

**THE BODHISATTVA'S PRACTICE
OF
MORAL VIRTUE**

Part One Supplement:

**The Semimonthly
Bodhisattva Precepts Recitation Ceremony**

Annotated English Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra

X38 n0696_p0767a01 ||

X38 n0696_p0767a02 || No. 696

767a03 || [1]附半月誦菩薩戒儀式注

767a05 || 毗補提囉怛娜伽耶婆那摩賀

767a06 || 冒地質多沙門 弘贊 注

767a15 || 眾中當差堪能誦者誦之。眾既雲集。先舉香讚畢。

767a16 || 三稱云。

767a17 || 南無梵網教主盧舍那佛。

767a18 || 次舉開經偈。

[菩薩淨戒難得聞，經於無量俱胝劫，讀誦受持亦如是，如說修行者更難。]

Alternate 開經偈：

[無上甚深微妙法，百千萬劫難遭遇，我今見聞得受持，願解如來真實義。]

其誦者昇座。白眾云。

767a19 || 某甲稽首和南。敬白大眾。僧差誦戒。恐有錯悞。願同

767a20 || 誦者。慈悲指示。

767a21 || ○初歸敬三寶 二策修 三作前方便

767a22 || 四誦戒序 五結問 六正誦戒經。

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○初歸敬三寶 二策修 三作前方便 四誦戒序 五結問 六正誦戒經。

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**THE SEMIMONTHLY
BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS RECITATION CEREMONY**

(As quoted in the commentary on this ceremony by Śramaṇa¹ Hong Zan [1611–1685] of Guangzhou’s Jeweled Elephant Monastery.)²

From among the members of the Assembly, one should appoint someone who is able to recite it to perform the recitation. Once the Assembly has gathered, after having first recited the incense praise, they should recite the following [invocation] three times:

Namo Rocana Buddha, Lord of the Brahmā’s Net Teachings. (x3)

Next, recite the scripture-opening verse.³

[The bodhisattva’s precepts of purity are but rarely heard even when passing through measureless *koṭīs* of kalpas. So too it is with reading, reciting, receiving, and upholding them. Rarer still is one who cultivates them in accordance with how they were taught.]

[An alternate sutra-opening verse:⁴

The unsurpassed, extremely profound, and sublime Dharma is rarely ever met even in a hundred thousand myriads of kalpas. Having now seen, heard, and been enabled to receive and uphold it, may we comprehend the Tathāgata’s true and actual meaning.]

The reciter should then ascend to the high seat and address the Assembly, saying:

I, so-and-so,⁵ bow in reverence and respectfully address the Great Assembly, for I have been entrusted with the recitation of the precepts. Fearing that I may err in reciting them, I hope that those reciting along with me will, with kindness and compassion, point out any errors.

LIST OF CONTENTS:

Part One: Taking Refuge in and Revering the Three Jewels;

Part Two: Instigation to Cultivation;

Part Three: Perform the Preliminary Procedures;

Part Four: Recite the Preface to the Precepts;

Part Five: Questioning [the Assembly];

Part Six: The Actual Recitation of the Precept Scripture.

正
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字

767a23 || ○初歸敬三寶
 767a24 || 菩薩戒眾等。諦聽。
 767b01 || 歸命盧舍那。十方金剛佛。亦禮前論主。當覺慈氏尊。
 767b02 || 今說三聚戒。菩薩咸共聽。
 767c01 || 戒如大明燈。能消長夜闇。戒如真寶鏡。照法盡無遺。
 767c02 || 戒如摩尼珠。雨物濟貧窮。離世速成佛。唯此法為最。
 767c03 || 是故諸菩薩。應當勤護持。
 767c21 || ○二策修
 767c22 || 諸大德。春分四月日為一時。
 768a09 || 半月日[巳>已]過。
 768a14 || 少一夜。餘有一夜三月半在。
 768b06 || 老死至近。佛法欲滅。諸大德。優婆塞。優婆夷。為得道
 768b07 || 故。一心勤求精進。所以者何。諸佛一心勤求精進。故
 768b08 || 得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。何況餘善道法。各聞強健
 768b09 || 時。努力勤修善。如何不求道。安可須待老。欲何樂乎。
 768c05 || 是日[巳>已]過。命亦隨滅。如少水魚。斯有何樂。

