

## CHAPTER 4

### Purification of the Ground

#### IV. CHAPTER FOUR: PURIFICATION OF THE GROUND

A. Q: HOW SHOULD THE 1ST GROUND BODHISATTVA CULTIVATE ITS PURIFICATION?

**Question:** In the case of the bodhisattva who has already gotten to the first ground, how should he go about cultivating its purification?

B. A: ONE CULTIVATES 27 DHARMAS (VERSE)

#### Response:

The power of faith becomes ever more superior as one practices deeply the mind of great compassion. One acts with kindness toward all types of beings and tirelessly cultivates the mind of goodness.

One finds joyous delight in sublime dharmas, always draws close to the good spiritual guide, maintains a sense of shame, dread of blame, and reverence, and makes one's mind gentle and harmonious.

One delights in contemplating dharmas and stays free of attachment, single-mindedly strives to acquire abundant learning, refrains from coveting offerings of benefits and support, while staying far from treacherous cheating, flattery, and deception.

One does not defile the family of the Buddhas and does not damage moral precepts or cheat the Buddhas. One deeply delights in all-knowledge,<sup>59</sup> and remains as unmoving as an immense mountain.

One always delights in cultivating and practicing ever more superior sublime dharmas.

One delights in the world-transcending dharmas and does not delight in worldly dharmas.

Even as one cultivates the Ground of Joyfulness, one is able to cultivate what is difficult to cultivate. Therefore one is always single-minded in the diligent practice of these dharmas.

The bodhisattva is able to perfect such supremely sublime dharmas as these. It is this then that constitutes secure abiding in the bodhisattva's first ground.

The bodhisattva relies on these twenty-seven dharmas in the purifying cultivation of the first ground.

1. "THE POWER OF FAITH BECOMES EVER MORE SUPERIOR"

As for "the power of faith becomes ever more superior," "faith" refers here to definitely accepting, without doubts, what one learns and perceives. "Superiority" refers here to "exceptional supremacy."

a. Q: OF THE TWO TYPES OF SUPERIORITY, OF WHICH DO YOU SPEAK?

**Question:** There are two sorts of "superiority." In the case of the first, it refers to having a greater amount of something. In the case of the second, it refers to being of superior quality. Which is it that you now discuss?

b. A: BOTH "MORE" AND "BETTER QUALITY"

**Response:** We speak here of both definitions. When the bodhisattva enters the first ground, because he experiences the flavor of the meritorious qualities, his power of faith becomes ever greater. Because of this power of faith, having assessed all buddhas' meritorious qualities and their measurelessly many extremely sublime aspects, he is able then to have faith in and accept them. Hence this mind [of faith] becomes both greater in its extensiveness and more superior in its quality.

2. "ONE PRACTICES DEEPLY THE MIND OF GREAT COMPASSION"

As for "one practices deeply the mind of great compassion," it is because one's sympathetic mindfulness of beings penetrates to one's very marrow that its practice is described as "deep." It is because one seeks to realize the Buddha path for the sake of all beings that [the practice of compassion as] is described as "great."

3. "THE MIND OF KINDNESS"

As for "the mind of kindness," one always strives to benefit beings and promote their peace and security. There are three kinds of kindness. This should be more extensively discussed later on.

4. "TIRELESSLY CULTIVATING THE MIND OF GOODNESS"

As for "tirelessly cultivating the mind of goodness," the dharma of goodness is what one draws near to and cultivates, and it is what yields desirable results. As one cultivates dharmas such as these, one's mind does not fall into indolence. As for the causes and conditions comprising good dharmas, this refers to the dharmas comprising the four means of attraction, the ten courses of good karmic action, the six *pāramitās*, the ten bodhisattva grounds, and all of the meritorious qualities.

## 5. "ONE FINDS JOYOUS DELIGHT IN SUBLIME DHARMAS"

As for "one finds joyous delight in sublime dharmas," this means that, if one always reflects on them, cultivates them, and deeply experiences the flavor of these dharmas, after a long while, this produces happiness. This is just as when someone amidst flowers and forest groves takes pleasure in sights he finds lovely.

