

**PART TWO:**

**THE BODHISAṂBHĀRA TREATISE  
COMMENTARY**

**The Early Indian Commentary On**

**Ārya Nāgārjuna's  
*Treatise on the Provisions for Enlightenment*  
(*Bodhisambhāra Śāstra*)**

**Composed by Bhikshu Vaṣitva  
(circa 300–500 CE)**



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**119 – Let Reflection Precede Action; Have no Faith in Non-Buddhists, Gods, or Spirits**

When one has not yet reflected on the right course of action,  
One must not be impulsive and must not simply emulate others.  
As for the non-Buddhists, gods, dragons, and spirits,  
One must not invest one's faith in any of them.

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**COMMENTARY:**

No matter what circumstance one is involved in, so long as one has not yet completely reflected on the right course of physical, verbal and mental karma, one must not act impetuously or become inclined to simply do what others do. One should ensure that one's practice hews to this precaution. If one deviates from this, then one will become involved in actions done in haste which later cause regret.

One should in all cases avoid developing any faith in the teachings of wandering monastics from any of the non-Buddhist traditions including the followers of the Nirgrantha order and such, and including as well the devotees of deities, dragons (*nāgas*), *yakṣas*, *gandharvas* and so forth.<sup>98</sup>

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**120 – Make the Mind Penetratingly Sharp Like Vajra and as Immovable as a Mountain**

One's mind should be like vajra,  
Able to penetrate all dharmas.  
One's mind should also be like a mountain,  
Remaining unmoved in any circumstance.

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**COMMENTARY:**

In stabilizing one's mind it should be made like *vajra*. Because it possesses the power of wisdom, it penetratingly understands all worldly and world-transcending dharmas in accordance with their own nature and in accordance with reality.

In all circumstances, one establishes one's mind so that it is like a mountain. Thus it cannot be moved by any of the eight worldly dharmas.

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**121 – Delight in Transcendent Words, Abandon Worldly Talk, Inspire Merit in Others**

Delight in world-transcending discourse  
And do not take pleasure in worldly words.  
Personally adopt all manner of meritorious qualities.  
One should then influence others to adopt them as well.

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## COMMENTARY:

There may be discourse conducing to transcending the world such as that relating to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, such as that relating to the six perfections, such as that relating to the bodhisattva grounds, or such as that related to the grounds of the Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas. One *should* delight in that.

There may also be discourse related to the world and tending to increase one's worldliness, words related to desire, hatred, and delusion. One should *not* find delight in that.

Where there are all manner of especially superior meritorious qualities such as taking on the moral precepts and studying the *dhūta* (ascetic) practices, qualities such as are praised and adopted by good people—one should adopt all such qualities while also influencing others to adopt these meritorious qualities.<sup>99</sup>

**122 – Cultivate Five Liberation Bases, Ten Impurity Reflections, Eight Realizations**

Cultivate the five bases of liberation.

Cultivate the ten reflections on impurity.

The eight realizations of great men

Should also be the focus of analytic contemplation and cultivation.

## COMMENTARY:

As for the bases of liberation, they are [gaining realization through]:

- 1 – Listening to Dharma as explained [for oneself] by others.
- 2 – Explaining Dharma [for others] oneself.
- 3 – Reciting the Dharma [from memory].
- 4 – Subjecting dharmas to [analytic contemplation through skillful use of] ideation (*vitarka*) and discursion (*vicāra*).
- 5 – Grasping specific aspects of a particular samādhi.

These are the five bases of liberation. One should bear them in mind and cultivate them.

As for “the ten reflections on impurity,” this refers to:

- 1 – Reflection on the distended corpse
- 2 – Reflection on the corpse blue from stagnant blood.
- 3 – Reflection on the purulent, rotting corpse.
- 4 – Reflection on the oozing corpse.
- 5 – Reflection on the gnawed corpse.
- 6 – Reflection on the dismembered corpse.

- 7 – Reflection on the scattered corpse.
- 8 – Reflection on the blood-smearred corpse.
- 9 – Reflection on the mangled corpse.
- 10 – Reflection on the skeletal corpse.

These are the ten contemplations on impurity. When lust arises, one should bear them in mind and cultivate them. This is because they were originally set forth as a means to do away with sensual desire.<sup>100</sup>

As for, “The eight realizations of great men should also be the focus of analytic contemplation and cultivation,” the eight realizations of great men refers to the following:

- 1 – Whereas but little desire is Dharma, an abundance of desire is non-Dharma. This is the first of the realizations.
- 2 – Whereas being easily satisfied is Dharma, not being easily satisfied is non-Dharma. This is the second.
- 3 – Whereas abiding at a distance from others is Dharma, miscellaneous bustling about is non-Dharma. This is the third.
- 4 – Whereas vigor is Dharma, indolence is non-Dharma. This is the fourth.
- 5 – Whereas abiding in mindfulness is Dharma, forgetting mindfulness is non-Dharma. This is the fifth.
- 6 – Whereas entry into meditative absorption is Dharma, the failure to enter meditative absorption is non-Dharma. This is the sixth.
- 7 – Whereas wisdom is Dharma, absence of wisdom is non-Dharma. This is the seventh.
- 8 – Whereas not finding enjoyment in frivolous discourse is Dharma, enjoying frivolous discourse is non-Dharma. This is the eighth.

These eight realizations of great men are worthy of one's own realization. As for the eight matters promoting what is not good, those involving “an abundance of desire” and the others, one should do away with them entirely.<sup>101</sup>

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#### 123 – Cultivate Purification in the Five Types of Spiritual Abilities

The heavenly ear, the heavenly eye,  
 The bases of spiritual powers, the cognition of others' thoughts,  
 And the cognition of past lives and abodes—  
 One should cultivate purification of these five spiritual abilities.

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## COMMENTARY:

One should cultivate the practice of the five types of penetrative spiritual knowledge gained through the heavenly eye, the heavenly ear, the remembrance of past lives and abodes, awareness of others thoughts, and the bases of spiritual power.<sup>102</sup>

**Question:** How does one go about cultivating their practice?

**Response:** (As below...)

## 124 – The Four Bases Are Their Root; the Four Immeasurables Govern Them

The four bases of spiritual powers comprise their root.

They are zeal, vigor, mental focus, and contemplative reflection.

The four immeasurables govern them.

They are kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.

