

THE THIRTY-SEVEN PRACTICES
of
BODHISATTVAS
by
Ngülchu Thogme Zangpo

Homage to Lokeshwara

I pay constant homage through my three doors, to my supreme teacher and protector Chenrezig, who while seeing all phenomena lack coming and going, makes single-minded effort for the good of living beings.

Perfect Buddhas, source of all well-being and happiness, arise from accomplishing the excellent teachings, and this depends on knowing the practices. So I will explain the practice of Bodhisattvas.

1 Having gained this rare ship of freedom and fortune, hear, think, and meditate unwaveringly night and day in order to free yourself and others from the ocean of cyclic existence—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

2 Attached to your loved ones you're stirred up like water. Hating your enemies you burn like fire. In the darkness of confusion you forget what to adopt and discard. Give up your homeland—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

3 By avoiding bad objects, disturbing emotions gradually decrease. Without distraction, virtuous activities naturally increase. With clarity of mind, conviction in the teaching arise. Cultivate seclusion—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

4 Loved ones who have long kept company will part. Wealth created with difficulty will be left behind. Consciousness, the guest, will leave the guest-house of the body. Let go of this life—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

5 When you keep their company your three poisons increase, your activities of hearing, thinking and meditating decline, and they make you lose your love and compassion. Give up bad friends – this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

6 When you rely on them your faults come to an end and your good qualities grow like the waxing moon. Cherish spiritual teachers even more than your own body—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

7 Bound himself in the jail of cyclic existence, what worldly god can give you protection? Therefore when you seek refuge, take refuge in The Three Jewels which will not betray you—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

8 The Subduer said all unbearable suffering of bad rebirths is the fruit of wrong-doing. Therefore, even at the cost of your life, never do wrong—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

9 Like the dew on a tip of a blade of grass, pleasures of the three worlds last only a while and then vanish. Aspire to the never-changing supreme state of liberation—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas

10 When your mothers, who've loved you since time without beginning, are suffering, what use is your own happiness? Therefore to free limitless living beings develop the altruistic intention — this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

11 All suffering comes from the wish for your own happiness. Perfect Buddhas are born from the thought to help others. Therefore exchange your own happiness For the suffering of others—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

12 Even if someone out of strong desire steals all your wealth or has it stolen, dedicate to him your body, possessions and your virtue, past, present and future - this is the practice of Bodhisattvas

13 Even if someone tries to cut off your head when you haven't done the slightest thing wrong, out of compassion take all his misdeeds upon yourself—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

14 Even if someone broadcasts all kinds of unpleasant remarks about you throughout the three thousand worlds, in return, with a loving mind, speak of his good qualities—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

15 Though someone may deride and speak bad words about you in a public gathering, looking on him as a spiritual teacher, bow to him with respect—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

16 Even if a person for whom you've cared like your own child regards you as an enemy, cherish him specially, like a mother does her child who is stricken with sickness - this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

17 If an equal or inferior person disparages you out of pride, place him as you would your spiritual teacher, with respect on the crown of your head—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

18 Though you lack what you need and are constantly disparaged, afflicted by dangerous sickness and spirits, without discouragement take on the misdeeds and the pain of all living beings—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

19 Though you become famous and many bow to you, and you gain riches equal to Vaishravana's, see that worldly fortune is without essence, and be unconceited—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

20 While the enemy of your own anger is not subdued, though you conquer external foes, they will only increase. Therefore with the militia of love and compassion subdue your own mind—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

21 Sensual pleasures are like saltwater: the more you indulge, the more thirst increases. Abandon at once those things which breed clinging attachment—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

22 Whatever appears is your own mind. Your mind from the start was free from fabricated extremes. Understanding this, do not take to mind [inherent] signs of subject and object—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

23 When you encounter attractive objects, though they seem beautiful like a rainbow in summer, don't regard them as real and give up attachment - this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

24 All forms of suffering are like a child's death in a dream. Holding illusory appearances to be true makes you weary. Therefore when you meet with disagreeable circumstances, see them as illusory - this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

25 When those who want enlightenment must give even their body, there's no need to mention external things. Therefore without hope for return or any fruition give generously—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

26 Without ethics you can't accomplish your own well-being, so wanting to accomplish others' is laughable. Therefore without worldly aspirations safeguard your ethical discipline—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

27 To Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue those who harm are like a precious treasure. Therefore towards all cultivate patience without hostility—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas

28 Seeing even Hearers and Solitary Realizers, who accomplish only their own good, strive to put out a fire on their head for the sake of all beings make enthusiastic effort, the source of all good qualities—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

29 Understanding that disturbing emotions are destroyed by special insight with calm abiding, cultivate concentration which surpasses the four formless absorptions—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

30 Since the five perfections without wisdom cannot bring perfect enlightenment, along with skillful means cultivate the wisdom which does not conceive the three spheres [as real]—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

31 If you don't examine your own errors, you may look like a practitioner but not act as one. Therefore, always examining your own errors, rid yourself of them—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

32 If through the influence of disturbing emotions you point out the faults of another Bodhisattva, you yourself are diminished, so don't mention the faults of those who have entered the Great Vehicle—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

33 Reward and respect cause us to quarrel and make hearing, thinking and meditation decline. For this reason give up attachment to the households of friends, relations and benefactors—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

34 Harsh words disturb the minds of others and cause deterioration is a Bodhisattva's conduct. Therefore give up harsh words which are unpleasant to others - this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

35 Habitual disturbing emotions are hard to stop through counteractions. Armed with antidotes, the guards of mindfulness and mental alertness destroy

disturbing emotions like attachment at once, as soon as they arise—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

36 In brief, whatever you are doing, ask yourself “What’s the state of my mind?” With constant mindfulness and mental alertness accomplish others’ good—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

37 To remove the suffering of limitless beings, understanding the purity of the three spheres, dedicate the virtue from making such effort to enlightenment - this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

For all who want to train on the Bodhisattva path, I have written *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, following what has been said by the excellent ones on the meaning of the sutras, tantras, and treatises.

Though not poetically pleasing to scholars owing to my poor intelligence and lack of learning, I’ve relied on the sutras and the words of the excellent, so I think these Bodhisattva practices are without error.

However, as the great deeds of Bodhisattvas are hard to fathom for one of my poor intelligence, I beg the excellent to forgive faults, such as contradictions and non-sequiturs.

Through the virtue from this, all living beings gain the ultimate and conventional altruistic intention and thereby become like the Protector Chenrezig, who dwells in neither extreme - not in the world nor in peace.

This was written for his own and others' benefit by the monk Thogme, an exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngülchu Rinchen.

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