

Chapter 5: Vigilance

- 1 Those who wish to keep a rule of life Must guard their minds in perfect self-possession.
Without this guard upon the mind, No discipline can ever be maintained.
- 2 Wandering where it will, the elephant of mind, Will bring us down to pains of deepest hell.
No worldly beast, however wild, Could bring upon us such calamities.
- 3 If, with mindfulness' rope The elephant of the mind is tethered all around,
Our fears will come to nothing, Every virtue drop into our hands.
- 4 Tigers, lions, elephants, and bears, Snakes and every hostile beast,
Those who guard the prisoners in hell, All ghosts and ghouls and every evil phantom,
- 5 By simple binding of this mind alone, All these things are likewise bound.
By simple taming of this mind alone, All these things are likewise tamed.
- 6 For all anxiety and fear, All sufferings in boundless measure,
Their source and wellspring is the mind itself, Thus the Truthful One has said.
- 7 The hellish whips to torture living beings – Who has made them and to what intent?
Who has forged this burning iron ground; Whence have all these demon women sprung?⁴⁷
- 8 All are but the offspring of the sinful mind, Thus the Mighty One has said.
Thus throughout the triple world⁴⁸ There is no greater bane than mind itself.
- 9 If transcendent giving is To dissipate the poverty of beings,
In what way, since the poor are always with us, Have former Buddhas practiced perfect generosity?
- 10 The true intention to bestow on every being All possessions – and the fruits of such a gift:
By such, the teachings say, is generosity perfected. And this, as we may see, is but the mind itself.
- 11 Where indeed, could beings, fishes, and the rest Be placed, to shield them totally from suffering?
Deciding to refrain from harming them Is said to be the perfection of morality.
- 12 The hostile multitudes are vast as space – What chance is there that all should be subdued
Let but this angry mind be overthrown And every foe is then and there destroyed.
- 13 To cover all the earth with sheets of hide – Where could such amounts of skin be found?
But simply wrap some leather round your feet, And it's as if the whole earth has been covered!

- 14 Likewise, we can never take And turn aside the outer course of things.
But only seize and discipline the mind itself, And what is there remaining to be curbed?
- 15 A clear intent can fructify And bring us birth in lofty Brahmā's realm.
The acts of body and of speech are less – They do not generate a like result.
- 16 Recitations and austerities, Long though they may prove to be,
If practiced with distracted mind, Are futile, so the Knower of the Truth has said.
- 17 All who fail to know and penetrate This secret of the mind, the Dharma's peak,
Although they wish for joy and sorrow's end, Will wander uselessly in misery.
- 18 This is so, and therefore I will seize This mind of mine and guard it well.
What use to me so many harsh austerities? But let me only discipline and guard my mind.
- 19 When in wild, unruly crowds We move with care to shield our broken limbs,
Likewise when we live in evil company, Our wounded minds we should not fail to guard.
- 20 For if I carefully protect my wounds Because I fear the hurt of cuts and bruises,
Why should I not guard my wounded mind, For fear of being crushed beneath the cliffs of
hell?⁴⁹
- 21 If this is how I act and live, Then even in the midst of evil folk,
Or even with fair women, all is well. My diligent observance of the vows will not decline.
- 22 Let my property and honor all grow less, And likewise all my health and livelihood,
And even other virtues – all can go! But never will I disregard my mind.
- 23 All you who would protect your minds, Maintain awareness and your mental vigilance.
Guard them both, at cost of life and limb – Thus I join my hands, beseeching you.
- 24 Those disabled by ill health Are helpless, powerless to act.
The mind, when likewise cramped by ignorance, Is impotent and cannot do its work.
- 25 And those who have no mental vigilance, Though they may hear the teachings, ponder them
or meditate,
With minds like water seeping from a leaking jug, Their learning will not settle in their
memories.
- 26 Many have devotion, perseverance, Are learned also and endowed with faith,
But through the fault of lacking mental vigilance, Will not escape the stain of sin and
downfall.
- 27 Lack of vigilance is like a thief Who slinks behind when mindfulness abates.
And all the merit we have gathered in He steals, and down we go to lower realms.

