

# Vows and Commitments etc.

(to support your Six Times Book)



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## The Top Ten Vows

These are the vows to use in the book although they are the top ten out of 84,000 !! Many people will also include the 12 Refuge commitments and some the 86 Bodhisattva vows but they will still look at six per day and then the following six the next day.

### **1) Did you protect life today?**

In some form. Did you move a pencil off the stairway that someone might have slipped on? You're not going to get a chance to throw someone out of the way of a speeding taxi or invent the Salk vaccine every day. Did you give aspirin to someone at work? Did you make tea for someone with a sniffle? This is protecting life. The karmic result of checking this one every day is that your body will get light, strong, healthy—unbelievable. Just little things! The Book is made for little things. The Book is made for moving a pencil off the stairway where you live. So that's protecting life.

## **2)Honor other people's property.**

Did you make noise at Leon's today going up the stairs? Did you take the last of the toilet paper from the bathroom and not make sure that the next person had some? Stuff like that—small. Heaven is built on small things. You'll find out that you don't have to be Mother Teresa. It's the state of your mind. Your state of mind has to be concerned about details. It's the small things that make you a perfect spiritual person. Seriously.

## **3)Sexual Purity.**

Are you faithful in your relationships with other people? If you are engaging in sex, are you doing it at a nice, normal, healthy level and not getting obsessed about it or thinking about it all day, or doing it in improper places at improper times, and with improper people? A healthy sexual, normal, relationship—fine. Adultery, all sorts of weird things, not fine, okay? Does it bother your peace of mind? See what I mean? That's the question. And maintain the level of sexual purity that you've committed to. For a married person it would be, did you check out someone's wife today? Just for a second, did you do that? This person is already committed to another. Are you honoring that relationship by not bothering that person's spouse, even in your mind?

Sex is similar to eating. There is overeating, there is eating bad food, there is eating what you need, there is eating what's good for you; and finally in Buddhism there is a stage where you don't need to eat any more, and sex is exactly the same. It's just a progression of a spectrum. The goal is to get to a point where you don't need it for the human body. It is a psychological thing that you can supply through much more amazing means, okay?

Generally work towards that. That's all. Don't get guilty, don't feel bad, don't feel dirty. Right now it's a normal healthy thing. Do it nicely, don't let it obsess your life. Do it nicely, beautifully, and in a sensitive way. Don't get close to adultery and hurting other people's relationships. That's the main thing right now. Honor your own and other people's commitments and don't ever cross that line.

## **4)Speak gently to other people.**

Use gentle speech when you speak to other people. Gentle, thoughtful; no curse words unless they're your best friends. We had names for our roommates in college (that I can't tell you) and they were meant in a nice, beautiful way. Then there are ways of talking to people in sweet ways when you're not feeling sweet at all. Like when you say "have a nice day," but what you really mean is "go to hell." It is judged by your intent. Speak gently for the context.

## **5)Try to be totally truthful all day long.**

So, are you required to tell someone how bad their dress looks who asks you for your opinion? Change the subject, okay? Drop your coffee cup. If it would hurt the person in some terrible way, make them very angry, if it's very destructive, you can just sort of slide out of it.

## **5) Do you speak in ways that you try to bring people together?**

Do you, in your everyday conversations, try to bring people close together? Once in a while you meet a person who's really good at this. Salim Lee, he'll run up to you and say, "I got a person for you! I've got someone who you've got to meet! You'll love this person!" He introduces you and you're best friends forever. Do you see what I mean? Because our normal human tendency is, "Did you hear what he said about you? Oh! You don't wanna know." So it's doing the opposite. It is concentrating on doing the opposite, okay? Bringing people together with your words.

**6) Try to speak meaningfully.**

Whenever you open your mouth, try to say something that has some kind of relevance to the person's life. Like, don't sit there and blab about scandals or stuff that's never going to be resolved. Stuff that doesn't matter, stuff that doesn't help anybody. Don't talk about who's having an affair with who or just waste talk, okay? When you open your mouth say something meaningful.

