



The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva

By Ngulchu Gyalsas Thogmed Zangpo



Homage to Avalokiteshvara







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Namo Arya Lokeshvara I always respectfully prostrate through my three doors to the Supreme Guru and protector Lokeshvara, who although seeing all phenomena as a devoid of going and coming, Endeavours one-pointedly to benefit sentient beings.





First Practice

The possession of this human base, this precious vessel so difficult to obtain, in order to liberate others and ourselves from the ocean of samsara, allows us to hear, reflect, and meditate day and night without distraction. This is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Second Practice



Toward our friends and those we love run the waters of attachment, toward our enemies burns the fire of aversion; in the obscurity of ignorance, we lose sight of what should be abandoned and what should be practiced. Therefore renunciation of one's country and home is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Third Practice

When we abandon our harmful surroundings, our illusions diminish, and because we have no distractions our practice of virtue develops spontaneously, leaving us with a clear mind. Our trust in the Dharma grows. To live in solitude is a practice of a Bodhisattva.

Fourth Practice

One day old and dear friends will separate, goods and riches obtained by great effort will be left behind. Consciousness, a guest of the body, this temporary dwelling, will depart. From this moment on, to renounce all attachment to this life is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Fifth Practice

If we have harmful companions, the three poisons are increased, our reflections and meditation becomes degraded; love and compassion are destroyed. To abandon dangerous company is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Sixth Practice



To rely on a spiritual friend who has eliminated all illusions, whose competence in the teachings and practice is complete, and whose qualities increase like the crescent moon; to cherish this perfect guru more than one's own body is a practice of a Bodhisattva.

Seventh Practice

How could the gods of this world possibly liberate us, being themselves tied to the prison of samsara? Instead let us take refuge in that on which we can rely. To take refuge in the Three Jewels is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Eighth Practice

The intolerable suffering of the lower realms is said by the Buddha to be the fruit of Karma; therefore, to never commit unwise deeds is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Ninth Practice

The happiness of the three worlds is like the dew on the tip of a blade of grass, disappearing in an instant. To aspire to supreme, immutable liberation is a practice of the Bodhisattvas.

Tenth Practice



Since beginningless time, our mothers took care of us with tenderness. What use is our happiness when they still suffer? To generate Bodhicitta in order to liberate infinite beings is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Eleventh Practice

All suffering, without exception, comes from the desire for happiness for oneself, while perfect Buddhahood is born from the desire to make others happy. This is why completely exchanging one's happiness for that of others is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Twelfth Practice

If, in the grip of violent desire or cruel necessity, an unfortunate person steals our possessions or incites someone else to steal them, to be full of compassion, to dedicate to this person our body, possessions, and past, present, and future merit, is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Thirteenth Practice

Even if we are beaten or tortured, we must not allow any aversion to arise within us. To have great compassion for those poor beings who out of ignorance mistreat us is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Fourteenth Practice



If, without reason, certain people slander us to the point where the entire world is filled with their malicious gossip, to lovingly praise their virtues is a practice of a Bodhisattva.

Fifteenth Practice

If in the company of several people, one among them reveals a fault that we would have liked hidden, to not become irritated with the one who treats us in this manner but to consider him as a supreme guru is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Sixteenth Practice

If someone who we have helped and protected as our own child shows only ingratitude and dislike in return, to have toward this person the tender pity a mother has for her sick child is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Seventeenth Practice

If someone who is your equal or someone who is obviously your inferior despises you or out of arrogance attempts to debase you, to respect him as your master is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Eighteenth Practice



When we are abandoned, overcome with sickness and worry, to not become discouraged but to think of taking on all the wrongful actions committed by others and suffering their consequences is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Nineteenth Practice

When we enjoy good reputation, the respect of everyone, and the wealth of Vaishravana, to see that the fruits of karma are without substance and not to take pride in this observation is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Twentieth Practice

Unless the aggression of our inner adversaries ceases, the more we fight them the more they multiply. Similarly, until we have mastered our own mind, negative forces will invade us. To discipline the mind through love and compassion is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Twenty-first Practice



The nature of sense pleasures is like that of saltwater: the more we drink, the more our thirst increase. To abandon the objects toward which desire arises is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Twenty-second Practice

All that appears comes from an illusion of the mind and the mind itself is from beginningless time without inherent existence, free from the two extremes of manifestation (externalism and nihilism) and beyond all elaboration. To understand this nature (Tathata) and to not conceive of subjects and objects as really existing is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Twenty-third Practice

When we encounter an attractive object or something that pleases our mind, we see it as beautiful and real, but actually it is as empty as a summer rainbow. To abandon attachment toward it is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Twenty-fourth Practice

Various sufferings are like that experienced from the death of an only child in a dream. To take as truth that which is only a false appearance is to uselessly exhaust the body and mind. When we meet with unfavorable circumstances, to approach them thinking they are only illusion is a practice of the Bodhisattva.