## COMMENTARY:

With deepening and repeated cultivation of the four immeasurables, the mind's abilities are progressively realized. With this progression in realization of the mind's abilities, one enters the first dhyāna. So, too, with the second. So, too, with the third. And so, too, with the fourth dhyāna.<sup>103</sup>

After one has gained those dhyānas, the body and mind develop "lightness" (i.e. "pliancy," *praśrabhi*). On account of adequately realizing this lightness of body and mind, one develops the capacity to enter the path of the spiritual superknowledges (*abhiññā*).

Through developing the capacity to enter the path of the spiritual superknowledges, one then generates the bases of spiritual powers (*rddhi pāda*). This refers specifically to "zeal" (*chanda*), to "vigor" (*vīrya*), to "[focused] thought" (*citta*), and to contemplative reflection (*mīmāṃsā*).

Among these, "zeal" refers to tending toward a particular dharma, "vigor" refers to perfecting a particular dharma, "thought" refers to the probing contemplation of a particular dharma, and "contemplative reflection" refers to implementing skillfulness in a particular dharma.

As regards the spiritual superknowledges, the minds of those bodhisattvas develop sovereign mastery in both the associated faith and understanding and their implementation. This is because they skillfully accomplish whatever they wish to do while remaining fundamentally in control. In all situations, they pursue their activities just as readily as wind blows along through open space.

After those bodhisattvas have realized the four immeasurable minds and the four dhyānas, those bodhisattvas develop the associated faith and understanding and implementation of the heavenly eye to the extent that its power becomes uniquely superior to that possessed by gods, dragons, *yakṣas*, *śrāvaka*-trainees, realized *śrāvaka*-disciples, and pratyekabuddhas. It is superior as regards purity, superior as regards illumination, superior as regards primacy, and superior as regards being especially distinctive in its capabilities. It is unimpeded in its ability to observe the forms and characteristic features of the world, including both the coarse and subtle, far and the near. They are in all cases able to see whatever they wish to see.

In this same manner, they become able, utilizing the heavenly ear, to hear the sounds of the gods, the sounds of the humans, and the sounds of the animals. So too, they become able to bring to mind and know previous existences, doing so in a manner which is limitless and unbounded. So too, they know the thoughts of others, including such motivations as covetousness and so forth, knowing them completely, even to the extent of being able to distinguish eighty-four thousand variations.

In this same manner, they realize an incalculable level of development of the bases of spiritual powers. Through realization of the spiritual powers, they are able to subdue whichever beings must be subdued.

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**125 – Regard Elements as Snakes, Senses as Empty Village, Aggregates as Assassins**

The four elements are like poisonous serpents.

The six sense faculties are like an empty village.

The five aggregates are like assassins.

One should contemplate them in this way.

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**COMMENTARY:**

Throughout the long night of time, even though one has guarded, rested, and raised these four elements of “earth” and such as the constituents of those material means through which happiness is enjoyed, they nonetheless remain precipitously hasty in their movements [expressed as disease, aging, and death]. They know no gratitude for one’s nurturance of them. They cannot be depended upon and cannot be trusted. Therefore, one should contemplate them as being like poisonous snakes.

Because they are devoid of any subjective agent and are unrelated to any self or possessions of a self, the [six] sense faculties consisting of the eye, [ear, nose, tongue, body] and so forth should be contemplated as like an empty village frequented by a band of six tormenting and fearsome insurgents.

Because the five appropriated aggregates manifest as united in phenomena through which one suffers destruction and punishment, it is as if they were assassins.

One should contemplate [the elements, sense faculties, and aggregates] in this very fashion each and every day.<sup>104</sup>

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**126 – Esteem Dharma and Its Teachers, Eschew Stinginess, Listen Closely to Dharma**

Esteem the Dharma and the masters of Dharma  
 And also relinquish any stinginess with the Dharma.  
 The instructing masters must not be tight-fisted or secretive  
 And those listening must not be mentally scattered or confused.

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**COMMENTARY:**

There are four types of dharmas herein which are able to generate great wisdom and which one should adopt:

- 1 – In the presence of the Dharma as well as the masters of Dharma, one should revere them.
- 2 – One should also relinquish any stinginess with the Dharma.
- 3 – Whatever Dharma one has heard and whatever Dharma one practices or recites, one should expounds upon it for others. Where there are those who delight in and desire the Dharma, instructors of Dharma must refrain from being tight-fisted or secretively cherishing.
- 4 – As for those who listen, they must not fall into mental scatteredness or confusion.

This is to say that one must not entertain any motivations at variance from what is right.

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**127 – Speak Dharma, Free of Arrogance or Hopes, Motivated Solely by Compassion**

Free of arrogance and free of hopes,  
 Motivated solely by thoughts of compassion and pity,  
 With reverent and respectful mind,  
 Expound the Dharma for the community.

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**COMMENTARY:**

There are four additional dharmas here which are signs of great wisdom and which one should adopt. Specifically, these are:

- 1 – One abandons any tendency to elevate oneself while slighting others, this due to being entirely free of arrogance.
- 2 – One renounces any concern for offerings, reverence, or reputation, this due to being entirely free of thoughts freighted with yearning.
- 3 – When in the midst of beings hindered by the darkness of ignorance, one feels only compassion and pity.
- 4 – Maintaining a reverential and respectful frame of mind, one proceeds to explain the Dharma for their benefit.

Through these four dharmas, the bodhisattva perfects great wisdom. One should adopt them in one's practice.

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**128 – Be Insatiable in Learning, Don't Deceive the Venerables, Please Instructors**

Be insatiable in learning  
 And always recite and retain what has been learned.  
 Do not deceive any among the venerable fields of merit.  
 Moreover, cause one's instructors to be delighted.

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**COMMENTARY:**

In pursuit of abundant learning, one remains free of any sense of weariness. Having heard the teachings, retain that dharma. Having retained that dharma, act in accordance with that dharma and integrate that dharma into the practice. Do not deceive those who are the revered "fields of merit."<sup>105</sup> What's more, cause the teaching master to be delighted. These are karmic causes for never forgetting the mind resolved on bodhi.

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**129 – Don't Pay Visits for Gifts or Respect, Don't Study Worldly Texts for Debate**

One should not pay visits to the houses of others  
 With a mind cherishing reverence or offerings.  
 One must not take up study and recitation of worldly texts  
 For the sake of debating challenging topics.