**8) When you see someone else get something nice, be happy.**

What's the opposite of that? It's like jealousy or unhappiness when somebody gets something nice. When something good happens to somebody else, you rush up and say, "I'm so happy you got that promotion! I can't believe it! You really deserve it." Something like that—consciously trying to take joy in other people's successes. Our human tendency is to be jealous. We say, "We are bodhisattvas, we are Mahayana Buddhists. We are committed to the goal of bringing every happiness to every sentient being." So don't think, "I don't see why the hell they got the promotion."

**9) Try to feel for other people who have a misfortune.**

Like when someone has a misfortune, you take the time and the effort to try and empathize with them. You try to go to them and say "I'm sorry that happened to you." The normal human tendency is to do the opposite. "Oh, O.J. Simpson, he murdered somebody, his life is ruined? Tell me more!" There's this human tendency to be fascinated by other people's problems, especially famous people's problems. "John Kennedy died? Oh, how? Did the fuselage break up or not?" You know what I mean? This is the big thing in the newspapers, and people are dying to know about it. You have to think the opposite. When you hear about something like that, you're like, "Oh, I'm sorry for his family, and I feel really bad about it and I wish that wouldn't happen to anyone." It's the opposite of being fascinated by other people's problems. You truly try to put yourself in their place and try to help them out with their problems. It's extensive empathy or compassion for other people's problems rather than this secret little joy. Okay?

If you work in a corporation, and I worked in a corporation for 16 years, the opposite goes on very frequently. Somebody makes a \$100,000 error on a shipment, and you're not going to get a raise this year because of it, and you're still fascinated. You're like "tell me, how did he do it?" It's a weird human tendency. You know? You're not upset by it, you are fascinated by it. "Tell me, how did he screw up, how did it get stolen? They went to the wrong address?" You know it's gonna ruin your raise too, but you don't care. You're just fascinated.

**10) Maintain a Buddhist World View.**

Understand all good things come from helping other people, and all bad things come from watching out for your own interest only. You can watch out for your own interests, but equally watch out for other people's interests. That's healthy. Okay? At the expense of others, you serve yourself. That's a wrong Buddhist view. Every good thing in the world - money, financial security, friends, relationships, food, Michael and Zoe's milk shakes, everything comes from serving other people. T

That's the Buddhist belief. You cannot breathe one breath of air unless you helped someone in the past to live. The reason you have the honor of breathing for the rest of today is that each breath comes from having done something for someone else, like making food. That's the Buddhist World View. You strive to keep it.

## **I. THE REFUGE COMMITMENTS**

1. Not seeking refuge in worldly objects and deities once you have taken refuge in the Buddha
2. Not harming any living being once you have taken refuge in the Dharma
3. Not associating closely with people who do not believe in the Path once you have taken refuge in the Sangha
4. Considering any representation of the Buddha, regardless of the quality of its artistry or material, as though it were the Buddha himself, once you have taken refuge in the Buddha
5. Considering any written material at all, from a single letter on up, as though it were the Dharma itself, once you have taken refuge in the Dharma
6. Considering even a single scrap of the saffron robe as though it were the Sangha itself, once you have taken refuge in the Sangha
7. Going for refuge over and over again, by calling to mind the good qualities of the refuge objects
8. In remembrance of their kindness, offering the first part of any food or drink to the refuge objects
9. Encouraging others to take refuge
10. Taking refuge three times each day, and three times each night, by bringing to mind the benefits of doing so
11. Putting all your trust in the objects of refuge, during any activity you may undertake at all
12. Not giving up the Three Jewels, even if it should cost you your life, and in every situation from that on down to doing so in jest

## **II. THE VOWS OF FREEDOM**

Refrain from:

1. Killing
2. Stealing
3. Sexual misconduct
4. Lying
5. Divisive talk
6. Harsh words
7. Useless talk
8. Craving
9. Ill-will
10. Wrong views

