

①Dharmakara Makes the Bodhisattva Vow in a Hymn of Praise

§19. “This monk Dharmakara, Ananda, once stood up in the assembly, put his robe over one shoulder, and knelt with his right knee on the ground before the Tathagata Lokeshvararaja. He joined the palms of his hands in homage to the Blessed Tathagata Lokeshvararaja and bowed to him. Then, on that occasion, facing the Blessed One, Dharmakara praised him with these verses:

IN PRAISE OF THE BUDDHA

§19(1). “Your light is immeasurable, your understanding, endless and incomparable.
No light in this world can outshine you;
Neither the splendor of the sun, nor the luster of precious stones,
nor the splendor of Mount Sumeru, nor the light of the moon
shine is this world like your blazing light.

§19(2). “In him who is among living beings the best, the body is also infinite.
Likewise, the voice of a buddha is of infinite sound—
likewise his conduct, as well as his mindfulness,
discernment, and vigor, are infinite.
No one in the world is your equal.

§19(3). “You have attained a Dharma that is deep, vast, and subtle.
Like the ocean, a noble buddha is inconceivable.
Yet, this does not cause arrogance in the teacher.
Leaving behind animosity and hatred,
he has crossed over to the other shore.

THE VOW TO EMULATE THE BUDDHA

§19(4). “Just as the noble Buddha, King of Kings, radiates infinite light
that brings warmth to all regions of the universe,
may I also,
becoming a buddha, a master of the Dharma,
free humanity from old age and death.

§19(5). “Possessed of generosity, self-restraint, moral conduct, patience,
vigor, meditation, concentration, and the highest discernment,
I now undertake this vow:

I shall become a buddha, a savior of all beings.

§19(6). “As I seek the most peaceful awakening,
I will worship all the numerous hundreds of thousands of millions
of buddhas, incomparable world protectors,
as countless as the grains of sand in the Ganges.

THE VOW TO SAVE ALL LIVING BEINGS

§19(7). “ ‘I will pour out my radiance everywhere in world system
as numerous as the grains of sand of the Ganges,
and unto the buddha-fields in these worlds,
which are so many more, endless—

such will be the strength of the determination I will assume.

§19(8). “ ‘I will have a magnificent field, the best and highest.
And in this most noble beautified high seat of awakening,
will be found the incomparable bliss of the state of nirvana.
And I will purify this field so that in it all living beings
will reach nirvana.

§19(9). “ ‘Living beings will gather from the ten directions,
and once they are here will quickly prosper in bliss.

May the Buddha be my judge and witness:

I now form a resolution empowered with truth and vigor.

§19(10). “ ‘May all the world-knowers in the ten directions,
whose knowledge encounters no impediments,
likewise always proclaim my resolution.

In this way I could forever live in the Avichi Hell
without losing the power of my vows.’

From Luis Gomez (tr.), *The Land of Bliss*, University of Hawai‘i Press and Higashi Honganji
Shinshū Ōtani-ha, 1996, pp. 66-67.

②Reformulation and Confirmation of the Vows

§29. “Then, Ananda, after he had proclaimed these most excellent vows, the monk Dharmakara pronounced on that occasion the following stanzas, inspired by the Buddha’s majesty:

VOWS TO RESCUE LIVING BEINGS

§29(1). “ ‘O Lord of Men, if I should obtain awakening, and still not fulfill vows as excellent as these, may I not become one of those best of beings, who command the ten powers and deserve incomparable offerings.

§29(2). “ ‘If I should not have a buddha-field like this one, with abundant celestial treasures for destitute living beings, to bring happiness to those who have fallen into misfortune, may I not become a king of Dharma, a jewel among human rulers.

§29(3). “ ‘If, when I have arrived at the seat of awakening, my name does not reach out swiftly and widely to numerous, endless buddha-fields in the ten directions, may I not become a World Protector, commanding the ten powers.

§29(4). “ ‘If I should delight in the enjoyment of sensual love, losing mindfulness, awareness, and right conduct, then, even as I reach awakening, incomparably peaceful, may I not become a Teacher of the World, commanding the ten powers.

IN PRAISE OF THE BUDDHA

§29(5). “ ‘The World Protector is incomparable and infinite, his radiance reaching far and wide.

With his light he has pervaded all buddha-fields in all regions of the universe.

He has quieted passion, after quieting hatred and delusion.

He has stilled the fires in the realms of hell.

§29(6). “ ‘When his luminous wide eye appears, driving away the darkness that surrounds all human beings— a light guiding them away from unfavorable circumstances— he leads them to celestial paths that shine with endless light.

§29(7). “The light of the sun and of the moon
no longer burn in the sky, nor does the fiery splendor
of the host of radiant gods.

The Lord’s aura eclipses, surpasses, all these lights;
for in his former lives, he practiced the purest conduct.

§29(8). “‘He is the best of men, a treasure house for those in misery, in all regions in the
universe there is no one like him.

He has completed all of hundreds of thousands of acts of
merit.

Before the assemblies of bodhisattvas he roars
the lion’s roar of a buddha.

§29(9). “‘By honoring in his previous lives conquerors of the
past, who had attained awakening relying only on
themselves,

and by practicing immeasurable millions
of ascetic vows and practices,
the best of beings sought to fulfill the power of the vows,
the most excellent store of liberating knowledge.

§29(10). “‘Blessed One, may I become like the one
who perceives through knowledge free of impediments,
the Lord who knows the three aspects of conditioned
things—

may I be equally deserving of incomparable offerings;
may I become a superior sage, a leader of men among
all men.

ACT OF TRUTH

§29(11). “‘Lord, if I am to obtain awakening,
and these vows are to succeed,
let this world system of thousands of worlds tremble,
let the host of gods rain down flowers from heaven.’”

§29(12). “The earth shook, flowers rained down from heaven, hundreds of instruments
resounded in the sky,
sweet-smelling sandalwood powder fell from the heavens,
and a voice was heard saying: ‘You will become
a buddha in this world.’”

From Luis Gomez (tr.), *The Land of Bliss*, University of Hawai‘i Press and Higashi Honganji
Shinshū Ōtani-ha, 1996, pp. 76-78.