

# The Ten Good Ways Of Actions Sutra

Translated to Chinese by the Tripitaka Master Sikshananda from Khotan  
during the Tang Dynasty

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha stayed in the palace of the Dragon King of the Ocean (Sāgara-nāgarāja) together with an assembly of eight thousand great Bhikshus and thirty-two thousand Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas altogether. At that time, the World Honored One told the Dragon King: Because all beings have different consciousness and thoughts, they too perform different actions, and as a consequence, there is a turning around in all the various courses of existence.

Dragon King, do you see the variety of shapes and appearances in this assembly and the great ocean - are they not different from one another? Of all of them, none is not made by the mind (heart), brought about by wholesome or unwholesome bodily, verbal, and mental actions. Yet the mind is formless, it cannot be grasped or perceived, but it is the unreal accumulation and arising of all dharmas which are ultimately without owner, without me and mine. Although each manifested differently according to their karma, there is nevertheless no creator in essence. Therefore, all dharmas are inconceivable. The self-nature is like an illusion, the wise ones knowing this ought to cultivate wholesome actions, so when they are born, the skandhas sense bases and realms<sup>1</sup> will be upright, and those who see them will not tire of them.

Dragon King, when you observe the body of the Buddha born from a hundred thousand Kotis of merit, with all the marks adorned, the splendour of its radiance covering the whole of the great assembly, even if there were immeasurable kotis of Brahma gods, they all would not be shown. How can those who revere the Tathagata's body not be dazzled? You again observe all these great Bodhisattvas of marvellous appearance, dignified and pure. All this comes into being entirely through the merit of cultivating wholesome actions. Furthermore, all the eight legions of devas and nāgas, and powerful beings as such were also born of good karma and blessings.

Now all beings in the great ocean are of vulgar shapes and appearances, big or small, all because of various thoughts from their minds that committed unwholesome bodily, verbal and mental actions. Thus each of them receives their karmic retribution according to their karma.

You ought to practice and study constantly in this way and bring beings to a thorough understanding of cause and effect and practice good karma. With this, you shall have unshakable right views and must not fall again into the views of annihilation and constant. With all the fields of blessings, you shall rejoice, respect and make offerings, so you will also be respected and made offered by humans and heavenly beings.

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<sup>1</sup>Here it refers to the five skandhas, the twelve sense bases and the eighteen realms. The five skandhas refer to the forms, feelings, thoughts, mental activity and consciousness (all the physical and mental aspects), and the twelve sense bases refer to the six internal and six external sense bases. The six internal roots (sense-bases) are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and consciousness, and the corresponding six external sense bases are forms, sound, fragrance, taste, touch and dharmas. The eighteen realms include the twelve sense bases plus the corresponding consciousness for each sense base, i.e. eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness and mind consciousness.

Dragon King, you shall know that the Bodhisattva has one practice which enables him to cut off all sufferings of evil paths. What is it? It is constantly, day and night, to contemplate and observe the wholesome dharma, so as to enable the increase of wholesome dharma thought after thought, without allowing the least unwholesome thoughts to come in, so that all the evil can be cut off and the wholesome dharma will be perfected, he will constantly be close to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other holy people.

Speaking about the wholesome dharma, the bodies of humans and heavenly beings, Shravakas (sound-hearers), Pratyekabuddhas, and the Unsurpassed Bodhi, all regard this as fundamental for them to be successful. Thus, this is called the wholesome dharma. This dharma is the ten good ways of actions. What are the ten? That is forever abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, frivolous speech, greed, anger, and ignorance (wrong view).

Dragon King, if one abstains from killing, then one will accomplish ten ways of being free from afflictions. What are the ten?

1. One gives fearlessness universally to all beings;
2. One always has a great compassionate heart towards all beings;
3. Forever cutting off all habitual tendencies of anger;
4. One's body is always free from illness;
5. One enjoys a long lifespan;
6. One is constantly protected by non-human beings;
7. One is free from bad dreams, one sleeps and wakes happily;
8. Eliminate grievances and all grievances will resolve themselves;
9. One has no fear of the evil paths ;
10. One will be born in heaven at the end of life.

These are the ten. If one is able to transfer the merit (of non-killing) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), when one becomes a Buddha, one can live as long as one wishes like the Buddhas.

Again Dragon King, if one abstains from stealing, then one will attain the ten good blessings. What are the ten?

1. One's assets and wealth will increase and accumulate and cannot be dispersed or destroyed by officials, robbers, floods, fires and unfilial children;
2. One will be adored by many;
3. Others cannot bully one;
4. One is praised by all;
5. One will not be worried about being harmed;
6. One's good name spreads;
7. One is without fear among the public;
8. One is endowed with wealth, long life, strength, peace, happiness and has perfect eloquence;
9. One always thinks of giving;
10. At the end of one's life, one will be born in heaven;

These are the ten. If one can transfer the merit (of non-stealing) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one will attain to the realisation of pure great wisdom of Bodhi (awakening).

