

Bodhisattva Attitude Booklet

By [Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche](#) (Last Updated Apr 3, 2012)

Publisher's Note This booklet was published in collaboration with Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, in honor of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's 2011 visit. It was excerpted from a longer version, which was [published in March 2012 and is now available](#). Please order on line if you would like a copy.

We do still have copies of the short version so please contact info@LamaYeshe.com if you would like one (or more).

Bodhisattvas totally dedicate their lives day and night to be used by other sentient beings for their happiness. This is what the bodhisattva looks for and wishes for all the time. Our motivation should be the same.
Lama Zopa Rinpoche

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Bodhisattva Attitude: Introduction This teaching on the *Bodhisattva Attitude* is extracted from a forthcoming book of the same title from Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, which will comprise several motivations taught by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. These motivations are called “bodhicitta motivations for life” and are intended to be used first thing every morning to generate the mind of bodhicitta and dedicate the life to numberless sentient beings. Although the first two bodhicitta motivations—which are not included here—are the foundation for the motivation in this booklet, still there is much to be gained by reading and contemplating this motivation on its own.

The *Bodhisattva Attitude* is taken from the sutra teachings of the Buddha and is based on verses by the great bodhisattva Shantideva in his *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*.¹ However, since the verses are translated from a prayer at the end of the great lama Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen's *Chöd* practice, there are variations in some of the lines.² Rinpoche has also added a concluding verse from the dedication prayer at the end of Shantideva's *Guide*.³

The verses are meant to be recited each morning to remind us of how we are going to dedicate our lives to others. We all understand the importance of motivation and attitude and how they affect the quality of our work and the result that can be achieved. Rinpoche particularly emphasizes the need for us to have a very clear direction and purpose for life. The real meaning of our lives is to bring both temporary and ultimate happiness to all sentient beings and to do this we need to achieve enlightenment. Enlightenment depends on first generating bodhicitta and training our minds in the bodhisattva attitude enables us to do that. As Rinpoche says here:

If what you want is to liberate sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and enlighten them, you need to achieve enlightenment. If you want to achieve enlightenment, you need to practice bodhicitta. The bodhisattvas' attitude is always day and night to totally dedicate their lives to be used by other sentient beings for their happiness. This is what they are seeking and wishing for all the time. You have to know that. If you feel like that, there is the opportunity to gradually become closer and closer to bodhicitta and have the realization. If you are able to change your mind into an attitude wishing to be USED by others for their happiness, this is EXACTLY what the bodhisattva's attitude is.

These verses then, are an expression of the bodhisattva's attitude—at once extensive, courageous and almost inconceivable in its dedication and aspiration to benefit others. It is the spirit of uncompromising dedication to the welfare of others and, of course, it is the attitude exemplified by Rinpoche himself. It is also the attitude Rinpoche seeks to cultivate in his students, centers and those around him. As Rinpoche says:

I often hear people say, "Oh, these people are just *using* me!" Even sometimes at meetings in our centers I hear this. That is because they are not practicing bodhicitta. One time I wrote a letter to a center saying, "Bodhisattvas *want* to be used by sentient beings." That is what the bodhisattvas' attitude is. They actually accept it. The worldly mind thinks that being used by others is *bad*, it is the worst thing, but bodhisattvas are *most happy* to accept this. If you want to achieve enlightenment, you have to practice bodhicitta and this is EXACTLY what the bodhisattvas' attitude is. Their happiest practice is to be used by sentient beings. It is what they are always looking for.

Clearly, the bodhisattva attitude is a total and radical change from our normal way of following the ego, self-cherishing and negative emotional thoughts, and cultivating it requires determined effort. In some ways these verses are like the famous prayer attributed to St. Francis⁴ and, like that prayer, they are meant to be not simply recited, but also contemplated and lived. Rinpoche's advice is to reflect on the meaning of the verses in the morning and then try to live in that throughout the day, using the verses as a guide for how to think and behave differently.