- 28 Defilements are a band of robbers Waiting for their chance to bring us injury.
They steal our virtue, when their moment comes, And batter out the life of happy destinies.
- 29 Therefore, from the gateway of awareness Mindfulness shall not have leave to stray.
And if it wanders, it shall be recalled, By thoughts of anguish in the lower worlds.
- 30 In those endowed with fortune and devotion, Mindfulness is cultivated easily –
Through fear, and by the counsels of their abbots, And staying ever in their teacher's
company.
- 31 The buddhas and bodhisattva both Possess unclouded vision, seeing everything:
Everything lies open to their gaze, And likewise I am always in their presence.
- 32 One who has such thoughts as these Will gain devotion and a sense of fear and shame.
For such a one, the memory of Buddha Rises frequently before the mind.
- 33 When mindfulness is stationed as a sentinel, A guard upon the threshold of the mind,
Mental scrutiny is likewise present, Returning when forgotten or dispersed.
- 34 If at the outset, when I check my mind I find within some fault or insufficiency,
I'll stay unmoving, like a log, In self possession and determination.
- 35 I shall never, vacantly, Allow my gaze to wander all about,
But rather, with a focused mind Will always go with eyes cast down.
- 36 But that I might relax my gaze, I'll sometimes raise my eyes and look around.
And if some person stands within my sight, I'll greet him with a friendly word of welcome.
- 37 And yet, to spy the dangers on the road, I'll scrutinize the four directions one by one.
And when I stop to rest, I'll turn my head And look behind me, back along my path.
- 38 And so, I'll spy the land, in front, behind, To see if I should go or else return.
And thus in every situation, I shall know my needs and act accordingly.
- 39 Deciding on a given course, Determining the actions of my body,
From time to time I'll verify My body's actions, by repeated scrutiny.
- 40 This mind of mine, a wild and rampant elephant, I'll tether to that sturdy post: reflection on
the Teaching.
And I shall narrowly stand guard That it might never slip its bonds and flee.
- 41 Those who strive to master concentration Should never for an instant be distracted.
They should constantly investigate themselves, Examining the movements of their minds.

- 42 In fearful situations, times of celebration, One may desist, when self-survey becomes impossible.
For it is taught that in the time of generosity, The rules of discipline may be suspended.
- 43 When something has been planned and started on, Attention should not drift to other things.
With thought fixed on the chosen target, That and that alone should be pursued.
- 44 Behaving in this way, all tasks are well performed, And nothing is achieved by doing otherwise.
Afflictions, the reverse of vigilance, Can never multiply if this is how you act.
- 45 And if by chance you must take part In lengthy conversations worthlessly,
Or if you come upon sensational events, Then cast aside delight and taste for them.
- 46 If you find you're grubbing in the soil, Or pulling up the grass or tracing the idle patterns on the ground,
Remembering the teachings of the Blissful One, In fear, restrain yourself at once.
- 47 When you feel the wish to walk about, Or even to express yourself in speech,
First examine what is in your mind. For they will act correctly who have stable minds.
- 48 When the urge arises in the mind To feelings of desire or wrathful hate, Do not act!
Be silent, do not speak! And like a log of wood be sure to stay.
- 49 When the mind is wild with mockery And filled with pride and haughty arrogance,
And when you want to show the hidden faults of others, To bring up old dissensions or to act deceitfully.
- 50 And when you want to fish for praise, Or criticize and spoil another's name,
Or use harsh language, sparring for a fight, It's then that like a log you should remain.
- 51 And when you yearn for wealth, attention, fame, A circle of admirers serving you,
And when you look for honors, recognition – It's then that like a log you should remain
- 52 And when you want to do another down And cultivate advantage for yourself,
And when the wish to gossip comes to you, It's then that like a log you should remain
- 53 Impatience, indolence faint heartedness, And likewise haughty speech and insolence,
Attachment to your side – when these arise, It's then that like a log you should remain.
- 54 Examine thus yourself from every side. Note harmful thoughts and every futile striving.
Thus it is that heroes in the bodhisattva path Apply the remedies to keep a steady mind.
- 55 With perfect and unyielding faith, With steadfastness, respect, and courtesy,
With modesty and conscientiousness, Work calmly for the happiness of others.

