

Bodhicitta

(Bodhichitta)

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Introduction

When I attended the Maitreya Relic Tour this fall, I came across this quote from Lama Zopa and it inspired me to such an extent that I decided to do my essay on the topic of “bodhicitta.” I have since seen different versions of the above from other sources but Lama Zopa’s version is my favorite. The quote follows:

**Get up with Bodhicitta.
Eat with Bodhicitta.
Go to work with Bodhicitta.
Sleep with Bodhicitta.
Study with Bodhicitta.
Experience problems with Bodhicitta.
Die with Bodhicitta.**

This quote denotes how bodhicitta, the union of compassion and wisdom, or the awakened heart/mind should be all-encompassing and pervasive in our lives, not an ornamental philosophy to espouse and take down from the shelf now and then, but an integral part of our thoughts and actions. With our thoughts and actions based on bodhicitta, we can become bodhisattvas.

I recognize that Bodhicitta is a vast subject (one could go on writing indefinitely) so this essay will be generalized in nature. I have tried to include something on the preliminaries, the two different types of bodhicitta, and various practices. At first I thought I could do it leaving out any materials relating to Shantideva (and Najarjuna before him) as I wanted to save all of it for the two April presentations in which I am scheduled to participate, but I realized that it would be incomplete to not include some references to Shantideva. He is, after all, my primary source of inspiration and his words have/had a tangible impact on my life. I confess that my essay has many references to Tibetan Buddhism but that is probably natural as I completed a module on “The Mind of Enlightenment” in my studies with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. Bodhicitta, as it is studied in Tibetan Buddhism, from where I derive most of my learning, is familiar ground for me. I am, however, mindful that the Chinese Buddhist tradition is somewhat different.

Lama Zopa puts the importance of bodhicitta so simply and put it within the reach of everyone:

Our lives are so busy; we are preoccupied by many family and other obligations. When your life is so busy, there is no other refuge than your good heart. Your good heart is the most important thing in which to take refuge. Even though you might want to do long practices, sitting meditation, many prayers or retreat, your life is usually so busy that you don't have time. You have too many other obligations; you can't do everything that you'd like. If this is the case, your only refuge is your good heart, your compassion, the thought of benefiting others, bodhicitta. If you take refuge in that, if you can practice that, no matter how busy you are - even if you cannot do many hours' sitting meditation, prayers, preliminary practices and so forth - you will have no regrets over lost opportunities, now or in the future. In this life and in all future lives, you will go from happiness to happiness to enlightenment.

As I write this essay, I never want to forget that the study of Bodhicitta is very important because its purpose is to teach us how to have bodhicitta. When all is said and done, though, it is the actual *practice* of bodhicitta (“the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel”) that is ultimately the most important thing.

Bodhicitta is made up of the word bodhi signifying “awakened” and citta meaning (according to your source) “mind,” or “consciousness,” or “spirit.” The words “essence,” “core,” “foundation,” or “crux” are just some of the words that I thought about to use when speaking of Bodhicitta but the word “heart” is the most appropriate. Bodhicitta *is* the **heart** of Mahayana Buddhism; it is the most apt word because bodhicitta is all about “the good heart.” Everything we study and do is for this end—the development of bodhicitta and enlightenment, enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings. Developing our minds, meditating, reading, and studying all lead to this end. If someone were to ask, “Tell me what Buddhism is all about in just a few sentences” I would refer to the Four Noble Truths and Bodhicitta in my answer. At the very least, we should consider the immediate benefit of bodhicitta—that it reduces all our fears and worries. The long-term benefit is that it totally eliminates them because it is the main antidote to the self-centered mind. Shantideva said, ***“I invite every living being to this festival giving both immediate and lasting joy.”*** In addition, bodhicitta is a practice that can be done by Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike because there is absolutely no conflict with any religion’s prevailing belief system, nor any conflict with East-West differences in culture.

There are methods to generate bodhicitta; the following lists are two of them:

Four-Point Mind Training

1. Equanimity;
2. Contemplate the faults of self-cherishing;
3. Contemplate the good qualities of cherishing others;
4. Exchanging self and others.

Seven-Point Mind Training

1. Equanimity
2. All beings have or could have been my mother in previous lives;
3. Remember your mother’s kindness;
4. Repay her kindness
5. Generate great love;
6. Generate great love;
7. Give up self-cherishing and egoism.

There are two types of bodhicitta: aspirational and engaging.

Aspirational Bodhicitta is the complete wish to overcome our emotional afflictions and delusions to realize our full potentials to bring all fellow beings to the enlightened state free from suffering.

Aspirational Bodhicitta has two stages

1) *Heartfelt wishing* to become a Buddha to benefit all sentient beings. This is followed by the desire to help all others become a Buddha

2) *Pledging* never to abandon this aim until it is achieved.

