

Motivation

All beings are motivated towards happiness of some sort or other. In Buddhism, we may consider beings of three scopes as regards their motivation: the lower scope, the middle scope and the higher scope. These all have some realisation that life is unsatisfactory; that we are born into suffering through the continual process of birth and death, known as *samsara*. The motivation of the being of lower scope is to attain a rebirth in the three upper realms of *samsaric* existence. The motivation of the being of the middle scope, based on the realisation that the nature of all *samsara* is suffering, is to achieve freedom from *samsara* and arrive at the liberated state of *nirvana*. The being of higher scope, realising that the personal happiness of *nirvana* is not complete without consideration for others, seeks the liberation of all sentient beings through reaching the perfect enlightened state of Buddhahood. This is Mahayana Buddhism (the Great Vehicle). What characterises Mahayana Buddhism is *bodhicitta* motivation - this altruistic mind seeking enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. This is the highest, most effective motivation, uniting wisdom and compassion. Therefore, we need to know how to develop this mind for the happiness of ourselves and others.

The Seven Point Cause and Effect Method in Brief

The seven points comprise six causes and one effect. The effect one wishes to achieve is *bodhicitta* - the altruistic mind that seeks enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. As a preliminary to the seven points, one develops an equanimity towards all sentient beings, i.e. an immeasurable equanimity. There are thus six causes and one effect giving a total of eight steps as follows:

- Immeasurable equanimity
- Recognising past lives' mothers
- Recognising their kindness
- Repaying their kindness
- Love through the force of attraction
- Compassion
- Altruism
- Bodhicitta

This method requires some disposition towards a belief in rebirth. Through this, one may come to see that all beings have, in some previous lives, been very kind and very dear to us - as dear as the dearest person in this life. The example usually taken is our own mother.

*"Whatever joy there is in this world
All comes from desiring others to be happy,
And whatever suffering there is in this world
All comes from desiring myself to be happy."*

Shantideva

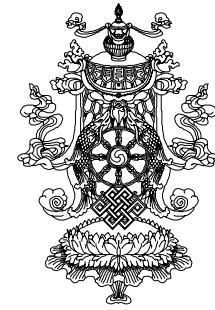
Recommended Reading

A library is available for general use with a limited selection of books. There is also a shop where books can be bought 'off-the-shelf' or to order. The following books are particularly recommended:

- Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, Pabongka Rinpoche
- The Essential Nectar, Geshé Rabten
- Path to Bliss, H.H. the Dalai Lama

"... do not accept my teachings merely out of respect for me, but analyse and check them, the way that a goldsmith tests gold by rubbing, cutting and melting it".

Shakyamuni Buddha



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DEVELOPING COMPASSION

THE SEVEN POINT CAUSE AND EFFECT METHOD

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The Seven Point Cause and Effect Method

Two methods of developing *bodhicitta* are addressed in the Lam Rim: the Seven Point Cause and Effect Method and the Method of Interchange of Self and Others.

The great Indian teacher Atisha, who started the Lam Rim tradition, travelled to Indonesia to obtain the *bodhicitta* teachings. These were held by Guru Suvarnavipi. Atisha was a great scholar who had studied for many years and achieved great knowledge and powers, but he realised that the swiftest path to enlightenment required training in love, compassion and *bodhicitta*. He spent twelve years receiving teachings from Suvarnavipi during which he obtained the instructions for both these methods.

Although taught separately, both methods should be practised. They both result in *bodhicitta*. In this method, there are six causes that lead to the one effect: recognising past lives' mothers, recognising their kindness, repaying their kindness, love through the force of attraction, compassion and altruism. Together with the preliminary practice of equanimity, there are a total of eight steps or meditations.

We will start with describing the effect: *bodhicitta*.

Bodhicitta

Bodhicitta is the mind that seeks enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is the sole gateway to the Mahayana. Why should we seek *bodhicitta* and not just liberation from *samsara* for ourselves? Can we not follow our own path and leave others to theirs? It is hard for us to envisage any lasting personal happiness while others are suffering. Nor is it possible to look after our own welfare exclusively because we are all dependent on one another. What truly benefits one of us benefits the rest.

Liberation from *samsara* could take a very long time - many lives maybe. When one takes the *bodhicitta* vows, these are taken not just for this life - that would be meaningless - but for all future lives until enlightenment is achieved. In this way, the scope of *bodhicitta* extends far beyond compassion.

