

Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas

(Tib: Gyalsay Laglen Sodun Ma)

- *Gyalsay Thogmay Sangpo*

Namo Lokeshvarâya!

You see that all phenomena neither come nor go.
Still you strive solely for the benefit of beings.
Supreme Guru and Protector Avalokiteshvara,
To you I continually bow with body, speech and mind.

The perfect Buddhas, the sources of benefit and happiness,
Arise from practising the genuine Dharma,
Which in turn depends on knowing how to practise.
So I'll explain the Bodhisattva practices.

1. Now that you have obtained this precious human body,
The great boat so difficult to find,
In order to free yourself and others from the ocean of
Samsara,
Listening, reflecting and meditating with diligence, day and
night,
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

2. Passion towards friends churns like water.
Hatred towards enemies burns like fire.
Through the darkness of ignorance, one forgets what to
adopt and what to reject.
To abandon one's homeland is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

3. Giving up inhospitable places, mental afflictions gradually
decrease.
With no distractions, virtuous activities naturally increase.
When mind becomes clear, conviction in the Dharma is born.
(Therefore) seeking solitude is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

4. Friends and relatives acquainted for long will separate.
Possessions gained with exertion will be left behind.
Consciousness, the guest, will leave the guesthouse of the
body.
To let go of this life is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

5. When, due to friendship with someone, the three poisons
increase,
Degrading the activities of listening, reflecting and meditating,
And destroys loving kindness and compassion,
To give up such a friendship is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

6. When, relying on someone, your negativities diminish,
And your positive qualities grow like a waxing moon,
To cherish such a spiritual friend more than your own body
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

7. Themselves captives in the prison of Samsara,
Whom can the worldly gods protect?
Therefore, to seek refuge in the Three Jewels, who do not
betray you,
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

8. The suffering of the lower realms, so difficult to bear,
Is what the Buddha taught to be the fruit of negative actions.
Therefore, even at the cost of your life,
Never to commit negative actions is the practice of a
Bodhisattva.

9. Happiness in the three realms, like dew on a blade of grass,
Is subject to instantaneous fading away.
To strive for the supreme state of liberation
That never wavers is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

10. From beginningless time your mothers have cherished you.
If they suffer now, what good is your own happiness?

Therefore, in order to liberate an infinite number of sentient beings,

Cultivating Bodhichitta is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

11. All suffering comes from yearning for your own happiness.

The perfect Buddhas are born from the intention to benefit others.

Therefore, to truly exchange your own happiness

For the suffering of others is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

12. Even if someone driven by excessive desire steals all your wealth

Or incites someone else to steal it,

To dedicate to this person your body, possession and all your virtues of the three times

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

13. If someone cuts off your head even when you have not done the slightest wrong,

Through the power of compassion,

To take his misdeeds upon yourself

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

14. Should someone slander you

In a billion worlds,
With a loving heart, to proclaim his good qualities in return
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

15. If, in the middle of a crowd,
Someone reveals your hidden faults and abuses you for them,
To see him as a spiritual friend and to bow to him with respect
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

16. If someone whom you cherish as dearly as your own child
Takes you for an enemy,
Then, like a mother whose child is sick,
To love that person even more is the practice of a
Bodhisattva.

17. Even when someone who is your equal or inferior,
Driven by arrogance seeks to disparage you,
To place him on the crown of your head
With the same respect as you would accord your Guru
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

18. Though gripped by poverty and always scorned,
Though stricken by acute illness and possessed by evil spirits,
To take upon yourself the negativities and suffering of

every being,

And never to get discouraged is the practice of a
Bodhisattva.

19. Though famous and prominent, someone to whom
others bow,

Though you amass riches like that of the god of wealth,
To see that worldly splendour has no essence,
Thus to be without arrogance is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

20. If you have not pacified the enemy of your own anger,

Combating outer opponents will only make them multiply.
Therefore, with an army of loving kindness and compassion,
To tame your own mind is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

21. Sensual pleasures are like salt water.

The more you partake of them, the more your craving will
increase.

Therefore, when something arouses attachment,
To abandon it immediately is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

22. All appearances are your own mind,

And mind itself primordially transcends all mental fabrications.
Knowing this, and to remain free from apprehending the

signs of subject and object

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

23. When you encounter objects that please your mind,

Like rainbows in the summer season,

Though they seem beautiful, not to view them as real

And to give up attachment to them

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

24. All suffering is like the death of your child in a dream.

To take such delusive appearances as true, how exhausting!

Therefore, whenever you encounter unpleasant
circumstances,

To see them as deceptions is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

25. If those who aspire to enlightenment willingly give up their
bodies,

What need is there to mention external objects?

Therefore, with no hope of reward or benefit,

To give with generosity is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

26. If lack of discipline prevents you from benefiting yourself,

Then your wish to benefit others is just a joke.

Therefore, to observe discipline, with no longing for worldly

existence

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

27. For a Bodhisattva who seeks a wealth of virtue,

Every perpetrator of harm is like a precious treasure.

Therefore, without feeling irritation towards any,

To cultivate patience is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

28. If Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas who strive for their
benefit alone,

Exert effort as if to extinguish a fire burning on their heads,

To cultivate joyous effort, the wellspring of positive qualities

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

29. Special Insight perfectly endowed with shamatha,

Completely conquers all afflictions.

Knowing this and to cultivate meditative concentration

That transcends the four formless states is the practice of a
Bodhisattva.

30. The practice of the first five perfections

Without wisdom cannot achieve perfect enlightenment.

Equipped with skilful means, and cultivating the wisdom
of non-conceptualizing the three spheres,

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

31. If you do not analyse your own faults,

You might put on a Dharmic facade while behaving in a non-Dharmic way.

Therefore, to continually analyse your faults and then discard them is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

32. If compelled by your own afflictions, you speak of the faults of other Bodhisattvas,

You yourself will degenerate.

Therefore, never citing the faults of those who have entered the Mahayana path

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

33. Desire for gain and services leads to mutual arguments,

And activities of listening, reflecting and meditating decline.

To relinquish attachment to the households of friends, relatives and donors,

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

34. Harsh words disturb the minds of others

And degenerate a Bodhisattva's conduct.

Therefore, to give up harsh and unpleasant speech towards

others

Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

35. Once you become accustomed to afflictions,
They are hard to undermine with antidotes.
Therefore, with the remedial weapons of mindfulness and
introspection,
To forcefully eliminate afflictions such as attachment, the
moment they arise is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

36. In brief, wherever you are and whatever you do,
Always examine the state of your mind.
Continuously working for the welfare of others
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

37. To dedicate the merits thus accumulated
Through these efforts towards enlightenment,
With the wisdom free of concepts of the three spheres,
In order to eliminate the suffering of all infinite beings
Is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

By relying on the words of genuine masters,
I explain the meanings taught in the Sutras, Tantras and
Treatises,

In the form of these thirty-seven Bodhisattva practices
To benefit those who wish to train on the Bodhisattva path.
Because my intelligence is small and my studies few,
I lack linguistic skills to please the scholars.
Yet, since they are based on Sutras and the teachings of the
genuine masters,
I believe these practices of a Bodhisattva are flawless.
Nevertheless, since the vastness of Bodhisattva conduct is
difficult to fathom,
By someone like me with an inferior intellect,
I pray to the genuine masters to consider with patience
All my flaws such as contradictions, incoherence and so on.

By virtue of the merit gathered here,
And by the power of conventional and ultimate Bodhichitta,
May all sentient beings become like the benefactor
Avalokiteshvara
Who dwells neither in the extreme of Samsara, nor in that of
peace.

Colophon: