

**Part Two:**

**THE PERFECTION OF MORAL VIRTUE**

**(Chapters 21–23)**



## Chapter 22: Details and Import of the Moral Precepts

### II. DETAILS AND IMPORT OF THE MORAL PRECEPTS

#### A. PRECEPTS DEFINED: CESSATION OF AND RESTRAINT FROM EVIL

**Question:** We are already aware of the many sorts of meritorious qualities and resultant rewards [associated with the precepts]. What are the characteristic features of the moral precepts?

**Response:** They consist of the stopping of evil and the refraining from any further commission of it. This is the case whether it comes forth from the mind, whether it involves utterances by the mouth, or whether it involves external influences. It includes the putting to rest of evil on the part of the body and the mouth. These are what constitute the characteristic features of the precepts.

#### 1. THE LAYPERSON'S PRECEPTS

##### a. THE FIVE PRECEPTS

##### 1) THE PRECEPT AGAINST KILLING

##### a) KILLING DEFINED

What constitutes evil? In this case, it is where there actually is a being, one knows it is a being, and one brings forth the thought desirous of killing and thus takes its life. One then does generate the physical action. It is a case where there does exist a created physical form. This constitutes the offense of killing a being. The other factors: the tying up, the confining, the whipping, the beating, and so forth—these are dharmas which are auxiliary to killing.

Additionally, it is when one kills another being that one incurs the offense of killing. In a circumstance where one kills one's own body—even if one knows it to be a being and then performs the act of killing, it is still not the case that this constitutes the offense of killing.

It does not qualify as an offense when one sees a person at night, thinks him to be a leafless tree trunk, and then kills him. It is when one deliberately kills a being that one incurs the killing offense. It is not the case [that an offense is incurred] when the act is not intentional. When one kills a being and does so with a pleased mind, one incurs the offense of killing. This is not the case where one is in a state of crazed delusion. It is at that very point in time when the root of life is cut off that it constitutes the offense of killing.

It is not the case that the physical action of creating a wound in itself constitutes the offense of killing. It is not the case that when one has only given the verbal instructions as an order [to kill] that

those verbal instructions in and of themselves constitute the offense of killing. Nor is it the case that the generation of the thought alone [constitutes the killing offense]. Cases which accord with the indications of these criteria are what constitute the offense of killing. So long as one refrains from creating these offenses, it still amounts to remaining in compliance with the precepts.

In a case where a person takes the precept, the thought arises and the mouth speaks, saying, "From this day on, I will not again kill beings." If it happens that the body does not actually move and the mouth does not actually speak, but the mind alone is nonetheless active and thus one mentally vows to oneself, "From this very day onward, I will refrain from ever killing beings again," this *does* constitute the taking on of the non-killing precept.

There are those who say that this "not killing" precept may be categorized as "good" or it may be "neutral."

**Question:** According to the testimony of the Abhidharma, all moral regulations associated with the precepts are good. Why then do you now say that they may be "neutral"?

b) ABHIDHARMIC ANALYSIS OF KILLING PRECEPT

**Response:** According to the Abhidharma of Kātyāyanīputra they are all categorized as "good."<sup>8</sup> According to the statements contained in other *abhidharmas*, the precept of not killing may be good or it may be neutral. Why? If it were the case that the not killing precept were always good, then it ought to be the case that those who uphold this precept should never fall into the wretched destinies just as in the case of those who have already gained realization of the Path. Using this rationale as a basis, there may be times when it should be neutral. Because that which is neutral has no resulting retribution, it may be the case that one has no resulting rebirth in the heavens or in the human realm [solely traceable to having adhered to this particular moral precept].

**Question:** It is not the case that one would fall into the hells based solely on the neutrality of a precept. It is because of the additional factors associated with the generation of evil thoughts that one falls into the hells.

**Response:** By not killing beings, one develops an immeasurable number of good dharmas. This is because the creating of merit through non-commission of the offense is accumulating constantly day and night. However, if one is simultaneously committing a few karmic offenses, one's merit then becomes limited and measurable.

How is this so? The relative balance gravitates towards that which is measurable and does not go the way of the immeasurable. It is on this basis that one can realize that within the sphere of the not killing precept, there may be instances in which it becomes “neutral.”

Moreover, there are those people who do not receive the precepts from a Master but who only bring forth in their minds a vow to themselves, “From this day on, I shall no longer kill any beings.” The refraining from killing under this sort of circumstance may have times when it is only neutral.

**Question:** To which of the realms is this precept requiring abstention from killing connected?

**Response:** According to the statements in the Abhidharma of Kātyāyanīputra, all moral regulations associated with received precepts are connected to the desire realm. According to statements in other *abhidharmas*, it may be connected to the desire realm or may not be connected to any realm at all. To speak of it in a manner corresponding to reality, there are three ways of classifying it: It may be connected to the desire realm; it may be connected to the form realm; or it may be connected to states beyond outflow-impurities. Although it would seem that the not-killing precept should be most properly associated with the desire realm where killing is actually carried out, because in the form realm and realms free of outflow-impurities one is far removed from actually engaging in killing, it is those spheres which best exemplify the true implementation of the not-killing precept.

Additionally, there are those people who do not actually take the killing precept but who, from birth onwards, nonetheless find no pleasure in killing beings. [Abstention from killing] may be either “good” or “neutral.” This is one of those circumstances qualifying as “neutral.”

c) ADDITIONAL ABHIDHARMA ANALYTIC DATA

This dharma of abstention from killing is not mind, is not a mind dharma, and is not a dharma associated with the mind. It may arise in association with the mind or it may be that it does not arise in association with the mind.

It is stated in the abhidharma of Kātyāyanīputra that abstention from killing beings is either body karma or mouth karma, that it may involve visible or invisible form, that it may conform with actions of the mind or may not conform with the actions of the mind. It is not the case that it constitutes karmic retribution from earlier lives.

(Chinese textual note: The notes in red state that “conforming with the mind” refers to “precepts linked to meditative absorption” whereas “not conforming with the mind” refers to the five precepts.)

There are two types of cultivation which should be cultivated and two types of realization which should be realized. (Chinese textual note: The notes in red state that this refers to “physical realization” and “wisdom realization.”) There is severance through thought. In all desire realms, it is the last to be achieved. This may involve severance through cognition or severance linked to a particular temporal circumstance.

That which is gained by both the common person and an ārya is a form dharma. It may be visible or it may be invisible. It may involve a dharma which is opposable or it may involve a dharma which is not opposable. It is a dharma which has a reward. It is a dharma which has a fruition. It is a dharma within the sphere of outflow-impurities. It is a conditioned dharma. It is a surpassable dharma. (Chinese textual note: The notes in red state that it is surpassable because it is not ultimate.) It is a non-corresponding cause. Analyses such as these are employed [in *abhidharma* writings] to describe the precept proscribing killing.

**Question:** The killing of beings is also proscribed by the moral-precept standard included in the eightfold right path. Why do you merely note here that the precept of abstention from killing beings has a retribution and is in the realm of outflow-impurities?

**Response:** We discuss herein only the regulatory dharmas associated with taking the precepts. We do not discuss here the regulations associated with beings who have become free of outflow-impurities. Moreover, in other *abhidharmas*, it is stated that the dharma of abstention from killing is practiced through the mind’s constantly avoiding pursuit [of ideation tending towards killing], that it is not the case that it constitutes karma of the body or mouth, that it is practiced through refraining from following along with the karma associated with one’s mind, that it may or may not involve karmic retribution, that it is not a dharma associated with the mind, and that it may or may not involve outflow-impurities. These are dharmas which vary [in their analysis from author to author]. They are in agreement on the other issues.<sup>9</sup>

d) RESUMPTION OF EXPOSITORY KILLING-PRECEPT DISCUSSION

There are yet others who make the point that the Buddhas, the Worthies, and the Āryas are not inclined towards frivolous debate

about dharmas and that, no matter which being one may encounter, in all cases it is inclined to cherish its own life. Therefore the Buddha said, “Do not take another’s life. If one takes another’s life, one will be bound to undergo all manner of bitter pain in life after life.” The issue of whether or not beings actually exist shall be discussed later on. (Chinese textual note: The notes in red state that “frivolous” refers to all sorts of variant discussions.)

i) OBJECTION: KILLING IS JUSTIFIED. WHY ABSTAIN?