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○初归敬三宝
 菩萨戒众等。谛听。
 归命卢舍那。十方金刚佛。亦礼前论主。当觉慈氏尊。今说
 三聚戒。菩萨咸共听。戒如大明灯。能消长夜闇。戒如真宝镜。
 照法尽无遗。戒如摩尼珠。雨物济贫穷。离世速成佛。唯此法为
 最。是故诸菩萨。应当勤护持。
 ○二策修
 诸大德。春分四月日为一时。
 半月日已过。
 少一夜。余有一夜三月半在。
 老死至近。佛法欲灭。诸大德。优婆塞。优婆夷。为得道
 故。一心勤求精进。所以者何。诸佛一心勤求精进。故得阿耨多
 罗三藐三菩提。何况余善道法。各闻强健时。努力勤修善。如何
 不求道。安可须待老。欲何乐乎。
 是日已过。命亦随灭。如少水鱼。斯有何乐。

PART ONE: TAKING REFUGE IN AND REVERING THE THREE JEWELS

The members of this bodhisattva precept assembly should listen carefully:

We take refuge in Rocana Buddha,
in the Vajra Buddhas throughout the ten directions,
and also pay reverence to the former treatise master
and future Honored One, Maitreya.

As we now speak the three collections of moral precepts,⁶
You bodhisattvas should all listen together.
The precepts are like a great bright lamp
that is able to dispel the darkness of the long night.

The precepts are like a true precious mirror
that completely reflects all dharmas without exception.

The precepts are like a *mani* jewel
that rains down gifts to rescue all the poor.

To leave the world and quickly become a buddha—
It is only this Dharma that is supreme.
Therefore all those who are bodhisattvas
Should diligently guard and uphold them.

PART TWO: INSTIGATION TO CULTIVATION

Greatly Virtuous Ones, spring's full moon day of the fourth month will mark [the completion of] one season.⁷

[Now], this month's half-moon day has already passed except for [this] one period of the night. There still remains this one period of the night followed by the three and a half months remaining [in this spring season].

Old age and death are growing near. The Buddha's Dharma is on the verge of dying out. For the sake of reaching enlightenment,⁸ all of you Greatly Virtuous ones and all of you *upāsakas* and *upāsikās* should single-mindedly and diligently pursue it with vigor. Why? It is due to single-mindedly and diligently pursuing it with vigor that all buddhas have realized *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*,⁹ how much the more so all of the other good dharmas of the path. Having heard it when still strong and healthy, one should energetically and diligently cultivate what is good. How could one not seek the path? How could one suppose it is necessary to wait to do so until one is old? What sort of happiness do you wish to attain?

This day has already passed and one's life has also diminished correspondingly. This is like being a fish stranded in ever shallower water. What bliss is there in this?

768c22 || ○三作前方便
 768c23 || 僧集不。
 769a03 || 和合不。
 769a07 || 僧集和合。何所作為。
 769a10 || 說戒布薩。
 769a18 || 此中未受菩薩戒。及不清淨者出不。
 769a24 || 不來囑授菩薩。有幾人說欲。及清淨。
 769b16 || ○四誦戒序
 769b17 || 諸佛子等。合掌至心聽。我今欲說諸佛大戒序。眾集
 769b18 || 默然聽。自知有罪。當悔懺。悔懺即安樂。不懺悔。罪益
 769b19 || 深。無罪者默然。默然故。當知眾清淨。諸大德。優婆塞。
 769b20 || 優婆夷等。諦聽。
 769c09 || 佛滅度後。於末法中應當尊敬波羅提木叉。波羅提
 769c10 || 木叉者。即是此戒。持此戒時。如闇遇明。如貧人得寶。
 769c11 || 如病者得瘥。如囚繫出獄。如遠行者得歸。當知此。即
 769c12 || 是眾等大師。若佛住世。無異此也。
 770a12 || 怖心難生。善心難發。

○三作前方便
 僧集不。
 和合不。
 僧集和合。何所作为。
 说戒布萨。
 此中未受菩萨戒。及不清净者出不。
 不来嘱授菩萨。有几人说欲。及清净。
 ○四诵戒序
 诸佛子等。合掌至心听。我今欲说诸佛大戒序。众集默然
 听。自知有罪。当悔忏。悔忏即安乐。不忏悔。罪益深。无罪者
 默然。默然故。当知众清净。诸大德。优婆塞。优婆夷等。谛
 听。
 佛灭度后。于末法中应当尊敬波罗提木叉。波罗提木叉者。
 即是此戒。持此戒时。如闇遇明。如贫人得宝。如病者得瘥。如
 囚系出狱。如远行者得归。当知此。即是众等大师。若佛住世。
 无异此也。
 怖心难生。善心难发。

PART THREE: PERFORM THE PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES

Q: "Has the Saṃgha assembled or not?"

Q: "Has the Saṃgha come together in harmony or not?"

A: "The Saṃgha has assembled and it is in harmony."

Q: "What is the purpose for which they have done so?"

A: "This is in order to participate in the *upoṣadha* recitation of the precepts."

Q: "Are there any among you who have not yet taken the bodhisattva precepts or who are not pure who have not yet departed?"

