

CHAPTER 2

CONFESSION OF FAULTS



Generating bodhicitta in one's stream of being [i.e. part 3.2] has three subsections:

1. Preliminaries
2. Main part
3. Conclusion

1. Preliminaries

This comprises the seven aspects of the seven-branch prayer, beginning with the making of offerings:

1. Offerings
2. Taking refuge
3. Confession
4. Rejoicing
5. Requesting
6. Supplication
7. Dedication of merit

1. Offerings

1. Offering worldly substances owned by oneself
2. Offering unowned worldly substances, i.e. those which exist unappropriated by anyone
3. Offering the physical body
4. Offerings emanated by the mind
5. Unsurpassable offerings
6. Offering homage

The first five are offerings of material goods, while the sixth is the offering of service. Among the material goods, the first four are surpassable, while the last is unsurpassable. Among the surpassable material goods, the first two are outer offerings, while the third is inner.

1. Offering worldly substances owned by oneself

2.1

**In order to take hold of this treasure of mind,
I make offerings properly to the oceans of good qualities—
The stainless jewels of the Tathāgata, the holy dharma,
And the sons of the Buddhas.**

The basis is the ‘Tathāgata’ and so forth, i.e. the Three Jewels. ‘Stainless jewels’ and ‘oceans of good qualities’ refer to all three of them.

Physically and mentally, one 'makes offerings properly'—i.e. the offerings are magnificent and one's intentions are pure.

2. Offering unowned worldly substances [271]

2.2

I offer every flower and fruit there is,
Every kind of restorative,
All the wealth in the world,
And all the clear, refreshing waters.

2.3

Likewise, I offer bejewelled mountains,
Secluded and delightful forest groves,
Trees of paradise rich with blossoming flowers,
Many trees with branches laden with excellent fruit,

2.4

The beautiful fragrances of gods and men,
All incense, wish granting trees and bejewelled trees,
All kinds of crops, cultivated without effort,
And everything else worthy of offering, all ornamented
with

2.5

Lakes and pools adorned with lotus flowers,
Mellifluous with the song of wild geese,
In the endlessness of space and in innumerable worlds,
All completely unowned.

2.6

Thinking of these, I offer them properly
To the sages, supreme among men, and their sons.
Holy recipients, out of your compassion,
Please accept my offerings and think of me with kindness.

2.7

I am without merit and completely destitute;
I have no other wealth to give.

**Therefore, protectors, you who think only of the benefit of
others,
Please accept these for my benefit.**

The first two verses concern the particular things offered, mostly the objects of mankind, while what follows that is the possessions of other kinds of beings. ‘In the endlessness of space and in innumerable worlds’ indicates the particular locus. Being ‘completely unowned’ indicates the particular criterion. ‘The sages, supreme among men, and their sons’ indicates the recipients. Verse 6 indicates the actual application. Verse 7 indicates the particular cause and purpose.

3. Offering the physical body

2.8

**To the conquerors and their sons, I offer
All my bodies. Sublime beings,
Please always accept them,
And I will be your devoted servant.**

2.9

**When I am under your protection,
I will fearlessly bring benefit to sentient beings in
conditioned existence.
I will completely overcome my former nonvirtues
And henceforth cease all other nonvirtues.**

The recipients are the conquerors and their sons. The offering substance is all one’s bodies. The practice is indicated by ‘sublime beings, please always accept them’. The type of offering is indicated in line 8d. The purpose of the offering is indicated in lines 9ab. The practice subsequent to the offering is indicated in lines 9cd.

4. Offerings emanated by the mind

1. Bathing
2. Robes and ornaments
3. Scented oil
4. Flowers
5. Incense

6. Food
7. Lamps
8. Palaces
9. Articles worthy of great beings
10. Offerings not for the purposes of enjoyment—the uninterrupted stream of veneration

1. Bathing

2.10

In freshly scented bathing houses,
With crystal floors, clear and bright,
And columns shimmering with jewels,
Decorated with canopies alight with pearls,

2.11

To the Tathāgatas and their sons
With many precious vases, filled with
Scented water that delights the senses, and with many songs
And music, I request to bathe the Buddhas' forms.

