



COURSE VII

The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class One

1) Name the principal commentary that we will be using for our study of the vows of the bodhisattva; give the author's full name and dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

The Highway for Bodhisattvas, by Je Tsongkapa Lobsang Drakpa, 1357-1419.

བྱང་ལྷུབ་གཞུང་ལམ།

jangchub shunglam

ཇེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ།

je tsongkapa

2) Summaries of the precepts contained in the three sets of vows are a standard type of book in Tibetan monasteries. Name the summary we will use, its author and his approximate dates. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

The String of Shining Jewels, by Geshe Tsewang Samdrup; we do not know his own dates, but we do know that he was the tutor of His Holiness the Tenth Dalai Lama, Tsultrim Gyatso, who lived 1816-1837.

ནོར་བུའི་འོད་འཕྲིང་།

norbuy u-treng

དགེ་བཤེས་ཚེ་དབང་བསམ་འགྲུབ།

geshe tsewang samdrup

3) Ultimately, all the bodhisattva vows come from the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. In their early organized form, the vows are found in a number of different sources. Name four early authors and their dates, and then state which of the vows can be found in their works. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) Lord Buddha (500 BC), gives thirteen of the root vows (#5-17) in the *Sutra of the Essence of Space*, and one root vow (#18) in the *Sutra of Skillful Means*.

ནམ་མཁའི་སྣང་པོའི་མདོ།

namkay nyingpoy do

ཐབས་ལ་མཁས་པའི་མདོ།

tab la kepay do

- b) Master Asanga (350 A.D.), in the *Levels of the Bodhisattva* gives four root vows.

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་ས།

jangchub sempay sa

འཕགས་པ་ཐོགས་མེད།

pakpa tokme

- c) Master Shantideva (695-743 A.D.), in the *Compendium of Advices*, gives all 18 root vows together.

བསྐྱབ་པ་ཀུན་བདུས།

lappa kuntu

- d) Master Chandragomi (925 A.D.), in the *Twenty Verses on the Vows*, gives Master Asanga's four root vows, and then the 46 secondary vows.

སྣོམ་པ་ཉི་ཤུ་པ།

dompa nyishupa

4) Give the short definition of bodhichitta taught by Maitreya.

The wish to become fully enlightened for the sake of all sentient beings.

སེམས་བསྐྱེད་པ་ནི་གཞན་དོན་ཕྱིར།
ཡང་དག་ཚུགས་པའི་བྱང་ཆུབ་འདོད།
semkye pa ni shendun chir
yangdak dzokpay jangchub du

5) Name the two basic types of bodhichitta. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) The wish in the form of a prayer (that is, *thinking* like a bodhisattva)

སློན་སེམས།
munsem

b) The wish in action (that is, *acting* like a bodhisattva)

འདུག་སེམས།
juksem

Please also note that bodhichitta can be divided into "ultimate" and "deceptive" bodhichitta, referring respectively to the direct perception of emptiness and the actual wish for enlightenment (what we normally think of as "bodhichitta").

6) Name and describe three sufferings, and explain their cause. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

a) The suffering of suffering—physical and mental suffering.

སྤྱུག་བསྔལ་གྱི་སྤྱུག་བསྔལ།
dukngel gyi dukngel

b) The suffering of change—having impure pleasures which must end.

འགྱུར་བའི་སྤྱུག་བསྔལ།
gyurway dukngel

c) Pervasive suffering—having a body and other parts whose nature is to age and die.

སྤྱུག་པ་འདུ་བྱེད་གྱི་སྤྱུག་བསྔལ།
kyappa duje gyi dukngel

They are caused by mental afflictions, which cause you to collect impure karma.

7) Describe the relationship between renunciation and bodhichitta.

Renunciation is focussed at your own suffering; it is to be tired of suffering yourself. Bodhichitta is a kind of renunciation focussed at others' suffering as well; it is to be tired of seeing all beings suffer.

8) Explain briefly the meaning of the lines in Je Tsongkapa's *Three Principal Paths* where beings are described as locked in a steel cage swept along a powerful river.

Every normal suffering being, each of which has been our mother, has been thrown into a great river of the four torrents of having to take birth in this world; having to get old here; having to fall into illness here; and finally dying here. They are chained or handcuffed by the power of their own past deeds. Beyond this, they are stuffed into the steel cage of grasping to some "self-nature" of things. They are smothered in the darkness of the night of ignorance, and they go through all this over and over again, in an endless round of births in this ocean of suffering life.