**Question:** People are able to use their strength to be victorious over others, annex adjacent countries, and demolish enemies. Sometimes the skins and meat hunted in the field provide great benefits in rescuing [people from hunger]. What then is the value of preventing one from killing beings?

ii) REFUTATION OF ARGUMENTS FOR KILLING

**Response:** One gains from this a state of fearlessness. One becomes peaceful, happy and free of dread. Because there has been no harm on my part towards others, they harbor no harmful intentions towards me, either. On account of this, one is never terrified and abides in fearlessness. Although a man who likes to kill may rise to the highest position wherein he becomes a king among men, he is still not at peace with himself. However, if one is a man who upholds the precepts, he may travel by himself and roam about alone, fearing nothing, and encountering no calamities.

Moreover, any being who possesses a life span does not enjoy encountering a person who takes pleasure in killing. If one dislikes killing, all beings happily rely on him. Again, when the life of a person who upholds the precepts is about to come to its end, his mind is at peace, happy, free of doubts, and free of regrets. Then, whether he is reborn in the heavens or among men, he always gains a long life span. This behavior constitutes a cause and condition for realizing the Path. When such a person finally achieves buddhahood, his lifespan in the world is incalculably long.

Additionally, in both present and future lives, a person who kills beings experiences all kinds of physical and mental bitterness and pain. A person who refrains from killing remains free of such manifold difficulties. This amounts to a great benefit.

Furthermore, the practitioner reflects to himself, “I cherish my own life and am fond of this body. Others are the same in this respect. How are they any different from me? I should therefore refrain from killing any being.”

Moreover, if one is a killer of beings, he is denounced by good people and is hated by his enemies. Because he is responsible for taking the lives of others, he is constantly afflicted with fearfulness and is detested by those beings.<sup>10</sup> When he dies, his mind is full of regrets and he is bound to fall into the hells or into the realm of animals. When he emerges from those realms, his lifespan is bound to always be brief.

Then again, even if one were able to cause there to be no karmic retributions in later lives, no denunciation by good people, and no detestation by enemies, one should still refrain from deliberately taking another's life. Why? This is a thing which should not be done by those who are good. How much the more so is this the case where one encounters in both eras<sup>11</sup> the resulting retribution arising from the baseness and evil of one's own offenses.

Furthermore, killing amounts to the most serious of all offenses. How is this so? When a person encounters a life-threatening situation, he will not spare even the most valuable treasures [in the quest to save his own life]. He takes simply being able to survive as what is of primary importance.

e) THE MERCHANT WHO LOST HIS JEWELS (STORY)

This principle is illustrated by the case of the merchant who went to sea to gather jewels. When he had just about gotten back from the great sea, his boat suddenly broke apart and the precious jewels were all lost. He was nonetheless overjoyed and exultant, throwing up his hands and exclaiming, "I almost lost a great jewel!"

Everyone thought this strange and said, "You lost all your valuable possessions and escaped without even any clothes on your back. How can you joyfully exclaim, "I almost lost a great jewel!"

He replied, "Among all the jewels, a person's life is foremost. It is for the sake of their lives that people seek wealth. It is not that they seek to live for the sake of wealth."

f) KILLING AS THE WORST AND NOT KILLING AS THE FINEST OF ACTIONS

It is for this reason that the Buddha said that, among the ten bad karmic actions, the offense of killing is foremost. It is also the first among the five precepts. Even if a person cultivates all sorts of merit, so long as he fails to uphold the precept against taking life, there is nothing to be gained from it. Why? Even though one might be born into a circumstance wherein one enjoys karmic blessings and noble birth attended by the power of aristocratic connections, if he still does not have a long lifespan, who would be able to survive to experience such bliss?<sup>12</sup>

For these reasons, one knows that, among all of the offenses, the offense of killing is the most serious and, among all of the meritorious practices, refraining from killing is foremost. In the world, it is the preserving of one's own life which is the primary concern. How do we know this? Everyone in the world would agree to undergo the physical cruelty of corporeal punishment, including even beating and flogging, in order to spare their own lives.

Then again, if the thought to take on the moral precepts arises in a person in such a way that he thinks, "From this very day onward, I shall not kill any beings," by doing this he has already given a gift to an incalculable number of beings of something which they prize as valuable. The merit which he gains thereby is also incalculable.

According to what the Buddha said, there are five great gifts. What are the five? The first is not killing beings. This is the greatest gift. Not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, not lying, and not drinking intoxicants are the others which are the similar in this respect.

Additionally, the merit of practicing the samādhi of kindness (*maitrī-samādhi*) is incalculable. Water and fire will not harm one. Knives and military weapons will not injure one. No matter what the evil poison, one is unable to be poisoned by it. These are the sorts of things which one gains from giving the five great gifts.

g) TEN KARMIC EFFECTS FROM KILLING

Moreover, the Buddha, foremost among all revered throughout the three periods of time and ten directions, told the *upāsaka* Nandika, "There are ten punishments which accrue from killing beings. What are the ten?"

1. In life after life without cease, one's mind constantly nurtures a poisonous disposition.
2. Beings detest, regard as evil, and find no joy in seeing such a person.
3. One constantly cherishes malicious thoughts and contemplates evil endeavors.
4. Beings fear one just as if they had encountered a snake or tiger.
5. One becomes terrified when asleep and unable to be at peace when awake.
6. One always has bad dreams.
7. As one's life draws to an end, one descends into madness and terror of dying.

8. One plants the karmic causes and conditions for having only a brief life.
9. When the body deteriorates and one's life ends, one falls into *niraya* (the hells).
10. When one emerges and finally regains human rebirth, one is bound to always have only a short life.

h) CONTEMPLATIONS TO REINFORCE NOT KILLING

Additionally, the practitioner thinks to himself, "All things possessed of life, including even the insects, cherish their own physical bodies. How could one kill beings for clothing, food and drink, or for the sake of one's own body?"

Moreover, the practitioner should study the dharmas of the great men. Among all of the great men, the Buddha is the greatest. Why? He has perfected every wisdom and has brought the ten powers to complete fulfillment. He is able to cross beings over to liberation and he constantly implement kindness and pity. It was through upholding the precept against killing that he arrived at the achievement of buddhahood. He then also instructed his disciples to course in this kindness and pity. Because the practitioner wishes to emulate the practices of the great men, he too ought to refrain from killing.

i) OBJECTION: WHAT IF MY LIFE IS THREATENED?

**Question:** If it is not a case of my being attacked, then the thought of killing may be put to rest. However, if one has been attacked, overcome by force, and is then being coerced by imminent peril, what should one do then?

**Reply:** One should weigh the relative gravity of the alternatives. If someone is about to take one's life, one should first consider whether the benefit from preserving the precept is more important or whether the benefit from preserving one's physical life is more important, considering also whether it is precept breakage which determines loss or whether it is physical demise which determines what amounts to a loss.

After having reflected in this manner, one realizes that maintaining the precept is momentous and that preserving one's physical life is a minor matter. If in avoiding peril one is able only to succeed in preserving one's body, then what advantage is gained with having preserved the body? This body is the swamp of senescence, disease and death. It will inevitably deteriorate and decay. However, if it is for the sake of upholding the precept that one loses one's body, the benefit of it is extremely consequential.

Furthermore, one should consider thus: “From the past on up to the present, I have lost my life an innumerable number of times. At turns, I have taken birth as a malevolent brigand or as a bird or beast where I have lived solely for profit or all manner of other unworthy pursuits.

“I have now encountered a situation where [loss of life] might be for the sake of preserving the purity of the moral precepts. To not be stinting of this body and to sacrifice my life to uphold the precepts would be a billion times better than, and in fact incomparable, to merely safeguarding my body at the expense of violating the prohibitions.” Thus one may decide in this manner that one should forsake the body in order to protect the integrity of the pure precepts.

j) THE BUTCHER’S SON REFUSES TO KILL (STORY)

For example, there once was a man who, having reached the rank of *srota-āpanna*,<sup>13</sup> had taken rebirth into the family of a butcher and then grown up to the threshold of adulthood. Although he was expected to pursue his household occupation, he was unable to kill animals. His father and mother gave him a knife and a sheep and shut him up in a room, telling him, “If you do not kill the sheep, we will not allow you to come out and see the sun or the moon, or to have the food and drink necessary for your survival.”

The son thought to himself, “If I kill this sheep, then I will be compelled to pursue this occupation my entire life. How could I commit such a great crime solely for the sake of this body?” He then took up the knife and killed himself. The father and mother eventually opened the door to take a look only to discover that the sheep was standing off to one side whilst the son was laying there, already deceased.<sup>14</sup>

Having killed himself, he then took rebirth in the heavens. If one were to act in this manner, this would amount to not sparing even one’s own life in safeguarding the integrity of the pure precepts.

