

CHAPTER 18

The Jointly Shared Practices

XVIII. CHAPTER 18: THE JOINTLY SHARED PRACTICES

A. Q: WOULD YOU PLEASE DISCUSS THE JOINTLY SHARED PRACTICES?

Question: You stated earlier that you would discuss the practices jointly shared by both lay and monastic bodhisattvas. You could now begin that discussion.

B. A: THE JOINTLY SHARED PRACTICES ARE AS FOLLOWS: (LIST)

Response: They are:

- Patience;
- Dharma giving;
- Dharmas patience;²⁸⁹
- Contemplation;
- Not distorting the Dharma;
- Maintaining reverential esteem for the Dharma;
- Refraining from presenting any obstacle to Dharma;
- Making offerings in support of the Dharma;
- Resolute faith;²⁹⁰
- Cultivation of emptiness;
- Not being covetous or envious;
- Acting in accordance with one's own words;
- Giving lamp light;
- Giving musical performances;
- Giving means of transport;
- Right vows;
- Thought imbued with the means of attraction;
- Benefiting and comforting beings;
- Maintaining a mind of equal regard toward everyone.

These are the essential dharmas jointly practiced by both lay people and monastics. Hence there is this verse which says:

1. PATIENCE, DHARMA GIVING, DHARMAS PATIENCE, AND CONTEMPLATION:

- Practicing patience results in a well-formed, handsome body.
- The giving of Dharma results in knowledge of previous lifetimes.
- By dharmas patience, one acquires the *dhāraṇīs*.²⁹¹
- Contemplation results in the procuring of wisdom.
- By never distorting any dharma
- one always acquires right recollective mindfulness.

a. PATIENCE

As for “practicing patience results in a well-formed, handsome body,” this means that, if one is able to endure harsh speech, curses, hate-filled oaths, being bound and tied, being assailed with knives and staves, being tortured, and being beaten and whipped, being able to endure all of this without any quavering or variation in one’s state of mind—the karmic result procured through such patience is that, whether one is reborn among humans or devas, one always obtains a well-formed body. Then, later on, when one becomes a buddha, one’s major marks and minor characteristics are incomparable in their perfection.

b. DHARMA GIVING

As for “the giving of Dharma results in knowledge of previous lifetimes,” this means that those who practice the giving of Dharma become able to know the events that have occurred throughout the course of countless past kalpas. The giving of Dharma refers to explaining all of the many different distinctions present in the teachings of the Śrāvaka Disciple Vehicle, the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle, and the Buddha Vehicle, providing explanations of the associated meanings and principles. Although there are thirty-five different karmic rewards resulting from the giving of Dharma, the most essential among them is the gaining of the knowledge of past lifetimes. The causes and conditions associated with the speaking of Dharma bring about the severance of doubts held by others. Consequently the corresponding karmic result is that one comes to know previous lifetimes.

c. DHARMAS PATIENCE

As for “by dharmas patience, one acquires the *dhāraṇīs*,” “dharmas” refers here to those dharmas that are associated with emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness, with the six *pāramitās*, with the grounds through which the bodhisattva progresses, and with the dharmas practiced by all bodhisattvas. One so thoroughly comprehends and clearly understands them that one’s mind becomes able to acquiesce in them and uphold them in practice. This is what is meant by “dharmas patience.”

If one practices this patience, then one gains the means for “comprehensive retention” (*dhāraṇīs*) as a result. “Comprehensive retention” refers to the ability to never forget the significance of any of the scriptures one has ever heard or recited even after hundreds of thousands of myriads of kalpas.

d. CONTEMPLATION

In “contemplation results in the procuring of wisdom,” “contemplation” refers to the judicious assessment of good dharmas and the making of right distinctions regarding their significance. As a consequence, one becomes able to attain their benefits in both present and future lifetimes.

e. NOT DISTORTING THE DHARMA

As for the idea that by “not distorting [the Dharma],” one’s mind acquires “right mindfulness,” “refraining from distortion” refers to being straightforward and free of flattery. If one cultivates this dharma, then one gains the ability to maintain solid mindfulness in the midst of all dharmas.

Additionally:

2. ESTEEM FOR DHARMA, NONOBSTRUCTION, OFFERINGS & RESOLUTE FAITH

If one esteems the Dharma, the Dharma will be solidly enduring.

If one does not create obstacles, one will be protected.

Through offerings in support of the Dharma, one meets the Buddhas.

