



The Bodhisattva Vows

His Holiness the Sakya Trichen



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<https://sakyatradition.org>

Email : info@sakyatradition.org

Wechat ID : sakyatradition

Weibo : sakyatradition

IG: the_sakya_tradition

Facebook: TheSakya

Soundcloud: the-sakya-tradition

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By the merit of this work, may His Holiness the Sakya Trichen enjoy perfect health and a very long life, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.



EDITORIAL PREFACE

Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are not born as such. Buddha Shakyamuni cultivated the supreme bodhicitta, the awakened mind, and spent three countless eons accumulating merit and wisdom as a bodhisattva. Ultimately, he achieved perfect awakening. This journey highlights the power of bodhicitta and the importance of consistent practice, while showing how beings like Shakyamuni, who followed this path, serve as inspiring role models. Just as Shakyamuni attained buddhahood through bodhisattva practice, each of us can aspire to bodhicitta, follow the bodhisattva path, and ultimately become a buddha.

Bodhicitta is the foundation of the path to enlightenment. Once bodhicitta arises, the practice of the bodhisattva path begins. The phrase, "May bodhicitta arise in those in whom it has not arisen; may it never decline where it has arisen; may it continue to increase, further and further!" reminds us that the arising and preservation of bodhicitta require continuous effort and practice. So, how can we generate and nurture this precious bodhicitta in our daily lives?

Are the bodhisattva vows and precepts merely rules to follow? What is their purpose, and what are their benefits? These questions will be explored in this teaching, helping us realize that the bodhisattva vows are essential tools for achieving complete enlightenment.

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Part One

Introduction

Good evening, Dharma friends. Today is a very special day, as you all know. It is the anniversary of Sakya Paṇḍita, who was a true emanation of Mañjuśrī. It is not just followers who believe from their devotion that the guru or that Sakya Paṇḍita is Mañjuśrī. There are many historical facts and logical reasons showing that he was the true emanation of Mañjuśrī, the manifestation of all the buddhas' wisdom.

Dharma practice on such a holy master's anniversary day brings much greater merit than it does on ordinary days. This is why we do the guru pūjā today. And then, this coming Sunday, I will be giving the bodhisattva vow. I have been asked to say something today as an explanation of the bodhisattva vow.

The Bodhisattva Vow is the Path to Enlightenment

The bodhisattva vow is important because it is the sole path of all the past, present, and future buddhas and bodhisattvas. There are different traditions of the vow based on different sūtras and lineages. The tradition of Mañjuśrī follows the *Ākāśagarbha Sūtra*, and its practice was explained by the great master Nāgārjuna and later by Śāntideva and many other great Indian masters. From them, it was passed down to the great Lama Sakyapa (Sachen Kunga Nyingpo). This bodhisattva vow lineage is also called the tradition of the Madhyamaka, or the Middle Way bodhisattva vow.

I think it is appropriate to begin by explaining the consequences of not receiving the bodhisattva vow. In other words, what are the faults if we never receive the bodhisattva vow?

First, if we never enter the Buddha's teachings, we will be caught up forever in the cycle of existence, or saṃsāra. And if we are

caught up in saṃsāra, then due to the defilements of hatred, desire, and ignorance, we will fall into the lower realms. For example, hatred will cause us to fall into the hell realm where there is enormous suffering. By indulging in desire, we will be born in the hungry ghost realm where there is great hunger. By indulging in ignorance, we will be born in the animal realm where there is clearly great suffering. We can see the suffering of animals for ourselves. If we as human beings were forced to undergo what animals suffer, it would be unbearable.

Then, if we are born into one of the three higher realms through the accumulation of virtuous deeds, there is also much suffering. Human beings are unable to fulfill their wishes, and there are many undesirable things that cause us to fall into the lower realms. There is fear of meeting our enemies, fear of separation from our loved ones, and other worries. We can consider families, for example. If there are many family members, and if it is a close family, then there will be suffering because you will worry greatly for everyone—your parents, your children, and so on. But if your family is not loving, then there will be rivalries, and you will suffer. Those who do not have wealth suffer from poverty, while those who have wealth suffer from fear of losing it and the need to protect their possessions. When one's life is short, one suffers from an early death. But if life is long, one will experience physical

decline and old age and face many difficult situations. In short, whether a human life is short or long, it is suffering. Also, while we are alive, we suffer from others because it is very difficult to please beings, or to please everyone around us. Human beings have many occasions for suffering.

The demigods suffer constantly because of their natural jealousy towards the gods. They do not have the same merits that the gods do, and so they suffer. The gods who are born into the highest realm of saṃsāra enjoy their lives, but they are like birds flying in the sky: No matter how high a bird flies, eventually it must land again on the ground. The devas eventually must fall again to the realms beneath them, and they will suffer.

In saṃsāra, no matter how much happiness might appear, we are never beyond the four ends:

The end of accumulation is exhaustion.

The end of height is to fall.

The end of gathering is separation.

The end of life is death.

In short, as long as we are caught in saṃsāra, existence will be full of suffering.

