

THE CONCISE SADHANA OF

THE BODHISATTV VOW

Composed by His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

Commented by Khenpo Sodargye

The Concise Sadhana of the Bodhisattva Vow

Composed by H. H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

Commented by Khenpo Sodargye

2021

I hope that every year, no matter where you are
in this world, as long as you're alive, you will
take the bodhisattva vow on the anniversary of
Buddha Shakyamuni's first turning of the
Dharma Wheel.

– Khenpo Sodargye





Contents

Contents	v
----------	---

CONCISE SADHANA BY

H. H. JIGME PHUNTSOK RINPOCHE	1
-------------------------------	---

1 Concise Sadhana by H. H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche	3
The Extraordinary of Bodhicitta	3
The Intention Aspect of the Relative Bodhicitta	3
The Action Aspect of the Relative Bodhicitta	8
Receive the Bodhisattva Vow	12
The Preliminary	12
The Main Practice	21

COMMENTARY BY

KHENPO SODARGYE	33
-----------------	----

2 Commentary by Khenpo Sodargye	35
Introduction	35
Adhere to the Precious Tradition	35
Understand the Noble Qualities of Bodhicitta	37

Stick to a Crucial Practice with a Strong Conviction . . .	41
The Conferral of the Bodhisattva Vow	45
Remind Oneself of the Qualities of the Bodhisattva Vow	45
Implore for the Conferral of the Bodhisattva Vow . . .	47
Visualize the Perfect Place and Invoke Buddhas and	
Bodhisattvas	49
Make the Seven-Branch Offerings to Accumulate Merit	51
Invoke Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Take the Refuge	
Vow	56
Receive the Bodhisattva Vow	58
Generate Great Joy for Oneself and Others	64
Dedicate the Merit	66

CONCISE SADHANA BY
H. H. JIGME PHUNTSOK
RINPOCHE

Precious bodhicitta is the source of all prosperity and good in both samsara and nirvana. Without exception it is the sole cause of all benefits and happiness. By the power of bodhicitta, the suffering of all beings in the three realms can be completely pacified and auspiciousness can be accomplished easily and in its entirety.

– H. H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

Concise Sadhana by H. H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

1

*May bodhicitta, precious and sublime,
Arise where it has not yet come to be;
And where it has arisen may it never fail
But grow and flourish ever more and more.*

As expounded by our teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni himself, who is endowed with the skillful means of great compassion, “Listen attentively and reflect very carefully upon what I am about to say”. When receiving the Dharma teachings, one must adjust their attitude and conduct properly. Now, listen carefully to the following teaching:

THE EXTRAORDINARY OF BODHICITTA

THE INTENTION ASPECT OF THE RELATIVE BODHICITTA

Reflect upon ourselves as teacher and students—we’ve obtained the precious human life, been received by supreme spiritual teachers, and moreover, encountered the wondrous Dharma and the heart of the Dharma, the Vajrayana instructions, all of which are exceedingly rare. With these endowments, we must optimize our life and make it

meaningful by practicing and applying the genuine teaching we've acquired.

If we fail to utilize this human birth for advantages and, under karmic influence, end up in the three lesser realms (hell, hungry ghost, and animal), at that point not even the buddhas and bodhisattvas will be able to provide protection. We won't so much as hear the name of the upper realms under the personal karmic effect. Therefore, we must purify our minds through the *four thoughts*. As Shantideva said in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

*So hard to find the ease and wealth
Whereby the aims of beings may be gained.
If now I fail to turn it to my profit,
How could such a chance be mine again?*

Though the great and compassionate Buddha gave inconceivable discourses on the Dharma in accordance with the particular dispositions, capacities, levels of faith, and desires of the disciples to be tamed, most of these teachings were intended for individuals of lesser or middling wisdom. As for the teachings for individuals of superior wisdom, the Buddha taught the mental attitude of those who traverse to the fruit of happiness, the state of Buddhahood, in reliance upon that salutary cause, the vehicle of the bodhisattva, precious bodhicitta. Apart from bodhicitta, no other virtuous practice brings such immense benefits.

In the present time of five-fold degeneration, convulsed by a dark

mass of five poisonous mental afflictions and non-virtue, when even a dim starlight-like glimmer of virtue is not visible, let alone virtue radiant as the sun and the moon, only a few of the meritorious give rise to a glimmer of virtue, and it is as transient as a flash of lightening in the dark. To overcome the opposing side of misdeeds and produce the side of extraordinary virtue, it is necessary to practice precious bodhicitta. As described in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*Just as on a dark night black with clouds,
The sudden lightning glares and all is clearly shown,
Likewise, rarely, through the Buddha's power,
Virtuous thoughts rise, brief and transient, in the world.*

Precious bodhicitta is the source of all prosperity and good in both samsara and nirvana. Without exception it is the sole cause of all benefits and happiness. By the power of bodhicitta, the suffering of all beings in the three realms can be completely pacified and auspiciousness can be accomplished easily and in its entirety. Through many aeons of observation and contemplation, the compassionate buddhas and their heirs have found no other practices to be as peerless as the practice of bodhicitta. Once again, as Shantideva mentioned in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*For many aeons deeply pondering,
The mighty Sages saw its benefits,
Whereby unnumbered multitudes
Are brought with ease to supreme joy.*

*Those who wish to crush the many sorrows of existence,
 Who wish to quell the pain of living beings,
 Who wish to have experience of a myriad joys
 Should never turn away from bodhicitta.*

Even if bodhicitta only flashed through one's mindstream once, one would become a bodhisattva very soon. For from that moment onward, one is called a "bodhisattva, the heir of the buddha," and truly becomes the virtuous object of veneration of all the worldly kings, Indra, Brahma, universal monarchs, and all rulers who, without exception, with crowns to the earth pay homage at the feet of the bodhisattva. As stated in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*Should bodhicitta come to birth
 In those who suffer, chained in prisons of samsara,
 In that instant they are called the children of the Blissful One,
 Revered by all the world, by gods and humankind.*

Without the guidance of bodhicitta, any physical and verbal root of virtue may be destroyed by neglected dedication, improper dedication, flaunting, regret, anger, and the rest. Whereas if we guide even a modest root of virtue with bodhicitta, it will ripen into temporary, inconceivable pleasure and wealth in the human and deva realms. As it is said, until the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood, whereas other virtues bear fruit and then are exhausted like the plantain tree, not only does the wish-fulfilling tree of bodhicitta continually bear fruit but the fruits continue to multiply.

As it is explained in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*Virtue, thus, is weak; and always
Evil is of great and overwhelming strength.
Except for perfect bodhicitta,
What other virtue is there that can lay it low.*

Moreover, should bodhicitta remain present in the mindstream of someone who has committed serious negative karma such as the five heinous crimes and is supposed to fall into the lowest hell right after death, such negative karma can mostly be purified. Even if slight negative karma remains, one will only experience the respective karmic result for an instant like the time it would take for a cotton ball to bounce up from the ground instead of staying in hell for a long time. Other karmic results to be experienced in future lives due to negative actions such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and so forth could also be destroyed as instantaneously as the kalpa-ending fire consumes all forests to bareness. Shantideva said,

*As though they pass through perils guarded by a hero,
Even those weighed down with dreadful wickedness
Will instantly be freed through having bodhicitta.
Why do those who fear their sins not have recourse to it?*

*Just as by the fire that will destroy the world,
Great sins are surely and at once consumed by it.*

Its benefits are thus unbounded

As the Wise and Loving Lord explained to Sudhana.

The benefits of the intention aspect of relative bodhicitta are briefly explained based on the first chapter of *The Way of Bodhisattva*. For details, please refer to the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which provides some 130 analogies to expound its benefits extensively.

THE ACTION ASPECT OF THE RELATIVE BODHICITTA

Based upon whether or not there is applied practice, a distinction between the *intention aspect* and the *action aspect* of relative bodhicitta is made. Between the two, the latter brings forth greater merits and benefits. As stated,

For when, with irreversible intent,

The mind embraces bodhicitta,

Willing to set free the endless multitudes of beings,

In that instant, from that moment on,

A great and unremitting stream,

A strength of wholesome merit,

Even during sleep and inattention,

Rises equal to the vastness of the sky.