## 6. "ALWAYS DRAWING CLOSE TO THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE"

As for "always drawing close to the good spiritual guide," the bodhisattva has four different types of good spiritual guides, a matter that shall be discussed extensively later on. As for the "good spiritual guides" that are intended here, it refers to buddhas and bodhisattvas. One always draws close to them with a mind that is correct and with which one is able to please them.

## 7. "A SENSE OF SHAME" AND "A DREAD OF BLAME"

"A sense of shame and a dread of blame" refers to that mind which happily subjects itself to feeling self-consciously abashed.

## 8. "REVERENCE"

"Reverence" refers to bearing in mind someone else's meritorious qualities and revering him for that reason.

## 9. "GENTLE AND HARMONIOUS"

"Gentle and harmonious" refers to having a mind that is congenially pleased in dwelling together with others.

## 10. "DELIGHTING IN CONTEMPLATING DHARMAS"

In "delighting in contemplating dharmas," "dharmas" refers to the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases, the eighteen sense realms, emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and so forth. One always contemplates these dharmas with right mindfulness.

## 11. "STAYING FREE OF ATTACHMENT"

In "staying free of attachment," "attachment" refers to the tendency of the mind to take refuge in the three realms of existence. This is where beings take refuge. There are those who explain that it is the five desires and all manner of erroneous views that constitute the places in which beings take refuge. Why is this? This is because the minds of beings always become bound up in attachment to them. The sharp wisdom of the bodhisattva is such that his mind has no such desire-based attachments.

## 12. "SINGLE-MINDEDNESS"

As for "single-mindedness," this means that one so esteems the Buddha's Dharma that he does not think of anything else.

## 13. "STRIVING TO ACQUIRE ABUNDANT LEARNING"

"Striving to acquire abundant learning"<sup>60</sup> refers to the ability to exhaustively investigate, cultivate, study, and entirely comprehend the nine categories of scripture set forth by the Buddha, [realizing that] if one learns but little, one will never completely fathom them.

## 14. "REFRAINING FROM COVETING OFFERINGS OF BENEFITS AND SUPPORT"

In "refraining from coveting offerings of benefits and support," "benefits" refers to the acquisition of food and drink, wealth, material possessions, and so forth. "Support" refers to others' reverential respect, ceremonial obeisance, arrangement of a place for one to rest and sit, welcoming one upon one's arrival, and escorting one off when one departs. The bodhisattva should be inclined to provide such assistance to other beings and should not covet and become attached to such things for himself.

## 15. "STAYING FAR FROM CHEATING, FLATTERY, AND DECEPTION"

"Cheating" refers to deception in weights and measures and to dealing in clothing and other goods that are not genuine.

"Flattery," means one's mind is not upstanding and direct.

"Deception" refers to taking up dharmas associated with the five sorts of wrong livelihood:

## a. THE FIVE TYPES OF WRONG LIVELIHOOD

The first is feigning uniqueness;  
 The second is taking advantage of a close relationship;  
 The third is inducement through instigation;  
 The fourth is [manipulation] through praising and blaming;  
 And the fifth is seeking to gain benefits based on one's benefits.

## 1) FEIGNING UNIQUENESS

As for "feigning uniqueness," there are those persons who, because they covet benefit and support, may wear the patched robes of the forest hermitage dweller, may take up the practice of only accepting food obtained on the alms round, may take up the practice of limiting all food intake to that consumed in but a single sitting, may take up the practice of always sitting [and never lying down,] or may take up the practice of not taking any sort of beverage other than water after midday. They take on the practice of such *dhūta* austerities as these, thinking, "Others who have adopted these practices have been able to come by offerings and reverence. If I take up these practices, perhaps I too shall be able to obtain them." This alteration of one's outward appearance and demeanor for the sake of acquiring benefit and support is what is meant by "feigning uniqueness."

## 2) TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

As for “taking advantage of a close relationship,” there are those persons who, because they covet benefit and support, therefore visit the households of benefactors<sup>61</sup> and say to them, “You are to me just like and no different from my father, mother, brother, sister, or other close relative. If there is anything at all that you need, I will be able to assist you with it. If there’s anything you need done, I will be able to see that it is done. No matter how far away I might be, I will be able to come and greet you. Actually, if I were to live right here, then that would really be the right course of action for us.” Thus, because he seeks offerings, and because he has a covetous attachment to a benefactor, he resorts to particular phrasings that manipulate the minds of other people. Such behaviors as these exemplify what is meant by “taking advantage of a close relationship.”