Then, if we follow the spiritual path but we never create the enlightenment thought and receive the bodhisattva vow, we will fall into the extreme of nirvāṇa, or self-liberation, which is the personal liberation of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas (solitary buddhas). We will not develop the qualities. If we should fall into the extreme of self-liberation, we will not be able to help other sentient beings. It is like setting out to build a house, or draw an image: If you discover that you made a mistake at the beginning, then it is very difficult to redo. If you fall into the extreme of nirvāṇa, then it will be very difficult to accomplish perfect enlightenment.

Because we have been born into this realm of existence since beginningless time, every sentient being has been at one time or another our mother, father, or other loved one. In other words, everyone is related to every living being in one way or another. For this reason, it is not right to ignore the welfare of all these mother sentient beings and seek only one's own liberation, or nirvāṇa.

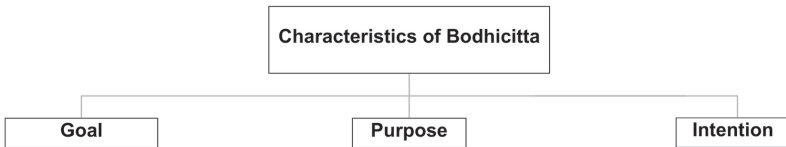
Temporal and Ultimate Benefits

There are both temporal and ultimate benefits to receiving the bodhisattva vow. Temporally, when you transfer from the wrong and the lower path to the right path—to the path practiced by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas—you change your name and your actuality. In future lives, you will not fall into the lower realms, and instead you will continue to enjoy the happiness of the higher realms.

The ultimate benefit is that it will help you create the qualities of the stages of bodhisattvas and eventually produce the physical aspects of the buddha, or the rūpakāya.

Characteristics of Bodhicitta

Now, regarding the special characteristics of the enlightenment thought, it is said by Lord Maitreya that it involves three things: the goal, purpose, and intention. The goal is precious enlightenment; the purpose is for other sentient beings; and the intention is the wish to attain that goal.



Next, we can understand bodhicitta from two points of view:

1. the point of view of its nature
2. the point of view of its object

The Nature of Bodhicitta: Wishing Bodhicitta and Entering Bodhicitta

From the point of view of its nature, bodhicitta, or the enlightenment thought, has two divisions: *wishing enlightenment thought* and *entering enlightenment thought*.

Wishing enlightenment thought can be explained by the example of wishing to go to a certain place. First, one must have the intention to go there. Similarly, wishing enlightenment thought means creating a wish or intention within your mind, the wish to attain perfect enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings without exception and not liberation for one's own sake alone.

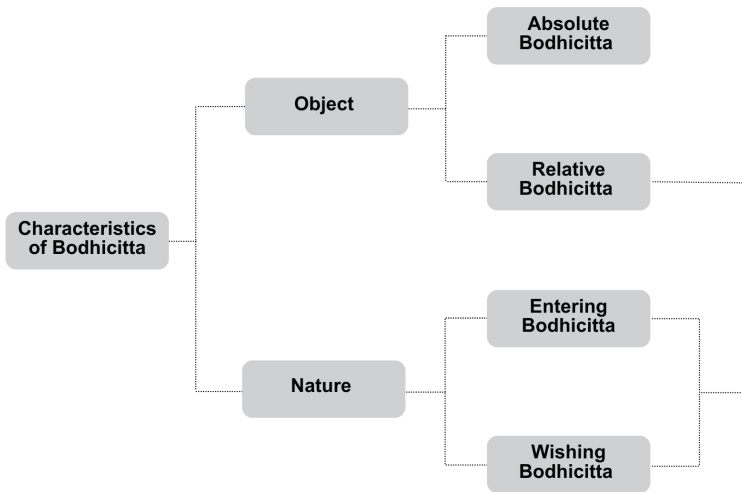
Entering enlightenment thought can be explained by the example of packing and traveling to your destination after having the thought of going there. If you really wish to go there, you will make every effort to reach your destination. Therefore, after having the wish to attain enlightenment, every activity and action that you undertake will aim at attaining the goal of enlightenment. This is called *entering bodhicitta*, or *entering enlightenment thought*.

The Object of Bodhicitta: Relative Bodhicitta and Absolute Bodhicitta

From the point of view of its object, bodhicitta again has two aspects: relative and absolute bodhicitta.

Relative bodhicitta refers to bodhicitta, both wishing and entering, that is based on universal loving-kindness and compassion along with all the activities that you do while on the path that are related to a bodhisattvas' activities.

With relative bodhicitta alone, however, you cannot attain enlightenment. For this, you also need wisdom. Wisdom, or realization of the true nature of phenomena, is what cuts saṃsāra at the root. This is called absolute bodhicitta.



Giving Rise to Bodhicitta

Next, we can ask, “How does one give rise to these two?” How are they produced? From this point of view, relative bodhicitta is created in the mind with the vow that is received through a symbol or the ritual. Absolute bodhicitta cannot be received through symbolic means or a ritual. It must be received through meditation. It is received by the mediation of insight wisdom on the basis of stable concentration. When you develop in this meditation, the realization of the true nature of phenomena will eventually arise in your mind. This is how you obtain absolute bodhicitta.