Concepts such as we have treated here form the bases for the precept against killing.

2) THE PRECEPT AGAINST STEALING

a) STEALING DEFINED

As for taking what is not given, if one knows it is something belonging to another, if one brings forth a thought intent on stealing it, if one takes that thing away from its original location, and if the thing is then considered to be “mine,” this is what is meant by stealing. If

one does not do this, then this amounts to refraining from stealing. The other associated factors, from the planning of the act on up to and including grasping it with the hand when it has not yet left the ground—these constitute dharmas auxiliary to stealing.

Valuable objects are of two types: those which belong to someone else and those which do not belong to someone else. If one takes a thing which belongs to someone else, this constitutes an offense of stealing.

Things which belong to someone else are also of two kinds: those which are within the boundaries of a village and those which are in the wilderness. If one's taking of things from either of these places is accompanied by a mind intent on stealing, then one incurs the offense of stealing. If the object is in the wilderness, then one should consider critically and come to an understanding as to whose kingdom this object might be in close proximity to, and as to whether or not it has an owner and thus should not be taken. Accordance with the Vinaya<sup>15</sup> discussions of the various circumstances not constituting stealing defines the character of what does not qualify as stealing.

b) THE BENEFITS OF NOT STEALING

**Question:** What are the benefits of refraining from stealing?

**Response:** There are two parts to a person's life, that which is personal (lit. "inward") and that which is beyond the personal (lit. "outward"). If one steals valuable objects, this amounts to stealing the bases of someone else's life. How is this so? Life depends upon drink, food, clothing, bedding, and other such things for its survival. If one robs or if one steals, this amounts to the stealing of someone else's life. This is as described in a verse:

Each and every one of all the beings  
 Depends on clothes and food for his survival.  
 Whether one takes by stealing or by robbing,  
 This amounts to the robbing or stealing of a life.

On account of this fact, a wise person should refrain from robbing or stealing.

Moreover, one ought to reflect, "If it is by robbing or stealing that one comes by the possessions he bestows on himself, even though he may be personally well provided for, he will nonetheless come to that time when he too must die. On dying, he will enter the hells. Then, even though his family might still be experiencing bliss, he

will be compelled to undergo punishment all by himself and will then be ensconced in a situation from which he cannot be rescued." Having contemplated in this fashion, one should then refrain from stealing.

c) TWO MAIN CATEGORIES OF STEALING

Additionally, this [offense of] "taking what is not given" falls into two categories: The first is stealing. The second is robbery. They are both generally referred to as "taking what is not given."

d) THE REPREHENSIBILITY OF ROBBERY IN PARTICULAR

Within the sphere of taking what is not given, robbery is the most serious form of the offense. How is this so? All people rely upon their wealth to keep themselves alive. If one nonetheless breaks in and commits robbery, this constitutes the most defiled sort of conduct. Why? It is because one has no power in such circumstances to allay the victim's fear of being murdered. It is because, in the course of committing robbery, one [forcefully] seizes possessions that robbery is the most serious class of stealing offense. This is as described in a verse:

Hungry and starving, one's body emaciated and thin,  
One undergoes punishment amidst intensely great suffering.<sup>16</sup>  
The belongings of others are such as cannot even be touched.  
In this they are comparable to a great flaming bonfire.

If one seizes through robbery the possessions of others,  
Their owners start weeping in anguished affliction.  
Even were one a god king or one of that sort,  
One would still look on this as freighted with suffering.

e) THE GRAVITY AND UNIVERSAL CONDEMNATION OF THEFT

Although one does commit a serious offense by killing, still, from the standpoint of the victim of the killing, he is seen as having acted as a thief [of a life]. A person who steals is a thief to all people who own material possessions. If one transgresses against other precepts, it may be that in other countries there are those who do not take that to constitute an offense. However, if one is a person who steals, there is no country which does not punish it as an offense.

f) OBJECTION: BUT ISN'T THE VERY BOLDNESS ADMIRABLE?

**Question:** As for people who engage in robbery by force, there are people in the present era who praise them and see their boldness as admirable. Why then should one refrain from engaging in this sort of thievery?

## g) CONDEMNATION OF THEFT OF ANY SORT

**Response:** If one takes something which has not been given, this is an act characterized by unwholesomeness. Although there are lesser infractions within the realm of stealing, all of them are inherently bad. This is comparable to mixing poison into fine food or mixing poison into bad food. Although there may be distinctions between fine and poor cuisine, still, in the sense that they have both been mixed with poison, they do not differ at all.

This is also comparable to stepping into fire when it is light out and when it is dark. Although there is the difference of day as opposed to night, they are the same as regards the burning of one's feet. The foolish people of the present age are not aware of the resultant retribution from offenses and merit as it occurs in the two periods of time. Devoid of thoughts of humanity and kindness, they observe that a man is able to use his strength to invade and take another's wealth by force and then praise it as being a measure of his power.

The Buddhas, the Worthies, and the Āryas maintain kindness and pity for all. They have completely understood that there is no fading away of the [inevitability of] encountering disasters and misfortunes [as karmic retributions for such acts] as one moves through the three periods of time. Hence they do not praise such acts. One should therefore realize that all stealing offenses are inherently bad. Any practitioner who is a good person will refrain from engaging in these actions.

## h) TEN KARMIC EFFECTS OF STEALING

As described by the Buddha, taking what is not given has ten associated punishments.

1. The owner always nourishes hatred.
2. One is repeatedly called into doubt. (Chinese textual note: The notes in red state, "With repeated offenses, people harbor doubts".)
3. Even when not engaged in the act, one is liable to encounter unforeseen events.<sup>17</sup>
4. One associates with evil men and departs far from those who are worthy and good.
5. One destroys one's wholesome qualities.
6. One becomes known as a criminal by the authorities.
7. One's valuables are bound to be lost.

8. One plants the karmic causes and conditions for being poor and destitute.
9. When one dies, he enters the hells.
10. When one emerges and takes a human rebirth again, he undergoes intense bitterness in the quest for wealth. Then, even so, that wealth ends up being shared with five different groups consisting of the King, thieves, fire, water, and unloving sons. Even if one hides it away or buries it, it is still bound to be lost.

### 3) THE PRECEPT AGAINST SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

#### a) SEXUAL MISCONDUCT DEFINED

As for the precept against sexual misconduct, if one violates [the “protected” status) of a female under the protection of the father, the mother, the elder or younger brother, the elder or younger sister, the husband as head of family, a son, the law of the world, or the law of a king, this constitutes sexual misconduct.

Sometimes there are those who, although they are not “under protection” in this sense, are nonetheless under the protection of the Dharma. How is it that one is under the protection of the Dharma? This refers to all women who have left the home life and to those who are householders but who have taken the “one day” precept. This is referred to as being under the protection of the Dharma.

If one uses force, or if one uses money, or if one engages in deceptive seduction, or if one has a wife who has taken the precept, who is pregnant or who is nursing an infant, or if one engages in sexual activity involving an inappropriate orifice—if one transgresses in such ways, this constitutes sexual misconduct.

All sorts of situations like these even extending to the giving of a flower garland to a courtesan as an indication of intent—if one transgresses in such ways, this constitutes sexual misconduct. If in all sorts of situations such as this one refrains from taking such actions, this qualifies as not engaging in sexual misconduct.

#### b) OBJECTION: HOW COULD THIS APPLY TO ONE’S WIFE?

**Question:** When the woman is under the protection of a man, one engenders the man’s hatred. When she is under the protection of the Dharma, one violates the Dharma. In these cases, it should qualify as sexual misconduct. However, when it involves a man’s own wife, how can it constitute misconduct?

## i) IN INSTANCES OF THE ONE-DAY PRECEPT

**Response:** When one has agreed to the taking of the one day precept, one falls under the jurisdiction of the Dharma. Although originally, she may indeed be one's spouse, now one no longer exercises sovereign independence in the matter. Once the time has passed when that precept is in force, then that situation no longer qualifies as one of being "under the protection of the Dharma."

## ii) IN INSTANCES OF PREGNANCY OR NURSING

There are cases where the wife is pregnant and, because the body is heavy, there is aversion for what was originally practiced. Moreover, it can be injurious to the pregnancy. If one engages in sexual relations with the mother during the time she is nursing an infant, the milk may dry up. Moreover, if the mind becomes attached to sexual desire, then there may not be continued protective regard for the infant.