## 3) INDUCEMENT THROUGH INSTIGATION

As for “inducement through instigation,” there are those who pay no heed to incurring the karmic offense of covetousness, desire to obtain valuable possessions, and so indicate an interest in obtaining material possessions by saying such things as, “This bowl is a fine one,” or “This robe is a fine one,” or “This house is a fine one,” or “This sitting mat<sup>62</sup> is a fine one” or “If I were to somehow obtain such a thing, I would be able to put it to use.” They may then add the statement, “It is a rare person who is able to give spontaneously.”

He may also go to some benefactor’s home and speak in this fashion: “Your household’s stew, rice, cakes, and meats are so fragrant and exquisite and your clothes are finer yet. If you were to make a regular practice of making offerings to me, based on the long-standing nature of our close relationship, I would certainly accept your gifts.”

And so, in just this sort of fashion, he makes his desires apparent to others. This is what is meant by “inducement through instigation.”

## 4) MANIPULATION THROUGH PRAISING AND BLAMING

As for “manipulation through praising and blaming,” there are those who, because they covet benefit and support, speak to a benefactor, saying, “You are the most extremely miserly person. You don’t even make gifts to your father or mother, your brothers, your sisters, your wife, your children, or your relatives. Just who is it that might ever be able to receive anything at all from you?” Thereupon the benefactor, feeling ashamed and embarrassed, immediately gives him gifts.

He may then go to yet another household and speak in this fashion: “You have such merit that, indeed, you have not taken on this human rebirth in vain. Even arhats always come and go from your home so

that you are able to sit down and converse with them." He does this thinking: "Perhaps the benefactor shall now reflect on this and think: 'Nobody else comes and goes from my home,' thereby concluding that this must certainly be referring to me."

These are examples of what is meant by "manipulation through praising and blaming."

#### 5) SEEKING TO GAIN BENEFITS BASED ON ONE'S BENEFITS

As for "seeking to gain benefits based on one's benefits," there are those who take up some item of clothing, a bowl, a *saṃghāṭī* robe, a sitting mat, or other such requisite, hold them in hand, and then say to someone, "This item was given to me by the king," or "by the equal of a king," or "by others among the nobility." He speaks in this fashion, thinking, "Perhaps the benefactor will now be able to conclude, 'If he is one to whom even the king and members of the nobility make offerings, how much the less could someone like me fail to present gifts to this man?'"

It is because he seeks by means of this previously acquired benefit to gain additional benefits that this practice is referred to as "seeking to gain benefits based on one's benefits."

One should therefore leave these sorts of obsequious and fraudulent behaviors far behind.

#### 16. "ONE DOES NOT DEFILE THE FAMILY OF THE BUDDHAS"

In "One does not defile the family of the Buddhas," just what sorts of things constitute "defilement of the family of the Buddhas"?

There are those who say that if someone who has brought forth the resolve to seek the unsurpassable path then later reverts to the *śrāvaka*-disciple or *pratyekabuddha* paths so that he is unable to remain in the world to see to the continuance of the lineage of the Three Jewels, this is what constitutes "defiling the family of the Buddhas." However, this is a wrong explanation of its meaning. How is this so? The person referenced herein is one who is still able to achieve liberation from *samsāra*. Moreover, he is able to achieve a state of realization of the [five] root faculties, [five] powers, [seven] limbs of enlightenment and [eightfold] path that is free of the contaminants. Moreover, he is still "a son of the Buddha." How then can assert that this amounts to "defiling the family of the Buddhas"?

As stated in a sutra: "The Buddha told the bhikshus, 'You are my sons who are born from my mind, are born from my mouth, and who are heirs to the Dharma.'<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, *śrāvaka* disciples claim that it is the [four] bases [of meritorious qualities] consisting of truth, relinquishment, quiescence,

and wisdom that constitute the basis for abiding within the family of the Buddhas. How so? It is because all buddhas are born from these four factors. If one defiles these four dharmas, then this is what constitutes “defiling the family of the Buddhas.”

