six years the future Sakyamuni Buddha practiced alone, after discovering that the ascetic teachings he received earlier were not leading to supreme enlightenment, as well as the forty–nine days he meditated under the bodhi tree.

¹⁷ One of the most beautiful and profound metaphors in the Mahayana tradition. It is associated with the Avatamsaka Sutra with its conception of unity and universal interdependence.

¹⁸ I have come to this world eight–thousand times. The Buddha has been among us countless times, in countless forms. The Buddha knows our world, therefore we can rely on the teachings.

¹⁹ (Skt. Bodhicitta) The spirit of Enlightenment, the aspiration to achieve it, the mind set on enlightenment. It involves two parallel aspects; which are the determination to achieve Buddhahood and the aspiration to save all beings.

²⁰ According to the Mahayana view, Buddha–nature is the true, immutable, and eternal nature of all beings. Since all beings possess Buddha–nature, it is possible for them to attain enlightenment and become a Buddha, regardless of what level of existence they occupy.

²¹ (Skt. for *precepts*) translates as '*growing and increasing*', as well as, '*purifying and eradicating.*' Pratimoksa also has two further meanings which are: '*guaranteed liberation,*' and '*special liberation.*' Guaranteed liberation means if one holds these Bodhisattva precepts, it is guaranteed that one can go from the level of an ordinary person to the level of a sage. Special liberation means that for every precept held, one may obtain that particular liberation.

²² Bodhisattva disciples should transmit the Bodhisattva precepts to all sentient beings. There is no such requirement in any other set of precepts.

²³ Important point: if we truly believe that sentient beings are the Buddhas of the future, we would never think of killing them, or harming them in any way. Rather, we would have feelings of compassion toward all sentient beings, without exception. This sense of compassion is the very essence of the Bodhisattva precepts. Therefore, the Sutra of Brahma's Net states: "*If you should have such faith, then this precept code is fulfilled.*"

²⁴ Filial piety toward one's parents means not only to avoid causing them pain, but also to strive to make them happy. To be devoted, therefore, is to have compassion towards our parents.

²⁵ The Buddha—the supremely enlightened being, the dharma—the teaching imparted by Buddha and the sangha—the congregation of priests, nuns, and genuine dharma followers.

²⁶ The Path to Buddhahood, not Arhatship (the goal of the two vehicles or Theravada) nor the paths of gods and humans. For example, if one were to donate ten thousand dollars to a temple, hoping to receive wealth in a future lifetime or to obtain happiness, one would not be following the ultimate path. On the other hand, transferring the merits one has accrued to all sentient beings so that they, as well as ourselves, may achieve Buddhahood is the ultimate path.

²⁷ The basic or Sravaka precepts taught by the Buddhas (i.e., the five lay precepts, the eight precepts, the ten precepts, or the 250 for Bhiksus) all have an essentially negative tone. They are meant to prevent the practitioner from committing offenses. The Bodhisattva precepts, on the other hand, shift the emphasis toward the altruistic aspect: we should consider all sentient beings as part of our family; we should be devoted to them, have compassion for them. Thus the Bodhisattva's precepts, unlike other precepts, have two components: self-benefit and benefit to others, with the emphasis on benefit to others.

²⁸ In other words, the Bodhisattva precepts are above differentiations, above idle speculation—above human reasoning. Trying to understand the Bodhisattva precepts in their totality with our limited mind is no different from viewing the heavens through a child's telescope.

²⁹ This refers to certain types of sentient beings, such as gods or dragons, who can take the appearance of human beings for the purpose of, attending sermons or receiving the precepts (as such opportunities are not necessarily available at all times in their respective realms.)

³⁰ Killing sentient beings, including slaughtering animals for food, is among the heaviest transgressions in Buddhism. This is not only because such acts create untold suffering but also because they cut short the lives of future Buddhas as all sentient beings have a common Buddha Nature. The injunction against all forms of killing, which includes suicide, and applies to all sentient beings, is unique to Buddhism.

³¹ Temporary or provisional teachings as a means to lead sentient beings to the final doctrine. The seventh of the ten paramitas. Refers to strategies, methods and devices targeted to the capacities, circumstances, likes and dislikes of each sentient being, so as to rescue and lead them to enlightenment. All particular formulations of the teaching are just provisional expedients to communicate the dharma in specific contexts. The Buddha's words were medicines for a given sickness at a given time, always infinitely adaptable to the conditions of the audience.

