

The Bodhisattva's Ten Great Vows *

Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva who dwells on this Ground of Joyfulness is able to completely institute just such great vows entailing just such great heroic courage and just such great effective action. Specifically, they are: [Bhikshu Dharmamitra translation - Page 69 - Section 7]

He who is on the Perfect Joy bodhisattva bhūmi accomplishes great prayers, great efforts, and great accomplishments in these ways: [84,00 Translation - 1.88]

1. He brings forth a vast, pure, and resolute understanding through which he makes a vow to reverently present gifts of every form of offering to all buddhas without exception. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order to offer to and serve all buddhas without exception, without remainder, the [bodhisattva](#) continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the [realm of phenomena](#), reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may render great service and make great offerings to all buddhas who will appear in all eons. [1.89]

2. He also makes a great vow in which he vows to take on all buddhas' turning of the Dharma wheel, vows to take on [the realization of] all buddhas' bodhi, vows to protect all buddha's teaching, and vows to preserve all buddhas' Dharma. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order to possess the Dharma taught by all the [tathāgatas](#), in order to obtain the enlightenment of all the buddhas, and in order to preserve the teachings of all the [samyaksambuddhas](#), the [bodhisattva](#) continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the [realm of phenomena](#), reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may possess the Dharma taught by all the [tathāgatas](#).

3. He also makes a great vow in which he vows that, in all worlds, when the Buddhas come forth into the world, descend from the Tuṣita Heaven Palace, enter the womb, abide in the womb, first take birth, leave behind the home life, achieve realization of the path, proclaim the Dharma, and finally enter nirvāṇa, in every instance, he will go forth to visit them, will draw close to them and make offerings to them, will serve them as a leader within their congregations, will take on the practice of right Dharma, and will proceed then to simultaneously turn the Dharma wheel in all places. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order that during the lives of all the buddhas in infinite worlds without exception, from when they are in the divine palace in [Tuṣita](#) onward—their departure from there, descent, entering a body, being born, enjoying youth, living with a retinue of queens, abandoning the lay life, practicing asceticism, going to the [bodhimaṇḍa](#), subjugating the [māras](#), attaining buddhahood, receiving a supplication, turning the great Dharma wheel, and demonstrating passing into the great [nirvāṇa](#)—and in order that they may come into their presence, make offerings to them, serve them, receive the Dharma, [\[F.177.b\]](#) and so on, the [bodhisattva](#) continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the [realm of phenomena](#), reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may be in the presence of all buddhas until they pass into [nirvāṇa](#).

4. He also makes a great vow in which he vows to explain in accordance with their reality all of the bodhisattva practices, so vast, so immeasurable, indestructible, unalloyed in their purity, and inclusive of all the *pāramitās*, vows to explain the purifying cultivation of the grounds, their general characteristics, their specific characteristics, their common characteristics, their differentiating characteristics, the characteristics conducing to success in them, and the characteristics leading to ruination, vowing too to teach these matters to everyone, thus influencing them thereby to take on these practices and bring forth increasing resolve. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order to accomplish the immeasurable vast extent of **bodhisattva** conduct without omission, accumulating all the **perfections** and refining all the **bhūmis**, and in order to acquire the aggregation of all the main and subsidiary **factors for enlightenment**—with the principal and various signs, dissolution, transformation, and all that is in the conduct of the **bodhisattva**, the teaching on the path of the **bhūmis**, the support and gift of the teaching and instruction on training in the **perfections**, and attaining the development of the motivation to buddhahood—the **bodhisattva** continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the **realm of phenomena**, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may throughout all eons accomplish the development of the motivation to buddhahood.

5. He also makes a great vow in which he vows: “I will teach all realms of beings in a manner influencing them to enter into the Dharma of the Buddha, influencing them to eternally cut off coursing in any of the destinies of worldly rebirth, and influencing them to become established in the path to the cognition of all-knowledge, teaching all of them, whether they be possessed of form or formless, whether they be possessed of perception, free of perception, or abiding in a state of neither perception nor non-perception, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, or transformationally born, teaching all of them, no matter how they are connected to the triple world, no matter in which of the six destinies of rebirth they abide, and no matter in which place they have taken birth, teaching all beings possessed of name-and-form, teaching all such classes of beings as these.” His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order that all the worlds of beings, without exception or remainder, who make up the three realms, who are within the six kinds of existence—those with form and the formless, those with perception and those without perception, those who are not those with perception and also those who are not those without perception, those born from eggs, those born from wombs, those born from warm moisture, those born miraculously—in order that all these beings, all those realms of beings, be ripened completely, enter the Buddha’s Dharma, follow the path without interruption, and be brought to the **bhūmi** of omniscience, the **bodhisattva** continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the **realm of phenomena**, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may throughout all eons ripen the nature of all beings.