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Two

1) Name the three different sets of vows. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) Vows of individual freedom (*pratimoksha* vows)

སོ་ཐར་གྱི་སྡོམ་པ།

sotar gyi dompa

b) Bodhisattva vows

བྱང་སེམས་གྱི་སྡོམ་པ།

jangsem kyidompa

c) Tantric vows

གསང་སྤྲུགས་གྱི་སྡོམ་པ།

sang-ngak kyidompa

2) Name and describe the three different types of morality. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

a) The morality of refraining from bad deeds: making sure that you are never sullied by committing any of the ten bad deeds, or breaking any of your vows.

ཉེས་སྡོད་སྡོམ་པའི་ཚུལ་བྲིམས།

nyechu dompay tsultrim

- b) **The morality of collecting goodness: using various methods, like performing the six perfections, to collect masses of merit and wisdom into yourself.**

དགོ་བའི་ཚོས་སྤྱད་པའི་ཚུལ་སྦྱིས་སྦྱོར།

geway chu dupay tsultrim

- c) **The morality of working for living beings: keeping the above two types of morality, specifically for the benefit of every living being.**

སེམས་ཅན་དོན་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚུལ་སྦྱིས་སྦྱོར།

semchen dunje kyi tsultrim

3) Name and describe the four wonderful qualities of the bodhisattva vows. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

- a) **Taken from another: When you are close to breaking the vows, you pull back because of a feeling of shame for what the holy person who gave you the vows would think.**

པ་རོལ་ལས་སྒྲངས་པ།

parul le langpa

- b) **Pure intention: When you're close to breaking a vow, you pull back because of how you know you would feel about yourself after that; you recall the pure motivation you had when you took your vows, and don't want to sully your healthy self-esteem.**

བསམ་པ་དག་པ།

sampa dakpa

- c) **The vows can be fixed if broken:** Unlike some other forms of vows, bodhisattva vows can be "repaired" or even taken over, should you break them.

ཉམས་ན་ཕྱིར་གསོ།

nyam na chir so

- d) **You can keep from breaking the vows in the first place:** This means that, if you possess the first two qualities strongly, you will never come to break the vows anyway.

མ་ཉམས་པར་བྱེད་པ།

ma-nyampar jepa

- 4) Give the two divisions of the bodhisattva vows, and explain one reason why they are only two. (Tibetan track give divisions in Tibetan and explain reason in English.)

- a) **Root vows**

ཙ་ལྷུང་།

tsatung

- b) **Secondary vows**

ཉེས་བྱས།

nyeje

One reason that there are only two groups of vows is that there are authoritative scriptures that say there are only two, despite the assertion of some early Tibetan masters that there may be more than two divisions. Another reason is that, any time you break a root vow in an incomplete way, this becomes the breaking of a secondary vow; there are no multiple categories of these transgressions, as there are with some other types of vows.

5) Name the seven types of individual freedom vows and explain their relationship to the bodhisattva vows.

- a) **The vows of a fully ordained monk.**
- b) **The vows of a fully ordained nun.**
- c) **The vows of an intermediate nuns.**
- d) **The vows of a novice monk.**
- e) **The vows of a novice nun.**
- f) **Lifetime vows for a male layperson.**
- g) **Lifetime vows for a female layperson.**

It works best if you have received one of the above sets of vows before taking the bodhisattva vows. At the very least, you must be avoiding the ten bad deeds strictly.

6) Describe Je Tsongkapa's reaction to the idea that practitioners of the secret way do not need to follow the other two sets of vows.

Je Tsongkapa says that this wrong idea "cuts the roots of the Buddha's teaching, and is like a great rain of hail that destroys the tender crops of the happiness of all living kind; it reflects a total failure to grasp both the higher and lower teachings, an absolute misconception that should be thrown away like so much garbage."



COURSE VII

The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Three

1) Some texts say that, when we take bodhisattva vows, we should do so in two separate steps: that we should first attend a ceremony where we commit ourselves to the wish for enlightenment in the form of a prayer (that is, promise to *think* like a bodhisattva), and then later a second ceremony where we commit ourselves to the wish in the form of action (promising to *act* like a bodhisattva by keeping the actual 64 vows and other commitments). Explain why Je Tsongkapa accepts this view.

Je Tsongkapa says that separate ceremonies for committing to the wish, and then to the vows, makes our vows more firm.

2) List the three main stages in the ceremony for taking the vows. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) The preliminaries

ལྷོད་བཤམ་

jorwa

b) The actual ceremony

དངོས་གཞི།

ngushi

c) The conclusion

མཇུག་ཚེག་

jukchok

3) Give the five parts to the preparation stage, and describe each one briefly. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

- a) Making a respectful request to your Lama to grant you the vows, offering a mandala for this purpose.

གསོལ་བ་གདབ་པ།

sulwa dappa

- b) Inviting all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to attend the ceremony and witness the vow you are taking; trying, at this moment, to be mindful of their wonderful qualities.

ཚོགས་སྐྱབ་པ།

tsok druppa

- c) Requesting that the vows be granted quickly, kneeling on your right knee to do so.