According to Lama Sakyapa, relative bodhicitta, which is received through the ritual, or by symbolic means, and which consists of wishing and entering bodhicitta, can be explained this way:

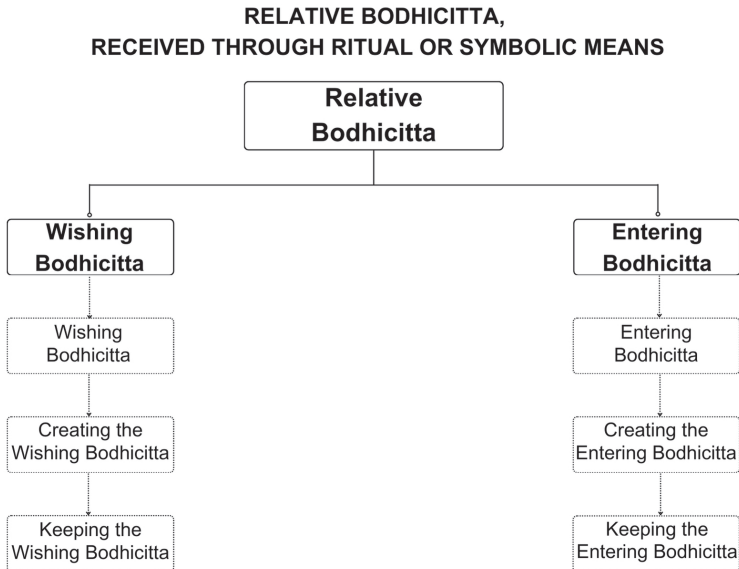
1. **Wishing enlightenment thought:**

- Wishing enlightenment thought
- Creating the wishing enlightenment thought
- Keeping the wishing enlightenment thought

2. **Entering enlightenment thought:**

- Entering enlightenment thought
- Creating the entering enlightenment thought
- Keeping the entering enlightenment thought

Wishing enlightenment thought itself is not the vow. The vow is received through rituals after creating wishing enlightenment thought, and it involves the determination to abstain from all that opposes enlightenment thought. This is the vow.



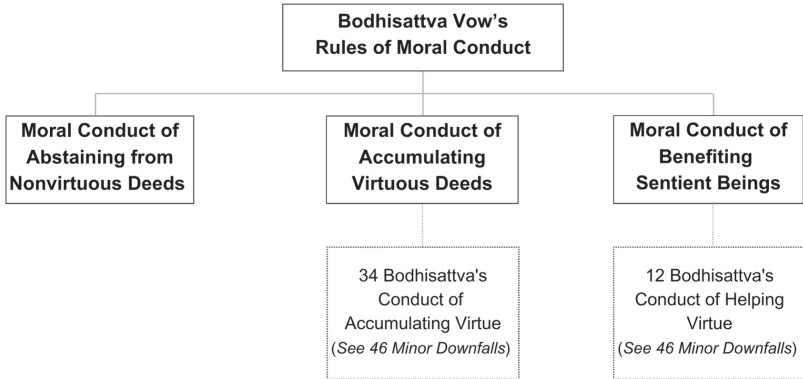
Rules for Moral Conduct

The vow's rules for moral conduct have three divisions:

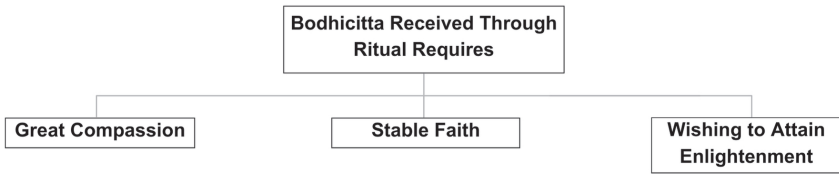
1. the moral conduct of abstaining from nonvirtuous deeds
2. the moral conduct of accumulating virtuous deeds
3. the moral conduct of benefiting sentient beings

Regarding the first, the moral conduct of abstaining from nonvirtuous deeds means to abstain from nonvirtuous deeds, including related thoughts. The moral conduct of accumulating virtuous deeds means that, after receiving the vow, then through determination and strong will, to accumulate all virtuous deeds. The moral conduct of benefitting sentient beings means that all your activities should henceforth be fully engaged in this—physically, verbally, and mentally—because the purpose of receiving the bodhisattva vow is to benefit other sentient beings.

These three are different ways of viewing the one activity of moral conduct, just like one precious wish-fulfilling jewel can be seen to have different actions. Such a precious jewel can eliminate darkness, for example, and it can also accumulate wealth, prevent undesirable things from occurring such as sickness, and so on.



The conditions that give rise to the enlightenment thought are varied: it can arise from friends, from the cause, from the root, through hearing, through habitual formations, through virtuous deeds, etc. There are many ways for bodhicitta to arise and many causes. However, the enlightenment thought that is received through the ritual, according to the sūtras as well as many authentic commentaries, is said to require three things: great compassion, stable faith, and wishing to attain enlightenment. If you have these three, then there is proper and sufficient cause to create the enlightenment thought.



The Results of Giving Rise to Bodhicitta

Giving rise to this enlightenment thought has two results: The results that are within this life, called the temporal result, and the ultimate result.

