

CHAPTER 6

On Producing the Bodhi Resolve

VI. CHAPTER SIX: ON PRODUCING THE BODHI RESOLVE

A. THE SEVEN BASES FOR PRODUCING THE BODHI RESOLVE

Question: The initial production of the resolve [to attain buddhahood] is the root of all vows. What then is meant by this “initial production of resolve”?

Response:

The initial resolve to attain bodhi
May involve three reasons or four reasons.

When beings initially produce the resolve to attain bodhi, this may find its origin in [one of] three reasons or else in [one of] four reasons.¹⁰⁰ Thus, when one combines them, there are a total of seven causes and conditions associated with producing the resolve to attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

Question: What then are those seven?

Response:

In the case of the first, a Tathāgata
may influence one to bring forth the resolve to attain bodhi.
As for the second, observing that the Dharma is about to be destroyed,
one produces the resolve in order to guard and protect it.

In the case of the third, with respect to beings,
one feels great compassion for them and thus produces the resolve.
As for the fourth, there may be a bodhisattva
who instructs one in the production of the resolve to attain bodhi.

In the case of the fifth, one may observe the conduct of a bodhisattva
and also then consequently produce the resolve.

Or, alternatively, following upon an act of giving,
one may produce the resolve to attain bodhi [based on that].

Or else, having observed the marks of a buddha’s body,
one may feel delight and then proceed to produce the resolve.
Thus it may be due to [any one of] these seven causes and conditions
that one produces the resolve to attain bodhi.

1. THE INFLUENCE OF A BUDDHA

In the case where a buddha “influences one to bring forth the resolve,” a buddha uses the buddha eye to observe beings. He may then realize that a person’s roots of goodness have become so completely ripe that he is capable of taking on this endeavor and that he will be able to realize *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. For a person such as this, the Buddha instructs him and enjoins him to bring forth the resolve, saying to him, “Son of good family, come forth. You may now bring forth that resolve by which you should bring suffering and afflicted beings across to liberation.”

2. THE MOTIVATION TO PROTECT THE DHARMA

Or then again there may be a person born into a dreadful era who, on observing that the Dharma is on the verge of destruction, then, for the sake of protecting it, brings forth the resolve, reflecting as follows:

Alas! From a time in the past an immeasurable and boundless number of hundreds of thousands of myriads of *kotis* of *asamkhyeyas* of kalpas ago on forth to the very present, there has only been:

- A single person;
- On two bases;
- Whose practice has transcended the three realms;
- Who has served as the great guide to the four truths of the Āryas;
- Who is that one who has known the five-fold treasury of Dharma;
- Who has gained liberation from the six destinies of rebirth;
- Who has taken possession of the great jewel of the seven kinds of right Dharma;¹⁰¹
- Who has deeply practiced the eight liberations;
- Who uses the nine categories of sutra text in teaching;
- Who has taken possession of the ten great powers;
- Who has described the eleven kinds of meritorious qualities;¹⁰²
- Who has skillfully set forth the continuous cycle of the twelve causes and conditions;
- Who has explained the thirteen dharmas assisting realization of the path of the Āryas;
- Who has taken possession of the great jewel of the fourteen factors fundamental to awakening;
- Who has dispelled the fifteen kinds of craving;
- Who has both attained the realization of the sixteen mind states involved in unimpeded liberation and has also extricated beings from the sixteen kinds of hells;

Who has also mastered the seventeen physical dharmas;¹⁰³
 Who has completely perfected the eighteen dharmas exclusive
 [to the buddhas];
 Who has skillfully distinguished the nineteen stations of persons who have gained the fruits [of the path];
 And who has well known and distinguished the twenty kinds of faculties [consisting of five each] for those still in training, the arhats, the *pratyekabuddhas*, and all buddhas.¹⁰⁴

This greatly compassionate one, this great lord of generals, this great lord of assemblies, this great king of physicians, this great guide, this great captain of the ship—only after a very long time then acquired this Dharma, and only after cultivating those ascetic practices so difficult to practice then acquired this Dharma. But now, it is on the verge of destruction. I should bring forth the resolve to attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*, should plant thick roots of goodness, should thus attain buddhahood, and thus should cause the Dharma to abide for a long time, enduring even for countless *asamkhyeyas* of kalpas.