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**COMMENTARY:**

One should not pay visits to the homes of others motivated by the wish to receive offerings and reverence, but rather should not

go forth except where it may serve as a cause facilitating someone's generation of the resolve to realize bodhi.

Nor should one indulge in taking up the study and recitation of worldly treatises and such simply out of a desire to debate challenging topics. One should not initiate these sorts of studies except where doing so will be able to serve as a causal basis facilitating extensive learning.

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**130 – Don't Defame Bodhisattvas or Slander Dharmas Not Yet Understood**

One must not be provoked by hatefulness or anger  
 Into defaming any bodhisattva.  
 As for dharmas not yet received or learned,  
 One must not initiate slanders in those cases either.

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**COMMENTARY:**

Why not? In order to preserve the continuous production of good dharmas.

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**131 – Sever Arrogance, Abide in the Lineage Bases, Avoid Disapproving, Halt Conceit**

In order to cut off arrogance and pride,  
 One should abide in the four lineage bases of the ārya.  
 One must not course in disapproval of others  
 And must not allow oneself to become conceited.

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**COMMENTARY:**

As for "cutting off arrogance and pride," one should abide among beings with the mind "lowered" as one might were one but a dog, this to cut off self pride. One should also abide in the four lineage bases of the ārya wherein one looks lightly on and tends toward frugality in matters having to do with robes, food, bedding and medicines, this because, in the lineage bases of the ārya, one is easily satisfied. One should not be inclined to course in disapproval of others and one should also not allow oneself to become conceited.<sup>106</sup>

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**132 – Don't Expose Others' Offenses or Find Fault, Be Aware of One's Own Errors**

Whether or not someone has actually committed a transgression,  
 One must not reveal his situation to others.  
 Do not seek out the errors and faults of anyone else.  
 Rather one should become aware of one's own errors.

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**COMMENTARY:**

In instances where someone else also devoted [through monastic vows] to the brahman conduct (celibacy) might have committed a karmic offense, no matter whether or not any sort of offense was actually committed, one must nonetheless never expose these sorts of situations.<sup>107</sup> Where there are others who have erred or have faults, one should not seek them out. One should instead be concerned solely with one's own errors and should immediately become aware of those.

**133 – Avoid Criticism or Doubt Toward Buddha or Dharma, Keep Faith in the Abstruse**

One should refrain from biased judgments and doubting  
In fathoming the Buddha and the Dharma of the Buddhas.  
Even though a dharma may be extremely difficult to believe,  
One should nonetheless maintain faith in it.

**COMMENTARY:**

One should not indulge discriminating thought as the means to understand the Buddha, this because the Bhagavān is equipped with dharmas unprecedented [in the common man's direct experience]. Additionally, one should not employ doubt-derived delusions as means to fathom the dharmas of the Buddha, this because these are dharmas not held in common with any other beings.<sup>108</sup> Even in the case of the most difficult to believe dharmas of a buddha, one should maintain faith in them purified through a basis in profound thought.

**134 – Even Though One May Be Put to Death, One Should Still Speak Only the Truth**

Even though one might be put to death for speaking the truth,  
Or might be forced to abdicate the throne of a universal monarch,  
Or even that of a king among the gods,  
One should still utter only truthful speech.

**COMMENTARY:**

If on account of speaking the truth, a bodhisattva is liable to the confiscation of his possessions or to execution—although he might be caused to retreat from the position of a wheel-turning king (*cakravartī-rāja*) or the position as a king of the gods—he should still speak only the truth. How much the less might he fail to speak the truth in other circumstances.

**135 – Even if Beaten, Cursed, or Terrorized, Don't Hate or Condemn; See It as Karma**

Even if beaten, cursed, or terrorized with death threats or captivity, One must not hate or condemn others, but should instead reflect: “This is all the product of my own karmic offenses. This has happened as a result of karmic retribution.”

**COMMENTARY:**

In all instances where others come and beat one up, curse, terrorize one with death threats or tie one up, holding one in captivity, this is all a result of one's own previous karmic offenses. Hence it is only fitting that one should have these things occur. One must not generate hatred for anyone else, [but rather should reflect in this manner]: “This is just my karma. I already took part in these actions in earlier lifetimes. Now, in return, I undergo a similarly undesirable karmic result.

“As for those beings [who are doing this to me], they are all free of any karmic offense in this. This is simply a case of karmic retribution for my offenses now coming forth. It is only fitting that such things should happen to me now.”

**136 – Support Parents Generously, Serve the Needs of Monastic Instructors as Well**

One should, with the most ultimate respect and affection, Provide offerings in support of one's father and mother. Also supply the needs of and serve the *upādhyāyas*, While extending reverence to the *ācāryas* as well.

**COMMENTARY:**

Wherever one's parents abide, one should, with extreme affection and respectfulness, provide offerings to support them. One should look upon them as deities and, adapting to their wishes, cause them to be pleased. In this, one must abandon any thoughts involving flattery or deceptiveness.

One should also revere, supply the needs of, and serve the *upādhyāyas* and *ācāryas* as well. One should accord with those principles in the dharmas taught by those *upādhyāyas* and *ācāryas* whereby one remains free of any sort of inward secretiveness [leading one to hold back Dharma from others]. In all circumstances, one should instead devote all of one's efforts to facilitating the teaching of others.<sup>109</sup>

**FOUR-FOLD BODHISATTVA PATH FACTORS  
FOUR BODHISATTVA ERRORS**

**137 – Discoursing on Profound Dharmas for Two-Vehicles Practitioners Is an Error**

When, for those who place their faith in the Śrāvaka Vehicle  
Or those dedicated to the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle,  
One discourses on the most profound of dharmas,  
This, for a bodhisattva, is an error.

**COMMENTARY:**

Starting here, we have four types of bodhisattva practice errors which should be abandoned by the bodhisattva. Specifically, it is a bodhisattva error to discourse on the most profound sorts of dharmas in the midst of beings dedicated to cultivation of either the Śrāvaka Vehicle or Pratyekabuddha Vehicle.<sup>110</sup>

**138 – Discoursing on Two-Vehicles Tenets to the Great-Vehicle Faithful is an Error**

When, for believers in the profound Great Vehicle teachings,  
One discourses to those beings  
On the Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha vehicles,  
This too is an error for him.