སྟོམ་བ་ལྷུང་དུ་བསྐྱལ་བ།

dampa nyurdu kulwa

- d) Reflecting with joy on the opportunity you now have for collecting the immense amount of goodness needed to become an enlightened being and help all living beings.

སྟོབ་བ་བསྐྱེད་པ།

trowa kyepa

- e) Having the teacher ask you about your intentions: Do you really hope, by taking these vows, to achieve enlightenment for all living beings? Do you really understand the vows, and do you intend to keep them all?

བར་ཆད་དྲི་བ།

barche driwa

4) Describe the kind of person who can grant the vows of a bodhisattva.

It is preferable, but not necessary, that the person who grants you the bodhisattva vows be ordained; and it is also preferable if they are someone who can give you your tantric vows. They can be either male or female. They should be someone who keeps their vows well; they should have the bodhisattva intention; know the ceremony; be a master of bodhisattva teachings; and be able and willing to bring up the student. They should also be free of attachment, in the sense that they should be satisfied with what they have; they should have respect for their vows; not be easily upset or angered, or hold anger; not be lazy in the sense of having no joy in doing virtue; not have a mind that wanders and cannot meditate well; and not be stupid in the sense of putting down the greater way (the mahayana).

5) Describe the kind of person who can take the vows of the bodhisattva.

The kind of person who can take the bodhisattva vows is someone who really wishes to take them; who has a compassionate nature; who knows the vows; intends to keep them; and is based in morality (avoids the ten non-virtues well).

6) Describe the four steps to the concluding stages of the ceremony for taking the bodhisattva vows.

- a) **You ask all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to witness what you've done, and to acknowledge your oath to them; this is followed by three prostrations to each of the ten directions where these beings reside.**
- b) **The teacher "pumps up" the disciples by describing the great deed they have just done; he or she describes for example how a shock wave caused by the disciple's extraordinary deed has just passed through all the Buddha paradises, and how these enlightened beings will now consider the disciple one of their special family, and care for them and lead them.**
- c) **You and the teacher make an offering of thanksgiving to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, for granting the opportunity to have taken the vows.**
- d) **You make a resolution not to advertise your vows to people who have no faith in them; if you do, and they have bad thoughts, it could create obstacles for them. Keep the vows privately, without hoping that you could obtain some gain or praise from others through them.**



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Four

1) List the first nine root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, using the short verse forms. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

(1) The root downfall of praising yourself, or criticizing others.

བདག་བསྟོད་གཞན་སྟོད།

daktu shenmu

(2) The root downfall of failing to give the Dharma, or material assistance.

ཚཱ་ལོ་མི་སྤྲེ།

chunor miter

(3) The root downfall of failing to accept someone's apology (or suggestion), or striking another.

བཤགས་ཀྱང་མི་ཉན།

shak kyang mi-nyen

(4) The root downfall of giving up the greater way, or teaching false Dharma.

ཐེག་ཆེན་སྟོང་བ།

tekchen pongwa

- (5) The root downfall of stealing what belongs to the Three Jewels.

དགོན་མཚོག་དགོར་འཕྲོག

konchok kortrok

- (6) The root downfall of giving up the highest Dharma.

ཚུམ་སྤོང་།

chupong

- (7) The root downfall of taking away someone's robes and the rest; or of removing someone from the status of an ordained person.

ངུར་སྒྲིག་འཕྲོག

ngurmik trok

- (8) The root downfall of committing one of the five immediate misdeeds.

མཚམས་མེད་ལྷ།

tsamme nga

- (9) The root downfall of holding wrong views.

ལོག་ལྷ།

lokta

2) In the original texts, the "root downfalls" are also referred to as "defeats." Explain the sense of each of these terms. (Tibetan track give the two terms in Tibetan and explain in English.)

- a) The word "root" generally means that, if you break this kind of vow, it is destroyed in your mind; "downfall" generally means that you would then fall to the great hells.

ཙ་ལུང་།

tsatung

- b) "Defeat" generally means that, if you break this kind of vow, you are defeated by your mental afflictions and cannot attain the first bodhisattva level in the same life.

པཎ་པ།

pampa

3) List the two parts of each of the first four root downfalls. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- (1) a) Praising yourself.

དག་བརྗོད།

daktu

- b) Putting down another person.

གཞན་སྤོང།

shenmu

- (2) a) Not giving Dharma teachings to someone.

ཚེས་མི་སྤྲོད་བ།

chu miterwa

- b) Not giving material assistance to someone.

ནོར་མི་སྤྲོད་བ།

nor miterwa

- (3) a) Not accepting someone's apology (or suggestion).

ཤད་སྤྱང་མི་ལེན།

shejang milen

- b) Striking another person.

