



The Bodhisattva Vows and the Tantra Vows

The Bodhisattva Vows

The Eighteen Root Downfalls

1. praising oneself and belittling others
2. not sharing one's wealth and Dharma with others
3. not forgiving even when others apologize
4. doubting and denying the doctrine of the Great Vehicle
5. taking offerings intended for the Three Jewels
6. abandoning the doctrine through sectarianism
7. causing an ordained person to disrobe
8. committing one of the five actions of immediate retribution
9. holding perverted views
10. destroying places such as towns
11. teaching emptiness to the untrained
12. discouraging others from seeking full enlightenment
13. causing others to break the vows of individual liberation
14. belittling those who follow the path of individual liberation
15. proclaiming false realizations, such as the realization of emptiness
16. accepting gifts that have been misappropriated from the belongings of the Three Jewels
17. laying down harmful regulations and passing false judgement
18. giving up the pledge of the altruistic aspiration

The Forty-six Secondary Downfalls

A. Downfalls Related to Generosity

1. not making offerings every day to the Three Jewels
2. acting out of desire because of discontent
3. not paying respect to those senior in ordination and in the taking of the bodhisattva vows
4. not answering others' questions out of negligence though one is capable of doing so
5. selfishly not accepting invitations out of pride, the wish to hurt other's feelings, anger, or laziness
6. not accepting others' gifts out of jealousy, anger, etc. or simply to hurt others
7. not giving the Dharma teachings to those who wish to learn

B. Downfalls Related to Morality

8. ignoring and insulting someone who has committed any of the five actions of immediate retribution or defiled his or her vows of individual liberation, or treating him or her with contempt
9. not observing the precepts of moral conduct because one wishes to ingratiate oneself with others
10. complying with the minor precepts when the situation demands one's disregard of them for the better benefit of others
11. not committing one of the seven negative actions of body, speech, and mind when universal love and compassion deem it necessary in the particular instance
12. accepting things that are acquired through one of the five types of wrong livelihood
13. wasting time on frivolous actions such as carelessness, lack of pure morality, dancing, playing music just for fun, gossiping, and also distracting others who are meditating
14. misconceiving that bodhisattvas do not attempt to attain liberation and failing to view the afflictions as objects to be eliminated
15. not living up to one's precepts
16. not correcting others who are motivated by the afflictions

C. Downfalls Related to Patience

17. parting from the four noble disciplines
18. neglecting those who are angry with one
19. refusing to accept the apologies of others
20. acting out thoughts of anger

D. Downfalls Related to Joyous Effort

21. gathering circles of disciples out of desire for respect and material gain
22. wasting time and energy on trivial matters
23. being addicted to frivolous talk

E. Downfalls Related to Concentration

24. not seeking the means to develop concentration
25. not abandoning the five obscurations that hinder meditative stabilization
26. being addicted to the joy of meditative absorption

F. Downfalls Related to Wisdom

27. abandoning the Theravada path as unnecessary for one following the Mahayana
28. exerting effort principally in another system of practice while neglecting the Mahayana teachings that one already has received
29. without good reason exerting effort to learn or practice the treatises of non-Buddhists that are not the proper object of one's endeavor
30. beginning to favor and take delight in the treatises of non-Buddhists although studying them for a good reason
31. abandoning any part of the Mahayana by thinking it is uninteresting or unpleasant
32. praising oneself and belittling others out of pride or anger
33. not going to Dharma gatherings or teachings
34. disparaging one's spiritual master

G. Downfalls Related to the Ethical Practice to Benefit Others

35. not helping those who are in need
36. not helping people who are sick
37. not alleviating the suffering of others
38. not explaining what is proper conduct to those who are reckless
39. not benefiting in return those who have benefited oneself
40. not relieving the sorrow of others
41. not giving material possessions to those in need
42. not working for the welfare of one's circles of friends, students, employees, or helpers
43. not acting in accordance with the wishes of others when doing so does not bring harm to oneself or others
44. not praising those who have good qualities
45. not acting with whatever means are necessary according to the circumstances to stop someone who is doing a harmful act
46. not using miraculous powers, if one possesses this ability, in order to stop others from doing unwholesome actions

Breaking a Root Vow

1. The four factors needed to break a vow

- i. not being mindful of the disadvantages*
- ii. having no desire to stop the action*
- iii. indulging in the act with great pleasure and delight*
- iv. lacking any shame or embarrassment*

2. The two root downfalls that do not need all four factors

There are two root downfalls that do not need the four factors to be complete. Simply doing them makes it a complete action. Those two are the ninth (holding perverted views) and the eighteenth (giving up the pledge of altruistic aspiration). All we need is to simply have that mind in order to completely break the vow.

