

CHAPTER 34

In Praise of the Moral Precepts

XXXIV. CHAPTER 34: IN PRAISE OF THE MORAL PRECEPTS

The bodhisattva who purifies his observance of the moral precepts in this manner is able to gather together all sorts of meritorious qualities and derive all manner of benefits. This is as stated by Akṣayamati Bodhisattva when he said:

Then again, to offer but a brief praise of a few aspects of *śīla*:

Śīla is the basis for the monastic's experiencing the foremost joyous delight that is comparable to the most supreme delight enjoyed by a youth who has both wealth and noble birth;

[*Śīla*] brings about the proliferation and growth of good dharmas just as when a kind mother raises her son;

[*Śīla*] is able to protect one from ruinous calamity just as when a father protects his son;

Śīla is able to bring about for monastics complete accomplishment in all forms of great benefit just as great wealth is able to bring about great benefit for a householder;

Śīla is as able to rescue one from all forms of suffering torment just as when right action accords with what is principled;

Śīla is as revered by good people as the dharma of repaying others' kindnesses;

Śīla is just as cherished and esteemed by people as a long lifespan;

Śīla is as esteemed by the wise as wisdom itself;

Those who strive to gain liberation thoroughly guard their practice of *śīla* just as carefully as high officials guard the secrets of the king;

Those who delight in the benefits of the path cherish and value *śīla* just as deeply as those who delight in nirvāṇa cherish and value the Dharma of the Buddha;

The wise thoroughly guard their practice of *śīla* with the same urgency as those who cherish their own lives guard their physical safety and urgently seek rescue when death threatens;

The supreme [good fortune] of encountering *śīla* is comparable to that of meeting a good guide in the midst of grave danger;

Śīla adorns the worthy ones with purity and, in this, it is analogous to the daughter of nobility who, possessed of a sense of shame and dread of blame, remains utterly undefiled;

- Śīla is the initial entryway into meritorious qualities just as not engaging in flattery and deviousness opens the way to acquiring fine benefits;
- Śīla is the most important foundation of *brahmacarya* just as the straight mind is the foundation of right views;
- Śīla is the origin of all dharmas of great men just as the straight mind is the origin of success in seeking an important position;
- Śīla is a treasure trove of meritorious qualities comparable to non-negligence and right mindfulness in their ability to bring forth every sort of benefit;
- [Śīla] is also comparable to a worthy friend who is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good to the end;
- [Śīla] is something beyond which one who trains in right Dharma must never go and, in this, he is like the ocean which always remains within its boundaries,⁶¹⁰
- Śīla is the dwelling place of meritorious qualities and, in this, it is also like the great earth upon which the myriad things depend;
- Śīla serves to moisten all of the meritorious qualities of goodness and, in this, it is analogous to the rain falling down from the sky that moistens and benefits the seeds and enables the growth of the five kinds of roots;
- [Śīla] is like fire in its ability to cook things and provide all sorts of benefits and, in this, it is like the [energetic] winds that sustain the body;
- Śīla is able to accommodate all fruits of the path and, in this, it is also like empty space that contains and takes in the myriad things.
- [Śīla] is also like the magically-auspicious vase that is able to bring forth anything that one might wish for, and it is also like fine cuisine in its ability to benefit all of one's faculties;
- Śīla is well able to open all paths and it is able to cause all one's faculties to become purified and unimpeded;
- One's wisdom life relies upon śīla as its foundation just as the life of the body depends upon the breath as its very foundation;
- Śīla is the most superior of all points of reliance just as it is the king upon whom all his subjects rely;
- Śīla serves as the lord of all the meritorious qualities just as the chief general commands the entire army;
- Śīla is the source of the many varieties of happiness and, in this, it is like the compliant wife who is well able to satisfy all the wishes of her husband;
- Whether it be in striving to reach nirvāṇa or in gaining rebirth in the heavens, śīla constitutes the provisions sustaining those training

