

# CHAPTER 31

## Guarding the Moral Precepts

XXXI. CHAPTER 31: GUARDING THE MORAL PRECEPTS

It is in this way that this bodhisattva practices the courses of good karmic action.

A. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC RESULTS OF THE TEN COURSES OF KARMIC ACTION

In both good and bad courses of karmic action, there are general characteristics as well as specific characteristics. Each of these are to be clearly distinguished and known as possessing two corresponding types of karmic results.

1. THE TEN COURSES OF GOOD KARMIC ACTION

a. GENERAL KARMIC RESULTS OF THE TEN COURSES OF GOOD KARMIC ACTION

As for the general characteristics of the resulting retributions of the ten courses of good karmic action, these may consist of either rebirth in the heavens or rebirth among humans.

b. SPECIFIC KARMIC RESULTS OF THE TEN COURSES OF GOOD KARMIC ACTION

As for the specific characteristics of the resulting retributions, they are as follows:

In the case of the good karmic action of abandoning the killing of beings, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, long lifespan. Second, having but little illness.

From the good karmic action of abandoning stealing, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one obtains great wealth. Second, one becomes independently wealthy.

From the good karmic action of abandoning sexual misconduct, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one's wife will be chaste and good. Second, she cannot be "ruined" by others.<sup>532</sup>

From the good karmic action of abandoning false speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will not be slandered by anyone. Second, one will not be cheated or deceived by others.

From the good karmic action of abandoning divisive speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will gain a fine following. Second, one's [reputation] will not be ruined by others.

From the good karmic action of abandoning harsh speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will hear whichever sounds one delights in hearing. Second, one will not become embroiled in disputes.

From the good karmic action of abandoning scattered or inappropriate speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, people will trust and accept whatever one says. Second, whatever one says will be definitely decisive.

From the good karmic action of abandoning covetousness, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will be easily contented. Second, one will have but few wants.

From the good karmic action of abandoning ill will, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, wherever one is reborn, one will always seek to bring about fine circumstances for others. Second, one will not delight in tormenting or harming other beings.

From the good karmic action of maintaining right views, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will abandon flattery and deviousness. Second, whatever one sees will be pure in character.

## 2. THE TEN COURSES OF BAD KARMIC ACTION

### a. GENERAL KARMIC RESULTS OF THE TEN COURSES OF BAD KARMIC ACTION

The same principles apply in the matter of the ten courses of bad karmic action. As for the general characteristics of their resulting karmic retributions, if one has engaged in them to a high degree, one falls into the hell realms. If one has engaged in them to a middling degree, one will fall into the animal realms. If one has engaged in them to a lesser<sup>533</sup> degree, then one will fall into the realms of the hungry ghosts.

### b. SPECIFIC KARMIC RESULTS OF THE TEN COURSES OF BAD KARMIC ACTION

As for the specific karmic retributions [associated with the ten courses of bad karmic action], they are as follows:

From the bad karmic action of killing beings, there are two resultant retributions: First, a short lifespan. Second, much illness.

From the bad karmic action of stealing, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, poverty. Second, loss of wealth.

From the bad karmic action of sexual misconduct, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will have an ugly and evil wife who is also unchaste. Second, one will be ruined by her.

From the bad karmic action of false speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will be slandered by others. Second, one will be cheated and deceived by others.

From the bad karmic action of divisive speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will gain a bad following. Second, one will have a following vulnerable to destruction.

From the bad karmic action of harsh speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will have to listen to sounds that one loathes. Second, one will be forever embroiled in disputes.

From the bad karmic action of scattered or inappropriate speech, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one's words will not be trusted and accepted. Second, one's speech will have neither beginning nor end.

From the bad karmic action of covetousness, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one's mind will never know contentment. Second, one will have an abundance of insatiable desires.

From the bad karmic action of ill will, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one will be bad-natured. Second, one will delight in tormenting other beings.

From the bad karmic action of maintaining wrong views, there are two resultant karmic retributions: First, one's mind will tend toward flattery and deviousness. Second, one will tend to fall into wrong views.

#### B. THE BODHISATTVA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF MORAL VIRTUE ON THE PATH

##### 1. CHERISHING THE DHARMA AND INCREASING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

Having known the Dharma, one cherishes and delights in it and one's mind becomes unshakeable in the Dharma.

When in the midst of beings,  
one's mind of kindness and compassion becomes ever greater.

As for "cherishing the Dharma," one cherishes only the Dharma and sees nothing superior to the Dharma. In this context, "Dharma" refers to the ten courses of good karmic action discussed earlier.

As for "delighting in the Dharma," one delights only in the Dharma and in nothing else.

As for "one's mind remains unshakeable in the Dharma," the bodhisattva never abandons the Dharma even when threatened with the loss of his life.

As the bodhisattva practices dharmas such as these, when he is in the midst of other beings, his kindness and compassion toward them become ever greater. Although kindness and compassion do exist on the first ground, their quality therein cannot match their quality as they exist on this ground. This is because he now has a penetrating comprehension of the causes and conditions for karmic offenses and karmic merit.

Beings are pitiable, for they are all under the influence of their own karma and are unable to gain independence from it. This being the case, one's mind then remains free of any thoughts affected by hatred

or anger. For one who practices in this way, kindness and compassion do indeed become ever greater. He reflects in this manner:

2. THE MOTIVATION TO TEACH BEINGS AND CAUSE THEM TO ENTER THE PATH

Alas! These beings!

They have fallen so very deeply into wrong views.

I must explain right views for them

and thus cause them to gain entry into the path of what is right.

