

The actual stages in training for bodhicitta

Training in seven-fold cause and effect method (to see all beings as attractive, like own children)

1a **Immeasurable equanimity** (shared with Hinayana) overcoming hostility, attraction, and indifference and preparing the ground for the following meditations. To have no concern for welfare of one person makes it impossible to gain bodhicitta.

1b **Realising every sentient being has been your mother** Difficult to realise, essential for subsequent realisations to arise.* Reason is based on beginninglessness of mind: we have had countless lives and therefore countless mothers. And on scripture, 'The Blessed One declared, 'When looking into the distant past it is difficult for me to see that place where you have not taken birth, lived, and died. When looking into the distant past, it is difficult for me to see that person who has not been your father, mother, brother, sister, spiritual master, teacher.' Nagarjuna: 'If we tried to count our maternal lineage with pellets of soil the size of juniper berries, the entire earth would not suffice.'

2 **Remembering love and kindness of all sentient beings**, for example, own mother's kindness.

3 **Wishing to repay their kindness**, just as we would do anything to help our present mother, we must cultivate the desire to repay the kindness of all sentient beings, even our enemies.

4 **Heart-warming love for all beings**, like a parent's love for child, automatically arises from the first three steps. Every sentient being appears to the mind in a pleasing manner.

5 **Immeasurable (love and) compassion to free all beings from suffering** Necessarily preceded by heart-warming love, but there is no fixed order for appearance of immeasurable love or compassion.

6 **Selfless intention to liberate all sentient beings**: "I will rescue them by myself alone." This can be the entity of either immeasurable love or immeasurable compassion (antidote to self-cherishing).

7 **Determination to attain enlightenment to liberate all beings**: bodhicitta.

**Pabongka Rinpoche*: "When you meditate on this topic, begin by reflecting how your mother in this life has also been your mother many times in past lives. After that, reflect in the same way with regard to your father and other family members. Then do the same with a neutral person. When you have developed an experiential awareness towards each of these examples, focus your attention on an enemy: that person too has been your mother. Finally, train by focusing on all sentient beings."

- Heart-warming love is the direct cause of both immeasurable love and immeasurable compassion.
- Great compassion, wanting to protect sentient beings from suffering by oneself, is the special Mahayana compassion, the 6th step.
- Heart-warming love is not the love wanting others to be happy. It is where all sentient beings appear in a pleasing manner, as our mother. It can be followed either by immeasurable love or immeasurable compassion.
- If you want bodhicitta you have to want its cause: love and compassion.
- If you think bodhicitta is nothing special its power will vanish.

Training in equalising and exchanging self with others (*self* refers to the thought that cherishes self before others; *exchange* is the attitude of putting others before self). This begins with the three steps up to wishing to repay the kindness of mother sentient beings, then:

1 Seeing others as equal to oneself to correct the imbalance of cherishing self more than others. Meditate on equanimity up to heart-warming love as in the 7 steps, then contemplate: "No one wants even the slightest suffering." Equanimity here is stronger than in the seven steps because there you still have mental bias liking some and feeling cool towards others. These aren't gross attachment and aversion, but they need to be overcome by this special equanimity. Reflect on these points:

- (i) All sentient beings have helped us immeasurably, not only as mother but in many other ways.
- (ii) Their help has been much greater than the harm they may have caused us.
- (iii) As we will soon die, wanting to harm others is senseless, like people fighting on death row.
- (iv) All sentient beings equally want happiness and not suffering (the main point).
- (v) When ten beggars equally hungry request food, it is not right to discriminate.
- (vi) When ten patients equally sick request medicine it is not right to be biased in giving treatment.
- (vii) Attachment and aversion incorrectly see others as good or bad from their own side.
- (viii) Attachment and aversion see friends and enemies as unchanging. This is not true; these

appearances are dependent-arising and not friends and enemies from their own side.

(ix) Things are relative and do not exist from their own side.

[*The seven steps* cultivate love, compassion, and special intention sequentially; *Equalising and exchanging* cultivates them simultaneously]

2 Contemplating the many faults of self-cherishing “Drive all blame onto one”: self-grasping and self-cherishing, or self-importance. Compared to the seven steps, this is taking the bull by the horns. It is difficult, but a stronger way to bodhicitta.

- (i) Self-cherishing is ultimately responsible for all unfavourable experiences.
- (ii) Every sickness, fear, suffering of loss, punishment comes from self-cherishing creating non-virtue due to inability to give up attachment to worldly concerns of food, clothing, reputation.
- (iii) It causes inability to tolerate and deal skilfully with unfavourable circumstances; inflexibility.
- (iv) It causes all problems between persons in high positions, disputes between countries, domestic disharmony; and conflict between sangha in a monastery.
- (v) Being victims of thieves and even mice eating food are all due to the self-cherishing thought.
- (vi) Like a butcher, it destroys the life force of our ability to achieve higher realms and liberation. It scorns morality and the three jewels.
- (vii) Like a thief, carrying the tools of the three poisons it steals the crop of our virtue.
- (viii) Like a farmer, it grows crops of samsara by planting seeds of non-virtue in field of ignorance.
- (ix) Like a greedy person, it hopes to profit by entering a battle with arrows, spears, and swords.
- (x) Like a wicked, shameless person, to avoid personal loss blames guru, abbot, father, and mother.
- (xi) Like a naked, lazy, and empty-handed person, since beginningless time, has never achieved the slightest virtue.
- (xii) It is like a person hoping to gain something in places where nothing can be gained and who fears harm in places where there is nothing to fear.
- (xiii) It is jealous of those who are superior, competitive towards those who are equal, and contemptuous towards those who are inferior.
- (xiv) It becomes arrogant when praised and angry when denounced.
- (xv) It brings every bad thing in the world and is the source of all non-virtuous deeds.
- (xvi) It is a ruinous, owl-headed fiend who has caused us to suffer since beginningless time.