འཚོག་པ།

tsokpa

- (4) a) Giving up the greater way.

ཐེག་ཆེན་སྤོང་བ།

tekchen pongwa

- b) Teaching false dharma.

དམ་ཚེས་ལྟར་སྤྲོད་།

damchu tarnang

4) Why are these four downfalls not made into eight separate downfalls?

As far as commission of the deeds, there are eight different acts. There are though four basic types of motivation involved, such that the deeds can be grouped in pairs. The four types of motivation are, respectively, a desire for gain or respect; a desire for possessions; malice towards others; and ignorance about the Dharma.

5) Explain the two possible motivations behind breaking the first root vow. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) **Desire for material gain.**

ལྷོད་པ་ལ་ཆགས་པ།
nyepa la chakpa

b) **Desire for the respect or admiration of others.**

བཀྲུང་སྡི་ལ་ཆགས་པ།
kurti la chakpa

6) Explain the two aspects of the person who is the object of the second root downfall.

a) **They have a physical need such as hunger, disease, or the like.**

b) **They have no one else to look to for help, no other support network, than you.**

7) Explain the difference in the objects of the fourth and the sixth root downfalls.

The object of the fourth downfall is the body of the teachings on the greater way (the mahayana teachings); you say that they were not spoken by Lord Buddha.

The objects of the sixth downfall are the three different ways: those of the listeners; the self-made buddhas; and the greater way. You say that any one or ones of these ways were not spoken by Lord Buddha.

8) Explain the forms of the seventh root downfall. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) **Taking away an ordained person's robes: forcibly removing the signs of their ordination.**

ངུར་སྒྲིབ་འཕྲོག་པ།

ngurmik trokpa

b) **Making an ordained person give up their vows.**

རབ་བྱང་ལས་ཕབ་པ།

rabjung le pappa

9) Name the five possible forms of the eight root downfall. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) **Killing your father.**

ཕ་བསད་པ།

pa sepa

b) **Killing your mother.**

མ་བསད་པ།

ma sepa

c) **Killing an enemy destroyer; that is, an arhat, or one who has attained nirvana.**

དགྲ་བཅོམ་པ་བསད་པ།

drachompa sepa

d) Trying to harm a Buddha.

བདེ་བཤེགས་ལ་ངན་སེམས་ཀྱིས་བླག་འབྱེན།
deshek la ngensem kyi trak jin

e) Creating a schism among Shakyamuni Buddha's followers.

གཞི་འདུན་དབྱེན་བྱེད།
gendun yenje

10) Explain two typical types of the ninth root downfall.

- a) Denying that karma and its consequences (the laws of moral cause and effect) exist.**
- b) Denying that past and future lives exist.**



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Five

1) List the 10th through the 18th root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, using the short verse forms. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

(10) The root downfall of destroying towns and such.

གྲོང་སོགས་འཇོམས།

drong sok jom

(11) The root downfall of teaching emptiness to a person who is not yet mentally prepared.

མ་སྤངས་སྣོད་ཉིད་བསྟན།

majang tongnyi ten

(12) The root downfall of causing a person to turn back from total enlightenment.

ཇོགས་བྱང་ལྲོག

dzokjang dok

(13) The root downfall of causing a person to give up the morality of freedom.

སོ་ཐར་སྡོད།

sotar pong

- (14) The root downfall of holding that a person cannot eliminate desire and the rest by following the way of the learner.

ཉན་སྟོང་།

nyenmu

- (15) The root downfall of professing the complete opposite (that is, of saying that you have seen emptiness or deities and the like directly, when you have not).

ཟབ་བརྩུན་སྟེ།

sabdzun ma

- (16) The root downfall of accepting what belongs to the Three Jewels when someone presents it to you.

མཚོག་གསུམ་དཀོར་ལེན།

choksum kor len

- (17) The root downfall of rejecting the practice of quietude and giving the possessions of meditators to those who practice recitation.

ཐྲིམས་ངན་འཆའ།

trim ngen cha

- (18) The root downfall of discarding the wish for enlightenment.

སེམས་གཏོང་།

semtong

- 2) Describe the result which is required for the 11th root downfall to occur.

As a result of your presentation of the concept of emptiness, a person who had already entered the greater way (the mahayana) becomes frightened or disturbed; they give up the teachings of the greater way, and enter the lower way (the hinayana).

3) Describe how the 13th root downfall is committed.

You tell someone who is keeping their freedom vows that their keeping these vows is not very important for attaining enlightenment, and that they should rather develop the wish for enlightenment and enter the greater way; the vow is broken when they agree and give up a moral life of following these vows.

4) Describe the difference between the 14th root downfall and the 6th.

