

**A TREATISE ON  
THE GENERATING THE BODHI RESOLVE SUTRA**

**By Vasubandhu Bodhisattva**  
(*ca* 300 CE)

**Chinese Translation by Tripiṭaka Master Kumārajīva**  
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**English translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra**

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## Exhortation to Generate the Resolve

### I. CHAPTER 1: EXHORTATION TO GENERATE THE RESOLVE

#### A. DECLARATION OF REVERENCE TO THE BUDDHAS

I respectfully pay reverence to the boundless community  
Of past, future, and present-era Buddhas,  
The possessors of unshakable wisdom as vast as space,  
The saviors of worlds, the greatly compassionate Bhagavāns.

#### B. INTRODUCING BODHI EXHORTATION AND THE PRACTICES FLOWING THEREFROM

There exists among the *mahāvaiṣṭya*<sup>3</sup> teachings the most superior and sublime of dharmas. Drawn from the *māṭṛkā*<sup>4</sup> treasury and cultivated by the Bodhisattvas and the Mahāsattvas, it is:

1. The exhortation to delight in cultivating and accumulating [the bases for realization of] the unsurpassed bodhi.<sup>5</sup>

#### C. THE PRACTICES FLOWING FROM EXHORTATION TO RESOLVE ON BODHI

By resort to it, one is able to influence other beings:

2. To generate the profound and vast resolve;
3. To establish the vows to carry out the most definite form of adornment;<sup>6</sup>
4. To relinquish lives and wealth in subduing covetousness;
5. To cultivate the five groups of moral precepts, teaching and leading forth those transgressing against the prohibitions;
6. To practice the ultimate patience by which they control and subdue the hindrance of hatred;
7. To generate the heroic vigor through which they establish and stabilize beings;
8. To accumulate the dhyāna absorptions for the sake of knowing the minds of the many varieties of beings;
9. To cultivate wisdom, destroying and eliminating ignorance;
10. To enter the gateway of according with reality, thus abandoning all forms of attachment;
11. To propagate and explain the extremely profound practices of emptiness and signlessness;
12. And to proclaim praises of the associated merit, thus preventing the lineage of the Buddhas from being cut off.

## D. THE RATIONALE FOR EXPLAINING THESE DHARMAS

There are countless skillful means such as these which serve as dharmas assisting bodhi (*bodhipakṣa dharma*) and which serve as gateways associated with purification. These should be distinguished and explained for all who possess the most supremely excellent aspiration, thus allowing them to gain complete realization of *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*.

## E. PRAISING BUDDHA'S QUALITIES TO PRESERVE THE BUDDHAS' LINEAGE

“Sons of the Buddha, if a son of the Buddha accepts and upholds the discourses of the Buddha and is able to expound the Dharma for the sake of beings, he should first proclaim and make known the meritorious qualities of the Buddha.” Once beings have heard this, they then become able to generate the resolve to seek the wisdom of the Buddha. It is on account of this generation of the resolve that severance of the lineage of the Buddhas is prevented.

When bhikshus, bhikshunis, *upāsakas*, or *upāsikās* practice mindfulness of the Buddha and mindfulness of the Dharma, they also bring to mind the *asaṃkhyeya* kalpas the Tathāgata spent cultivating the Bodhisattva Path, enduring all manner of intense suffering while seeking the Dharma. If on account of cultivating such mindfulness they were then to explain so much as a single verse of Dharma for the sake of some bodhisattva and that bodhisattva were to hear the teaching of this Dharma and were to thereby be benefited and delighted by it—this would result in his planting roots of goodness, in his cultivating the Dharma of the Buddha, and in his ultimately realizing *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*.

## F. THE IMMEASURABLE PRACTICE OF THOSE RESOLVED ON BODHI

For the sake of cutting off the sufferings and afflictions besetting the countless beings coursing in the beginningless round of births and deaths, bodhisattvas and *mahāsattoas* strive to perfect immeasurability in their manifestations of body and mind. They diligently cultivate vigor and, with deep resolve, generate great vows. They implement great skillful means and bring forth the great kindness and the great compassion. They seek to gain the great wisdom and the vision-surpassing summit mark.<sup>7</sup> They seek to acquire all of the great dharmas of a buddha such as these. One should realize that these dharmas are themselves immeasurable and boundless. Because these dharmas are immeasurable, the karmic blessings resulting from them are also immeasurable.

## G. THE INCALCULABLE BENEFITS ARISING FROM GENERATING THE BODHI RESOLVE

The Tathāgata stated, for instance, that the karmic blessings resulting from even the lowliest and most feeble single initial thought of a bodhisattva “generating the resolve” are such that they could not be completely described even in a hundred thousand myriads of kalpas. How much the less could the resultant karmic blessings be completely described where one has coursed in such thoughts of resolve for a day, a month, a year, or even a hundred years?

Why is this the case? Whatsoever is practiced by a bodhisattva is itself endless. He desires to cause all beings to abide in the unproduced-dharmas patience and then succeed in realizing *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.

## 1. ANALOGY: LIKE WHEN THE GREAT SEA BEGINS TO FORM

Sons of the Buddha, when the bodhisattva first brings forth the bodhi resolve, it is analogous to when the great sea first gradually begins to rise into existence. One should realize that it then becomes the abiding place for all of the lesser-value, middling-value, superior-value, and priceless “as-you-wish-it” wishing pearls, this because all of these jewels are born from within the great sea.