Having gained this penetrating comprehension of the causes and conditions for karmic offenses and karmic merit, the bodhisattva engages in the deep practice of kindness and compassion for all beings, thinking thus:

Beings are so pitiable. Because they do not know the true character of dharmas, for the most part they engage in false thinking and thus develop all manner of wrong views. It is because of their wrong views that they produce all manner of afflictions, and it is because of their afflictions that they then create all sorts of karma. And it is because they produce these karmic causes and conditions that they then turn about in *saṃsāra*'s cycle of births and deaths.

I previously brought forth the resolve to seek *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*. In order to bring about the liberation of beings, I should explain right views for them. I should liberate all of these beings and influence them to enter the true path so that they are then caused to attain liberation.

Having reflected thus, one comes to realize that all beings are beset by all manner of afflictions, as described below:

3. THE GENESIS OF A BODHISATTVA'S WISH TO RESCUE BEINGS FROM SUFFERING

One contemplates the afflictions they have brought forth as well as the defilement associated with those afflictions, all of the different sorts of black and evil karmic actions they do, and all the diverse sorts of suffering and anguish they undergo.

One bears in mind all of these beings, feeling pity for their plight and for the many ways in which they have become so deficient. Having taken up all of these different contemplations, one realizes, "They are all just as I myself have been."

One then immediately brings forth the mind of compassion and uses the skillful means of bringing forth a great aspiration: "Oh, how might I be able to influence these beings to succeed in extinguishing all their many sufferings?"

Regarding "afflictions" and "defilement associated with those afflictions," "afflictions" refers to any of the dharmas subsumed by the

fetters whereas “defilement” refers to [whatever arises from] being “obsessed”<sup>534</sup> [by the afflictions].

[More specifically], those afflictions subsumed by the fetters include greed, hatred, conceit, ignorance, the view of a real self in association with the body [or any of the other four aggregates],<sup>535</sup> extreme views, seizing on views, seizing on unprincipled precepts, wrong views, and doubt. These ten [consisting of three] root and [seven] subsidiary afflictions are distinguished according to their relationship to the three realms of existence and according to whether they are to be severed by directly seeing the [four] truths or whether they are to be severed by meditative cultivation.<sup>536</sup> As a consequence [of these distinctions], there are ninety-eight latent tendencies.<sup>537</sup>

Those not subsumed by the fetters include non-faith, absence of a sense of shame, absence of a dread of blame, flattery, deviousness, restlessness, regretfulness,<sup>538</sup> rigid attachment, indolence, neglectfulness, drowsiness, malice, miserliness, jealousy, arrogance, impatience, and gluttony. These too are distinguished according to their relationship to the three realms of existence and according to whether they are to be severed by directly seeing the [four] truths or whether they are to be severed by meditative cultivation. As a consequence [of these distinctions], there are one hundred and ninety-six obsessive defilements.

There are others who explain “afflictions” as phenomena residing in deep mental dispositions and explain “defilements” as phenomena abiding at a more superficial level of mind.

There are yet others who explain that it is all of the hindrances that constitute “obsessive defilements” whereas all else falls within the sphere of “afflictions.”

Regarding “black and evil karmic actions,” this refers to those seven courses of karmic action [among the ten courses of bad karmic action] that actually do constitute [physical or verbal] karmic actions together with thought that has come under the influence of covetousness, ill will, or wrong views. These are able to engender painful karmic retributions.

As for “all the different sorts of suffering and anguish,” whatsoever bad experiences are undergone by the body correlate with “suffering” whereas whatsoever bad experiences are undergone by the mind correlate with “anguish.” Alternatively, one may explain that present-life sufferings are what correlate with “suffering” whereas “anguish” corresponds to later experiences occurring through descent into the wretched destinies.

Regarding “the many ways in which they have become so deficient,” “deficiencies” refers here to inadequacies in sense faculties, limbs, or physical bodies, in what is essential to sustain life, or in faith, observance of the moral precepts, or other such meritorious qualities.

Because the remaining lines are easy to interpret in accordance with the verse statements, no further explanation is necessary.

Once one has contemplated in this manner, one realizes:

4. THE VOW TO CAUSE 2 VEHICLES PRACTITIONERS TO ENTER THE MAHĀYĀNA

Beings are ever so pitiable.

For those who have fallen into the Two Vehicles,

I shall make a vow for their sakes

to cause them to dwell in the Great Vehicle.<sup>539</sup>

This circumstance accords with this *Ten Grounds Sutra* wherein Vajragarbha Bodhisattva himself said:<sup>540</sup>

This bodhisattva abandons the ten courses of bad karmic action while also influencing beings to abide in the ten courses of good karmic action. For the sake of these beings, he strives profoundly to gain the supreme mind, the fine mind, the delighting mind, the pitying mind, the kind and compassionate mind, the beneficial mind, the protective mind, the mind that sees other beings as one's own, the mind that acts as a great teacher, the mind that draws in others, and the mind that accepts others. He thinks:

All of these beings are so very pitiable. They have fallen into all different sorts of wrong thought and wrong views, and thus travel along in wrong and hazardous paths. I should now influence them to abide in the true path of right views.

All these different groups of beings engage in mutual disputation and fighting. They always feel anger toward one another as mutual hatred and torment blaze up between them. This being the case, I should influence them to instead abide in the unsurpassably great kindness.

These beings are insatiable, so much so that they covet any advantages enjoyed by others and pursue wrong livelihoods as their means of survival. I should influence them to instead abide in the pure actions of body, speech, and mind.