And if both the intention aspect and the action aspect are unified, the merit is even more extensive. From the time of genuinely engaging

in activities for the welfare of sentient beings, as long as bodhicitta never regresses due to a root downfall of abandoning a sentient being, inconceivable merits are guaranteed. Even if one does not accomplish virtue, is not conscientious, and lives an indulgent life filled with insignificant entertainment such as dramas, singing, dancing, and more, the virtuous root upheld by bodhicitta would be inexhaustible like the current of a great river.

For that reason, Shantideva said,

*This the Tathagata,
In the sutra Subahu requested,
Said with reasoned argument
For those inclined to lesser paths.*

Virtuous roots guided by bodhicitta are distinct from all others for their inconceivable qualities. The reason is: the objects of its application, sentient beings, are innumerable; its time span is as infinite as the duration of samsara; its intention is none other than guiding all boundless beings to attain Buddhahood. Therefore, the virtuous roots and the corresponding results are immeasurable, which make bodhicitta far surpass other sources of virtue.

It also can be explained with an example. Shantideva said,

*If with kindly generosity
One merely has the wish to soothe*

*The aching heads of other beings,
Such merit knows no bounds.*

*No need to speak, then, of the wish
To drive away the endless pain
Of each and every living being,
Bringing them unbounded excellence.*

The wish to relieve one being of their headache is incredible enough. As a sutric story goes, when a person named “the daughter of the sea-captain Vallabha” fell into hell and saw an iron wheel encircling the head of another, he felt compassion and wished, “May their suffering ripen upon me.” With this thought, he was liberated from all his karmic suffering in the lower realms and took rebirth in the deva realm right away. Think about it, if simply wishing to relieve the headache of another being could bring such merit, what need to mention the merit of aspiring to accomplish the welfare of all sentient beings as boundless as space. The merits and benefits are beyond our imagination.

As it says in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*If the simple thought to be of help to others
Exceeds in worth the worship of the buddhas,
What need is there to speak of actual deeds
That bring about the weal and benefit of beings?*

The merit generated by the intention to benefit one sentient being one time far exceeds the merit of offering the seven types of jewels to buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions for countless eons. The aspiration of bodhicitta is much more than to provide all sentient beings trivial and temporary benefits; more importantly, it is to let all of them achieve the state of Buddhahood. What need is there to mention the inconceivable benefits won when one gives rise to it and genuinely applies it. Such an attitude is exceedingly difficult to realize.

*Could our father or our mother
Ever have so generous a wish?
Do the very gods, the rishis, even Brahma
Harbor such benevolence as this?*

*For in the past they never,
Even in their dreams,
Wished something like this even for themselves.
How could they do so for another's sake?*

*This aim to bring the benefit of beings,
A benefit that others wish not even for themselves,
This noble, jewellike state of mind
Arises truly wondrous, never seen before.*

Generally speaking, parents have the purest intentions. Yet, beyond providing their children with food and clothing they do not have the

wish that their children attain the state of Buddhahood. Similarly, although devas of the desire realm and the form realm like Brahma are also strongly inclined to help sentient beings, their intentions do not compare to the noble motivation of bodhicitta. When even renowned rulers do not generate bodhicitta, what need is there to mention ordinary beings.

With that being said, we must be cheerful and joyous if we've aroused bodhicitta in our mind, as this is admirable.

RECEIVE THE BODHISATTVA VOW

THE PRELIMINARY

In general, one should set up objects of the Three Jewels, offerings, and so forth in a clean place and with a pure mind perform the *seven branches* for the preliminary of gathering the accumulations. If offering substances haven't been prepared, one should visualize the adornments of the Buddha-field clearly in the mind and dedicate one's body, possessions, and virtuous roots of the three times entirely.

Next, the vajra master sits on the lion throne to elaborate the qualities and benefits of the absolute bodhicitta free from the extremes of samsara and nirvana as well as the qualities and the merits of the relative bodhicitta. The most extensive reference to the benefits of

bodhicitta can be found in the 130 analogies given in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. The medium-length reference is found in the chapter on *The Excellence of Bodhicitta* in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*. At the very least, one must read the following stanza from *Maitreya's Aspiration* as a preliminary to inspire a conviction towards the qualities of bodhicitta in one's mind:

*Homage to bodhicitta, the heart of awakening,
That keeps the lower realms at bay,
That shows us the way to the higher realms,
And that leads us to a state beyond aging and death.*

Now, in order to receive the bodhisattva vow, first regard the vajra master as the inseparable embodiment of the tathagatas of the three times. Next, contemplate, "Please grant me the jeweled bodhicitta, the sole source of all happiness and wellbeing" with faith and yearning. Repeat the following commitment after the vajra master three times:

*Please grant me bodhicitta, the heart of awakening,
That keeps the lower realms at bay,
That shows us the way to the higher realms,
And that leads us to a state beyond aging and death.*

Here, the vajra master explains, "Through countless eons of contemplation and observation, the tathagatas of the three times have found that bodhicitta is unsurpassed as the most beneficial practice. I will now confer this supreme bodhisattva vow to you fellow disciples."

With that, imagine permission has been given. Then the vajra master recites the following verse one time:

*Since the boundless wisdom of the only guide of beings
Perfectly examined and perceived its priceless worth,
Those who wish to leave this state of wandering
Should hold well to this precious bodhicitta.*

Now, visualize the place where you are as a base of lapis lazuli instead of a disordered environment filled with holes, stones, rubble, and thorns. The field is divided into sections by a golden grid and its surface is bouncy and smooth. The whole land is adorned with the perfect qualities just like Sukhavati. The vajra master and the disciples recite the following once together:

*May the earth be wholesome everywhere,
Free from boulders, cliffs, and chasms,
Flat and even like a level palm,
And smooth like lapis lazuli.*

A variety of offerings are on display at the center of this perfect Buddha-field. They are extremely dignified just as they are described in *The King of Aspiration Prayers* and *The Adornment Sutra of Sukhavati*. Together again, recite the following stanza once:

*May all excellent materials, outer and inner, of gods and men,
Such as musical instruments, ornaments, garlands, food and
clothing,*

*All become a beautiful cloud of offerings
Like the offerings of Samantabhadra,
which arose from the aspirations of the buddhas and their heirs.*

And recite the *Clouds of Offering Mantra* three times:

*namo ratna-trayāya namo bhagavate vajrasārapramardane
tathāgatāyārhate samyaksaṃbuddhāya tadyathā
oṃ vajra vajra mahāvajra mahātejavajra mahāvidyāvajra
mahābodhicittavajra mahābodhimaṇḍopasaṃkramaṇavajra
sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanavajra svāhā*

Then, clearly visualize at the center of the perfectly adorned Buddha-field the subject of the offerings, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, arranged without break like sesame seeds in an open pod. They are present to witness the generation of supreme bodhicitta. The vajra master recites the following verse one time:

*Filled with buddhas who have sat before the mighty bodhi tree,
Around them all their bodhisattva sons and daughters!*

Meanwhile, visualize that all buddhas and bodhisattvas from numerous Buddha-fields of the ten directions descend in person. They merge with the principal deity of our visualization to become a non-dual oneness. Make offerings to the nondual deity, and until we complete the ritual of receiving the bodhisattva vow, continue to visualize buddhas and bodhisattvas as present in person. Altogether, recite the following one time:

*Protector of all beings,
Divine being, vanquisher of demonic hordes,
And knower of all things as they are—
Blessed One, together with your retinue, please come here to this
place.*

*With your compassion for me and other beings,
And your magical powers,
Blessed One, for as long as I make offerings,
Please remain here.*

With this contemplation, perform the *seven branches* in front of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas for gathering the accumulations:

(1) Prostration

Master and students together, we fold our palms together in front of buddhas and bodhisattvas as the physical homage; pray to them respectfully as the verbal homage; and recollect their qualities as the mental homage. In our visualization, we are not limited to one physical form but boundless manifestations; we are not alone, but countless sentient beings are also paying homage in the same manner. All the beings' reverence is expressed as such.

(2) Offering

In the visualization, summate our bodies, enjoyments, virtuous roots of the three times, and all the offerings manifested by the power of dharani, mantra, and meditation. Then, offer them to the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

(3) Confession

The sources of all the negative karma of oneself and others are greed, aggression, and ignorance. The doors for the negative karma to be created are the body, speech, and mind. The nature of negative karma is of two kinds: naturally negative acts and downfalls that violate the precepts. As of the time, it is from the beginningless until now. All the negative karma and faults that we've performed are to be confessed through the *four powers*. The *power of regret* is the remorse of misdeeds in the past. The *power of resolve* is the determination of never repeating the same misdeed. The *power of support* is the witness of buddhas and bodhisattvas. Lastly, the *power of action as an antidote* is giving rise to the supreme bodhicitta.

