

Catturapramana: Four Immeasurables as Aspiration Bodhicitta

Compilation of Essential Texts

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Brahma Vihara: The Four Abodes of Brahma

In the Auditors' vehicle, these four qualities (metta, karuna, mudita and upekkha) are described in particular in the Brahmavihara Sutta or the Mettam Sutta and several times in the sutras. They are the answer to all the situations that come from social contact and the relationship to others. They must be cultivated because they spiritually elevate the human to divine heights where duality fades between sentient beings. Practicing these four immeasurable qualities leads to rebirth in the world of Greater Brahma. The Buddha explains the name "four mansions of Brahma".

O monks, you must know that the one called Great Brahma; a thousand Brahmas cannot match him. Not being surpassed, he controls a thousand worlds.

This is why his palace is called "dwellings of Brahma".

O monks, the one who excels in these four "mansions of Brahma" is able to contemplate these thousand worlds.

This is why they are called "dwellings of Brahma".

By continually exercising and developing his feelings of benevolence, compassion, joy and equanimity, the meditator raises his meditative awareness to the state of the god Maha Brahma or Great Brahma. He can hope to be reborn in this divine world beyond the worlds of desire. We can then realize the fundamental interconnection between the beings of the universe and transform the world. If these four Immeasurables are joined with the consciousness of the non-self and the impermanence of all phenomena, then they can lead to supreme awakening.

Here's how to accomplish it (according to a formula repeated in many sutras):

I will remain by radiating a spirit of benevolence,

In a neighborhood of the universe, and likewise for the second quarter, the third, the fourth,

And likewise above, below, through,

And everywhere in its totality;

To each other as to myself,

I will remain shining in every place of the universe,

With a spirit imbued with kindness,

Wide, deep, high, immeasurable,

Without hatred and free from enmity.

Exactly the same practice applies to compassion, joy and equanimity. Each time it is a question of spreading a thought of benevolence, compassion, joy or equanimity in the consciousness that we have of the world. Change our view of beings by adopting a more open and favorable disposition. This practice of the Four Incommensurables according to the Buddha implies that one goes beyond his limited frameworks of his small subjectivity. For example, we love his parents, his friends, his dog and his goldfish. What the Buddha asks us to do is to go beyond this to cultivate a mind that contemplates the infinite and the unlimited by immersing itself in this kindness, this compassion, this joy and this equanimity towards the unknown, people who are not even looked at or even insignificant animals. It also extends to our enemies and those who hurt us. This extends to sentient beings close to us who appear in our lives, but also to those who are distant and may never see (in this life at least). It is therefore to a love of neighbor that the Buddha invites us, but also to a love of the distant! From a limited framework, we gradually extend these feelings of love and benevolence to the entire universe. It requires a long training of the mind. This is why in the introduction of the Breathing Attention Sutra, Anapana Sati Sutta, the Buddha mentions that some meditators focus particularly on the practices of benevolence, compassion, joy and equanimity as main practices:

There are those who practice benevolence, there are those who practice Compassion, there are those who practice Joy and those who practice Equanimity.

The Buddha also insists in the Parable of the Cloth, Parable on the fact that the meditation of the Four Incommensurables is also a factor of purification of the faults together with the taking of the Three Refuges

In the Mahayana, the Four Incommensurables are considered essential to the practice of Bodhicitta called "aspiration", and are an integral part of the Bodhisattva's vow (pranidhana). These Four Incommensurables are practiced together with the consciousness of emptiness to truly be fulfilled as practices of the bodhisattvas. It says in the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*:

To cultivate the four immeasurable thoughts, other than to be reborn in a world of Brahma, is the practice of the bodhisattva.

Indeed, outside the framework of bodhicitta, these practices are supposed to grant rebirth in Brahma's paradises. Considering this somewhat selfish motivation, and the perilous gods' way in this regard, Shakyamuni Buddha has reoriented this practice towards the attainment of Supreme and Unparalleled Enlightenment (*anuttara Samyak Sambodhi*).

Caturapramana: The Four Immeasurables

The Four Immeasurables are:

བྱམས་པ།

Immeasurable love (byams-pa, Skt: maitri, Pali: metta),

སྙིང་རྗེ།

Immeasurable compassion (snying-rje, Skt: karuna, Pali: karuna),

དགའ་བ།

Immeasurable joy (dga'-ba, Skt: mudita, Pali: mudita),

བཏང་སྙོམས།

Immeasurable equanimity (btang-snyoms, Skt: upeksha, Pali: upekkha).

The Four Immeasurables as a Traditional Tibetan Buddhist Prayer

May all beings have happiness and the cause of happiness.

May they be free of suffering and the cause of suffering.

May they never be disassociated from the supreme happiness, which is without suffering.

May they remain in the boundless equanimity, free from both attachment to close ones and rejection of others.

The following section is excerpted from “*The Door to Inconceivable Wisdom and Compassion*” by Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche

...There was a very famous Dzogchen master in the thirteenth century Tibet named Longchenpa who taught that the entire conduct of the bodhisattva can be summarized into two aspects: (1) **aspirational bodhichitta** and (2) **actualizing bodhichitta**.

Longchenpa went on to explain that the aspirational bodhichitta is actually based on the Four Immeasurables: (1) **Immeasurable Love**, (2) **Immeasurable Compassion**, (3) **Immeasurable Joy**, and (4) **Immeasurable Equanimity**.