In breaking the 6th vow, you say that one of the three ways (the way of the listeners, for example) was not taught by Lord Buddha. In breaking the 14th vow, you attack the realizations of the lower way by saying that this path does not lead to nirvana—which is an inaccurate statement. You do not discount the whole lower way in vow 14.

5) Describe the "missing vow" between root vows 14 and 15. Then tell why it is not counted as a separate vow.

The "missing vow" is praising yourself and criticizing someone else due to desire for the gain or admiration of others. It refers specifically to claiming that someone who is properly teaching, studying, and reciting scriptures is not doing so, and that you are. It is an untrue statement which you make because of desire for gain or adulation. It is not counted as a separate vow at this point because it is encompassed by the first downfall; in some interpretations it is the very essence of this first.

6) Explain the difference between the 16th and the 5th root downfalls.

The fifth downfall is stealing the property of the Three Jewels yourself. The sixteenth downfall is accepting what others have stolen from the Three Jewels.

7) When root downfall 17 is committed, three different parties are involved, and one of them collects the bad deed. Name the three, and tell which one collects the deed. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) One person, or a group of people, in a monastic or similar setting who are engaged in meditation to reach the states of quietude (shamata) and special insight (vipashyana).

b) One or a group of people in the setting who are memorizing and reciting scriptures.

c) An administrator of the monastery or center who believes that the meditators are wasting time and not contributing, and who makes a rule to take the possessions of the meditators and give them to the reciters. He is the one who collects the bad deed.

8) The 18th root downfall, and one other before it, are particularly serious and occur whether or not the four mental afflictions called the "chains" are all present. Name this other root downfall and describe it briefly. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

This other downfall is the 9th; that is, holding wrong views. There are two classic types of wrong view: believing there is no such thing as good and bad karma, and believing there is no such thing as past and future lives.

ལོ་ཀ་ལྷ།

lokta



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Six

1) Name the four "chains": the four mental afflictions that bind you, and which must all be present in order for a "major" instance of these afflictions to occur-- which destroys one's root vow. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) You are willing to commit the particular wrong deed again.

ལྷོད་འདོད་མ་ལོག།

chu du malok

b) You do not have any shame or consideration about doing it; that is, you are neither concerned, respectively, about avoiding the wrong deed out of respect for the self-image you have of yourself, nor out of a concern for how your action will affect others.

ངོ་ཚ་ཁྲིལ་མེད།

ngotsa trelme

c) You derive a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction out of doing the wrong deed.

དགའ་མགུ།

gan-gu

d) You do not consider the deed to be wrong.

ཉེས་དམིགས་མི་བཟླ།

nyemik mita

2) Describe the difference between shame and consideration. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

Shame is avoiding a bad deed because of your own conscience or self-esteem. Consideration is avoiding a bad deed because of concern for what others will think about you.

ངོ་ཚ་ཉེས་པ།

ngotsa shepa

བྲིལ་ཡོད་པ།

trel yupa

3) Describe the "medium" and "lesser" instances of the chains.

a) Medium: Committing a downfall with the fourth chain (not considering your deed to have been wrong) present by itself, or with any one or two of the other three chains also present.

b) Lesser: Committing a downfall with any combination of the first three chains present, but without the presence of the 4th chain.

4) Explain how one restores one's vows in each of the three instances.

a) Major instance: You must re-take the vows.

b) Medium instance: You must confess before a group of three or more people.

c) Lesser instance (or for the secondary downfalls): You must confess before at least one person.

5) Name and describe briefly the four antidote forces. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

- a) **Basis force:** The "grounding" or basis you use to begin to get yourself back up after having fallen down. You reaffirm your basic Buddhist beliefs: you take refuge in the Three Jewels, and re-commit yourself to the task of working to become enlightened for the sake of every living being.

ཏེན་གྱི་སློབ་སྒྲུབ།

ten gyi top

- b) **Destruction force:** The intelligent regret (but not some kind of paralyzing guilt) of an educated Buddhist, knowing that you personally will suffer badly in the future from the harm that you did.

ནམ་པར་སུན་འབྱིན་པའི་སློབ་སྒྲུབ།

nampar sunjinpay top

- c) **Restraint force:** You stop doing that deed from now onward. This is the real essence of purification. (You should set a time limit as to how long you will refrain from doing the deed, if it is one that you cannot honestly promise to avoid permanently.)

ཉེས་པ་ལས་སྐྱར་བ་ལྗོངས་པའི་སློབ་སྒྲུབ།

nyepa le larndokpay top

- d) **Antidote force:** You do some good deed to make up for what you did. The best antidote is studying and meditating upon emptiness.

གཉེན་པོ་ཀུན་ཏུ་སློབ་པའི་སློབ་སྒྲུབ།

nyenpo kuntu chupay top

6) Why is it wrong to be overly comforted by the fact that, if you destroy a root vow, you can take it over again?