Through resolute faith, one sheds all difficulties.

a. ESTEEM FOR THE DHARMA

“If one esteems the Dharma, the Dharma will be solidly enduring” means that if one maintains veneration, esteem, and reverence for the Dharma, then the Dharma will be solidly enduring. “Solidity in the Dharma” refers to the fact that, whatever dharma one accepts and upholds in practice, that will all naturally become so solid and enduring that one can never be shaken or turned back in its practice. Later on, when one becomes a buddha, one will have many bodhisattvas and *śrāvakas* as disciples. Having come to abide in these solidly maintained dharmas, no one will ever be able to obstruct one in the practice of the dharmas one has received. Additionally, “solidity” refers here to the ability of the Dharma to abide for a long time.

“If one does not create obstacles, one will be protected,” means that, no matter whether it is with regard to someone’s speaking Dharma or someone’s being able to hear the Dharma, one refrains from perversely creating obstacles to their being able to do so. As a consequence, later on, when one attains buddhahood, both the devas and the people of the world will jointly serve as protectors of one’s Dharma.

If while one has still not yet attained buddhahood one is ever able to protect and preserve the right Dharma of the Buddhas, and if, after the Buddha’s passing into *nirvāṇa*, one strives to protect his Dharma legacy, one will then be able to encounter the next buddha when he appears in the World.

For these reasons, bodhisattva and *śrāvaka* disciple practitioners alike should all exert themselves to the utmost in thoroughly preserving and protecting the Dharma.

b. OFFERINGS IN SUPPORT OF THE DHARMA

In “through offerings in support of the Dharma, one meets the Buddhas,” “offerings” refers to demonstrations of reverential respect in all endeavors related to the Dharma. For instance, in a Dharma congregation where there will be the giving of Dharma, with a reverential mind, one makes offerings to those who speak on the Dharma, sets up a Dharma seat for them, establishes places for *dhyāna* meditation, and provides decorative adornments for the place where the lectures on Dharma will take place. Because of such earnest intentions and fondness in making offerings for the sake of Dharma, one will be able to encounter the Buddhas.

c. RESOLUTE FAITH

In “through resolute faith, one sheds all difficulties,” “faith” refers to the arising of profound zeal and aspiration with respect to all good dharmas. It is because of this dharma that one becomes able to abandon the eight difficulties.

It is through the “resoluteness” [of one’s faith] that one becomes able to extinguish all karmic offenses. Thus, through the power of one’s resolve, one freely comprehends the import of all good dharmas. This is comparable to when, in cultivating the ten universal bases (*kṛtsnāyatana*), one becomes freely able to comprehend them in accordance with one’s wishes.²⁹²

If one has abundant power of resolute faith, one can then extinguish the measureless karmic evil one has created due to karmic transgressions throughout beginningless time in *saṃsāra*. This accords with the earlier discussion in the chapter on repentance of karmic transgressions.

Additionally:

3. EMPTINESS, NON-GREED, CONGRUENT ACTIONS & WORDS, LAMP LIGHT

Through cultivating emptiness one avoids neglectfulness.

By avoiding covetousness, one succeeds in whatever is beneficial.

Through actions faithful to one’s words, one extinguishes afflictions.

Through the giving of lamp light, one acquires the heavenly eye.

a. CULTIVATION OF EMPTINESS

In “through cultivating emptiness, one avoids neglectfulness,” “cultivation” is of two types, namely cultivation involving realization and cultivation consisting of practice. Due to the power associated with

cultivating emptiness, one believes that all conditioned dharmas are false and deceptive, yet still does not abide in emptiness. One realizes then that all dharmas are not fixed entities. Consequently, one always naturally focuses and restrains one's mind so that one does not fall into neglectfulness.

b. NOT BEING COVETOUS OR ENVIOUS

In "by avoiding covetousness, one succeeds in whatever is beneficial," "covetousness" refers to bringing forth thoughts desirous of appropriating others' possessions. If one rids oneself of this condition, then whatever one seeks to accomplish will meet with success and whatever one wishes for, those wishes will all be fulfilled.

c. ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH ONE'S OWN WORDS

As for "through actions faithful to one's words, one extinguishes afflictions," if one immediately carries out what one has said one will do, then one will succeed in severing afflictions. If, in all that one does, one always acts in a manner consistent with one's pronouncements, then the karmic propensities associated with the afflictions²⁹³ that have always imbued one's mind in life after life up to the present—these will all be entirely extinguished. One will thereby transform the nature of one's evil habitual karmic propensities associated with the afflictions.

d. GIVING LAMP LIGHT

As for "through the giving of lamp light, one acquires the heavenly eye," if one lights lamps as offerings to buddhas, *śrāvaka* disciples, and *pratyekabuddhas* and also makes such offerings wherever there are their stupas, images, or *śarīra* relics, because of these actions, one will acquire the heavenly eye as a karmic result.

