

11. The Perfection of Ethical Discipline

How to Train in Ethical Discipline This has 5 parts: 1. What ethical discipline is 2. How to begin the cultivation of ethical discipline 3. The divisions of ethical discipline 4. How to practice 5. A Summary

1. What ethical discipline is

Ethical discipline is an attitude of abstention that turns your mind away from harming others and from the sources of such harm.

Therefore, you bring about the perfection of ethical discipline by progressively increasing your habituation to this attitude until you reach completion.

It is not the case that you bring the perfection of ethical discipline to completion in the external world by establishing beings in a state free from all harm. Other wise, since there are still beings in harms way, it would mean the beings of the past who perfected the ethical discipline would not have done so.

So whether or not all beings are free or not makes no difference in this context.

The practice of ethical discipline is just the habituation which turns away from harm to these beings.

`Where can beings such as fish be sent
Where they will not be killed?
So it is said that by attaining an attitude of abstention
You perfect ethical discipline

Shantideva

` Although ethical discipline does have 3 divisions, it is explained in this context as the attitude of abstention in terms of the **ethical discipline of restraint**, which is the principle division.

Moreover, in terms that include motivation, it is the 10 abstentions that eliminate the 10 non virtues; and in terms of what it really is, it is 7 abstentions, which are the nature of the body and speech that abstain from the 7 non virtues.

`It is called ethical discipline because it does not acquiesce in the affiliation, because it allows no sins to arise, because it is coolness since it quells the fire of regret, or because it is that upon which the excellent rely since it is the cause of happiness. Moreover, it is characterized by 7 abstentions. These are motivated by three qualities – non-attachment, non-hostility, and correct view. Therefore, ethical discipline is explained as the 10 paths of action in terms that include motivation.

Chandrakirti

2. How to being the cultivation of ethical discipline

As a person who generates the spirit of enlightenment and then promises to train in the bodhisattva deeds, you have promised to endow all living beings with the ornament of the ethical discipline of perfect buddhas; therefore, you just accomplish the aims of all beings. In this regard, you must first develop the strength of your own pure ethical discipline, for, if your own ethical discipline is impure and degenerates, you will fall to a miserable rebirth and will therefore not even achieve your own welfare, never mind the welfare of others.

So once you begin working for the welfare of others, value highly your ethical discipline. You need to sharply focus on safeguarding it and restraining your behavior. Do not be lax.

`Those who strive to endow all beings
With the ornament of the perfect buddhas' ethical discipline
Initially purify their own ethical discipline;
With pure ethical discipline they develop powerful strength

Compendium of Perfections

` Such pure ethical discipline is based on the practice of what to adopt and what to cast aside. This depends on the strong and stable attitude of wanting to safeguard your ethical discipline. So, develop a desire to safeguard your ethical discipline by meditation for a long time on the grave consequences of not safeguarding it and the benefits of safeguarding it.

The grave consequence of not safeguarding it, according to the *Compendium of Perfections*:

`Therefore, see the unbearable fright and
Eliminate even the smallest thing that should be eliminated

` Once you are frightened by the grave consequences of your misdeeds, you strive to abstain from even the small ones. Think as explained earlier about the consequences of the 10 non-virtues.

With respect to the benefits of safeguarding your ethical discipline, they are as explained earlier and as set forth by Aryasura in Compendium of Perfections

`The divine substances, the resources of humans in which to delight, and
The supreme bliss and supreme tastes which are the wonders of the deities—
Does anything more marvelous come from ethical discipline?
Even the buddhas and the teaching arise from it.

`Furthermore, in dependence on ethical discipline, your mind stream develops; your training becomes the same of that as the mahasattva bodhisattvas who have a compassionate nature; and you attain the pure sublime wisdom of that eliminates all the seeds of wrongdoing.

When worldly ornaments adorn the young or old they make them seem ridiculous and thus ugly.
But, not matter who has the ornament of ethical discipline, young, old, and in between, it delights all of them, and is thus the best ornament.

The pleasant fragrance of ethical discipline spreads in all directions.

Although you do not speak flattering words and do not strive with great effort and hardship, you naturally gather immediately necessary resources. All beings pay homage to you. People who do not know you are naturally kind to you; and dieties and humans revere the dust of your foot prints, and carry away what they can get as an object of worship.