Engaged Bodhicitta means engaging in the practices and behavior that bring about this goal and taking the bodhisattva vows to restrain from actions detrimental to it.

In taking bodhisattva vows the trainee bodhisattva vows to abstain from certain negative acts that would defer the bodhisattva reaching enlightenment and to be of as much benefit to others as is possible. The vows include eighteen actions that constitute a root downfall and forty-six types of wrong behavior. These two lists are at the end of this essay.

Some of these root downfalls are complex, difficult to understand and require much explanation. In order to have a correct understanding, many of them require an expansion that would make this essay interminably long. Also, there is great diversity in how these root downfalls are phrased and understood. That is why I was initially reluctant to enumerate them in a list that oversimplifies them. Simply reading them in a list may give rise to much misunderstanding. Tibetan Buddhism is replete with lists of all sorts. The good news is that there are ways to mend broken Bodhisattva vows. Simply put, they are: feeling regret about the action, promising to try our best not to repeat the action, going back to a positive approach in our lives and rededicating our hearts to enlightenment, and taking action to counterbalance our transaction

The Bodhisattva Vows which I took in sincerity (at KTD with Bardor Tulku Rinpoche, year 2000) were premature, yes, but they planted the seeds in me. In a sense I sometimes think I understand what Shantideva meant by “flashes of lightning” and even at times developed “aspirational bodhicitta” though I didn’t quite understand all the implications of my vows at the time I took them, not even understanding that the vow was irreversible in this lifetime and in others to follow. (There are many different versions of the Bodhisattva Vows). I remember one time, in particular, when I think I understood bodhicitta and the emptiness that is its foundation. I was in the surgical waiting room while my daughter was undergoing surgery for breast cancer. I

remember feeling a unity with all who had experienced the same suffering; there was a sense of deep connection, a sense that we were all in the same family. While I waited, I wrote in my journal:

I have become extra sensitive to all around us, seeing suffering not from a generalized global perspective, but up close and personal, knowing all who suffer are really connected. As they say in Zen “it’s just the skin bag” that separates us. What made me think I was so different from anyone else who suffers, who desires *not to suffer*, who wants happiness and peace?...I have had to re-learn some very elementary and basic things (I say “relearn” because I think I once knew them): namely, that yesterday belongs to yesterday, that yesterday’s bitterness can poison today, that sickness and death are a part of life, that I cannot hold on to anyone or anything, and finally that I am responsible and accountable for all time for my actions. Yes, I know they sound hauntingly familiar. In fact, I claim them as my daily practice—*The Five Remembrances*, but I now really have experiential knowledge of them; they are not just beautiful sentences from the Buddha that I keep framed on my desk.

And so, I would say that something has happened to my heart. I feel as though the great big hand of the universe has taken my puny heart in hand and kneaded it to a suppleness, a vulnerable porousness, a softness that takes on, receives and blends with all suffering in this world, not from any phony intellectual gleaning, but an understanding from where suffering can only be truly understood—in the softness of the human heart.

That day, I felt all barriers dissolve. There was no “I” no “others.” We were all the same in our human joys, frailties and suffering. I believe that I went beyond just an intellectual understanding of emptiness that day, emptiness which is part and parcel of bodhicitta. I know we should not attach to feelings but I will never forget the feeling of complete ease that day.

To make reference to my former studies of bodhicitta (FPMT), it was very complex. I am sure that I did not understand all of it; I know that I do not know the twenty-two types of bodhicitta, for example and I have to be reminded of the difference between “king-like,” “ferryman-like,” or “herdsman-like” bodhicitta. Maybe these teachings are particular to Tibetan Buddhism only.

Tonglen (another Tibetan practice) means “giving and taking” (or, sending and taking), and it refers to a [meditation](#) practice found in [Tibetan Buddhism](#). It is bodhicitta in action. In the practice, one visualizes taking onto oneself the suffering of others, and giving one's own happiness and success to others. As such it is a training in altruism in its most extreme form. The function of the practice is to:

- reduce selfish attachment
- increase a sense of [renunciation](#)
- create positive [karma](#) by giving and helping
- develop loving-kindness and [bodhicitta](#)
- it refers to all of the [Six Perfections](#) of giving, ethics, patience, joyous effort, concentration and wisdom, which are the practices of a [Bodhisattva](#).

This practice is summarized in the Seven-Point Mind Training referred to above which are attributed to the great Indian Buddhist teacher, Atisha, born in 982 CE. They were first written down by [Kadampa](#) master [Langri Thangpa](#). The practice became more widely known when Geshe [Chekawa Yeshe Dorje](#) summarized the points

in his *Seven Points of Training the Mind*. This list of mind training ([lojong](#)) proverbs or slogans compiled by Chekawa is often referred to as the Atisha Slogans.