Immeasurable Equanimity

We take the preliminary step of developing Immeasurable Equanimity before embarking on the six causes. This equanimity needs to be immeasurable as it applies to an immeasurable number of sentient beings. Clearly, if one seeks to benefit all these beings, there is no sense in holding some more dear or some less dear than others. Attachment, aversion and indifference would be obstacles to achieving *bodhicitta*, directly affecting others and perpetuating our own delusions. All beings equally want happiness; all equally don't want suffering; all are equally deserving of our concern.

Those that we now call enemies have been friends in past lives. Because their kindness is now history does not make it less than the kindness of our present friends. Moreover, although everyone we see now appears to be either enemy, friend or stranger, there is no certainty that they will always



Chenrezi - the Embodiment of Compassion

remain so. To have a selective attitude towards others is a very narrow view restricted to this life, or even part of this life. It would thus be incompatible with the development of *bodhicitta* which extends over many lives.

Like water remains on a flat surface, *bodhicitta* remains with the mind of equanimity. We therefore need to meditate on Immeasurable Equanimity in preparation for the six causes.

Recognising Past Lives' Mothers

Through the continuous cyclic existence in the six realms of *samsara*, where we undergo the sufferings of countless lives, we have met kindness and harmfulness from all sentient beings. With a history of an infinite number of lives, every single being we meet in this life has been someone very dear and special to us. We have shared with all of them the closest of relationships - that of mother and child. They may not appear to us in this way now - we cannot see it due to our ignorance and obscurations. Nevertheless, each and every being we meet is our mother from a past life. The special relationship of mother and child is normally used as an example, but any close relationship can be considered if it serves to develop affection for all beings.

This meditation may at first seem rather difficult. The present instant in our mental continuum is based on a preceding instant and so on back in time. This sequence is beginningless. We have taken birth countless times and have had countless mothers. Is there any being we can definitely identify as never being our mother from a past life?

Recognising their Kindness

Having recognised all sentient beings as mothers from previous lives, we are in a position to recognise how kind they have been to us. We can reflect on the kindness that our present mother has shown to us. We can see the sacrifices made for our sake; the care and attention from even before we were born through our lives as babies and children up to

the present.

Furthermore, we can reflect on the kindness that all mothers show to their offspring in both human and animal realms. Even the most fierce of animals show great kindness to their young, putting their own lives at risk to protect them.

Repaying their Kindness

We feel gratitude to our mother for her kindness. We have a natural inclination to reciprocate this. If she needs help, it is of concern to us. This feeling is very strong when we are young and aware of our dependence on her. Now we realise worldly help is of a temporary nature so we seek to provide them the lasting benefit of leading them to Buddhahood.

Similarly, we should feel gratitude to past-lives' mothers. Their kindness equals that of our mother in this life. Therefore, just as we wish to repay the kindness of our present mother, we can generate a strong wish to repay all past mothers.

Love through the Force of Attraction

This meditation is a natural continuation of the previous three meditations. We have a heart-felt attraction to those close to us but now, having recognised all sentient beings as having been at one time dear to us, we wish to bring them the real happiness of liberation from *samsara*. Therefore, based on our natural affection for some and our reasoning from the previous meditations, loving-kindness is generated *from the heart* towards others.

Compassion

This goes beyond the simple compassion wanting all sentient beings to be free of suffering - the compassion common to practitioners of the small and middle scopes. The compassion referred to here is the Great Compassion which seeks to save them from suffering. The distinction is thus made between the higher scope and the other scopes.

The Great Compassion is based on recognition and understanding of the true causes of sufferings because only on this basis can we bring about its cessation for all sentient beings. Then compassion can be extended to those creating the causes for suffering as well as those experiencing it.

Altruism

Having generated the Great Compassion, the Mahayana practitioner now actively takes responsibility for all sentient beings by following the path to do this. It is therefore no longer a mere wish or imagination alone. This special state of mind is also called the superior intention, extraordinary or unusual attitude. It is thus called because this sort of commitment is not found in practitioners of lower capacity.

When we have completed the previous meditations we can ask ourselves if we are putting them into practice. Do we have this mind? If we do, then *bodhicitta* will be the effect.