

# The Trainings of Bodhicitta

There are two levels of practicing of bodhicitta – aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta.

## I. Aspiring bodhicitta

This has two levels:

- If someone has generated a **mere aspiration** to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, this does not entail any commitment
- When generating **aspiring bodhicitta by way of ritual**, one makes the promise in front of a master or a visualized merit field that one will practice actual bodhicitta and work for the benefit of sentient beings until one has achieved enlightenment. It entails keeping to 5 precepts. The first four stabilize the bodhicitta one has generated, make it increase, and keep it from degenerating **in this life**; the fifth precept is for the sake of ensuring that bodhicitta will be met with and will not degenerate in **future lives**:

### *1. Recollecting the benefits of bodhicitta every day*

The **ten benefits** of aspiring bodhicitta mentioned in *Bodhisattva Levels* are divided into two groups:

*You become a field*

1. You become an object of veneration
2. You outshine hearer foe-destroyers by way of your lineage
3. You become a field of merit
4. You become a support for the whole world, like the earth

*You become endowed with protective merit*

5. You will be guarded by protectors from harm-givers etc.
6. Mantras and so on will succeed for you
7. Wherever you dwell there will not be famines and other sources of fear
8. You will be gentle-minded, without anger, and patient
9. It will be difficult for you to be born in the lower realms
10. The benefits are described as limitless by way of analogy

### *2. Generating bodhicitta three times a day and three times a night*

The important part is the mental attitude. You can generate bodhicitta by mindfully reciting the following formula:

I go for refuge until I am enlightened  
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.  
By my merit from generosity and the other perfections  
May I become a buddha for the sake of all migrating beings.

### *3. Never giving up any living being*

Do not think “I will not help this person any more!”

### *4. Always working at the two collections of merit and wisdom*

Make daily offerings with your body, speech, and mind to the Three Jewels, etc.

***5. Practising the four white dharmas and avoiding the four black dharmas:***

The four black dharmas to be avoided are:

- i. Deceiving your abbots, masters, gurus, etc.
- ii. Causing others to regret virtue
- iii. Saying unpleasant things about bodhisattvas
- iv. Acting with deceit and dissimulation without an attitude of responsibility towards others

The four white dharmas to be practiced are:

- i. Abandoning lying knowingly
- ii. Having an attitude of responsibility towards others without deceit or dissimulation
- iii. Thinking of bodhisattvas as if they were the Teacher and praising them
- iv. Ripening sentient beings

If you give up the **aspiration to achieve enlightenment** or give up the **wish to work for all sentient beings**, you lose the aspiring bodhicitta and must **take it again through ritual**.

This can be done by:

Visualizing the merit field in front of yourself

Performing the seven-limb practice

Offering a mandala and making the request

Taking the uncommon Mahayana refuge

Reciting the promise:

*I go for refuge to the Three Jewels.*

*I confess all negativities individually.*

*I rejoice in the virtues of migrating beings.*

*I mentally uphold a buddha's enlightenment.*

*I go for refuge until I am enlightened*

*To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.*

*In order to fully accomplish the welfare of myself and others,*

*I will generate the mind of enlightenment.*

If you **act in a manner that opposes any of the other bodhisattva root vows**, since you have not taken the actual bodhisattva vows, it is not a downfall but it is still faulty conduct. In this case you need to **purify it by way of the four opponent powers**:

- 1. The power of the base – going for refuge and generating bodhicitta
- 2. The power of regret
- 3. The power of resolve
- 4. The power of the antidote

## II. Engaging bodhicitta

The second level of practice is, after having generated the mind of enlightenment and taken the aspiring bodhicitta through ritual, to develop **engaging bodhicitta by taking the actual bodhisattva vows**. When you take the actual bodhisattva vows, you commit yourself to engaging in the bodhisattva conduct – the practice of the six perfections – in addition to the previous commitments. This is ensured by keeping the 18 root and 46 secondary bodhisattva vows.

### *The Eighteen Root Downfalls*

1. praising oneself and belittling others
2. not sharing one's wealth and Dharma with others
3. not forgiving even when others apologize
4. doubting and denying the doctrine of the Great Vehicle
5. taking offerings intended for the Three Jewels
6. abandoning the doctrine through sectarianism
7. causing an ordained person to disrobe
8. committing one of the five actions of immediate retribution
9. holding perverted views
10. destroying places such as towns
11. teaching emptiness to the untrained
12. discouraging others from seeking full enlightenment
13. causing others to break the vows of individual liberation
14. belittling those who follow the path of individual liberation
15. proclaiming false realizations, such as the realization of emptiness
16. accepting gifts that have been misappropriated from the belongings of the Three Jewels
17. laying down harmful regulations and passing false judgement
18. giving up the pledge of the altruistic aspiration

### *The Forty-six Secondary Downfalls*

#### *Downfalls Related to Generosity*

1. not making offerings every day to the Three Jewels
2. acting out of desire because of discontent
3. not paying respect to those senior in ordination and in the taking of the bodhisattva vows
4. not answering others' questions out of negligence though one is capable of doing so
5. selfishly not accepting invitations out of pride, the wish to hurt other's feelings, anger, or laziness
6. not accepting others' gifts out of jealousy, anger, etc. or simply to hurt others
7. not giving the Dharma teachings to those who wish to learn