Abiding among causes and conditions associated with greed, hatred, and delusion, these beings are forever generating all the different sorts of afflictions and fetters while never availing themselves of the means whereby they might seek to escape their plight. I should extinguish their sufferings and anguish and influence them to instead abide in the state that is free of sufferings and anguish.

These beings have had their vision obscured by ignorance and thus have wandered into a dense forest of darkness so deeply that they are unable to escape from it by themselves. Having abandoned the light of wisdom, they have strayed into the hazardous and evil path of the various [wrong] views. I should rescue them and cause them then to acquire the eye of unimpeded wisdom. Using this wisdom eye, they will not follow other people, but rather will know all dharmas in accordance with their true character.

These beings have fallen into the long river of births and deaths and are about to descend into the pit of the hell realms, animal realms, hungry ghost realms, and *asura* realms. They are on the verge of falling into the net trap of perversity and deviousness hidden from their view by the weeds of the many different afflictions.

Having no guide, they are not even motivated to escape from their predicament. They claim that the path is not the path and that what is not the path is indeed the path. The minions of Māra, their adversaries, always pursue them. Having no good guide, they obey the ideas of Māra and stray far from the Dharma of the Buddha.

I should cause beings such as these to pass beyond these hazardous and evil roads in the cycle of births and deaths so that they may be able to dwell in the city of all-knowledge that is free of fear and free of decay.

All these beings have become caught and carried along, drifting, in the current of the flood of desire, the flood of existence, the flood of [wrong] views, and the flood of ignorance in which they are pulled under by the great waves of the many different karmic offenses and are submerged in the river of craving. They are swept along by the waves of the cycle of births and deaths, caught in a swirling whirlpool that pulls them around and around in a current from which they cannot escape.

They are drowned and rotted by the salty waves of desirous ideation, hate-filled ideation, and tormenting ideation.<sup>541</sup> They are seized and held by that *rākṣasa* of the view of a real self in association with the body. They enter into the deep woods of the five desires, are seized by the defilements of sensual enjoyments, and are blown about on the high plateau of conceit.

[Beings] are so extremely pitiable. There is no island [of respite] for them, nor do they have any means of rescue. They are stuck in the empty village of the six sense bases from which they are unable to move. There is no one with the skill to take

them on beyond. I should now transport all such beings in the sturdy and durable ship of the great compassion and wisdom, taking them to the continent of all-knowledge where they shall become safe, secure, and free of fear.

These beings produce such an abundance of suffering that they are indeed pitiable. They are confined within the prison of birth, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, and anguish wherein they are much inclined toward greed, anger, craving, and hatred. They fall into the four inverted views, are harmed by the venomous snakes of the four great elements, are tortured by their five-aggregate enemies, are ensnared by the deceptive thief of sensual enjoyments' defilements, and undergo measureless suffering and anguish in the empty village of the six sense bases.

I should demolish their prison of *saṃsāra* and cause them to attain unimpeded sovereign mastery in the security and bliss of *nirvāṇa*.

These beings are so extremely pitiable. With such narrow, inferior and petty minds, they have come to delight in paltry sorts of benefit. They have shrunken back from, fallen away from, and become bereft of the resolve to attain all-knowledge. Even when they do seek a means of escape, they then only delight in the vehicles of *śrāvaka* disciples or *pratyekabuddhas*. I should cause them to gain the truly great resolve by influencing them to delight in the vast and magnificent dharmas of a buddha.

[Next, we have]:

#### 5. THE POWER OF THE PRECEPTS AND DEEP ENTRY INTO THE SECOND GROUND

If the bodhisattva carries forth his practice in this manner, he will gain the power arising from upholding the moral precepts. Having thoroughly known how to bring forth good karmic actions, he strives to cause them to increase.

If one proceeds thus, he will thereby become a son of the Buddha and will deeply enter the Ground of Stainlessness.

Regarding "the power arising from upholding the moral precepts," if one is single-minded in purely fulfilling the moral precepts associated with the ten courses of good karmic action, then he will acquire the power derived from cultivating and accumulating merit.

As for the ability "to bring forth good karmic actions," one knows well how to personally bring forth and increase the courses of good karmic action and also knows how to cause other beings to do so as well.

As for his “deeply entering” [the Ground of Stainlessness], his practices become ever more far-reaching to the point that they exhaust its very limits and depths.

As for the term “son of the Buddha,” whosoever is able to carry on his practice in accordance with the Dharma is one who is known as “a son of the Buddha.”

From the point of its initial arising on the first ground on through to the second ground in which it increases, this bodhisattva should diligently practice vigor in this manner.

6. REACHING THE 2ND GROUND, THE BODHISATTVA MAY SEE A 1000 BUDDHAS

When the bodhisattva succeeds in reaching  
the boundaries of the Ground of Stainlessness,  
he will then be able to see  
a hundred or a thousand buddhas.

In discussing the first ground, we already explained the *pratyutpanna* samādhi and the dharmas assisting acquisition of the samādhi in which one sees the buddhas of the present era. Specifically, these included using the thirty-two major marks, eighty secondary characteristics, and forty dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas in practicing mindfulness of the Buddha without having any attachment to any dharma. We also discussed the means to enhance the samādhi and enable the complete development of the powers arising from its fruition.

**Question:** If, by virtue of having already reached the limits of the first ground, a bodhisattva is able to see the Buddhas, then, on entering the second ground, he should then be able to see the Buddhas. Why then do you now state that, only upon reaching the limits of the second ground, does one, then and only then, see the Buddhas? If that is truly the case, then it must be that one loses this samādhi on first entering the second ground and only then regains it later on.