## **III. THE VOWS OF THE BODHISATTVA**

### **A. ROOT DOWNFALLS**

1. Praising yourself, out of attachment to gain or honor
2. Criticizing others, out of attachment to gain or honor
3. Failing to give Dharma, due to feelings of possessiveness
4. Failing to give material assistance, due to feelings of possessiveness
5. Failing to accept someone's apology
6. Striking another
7. Giving up the greater way
8. Teaching false Dharma
9. Stealing what belongs to the Buddha Jewel
10. Stealing what belongs to the Dharma Jewel
11. Stealing what belongs to the Sangha Jewel

12. Giving up the highest Dharma by discounting the scriptural collections of the way of the listeners
13. Giving up the highest Dharma by discounting the scriptural collections of the way of the self-made Buddhas
14. Giving up the highest Dharma by discounting the scriptural collections of the greater way
15. Taking away the golden robes, beating, or incarcerating an ordained person
16. Removing someone from the status of an ordained person
17. Committing the immediate misdeed of killing your father
18. Committing the immediate misdeed of killing your mother
19. Committing the immediate misdeed of killing an enemy destroyer
20. Committing the immediate misdeed of creating a schism in the Sangha
21. Committing the immediate misdeed of drawing blood from a Buddha with evil intent
22. Holding wrong views
23. Destroying towns
24. Destroying cities
25. Destroying whole areas
26. Destroying entire countries
27. Teaching emptiness to a person who is not yet mentally prepared
28. Causing a person to turn back from total enlightenment
29. Causing a person to give up the morality of freedom
30. Holding that a person cannot eliminate desire and the rest by following the way of the learner
31. Criticizing someone else due to one's desire for the adulation of others
32. Professing the complete opposite by saying you have seen emptiness directly when you have not
33. Accepting what belongs to the Jewels, to the Sangha, or to an individual monk when someone presents it to you
34. Rejecting the practice of quietude, and giving the possessions of meditators to those whose practice is recitation
35. Discarding the wish for enlightenment

## **B. SECONDARY OFFENSES**

1. Failing to make offerings to the Jewels through the three doors of expression
2. Allowing thoughts of desire to go on
3. Failing to pay respect to those who have taken the precepts of the bodhisattva before you
4. Failing to answer questions, out of anger or laziness
5. Failing to accept an invitation, out of pride, or a wish to hurt someone, anger, or laziness
6. Failing to accept gold or silver or any other kind of material wealth that a sponsor has tried to offer to you, out of a desire to hurt them, or out of anger or laziness
7. Failing to give the Dharma to those who wish it, out of a desire to hurt them, or out of anger or envy or laziness
8. Rejecting persons with sullied morality, out of feelings of wanting to hurt them, or out of anger or laziness
9. Failing to follow the rules of the teachings on discipline which lead other persons to develop faith
10. Performing deeds which are only of lesser benefit for all living beings
11. Failing to break a rule out of compassion [There are extraordinary requirements for those who should undertake these kinds of actions, and these must be studied seriously from a qualified Lama before one attempts them]
12. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through pretending

13. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through flattering
14. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through hinting
15. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through forcing
16. Taking up wrong livelihood of trying to obtain things through baiting
17. Forgetting yourself and acting wild, or getting others to act wild, and so on
18. Thinking that you only have to travel through the circle of suffering life
19. Failing to put a stop to rumors about yourself
20. Failing to correct someone when it must be done in a negative way
21. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to scolding with = scolding
22. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to anger with anger
23. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to being beaten by beating
24. Losing the four points of the practice of virtue by responding to being criticized by criticizing
25. Simply ignoring those who are angry at you, by failing to explain yourself to them in an appropriate manner out of a desire to hurt them, or pride, or laziness
26. Refusing to forgive another person when they apologize for doing something wrong to you, out of a desire to hurt them, thoughts of malice, or simply because you don't feel like it
27. Allowing thoughts of anger to go on
28. Collecting a group of disciples, out of a desire to have others pay honor to you, serve you, or make material offerings to you
29. Failing to dispel your laziness and the like
30. Spending time with busy talk because you enjoy it
31. Failing to seek the meaning of meditative concentration, out of a desire to hurt someone, or laziness
32. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of the pair of restless desire and missing something or someone
33. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of feelings of malice about someone
34. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of the pair of drowsiness and mental dullness
35. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of attraction to objects of the senses
36. Failing to purge yourself of the meditation obstacle of unresolved doubts
37. Considering the pleasant sensation of meditation to be an important personal attainment
38. Rejecting the way of the listeners
39. Making efforts in the scriptural collection of the listeners, when you have an opportunity to exert yourself in the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas
40. Making efforts in non Buddhist texts where no efforts should be made
41. Being attracted to non-Buddhist texts, even in a case where one must make efforts
42. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "This part is not as good"
43. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "The composition at this point is inferior"
44. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "The author of this part was not the best"
45. Rejecting the greater way by discounting any part of the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas by saying, "This part won't contribute to the welfare of living beings"