(4) Rejoicing

Delightfully rejoice in all the virtuous roots of ordinary beings, shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas without

the slightest jealousy.

(5) Requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma and

(6) Requesting not to pass into parinirvana

In the event where buddhas, bodhisattvas, gurus, and spiritual guides who abide in the expanse of Buddha-fields in the ten directions stop turning the wheel of Dharma by approaching parinirvana, I should sincerely implore them with the body, speech, and mind to turn the Dharma Wheels in accordance with the karmic fortune, devotion, and inclination of sentient beings. Until samsara is empty, please remain in the world and do not enter parinirvana.

(7) Dedication of merit

Let's dedicate all the virtuous roots unified through the abovementioned six branches to the attainment of the unsurpassable *bodhi* by all beings. With this devoted aspiration, the vajra master and the disciples recite the *seven branches* for gathering the accumulations from *The King of Aspiration Prayers*:

To all the buddhas, the lions of the human race,

In all directions of the universe, through past and present and future:

To every single one of you, I bow in homage;

Devotion fills my body, speech, and mind.

*Through the power of this prayer, Aspiring to Good Action,
All the victorious ones appear, vivid here before my mind
And I multiply my body as many times as atoms in the universe,
Each one bowing in prostration to all the buddhas.*

*In every atom preside as many buddhas as there are atoms,
And around them, all their bodhisattva heirs:
And so I imagine them filling
Completely the entire space of reality.*

*Saluting them with an endless ocean of praise,
With the sounds of an ocean of different melodies
I sing of the buddhas' noble qualities,
And praise all those who have gone to perfect bliss.*

*To every buddha, I make offerings:
Of the loveliest flowers, of beautiful garlands,
Of music and perfumed ointments, the best of parasols,
The brightest lamps and finest incense.*

*To every buddha, I make offerings:
Exquisite garments and the most fragrant scents,
Powdered incense, heaped as high as Mount Meru,
Arranged in perfect symmetry.*

*Then the vast and unsurpassable offerings—
Inspired by my devotion to all the buddhas, and*

*Moved by the power of my faith in Good Actions—
I prostrate and offer to all you victorious ones.*

*Whatever negative acts I have committed,
While driven by desire, hatred, and ignorance,
With my body, my speech, and also with my mind,
Before you, I confess and purify each and every one.*

*With a heart full of delight, I rejoice at all the merits
Of buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Pratyekabuddhas, those in training and the arhats beyond training,
And every living being, throughout the entire universe.*

*You who are like beacons of light shining through the worlds,
Who passed through the stages of enlightenment, to attain Buddhahood, freedom from all attachment,
I exhort you: all of you protectors,
Turn the unsurpassable wheel of Dharma.*

*Joining my palms together, I pray
To you who intend to pass into nirvana,
Remain, for aeons as many as the atoms in this world,
And bring well-being and happiness to all living beings.*

*What little virtue I have gathered through my homage,
Through offering, confession, and rejoicing,*

*Through exhortation and prayer—all of it
I dedicate to the enlightenment of all beings!*

The above concludes the preliminaries for receiving the bodhisattva vow.

THE MAIN PRACTICE

According to the intent of Kunchen Longchen Rabjam and Jigme Lingpa, the *three invocations* and the *three refuges* are the basis for the main practice.

Firstly, with the plea for the presence of witnesses, perform the invocation three times. In every round, the vajra master recites first and the disciples repeat after:

*All you buddhas who dwell in the ten directions,
All you great bodhisattvas on the ten levels,
All you great teachers, the vajra-holders, turn your mind towards
me, I pray!*

Next is to take the *three refuges* with the determination that, “From now onwards until the attainment of Buddhahood, my sole teacher of refuge is the Bhagavan. My primary study is the Mahayana Dharma teachings with bodhicitta as the essence. My reliance on fellowship is the most supreme of all—the sangha of noble beings. By taking these as refuges, I practice for the fruition of full enlightenment.”

Determined with such a vow, the vajra master reads the following once and the disciples follow after. Repeat three times,

Until the essence of enlightenment is reached,

I go for refuge to the Buddhas.

Also I take refuge in the Dharma

And in all the host of Bodhisattvas.

By the last sentence of the third round, the vajra master snaps the fingers or claps. Upon hearing the signal, visualize that all of you have received the Mahayana precepts for taking the refuge. The “affirmation of receiving” the vow must arise along with immeasurable joy and reverence.

Next is the actual part of receiving the bodhisattva vow.

Bodhicitta can be understood from two aspects: the *intention aspect* and the *action aspect*. The *intention aspect* is the intent to liberate sentient beings, whereas the *action aspect* is the intention conjoined with the application. Just as Buddha Shakyamuni, Buddha Amitabha, Manjushri, et al., produced bodhicitta “to establish all beings onto Buddhahood,” I should also give rise to the same aspiration “to establish all beings onto Buddhahood.” Just as the buddhas and bodhisattvas observe precepts, practice meditation, increase their wisdom through diligently hearing, contemplating, and practicing the Dharma for the sake of beings to attain enlightenment, so should I progressively emulate them.

Despite the fact that we cannot behave like Buddha Amitabha, Buddha Shakyamuni, Manjushri just yet, however, as mentioned in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*Our guide instructs us to begin
By giving vegetable greens or other little things,
That later, step-by-step, the habit once acquired,
We may be able to donate our very flesh.*

You can begin by practicing giving a few items in generosity to others, such as sauerkraut. Then gradually, you will make this a habit. One day, when you reach the first bhumi of bodhisattva, you'll be able to give your flesh without the slightest hesitation or possessiveness. Like those who vowed to recite the Mani mantra a hundred million times would strive to reach the goal by all means, similarly, with the thought that we must exert our full effort to emulate the conduct of bodhisattvas, we generate supreme bodhicitta.

Then, the vajra master leads the disciples to repeat the following stanzas. By the third time, the disciples will receive the bodhisattva vow. Regarding the exact moment the vow is received, various Indian and Tibetan scholars and adepts hold different opinions. Nonetheless, the point is that when the vajra master snaps his fingers in the third recitation, everyone should generate an affirmation that "I've now obtained the bodhisattva vow with both the intention aspect and the action aspect" and with that confidence, repeat after the vajra master. This would complete the conferral of the bodhisattva vow. With this

understanding in mind, the vajra master leads the disciples to recite the following three times:

*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,*

*Likewise, for the benefit of beings,
I will bring to birth the awakened mind,
And following those precepts,
I will abide and train myself.*

In the third round, the vajra master snaps his fingers. At the same time, everybody should visualize that they have obtained the precious bodhisattva vow.

From now on, so long as one refrains from the root downfall of abandoning sentient beings, the continual engagement in harmful intent and action toward sentient beings, everyone has become a bodhisattva on the lesser path of accumulation. Therefore, at the latest, it is guaranteed that one could attain Buddhahood after three incalculable eons. Take note that this is under the circumstances that one does not deliberately practice with the supreme skillful means and wisdom. Should one uphold the supreme skillful means and wisdom, it would be much swifter than the abovementioned “indispensable path” to achieve Buddhahood.

Hence, all the practitioners who have approached the bodhisattva path are the fortunate ones who are endowed with the ability to benefit sentient beings. All of them are the heirs of the buddhas of the three times. A bond of brotherhood is shared among them and all bodhisattvas. All dakinis would consider them as companions and offer them full support and assistance. Therefore, we must give rise to joy and enhance our bodhicitta. Be consistently mindful that “from today onwards, I’m making this human life meaningful.”

Why is that? It is because from now on, I’ve obtained the favorable conditions of becoming a bodhisattva, the heir of the tathagatas. As a person without any good fortune, I’m filled with karmic obscurations and afflictions. Yet, I’ve acquired bodhicitta. The situation is just like an old and blind lady who is an “unjustified obtainer” but excavates the “unjustified wealth” of the wish-fulfilling jewel from an “unwarranted environment.” She would definitely be amazed. “Is it a dream, a blind and old lady like myself obtaining such a wish-fulfilling jewel? Will it be lost to foes?” She would treasure it dearly. Likewise, we ordinary beings are the “unjustified obtainers” bounded by all kinds of defilements, while from the “unwarranted environment” which is the afflictive source of non-virtues, greed, aggression, ignorance, and more, we retrieve the “unjustified wealth” of the jeweled bodhicitta, which is the source of all virtues in both samsara and nirvana. What a thrill! Could it be a dream? So even at the cost of our lives, we should never forsake such a precious fortune. With this attitude, we should give rise to great joy. Then the vajra

master leads the disciples to recite the following or the disciples recite them together with the vajra master:

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.