Because sentient beings are as limitless as space, our practice of these four virtues must also be immeasurable. We can begin developing these in our heart by chanting aspirational prayers such as, “May all beings be happy, may the causes of their suffering be removed, may they always be joyful, and may they all remain in a state of equanimity.”

The aspirational bodhichitta is mainly applied at the levels of mind and speech. Through practice, it becomes the cause of the actualized bodhichitta. Once we accomplish this, we can perform actions with the confidence arising from our intention to benefit others.

The first of the Four Immeasurables is loving-kindness. Presently our loving-kindness is very partial, because we just love ourselves and our close friends, family members and relatives. Love is something we can experience quite easily, and therefore through practice it can become profound and vast.

The Buddha Shakyamuni taught that there are one thousand and one Buddhas that will come into our world during the superior aeon. Among those, three Buddhas have already come, so Shakyamuni is the fourth. The next, or the fifth Buddha, is known as Maitreya in Sanskrit, which means “loving-kindness.” Buddha Shakyamuni spoke a lot about this future Buddha in the Mahayana Maitreya Sutra. He taught that Maitreya would realize Buddhahood solely through the practice of loving-kindness.

When you really love, you feel respect for the person or beings that are the object of your love. This attitude of loving-kindness expands and increases by seeing and appreciating their good qualities. True love is based in pure perception and a respectful attitude toward yourself and others.

If you decided to be loving, you can easily develop the other three Immeasurables: compassion, a joyful attitude, and equanimity.

So it is important that we know the value of love before we begin the other practices. The benefit of love is a very powerful and special. As soon as you generate an attitude of loving-kindness, you will start feeling more calm and peaceful, and naturally share this feeling with other beings. Your whole field of perception will be changed into something beautiful.

When you radiate true love, in that moment everyone is your friend. You will be able to see how nice everyone is, and they will see that you are also very special. Another power of loving-kindness lies in its ability to overcome serious obstacles. When Buddha Shakyamuni sat beneath the bodhi tree before his enlightenment, hundreds of demons were attacking him, but he conquered all of them by not getting angry. By simply meditating on loving-kindness, he transformed each one into an ornament of his enlightenment.

Being open to the value of loving-kindness, one can easily develop the precious attitude of compassion because its nature is the wish to remove the suffering of all beings. Love moves you to offer them some assistance to get through and free them from misery. It weakens the structure of ego clinging so that your true nature can break through and reach out to all sentient beings, sharing this openhearted attitude with everyone. Of course, you can feel compassion for yourself as well, but it is primarily practiced in relation to other beings. Compassion helps create an opening or gap in your normal habit patterns and weakens ego clinging.

You have good reason to feel compassion for others, because every being is suffering. Although their intentions are quite normal and similar to your own—to be happy, joyous, and peaceful, their aspirations and what is actually happening are at variance. We would like to be happy, but often, if not constantly, we are facing many difficulties, misfortunes, and hardships.

Sentient beings normally act with good intentions. Even in trivial activities we are trying to achieve some joy, peace, and freedom for ourselves, either directly or indirectly. Animals are doing this as well. In running, flying, digging, and moving, by day or night, their final goal is to achieve some kind of comfort according to their understanding. In this way, the common goal of all sentient beings is the same. We have similar desires and objectives, yet we do not achieve what we want all the time. Why not? The major obstacle is ignorance.

We already have the Four Immeasurables within the natural state of our mind, so practice is actually a matter of progressively clarifying and revealing them.

To do this, we have to be purified of ego clinging, grasping, and attachment to dualistic knowledge and experience. Such activities obscure our primordial nature and put severe limitations on these four precious powers.

As I have indicated many times, all beings already enjoy some degree of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity. They are not qualities that we simply do not have or have never experienced. They are not beyond us in any way, like something we might discover out in space. The Buddha and Shantideva both explain that these four are naturally inherent in our being.

When practiced impartially and consistently, love, compassion, equanimity, and joy lead to Buddhahood. Even when first beginning their cultivation, you will start to awaken to the inconceivable qualities of the buddha-mind. Everybody has the opportunity to grow in this way and realize buddha-nature. This wondrous Truth is the supreme potential we have to develop.

...People often wonder why there are such great benefits associated with practicing bodhichitta. To account for this, Buddha Shakyamuni gave **four reasons**.

First of all, when you grow in this way, you are not just doing it for one or two people. You are developing love and compassion for all beings, so there is great cause for an infinite expansion of merit.

The practice truly brings joy and happiness to all sentient beings directly or indirectly, so it is a great source of spiritual energy and miraculous abilities. This is the first reason given to account for the immeasurable power associated with the practice of bodhichitta: the infinity of the objective focus—all sentient beings.

The second reason given is that, when considering the experience of all sentient beings, you feel from the bottom of your heart that you would like to remove their misery.

Since you are not only thinking of the misery of one or two friends, but you are aspiring to remove the suffering of all beings, the power of this virtue expands infinitely. This is the inconceivable power arising from the aspiration to relieve all of their suffering.

The third power is related to the fact that you would like to establish them in the unceasing happiness and joy of enlightenment.

This is called the power of giving, the great aspiration to share happiness with all beings.

The fourth power is associated with tireless endurance.

As we have already mentioned many times, the bodhisattva's endeavor is not just for one or two days. His or her commitment perseveres until every single sentient being is totally free from suffering and realizes ultimate enlightenment. On the basis of these four great factors, bodhisattvas accumulate great power to remove the troubles and obscurations of self and others.

