

## 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva

By Thogme Zangpo

I pay heartfelt homage to you, Lokeshvara; You have true compassion extending to all.

To those who in every coming and going have seen that each thing is inherently void, and thus can devote both their time and their efforts with one aim in mind - "Let me benefit all!"

To such foremost Gurus and you, Lokeshvara, All- seeing protector, with utmost respect I bow down before you in constant obeisance, and turn to your service my thoughts, words and deeds.

The Fully Enlightened Victorious Buddhas, from whom all true pleasure and benefits derive, have reached their attainment by following Dharma and leading their lives through this noblest of paths.

To live by the Dharma depends on full knowledge of how we must practise and what we must do, thus I'll attempt now a brief explanation of what is the practise of all Buddhas' Sons.

(1)

This sound human body endowed with full leisure and excellent vessel is rare to be found.

Since now we have obtained one in no way deficient, let's work night and day without veering off course to take a cross the ocean and free from samsara not only ourselves but all others as well.

First listen, think hard, then do much meditation - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(2)

Remaining too long in one place our attraction to loved ones upsets us, we are tossed in its wake.

The flames of our anger towards thus who annoy us consume what good merit we have gained in the past.

The darkness of closed-minded thought dims our outlook, we loose vivid sight of what is right and what is wrong.

We must give up our home and set forth from our country - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(3)

Withdrawing completely from things that excite us, our mental disturbances slowly decline.

And ridding our mind of directionless wandering, attention on virtue will surely increase.

As wisdom shines clearer, the world comes in focus, our confidence grows in the Dharma we have learned.

Live all alone far away in seclusion - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(4)

Regardless of how long spent living together, good friends and relations must some day depart.

Our wealth and possessions collected with effort are left fare behind at the end of our life.

Our mind, but a guest in our body`s great guest house, must vacate one day and travel beyond.

Cast away thoughts that concern but this lifetime - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(5)

From staying together with friends who misguide us, our hatred, desires and ignorance grow.

With little time left to continue our studies, we don`t think of Dharma; we meditate less.

Our love and compassion for all sentient beings are lost and forgotten while under their sway.

Sever such ties with misleading companions - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(6)

When placing ourself in the hands of the Guru, we are turning sincerely for guidance to someone

Whose competence both in the scriptures and practice expands like the moon growing full.

We will then solve all our problems, dispel our delusion, if we place our full confidence solely in him - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(7)

The gods of this world are not free yet from sorrow, for caught in samsara, some day they must fall.

If they are bound as we are, how can they protect us?

How can someone in prison free anyone else?

But Buddha, his teachings and those who live by them are free to give comfort - they will not let us down.

Go to the Three Jewels of Refuge for shelter - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(8)

Buddha has said that the grief past endurance of creatures whose lives contain nothing but pain

is unfortunate fruit of the wrongs they have committed against other beings in

lifetime gone by.

Not wishing to suffer from horrible torment, not flinching if even our life is at stake,  
turn from all actions that harm other beings - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(9)

Like the dew that remains for a moment or two on the tips of the grass and then melts with the dawn,

The pleasures we find in the course in our lives last only an instant, they cannot endure;

While the freedom we gain becoming a Buddha is a blissful attainment not subject to change.

Aim every effort to this wondrous achievement - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(10)

In each incarnation, through all of our lives, we have been cared for by others with motherly love.

While these mothers of ours are still lost in samsara, how cruel to ignore them and free but ourself!

To save other beings, though countless in number, to free from their sorrow these mothers of old,

Produce Bodhichitta, the wish to be Buddha - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(11)

All of our sufferings, without an exception, derive from the wish to please but ourselves;

While the thoughts and the actions that benefit others conceive and give birth to supreme Buddhahood.