[A: "All who have not taken the bodhisattva precepts or who are impure have already left."]

Q: "Of those bodhisattvas who could not come but who have communicated through an intermediary, how many of them declared that they wished to attend and did affirm their purity?"¹⁰

[A: Answer as appropriate.]

PART FOUR: RECITE THE PREFACE TO THE PRECEPTS

PREFACE TO THE BRAHMĀ'S NET SUTRA BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS

All you sons of the Buddha, place your palms together and listen with a mind of utmost sincerity. I now wish to speak the preface to the great precepts of all buddhas. Having gathered together here, the Assembly should listen in silence. If one becomes aware that one has committed an offense one should repent, for, having repented, one then becomes peaceful and happy. If one does not repent, his offenses become increasingly grave. Those who are free of offenses may remain silent. By such silence it will be known that the members of this assembly are pure. Greatly Virtuous Ones,¹¹ *upāsakas*, and *upāsikās*,¹² listen attentively:

After the Buddha's nirvāṇa, during the Semblance Dharma Age,¹³ one should revere the *prātimokṣa*.¹⁴ The *prātimokṣa* is just these very precepts. When one upholds these precepts, it is just as when one who is in darkness encounters the light, just as when one who is poor obtains a jewel, just as when one who is sick finds a cure, just as when one who has been imprisoned emerges from prison, and just as when one who has traveled afar is then able to return home. One should realize that these [precepts] serve as the great master for all those in the Assembly, no differently than if the Buddha himself were still dwelling in the world.¹⁵

It is difficult to develop a mind that is fearful [of committing offenses] and it is difficult to develop a mind that is devoted to

正體字

故經云。勿輕小罪。以為無殃。水滴雖微。漸盈大器。剎那造罪。殃墮無間。一失人身。萬劫不復。

770a13 || 壯色不停。猶如奔馬。人命無常。過於山水。今日雖存。明亦難保。

770a14 || 眾等。各各一心。勤求精進。慎勿懈怠懶惰。睡眠縱意。夜即攝心。存念三寶。莫以空過。徒設疲勞。後代深悔。

770a24 || 眾等。各各一心。謹依此戒。如法修行。應當學。

770b01 || ○五詰問

770b06 || 諸大德。今(白黑)月十(五四)日。作布薩。說菩薩戒。眾當一心

770b07 || 善聽。有罪者發露。無罪者默然。默然故。當知諸大德清淨。堪說菩薩戒。[已>已]說菩薩戒序竟。今問諸大德。是

770b08 || 中清淨不(三問)。

770b18 ||

770b19 ||

770b20 ||

770b21 ||

770b22 ||

简体字

故经云。勿轻小罪。以为无殃。水滴虽微。渐盈大器。刹那造罪。殃堕无间。一失人身。万劫不复。

壮色不停。犹如奔马。人命无常。过于山水。今日虽存。明亦难保。

众等。各各一心。勤求精进。慎勿懈怠懒惰。睡眠纵意。夜即摄心。存念三宝。莫以空过。徒设疲劳。后代深悔。众等。各各一心。谨依此戒。如法修行。应当学。

○五诘问

诸大德。今(白黑)月十(五四)日。作布萨。说菩萨戒。众当一心善听。有罪者发露。无罪者默然。默然故。当知诸大德清净。堪说菩萨戒。已说菩萨戒序竟。今问诸大德。是中清净不(三问)。

goodness. Therefore a sutra says: “Do not consider minor offenses to be insignificant, taking them to be free of misfortune, for, although drops of water are tiny, they will gradually fill up even a large vessel.”¹⁶ An offense committed in a *kṣaṇa* may bring about the misfortune of falling into the Uninterrupted [Hells].¹⁷ Having once lost the human body, one may not regain it even after a myriad kalpas. Like the passing of a galloping horse, a strong body does not remain for long. A person’s life passes more quickly¹⁸ than the [rapidly flowing] waters of a mountain stream. Although it may remain today, it would be difficult to guarantee it will still be here tomorrow.

Members of the Assembly, each of you should single-mindedly and diligently seek to cultivate with vigor. Take care and do not become indolent or lazy or allow your mind to become uncontrolled when sleeping. At night, one should focus the mind and remain mindful of the Three Jewels.¹⁹ One must not allow it to occur that, by letting the time go by fruitlessly, one’s efforts are expended in vain so that, later on, one will be bound to experience deep regret. Members of the Assembly, you should each single-mindedly and diligently abide by these precepts. You should train in them by cultivating them in accordance with the Dharma.