- 56 Let us not be downcast by the warring wants Of childish persons quarreling.
Their thoughts are bred from conflict and emotion. Let us understand and treat them lovingly.
- 57 When doing virtuous acts, beyond reproach, To help ourselves, or for the sake of others,
Let us always bear in mind the thought That we are self-less, like an apparition.
- 58 This supreme treasure of a human life, So long awaited, now at last attained!
Reflecting always thus, maintain your mind As steady as Sumeru, king of mountains.
- 59 When vultures with their love of flesh Are tugging at this body all around,
Small will be the joy you get from it, O mind! Why *are* you so besotted with it now?
- 60 Why, O mind, do you protect this body, Claiming it as though it were yourself?
You and it are each a separate entity, How ever can it be of use to you?
- 61 Why not cling, O foolish mind, to something clean, A figure carved in wood, or some such thing?
Why do you protect and guard An unclean engine for the making of impurity?
- 62 First, with mind's imagination, Shed the covering skin,
And with the blade of wisdom, strip The flesh from off the bony frame.
- 63 And when you have divided all the bones, And searched right down amid the very marrow,
You should look and ask the question: Where is the "thingness" to be found?
- 64 If, persisting in the search, You find no underlying object,
Why still cherish – and with such desire – The fleshly form you now possess?
- 65 Its filth you cannot eat, O mind; Its blood likewise is not for you to drink;
Its innards too unsuitable to suck – This body, what then will you make of it?
- 66 As second best, it may indeed be kept As food to feed the vulture and the fox.
The value of this human form Lies only in the way that it is used.
- 67 Whatever you may do to guard and keep it, What will you do when
The Lord of Death, the ruthless, unrelenting, Steals and throws it to the birds and dogs?
- 68 Slaves unsuitable for work Are not rewarded with supplies and clothing.
This body, though you pamper it, will leave you – Why exhaust yourself with such great labor?
- 69 So pay this body due remuneration, But then be sure to make it work for you.
But do not lavish everything On what will not bring perfect benefit.

- 70 Regard your body as a vessel, A simple boat for going here and there.
Make of it a wish-fulfilling gem To bring about the benefit of beings.
- 71 Thus with free, untrammled mind, Put on an ever-smiling countenance.
Rid yourself of scowling, wrathful frowns, And be a true and honest friend to all.
- 72 Do not, acting inconsiderately, Move furniture and chairs so noisily around.
Likewise do not open doors with violence. Take pleasure in the practice of humility.
- 73 Herons, cats, and burglars Go silently and carefully;
This is how they gain what they intend. And one who practices this path behaves likewise.
- 74 When useful admonitions come unasked To those with skill in counseling their fellows,
Let them welcome them with humble gratitude, And always strive to learn from everyone.
- 75 Praise all who speak the truth, And say, “Your words are excellent.”
And when you notice others acting well, Encourage them in terms of warm approval.
- 76 Extol them even in their absence; When they’re praised by others, do the same.
But when the qualities they praise are yours, Appreciate their skill in knowing qualities.
- 77 The goal of every act is happiness itself, Though, even with great wealth, it's rarely found.
So take your pleasure in the qualities of others. Let them be a heartfelt joy to you.
- 78 By acting thus, in this life you’ll lose nothing; In future lives, great bliss will come to you.
The sin of envy brings not joy but pain, And in the future, dreadful suffering.
- 79 Speak with honest words, coherently, With candor, in a clear, harmonious voice.
Abandon partiality, rejection, and attraction, And speak with moderation, gently.
- 80 And catching sight of others, think That it will be through them
That you will come to buddhahood. So look on them with open, loving hearts.
- 81 Always fired by the highest aspiration, Laboring to implement the antidotes,⁵⁰
You will gather virtues in the fields Of qualities, of benefits, of sorrow.⁵¹
- 82 Acting thus with faith and understanding, You will always undertake good works.
And in whatever actions you perform, You’ll not be calculating, with your eye on others.
- 83 The six perfections,⁵² giving and the rest, Progress in sequence, growing in importance. The
great should never be supplanted by the less, And it is others’ good that is the highest goal.
- 84 Therefore, understand this well And always labor for the benefit of beings.
The far-seeing masters of compassion Permit, to this end, that which is proscribed.⁵³