2.12

I then wipe dry their bodies with the finest cloths,
Fresh and fragranced with scents.

The first verse is emanating the bathing houses; 11a indicates the objects of veneration; 11b-d is requesting to bathe their bodies; and the final two lines indicate drying their bodies.

2. Robes and ornaments

To the holy ones I offer
Fragrant robes of appropriate colours.

2.13

With all kinds of excellent garments, soft and fine,
And an array of supreme ornaments, I adorn
Ārya Samantabhadra, Mañjughoṣa,
Avalokiteśvara and the others.

‘Appropriate colours’ means offering robes of the correct colours for those who dress as monastics, while ornaments and variously coloured garments are offered to those who dress as laypeople. [272]

3. Scented oils

2.14

**With supreme scents that permeate
The three thousand-fold world system, I anoint
The bodies of the lords of sages, blazing with light,
Like polishing pure, burnished gold.**

4. Flowers

2.15

**To the supreme objects of worship, the lords of sages, I offer
Delightful flowers such as mandararas, lotuses
And utpalas, all sweet-smelling and
Wonderfully laid out in garlands,**

5. Incense

2.16

**And I offer clouds of permeating incense, enchanting to the
mind,
From the finest incense sticks,**

6. Food

**And I offer many kinds of
Ambrosial foods and drinks.**

7. Lamps

2.17

**I offer jewelled lamps, arranged upon
Rows of golden lotus flowers.**

8. Palaces

**Their grounds fragrant with the perfume
Of flower petals scattered upon it,**

2.18

**I offer vast palaces, resonant with pleasing songs of praise,
Bright and resplendent with hanging ornaments of pearls and
jewels,
Ornamenting the vastnesses of space,
To those who have the nature of compassion.**

According to Ācārya Ratnākaraśānti,¹ verse 2.17 is actually arranged,

On grounds fragrant with the perfume
Of flower petals scattered upon it,
I offer jewelled lamps, arranged upon
Rows of golden lotus flowers.

The offerings of lamps and palaces are thus set out as verses 2.17 and 2.18, respectively.

9. Articles worthy of great beings

These articles comprise the precious parasol, lion throne, foot rest, cooling fan with a jewelled handle and so forth. Of these, the parasol with golden handle is described in the first of the next two verses:

2.19

**I offer to the lords of sages
Beautiful jewelled parasols with golden handles,
Decorated with handsome designs and
Held aloft in an arrangement joyful to behold,**

2.20

**And a multitude of other offerings,
With music delightful to hear.
I present billowing clouds of offerings
To soothe the sufferings of sentient beings.**

10. Offerings not for the purposes of enjoyment—the uninterrupted stream of veneration

Having offered objects for the purpose of pleasure, now one offers objects which are not for pleasure: an uninterrupted stream of veneration.

2.21

**May an uninterrupted rain
Of flowers and precious gems descend
Upon all the jewels of holy dharma,
The stupas and statues.**

5. Unsurpassable offerings

The masters of the tenth bhūmi, who have gained mastery over the six higher perceptions, make offerings to the Buddhas by manifesting light rays which arise from their actions:

2.22

**Just as Mañjughoṣa and others
Made offerings to the conquerors
Likewise I make offerings
To the Tathāgatas and their sons.**

6. Offering homage

1. Praise
2. Prostration

1. Praise

2.23

**I praise these oceans of good qualities
With oceans of melodious praise.
May these pleasing clouds of melodious praise
Always ascend to their ears.**

2. Prostration to the sources of refuge

2.24

To the Buddhas of the three times,

**To the dharma, and to the supreme among communities,
With bodies as numerous as atoms
I respectfully prostrate.**

The recipient, agent and action of prostration correspond to the first two lines, third and fourth lines, respectively. One also prostrates as follows: [273]

2.25

**I prostrate to the bases of bodhicitta,
And to the stupas,
And I prostrate to preceptors, ācāryas,
And the supreme practitioners.**

The 'bases of bodhicitta' means forms of the Buddha-body which are extraordinary supports of generating bodhicitta. Some commentaries say it means the bodhisattva pitakas.