**COMMENTARY:**

When, in the midst of beings believing in the profound Great Vehicle teachings, one discourses for them on the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha vehicles, this is a bodhisattva error.<sup>111</sup>

**139 – The Two Other Errors: Failing to Teach the Worthy, Trusting Wrongdoers**

So too where some superior person comes seeking the Dharma,  
But one delays and fails to provide him with teachings.  
So too where, on the contrary, one takes in wrongdoers  
Or delegates responsibilities to those who are untrustworthy.

**COMMENTARY:**

When an upstanding superior person comes requesting instruction, one should immediately discourse on good dharmas for his benefit. In this case, one fails to do so and, beyond that, delays.

When a person comes who is a transgressor against the moral precepts and who courses in evil dharmas and one takes just the opposite course of action by taking them in, this is a bodhisattva practice error.

In this latter case, we speak of a person who has not yet developed faith in or understanding of the Great Vehicle. He has not yet been spiritually matured through skillful use of the four means of attraction (giving, pleasing words, beneficial actions, joint endeavors). Nonetheless, one trusts him and even goes so far as to delegate responsibilities to him. This is a bodhisattva practice error.

These [errors brought up in these three ślokas] are four types of bodhisattva practice errors.<sup>112</sup>

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**140 – Abandon These Errors While Also Studying and Adopting the *Dhūta* Practices**

One must abandon the errors mentioned above.  
 As for such herein-described meritorious practices as the *dhūtas*,  
 One ought to become knowledgeable about them  
 And then incorporate them into one's own practice.

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**COMMENTARY:**

The four kinds of errors and faults described herein are such as one should abandon, this because they diverge far from bodhi. As for the previously-mentioned practices from within the Śrāvaka and Pratyekabuddha vehicles, including the *dhūta* practices and other such meritorious practices, one should at least realize that practices of those sorts present no obstacle to bodhi. One should also incorporate each one of them into one's own practice.<sup>113</sup>

**FOUR TYPES OF BODHISATTVA PATH PRACTICES**

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**141 – Maintain Four Types of Uniformly Equal Bodhisattva Path Practices**

Regard all equally in one's thoughts, speak equally for all,  
 Be uniformly equal in establishing all others in goodness,  
 And influence them all equally to accord with what is right.  
 Thus one refrains from making distinctions between any beings.

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**COMMENTARY:**

These four types of bodhisattva path practices should be closely cultivated. What are the four? They are:

- 1 – Uniform equality in thought raised toward all other beings.
- 2 – Uniform equality in discoursing on Dharma for all beings.
- 3 – Uniform equality in establishing all beings in goodness.
- 4 – [Uniform equality] in influencing all beings to act in accordance with what is right.

In all such matters, one avoids making discriminating distinctions [between beings]. These are the four types [of bodhisattva path practices].<sup>114</sup>

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#### FOUR TYPES OF GENUINE BODHISATTVAS

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##### 142 – One Works for Dharma Over Benefit, Good Over Fame, Beings Over Happiness

One works for the sake of Dharma and not for self-benefit.  
 One works to develop meritorious qualities, not for renown.  
 One wishes to liberate beings from suffering  
 And does not wish merely to ensure his own happiness.

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#### COMMENTARY:

These [two *ślokas*] deal with these four types of genuine bodhisattvas about which one should be aware. What are those four? This refers to:

- 1) Those who work only for Dharma and do not concern themselves with material benefit.
- 2) Those who work only for the sake of developing meritorious qualities and not for the sake of gaining a reputation.
- 3) Those who work only out of a wish to liberate beings from suffering and not simply to achieve happiness for themselves.

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##### 143 – One Works in Secret for the Many and so Relinquishes Personal Concerns

With purposes kept secret, one seeks fruition in one's works.  
 When the results of one's merit-generating endeavors come forth,  
 Even then, one applies them to the ripening of the many  
 While abandoning preoccupation with one's own concerns.

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#### COMMENTARY:

4) This refers to a case where, keeping one's intentions to oneself, one strives to bring about the fruition of one's karmic works. Thus one courses in the three types of merit-generating circumstances.<sup>115</sup> Then, once the merit associated with this begins to manifest, it is applied solely to the goal of realizing bodhi and its ability to bring about the benefit and happiness of beings. And it is also applied solely to the goal of realizing bodhi with its ability to bring about the ripening of the community as a whole. Because it is devoted to the benefit of the community as a whole, one abandons any preoccupation with one's own concerns. These are the four types of genuine bodhisattvas.<sup>116</sup>

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**FOUR TYPES OF GOOD SPIRITUAL FRIENDS FOR A BODHISATTVA**


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**144 – Grow Close to the Four Types of Good Spiritual Friends**

Grow close to good spiritual friends,  
Specifically, to the masters of Dharma, to the Buddhas,  
To those who encourage one to leave the home life,  
And to those who are seekers of alms.

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**COMMENTARY:**

These are four categories of individuals who serve as “good spiritual friends” (*kalyāṇamitra*) for the bodhisattva. One should grow close to them. What are the four categories? This refers to:

- 1 – The Dharma masters (i.e. learned monks who teach Dharma). They are good spiritual friends for the bodhisattva because they provide assistance with developing the wisdom which comes from learning [about the Dharma].
- 2 – The Buddhas, the Bhagavāns. They are good spiritual friends for the bodhisattva because they are the ones providing the assistance of preserving the Dharma of all buddhas.
- 3 – Those who encourage one to abandon the home life serve as good spiritual friends for the bodhisattva because they provide assistance with maintaining one’s roots of goodness.
- 4 – Those who seek alms. They are good spiritual friends for the bodhisattva because they provide assistance with maintaining the [altruistic] mind resolved on realizing bodhi.