[Of this same sort are those who], while cultivating the bodhisattva path, strive with diligence and vigor to guard and uphold the Dharma of the incalculably many buddhas.

3. COMPASSION FOR THE SUFFERING OF BEINGS

Or, alternatively, there may be those who observe:

That beings, beset as they are by bitter afflictions, are pitiful;
 That they have no one to rescue them, no refuge, and no one on whom they can rely;
 That they flow along in *saṃsāra*'s dangerous and difficult wretched destinies;
 That they are afflicted by great enemies, by all manner of fearsome insects and animals, by the terrors involved in births and deaths, by all manner of fearsome ghosts, and so forth;
 That they are always beset by the piercing thorns of worry, sadness, pain, and distress;
 That they fall into the deep pit of [sufferings associated with] separation from those they love and encounters with those they detest;
 That the waters of joy and happiness are only very rarely encountered;
 That they travel alone in the midst of intense cold and intense heat;
 That they are stranded without shade in the vast wilderness and find it difficult to make their way across to liberation;
 That beings in the midst of all this are possessed by every sort of terror and fear;

And that they have no one to rescue them, protect them, or serve as guides for them.

Having observed that beings have entered in this manner into the dangerous and wretched destinies involved in *saṃsāra*, that they undergo all manner of suffering and affliction, such a person, because of the great compassion, may then bring forth the resolve to attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* and may then proclaim, "I shall become a rescuer for those who have no one to rescue them. I shall become a refuge for those who have no refuge. I will become a support for those with no one to rely on.

"Once I have gained liberation, I shall strive to liberate other beings as well. Once I have gained liberation, I shall then also liberate these beings. Once I have gained peace, I shall also bring peace to other beings."

4. THE INSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE OF A BODHISATTVA

Then again, there are also those persons who need only hear of this matter from others and then, due to thoughts of resolute belief¹⁰⁵ and other such factors, they produce the resolve to achieve the unsurpassed enlightenment and reflect:

By always¹⁰⁶ and ceaselessly cultivating wholesome dharmas, I may reach the stage of certainty and realize the unproduced-dharmas patience.¹⁰⁷ Due to accumulating all manner of merit and due to the ripening of roots of goodness, I may then encounter buddhas or may encounter great bodhisattvas who are able to know the relative acuity or dullness of beings' faculties, are able to know from root to branch their deep-seated inclinations and the differences in their individual natures and aspirations, who thoroughly understand the use of skillful means, and who are under the protection of the *prajñāpāramitā*.

Those [beings such as these] who are able to carry on the works of a buddha will realize that I have brought forth the vow. Then, because of the ripening of my roots of goodness, they may influence me to abide in the stage of certainty or the unproduced-dharmas patience.¹⁰⁸

These bodhisattvas [to which he refers] are those who abide on the seventh, eighth, ninth, or tenth bodhisattva grounds. They are those who, like a buddha, thoroughly know the strengths of beings' minds and thereby teach them to produce the resolve.

5. THE ASPIRATION TO EMULATE THE CONDUCT OF BODHISATTVAS

But it is not solely through their possession of the power of resolute belief and other such factors that they are taught to bring forth the resolve. In addition, there are those persons who [bring forth the

resolve] by observing other bodhisattvas practicing the path, cultivating all manner of roots of goodness, proceeding under the protection of the great compassion, and perfecting skillful means as they teach and transform beings. [They observe that]:

They accomplish an abundance of beneficial deeds without indulging any cherishing regard for their own bodies or lives;
 They develop vastly extensive learning;
 They become especially distinctive people in the world;
 They become the most emblematically superior people;
 They serve as a source of shade for weary and suffering beings;
 They become securely established in the practices of giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor, *dhyāna* concentration, wisdom, a sense of shame, a dread of blame, straightforwardness in character, mental pliancy, and congeniality;
 Their minds are pure;
 And they deeply delight in good dharmas.

By observing persons such as these, they are inspired to reflect, “I too should practice what these people practice. I too should cultivate the vows and conduct that they cultivate. I should bring forth this vow for the sake of acquiring this Dharma.” Having had this thought, they then bring forth the resolve to attain the unsurpassable enlightenment.