If you break even one root downfall completely, says Je Tsongkapa, it is impossible for you to see emptiness with bodhichitta—that is, to attain the first bodhisattva level or bhumi—in this life. Whatever collection of virtue you have to see emptiness cannot be increased further, and you lose any ability to create whatever kinds of this merit you have not already attained. It also makes it very difficult for you to meet spiritual teachers in the future.

7) Name three different ways that a person can lose his or her bodhisattva vows.

- a) **Holding wrong views.**
- b) **Giving up bodhichitta, or the wish to reach enlightenment in order to be of help to every living being; this is the same as formally giving the vows back.**
- c) **Breaking a root vow with all four chains present.**



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Seven

1) Name five instances in which you do not commit a secondary offense if you fail to reply to a question.

- a) When teaching Dharma, or already engaged in a Dharma discussion with a person other than the one asking the question.
- b) When, in some other context than the preceding, you are attempting to engage in an earnest conversation with someone to satisfy their needs.
- c) When you yourself are listening to a Dharma talk.
- d) If it would disturb someone else listening to a Dharma talk.
- e) If you are afraid it might upset the Dharma teacher whose talk you are attending.

(Some other cases would be when you are very ill; or where not answering would teach a valuable lesson to the questioner; or where your monastic vows require that you not answer.)

2) There are two broad divisions of motivation behind committing an offense. Name them and give two examples of each. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) Cases where you commit an offense because you are motivated by a negative thought such as anger, jealousy, desire, or malice.

ཉོན་མོངས་ཅན།

nyonmong chen

ཁོང་སྒྲོ།

kongtro

ཕྱག་དོག།

trakdok

ཆགས་པ།

chakpa

གཞོན་སེམས།

nusem

- b) Cases where you commit an offense not because of a mental affliction, but rather due to some other thought: because you forget what you are supposed to be doing, or because you are simply lazy, or the like.

ཉོན་མོངས་ཅན་མ་ཡིན་པ།

nyonmong chen mayinpa

བརྗེད་ངེས། ལེ་ལོ།

je-nge

lelo

3) Generally, bad deeds are divided into those which are natural and those which are proscribed; that is, something the Buddha found necessary to prohibit because of some unpleasant incident. Name and describe the two types of proscribed misdeeds. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) Misdeeds which were prohibited in order to maintain others' good opinion of both the practitioner and the Buddhist way. An example would be for an ordained person to avoid drinking alcohol or the like, since if others saw them engaging in this action it might turn them away from Buddhism.

གཞན་སེམས་བསྐྱུང་བ།

shen sem sungwa

- b) Misdeeds which were prohibited in order to keep one's activities few. This includes accumulating possessions or the like, which could distract the person from their practice.

དོན་དང་བྱ་བ་ཉུང་བ།

dun dang jawa nyungwa

4) Should a bodhisattva keep those two types exactly as a follower of the lower way does?

He should keep the first type better than those of the lower way; but in cases where it would benefit others, he should not keep the second as strictly as those of the lower way. Fully ordained monks, for example, are not allowed to keep cloth that they are not using immediately for robes more than a certain number of days. A monk with bodhisattva vows though *must* store a large amount of cloth that someone gives them, even for a long time, if this would help someone else.

5) Describe the kind of person you must be to break one of the rules of body and speech out of compassion in certain very extraordinary circumstances.

You must be a bodhisattva who is very well versed in the path, having practiced it for many millions of years; who has great compassion; who possesses skilful means; and who sees that there is no other alternative.

6) Name and describe the five kinds of wrong livelihood taught in the *String of Precious Jewels*, and then describe the additional general kind of wrong livelihood mentioned by Master Bodhibhadra. (Tibetan track name the five in Tibetan and describe all in English.)

a) **Pretending: Pretending to be some holy person in the hopes that someone will give you something.**

ཚུལ་འཚོས།

tsulchu

b) **Flattery: Saying nice things to someone in the hopes that they will give you something.**

ཁ་གསལ།

kasak

- c) **Hinting:** Hinting to someone else that you need or want something in the hopes that they will give it to you.

གཞོག་སྤོང་།

shok-long

- d) **Forcing:** Hassling or harassing people to give you something that they really don't feel like giving you.

ཐོབ་ཀྱིས་འཇལ་བ།

top kyi jelwa

- e) **Baiting:** Giving someone a minor gift in the hopes that they will return you something substantial.

རྩིད་པས་རྩིད་འཚོལ།

nyepe nye tsul

Master Bodhibhadra also adds: Trading in alcohol, weapons, silk, or animals; digging or plowing in the ground without any regard for the living beings there; and the like. Basically, any occupation which is harmful to others.

- 7) Explain what the sutras really mean when they say that a bodhisattva "prefers the circle of suffering life to nirvana."