## iii) IN INSTANCES INVOLVING INAPPROPRIATE ORIFICE OR FORCE

If one resorts to a place which is not the [genital] orifice, then that is not the female organ and the mind of the woman is not pleased. [Also,] if one resorts to force, because that is unprincipled, that would qualify as sexual misconduct. If one does not engage in such things, this constitutes refraining from sexual misconduct.

## c) OBJECTION: IF HER HUSBAND DOESN'T KNOW, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

**Question:** If the husband does not know, does not observe it, and is not afflicted by it, what offense do others incur?

## i) OFFENSE IS BASED ON THE ACT ITSELF

**Response:** It is on account of the action's inherent erroneousness that it is consequently referred to as "misconduct." This is a case of doing what is not right. It is on this basis that this qualifies as an offense.

## ii) ALIENATION OF AFFECTIONS ENTAILS THEFT

Moreover, there are all sorts of transgressions inherent in this. The feelings existing between husband and wife are such that, although they are of different bodies, they are substantially the same [unified entity]. If one steals the object of another person's love and destroys her original thoughts [of affection for him], one qualifies thereby as a thief. Thus one simultaneously commits yet another serious offense.

## iii) DISREPUTE, HATRED, UNHAPPINESS, FEAR, DANGER, LIES, CENSURE

One gains a bad name and an ugly reputation. One is detested by others and thus experiences diminished happiness and increased fearfulness. One may live in fear of brutal punishment. Additionally, one is fearful that the husband and other people will find out about it. Hence one is much involved in maintaining lies. It is an activity which is denounced by the Āryas. It involves offenses within offenses. (Chinese textual note: The notes in red say, "Regarding this lust-related offense, it is because one breaks [yet other] precepts in the course of committing sexual misconduct that it refers to 'offenses within offenses.'")

## iv) IDENTITY OF LOVERS MAKES IT POINTLESS

Furthermore, the sexually dissolute person ought to consider to himself, "My wife and his wife are both women. In terms of bone and flesh, feelings and demeanor, that one and this one are no different. So why do I perversely bring forth these deluded thoughts and pursue such incorrect intentions?"

## v) PRESENT AND FUTURE HAPPINESS IS LOST

A person who engages in sexual misconduct destroys and loses any happiness in both this life and later lives. (Chinese textual note: A fine name, a reputation for goodness, and peace and happiness of body and mind are gained in the present life. The benefits of rebirth in the heavens, gaining the Path, and reaching nirvāṇa are realized in later lives.)

## vi) ONE SHOULD HAVE SYMPATHY FOR THE PROSPECTIVE CUCKOLD

Then again, one should turn one's situation around and change places as a means of controlling one's mind, considering, "If he were to violate my wife, I would be enraged. Hence, if I were to violate his wife, how is it that he would feel any differently?" Through the natural self-control arising realizing one's own circumstance, one should be motivated to refrain from such acts.

## vii) THE KARMIC RETRIBUTION IS HORRIBLE

What's more, as the Buddha said, a person who engages in sexual misconduct later falls into the hell of sword trees where he undergoes an abundance of many sorts of sufferings. When one succeeds in emerging and becoming a human, one's family life is not harmonious. One always meets up with a licentious wife who is devious, remote, and ruthlessly cruel.

## d) TEN KARMIC EFFECTS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct is a calamity analogous to a venomous snake or a great fire which, should one fail to immediately avoid it, entails

the encroachment of disastrous harm. As stated by the Buddha, sexual misconduct has ten resulting karmic punishments:

1. The husband of [the offender's] sexual conquest is constantly bent on destroying him.
2. The husband and wife are not harmonious and are constantly engaged in mutual strife.
3. Bad dharmas proliferate with each passing day, whereas good dharmas diminish with each passing day.
4. One does not protect one's own physical health while one simultaneously widows one's wife and orphans one's children.
5. One's wealth and business deteriorate daily.
6. All manner of unfortunate situations develop while one is also constantly doubted by others.
7. One's relatives and friends no longer feel affection or fondness for him.
8. One plants the karmic causes and conditions for having enemies.
9. At the break-up of the body when the life comes to an end, one dies and enters the hells.
10. If when one emerges, one takes birth as a woman, many men simultaneously engage in the acts of a husband. If one takes birth as a man, one's wife is not chaste.

If one refrains from all such causes and conditions as these, then this qualifies as refraining from sexual misconduct.

4) THE PRECEPT AGAINST FALSE SPEECH

a) FALSE SPEECH DEFINED

As for false speech, if there is a thought which is not pure, if one wishes to deceive someone else, if one hides the truth, and if one speaks forth words which differ from the truth, thus generating karma of the mouth, this is what constitutes "false speech." The offense of false speech arises from the sound of the words and mutual understanding. If there is no understanding, then although they are untrue words, there is no offense of false speech.

As for this false speech: if one actually does know, yet nonetheless claims that he does not know; if one does not know, yet claims that he does know; if one has seen, yet claims that he has not seen; if one has not seen, yet claims that he has seen; if one has heard, yet claims that he has not heard; or if one has not heard, yet claims that he has heard—these all constitute instances of false speech. If

one has not acted in such a manner, then this qualifies as refraining from committing false speech.

b) THE INHERENT FAULTS IN FALSE SPEECH

**Question:** What faults are there in false speech?

**Response:** The person who commits false speech first of all cheats himself, and then proceeds to deceive others. He takes what is real as false and what is false as real. He turns false and real upside down and refuses to accept good dharmas. He is comparable to an inverted vase into which water cannot be poured.

The mind of a person who commits false speech is devoid of a sense of shame or a dread of blame. He blocks off both the way to the heavens and the gate to nirvāṇa. One contemplates this matter, realizes the existence of these disadvantages, and therefore refrains from couraging in it.

Additionally, one contemplates this matter and realizes that the benefits of true speech are extremely vast. The benefits of true speech naturally come forth from one's self and are extremely easily gained. This is the power of all who have left the home life. Both householders and those who have left the home life possess the benefits of this sort of merit. It is the mark of a good person.

Moreover, the mind of a person whose words are true is correct and straight. Because his mind is correct and straight, it is easy for him to succeed in avoiding suffering. It is just as when pulling forth logs from a dense forest. The straight ones come forth easily.

c) WHY THEN DO PEOPLE ENGAGE IN FALSE SPEECH?

**Question:** If false speech entails disadvantages such as these, why then do people engage in false speech?

**Response:** There are those who are foolish and deficient in wisdom who, when they encounter anguishing difficulties, tell lies as a stratagem to escape them. They fail to recognize the manner in which matters are bound to unfold. When they commit a transgression in this present life, they do not realize that there will be an immense retribution in a later life which is brought on as a result of that transgression.

Then again, there are people who, although they are aware of the fact that false speech entails a transgression, nonetheless course in lies due to an abundance of greed, hatred, or delusion.

d) KOKĀLIKA'S SLANDEROUS OFFENSE (STORY)

Additionally, there are people who, although not afflicted with greed or hatred, nonetheless falsely testify to another man's transgression

because, in their own minds, they are of the opinion that their testimony is true. When they die, they plummet into the hells just as did Kokālika, a disciple of Devadatta. He constantly sought to find fault with Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana.

At that time, those two men had just reached the end of the summer retreat and so they proceeded to travel about, journeying through the various states. Having encountered a great rain storm, upon arriving at the home of a potter, they spent the night in a pottery storage building.

Before they had arrived, unbeknownst to these two, a woman had already gone in and fallen asleep in a darkened part of the building. That night, this woman had an orgasm in her dreams. In the early morning, she went to get water with which to bathe. Kokālika happened to be walking by at the time and took notice of her. Kokālika possessed the ability to know about a person's sex life simply by observing one's countenance. Even so, he couldn't deduce whether the activity had happened in a dream state or while awake.

Kokālika then mentioned to a disciple, "This woman had sex with someone last night," whereupon he asked the woman, "So, where did you spend the night last night?"

She replied, "I spent the night over in the pottery building."

Next, he asked, "Who else was there?"

She replied, "There were a couple of bhikshus there." At just that time, those very two men happened to emerge from inside that building. Having noticed them, Kokālika examined their countenances and convinced himself that the two men were definitely not pure. It so happened that he had formerly nurtured jealousy towards them. Having observed this situation, he proceeded to spread it all about in the various cities, villages and hamlets. Next, he went to the Jeta Grove where he openly proclaimed this evil rumor.

At this time, it so happened that Brahmā, the King of the Gods, had come wishing to have an audience with the Buddha. However, the Buddha had entered into a silent room where he remained very still, immersed in samādhi. All of the bhikshus too had shut their doors and entered samādhi. None of them could be roused. Then he thought to himself, "I originally came to see the Buddha, but, as it happens, the Buddha has gone into samādhi."

