

Vīrya Pāramitā

VII. CHAPTER 7: THE PERFECTION OF VIGOR

A. THREE KINDS OF BENEFIT AND PATH ADORNMENT FROM VIGOR

How does the bodhisattva go about cultivating vigor? If vigor is cultivated for the sake of bringing about self-benefit, benefit of others, and the combined benefit of both, one becomes able thereby to adorn the path to bodhi.

1. RIGHT MOTIVATION IN THE PRACTICE OF VIGOR

In his cultivation of vigor, the bodhisattva is motivated by a wish to so train and discipline beings that they are caused to abandon suffering and affliction.

One who cultivates vigor is diligent at all times in cultivating the accumulation of practices associated with the pure brahmin conduct¹⁶ and in abandoning laziness and refraining from negligence. One's mind remains constantly vigorous and diligent and never retreats or sinks away even in the midst of endeavors which are freighted with difficulty and which yield one no [personal] benefits. This is what qualifies as the mind of vigor as initially cultivated by the bodhisattva.

2. SELF-BENEFIT

On account of cultivating vigor, one becomes able to gain the supremely marvelous and good worldly and transcendental dhar-mas. This is what is meant by "self-benefit."

3. BENEFIT OF OTHERS

One teaches and transforms beings in a way which causes them to take up the diligent cultivation of goodness. This is what is meant by "benefit of others."

4. COMBINED BENEFIT

On the basis of those right causes for bodhi which one has cultivated, one teaches beings, thus causing them to gain benefit identical to one's own. This is what is meant by "combined benefit."

5. ADORNING THE PATH OF BODHI THROUGH VIGOR

By cultivating vigor, one gains ever more supreme, pure, and marvelous fruits [of the Path] and oversteps [bodhisattva] stages, even to the point that one succeeds in swiftly realizing the right enlightenment. This is what is meant by "adorning the path to bodhi."

B. TWO TYPES OF VIGOR

There are two types of vigor. The first type is that which is cultivated for the sake of seeking the unsurpassed Path. The second type is that wherein one generates vigor as a consequence of wishing to extensively extricate and rescue [beings] immersed in suffering.

C. TEN RECOLLECTIONS AS BASES FOR DILIGENT PRACTICE OF VIGOR

It is through perfecting ten recollections that one then becomes able to initiate the resolve to diligently practice vigor. What then are those ten? They are:

First, one recollects the incalculably many meritorious qualities of the Buddhas.

Second, one recollects the inconceivable and indescribable liberation brought about by the Dharma.

Third, one recollects the Sangha's purity and freedom from defilements.

Fourth, one recollects that it is through practice of the great kindness that one succeeds in establishing beings [on the Path].

Fifth, one recollects that it is through practice of the great compassion that one extricates and rescues [beings from] the many sorts of suffering.

Sixth, one recollects that it is the accumulation of right meditative absorptions that encourages delight in the cultivation of goodness.

Seventh, one recollects those who are involved in the accumulation of wrong meditative absorptions and strives to extricate them [from such entrapment], thereby causing them to turn back to the original state.

Eighth, one recollects the hunger, thirst, and fiery afflictions of the hungry ghosts.

Ninth, one recollects the long endurance of manifold sufferings undergone by the animals.

Tenth, one recollects the extensive experience of being roasted and boiled undergone by those residing in the hells.

The bodhisattva then contemplates these ten recollections in this manner: "I must cultivate and accumulate the meritorious qualities possessed by the Triple Jewel. I must encourage and instigate the practice kindness, compassion, and right meditative concentration.

I must extricate and rescue those beings immersed in wrong meditative absorptions and those beings suffering in the three wretched rebirth destinies.”

When one contemplates in this manner, one’s mindfulness becomes ever more focused and undistracted. One diligently cultivates in this manner both day and night and thus remains free of any sort of relaxation or deterioration of one’s efforts. It is this which qualifies one to be able to generate vigor characterized by right mindfulness.

D. THE FOUR RIGHT EFFORTS

The vigor of the bodhisattva is possessed of four additional factors. This involves the cultivation of what is referred to as “the path of the four right efforts”:

Whatsoever bad dharmas have not yet arisen—one blocks them off and does not allow them to arise.

Whatsoever bad dharmas have already arisen—one swiftly causes them to be eliminated and cut off.

Whatsoever good dharmas have not yet arisen—one institutes skillful means by which they are caused to arise.

Whatsoever good dharmas have already arisen—one cultivates them to fullness, causing them to increase and become more expansive.

E. PRACTICE SCENARIOS EXEMPLIFYING VIGOR

When the bodhisattva cultivates the path of the four right efforts in this manner, doing so without resting, this is what qualifies as vigor. This diligent practice of vigor is able to destroy all afflicted mental states while also bringing about increase in the right causes for realization of the unsurpassed bodhi.

If the bodhisattva is able to endure all of the great sufferings which befall both body and mind, doing so out of a desire to establish beings [in the Path], and if he is able in doing so to remain free of weariness, it is this which qualifies as vigor.