These four kinds of good spiritual friends of the bodhisattva are those to whom one should draw near.<sup>117</sup>

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**FOUR TYPES OF UNSUITABLE SPIRITUAL FRIENDS FOR A BODHISATTVA**


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**145 – Lokāyatas, Wealth Obsessives, Pratyekabuddha and Śrāvaka Vehicles Advocates**

Those who ground themselves in worldly treatises,  
Those who exclusively seek worldly wealth,  
Those with Pratyekabuddha Vehicle faith and understanding,  
And those devoted to the Śrāvaka Vehicle—

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**COMMENTARY:**

These are four categories of individuals who would function as unwholesome spiritual friends for a bodhisattva. One should be aware of them as such. What are these four specific categories? This refers to:



- 1 – Those whose associations are with worldly treatises (the Lokāyatas), this because their practice involves all kinds of clever rhetoric on miscellaneous topics.
- 2 – Those who focus on accumulating worldly wealth and possessions, this because they do not focus on Dharma.
- 3 – Those of the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle this because they bestow but little in the way of meaning-based benefit on others and because they do but little in the way of [good] works.
- 4 – Those of the Śrāvaka Vehicle this because their practice is devoted to self-benefit.<sup>118</sup>

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**146 – Be Aware of Them As Unfit Spiritual Friends, Seek Out the Four Vast Treasuries**

As for these four types of bad spiritual friends,  
The bodhisattva should be aware of them as such.  
There are, however, other circumstances one should seek out.  
This refers specifically to the four vast treasures:

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**COMMENTARY:**

Those belonging to the four types of spiritual friends described above would function as bad spiritual friends [for a bodhisattva practitioner]. Once one has realized this, one should withdraw [from taking them on as spiritual friends].

There are additional circumstances which one should aspire to bring about, namely the “four vast treasures.” (See next *śloka*.)<sup>119</sup>

**FOUR VAST TREASURES**

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**147 – Meeting Buddhas, Perfections Teachings, Dharma Masters, Solitary Practice**

The emergence of buddhas; hearing the perfections explained;  
Being able in the presence of a master of Dharma  
To behold him with unobstructed mind;  
And happily pursuing cultivation in a place of solitude.

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**COMMENTARY:**

One should strive to obtain these four types of vast bodhisattva treasures. What are the four? They are:

- 1 – Serving the Buddhas when they come forth into the world.
- 2 – Listening to explanations of the six pāramitās.
- 3 – Beholding a master of Dharma with unobstructed mind.
- 4 – Abiding happily in a place of solitude while remaining free of neglectfulness.

These are the four kinds of vast bodhisattva treasuries. One should strive to obtain them.<sup>120</sup>

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**ADDITIONAL BODHISATTVA PRACTICE ESSENTIALS**

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**148 – Abide Like the Elements, Uniformly Equal in Benefiting All**

Abide in a manner comparable to  
 Earth, water, fire, wind, and space,  
 Remaining thus uniformly equal under all circumstances  
 In providing benefit to all beings.

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**COMMENTARY:**

There are two respects in which one may be like earth, water, fire, wind, and space. The bodhisattva should integrate them. Specifically, they are as regards their being uniformly equally available and also as regards their being beneficial.

For example, the five elemental entities comprised by earth, the other great elements, and space—these are all uniformly equal and free of any aspect whereby they manifest differently among all things, whether those things be possessed of mind or devoid of mind. Thus all beings always remain able to put them to use. In this, those elements still do not undergo any fundamental change, nor do they seek any reward in return for their kindnesses.

One reflects, “I too should be just like this even up to that point when I finally reach the site of the enlightenment, remaining all the while available for the use of all beings, not changing in response to that and not seeking any reward for any kindnesses bestowed.”

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**149 – Reflect on Meanings, Progress in Uses of *Dhāraṇīs*, Don’t Block Dharma Study**

One should skillfully reflect upon the meanings  
 And diligently progress in the uses of the *dhāraṇīs*.  
 One must never create any sort of obstruction  
 To those seeking to hear the Dharma.

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**COMMENTARY:**

As for “the meanings,” this refers to the meanings of what was taught by the Buddha. One should skillfully reflect upon them, whether it be through joint discussion or whether it be while abiding in solitude. One should proceed in this manner.

Additionally, one should abide with stability in the purity of mind instilled by the restrictive prohibitions. Remaining intensely

diligent and immaculate in this, one should progress in one's use of the *dhāraṇīs* and should listen to and learn such *dhāraṇīs* as the "Silver Lord" and "Ocean Lord" *dhāraṇīs*.<sup>121</sup>

Also, one must never create even the most subtle obstructive circumstance in a place where people listen to the teaching of Dharma, this in order to avoid karma conducing to dharmically disastrous rebirth circumstances.

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**150 – Overcome Major Afflictions, Banish Subsidiary Afflictions, Cast off Indolence**

When embroiled in the afflictions, be able to overcome them.  
Relinquish the lesser instances, retaining not a trace.  
Regarding the eight cases involving indolence,  
One should cut all of those off as well.

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**COMMENTARY:**

Regarding "When embroiled in the afflictions, be able to overcome them," this is an allusion to the nine different categories of circumstances involving the [six primary] afflictions,<sup>122</sup> namely:

[1-3] Past, present, and future circumstances "not beneficial to me" comprise three categories.

[4-6] Past, present, and future circumstances "not beneficial to those I hold dear" comprise three categories.

[7-9] Past, present, and future circumstances "beneficial to those I detest" comprise an additional three categories.

All of these are situations involving afflictions. One should be able to exercise self-control in these nine affliction-prone circumstances.

Regarding "Relinquish the lesser instances, retaining not a trace," this alludes to the twenty lesser circumstances [involving the twenty subsidiary afflictions], namely: absence of faith; absence of a sense of shame, flattery, deceptiveness, agitation, mental scatteredness, negligence, harming, absence of a dread of blame, indolence, worry, drowsiness, enmity, concealment, jealousy, miserliness, elevating oneself, anger, regretfulness, and depression. One relinquishes all of these twenty lesser instances, retaining not so much as a trace of them.

As for "Regarding the eight cases involving indolence, one should cut all of those off as well," there are therein eight circumstances characterized by indolence. Specifically, this refers to [rationalizations for desisting from effort as listed below]:

[1] One thinks, “I’m about to take up [such-and-such] a task,” and then immediately lies down peacefully [to take a preparatory nap] and thus does not generate any vigor.

[2] One thinks, “I’ve now completed that task,” or [3] “I’ve been walking along,” or [4] “I’ve finished with walking along,” or [5] “My body is so weary,” and hence one concludes he cannot do his cultivation work.

[6] Or else one thinks, “My body feels so heavy” [from eating too much] and hence one concludes that therefore he cannot do his cultivation work.

Or else one thinks, [7] “I’ve fallen ill,” or [8] “My sickness has not yet subsided for very long,” and then one immediately lies down peacefully and thus does not generate any vigor.

Due to circumstances such as these, one does not achieve what one should achieve, does not arrive at the point at which one should arrive, and does not bring to realization what one should bring to realization.