He was about to return [to his celestial abode] when he had another thought, "It won't be long before the Buddha arises from meditative absorption. I'll just wait here a for a little while longer."

He then went over to the entrance to Kokālika's room, knocked on the door, and called out, "Kokālika! Kokālika! The minds of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are pure and pliant. Do not slander them or you will be bound to spend the long night [of your future lifetimes] enduring sufferings."

Kokālika asked, "Who are you?"

He replied, "I am Brahmā, the King of the Gods."

He asked, "The Buddha has said that you have realized the path of the *anāgāmin* (lit. "never-returner").<sup>18</sup> Why then have you returned here?"

Brahmā, King of the Gods, thought for a moment and then uttered this verse:

In wishing to fathom immeasurable dharmas,  
One should not seize on what is mere appearance.  
In wishing to fathom immeasurable dharmas,  
A boor of this sort is bound to capsizes and drown.

After he had spoken this verse, he went to where the Buddha was and set forth the entire matter. The Buddha said, "Good indeed. Good indeed. This verse should be proclaimed straightaway." The Bhagavān himself then repeated the verse:

In wishing to fathom immeasurable dharmas,  
One should not seize on what is mere appearance.  
In wishing to fathom immeasurable dharmas,  
A boor of this sort is bound to capsizes and drown.

After Brahmā, King of the Gods, had heard the Buddha proclaim this, he suddenly disappeared and immediately returned to the heavens.

Kokālika then went to where the Buddha was, prostrated in reverence before the Buddha, and then stood off to one side. The Buddha told Kokālika, "The minds of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are pure and pliant. Do not slander them or you will spend the long night [of future lifetimes] undergoing sufferings."

Kokālika addressed the Buddha, saying, "I don't dare disbelieve the words of the Buddha. However, I saw this clearly with my own eyes. I know definitely that these two men have actually committed impure acts."

The Buddha rebuked him in this manner three times and Kokālika three times still refused to accept it. He then got up from his place, left, and returned to his room. His entire body then broke

out in sores. At first, they were the size of sesame seeds. They gradually became as big as beans, as big as dates, as big as mangoes, and finally, as big as melons. Then, they all simultaneously broke open, leaving him looking as if he had been burned by a great fire. He wailed and wept. Then, that very night, he died and entered the Great Lotus Blossom Hell. A Brahma Heaven god came and informed the Buddha, “Kokālika has already died.”

Then yet another Brahma Heaven god declared, “He has fallen into the Great Lotus Blossom Hell.” After that night had passed, the Buddha ordered the Sangha to assemble, and then asked, “Do you all wish to know the length of the life in that hell into which Kokālika has fallen?”

The Bhikṣus replied, “Pray, please tell us. We wish to hear it.”

The Buddha said, “It is as if there were sixty bushels of sesame seeds and then a man came along only once every hundred years and took away but a single sesame seed. If this went on until all of the sesame seeds were gone, the lifespan endured in the Arbuda Hells would still not have come to an end. Twenty Arbuda Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Nirarbuda Hells. Twenty Nirarbuda Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Aṭaṭa Hells. Twenty Aṭaṭa Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Hahava Hells. Twenty Hahava Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Huhuva Hells. Twenty Huhuva Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Utpala Hells. Twenty Utpala Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Puṇḍarīka Hells. Twenty Puṇḍarīka Hell lifespans equal the lifespan in the Mahāpadma Hells. Kokālika has fallen into these Mahāpadma Hells.<sup>19</sup> His tongue is drawn forth and nailed down with a hundred nails where it is plowed by five hundred plows.” The Bhagavān then spoke forth this verse:

When a person takes rebirth there,  
Hatchets are plunged into his mouth.  
The reason for the body’s being hacked  
Is found in his utterance of evil words.

What should be criticized, he nonetheless has praised.  
What should be praised, he nonetheless has criticized.  
The mouth thus piles up all manner of evil deeds,  
With the result that one is never able to experience any bliss.

The actions of mind and mouth generate evil.  
One plummets then into the Nirarbuda Hells.  
For a term of fully a hundred thousand lifetimes,  
He endures there all manner of excruciating pain.

When one takes rebirth into the Arbuda Hells,  
 He is bound to endure it for a full thirty-six lives,  
 And then suffer for yet another additional five lives,  
 Where in all of them he suffers all manner of suffering anguish.

The mind comes to rely upon erroneous views,  
 And speaks then in a way destroying the Worthies and Āryas.  
 In this, it's like that bamboo which, in putting forth its fruit,  
 Thereby brings on the destruction of its very own physical form.

In just such a manner, the mind generates doubts and slanders. Once they have become rigidly established, they also become manifest in false speech. Thus a person who courses in false speech refuses to believe in or accept even the words of the Buddha. He becomes bound then to undergo punishments just such as these. It is for these reasons that one must refrain from engaging in false speech.

e) RĀHULA'S LESSON ABOUT FALSE SPEECH (STORY)

Then again, a case in point is that of the Buddha's son Rāhula who, being in years but a child, had still not yet understood the importance of taking care with his words. When people would come and ask him, "Is the Bhagavān here, or not?" he would deceive them by saying, "He's not here."

If in fact he was not present, when others would ask Rāhula, "Is the Bhagavān here or not?" he would deceive them by saying, "The Buddha is here."

Someone informed the Buddha about this. The Buddha then told Rāhula, "Get a wash basin, fill it with water, and then wash my feet for me." After his feet had been washed, he instructed Rāhula, "Now put the lid on this wash basin."

Then, obeying the command, he immediately covered it. The Buddha then said, "Take water and pour it in." After it had been poured, he asked, "Did the water go in or not?"

He replied, "No, it didn't go in."

The Buddha told Rāhula, "The lies of a person devoid of a sense of shame or dread of blame cover over his mind so that, in just this same manner, the Dharma of the Path is unable to enter into it."

f) TEN KARMIC EFFECTS OF FALSE SPEECH

As stated by the Buddha, false speech has ten karmic retributions. What are the ten? They are as follows:

1. The breath always smells bad.
2. The good spirits depart far from him and the non-humans are then free to have their way with him.
3. Even though there may be instances when he does speak the truth, people nonetheless do not believe or accept it.
4. He can never participate in discussions with the wise.
5. He is always slandered and his ugly and foul reputation is heard throughout the land.
6. He is not respected by others. Thus, although he may issue instructions and orders, people do not accept or follow them.
7. He is constantly afflicted with many worries.
8. He plants the karmic causes and conditions resulting in his being slandered.
9. When his body deteriorates and his life comes to an end, he is bound to fall into the hells.
10. When he emerges and becomes a person, he is always the object of slander.

If one does not engage in actions such as described here, this qualifies as refraining from committing false speech. This is a moral regulation defining goodness in the sphere of mouth karma.

5) THE PRECEPT AGAINST INTOXICANTS

a) ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DEFINED

As for abstention from alcoholic beverages, alcoholic beverages are of three kinds, the first being alcohol made from grain, the second being alcohol made from fruit, and the third being alcohol made from botanical herbs.

As for alcohol made from fruit, it includes grapes and the fruit of the *ariṣṭaka* tree. All other such varieties also qualify as alcohol from fruit. As for alcohol from botanical herbs, all sorts of botanical herbs, when mixed into rice or wheat, and sugar cane juice are capable then of being transformed into alcoholic beverages. This is also true of milk from hooved animals, for any sort of fermented milk may be used in the same fashion to make alcoholic beverages.

To summarize, whether they be dry, wet, clear, or turbid, any such things possessing the capacity to influence a person's mind to move or backslide are collectively referred to as alcoholic beverages. One must not drink any of them. This is what is meant by abstention from alcoholic beverages.

b) OBJECTION: WITH SO MANY BENEFITS, WHY ABSTAIN?

**Question:** Alcohol is able to dispel coldness, benefit the body, and cause the mind to be delighted. Why then should one refrain from drinking it?