There are Four Trainings for Bodhicitta Resolve Not to Decline in This Life

- 1) Each day and night, recalling the advantages of the Bodhicitta motivation.
- 2) Remembering, reaffirming and intensifying this motivation by rededicating our hearts to our enlightenment and the enlightenment of others, three times each day and three times each night.
- 3) Striving to build up positive mental states and deep awareness and wisdom. Benefiting and helping others using all the skills and means at our disposal, as effectively as we can, and doing so with as much deep awareness of reality as is possible.
- 4) Never giving up trying to help anyone, or at least wishing to be able to do so, no matter how difficult he or she may be.

I like the Dalai Lama's straightforward definition:

The one is the aspiration to bring about others' welfare and that condition induces the second aspiration which is to gain enlightenment oneself. Now both of these aspirations one needs to practice. The development of the aspiration to bring about others' enlightenment is brought about by practice in two ways. One is through considering the switching of self and other--the equality of self and other and then the switching of self and other. The other way is through reflecting on the Seven Quintessential Instructions of Cause and Effect. The essence of this process is to realise that all other sentient beings as well as yourself are very similar in that everyone wants happiness and doesn't want suffering and in that suffering is removable.

The Bodhisattva's actions also include the Six Perfections (paramitas) which are: generosity, ethics, patience, joyous effort, concentration and wisdom. Without going into too much detail, I will say that these paramitas interface wonderfully with one another: for example, you need joyous effort to practice generosity; you need concentration to practice joyous effort, etc.

Lama Yeshe said in one of his teachings that one of the main causes of our dissatisfaction is that we are not helping others the best we can. I believe that to be true. In addition, he stated that "*bodhicitta energy is alchemical. It transforms all your ordinary actions of body, speech and mind – your entire life into positivity and benefit for others, like iron transmuted into gold.*" Maybe active bodhicitta can begin very simply, just maybe as Lama Yeshe says: "*To help the people around you, you have to maintain a happy, peaceful vibration.*" It can be challenging to overcome the self-indulgent attitude of "woe is me," and bad habit energy. However, I think that it is a good starting point to make an effort to exude gentle, peaceful vibrations. From my

experience, I have observed how it calms and assures others. Maybe we should look at this in another way: again, the Lama Yeshe, quoting H.H. the Dalai Lama (as he expresses himself playfully): “*As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said recently, 'if you're going to be selfish, do it on a grand scale; wide selfishness is better than narrow!'*” What did His Holiness mean? He was saying that, in a way, bodhicitta is like a huge selfish attitude because when you dedicate yourself to others with loving kindness you get a lot more pleasure than you would otherwise.”

There is a quote from H. H. the Dalai Lama - "If I have any understanding of compassion and the practice of the bodhisattva path, it is entirely on the basis of this text that I possess it." The following (from Shantideva) is a favorite of the Dalai Lama:

**Take advantage of this human boat;
Free yourself from sorrow's mighty stream!
This vessel will be later hard to find.
The time that you have now, you fool, is not for sleep!**

This is from Shantideva: “*All the suffering in the world comes from seeking pleasure for oneself. All the happiness in the world comes from seeking pleasure for others.*”

**If with kindly generosity
One merely has the wish to soothe
The aching heads of other beings,
Such merit has no bounds.**

Lama Yeshe stated in one of his teachings that:

There are so many practices you can do - what's the most important? What's the most important thing to practise in life? Meditation. What's the most important meditation, the most important Dharma practice? I would say that it's the good heart, your very precious thought of loving kindness, compassion; the thought of benefiting others, bodhicitta. That is the best meditation, the best Dharma practice. As Shantideva also said when talking about the benefits of bodhicitta in the Bodhicharyavatara, "After checking for many eons, the buddhas discovered that bodhicitta is the most beneficial thing for sentient beings."

To practice bodhicitta, one should work on developing “equanimity,” Equanimity can be a neutral feeling where one feels neither pleasure nor displeasure, to be dispassionate. It is a mind that is equally balanced between distracted or dull. Immeasurable equanimity is the absence of partiality, having the same feeling for all. Equalising oneself with others; reflecting on the disadvantages of the self-cherishing attitude, reflecting on the advantages of cherishing others, the actual exchanging oneself with others, and taking and giving. This is basically more of an “active or engaging Bodhicitta” insofar as the last step is quite a huge undertaking and, although symbolic, it is here where one can practice bodhicitta.