Thus in exchange for our selfish desires and shameful neglect of our suffering kin,

Replace thoughts of self with concern for all others - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(12)

If under the sway of compulsive desire and longing for thing that he does not possess,

Some unfortunate person has stolen our riches or lets others rob us and idly stands by;

Then out of compassion and with no attachment, to him we must dedicate all of our prayers:

May we have wealth, our body and merits - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(13)

Although we are not guilty of any offence and never have harmed anyone in our life

If someone deluded should threaten to kill us because he is crazed with a tormented mind,

Then mercifully wishing for him not to suffer further misfortune because of his state,

Selflessly take on the effects of his actions - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(14)

If someone insulting should spread ugly rumours about us with cruel words unpleasant to hear,

And even if what he has said spreads to others and gains wide acceptance as being the truth;

Yet out of our wish for the one who has maligned us to conquer his trouble and gain peace of mind,

Praise all his virtues and treat him with kindness - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(15)

If in the midst of a large crowd of people someone should single out of abuse, Exposing our faults before all within hearing and pointing out clearly the flaws we still have;

Then not getting angry or being defensive, just listening in silence and heeding his words,

Bow in respect to this man as our teacher - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(16)

If someone we love and have cared for with kindness, as an unselfish mother would cherish her child,

Should shun our devotion with thankless resentment and treat us as if we are his most hated foe,

Then seeing these acts as a terrible sickness befallen our child and affecting his mind,

Treat him with even more love and affection - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(17)

If by our own equals or these who are lower in intellect, spiritual level, or wealth, We are insulted and treated as if we were nothing by the force of their pride and their jealous contempt,

Then seeing that they are like Gurus to teach us to be always humble and conquer our pride,

Treat them with honour and place them above us - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(18)

If we are but men of most meagre subsistence and always receive a great deal of abuse,

If we find ourselves constantly gripped by much sickness and experience harm, interruptions and pain,

Then accepting ourself all these hardships which others would surely have suffered from the wrongs they had done,

Never lose courage to take pain from others - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(19)

Though praised and well-known, admired by many who act most respectful by bowing their head,

Though having obtained a vast treasure of riches which equals the store of the great God of Wealth,

Yet seeing full well that this fruit of samsara, though fortunate, still has no essence at all,

Cast out what pride we might have in these glories - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(20)

If anger that dwells in our heart lies neglected and, turning instead to our external foes,

We try to destroy them and even kill thousands, the thousands of others will plague us still more,

So seeing this action is not the solution, let us muster the forces of mercy and love;

Turn inwards and tame the wild flow of our mind-stream - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(21)

Indulging in objects our senses run after and drinking salt water are one and the same:

The more we partake, for our own satisfaction, the more our desire and thirst for them grow.

Then when we conceive a compulsive attraction towards whatever object our senses desire,

Abandon it quickly without hesitation - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(22)

Whatever appears to be truly existent is merely what mind in delusion creates;

This mind of ours also is from the beginning devoid of an essence inherently real.

Then realising Truth is beyond the conceptions we have the known and the knower as well,  
Dispel the belief in inherent existence - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(23)

Whenever we meet with a beautiful object, or something attractive which pleases our mind,  
Do not be deceived into thinking it differs in fact from a summertime rainbow:  
Though both of them have such a lovely appearance, nothing substantial lies behind their façade.  
Abandon the drives of compulsive attraction - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(24)

The various ills in our life that we suffer resemble the death of our son in a dream;  
To hold as the truth what is merely illusion is needless exhaustion of body and mind.  
For this very reason, when faced with unpleasant conditions that normally cause us much grief,  
Approach them as if they were only illusion - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(25)

The beings who strive to be Fully Enlightened would give up their body pursuing this aim:  
With this peerless example, what need is the mention of gifts we should make of the objects we own.  
Without any hope of return for our kindness, not considering even the merit to be gained,  
Engage in the practice of generous giving - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(26)

If lacking strict moral control of our conduct we haven't been able to reach our own goal,  
How can we fulfil all the wishes of others?  
Undisciplined effort is surely absurd!  
We first must renounce our attachment to pleasure which binds us so tightly to samsara's wheel,  
Then protect all our vows of sworn moral behaviour - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(27)

For all Bodhisattvas with minds set on merit who wish to amass a great store of

good deeds,  
Encounters with those causing harm and destruction which test their commitment  
are mines of great wealth.  
For this very reason, abandon resentment and anger directed towards those who  
do harm;  
Perfect meditation on patient endurance - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise  
this way.

