

Generating Bodhichitta: Sevenfold Cause and Effect

Preparation: Start with a 5-minute breathing meditation. Focus the attention on the breath. Let all thoughts go, like clouds floating through the sky. If distractions arise, be aware of them without getting involved and without judgment, then gently bring the attention back to the breath.

Motivation: When the mind is calm and quiet and you feel relaxed and focused, create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own individual intellectual or emotional benefit, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop your mind to reach the state of enlightenment where you can most skillfully benefit all beings. (Spend as much time as you need to feel this motivation in your heart.)

Preliminary: Equanimity

Meditate on equanimity – that all beings, whether friend, enemy, or stranger are equal in wishing to be happy and to avoid suffering. If you like, you can visualize before you 3 specific individuals – a friend, a stranger, and an enemy (someone who annoys you or creates problems for you). Contemplate that the differences we perceive between these 3 beings are merely a product of our attitude, rather than something inherent residing in those beings themselves. Contemplate the infinite different types of relationship that you have had with each of these beings

Step 1: Recognizing All Sentient Beings as Having Been My Mother

Meditate for a short time on the continuity of your mind, going back through infinite lifetimes in the past, and forward into your next lives in the future. Think about those countless past lives. In each of those lives, just as in this life, you have had a mother who gave birth to you. As you have had countless previous lifetimes, you have had countless mothers. It isn't logical to think that the same being has always been your mother in all those lives, so instead, through infinite lives, you have had infinite different mothers. Thus, it is impossible to point to any sentient beings and be able to say that that person was never your mother. All sentient beings have been your mother at one time or another! Contemplate this deeply until you have a strong feeling in your heart that there isn't even one sentient being who hasn't been your mother in the past.

Step 2: Recognizing the Kindness of All Mother Sentient Beings

The depth of our mother's kindness is incomparable. We would not be alive if it were not for our mother having carried us in her womb for nine long months, having taken care of us as infants when we could not take care of the smallest thing for ourselves; we would not have so much of the good fortune that we have in our lives if not for our mother having cared for us when we were ill, having seen to all of our needs throughout our childhood, making sure that we were educated so that we could become decent human beings with the opportunities that we have in life. Also, all of our inner qualities, our good characteristics, have developed because of the kindness of our mother. These things are true not only of our mother in this life, but of our mothers in all our lifetimes. Thus, all sentient beings, who have been our mothers in our past lives, have been unspeakably, infinitely kind to us. Think deeply about all the ways that mother sentient beings have been kind to us until you have a strong feeling in your heart.

Step 3: Repaying the Kindness of All Mother Sentient Beings

Having gained an understanding of the kindness of mother sentient beings, now contemplate how important it is not to ignore their kindness but to repay their immense kindness in the best way possible. Think that you are in especially fortunate circumstances, mostly because of them, and that those fortunate circumstances allow you to be able to repay their kindness: You have met the Dharma, you have received teachings from wonderful, qualified teachers, you have all the right circumstances to practice the Dharma teachings. Therefore, determine

that you will do as much as you can, to repay sentient beings' kindness by liberating them from their sufferings and by bringing them the true happiness that they wish for. Contemplate this again and again.

Step 4: Affectionate love, loving-kindness

There are different kinds of love. There's one kind of love that wants others to have happiness and its causes. This kind of love is slightly different. This kind of love is just seeing others as lovable, seeing them with affection. This particular kind of love arises from having cultivated the first three steps. After seeing others as our mother, remembering their kindness, and wanting to repay their kindness, then this one automatically arises. It doesn't need to be meditated on specially. It's a natural feeling of affection for others, wanting to care for them as if they were your children. Having that same kind of feeling of ease in caring for somebody, and real joy and pleasure in doing it. Instead of the mind making all its lists, "I can't be friends with this person because they did this and that. That one I can't love because he did this and that..." All of our reasons why everybody is so objectionable. It's really putting that down and just letting ourselves see that others are lovable. Why? Because they've been our mother and they've done all these incredible things for us in previous lives.

Step 5: Great Compassion/Love

Contemplate the sufferings of kind sentient beings. It is said that it is especially beneficial to contemplate the example of the slaughter of an animal at the beginning of this meditation. Think about the suffering not only of the animal being slaughtered, but of the person doing the slaughtering. Think about the unbearable suffering that sentient beings experience constantly. Reflect on the fact that although they want nothing other than to be happy, they are constantly creating the causes for infinite sufferings in the future. Think about the sufferings of each individual realm of samsara, especially the lower realms. Reflect on these realities until an unbearable feeling of sadness arises in you, the overwhelming wish that all sentient beings be completely free from their sufferings. Generate that strong loving attitude wishing all kind mother sentient beings to receive every happiness. Then, on top of this, make a strong determination that you yourself will eliminate all their sufferings and that you yourself will bring all sentient beings to the happiness they wish for. Contemplate this strongly from the depths of your heart.

Step 6: The Extraordinary Thought

Contemplate like this: It is unbearable that sentient beings are so overwhelmed by suffering and cannot have the happiness they wish for and deserve. I cannot depend on someone else to help them to overcome their suffering and to achieve happiness. I must do this myself, by myself alone! Just as it is a child's responsibility to save her parents if they are in danger, so it is my responsibility to free all mother sentient beings from their sufferings and to bring them to perfect uncontaminated happiness. There is no other way. Think about this again and again until it permeates your heart through and through.

Step 7: Generating Bodhichitta

Contemplate as follows: The only real and true benefit that I can give to other sentient beings is to completely take away their sufferings and to bring them true, everlasting happiness. This means bringing them to enlightenment. Nothing else will suffice. But in my current ordinary state, I am still controlled by delusion and karma; I cannot even liberate myself at this point, much less liberate others. The only way that I can become able to enlighten other sentient beings is to become enlightened myself first. So, for the sole purpose of liberating all other sentient beings (ALL) from suffering and leading them to perfect, complete enlightenment, I must, as quickly as possible, achieve the exalted state of supreme enlightenment, the state of a perfect, complete buddha.

Dedication: May I quickly generate all positive qualities of kindness and compassion and remove all negativities and obscurations of self-cherishing from my mind. May I swiftly awaken to the state of supreme enlightenment and lead all other beings to that supreme state.