Relative to that is an interesting translation from Spanish that I did when I was eighteen years of age and studying in the Latin American Institute: The quote is from the book, *La Piedad Peligrosa* or [*Beware of Pity* by Stefan Zweig](#):

There exists two kinds of compassion: one, a superficial one, that tries to cope with this foreign sorrow. This compassion really is not true compassion but an impulsive manner of banishing this strange pain from one's soul. The other compassion—the only important one—is not a sentimental but a productive compassion that knows what it is about and is willing to share any suffering up to the limit of its efforts and even beyond that limit

This passage gained further significance for me when I studied Bodhicitta and realized that Bodhicitta is not pity and sentimentality; it does not depend on emotion...it is true compassion. Too many of us confuse compassion with pity...they are not the same. And while compassion and bodhicitta are not strictly synonymous, compassion is necessary for bodhicitta. Some sources say that relative bodhicitta and compassion are indeed synonymous. That strong desire to achieve enlightenment for the sake of other sentient creatures must, of necessity, be based on compassion.

Khenchen Konchog Gyaltsen Rinpoche explains:

"Loving-kindness and compassion alone are not bodhicitta. They constitute the critical foundation for bodhicitta, but should not be mistaken for the mind of enlightenment itself. Some places say that compassion is the same as bodhicitta, but this is not always so. There are many beings, even animals, who have love and compassion, but they do not have bodhicitta. On the other hand, if you have bodhicitta, then compassion and loving-kindness are definitely also present as they are its predecessors. So, in order to cultivate bodhicitta properly, it is important to study and practice these two first. Plant the seed of bodhicitta in the well-ploughed ground of your mind that has been fertilized with compassion and moistened with loving-kindness."

The first intent of bodhicitta is to eliminate "self-cherishing" ("self-cherishing" is a term that was used much in my previous studies of bodhicitta). In order to practice bodhicitta, we must do away with our selfishness and self-interest, our habitual mode of thinking when we assess any situation, "How does this affect *me*?" "Will *I* benefit from this?" "Will *I* be harmed from this?" We are always thinking of the "*I*," the self, the self that ultimately does not exist. So, our self-cherishing is a result of our delusion, the delusion of thinking of ourselves as solid entities. Emptiness is another very important pre-cursor to bodhicitta; "***regard all dharmas as dreams.***" To see everything as inter-related can bring one to bodhicitta. We can train in having compassion for all sentient beings and progress to immeasurable compassion, which is to regard all beings as our mothers.

Whenever I think of bodhicitta, I think of the "*Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind*" and how they are a necessary preliminary to practicing bodhicitta; they are considered "the preliminaries." Precious Human Rebirth or simply Precious Human Birth, Impermanence, Karma or Cause and Effect and the Disadvantages of Samara are the starting point to achieving bodhicitta. Here again is where I think that the Four Thoughts that turn the Mind can help and sustain us. They all fit in and apply: I am lucky to be born human, my life and

capabilities are precious...All phenomena are impermanent. Cause and effect are self-explanatory..I either reap good or bad karmic results depending on my actions. And lastly, do I want to stay in samsaric existence? These realizations can lead us to relative and ultimate bodhicitta. The “Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind” are always a wonderful teaching but, when aspiring to bodhicitta, can be a basic centered instruction for preparing our mind to be receptive and inclined towards bodhicitta.

The same thinking applies to The Four Noble Truths and their relevancy to bodhicitta. When I consider suffering I know it to be personal and yet universal at the same time. It helps us to relate to the suffering of our fellow beings. It starts with thinking “the suffering of fellow beings is similar to mine and then progresses to “Oh, wait a minute...it *is* mine!” To understand that there is a cause, and way out of suffering and a methodology to get there is fundamental to all the subsequent teachings in Buddhism. It redefines the path so reflecting on the Four Truths is not only a “jumping off” point with Bodhicitta but a place to come home to when we practice it.

Today, indeed, I am hale and well,

I have enough to eat and I am not in danger.

Bt this life is fleeting, unreliable,

My body is like something briefly lent. (Shantideva)

The verse above is reason enough to begin the practice of bodhicitta...there is no time like the present to start. It is the actual *practice* of Bodhicitta that matters, not how many of the twenty-two types of bodhicitta I can name. (They are listed at the end of this essay).

In my recent readings, I came across this interesting piece of information about Atisha: When he first met anyone, he entered into conversation by saying, “Do you have a good heart?” or “Has the good heart arisen in you?” *Such is the importance of bodhicitta!*

Janet Reale

December 31, 2008

May we attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

These teachings are from Lama Tsong Khapa, the founder of the Gelugpa lineage of Buddhism (that of H.H. Dalai Lama as well). I have used a translation from the Geluk lineage of Buddhism (same lineage as HH Dalai Lama). The word “root” in Tibetan also means “defeated.” These are the root Bodhisattva Vows (of course phrased positively). The eighteen actions that, if committed, constitute a root downfall are:

1. Praising yourself and denigrating others.
2. Not giving wealth or dharma.
3. Not forgiving though someone apologizes.
4. Abandoning the Mahayana
5. Stealing offerings to the Three Jewels.
6. Abandoning the Dharma.
7. Disrobing monks or nuns.
8. Committing the five heinous crimes. (The five heinous karmas are killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an Arhat, wounding a Buddha and creating a schism in the Sangha.
9. Holding wrong views.
10. Destroying towns (or any place where living beings reside).
11. Teaching emptiness to the untrained. (They may equate emptiness with nothingness.)
12. Reversing others' aspiration for complete enlightenment.
13. Causing someone to abandon individual liberation.
14. Denigrating the Hinayana.
15. Falsely claiming to have realized emptiness.
16. Receiving the property of the Three Jewels
17. Establishing unfair policies.
18. Giving up bodhichitta.