Additionally:

4. MUSIC, MEANS OF TRANSPORT, RIGHT VOWS, THE MEANS OF ATTRACTION

Through offerings of music, one gains the heavenly ear as a result.

By giving means of transport, one gains the bases of psychic power.

Through right vows, one reaches a pure land.²⁹⁴

Through the means of attraction, one's sangha will be complete.

a. GIVING MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

As for "through offerings of music, one gains the heavenly ear as a result," it is by making offerings of musical performances to the Buddha on the occasion of great Dharma assemblies²⁹⁵ that one gains the heavenly ear as a karmic result.

b. GIVING MEANS OF TRANSPORT

In "by giving means of transport, one obtains the bases of psychic power," "means of transport" refers to carriages, sedan chairs, elephants, horses, and the like. There are others who state that one may also gain the bases for psychic power through the giving of shoes, slippers, and such.

c. RIGHT VOWS

As for "through right vows, one reaches a pure land," one may take rebirth in a pure land in a manner corresponding to one's vows, thereby becoming able to go to a pure land where everything is made of gold, silver, crystal, coral, amber, mother-of-pearl, carnelian, and countless other precious things.

d. THOUGHT IMBUED WITH THE MEANS OF ATTRACTION

"Through the means of attraction, one's sangha will be complete," means that, if a bodhisattva perfects the practice of the four means of attraction, he will acquire a perfectly complete sangha. Thus, by attracting beings through giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, and joint endeavors, later, when one becomes a buddha, one will have a perfectly pure sangha consisting of countless bodhisattvas and *śrāvaka* disciples just as is the case with Amitābha Buddha who has just such a two-fold sangha perfect in its purity. As for [those bodhisattvas'] "perfection in vows," this is as discussed earlier in the treatment of the ten vows.

Additionally, there are these lines:

5. BENEFITING AND COMFORTING BEINGS AND EQUAL REGARD FOR ALL BEINGS

Through benefiting beings,
one becomes loved and respected by all.

By preserving a non-dual mind holding all in equal regard,
one is able to become one who is supremely victorious.

Whatever the bodhisattva does in all physical, verbal, and mental actions is for the sake of benefiting beings and causing them to acquire peace and happiness. As a consequence, beings all revere and respect him. If the bodhisattva maintains equal regard for all beings whether they be adversaries, close friends, or those who are neutral in their relationship with him, and if he refuses to forsake any being, the karmic result of this will be that he will become supremely victorious. "Victorious" here refers to the ability to triumph over greed, hatred, delusion, and all of the other afflictions and bad dharmas. One who is able to succeed in this is known as a "buddha."

- a. Q: HOW CAN ONE DIFFERENTIATE A BUDDHA FROM OTHER PEOPLE?

Question: People all have eyes, ears, nose, tongue, mouth, and so forth. There are no differences between them in this regard. That being the case, how then might one be able to know which among them is a buddha?

- b. A: A BUDDHA POSSESSES THE THIRTY-TWO MARKS

Response: A buddha possesses the thirty-two major physical marks of a great man. One should realize that those possessed of these marks are buddhas. Both laypeople and monastics should be able to distinguish and completely recognize the thirty-two marks, coming to know with respect to this particular physical mark which particular dharma brought about its acquisition and coming to know with respect to this particular dharma which particular sort of action brought about its acquisition. One should also understand these corresponding actions. And why? If one wishes to develop a particular meritorious quality, one should know its corresponding physical mark and if one wishes to acquire a particular physical mark, one should know the corresponding actions by which it is acquired.

- 1) Q: HOW CAN ONE UNDERSTAND SUCH MATTERS?

Question: By what means would one be able to understand matters such as these?

- 2) A: EACH OF THE THIRTY-TWO MARKS HAS THREE DISTINCTIONS

Response:

In the chapter on the marks of dharmas, each one of the marks has three distinctions.

In the Abhidharma's chapter on the thirty-two marks, each and every one of the physical marks has three types of distinctions. One should know all of these.²⁹⁶

- a) Q: WHAT IS MEANT BY EACH MARK HAVING THREE DISTINCTIONS?

Question: What is meant by "each and every one of the marks has three different distinctions"?

- b) A: THIS REFERS TO EACH MARK'S SUBSTANCE, FRUITION, AND KARMA

Response:

The first explains the substance of each mark.

The second explains the karmic effects associated with each mark.

And the third explains the karmic actions producing each mark.

