

PART ONE:

**THE TREATISE ON THE PROVISIONS
FOR ENLIGHTENMENT**

**Ārya Nāgārjuna's
BODHISAṂBHĀRA TREATISE
(*Bodhisambhāra Śāstra*)**

055

If all of the merit I have created
Could be formed into a single ball,
I would bestow it on all beings through dedicating it
To causing them to gain the right enlightenment.

056

As for these actions I undertake in repenting transgressions,
In entreating and beseeching, in rejoicing in others' merit,
And so on, including in dedicating all merit to realizing bodhi—
One should realize they accord with all buddhas' own practices.

057

These acts of confession and repentance of my bad karmic deeds,
Of entreating the Buddhas, of rejoicing in others' merit,
And so on, including dedicating all merit to realizing bodhi—
These all accord with teachings set forth by the Victorious One.

058

Kneeling down with the right knee touching the ground
And the upper robe arranged to bare one shoulder,
Three times each day and three times each night,
Press the palms together and proceed in this manner.

059

The merit created in even a single instance of doing this,
If manifest in material form, would be so immense
That even a Ganges' sands of great chiliocosms
Would still be unable to contain it.

060

Having brought forth the initial resolve,
In relations with minor bodhisattvas,
One should bring forth for them veneration and cherishing
Comparable to that felt for the Guru and parents.

061

Although a bodhisattva may have committed transgressions,
One should still not speak about them,
How much the less so where there is no truth to the matter.
One should utter praises only where they are grounded in truth.

062

Where someone has vowed to become a buddha
 And one wishes to prevent his retreat from that resolve,
 Reveal the way with such clarity he brims with intense vigor,
 And cause him to be filled with delight.

063

Where one hasn't yet understood extremely profound scriptures,
 One must not claim they were not spoken by a buddha.
 If one makes statements of this sort,
 One suffers the most bitter and horrible of karmic retributions.

064

If the karmic offenses generating "non-intermittent" retributions
 Were all put together to form a single ball
 And were compared to one formed from the above two offenses,
 They would not amount to even the smallest fraction thereof.

065

One should skillfully cultivate
 The three gates to liberation:
 The first is emptiness, the next is signlessness,
 And the third is wishlessness.

066

Because they have no self-existent nature, phenomena are empty.
 If already empty, how could one establish any characteristic signs?
 Since all characteristic signs are themselves in a state of cessation,
 What could there be in them that the wise might wish for?

067

When cultivating the mindful awareness of these,
 One draws close to those paths leading into nirvāṇa.
 Do not bear in mind anything not resulting in a buddha's body
 And, in that matter, one must not allow any negligence.

068

"In this matter of nirvāṇa,
 I must not immediately invoke its realization."
 One should initiate this sort of resolve,
 For one must succeed in ripening the perfection of wisdom.

069

Just as an archer might shoot his arrows upwards,
 Causing each in succession to strike the one before,
 Each holding up the other so none are allowed to fall—
 Just so it is with the great bodhisattva.

070

Into the emptiness of the gates to liberation,
 He skillfully releases the arrows of the mind.
 Through artful skillful means, arrows are continuously held aloft,
 So none are allowed to fall back down into nirvāṇa.

071

“I shall not forsake beings,
 But rather shall continue on for the sake of benefiting beings.”
 One first initiates this very sort of intention,
 And thenceforth ensures that his practice corresponds thereto.

072

There are beings who have become inured to attachment
 Throughout time’s long night and in present actions as well.
 Their coursing in inverted views regarding characteristic signs
 Is in every case due to confusion wrought by delusion.

073

For those attached to marks and holding inverted views,
 One explains the Dharma so such errors might be eliminated.
 One first generates this very sort of resolve,
 And thenceforth ensures that his practice corresponds thereto.

074

The bodhisattva benefits beings
 And yet does not perceive the existence of any being.
 This in itself is the most difficult of all endeavors
 And is such a rarity as to be inconceivable.

075

Although one may have entered “the right and definite position,”
 And one’s practice may accord with the gates to liberation,
 Because one has not yet fulfilled one’s original vows,
 One refrains from proceeding to the realization of nirvāṇa.

076

Where one has not yet reached “the definite position,”
 One holds himself back through the power of skillful means.
 Because one has not yet fulfilled his original vows,
 In this case too, he refrains from realization of nirvāṇa.

077

Though one abides in the ultimate renunciation for cyclic existence,
 He nonetheless confronts cyclic existence directly.
 Though one maintains faith and happiness in nirvāṇa,
 He nonetheless turns his back on realization of nirvāṇa.

078

One should dread the afflictions,
 But should not end the afflictions.
 To gather the manifold forms of goodness, one should
 Use blocking methods to fend off afflictions.

079

For the bodhisattva, afflictions accord with his nature.
 He is not one who takes nirvāṇa as his very nature.
 It is not the case that the burning up of the afflictions
 Allows one to generate the seed of bodhi.

080

As for the predictions bestowed on those other beings,
 These predictions involved specific causal circumstances.
 They were solely a function of the Buddha’s artfulness
 In taking the perfection of skillful means “to the far shore.”

081

Similes for their plight reference “empty space,” “lotus flowers,”
 “Precipitous cliffs,” and “a deep abyss.”
 Their realms bar it. Analogies cite “non-virility” and “kācamaṇi,”
 With an additional comparison made to “burnt seeds.”