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.

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 bodhichitta has been born in me.

That's how we practice generating a joyful mind.

Next is about making others joyful:

All sentient beings in the world, particularly all the non-human beings who dislike Buddhism and do harms to others, such as demon kings, female ghosts, one-horned ghosts, resentful ghosts, ferocious ghosts, please listen well! Today, with the witness of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, I invite all of you as my dear guests.

If asked what I have to offer you, the invited guests, I have the temporary benefits of the heaven realm and the human realm as well as the ultimate and wondrous joy of the innate and jewel-like Buddhahood. This is my commitment. Even if I'm to be cut into hundreds of pieces, chopped into thousands of pieces, and to lose my life, I'd never fail to fulfill this vow.

All of you do not need to go through any adversities or deprivations. I'll be the one to provide you peace and happiness, and it is my sincerest wish to bring you great joy and bliss. Regardless of your past, from now on, may you cut through the mentality of maliciousness, envy, jealousy, and irritability. Throughout my cultivation of bodhicitta, please support and assist me by all means wholeheartedly.

With this mindset, we can make other beings joyous. Now, repeat the following stanza after the vajra master once or recite it together with the vajra master:

*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!*

At this point, the conferral of the bodhisattva vow is concluded. In the end, make dedication and aspiration. By reciting *The King of Aspiration Prayers*, dedicate the virtuous root of receiving the vow and of both delivering and hearing the teachings altogether.

Generally speaking, the transmission of the bodhisattva vow can be understood as two lineages: the lineage of the profound view of emptiness that was transmitted by the fundamental teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni, compiled by Manjushri, commentated by the Dharmic father and son of Nagarjuna, and propagated by Shantideva; and the lineage of the vast deeds of practice that was transmitted by the Buddha, compiled by Maitreya, the successor of the present Buddha, commentated by the Dharmic father and son of Asanga, and propagated by Atisha. In Tibet, there's a method of receiving the bodhisattva vow based on the description in Kunchen Longchenpa's *Finding Rest in the Nature of the Mind*. The method follows the instructional lineage of the profound view of emptiness and takes *The Way of the Bodhisattva* as the standard. In addition, following what is explained in Vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa's *Treasury of Precious Qualities: The Rain of Joy*, Khenpo Kunzang Palden had composed a ritual that is integrative with both lineages of the profound view of emptiness and the vast deeds of practice.

The above mentioned are the transmissions of precepts and intent of the bodhisattva vow. I have received each of them in their entirety and am confident to claim that they've engendered the simulated bodhicitta in my mind. The ritual of the bodhisattva vow given today is the combination of *The Way of the Bodhisattva* and *The King of Aspiration Prayers*. It mainly follows the lineage of the profound view of emptiness, but also contains the key points of the lineage of the vast deeds of practice. As I have conferred on you the vow that has

been passed down through the uninterrupted lineage, you should all be very joyous.

This time, you received the vow in front of the spiritual master and recited most of the ritual after me. According to the tradition of Patrul Rinpoche, there is another ritual based on *The Way of the Bodhisattva* where the recipients must recite the entire content after the vajra master. But this time, the way I have conferred the bodhisattva vow is by taking *The Way of the Bodhisattva* as the primary reference and *The King of Aspiration Prayers* as the supplementary. The main practice of obtaining the vow in the ritual can only be executed by reciting after the spiritual master.

When we deliver and receive Dharma teachings or engage in any virtuous deeds in daily life, we must first engender the intent corresponding to the bodhisattva vow. In our routine prayers before and after the teaching, the *four causes of rebirth in Sukhavati* are incorporated. This is a standardized, legitimate, perfect, and inconceivable tradition.

By the merit of engendering bodhicitta, teaching and hearing the Dharma, let's dedicate all the accumulated virtuous roots of the three times of oneself and others:

May the source of benefits and happiness, the wish-fulfilling Dharma, prosper in all times and spaces and remain continuously in this world.

May all the lineage holders live long with their activities perfected and all their wishes accomplished without obstruction. In particular, the subjects of the dedication are those great masters who are impartially altruistic and compassionate towards all the “general” sentient beings and the “specific” Tibetan people. They work tirelessly for the welfare of all beings and may their wishes be all fulfilled.

May all nations be at peace, free from natural disasters and diseases of humans and livestock, and their farm production in crops and livestock be abundant.

May everyone enjoy the perfect merit and great joy like the humans at the beginning of the current kalpa. In the near future may they, by taking the path of bodhicitta, attain Buddhahood and benefit boundless sentient beings by utilizing the twenty-seven activities and more in correspondence with the inclinations of the intended subjects.

This is like the aspirations of Manjushri “as the bodhisattva Manjushri attained omniscience.” What are his aspirations?

*In order to perform the full virtue of Good Actions,
I shall act according to Manjushri's prayers of aspiration,
And without ever growing weary, in all the eons to come,
I shall perfectly fulfill every one of his aims!*

What are the aspirations to be perfected?

*Let my bodhisattva acts be beyond measure!
Let my enlightened qualities be measureless too!
Keeping to this immeasurable activity,
May I accomplish all the miraculous powers of enlightenment!*

We cannot fathom the altruistic activities of the sons and daughters of buddhas. Nonetheless, in order to uproot samsara completely and to lead sentient beings to the pure land of Sukhavati, we must aspire deeply and vastly to emulate their dedications and aspirations.

*By this accumulation of merit,
may I obtain all seeing omniscience,
And may all faults be defeated.
The whirling, turbulent waves of birth, aging, sickness,
And death — from this ocean of samsara, may I liberate beings.*

Lastly, conclude the dedication with *The Sun of Samantabhadra's Realm* – *The Quintessence of Oceanic Prayers of Aspiration* and *The King of Aspiration Prayers*.

Note: This text, *The Concise Sadhana of the Bodhisattva Vow* was orally transmitted by H. H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche and documented by his disciple, Khenpo Sodargye. This sadhana is concise and convenient to practice. It holds an uninterrupted transmission and a great blessing. It is pithy and quintessential. As a tradition established by H. H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, upon the auspicious day to commemorate Buddha's first turning of the Dharma Wheel and other significant Buddhist days, he would confer the bodhisattva vow on his disciples and the sangha members. As Mahayana practitioners, to take this concise sadhana for oneself or to confer it on others is of extreme benefits.

COMMENTARY BY
KHENPO SODARGYE

From today onwards, by the blessing of His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche and all lineage masters, you've been transformed into a noble person with altruism for all beings. Thus, today has become a significant moment in your life trajectory.

– Khenpo Sodargye

INTRODUCTION

ADHERE TO THE PRECIOUS TRADITION

According to the Tibetan calendar, today, June 4th, is the auspicious anniversary of Buddha Shakyamuni's first turning of the Dharma Wheel. Every year on this remarkable day, as one of His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche's traditions, a conferral of the bodhisattva vow would be performed at Larung Gar. In his later years, His Holiness couldn't initiate the vow as frequently as before, but in early times, he would give the bodhisattva vow every year. Even when His Holiness was outside of Larung Gar, he would confer the vow whenever an opportunity arose. For instance, during his pilgrimage trip to Mount Wutai in 1987, His Holiness performed the ritual of conferring the bodhisattva vow to his followers and many Han Buddhists.

It has been years since His Holiness passed into nirvana, and I have had the wish to confer the bodhisattva vow by following the same sadhana of His Holiness. Regrettably, I failed to find any related materials of his teaching for a long time. When His Holiness was

alive, I assumed that he would confer the vow frequently, so I seldom thought of preserving his teaching materials. However, now that he is gone, I realize how important his sadhana on the bodhisattva vow is, and that it is not preserved in any form. Surely, we have other sadhanas on the conferral of bodhicitta, like the specific one from Patrul Rinpoche's works. But, as the close disciples of His Holiness, we all believe that, since His Holiness had used his sadhana to confer the bodhisattva vow many times, it must be significant for us.