Some of these root downfalls are complex, difficult to understand and require much explanation. In order to have a correct understanding, many of them require further expansion. Also, there is great diversity in how these root downfalls are phrased and understood. That is why I was initially reluctant to enumerate them in a list that oversimplifies them or invites more thorough discussion in order to understand. Simply reading them in a list may give rise to much misunderstanding. The good news is that there are ways to mend broken Bodhisattva vows. Simply put, they are: feeling regret about the action, promising to try our best not to repeat the action, going back to a positive approach in our lives and rededicating our hearts to enlightenment, and taking action to counterbalance our transaction.

The forty-six types of wrong behavior are sometimes **called “Forty-Six Secondary Downfalls”** and are regarded as secondary because they stem from the root downfalls and are not likely to lead to other negative actions. These forty-six secondary downfalls are mainly connected with the practice of the six perfections. Some are easily understood but many are not and require additional explanation. They come directly from

Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara* sometimes called the **Bodhisattvacharyavatara**. I found a good translation on <http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org> and decided to just copy and paste:

Vow 1- 7 are related to the **perfection of generosity**.

1. Neglecting to pay homage to the Three Jewels each day.

Having taken the bodhichitta vows it is necessary to accumulate merit. You should therefore take refuge in the Three Jewels, make physical offerings and prostrations, verbal praises, requests and mental homage each day.

2. Following the mind of desire.

If you do not restrain yourself from acting out delusions, indulging in desire, and do not know contentment, you will constantly grasp at material comforts and the enjoyments of cyclic existence and break this branch vow.

3. Not respecting elders.

Elder Bodhisattvas, that is those who have taken the bodhichitta vows before you, are objects of respect and objects of offering. Not showing them respect will break this branch vow.

4. Not replying to questions.

When someone trusts you and sincerely asks a question of you, and if you become angry or, due to laziness do not give the appropriate answer, you will break this branch vow. Any time that you avoid skillfully and appropriately answering questions on the Dharma and other matters is an infraction of this branch vow. For example, if somebody asks you to explain how to meditate on impermanence and you respond with an explanation of bodhichitta, you will have broken this vow. Even if you respond on the subject of impermanence, but in an inappropriate or unsatisfactory way, that is an infraction. This branch vow applies whether you have full ordination or lay vows, and also with respect to the practice of the ten virtues, about unconditioned phenomena, such as space or emptiness.

5. Not accepting invitations.

If you decline an invitation without a proper, valid reason, that is an infraction of this vow. The vow specifically refers to refusing an invitation because of anger, jealousy, and laziness and so on. It is acceptable to decline an invitation if you have a good reason for doing so. For example, you may be sick, too busy, doing a retreat, or if accepting the invitation could cause an obstacle to your Dharma practice or cause others to be unhappy or jealous. When people invite you to their home for dinner, they are extending their friendship. A refusal will cause them to feel rejected and make them unhappy. So, in general you should try to accept invitations but, before you do, check first to ensure that you will not be led into creating negative karma or breaking a vow. For example, if you have a vow not to drink alcohol and are invited to a function where old friends may put a lot of pressure on you to drink, then it may be best to refuse such an invitation politely and gently.

6. Not accepting gold and so on.

When a benefactor sincerely offers gold, silver or other precious things, to decline them through malice, anger or laziness breaks this branch vow.

7. Not giving the Dharma to those who desire it.

Refusing to teach the Dharma to those who genuinely wish to learn and practise it because of delusions such as anger, jealousy or laziness is an infraction of this vow. There are valid reasons not to give teachings, such as being too busy, not familiar with the subject, believing that there is not a suitable time, or that the student lacks faith. In those cases it is acceptable not to teach, but to refuse to teach the dharma due to laziness and so on breaks this vow.

Vow 8-16 are related to the **perfection of ethical self-discipline**.

8. Forsaking those who have broken their moral discipline.

These people will need advice and help with relieving their guilt. They should not be treated with contempt or be ignored.

9. Not observing the (Hinayana) trainings in order to generate or sustain faith in others.

If, for example one breaks the monastic vows saying 'I need to help others', but with the motivation of gaining others' respect.