In situations such as found in these eight circumstances involving indolence, one should generate vigor to cut it off.<sup>123</sup>

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**151 – Don’t Covet What Is Not One’s Lot, Reconcile the Estranged**

Do not covet what is not one’s lot,  
For unprincipled covetousness will not bring satisfaction.  
Influence all who have become estranged to reconcile,  
Whether or not they are one’s own relations.

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**COMMENTARY:**

This refers to a case where one observes others who have gained abundant offerings, fame, happiness, esteem, and bounteous merit. As for their plentiful karmic rewards, one must not indulge any covetous thoughts focused on what is not one’s own lot. If one generates covetous thoughts for what is not one’s own lot, then one will fail to develop a satisfied mind. Hence one should refrain from such behavior.

Additionally, regarding anyone involved in mutual disputation, estrangement, and destructiveness, ignoring the question of whether or not they are one’s own relatives, all such individuals should be influenced to achieve that harmonious unity wherein their thoughts are in agreement and they treat each other with kindness.

**152 – Seeking to Get at Emptiness Itself Is Worse Than Viewing Body As Self**

The wise must not base their practice  
 On getting at the “emptiness” in what is intrinsically empty.  
 In the case of one determined to get at that emptiness itself,  
 That wrong is even more extreme than viewing the body as a self.

**COMMENTARY:**

One relies upon realization of emptiness to eliminate the accumulation [of conceptions] associated with deficient wisdom. The wise must not rely on getting at emptiness itself as the goal of practice. If one sees getting at emptiness itself as the goal of practice, then that error goes beyond even the difficult-to-cure misconception of those who maintain the view which seizes on the body as constituting a self.

The reason for this is that it is by resort to emptiness that one is able to escape from all view-based practices. In a case where, beyond that, one has developed another view which attempts to grasp at that emptiness itself, this is a circumstance for which there is no cure, this because, there is nothing over and above that through which one can escape [from such a view].<sup>124</sup>

**153 – Maintain Stupas, Provide Adornments, and Make Offerings at the Stupas**

By sweeping and finishing floors, by providing adornments,  
 By furnishing many varieties of drums and music,  
 And by offering fragrances, flower garlands, and other gifts,  
 Contribute offerings to the *caityas*.

**COMMENTARY:**

At the *caityas* of the Tathāgata and at the places where there are images, one should keep the floors swept and coated (lit. “smeared”) while also providing fragrant garlands, burnable incense, powder incense, floral canopies, banners, and other such articles used as adornments and as offerings. One should make such offerings to gain [in future rebirths] a fine and upright physical form, the fragrance of moral virtue, and sovereign freedoms.

Offerings of all different sorts of drums and music—wind instruments made from shells, stringed instruments, the waist-mounted drums, the large drums, the thundering drums, the clapping of hands [along with the rhythm], and so forth—this is done for the sake of gaining the heavenly ear.

**154 – Provide Lantern Wheels, Stupa Canopies, Sandals, Carriages, Sedan Chairs**

Create all sorts of lantern wheels  
 As offerings to the *caityas* and their buildings.<sup>125</sup>  
 Provide canopies as well as sandals,  
 Horse-drawn carriages, sedan chairs, and the like.

**COMMENTARY:**

In the buildings surrounding the *caityas*, one should assemble all sorts of lanterns fueled by fragrant oils and ghee, garlands, and so forth, using them to make as offerings. This is done for the sake of gaining the buddha eye.

One makes gifts of parasols, canopies, sandals, carriages drawn by elephants and horses, sedan chairs, and so forth. This is done for the sake of gaining the bodhisattva's unsurpassed spiritual penetrations and for experiencing no difficulties in taking up that vehicle.

**155 – Find Happiness in Listening to Dharma, in Faith in Buddha, in Serving Sangha**

One should especially find delight in the Dharma<sup>126</sup>  
 And be happy knowing what is gained through faith in Buddha.  
 Delight in providing for and serving the monastic Sangha,  
 While also finding happiness through listening to right Dharma.

**COMMENTARY:**

In the midst of all this, the bodhisattva should constantly find in these ways delight and happiness in the Dharma. One must not find one's delight in the karmic blessings and pleasures linked to the five sorts of desire.

One should realize what benefits are gained through faith in the Buddha. One must not look solely to the physical form body as the basis of one's trust and happiness.

One should find constant delight in supplying and serving the Sangha order with those articles which ensure their happiness. One must not find delight solely in obtaining audiences with them and observing the protocols of greeting.

One should experience delight in listening to the Dharma and never become self-satisfied that one has had enough of that. One must not find one's delight and happiness solely through listening briefly to their words.

**156 – Dharmas Don't Arise in the Past, Abide in the Present, or Extend into the Future**

They do not arise in the past.  
 They do not abide in the present.  
 They do not go forward into the future.  
 Contemplate all dharmas in this manner.

**COMMENTARY:**

Because their "existence" is based solely on the strength of component causes and conditions, and because they have no place from whence they come, dharmas are not produced in the past.

Because they undergo continuous [and complete] destruction in each successive micro-moment (*kṣaṇa*), and also because they do not abide at all, dharmas do not dwell in the present.

Because they are completely destroyed, leaving no trace, and also because there is no place to which they go, dharmas do not proceed on into the future.

One should direct such analytic contemplation to all dharmas.

**157 – Bestow What Is Best, Seek No Reward, Take on Sufferings, Do Not Covet Bliss**

Give to beings whatsoever is fine  
 And do not wish that they bestow anything fine in return.  
 One should prefer it be solely oneself who endures suffering  
 While not favoring oneself in the enjoyment of happiness.

**COMMENTARY:**

In his interactions with beings, the bodhisattva should use whatever is fine to provide them benefit and happiness while cherishing no hope that those beings use fine things to provide him any benefit or happiness in return.

This extends even to the point that, wherever beings are beset with countless sufferings, he thinks, "I alone should endure those sufferings on their behalf. I should bestow on beings whatever happiness-facilitating things I possess that they might use them to enjoy some happiness."

**158 – Don't Be Overjoyed at Karmic Rewards Nor Downcast at Karmic Misfortune**

Although replete with karmic rewards from immense merit,  
 The mind should not become lofty or overwhelmed with delight.  
 Although one may be as poverty-stricken as a hungry ghost,  
 One should still not become downcast or overcome with distress.