Fortunately, this winter I received a voice recording of His Holiness's conferral of the bodhisattva vow from someone. I was so happy upon hearing it. Just like rediscovering a long-lost wish-fulfilling jewel, the joy was beyond words. I transcribed the content immediately and offered it to other khenpos at Larung Gar. At the same time, I translated the text into Chinese right away.

So, today, following the sadhana of His Holiness, I will be giving you the bodhisattva vow. To get started, although its Tibetan version is slightly longer compared to the translated Chinese version, I assume many monastics or lay practitioners present here today will use this material to confer the bodhisattva vow on others in the future; therefore, it is better for me to offer you the full transmission of the complete program, including both the sadhana and His Holiness's explanation.

The pureness and entirety of my transmission is assured. For this bodhisattva vow, I was present on many occasions when His Holiness

was conferring it. Once, a group of laymen and monastics visited from Lhasa. They requested His Holiness to give them the conferral of the bodhisattva vow, and he agreed and delivered it. I remember this clearly as I was there in person when His Holiness gave the vow. So, I received the complete transmission of his conferral, including his explanation and the scriptural references he quoted. Hence, rest assured that I'm not giving you the transmission just by hearing the voice recording. *(Audience laughs.)* Now, I will recite this material first and then confer the vow.

(Khenpo reads the oral transmission for more than half an hour.)

UNDERSTAND THE NOBLE QUALITIES OF BODHICITTA

That is the entire oral transmission for you. Many of you will need it in order to confer the bodhisattva vow to others or to re-take it on your own. This is essential. Also, since you have received the transmission, I'd expect you to study the sadhana and His Holiness's explanation thoroughly in the next couple of days. A good number of scriptural references on how the vow can be engendered within one's mindstream are included in the explanation. Many of you should have aspired to generate bodhicitta, but the genuine bodhicitta may not have arisen in your mind yet. Or, you haven't recognized the importance of bodhicitta. That's why we require extensive study on the qualities of bodhicitta.

Supposedly, we should first study the 130 analogies on bodhicitta given in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, or the first chapter of *The Excellence of Bodhicitta* from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, or the short text of *Maitreya's Aspiration*, to comprehend the qualities of bodhicitta. But because our time is limited and you've also just finished a day-long recitation, I don't want to take too long. When I was giving the oral transmission, some of you were receiving it in a dreamy state. This is very impressive and I rejoice in your skill. Seems you can hit two birds with one stone, sleeping and listening at the same time. Such a state must be beyond our common sense. When we get to the main part later, some of you might be receiving the vow while again entering into a dream. I'm sure that an exceptional few can do this. Yet, it is quite impossible for most people.

Without further ado, I'll confer the bodhisattva vow by following His Holiness's sadhana. To well understand the bodhisattva vow, you should study the teaching given by His Holiness. Not only have I transcribed the content authentically, I have also translated it into Chinese. There should be no language barriers or misunderstandings whatsoever. Were His Holiness still alive and present on this occasion, the blessing of his physical nobility and magnificence would undoubtedly be unparalleled. But what he would say would be no different from what you hear in these recordings. So these records are something truly special to us. In the past, if there hadn't been disciples with the unfailing memory, ordinary people with poor memory would have been unlikely to write down the vajra speech of the teacher precisely

and completely. But now we are fortunate to have these records. We can transcribe every word in the records precisely. With the technical convenience, we are very confident with the completeness of the transcription on His Holiness's vajra speech.

That being said, many people can be directly connected with this great bodhisattva, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, by listening to his audio records. I'm not praising His Holiness with any of my personal bias. When we contemplate from all aspects, His Holiness was a genuinely great bodhisattva who graced the world with his presence. He delivered the Dharma teachings, elaborated pith instructions, and left for us the most precious Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings. Even if it is a small piece of teaching or a word of pith instruction, we cherish it like nothing else.

As mentioned, today is exceptionally auspicious. On such a special occasion, it is my sincerest wish that every one of you can give rise to the genuine bodhicitta. In *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, Patrul Rinpoche says, "The most important thing about bodhicitta is not arousing it, but rather that it has actually arisen." Plainly saying that "I aspire for bodhicitta! I want to arouse bodhicitta!" is just a formality that anyone can pull off. But, most importantly, one must truly generate the genuine bodhicitta in the mindstream. I hope that you can take this message into your heart.

Our life is limited. Even if some people can live up to a hundred years, they make for only a few rare cases. In Han Buddhism, there have

been a few prominent monks who lived over a hundred years. But that's not the usual case for ordinary people. In such a short span of life, it will be a deep regret if bodhicitta never truly arises even once in our mindstream. It will be a huge disappointment by the time we leave this world.

In Buddhism, the pratimoksha vows are the fundamental ethical trainings. Among all types of the pratimoksha vows, the highest vows are the bhikkhu and bhikkshuni pratimoksha. Nonetheless, these two are only effective from the time of receiving them to the end of this lifetime. They vanish with one's death, and probably no traces or influences can be found in the next life. However, that's not the case with the bodhisattva vow. As long as there are no opposites and no root downfall of the vow, the bodhisattva vow will remain intact for infinite lifetimes or eons until one attains Buddhahood.

We should know that the most severe opposite to the bodhisattva vow is the intention to harm sentient beings, or not to benefit others even if there are chances. If one were to hold such a malicious intention, the bodhisattva vow would be broken. Otherwise, the vow should remain intact. Those who have learned about the bodhisattva vow should be well aware of this. In terms of restoring the commitment after violation, the bodhisattva vow is also different from the pratimoksha vow. The bodhisattva vow can be always reinstated like repairing a broken gold vessel by a smart craftsman, while the pratimoksha vows cannot be restored after having a root downfall, like a porcelain cup being completely broken.

Now, knowing its value in brief, every one of us here must engender the genuine bodhicitta. For myself, I have received the bodhisattva vow in front of His Holiness and from other spiritual masters many times before. Ever since, I have been deliberately observing the workings of my mind for the violations of the vow. On the other hand, however, regarding the discernment of the generation of bodhicitta, even His Holiness implied in his teaching that he only generated “the simulated bodhicitta.” By this standard, I’m not confident to say that I’ve engendered the genuine bodhicitta. Nevertheless, since the time I received the bodhisattva vow from His Holiness until now, I’ve been confronted by all kinds of challenges in my life. Whether it be frame-ups, defamation, or various unimaginable crises, I’ve been pretty sure that I have never broken my vow. I’m confident to say this. Today, as I’m going to confer the bodhisattva vow to you all, I’m also contemplating for myself, “For the rest of my life, no matter how distressing the struggle I might face, I would never forsake my bodhisattva vow.” The same wish goes to you all.

STICK TO A CRUCIAL PRACTICE WITH A STRONG CONVICTION

Today’s conferral of the bodhisattva vow follows the tradition of His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. It is a skillful integration of *The King of Aspiration Prayers* and *The Way of the Bodhisattva* in a very concise and comprehensible manner. Furthermore, it is endowed with the blessing of the near lineage of transmission. For all of us

here, it is important to get the transmission in its entirety in order to confer the vow to others or to re-take it by ourselves.

I hope that every year, no matter where you are in this world, as long as you're alive, you'll take the bodhisattva vow on the anniversary of Buddha Shakyamuni's first turning of the Dharma Wheel. If possible, you should take the vow from a spiritual teacher. If not manageable, you can visualize that in the open space above you, all buddhas, bodhisattvas, spiritual teachers, and vajra masters of the ten directions are gathering upon your invocation. With the presence of these noble ones, you can receive the vow by following Nagarjuna's lineage of the profound view of emptiness or Asanga's lineage of the vast deeds of practice.

We should be aware that a superficial formality brings no benefit to our practice. Instead, we need to stick to a crucial practice that will never be changed or abandoned in the present and all future lifetimes. Yesterday when I attended the jomo's award ceremony, I spoke to all the khenmos and jomos and said that, generally speaking, their engagements in hearing, contemplation, meditation, teaching, debates, and writing, are all important, but everyone must hold a principal practice as a reliance. May it be the contemplation on impermanence, the cultivation of renunciation, the generation of bodhicitta, or the daily chanting, one needs to stick to the practice firmly.