- i) A LIST OF THE "SUBSTANCE" OF EACH OF THE THIRTY-TWO MARKS

The physical mark consisting of a "wheel" emblem on the hands and on the feet is a matter that has already been discussed. Wheel-turning

kings also have these marks. Bodhisattvas also have these marks. Other people may have this physical mark as well. However, these cases are not the same, that's all.

As for this wheel mark on the hands and the feet, the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet have a mark consisting of a thousand-spoked wheel that is so perfect and utterly clear in its detail that it looks like an inscribed pattern.

[As for that mark whereby the Buddha's] feet are so stable in their stance when standing up that he does not move at all, this is "the mark of securely planted feet."

The mark consisting of proximal [finger and toe] webbing as soft and thin as that of a royal goose marked by lines so utterly clear as to be made from real gold thread—this is "the mark of having webbed fingers and toes."

Softness and tenderness [of hands and feet] like the down of the tala palm²⁹⁷ or the skin of a baby wherein they are more rosy in hue than the rest of the body—this is "the mark of soft hands and feet."

Fullness in seven places: the palms of both hands; the soles of both feet; the surface of the neck; and the two sub-axillary regions—this is what is meant by "the mark of fullness in seven places."

Long fingers that are slender and straight—this is "the mark of long fingers."

Long and broad heels are "the mark of broad heels."

The body being seven cubits in height and in no way crooked—this is "the mark of a large and erect body."

Prominent elevation of the top of the feet—this is "the mark of high arches."

Body hair grown upwards in a clock-wise spiral—this is "the mark of upwardly spiraling body hair."

Legs gradually increasing in thickness after the manner of an *aiṇeya* antelope—this is "the mark of antelope-like legs."

The two hands being able to touch the knees even when standing erect—this is "the mark of long arms."

Having the male organ retracted after the manner of the thoroughbred horse or elephant—this is "the mark of genital ensheathment."

Having the most pure sort of golden radiance—this is "the mark of the golden hue."

Having skin that is soft, that appears as if it was made from refined gold, and that cannot be smudged by dirt—this is "the mark of fine skin."

Each and every bodily pore has but a single hair grown from it—this is "the mark of having but a single hair in each pore."

Having a white hair mark between the brows that is the color of white agate—this is “the mark of the white hair tuft.”²⁹⁸

Having an upper body broad and massive like that of a lion—this is “the mark of the lion-like torso.”

Having large rounded shoulders—this is “the mark of large round shoulders.”

Having the area below the axilla flat and full—this is “the mark of sub-axillary fullness.”

Because the tongue is invulnerable to injury by wind, cold, or heat, it is able to skillfully distinguish all flavors in a manner unmatched by any other person. This is “the mark of being aware of each and every flavor.”

Having a body as thick and wide as the trunk of the *nyagrodha* tree²⁹⁹—this is “the mark of a round body.”

Having the round *uṣṇiṣa* bulge atop the crown upon which the hair grows in a clockwise spiral—this is “the mark of the fleshy prominence atop the crown.”

Having a tongue as red as a red lotus that is broad, long, and thin—this is “the mark of broad and long tongue.”

Having a voice like the king of the Brahma Heavens and the *kalaviṅka* bird—this is “the mark of a Brahmā-like voice.”

Having a jaw that is round and as broad as a mirror—this is “the mark of the lion-like jaw.”

Having teeth that are as white as white agate or the *kunda* jasmine blossom—this is “the mark of white teeth.”

Having teeth that are not uneven or skewed—this is “the mark of straight teeth.”

Having teeth that are close-set and free of gaps—this is “the mark of perfect teeth.”

Having teeth well matched above and below—this is “the mark of forty teeth.”

Having bright and clear eyes in which black and white areas are distinctly delineated and there are no reddening surface veins—this is “the mark of blue eyes.”

Having eyelashes that are not mismatched above and below, that blink in unison, and that are neither too long nor too short—this is “the mark of eyelashes like the king of bulls.”

ii) THE 32 MARKS’ KARMIC ACTIONS AND EVENTUAL KARMIC EFFECTS

Through respectfully welcoming and escorting away those who are venerated and through making sustaining offerings to those who are at stupas and temples, doing so in places where there are Dharma

assemblies, and where Dharma is spoken—it is because of doing these things that one acquires hands and feet that have the wheel mark.

Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one who is a layperson is destined to become a wheel-turning king who acquires a large population of subjects. If one who has this mark instead leaves the home life and studies the path, he will acquire a retinue consisting of many disciples.

Through continuing to solidly uphold all dharmas one has received without ever forsaking them, one acquires the mark of solidly planted feet. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one becomes one who cannot be the least bit moved by anyone at all.