As I said in the beginning, the immediate result, or the result that ripens in this lifetime, is that you will change your name, or your designation. This will change from *ordinary person* to *bodhisattva*. Even though you are still within saṃsāra, you will acquire the name *bodhisattva*. In actuality, too, you are a bodhisattva, even though you are still in the realm of existence and not yet free from karma and the defilements. Because you are now set or established on the path towards enlightenment, you have become

a bodhisattva. The other temporal results are: it pleases all the buddhas, it satisfies sentient beings, and it will accomplish one's purpose.

The ultimate result is the attainment of omniscient wisdom. Anyone who has the causes of this result will naturally obtain the result. It is just like planting seeds. When someone plants the seed for a crop and the owner of that field looks after the crop so that the causes and conditions are right, the crop will yield. Similarly, when you create the enlightenment thought, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas will protect it until the accomplishment of the goal.

Mind Only and Madhyamaka Traditions of the Bodhisattva Vow

In Tibet, there are two bodhisattva vow traditions: the Mahāyāna Mind-Only school tradition and the Mahāyāna Madhyamaka tradition. The Mind Only tradition is based on the great sūtras explained by Lord Maitreya. It came through Ācārya Asaṅga and Ācārya Candragomin and eventually it was passed to the Kadampas. I already described the other one: the tradition based on the Ākāśagarbha Sūtra and Mañjuśrī, passed through Ācārya Nāgārjuna, Śāntideva, Ācārya Jetari, and so on, until it came to the Sakyapas. This is the Madhyamaka, or the Middle Way, tradition.

The Mind Only school and the Middle Way school have different views. The bodhisattva vow ritual is also different. Although the goal is the same, the structure of the ritual is different.

The content of the vows also varies based on different sūtras. They can vary depending on the individuals, too. We are all different, with different mentalities, propensities, and defilements. Therefore, the rules of the vows of bodhisattvas are different from

person to person. There is one set of vows for persons who are very capable of practicing a lot of virtuous deeds, but different vows for medium practitioners, and different again for those who are incapable. The rules of the bodhisattva vow are not the same for everyone. It depends on one's situation, one's ability, and so on.

According to the Madhyamaka tradition, the bodhisattva vow does not need any special basis. This means that anyone can receive the bodhisattva vow, as long as they comprehend the meaning. This includes both human and non-human beings, as well as single persons, married householders, virtuous and nonvirtuous persons. One need not have any special condition, such as being a monk, nor have taken any prior vow.

The bodhisattva vow differs in this regard from the prātimokṣa vow. You need a special condition in order to receive the prātimokṣa vow. Then, if you break it by committing one of the major defeats, you cannot revive it. However, with the bodhisattva vow, you can revive it; you can receive it again, even if you break it.

Bodhicitta, the enlightenment thought, is the true nectar that will eliminate all forms of difficulty and suffering. It is the true treasure that removes the poverty of beings, and it is the essence of all the teachings. Tomorrow, I will explain the actual vows.

Part Two

Introduction

Good evening to all my Dharma friends. Yesterday I explained the nature of the bodhisattva vow, the different divisions of the vow, the benefits and consequences of making the vow, and other things. Today I will continue the explanation.

As Mahāyāna practitioners, we recognize three vows: the prātimokṣa vows, the bodhisattva vows, and the Mantrayāna vows. The prātimokṣa vows have many different levels and components, but basically the prātimokṣa vows focus on abstaining from doing any harm, including abstaining from having the intention to do anything that would harm sentient beings. The bodhisattva vow is higher than the prātimokṣa. It consists not only in abstaining from harm, or abstaining from negative deeds, but in making every effort to help sentient beings. The Mantrayāna vow is the vow to hold the continuity of awareness.

Regarding the bodhisattva vows, as I said yesterday, the vows are not fixed, not the same for everybody, but depend on the individual

according to ability. For capable people, there are many vows involved; for less capable people, something medium; and for the incapable, only the essence.

The Four Dark Actions and the Four White Dharmas

There are four dark actions that will degenerate one's bodhicitta, and it is important to abstain from them. The four actions are:

1. To deceive one's spiritual master, or any holy being worthy of offering, such as the Buddha, Dharma, or Saṅgha.
2. To create regret in someone who does not have any cause for regret.
3. To fail to praise those who have entered the bodhisattva path and to criticize them instead.
4. To not have the proper intention but to dilute one's mind with deception.

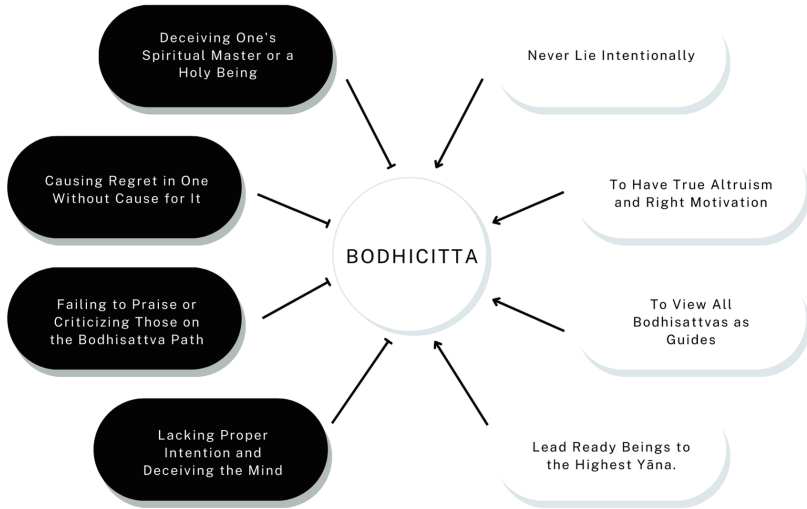
It is important to abstain from these four acts at every stage of the bodhisattva path. Then, it is also important to practice the four white dharmas, which are:

1. Never intentionally tell lies.
2. To have proper altruism and the right motivation without deception.
3. To see all bodhisattvas as one's guide, or one's example. You should praise bodhisattvas in all directions, and recite the praises of the great activities of bodhisattvas.
4. To lead beings to the highest yāna. Beings who are ready, who have reached the ripening stage, should be led to the highest yāna and not left to lower yānas.

Practicing the four white dharmas increases one's bodhicitta and prevents the forgetting of bodhicitta. The most important thing for maintaining the bodhisattva vow is to abstain from the four dark actions and to practice the four white dharma actions. This is described in many sūtras.

DARK ACTIONS

WHITE DHARMAS



The Defeats and the Faults

Just like in the prātimokṣa vows, the bodhisattva vows have many levels of rules with defeats and downfalls and so forth. There are basically two categories: the defeats and the minor downfalls (or flaws, or faults).

The Four Defeats

1. The first defeat is to praise oneself and criticize others for the purpose of obtaining wealth or gaining respect. Just like in the prātimokṣa, there are specific conditions regarding the time and situation and many other factors before this defeat is considered to have been fully committed.
2. The second defeat is to fail to give wealth or teachings to those who are suffering, who lack guardians, or who do not have a protector to guide them—the defenseless—because of your defilement and stinginess.

3. The third defeat is not to accept—because of one’s defilement—the apology of people who have made mistakes and then apologized and sought pardon.
4. The fourth defeat is to criticize because of one’s wrong view the bodhisattva teachings, or to explain false teachings from having the wrong view.

The 34 Minor Faults

The minor faults, or flaws, or minor downfalls, are related to the six perfections. As I explained last night, the moral conduct of the bodhisattva has three sections: to abstain from negative deeds, to practice virtuous deeds, and to help other sentient beings. Regarding the accumulation of virtuous deeds, there are 34 faults. These flaws are analyzed according to whether they have been committed with or without defilements, and whether there are special circumstances under which the fault is not considered a fault.

Seven Faults Related to the Pāramitā of Generosity

1. To fail to make daily offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha. The fault occurs when someone who has taken the bodhisattva vow intentionally fails in making offerings. This includes material offerings, recitation of

praises, or doing physical prostrations, and it is related to the pāramitā of material giving. The fault has different levels: The most severe is to not make offerings because of disrespect or laziness. This is called the fault with defilements. If, however, you miss a day simply because of forgetfulness, this is called the fault without defilements. Then, if you have no choice in the matter because of some circumstance, it is not a fault.

2. The second fault occurs when bodhisattvas—who should always be satisfied, never greedy or seeking wealth, praise, respect from others, position, or fame—fail in this.
3. The third occurs if you fail to give respect to someone worthy of respect out of a defilement such as pride. This fault occurs if a bodhisattva fails to pay respect, out of pride or other defilements, to someone who is worthy of respect such as a person of senior rank, an elderly person, someone born in a great race, someone rich in knowledge and experience, and so forth.
4. The fourth is related to the gift of Dharma. If someone asks you a question and you have knowledge to answer, but out of defilements you withhold an answer, this is the fault.

5. The fifth fault arises when someone who has taken the bodhisattva vow or practices the bodhisattva path is invited to an occasion with a special purpose, but they do not accept the invitation because of a defilement such as hatred. As I said before, the faults have different levels. For this fault, if one refuses to accept the invitation because of pride, anger, etc., then it is called the fault with the defilement, and this is more severe. If you refuse to accept the invitation because of other, minor reasons, then it is the fault without defilements. There are other circumstances when such a refusal can occur without a fault, such as if accepting the invitation would be a hindrance to one's own Dharma practice, and other circumstances.
6. Refusing to accept worthy offerings because of defilements.
7. Refusing to give instruction to those who are seeking spiritual guidance because of one's pride or jealousy, or other defilements.

Nine Faults Related to the Pāramitā of Moral Conduct

1. The first is to fail to care for, or to ignore, persons who have broken their vows and who have regret.

Bodhisattvas should have more concern—love and compassion—for those who have broken their vows, not less concern. If you ignore them and fail to care for those who have broken their vows or who have committed wrong deeds, then this is the fault.

2. The second fault arises when, the bodhisattva does keep the rules with the intention of pleasing others, especially to please those who are entering the spiritual path. The fault is ignoring such common vows.
3. This fault occurs if a bodhisattva keeps a rule when the situation demands that they should disregard it for the sake of another's benefit.
4. The bodhisattvas should devote their full time and energy for limitless sentient beings. If it can help sentient beings, if there is some special reason, then there are occasions when physical and verbal nonvirtuous deeds are allowed, any of the seven non-virtuous actions connected with the body and speech (three with the body and four with the speech). Only mental nonvirtuous deeds are not allowed. If it would benefit beings and you avoid taking the opportunity, then this is the fault.