³² A major offense, which warrants expulsion from the Buddhist Order. (*In practice, the practitioner is given the opportunity to repent and reform.*)

³³ The life of a sentient being can be divided into two aspects: the internal, related to the physical body, and the external, having to do with food, possessions, and the like. The physical body is sustained by food and other essentials. If these essentials are stolen, life becomes very difficult. In extreme cases, stealing them is tantamount to taking a person's life. Therefore, the precept '*not to steal*' is second in importance only to the precept '*not to kill*.' Please note, too, that in the "*four means of salvation*," charity is first and foremost. These are the four means by which Bodhisattvas interact with society in order to carry out their work. Charity, the giving of one's possessions to benefit others, is the antithesis of stealing.

³⁴ Stealing by expedient means, refers to such acts as hiding other people's possessions, etc. and then adopting an air of innocence, feigning ignorance as to what occurred.

³⁵ According to the commentaries, improper sexual behavior includes such actions as engaging in sex at inappropriate times or in inappropriate places.

³⁶ Examples of physical means include nodding, shaking one's head, etc. An instance of lying through mental means is when someone who has committed a misdeed remains silent when asked. The most serious example of false speech in Buddhism, constituting a major offense is to claim to have achieved a level of attainment (Arhatship, for example) when one has not in fact attained it. The purpose of such a claim is, of course, to receive respect and offerings. Other lies are considered secondary in importance.

³⁷ Selling intoxicating substances is considered a major offense while consuming intoxicating substances is only a secondary one. (Bodhisattva precept No. 2). This is because Bodhisattvas place compassion first and foremost and aim at benefiting others—to sell intoxicants is to harm others, to consume intoxicants is to harm only oneself. Why should we not consume intoxicants? Buddhism prohibits intoxicants not to deny enjoyment of life, but because intoxicants clouds the mind and prevents one's innate wisdom from emerging. Thus, to sell intoxicants goes against the Bodhisattva's compassionate goal—to help sentient beings develop wisdom and achieve Buddhahood.

³⁸ Literally "non-Buddhists." This term is generally used by Buddhists with reference to followers of other religions. An externalist is someone who does not believe in or follow Buddhist teaching.

³⁹ The two vehicles are those of the Sravakas and Pratyeka-Buddhas. Together they constitute what is called Theravada, Southern or Monastic

Buddhism. The Bodhisattva vehicle which leads to Buddhahood is called Mahayana Buddhism.

⁴⁰ The Bodhisattva's aim is to benefit sentient beings. Therefore, when someone commits an offense, the Bodhisattva does not advertise it but patiently finds ways to counsel the violator. Furthermore, a Bodhisattva should mention the good points of others to encourage them on the right path and help them develop their potential.

⁴¹ To praise oneself and speak ill of others necessarily makes other people suffer. Not only that, such action tends to raise the ego—the very opposite of the goal of cultivation. Furthermore, in chapter 49 of the Avatamsaka Sutra, sentient beings are compared to the roots of a tree growing in the rocks and sand of the barren wilderness, while the Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are the flowers and fruits. Therefore, Bodhisattvas need sentient beings. How can they go about criticizing them, unless it is for the purpose of helping them correct their mistakes?

⁴² The Buddhist disciple becomes angry and loses his temper because the other party keeps asking for help.

⁴³ This ninth precept includes two parts: (1) being angry and (2) harboring grudges. This precept, like others, takes compassion as its cornerstone. Once anger arises, all compassion is lost. The Bodhisattva should not harbor grudges toward anyone and should gladly forgive the mistakes of others. Moreover, once we are reborn in this impure world, we are bound to meet with events that go against our wishes. When these events occur—as they are bound to—we should keep calm and try to transcend them.

What is the use of getting angry or getting even? Supposing we were lost in the depths of the forest, filled with poisonous plants, deadly insects and ferocious beasts. We should expect to be pricked by thorns and bitten by insects. The best course of action is to find a way out of the forest. To lose one's temper, cursing the thorns and insects, is irrational, to say the least.