- on the path and, in this, it is like the essential clothing and provisions that one traveling afar must take along on his travels;
- Śīla* leads people along in such a way that they are caused to reach a good place and, in this, it is like finding a good guide who escorts one along a hazardous road;
- Śīla* delivers people from the faults of *saṃsāra* and, in this, it is like a sturdy ship by which one is able to cross a great ocean;
- Śīla* is well able to put an end to all calamities wrought by the afflictions and, in this, it is like a good medicine that is able to eliminate the many sorts of diseases;
- Śīla*'s weapons are able to defend one against *Māra*'s thieves and, in this, they are like the weapons of a good army that are able to counter an enemy's troops;
- Just as a beloved relative leads one through hardships and does not desert one, so too, *śīla* leads people through all manner of ruinous torment, continues to protect them, and never abandons them;
- Śīla* is able to illuminate even the darkness of delusion in one's future lives and, in this, it is like the light of a great lamp that is able to dispel the darkness;
- Śīla* is able even to deliver one out of the wretched destinies and, in this, it is like finding a good bridge when crossing deep waters;
- Śīla* is able to dispel the extreme fever of the afflictions and, in this, it is like a cool room that is able to get rid of scorching heat;
- Even when on the verge of falling into the wretched destinies, *śīla* is able to come to the rescue and, in this, it is like a fierce sword-brandishing warrior rescuing someone in terror;
- Every common person should feel a deeply cherishing fondness for *śīla* like that of the bodhisattvas training in the supreme basis of truthfulness;⁶¹¹
- The practitioner's skillful practice of *śīla* is just like all bodhisattvas' practice of the supreme basis of relinquishment;
- The skillful cultivation of *śīla* on the part of the practitioner who has gained the fruits [of the path] is just like all bodhisattvas' cultivation of the supreme basis of quiescence;
- Guarding and upholding the practice of *śīla* causes one to attain the fruits [of the path] just like a bodhisattva who cultivates the wisdom supreme basis;
- One who refrains from damaging the Dharma is able to purify his practice of *śīla* in a manner comparable to the purity and stainlessness of the bodhisattvas;
- Bad people abandon *śīla* just as flattering and devious people abandon the straight mind;

- Neglectful people do not practice *śīla* and, in this, they are like miserly people who do not practice kindly giving;
- Neglectful people abandon *śīla* and, in this, they are like those prone to inappropriate and frivolous speech who abandon the dharma of quiescence;
- Stupid people are bereft of *śīla* just as a blind man does not see the five colors;
- An unreflective person is as far from *śīla* as one who has abandoned the eight-fold right path is far from nirvāṇa;
- Those who truly love themselves deeply delight in *śīla* just as an arhat deeply loves the Dharma;
- Śīla* is able to ensure that the good dharmas by which one remains free of afflictions continue on uninterruptedly just as the Buddha's emergence in the world ensures that goodness will continue without cease;
- Śīla* is able to cause the fruits of the path to abide [in the world] just as the Buddha's spiritual power causes the Dharma to remain for a long time;
- Śīla* is just like the Buddha in that it benefits both oneself and others;
- Śīla* thoroughly protects all good meritorious qualities just as a king who understands right timing, is able to defend the country's borders;
- Śīla* quiets the mind of the practitioner just as when a stream-enterer,⁶¹² by revealing in timely fashion [moral-code infractions] remains free of subsequent regrets;
- Śīla* ensures that one shall ultimately and definitely reach nirvāṇa just as the bodhisattva vow ensures that one will ultimately become a buddha;
- Śīla* is also like a good plot of farmland that is well irrigated which, when sown with seeds, produces a rapidly-growing crop;
- Śīla* is the cause of right conduct just as knowing the right time, knowing the right place, and so forth are the causes of success in all endeavors;
- Just as a handsome man possessed of merit and wisdom is revered and esteemed by others, so too is *śīla* respected by both self and others;
- Just as when one's merit has become ripe, one's mind is peaceful and secure, so too is *śīla* able to cause one's mind to become peaceful and secure and to enjoy all its beneficial rewards;
- Śīla* is able to cause the practitioner to be delighted just as a fine son is able to inspire delight in his father's mind;