**Response:** The benefits to the body are extremely minor. The harmful aspects are extremely numerous. Therefore, one should not drink it. It is analogous to a marvelous beverage into which one has mixed poison. What sorts of “poison” are being referred to here? As told by the Buddha to the *upāsaka*, Nandika, alcohol has thirty-five faults. What are the thirty-five? They are:

c) THIRTY-FIVE KARMIC EFFECTS OF CONSUMING INTOXICANTS

1. Valuables owned in the present life are squandered. Why? When people consume intoxicants, their minds know no limits. Consequently they indulge in unconstrained wastefulness.
2. It is the entry point for affliction with the many sorts of diseases.
3. It is the basis for generating strife.
4. One’s nakedness is allowed to become shamelessly exposed.
5. One develops an ugly name and terrible reputation leading to not being respected by others.
6. It obscures and submerges one’s wisdom.
7. Those things which ought to be obtained are nonetheless not obtained, whilst whatever has already been obtained becomes scattered and lost.
8. Matters which should remain confidential are told in their entirety to others.
9. All sorts of endeavors deteriorate and are not brought to completion.
10. Intoxication is the root of worry. How so? When one is inebriated, much is lost. After one returns to a condition of mental clarity, one feels shame and blame, and abides in a state of worry.
11. The strength of the body decreases.
12. The appearance of the body deteriorates.
13. One does not know to respect one’s father.
14. One does not know to respect one’s mother.
15. One does not respect the Śramaṇas.
16. One does not respect the Brahmins.

17. One does not respect one's uncles or venerable elders. Why is this? One is so stupefied by drunkenness as to fail to make any such distinctions.
18. One does not honor or respect the Buddha.
19. One does not respect the Dharma.
20. One does not respect the Sangha.
21. One associates with bad people.
22. One remains distant from the worthy and the good.
23. One becomes a breaker of the precepts.
24. One becomes devoid of a sense of shame or dread of blame.
25. One fails to guard the six sense faculties [through appropriate restraint].
26. One falls away into sexual profligacy.
27. One becomes so detested and abhorred by others that they find no delight in laying eyes on him.
28. One becomes abandoned and rejected by those who are esteemed, by one's relatives, and by one's friends.
29. One courses in those dharmas which are not good.
30. One relinquishes good dharmas.
31. One is neither trusted nor employed by intelligent people or wise personages. Why? Because, through intoxication, one has fallen into neglectful ways.
32. One departs far from nirvāṇa.
33. One plants the causes and conditions for becoming crazy and stupid.
34. When the body deteriorates and the life comes to an end, one is bound to fall into the wretched destinies and, in particular, into *niraya* (the hells).
35. When one finally succeeds in taking human rebirth gain, wherever one is reborn, one is crazy and stupid.

It is on account of all manner of such faults that one should abstain from drinking. This is as described in the following verse:

Intoxicants are marked by a loss of awareness in judgment.  
 One's physical appearance becomes murky and detestable.  
 While one's intelligence becomes agitated and confused,  
 And one is robbed of both sense of shame and dread of blame.  
 One loses one's mindfulness, multiplies hate-ridden thoughts,  
 Forfeits one's happiness, and does damage to the clan.

Thus, although it may be referred to as “drinking,”  
In truth, it is synonymous with consuming deadly poison.

Where one should not be hateful, one is nonetheless hateful.

Where one should not laugh, one nonetheless laughs.

Where one should not cry, one nonetheless cries.

Where one should not inflict blows, one nonetheless inflicts blows.

What one should not say, one nonetheless says.

One becomes indistinguishable from a crazy person.

All of one’s good qualities are stolen away.

Whoever knows a sense of shame abstains from drink.

6) ADDITIONAL FIVE-PRECEPT TOPICS

a) SUMMATION OF THE PRIMARY BASIS OF LAY MORALITY

In this manner, abstention from four offenses constitutes accordance with the moral regulations governing goodness in physical actions whereas abstention from false speech constitutes accordance with the moral regulations governing goodness in verbal actions. These collectively constitute the moral regulations comprising the *upāsaka’s* five precepts (*upāsakapañcaśīla*).

b) EIGHT PRECEPTS, OTHER MOUTH KARMAS, PURE LIVELIHOOD

**Question:** If it is the case that eight moral regulations and pure livelihood collectively constitute the precepts, why is there no mention here for the *upāsaka* of either the other three moral regulations associated with the mouth<sup>20</sup> or of pure livelihood?

i) LIMITED CAPACITIES OF LAY BUDDHISTS

**Response:** The laity (lit. “the white-robed ones”) dwell in the midst of the home life where they accept the pleasures of the world while also concurrently cultivating merit. Hence they are unable to fully practice the Dharma as prescribed by the moral precepts. Therefore the Buddha decreed that they uphold the five precepts.

ii) HOW THE FALSE SPEECH PRECEPT SUBSUMES THE OTHERS

Moreover, within the four moral regulations associated with mouth karma, false speech is the most serious. Additionally, with false speech, the thought arises and then one deliberately engages in it. As for the others, one may deliberately engage in them or may do so without any particular deliberate intention.

Then again, when one mentions only false speech, one thereby already subsumes within it the other three related endeavors. Moreover, among all good dharmas, truthfulness is the one of greatest importance. If one speaks true words, all four types of right speech are completely subsumed and realized.

## iii) LAY LIFE'S INHERENT CONNECTION TO HARSH SPEECH

Additionally, the layperson abides in the world where he becomes responsible for oversight and management. He takes responsibility for the family business and issues orders. Hence it is difficult to uphold the dharma which requires abstention from harsh speech. False speech, however, is a thing which is intentionally done. Because it is a serious matter, one must not engage in it.

## iv) FIVE DEGREES OF FIVE-PRECEPT ACCEPTANCE

There are five degrees of acceptance of the five precepts which determine the five kinds of *upāsaka*. The first is the single-practice *upāsaka*. The second is the lesser-practice *upāsaka*. The third is the greater-practice *upāsaka*. The fourth is the full-practice *upāsaka*. The fifth is the celibate *upāsaka*.

As for the first, the single-practice *upāsaka*, it refers to taking on one precept from among the five moral precepts while being unable to take on and uphold the other four precepts. As for the lesser-practice *upāsaka*, it refers to taking on two or three precepts. The greater-practice *upāsaka* is one who takes on four precepts. The full-practice *upāsaka* completely upholds all five precepts. As for the celibate *upāsaka*, after taking on the five precepts, in the presence of his spiritual teacher, he additionally makes a vow for himself, saying, "I will no longer engage in sexual activity even with my own wife. This is what is meant by the five precepts. They are as described by the Buddha in verse:

## v) BUDDHA'S VERSE ON FIVE-PRECEPT KARMIC REWARDS

One does not kill, does not steal,  
 Nor does one engage in sexual misconduct.  
 One maintains true speech, abstains from alcohol,  
 And upholds right livelihood. One thereby purifies his mind.  
 For whoever is able to put this into practice,  
 During the two eras,<sup>21</sup> worry and fear will be dispensed with,  
 Precept merit will constantly follow along with him,  
 And he will always enjoy the company of gods and men.  
 In the six-seasoned flower of the worldly existence,  
 Glory and physical appearance bloom together.  
 This single flower of all of our years,  
 Is contained in a single day of heavenly existence.<sup>22</sup>  
 The celestial trees spontaneously produce  
 Flower garlands and necklaces.

The crimson flowers bloom as luminously as lamps.  
The many colors there are displayed each among the others.

The celestial apparel of countless varieties,  
In hues of so many sorts,  
Is fresh and pure, reflects the heavenly sun,  
And is light, tightly-woven, and free of any wrinkle.

The golden light is reflected in embroidered motifs.  
The graceful color patterns appear like formations of airy clouds.  
Such supremely marvelous apparel  
All comes forth from the trees in the heavens.

Bright jewels, celestial earrings,  
And precious bracelets brighten the hands and feet.  
Whatever the mind finds delightful  
Comes forth as well from the heavenly trees.

There are flowers of gold with stems of *vaiḍūrya*,  
With floral stamens and pistils created from *vajra*.  
Soft and pliant, exuding a pervasive fragrance,  
They all grow forth from pools of jewels.

The guitar, bass, harp, and lute<sup>23</sup>  
Are inlaid with ornaments of seven precious things.  
The instruments are marvelous, the ancient sounds clear.  
All of these also come forth from the trees.

The Pārijātaka tree<sup>24</sup>  
Is the king of the trees in the heavens.  
It grows there within the "Garden of Delight" (Nandanavana)  
Where it remains unmatched by any other.

Upholding the precepts amounts to the tilling of the fields.  
From which these heavenly trees all grow forth.  
The celestial kitchens issue flavors of sweet-dew ambrosia.  
Its drink and food dispel both hunger and thirst.

The heavenly maidens have no interference from guardians,  
Nor do they have the hindrance of a pregnancy-prone body.  
One may enjoy oneself, relax, and be unrestrained in pleasures,  
Whilst eating remains free of the troubles of elimination.

If one upholds the precepts and constantly controls the mind,  
One succeeds in being born in a land where one may indulge.

