

Part One:

**ON GENERATING THE RESOLVE
TO BECOME A BUDDHA**

Ārya Nāgārjuna's *Ten Grounds Vibhāṣā* – Chapter. 6

But on account of accumulating all manner of merit and roots of goodness which have become thoroughly ripened, they may then be able to encounter a buddha, or else may be able to encounter a great bodhisattva, one of those beings who is able to know the sharpness and dullness of the faculties of beings, is able to know from root to branch the deepest thoughts of beings, is able to know the distinctions existing in their natures and desires, is able to well understand what constitutes appropriate skillful means, and who is protected by the Prajñāpāramitā.

Those [beings of this sort] who are able to carry on the works of a Buddha will realize when we have generated the vow. Then, on account of our ripening roots of goodness, they may then cause us to abide in [the Bodhisattva Path's] "right and fixed position" upon realizing the unproduced-dharmas patience.⁵ These bodhisattvas are those abiding on the seventh, eighth, ninth, or tenth bodhisattva grounds. In a manner comparable to that of the Buddha, they skillfully assess the mental powers of individual beings and instruct them accordingly, causing them to bring forth the resolve.

In a case such as this, [success in this matter] is not solely on account of such things as the power of faith and happiness [occurring on hearing of the great matter], but rather is a case of being taught [by such great beings] to generate the resolve [to strive for buddhahood].

A. THE ASPIRATION TO EMULATE THE CONDUCT OF BODHISATTVAS

Yet again, there are those persons who observe other bodhisattvas in their coursing along on the Path. They observe them as they cultivate all manner of roots of goodness and as they proceed along under the protection of the great compassion. [They observe those bodhisattvas in] their perfecting of appropriate skillful means and in their teaching and transforming of beings. [They observe]:

- That, as they accomplish an abundance of beneficial deeds, they refrain from indulging any cherishing regard for their own bodies or lives,
- That they become vast in the extensiveness of their learning,
- That they become the most especially distinctive persons in the world,
- That they become the most emblematic among people in their superiority,

- That they serve as a source of shade for those beings who have become weary and afflicted by suffering,
- That they become established in the practices of giving, of moral virtue, of patience, of vigor, of dhyāna absorption, of wisdom, of a sense of shame, of a sense of blame, of straightforwardness in character, of mental pliancy, and of self regulation,
- That their minds are pure,
- And that they are profoundly delighted by coursing in good dharmas.

On observing persons such as these they are inspired to reflect, “I, too, should course in those practices coursed in by these men. I, too, should cultivate just such vows and conduct as they themselves do practice. I should generate this vow for the sake of realizing this Dharma.” Having had this thought, they then proceed to generate the resolve to realize the unsurpassed path.

B. INSPIRATION PROVOKED BY AN ACT OF GIVING

Yet again, there are those persons who engage in acts of great giving, acts wherein they present gifts to a buddha or to his sangha, or who may merely make a gift of food, drink, or robes to a buddha. On account of such acts of giving, these persons may call to mind those bodhisattvas of the past who were able to course in giving, such bodhisattvas as Velāma, Vessantara,⁶ Sarvada, and King Śibi. [Having called them to mind], they may then straightaway generate the resolve to gain the realization of bodhi and thus may proceed with dedicating the merit from their giving to *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

C. INSPIRATION ARISING FROM OBSERVING A BUDDHA’S PHYSICAL FEATURES

Yet again, there may be those persons who directly observe or merely hear about the thirty-two marks of the Buddhas, namely such marks as:

- The evenness of their soles,
- The wheel-marks on the hands and feet,
- The webbing at the roots of their fingers,
- The softness of their hands and feet,
- The fullness in seven places,
- The slenderness and length of their fingers,
- The breadth of their heels,

- The straightness of their bodies,
- Their high and even ankles,
- The upward-pointing and swirling of their bodily hairs,
- Their shanks resembling those of the *aiṇeya* antelope,
- Their arms whereby the fingers reach below the knees,
- Their genital ensheathment like that of a stallion,
- The gold color of their bodies,
- The softness and thinness of their skin,
- The placement of but a single hair in each pore,
- Their white “hair-mark” betwixt their brows,
- Their lion-like bodies,
- Their round and large shoulders,
- The fullness of the axillary region,
- Their ability to distinctly know sublime flavors,
- Their physical girth like that of the *nyagrodha* tree,
- Their flesh-cowl atop the crown of their heads,
- Their vast and long tongues,
- Their voices possessed of the brahmin sound,
- Their lion-like jaws,
- Their forty teeth, straight, white, and closely set,
- Their blue eyes,
- And their eyelashes like those of the king of the bulls.

[Having observed or heard of these marks of a buddha’s body], they may then become delighted in mind and may think, “I, too, should strive to gain these physical marks and I, too, should strive to gain those dharmas gained by those who possess such physical marks.” They may then straightaway generate the resolve to gain realization of *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*.

Thus, it may be on account of any of these seven causes and conditions that one then generates the resolve to gain the realization of bodhi.

I. THE RELATIVE PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS IN THESE SEVEN BASES

Question: You have declared that there are these seven sorts of causes and conditions behind a person’s generation of a bodhi-sattva’s resolve. Is it the case that every one of these circumstances will result in success or is it rather the case that there will be success in some instances whereas, in other instances, there will be no success?

Response: It may not be the case that there will definitely be success resulting from all of these circumstances. It may be that there

is success in some cases whereas no success results in other cases.

Question: That being the case, one should proceed with an explanation of this matter.

Response:

Among the seven sorts of generation of resolve,
Where the Buddha has instructed one to generate resolve,
Where one generates resolve in order to protect the Dharma,
And where one generates resolve on account of pity,

Those possessed of the three motivations of this sort,
Will definitely be ones who find success in this.

As for the other four types of motivation,
It is not definite that they will be successful in every case.

Among these seven categories of resolve, where a buddha has contemplated the basis in one's faculties and then instructed one to generate the resolve, that will certainly result in success, this because [the Buddhas] do not utter words which are in vain.

So, too, in instances where [such resolve is generated] on account of revering and esteeming the Dharma of the Buddhas and being motivated by the will to protect it.

So, too, in those instances where one has brought forth the mind of great compassion for the sake of beings. These three categories of resolve will definitely result in success, this because the roots [of goodness] are deeply anchored.

In instances where other bodhisattvas have provided instruction which has influenced one to generate the resolve, in instances where one has observed the practices of bodhisattvas and thus generated the resolve, in instances where one has generated the resolve on account of an act of great giving, and in instances where one has generated the resolve on account of directly seeing or merely hearing about the physical marks [of a buddha]—most of these instances of generating the resolve do not result in success.

Still, it may indeed be that there will be success in these latter instances. [Failure to find success in such instances] is on account of the relative weakness of the roots [of goodness] which serve as their bases.