

On the Merit and on Preserving Dharma

XII. CHAPTER 12: ON THE MERIT AND ON PRESERVING DHARMA

A. CHARACTERISTICS OF A BODHISATTVA'S BODHI-DIRECTED CULTIVATION

The bodhisattva perfects the cultivation of the mind cognizing signlessness and so never allows his mind to abide in the carrying out of karmic deeds. This bodhisattva realizes [the empty nature of] the characteristic signs of karmic deeds and yet still deliberately engages in performing them.

For the sake of cultivating roots of goodness and seeking bodhi, he does not relinquish involvement in the conditioned. Because he cultivates the great compassion for the sake of all beings, he does not abide in the unconditioned.

For the sake of realizing the genuine and sublime wisdom of all buddhas, he does not relinquish involvement in the sphere of birth and death. For the sake of bringing a boundless number of beings across to liberation and allowing them to reside in the remainderless [nirvāṇa], he does not himself abide in nirvāṇa.

This is what constitutes the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva's* striving with profound mind for realization of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

B. TEN BODHISATTVA DHARMAS ENSURING NON-RETREAT

Sons of the Buddha. The bodhisattva perfects ten dharmas through which he never retreats from the unsurpassed bodhi. What then are those ten? They are:

First, the bodhisattva generates with profound mind the resolve to gain the unsurpassed bodhi while also teaching beings so that they, too, are then caused to generate the same resolve.

Second, he constantly delights in seeing the Buddhas, in respectfully giving offerings to them of whatsoever he most treasures, and in deeply planting roots of goodness.

Third, for the sake of seeking the Dharma, he proceeds with a reverent mind to make offerings to the masters of Dharma and to listen tirelessly to the teaching of Dharma.

Fourth, if he encounters a circumstance where the Bhikshu Sangha has broken itself into two factions involved in mutual contentiousness, accusations, and fault-finding, he diligently seeks to implement skillful means by which they are allowed to become harmoniously united again.

Fifth, if he encounters a circumstance of increasing perversity and evil in his country, one whereby the Dharma of the Buddha verges on falling into ruin, he is able then to read out, recite, and expound on it, even if it be but a single verse through which he prevents the Dharma from being cut off. He then dedicates himself to preserving the Dharma, even to the point where he relinquishes any cherishing regard for his own physical life.

Sixth, whenever he encounters beings beset by the suffering and the affliction of fearfulness, he acts to rescue and protect them, thus bestowing fearlessness on them.

Seventh, he initiates a diligent cultivation practice through which he seeks out such extremely profound sutra dharmas as these from the *vaipulya* Mahāyāna's treasury of bodhisattva scriptures.²²

Eighth, after he has found such Dharma, he accepts and upholds it through study, recitation, practicing it as taught, and through abiding in a manner which accords with its dictates.

Ninth, he himself abides in the Dharma while also being able to exhort, lead, and otherwise cause a multitude of beings to enter into this Dharma.

Tenth, after they have entered into this Dharma, he develops competence in explaining it for their sakes, revealing and teaching it, benefiting and delighting them, and thereby causing those beings to awaken.

In a circumstance where the bodhisattva perfects ten dharmas of this sort, he will never retreat from the unsurpassed bodhi. The bodhisattva should cultivate this sutra in this manner.

C. BENEFITS ARISING FROM SCRIPTURES SUCH AS THESE

Sutras such as this are inconceivable and indescribable. Specifically, they are able to produce all seeds of the great kindness and great compassion. This sutra is able to awaken, lead forth, and guide beings constrained by the fetters, influencing them to generate the resolve [to realize bodhi]. This sutra is able to act as the initiating cause for those proceeding towards bodhi. This sutra is able to establish the unmoving practice of all bodhisattvas.²³ This sutra is worthy to be one of which all buddhas of the past, future, and present are protectively mindful.

If there be a son or daughter of good family who wishes to diligently cultivate and accumulate [the provisions for] the unsurpassed bodhi, they should extensively proclaim and circulate sutras such as these, thus preventing them from being cut off in the lands of

Jambudvīpa, and thus causing a countless and boundless number of beings to succeed in hearing this sutra.

If there be sons or daughters of good family who succeed in hearing this sutra, persons such as these all come into possession of the accumulation of the fiercely sharp, inconceivable, and indescribable great wisdom and shall also gain an incalculably great karmic reward in the form of merit.

Why is this the case? It is because this sutra is able to open pure wisdom eyes incalculable in their number. It is able to cause the lineage of the Buddhas to continue on and not be cut off. It is able to rescue countless beings beset by suffering and affliction. It is able to illuminate the darkness of all forms of ignorance. It is able to rout the four types of demons and demolish demonic karma. It is able to destroy the erroneous views of all non-Buddhist traditions. It is able to extinguish the great blaze of all afflictions. It is able to melt away all of the karmic formative actions (*saṃskāras*) generated through [the chain of] causes and conditions.

It is able to cut off covetousness, the breaking of the moral precepts, hatred, indolence, mental distraction, and delusion, these six extremely grave disorders. It is able to eliminate karmic obstacles, retribution obstacles, obstacles to Dharma, the obstacle of afflictions, the obstacle of views, the obstacle of ignorance, obstacles to cognition, and the obstacle of habitual propensities. To sum up the essentials: This sutra is able to cause all evil dharmas without exception to be completely melted away and disappear. It is able to cause all good dharmas to increase and grow like a flaming blaze.

D. THE MERITORIOUSNESS OF THIS SUTRA AND THOSE REVERING IT

If there be a son or daughter of good family who, having heard this sutra, delights in it, becomes fondly pleased by it, and is inspired to thoughts admiring its rarity, one should realize that this person has already made offerings to countless buddhas and has already deeply planted roots of goodness.

How is this the case? This sutra is one which has been carried out in practice by all buddhas of the three periods of time. Hence the practitioner who succeeds in hearing this sutra should celebrate his good fortune in acquiring such a great and fine benefit.

If there be someone who writes out, studies, or recites this sutra, one should realize that the resulting merit-based blessings gained by this person are incalculable and boundless. Why is this? The objective sphere encompassed by [the teachings of] this sutra is

boundless. This is because it promotes the flourishing generation of countless vows, because it draws in all beings, and because it involves the adornment of unsurpassed bodhi. Thus the merit-based blessings gained in reward are themselves boundless in this very same way.

If one is able to comprehend its meaning and then proceed to cultivate in accordance with what it teaches, even if all buddhas attempted for *asamkhyeyas* of kalpas with their inexhaustible wisdom to describe the karmic rewards generated by this, not even they could come to the end of them.

If there be a place where a master of the Dharma has taught this sutra, one should realize that one should erect a stupa on this site. Why? This is because that place is one in which genuine right Dharma was brought forth.

In whatsoever place this sutra abides, whether it be a country, city, village, monastery, temple, or serene monastic abode, one should realize that the Dharma body itself abides therein. If a person makes offerings there of incense, flowers, music, hanging banners, pennants, canopies, songs, verses, praises, pressed palms, or expressions of reverence, one should realize that this person has already himself participated in the carrying on of the lineage of the Buddhas. How much the more so is this true in the case of one who in the most complete fashion upholds [the teachings of] this sutra. Persons such as these perfect the adornments consisting of merit and of wisdom. In a future life, they are bound to receive the prediction [of eventual buddhahood]. They will definitely succeed in realizing *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

End of A Treatise on the Generating the Bodhi Resolve Sutra