Some people with an unstable personality change their minds quite

easily. The lack of conviction makes them volatile, being fickle and ever so changeable. By the measure of the Mahayana teachings, this kind of person is unreliable and untrustworthy. What we need is a strong conviction to ensure that we hold onto certain principal Dharma practices and never give up. Say, here I am in this human world, and I have encountered the Dharma, so I must generate bodhicitta and, as I am committed to the vow, I'll never ever forsake it, no matter what kinds of difficulty I run into. If we have such a strong determination, then dharmapalas, devas, nagas, and worldly spirits in favor of virtuous conduct will all safeguard and assist us, and many things will run smoothly and be well accomplished.

Therefore, I hope that for many of you, today will become a critical turning point in your life journey. Before today, you might have been a selfish person engaged in many unvirtuous activities, and may never have considered the welfare of sentient beings even momentarily. From today onwards, by the blessing of His Holiness and all lineage masters, you've been transformed into a responsible person for all beings. Thus, today has become a significant moment in your life trajectory.

If we can truly transform ourselves to be less selfish and more altruistic for the benefits of others, undoubtedly, our practice will be improved progressively. Conversely, without the altruistic intention, the practice of Dzogchen, Yamantaka, the Great Middle Way, or any sophisticated training will still fail to change the self-absorbed man of impure flesh and bone. It would be extremely difficult for such a person

to accomplish the Dharma practice. Therefore, you must uphold those most fundamental practices with a resolved and unshakable commitment. That way, you will not easily surrender or change your mind in front of any challenge, and your spiritual practice is bound to succeed. Otherwise, you'd be fickle and follow the crowd blindly without a strong belief or principle. You might find this practice agreeable today, but abandon it for a new master the next day, and compliment another Dharma center enthusiastically the day after. People without a conviction will gradually lose themselves.

In short, a resolute perseverance should remain unchanged for the rest of one's life without any compromises. This is my concern with the qualities of Dharma practice. I'm not speaking of those who don't want to be good practitioners. But if you wish to become genuine practitioners, you should avoid any superficial or fancy tricks. Instead, you need to explore your mind to find the most excellent and suitable practice or instruction for yourself and then practice it continuously for the rest of your life and even for all future lifetimes. Deepening your practice in such a way is crucial. I cannot stress it any more.

With the confidence and the reasons I've just explained, I'll be giving you the bodhisattva vow, and also explaining the text in short along with the conferral. Generally speaking, if one has never received the bodhisattva vow, one should receive it from a person. After that, one can re-take the vow on their own everyday by reciting the sadhana. In today's program, the vow will be given as we recite the sadhana, and

some parts will be recited in Chinese and other parts in Tibetan.

THE CONFERRAL OF THE BODHISATTVA Vow

A. REMIND ONESELF OF THE QUALITIES OF THE BODHISATTVA VOW

At the beginning, the qualities of the bodhisattva vow must be introduced. I'd expect you to take a good look at those scriptural references from the first chapter of *The Way of the Bodhisattva* quoted by His Holiness in his teaching. Although I claim to be a follower, a lineage disciple of His Holiness, I feel very ashamed with my poor memory. Despite the fact that I had memorized the first chapter of *The Way of the Bodhisattva* when I was young, now I cannot recall it anymore, not even read those stanzas smoothly. On the contrary, His Holiness memorized all these scriptural quotations and could apply them effortlessly. I truly envy his unfailing memory. As a matter of fact, his demonstration reminds us of the familiarity and affinity that we should hold towards Mahayana teachings, especially the qualities of bodhicitta. That way, our devotion and confidence for the qualities of the bodhisattva vow will be strengthened. This is very important.

That's why we need to understand the immense qualities of bodhicitta before receiving the bodhisattva vow.

Speaking from one aspect, if one dies without having ever given rise to bodhicitta in the course of this life, it would be very regrettable. Even if you are a monastic who follows the Shravakayana and observes precepts purely, without the generation of bodhicitta, it is still insubstantial in the pursuit of the Dharma. In this lifetime, either as a lay practitioner or a monastic, none of us knows how long we can live in this world. But as long as our bodhisattva vow remains intact for the rest of our life, even if we're supposed to fall into hell, we'd only experience the suffering for the time it takes to snap one's fingers. Knowing this, we should give rise to great joy deep in our heart as we are going to receive the bodhisattva vow.

There's also another important aspect to today's occasion. Over 2,500 years ago, on this same auspicious day, Buddha Shakyamuni turned the first Dharma Wheel in Sarnath, India. Since then, Buddhists all around the world have been honoring this as an auspicious day. At times like this, if we sincerely invite all buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions to be present with us and we receive the bodhisattva vow in front of them, their blessings will surely secure and enhance our bodhicitta, the essence of the bodhisattva vow, in our mindstream.

We must be aware that having the authentic bodhicitta arise in one's mind is not an easy task. Many people remain with their spiritual practice on a superficial level, and very few are conscientious and

assiduous. But if, with good fortune, the genuine bodhicitta arises in our mind, we will not be troubled by most negative things. Sufferings in life that have brought us so much grief and tears are actually caused by a selfish mind that we should feel ashamed of. When we truly give rise to the altruistic bodhicitta, all the agonies in life that we originally thought to be insurmountable will become trivial things and can be dealt with easily.

In other words, we should realize that most suffering in our life is due to the lack of bodhicitta. With bodhicitta arising in our mind, all problems can be simply solved. The pain resulting from selfishness will dissipate if we are motivated by a strong bodhicitta. No matter how devastating these sufferings might be, they are nothing to a man with bodhicitta. Therefore, for each individual, the key to happiness is the generation of bodhicitta. Aware of the abovementioned aspects, we now prepare our minds with great joy and delight.

B. IMPLORE FOR THE CONFERRAL OF THE BODHISATTVA VOW

Next, according to the sadhana, let's implore the vajra master for the conferral of the bodhisattva vow. Regard the spiritual teacher as the inseparable embodiment of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, and pray to him to grant us a way to keep the lower realms at bay, to show us a way to the higher realms, and to guide us to attain nirvana at last. For this yearning to be actualized, the bodhicitta is indispensable. That's why we beseech the guru to grant us bodhicitta. I will read the

following stanza excerpted from *Maitreya's Aspiration* in Tibetan and you repeat after me.

*Please grant me bodhicitta, the heart of awakening,
That keeps the lower realms at bay
That shows us the way to the higher realms,
And leads us to a state beyond aging and death. (x 3)*

After three times, the vajra master will answer, "Through countless eons of contemplation and observation, tathagatas of the three times have found out that bodhicitta is the most beneficial practice that no others could surpass." The vajra master then recites the stanza from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

*Since the boundless wisdom of the only guide of beings
Perfectly examined and perceived its priceless worth,
Those who wish to leave this state of wandering
Should hold well to this precious bodhicitta.*

Teachers of sentient beings, or tathagatas of the three time, have examined with their pristine wisdom for numberless eons and concluded that the precious bodhicitta is unparalleled in this world. Only by the power of bodhicitta can we liberate boundless sentient beings. This is the answer given by the teacher to approve the conferral.

C. VISUALIZE THE PERFECT PLACE AND INVOKE BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS

Then, we should visualize the place where we are to be decorated by a variety of offerings and adornments just as it's described in *The King of Aspiration Prayers* and *The Adornment Sutra of Sukhavati*. We should visualize this world as nothing like that which we perceive through our ordinary senses as filthy and disorderly, filled with holes, rubble, and more. In our visualization, the land should be smooth like lapis lazuli. This entire universe is extremely dignified and perfect. That's how we should view this world with a pure perception and then invoke all buddhas and bodhisattvas with the three recitations of the *Clouds of Offering Mantra*. Now, let's recite the stanzas for the visualization of a pure place and the *Clouds of Offering Mantra* for inviting all buddhas and bodhisattvas:

*May the earth be wholesome everywhere,
Free from boulders, cliffs, and chasms,
Flat and even like a level palm,
And smooth like lapis lazuli.*

*May all excellent materials, outer and inner, of gods and men,
Such as musical instruments, ornaments, garlands, food and
clothing,
All become a beautiful cloud of offerings,*

*Like the offerings of Samantabhadra,
which arose from the aspirations of the buddhas and their heirs.*

*namo ratna-trayāya namo bhagavate vajrasārapramardane
tathāgatāyārhatē samyakṣambuddhāya tadyathā
om vajra vajra mahāvajra mahātejavajra mahāvidyāvajra
mahābodhicittavajra mahābodhimaṇḍopasaṃkramaṇavajra
sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanavajra svāhā (x 3)*

After the three recitations of the *Clouds of Offering Mantra*, we are situated in a pure and dignified world, and invoke all buddhas and bodhisattvas. As we invite their presence, His Holiness instructs us in the visualization with a stanza from *The King of Aspiration Prayers*, saying that tathagatas and a great assembly surrounding them are all gathering under the bodhi tree:

*Filled with buddhas who have sat before the mighty bodhi tree,
Around them all their bodhisattva sons and daughters!*

The supplication follows the Sutrayana tradition. As we are receiving the bodhisattva vow, clearly visualize that the entire space is graced with the presence of buddhas and bodhisattvas who come to witness us. Now, we entreat buddhas and bodhisattvas with the following stanzas:

*Protector of all beings,
Divine being, vanquisher of demonic hordes,*

And knower of all things as they are—

Blessed One, together with your retinue, please come here to this place.