**Response:** When first entering the second ground, one still sees the Buddhas and still does not fall back from this samādhi. It is only because you have not well understood the intended meaning of the verse that you have posed this challenge.

In the beginning and middle phases of the second ground, one still only sees a hundred buddhas. It is only when one reaches its very limits that one is then able to see from a hundred up to a thousand buddhas. Once one has seen the Buddhas, one’s mind is filled with immense joy. It is because of one’s zeal to achieve success in the Buddha’s Dharma that one then becomes diligent in practicing vigor.

## 7. ONE MAKES OFFERINGS TO THE BUDDHAS &amp; RECEIVES THE 10 COURSES AGAIN

One immediately becomes able to use the four requisites to make offerings to the Buddhas.

He is then able to receive again the ten courses of karmic action in the abodes of the Buddhas.

“The four requisites” refers to robes, food and drink, bedding, and medicines. One may deduce for himself the meaning of the rest of the verse.

## 8. HAVING RECEIVED THEM AGAIN, ONE FOREVER UPHOLDS THE PRECEPTS

Having performed acts such as these,  
one receives the courses of good karmic action from the Buddhas  
and, even throughout a hundred thousand myriads of kalpas,  
one never allows his practice to become damaged or lost.

“Never allowing this practice to become damaged” means that one does not allow one’s practice of the moral precepts to become scant or weak. One may also say that it is purity in one’s endeavors that defines non-damage. “Loss” refers to complete discontinuance of one’s practice.

It is in this manner that this bodhisattva has passed through the first ground and entered the second ground. This matter is as described below:

## 9. ONE ABANDONS MISERLINESS, PRACTICES GIVING, &amp; DELIGHTS IN PRECEPTS

One thoroughly abandons the defilement of miserliness  
and delights in the practice of pure giving.

By thoroughly abandoning the defilement of miserliness,  
one gains a deep love of purity in upholding the moral precepts.

“Purity” refers to practicing giving with a mind devoted exclusively to goodness, one that is not mixed with any of the afflictions. “Deep love” [of purity in the moral precepts] refers to abiding so solidly in it that one never relinquishes that practice.

On this ground, there are no further residual traces of the defilement associated with miserliness or the defilement associated with breaking precepts. It is because of this that this ground is referred to as “stainless.”

The bodhisattva who in this manner remains free of thoughts inclined toward miserliness or the breaking of moral precepts is especially proficient in the practice within the four means of attraction known as “pleasing words” and is also especially proficient in the practice within the six *pāramitās* referred to as “the perfection of moral virtue.”

“Proficient” refers here to having engaged in extensive practice whereby one’s power in that practice has become ever more deeply developed.

C. ŚĪLA PĀRAMITĀ’S ASPECTS, ARISING, POWERS, PURIFICATION & DISTINCTIONS

**Question:** If on the second ground one has already acquired strength in one’s practice of *śīla pāramitā*, the perfection of moral virtue, now, as one discusses this ground, one should explain the aspects, the arising, the powers, the purification, and the distinctions associated with *śīla pāramitā*.

**Response:**

In a general discussion of the perfection of *śīla*, there are sixty-five aspects.

As for its arising, powers, purification, and distinctions, these are discussed in place after place elsewhere in this treatise.

1. THE SIXTY-FIVE ASPECTS OF THE PERFECTION OF MORAL VIRTUE

*Śīla pāramitā*, as a topic of discussion, is measureless and boundless. To speak of it only in general terms, there are sixty-five aspects. As for the other subtopics, in particular the arising of moral virtue, the powers of moral virtue, the purification of moral virtue, and distinctions to be made with regard to moral virtue, these factors are discussed in detail both earlier and later on in this treatise.

[This interpretive approach] is in accordance with the “The Harmonious Dharma of the Buddha” chapter of *The Jeweled Summit Sutra* wherein, in the presence of the Buddha, Akṣayamati Bodhisattva spoke of the sixty-five aspects of *śīla pāramitā*, stating that *śīla* refers to the following:<sup>542</sup>

It is not [physically] tormenting any being;<sup>543</sup>

It is not having any thought of stealing the possessions of others;

It is not being attached to any outward visual forms;

It is not deceiving beings;

Through ensuring the complete unity of retinue, it is not engaging in divisive speech;

Through being well able to patiently endure harsh words [from others], it is being free of harsh speech;

Through always contemplating and evaluating whether one’s speech is beneficial, it is being free of scattered or inappropriate speech;

Through delighting in the continued happiness of others, it is being free of covetousness;

Through patiently enduring every sort of suffering, it is being free of ill will;

- Through not praising teachers of other paths, it is right view;
- Through faith in purification of the mind, it is faith in the Buddha;<sup>544</sup>
- Through knowing that the Dharma is genuine, it is faith in the Dharma;
- Through delighting in venerating and revering the assemblies of worthies and *āryas*, it is faith in the Sangha;
- Through full prostrations, the making of offerings, and other expressions of reverential respect, it is mindfulness of the Buddha;
- Through having mental dispositions by which one is fearful of transgressing against even the most minor moral precept, it is moral virtue that does not become diminished or weak;
- Through not relying on any of the other vehicles, it is moral virtue that is undamaged;
- Through abandoning erroneous practice, it is moral virtue that does not become deficient;
- Through the non-arising of evil afflictions, it is moral virtue that does not become admixed [with impure aspects];
- Through the most ultimate and constant delight in increasing and strengthening good dharmas, it is moral virtue that remains unsullied;
- Through practicing in accordance with one's wishes, it is moral virtue characterized by sovereign mastery;
- Through not doing anything criticized by the wise, it is moral virtue that is praised by the Āryas;
- Through always abiding in mindfulness guided by stable wisdom, it is easily practiced moral virtue;
- Through the complete absence of karmic transgressions in all that one does, it is irreproachable moral virtue;
- Through guarding the sense faculties, it is skillfully guarded moral virtue;
- Through being one of whom all buddhas are mindful, it is illustrious moral virtue;
- Through receiving in proper measure things obtained in accordance with the Dharma,<sup>545</sup> it is moral virtue characterized by but few wants;
- Through the severance of covetousness, it is moral virtue that knows contentment;
- Through renunciation in both body and mind, it is moral virtue characterized by renunciation;
- Through abandoning the many sorts of boisterous speech, it is moral virtue appropriate to a forest hermitage;