There are no tasks to be done and there are no difficulties.  
And one is ever able to fulfil aspirations for bliss.

All of the gods achieve sovereign freedom.  
 Distress and suffering no longer arise.  
 Whatever one desires comes in response to one's thoughts,  
 While the light from one's body illuminates all darkness.  
 All sorts of such pleasures as these  
 All come from giving and the observance of precepts.  
 If one wishes to gain this reward,  
 One ought to be diligent and exhort oneself in this.

(1) BUDDHAHOOD IS THE GOAL; WHY PRAISE HEAVENS?

**Question:** Now we are discussing the *śīla* pāramitā. It should be for the purpose of realizing buddhahood. Why is there now this praising of the merits of the heavens?

(2) THREE ENDEAVORS ENTAILING CERTAIN REWARDS

**Response:** The Buddha said that there are three endeavors which certainly entail rewards and for which the gaining of results is not a false matter: If one gives, one gains great fortune. If one upholds the precepts, one will be reborn in a fine place. If one cultivates the meditative absorptions, one will gain liberation.

If one practices *śīla* alone, one will succeed in being born in a fine place. If one additionally implements the combined practice of the absorptions, wisdom, kindness and compassion, one will succeed in gaining the path of the Three Vehicles.

(3) ATTRACTION TO KARMIC REWARDS CONDUCTING TO THE PATH

We are just now praising the upholding of precepts in particular. This brings meritorious qualities, fame, peace, and bliss in the present life while gaining in later lives rewards such as were praised in the verse. This is analogous to smearing honey on bitter medicine for a small child so that he then becomes able to swallow it. We now initially praise the merit from the precepts so that a person then becomes able to uphold the precepts. After one has been able to uphold the precepts, he makes the great vow to succeed in arriving at the Buddha Path. This amounts to the practice of *śīla* finally producing *śīla* pāramitā.

Also, because all people are attached to bliss and because, among all of the world's blisses, those in the heavens are the most supreme, if people hear of all of the various sorts of pleasure and happiness in the heavens, they will then be able to take on the practice of *śīla*. Later, when they have heard of the impermanence of the heavens, thoughts of aversion and abhorrence will develop, and they will finally be able to take up the quest for liberation.

When people additionally hear of the incalculable meritorious qualities of the Buddha, it may be then that thoughts of kindness and compassion will arise in them. As a result, they may then become able to rely upon *śīla* pāramitā as the means to succeed in arriving at the Buddha Path. It is on account of these factors that, although we do discuss the rewards associated with *śīla*, there is no fault inherent in it.<sup>25</sup>

b. THE SPECIFIC-TERM PRACTICE OF EIGHT PRECEPTS

**Question:** Is it that the householder has only these these five precepts, or are there other relevant dharmas in addition to these?

**Response:** There are also the one-day precepts and the six days of abstinence. The merit gained from upholding those is incalculable. If one is able to observe these precepts from the first through the fifteenth of the twelfth month, his merit will become extremely abundant.

1) THE CEREMONY FOR SPECIFIC-TERM EIGHT-PRECEPT PRACTICE

**Question:** How does one go about taking the one-day precepts?

**Response:** The dharma for accepting the one-day precepts entails kneeling on both knees with the palms joined while making a statement such as this: "I, so-and-so, now, for one day and one night, take refuge in the Buddha, take refuge in the Dharma, and take refuge in the Sangha." One proceeds in this manner, proclaiming the taking of the refuges for a second and a third time.

Next, one proclaims, "I, so-and-so, have now taken refuge in the Buddha. I have now taken refuge in the Dharma. I have now taken refuge in the Sangha." One proceeds in this manner, declaring the completion of the refuges for a second and a third time.

Next, one proclaims, "I, so-and-so, whether it be bad karma of the body, bad karma of the mouth, or bad karma of the mind, whether it be on account of greed, on account of hatred, or on account of stupidity, and whether it be that I have offenses such as these in the present life or in former lives, today, with a sincere mind, I repent of them all in order to achieve purity of the body, purity of the mouth and purity of the mind."

If one then takes on the practice of the eight precepts this constitutes the *upavāsa*. (Chinese textual note: In our language, this means "dwelling together.")

Next, one proclaims, "Just as the Buddhas, for the remainder of their entire lives did not kill beings, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not kill beings.

“Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not steal, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not steal.

“Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not engage in sexual activity, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not engage in sexual activity.

“Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not commit false speech, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not commit false speech.

“Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not drink intoxicants, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not drink intoxicants.

“Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not sit on a high or grand couch, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not sit on a high or grand couch.

“Just as the Buddhas for the rest of their entire lives did not wear flowers or necklaces and did not perfume their bodies and did not perfume their robes, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not wear flowers or necklaces and will not perfume my body or my robes.

“Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not themselves sing or dance or make music and did not go to watch or listen to it, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not myself sing or dance or make music or go and observe or listen to it.”

At this point, one completes the taking of the eight precepts.

One then continues by proclaiming, “Just as the Buddhas for the remainder of their entire lives did not eat past midday, in the same manner, I, so-and-so, for one day and one night, will not eat past midday.

“I, so-and-so, accept and practice the eight precepts and pursue the study of the Dharma of the Buddhas. This constitutes the *upavāsa*. I pray I will be able to sustain the meritorious retribution of this *upavāsa* and so pray that in life after life I will not fall into the three wretched destinies or experience the eight difficulties.

“I do not seek the pleasures of a wheel-turning sage king, of Brahmā or Śakradevendra, the kings of the gods, or of worldly existence. I pray that I will be able to bring an end to all afflictions, will be able to succeed in gaining *sarvajñāna* (omniscience), and will be able to succeed in perfect realization of the Buddha Path.”

## 2) THE CEREMONY FOR LIFE-LONG FIVE-PRECEPT PRACTICE

**Question:** How does one go about taking the five precepts?

**Response:** The dharma for accepting the five precepts is as follows: One kneeling on both knees with the palms joined, and then proclaiming, "I, so-and-so, take refuge in the Buddha, take refuge in the Dharma, and take refuge in the Sangha." One proceeds in this fashion for a second and a third time.

Next, one proclaims, "I, so-and-so, have now taken refuge in the Buddha. I have now taken refuge in the Dharma. I have now taken refuge in the Sangha." One proceeds thus a second and third time.

Next, one states, "I am an *upāsaka* disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha. Pray, certify and be aware that I, so-and-so, take these refuges from this day onward, for the rest of my life."

The Precept Master then says, "You, *Upāsaka*, hear me: The Tathāgatha, the Arhan and Samyāksambuddha, is a man of knowledge and a man of vision. He proclaimed the five precepts for the *upāsaka* in just this way. They are to be upheld by you for the rest of your life.

"What are the five? They are: To not kill beings for the rest of one's life is an *upāsaka* precept. Herein, for the rest of one's life, one must not deliberately kill beings. If you are able to carry out this matter, then you should say, 'I do so swear.'

"To not steal for the rest of one's life is an *upāsaka* precept. Herein, for the rest of one's life, one must not steal. If you are able to carry out this matter, then you should say, 'I do so swear.'

"To not engage in sexual misconduct for the rest of your life is an *upāsaka* precept. Herein, for the rest of your life, you must not engage in sexual misconduct. If you are able to carry out this matter, then you should say, 'I do so swear.'

"To not engage in false speech for the rest of one's life is an *upāsaka* precept. Herein, for the rest of one's life, one must not engage in false speech. If you are able to carry out this matter, then you should say, 'I do so swear.'

"To not drink intoxicants for the rest of one's life is an *upāsaka* precept. Herein, for the rest of one's life, one must not drink intoxicants. If you are able to carry out this matter, then you should say, 'I do so swear.'

"These five precepts of the *upāsaka* are to be accepted and upheld for the remainder of one's life. One should make offerings to the Triple Jewel: the Buddha Jewel, the Dharma Jewel, and the Bhikshu

Sangha Jewel. One should diligently cultivate meritorious karma and thereby come forth into the Buddha Path.”

3) WHY EIGHT PRECEPTS ARE OBSERVED ON SIX DAYS

**Question:** Why is it that, on the six days of abstinence, one takes the eight precepts and cultivates merit?

**Response:** It is on these days that evil ghosts pursue people desiring to steal their lives. They bring acute illnesses and calamitous ruination and thus cause people misfortune. Therefore the sages at the beginning of the kalpa instructed people to observe days of abstinence, cultivate good, and do meritorious deeds to thereby avoid calamity and ruination.

