

Daily Bodhisattva Practices & Prayers

Taking Refuge and Generating Awakening Mind

Until enlightenment, I go for refuge in the
Buddha, the Dharma, and the supreme Sangha.
By the merit of generosity and other virtues,
May I attain buddhahood for the benefit of beings.

*sang gye cho dang tsok kyi nam la
jang chub bar du dak ni kyap su chi
dak gi jin sok gyi pe so nam kyi
dro la pen chir sang gye drup par shok*

Daily Bodhisattva Vow

Until I reach the heart of awakening,
I take refuge in all buddhas
And likewise in Dharma
And the host of bodhisattvas.

Just as the sugatas of former times aroused awakening mind
And followed the training of an awakening being step by step,
I, too, for the benefit of beings, arouse awakening mind
and step by step follow that training.

This day my life is fruitful.
I have claimed my human heritage.
Today I am born into the family of the awakened.
Now I am a child of buddha.
From now on I will do only what befits this family.
I will do nothing to disgrace this noble and faultless family.

Today, witnessed by all the protectors
I invite all beings to the happiness
Of awakening mind and the approach to it.
Gods and titans rejoice!

Awakening mind is precious.
May it arise where it has not arisen.
May it not fade where it has arisen.
May it ever grow and flourish.

*English translation by Ken McLeod. See also chapter 3 of The Way of the Bodhisattva
(Bodhicaryavatara) by Shantideva*

Seven Branch Prayer

With complete faith I bow
To Buddha Shakyamuni and
All the victorious ones and their followers
Abiding in the ten directions and three times.

I offer flowers, incense, light,
Perfume, food, music, and many other things,
Both in substance and in my imagination.
I ask the noble gathering to accept them.

I confess all evil actions that i have done
In the grip of emotional reactions,
From time without beginning until now:
The five that ripen immediately,
The ten non-virtuous acts, and others.

I rejoice in the goodness of all the virtue
Listeners, independent buddhas,
Bodhisattvas, and ordinary people
Gather throughout the past, present, and future.

I pray for the Dharma Wheel to be turned,
The teachings of the universal and individual paths,
In ways suitable for the different aptitudes
And motivations present in sentient beings.

I ask the buddhas not to pass into nirvana,
But, with great compassion and until samsara is completely empty,
To look after all sentient beings
Who are drowning in this ocean of suffering.

May whatever goodness I have generated
Become a seed for the awakening of all beings.
Without delay, may I become
A wonderful leader for sentient beings.

Seven Branch Prayer from Aspirations for Noble Conduct, translated by Ken McLeod, 2005.

Six Paramitas (Transcendent Perfections)

PERFECTION Skt: paramita Tib: parol tu chinpa	DEFINITION from Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation	FAR ENEMY: the opposite of the paramita	NEAR ENEMIES: qualities that look like paramitas but are not
Generosity Skt: dana Tib: jinpa	Definition: giving fully without attachment. Classification: (a) giving wealth, (b) giving fearlessness, (c) giving Dharma.	Stinginess	Giving with strings attached or other impure motivation
Ethical discipline Skt: shila Tib: tsultrim	Definition: taking precepts from others; pure motivation; renewing when it declines; mindfulness and respect. Classification: (a) restraint; (b) accumulating virtue; (c) benefitting sentient beings.	Undisciplined, harmful behavior such as killing, stealing, lying.	Restraint motivated by one's own benefit (I'll be nice to you so you'll be nice to me).
Patience, tolerance Skt: shanti Tib: zopa	Definition: a feeling of ease accompanied by compassion. Classification: (a) patience toward someone harmful; (b) patience of accepting suffering; (c) patience in understanding the Dharma.	Impatience, anger.	Patience for worldly things but not spiritual practice. Indifference that appears to be genuine patience.
Energy, diligence, enthusiasm, determination Skt: virya Tib: tsonдру	Definition: joy in virtue. Classification: (a) armor-like perseverance until the end of samsara; (b) applied perseverance to avoid kleshas, to accomplish virtue, and to benefit beings; (c) insatiable perseverance until awakening.	Laziness, listlessness, disregard, discouragement	"Busy laziness": being so busy with mundane things that you have no time for spiritual practice.
Meditation Skt: dhyana Tib: samten	Definition: calmly abiding one-pointedly on virtue. Classification: (a) abiding bliss free of discursive thoughts; (b) accumulating good qualities; (c) benefitting sentient beings.	An untrained mind running on confusion and reactivity.	Dullness mistaken for stability. Mere conceptual understanding masquerading as direct knowing.
Wisdom Skt: prajna Tib: sherab	Definition: full discrimination of all phenomena. Classification: (a) mundane wisdom: medicine, reasoning, language, arts; (b) lesser supramundane wisdom: hearing, reflection, and meditation that realizes the three marks: impermanence, selflessness, suffering; (c) greater supramundane wisdom: hearing, reflection, and meditation that realizes the emptiness of all phenomena.	Ignorance leading to grasping and aversion.	Mere knowledge and facts that are still confused about how things are.