- Through having no need to look to anyone else in the hope of obtaining anything, it is moral virtue perfectly complete in the lineage-bases of the Āryas;
- Through being one who possesses roots of goodness, it is moral virtue characterized by refined practice of the *dhūta* austerities;
- Through [its efficacy in bringing about] rebirth among humans and devas, it is moral virtue characterized by practice consistent with the manner in which it has been taught;
- Through devotion to rescuing all beings, it is moral virtue characterized by kindness;<sup>546</sup>
- Through enduring every sort of suffering, it is moral virtue characterized by compassion;
- Through resolve that does not retreat and sink away, it is moral virtue characterized by joy;
- Through abandoning both hatred and affection, it is moral virtue characterized by equanimity;
- Through subduing the mind, it is moral virtue marked by seeing one's own faults;
- Through protecting the minds of others, it is unerring moral virtue;
- Through skillfully guarding the precepts, it is moral virtue that is well restrained.<sup>547</sup>
- Through devotion to the ripening of beings, it is moral virtue characterized by giving;
- Through having nothing for which one wishes, it is moral virtue characterized by patience;
- Through not desisting and withdrawing from endeavors, it is moral virtue characterized by vigor;
- Through accumulating the dharmas assisting *dhyāna*, it is moral virtue characterized by *dhyāna*;
- Through insatiable pursuit of abundant learning and roots of goodness, it is moral virtue characterized by wisdom;
- Through gaining wisdom from abundant learning, it is moral virtue that seeks abundant learning;
- Through accumulating the dharmas that assist the seven limbs of enlightenment, it is moral virtue that draws close to good spiritual guides;
- Through relinquishing erroneous paths, it is moral virtue characterized by the abandonment of bad spiritual guides;
- Through contemplating impermanence, it is moral virtue characterized by non-attachment to the body;
- Through diligently accumulating roots of goodness, it is moral virtue characterized by not trusting [in the durability of] one's life;

- Through purity in one's resolute intentions, it is moral virtue characterized by freedom from regrets;
- Through purity in one's actions, it is moral virtue that is not false;
- Through resolute intentions that are free of defilement, it is moral virtue that is free of heat;
- Through skillfulness in initiating karmic actions, it is moral virtue that is free of sorrow;
- Through not elevating oneself [above others], it is moral virtue that is free of conceit;
- Through abandoning defiled desires, it is moral virtue that does not indulge frivolous restlessness;
- Through maintaining a straightforward mind, it is moral virtue that does not elevate oneself [above others];
- Through maintaining a well-regulated mind, it is moral virtue possessed of a sense of shame;
- Through not bringing forth evil thoughts, it is moral virtue trained in goodness;
- Through extinguishing all afflictions, it is moral virtue characterized by quiescence;
- Through practicing in accordance with [the original] explanations, it is moral virtue that follows what has been taught;
- Through practicing the dharmas constituting the four means of attraction, it is moral virtue characterized by the transformative teaching of beings;
- Through not erring in [the practice of] one's own dharma, it is moral virtue that protects the Dharma;
- Through [maintaining one's] fundamental purity, it is moral virtue in which all vows are fulfilled;
- Through dedicating [one's merit] to realization of the unsurpassed path, it is moral virtue that leads to acquiring the dharmas of the Buddha;
- Through maintaining a mind of uniformly equal regard for all beings, it is moral virtue that leads to acquiring the Buddha's samādhis.
- Venerable Śāriputra, as for these sixty-five aspects [of the perfection of *śīla*], [were one to exhaustively list them], the aspects of all bodhisattva's pure moral virtue would be endlessly numerous.

## 2. THE ARISING OF THE MORAL PRECEPTS

Now, as for the arising of the moral precepts, this is a matter discussed in place after place [elsewhere in this treatise].

Briefly stated, there are eight categories involved in the arising of the moral precepts, four arising from association with the body and

four arising from association with speech. Those arising from association with the body are the abandonment of taking life, the abandonment of inflicting torment and suffering on beings, the abandonment of stealing, and the abandonment of sexual misconduct. Those associated with the mouth are the abandonment of lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and scattered or inappropriate speech. These are the eight.

These eight categories of moral precepts arise by taking them on [as ongoing obligations]. These dharmas associated with taking them on, when separately distinguished in terms of taking them on physically, taking them on verbally, and taking them on mentally result in a combined total of twenty-four sub-categories. When further considered in terms of the twenty-four associated with [the injunction against] instructing others [to commit any of these transgressions], the twenty-four associated with [the injunction against] rejoicing in [transgressions directly committed by others], and the twenty-four associated with [the injunction against] carrying them out oneself, this results in a total of ninety-six, all of which occur in connection with the desire realm.

These [moral precepts] arise commencing with this very day and night. How is this the case? After the initial mental moment of taking on [the obligation imposed by the moral precept] has expired, throughout the entire day and night, during the second [and all subsequent] mental moments thereafter [the force of that moral precept] constantly arises.