082

All of the treatises as well as the specialized skills,
 The occult and mundane sciences, and the various trades—
 Because they bring benefit to the world,
 One brings them forth and establishes them.

o83

Adapting to beings amenable to instruction,
To their worlds, rebirth destinies, and birth circumstances,
As befits one's reflections, one goes directly to them,
And, through power of vows, takes birth among them.

o84

In the midst of all sorts of circumstances rife with evil,
And when among beings prone to guileful flattery and deceit,
One should don one's sturdy armor.
One must not yield to either loathing or fear.

o85

One equips oneself with supremely pure intentions,
Does not resort to guileful flattery or deception,
Reveals the wrongs of his karmic offenses,
And conceals his many good deeds.

o86

One purifies the karma of body and mouth
And also purifies the karma of the mind.
Cultivating observance of all passages in the moral-code training.
One must not allow any omissions or diminishment in this.

o87

One establishes himself in right mindfulness,
Focuses on the object condition, and stills his thought in solitude.
Having put mindfulness to use as a guard,
The mind becomes free of any obstructive thoughts.

o88

When discriminating thoughts arise,
One should realize which are good and which are unwholesome,
Should forsake any which are not good,
And extensively cultivate those which are good.

o89

If the mind trained on the object becomes scattered,
One should focus one's mindful awareness,
Return it to that object,
And, whenever movement occurs, immediately cause it to halt.

090

One should refrain from laxity and from wrong attachment
 Cultivated with intensity,
 For they make it impossible to maintain concentration.
 One should therefore remain constant in one's cultivation.

091

Even were one to take up the vehicle of the Śrāvakas
 Or the vehicle of the Pratyekabuddhas,
 And hence practice solely for one's own benefit,
 One would still not relinquish the enduring practice of vigor.

092

How much the less could it be that a great man
 Committed to liberate both himself and all others
 Might somehow fail to generate
 A measure of vigor a thousand *koṭīs* times greater?

093

As for cultivating some other practice half the time
 Or simultaneously practicing some other path,
 One should not do this when cultivating meditative concentration.
 One should rather focus exclusively on a single objective condition.

094

One must not indulge any covetousness regarding the body
 And must not cherish even one's own life.
 Even were one to allow any protectiveness toward this body,
 It is but a dharma bound in the end to rot away.

095

One must never develop a covetous attachment
 To offerings, reverence from others, or fame.
 Rather one should strive diligently to fulfill one's vows,
 Acting with the urgency of one whose turban has caught fire.

096

Acting resolutely and immediately, pull forth the supreme benefit.
 In this, one cannot wait for tomorrow.
 Tomorrow is too distant a time,
 For how can one ensure survival even for the blink of an eye?

097

Having established oneself in right livelihood,
When eating, it is as if consuming the flesh of a cherished son.
One must not indulge in either affection for or disapproval of
Whatever food one has taken for the meal.

098

For what purpose has one left the home life?
Have I finished what is to be done or not?
Reflect now on whether or not one is doing the work,
Doing so as described in the Ten Dharmas Sutra.

099

Contemplate conditioned phenomena as impermanent,
As devoid of self, and as devoid of anything belonging to a self.
One must become aware of and withdraw from
All forms of demonic karmic activity.

100

Generate energetic diligence in order to cultivate
The roots, powers, limbs of enlightenment,
Bases of spiritual powers, right severances, the Path,
And the four stations of mindfulness.

101

The mind may serve as a source for the repeated generation
Of good deeds bestowing benefit and happiness
Or it may instead serve as the root of all sorts of evil and turbidity.
One should make it the focus of skillful analytic contemplation.

102

“From one day to the next, what increase has occurred
In my cultivation of good dharmas?”
“Also, what diminishment has occurred in this?”
Those should be the contemplations of utmost concern.

103

Whenever one observes someone else experiencing an increase
In offerings, reverences, or reputation,
Even the most subtle thoughts of stinginess and jealousy
Should never be indulged.

104

One should not cherish any aspect of the objective realms,
 But rather should act as if dull-witted, blind, mute, and deaf.
 Still, when timely, respond by roaring the lion's roar,
 Frightening off the non-Buddhist deer.

105

In welcoming them on arrival and escorting them off as they go,
 One should be reverential toward those worthy of veneration.
 In all endeavors associated with the Dharma,
 One should follow along, participate, and contribute assistance.

106

One rescues and liberates beings bound to be killed.
 One's goodness increases and never decreases.
 One well cultivates karmic works involving the sciences and skills,
 Training in them oneself while also teaching them to others.

107

Adopt all of the supremely good dharmas,
 Through persistent and solid practice.
 Cultivate the four means of attraction,
 Making gifts of robes and food and drink.

108

Do not turn away from those begging for alms.
 Facilitate the uniting of close relatives.
 Prevent estrangement between those of the same clan.
 Make gifts of dwellings and of material possessions as well.

109

As for one's father, mother, relatives, and friends,
 Provide them circumstances befitting their station.
 Wherever one has given them such a suitable situation,
 Treat them as supreme and independent sovereigns.

110

Although there may be yet others who are servants,
 One speaks to them with goodness and, in effect, adopts them.
 One should accord them the highest esteem
 And provide them with medicines and treatment for all illnesses.