2. Taking refuge

The first line indicates the particular time and the following three indicate the particular field and type of refuge:

2.26

**Until the essence of enlightenment,
I take refuge in the Buddha,
And likewise in the dharma,
And in the assembly of bodhisattvas.**

Taking refuge can be summarized in seven points:

1. Classifications
2. Explaining their distinguishing characteristics
3. Nature
4. Distinction of resultant refuge and generation of aspiration
bodhicitta
5. Purpose
6. The meaning of the term 'refuge'
7. The distinct trainings

1. Classifications: ordinary refuge and extraordinary refuge
2. Explaining their distinguishing characteristics

Sources: Śrāvakas emphasize as their source of refuge the result of the śrāvaka [vehicle]—the stage of an arhat. Having abandoned suffering, arhats listen to the dharma in the presence of the Buddha and teach it to others and thus they are the precious jewel of the saṅgha. Pratyekabuddhas, through their realization of the profound dependent origination, emphasize as their source of refuge the precious jewel of the dharma which dispels sufferings. Mahāyānists emphasize as their source of refuge the teacher, the Buddha, who frees them from fear. Taking hold of all three—taking the Buddha as the teacher, the dharma as the path and the saṅgha as companions—is the ‘causal’ refuge [as opposed to the ‘resultant’ refuge].²

Durations: Hīnayānists take refuge for as long as they live; Mahāyānists take refuge until they have attained ultimate enlightenment.

Causes: Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, wishing to be liberated from suffering, take refuge out of faith, whilst Mahāyānists [274] take refuge out of a compassion that wishes to free others from their sufferings.

Motivations: Śrāvakas take refuge for their own benefit, whilst Mahāyānists take refuge to free others from their sufferings.

These four distinguishing characteristics determine the specific superiorities of the extraordinary refuge.

3. Nature

The one who seeks the result—buddhahood, the source of fearlessness—takes the Buddha as the teacher, the dharma as the path and the saṅgha as companions. While striving for that result, even though one takes the Buddha as teacher and so forth [i.e. dharma as path, saṅgha as companions], if one takes other teachers such as Brahmā, it is not the proper refuge, since one still seeks inferior results.

4. Distinction of resultant refuge and generating aspiration bodhicitta

How then is the resultant refuge different from aspiration bodhicitta? To think, 'Seeking enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings, I will definitely attain the result' is merely an intention in the context of refuge, whereas in the generation of aspiration bodhicitta, one actually grasps the hook of a vow.

5. Purpose

By taking refuge, one can go on to take the prātimokṣa vows. Furthermore, one takes refuge in order to possess great protection, to restrain the karmic obscuration of erroneous objects of faith, to be counted as a holy person and to be protected by gods who have faith in the dharma.

6. The meaning of the term 'refuge'

When in the grip of a mass of obscurations, fears and sufferings, one seeks a refuge from them.

7. The training which follows refuge

From the ordinary perspective, it is said there are four primary trainings:

Attending holy beings, listening to the dharma, disciplining one's mind [275] and practising the dharma in conformity with the dharma.

And four associated trainings:

Being without sensory disturbances, perfectly undertaking the training, having love and compassion for sentient beings and endeavouring in making offerings at the appropriate times.

These quotations are from Ārya Asaṅga.³ From the extraordinary perspective, it is taught in the *Parinirvāṇa Sutra*:

After going for refuge to the Buddha,
One is a perfect follower of virtue,⁴
And should not take refuge
In any other deities.