One's use of the associated merit is also just the same. How is this the case? After the initial mind-moment associated with an act of giving expires, beginning with the second mind-moment, as one uses [this merit], it is constantly produced.<sup>548</sup> This is the nature of the process as it occurs in association with good physical karmic actions.

There are those [instances of the arising of the moral precepts] that are subsumed within the ten courses of good karmic action and those that are not subsumed therein. This is the situation as it occurs in connection with the desire realm.

As for those [instances of the arising of moral precepts] that occur in connection with the form realm, there are two kinds: first, those [moral precepts] arising from association with the body, and second, those [moral precepts] arising from association with speech. As for those arising from association with the body, this refers to the abandonment of karmic offenses not subsumed among the ten courses of bad karmic action.<sup>549</sup>

In the case of those [moral precepts] arising from association with speech, this refers to the abandonment of scattered or inappropriate speech.<sup>550</sup> Taking on this moral precept involves taking it on physically, taking it on verbally, and taking it on mentally. Taking all of these categories into account, this amounts to two times three, a subtotal of six.

Similarly, there are thus also another six associated with the injunction against instructing others [to carry out any given karmic transgression], another six associated with [the injunction against] rejoicing [in transgressions committed by others], and another six associated with [the injunction against] carrying out [any given transgression] oneself. This yields in total four times six, for a net total of twenty-four. When these are added to the previously cited ninety-six, this brings the grand total to one hundred and twenty.

In much the same fashion, moral precepts also arise in association with the character of one's actions. Thus there is also an arising of moral precepts at the time one attains the realization of the path and there is also an arising of moral precepts at the time one retreats from the path. So too, there may also be an arising of moral precepts in association with one's first taking on birth.

Because this subject [of the arising of moral precepts] is so very expansive in its scope, we now only present this condensed explanation.

### 3. THE POWERS OF THE MORAL PRECEPTS

As for the powers associated with the moral precepts, as growth occurs in the corresponding *pāramitā*, one's practice of moral virtue becomes ever stronger. Also, in direct correlation with whichever of the grounds one has entered, there will also be a corresponding enhancement in the solidity of one's practice of moral virtue and hence also in the powers associated with it.

### 4. THE PURIFICATION OF THE MORAL PRECEPTS

As for the purification of the moral precepts, not damaging or destroying moral precepts, not allowing deficiencies or diminishment in their practice, and so forth—these are all just as previously explained.

Additionally, the characteristic features of purity or impurity in one's practice of moral virtue correspond to their treatment in the dharma of the seven types of brahmacarya.<sup>551</sup> As related in the sutras, it is by virtue of seven manifestations of sexual desire<sup>552</sup> that the moral virtue [of one who practices *brahmacarya*] is impure, namely:

First, although one may indeed have cut off sexual relations, with a defiled mind, one might nonetheless still accept either bathing or massage performed by a woman;

Second, with a defiled mind, one might smell the perfume of a woman, engage in conversation with her, or participate in mutual joking with her;

Third, with a defiled mind, one might engage in mutual gazing with her;

Fourth, even though there might be a physical barrier separating one from a woman, with a defiled mind, he might still listen to her voice;

Fifth, one might have earlier talked and joked with a woman and later, even though separate from her, he might still recall that experience, being unable to let it go;

Sixth, one has restricted oneself from sexual relations [only] for a particular period of time, after which one will indulge in it again later on,<sup>553</sup>

Seventh, someone might temporarily cut off all sexual relations, doing so hoping that he will thereby be reborn in the heavens and enjoy sexual pleasures there together with celestial maidens while also gaining wealth and pleasure in future lives.

Therefore, [in cases such as these, even though] one has cut off sexual relations, these are still instances of impurity [in moral virtue]. Apart from these seven types of situations, [the practice of *brahmacharya*] does constitute purity in the practice of moral virtue.

##### 5. DISTINCTIONS IN THE MORAL PRECEPTS

Regarding distinctions in moral virtue, a two-fold distinction consists of, first, that characterized by the presence of the contaminants, and second, that characterized by the absence of the contaminants.

A threefold distinction consists of that connected with the desire realm, that connected with the form realm, and that with no connections [anywhere in the three realms].

A four-fold distinction consists of two types of right speech and right karmic action subsumed within right livelihood together with a different two types of right speech and right karmic action not subsumed within right livelihood.

A five-fold distinction consists of the common person's moral virtue, a bodhisattva's moral virtue, a *śrāvaka* disciple's moral virtue, a *pratyekabuddha*'s moral virtue, and the unsurpassable moral virtue of a buddha.

A six-fold distinction consists of:

First, desire realm [moral virtue] of body and speech subsumed within right livelihood;

Second, [desire realm moral virtue of body and speech] not subsumable within right livelihood;

Third, form realm [moral virtue] of body and speech subsumed within right livelihood;

Fourth, [form realm moral virtue of body and speech] not subsumable within right livelihood;

Fifth, [moral virtue] of body and speech that is free of the contaminants and which is subsumed within right livelihood;

Sixth, [moral virtue of body and speech that is free of the contaminants] but not subsumed within right livelihood.

A seven-fold distinction consists of the seven [physical and verbal] courses of good karmic action.

An eight-fold distinction consists of the previously-mentioned eight [types of arising of moral virtue] consisting of those four associated with the body and those four associated with speech.

A nine-fold distinction consists of the seven [physical and verbal] courses of good karmic action in addition to the two-fold distinction [according to presence or absence of the contaminants] cited earlier.

