

THE VOWS

Adapted from *The Book*, by Geshe Michael Roach, Lobsang Chünzin, August 9, 1999. There are 147 Vows. <The positive sense of the vows is in brackets, as presented by Geoff K., Breckenridge, Colorado.>

I. The Refuge Commitments

1. Not seeking refuge in worldly objects and deities once you have taken refuge in the Buddha <Celebrate and appreciate the Buddha, the totally enlightened state, as the only refuge, not worldly objects or deities.>
2. Not harming any living being once you have taken refuge in the Dharma. <Protect living beings from harm once you've taken refuge in the Dharma.>
3. Not associating closely with people who do not believe in the Path once you have taken refuge in the Sangha. <Attempt to associate primarily with others on the path once you've taken refuge in the Sangha.>
4. Considering any representation of the Buddha, regardless of the quality of its artistry or material, as though it were the Buddha himself, once you have taken refuge in the Buddha. <Recognize all representations of the Buddha as the Buddha.>
5. Considering any written material at all, from a single letter on up, as though it were the Dharma itself, once you have taken refuge in the Dharma. <Recognize all written material as the Dharma.>
6. Considering even a single scrap of the saffron robe as though it were the Sangha itself once you have taken refuge in the Sangha. <Recognize any and all signs of the Sangha as the Sangha. >
7. Going for refuge over and over again, by calling to mind the good qualities of the refuge objects. <Call to mind the good qualities of the three jewels over and over again. This is a form of going for refuge. >
8. In remembrance of their kindness, offering the first part of any food or drink to the refuge objects. <When taking food or drink remember the kindness of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and offer the first part of any food to them. >
9. Encouraging others to take refuge. <Encourage others to take refuge. >
10. Taking refuge three times each day, and three times each night by bringing to mind the benefits of doing so. <Bring to mind the benefits of taking refuge and do so formally three times each day and night. >
11. Putting all your trust in the objects of refuge, during any activity you may undertake at all. <Let all the activities you undertake be guided by complete trust and faith in the Buddha, Dharma & Sangha. (Undertake your activities with complete faith in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.)>
12. Not giving up the Three Jewels, even if it should cost you your life, and in every situation from that on down to doing so in jest. <In every situation, even if it should cost you your life, take refuge in the three jewels. Don't give them up even in jest. >

II. The Vows of Freedom

Refraining from Deeds of Body

13. 1. Killing. <Protect Life.>
14. 2. Stealing. <Honor other people's property.>
15. 3. Sexual Misconduct. <Maintain sexual purity and practice loving kindness and compassion in your intimate relations.>

Refraining from Deeds of Speech

16. 4. Lying. <Try to be totally truthful all day long.>
17. 5. Divisive Talk. <Try to bring people together.>
18. 6. Harsh Words. <Try to speak gently to others.>
19. 7. Useless Talk. <Try to speak meaningfully (i.e. not going on and on about things that don't help others).>

Refraining from Deeds of Mind

20. 8. Craving. <Be content with what you have and keep a non-self-centered attitude about desires and needs.>
21. 9. Ill Will. <Try to feel for other people who have a misfortune and be happy for the good fortune of others. Mahayana Buddhists are committed to the goal of bringing every being to happiness.>
22. 10. Wrong Views. <Maintain a Buddhist world view. All good things come from helping others, all bad things from watching out for our own interest only. You cannot breath one breath of air unless you helped someone in the past to live.>

III. The Vows of the Bodhisattva

A. Root Downfalls

23. 1a. Praising yourself, out of attachment to gain or honor. <Be humble, knowing attachment to gain or honor is part of the samsaric cycle.>
24. 1b. Criticizing others, out of attachment to gain or honor. <Praise others, out of happiness and kindness.>
25. 2a. Failing to give Dharma, due to feelings of possessiveness. <Offer Dharma, knowing it will lead others to happiness.>
26. 2b. Failing to give material assistance, due to feelings of possessiveness. <Give material assistance, recognizing there is no real separation between your happiness and others.>
27. 3a. Failing to accept someone's apology. <Accept apologies and do not harbor ill will (cultivate forgiveness and good will towards even those who have hurt you).>
28. 3b. Striking another. <Let go of anger and aggression as quickly as possible (knowing it is based on wrong views and leads to further suffering of yourself and others).>
29. 4a. Giving up the greater way. <Rejoice in the Greater Way and in following the path.>
30. 4b. Teaching false Dharma. <Teach only true Dharma (based on your own experience, the scriptures and your teachers).>
31. 5a. Stealing what belongs to the Buddha Jewel. <Recognize and respect (pay homage) and add to or protect what belongs to the Buddha Jewel.>
32. 5b. Stealing what belongs to the Dharma Jewel. <Recognize and respect (pay homage) and add to or protect what belongs to the Dharma Jewel.>