10. Doing little to benefit other sentient beings.

Bodhisattvas need not observe the Vinaya disciplines exactly in the same manner as the Hinayana. For instance, the minor rule for an ordained person not to keep new robes for more than ten days without blessing them is not a natural negativity but a negativity decree; that is, a decree of the Buddha for the ordained. However, to place too much importance on Bodhisattva Vows http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org/resources/bodhisattva_vows.html
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such minor rules compared to taking opportunities to benefit other living beings will incur this downfall. You must compare which course of action will serve the greater purpose and act to provide the greatest benefit to other living beings. When you are in a situation where you can help another living being, but doing so requires that you transgress one of the Vinaya rules and you pull back from helping by thinking, 'I should not break a vow', then you incur this downfall.

11. Not knowing the full purpose of compassion.

If it serves a special purpose for others, it is permissible for a Bodhisattva to commit the seven non-virtues of body and speech. If you refuse to commit a such a non-virtue, when by doing so you could help numberless sentient beings, you will incur this downfall. Generally, you have to avoid all non-virtues. But when the circumstances arise in which, through compassion, you can help numberless sentient beings by engaging in one of the seven non-virtues of body and speech, then you must do so. For instance, suppose you were living in the country and a hunter came by and asked you whether you had seen any deer. If you had seen some and decided not to lie, you would keep your Vinaya precepts and retain observance of the seven virtues, but the hunter would kill the deer. In this case you should rather tell a lie than follow the normal rule. This judgement obviously requires wisdom.

12. Deliberately accepting things which are acquired by wrong livelihood.

If, with selfish motivation you deliberately acquire wealth, reputation and so on by any of the five wrong livelihoods you incur this downfall.

The five wrong livelihoods are:

- a) Hypocrisy: for example acting as though you are a great and holy lama full of love, compassion and limitless insight in order to win the devotion offerings of others.
- b) Flattery is praising others with the negative motivation of gaining something from them
- c) Hinting is gaining something by asking for it indirectly. An example would be saying to your benefactor, 'Last year you gave me a thousand dollars which was a wonderful help in supporting my retreat to benefit all living beings. This year I am going to do a special retreat again...??' Or, 'You are so incredibly successful and wealthy and have always been so kind and generous to me.'
- d) Artful acquisition is gaining things by sneaky methods or pressuring others. For example, by insulting them about their miserliness and lack of caring for the desperate plight of such deserving individuals as your good self.
- e) Seeking reward for favour is giving a small gift in the expectation that you will get something much greater in return

13. Indulging in frivolity with agitation, delusion and lack of mindfulness you make fun of others, laugh loudly, make loud noises and so on, you incur this downfall.

Being agitated in this way is an obstacle to concentration and the practice of Dharma because your attachment will be increased. If you are constantly joking, singing, dancing, drinking and carrying on, you will be unable to concentrate and will also distract other people, It is

acceptable to sing, listen to music, laugh, joke and so on if you have a good purpose for doing so. If, with compassion and love, you want to relax or cause others to be relaxed and happy, then singing, joking and the like can be useful. The branch vow refers to doing these things through agitation and delusion.

14. Claiming Bodhisattvas should remain in cyclic existence.

Holding the view that Bodhisattvas should not be attracted to liberation, not be afraid of delusion and not to become separate from delusion, but rather that a Bodhisattva's job is to roam in cyclic existence for three countless aeons while cultivating enlightenment, incurs this downfall. Such an attitude shows that you do not understand the nature of cyclic existence, delusion and the Bodhisattva path. Instead, a Bodhisattva is to achieve liberation and full enlightenment in order to be of greatest benefit to others.

15. Not avoiding a bad reputation.

A bodhisattva can often help others better when having a good reputation. Even joking too much can be tricky when people misunderstand one's real intentions. Also, when others criticise you and damage your reputation, you should endeavour to clear your name.

16. Not employing the methods to overcome others' negativities.

If it is possible to overcome others' negativities of body and speech through forceful methods, but you elect to use flattery and help them save face instead, you incur this downfall. You should make an effort and use all your skill and suitable methods to help those who create negative actions, break their vows, harm others and so on. Where possible, teach them ways to purify negative karma, such as the 4 opponent powers, and practise such methods yourself as an example.

Vow 17- 20 are related to the **perfection of patience**

17. Not practising the four noble disciplines.

The four dharmas are to be patient and

1. not responding to anger with anger
2. not responding to physical harm with physical harm
3. not responding to criticism with criticism
4. not responding to verbal argumenting with verbal argumenting

These four noble disciplines are said to distinguish a real practitioner, as they refer to the causes of anger and lack of patience. If you retaliate in any of the four circumstances you break this branch vow.