The wise who reject well on these benefits and grave consequences must safeguard their ethical discipline.

`Due to a craving for their own happiness, bodhisattvas
Will not compromise ethical disciplines, which must be protected.

Compendium of Perfections

` Moreover, after you have cleared away your mere fear of the miserable realms and your wish for the mere excellences of dieties or humans, safeguard your ethical discipliner the sake of establishing all living beings in ethical discipline.

3. The divisions of ethical discipline

there are 3 divisions: 1. The ethical discipline of restraint 2. The ethical discipline of gather virtue 3. The ethical discipline of acting for the welfare of living beings

a. The ethical discipline of restraint

The *Bodhisattva Levels* says that the ethical discipline of restraint is the 7 types of vows of individual liberation. The ethical discipline restraint is either the actual vows of individual liberation for the group of either laypersons or renunciates, or it is a practice of restraint or abstention that would be associated with the actual vows.

The ethical discipline of restraint is the practice of restraint and abstention that gives up any deed that is wrong by prohibition that would be associated with the vows of individual liberation.

b. The ethical discipline of gathering virtue

The ethical discipline of gathering virtue means that you focus on the virtues such as the 6 perfections and then develop the virtues that you have not developed in your mind, do not spoil the ones that you have already developed, and increase both of these ever further.

c. The ethical discipline of acting for the welfare of living beings

The ethical discipline of acting for the welfare of living beings means that you focus on the welfare of 11 sorts of living beings, and then accomplish their aims in this and future lives in a suitable manner and without wrongdoing.

— Within the 3 divisions of ethical discipline, the ethical discipline of restraint — the actual rules of the individual liberation vows or the practice of engaging in what is to be adopted and rejecting what is to be cast aside that would be associated with these vows. — is initially very important even for bodhisattvas, so train in this.

It is said that if the bodhisattvas ethical discipline of restraint degenerates, all their vows degenerate.

It is said that ethical discipline of restraint is the basis and source of the next 2 types of ethical discipline.

Furthermore, the principle aspect of the ethical discipline of restraint is abstaining from deeds that are wrong by nature. It is taught in all the vehicles, higher and lower, that this abstention from deeds that are wrong by nature is the abstention from the 10 non-virtues, which comprise the crux of the major faults of the deeds that are wrong by nature. You must correctly restrain yourself physically and mentally by not allowing a flicker of mere motivation for these non virtues.

Do not let these 10 paths of action degenerate;
They are the path to the joys of high status or liberation.
By maintaining these you reach your goals, which are
Special contemplations wherein you think of helping beings.

Correctly restrain your speech, body, and mind;
There Conqueror said, “This, in brief, is ethical discipline.”
This is the basis that comprises all ethical discipline,
So train in this restraint.

Compendium of Perfections

The master Chandrakirti also explains the perfection of ethical discipline as abstaining from the 10 non virtues in the chapter on ethical discipline.

If you initially train your mind in such restraint as presented above, you easily accomplish the remaining 2 types of ethical discipline

d. How to practice

You practice the 3 types of ethical discipline in association with the 6 supremacies and the 6 perfections. When you practice in association with the 6 perfections, the generosity of ethical discipline is establishing others in ethical discipline after you have stabilized yourself in it. The remains perfections are as presented before.

e. A summary

Not to weaken and to increase steadily the spirit of enlightenment — the basis of bodhisattva deeds — is the root of engaging in the deeds of ethical discipline and so forth. It is the best way to desist from harming any living being.

Aspire to practice the ethical discipline of those at high levels and then train your mind in it.

Sincerely learn right now what to adopt and what to cast aside, starting with the ethical discipline of a beginner bodhisattva.

In particular, each day frequently exercise an attitude of restraint with respect to what you know about deeds that are wrong by nature — such as the 10 non virtues — and deeds that are wrong by prohibition. Among these also strive again and again to apply an attitude of restraint toward the fundamental transgressions of the vow to which you are committed.

Once you do this, you will be able to complete the bodhisattva training in another lifetime as a casually concordant behavioral effect, with little difficulty and with little suffering. However, if you neglect these things now, you will be continually tainted by very grave faults and transgressions, and moreover for many lives you will be unable to learn the bodhisattvas’

trainings. So from now on strive to these practices.