⁴⁴ Few people would dare slander the Buddha. However slandering the dharma or sangha is another story. An example of slander of the dharma is to criticize the two-vehicle teaching as inadequate for all sentient beings. Slandering the sangha is very common nowadays. If a cleric breaks the precepts, he will receive bad karma, but this does not preclude him from being a good teacher. It is like being lost with a group of people in a deep, dark ravine and among them is a leper who happens to have a torch. A wise person would suppress his revulsion and follow the leper to safety. Please note in this regard the teachings on the four reliances, the most important of which is reliance on the dharma, not on any particular teacher. Moreover, the Buddhist disciple should have a calm mind, free of discrimination in all circumstances. To speak ill of others is to harbor a mind of discrimination, not yet realizing that good and bad, correct and incorrect are in essence non-existent and dream-like.

⁴⁵ An ideal ruler in Indian mythology. In Buddhism the wheel–turning kings are kings who rule by justice rather than force. They possess the thirty–two features of greatness and rule the four continents surrounding Mt. Sumeru.

⁴⁶ The paths of the various realms of hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. These paths can be taken as states of mind; i.e., when someone has a vicious thought of maiming or killing another, he is effectively reborn, for that moment, in the hells.

⁴⁷ All the Bodhisattva precepts are based on compassion, on avoiding harm and being of benefit to others. To break them intentionally is to have no compassion toward sentient beings and to lose the seed of enlightenment. One is then cast out of the Sea of the Dharma and is no longer a Bodhisattva. Note that the most important thing in cultivation is to develop and nurture the seed of enlightenment (the bodhi mind), because without that seed, one cannot become a Buddha.

⁴⁸ This chapter was not transmitted outside of India.

⁴⁹ A Buddhist disciple who is to become an emperor or a high official should first receive the Bodhisattva precepts because the mistakes made by a person in high position have wide and far–reaching implications. It is, then, an act of compassion to urge leaders to study and observe the Bodhisattva precepts so that they can work for the benefit of the many instead of the few.

⁵⁰ Why should one rise to greet and make offerings to elder masters? It is because they are the causes and conditions which help the cultivator attain enlightenment. To fail to respect and draw near them is to lose the benefits of their teachings. In accord with the dharma: with body, speech and mind (rising to greet them, saying welcoming words, in all sincerity).

⁵¹ No hands for five hundred lives: the disciple will be reborn as a worm, reptile, etc. This retribution appears unusually harsh at first sight; however, in Buddhism, the worst karma is to lack wisdom, the consequence of intoxication. Without wisdom, we can never escape birth and death and are bound to revolve in samsara not only for five hundred lives but even for untold eons! Please note that selling alcoholic beverages is a major or root offense as opposed to consuming intoxicants which is only a minor offense. To drink alcohol hurts only oneself, but to sell alcoholic beverages hurts others and goes against the mind of compassion that a Bodhisattva should nurture at all times.

⁵² Exception: “When the Buddha was in the world, King Prasenajit’s Queen had received the eight precepts of a layperson. One time, King Prasenajit wanted to kill his cook. When his Queen heard about this she wanted to save the cook, so she bedecked herself in fine adornments, put on fragrant powders, placed flowers in her hair, and prepared delicious food and wine. Then she took along several ladies–in–waiting and went to

see the king. King Prasenajit was extremely pleased with the wine and the food, and afterwards the queen beseeched the king to forgo his idea of killing the cook. The king consented, and so in this way the cook was saved. The next day, the queen went to the Buddha's place and repented. She had already taken the eight lay precepts, and one of them is that one can't put fragrant oils or perfumes on one's body or flowers in one's hair. She had also drunk wine the previous day...But since the only reason she did all that was because she wanted to save the cook's life, the Buddha said, "*Not only have you not transgressed the precepts, you actually have gained merit and virtue.*"

⁵³ Eating meat not only goes against the spirit of great compassion, it also has far-reaching health implications as illustrated by the recent refusal of the European community to buy American beef from cattle fattened with hormones. See also the following passage from the Lankavatara Sutra, the only text recommended by Bodhidharma: In the present sutra, all meat-eating, in any form, in any manner, and in any place, is unconditionally and once for all, prohibited for all. Thus, Mahamati, meat eating I have not permitted to anyone, I do not permit, I will not permit. Meat eating, I tell you, Mahamati, is not proper for homeless priests.