18. Not caring about those who are angry.

Do not add fuel to the anger of others by neglecting or ignoring those who are angry with you. Instead of closing yourself off, try to communicate and dissipate their anger. If you cause a problem for others or you have suspicious projections that they are harming you, and then through pride, laziness, malice or other delusions you do not clear the air by apologising when you have the opportunity you incur this downfall.

19. Not accepting others' apologies.

If others harm you and then apologise according to the Dharma, but through malice or resentment you do not accept their apology you will incur this downfall. This vow is the same as the third root vow except that the four conditions are not required here to break it.

20. Not checking the angry mind or acting out thoughts of anger.

When you become angry with someone and make no effort to try to control anger but let it continue unchecked instead, you incur this downfall. .

Vow 21- 23 are related to the **perfection of joyous effort.**

21 Gathering a circle of followers because of desiring wealth and fame.

If you gather a circle of followers and other people for the selfish purpose of gaining respect, fame, profit, praise or security, you will incur this downfall.

22. Not eliminating the three types of laziness.

The three types are: sloth, attraction to negative actions and self-pity or discouragement. If due to laziness, you sleep excessively during the day or late in the morning but you do not make an effort to eliminate laziness you break this branch vow. Note that laziness is not just being non-active, one can very well be hyper-active in useless or negative activities and because of that be spiritually lazy.

23. Engaging in senseless talk through attachment.

If you waste your time gossiping with attachment about royal families, politics, wars, relationships, divorce, crimes and so on, you incur this downfall.

Vow 24- 26 are related to the **perfection of concentration**

24. Not seeking the meaning of concentration.

Although you need to develop concentration, if through malice or laziness you refuse to seek out instruction and advice on the means for its development, or refuse to practice after having received the instructions, you will incur this downfall. You should make an effort to listen, study and meditate on the development of concentration

25. Not removing obstacles to concentration.

There are five obstacles to concentration: (1) agitation and regret (2) malicious thoughts, (3) sleep and sloth, (4) longing desire, and (5) doubt. Not making an effort to overcome these obstacles when they arise causes you to break this branch vow.

26. Viewing the taste of concentration as being its main quality.

The 'taste of concentration' refers to the bliss and pliancy that arise from this practice. The main quality, or real purpose, of concentration is to prepare the mind to be able to engage the very subtle object that is the true nature of phenomena, its emptiness of inherent existence and the development of compassion. If you become attached to the taste of bliss and pliancy while viewing it as being the main quality, or real purpose, of concentration, you will incur this downfall. Although it may be acceptable for Hearers and Solitary Realisers to enjoy the complete relaxation, peace and bliss of concentration for long periods; because the Bodhisattva is bound to help other living beings, he should not waste time like this, but move on to realising emptiness and developing compassion.

Vow 27- 34 are related to the **perfection of wisdom**.

To assert that listening to the Hinayana, memorising its texts and engaging in its practices, though necessary for the Hinayana, is not required by Bodhisattvas, or to proclaim this to others, will incur this downfall, A Bodhisattva must tread the small and medium scope paths in common with the Hinayana Hearers and Solitary Realisers to gain the proper foundation for the explicitly Mahayana practices of the great scope. A Bodhisattva must also be able to communicate the Dharma to all living beings, many of whom will have the Hinayana potential, so it is important to know the Hinayana path. This vow looks similar to the root vow 13, but that vow refers mostly to vows of individual liberation, and this secondary vow one relates mainly to the Hinayana explanation of selflessness.

28. Applying great effort to the Hinayana while currently engaged in the Mahayana .

When you have become fully involved in the Bodhisattva practices and you set them aside and engage in the Hinayana practices instead, you will incur this downfall. To be able to benefit all living beings requires that you make use of the precious opportunity to practise the Mahayana. The keyword here is balance; study the Hinayana, but do not forget to put effort on the Mahayana practices.

29. Applying effort to non-Buddhist teachings while currently engaged in the Buddhadharma.

When involved in the Buddha Dharma, if you set this practice aside in preference for the

study of non-Buddhist systems, you will incur this downfall. Generally, studying these systems will strengthen the wrong view holding an inherently existent self. If however you have a good reason, such as wishing to be able to communicate with people from other religious backgrounds, then it is acceptable to study their systems.

30. Excessive involvement in non-Buddhist subjects.

With a specific purpose in mind, you will sometimes have to study non-Buddhist texts but if you allow yourself to become attached to them, completely involved and take great pleasure in them you will break this branch vow.

31. Abandoning the Mahayana.

Denigrating any Mahayana teaching or teacher, and suggesting that they are of no benefit and Bodhisattva Vows http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org/resources/bodhisattva_vows.html

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will not help others, will incur this downfall. Although it looks similar to the root vow 4, this vow specifically relates to the teachings and practice of wisdom of emptiness.