If one seeks refuge in the dharma
One should abandon the intention to kill any life.
If one seeks refuge in the saṅgha,
One should not prostrate to the tīrthikas.⁵

3. Confession

1. The power of regret
2. The power of reliance
3. The power of antidote
4. The power of desisting



1. The power of regret

1. Consideration of each type of act individually
2. Longing to be freed swiftly
3. Consideration of individual meaningless acts

4. Fear of the results

1. Consideration of each type of act individually

1. Supplication to the objects of reliance
2. Consideration of the natures individually
3. Consideration of the objects individually

1. Supplication to the objects of reliance

2.27

**To the perfect Buddhas and bodhisattvas
Who dwell in all directions,
And who possess great compassion,
I supplicate you with joined palms.**

The first three lines indicate the objects of reliance, 'joined palms' indicates the act of outward respect and 'supplication' indicates the act of speech.

2. Consideration of the natures individually

2.28

**Having wandered without beginning
In this life and in others,
I stupidly performed nonvirtues,
Or commanded them to be done.**

2.29

**Compelled by ignorance and delusion,
I took pleasure in this.
Now seeing this was a terrible mistake,
I sincerely confess it to the protectors.**

One's own 'stupidity' is the general motivation for nonvirtue. The specific reason is the compulsion by ignorance and delusion. 'Nonvirtues' are one's own inherent misdeeds, attendant misdeeds and the inciting of others to the same. The last two lines indicate the content of the confession.

3. Consideration of the objects individually [276]

2.30

**Whatever harm I have done towards
The Three Jewels, my parents, my teachers and others,
Based on the defilements,
And whatever nonvirtues I, burdened with nonvirtue**

2.31

**And afflicted with many faults, have done
With my body, speech or mind,
These deeds, now utterly unbearable to me,
I confess before the guides of the world.**

The first two lines indicate the substantive objects. The next line indicates the motivation. The next three lines indicate the basis. The last two lines are a consideration of results of this.

2. Longing to be freed swiftly

1. The aspects of longing
2. Ceasing to rely on the unreliable

1. The aspects of longing

2.32

**I will die before
My nonvirtues have been purified.
So that I may be saved from them,
I pray for your protection to come swiftly.**

The first two lines indicate the negative actions which have not been confessed. The next line is the intention and the last line is the supplication to the objects of reliance.

2. Ceasing to rely on the unreliable

2.33

**The untrustworthy Lord of Death
Will not wait for me to be ready.**

**Regardless of whether I am sick or healthy,
This fleeting life is unstable.**

Although one may have a general intention to confess, if one wonders whether it should be done now or later, consider how unsuitable it is to rely on something unreliable.

3. Consideration of individual meaningless acts

1. Various kinds of nonvirtuous actions have been committed
2. Consideration of their meaninglessness
3. Logically establishing that point
4. Empirically establishing that point
5. Summary

1. Various kinds of nonvirtuous actions have been committed

2.34

**Everything must be left behind and I must go, too.
Yet, without understanding this,
Because of friends and foes,
I have carried out all kinds of nonvirtue.**

The first two lines indicate the intention; the third line indicates the objects of the intention and the last line indicates the deed itself.

2. Consideration of their meaninglessness

2.35

**My foes will become nothing.
My friends will become nothing.
I, too, will become nothing.
In this way, all of us will become nothing.**

Contemplate the fruitlessness of negative acts for their sakes.

3. Logically establishing that point

2.36

Like experiences in dreams,

**We get involved with this and that,
But these will become only memories,
For whatever has passed will never be seen again.**

The logical subject is the objects of experience, i.e. that which ‘we get involved with’. The conclusion is that they will pass from objects of experience into objects of memory. The reason is that whatever passes away will never be seen again. The example which proves that pervasion⁶ is their likeness to ‘the experiences in a dream.’

4. Empirically establishing that point

2.37

**In the short time of this life,
Many friends and foes have already passed,
But whatever unbearable nonvirtues
I carried out because of them still await me.**

The first two lines indicate that the objects of intention are unreliable. Nevertheless, since nonvirtues are impermanent, perhaps they are harmless? Although the nonvirtue itself may have ceased, it is taught that the continuity of imprints remains, as indicated in the second two lines.

5. Summary

2.38

**Not even understanding
That I, too, am just as temporary as they were,
Out of ignorance, desire and hatred,
I have done many nonvirtues.**

The first two lines indicate that one has not taken the antidote—the understanding of impermanence. [277] The last two lines indicate the various kinds of action.

