
Exhortation to Bring Forth The Bodhi Resolve

BY ANCIENT HANGCHOW'S BRAHMA HEAVEN TEMPLE SHRAMANA SHIH HSIEN

-translated by Bhikshus Heng Sure & Heng Ch'au
-reviewed by Bhikshuni Heng Tao
-edited by Bhikshuni Heng Bin

This unfilial common Sanghan named Shih Hsien, weeping blood and bowing his head to the ground, importunes this great assembly and the present age's men and women of pure faith: Please be compassionate and listen to my report.

We have heard that of the fundamentals for entering the way, the foremost is to bring forth the resolve. Cultivation is an urgent responsibility and making vows come first. In making vows then there are living beings to save. In bringing forth the resolve, then there is the Buddha Way to accomplish. If one doesn't bring forth a vast, great resolve and establish solid vows, although one passes through innumerable kalpas, one will stay on the turning wheel. Although there is cultivation, most of it is bitter toil in vain.

Therefore, the AVATAMSAKA SUTRA says, "If one loses the Bodhi resolve while cultivating wholesome Dharmas, it is called the deeds of demons." Forgetting the Bodhi-mind is this way, how much the more so, if it is not expressed at all. So we know that if one wishes to study the Thus Come One's Vehicle, one must first fully bring forth Bodhisattva vows. One may not be tardy in this matter. Resolves and vows are different, their marks numerous. If not pointed out, how can one approach them? Today I will explain them for the assembly in brief. There are eight types of resolves: Deviant and Proper; True and False; Great and Small; Partial and Complete. What is meant by Deviant and Proper; True and False; Great and Small; Partial and Complete?

DEVIANT: If cultivators practice but do not focus their own minds and only know how to deal with externals; if they seek benefit or gain, or fame or reputation; if they are greedy for bliss and pleasure in this world or reward in the next--these resolves express the deviant Bodhi-mind.

PROPER: When cultivators do not seek fame, do not have greed for bliss, pleasure or reward, but seek only to resolve the matter of birth and death, only to realize Bodhi--these resolves express the Proper Bodhi-mind.

TRUE: In moment after moment seeking the Buddha's path above; in thought after thought being mindful of living beings below; hearing that the road to Buddhahood is long and far and yet not retreating in fear; contemplating that beings are hard to transform, yet not wearying of this work; as if climbing a ten thousand foot mountain with determination to gain the peak; as if ascending a nine-story stupa with a will to advance to the top--these resolves express the True Bodhi-mind.

FALSE: To have offenses and not repent; to hold on to faults without changing them; to be turbid inside but make a show of purity; to be diligent at the start but slack at the end; to have good intentions but mix them with a quest for name and gain; to practice wholesome dharmas but defile them with bad karma--these resolves express the false Bodhi-mind.

GREAT: "When the realm of beings reaches an end, only then do my vows end; When the Bodhi-way is accomplished, only then are my vows accomplished." These resolves express the Great Bodhi-mind.

SMALL: Observing the three realms as a prison, treating birth and death as an enemy; wishing to save only oneself, and having no thought to save others--these resolves express the small Bodhi-mind.

PARTIAL: If one sees living beings as existing external to the mind; if one wishes to save others and accomplish Buddhahood but does not forget one's own accumulation of merit; if one does not purge (worldly) knowledge and views--these resolves express the partial Bodhi-mind.

COMPLETE: Knowing that the self-nature is just living beings, thus vowing to save them all; knowing the self-nature is the Buddha-way and vowing to accomplish it; not seeing a single dharma existing apart from the mind; using a mind like empty space and making vows like empty space, cultivating practices like empty space; realizing a fruition like empty space, and yet without having a mark of emptiness which can be obtained--these resolves express the Complete Bodhi--mind.

Knowing these eight different kinds of resolves, I know to investigate and contemplate them. Knowing to investigate and contemplate them, I know which to keep and which to discard. Knowing which to keep and which to discard, I can then bring forth the resolve.

What does it mean to "investigate and contemplate?" Amid these eight resolves, is the resolve I have brought forth deviant or proper, true or false, great or small, partial or complete? What does it mean "to keep or discard?" Discard the deviant, the false, discard the small, and the partial. Keep the proper, keep the true, keep the great, and the complete.

Only making the resolve like this can be called truly and properly bring forth the resolve.

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