#### *Downfalls Related to Morality*

8. ignoring and insulting someone who has committed any of the five actions of immediate retribution or defiled his or her vows of individual liberation, or treating him or her with contempt

9. not observing the precepts of moral conduct because one wishes to ingratiate oneself with others
10. complying with the minor precepts when the situation demands one's disregard of them for the better benefit of others
11. not committing one of the seven negative actions of body, speech, and mind when universal love and compassion deem it necessary in the particular instance
12. accepting things that are acquired through one of the five types of wrong livelihood
13. wasting time on frivolous actions such as carelessness, lack of pure morality, dancing, playing music just for fun, gossiping, and also distracting others who are meditating
14. misconceiving that bodhisattvas do not attempt to attain liberation and failing to view the afflictions as objects to be eliminated
15. not living up to one's precepts
16. not correcting others who are motivated by the afflictions

*Downfalls Related to Patience*

17. parting from the four noble disciplines
18. neglecting those who are angry with one
19. refusing to accept the apologies of others
20. acting out thoughts of anger

*Downfalls Related to Joyous Effort*

21. gathering circles of disciples out of desire for respect and material gain
22. wasting time and energy on trivial matters
23. being addicted to frivolous talk

*Downfalls Related to Concentration*

24. not seeking the means to develop concentration
25. not abandoning the five obscurations that hinder meditative stabilization
26. being addicted to the joy of meditative absorption

*Downfalls Related to Wisdom*

27. abandoning the Theravada path as unnecessary for one following the Mahayana
28. exerting effort principally in another system of practice while neglecting the Mahayana teachings that one already has received
29. without good reason exerting effort to learn or practice the treatises of non-Buddhists that are not the proper object of one's endeavor
30. beginning to favor and take delight in the treatises of non-Buddhists although studying them for a good reason
31. abandoning any part of the Mahayana by thinking it is uninteresting or unpleasant
32. praising oneself and belittling others out of pride or anger
33. not going to Dharma gatherings or teachings
34. disparaging one's spiritual master

*Downfalls Related to the Ethical Practice to Benefit Others*

35. not helping those who are in need
36. not helping people who are sick
37. not alleviating the suffering of others

38. not explaining what is proper conduct to those who are reckless
39. not benefiting in return those who have benefited oneself
40. not relieving the sorrow of others
41. not giving material possessions to those in need
42. not working for the welfare of one's circles of friends, students, employees, or helpers
43. not acting in accordance with the wishes of others when doing so does not bring harm to oneself or others
44. not praising those who have good qualities
45. not acting with whatever means are necessary according to the circumstances to stop someone who is doing a harmful action
46. not using miraculous powers, if one possesses this ability, in order to stop others from doing unwholesome actions

### ***Breaking a Root Vow***

*The four factors needed to break a vow*

- i. not being mindful of the disadvantages
- ii. having no desire to stop the action
- iii. indulging in the act with great pleasure and delight
- iv. lacking any shame or embarrassment

*The two root downfalls that do not need all four factors*

There are two root downfalls that do not need the four factors to be complete. Simply doing them makes it a complete action. Those two are the ninth (holding perverted views) and the eighteenth (giving up the pledge of altruistic aspiration). All we need is to simply have that mind in order to completely break the vow.

### ***Restoring the Bodhisattva Vows***

Once you have broken one of the 18 root vows, you must **take the bodhisattva vows again**, either from a master or in front of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the merit field.

This can be done by:

- Visualizing the merit field in front of yourself
- Performing the seven-limb practice
- Offering a mandala and making the request
- Taking the uncommon Mahayana refuge
- Reciting the vow:

*I go for refuge to the Three Jewels.  
I confess all negativities individually.  
I rejoice in the virtues of migrating beings.  
I mentally uphold a buddha's enlightenment.*

*I go for refuge until I am enlightened  
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.*

*In order to fully accomplish the welfare of myself and others,  
I will generate the mind of enlightenment.*

*Having generated the mind of supreme enlightenment,  
I will invite all sentient beings to be my guests.  
I will undertake the supreme pleasing conduct of enlightenment.  
May I achieve buddhahood for the benefit of all migrating beings.*

If an infraction of any of the secondary vows has occurred or a breach of the root vows without the four binding factors being complete, it is not necessary to take the bodhisattva vows again. It is sufficient to purify the vow with the four opponent powers as before.

## Revision Questions

1. What is the difference between aspiring and engaging Bodhicitta?
2. Which one of them is the actual bodhisattva vow?
3. What are the commitments once you have taken the aspiring bodhicitta by ritual?
4. What are the commitments of engaging bodhicitta?
5. As long as you do not have the actual bodhisattva vows, do behaviors that contradict the actual bodhisattva vow need to be purified? If so, how?
6. For how long does one take the bodhisattva vow, for 24 hours, for one lifetime, or until enlightenment?

*May all sentient beings be guided by a perfect Mahayana virtuous spiritual friend.  
May they all perfectly aspire to enlightenment.  
May they abide in the bodhisattva conduct of the six perfections.  
May they quickly accomplish perfectly complete buddhahood  
and perfectly benefit all sentient beings.*