The Buddha Shakyamuni's Words on Kindness in the *Metta Sutta*, this is what should be done by one who is skilled in goodness, and who knows the path of peace:

Let them be able and upright, straightforward and gentle in speech.

Humble and not conceited, contented and easily satisfied.

Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways.

Peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful, not proud and demanding in nature.

Let them not do the slightest thing that the wise would later reprove.

Wishing: In gladness and in safety, may all beings be at ease.

Whatever living beings there may be; whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,

The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,

The seen and the unseen, those living near and far away, those born and to-be-born,

May all beings be at ease!

Let none deceive another, nor despise any being in any state.

Let none through anger or ill-will wish harm upon another.

Even as a mother protects with her life her child, her only child,

So with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings,

Radiating kindness over the entire world, spreading upwards to the skies,

And downwards to the depths; outwards and unbounded,

Freed from hatred and ill-will.

Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down free from drowsiness,

one should sustain this recollection. This is said to be the sublime abiding.

By not holding to fixed views, the pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,

being freed from all sense desires, is not born again into this world.

Cleansing the Mind by Training in the Four Boundless Attitudes

From Treasury of Precious Qualities, Book One, by Jigme Lingpa

The Mahayana Path

Since its characteristic attitude and practice are limited, aimed solely at the pacification of one's own defilement and suffering, the Hinayana is likened in the root verses to a pool of muddy water. As yet, the seed of the Mahayana,¹⁰⁸ the potential for bodhichitta, lies unstirred in the minds of the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and they enter the peace of cessation. But they are at length roused from this by the Buddhas, who are guides to the wisdom of emptiness and universal compassion. With bodhichitta thus awakened, the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas embrace the Dharma of the Great Vehicle, as deep and vast as the sea itself, and set out for the land of jewels, the omniscience of Buddhahood.

As long as generosity and the other four virtuous actions are not combined with wisdom, they do not constitute transcendent perfections—the *paramitas* that bring forth great enlightenment. Nevertheless, as when alchemy transmutes base metal into gold, the union of wisdom and skillful means can transform these lesser virtues into the invaluable causes of great enlightenment.

Bodhichitta is the indispensable prerequisite for achieving non-abiding nirvana and is the fusion of the skillful means of compassion and the wisdom of emptiness. It arises in the mind through repeated training in the four boundless attitudes, whereby a person's thoughts and actions are transformed into the path of the Mahayana. The four boundless attitudes are therefore to be seen as guides. Once the mind is purified by them, the cultivation of bodhichitta in aspiration and action and the training in the precepts become possible. On the

paths of accumulation and joining, this bodhichitta, the union of skillful means and wisdom, is, however, no more than a foretaste of the fully authentic bodhichitta that arises on the path of seeing.

The Four Boundless Attitudes

Love is essentially the wish that beings that suffer--for instance, in being deprived of the bliss of the upper realms--should have happiness, both immediately and ultimately. The love that a Bodhisattva feels toward other beings resembles the love that a mother feels for her own dear child. Therefore, our person, our possessions, and our merits gained in the past, present, and future should all be devoted to the benefit of beings in the immediate and ultimate term. In addition, we should train ourselves to endure with love even the harm that others do to us, returning them good in exchange.

The essence of *compassion* is a valiant resolve to free absolutely all beings from their miseries--beings who are by nature entangled in the three or eight types of suffering. It is a sensation felt in the very roots of the heart, an inability to tolerate the fact that beings suffer. It is as when a man unhesitatingly jumps into a filthy pit to retrieve his child. Such compassion is incapable of leaving matters simply as they stand; it is a resolute determination to free beings from their pain. People with such compassion see that the beings of the six realms are like cornered deer, unable to escape from the pain arising from their ego clinging. And with tears of compassion in their eyes, they strive by every means to liberate those who would never otherwise be able to free themselves.

Sympathetic joy is a sincere pleasure, untainted by jealousy or a sense of competition, at the happiness and prosperity that others have. It also involves the cultivation of the excellent thought "*How wonderful it would be if all beings had*

perfect prosperity and well-being!" It is a sense of delight that, due to their past karma, beings have attained happiness, and gives rise to the wish that they will never lose their contentment and bliss.

Impartiality, or lack of bias, is freedom from the fixed, conventional attitudes of exclusive attachment to the objects of one's love (parents, relatives, husband or wife, etc.), hatred toward enemies and those inimical to one's interests, and indifference toward those who fit into neither of these categories. Impartiality is the ability to see that all beings, regardless of their associations and alignment, are equal, and to consider them all-friend, enemy, or neither-with the same benevolence.

The four boundless attitudes are thus the wish that others be happy, the wish that they not suffer, the joyful desire that they never lose their happiness, and the aspiration to view them all with an open heart free of partiality. It is important to understand that the object of the practice, namely, other beings, and the form of the practice, that is to say, these four attitudes, are devoid of true existence. They are like dream visions or reflections in a mirror. In other words, this training should be performed in a state that is free of clinging to a truly existent subject, object, and action.

By contrast, the loving attitude of wishing happiness for one's friends and relatives out of attachment; the kind of compassion that, for instance, spares animals from toil only out of miserliness; the conceited exhilaration that comes from being more prosperous than others; and the formless, mindless indifference of wishing neither to help nor to harm-these have nothing to do with the authentic path of liberation. They are more akin to the four so-called Brahmaviharas, the four attitudes that provoke rebirth in the form and formless realms. Since they approach their objects with partiality and bias, and since

their character is one of clinging, they are a distortion of the four boundless attitudes of the Mahayana and should be utterly discarded.