5. The fifth is to seek one's livelihood in the wrong way or to accept gifts acquired this way. There are five wrong ways of livelihood in this fault. The first is deceit, such as pretending to others that you are strict in keeping your vows when you are not so that you can gain wealth, or your livelihood. The second way of seeking the wrong livelihood is to speak flatteringly so that you can find your livelihood. The third is to ask for things indirectly, as by hinting to someone about what another person offered. The other two are bribery and extortion. These acts are all ways of obtaining wrong livelihood.
6. The sixth is indulging in worldly activities, even jokingly, that cause the loss of other people's faith and respect.
7. The seventh one is to misconceive that bodhisattvas do not attempt to attain liberation and failing to view delusions as things to be eliminated. Although bodhisattvas are fully devoted to other sentient beings, at the same time, they also seek liberation. Nirvāṇa is inactive compared to buddhahood, but at the same time it is away from all forms of samsaric existence.
8. The eighth is not living up to one's precepts and so missing an opportunity to help others. This occurs when

someone doesn't take things seriously when they should, for example.

9. When someone indulges in gross defilements and the bodhisattva could prevent such actions by being harsh or strict or wrathful with them, but the bodhisattva avoids doing so because they do not want to experience the other person's displeasure, this is the ninth one.

Altogether, there are nine faults related to moral conduct.

Four Faults Related to the Pāramitā of Patience

1. To reciprocate when you are criticized, or to take revenge. A bodhisattva should avoid reciprocating whenever they are criticized and should avoid all forms of revenge. If someone is hateful and speaks about your faults, criticizes you, or gossips, you should not take revenge by doing the same. When others are angry at you, you should not become angry at them. When others hit you, you should not hit them back. To do any of these things is the fault. The bodhisattva should not reciprocate such actions. Even if one does so in jest, it is still a fault; this is the fault without the defilements, rather than with the defilements.

2. To fail to eliminate the anger of someone towards you. Whenever someone is angry at you, whether you are guilty or not, you should go to them and explain yourself to that person for the sake of eliminating that person's anger. To ignore them and not try to explain is the fault.
3. Not to forgive someone or accept their apology whenever they commit a mistake against you and later regret it and confess according to the teachings. If, out of anger or other defilements, you do not accept the apology and you are angry, then this is the fault.
4. Not to apply the antidote to anger when you experience anger and know the antidote. The bodhisattva should apply the antidote to eliminate anger when angry at another person. If you continue to hold onto your angry thought, this is the fault.

Three Faults Related to the Pāramitā of Endeavor

1. To gather followers with the motivation of gaining respect, offerings, and so forth.
2. Not applying the antidote to laziness. Laziness is the opposite of not making effort to practice virtuous deeds.

The bodhisattva should always avoid this fault. As I have explained, these faults are further analyzed into faults with defilements and faults without defilements, as well as exceptions or circumstances when the act is not considered a fault. In this case, it is not considered a fault if you are sick or if you are tired from doing other virtuous deeds.

3. To waste time indulging in speech about worldly things.

Three Faults Related to the Pāramitā of Concentrative Meditation

1. Not to seek instruction from a teacher when you wish to do meditation, due to ignorance or lack proper knowledge or instruction. To not seek instruction from laziness is the fault.
2. Not to enter concentration because of one's defilements, such as anger, regret, scattering, or sinking.
3. If, instead of progressing further, you enjoy the taste of the state of concentration and remain there, this is

the fault. The third fault does not apply to ordinary people. It is only for those who have reached meditative concentration.

Eight Faults Related to the Pāramitā of Wisdom

1. To avoid the teachings of the followers, the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. It is a fault if you think that because you are a follower of the bodhisattvayāna, it is not necessary to study or contemplate the teachings of the lower vehicles.
2. To be so devoted to the teachings of the lower yānas that you completely ignore the bodhisattvayāna teachings.
3. To devote your time to heretical teachings and to avoid Buddhist teachings. There are occasions when one needs to study the philosophy or teachings of other schools and systems, but to devote yourself to this full-time is a fault.
4. To be attached to the teachings of non-Buddhists when one is well-versed in them. It is fine to study these teachings if the point is to help beings who follow them. But they should not be taken as the path. It should be like taking medicine: patients take medicine to cure a disease, not to enjoy the taste.

5. To doubt or criticize the miraculous activities of the great bodhisattvas, which are beyond ordinary perceptions. This refers to such things as their ability to accommodate three thousand universes in one sesame seed.
6. To praise oneself and to criticize others because of anger. This fault resembles another that was already described; the difference is the motivation. Formerly, the motivation was to gain wealth or respect. Here, the motivation is anger.
7. Not to make effort to listen to the teachings. When there are opportunities to hear the teachings from people who have greater knowledge than you, and you do not go because of your pride or anger or other defilements, the fault is present. As before, there are different levels: If the teacher has less knowledge than you, for example, then it is not a fault.
8. To show any form of disrespect to a teacher who is capable of explaining the teachings. You may already know the teaching, but if you ignore them, do not pay respect, or if you show disrespect, then the fault occurs.