4. Fear of the results

1. The inevitable result: the transmigration to another rebirth
2. Fear of experiencing this

3. The reason why the fear will not abate
 4. The aspects of suffering
1. The inevitable result: the transmigration to another rebirth

2.39

**If, without respite, day and night,
This life is running out,
And there is no granting of an extension,
Why would death not come for someone like me?**

The logical subject is 'me'. The probandum is that death will come, i.e. 'Why would death not come?' The reason is indicated in the first two lines, i.e. the exhaustion of life and the third line, i.e. no extension of life. Therefore, since migrating to the next life is certain, it is inevitable that it will be experienced.

2. Fear of experiencing this

2.40

**Lying on my death bed,
Though surrounded by all my friends and family,
The sensations of life ending
Will be experienced by me alone.**

2.41

**When seized by the messengers of the Lord of Death,
What good is family, what good are friends?
Merit alone will protect me then,
But I have never really relied on it.**

2.42

**Oh protectors—I was unconcerned and,
Not realizing this would be so terrifying,
I carried out many nonvirtues
For the sake of this impermanent life.**

The first verse indicates the ceasing of life, the second indicates the approach of the suffering of the next life and the third indicates the aspects of regret.

3. The reason why the fear will not abate

2.43

Even now, when someone is told
They are to be taken to a torture chamber, they are terrified.
Their appearance quickly changes:
Their mouth becomes dry, their eyes bulge and so on.

2.44

What need to mention the utter despair
Of being in the grasp of the terrifying
Messengers of the Lord of Death,
And being sick with terror.

The first two lines give an example of fear for the harms of this life. The next two lines complete the example. The second verse relates the example to the harms of future lives.

4. The aspects of suffering

2.45

'Can anyone protect me
From such a great horror?'
With gaping eyes and a terrified aspect,
I will search in the four directions for a refuge,

2.46

But not seeing any refuge in the four directions,
I will be enveloped in despair.
Then, when I have no refuge,
What am I going to do?

2. The power of reliance

1. Taking hold of the general supports
2. Taking hold of the particular supports of specific bodhisattvas

3. Having taken hold of the supports, the subsequent practice—
to follow their instructions

1. Taking hold of the general supports

2.47

**Therefore, to the conquerors, the protectors,
Who strive in their purpose of protecting beings,
And whose great power dispels all fears,
I go for refuge from this day forth.**

2.48

**In the dharma taken to heart,
Which dispels fear of saṃsāra,
And in the assembly of bodhisattvas,
I likewise completely take refuge.**

The Buddhas are ‘conquerors’ of the benefit of self in respect of abandoning the defilements and possessing good qualities. They are ‘protectors’ of beings in that they fulfil the benefit of others:

Everything that is harmful,
Non-methods [of mistaken paths], the lower realms,
The transitory collections and lesser vehicles—
Because of protecting from these, he is supreme among
refuges.⁷

Thus the protectors of beings [278] strive in these ways, using manifold powers and dispelling fears of saṃsāra. The ‘dharma’ means the dharma of realization which, when it is taken to heart, is cessation—freedom of the dhātu from adventitious impurities—and the dharma of the path, which dispels fears of saṃsāra. The ‘saṅgha’ means the community of bodhisattvas.

2. Taking hold of the particular supports of specific bodhisattvas

2.49

**Overwhelmed by fear,
I offer myself to Samantabhadra.**

To Mañjughoṣa
I make an offering of my own body.

2.50

To the protector Avalokiteśvara
Who unerringly acts out of compassion,
I call out with a desperate cry,
Begging him to protect me, someone so burdened with
nonvirtue.

2.51

To Ārya Ākāśagarbha
And to Kṣitigarbha, too,
And to all the lords of great compassion,
Seeking refuge, I cry out for their help.

2.52

To Vajrapāṇi, the sight of whom
Makes malevolent beings, like the messengers
Of the Lord of Death, scatter to the four directions,
I go for refuge.

