

At the auspicious time of the approaching Lunar New Year, Geshe la sent along these instructions in regard to the methods and steps of taking the Bodhisattva Vows.

Taking the Bodhisattva Vows

There are two vows relating to bodhicitta– aspiring and engaging. As for receiving them, one can take these vows themselves by means of the ritual that utilizes recitation of verses from chapter three in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*.

Aspiring Bodhicitta: aspiring to develop bodhicitta and be bodhisattva in the future; and ***Engaging Bodhicitta***: pledging to presently generate bodhicitta and take up the activities and conduct of a bodhisattva. The vows can be taken separately on different occasions, or together at the same time.

How to Take the Vow(s)

1. Recite the 7 Limb Prayer (as in the *Seven-Limb Prayer to Arya Tara* or the *concise Seven-Limb Prayer*)

2. Recite the vows:

a. Aspiration Bodhicitta:

From *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, recite the first two lines of Ch 3, verse 23 and first two of 24 (3x)*

b. Engaging Bodhicitta

From *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, recite the second two lines of Ch 3, verses 23 and second two of 24 (3x)*

c. Taken together recite (entire) Ch 3, verse 23 and 24 (3x)*

3. Conclude with a few uplifting Verses of Celebration and

Rejoicing (chosen from among vs. Ch 3, 26 - 34 from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*). Any verses that personally resonate for the one taking the vows can be recited.

Geshe la mentioned that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as part of this section, also very often recites the verse below (from the dedication chapter) after bestowing Bodhisattva vows.

*And now as long as pace endures,
As long as there are beings to be found,
May I continue likewise to remain
To drive away the sorrows of the world*

* The vow is placed/received with the final words of the third recitation.

Appreciation to Geshe Jinpa Sonam and Dianne McKinnon for preparing these instructions.

The Short Seven-Limb Prayer

*Whatever merit I have accumulated
through prostrating, offering, confessing,
rejoicing in the merits of others, exhorting and beseeching,
I dedicate all towards the highest perfect enlightenment
for the benefit of all sentient beings.*

༄༅། ལྷོ་ལ་མའི་ཡན་ལག་བདུན།

Seven-Limb Prayer to Arya Tara

Invocation:

ལ་ལྷས་སེམས་ཅན་ཀུན་གྱི་མགོན་གྱུར་ཅིང་། བདུད་སྡེ་དབྱང་བཅས་མི་བཟད་འཛོམས་མཛད་ལྷ།
དངོས་རྣམས་མ་ལྷས་ཡངས་དང་མཁྱེན་གྱུར་བའི། བཅོམ་ལྷན་འཁོར་བཅས་གནས་འདིར་གཤེགས་སུ་གསོལ།

*ma lüs sems chen kun gyi gön gyur ching/
düd day pung che mi zay jhom dzay lha/
ngos nam ma lüs yang dag khyen gyur wai/
chom den kor dang che nay dīr sheg su sol*

Having become the Protector of all beings without exception,
You are the deity who vanquishes inexhaustible hosts of demons.
You hold true knowledge of all phenomena without exception -
Transcendent conqueress and your retinue, I supplicate you,
please come here to this place!

ཎོ་ཏ་ལ་ཡི་གནས་མཚོག་ནས། ཏི་ཡིག་ལྷང་གུ་ལས་འབྱུངས་ཤིང་།
འོ་དཔག་མེད་ཀྱི་དབུ་ལ་རྒྱན། ལྷོ་ལ་མ་བའོར་བཅས་གཤེགས་སུ་གསོལ།

*Po-ta la-yi ne-chog-ne TAM-yik jang-ku le-trung-shing
Uh-pak me-kyi u-la-gyen drol-ma kor-che sheg-su-sol*

From your supreme abode, the Potala, arising from a green syllable TAM,
Amitabha adorning your crown, Tara and your entourage please come to us.

1) Prostration:

། རྗེ་བཙུན་འཕགས་མ་སྒྲེལ་མ་དང་། ། རྩོགས་བཅུ་དུས་གསུམ་བཞུགས་པ་ཡི།
 ། རྒྱལ་བ་སྤྲས་བཅས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ། ། ཀུན་ནས་དང་བས་ཕྱག་བགྱེད།
Je-tsun pag-ma drol-ma-dang chok-chu du-sum zhuk-pa-yi
gyal-wa se-che tam-che-la kun-ne dang-we chak-gyi-o

Respectfully, I prostrate to Arya Tara and all the victorious
 and their sons residing in the ten directions and the three times.

2) Offering:

། རྒྱལ་ཟས་རོལ་མོལ་སོགས་པ། ། མི་དྲོག་བདུག་སྤྲོས་མར་མེ་དྲི།
 ། དངོས་བཤམས་ཡིད་གྱིས་སྤྲུལ་ནས་འབུལ། ། འཕགས་མའི་ཚོགས་རྣམས་བཞེས་སུ་གསོལ།
Zhal-ze rol-mo la-sok-pa me-tok duk-puh mar-me-dri
nguh-sham yi-kyi trul-ne-bul pak-mai tsok-nam zhe-su-sol

I offer flowers, incense, and butter lamps, perfume, food, music and the like,
 both those actually arranged here and those imagined.