⁵⁴ They are: leek, onion, garlic, and a few other such herbs such as asafoetida, an ingredient common in curries etc. Eaten raw they are believed to incite people to anger and disputes; eaten cooked they increase one's sexual desire. Buddhist adepts are advised to avoid them, as their consumption tends to disturb the peacefulness of the mind. According to the Surangama Sutra, garlic, three kinds of onions, and leeks are the five forbidden pungent roots. If eaten raw, they are said to cause irritability of temper, and if eaten cooked, to act as an aphrodisiac; moreover, the breath of the eater, if reading the sutras, will drive away the good spirits.

⁵⁵ Important point.

⁵⁶ There are three methods of repentance, depending on the severity of the offense. 1) *Face-to-face repentance*. The offender confesses before a group of priests/nuns, consisting of one, three, four or twenty clerics. This method is for minor transgressions. 2) *Auspicious sign repentance*. The offender repents before images of Buddhas/Bodhisattvas until he witnesses an auspicious sign (lights, halos, flowers, the Buddhas rubbing his crown, etc.). This method can expiate all offenses except the five cardinal sins. 3) *No-birth repentance*. The offender meditates on the truth of true mark seeking the state of no-birth ("the nature of all offenses is basically emptiness"). This method covers all transgressions, including the five cardinal sins.

⁵⁷ These are special types of adversity that prevent the practice of the dharma; they are rebirth in hell, rebirth in the brute-world, rebirth in the ghost-world, rebirth among the long-lived gods, rebirth in an uncivilized

country, rebirth with deficient faculties, adherence to false views, and life in a realm wherein there is no Tathagata.

⁵⁸ Originally a form of meeting. According to the Vinaya, the assembly of priests meets on a full moon and then on a new moon to celebrate the ceremony of reciting the precepts (formerly ordination was also held on this occasion). The ceremony begins with a public confession. The chairman then advises the audience: ‘During the past half–month, he who has violated the precepts is invited to confess them and make repentance before the assembly’. This announcement is repeated three times. If there is no answer, he proclaims: ‘The precepts have been cleanly observed by everybody.’ Thereupon, follows the ceremony of reciting precepts.

⁵⁹ *Note:* It is incumbent on the host to request the guest master to teach the Dharma as often as three times a day, time and health permitting.

⁶⁰ Note the example of the youth Sudhana in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, who traveled “south” to some one hundred and ten cities in search of the truth. If it were not for his determination to go wherever required to find the dharma, how could he finally be admitted to Maitreya’s Tower and achieve enlightenment in one lifetime? An exception to this rule is when one is already fully conversant with a particular sutra or commentary, or when the sutra or commentary is being taught in a language one does not understand.

⁶¹ When preaching the dharma, a Bodhisattva disciple should always emphasize the development of the bodhi mind. Thus, when teaching the practice of Buddha Recitation, for example, he should urge his listeners not only to recite the Buddha’s name but also to teach others to do likewise—all the while seeking rebirth in the pure land as a stepping stone to Buddhahood. An exception to the rule of not turning away from the Mahayana is when the capacity of the audience is limited and, for reasons of expediency, can only be taught the two–vehicle path as a stopgap measure.

⁶² A figurative term for someone who is worthy of offerings. Just as a field can yield crops, so people will obtain blessed karmic results if they make offerings to one who deserves them. There are many kinds of ‘fields of blessings’: priests, enlightened beings such as the Buddhas, parents, the poor, etc.

⁶³ This precept—looking after the sick—exists only in the Bodhisattva precepts. Why are the sick foremost among the eight fields of blessings? It is because the other fields of blessings, including the Buddhas and sages, derive from our sense of *gratitude*. We are grateful to Sakyamuni Buddha for *leaving his throne* and luxurious life to find the path to enlightenment and teach it to us. The sick, on the other hand, constitute a *field of blessing based on compassion*. Since the highest moral attribute in Buddhism is compassion, the sick represent the foremost field of blessings.

⁶⁴ Not looking after the sick (minor precept No. 9) is to fail to save lives, while storing weapons is to create the conditions for actually destroying life. Both go against the mind of compassion of a Bodhisattva.

⁶⁵ A Bodhisattva disciple should not avenge even the death of his parents because this would be killing the parents of a past lifetime to avenge the parents of the current lifetime. Such action goes counter to the spirit of compassion—the very marrow of Buddhism. In Buddhism, the more offenses a person commits and the heavier these offenses are, the more a Bodhisattva should have compassion for him. Buddhism exists because there are people who commit infractions and offenses. Thus, the most revered and most popular Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana always live in places of great turmoil and suffering.