**COMMENTARY:**

Even if one ascends to the heavens of those karmic rewards generated by immensely replete merit, one's mind should not become delighted or raised aloft by that. Even though one might have fallen into this most extremely difficult life of the hungry ghost afflicted with extreme poverty, disastrous misfortune, and torment, one should still not adopt a downcast mind and should not become overcome with anguish. How much the less should one allow this to occur when, still abiding in the human realm, one falls into poverty and experiences disastrous misfortune.

**159 – Esteem the Learned, Inspire the Untrained to Study Without Belittling Them**

Accord the most ultimate degree of esteem  
To those already accomplished in learning.  
Inspire those as yet unlearned to devote themselves to study.  
One should not behave in a manner belittling them.

**COMMENTARY:**

On encountering those already accomplished in their studies, one should express the most ultimate degree of esteem for them. As for those who have not yet become learned, one should influence them to course in learning. One should refrain from acting toward them in a manner which slights or belittles them.<sup>127</sup>

**160 – Revere Virtue, Inspire Purity, Draw Close to the Wise, Promote Wisdom in Fools**

Revere those perfect in observance of the moral precepts  
And influence those who break precepts to take on the precepts.  
Draw close to those perfect in wisdom  
And influence those who act foolishly to abide in wisdom.

**COMMENTARY:**

On encountering those perfect in observance of the moral precepts, one should press palms together and observe the protocols of reverence. One should also speak to them about the karmic merit generated by observing the moral precepts.

On encountering those who break the precepts, one should influence them to take on the moral prohibitions. One should also speak to them about the karmic punishments resulting from breaking precepts.

One should draw close to those possessed of well-developed



wisdom, and should also speaking to them in a manner revealing the fine qualities accruing to those coursing in wisdom.

One should also influence those who act foolishly to abide in wisdom and should also discourse for them on the karmic transgressions inherent in foolish actions.

#### FINAL SECTION

#### CONCLUDING INSTRUCTIONS

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#### 161 – Don't Be Terrorized by Saṃsāra, Rather Subdue Demons and Evil Knowledge

The sufferings of cyclic existence are of many kinds,  
Involving birth, aging, death, and the wretched destinies.  
One should not be frightened by the fearsomeness of these.  
One must instead subdue demons and knowledge rooted in evil.

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#### COMMENTARY:

In the midst of cyclic births and deaths, the bodhisattva undergoes many kinds of sufferings such as birth, aging, death, lamentation, suffering-inducing afflictions, and the wretched destinies of the hells, animals, hungry ghosts, and *asuras* (demi-gods). One should not fear those things, but rather should especially focus on subduing evil demons and types of knowledge rooted in evil.<sup>128</sup>

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#### 162 – Amass Merit in All Buddhalands, Make Vows That Others Will Reach Them Too

Amass every form of merit  
In the lands of all the Buddhas.  
Bring forth vows and proceed with vigor  
So that everyone may succeed in reaching them.

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#### COMMENTARY:

In all of the lands of the innumerable buddhas throughout the ten directions, whether it be from bringing a buddhaland to perfection, whether it be from adorning a buddhaland, whether it be from listening to the teachings of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, or whether it be from being able to see them personally, one amasses in all such cases especially superior forms of merit.

All of this is dedicated to causing those beings to be able to reach their own buddhaland. One should make vows concordant with this intent. Whatever one vows to do, one proceeds immediately to accomplish that. In this too, one should proceed accordingly, availing oneself of intense diligence as one proceeds with cultivation.

**ON RIGHT-VIEW EQUANIMITY AND PRESERVING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION****163 – Never Seize on Dharmas, Abide in Equanimity, Take Up the Burden for Beings**

Even in the midst of all dharmas, one is constant  
 In not seizing on them, thus coursing along in equanimity.  
 One takes on the burden, wishing to bear it on forth,  
 Proceeding in this manner for the sake of all beings.

**COMMENTARY:**

It is on account of grasping that one suffers and on account of refraining from grasping that one enjoys happiness. Once one has reflected in this manner, even in the midst of all dharmas, one constantly refrains from seizing on them and so abides in equanimity.

Although one refrains from seizing on them and thus abides in equanimity, still, in an earlier time, for the sake of their being able to go on forth to bodhi, one made vows to take on their burden, vowing that, “I shall escort across to enlightenment those who have not yet gone across, shall liberate those who have not yet gained liberation, and shall bring to cessation those who have not yet arrived at cessation.”

It is on account of this that one should bear such a burden for the sake of all beings.

**164 – Contemplate Dharmas as Non-Self, Don't Relinquish Compassion or Kindness**

Abide in the right contemplation of all dharmas  
 As devoid of self and as devoid of anything belonging to a self.  
 Even so, one must not relinquish the great compassion  
 Or one's reliance on the great kindness.

**COMMENTARY:**

As for the declaration that all dharmas are devoid of any [inherent] existence, it is because they are like a dream and like a magical conjuration that dharmas are devoid of self.

As for their being devoid of anything belonging to a self, this is based on the contemplation of their signlessness. Pronouncements of this sort correspond to the dharma of the supreme meaning (*paramārtha*).

Even when one undertakes the contemplation of these signs [from the standpoint of the supreme meaning], one still refrains from relinquishing the great compassion or the great kindness employed in relation to beings. This being so, one should gauge the

situation yet again and be moved to utter the sighing exclamation, "Strange indeed! All of those beings are blanketed by the darkness of delusions, are attached to 'I' and 'mine,' and are incognizant of this dharma of the supreme meaning path. Just how long will it be before I am finally able to instigate those beings to realize this dharma of the supreme meaning path?"

This is what is meant by not relinquishing the great compassion or the great kindness toward beings.

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#### ON THE GIVING OF DHARMA

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##### 165 – Making Offerings of Dharma Is Superior to Giving Every Gift to the Buddha

As for that which is superior even to using every sort of gift  
 In making offerings to the Buddha, the Bhagavān,  
 What sort of action might that be?  
 This refers specifically to making offerings of Dharma.

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#### COMMENTARY:

In a case where one takes all manner of gifts and makes offerings of them to all of the Śrāvaka-disciples, the Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattvas, and the Buddhas, the Bhagavāns—these may include offerings of all manner of flowers, fragrances, garlands, powdered incenses, and lantern wheels, may include offerings of all sorts of canopies, banners, and pennants, may include offerings of all sorts of music, or may include giving as offerings all manner of medicines, fine foods and beverages, and other such things.