In the context of the Mahayana path leading to Peace, the non-abiding nirvana beyond the two extremes, the focus of the four boundless attitudes is the entire aggregate of beings and is completely without bias. Moreover, although such beings, and for that matter the four attitudes themselves, are manifest phenomena, they are without inherent existence, being primordially beyond all conceptual construction. Through repeated training, the four boundless attitudes, in which both skillful means and wisdom are combined, will strengthen and eventually give rise to relative and absolute bodhichitta. This is why they are referred to as extraordinary. They are endowed with a skill and wisdom that are not to be found among the Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and those who follow worldly paths.

How to Meditate on the Four Boundless Attitudes

The four boundless attitudes may be meditated upon either in the direct order described here or in any sequence, as when the meditation on impartiality is taken first. To begin with, one should get used to the practice by focusing on objects toward which these attitudes may be entertained easily. However, in order to counteract attachment, should it arise while meditating in a fixed order, the sequence of meditations should be changed. It may happen, for instance, that, in the course of sustained meditation on love and cherishing, the practice itself provokes attachment. If this happens, the meditation on impartiality, which is free from bias toward those who are close as opposed to those who are II distant, will remove such attachment. On the other hand, if during the meditation on impartiality the mind becomes simply addled and

neutral and loses its benevolent impulse, then by shifting to the meditation on compassion and reflecting on how beings sow and reap the crop of suffering, this worthless kind of impartiality will be averted. Again, if, while meditating on compassion and reflecting on the immense sufferings that beings experience, the mind becomes excessively downcast and depressed, by turning to the meditation on sympathetic joy and focusing on the happiness and prosperity of beings, it is possible to avoid discouragement. Finally, if meditation on joy leads to overexcitement and distraction of the mind, one should begin to meditate on love, and so on.

The Benefits of this Meditation

Training in the four boundless attitudes gives rise to four results. (1) The fully ripened karmic result will be birth in the higher levels of samsara with the perfect form of a human being or a god of the desire realm. With the support of such a body, it will be possible to complete the two accumulations and achieve ultimate excellence, the grounds of the twin paths of learning and no more learning. (2) With regard to the two effects similar to the cause, *actively* (action similar to the cause) one will continue to meditate on the four boundless attitudes in all one's subsequent lives, and experientially (experience similar to the cause) one will attain perfect happiness free from the four unfavorable factors of malevolence, cruelty, jealousy, and craving taken together with anger. (3) As for the conditioning environmental effect, the practice of love will result in the experience of congenial places with pleasant company and amenities. Through compassion one will find fortunate conditions of both body and mind; because of sympathetic joy, the environment will be adorned with medicinal trees and plants and will be a

pleasure to live in; through impartiality, one will find oneself in a country where the people are friendly and live in harmony. (4) Due to the proliferating effect, one's practice of the four boundless attitudes will gain in strength, and every excellent quality related to the twofold aim (one's own and others' benefit) will be gained.

As one becomes proficient in the practice of boundless love, one will come to cherish all beings as a mother would love her only child. Through the power of such love, in which anger and hostility have no place, one will receive the affection and appreciation of others. By meditating on the fact that love is by nature empty, that it is devoid of inherent existence, one will achieve the unobstructed knowledge of mirror like wisdom and gain the Sambhogakaya endowed with the ocean like infinity of the major and minor marks of Buddhahood. As it is said in the *pad ma rtse mo* tantra:

By love is anger driven out and the mirror like wisdom and Sambhogakaya are perfected.

Likewise, in becoming proficient in great compassion, one will be able to bear the burden of all the sorrows of others as though they were one's own. Unable to tolerate the fact that others suffer, one will think only of ways to free them from their sorrow. One will never entertain thoughts of aggression even for an instant and will approach other people as friends, with an attitude free from any trace of passionate desire. Compassion is nothing but the glow and display of emptiness, from which it is inseparable. It embodies a clear understanding of the principle of cause and effect that dominates all samsaric phenomena, including living beings. It leads finally to the realization of all-discerning wisdom, which perceives clearly and distinctly all objects of knowledge, and thence to the attainment of the Dharmakaya, naturally endowed with every quality. As the *pad ma rtse mo* tantra says:

Through compassion is desire cleansed.

This is wisdom all-discerning, the Dharmakaya.

As one becomes proficient in the practice of sympathetic joy, all jealousy and resentment at the happiness and prosperity of others will evaporate. On account of the unusual pleasure one feels at the happiness of others, one's own wholesome qualities will be stable, and one will enjoy an uninterrupted satisfaction free from the torment of jealousy. As a result, one's meditative concentration will be undisturbed. Sympathetic joy is essentially a sense of happiness at the perfect endowments of others, free from the strain that arises from the dualistic apprehension of subject and object. Accordingly, on the ultimate level, all-accomplishing wisdom, which effortlessly achieves the benefit of others, will come into play. One will attain the supreme Nirmanakaya and strive for the welfare of others. As it is said in the *pad ma rtse mo* tantra:

Jealousy is purified by sympathetic joy. This is wisdom all-accomplishing, the supreme Nirmanakaya and the supreme, spontaneous activity of Buddhahood.