6. He also makes a great vow in which he vows to directly know and perceive with utterly clear cognition all worlds in all their vastness and countless varieties, including the coarse, the subtle, the disordered, the inverted, and the upright, knowing them all, whether in entering them, coursing along within them, or emerging from them, knowing them in their countless many different sorts of variations throughout the ten directions that are analogous [in their mutual relationship] to the net-like curtain of Indra. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order that his miraculous emanations may enter equally and separately into every assembly in every single world in the ten directions while having the wisdom that perceives their dissimilarities—the wide worlds and the narrow, the vast and immeasurable, the subtle and the gross, the inverted and the upside down—the bodhisattva continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the realm of phenomena, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may throughout all eons enter those worlds for the sake of purification.

7. He also makes a great vow in which he resolves to bring about the complete purification of all the measurelessly many buddha lands wherein all lands enter a single land, a single land enters all lands, and they are all adorned with many radiant phenomena, wherein they all become filled with measurelessly many wise beings who have left behind all afflictions and perfected the path of purification, and wherein he everywhere enters the vast realms of all buddhas, accords with the mental dispositions of beings, and thus appears for them in a manner that causes them all to be pleased. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order for all purified realms to be in one realm and one realm in all realms, for there to be limitless purified buddha realms, beautified by adorning arrays of a multitude of lights, where there is the attainment of the path of purification that removes all kleśas, realms that are filled by countless beings who are the source of wisdom and that are the entirety of the vast fields of activity of the buddhas that satisfy with teachings the wishes of beings, [F.178.b] the bodhisattva continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the realm of phenomena, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may throughout all eons purify buddha realms.

8. He also makes a great vow in which he vows to unite with all other bodhisattvas in practices with a single determined aim, doing so in a manner that remains free of enmity or jealousy, proceeding in this with the accumulation of all forms of roots of goodness, engaging with all bodhisattvas toward a single objective with universally equal regard, always gathering together with them and never allowing there to develop any mutual estrangement, doing so with a freely exercised ability to manifest all sorts of different buddha bodies, being able by resort to the capacities of his own mind to know all the domains, awesome powers, and wisdom of all tathāgatas, being able thus to gain realization of the irreversible psychic powers through which one freely roams throughout all worlds, manifesting his physical presence in all of their assemblies, everywhere entering into all of stations of rebirth, perfecting the inconceivable Great Vehicle, cultivating the practices of the bodhisattvas. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order to be dedicated to the one intention of all **bodhisattvas**; in order to individually accumulate the roots of goodness; in order to have the same goal as all **bodhisattvas**; in order to be always inseparably accompanied by **bodhisattvas**; in order for the buddhas to teach him whatever he wishes; in order to obtain, through his motivation to buddhahood, the scope, power, and wisdom of all the **tathāgatas**; in order to attain imperishable, ever-present **clairvoyance**; in order to move throughout all worlds; in order for his form to appear among the assembled pupils of all buddhas and for all buddhas to teach him; in order for his bodies to continue in all his rebirths; in order to obtain the inconceivable Mahāyāna; and in order to have the uninterrupted practice of **bodhisattva** conduct, the **bodhisattva** continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the **realm of phenomena**, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may throughout all eons accomplish the Mahāyāna in all his conduct.

9. He also makes a great vow in which he vows to take up the irreversible turning of the wheel, to course in the bodhisattva practices, to cultivate the refinement of physical, verbal, and mental karmic actions, to never neglect his endeavors in these matters, vowing too that, if anyone sees him, even if only momentarily, then he will thereby become bound for definite success in the Buddha's Dharma, vows that, if anyone hears his voice, even if only momentarily, then he will thereby become bound to gain genuine wisdom, vows that, if one merely brings forth thoughts of pure faith, then he will thereby become bound to eternally cut off the afflictions, vows that he will succeed in becoming like a personification of the great king of medicine trees, that he will become like a personification of a wish-fulfilling jewel, and vowing that he will cultivate all of the bodhisattva practices. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

In order to practice the sublime **bodhisattva** conduct that resides within the irreversible wheel; in order for there to be the fruitful activities of body, speech, and mind [F.179.a] that bring conviction in the Buddhadharma as soon as the body is seen, that bring attainment of wisdom as soon as the voice speaks, and that bring freedom from **kleśas** as soon as there is faith; in order to attain the motivation that is like the great king of medicines; in order to attain a body that is like a wish-fulfilling jewel; and in order to practice all the conduct of the **bodhisattvas**, the **bodhisattva** continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the **realm of phenomena**, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that throughout all eons all his practice of the wheel of irreversibility will be fruitful.