3. Having taken hold of the supports, the subsequent practice—to follow their instructions

2.53

In the past, I defied your advice but,
Now, seeing such great horrors,
I pray that my truly going for refuge to you
Will dispel them.

3. The power of antidote

1. The reasons to persevere in the antidote
2. Advice to engage in it quickly

1. The reasons to persevere in the antidote

1. The example of an illness

2. The example of a precipice

1. The example of an illness

2.54

**If I need to follow the doctor's advice
Out of fear of just a common illness,
What can be said of being constantly sick
With the hundred faults of desire and so forth.**

'Common illness' means illnesses such as phlegmatic disorders etc. If frightened even of that, what can be said of the necessity to rely upon the antidotes to the illnesses of the defilements?

How is that worse than common illnesses?

2.55

**If any one of these
Can destroy everyone in the world,
And if no other cure for them
Is anywhere to be found,**

2.56

**Then the attitude of disregarding
The instructions of the omniscient physician,
Which remediate all these maladies,
Is extremely stupid and contemptible.**

The first two lines indicate the great faults of such illness. The next two lines indicate the rarity of the remedy. The second verse indicates the practice which becomes the supreme remedy.

2. The example of a precipice

2.57

**If I need to be careful
Near an ordinary, shallow ridge,
What can be said of this abyss
Which plummets for a thousand miles?**

To ‘plummet for a thousand miles’ indicates wandering in the depths of saṃsāra without beginning or end.

2. Advice to engage in it quickly

2.58

**‘Surely I won’t die today!’
It is hardly appropriate to be so casual,
When the time of my end
Will inevitably come.**

2.59

**What can take away this horror?
What can I do to be free from it?
If the end is inevitable,
How can I be relaxed and content?**

The first four lines indicate making certain of impermanence. The next line indicates there being no cause of permanence. The last three lines are an exhortation to be diligent.

4. The power of desisting

1. Restraint for the next life
2. Purifying former lives
3. Conclusion of the chapter

1. Restraint for the next life

1. Fearing the consequences [279]
2. Speciality of the intention to abandon

1. Fearing the consequences

2.60

**The past was experienced and now it is gone.
What is left of that for me now?
Through my attachment to it,
I defied the instructions of the teacher.**

2.61

**If I must leave behind this life
And all its friends and acquaintances,
Going on alone to who knows where,
How can these friends and enemies matter?**

The first line is reflecting on the nature of impermanence, the next is on the cessation of any lasting remainder, the next is on attachment to the impermanent remnants not being sensible and the fourth is on wrong practices not being appropriate. The next four lines indicate definitively giving up worldly interests.

2. Speciality of the intention to abandon

2.62

**'Suffering comes from nonvirtue.
How can I be definitively freed from that?'
Day and night, I should constantly consider
Nothing but this very thought.**

The first line indicates the resultant suffering and the rest is bringing the cause of that to mind.

2. Purifying former lives

2.63

**Insensibly and ignorantly,
Whatever nonvirtues, whether inherent
Or attendant,
I have done,**

2.64

**In the presence of the protectors,
With palms joined and desperately aware of the suffering,
Again and again I prostrate
And confess all of these acts.**

'I' (myself) am the one who is to make the confession. An 'inherent misdeed' is an act of nonvirtue unconnected to any vows of training. A

misdeed that is 'attendant' refers to nonvirtue which is attendant upon the taking of a vow.⁸

Perhaps then one should not take vows at all, for then it would be impossible to commit the nonvirtues attendant upon them. This is not correct. If a vow is maintained, merit increases, which is why vows are so important. Why does merit increase with the maintenance of a vow? Attendant misdeeds are extremely serious acts, so to prevent their occurrence, it is necessary to maintain a protective cordon around the vow, like maintaining a bamboo fence in order to preserve a fruit grove.

3. Conclusion of the chapter

2.65

Guides of the world, please look upon

My mistakes and nonvirtues.

They lack any goodness at all.

From now on, I will not do them anymore.

In the first two lines, one acknowledges one's faults as faults. In the latter two, having seen those faults, one promises to refrain from them.