Again Dragon King, if one abstains from sexual misconduct, one will obtain the four blessings and be raised by the wise ones. What are the four?

1. All the roots (faculties) are in order and in good health;
2. One is free from quarrels, physical and mental uneasiness;
3. The world praises one;
4. Nobody can infringe one's wife.

These are the four. If one can transfer the merit (of no sexual misconduct) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one can attain the sign of a concealed organ like the Buddha.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from lying, one will obtain eight blessings that the gods praise. What are the eight?

1. One's mouth is always pure and has the fragrance of a green lotus flower;
2. One is trusted and obeyed by all the worlds;
3. What one says is true and is loved by humans and gods;
4. One always comforts beings with loving words;
5. One obtains supreme happiness, and one's three karma (body, speech and mind) are pure;
6. One's speech is flawless, and one's heart is always happy;
7. One's words are respected and are followed by men and devas;
8. One's wisdom is extraordinary and cannot be subdued.

These are the eight. If one can transfer the merit (of no lying) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one will attain the true words of the Tathagata.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from divisive speech, one will attain the five indestructible dharmas. What are the five?

1. One attains an indestructible body which cannot be harmed;
2. One gets an indestructible family which cannot be destroyed;
3. One attains an unbeatable reputation and successful career;
4. Others cannot destroy one's practice which is deep and firm;
5. One will have an indestructible good teacher and will not be deceived;

These are the five. If one can transfer the merit (of no divisive speech) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one will have the right retinue which cannot be destroyed by all the devils and externalists.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from harsh speech, one will accomplish the eight kinds of pure karma. What are the eight?

1. One's speech is meaningful and reasonable;
2. One's speech is beneficial;
3. One's speech is in accordance with the truth;
4. One's speech is beautiful and marvellous;
5. One's words are accepted (by others);
6. One's words are trusted;
7. One's words cannot be ridiculed;
8. All of one's speeches are loved and accepted by all.

These are the eight. If one can transfer the merit (of no harsh speech) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after he becomes a Buddha, he will possess the Brahma sound and appearance of the Tathagata.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from frivolous speech, one will accomplish the three certainties. What are the three?

1. One is sure to be loved by the wise;
  2. One can definitely answer questions with wisdom, in accordance with the truth;
  3. One is sure to have the mighty virtue among humans and gods without delusions.
- These are the three. If one can transfer the merit (of no frivolous speech) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after becoming a Buddha, one will receive all the predictions by the Tathagata, none of which will be in vain.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from greed, then one will accomplish the five kinds of freedom. What are the five?

1. The three karma (body, speech and mind) are at ease, and all the roots are perfect;
  2. Freedom of property as all the enemies and robbers cannot take away;
  3. Freedom about blessings, whatever one wishes one will be provided with;
  4. Freedom of being on the throne, precious, rare and marvellous things will all be offered;
  5. The things one obtains are a hundred times better than one expects because one was not selfish and jealous in the past.
- These are the five. If one can transfer the merit (of no greed) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one will be especially revered by the three realms (desire, form and formless realms) and will be honoured and offered by all.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from anger, then one will obtain eight kinds of joyful hearts. What are the eight?

1. The heart which is free from annoyance and worries;
2. The heart which is free from anger;
3. The heart which is free from disputes and arguments;
4. The heart which is gentle and upright;
5. One obtains the compassionate heart of the holy sages;
6. One constantly acts beneficially and gives peace of mind to sentient beings;
7. One's bodily appearance is dignified and revered by all;
8. Because one is kind and forbearing, one can be born soon in the Brahma world.

These are the eight. If one can transfer the merit (of no anger) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one will attain the heart of the Buddha which is free from obstacles. People will not become tired of looking at him.

Again, Dragon King, if one abstains from ignorance (wrong views), one will accomplish the ten meritorious dharmas. What are the ten?

1. One obtains genuine true happiness and will have genuinely good companions;
2. One has deep faith in the law of karma (cause and effect), and one would rather lose one's life than do evil;
3. One takes refuge in the Buddha only and not in gods and others;
4. One is of a straightforward heart and right views, forever away from all the doubts of the law of karma;
5. One will often be born in the humans and heavenly realms and will never fall into the evil paths;
6. Immeasurable blessings and wisdom will increase sublimely from turn to turn;

7. One will forever leave the evil paths and tread the holy path;
8. One will not give rise to the attachment to the body and abstains from all evil karma;
9. One will abide by unobstructed understanding ;
10. One will not fall into any trouble and evil paths.

These are the ten. If one can transfer the merit (of no ignorance) towards anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (supreme perfect enlightenment), after one becomes a Buddha, one will quickly realise all the Buddha-dharma, accomplishes and be at ease with all the spiritual powers.

At that time, the World Honored One further told the Dragon King:

If there is a Bodhisattva who acts in accordance with these good deeds while cultivating the way, because he abstains from killing and harming and practises giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. He will have a long lifespan and not die young, and any enemies and robbers will not harm him.