Having departed far from the deceptiveness and wrongly-directed vigor typical of an evil age, the bodhisattva cultivates right vigor.

This is to say that, in cultivating faith, giving, moral virtue, patience, meditative concentration, wisdom, kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, whether it be with respect to prospective endeavors, past endeavors, or current endeavors, he

constantly practices vigor with ultimate sincerity while remaining free of any sort of regret.

In his cultivation of all good dharmas and in his extrication and rescue of [beings] from the many sorts of suffering, he does so with the same urgency as someone putting out a fire in his own turban, never allowing his determination to retreat or sink away.

This is what is meant by "vigor."

F. THE BODHISATTVA'S STATELY DEPARTMENT AND ALIGNMENT WITH DHARMA

Although the bodhisattva cherishes no particular regard for his own physical life, still, for the sake of extricating beings from the many sorts of suffering and for the sake of protecting right Dharma, he should in fact retain a form of cherishing wherein he refrains from relinquishing the stately comportment [requiring perfectly appropriate behavior] while proceeding with constancy to cultivate good dharmas.

When he cultivates good dharmas, his mind remains free of indolence. Even were he to encounter a time when he might be required to sacrifice his life, still, he refrains from forsaking his conformity with Dharma. This is what is meant by the bodhisattva's diligent implementation of vigor as he pursues cultivation of the path to bodhi.

G. THE IMPORTANCE OF VIGOR TO THE PĀRAMITĀS AND BUDDHAHOOD

A person who is subject to indolence remains unable to give up everything at once. He is also unable to uphold the moral precepts, maintain patience with the many sorts of suffering, diligently implement vigor, focus his thoughts in meditative concentration, or distinguish between what is good and what is bad. It is for this reason that it is said that the six *pāramitās* are able to progressively increase on account of vigor. If the vigor practiced by a bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* grows ever more superior, then he becomes able to swiftly gain realization of *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*.

H. FOUR FACTORS IN THE BODHISATTVA'S INITIATION OF THE GREAT ADORNMENT

In the bodhisattva's initiation of the great adornment and in his bringing forth of vigor, there are four additional component factors:

First, he initiates the great adornment.

Second, he accumulates heroic strength.

Third, he cultivates all manner of roots of goodness.

Fourth, he teaches and transforms beings.

1. THE INITIATION OF THE GREAT ADORNMENT

How is it that the bodhisattva initiates the great adornment?¹⁷ His mind becomes able to endure the prospect of all of the births and deaths [involved on the bodhisattva path to buddhahood] and thus takes no account of the number of kalpas involved. Even the prospect of passing through boundlessly many hundreds of thousands of myriads of *koṭīs* of *nayutas* of Ganges' sands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of kalpas before being able then to perfectly realize the path to buddhahood is not such as causes his mind to become weary. This is what is referred to as the vigor wherein one is not lax in carrying on with adornment.

2. THE ACCUMULATION OF HEROIC STRENGTH

The bodhisattva accumulates heroic strength as he proceeds with bringing forth vigor. Even if the worlds of the great trichiliocosm were brimming with raging fire, still, if it were necessary to pass through this fire for the sake of being able to encounter the Buddha and hear the Dharma, for the sake of establishing beings in good dharmas, he would do just that. When he proceeds in this way for the sake of training and subduing beings and on the basis of having well established his own mind in the great compassion, this is what qualifies as heroic strength in the practice of vigor.

3. THE CULTIVATION OF ROOTS OF GOODNESS

The bodhisattva brings forth vigor in his cultivation of roots of goodness and, no matter what roots of every kind of goodness he has developed, he dedicates them all to *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*, doing so for the sake of being able to perfect all-knowledge. It is this which qualifies as vigor in the cultivation of roots of goodness.

4. THE TEACHING AND TRANSFORMING OF BEINGS

As the bodhisattva teaches and transforms beings, he brings forth vigor. The nature of beings is that they are inestimably many. In number they are as immeasurable and boundless as empty space itself. Still, the bodhisattva establishes a vow: "I shall bring them all without exception across to liberation." For the sake of transforming them and bringing them across to liberation, he is diligent in his practice of vigor. It is this which qualifies as vigor in teaching and transforming beings.

I. SUMMATION ON VIGOR

To speak of the essentials, the bodhisattva cultivates the path-provision of merit in support of his development of unsurpassable

wisdom. In his cultivation and accumulation of these dharmas essential to buddhahood, he brings forth vigor. The merit of the Buddhas is incalculable and boundless. The vigor practiced by the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva* as he proceeds with the great adornment is incalculable and boundless in just this same way.

J. THE ESSENCE OF THE BODHISATTVA'S PERFECTION OF VIGOR

In the bodhisattva, *mahāsattva's* cultivation of vigor, his mind is not such as abandons zeal. This is because he proceeds with extricating beings from the many sorts of sufferings. It is this then which brings about perfection of *vīrya pāramitā*.