



# *The Thirty Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*

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# The Thirty Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas



## *Paying Homage*

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 practices of bodhisattvas.

# 1 *Precious Human Life*

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 *The Three Poisons*

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 *Relying on Solitude*

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

# 4 *Mindfulness of Impermanence and Death*

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 *Giving up Bad Company*

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 Relying on a Spiritual Mentor

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 Taking Refuge

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 Karma and Its Results

The Subduer said all the unbearable suffering  
Of bad rebirths is the fruit of wrongdoing.  
Therefore, even at the cost of your life,  
Never do wrong —  
This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

## 9 Aspiring for Liberation

Like dew on the 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 *Bodhicitta*

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 *Equalising and Exchanging Self and Others*

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 *Transforming Loss into the Path*

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 *Transforming Suffering into the Path*

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 *Transforming Blame into the Path*

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 *T*ransforming *C*riticism into the *P*ath

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 *T*ransforming *B*etrayal into the *P*ath

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 by sickness —  
This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

## 17 *T*ransforming *D*erision into the *P*ath

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 *T*ransforming *P*overty into the *P*ath

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 *T*ransforming *W*ealth into the *P*ath

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 *T*ransforming *A*nger into the *P*ath

While the enemy of your own anger is unsubdued,  
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 *T*ransforming *D*esire into the *P*ath

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 *R*ealising *E*mptiness

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 *S*eeing the *D*esired as *E*mpy

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 *Seeing the Hated as Empty*

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 *Far-reaching Generosity*

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 *Far-reaching Ethical Discipline*

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 *Far-reaching Patience*

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 *Far-reaching Joyous Effort*

Seeing even Hearers and Solitary Realisers, who accomplish  
Only their own good, strive as if 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 *Far-reaching Meditative Stabilisation*

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 *Far-reaching Wisdom*

Since the five perfections without wisdom  
Cannot bring perfect enlightenment,  
Along with skilful means cultivate the wisdom  
Which does not conceive the three spheres (as real) —  
This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

## 31 *Avoiding Hypocrisy*

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 *Not Criticising Bodhisattvas*

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 Avoiding Attachment to Benefactors*

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 Refraining from Harsh Words*

Harsh words disturb the minds of others  
And cause deterioration in a Bodhisattva's conduct.  
Therefore give up harsh words  
Which are unpleasant to others—  
This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

### *35 Abandoning Bad Habits and Mental Afflictions*

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 Training in Mindfulness and Alertness*

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 Dedication of Virtue to Full Enlightenment

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.

### Epilogue

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 all faults,  
Such as contradictions and non sequiturs.

Through the virtue from this may 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 Tokme, an  
exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngülchu Rinchen.