6. INSPIRATION PROVOKED BY AN ACT OF GIVING

Yet again, there are those persons who engage in acts of great giving, acts whereby they present gifts to a buddha or to his sangha, or acts whereby they simply offer food, drink, or robes to a buddha. Due to such acts of giving, these persons may then call to mind those bodhisattvas of the past who were able to practice giving, bodhisattvas such as Velāma,¹⁰⁹ Viśvantara,¹¹⁰ Sarvadā, and King Śibi. [Having called them to mind], they may then immediately bring forth the resolve to attain bodhi and then dedicate the merit from their act of giving to [their future attainment of] *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

7. INSPIRATION ARISING FROM OBSERVING A BUDDHA’S PHYSICAL MARKS

Yet again, there may be those persons who directly observe or merely hear about the thirty-two marks of the Buddhas, namely such marks as:

The evenness of their soles;
 The wheel-marks on the hands and feet;
 The webbing at the roots of their fingers;
 The softness of their hands and feet;
 The fullness in seven places;

The slenderness and length of their fingers;
 The breadth of their heels;
 The straightness of their bodies;
 Their high and even ankles;
 The vertical swirling shape of their bodily hairs;
 Their thighs resembling those of the *aiṇeya* antelope;
 Their arms whereby the fingers reach even below the knees;
 Their genital ensheathment like that of a stallion;
 The gold color of their bodies;
 The softness and thinness of their skin;
 The placement of but a single hair in each and every pore;
 Their white "hair-mark" between their brows;
 Their lion-like bodies;
 Their round and large shoulders;
 The fullness of the axillary region;
 Their ability to distinctly know sublime flavors;
 Their physical girth like that of the *nyagrodha* tree;
 Their fleshy prominence atop the crown of their heads;
 Their vast and long tongues;
 Their voices possessed of the sound like Brahmā;
 Their lion-like jaws;
 Their forty teeth which are straight, white, and closely set;
 Their blue eyes;
 And their eyelashes like those of the king of the bulls.

[Having observed or heard of these marks of a buddha's body], they may then become delighted and think, "I too should strive to gain these physical marks and I too should strive to gain those dharmas gained by those who possess such physical marks." They may then immediately produce the resolve to attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*.

Thus it may be because of any of these seven causes and conditions that one then brings forth the resolve to attain bodhi.

B. THE RELATIVE PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS IN THESE SEVEN BASES

Question: You stated that there are these seven reasons for a person's generation of the bodhisattva's resolve. Will they all result in success or is it instead the case that some will result in success but others will not?

Response: It is not necessarily the case that they will all result in success. They may result in success or they may not result in success.

Question: If that is so, you should explain this.

Response:

Of the seven reasons for generating the resolve,
 where the Buddha has instructed one to produce the resolve,
 where one produces the resolve in order to protect the Dharma,
 and where one produces the resolve out of pity for others—
 those who have the three motivations such as these
 will certainly find success in this.
 As for the other four types of motivation,
 It is not certain that they will all be successful in this.

Among these seven reasons for generating the resolve, in a circumstance where a buddha has contemplated one's origins and then instructed one in a way that one is caused to produce the resolve, that will certainly result in success. This is because [buddhas] do not speak in vain.

So too is this true of those instances where [one's production of the resolve occurs] because one reveres and esteems the Dharma of the buddhas and one is motivated by the determination to protect it.

So too is this true of those instances where [one's production of the resolve occurs] because one has the mind of great compassion for beings. These three reasons for generating the resolve will definitely result in success, for the roots [of such resolve] are deeply anchored.

In instances where other bodhisattvas have provided instruction which has influenced one to produce the resolve, in instances where one has observed the practices of bodhisattvas and therefore produced the resolve, in instances where one has produced the resolve due to an act of great giving, and in instances where one has produced the resolve because of seeing or hearing about the physical marks of a buddha—for the most part, these four instances of generating the resolve do not result in success, though it may be that there are still those that do succeed. [When these do not result in success], it is due to the relative weakness of the foundations [of their practice].