⁶⁶ A Bodhisattva should not act as a country's emissary for the purpose of spying or fostering war. However, if he were to do so to put an end to war or military confrontation, he would be acting in a spirit of compassion. The key words in this precept are for personal benefit or evil intention.

⁶⁷ To sell human beings and domestic animals is to make one's living off the life of others; to sell coffins and products connected with the disposal of corpses is to make one's living off the death of others. Unconsciously, if not consciously, one is happy to see others die, since one's livelihood is dependent on the number of deaths. The offense can be subtle—in the rejoicing mind—or not so subtle, as demonstrated by periodic exposures of questionable practices in the funeral industry. To make one's living off the life and death of others is to lack compassion, the very essence of Mahayana Buddhism. Therefore, all professions or trades connected with the above are forbidden to aspiring Bodhisattvas.

⁶⁸ This secondary precept 13 is related to major precept 7 (praising oneself and disparaging others) and major precept 10 (slandering the Triple Jewel). The offense committed here is secondary because: a) unlike in major precept 7, there is no self-praise and b) unlike in major precept 10, the objects of slander are virtuous persons, which include the Sangha (the community of priests and nuns) but not the Triple Jewel as a whole (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha). More important, this secondary precept 13 deals specifically with slander without cause. For a follower of the two vehicles (Theravada), this type of slander is a major offense, because it is immoral. (The emphasis here is on the personal integrity of the slanderer.) However, for a Bodhisattva, it is a secondary offense, because baseless slander can be refuted and is thus less likely to do permanent damage to the victim than slander based on fact. The emphasis in this instance has shifted to the well-being of the victim—compassion being the basis of Bodhisattvahood. This example illustrates the major difference between the Bodhisattva and other precepts.

⁶⁹ This precept refers to the setting of fires for farming and other such necessary purposes. Otherwise, the offense would be that of killing or stealing (Major precepts No. 1 and No. 2). In Asia, the period between the fourth and ninth months coincides with the reproductive cycles of such insects as ants and earthworms. Therefore, the Buddha forbade the setting of fires during those periods, out of a spirit of compassion toward all creatures, however lowly and helpless.

⁷⁰ To the followers of the Monastic Tradition (i.e., early Buddhism or Theravada), the attainment of the state of Arhat is the ultimate goal. They are attached to that teaching as the orthodox and highest form of Buddhism. For Mahayanists, such a goal is limited and unwholesome. Therefore, unless a person cannot profit from Mahayana teachings, it is an offense for a Bodhisattva to teach the two vehicle tradition. To do so would cause sentient beings to lose the great benefit of supreme enlightenment and Buddhahood.

⁷¹ Wholesome mind: in the Mahayana context, means to seek Buddhahood and to rescue all sentient beings. Why should a Bodhisattva teach the difficult Bodhisattva renunciation practices to a novice coming from afar? It is to test his capacity as a potential Bodhisattva and strengthen his resolve for the difficult tasks ahead. Moreover, to succeed in cultivation, a novice must cultivate a wholesome mind (seek Buddhahood and rescue sentient beings). To do so, he has to (1) set aside the ego/sever the attachment to the self (burn one's body...) and (2) be willing to sacrifice himself for sentient beings (forsake his body for starving beasts...). Unless the novice is ready to make such commitments, he is not a good "vessel of the dharma" and is likely to fail. A famous example of such commitment is the story of Master Hui-k'ō, the second patriarch of Zen, who knelt in the snow for days and finally cut off his arm, to persuade Bodhidharma to accept him as a disciple. This precept is directed specifically at priests and nuns, as an example of the Bodhisattva ideal.

⁷² The offenses described here are relatively minor, such as charging high rent or high interest on loans. Otherwise, the transgressions would be the major offense of stealing (second major precept).