Therefore, if a person acts in a false, miserly, covetous, manically deranged or foolish fashion, this is what constitutes “defiling the family of the Buddhas.” If one is correct in his implementation of these four bases, then one does not “defile the family of the Buddhas.”

There are others who claim that the six *pāramitās* constitute the bases for belonging to the family of the Buddhas doing so because these are the dharmas that give birth to the Buddhas. Consequently they infer that, if one acts in a manner that contradicts these six sorts of endeavors, this is what constitutes “defiling the family of the Buddhas.”

Then again, there are yet others who state that *prajñāpāramitā* serves as the mother of the Buddhas whereas skillful means serve as the father of the Buddhas. They hold that these are the factors that serve as the basis for belonging to the family of the Buddhas. They claim that, because these two dharmas give birth to all buddhas, if one transgresses against these dharmas, this constitutes “defilement of the family of the Buddhas.”

17. “NOT DAMAGING MORAL PRECEPTS” AND “NOT CHEATING THE BUDDHAS”

Then again, the verse itself explains what constitutes the marks of defilement and non-defilement, in particular referring to “not damaging the moral precepts” and “not cheating the Buddhas.”

If one takes on the Buddha’s moral precepts yet remains unable to guard and uphold them, it is this that constitutes “cheating the Buddhas” and “defiling the family of the Buddhas.” How is this the case? It is because, when one takes on the moral precepts, one is born into the family of the Buddhas. If one then breaks the precepts, it is this then that constitutes “cheating the Buddhas” and it is this, then that constitutes “defiling the family of the Buddhas.”

a. MIGHT A BODHISATTVA AT THE STAGE OF CERTAINTY BREAK PRECEPTS?

**Question:** Is it possible that the bodhisattva who has reached the stage of certainty may have instances in which he breaks the moral precepts?

b. THIS IS POSSIBLE IF HE HAS NOT YET CUT OFF THE AFFLICTIONS

**Response:** So long as one has not yet cut off the afflictions, this remains as a circumstance to be feared. Thus, when it has still not been long since he achieved entry into the stage of certainty, the bodhisattva may still have instances in which he breaks the precepts. This is as described in “the Dharma of Greatly Supreme Buddha”<sup>64</sup> wherein it states, “Nanda deliberately broke precepts. I declare that

this possibility still remains as something to be feared." It is only on the basis of the sutras that there is this claim. Because one has faith in the words of the Buddha, one's mind believes and accepts this.

If, having taken on the moral precepts, one does not break them and does not cheat the Buddhas, it is this that qualifies as "not defiling the family of the Buddhas."

Then again, the moral precepts are synonymous with the three trainings, namely: the training in the moral precepts, the training of the mind [in *dhyāna* meditation], and the training in wisdom. If one breaks with these trainings, then this is "defiling the family of the Buddhas." If one takes on the precepts in a context that accords with the Dharma and yet later damages or breaks them, this is "cheating the Buddhas."

Thus, when one explains the matter in this fashion, these two phrases each possesses a particular meaning and implication. As for "cheating the Buddhas," if one's making of vows has been merely an empty exercise and thus one does not carry them out in practice in a manner according to one's declarations, one thereby cheats and deceives beings. It is this then that constitutes "cheating the Buddhas."

Then again, if one fails to practice any of the dharmas in accordance with the way it was taught, this is "cheating the Buddhas."

18. "DEEPLY DELIGHTING IN ALL-KNOWLEDGE" AND "REMAINING UNMOVING"

As for "deeply delighting in all-knowledge" and "remaining unmoving like a great mountain," in every vow that he makes, this bodhisattva seeks the goal of all-knowledge so that, no matter what causes and conditions he encounters, even if it entails having to undergo the sufferings of the Great Hells, his resolve is still never shaken. In this, he is just like Sumeru, the king of the mountains, that cannot be moved by the blowing of the winds.

19. "ALWAYS CULTIVATING EVER MORE SUPERIOR DHARMAS"

As for "always cultivating ever more superior dharmas," from that very time when one first brings forth the resolve, one always strives to acquire supreme dharmas. Upon entering the first ground, one is even more involved in cultivating superior dharmas. One's resolve then continues insatiably onward in this manner.