32. Praising yourself and denigrating others.

When, motivated by pride or anger, you praise yourself and denigrate others you incur this downfall, this is the same as the first root vow except that the four conditions are not required to break it.

33. Making no effort to study Dharma.

If through pride or laziness you do not go to teachings, Dharma discussions and so on you will break this branch vow. It relates mainly to the realisation of wisdom, for which one needs to study.

34. Deriding guru and word rather than relying on the meaning.

If instead of viewing your guru as a Buddha and making offerings, you knowingly deride him or make fun of him. And, if instead of relying on the meaning of the teachings, you rely on the words instead of their meaning or you chase after pleasant sounding words instead of the teachings, you will incur this downfall.

35 to 45 are related to the **perfection of going to the assistance of those in need**, or the "11 ways of benefiting others".

35. Neglect to help whoever needs assistance.

Not providing counselling, teaching, protection, shelter, guidance and so on when you have the opportunity and capability to do so, but through anger, laziness or other delusions you decline to help, you will break this branch vow. This relates especially to situations where you promised to help.

36. Avoiding taking care of those who are sick.

When you have the opportunity to look after a sick person or animal and you do not do so due to anger, laziness or other delusions, you will incur this branch downfall

37. Not dispelling sufferings of others.

If you do not help to dispell the suffering of the blind, deaf, handicapped, those who are exhausted, afflicted by the five obstacles, under the influence of malicious thoughts and superstition, and those derided by others, you will incur this downfall

38. Not guiding the reckless.

If through anger or laziness you do not skilfully guide those who are wrongly involved in the purposes of the present and future you will incur this branch downfall. Recklessness relates to a lack of consideration for others.

39. Not returning kindness.

If through malicious thoughts or laziness, you fail to repay the kindness of others who have helped you or been generous you will break this branch vow.

40. Not relieving the grief of others.

If, due to malice or laziness, you do not dispel the grief of relatives, friends and others who

are stricken with misfortune, poverty, depression and so on, you will break this branch vow.

41. Refusing charity to the needy.

If someone asks for charity and due to malice or laziness you refuse him or her, you will incur this downfall. If, however, there are good reason not to give them something, like when it would cause them harm then it is suitable not to give.

42. Not taking care of friends, disciples, servants etc.

If you do not give teachings and look after the welfare of people who trust in you, you will incur this downfall.

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43. Not being considerate of the wishes of others.

If you do not act agreeably toward others due to laziness or malice, you will break this branch vow. You should avoid arguing with, or harming friends, relatives and those with whom you associate. Rather, be considering and endeavour to respond to their needs and aspirations, as long as it does not bring harm to oneself or others.

44. Not praising others' good qualities.

If, due to malice or laziness, you do not praise the knowledge, virtuous qualities of others, you will incur this downfall. One should encourage others' good qualities and show interest in them instead.

45. Not using force when necessary.

If, due to laziness malice, you do not expel, punish or deflate the pride of those who need it, you will incur this branch down-fall. Some situations may require forceful action to stop harm.

46. Not using miracle powers, threatening activities and so on.

You should use whatever wrathful or miracle powers you may possess if doing so will benefit other living beings. If you do not use them when appropriate, you will incur this branch downfall. You should be very careful, however, not to make a display if it is not really of great benefit; bodhisattvas should not show their miraculous powers without a good reason.

The Twenty-Two Types of Bodhicitta

There are twenty-two similes of bodhicitta. They represent the various stages of the development of bodhicitta. I have read that they are mentioned in [Maitreya's Abhisamayalankara](#). I read elsewhere that they can be credited to Asanga (Yogacara School, Vashubandu's brother). Also, there are multiple versions with different similes. There were shorter ones, I must confess, but I chose this one because of its poetic qualities:

A mind that seeks to become enlightened for the sake of others is a mind of enlightenment .

Like the mighty earth a foundation of all that is good,

like gold never changing,

like the waxing moon it grows in purity,

like a raging fire burning away all hindrance to the true perfection of wisdom,

like a never-ending treasure satisfying all,

like a jewel mine the source of many a precious quality,
like the mighty ocean untroubled by misfortune,
like the vajra it will not crack, it will not split,
like the mountain never moved by distraction,
like powerful medicine curing the ills of delusion,
like a true guru never forsaking any living being,
like the wish fulfilling jewel fulfilling all desire,
like the sun ripening our minds,
like the sweetest song filling hearts with inspiration,
like a king supremely powerful in helping others,
like a treasure house holding great stores of virtue,
like a great highway travelled by all great beings,
like good horse moving effortlessly between the ditches of samsara and nirvana,
like an eternal spring holding all teachings heard and unheard,
like music to the ears of those who seek freedom,
like an ever flowing river ceaselessly working for others,
like a rain cloud whose rain of teaching falls everywhere,
this is the mind of enlightenment.

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