- Śīla* is a dharma that causes fearlessness in one who is free of faults just as when a person becomes free of faults, his mind then becomes free of fear;
- Śīla* causes one to become free of all fear and free of the evil of moral transgressions in both the present life and future lives;
- Others are inspired to make offerings and give praise to whoever upholds the practice of *śīla*, for others are moved by him to feel joy and realize that they too have some part in it;
- Śīla* causes one to feel affection for other beings, just as when one cultivates the meditation on [measureless] kindness;
- Śīla* motivates one to do away with the sufferings of others, just as when one cultivates the meditation on [measureless] compassion;
- Śīla* bestows joyfulness, just as when one cultivates the meditation on [measureless] sympathetic joy;
- Śīla* causes one to become free of both hatred and desire, just as when one cultivates the meditation on [measureless] equanimity;
- Śīla* inspires faith on the part of others, just as the four kinds of good speech are able to win the trust of others;
- Śīla* brings delight in its practice just as dharmas of the world always bring delight to the mind [of a worldly person];
- Just as extensive learning is the cause of delight in speech, *śīla* is the cause of consistency between one's words and one's actions;
- Śīla* is the cause of fearlessness just as eloquence also brings about fearlessness;
- Śīla* is the cause of renown just as complete comprehension of all scriptures brings a fine reputation;
- Śīla* is a dharma capable of bringing about one's rescue just as being one who is easy to converse with ensures one will be rescued by them;
- Śīla* is a dharma that is able to bring about successful attainment of the clear knowledges and liberation and, in this, it is comparable to practicing in accordance with the teachings;
- Śīla* is the characteristic feature of all buddhas and, in this, it is comparable to *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*;
- Śīla* is a dharma that aids cultivation of the path and, in this, it is like *samādhi*'s role in assisting the attainment of wisdom;
- Śīla* causes a person to have no difficulties that he fears just as someone possessed of great courage has nothing that he fears;
- Śīla* is the gathering place of every form of meritorious quality, for just as the Himalayas are the repository of precious things, faith, the other meritorious qualities, and all marvelous phenomena⁶¹³ rely on *śīla* for their very existence;

- Śīla is like the great sea in that it contains the many sorts of extraordinary things;
- Also, just as, to obtain fine fruit, one relies on a tree, so too śīla is what provides people with whichever fruit they find pleasing. This is just as when one who pursues right wisdom then acquires [its fruits] in accordance with his practice;
- Śīla is that by which one is cleansed even without the aid of water;
- Śīla is the most superior of sublime incenses, one that does not come forth from some root, trunk, branch, leaf, blossom, or fruit;
- Śīla is an adornment that surpasses that of any jewelry, for it always remains with one's person and cannot be stolen by anyone;
- Śīla provides a great bliss not born of any of the five desires and it bestows the reward of sublime bliss in future lives as well;
- Śīla is that which is praised by all worlds' devas, humans, Māras, Brahmās, śramaṇas, and brahmins;
- The happiness produced by śīla abides independently in one's own person for it is not obtained from anyone else and it is also the excellent means for gaining celestial rebirth or nirvāṇa;
- Śīla is the right ford for crossing the river of faith, one that is free of quicksand, tiles, stones, thorns, or brambles, and one that may be entered at will so as to skillfully cross without being impeded by anything;
- Śīla is a form of precious wealth free of ruin or anguish;
- Śīla is the indestructible path of purity that is comparable to a level road that can be traveled without difficulty;
- Śīla is a fine farm field that, even without having to plant it or harvest it, one naturally obtains its fruits;
- Śīla is the fruit tasting of the elixir of immortality that, even though not obtained from a tree or produced from a plant, is incomparably delicious;
- Śīla is a mañjūṣaka flower that does not grow forth from either water or land and never wilts;
- Śīla dispels the fever of the afflictions and, in this, it is like bathing in cool waters;
- Śīla provides complete protection superior to that of even swords or staves, hence the practitioner of śīla is respected, but not because others fear him;
- Śīla is a station of sovereign mastery that is free of any disputation or struggle;
- Śīla is a fine jewel not extracted from the mountains or drawn forth from the great sea, one whose value is incalculable;

Śīla is able to take one beyond the fear of not surviving, beyond the fear of entering the assembly, beyond the fear of interrogation and beating, and beyond the fear of falling into the hells;⁶¹⁴

Śīla always follows along with a person in present and future lives just as a shadow follows its form.