⁷³ The 12 kinds of Buddhist scriptures distinguished according to different styles of exposition: (1) the Buddha's exposition of the Dharma in prose (sutra), (2) verses which repeat the ideas already expressed in prose (geya), (3) verses containing ideas not expressed in prose (gatha), (4) narratives of the past which explain a person's present state (nidana), (5) narratives of past lives of the Buddha's disciples (itivrittaka), (6) narratives of past lives of the Buddha (jataka), (7) accounts of miracles performed by the Buddha or a deva (abdhuta-dharma), (8) an exposition of the Dharma through allegories (avadana), (9) discussions of doctrine (upadesa), (10) an exposition of the Dharma by the Buddha without

awaiting questions or requests from his disciples (udana), (11) an extensive exposition of principles of truth (vaipulya), and (12) prophecies by the Buddha regarding his disciples' attainment of Buddhahood (vyakarana).

⁷⁴ Principles of the Bodhisattva precepts: The Sravaka precepts were promulgated by the Buddha as the offenses actually arose. They were expressly devised for priests and nuns and are to be taken only by them. The Bodhisattva precepts, on the other hand, are the precepts of the Mind, and are common to all sentient beings. Therefore, they can be observed by all. The essence of the buddha nature includes such qualities as compassion, filiality, etc. Each of us intrinsically possesses the buddha nature, the primary cause of Buddhahood. Observance of the Bodhisattva precepts creates the conditions for the buddha nature to manifest itself. When cause and conditions come together, the result is Buddhahood. This is referred to as the "essence of the buddha nature."

⁷⁵ Bodhisattvas engage in countless cultivation practices. One such practice is to light incense and then either place the incense pieces on a large incense burner before the image of a Buddha or, alternatively, raise a small burner to one's forehead and recite verses of praise or mantras while facing the Buddha. If a disciple, out of envy, gossips about a Bodhisattva who engages in these practices (calling him a fake and a showoff, for example), the disciple commits a secondary offense. This precept is similar to precept 13, but differs with respect to the goal of the offender. In precept 13, the aim of slandering priests in particular is to defame them and make them lose offerings, while in this precept it is to cause discord within the Sangha.

⁷⁶ "Throughout the eons of time, all male sentient beings have been my father; all female sentient beings have been my mother. I was born of them." This is a poetical way to express the truth that we are all related throughout the eons of time, and thus to save sentient beings is to save one's family and ultimately oneself.

⁷⁷ Precept #20 has two parts, the first part concerning the living and the second part the deceased. (1) In the first part, there are two related concepts, "rescue and protect" and "rescue and deliver." The first concept relates to the potential victim, while the second concept embraces the killer as well. To help both, it is necessary to develop the killer's sense of compassion. Once there is true compassion, all killing ceases, and both the killer and the victim are liberated. Thus, the sutra states: "the disciple should always teach the Bodhisattva precepts to rescue and deliver sentient beings." (2) Furthermore, not only the living, but also the dead, should be liberated. Therefore, priests and nuns should be invited to explain the Bodhisattva sutras and precepts on the death anniversaries of

parents and other kin. Note: “If a Bodhisattva sees an animal on the verge of being killed, he must devise a way to rescue and protect it”: Now, if you wish to save a certain being but it’s beyond your capacity, then you should single-mindedly recite the Buddha’s name. For example, you may see some pigs or sheep that are about to be slaughtered, and you can’t liberate them because you aren’t able to buy them all. At this time you should single-mindedly recite the Buddha’s name so those creatures can hear it. You can speak Dharma also. You can say to them, “All of you living beings should bring forth the Bodhi resolve bodhi-mind.”” This is creating causes and conditions for rescuing their wisdom-light (Mind). Although you are not saving their physical bodies, you are rescuing their wisdom-light. (Master Hui Seng)

⁷⁸ When a Buddhist dies, it is the practice for relatives to recite the sutras and perform other meritorious acts, transferring all the merits to the dead. This helps the deceased achieve rebirth in the Pure Lands (“behold the Buddhas”) or, alternatively, to obtain a good rebirth in the human or celestial realms. Rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha is the aim of many Mahayana Buddhists, as this is viewed as a realistic goal, considering the circumstances of ordinary human beings in the Saha World.