Twenty-fifth Practice

If he who desires awakening must sacrifice his own body, his precious human life, what need is there to mention external objects to abandon? This is why practicing generosity without hoping for a reward or a “karmic fruit” is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Twenty-sixth Practice

If, lacking ethical discipline, we cannot realize our own intentions, to want to fulfil the vows of other beings is simply a joke. To keep rules and vows, not for a temporal and samsaric goal but in order to help all sentient beings, is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Twenty-seventh Practice



For a son (or a daughter) of a Buddha who desires the rewards of virtuous merit, all adverse circumstances are a precious treasure for they require the practice of Kshanti (Patience). To be perfectly patient, without irritation or resentment toward anyone, is a practice of the Bodhisattva.



Twenty-eighth Practice

Even the pratyekabuddhas and the shravakas who are concerned only with their own liberation make great efforts to obtain virya (energy). To perfectly practice energy, the source of all qualities for the benefit of all beings, is a practice of the Bodhisattvas.

Twenty-ninth Practice



In understanding that vipashyana (insight) in union with shamatha (calmabiding) completely destroys kleshas (desires, obstacles), to meditate on the dhyanas which are beyond the four realms is a practice of the Bodhisattvas.

Thirtieth Practice

Without prajna, the five preceding virtues cannot be called “paramita” (excellent, perfect) and are incapable of leading us to Buddhahood. To have the right view which perceives that the one who acts, the act, and the one for whom we act completely lack inherent existence is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Thirty-first Practice

To analyze our actions and feelings allows desire to arise. To examine our errors and faults in order to separate ourselves from them completely is a practice of the Bodhisattva.





Thirty-second Practice

To never criticize others or speak of the errors that those who are on the path of the Mahayana may have committed is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Thirty-third Practice



In order to receive offerings and be surrounded by respect, we fight among ourselves in the spirit of competition to the detriment of our attention toward study; our meditation slackens. To abandon all attachment to the gifts of those who care for us is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Thirty-fourth Practice

Harsh speech disturbs the mind of others, and our practice feels the effects of this. To abandon all coarse and vulgar language, all harsh speech, and all idle chatter is a practice of the Bodhisattva.

Thirty-fifth Practice

As we are accustomed to acting under the rule of our passions, destroying them demands great effort. Mindfulness of these (opposing force) is the weapon that allows us to repel them immediately. In short: whatever we do, in whatever circumstance or conditions, to always be attentive to the situation that present itself and to the reaction that it awakens in our mind; with this motivation of amending our behavior for the well-being of all sentient beings, is a practice of the Bodhisattva.









Thirty-sixth Practice

In brief, wherever one is and whatever one's behaviour. One should always possess mindfulness and introspection To examine the condition of one's mind. To achieve benefit for others is the practice of the Bodhisattva.

Thirty-seventh Practice

To dedicate the merit that results from our efforts to obtain Buddhahood, toward illumination through the wisdom of the view of emptiness of the three realms of action and in order to overcome the suffering of infinite beings, is a practice of the Bodhisattva.







Basing myself in the teaching of the Sutra, the Tantra, and the Shastra, I have grouped these Thirty-seven Practices of the Bodhisattva for usage and for the benefit of those who would like to follow their path.

Because of my limited understanding and inadequate knowledge, this composition lacks the poetry and the elegance of the language that the scholars revived, but as these teachings depend strictly on the Sutra of the Supreme, I think that they reveal the practices of the Bodhisattva free from errors.

However, the immense course of action of the Bodhisattvas is difficult for someone of my level of ignorance to understand and realize; I ask also of the Supreme Ones to practice patience toward me and to pardon my impression and whatever contradictions and inconsistencies may have crept into this text.

By the merit that I have obtained through this effort, as well as through the power of the two Bodhicittas, the relative and the ultimate, may all sentient beings, without remaining within the limites of samsara and nirvana, become like Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.





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