

Chapter 14 of the Lotus Sutra

Answer;

So, indeed this chapter has its variations amongst translations. Reviewing my copy of H. Kern's translation from the late 1800's I read terms and prohibitions true to the time and era of various "types" or behaviors of people inside and outside the Buddhist practice. I also reviewed the translations of the "Threefold Lotus Sutra" of Kosei Publishing, and the most recent translation by Gene Reeves. I do not currently have a Burton Watson translation.

Several points ring true throughout these translations.

- 1- If a person is coursing the world of Samsara as a Bodhisattva, it is imperative to behave as a constant example of the goal of Buddhist practice (specifically the Dharma of the Law Flower Teachings).
- 2- Sex, male or female, enticements in that direction, etc. are destroyers of a clear Buddha mind, and must be avoided strenuously. However, it is interesting that even this strict prohibition, just as the many others, is followed immediately with a caveat that those same people, should they seek enlightenment, be given the Dharma teaching albeit with a stricture of the Bodhisattvas mind and behaviors. The Dharma is always preeminent.
- 3- This is also true of prohibitions on Boxing et al. This prohibition is more broadly due to the violence and the tendencies toward violence. Not dissimilar to the stricture of associations with political figures, these are all associated with the world or realm of anger. Anger in Buddhism is a state of mind that is devious, sometimes underhanded and manipulative, seeking superiority or pretense. These qualities are offensive and easily influence negative thoughts and actions. One dealing with such persons should be hyper aware of their own mind state, which is why, in his exception, Shakyamuni states that if a Bodhisattva must interact with people of this type, he or she must course in the Buddha mind constantly with guard against influence, just as with sexual influences or killing, violence, etc...
- 4- For more on this mental guarding of the states of mind, a re-reading of the "Noble Eightfold Path" could prove useful. This teaching is not unique to the Lotus.
- 5- Finally, the use of the word "Evil" is often very off-putting to me as it suggests religious rhetoric against forces outside one's ability to control. This is absolute bias of translators with religious backgrounds. Any reference to "Evil" in Buddhist scholarship must be corrected to represent negative influence. Negative because it is a distraction from or an enticement away from our

Buddha mind and the pursuit thereof. That “evil” is from within as it requires our acceptance.

As to your specific focus on Boxing and Wrestling, I think it can be easily reasoned that both the aspects of violence and sensuality can be inferred. Especially considering the ancient practice of wrestling in hot, humid climates, naked or with a small genital wrap, sweaty bodies rubbing and tossing about, yes, quite carnal. I am sure you can understand the prohibition for a person wishing to live as representative and coursing in the Dharma.

NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo

Love and respect,

Sifu Sylvain

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Books available at

www.LULU.com/spotlight/kwoon

QUESTION:

Good morning Sifu Sylvain,

I hope this email finds you well.

Thank you again for your previous response, it clarified many things for me and I truly appreciated it.

I was wondering if I could please ask you another question. In some of the translations of the Lotus Sutra, specifically the Peaceful Practices chapter, there is a section where Shakyamuni is said to have stated the following:

"They should abide by the practices and associations proper for bodhisattvas: perseverant, gentle and compliant, never violent, and never afraid or alarmed, and without acting or making any distinction, that is, neither act nor discern (!).

"Further, they should not associate closely with rulers, princes, high ministers or heads of offices, or with those who compose works of secular literature, critics of poetry, or with writers of books extolling the heretics, and not with hazardous amusement, boxing or wrestling, clowns, and various jugglers or with actors or others engaging in various kinds of illusionary entertainment, or with persons engaged in raising pigs, sheep, chickens or dogs, or those who engage in hunting or fishing or those with evil conduct."

I'm wondering if you could please explain the relevance of this passage. Is there a contextual reason for it, or is there a translation bias I am not aware of? I am particularly interested in knowing why it is apparently stated that one should not associate with boxing or wrestling? I found this strangely peculiar, perhaps these sports had a different meaning/purpose in that setting?

Thank you again very much!