Sixteen Ways Of Accumulating Virtues

1. Maintaining and sustaining the bodhisattvas' morality.
2. Joyfully making effort in hearing, contemplating and meditating.
3. Performing service for and honoring all the teachers.
4. Helping and nursing sick people.
5. Giving properly and proclaiming good qualities.
6. Rejoicing in others' merit and patience.
7. Having patience when others look down on you.
8. Dedicating virtue toward enlightenment and saying aspiration prayers.
9. Making offerings to the Triple Gem and making efforts for the virtuous teachings.
10. Sustaining introspection.
11. Recollecting the bodhisattvas' training.
12. Protecting the bodhisattvas' training with vigilant awareness.
13. Protecting all the sense-doors and moderately eating food.
14. Making effort in meditation practice without sleeping too early in the evening or too late in the morning.
15. Attending spiritual masters and authentically holy people.
16. Investigating your own mistakes and purifying them.

Source: Gampopa, *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, trans. Konchog, p.199. Gampopa drew this list from *The Bodhisattvabhumi* by Asanga.

Four Root Downfalls

<p>ONE. Praising oneself and abusing others, through attachment to wealth and honor.</p> <p>TWO. Not giving material aid or teaching to those who are suffering and without protection, through stinginess.</p> <p>THREE. Not to forgive someone though they have apologized.</p> <p>FOUR. To abandon the Mahayana and to present false teachings.</p>	<p>Jamgon Kongtrul: "The three conditions necessary for these four deeds to be root downfalls are to have assumed the [bodhisattva] commitments, to be in a normal state of mind, and to be emotionally involved in the act. Depending on the degree of [emotional] involvement, the downfalls may be serious, moderate, or slight...</p> <p>To perpetuate the act, feel no shame or embarrassment about it, be pleased with it, and regard it as a good deed [constitutes] great emotional involvement. The involvement is moderate or slight depending on the presence of many or few of such factors.</p> <p>Further distinctions of involvement are made based on the lapse of time before shame arises, how long it lasts, how quickly [one turns away from the infraction], etc." (Jamgon Kongtrul, <i>Buddhist Ethics</i>, p.18).</p>
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Four Opponent Powers which purify transgressions

<p>Regret / Remorse / Recognition Recognize and regret unwholesome acts of body, speech, and mind as mistakes, as you would regret accidentally drinking poison. Negative acts arise from the kleshas (confusion, hatred, greed, jealousy, pride). Acknowledge and understand harm done without getting carried away. Understand karma: positive acts bring happiness; negative bring unhappiness; intention opens the possibility of change.</p>	<p>Resolve / Renew / Determination Disidentify with negative acts compelled by the confusion of disturbing emotions (kleshas). Renounce and repudiate any defense or justification of negative acts. Aspire and vow not to commit unwholesome acts again. Commit completely to bringing goodness, merit, and positive acts into every area of life. Take joy in virtue.</p>
<p>Reliance / Support / Refuge Reestablish your intention and direction. Renew your connection to practice. Take refuge in the Three Jewels. Do not lose bodhicitta, the intention to awaken in order to help all beings. Wisdom discriminates negative and positive actions. Trust and rely on awareness and compassion to purify actions and guide how skillful action evolve into experience.</p>	<p>Remedy / Antidote / Positive Action Mitigate and counteract negative actions with positive actions. Engage in specific practices that disrupt and replace habitual negative actions. Motivated by bodhicitta, the bodhisattva's practices include generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and wisdom. Take joy in practice.</p>

Rays of Moonlight to Dispel the Darkness of Misdeeds

Namo guru sakyamunaye!

