HOMAGE TO AVALOKITESHVARA!

A. I always respectfully prostrate with my three doors to the excellent teacher and protector Chenrezig, who although seeing the lack of going and coming of all phenomena, endeavours one-pointedly to benefit sentient beings.

B. The perfect Buddhas, the source of all temporal and ultimate happiness, arise from having accomplished the holy Dharma. As accomplishing that also depends on knowing its practices, I shall explain the practice of Bodhisattvas.
1. At this time when the difficult-to-obtain, great vessel of leisure and fortune has been obtained, the practice of Bodhisattvas is to continuously listen, think, and meditate day and night in order to ferry themselves and others from the ocean of Samsara.

2. The practice of Bodhisattvas is to renounce their homelands which condition desire, like water, to waver towards friends, anger, like fire, to turn towards enemies, and ignorance, which possesses obscurations of forgetting what to accept and what to discard.

3. The practice of Bodhisattvas is to remain in isolated places as obscurations will gradually diminish due to abandoning harmful objects, virtuous actions will gradually increase as the mind is not distracted, and due to clear-mindedness, perfect recognition of the Dharma will arise.
4. The practice of Bodhisattvas is to renounce this life for at the time of death long-associated family and friends will be separated, wealth and goods which have been procured with great effort will be left behind, and the guesthouse-like body will be discarded by the guest of consciousness,

5. Practice of Bodhisattvas is to abandon harmful friends, who when associated with, cause the three poisons to increase, the actions of listening, thinking, and meditating to degenerate, and love and compassion to be non-existent.

6. When relying on the excellent spiritual friend, faults decrease and good qualities increase like the waxing of the moon. Therefore, the practice of Bodhisattvas is to hold the excellent spiritual friend as even more dear than their own bodies.
7. What worldly god, himself also imprisoned in the jail of Samsara, is able to protect anyone? Therefore, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to go for refuge in the Three Jewels which are undeceiving when refuge in someone is sought.

8. It has been said by the Sage that the very-difficult-to-endure sufferings of the lower realms are the result of negative karma. Therefore, even at the cost of their lives, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas never to create negative karma.

9. The happiness of the three worlds, like dew drops on the tip of a blade of grass, has the nature of perishing in a single moment. Therefore, striving for the excellent state of unchanging liberation is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
10. What is the use of one's own happiness when all mothers who have been kind to oneself since beginningless time are in distress? Therefore, in order to ferry all sentient beings, generating the [altruistic] mind of Enlightenment is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

11. As all sufferings have occurred due to desiring happiness for, oneself and the perfect Buddhas have been born from the mind which benefits others, the actual exchange of their own happiness with the sufferings of others is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

12. Even if others under power of great desire, steal or force others to steal all of their [the Bodhisattvas] wealth, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to dedicate their bodies, wealth and virtues of the three times to them.
13. Even if others were to cut off their heads, while they were not even the slightest bit at fault, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to take on all of the ill-deeds of others with the power of compassion.

14. Even if someone were to shout different types of insults throughout the billion worlds at them, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas still to speak of that person's good qualities with a loving mind.

15. Even if someone were to uncover their most intimate faults and say harmful words in the centre of a crowd of many people, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to bow humbly to that person with the thought that he is a spiritual friend.
16. Even if a person whom they have lovingly taken care of like their own son were to regard them as an enemy, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to show greater kindness, like a mother, to her son who is stricken by an illness.

17. Even if a person of the same or lower status than they were to attempt to insult them due to the power of pride, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas respectfully to take that person, like a teacher, on the top of their heads.

18. Even if they have a poor livelihood, are always insulted by people and are afflicted by a very dangerous illness or evil spirits, it is still the practice of Bodhisattvas undauntedly to take on the ill-deeds and sufferings of all living beings.
19. Even if they are famous, respected by many people and have attained wealth like Vaishravana [the guardian king], having seen there is no essence in the glory and wealth of worldly existence, remaining without pride is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

20. If outer enemies are destroyed while not restraining the enemy of one's own anger, enemies will [only] increase. Therefore, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to conquer their own minds with the powerful army of love and compassion.