33. 5c. Stealing what belongs to the Sangha Jewel. <Recognize and respect (pay homage) and add to or protect what belongs to the Sangha Jewel.>
34. 6a. Giving up the highest Dharma by discounting the scriptural collections of the way of the listeners. <Show respect and pay homage to the Theravaden Path as embodying the core of Buddhism and foundation for the highest Dharma.>
35. 6b. Giving up the highest Dharma by discounting the scriptural collections of the way of the Self-made Buddhas. Show respect and pay homage to the scriptural collections of the self made Buddhas.>
36. 6c. Giving up the highest Dharma by discounting the scriptural collections of the greater way. <Show respect and pay homage to the scriptural collection of the greater way.>
37. 7a. Taking away the golden robes, beating, or incarcerating an ordained person. <Assist in whatever way you reasonably can any ordained person.>
38. 7b. Removing someone from the status of an ordained person. <Recognize and appreciate and encourage all ordained people.>
39. 8a. Committing the immediate misdeed of killing your father. <Aid and show kindness, love and appreciation towards your father or any paternal guiding providing figure.>
40. 8b. Committing the immediate misdeed of killing your mother. <Aid and show kindness, love and appreciation towards your mother or any nurturing & supporting figure.>
41. 8c. Committing the immediate misdeed of killing an enemy destroyer. <Aid and show kindness, reverence, love and appreciation towards anyone who has eliminated the obstacles to awakening.>
42. 8d. Committing the immediate misdeed of creating a schism in the Sangha. <Bring harmony to the Sangha.>
43. 8e. Committing the immediate misdeed of drawing blood from a Buddha with evil intent. <With pure intent, offer your own blood to the Buddha. Strive for pure motivation in Dharma practice and in all relations, mental and physical, with the Buddhas & Bodhisattvas.>
44. 9. Holding wrong views. <Practice correct view.>
45. 10a. Destroying towns. <Strengthen towns.>
46. 10b. Destroying cities. <Strengthen cities.>
47. 10c. Destroying whole areas. <Strengthen whole areas.>
48. 10d. Destroying entire countries. <Strengthen entire countries.>
49. 11. Teaching emptiness to a person who is not yet mentally prepared. <Practice skillful means by refraining from teaching emptiness to a person who is not yet mentally prepared. Strive to offer appropriate teachings to gradually deepen someone's awareness and practice of Dharma.>
50. 12. Causing a person to turn back from total enlightenment. <Encourage others to seek total awakening.>
51. 13. Causing a person to give up the morality of freedom. <Cause a person to maintain the morality of freedom.>
52. 14a. Holding that a person cannot eliminate desire and the rest by following the way of the learner. <Acknowledge and rejoice that a person can eliminate desire and the rest by following the way of the learner.>

- 53. 14b. Criticizing someone else due to one's desire for the adulation of others. <Praise someone without any interest in personal gain, out of recognition of the benefits it may cause that person (understanding the laws of karma and also your projections).>
- 54. 15. Professing the complete opposite by saying you have seen emptiness directly when you have not. <Speak humbly and modestly if at all of your own practice.>
- 55. 16. Accepting what belongs to the Jewels, to the Sangha, or to an individual monk when someone presents it to you. <Give what belongs to the three Jewels to the three Jewels when presented to you.>
- 56. 17. Rejecting the practice of quietude, and giving the possessions of meditators to those whose practice is recitation. <Provide for and respect those practicing quietude.>
- 57. 18. Discarding the wish for enlightenment. <Cultivate and treasure the wish for enlightenment.>

B. Secondary Offenses

Offenses Against the Morality of Collecting Goodness (Six Perfections)