As I explained, the moral conduct of a bodhisattva has three sections: abstaining from negative deeds, practicing virtuous

deeds, and helping other sentient beings. Regarding the accumulation of virtuous deeds, these are the 34 faults. Seven of them relate to the pāramitā of generosity, nine to the pāramitā of moral conduct, four to the pāramitā of patience, three to the pāramitā of effort, three to the pāramitā of concentrative meditation, and eight to the pāramitā of wisdom.

The Faults Related to the Moral Conduct of Helping Sentient Beings

As I explained, the third section of the moral conduct of bodhisattvas is helping sentient beings. There are 12 faults related to this:

1. Not to help sentient beings when there are opportunities to help them, such as through generosity, the gift of Dharma, and so on. Or, the fault occurs when there are individuals in disharmony and you fail to reconcile them, even though you have the opportunity, and so on.
2. Not to help sentient beings who are physically sick or suffering when you have the opportunity to help them.
3. Not to help sentient beings who are experiencing mainly mental suffering and you have the opportunity.

4. Not to guide sentient beings out of defilements when you see that they are engaged in wrong or carelessness actions and there is the opportunity to guide them.
5. Not to reciprocate the kindness that other people show you.
6. Not to console or remove the sorrow of sentient beings who are in great sorrow, as when they have lost a loved one, or lost their wealth or position, and so forth. If because of laziness or some other defilement, you do not help them, then this fault occurs.
7. Not to give food, drink, shelter, or clothing to those who need these things, even though you have them to give. If you do not give because of stinginess, then it is the fault with defilements. If you do not give because of forgetfulness, then it is the fault without defilements. If you do not have these things to give, or if you have them but you know that giving would be harmful to the person—for example, giving alcohol to a Saṅgha member or giving food that would make someone sick—then the fault does not occur.
8. Not to benefit one's disciples through teachings or through material gifts when you have gathered disciples, because of your defilements.

9. Not to praise your disciples and benefit them according to their needs, abilities, and mental states, but instead to give them things like wrong teachings and advice, wrong material things, and so on.
10. Not to praise people who possess the great qualities, because of your defilements.
11. To fail to be strict towards those who are following the wrong path or who are not acting in the right way when they would switch from the wrong path to the right one if you scolded them.
12. To fail to use your great power of miracles when you possess these powers to help beings to enter the Dharma path and there is an occasion to use your power this way.

Altogether, there are 46 minor downfalls. Thirty-four pertain to the bodhisattva's moral conduct of accumulating virtue and 12 to the bodhisattva's moral conduct of helping beings. This is according to the Ākāśagarbha Sūtra. In some sets, they are more elaborate and in others they are more vivid. While you do not have to keep all of them, those capable of keeping them can do so. Those who are less capable or incapable can keep the more vivid ones.

18 Root Downfalls

If we count them on basis of individuals, there are 18 root downfalls. However, if we count them on the basis of acts, there are only 14.

From the point of view of individuals, there are five root downfalls that are mainly for kings, five mainly for ministers, and eight mainly for beginners. This adds up to 18. However, the same root downfalls, when counted on the basis of acts, are only 14. This is because the first four downfalls for kings are the same as the first four downfalls for ministers; they have four downfalls in common.

Then, in addition to these, there are eight for beginners. This adds up to 14.

The downfalls that are said to be mainly for kings and ministers are called that way because they are more likely to be committed by kings or ministers. In reality, they apply to anyone who takes the bodhisattva vows.

The four root downfalls common to kings and ministers are:

1. To steal offerings made to the Triple gem by any means whatsoever.
2. To give up or abandon the Dharma path.
3. To defrock, beat, imprison, or kill a Saṅgha member who has broken vows.
4. To commit one of the five heinous crimes: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, drawing blood from a buddha, or creating a schism in the Saṅgha.