A ten-fold distinction consists of three types of moral virtue associated with the path, three types of antidotal moral virtue, and three types of simple moral virtue. These nine types are all free of the contaminants. With the addition of moral virtue involving the contaminants, the total number of types comes to ten.

So it is that we have all these many different categories of moral virtue.

#### D. THE ESSENTIAL CONSTITUENTS OF ŚĪLA (MORAL VIRTUE)

##### 1. Q: DOES MORAL VIRTUE CONSIST ONLY OF GOOD ACTIONS OF BODY & SPEECH?

**Question:** The Śrāvaka Disciple Vehicle claims that karmic actions of body and speech are the bases of *śīla*, moral virtue. Where these two consist of good karmic actions, they are deemed to be good. Where these two consist of bad karmic actions, they are deemed to be bad. Thus they hold that good karmic actions of body and speech constitute [the practice of] *śīla*. Does this treatise take these to constitute *śīla* or does it instead take *śīla* to involve some other additional factor?

##### 2. A: NO, THERE ARE OTHER FACTORS INTEGRAL TO MORAL VIRTUE

#### Response:

It is not merely karmic actions of body and speech that constitute *śīla*.

Cultivation, close personal engagement, and delight in practice also constitute what is meant by *śīla*.

These three factors each contribute to the meaning of this single concept: cultivation, close personal engagement, and delight in practice.

## 3. THE SUPREME CULTIVATION OF MORAL VIRTUE

## a. Q: PLEASE EXPLAIN THE BASES OF SUPREME CULTIVATION OF MORAL VIRTUE

**Question:** If one takes cultivation, close personal engagement, and delight in practice as [also] determining what is meant by *śīla*, then all dharmas could be considered as associated with *śīla*. How so? Because they may all be associated with constant cultivation, close personal engagement, and delight in practice. Therefore, you should explain what constitutes the supreme cultivation of *śīla*.

## b. A: NO “I,” NO “MINE,” NO ELABORATION, AND INAPPREHENSIBILITY

**Response:**

If it is based on the nonexistence of “I” and “mine,”  
the renunciation of conceptual elaboration,  
and realizes nothing at all is apprehensible as [inherently existent],  
then this is what is meant by *śīla*.

If one does not know the true character of all inward and outward dharmas, then, because one may generate arrogance and clinging attachment due to one’s attachment to *śīla*, one may thereby open the door to all sorts of karmic offenses.

Therefore, if one does not perceive any self among the inward dharmas, does not perceive anything belonging to a self among the outward dharmas, if one realizes that all these inward and outward dharmas are ultimately empty and devoid of anything that is apprehensible, and if one also refrains from conceptual elaboration seizing on any characteristics in what is ultimately empty, then this is what constitutes the supreme [practice of] *śīla*.

And why is this so? In *śīla* such as this, there is not even the slightest mental error, how much the less could there be any [error in the actions] of either body or speech? Therefore, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas are those who are foremost in their ability to practice *śīla*, for they do not apprehend any [inherent existence] in any dharma. This is what constitutes the supreme practice of *śīla*. As related in the *Kāśyapa Sutra*, the Buddha told Kāśyapa:<sup>554</sup>

## c. SCRIPTURAL DESCRIPTIONS OF SUPREME CULTIVATION OF MORAL VIRTUE

*Śīla* refers to the non-existence of self, to the non-existence of non-self, to the non-existence of doing, to the non-existence of anything that is done, to the non-existence of a doer, to the nonexistence of practice, to the nonexistence of non-practice, to the nonexistence of name, to the non-existence of form, to the non-existence of characteristics, and to the non-existence of the absence of characteristics. There is neither goodness nor non-goodness. There is neither quiescent cessation nor nonexistence of quiescent cessation. There is no

grasping and no relinquishing. There are no beings and no causes and conditions for the existence of any being. There is no body, no speech, and no mind, no world, no worldly dharmas, no reliance on the world. There is no elevation of oneself by virtue of one's *śīla*, no belittling of others because of [their absence of] *śīla*, no development of overweening pride because of one's *śīla*, and no distinguishing between this one and that one because of *śīla*.

Kāśyapa, this is what constitutes the *śīla* of all worthies and *āryas*, the *śīla* that has gone beyond the three realms, that is free of all contaminants, and that retains no connections [anywhere within the three realms].

This also accords with Akṣayamati Bodhisattva's statement to Śāriputra in the chapter on *śīla*:<sup>555</sup>

*Śīla* refers to not making any discriminating assertion claiming the existence of any being. One does not claim that any self exists, does not claim that anyone possessed of a soul or anyone possessed of a life exists. One does not claim that there is any person, does not claim that there is anyone who has been raised up, does not claim that there is any form aggregate or any feeling, perception, formative-factor, or consciousness aggregate. One does not claim that there exists any earth element or any water, fire, or wind element;

*Śīla* refers to not discriminating the existence of any eye characteristic, to not discriminating the existence of any visual form characteristic, to not discriminating the existence of any ear characteristic, any sound characteristic, any nose characteristic, any smell characteristic, any tongue characteristic, any flavor characteristic, any body characteristic, any characteristic of tangible objects, any mind characteristic, or any characteristic of dharmas as objects of mind;

*Śīla* refers to not discriminating the existence of body, speech, or mind;

Because *śīla* involves maintaining a focused mind, it is therefore characterized by single-mindedness;

Because it involves skillful selection among dharmas, it is therefore characterized by wisdom;

*Śīla* refers to arriving at emptiness, to reaching the ultimate limit of signlessness that does not involve any admixture with the three realms of existence, and to wishlessness, non-arising, and the unproduced dharmas patience;