At that time, the abstinence dharma did not involve taking these eight precepts. It only took going one day without food as constituting abstinence. Later, when the Buddha came forth into the world, he instructed people, saying, “In the manner of the Buddha, you should uphold the eight precepts for one day and one night while also refraining from eating after midday. This merit will take a person forth to nirvāṇa.”

According to what the Buddha said in the *Sutra of the Four Heavenly Kings*, on these six monthly abstinence days the retainers, princes, and the four heavenly kings themselves descend, observe, and investigate the status of beings’ giving, maintenance of the precepts, and filial piety towards their fathers and mothers. In an instance where it is deficient, they then ascend to the Trāyastriṃśa heaven and inform Śakra of this. In such a case, Śakra and the other gods are all disappointed and proclaim, “The clan of the *asuras*<sup>26</sup> is on the increase and the clan of the gods is diminishing.”

If, however, it is the case that the giving, maintenance of precepts, and filial piety towards fathers and mothers is greater, then the gods and Śakra are all delighted and thus proclaim, “There is increase in the company of the gods and a decrease among the *asuras*. At one such time, Śakradevendra observed the delight among the gods and uttered a verse, saying:

If, on six days and [on fifteen] in “spiritual” months,<sup>27</sup>  
 Someone is able to uphold the pure precepts—  
 After this person’s life has come to an end,  
 His merit will certainly be comparable to mine.

The Buddha told the Bhikshu, “Śakradevendra should not have uttered a verse such as this. Why? Śakradevendra has not yet gotten rid of the five signs of deterioration<sup>28</sup> or the three poisons. How

could he falsely state, 'If there is one who upholds the one-day precepts, he will certainly gain a meritorious reward comparable to mine.'? If one upholds these precepts, he ought as a result to become similar in mind to the Buddha. If he had said this, then it would have qualified as true speech."

Because the great and revered gods are delighted, one gains an increased amount of merit. Additionally, on these six abstinence days, evil ghosts bring harm to people and strive to visit affliction and confusion upon everyone. If, in the open country, village, prefecture, province, country, or city-state where one abides, there is a person who observes the days of abstinence, takes the precepts, and practices goodness, because of this, the evil ghosts depart far away and the place in which one dwells becomes peaceful and secure. For this reason, if one observes the abstinences and takes the precepts on these six days, one thereby gains increased merit.

4) WHY GHOSTS ACT UP SIX DAYS EACH MONTH (STORY)

**Question:** Why do the evil ghosts and spirits take advantage of these six days to visit affliction and harm on people?

**Response:** In the *Sutra on the Origins of Heaven and Earth*, it states that when this kalpa first began, there was a different "Brahmā" diety's son who was the father of the ghosts and spirits. He cultivated a form of *brahmacārin* ascetic practice whereby, for a full twelve heavenly years, on the occasion of these six days, he cut away portions of his own flesh, drew off a measure of his own blood, and then placed them in a fire. It was on account of this that the evil ghosts and spirits would suddenly come into possession of particularly strong powers on these six days.

**Question:** Why on these six days did the father of the ghosts and spirits cut away the flesh and blood of his body, placing them into a fire?

**Response:** Among all of the ghosts and spirits, the Maheśvara spirit is the biggest and the most primary in status. All of the spirits have an allotted number of days. Maheśvara has an allotment of four days out of each month: the eighth, the twenty-third, the fourteenth, and the twenty-ninth.

The other spirits have an allotment of two days out of each month: their first day out of the month is the sixteenth and their second day out of the month is the seventeenth. The fifteenth and the thirtieth belong collectively to all spirits.

Because Maheśvara is the lord of all of the spirits and because he has been allotted the most days, his four days came to be counted as abstinence days. The other two days also counted as abstinence days are the days belonging collectively to all of the spirits. Hence, all of the ghosts and spirits suddenly possess strong powers on these six days.

Furthermore, after the father of ghosts and spirits had continued for twelve years his practice of cutting away his flesh, drawing off his blood, and placing them in fire, the king of the gods descended and asked his son, "What prayer do you seek to fulfill by doing this?"

He replied, "I seek to have sons."

The king of the gods said, "It is the offering method of the rishis to employ the burning of incense, the offering up of sweet fruits, and the carrying out of all manner of pure endeavors. Why do you employ this method of placing flesh and blood into fire, a method associated with offensive and evil dharmas? Your destruction of the dharma of goodness and your taking pleasure in carrying out evil endeavors will cause you to give birth to evil sons who feast on flesh and drink blood."

Then, in accordance with his proclamation, eight huge ghosts came forth at that very moment from within the fire. Their bodies were as black as ink. Their hair was yellow, their eyes were red, and they shone with abundant light. Then, all manner of ghosts and spirits were subsequently born from these eight ghosts. Thus it was that this practice of carving off his own flesh, drawing his own blood, and then placing them into fire resulted in the generation of such power.

As for the Dharma of the Buddha, though, these days are devoid of any particular auspiciousness or adversity. But nonetheless, as an adaptation to the world's treatment of these as inauspicious days, one is instructed to observe the abstinences and take the eight precepts on these days.

#### C. COMPARISON OF FIVE AND EIGHT PRECEPTS

**Question:** Which is superior, the five precepts or the one-day precepts?

**Response:** There may be causal bases whereby the two precept categories can be considered equal. However, the five precepts are taken for the rest of one's life, whereas the eight precepts are upheld for only a single day at a time. But then again, although the five

precepts are constantly upheld over a longer period of time, the precepts observed are fewer in number. With the one-day precepts, the time is less, but the number of precepts observed is greater.

As another consideration, if one is not possessed of a great mind, although one may uphold the precepts for one's entire life, the goodness involved does not measure up to that of a person of the great mind upholding the precepts for but a single day.<sup>29</sup>

This is analogous to a weak man serving as a general. Although he may serve as a general of the troops for the rest of his life, because of his inadequacies in wisdom and bravery, the shock troops will have no reputation for meritorious service. But if a greatly heroic man brings forth high resolve to immediately stabilize a disastrous and chaotic situation, through just a single day of devoted service, his meritorious reputation may spread throughout the world.

#### 1) FOUR GRADES OF LAY PRECEPT OBSERVANCE

These two categories of precepts are dharmas intended for the householder, the *upāsaka*. The upholding of precepts on the part of the householder is commonly of four degrees. There are the lesser, the middling, the superior, and the superior among the superior.

#### 2) THE LESSER GRADE OF LAY PRECEPT OBSERVANCE

When a lesser person upholds the precepts, it may be for the sake of gaining pleasures in the present life, or perhaps it may be out of fearfulness, out of a desire to be praised, or out of a motivation to gain a prestigious reputation. Or it may be that for the sake of adhering to family standards, he will constrain himself to go along with someone else's ideas. It may also be done out of a desire to avoid a misery-ridden period of conscription or may be done because one seeks to avoid dangerous circumstances. All sorts of factors such as these may characterize the lesser person's observance of moral precepts.

#### 3) THE MIDLING GRADE OF LAY PRECEPT OBSERVANCE

When the middling person upholds the precepts, it is for the sake of wealth and noble status in the human realm and for the sake of gaining delights and pleasures which accord with his aspirations. Or perhaps, hoping for good fortune and bliss in later lives, one will endure self-denial and encourage himself, thinking, "The days one must suffer this are but few, whereas the gains to be achieved are extremely great."

Through making such considerations, one may come to uphold the precepts solidly. This is comparable to a merchant's traveling far

and investing heavily. The profit to be gained is bound to be great. The merit from upholding the precepts causes people to receive good fortune and bliss in later lives in just this fashion.

4) THE SUPERIOR GRADE OF LAY PRECEPT OBSERVANCE

When the superior person observes the moral precepts, it is for the sake of nirvāṇa and because he knows that all dharmas are impermanent. It is because he wishes to transcend suffering and gain eternal enjoyment of the unconditioned.

a) HOW THESE PRECEPTS ARE THE CAUSES FOR NIRVĀṆA

Furthermore, the mind of the person who observes the moral precepts remains free of regrets. Because his mind remains free of regrets, he gains delight and enjoyment. Because he gains delight and enjoyment from it, he achieves single-mindedness. Because he achieves single-mindedness, he gains real wisdom. Because he gains real wisdom, he develops the mind of renunciation. Because he develops the mind of renunciation, he succeeds in transcending desire. Because he succeeds in transcending desire, he gains liberation. Because he gains liberation, he gains nirvāṇa. In this manner, upholding the precepts constitutes the foundation for all of the good dharmas.

Moreover, the upholding of precepts constitutes the initial entryway into to the eightfold right Path. This initial entryway onto the Path certainly extends all the way to nirvāṇa.