As one becomes proficient in the practice of impartiality, one will benefit oneself and others equally, whether friends, enemies, or neither. As a result, all self-cherishing or conceited (artificial) altruism and pride will subside. For the mind is empty; it is empty even though it now strays from the evenness of the middle position, its true and ultimate nature, and so clings to the conceptual extremes of existence and non-existence. It is within this emptiness, in the expanse of peace wherein all conceptual activity subsides, that the extraordinary realization of impartiality is born. Essentially, impartiality is simply the absence of ignorance, the confused apprehension of distinctions (between friend and enemy); it is the pacification of extreme notions. Ultimately, the wisdom of the dharmadhatu that knows that all phenomena are equal, beyond acceptance and rejection, will be realized and the Svabhavikakaya will be attained-the expanse

that is utterly pure and free from all obscurations. As the *pad ma rtse mo* tantra says:

The great impartiality purifies stupidity and pride. It is the wisdom of equality together with the wisdom of the dharmadhatu: the body of manifest enlightenment and the vajra body, respectively.

It is thus possible to train in the four boundless attitudes according to the extraordinary Mahayana, bringing into play an understanding of the ground, path, and fruit. The path of the two accumulations, which bring to birth the two kayas (as understood on the level of the sutra teachings), and the path of skillful means and wisdom, which purify the two veils (as understood in the context of tantra) are, as far as the ground nature is concerned, one and the same. Because these two paths, by means of which ultimate reality is actualized, are not by nature different, the same is also true of their respective results, namely, the two kayas.

This practice is extremely profound and gives rise to limitless qualities, which infallibly lead to the attainment of the ultimate level.

Finally, the *Shrimaladevi-sutra* says:

All who meditate upon the four boundless attitudes will attract the notice of the Buddhas. They will acquire limitless qualities surpassing the very vastness of the sky.

False paths and non-Buddhist traditions do not possess the teaching and practice of the four boundless attitudes. Their tenets result in samsaric existence. The commentary on the *Praise of the Grounds* says:

The four boundless attitudes are the path to liberation.

Neglect them and you will go astray.

We should not diverge from the true path of compassion combined with the wisdom of understanding the primordial emptiness of phenomena. Jigme Lingpa requests us to train ourselves on the supreme path of the Bodhisattvas,

leading to liberation free from the two obscurations and stilling the turmoil of our minds, our self-centeredness, and our belief in the true existence of phenomena. And we should actually do it and train ourselves, and not be satisfied with a merely intellectual understanding!

Four Immeasurables

From “A Guide to the Words of my Perfect Teacher” by Khenpo Ngawang Pelzang

Arousing Bodhichitta, the Root of the Great vehicle

When we have the vast attitude of bodhichitta, even if the Dharma we are practicing is that of the Lesser Vehicle, it will become the Dharma of the Great Vehicle. As far as beginners are concerned, the reason for designating a vehicle as "great" or "lesser" is whether it has the relative bodhichitta. Apart from this, there is nothing in the Dharma itself that makes it a great or a lesser vehicle, so relative bodhichitta is the most important factor, and it has to be accompanied by the view. According to the teachings of the ultimate meaning, to reach the final goal we need the absolute bodhichitta, as that ultimate result cannot be attained through relative bodhichitta alone.

Also, as beginners, we must have a good heart. It is said:

If the intention is good, the levels and paths are good.

If the intention is bad, the levels and paths are bad.

If we possess the intention of bodhichitta, then we will traverse the good levels, the ten Bodhisattva levels, and the good paths, the five paths. If our intentions are bad, then we have no choice but to depend on bad levels, the nine levels of the three worlds of samsara (The nine levels of the three realms of samsara (khams gsum sa dgu) are: the desire realm, the four concentrations of the form realm, and the four formless absorptions.), and follow bad paths, the paths of the five classes of living beings. (The hell beings, Pretas, animals, humans, and gods.)

This is why when we begin, everything depends on this intention of bodhichitta, on this and on nothing else. It does not depend on our view, nor does it depend on our meditation, for even Shravakas and Pratyeka Buddha have realization of the view, as the great Sakya Pandita points out:

*Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas meditate on emptiness,
And the result this brings is cessation.*

It is through this intention of bodhichitta coupled with the accumulations of merit and wisdom that the result of Buddhahood is obtained. In the New Tradition it is said that arousing the relative bodhichitta is the most important thing. According to the Ancient Tradition, which identifies (1) an expedient meaning; (2) a semi definitive meaning; and (3) an ultimate meaning, from the point of view of the expedient meaning, we must have the relative bodhichitta. From the point of view of the semi definitive meaning, we have to combine relative and absolute bodhichitta. And in this respect Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas do not realize the views of the three great systems. In terms of the ultimate meaning, the ultimate and final goal is the absolute bodhichitta.

Nagarjuna says that bodhichitta is what makes the Mahayana vehicle great, and the glorious Chandrakirti, who asserts in his *Introduction to the Middle way* that there is only one ultimate vehicle, maintains it is by virtue of absolute bodhichitta that there is a single ultimate vehicle and that it is impossible to assert one ultimate vehicle by means of relative bodhichitta.