PART FIVE: QUESTIONING THE ASSEMBLY

Greatly Virtuous Ones: Today is the _____ day of the _____ month. We are performing the *uposadha* ceremony in which we speak the bodhisattva precepts. The Assembly should listen single-mindedly and well. Those who have committed offenses should reveal them whereas those who are free of offenses should remain silent. By their silence we will know that the Great Assembly is pure and that therefore we can proceed with speaking the bodhisattva precepts. We have finished speaking the preface to the bodhisattva precepts. We now ask the Greatly Virtuous Ones: “Are those within this assembly pure, or not?” (Ask three times.)

770c20 || ○六正誦戒經
 770c21 || 謂誦心地品下。從爾時起。至共成佛道。
 771a06 || 既誦戒畢。下座謝眾云。
 771a07 || 某甲敬謝大眾。僧差誦戒。三業不勤。戒文生澁。坐久
 771a08 || 延遲。令眾生惱。望眾慈悲。布施歡喜。
 771a09 ||
 771a10 || 附半月誦菩薩戒儀式註(終)

正
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字

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○六正誦戒經
 謂誦心地品下。從爾時起。至共成佛道。
 既誦戒畢。下座謝眾云。
 某甲敬謝大眾。僧差誦戒。三業不勤。戒文生澁。坐久延
 遲。令眾生惱。望眾慈悲。布施歡喜。
 附半月誦菩薩戒儀式註(終)

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PART SIX: THE ACTUAL RECITATION OF THE PRECEPT SCRIPTURE

This refers to reciting the second fascicle of the Mind Ground Chapter beginning with “At that time...” on through to “May all of those who hear this Dharma swiftly succeed in realizing buddhahood.”

After having finished the recitation of the precepts, the reciter should descend from the high seat and thank the Assembly, saying:

I, so-and-so, respectfully thank the Great Assembly. Although I was appointed by the Saṃgha to recite the precepts, because of my lack of diligence in cultivating the three modes of action, my recitation of the precept text may not have been smooth. Perhaps then I have made the Assembly sit for an overly long time through an extended recitation and thus caused them unnecessary discomfort. I hope the Assembly will have compassion on me and feel satisfied with my recitation.

(End of the Semi-monthly Recitation of the Bodhisattva Precepts)

Recitation Ceremony Endnotes

- 1 “Commentary by the Great Bodhicitta Śramaṇa Hongzan.” (冒地質多沙門 弘贊 注.)
- 2 At the end of his introductory paragraph to his commentary on this ceremony (X38_n0696), Śramaṇa Hongzan attributes the origin of the ceremony to members of the Tiantai School at the end of the Tang Dynasty or the beginning of the Song Dynasty (X38n0696_p0767a14).
- 3 This ceremony text does not specify which of several alternate sutra-opening verses should be used. The sutra-opening verse that I insert here is one that is most directly relevant to the bodhisattva precepts and which therefore is commonly recited at the beginning of bodhisattva precept recitations: 菩薩淨戒難得聞，經於無量俱胝劫，讀誦受持亦如是，如說修行者更難。
- 4 An alternative sutra-opening verse sometimes used here is: 無上甚深微妙法，百千萬劫難遭遇，我今見聞得受持，願解如來真實義。
- 5 Here “so-and-so” (某甲) indicates that, when the Assembly is reciting the precepts, whoever has been appointed to do so should replace “so-and-so” with his or her name and title, as for instance: “I, Bhikshu Dharmadīpa (or Bhikshuni Upāsika John Smith, or Upāsikā Jane Brown, etc.), bow in reverence ... etc.”
- 6 “The three collections of moral precepts” (三聚戒), most often referred to as “the three collections of the precepts of purity” (三聚淨戒), refers to the three different sorts of moral precepts and the three important functions they serve: 1) “The precepts of restraint” (*saṃvaraśīla* / 攝律儀戒) consisting of those that serve to bring about the stopping of whatever is wrong or evil; 2) “The precepts that gather good dharmas” (*kuśala-dharma-saṃgrāhaka-śīla* / 攝善法戒) consisting of those that serve to bring about the cultivation of good moral qualities; and 3) “The precepts that gather in beings” (*sattva-artha-kriyā-śīla* / 攝眾生戒) consisting of those that serve to gather in other beings by benefiting them.
- 7 Zhuhong’s parenthetical note (at 0153c02–04) explains: “This is relying on [the calendar of] India (*xiyu* - 西域) where one year is divided into three seasons and a single season has four months. From the sixteenth day of the twelfth lunar month (*la yue* - 臘月) to the fifteenth day of the fourth month constitutes the spring season. From the sixteenth day of the fourth month to the fifteenth day of the eighth month constitutes the summer season. From the sixteenth day of the eighth month to the fifteenth day of the twelfth lunar month constitutes the winter season. Now here [in this text as we have received it] it is referring to the spring season. One should accord with [India’s]