20. "DELIGHTING IN WORLD-TRANSCENDING DHARMAS," "NOT WORLDLY ONES"

As for "delighting in world-transcending dharmas" and "not delighting in worldly dharmas," "worldly dharmas" refers to endeavors that follow along and accord with worldly affairs and prolong one's involvement in *saṃsāra*. These include the six rebirth destinies, the three realms of existence, the five aggregates, the twelve sense bases,

the eighteen sense realms, the twelve-fold chain of causes and conditions, the afflictions, contaminated karmic actions, and so forth.

As for “world-transcending dharmas,” this means that, whatever dharmas one puts to use are able to bring about transcendence of the three realms of existence. These include the five root faculties, the five powers, the seven limbs of enlightenment, the eight-fold path, the four stations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of psychic power, the gates of liberation consisting of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, the moral precept codes, extensive learning, the roots of goodness consisting of non-greed, non-aversion, and non-delusion, the mind of renunciation, non-neglectfulness, and so forth.

Because this bodhisattva possesses sharp faculties, he does not delight in the false dharmas of the world. Rather, he delights only in true world-transcending dharmas.

#### 21. “CULTIVATING WHAT IS DIFFICULT TO CULTIVATE”

As for “Even as one cultivates the Ground of Joyfulness, one is able to cultivate what is difficult to cultivate,” this “cultivation” is a reference to reaching an utterly penetrating unimpeded understanding. Just as when someone splits bamboo, the first section is difficult, but the rest are easy, so too, the first ground is difficult to cultivate, but after one has cultivated it, the rest are naturally easy to cultivate.

How is this the case? This is because, when the bodhisattva abides on the first ground, his strength has not yet become completely developed and his roots of goodness have not yet grown thick, for he has not yet cultivated the dharmas of goodness over a long time. Hence the eye sense faculty and the other sense faculties are all still prone to follow their respective sense objects and the mind has not yet become well controlled. Therefore the afflictions are still able to cause trouble for him. This is just as when someone’s strength has not yet become fully developed, one finds it difficult to swim upstream, against the current.

Moreover, because Māra and Māra’s minions create more of an obstacle on this ground, one is therefore compelled to use the power of skillful means and be diligent in the practice of vigor. It is for these reasons that this ground is said to be “difficult to cultivate.”

So it is that, beginning with “the power of faith becomes ever more superior” as the foremost factor and “does not delight in worldly dharmas” as the last, one proceeds with the practice of these twenty-seven dharmas, carrying out one’s cultivation of the bodhisattva’s first ground, the Ground of Joyfulness.

It is therefore stated that the bodhisattva ought to always cultivate these dharmas. "Cultivation" refers here to single-mindedness and non-neglectfulness in always practicing them, in always contemplating them, and in getting rid of all transgressions and evils. It is for this reason that it refers here to "cultivation." This is just as when one maintains a walking path and thereby causes it to remain clean.

As for all of these dharmas, they are not cultivated solely on the first ground. Rather, one uses these dharmas on all the grounds.

22. Q: HOW DOES ONE "SECURELY ABIDE" AND NOT RETREAT?

**Question:** You have now completed the discussion of the skillful means and purification dharmas used to attain the first ground. How then does the bodhisattva "securely abide" in it so that he does not retreat from it and lose it?

23. A: BY ALWAYS PRACTICING AND COMPLETELY DEVELOPING THESE DHARMAS

**Response:** This is a matter of always practicing and completely developing dharmas such as these consisting of "the power of faith becomes ever more superior," and so forth. This is what constitutes the basis for "secure abiding" in the first ground.

24. THE MEANING OF "BODHISATVA" AND "SUPERIOR DHARMAS"

Now, as for the "*bodhi*" of bodhisattva, this is a reference to the superior path. "*Sattva*," refers to [a being] that is possessed of resolute intentions. Hence it is because someone deeply delights in bodhi that he is referred to as a "bodhisattva." Then again, one may explain that "*sattva*" refers to "beings." Hence it is on the basis of a person's cultivating and accumulating [the bases for realization of] bodhi, doing so for the sake of other beings, that one is referred to as a "bodhisattva." "Superior dharmas," refers to dharmas such as "faith" and the others. It is because they enable a person to realize buddhahood that they are referred to as "superior dharmas."