The Tantra Vows

The root tantric downfalls:

1. despising one's guru;
2. disregarding the trainings;
3. expressing faults in one's vajra brothers or sisters;
4. abandoning love for a migrating being;
5. giving up the wishing and engaging bodhichittas;
6. scorning the Dharma of sutra or tantra;
7. proclaiming secrets to those who are unripe;
8. abusing one's aggregates;
9. abandoning emptiness;
10. relying on the malevolent as friends;
11. not recollecting the view [of emptiness];
12. causing someone to lose faith;
13. not honoring one's pledges; and
14. belittling women.

The secondary pledges:

1. abandoning the four root, as well as alcohol and misdeeds;
2. relying on holy protectors, honoring one's companions, and cultivating the ten virtuous actions;
3. abandoning the causes for turning away from the Mahayana, scorning it, and stepping over it.

The secondary tantric transgressions:

1. relying upon an unqualified consort;
2. engaging in union without the three discriminations;
3. showing secret substances to an unsuitable vessel;
4. fighting or arguing at a tsog ceremony;
5. giving a wrong answer to a question asked out of faith;
6. staying for seven days in the home of a hearer;
7. boasting that one is a yogi although one is not;
8. teaching the holy Dharma to one without faith;
9. engaging in mandala rites without the approximation and so forth;

10. needlessly transgressing the trainings of individual liberation and the bodhisattva trainings;
and acting in contradiction to The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion.

Uncommon vows of Mother Tantra:

1. doing activities with the left; not belittling, and making offerings [to women];
2. abandoning union with an unqualified [consort];
3. not being parted from the view [of emptiness] at the time of union;
4. having unwavering aspiration for the path of attachment;
5. not rejecting the two types of mudra;
6. striving mainly for the outer and inner methods;
7. relying upon chaste behavior without releasing kunda;
8. abandoning repulsion when taking bodhichitta.

The Nineteen Pledges of the Five Buddha Lineages

The six pledges of Vairochana:

1. the morality of restraining from non-virtuous conduct
2. the morality of performing virtuous actions
3. the morality of benefiting other sentient beings

The next three are taking refuge 3 times each day and 3 times each night::

4. in Buddha
5. in Dharma
6. in Sangha

The four pledges of Akshobhya:

1. the mind pledge of the vajra – the symbol of the exalted wisdom of indivisible bliss and emptiness
2. the speech pledge of the bell – the symbol of the wisdom realizing emptiness
3. the pledge of mudra – generating oneself as the deity
4. the pledge of the vajra master – making offerings and remembering the vajra master six times each day

The four pledges of Ratnasambhava:

1. giving material things
2. giving the Dharma
3. giving protection
4. giving love

The three pledges of Amitabha:

Preserving the external and secret teachings of tantra as well as those of the three vehicles.

1. the external – action and performance tantras
2. the secret – yoga and highest yoga tantras
3. the vehicles of hearers, solitary realizers, and bodhisattvas

The 2 pledges of Amoghasiddhi:

1. preserving and keeping the purity of the pledges of the other four buddha families
2. making inner, outer, secret, and suchness offerings.
[Suchness refers to remembering emptiness. Outer refers to offering flowers, water, incense, and so forth. Inner refers to offering the five meats and five nectars (the inner offering). Secret refers to offering a consort to the guru and the deity.]

The two other minor pledges::

1. the pledge of abandonment (this refers to abandoning non-virtuous actions, especially the four root downfalls of killing, stealing, lying, and sexual misconduct)
2. the pledge of reliance and devotion (devoting oneself to one's guru, one's Dharma companions, and the practice of morality).