

The Brahma Net Sutra

Mahayana Brahmajala Sutra (partial), translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva, 406 CE
Translated into English by the Buddhist Text Translation Society, revised by Kokyo Henkel

Shakyamuni Buddha contemplated the wonderful jewel net hung in Lord Brahma's palace and taught the Brahma Net Sutra for the great assembly. He said: "The innumerable worlds in the cosmos are like the eyes of the net. Each and every world is different, its variety infinite. So too are the Dharma gates taught by the buddhas... The radiant vajra (diamond) jewel precepts are the original source of all buddhas and all bodhisattvas, the seed of buddha-nature. All living beings without exception have buddha-nature. All with consciousness, form, and mind are encompassed by these buddha-nature precepts. Because of these ever present causes (in the form of the precepts), there is without fail always an abiding Dharma body. For this reason, the ten pratimoksha (conducive to liberation) precepts came into being in this world. These precepts belong to the true Dharma. They are received and upheld in utmost reverence by all living beings of the three times – past, present and future. Once again, I shall teach for the great assembly the chapter on the Inexhaustible Precept Treasury. These are the precepts of all living beings, whose original Self-nature is pure."

Now I am (Vai)rochana Buddha seated on a thousand-petal lotus throne, Upon each petal sits a Shakyamuni Buddha. Each petal supports a hundred million worlds, and in each world a Shakyamuni Buddha appears, all sitting beneath a bodhi-tree and realizing buddhahood.

All these innumerable buddhas have (Vai)rochana as their original body.

These countless Shakyamuni Buddhas all offer flowers, numerous as dust motes.

They all come to my lotus throne to listen to buddha's precepts.

I now teach the Dharma, opening the gate of sweet dew, and then the countless buddhas return to their own worlds.

Under a bodhi-tree they proclaim these major and minor precepts of (Vai)rochana, the original Buddha.

The precepts are like the radiant sun and moon, like a shining jewel necklace.

Bodhisattvas as numerous as dust motes uphold them and attain buddhahood.

These precepts are recited by (Vai)rochana, and these precepts I (as Shakyamuni Buddha) recite as well.

You novice bodhisattvas should reverently accept and uphold them,

and once you have done so, transmit and teach them to living beings.

Now listen attentively as I recite the Bodhisattva Pratimoksha -- the source of all precepts in the Buddha-Dharma.

All of you in the great assembly should firmly believe that you are the buddhas of the future,

While I am a buddha already accomplished. If you have such trust at all times, then these precepts are fulfilled.

All beings who have mind should accept and uphold the buddha's precepts.

When living beings receive buddha's precepts, they enter the rank of all buddhas,

the same rank as great awakening. Truly these disciples are children of all the buddhas.

Therefore, great assembly, listen with utmost reverence as I proclaim the Bodhisattva Precepts.

At that time, when Shakyamuni Buddha first realized supreme awakening under the bodhi-tree, he taught the Bodhisattva Precepts, which are devotion (filial respect) to fathers, mothers, the sangha, and the Three Treasures. This devotion is the principle of the ultimate path. "Devotion" means the precepts and also means restraint. The Buddha then emitted limitless light from his mouth. Thereupon, the whole great assembly, consisting of innumerable bodhisattvas, the gods of the eighteen Brahma heavens, the gods of the six desire heavens, and the rulers of the sixteen great kingdoms all joined their palms and listened single-mindedly to the Buddha recite the Mahayana precepts. The Buddha then said to the bodhisattvas: "Twice a month, on the new and full moon, I recite the precepts observed by all buddhas. All bodhisattvas, from those who have just developed bodhichitta to the bodhisattvas of the ten dwellings, the ten practices, the ten dedications, and the ten grounds also recite them. Therefore, this precept-light shines forth from my mouth, so that those with affinity are not without a cause. This light is neither blue, yellow, red, white, nor black. It is neither form nor mind. It is neither existent nor nonexistent, neither cause nor effect. This precept-light is precisely the original source of all buddhas, all bodhisattvas, and all disciples of buddha in the great assembly. Therefore, all disciples of buddha should receive and observe, read, recite and study these precepts with utmost attention."...

1. No Killing Life

A disciple of Buddha does not kill, encourage others to kill, kill by expedient means, praise killing, rejoice at witnessing killing, or kill through incantation or deviant mantras. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of killing, and must not intentionally kill any living being. A bodhisattva ought to nurture a constant mind of kindness, compassion and devotion, always devising expedient means to rescue and protect all beings. If instead, one fails to restrain oneself and kills sentient beings without mercy, one commits a parajika (major) offense.