When the bodhisattva generates the resolve, that circumstance is just the same. When [this nascent bodhi resolve] first gradually begins to rise into existence, one should realize that it then becomes the birthplace of all of the good dharmas, dhyāna absorptions, and wisdom possessed by humans, gods, hearer-disciples, pratyeka-buddhas, buddhas, and bodhisattvas.

## 2. ANALOGY: LIKE WHEN THE GREAT TRICHILIOCOSM FORMS

Additionally, this is also comparable to when the great trichiliocosm first gradually rises into existence. One should realize that it then takes on the burden of all beings of the twenty-five realms of existence and becomes the place in which they abide.

When the bodhisattva generates the bodhi resolve, it is just the same as this. When it first gradually rises into existence, it then universally takes on the burden of all of the incalculably many beings and becomes for them that upon which they rely. This includes those of the six destinies and four types of birth, those possessed of right views and those possessed of perverse views, those who cultivate goodness and those who course in evil, those who guard and uphold the precepts of moral purity and those who transgress against the four serious monastic prohibitions, those who reverently esteem the Triple Jewel and those who slander right Dharma,

and those who are demons, non-Buddhists, śramaṇas, *brahmacārins*, *kṣatriyas*, brahmins, *vaiśyas*, and *śūdras*.

### 3. BODHI RESOLVE AS GUIDED BY KINDNESS AND COMPASSION IMMEASURABLES

Additionally, when the bodhisattva generates the resolve, it is kindness and compassion which are taken as foremost. The bodhisattva's kindness is boundless and immeasurable. Therefore this generation of the resolve is itself free of any boundaries and is equal in its vastness to the expansiveness of all of the realms inhabited by beings.

### 4. ANALOGY: BODHI RESOLVE COMPARABLE IN INCLUSIVENESS TO EMPTY SPACE

This is comparable to empty space, for there is nothing which is not universally embraced by it. When the bodhisattva generates the resolve, it is just the same. Of all of the beings, there are none who are not embraced by it. Just as the realms of beings are incalculably many, boundless, and endless, so too it is with the bodhisattva's generation of the resolve. It is incalculably vast, boundless, and endless.

### 5. ANALOGY: BODHI RESOLVE EQUALS IN VASTNESS ALL REALMS OF BEINGS

Because empty space is endless, beings, too, are endless. Because beings are endless, the bodhisattva's generation of the resolve is equivalent in its vastness to the realms of beings.

As for "the realms of beings," they have no boundaries. I should now take up the intent of the Āryas in this regard and discuss a minor measure of it:

Suppose that one were to take from the easterly direction a thousand *koṭīs* of Ganges' sands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of buddhalands while also taking a thousand *koṭīs* of Ganges' sands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of buddhalands from each of the other directions, from the southerly, westerly, and northerly directions, from the four intermediary directions, from the zenith, and from the nadir. Now suppose that one were to then grind them all into dust motes so fine that they could not be seen by the naked fleshly eye.

Now suppose again that one were to remove just a single one of these dust motes as a signifier to represent an aggregation of all of the beings from the worlds contained in a hundred myriads of *koṭīs* of Ganges' sands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of great trichilocosms. Then suppose that one then removed a second one of these dust motes as a signifier to represent a second aggregated group of all of the beings contained in the worlds contained in another hundred myriads of *koṭīs* of Ganges' sands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of great trichilocosms.

Finally, suppose that one proceeded in sequential manner with this calculation until one had removed all of those fine dust motes contained in the earth element in a thousand *koṭīs* of Ganges' sands of *asaṃkhyeyas* of buddhalands in each of the ten directions. In such a case, one would still not have come to the end of all of these "realms of beings."

Now suppose that there was a person who split a single hair into a hundred filaments and then, by dipping one of them into the water, drew forth a droplet of the great sea's waters. The minor portion of all beings which I have just now described would be comparable only to this whereas those beings not subsumed within that description would be comparable to all of the waters remaining in the great sea. Beings are so numerous that, even if all buddhas discoursed on the matter for an incalculable and boundless number of *asaṃkhyeyas* of kalpas, resorting to extensive expounding of analogies, they still would not completely include them all.

When the bodhisattva generates the resolve, it is able to completely extend to all of these beings. Sons of the Buddha, how then could one be able to reach the end of this bodhi resolve's vastness?

#### 6. SUMMATION ON EXHORTATION TO GENERATE THE BODHI RESOLVE

If there are bodhisattvas who hear this description and yet are not frightened by it, who are not struck with terror by it, and who are not caused to retreat and sink away by it, then one should realize that these persons are definitely able to generate the bodhi resolve. Even if all of the incalculably many buddhas praised the merit of such a person for an incalculable number of *asaṃkhyeyas* of kalpas, they still would not be able to completely describe it. Why is this the case? It is because this bodhi resolve is itself boundless and is such as one cannot come to the end of. It is because it possesses such an incalculable measure of benefits that these qualities are proclaimed. This is done for the sake of influencing all beings to universally embrace it in practice and thus initiate their own resolve to realize bodhi.