10. He also makes a great vow in which he vows that he will gain realization of anuttara-samyaksambodhi in all worlds, that he will not abandon even any of those places manifesting within the tip of a hair, that he will appear even in all those places manifesting within the tip of a hair the actions of taking on human birth, leaving behind the home life, arriving at the bodhimaṇḍa, realizing the right enlightenment, turning the wheel of Dharma, and entering nirvāṇa, that he will acquire the Buddha's realms of awareness and powers of great wisdom,⁵³ that even in every successive instant, adapting to the minds of every being, he will manifest for them the realization of buddhahood and cause them to succeed in achieving quiescent cessation themselves, that he will, through a single sambodhi, gain the realization of all dharma realms as characterized by identity with nirvāṇa, that, employing a single voice in the proclamation of Dharma, he will be able to cause the minds of all beings to become joyful, that, even though he manifests the appearance of entering the great nirvāṇa, he will still never cut off his coursing in the practices of the bodhisattva, that he will reveal the grounds of great wisdom⁵⁴ and the establishment of all dharmas, and that, in accomplishing this, he will employ the super-

knowledges associated with the cognition of dharmas, the super-knowledges associated with the foundations of spiritual power, the conjuration-like super-knowledges, and sovereignly masterful transformations that fill up the entire Dharma realm. His implementation of this vow is as vast as the Dharma realm and as extensive as empty space as it continues on incessantly until the end of future time and throughout all kalpas.

Son of the Buddha, the bodhisattva dwelling on this Ground of Joyfulness is able to bring forth such great vows, great heroic courage, and great effective action. Taking these ten vow gateways as foremost, he brings about the complete fulfillment of a hundred myriads of asaṃkhyeyas of great vows. [page 75]

In order to attain buddhahood, unsurpassable complete enlightenment, in all worlds; in order that there will be, for each childlike being without a hairsbreadth of difference, birth,¹³⁶ enjoying youth, living with a retinue of queens, abandoning the lay life, practicing asceticism, going to the bodhimaṇḍa, subjugating the māras, attaining buddhahood, receiving a supplication, turning the great Dharma wheel, and demonstrating passing into the great nirvāṇa;¹³⁷ in order to obtain the Buddha's great scope, powers, and wisdom; in order to manifest as a buddha in all the realms of beings in accordance with his wishes, and in each instant manifest buddhahood and the attainment of peace; in order that one buddhahood will fill the entire expanse of phenomena with emanations; in order that speaking in one voice will completely satisfy the minds and wishes of all the realms of beings; in order to manifest passing into the great nirvāṇa and the continuous practice of conduct; [F.179.b] in order to teach the presentation of all the qualities in the bhūmis of great wisdom;¹³⁸ and in order to emanate throughout all worlds the clairvoyance that is the power of the Dharma of wisdom, the bodhisattva continuously makes great prayers, perfect in all aspects, that have the complete purity of a vast aspiration, are as vast as the realm of phenomena, reach the ends of space, and extend to the end of time, so that he may throughout all eons have the clairvoyance of great wisdom in the attainment of buddhahood.

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“O jinaputras! Those are their great prayers, great scope, and great diligence. They make these ten doorways of prayer, and the bodhisattva on the Perfect Joy bodhisattva bhūmi fulfills these ten prayers countless hundreds of thousands of times.

* *Found in The Daśabhūmika; Found in The Avataṃsaka Sūtra*

Chapter 26 of the Chinese - Flower Ornament

Chapter 31 (of 45) of the Tibetan - A Multitude of Buddhas

An Annotated English Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra and from the 84,000 Translation

Notes

47. In his Treatise on the Ten Grounds Sutra, (Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā / 十住毘婆沙論 [T no. 1521]), Nāgārjuna devotes all of Chapter Five (T26n1521_p30b10-35a21) to an extensive explanation of the following ten vows. For an English translation of this, see my translation of this entire treatise.
48. DSBC = “sarvajñajñānapraṭiṣṭhāpanāya.”
49. I opt for the first of Qingliang's two interpretations for the reading of this extremely ambiguous line not found at all in Bodhiruci, Śīladharma, Buddhahadra, or the Sanskrit and only obliquely alluded to in Kumarajiva. (QL's other approved interpretation of “若入若行若去” refers to these worlds subsuming or being subsumed by each other in an interpenetrating fashion wherein this bodhisattva freely travels to and returns from these many different sorts of worlds.)
50. DSBC doesn't specify “wise beings” so much as “beings possessed of knowledge”: “apramāṇajñānākarasattva.” [84,000 སེམས་ཅན་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་འབྲུང་གནས་ཚད་མེད་པས་]
51. DSBC doesn't specify “wisdom,” but rather “knowledge”: “tathāgatap rabhāvajñānānugamāya.”

asamkhyeya = grangs med
A number equaling 10 to the 59th