

The Bodhisattva Vow

A Sourcebook



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CONTENTS

BODHISATTVA VOW CEREMONY	ix
THE BODHISATTVA VOW	1
<i>Vidyadhara the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche</i>	
AWAKENED BEING, AWAKENED HEART	23
<i>The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche</i>	
CULTIVATION OF BODHICHITTA	37
<i>Gampopa (commentary by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche)</i>	
AROUSING BODHICHITTA	71
<i>Patrul Rinpoche</i>	
COMMITMENT	79
<i>Shantideva</i>	
RECOMMENDED READING	87

Bodhisattva Vow Ceremony

Excerpted from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*
by Lord Gampopa

I. Preparation

Disciples who wish to arouse bodhichitta should approach a genuine spiritual friend and offer prostration. The spiritual friend instructs the disciples, having them arouse revulsion for samsara, compassion for sentient beings, desire for enlightenment, faith in the three jewels, and respect for the teacher.

Then the disciples repeat after the teacher:

Teacher, please consider me. Just as the previous tathagata arhat perfect complete buddha bhagavats and the bodhisattvas dwelling on the great bhumis first aroused the mind that aspires to unsurpassable, perfect, complete, great enlightenment, so also I, (*refuge name*), request the teacher to help me arouse the mind that aspires to unsurpassable, perfect, complete, great enlightenment.

Say that three times.

II. Main Section

The teacher instructs the disciples in this way: "Generally, wherever there is space, there are sentient beings. Wherever there are sentient beings, there are kleshas. Wherever there are kleshas, there are negative actions. Wherever there are negative actions, there is suffering. All these sentient beings who suffer have been our fathers and mothers, and they have only been kind to us. These kind parents of ours are drowning in the great ocean of samsara. They are

tormented with immeasurable suffering. They have no refuge or protector. They are completely exhausted. They are overwhelmed by the kleshas. If only they could be happy! If only they could be free from suffering!" Therefore, contemplate this and give rise to loving kindness and compassion for a moment.

Then contemplate: "Presently I am unable to benefit these beings. Therefore, in order to benefit them, now I must attain that which is known as 'perfect, complete enlightenment,' which is free of all faults, is complete with all good qualities, and is able to benefit all beings."

Next, the disciples repeat after the teacher:

All buddhas and bodhisattvas dwelling in the ten directions, please consider me. Teacher, please consider me.

In this and previous lives, I, (*refuge name*), have practiced, urged others to practice, and rejoiced in the practice of the roots of virtue arising from generosity, discipline, and meditation.

Therefore, just as the previous tathagata arhat perfect complete buddha bhagavats and the bodhisattva mahasattvas dwelling on the great bhūmis first aroused the mind that aspires to unsurpassable, perfect, complete, great enlightenment, so also, from now until I reach supreme enlightenment—in order to take across sentient beings who have not crossed over, to liberate those who have not been liberated, to encourage those who need encouragement, and to establish in complete nirvana those who have not been established—I, (*refuge name*), will arouse the mind that aspires to unsurpassable, perfect, complete, great enlightenment.

Take the vow by saying that three times.