- 85 Eat only what is needful; Share with those who have embraced the discipline.
To those, defenseless, fallen into evil states, Give all except the three robes of religion.
- 86 The body, apt to practice sacred teaching, Should not be harmed in trivial pursuits.
If this advice is kept, the wishes of all beings Will swiftly and completely be attained.
- 87 They should not give up their bodies Whose compassion is not pure and perfect.
But let them, in this world and those to come, Subject their bodies to the service of the supreme goal.
- 88 Do not teach to those without respect, To those who like the sick wear cloths around their heads,
To those who proudly carry weapons, staffs, or parasols, And those who keep their hats upon their heads.
- 89 Do not teach the vast and deep⁵⁴ to those Upon the lower paths, nor, as a monk,
To women unescorted. Teach with equal honor Low and high⁵⁵ according to their path.
- 90 Those suited to the teachings vast and deep, Should not be introduced to lesser paths.
But basic practice you should not forsake, Confused by talk of sūtras and mantras.⁵⁶
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- 91 Your spittle and your toothbrushes, When thrown away, should be concealed.
And it is wrong to foul with urine Public thoroughfares and water springs.
- 92 When eating do not gobble noisily, Nor stuff and cram your gaping mouth.
And do not sit with legs outstretched, Nor rudely rub your hands together.
- 93 Do not sit upon a horse, on beds or seats With women of another house, alone.⁵⁷
All that you have seen, or have been told, To be offensive – this you should avoid.
- 94 Not rudely pointing with your finger, But rather with a reverent gesture showing,
With the whole right hand outstretched – This is how to indicate the road.
- 95 Do not wave your arms with uncouth gestures. With gentle sounds and finger snaps⁵⁸
Express yourself with modesty – For acting otherwise is impolite excess.
- 96 Lie down to sleep with posture and direction Of the Buddha when he passed into nirvāṇa.
And first, with clear resolve, Decide that you'll be swift to rise again.
- 97 The bodhisattva's acts Are boundless, as the teachings say,
And all these practices that cleanse the mind Embrace – until success has been attained.
- 98 Reciting thrice, by day, by night, *The Sutra in Three Sections*,⁵⁹
Relying on the buddhas and the bodhisattvas, Purify the rest of your transgressions.

- 99 And therefore in whatever time or place, For your own good and for the good of others,
Be diligent to implement The teachings given for that situation.
- 100 There is indeed no virtue That the buddhas' offspring should not learn.
To one with mastery therein, There is no action destitute of merit.
- 101 Directly, then, or indirectly, All you do must be for others' sake.
And solely for their welfare dedicate Your actions for the gaining of enlightenment.
- 102 Never at the cost of life or limb, Forsake your virtuous friend, your teacher,
Learned in the meaning of the Mahāyāna,⁶⁰ Supreme in practice of the bodhisattva path.
- 103 For thus you must depend upon your guru, As you will find described in Shrī Sambhava's
life,⁶¹
And elsewhere in the teachings of the Buddha: These be sure to study, reading in the sūtras.
- 104 The training you will find described Within the sūtras. Therefore read and study them.
*The Sūtra of the Essence of the Sky*⁶² – This is the text that should be studied first.
- 105 The *Digest of All Disciplines* Contains a detailed and extensive explanation
Of all that must be practiced come what may. So this is something you should read
repeatedly.
- 106 From time to time, for the sake of brevity Consult the *Digest of the Sūtras*.⁶³
And those two works peruse with diligence That noble Nāgārjuna has composed.
- 107 Whatever in these works is not proscribed Be sure to undertake and implement.
And what you see there, perfectly fulfill, And so safeguard the minds of worldly beings.
- 108 To keep a guard again and yet again Upon the state and actions of our thoughts and deeds –
This and only this defines The nature and the sense of mental watchfulness.
- 109 But all this must be acted out in truth For what is to be gained by mouthing syllables?
What invalid was ever helped By merely reading the doctor's treatises?

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