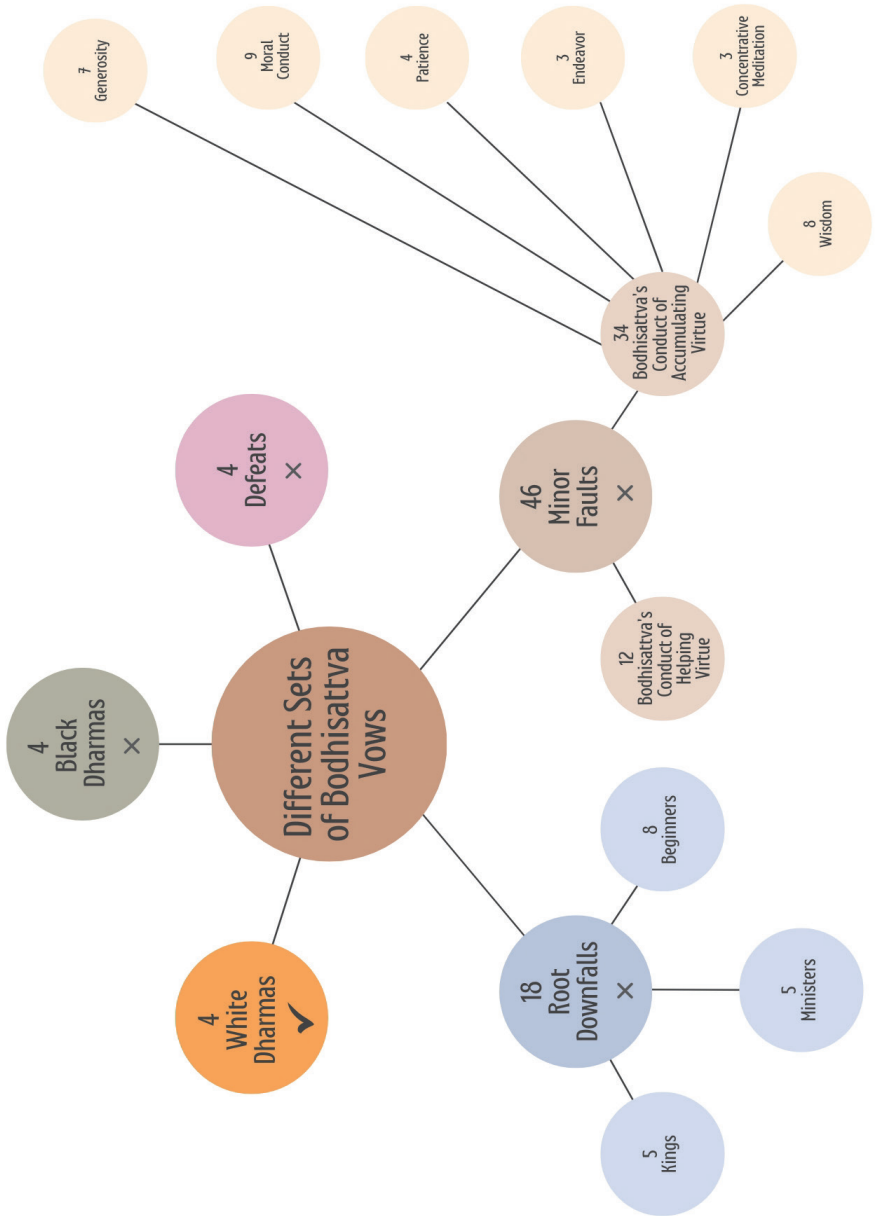
The fifth downfall mainly for kings is to hold wrong views. The fifth downfall mainly for ministers is to destroy cities.

The remaining eight root downfalls are the downfalls mainly for beginners. These are:

1. To explain the profound teachings on emptiness to those who have not gone through the basic preliminary mind training.
2. To turn someone who is following the path that leads to complete enlightenment away from this path. In other

words, the downfall is to turn someone away from the bodhisattva path to the path of self-liberation.

3. To believe or to cause others to believe that it is not possible to eliminate the defilements through the practice of the lower yānas.
4. To place followers of the Hīnayāna on the path of the Mahāyāna by criticizing the Hīnayāna teachings.
5. To praise oneself and to criticize others for the purpose of obtaining wealth and respect.
6. To tell others that one has attained realization of emptiness, etc. when one has not attained any realization.
7. To punish members of the Saṅgha and take away their belongings or to receive belongings that were taken from them. The third downfall of kings and ministers is similar to this one. There, it pertained to those who had broken their vows; this one pertains to punishing Saṅgha members who have not broken vows.
8. To give the contributions made to the Saṅgha members engaged in meditation to those who are not engaged in meditation. This is because meditation is higher than pursuits like study.



Conclusion

I have explained several different sets of vows: the four dark actions to be avoided, the four white dharmas, the four defeats, the 46 minor faults, and the 18 root downfalls.

In a sūtra, Lord Buddha said that a great king, one who has many activities, is not able to keep all the vows. He would not be able to practice the pāramitās from generosity up to wisdom. Therefore, to include all the vows into one, Lord Buddha said that his vow should be to do all things always with a sincere and devoted wish or the aim to seek enlightenment, and to hold this at all times, day and night. He should never forget or give up the wish to attain perfect enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, in whatever activity he is doing. On the basis of this, he should rejoice in every virtuous deed done anywhere in saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, and dedicate daily whatever merit that is accumulated to all sentient beings.

To practice like this does not interfere with the duties and activities of a king and enables him to keep the vows of the bodhisattva. This advice means that the root of all the vows is always to hold and cherish wishing bodhicitta, the sincere wish to attain perfect enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. This is the most important thing. On the basis of this wish, we are to make efforts to help all sentient beings as much as we can, according to our ability.

I think that it is important for us to know how the vows are presented in different ways in the different sūtras. They all have special meanings and special purposes.

With this, we will conclude today's teachings. May the blessings of all buddhas and bodhisattvas be with you now and always.



- His Holiness the Sakya Trichen is revered as the forty-first throne holder of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Born in Tibet in 1945, His Holiness is from the noble Khön family, whose predecessors date to the early days of Tibetan history and established the Sakya order in the eleventh century. In his youth, His Holiness received intensive training in Buddhist philosophy, meditation, and ritual from eminent masters and scholars.

Widely regarded as an emanation of Mañjuśrī, His Holiness is the spiritual guide to many in the next generation of Buddhist teachers and practitioners, and has bestowed Sakya's core teaching cycle known as the Lamdre (the Path with the Result) in both eastern and western countries. His Holiness manifests profound wisdom and compassion, tirelessly working to establish monasteries, nunneries, and educational institutions and to impart the Buddha's teachings to countless students around the world.



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