Offenses Against the Perfection of Generosity

- 58. 1. Failing to make offerings to the Jewels through the three doors of expression. <Make offerings to the Jewels with the three doors of expression (acts of devotion and prayer).>
- 59. 2. Allowing thoughts of desire to go on. <Catch thoughts of desire and apply antidotes (4 thoughts that turn the mind from samsara; being content; let go of self-cherishing attitude).>
- 60. 3. Failing to pay respect to those who have taken the precepts of the bodhisattva before you. <Pay respect to those who have taken the precepts of the bodhisattva before you.>
- 61. 4. Failing to answer questions, out of anger or laziness. <Answer questions patiently and with enthusiasm and care.>
- 62. 5. Failing to accept an invitation, out of pride, or a wish to hurt someone, anger, or laziness. <Accept invitations with humility, patience, and enthusiasm and with the wish to be of assistance to others.>
- 63. 6. Failing to accept gold or silver or any other kind of material wealth that a sponsor has tried to offer to you, out of a desire to hurt them, or out of anger or laziness. <Accept silver and gold or any other material wealth sponsors offer to you with humility, enthusiasm, care and the wish to be of assistance to others.>
- 64. 7. Failing to give the Dharma to those who wish it, out of a desire to hurt them, or out of anger or envy or laziness. <Give the Dharma to those who wish for it, with humility, enthusiasm, care and the wish to be of assistance.>

Offenses Against the Perfection of Morality

- 65. 8. Rejecting persons with sullied morality, out of feelings of wanting to hurt them, or out of anger or laziness. <Accept and engage people with sullied morality with humility, enthusiasm, care and the wish to be of assistance>
- 66. 9. Failing to follow the rules of the teachings on discipline which lead other persons to develop faith. <Follow the rules of the teachings on discipline that lead other persons to develop faith.>
- 67. 10. Performing deeds which are only of lesser benefit for all living beings. <Perform deeds that are of the greatest benefit for all living beings.>

68. 11. Failing to break a rule out of compassion [There are extraordinary requirements for those who should undertake these kinds of actions, and these must be studied seriously from a qualified Lama before one attempts them.], <In extraordinary cases, break a rule when necessary out of compassion.>
69. 12a. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through pretending. <Take up right livelihood of trying to obtain things (of fulfilling your needs and others) through honesty.>
70. 12b. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through flattering. <Take up right livelihood of trying to obtain things through sincerity.>
71. 12c. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through hinting. <Take up right livelihood of trying to obtain things through speaking directly to the point.>
72. 12d. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through forcing. <Take up right livelihood of trying to obtain things through patience and working with others.>
73. 12e. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through baiting. <Take up right livelihood of trying to obtain things through fairness and openness>
74. 13. Forgetting yourself and acting wild, or getting others to act wild, and soon. <Be mindful of your behavior and help others to maintain or develop their own mindfulness.>
75. 14. Thinking that you only have to travel through the circle of suffering life. <Commit yourself to the path of full awakening. Rejoice in the path of liberation and in doing practices that lead to liberation.>
76. 15. Failing to put a stop to rumors about yourself. <Put a stop to rumors about yourself.>
77. 16. Failing to correct someone when it must be done in a negative way. <Correct (or assist) someone though it must be done in a negative way. (In other words, mindfully and with right motivation, be willing to use anger or skillful criticism or other such methods when it is the only or the most appropriate means necessary to help someone.)>

Offenses Against the Perfection of Patience

78. 17a. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to scolding with scolding. <Maintain the four points of virtue by responding to scolding with patience, kindness, compassion and seeing what is happening as the play of karma and emptiness. (Respond to scolding with patience and kindness.)>
79. 17b. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to anger with anger. <Maintain the four points of virtue by responding to anger with patience, kindness, compassion and seeing what is happening as the play of karma and emptiness (Respond to anger with patience and kindness.)>
80. 17c. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to being beaten by beating. <Maintain the four points of virtue by responding to being beaten with patience, kindness, compassion and seeing what is happening as the play of karma and emptiness. (Respond to being beaten with forbearance and compassion)>
81. 17d. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to being criticized by criticizing. <Maintain the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to criticizing with kindness, patience, openness and see what is happening as the play of karma and emptiness. (Respond to criticizing with patience and kind, skillful, harmonizing speech.)>
82. 18. Simply ignoring those who are angry at you, by failing to explain yourself to them in an appropriate manner out of a desire to hurt them, or pride, or laziness. <Engage those who are angry with you by explaining yourself to them in an appropriate manner with care and humility and the desire to be of assistance.>

83. 19. Refusing to forgive another person when they apologize for doing something wrong to you, out of a desire to hurt them, thoughts of malice, or simply because you don't feel like it. <Forgive others with sweetness and gratitude when they apologize for doing something wrong to you.>
84. 20. Allowing thoughts of anger to go on. <Recognize and let go of thoughts of anger.>

Offenses Against the Perfection of Joyful Effort

85. 21. Collecting a group of disciples, out of a desire to have others pay honor to you, serve you, or make material offerings to you. <Have students only out of the desire to help them be liberated from the sufferings of samsara..>
86. 22. Failing to dispel your laziness and the like. <Delight in virtue and be enthusiastic about the opportunities you have in this life to practice the path of liberation and bliss.>
87. 23. Spending time with busy talk because you enjoy it. <Cultivate silence as skillful means and try to make your speech meaningful.>