With your compassion for me and other beings,

And your magical powers,

Blessed One, for as long as I make offerings,

Please remain here.

D. MAKE THE SEVEN-BRANCH OFFERINGS TO ACCUMULATE MERIT

We've visualized the entire field being utterly pure, and then visualized all buddhas being invited to our world. They would remain in our world to witness the ritual of receiving the bodhisattva vow. Before formally receiving the vow, we should perform the *seven branches* of offering in front of buddhas and bodhisattvas to accumulate merit.

(1) Prostration

First is the prostration. We should fold our palms together as the physical homage, pray respectfully as the verbal homage, and recollect the qualities of tathagatas as the mental homage. We are not in only one physical form, but have boundless manifestations of our body to pay homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Besides our own

manifestations, there are also countless sentient beings who pay the homage in the same manner to all buddhas and bodhisattvas. This is the first branch of prostration where we express reverence to the sublime objects of visualization, all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

(2) Offering

Second is to make offerings. Regarding the offering objects, we should summate our bodies, enjoyments, virtuous roots of the three times, and all the offerings manifested by the power of dharani, mantra, and meditation and then offer them to buddhas and bodhisattvas.

(3) Confession

The third branch is confession. All the negative karma generated from greed, aggression, and ignorance in terms of body, speech, and mind can be categorized into the naturally negative acts and downfalls that violate the precepts. As we have committed these misdeeds since beginningless time, we should reveal and confess them in front of buddhas and bodhisattvas through the four powers of confession.

(4) Rejoicing

Fourth is the rejoicing branch. For all the secular and transcendental qualities and virtues achieved by ordinary beings, shravakas, pratyek-

abuddhas, bodhisattvas, and buddhas, we should rejoice in them delightfully without the slightest jealousy or competition.

(5) Requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma and

(6) Requesting not to pass into parinirvana

The fifth and the sixth branches are to request the Buddha to turn the wheel of Dharma and not to pass into parinirvana. In the expansive field of the ten directions, if buddhas, bodhisattvas, gurus, and spiritual guides seem disheartened to remain any longer, we must implore them sincerely to stay. In the event that they stop turning the Wheel of Dharma, we should also entreat them wholeheartedly to continue turning the Dharma Wheel.

(7) Dedicating

Now, let's dedicate the virtuous roots accumulated through the abovementioned six branches to all sentient beings for their attainment of the unsurpassable bodhi.

Together, the teacher and the disciples recite the following stanzas from *The King of Aspiration Prayers*:

*To all the buddhas, the lions of the human race,
In all directions of the universe, through past and present and*

future:

*To every single one of you, I bow in homage;
Devotion fills my body, speech, and mind.*

*Through the power of this prayer, Aspiring to Good Action,
All the victorious ones appear, vivid here before my mind
And I multiply my body as many times as atoms in the universe,
Each one bowing in prostration to all the buddhas.*

*In every atom preside as many buddhas as there are atoms,
And around them, all their bodhisattva heirs;
And so I imagine them filling
Completely the entire space of reality.*

*Saluting them with an endless ocean of praise,
With the sounds of an ocean of different melodies
I sing of the buddhas' noble qualities,
And praise all those who have gone to perfect bliss.*

*To every buddha, I make offerings:
Of the loveliest flowers, of beautiful garlands,
Of music and perfumed ointments, the best of parasols,
The brightest lamps and finest incense.*

*To every buddha, I make offerings:
Exquisite garments and the most fragrant scents,
Powdered incense, heaped as high as Mount Meru,
Arranged in perfect symmetry.*

*Then the vast and unsurpassable offerings—
Inspired by my devotion to all the buddhas, and
Moved by the power of my faith in Good Actions—
I prostrate and offer to all you victorious ones.*

*Whatever negative acts I have committed,
While driven by desire, hatred, and ignorance,
With my body, my speech, and also with my mind,
Before you, I confess and purify each and every one.*

*With a heart full of delight, I rejoice at all the merits
Of buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Pratyekabuddhas, those in training and the arhats beyond training,
And every living being, throughout the entire universe.*

*You who are like beacons of light shining through the worlds,
Who passed through the stages of enlightenment, to attain Buddhahood, freedom from all attachment,
I exhort you: all of you protectors,
Turn the unsurpassable wheel of Dharma.*

*Joining my palms together, I pray
To you who intend to pass into nirvana,
Remain, for aeons as many as the atoms in this world,
And bring well-being and happiness to all living beings.*

*What little virtue I have gathered through my homage,
Through offering, confession, and rejoicing,
Through exhortation and prayer—all of it
I dedicate to the enlightenment of all beings!*

The above concludes the preliminaries for receiving the bodhisattva vow.

E. INVOKE BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS AND TAKE THE REFUGE VOW

Now, we're entering the main part of receiving the bodhisattva vow. According to the intent of Kunchen Longchen Rabjam and Vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa, it is conventional to take the three invocations and the three refuges as the basis for the main practice. We follow their tradition when we take the bodhisattva vow in our everyday practice. The same for our daily recitation before and after every Dharma lecture.

According to their tradition, first is the three invocations. We pray to all buddhas, bodhisattvas and gurus of the ten directions to look after us. Whenever we are taking the bodhisattva vow, we must ask them to be present and witness. Now, I'll read the following supplication in Tibetan and you repeat after me.

*All you buddhas who dwell in the ten directions
 All you great bodhisattvas on the ten levels,
 All you great teachers, the vajra-holders, turn your mind
 towards me, I pray! (x 3)*

As we've supplicated three times, now we take the refuge vow. The way of taking refuge is to contemplate that, "From now onwards until the attainment of Buddhahood, I will take refuge in all tathagatas, in bodhicitta that entails all sublime teachings given by tathagatas, and in all practitioners who uphold bodhicitta, namely the assembly of bodhisattva. Until the enlightenment is attained, I take refuge in the Buddha, the Mahayana teaching with bodhicitta as its essence, and all the upholders of the Mahayana teaching, like Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and Ksitigarbha."

Those who haven't received the refuge vow before can take this opportunity to receive it. Those who have received it can affirm the refuge vow by receiving it again and again. Hold this devotion in mind; repeat after me:

*Until the essence of enlightenment is reached,
 I go for refuge to the Buddhas.
 Also I take refuge in the Dharma
 And in all the host of Bodhisattvas. (x 3)*

It is the way! Yes, how wonderful!

Now, the refuge vow is taken. I see that most of you are very fluent when reciting the stanza because it's part of your daily prayer. You folks repeated the stanzas smoothly and that was impressive.

F. RECEIVE THE BODHISATTVA VOW

Now comes the actual receiving of the bodhisattva vow. The following stanzas are for the generation of bodhicitta. We will recite them three times. By the third round, I will snap my fingers and an affirmation of receiving the vow should arise within your mind. Some of you have not generated the genuine bodhicitta yet. Today, in front of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and gurus, you should make the commitment seriously. The solemnity is like making a declaration on joining a national organization or a party. We should hold an earnest attitude when entering the Mahayana path.

Here we are in this magnificent shrine hall surrounded by sutras, buddha statues, images of masters, as well as hosts of buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and lineage vajra masters that we visualize in the space—we must take the vow seriously. We should not hold a frivolous attitude or a distracted mindset to come here for some tsok offerings and snacks. Instead, this should be a crucial moment in our life, just like getting married is, when one places great importance on the wedding day. As one of the most significant changes in one's entire life, one will remember that moment clearly

forever. Similarly, we should be very serious and attentive at this moment of receiving the vow.