This good intention of bodhichitta arises only in one who has a good heart, not in someone of ill will, and the way to make it arise falls into three sections:

- I. Training the mind in the four boundless qualities
- II. Arousing bodhichitta, the mind turned toward supreme enlightenment
- III. Training in the precepts of bodhichitta in aspiration and bodhichitta in action

I. Training The Mind In The Four Boundless Attitudes

First we need to train our minds in the four boundless qualities. Without this training we will never give up all our schemes and efforts for achieving our own selfish ends, and from the point of view of both the Dharma and worldly life, we will never succeed in getting what we want. We have only to look around us to know this: the rulers of this world, the ministers and people of position and power who have exclusively their own selfish interests at heart, all in the end cannot but fall into states of misfortune, bringing ruin on themselves and others.

Then, from the point of view of the Dharma, the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, who seek their own benefit, attain neither the qualities of the levels of the Bodhisattvas, children of the Buddhas, nor the qualities of the result, those of the Bhagavan Buddha, and all because of

this self-centeredness. So it is not right to continue seeking to achieve our own selfish ends, and we must now arouse the attitude of bodhichitta within our minds.

Shantideva wrote:

*May bodhichitta, precious and sublime,
Arise where it has not yet come to be;
And where it has arisen may it never fail
But grow and flourish ever more and more.*

In the first place, "bodhichitta, precious and sublime" is the wish that all sentient beings attain Buddhahood. The method for making it "arise where it has not yet come to be" is to train the mind in the four boundless qualities. The method for making it "never fail but grow and flourish ever more and more" is to arouse the supreme bodhichitta and to train in the precepts of bodhichitta. So we should practice these methods for making it arise where it has not yet come to be, for preventing it from declining where it has arisen, and for making it not fail but flourish more and more, either in a detailed way with the four boundless qualities, or in less detail with love and compassion, or simply with compassion alone.

Boundless Qualities And States Of Brahma

Regarding the four boundless qualities that are the means for making the bodhichitta arise where it has not arisen, we need to consider the four boundless qualities and the four Brahmaviharas. The four Brahmaviharas are "Priests of Brahma" and so on (First Dhyana's four stages: 1/ *Brahma-Kayika*: The devas who belong to the company of Brahma. 2/ *Brahma-Parisadyah*: The devas who are in the retinue of Brahma. 3/ *Brahma-Purohitah*: The ministers or priests of Brahma. 4/ *Maha-Brahmanah*: The devas attached to the great deva.), and the cause for being born in these four is meditating on love, compassion, sympathetic joy, or impartiality, but in a limited way, without either the object or the mental attitude being boundless.

In what way are these four not boundless? Put briefly, they are love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and impartiality in which the determination to be free as intention is lacking, in which there is no bodhichitta, neither the view of emptiness, nor the wisdom that realizes no-self, and this is why they are known as "the four states of Brahma." The object on which they focus and the form they take are limited like those of a kind-hearted old lady, whose attitude is like that of a mother concerned for her child's happiness and well-being. But when

taken onto the path of omniscience, these four become the four boundless qualities. While we are practicing on the path, the four boundless qualities constitute the first four of the thirty-seven elements of enlightenment, (The first four of the thirty-seven elements of enlightenment are more usually described as the four close mindfulnesses.) and when we attain the result they are the four boundless qualities of a Buddha. (These constitute the second of the twenty-one sets of immaculate qualities of the Buddha's wisdom dharmakaya.) They are called boundless qualities because the object on which they focus is boundless, the form they take in the mind is boundless, and their result is boundless.

The order in which the four boundless qualities are explained in the texts puts love first. However, according to the tradition of the pith instructions, if we do not start by meditating on boundless impartiality, the others will simply turn into the brahma states. We should therefore meditate first on impartiality.

The wish that beings possess both happiness and its cause is the nature, definition, and form of love.

The wish that beings be free from suffering and its cause is the nature, definition, and form of compassion.

The wish that beings never part from happiness is the nature, definition, and form of sympathetic joy.

And the wish that beings be free from attachment and aversion is the nature, definition, and form of impartiality.

For these four boundless qualities there are "boundless qualities with concepts" and "boundless qualities without concepts." When you meditate on boundless qualities with concepts, the object on which you focus should be associated with the form of the meditation.

First, the object on which love focuses. When we say, "May all sentient beings, who have been my own mother, and who are as numerous as the sky is vast, enjoy happiness and the causes of happiness," the object on which we focus is beings who do not have happiness, and the form love takes in the mind is the wish that they have both the cause of happiness and the happiness that results.

With compassion, the object on which we focus is suffering beings, and the form compassion takes in the mind is the wish that they be free from both suffering and its causes. The object on which sympathetic joy focuses is beings that have both happiness and the causes of happiness, and the form it takes in the mind is the wish that they never be

without happiness. With impartiality, the object on which we focus is both the attachment and aversion in our own minds and the attachment and aversion in others' minds. The form it takes is the wish to be even-minded, that is, the wish to still thoughts of attachment and aversion and to be of benefit to others. The way to meditate on these four boundless qualities is thus to match the object of meditation with the form of the meditation.

As for the boundless qualities without concepts, beginners should train the mind in the eight similes of illusion, seeing everything as a magical illusion, as a dream, and so on. (1/ Dream: like a dream, objects perceived with the five senses are not there, but they appear through delusion. 2/ Magical illusion: like a magic illusion, things are made to appear due to the temporary coming together of causes and conditions. 3/ Hallucination or *trompe-l'oeil*: like a hallucination, things appear, yet there is nothing there. 4/ Mirage: like a mirage, things appear, but they are not real. 5/ Echo: like an echo, things can be perceived, but there is nothing there, either inside or outside. 6/ City of gandharvas: like a city of gandharvas, there is neither a dwelling nor anyone to dwell. 7/ Reflection: like a reflection, things appear, but have no reality of their own. 8/ Apparition: like an apparition, there are different types of appearances, but they are not really there) Experienced, realized practitioners meditate with what is known as "all-accomplishing nonconceptual wisdom" on the love, compassion, and the like that arise as a natural result of their state of meditation.