Respectfully, I take refuge
In all the buddhas and their heirs
Throughout the three times and
 ten directions,
Until I reach the essence of enlightenment!

With my palms together, I pray
To the supreme, unfailing source of
 refuge:
In this and all my other lives,
Overwhelmed by afflictions and
 the three poisons,

Physically, vocally and mentally,
I have committed the five boundless
 crimes, five deeds of approximate
 gravity,
And ten non-virtuous forms of action—
From the depths of my heart, I confess
 them all to you, my protectors.

Whatever I have done to harm or injure
The Three Jewels or the guru,
My own parents or anyone else besides,
I confess from the depths of my heart!

All the evil actions that lead to rebirth
In the dreaded hells or in the preta realms,
Among animals or barbarians of the
 borderlands,
Or as uncomprehending or wrong-viewed,
 I confess!

Whatever I have done to belittle or harm
 others
Out of my own arrogance and pride
Based on wealth, youth, strength and
 the like,
I now confess it all!

In short, whatever I have done unwittingly
To obstruct attainment of the higher
 realms,
Definitive goodness or genuine
 omniscience,
I now confess with intense feelings
 of remorse!

Whatever negative acts I have committed
Or rejoiced in when done by others—
Both natural and proscribed misdeeds,
I now thoroughly confess them all!

Victorious ones endowed with great
 compassion,
And the great beings who are your
 bodhisattva heirs,
Lovingly consider me—a wrongdoer—
And purify all my harmful actions, I pray!

Feeling regret for my past non-virtues
As I would for having imbibed poison,
I vow never to act that way again even for
 a moment
And even at the cost of my life!

Through whatever merit I have gained
By confessing and pledging in this way,
May I and all other living beings
Swiftly attain awakening!

*Composed by Lobzang Chökyi Gyaltzen [Fourth
Panchen Lama, 1570-1662]. May virtue and
goodness increase! Translated by Adam Pearcey,
2019.*

Suggested Reading

The Way of the Bodhisattva (Bodhicharyavatara), by Shantideva

The Padmakara Translation Group version includes Kunzang Pelden's commentary on Shantideva's verses on Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Other. Shambhala Publications, revised edition, 2008.

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, by Gampopa

The classic sourcebook by 12th century Kagyu master Gampopa. Translated by Khenpo Konchog Gyaltzen Rinpoche. Snow Lion, 1998.

The Training Anthology of Santideva (Siksa-samuccaya)

Shantideva's other book: an anthology of sutra verses and commentary on the bodhisattva way. Translated by Charles Goodman. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Buddhist Ethics, by Jamgon Kongtrul

The Treasury of Knowledge Book Five. Kalu Rinpoche Translation Group. Snow Lion Publications, 1998. Detailed explanation of the three levels of vows: individual (monastic and lay), bodhisattva, and vajrayana.

The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment: A Complete Translation of the Bodhisattvabhumi by Asanga. Translated by Artemus B. Engle.

Chandragomin's Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow and Its Commentary by Sakya Dragpa Gyaltzen. Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1982, 1997. Translated by Mark Tatz.

The Collected Teachings on the Bodhisattva (Bodhisattvapitaka)

Detailed description of bodhisattva practices and stages; this sutra is part of the great *Heap of Jewels (Ratnakuta)* collection. Online at 84000.co/translation/toh56.html

Taking the Bodhisattva Vow, by Bokar Rinpoche

Clear Point Press, 1997. Teachings on taking and maintaining the vow.

Vast As the Heavens, Deep As the Sea, by Khunu Rinpoche

Wisdom Publications, 1999. A poem in praise of bodhicitta in 356 verses.

The World Could Be Otherwise: Imagination and the Bodhisattva Path, by Norman Fischer. Shambhala Publications, 2019. A Zen priest's exploration of the six perfections (paramitas).

These Daily Bodhisattva Practices and Prayers were compiled by George Draffan for the Dekeling.Community. NaturalAwareness.net, July 2024.