If you have not generated the genuine bodhicitta before, I believe that today's entire program with the preliminaries, offerings, and rituals is wholesome and flawless for you to sincerely engender bodhicitta in your mind. If you have generated bodhicitta already, your aspiration will be certainly enhanced multifold through taking the vow again. Although I may not be qualified to confer the bodhisattva vow, yet, I can be "authorized personnel" or a delegate to do this. Not that I'm a legitimate power but I'm authorized to perform the ritual.

Hence, I believe that for each one of you, today should be regarded as the most significant moment in life. Once bodhicitta is generated in your mind, you will truly become a bodhisattva. As declared in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, you will be called "the heir of the buddha" and truly become the virtuous object of veneration and offering for all devas and humans. Not only has your name changed, your significance has also transformed.

To attain such a state, you must have a strong determination to assume the role of a bodhisattva. Some people said to me, "Being a bodhisattva is not so great as it is stressful and painful. I'd prefer to be a shravaka." If that's the case, do not repeat the vow when we get to the stanzas of declaration. You may just think that being a bodhisattva is impossible as it is too demanding and difficult. But I would still encourage you to think it over. Obtaining a precious human body is extremely rare;

how wonderful it would be to further receive the bodhisattva vow and let the genuine bodhicitta arise in your mind.

The generation of bodhicitta is of great importance for all Buddhists nowadays. I've met with many Buddhists who claim to be genuine practitioners yet might even lack the basic thought of renunciation, the heart of Shrivakayana. They just apply for a refuge certificate and spend the rest of their lives in dullness. This would be improvident. Since we have come across excellent gurus and the sublime Mahayana teachings, I hope that we can strive to be authentic bodhisattvas and make our human existence truly meaningful. In the future, we might meet people who'd hurt us to the point where we're on the verge of forsaking the bodhisattva vow. But we can always confess the violation and to re-take the vow. It is excellent to receive the bodhisattva vow in the first place, and then it can be re-taken and reinforced from time to time.

Now, we'll proceed with declaring the commitment. Some people take vows before God, some make their promise to the sky. In any case, right at that moment of declaring, one should not be absent-minded. Otherwise, it'd be saying is one thing and doing another. That isn't how it should be. As we vow to liberate sentient beings from today onwards, we must keep in mind the reason behind this commitment: We have been wandering in samsara and undergoing countless rounds of birth and death, yet why haven't we attained liberation? Not to mention others, we ourselves—without exception, every one of us—have suffered enough in samsara. We've been caught

in the myriad of suffering—the suffering of birth, aging, death, illness; the suffering of separation, and so on—for far too long. If we never aspire for bodhicitta, we will continue to be stuck in this endless cyclic existence not knowing when the end will come. But if we’ve generated bodhicitta, starting with the lesser path of accumulation, we’re paving the road towards enlightenment and have the hope for liberation right now.

I believe that if everyone sincerely generates bodhicitta, a great number of extraordinary blessings and unique powers of our lineage will undoubtedly be bestowed upon us and save us from suffering. I am saying this from my personal experience. Before I had any idea about bodhicitta, I was a young, hot-tempered boy. You could always catch me in fights when I was in elementary and junior high. I was extremely fortunate to be kindly accepted by His Holiness, whose mind was so open and embracing. Gradually, I realized that life is transient and the most precious thing for me is nothing but bodhicitta. This compassionate essence of bodhicitta should never be forsaken, no matter how dire the situation I encounter. Later in life, I’ve experienced many adverse circumstances, such as groundless accusations and frame-ups, some of which you couldn’t even imagine. If I hadn’t learned or practiced bodhicitta with His Holiness, I wouldn’t have gone so easy on these people. As we are all humans, if someone had mistreated me without reason, I’d certainly have fought back and, most likely, I would have won given of my hot temper. I was not a coward but very brave in fights. Well, that’s the old me. Under

the guidance of His Holiness, my bodhicitta has prevented me from giving rise to any destructive emotions. For so many times, I've reckoned that with the aspiration of bodhicitta, at least I've become a much better person.

For all of you present here, I hope that you will highlight today, July 24, 2020, or June 4 on the Tibetan calendar, as a pivotal turning point in your life. Should we give rise to the genuine bodhicitta, it will remain for infinite lifetimes and the vow will never regress. Everyone should be clear about this. Through today's teaching, may the bodhicitta genuinely arise within the mindstream of those who haven't generated it. May the bodhicitta that had arisen be strengthened and perfected. This is the main purpose of today's teaching.

Next, we will recite the stanzas for taking the vow. Before this, I will play the audio clip of His Holiness's conferral of the bodhisattva vow. Although the vow cannot be received through listening to the audio, nonetheless, we can still receive the blessing since His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche had given the vow in this way in the past. Let's hear it and see how His Holiness delivered the bodhisattva vow then.

(Khenpo plays the audio clip)

That was the scene of His Holiness giving the bodhisattva vow. Now we will first recite the stanzas twice and by the third round, you should affirm that you have received the vow.

*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,*

*Likewise, for the benefit of beings,
I will bring to birth the awakened mind,
And following those precepts,
I will abide and train myself. (x 2)*

As we've recited it twice, I will snap my fingers in the third round. I think His Holiness did two gestures back then. One was to snap his fingers, and, for the other gesture, when the audience was too big, he would also clap. Upon hearing any one of these signals, you need to think in your mind, "Okay, I hear the signal, and I have received the bodhisattva vow right at this moment. I have generated bodhicitta." Contemplate as such. Now, I will recite the last round.

*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,*

*Likewise, for the benefit of beings,
I will bring to birth the awakened mind,
And following those precepts,
I will abide and train myself.*

So be it; how wonderful!

G. GENERATE GREAT JOY FOR ONESELF AND OTHERS

After receiving the bodhisattva vow, we should cultivate a sense of great joy for both ourselves and others. Firstly, we should rejoice in ourselves and think, “As I have obtained the bodhisattva vow, my human life is now truly meaningful. From today onwards, I’m a member of the Shakya family, and become an heir of tathagatas. No matter what I do, I should never tarnish the family of tathagatas because its nobility is immaculate. As if I am a blind man who found a wish-fulfilling jewel or a piece of gold in the garbage heap, having a human birth filled with karma and afflictions, yet, I have obtained the precious bodhicitta that is like a wish-fulfilling jewel. How fortunate!” We should feel joyous in this way. The following stanzas can be repeated after me or recited together. Let’s recite together.

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.

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.

*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.*

This is the sense of joy for ourselves. I can assume that some of you here might have never generated the Mahayana bodhicitta, the thought of renunciation or impermanence having yet to be generated in your mind. Now, having this one-in-a-million chance to give rise to bodhicitta, you should feel immensely happy.

Secondly, we should make others joyous. Once you have the bodhicitta, those worldly gods, ghosts, rakshas, non-human beings, and other harm-doers will all be pleased. It is because when a bodhisattva is present in the world, the benefits are immense for beings of infinite realms. Not only will a bodhisattva offer the ordinary provisions like food and clothing to sentient beings in countless worlds, he will also provide them both the temporary and the ultimate benefits in all lifetimes. Therefore, here we are today to announce to all sentient beings that we have generated bodhicitta, and they all should be cheerful since we will not harm them ever. Of course, they shouldn't take advantage of us Buddhists, assuming that they can treat us badly because we are bodhisattvas. As we're observing an altruistic intent, all the aggressive attitudes and behaviors will disappear naturally from the world. This world can restore peace where all kinds of happiness may be acquired. So now, let's make others joyous by

reciting the following stanza altogether.

*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!*

H. DEDICATE THE MERIT

The entire program on conferring the bodhisattva vow is now completed. Lastly, let's dedicate all the virtuous roots to boundless sentient beings. May the wish-fulfilling Dharma prosper, may all sentient beings be happy, and may the world be wonderful like the beginning of the current kalpa when the phenomenal world and the sentient beings are felicitous across the six times. With this intention, let's dedicate the merits.

*By this accumulation of merit,
may I obtain all seeing omniscience,
And may all faults be defeated.
The whirling, turbulent waves of birth, aging, sickness,
And death — from this ocean of samsara, may I liberate beings.*

This is the end of Khenpo Sodargye's commentary and conferral of the bodhisattva vow by following His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche's *Concise Sadhana of the Bodhisattva Vow* on June 4th, 2020, the anniversary of Buddha Shakyamuni's first turning of the Dharma Wheel.



For Non-Commercial Use Only