1. Impartiality

Now we come to the actual meditation on the boundless qualities. If we do not begin by training in impartiality, then our love, compassion, and sympathetic joy will never become boundless. With regard to the ways of meditating, there are both analytic meditation and resting meditation: love and the samadhi of love, compassion and the samadhi of compassion, sympathetic joy and the samadhi of sympathetic joy, and impartiality and the samadhi of impartiality. Of the two sorts of meditation, sustained calm and profound insight, all these fall into the category of sustained calm meditation. And of the two traditions of meditation, that taught in the texts and that taught in the pith instructions, here we follow the latter. The preliminary practice for the session is the same in all cases (This sentence also implies that in the preliminary practice for the session one also develops the four boundless qualities, though in less detail than in the main practice that now follows.) Now we come to the main practice.

Enemies And Friends

For the main practice, imagine your enemy on your right and a relative or friend on your left. Then begin by making a definite feeling of aversion arise toward your enemy and a feeling of attachment arise toward the person to whom you are close. Next, you should think about the past, present, and future, as follows. Of our enemies and friends and ourselves, throughout the course of all our births and all our deaths, there is not one of them who has not been our

father and mother and relative and close friend. At that time they helped us in countless ways, protected us from countless forms of harm. They were thus most beneficial friends.

Enemies

Right now, we may think of somebody as being our enemy. However, we cannot be sure that he even conceives of us as an adversary. Even if he does see us as an enemy, and we fight one another, and he wins, it is likely to make him famous. (He might be considered a hero for defeating us.) No longer will he even think of us as an enemy. Or if he has conceived of us as an enemy, a third person may show him how it has all been a misunderstanding, so that he turns into a friend, an even better friend than those we have already. Alternatively, we might say to each other, "Look, you were wrong, but then I was in the wrong as well. Now let's not behave as we did before." Or else, with gifts of some sort or with kind words, we might apologize and come to an agreement simply between ourselves, and so end up as friends.

Looking at it from the perspective of the Dharma, it is thanks to circumstances like being robbed or ruined by enemies that we first meet the Dharma. If you find yourself in such a situation, you should meditate and think: "Now I am a Bodhisattva, a child of the Buddhas, and as it is said," Better than a hundred years of generosity is one day of maintaining discipline, and better than a hundred years of keeping discipline is one day of meditating on patience." All the major and minor marks of a Buddha are obtained through patience and for patience the object of meditation is enemies, so if I am able to meditate on patience, then this enemy is actually helping me, and is therefore not an enemy at all. In the future too, this enemy will become a friend and will help me."

At the same time, this enemy of ours, throughout all his beginningless lives, has been our enemy and inflicted harm on us. Even now he is an enemy and causes us harm, and in the future too he will act as an enemy and inflict harm on us. So this "enemy" of ours has both helped us and harmed us.

Friends

Turn now to the friend. However much attachment we feel toward those to whom we feel close, when we think very carefully about them we are obliged to conclude that they are in fact our enemies. In previous lives, these relatives or friends have caused us harm: acting as our enemies, the number of times they have robbed us of our wealth, taken our lives, or cut off our head and limbs cannot be calculated. And in this life too, they have been an obstacle to our practicing the sacred Dharma. As children they have brought us, their parents,

suffering. As parents they have harmed us, their children, marrying us off and tying us tightly down with the topos of samsara. By teaching us how to get the better of our enemies and care for our families, and all sorts of negative activities like business and trickery, they have ruined us in ensuring that we will never be freed from samsara.

From the point of view of the Dharma also, regarding first of all meeting a true master, then **engaging in religious activities**, (Going to the temple, reciting mantras with a mala, reading Dharma texts, and so on, before actually taking ordination.) and finally **keeping discipline** and so on, as long as we spend our time looking after the interests of our parents and family, thanks to them we will ruin our discipline, impair our concentration, and make our wisdom degenerate.

As a result of karmic debts incurred by our enemies in former lives, they are now friends or relatives. And because of debts incurred with those who are now close to us, in future lives they will be our enemies. So our friends in fact act as enemies in the past, in the present and also in the future (The notion of karmic debts is illustrated in the story of Katyayana.)

At the same time, this friend here has helped us throughout samsara, which has no beginning in being our father and mother and the like. Now too he is our friend and helps us by giving us things like food, clothing, and somewhere to stay. And in the future as well he will be our friend and will help us. So this "friend" of ours has done us both good and wrong.

Now to sum up, the point about enemies and friends is that they both give help and both cause harm, and so when you see this, you will feel no desire to harm an enemy, nor any particular wish to help a friend. However, if you just leave it at that, this is "mindless impartiality," which brings neither harm nor benefit. Here what you must do is to see both enemies and friends as equal in having been your mothers, and to treat them as equal in both being objects to be helped. How does one meditate on this?