⁷⁹ A Bodhisattva must not return anger for anger. This is because wherever there is anger, all compassion is lost. “To seek revenge and maim and kill and prosecute” is to create the causes of future sufferings and ensure that they will never end. Even today, this lesson has unfortunately not been learned despite all the hindsight available to us from past warfare and genocide: “President Clinton came to Kigali today to talk to scarred and mutilated survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and to acknowledge that the world could have protected them, though it did not . . . Both in his meeting with the victims and the speech to an invited audience here, Mr. Clinton called for sharper vigilance against genocide and swifter prosecution of its perpetrators . . .” (NY Times: March 26, 1998). N.B. Buddhists do not cultivate a sense of vengefulness because they realize that sentient beings know only Cause and Effect in the present, but not in past or future lifetimes. The present perpetrators might have been the victims in a previous lifetime; thus, to exact retribution now may be to jeopardize the parents of one lifetime in order to avenge the parents of another! This truth can be glimpsed in the current wave of ethnic conflicts in Africa and the Balkans.

⁸⁰ “According to the Brahma Net and Avatamsaka Sutras, we should ignore appearances and external forms when seeking a good teacher. For example, we should disregard such traits as youth, poverty, low status or lack of education, unattractive appearance or incomplete features, but should simply seek someone conversant with the Dharma, who can be of

benefit to us. Nor should we find fault with good spiritual advisors for acting in certain ways, as it may be due to a number of reasons, such as pursuing a hidden cultivation practice or following an expedient teaching. Or else, they may act the way they do because while their achievements may be high, their residual bad habits have not been extinguished. If we grasp at forms and look for faults, we will forfeit benefits on the path of cultivation.

⁸¹ Traditionally listed as: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, agate, red pearl and carnelian. They represent the seven powers of faith, perseverance, sense of shame, avoidance of wrongdoing, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

⁸² A Bodhisattva should not follow the Two Vehicle teachings or worldly teachings because they all have one principle in common: the rejection of the concept of Buddha Nature as basic to all sentient beings.

⁸³ What is meant by skillfully administering the resources of the Three Jewels? If one receives goods for the Buddha Jewel but uses them for the Dharma Jewel, this is misusing goods. Or, if one receives them for the Sangha Jewel but uses them for the Buddha Jewel, that is also misusing goods. In Buddhist teachings, it becomes clear that Cause and Effect are quite complicated. If money is given to repair an image of Sakyamuni Buddha and the money is used to print sutras instead, then one has used the Buddha Jewel money for the Dharma Jewel.

⁸⁴ To pawn himself, or cut off and sell his own flesh: is a figure of speech for selling one's physical labor or one's intellectual labor.

⁸⁵ All visiting Sangha members should be invited to receive offerings in accord with their position in the Sangha (seniority of ordination). They are part of the assembly that keeps the precepts and, as such, should receive their share of the offerings. If one does not offer a visiting Sangha what he rightly deserves, if one is greedy for profit and receives individual offerings, that is a violation of the precept against stealing

⁸⁶ This precept specifically prohibits a cleric from seeking invitations and donations for himself personally. In the regulations on offerings there is a stanza that stipulates: Above, offerings should go to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions; In the middle, to the community of priests; Below, to all sentient beings of the Six Realms. Offerings belong to all without distinction. Moreover, the offerings destined for the community of priests belong to all priests and nuns, not only those residing at the temple, but also to current visiting priests and nuns as well as future visitors. Thus, technically, the offerings should be divided equally among all those present, with a portion set aside for future visiting priests. This editor remembers visiting a temple in India and upon seeing goods piled up in corner rooms, thinking to himself that the temple was too wealthy. Later

he realized that these goods had been set aside for visiting priests in observance of this precept!

⁸⁷ It is very important to issue invitations to priests and nuns according to their proper order or seniority according to the time of their full ordination as a Bhiksu or Bhiksuni. This is to avoid discord and dissension within the assembly, with popular priests receiving the bulk of the invitations and others receiving none. For a layperson to fail to respect this precept is to lose deep merit and virtue, as he would, in effect, disrupt the harmony of the Sangha. Thus, to issue a discriminatory invitation goes against the spirit of compassion and non-discrimination that all Buddhists, particularly Bodhisattvas, should nurture. Furthermore, to offer a discriminatory invitation even to 500 Arhats is not necessarily meritorious because the degree of merit or virtue depends on three factors: the recipient, the gift and, most important, the mind of the giver. If the gift is presented with a mind of compassion and equanimity, with no thought of gift, recipient or giver, then the merits accrued become infinite. Otherwise, they are limited. See in this connection the Vimalakirti Sutra.

⁸⁸ Sakyamuni Buddha and the six Buddhas who preceded him. By extension, it means all the Buddhas.