It *does not* mean that a bodhisattva would delay his or her enlightenment to help others, since an enlightened being could emanate countless bodies to give others this help. Rather, it means that, *after getting enlightened as fast as they can*, a bodhisattva should enjoy the act of appearing or pretending to take rebirth (out of joyful compassion, rather than out of karma and mental afflictions) in the circle of suffering life, in order to help others.



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Eight

1) Name the four points of the practice of virtue. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) When someone yells at you, you don't respond in kind by yelling back at them.

གཤེ་བ་ལན་བྱས།

shewa lenje

b) When someone gets angry at you and says something unpleasant, you don't respond in kind.

ཁྲོ་བ་ལན་བྱས།

trowa lenje

c) When someone hits you, you don't respond in kind.

བརྗེ་ག་པ་ལན་བྱས།

dekpa lenje

d) When someone criticizes you and points out your faults, you don't respond in kind.

མཚང་འདྲུ་ལན་བྱས།

tsangdru lenje

2) Name the five obstacles to meditation and describe them briefly. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan and describe in English.)

- a) **Restless desire, or missing someone or something:** You sit in meditation with your mind flitting around, thinking about the things you have to do, or eat, or anything else you like which disturbs your meditation; or else you sit and think about the "good old days," past accomplishments, past girlfriends or boyfriends, or the like.

གོད་འགྲོད།

gu gyu

- b) **Malicious thoughts:** You sit in meditation thinking about people you don't like.

གཞོན་སེམས།

nusem

- c) **Foggy-mindedness, or sleepiness:** You sit in meditation with a dull state of mind brought on for example by eating too much before sitting, or by not getting enough sleep.

གཉིད་མྱུགས།

nyimuk

- d) **Attraction to objects of the senses:** You sit in meditation disturbed by your excessive attraction throughout the day to objects of the sense organs: things such as food, sex, music, or the like.

འདོད་པ་ལ་འདུན་པ།

dupa la dunpa

- e) **Unnecessary doubts:** You sit in meditation bothered by doubts about issues that you really could have resolved, but were too lazy or inattentive to do so. This *does not* include healthy doubts about dharma issues that you are attempting to work out or are waiting to learn more about before you make a decision about them; this kind of doubt is healthy for Buddhists.

ཇེ་སོ་མ།

tetsom

- 3) Describe the kind of bodhisattva who can engage in serious study of hinayana and non-Buddhist teachings without breaking a bodhisattva vow.

One who can correctly and quickly grasp the meaning of what he or she is reading; who is very logical in their approach; who can easily remember whatever they have studied; and who cannot be swayed from their correct beliefs. Someone who on any given day would naturally want to spend twice the time studying Buddhist scripture as they would reading something else that they had to read for a good reason.

- 4) Describe the four ways in which a person may make the mistake of rejecting a mahayana teaching.

- a) **By saying that some part of the teaching is inferior.**
- b) **By saying that the composition is inferior.**
- c) **By saying that the author is inferior.**
- d) **By saying that the teaching won't help living beings much.**

- 5) Explain what the Protector, Maitreya, advises us to do if we find that some Buddhist teaching doesn't suit us for now.

If there is some point within the teachings which you cannot understand, or which you have a doubt about right now, then leave it for the time being. Be careful not to decide for sure that it is wrong, or reject it, since this would be serious bad karma; rather, shelve the idea for now and decide you will come back to it later when you get more information or have thought about it longer.



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Nine

1) Name four of the situations in which a bodhisattva is required to assist someone in need.

- a) When someone is undertaking any particular task.
- b) When someone is trying to protect their belongings.
- c) When someone is trying to learn a skill, as long as it is not harmful.
- d) When someone is planning a virtuous event of some kind.

2) Name the "two states of mind" and "the other two states of mind" that often occur as motivations for committing the secondary offenses. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

- a) malice: wanting to hurt someone

མནེམ་སེམས།

narsem

- b) anger

ཁོང་ཁྲོ།

kongtro

- c) regular laziness: being addicted to low-level non-virtuous behavior,
not feeling like making an effort

ལེ་ལོ།

lelo

d) spiritual laziness: failing to take joy in doing good deeds

སྙོམ་ལེ།

nyomle

3) Name any four of the nine additional offenses which act against the wish for enlightenment in the form of a prayer; that is, which act against *thinking* like a bodhisattva.

- a) Failing to support those whom it would be proper to support with dharma teachings.
- b) Failing to support those whom it would be proper to support with material help.
- c) Failing to let go of anger about something someone has done to hurt you.
- d) Discriminating between people by liking some and disliking others.

Other possible answers are:

Failing to take oneself to a holy Lama;

Giving up the practice of going to dharma classes and studying at home;

Giving up the practice of contemplating what you have learned and studied;

Using clothing or places or food or money without having the wish for enlightenment in mind; and

Engaging in any virtuous activity without thinking about this wish.