Please accept them, assembly of Arya Taras.

3) Confession:

། ཐོག་མ་མེད་ནས་ད་ལྟའི་བར། ། མི་དགོ་བཅུ་དང་མཚམས་མེད་ལ།
 ། སེམས་ནི་ཉེན་མོངས་དབང་གུར་པས། ། བགྱིས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་བཤགས་པར་བགྱེ།
Tok-ma me-ne da-tai-bar mi-ge chu-dang tsam-me-nga
sem-ni nyun-mong wang-gyur-pe gyi-pa tam-che shak-par-gyi

I confess all that I have done from beginningless time until now,
 with my mind being under the sway of delusion:
 the ten non-virtues and five immediate misdeeds.

4) Rejoicing:

། ཉན་ཐོས་རང་རྒྱལ་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དྲུག་ ། རྩོམ་སྤྱོད་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པས།
། རྟུན་གསུམ་དག་བ་ཅི་བསགས་པའི་དྲུག་ ། དེ་བཞིན་ནམས་ལ་ནི་བདག་ཡི་རང་།
Nyen-tuh rang-gyal jang-chub-sem so-so kye-wo la-sok-pe
du-sum ge-wa chi-sak-pai suh-nam la-ni dag-yi-rang

I rejoice in whatever virtuous merit that has been collected throughout the three times by hearers, solitary realizers, and Bodhisattvas and ordinary beings.

5) Requesting Teachings:

། སེམ་ཅན་རྣམས་ཀྱི་བསམ་པ་དང་། ། རྩོམ་ཡི་བྱེ་བྲག་རི་ལྟ་བུར།
། ཆེ་ཆུང་སྤུན་མོང་ཐོབ་པ་ཡི། ། ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་བསྐྱོར་དུ་གསོལ།
Sem-chen nam-kyi sam-pa-dang lo-yi je-dak ji-tar-war
che-chung tun-mong tek-pa-yi chuh-kyi kor-lo kor-du-sol

I request you to turn the wheel of Dharma – the great, small, and common vehicles in accordance with the needs of all sentient beings and suited to their individual minds.

6) Requesting to Remain:

། འཁོར་བ་ཇི་སྲིད་མ་སྟོངས་བར། ། ལྷ་ངན་མི་འདའ་སྤྲུགས་རྗེ་ཡིས།
། ལྷག་བསྐྱེད་རྒྱ་མཚོར་བྱིང་བ་ཡི། ། སེམ་ཅན་རྣམས་ལ་གཞིགས་སུ་གསོལ།
Kor-wa ji-si ma-tong-bar nya-ngan mi-da tuk-je-yi
duk-ngal gya-tsor jing-wa-yi sem-chen nam-la zik-su-sol

I beseech you to remain until Samsara ends and not pass away to the state beyond sorrow. Please, with your boundless compassion look upon all beings drowning in the ocean of suffering.

Selected Verses from The Way of the Bodhisattva

From Chapter 3, "Taking hold of bodhicitta":

- 23: Just as all the Buddhas of the past
Have brought forth the awakened mind,

And in the precepts of the Bodhisattvas
Step-by-step abode and trained,
24. Likewise, for the benefit of beings,
I will bring to birth the awakened mind,

And in those precepts, step-by-step,
I will abide and train myself.
25. Those who thus with clear intelligence
Take hold of the awakened mind with bright and lucid joy,
That they may now increase what they have gained,
Should lift their hearts with praises such as these:
26. "Today my life has given fruit.
This human state has now been well assumed.
Today I take my birth in Buddha's line,
And have become the Buddha's child and heir.
27. "In every way, then, I will undertake
Activities befitting such a rank.
And I will do no act to mar
Or compromise this high and faultless lineage.
28. "For I am like a blind man who has found
A precious gem inside a heap of dust.
For so it is, by some strange chance,
That bodhicitta has been born in me.
29. "This is the supreme draft of immortality
That slays the Lord of Death, the slaughterer of beings,
The rich unfailing treasure-mine
To heal the poverty of wanderers.

30. “It is the sovereign remedy
That perfectly allays all maladies.
It is the tree that gives relief
To those who wander wearily the pathways of existence.
31. “It is the universal bridge that saves
All wandering beings from the states of loss,
The rising moon of the enlightened mind
That soothes the sorrows born of the afflictions.
32. “It is the mighty sun that utterly dispels
The misty ignorance of wandering beings,
The creamy butter, rich and full,
That’s churned from milk of holy teaching.
33. “Living beings! Wayfarers upon life’s paths,
Who wish to taste the riches of contentment,
Here before you is the supreme bliss.
Here, O ceaseless travelers, is your fulfillment!
34. “And so, today, within the sight of all protectors,
I summon beings, calling them to Buddhahood.
And, till that state is reached, to every earthly joy!
May gods and demigods and all the rest rejoice!”