46. Praising oneself out of pride or anger
47. Criticizing others out of pride or anger
48. Not going to hear the Dharma out of pride or laziness
49. Focusing on the vessel and the letters, by focusing on the teacher and not the teaching
50. Failing to assist someone in need who is just undertaking a particular task, out of anger or laziness
51. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to get somewhere, out of anger or laziness
52. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to learn a language, out of anger or laziness
53. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to learn a skill (as long as it is not something harmful), out of anger or laziness
54. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to protect their belongings, out of anger or laziness
55. Failing to assist someone in need who is trying to fix a split between people, out of anger or laziness
56. Failing to assist someone in need who is planning a virtuous event of some kind, out of anger or laziness
57. Failing to assist someone in need who is undertaking some more general virtue, out of anger or laziness
58. Failing to serve the sick, out of anger or laziness
59. Failing to make some attempt to remove the suffering of those who are blind, deaf, handicapped, weary from travelling, tormented by any of the five mental obstacles, haunted by thoughts such as malice toward someone, or suffering from defeat at the hands of someone else
60. Failing to give good reasons to those who are acting in a dangerous way, out of anger or laziness
61. Failing to repay someone who has helped you, by helping them back, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness
62. Failing to dispel another person's grief, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness
63. Failing to give money or other material things to someone who wants them, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness
64. Failing to fill the needs of your circle of disciples, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness
65. Failing to get along with someone, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness
66. Failing to praise someone's good qualities, out of a desire to hurt someone or out of laziness
67. Failing to cut someone off when the time has come to do so, out of mental afflictions or laziness
68. Failing to use your supernormal powers to threaten someone or such when needed

### **C. SECONDARY OFFENSES AGAINST THE PRECEPTS OF THE PRAYER FOR THE WISH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT**

1. Failing to support those whom it would be proper to
2. support, with Dharma
3. Failing to support those whom it would be proper to support, with material things
4. Failing to let go of your anger about something some one else had done to hurt you
5. Discriminating between people, in the sense of liking some and disliking others
6. Failing to take yourself to a holy Lama
7. Giving up the practice of learning

8. Giving up the practice of contemplating upon what you have learned
9. Failing to have helping others in mind as you partake of food or clothing or any other thing that you make use of
10. Engaging in any virtuous activity without having in mind the wish to reach enlightenment for the sake of all living beings

#### **D. THE BLACK AND WHITE DEEDS**

1. The black deed of intentionally deceiving your Lama, or those to whom we make offerings, or any such person, by lying to them
2. The white deed of never intentionally speaking a lie, even if only in jest, to any single living being there is
3. The black deed of causing another person to regret some virtuous thing they have done
4. The white deed of bringing a person that you are cultivating to strive for total enlightenment, rather than bringing them to the path of the lower way
5. The black deed of saying something unpleasant to a bodhisattva out of anger
6. The white deed of trying to conceive of every sentient being as the Teacher himself, and to see all beings and things as totally pure
7. The black deed of acting in a devious way with any living being, without any sense of personal responsibility for their enlightenment
8. The white deed of maintaining an attitude of total honesty toward every being, free of any kind of deception

#### **IV. THE FIVE VOWS OF A LIFETIME LAYPERSON**

1. Not killing a human or a human fetus
2. Not stealing anything of value
3. Not lying about your spiritual realizations
4. Not committing adultery
5. Not taking alcohol or intoxicants