3 Contemplating the advantages of selflessly cherishing others. This cannot be practised without heart-warming love. For others, it gives peace, happiness, and relief from troubles; for self it gives higher rebirth, beautiful environment, attractive body, wealth, health, a perfect human rebirth, bodhicitta, liberation, and enlightenment. All sentient beings’ minds have the seed of compassion wishing to help others, we must nurture our own seed. Upon attaining great compassion, the self-cherishing thought (a non-afflictive obscuration) is abandoned.

4 Actual thinking that exchanges thoughts of self for thoughts of others: Others are limitless and we are only one; we must transfer self-cherishing onto others and ignoring others onto self with five definite decisions:

- (i) To abandon self-sensitivity, self-consciousness, and self-importance and replace them with self-confidence: “I shall lead all beings to happiness and freedom from suffering.”
- (ii) The self-cherishing thought is the *real* enemy.
- (iii) Cherishing others is best.
- (iv) I must practise exchanging self and others.
- (v) I must do so single-pointedly.

5 Based upon this, how to meditate on giving and taking (love, compassion, and special thought)

- (i) Taking the suffering of others upon yourself with compassion
- (ii) Giving your happiness – body, wealth, and virtues of 3 times – to others with immeasurable love.

Conclude the equalising and exchanging practice with meditation on emptiness and then the special intention and bodhicitta are achieved in dependence on this. Deeply meditate on the source, self-grasping ignorance, and then meditate on emptiness by seeing that the self-grasping ignorance can be abandoned and this intellectual realisation of emptiness makes it clear that Buddhahood is attainable. This increases the intensity of your practice and this leads to bodhicitta striving for Buddhahood. Most aspirants meditate on emptiness after generating immeasurable compassion and then go on to develop the special intention and bodhicitta

Development of the afflictions

- 1 **Wrong appearance of true existence:** the mere I and a truly existing I appear as mixed. The illusion of true existence is neither mind nor form and is an obscuration to omniscience; true existence is a non-existent and is an object of refutation
- 2 **Grasping at wrong appearance as true** leads to self-grasping ignorance, an object of abandonment by hearers and solitary realisers. Self-importance, not an affliction, is cultivated by hearers and solitary realisers (I want nirvana). In ordinary beings, self-importance grasps false I. In arhats, self-importance grasps mere I as most important.
- 3 **Inappropriate attention** (unrealistic thinking) induces afflictions by exaggerating or super-imposing good or bad qualities.
- 4 **Afflictions** by clinging to exaggerated good or bad qualities, attachment and aversion arise.
- 5 **Karmic actions** follow.

Self-grasping refers to the mere-I and apprehends it as a truly existing I as it appears.

Self-cherishing holds on to the I apprehended by self-grasping as most important and wants to protect it. It is a main mental consciousness, not an affliction.

Training in the eleven-round bodhicitta meditation

- 1 Developing immeasurable equanimity as in the seven steps.
- 2 Realising every sentient being has been your mother.
- 3 Remembering love and kindness of others when they have been your mother and also when not. If don't meditate on reasons why sentient beings are so kind, will be unable to realise love, compassion, and bodhicitta. You will have bodhicitta like the bark of sugarcane, not the pulp of actual bodhicitta.
- 4 Wishing to repay that kindness
- 5 Thinking of others as being equal to yourself: we equally want happiness and don't want suffering.
- 6 Contemplating the many faults of self-cherishing
- 7 Contemplating the advantages of selflessly cherishing others
- 8 Taking the suffering of others upon yourself with compassion
- 9 Giving happiness to others with immeasurable love. 8 & 9 are the main *practices* of exchanging self and others. As taking and giving do not directly benefit sentient beings, now think, 'I must actually *cause* sentient beings to gain the benefits and happiness I have visualised,' and generate:
- 10 Selfless intention to liberate all sentient beings from suffering
- 11 Realising only a Buddha can do this, wishing to attain Buddhahood to be able to liberate all beings

Bodhicitta has to be induced by the *aspiration intent on the welfare of others*. In the 7-fold cause and effect, the causal aspiration intent on the welfare of others is immeasurable compassion and love, and the exceptional resolve, which can be entity of either love or compassion. The first four steps are the basis for accomplishing this aspiration. In equalising and exchanging self and others, thinking of faults of self-cherishing and qualities of cherishing others are the basis for accomplishing the aspiration intent on the welfare of others. Here, this aspiration is the practice of taking and giving, and the exceptional resolve comes with that. In either case, having generated the aspiration intent on welfare of others, you then reflect that only a Buddha can really dispel the

suffering of sentient beings and give them happiness. Then you generate the *aspiration to attain enlightenment*, and the main mind accompanying that aspiration is bodhicitta. Both mind generations, the wishing mind and the engaging mind, are mind generation. But there is a difference in their power.

7-Point Mind Training for decreasing self-cherishing and increasing cherishing others is difficult for an unfit vessel

- 1 Preliminary practices: meditation on the 1st and 2nd scopes.
- 2 Training in the two bodhicittas (main practice).
- 3 Transforming problems into the path.
- 4 Daily practice for life: the Five Powers.
- 5 Criteria for success.
- 6 Eighteen commitments of mind training.
- 7 Twenty-two instructions on mind training.