2. No Stealing

A disciple of Buddha does not steal, encourage others to steal, steal by expedient means, or steal by means of deviant mantras. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of stealing. No valuables or possessions, even those belonging to ghosts and spirits or thieves and robbers, be they as small as a needle or blade of grass, may be stolen. A bodhisattva ought to have a mind of kindness, compassion, and devotion, always helping people generate merit and happiness. If instead, one steals the possessions of others, one commits a parajika offense.

3. No Sexual Greed

A disciple of Buddha does not indulge in sexual greed, or encourage others to do so. One should not indulge in sexual greed with any human, animal, deity or spirit, nor create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of such conduct. One must not engage in inappropriate sexual conduct with anyone. A bodhisattva ought to have a mind of devotion, rescuing all sentient beings and instructing them in the dharma of purity. If instead, one lacks compassion and encourages others to engage in sexual relations promiscuously, including with animals and even their parents, children, siblings, or other close relatives, one commits a parajika offense.

4. No False Speech

A disciple of Buddha does not speak falsely, or encourage others to lie or lie by expedient means. One should not involve oneself in the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of lying, saying that one has seen what one has not seen or vice-versa, or lying implicitly through physical or mental means. A bodhisattva ought to maintain right speech and right view always, and lead all others to maintain them as well. If instead, one causes wrong speech, wrong views or harmful karma in others, one commits a parajika offense.

5. No Selling Alcohol

A disciple of Buddha does not sell alcohol, or encourage others to do so. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of selling any kind of alcohol, for alcohol is the cause and condition of all kinds of offenses. A bodhisattva ought to help all sentient beings achieve bright clear wisdom. If instead, one causes them to have upside-down, distorted thinking, one commits a parajika offense.

6. No Speaking of Others' Faults

A disciple of Buddha does not speak of the faults of bodhisattva home-leavers or bodhisattva householders, or of monks and nuns, nor encourage others to do so. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of discussing the faults of the assembly. A bodhisattva, whenever hearing of harmful people, those outside the Way, or followers of the two vehicles (shravakas and pratyekabuddhas) speak of practices contrary to the Dharma or contrary to the precepts within the Buddha's Sangha, ought to instruct them with a compassionate mind and lead them to develop wholesome faith in the Mahayana. If instead, one discusses the faults and misdeeds of the assembly, one commits a parajika offense.

7. No Praising Self and Belittling Others

A disciple of Buddha does not praise self and belittle others, or encourage others to do so. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of praising oneself and disparaging others. A bodhisattva ought to be willing to stand in for all sentient beings and endure humiliation and slander, accepting blame and letting others have all the praise. If instead, one displays one's own virtues and conceals the good points of others, thus causing them to suffer slander, one commits a parajika offense.

8. No Possessiveness (of Dharma or Wealth)

A disciple of Buddha is not possessive, and does not encourage others to be stingy. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of possessiveness. A bodhisattva, whenever a destitute person comes for help, ought to give that person what he or she needs. If instead, out of anger and resentment, one denies all assistance, refusing to help with even a penny, a needle, a blade of grass, even a single sentence or verse or a phrase of Dharma, but instead scolds and abuses that person, one commits a parajika offense.

9. No Indulging in Anger

A disciple of Buddha does not indulge in anger, or encourage others to be angry. One should not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of anger. A bodhisattva ought to be compassionate and devoted, helping all sentient beings develop the good roots of non-contention. If instead, one insults and abuses sentient beings, or even transformation beings (such as deities and spirits), with harsh words, hitting or kicking them, or attacking them with a knife or club, or harbors grudges even when the victim confesses his or her mistakes and humbly seeks forgiveness with sincere words, one commits a parajika offense.

10. No Disparaging the Three Treasures

A disciple of Buddha does not disparage the Three Treasures, or encourage others to do so. One must not create the causes, conditions, methods or karma of disparagement. A bodhisattva, hearing a single word of slander against the Buddha from those outside the Way or harmful beings, experiences a pain like three hundred spears piercing the heart. How then could one possibly slander the Three Treasures oneself? Hence, if one lacks faith and devotion towards the Three Treasures, and assists harmful people or those of aberrant views to slander them, one commits a parajika offense.