21. As sensual pleasures, like salt water, increase desire no matter how much they are enjoyed, the practice of Bodhisattvas is immediately to abandon all objects that generate a desire towards them.
22. The manner of all appearances is the creation of one's own mind; the nature of mind from the beginning is free from the extremes of [mental] elaboration. Knowing this, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas not to make mental distinctions between object and subject.

23. It is the practice of Bodhisattvas to renounce attachment when meeting with pleasant objects, for although they appear lovely, like a rainbow in summer, they are not really being seen.

24. The various types of sufferings are like the death of a son in a dream, There is weariness due to holding illusive appearances as real. Therefore, when meeting with unfavourable conditions, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to view them as illusive.
25. If it is necessary to give even one's body when desiring Enlightenment, what need is there to mention outer objects? Therefore, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to give gifts without the hope of present or future gain.

26. If when lacking moral conduct, one cannot achieve one's own aim, wanting to achieve benefit for others is just a laughing matter. Therefore, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to protect morality without craving for worldly pleasures.

27. To Bodhisattvas, who desire the wealth of virtue, all agents of harm are like a precious treasure. Therefore, cultivating the patience that lacks hatred and animosity towards all is the practice of Bodhisattvas.
28. If even the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, who work only for self gain, are seen to exert themselves as if extinguishing burning fires on their heads, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas, in order to benefit all beings, to undertake diligence, the source of all good qualities.

29. It is the practice of Bodhisattvas to cultivate the concentration which surpasses the four formless stages through having realised that Vipashyana (meditative insight) possessed with excellent Shamatha (mental quiescence) completely destroys obscurations.

30. It is the practice of Bodhisattvas to cultivate the wisdom that possesses method and does not differentiate the three spheres (subject, object and action); for if wisdom is lacking, one will be unable to achieve complete Buddhahood by means of the five other perfections.
31. With merely the external appearance of a practitioner, if one doesn't examine one's own mistakes, it is possible to act antithetically to the Dharma. Therefore, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas continuously to examine their own mistakes and to abandon them.

32. If a Bodhisattva, due to the power of obscurations were to describe the faults of other Bodhisattvas, he himself would degenerate. Therefore, not speaking of the faults of others who abide in the Mahayana is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

33. As quarrelling back and forth in order to gain wealth and honour degenerates the actions of listening, thinking and meditating, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to abandon attachment to the households of family, friends and sponsors.
34. Due to harsh words the minds of others are disturbed and the character of Bodhisattvas degenerate. Therefore, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to abandon harsh words unpleasant to others.

35. Because obscurations when habituated are difficult to reverse with an antidote, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to destroy obscurations such as attachment and others the very first moment they appear, [waiting ready] as mindful and introspective beings who have grasped the antidotal sword.

36. In brief, it is the practice of Bodhisattvas to achieve benefit for others through continuously possessing the mindfulness and introspection that examines whatever conditions arise in their own minds in all facets of behaviour.
37. It is the practice of Bodhisattvas to dedicate to Enlightenment the virtue they have achieved by endeavouring in this way, with the wisdom of the purity of the three spheres (subject, object and action) in order to clear the sufferings of limitless beings.

I. I have arranged the thirty-seven Bodhisattva practices for those who wish to practise the Bodhisattva path through adhering to the speech of the excellent ones (concerning) the meanings related in the sutras, tantras and commentaries.

II. Because I am of low intelligence and little learning, this is not a poetical composition that will please the learned. However, as I have relied on the sutras and the speech of the excellent ones, I think Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices is not mistaken.
III. Yet, because it is difficult for someone of low intelligence like me to fathom the depths of the great Bodhisattva practices, I request the excellent ones to be patient with the groups of faults, such as contradictions and unrelatedness.

IV. Due to the virtue arising from this, may all sentient beings, by means of the excellent ultimate and conventional minds of Enlightenment, become the same as Avalokiteshvara, the Protector, who does not abide in the extremes of worldly existence and solitary pacification.

This has been composed by (me), the monk Thogs-med, an expounder of scripture and logic, in a cave in Ngol-chu'i-Rin-chen for my own and others' benefit.


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