(28)

If Sravakas as well as Pratyekabuddhas, who work towards Nirvana for merely  
themselves,  
Exert so much effort fulfilling their purpose that were there in flames they'd not  
stray from their goal,  
Then how much more energy must be expended by those of us working for  
everyone's sake;  
Enlightenment calls for the most perseverance - the Sons of the Buddhas all  
practise this way.

(29)

Higher insight that penetrates right to the essence, revealing the true way in  
which things exist,  
Can only root out our emotional problems if mental quiescence is laid as its base.  
Thus surpassing the four formless states of absorption we must work to achieve  
single-minded control  
And the full concentration of deep meditation - the Sons of the Buddhas all  
practise this way.

(30)

Perfection of Charity, patience and morals, absorption and effort alone won't  
suffice;  
Without the Perfection of Wisdom these five are unable to bring to full  
Buddhahood.  
With the methods of pure Bodhicitta develop the wisdom to see that the actor,  
the act,  
And the acted upon lack inherent existence - the Sons of the Buddhas all  
practise this way.

(31)

Without making efforts to analyse clearly delusions we have and mistakes we  
commit,  
Then even though outwardly practicing Dharma, we still may perform many non-  
Dharmic deeds.  
For this very reason, let us try to examine mistakes and delusions, the faults we  
possess,  
Then afterwards try to remove them completely - the Sons of the Buddhas all  
practise this way.

(32)

While speaking of others, the force of delusion may cause us to dwell on the flaws they possess;

Should those we find fault with be Bodhisattvas, our own reputation will suffer instead.

So avoid the mistake of disparaging others who have entered upon Mahayana's great path;

Only the faults that we have should we mention - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(33)

Domestic disputes with our friends and relations, to gain their respect or the things we feel due,

Will leave us unable to listen to Dharma: unable to study or meditate well.

Since danger is found in the homes of our patrons, as well as in those of our family and friends,

Abandon attachment we have these households - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(34)

The words of abuse that we utter in anger cause others much pain by disturbing their mind.

And we who are striving to be Bodhisattvas will find that our practise will surely decline.

So seeing the faults that arise from harsh language, which those who must hear find unpleasant and rude,

Abandon abuse directed towards others - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(35)

Defiled types of actions will soon become habits as we grow accustomed to base states of mind;

Strenuous effort will then be required for the force of opponents to counter these stains.

So armed with the weapons of alertness and memory, attack such defilements as lust on first sight;

Remove these obstructions that hinder our progress - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

(36)

In short then, whatever we do in whatever condition or circumstance we may confront

Should be done with the force of complete self-awareness which comprehends fully the state of our mind.

Then always possessing alertness and memory, which keep us in focus and ready to serve,

We must work for the welfare of all sentient beings - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way

(37)

All merits we gain from the efforts we are making to put into practice these virtuous ways,  
Which we do for the sake of removing the suffering endured by the limitless mothers we have had,  
We must dedicate purely for them to be Buddhas, with the wisdom which sees that both they and ourself  
As well as this merit all lack true existence - the Sons of the Buddhas all practise this way.

By carefully following all of the teachings my most holy Gurus have imparted to me  
Concerning the meanings of sutra and Tantra explained by the Buddhas and masters of old  
I have written this work on the practises numbering thirty and seven of all Buddhas' Sons  
To benefit those who desire to follow the path that all Sons of Buddhas must tread.

Because of my poor intellectual powers and the meagre amount of training I have had,  
I have not been able to write polished verses in metre and style which would please those with skill;  
But as I have relied on the words of the sutras and all that my most holy Gurus have taught,  
I am certain that this is without any errors; this truly is what Buddha's Sons have all done.

However because the extent and the depth of the great waves of conduct of all Buddha's Sons  
Are hard to be fathomed by someone of limited power of intellect as is myself,  
There are bound to be faults, contradictions and many such flaws; so most holy Gurus, I beg your indulgence,  
Be patient with all the shortcomings I have.

With pure Bodhicitta of ultimate Voidness, yet relative nature of mercy and love,  
And passive absorption an blissful release, may all sentient beings,  
receiving the merit amassed by the effort I have made in this work,  
Soon reach your attainment, O great Lokesvara, All-seeing protector with love for us all.