Because he abstains from taking what is not given and practices giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. He will be excelling beyond comparison (in this respect) and will be able to collect all the treasures of the Buddha-dharma.

Because he abstains from the impure way of living (sexual misconduct) and practices giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. His family will be virtuous and obedient. Nobody can look at his mother, wife, and daughter with a lustful mind.

Because he abstains from lying and practices giving, he will always be rich in wealth, incapable of encroachment.

Because he abstains from slandering and upholds the right Dharma, what he does will certainly bear fruit according to his vows.

Because he abstains from divisive speech and practices giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. The family members are in harmony, have the same aspirations and joy in common and never have disputes.

Because he abstains from coarse evil speech and practises giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. At all gatherings, people will joyfully receive, accept and take refuge in him, and no one will disobey or reject him.

Because he abstains from meaningless (frivolous) speech and practises giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. His words are not spoken in vain but are received with respect by everyone. He is skilful in resolving all the doubts and confusions (of others).

Because he abstains from the greedy mind and instead practises giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. All that he has, he gives with wisdom. His faith and understanding (in the Buddha-dharma) is firm, and he is endowed with great power and strength.

Because he abstains from the angry mind and practices giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. He quickly accomplishes the wisdom of the unobstructed heart (mind). All his roots (faculties) are dignified and well, and all those who see respect and love him.

Because he abstains from the ignorant mind and practices giving, he is always wealthy, incapable of encroachment. He is always born into a family with the right views, reverence and faith (in the Buddha-dharma). He can see the Buddha, hear the Dharma and offer to the Sangha. He never forgets or loses his great bodhicitta. When the great being (Bodhisattva) cultivates the Bodhisattva path, he practised the ten good deeds and adorned them with giving, thus he obtained such great benefits.

Dragon King, here I summarise the key points. Because one practises the ten good deeds, and adorns (the practice) with morality, this can give rise to the benefits of all the Buddha-dharma and accomplishing great vows. Because one adorns (the practice) with forbearance, one will obtain the perfect sound of the Buddha and possess all the perfect signs of appearance. Because one adorns (the practice) with diligence, one can destroy all the evils, entering the treasure of the Buddha-dharma. Because one adorns (the practice) with meditation, therefore can give rise to mindfulness, wisdom, shame, peace and calm. Because one adorns (the practice) with wisdom, one can cut off all the separation and delusional views.

Because one adorns (the practice) with loving kindness, one will not harm or cause trouble to any sentient beings. Because one adorns (the practice) with compassion, one will sympathise with all beings and never give up on them. Because one adorns (the practice) with sympathetic joy, one is free from envy when seeing others cultivate good. Because one adorns (the practice) with equanimity when encountering favourable and unfavourable circumstances, one does not have a heart of attachment or resentment.

Because one adorns (the practice) with the four ways of helping people, one will always be diligent in helping and teaching all beings.

Because one adorns (the practice) with the foundations of mindfulness, one is skilful in practising the contemplation of the four foundations of mindfulness.

Because one adorns (the practice) with the right efforts, one can eliminate all unwholesome dharmas and accomplish all wholesome dharmas. Because one adorns (the practice) with spiritual powers, one's body and mind will always be calm and at ease. Because one adorns (the practice) with the five roots, deep confidence is firmly established, diligent and relentless, always free from confusions and delusions, calm and harmonious, and cut off all afflictions. Because one adorns (the practice) with the (five) powers, all enmity will be entirely eliminated, and one cannot be harmed. Because one adorns (the practice) with the (seven) factors of awakening, one is always skilful in awakening to all dharmas. Because one adorns (the practice) with the Noble (Eightfold) Path, one will attain the perfect wisdom which will always be present before oneself.

Because one adorns (the practice) with samatha, one can wash away all afflictions. Because one adorns (this practice) with insight (vipassana), one can know the self-

nature of all dharmas according to the suchness of reality. Because one adorns (the practice) with skilful means, one can quickly accomplish and fulfil the happiness of conditioned and unconditioned dharmas.

Dragon King, you should know that these ten good deeds can even lead to the completion of the ten powers (of the Tathagata), (four) fearlessness, eighteen unshared qualities of a Buddha, and can perfect and complete all the Buddha-dharma. Therefore, you should learn and practise with diligence.

Dragon King, just like all the cities, towns and villages, rely on the earth to live. All the herbs, flowers, trees, and woods also depend on the earth to grow. The same is true for the ten virtues. All (the nature of) humans and heavenly beings are dependent on them. All the Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, all the practices of the Bodhisattvas, and all the Buddha-dharma all rely on the ten good deeds of grounds to achieve success. After the Buddha had spoken this discourse, the Dragon King Sāgara of the Ocean, together with the great assembly, all the worlds of gods, humans, asuras and so on, all rejoiced greatly, received it with confidence and put it reverently into practice.