Offenses Against the Perfection of Meditation

88. 24. Failing to seek the meaning of meditative concentration, out of a desire to hurt someone, or laziness. <Seek the meaning of meditative concentration rejoicing in (and motivated by) its many benefits.>
89. 25a. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of the pair of restless desire and missing something or someone. <Recognize and purge restless desire and missing others as obstacles to meditation.>
90. 25b. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of feelings of malice about someone. <Recognize and purge the meditation obstacle of feelings of malice towards someone. Cultivate equanimity.>
91. 25c. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of the pair of drowsiness and mental dullness. <Purge the meditation obstacle of drowsiness and dullness (lethargy and laxity).>
92. 25d. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of attraction to objects of the senses. <Purge the meditation obstacle of attraction to objects; of the senses (excitement/distraction/scattering).>
93. 25e. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of unresolved doubts. <Purge the meditation obstacle of unresolved doubts (cultivate faith based on logical insight into understanding karma, the suffering of samsara, death and impermanence, this precious human life, the path and so on).>
94. 26. Considering the pleasant sensation of meditation to be an important personal attainment. <Maintain equanimity regarding pleasant (and unpleasant) sensations of meditation. (If you become attached to these sensations you are being deluded and will not attain liberation).>

Offenses Against the Perfection of Wisdom

95. 27. Rejecting the way of the listeners. <Respect the way of the listeners.>
96. 28. Making efforts in the scriptural collection of the listeners, when you have an opportunity to exert yourself in the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas. <Take the opportunity--choose-to exert yourself in the scriptural collection of the boddhisattvas rather than the scriptural collection of the listeners.>
97. 29. Making efforts in non Buddhist texts where no efforts should be made. <Make effort--take the opportunity you have in this precious life the Buddhist texts that will free you and others from suffering rather than in studies that will not.>

98. 30. Being attracted to non-Buddhist texts, even in a case where one must make efforts. <Let go of attraction and preoccupation with non-Buddhist texts. (Again, be very mindful of where your efforts are going and your deepest motivations-towards studies, magazines, the back of cereal boxes, that apply only to samsara or towards texts that deal directly with liberation or some of the vague and not so vague in between).>

[For these next four, all are basically asking us to approach the texts/teachings/beings of the greater way with equanimity - an equanimity with regard to their value - that every word, every approach, is valuable for obtaining liberation and it is only our very narrow self-centered view that would judge one aspect as better than another.]

99. 31a. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "This part is not as good."
100. 31b. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying "The composition at this point is inferior."
101. 31c. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "The author of this part was not the best."
102. 31d. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "This part won't contribute to the welfare of living beings."
103. 32a. Praising oneself out of pride or anger. <Maintain humility - even actively take a humble stance in your relations and "self-evaluations" - out of kindness and sincerity.>
104. 32b. Criticizing others out of pride or anger. <Praise others, think well of others, out of kindness and sincerity.>
105. 33. Not going to hear the Dharma out of pride or laziness. <Go to hear the Dharma aware of its great benefits (even if you think you've heard that teaching before).>
106. 34. Focusing on the vessel and the letters, by focusing on the teacher and not the teaching. <Focus on the meaning of the teaching rather than the personality and appearance of the teacher.>

Offenses Against the Morality of Working for the Good of All Living Beings

107. 35a. Failing to assist someone in need who is just undertaking a particular task, out of anger or laziness. <Assist those in need who are undertaking particular tasks with enthusiasm and the sincere motivation to be of help to them.>
108. 35b. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to get somewhere, out of anger or laziness. <Assist those trying to get somewhere, with enthusiasm and the sincere desire to be of help. (For enthusiasm, you could also say, "taking delight" in helping others, or make joyful effort as you do these sweet things even if it takes some hardship.)>
109. 35c. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to learn a language, out of anger or laziness. <Assist someone who's learning a language with enthusiasm and the sincere desire to be of help.>
110. 35d. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to learn a skill (as long as it is not something harmful), out of anger or laziness. <Assist those trying to learn a non-harmful skill with enthusiasm and the sincere desire to be of assistance.>
111. 35e. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to protect their belongings, out of anger or laziness. <Help others protect their belongings with patience and enthusiasm.>
112. 35f. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to fix a split between people, out of anger or laziness. <Patiently (patience in Buddhism always means "not getting angry") and enthusiastically, help someone in need who's trying to fix a rift between people.>