*Śīla* refers to not coming forth from the past, not going forth to the future, and not abiding between them, either;

*Śīla* refers to not dwelling in the conjunction of mind faculty, mind consciousness, and thoughts [as objects of mind];

*Śīla* refers to not relying on the desire realm, to not relying on the form realm, and to not relying on the formless realm;

*Śīla* refers to abandoning the dust of greed, to ridding oneself of the defilement of hatred, to extinguishing the darkness of ignorance, to not falling into either eternalism or annihilationism, and to not contradicting production as characterized by [the conjunction of] multiple conditions;

*Śīla* refers to abandoning the conception of a self, to relinquishing the conception of anything belonging to a self, and to not dwelling in the view of a real self in association with the body;

*Śīla* refers to not being attached to designations and characteristics being incompatible with name-and-form;<sup>556</sup>

*Śīla* refers to not being under the direction of any of the fetters;  
[*Śīla* refers to] not being overpowered by any of the obsessions;  
[*Śīla* refers to] not abiding in any of the hindering doubts or regrets;

*Śīla* refers to not abiding in roots of bad action associated with greed, to transcending roots of bad action associated with hatred, and to severing roots of bad action associated with delusion;

*Śīla* refers to the happiness of the delighted mind free of anxiety and free of mental fever;

*Śīla* refers to not destroying the Dharma body, this through not severing the lineage of the Buddhas, to not severing the lineage of the Dharma, this through not making discriminations regarding the nature of dharmas, and to not severing the lineage of the Sangha, this through being characterized by [cultivation of] the unconditioned.<sup>557</sup>

Sāriputra, this is what is meant by the supreme and unsurpassed *śīla* of bodhisattvas. *Śīla* of this sort is inexhaustible. With the sole additional exception of the Buddhas, *śīla* [as practiced by all others] is in every case exhaustible.

This is as stated herein:

d. THE INEXHAUSTIBILITY OF THE BODHISATTVAS' MORAL VIRTUE

Beginning with the *śīla* of the common person  
and ending with that practiced by a *pratyekabuddha*,  
all of these are characterized by exhaustibility.

It is only that of bodhisattvas that is inexhaustible.

Even though all of the *śīla* practice coming forth from the common person results in their long-enduring enjoyment of its karmic fruits, it is all finally completely exhausted. Even all *śīla* ever practiced by all arhats and *pratyekabuddhas* is finally exhausted as well.

However, because the bodhisattva's practice of *śīla* is based on the realization of the non-existence of a self or anything belonging to a

self, on the abandonment of the idea that any dharma can be apprehended at all, and on the extinguishing of all conceptual elaboration, it is therefore utterly inexhaustible. This is as described by Akṣayamati Bodhisattva in the chapter on *śīla*.<sup>558</sup>

Because [the karmic fruits of] the *śīla* practiced by common people come to an end in accordance with the stations of rebirth into which they are reborn, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* become exhausted. Because the five spiritual powers acquired by non-Buddhist practitioners come to an end when they regress, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* become exhausted. Because [the karmic fruits of] the ten courses of good karmic action as practiced by humans are exhaustible, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* become exhausted

Because the merit of the devas in the desire realm is exhaustible, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* become exhausted. Because the four *dhyānas* and the four immeasurable minds as practiced by devas in the form realm are exhaustible, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* become exhausted. Because the stations into which the devas of the formless realm may be reborn in accordance with their meditative absorptions are exhaustible, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* become exhausted.

Because learners and those beyond learning [in the Śrāvaka Disciple Vehicle] come to an end with their entry into nirvāṇa, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* are exhaustible. Because the *pratyekabuddhas* do not possess the great compassion, [the karmic fruits of] their *śīla* are exhaustible.

Venerable Śāriputra, only the *śīla* of bodhisattvas is inexhaustible. Why? It is from the bodhisattva's practice of *śīla* that there emerge all the different manifestations of *śīla*. Because those karmic causes are inexhaustible, the associated karmic fruits are also inexhaustible. Because the *śīla* of bodhisattvas is inexhaustible, the *śīla* of the Tathāgatas is also inexhaustible. As a consequence, the *śīla* as practiced by all these great men is inexhaustible.

#### 4. A CLARIFICATION REGARDING ASPECTS VERSUS ESSENCE OF MORAL VIRTUE

**Question:** When you explained the more general aspects of *śīla*, you spoke of sixty-five different aspects of *śīla* [*pāramitā*] and stated that, among *śrāvaka* disciples, there are eight kinds of *śīla*, four arising in association with the body and four arising in association with speech. How is there no contradiction between these [two different ways of enumerating the types of *śīla*]?

**Response:** They are not mutually contradictory. How is this so?

Although [those aspects] are not the very essence of *śīla*, because they are beneficial, they are referred to as its aspects.

As for those eight kinds of physical and verbal karmic actions, those do constitute the essence of *śīla*.

Although those sixty-five aspects do not constitute the very essence of *śīla*, because they are nonetheless beneficial to those eight relatively coarse categories of physical and verbal *śīla*, they are therefore referred to as aspects of *śīla*. In general, whatever is able to be of benefit [to this practice] is regarded as an aspect [of *śīla*]. This is analogous to the custom of referring to all the [monarch's] elephants, horses, feather fans, and canopies as aspects of kingship. Consequently, although the *dhyāna* absorptions, wisdom, and so forth are not themselves the very essence of *śīla*, because they are beneficial to the practice of *śīla*, they too are regarded as aspects of *śīla*.