4) Name the four white deeds, and for each explain the black deed for which it acts as an antidote. (Tibetan track name white deeds in Tibetan, explain the black deed in English.)

- a) **Never speak a lie to any living being, even in jest. This is the antidote to intentionally deceiving your Lama, or any other holy beings.**

ཀུན་ལ་རྩུན་མི་སྲིད།

kun la dzun mi-ma

- b) **Bring other people to strive for the bodhisattva ideal of total enlightenment. This is the antidote for causing a person to regret a virtuous deed they have done.**

ལྗོངས་བྱང་ལ་འགོད།

dzokjang la gu

- c) **Try to see every person or thing you encounter as being absolutely pure, and conceive of every living being as the Teacher himself (or herself). This is the antidote to saying something unpleasant to a bodhisattva out of anger.**

དག་སྣང་སྦྱོར་བ།

dak nang jorwa

- d) **Maintain an attitude of total honesty, free of any kind of deception, towards every living being. This is the antidote for acting in a devious way towards anyone, without a sense of personal responsibility for their enlightenment.**

ཀུན་ལ་གཡོ་སྦྱུ་མི་དེ།

kun la yo-gyu me



COURSE VII
The Vows of the Bodhisattva

Answer Key, Class Ten

1) Describe the five steps involved in keeping the bodhisattva vows well.

- a) **Respect the speech of the Buddha: think of the vows as a gift given to you personally by an enlightened being.**
- b) **Maintain the three intentions: intend to follow the vows because an enlightened being gave them to you; intend to become enlightened and reach paradise; and intend to help limitless beings.**
- c) **Take the vows based upon the prior two steps.**
- d) **Respect the vows as your most precious possession and the most precious thing in this world.**
- e) **Since the previous point (d) is true, then avoid breaking your vows.**

2) Can a person break a secondary vow out of a mere forgetfulness, or does the motivation have to be one of the mental afflictions?

You can break them either way.

3) Name and explain five distinctions that can determine whether a serious downfall has been committed. (Tibetan track name in Tibetan.)

- a) **The nature of the vow. That is, whether you broke a root vow (heavier) or a secondary vow (lighter).**

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད།

ngowo nyi

- b) What instigated you to break the vow. Being careless, forgetful, distracted, or not knowing the vows is lighter; having a mental-affliction attack is medium; and discounting or disrespecting your vows is most serious.

ཇེཔ་པ།

jepa

- c) How thoughts of the three poisons (ignorant liking, ignorant disliking, or ignorance itself) were present in your mind. The strength with which these occurred, and how many were present in your mind, affect the seriousness of the downfall.

བསམ་པ།

sampa

- d) The object towards whom you committed the act. Lighter objects would be life forms like animals. Medium objects would be humans and human fetuses. Heavy objects would be people who have been particularly helpful in your spiritual journey: your parents, or your Lama.

གཞི།

shi

- e) The accumulation, or how many times you repeated transgressions. Breaking a small but easily remembered or countable amount of secondary vows would be lighter. A larger but countable amount would be medium. More than you can count would be serious.

སོགས་པ།

sokpa

4) Name the four typical causes why a person might break their bodhisattva vows.

a) You don't know your vows in the first place.

མི་ཤེས་པ།

mi-shepa

b) You know the vows but you are careless, lazy, or forgetful in trying to keep them.

བག་མིན་པ།

bak mepa

c) You know the vows, but you have an attack of bad thoughts and break them because you can't help yourself.

ཉོན་མོངས་མང་བ།

nyonmong mangwa

d) You disregard the vows; you disrespect the vows and Lord Buddha.

མ་གུས་པ།

ma-gupa

5) Name the four antidotes for these four causes. (Tibetan track in Tibetan.)

a) Become a master of the vows.

ཏུང་བ་ལ་མཁས་པ།

tungwa la kepa

b) Be mindful and catch yourself if you start to slip.

དྲན་ཤེས་བསྐྱེན།

drenshe ten

c) Identify your worst mental affliction and work on it.

སྙུན་ཤེས་ཆེ་བའི་གཉེན་པོ།

nyun she cheway nyenpo

d) Feel respect for the vows, based upon the results you get from keeping them.

གུས་པ།

gupa

6) Name the ultimate benefit, and the five temporal benefits, of keeping the bodhisattva vows.

a) *ultimate benefit:* You perfect your morality and reach Buddhahood.

b) The enlightened beings consider you part of their family and attend to you.

c) Your death comes with ease and great happiness.

d) You are reborn in a place where there are teachers and others practicing the Dharma.

e) In this life you accumulate great merit. Your life gets better and your morality improves.

f) In future lives, you are automatically a master of morality.