Through always cultivating the four means of attraction, namely giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, and joint endeavors, one acquires the mark of proximal webbing of fingers and toes. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one quickly attracts a community of other people.

Through giving fragrant, sweet, delectable, and soft foods and beverages to others, including giving them to those that are venerated, providing them with everything they need, one comes to possess the mark of soft and tender hands and feet while also obtaining the mark of fullness in seven places. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one mostly receives fragrant, sweet, delectable, and soft foods and beverages, is rescued from life-threatening circumstances, and acquires a lifespan of increased duration.

Also, through taking on the moral precept of abstaining from killing beings, one acquires the mark of slender and long fingers and toes, the mark of fullness of the heels, and the mark of the large and erect body. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one's lifespan is bound to be long-lasting.

Through increased and unflinching development of the good dharmas one has taken on, one acquires the mark of high arches and the mark of having bodily hairs that grow upwardly in a clockwise spiraling fashion. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, none of the meritorious qualities that one has developed recede or disappear.

Through being able to offer unstinting instruction in special skills and classic texts and through making gifts of shoes, slippers, and such, one acquires the mark of legs that gradually increase in the thickness of their shape in a manner similar to those of the *aiṇeya* [antelope].³⁰⁰ Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one rapidly learns whatever one cultivates or studies, doing so in a manner that accords with one's wishes.

Through unstintingly and completely granting the requests of those who come seeking something, one acquires the mark of long arms. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one is able to gain personal power, is able to engage in immensely generous giving, and is able to skillfully establish harmony among others.

Through not allowing estrangement to occur among other beings or among one's relatives, and through being able to cause those who have become estranged to be reunited, one acquires the mark of male genital enshreament. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one acquires many disciples.

Through giving fine and perfectly clean clothing, bedding, halls, and dwellings, one acquires the mark of the golden hue as well as the mark of thin and fine skin. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one acquires fine and perfectly clean clothing, bedding, halls, and dwellings.

Through being well able to look after and protect those worthy of one's offerings whether they be monastic preceptors, monastic Dharma teachers,³⁰¹ one's parents, one's elder and younger siblings,³⁰² or those worthy of veneration and esteem, one acquires the mark of a single clockwise spiraling bodily hair in each hair pore and the mark of the mid-brow white hair tuft adorning one's countenance. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one becomes someone who has no peer.

Through using speech imbued with a sense of shame and dread of blame, speech that is compliant with the circumstances, and speech that is pleasing, one acquires the mark of having a lion-like torso and the mark of having large and round shoulders. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, whoever sees one never tires of looking at him.

Through providing medical care, medicines, food, and drink to those who are sick while also personally seeing to their care, one acquires the mark of fullness in the sub-axillary region as well as the mark of being able to clearly distinguish each and every flavor. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one's body is only seldom assailed by sickness.

Through the giving of parks, groves, sweet fruit, bridges, luxuriantly thriving trees, ponds, wells, food and drink, flowers, incenses, necklaces, and buildings, by building stupas, merit halls,³⁰³ and such, and also through bringing forth many things as gifts at such times as offerings are made to the assembly—through doing these things, one acquires the mark of a body resembling the trunk of the *nyagrodha* tree as well as the mark of having the fleshy *uṣṇīṣa* prominence atop one's

crown. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one is readily honored and regarded with the highest esteem.

Through cultivating the practice of truthful speech and gentle speech during the long night [of previous lifetimes], one acquires the mark of the broad and long tongue as well as the mark of having the Brahmā-like voice. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one has the voice replete with five excellent qualities. Those five excellent voice qualities are:

- One's voice is easily understood;
- A listener can never get enough of listening to this voice;
- Its sound is deep and far-reaching;
- Its sound is pleasing to the ear of the listener;
- And its sound does not easily fade away.

Through practicing truthful speech and non-frivolous speech during the long night [of previous lifetimes], one acquires the mark of the lion-like jaw. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one's words are definitely trusted and accepted.

Through never slighting someone after making an offering to them and through being freely generous in making offerings, one acquires the mark of white teeth and the mark of straight teeth. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] this mark, one acquires a pure, harmonious, and like-minded retinue.

Through truthful speech during the long night [of previous lifetimes] and through abstaining from slander, one acquires the mark of forty teeth and the mark of closely set teeth. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, one acquires a unified retinue that is invulnerable to being impeded or destroyed.

Through having sincere intentions, through thinking fondly of others, through looking upon beings with a harmonious expression free of desire, hatred, or delusion, one acquires the mark of blue eyes as well as the mark of eyelashes like the king of bulls. Due to having [planted the karmic causes that result in] these marks, everyone who sees one is moved to feelings of fondness and respect.