If one wishes to perform an act of offering superior to taking all of those gifts and offering them to the Buddhas, what additional sort of thing might that be? The reply states that it refers specifically to making an offering of Dharma. Now what additional characteristic features would such an offering of Dharma possess?

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##### 166 – Upholding the Bodhisattva Canon Is the Foremost Dharma Offering

If one upholds the Bodhisattva Canon,  
 Even to the point of gaining realization of the *dhāraṇīs*—  
 If one enters into and reaches the bottom of Dharma's source—  
 This is what constitutes the offering of Dharma.

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#### COMMENTARY:

If one is to conform in this to the Bodhisattva canon, [one should contemplate the following ideas from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*]:

“The sutras spoken by the Tathāgata and the other scriptures are extremely profound in their clarification of the characteristics of dharmas. They are diametrically opposed to the ways of the world. It is difficult to succeed in reaching to the very bottom of them. It is difficult to perceive the subtleties involved in the ultimate meaning of being free of attachment.

“[That which is included in the Bodhisattva Canon] is such as receives the seal of certification of the seal described in the *King of Dhāraṇīs Sutra*. It explains that the causes for realizing irreversibility are born from the six perfections. [The Bodhisattva Canon] skillfully subsumes what should be subsumed. It complies with and enters into the dharmas which equip one for bodhi. It brings one into unity with the nature of the right enlightenment. It enters into all forms of the great compassion and discourses on the great loving kindness.

“It abandons the many demonic views, skillfully explains conditioned arising, and enters into the sphere of the nonexistence of beings, the nonexistence of a life, the nonexistence of any developing entity, and the nonexistence of persons. It accords with emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and non-production.

“It leads one to sit at the site where bodhi is realized and set in motion the wheel of Dharma whereupon one is praised by the gods, dragons, *yakṣas*, and *gandharvas*. It delivers one from the mire of the householder’s life and draws one in among the Āryas. It expounds on all of the bodhisattva practices and enters into the eloquence consisting of [being unobstructed in understanding] dharmas, in realizing their meanings, in formulating articulate phrasing, and in speaking about them with delight.

“It shakes the world with the thunder of that sound which proclaims impermanence, suffering, absence of self, and other such dharmas. It strikes terror into all who subscribe to the attachments to views and attainments characteristic of the non-Buddhist treatises. It is praised by all buddhas. It counteracts one’s coursing in cyclic existence and reveals the bliss of nirvāṇa. If one explains, if one upholds, if one analytically investigates, and if one adopts sutras such as these, it is this which qualifies as the offering of Dharma.”

Additionally, those who give offerings of Dharma succeed in achieving irreversibility and thus do not fall, this on account of the dhāraṇīs which follow along with them [from life to life, guarding them] in their practice. In those profound dharmas corresponding

to emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, and non-production, one enters and reaches to their very bottom where one remains unmoving and free of doubts. It is this which qualifies as the offering of the dharma of the most supreme meaning.<sup>129</sup>

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**167 – Rely on Meaning, Not Flavors; Enter the Profound Path, Avoiding Negligence**

One should rely upon the meaning.

One must not cherish only the various flavors.

In the Path of the profound Dharma

One enters with skill and must not fall prey to negligence.

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**COMMENTARY:**

Additionally, as for this making of offerings of Dharma, whether it be in the meditative reflection on dharmas or in the implementation of dharmas in one's practice, whether it be in acting in accord with conditioned arising, whether it be in the abandonment of views seizing on extremes, whether it be in the realization whereby one never leaves the unproduced-dharmas patience, whether it be in gaining entry to the nonexistence of the self, whether it be in remaining free of any opposing, struggling, or disputation in the midst of the circumstances formed by causes and conditions, or whether it be in the abandonment of the self and anything belonging to a self—in all such circumstances, one should rely upon the meaning. One must not be motivated by an affection which chases after the flavor of the various forms of decorous phrasing.

One should rely upon wisdom and must not merely rely upon impressions gained through one's consciousnesses. One should rely upon ultimate-meaning scriptures and must not become attached to worldly and common discourses which do not reflect the ultimate meaning. One should rely upon Dharma and must not seize upon the views which people hold. In one's practice, one should accord with and follow those dharmas which correspond to reality, thus entering into that place wherein there is no abiding.

One should skillfully contemplate the cycle of ignorance, karmic compositional factors, consciousness, name-and-form, the six sense faculties, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering-laden afflictions, and the very extremes of difficulty—perceiving them all as abiding in a state of complete cessation. After one has contemplated the circumstances of conditioned arising in this manner, one may draw upon

it endlessly and, on account of remaining sympathetically mindful of beings, one refrains from becoming attached to any views and refrains from falling into negligence.

If one is able to constantly act in this manner, then and only then does this qualify as an offering of the unsurpassed Dharma.<sup>130</sup>

#### FINAL SUMMARIZING STATEMENT

**168 – Buddhahood is Gained by Cultivating the Provisions in Countless Future Lives**

One cultivates these provisions in this manner  
 For kalpas as numerous as the Ganges' sands,  
 Doing so sometimes as a monastic, sometimes as a householder.  
 Thus one will succeed in perfecting the right enlightenment.

#### COMMENTARY:

One cultivates the provisions in accordance with the preceding explanations, doing so for a Ganges' sands number of great kalpas. One does so within the monastic communities and householder communities of the Bodhisattva Vehicle. It is over a long period of time that one fulfills one's vows and then finally succeeds in realizing the right enlightenment.

I present this based on those stanzas about the provisions  
 To stimulate contemplative reflections about bodhi.  
 As their portrayal of the provisions' meaning is already flawless.  
 The aim here was merely to be able to accord with those verses.

My present analysis of those stanzas  
 May have either enhanced or detracted from their meanings.  
 Where the explanation has well matched the verses' meanings,  
 I pray the wisdom of the Worthies will acquiesce in it.

May any meritorious goodness I might have created  
 Through explaining those verses devoted to the provisions  
 Be dedicated to the beings coursing on in cyclic existence  
 That they may gain the right and universal awakening.

**The End of Ārya Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Provisions for Enlightenment.***

**The End of the Explanation Set Forth by Me, Bhikshu Vaśitva.**