The result of this way of practicing bodhicitta is deep happiness, peace, joy and satisfaction. How can this be so? Well, all of us seek happiness, yet we mostly fail to grasp the simple fact that happiness comes from cherishing others, rather than perpetuating an ignorant and self-centred over-concern with ourselves. Rinpoche puts it quite simply:

In the West, millions of people suffer from depression, but if you dedicate your life in the morning to numberless sentient beings, there is unbelievable joy and happiness the whole day. Cherishing the I opens the door to all suffering, while cherishing others opens the door to all happiness. When you live your life every day for others, the door to depression, relationship problems and all these things is closed and instead there is incredible joy and excitement.

With this bodhisattva attitude you become wish-fulfilling for others. All sentient beings have been wish-fulfilling and kind to you since beginningless rebirths and now you become wish-fulfilling for them. From this, all your wishes for happiness are fulfilled, even your wish to achieve liberation and enlightenment and to benefit others by causing them happiness this life, future lives, liberation and enlightenment. You become the cause of all this for others. This is how to overcome all problems.

The verses are most effective when read first thing in the morning on the basis of any of the other "bodhicitta motivations for life." In general, the stronger we can feel how kind and precious other sentient beings are, the more natural it will be to cherish them and want to serve them—which is what the bodhisattva attitude is all about. However, the verses can also be read any time of the day and can be used alone as a source of inspiration.

There are elaborate and abbreviated ways of reciting the *Bodhisattva Attitude*. The longer version consists of reciting all the verses, while the shorter way is just to recite the last three or two verses that cover everything. It all depends on time.

Included in this booklet are the verses; a commentary to them based on four separate teachings given by Rinpoche; and a meditation that combines the verses with the meditations explained by Rinpoche in the commentary.

The material used for this booklet was originally taught in two sessions at the “Lamp of the Path” teachings, Black Mountain, North Carolina, September 2009. It was again taught as a motivation for the Chinese Lunar New Year at Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, February 2010, and at the Most Secret Hayagriva Retreat, Tushita, Dharamsala, March 2010. Finally, it was taught at Shedrup Ling Center, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, October 2010. This book combines all four teachings.⁵

The *Bodhisattva Attitude* verses are Rinpoche’s translation and have been extracted from the teachings. They are intended to convey the spirit of Rinpoche’s commentary rather than be a precise translation of the original Tibetan or Sanskrit. Transcribing and editing is my own with the exception of the Singapore transcript where no recording was available. All mistakes are definitely mine.

Many people were kind and supportive to me while doing this work. My thanks to Tan Hup Cheng and Amitabha Buddhist Center Singapore students for publishing this booklet; to Lim Cheng Cheng, Ng Swee Kim and Kennedy Koh. Many thanks also to Dr Nick Ribush and LYWA for years preserving and publishing Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe’s teachings. Thank you to Ven Kunsang for his recordings and to Ven Joan Nicell for her simultaneous transcribing of Rinpoche’s teaching. Thank you also to Dr Chiu Nan Lai and family, Rowena Mayer, Mindrol, and Vens. Dekyong, Yangchen, and Jangchub.

I pray from my heart that making this book available can in some way repay the incomparable kindness of our precious guru Lama Zopa Rinpoche in teaching them, support his work and contribute to his most precious long life. I also hope that people will find something useful in these pages.

Sarah Thresher,
Land of Medicine Buddha, USA,
January 2011

Notes

¹ *Guide*, Ch. 3, vv. 11-21. [\[Return to text\]](#)

² For example, v.20. [\[Return to text\]](#)

³ *Guide*, Ch.10, v.55. [\[Return to text\]](#)

⁴ Rinpoche’s version of the *Prayer of St. Francis* is:

Lord [Buddha], make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is discord, unity.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is error, truth.

Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is sadness, joy.
Where there is darkness, light.

O divine master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled [happiness for the ego] as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying [having practiced] that we are born to eternal life [from happiness to happiness up to full enlightenment].
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⁵ This commentary is drawn from four teachings by Rinpoche: Day 2a (afternoon) and 2b (evening) September 10, 2009, Lamp of the Path, Black Mountain, USA; March 14, 2010, Most Secret Hayagriva Retreat, Tushita, Dharamsala; Chinese New Year, February 14, 2010, Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore; October 21, 2010, Shedrup Ling, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. [\[Return to text\]](#)