113. 35g. Failing to assist someone in need who is planning a virtuous event of some kind, out of anger or laziness. <Patiently and enthusiastically assist someone who needs help planning a virtuous event of some kind.>
114. 35h. Failing to assist someone in need who is undertaking some more general virtue. <Patiently and enthusiastically assist someone who needs help undertaking any virtuous deed.>
115. 36. Failing to serve the sick, out of anger or laziness. <Serve the sick with compassion and joyful effort.>
116. 37. Failing to make some attempt to remove the suffering of those who are blind, deaf, handicapped, weary from traveling, tormented by any of the five mental obstacles, haunted by thoughts such as malice toward someone, or suffering from defeat at the hands of someone else. <Make an attempt to remove the suffering of others...>
117. 38. Failing to give good reasons to those who are acting in a dangerous way, out of anger or laziness. <Skillfully give good guidance to those acting in a dangerous way out of concern and kindness.>
118. 39. Failing to repay someone who has helped you, by helping them back, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness. <Repay others who've helped you by helping them back with the wish that they be truly happy.>
119. 40. Failing to dispel another person's grief out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness. Patiently and skillfully, try to dispel another person's grief out of compassion.>
120. 41. Failing to give money or other material things to someone who wants them, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness. <Offer money or other material things to someone who wants or needs them without selfish intent or fear.>
121. 42. Failing to fill the needs of your circle of disciples, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness. <Make an effort to fulfill the needs of your students without selfish intent but with the wish for their liberation.>
122. 43. Failing to get along with someone, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness. <Be affable with others, not lazy or even subtly acting with meanness or petty intent.>
123. 44. Failing to praise someone's good qualities, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness. <Freely recognize and praise other's good qualities with the desire to reinforce their virtue that will help bring the highest happiness.>
124. 45. Failing to cut someone off when the time has come to do so, out of mental afflictions or laziness. <Cut someone off when the time has come to do so with care and clarity of intent to be of assistance.>
125. 46. Failing to use your supernormal powers to threaten someone or such when needed. <Use your supernormal powers to threaten (protect) someone or to positively influence a situation when needed.>

C. Secondary Offenses against the Precepts of the Prayer for the Wish for Enlightenment

126. Failing to support those whom it would be proper to support with Dharma. <Support those whom it would be proper to support with Dharma.>
127. Failing to support those whom it would be proper to support, with material things, <Support those whom it would be proper to support with material things.>
128. Failing to let go of your anger about something some one else had done to hurt you. <Let go of your anger about something someone else seemed to have done to hurt you.>

129. Discriminating between people, in the sense of liking some and disliking others. <Maintain equanimity in the sense of not preferring some people over others.>
130. Failing to take yourself to a holy Lama. <Take yourself to a holy lama.>
131. Giving up the practice of learning. <Maintain the practice of learning>
132. Giving up the practice of contemplating upon what you have learned. <Maintain the practice of contemplating upon what you have learned.>
133. Failing to have helping others in mind as you partake of food or clothing or any other thing that you make use of. <Have helping others in mind as you partake of food or clothing or any other thing that you make use of.>
134. Engaging in any virtuous activity without having in mind the wish to reach enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. <Engage in all virtuous activity with the wish to reach enlightenment for the sake of all living beings.>

D. The Black and White Deeds

135. The black deed of intentionally deceiving your Lama, or those to whom we make offerings, or any such person, by lying to them.
136. The white deed of never intentionally speaking a lie, even if only in jest to any single living being there is.
137. The black deed of causing another person to regret some virtuous thing they have done.
138. The white deed of bringing a person that you are cultivating to strive for total enlightenment rather than bring them to the path of the lower way.
139. The black deed of saying something unpleasant to a bodhisattva out of anger.
140. The white deed of trying to conceive of every sentient being as the Teacher himself, and to see all beings and things as totally pure.
141. The black deed of acting in a devious way with any living being, without any sense of personal responsibility for their enlightenment.
142. The white deed of maintaining an attitude of total honesty toward every being, free of any kind of deception.

IV. Lifetime Layperson's Vows

143. 1. Not killing a human or a human fetus. <Protect human life.>
144. 2. Not stealing anything of value. <Protect others' possessions and give freely.>
145. 3. Not lying about your spiritual realizations. <Be honest and humble about your spiritual realizations.>
146. 4. Not committing adultery. <Uphold your commitments by maintaining sexual fidelity and imbue sexual relationships with loving kindness and compassion.>
147. 5. Not taking alcohol or intoxicants. <Take healthy food and drink that help you to maintain mindfulness and physical well-being.>