Recognizing Beings As Our Mothers

Wherever there is space, it is filled with sentient beings. Wherever there are sentient beings, they are immersed in karmic perceptions and suffering. And of all these beings tormented by karmic perceptions and suffering, there is not a single one who throughout time without beginning has not been our father, mother, friend, and loved one. Of all of them it is our present mother who is dearest to us, and this enemy of ours is no different: he has been our mother too, not just once but an unimaginable number of times, for as it is said:

To count one's mother's lineage with pills

Just berry sized, the earth would ne'er suffice. (Nagarjuna's Letter to a Friend, verse 68, last two lines.)

Imagine that you and your mother, or you and your enemy, were seated before an omniscient Tathagata. He would tell you, "This enemy and you in your last life were human beings, and he was your mother. In the life before that when you were gods he was your mother," and so on, one after the other, life after life. Even if you were to take this great earth and roll it into little balls the size of juniper berries and count them, you would run out of earth, but you would never finish counting the number of times this one enemy had been your mother. Why is this? Throughout samsaric existence, from time without beginning until now we have been going around in circles, and there is nowhere, not even a piece of ground the size of a hand, where we have not been born or have not died an inconceivable number of times. With the exception of gods and hell beings, which usually take miraculous birth, most beings are born from a womb, and if they are born from a womb, they cannot be born without a mother. It is not as though one being has been our mother and that is all: all sentient beings have been one another's mothers an inconceivable number of times, and so this enemy has been our mother many, many times. To reflect in this way is to "recognize beings as our mothers."

Remembering Their Kindness

Next we need to remember our mothers' kindness, for a mother is only ever kind; there is no such thing as a mother who is not. Even among the most ferocious wild beasts, like hawks and wolves, the females kill other animals to feed their offspring, and they care for them with kindness. One need hardly mention children born in a rich family, who have everything like food and clothing; even when the mother is a poor beggar she will look after her child with immense love and kindness. She will stay up long into the night with only the stars to cover her head; she will get up before dawn with only the frost for her shoes, hurrying along, the folds of her skirt whipping the backs of her legs, blood from her feet lying spattered on the ground, blood from her hands spilled on the stones; she will beg without shame or embarrassment, letting the dogs tear at her calves; and then, if there is just a small morsel of fat in the few poor scraps she gets, for which she has both suffered and caused harmful actions, she will give it to her child. From the one and only blanket she has, torn and tattered, she will find a piece that is thicker, and make her child's clothes or patch the ones it has.

When this present enemy of yours was in the process of becoming your mother, you were a *drizga* (A spirit feeding upon smell), a consciousness on the point of seizing another body, wandering in the intermediate state, roaming in search of the odor of food. Then, because of the conjunction of cause and condition, namely your past karma and your parents' having sexual intercourse, you entered the womb. For nine months and ten days your mother kept you in her womb. She endured hardship and put up with having to commit negative acts. She had to suffer and weep, alone and in secret silence. Her whole body felt as if it was being shaken and churned like milk for butter. She cared nothing for negative actions, her own suffering, or people's spiteful remarks. All the goodness in the food eaten by your mother and all the vital force in her body was channeled through her child's navel and provided the nourishment for its life, enabling its body to grow. All this constitutes *the kindness of producing your body*.

Next, when she had given birth, one might have said you were alive, but you could not even lift your head up; or one might have said you were dead, but there you were, breathing. You were just this tiny, tender, pudgy thing, which your mother, with all her kindness, managed to keep from dying when it could so easily die, and to keep from drying out when it could so easily desiccate and putrefy. And yet a mother feels the most tremendous delight and joy to think she has given birth to a child. Looking after you with a mind full of love, her face always beaming, calling to you in a sweet voice, with infinite care she lifted you onto her lap on the tips of her ten fingers. This is *the kindness of giving life without letting you die*.

Then, as a consciousness wandering in the intermediate state with no food in your mouth, no money in your hands, and no clothes on your back, you arrived in a home where you knew no one and no one knew you. This mother, so kind, gave you your first nourishment, her sweet breast milk: the essential goodness in this milk went into your eyes and at the moment of death will trickle from your eyes as teardrops. The grosser, non-nutritious part of your mother's milk stayed within your body and is what now allows you to absorb all the nutrition in the food you eat. Having enabled your body to grow, at the time of death this "vital force of the body" will be vomited out or else excreted.

Your first clothing was the warmth of your mother's body as she held you close to her. Then, when you could eat a little food, she gave you the very best of her food, the cream of the milk, the curds of the yogurt, the most tender and freshest pieces of meat, whatever was delicious and good to eat, and lots of it, chewing all the solid food herself before she put it in

your mouth. With her hand she wiped up all your excrement and dribble, with her hand she touched your belly to test whether you were hungry or full, and with her fingers she checked whether your food was too hot or too cold before she gave it to you to eat. She dressed her child in the best clothes, finding whatever she could that was soft and warm.

And yet your mother was stingy about making offerings to the Three Jewels above or giving to the needy below; she was stingy about making offerings for the dead and stingy with food and clothing for the living. And all of this without a care for her negative actions, her suffering, or the bad things people said about her. All the possessions and money she had amassed exclusively through negative actions and through craft and deceit she gave to her child. And still, even if she saw her child crowned in the kingdom of a Universal Ruler, she would never think it was good enough; if her child wanted food in his mouth, she would give him food; if he wanted money, she would give him money; and if he lacked clothes on his back, she would give him clothes. Without the slightest stinginess or second thoughts, your mother gave everything she had to you, her child. This is *the kindness of providing material needs*.

Later, when you could eat and crawl a little, she showed you how to eat properly, how to get dressed, how to put on your clothes the right way, how to adjust your belt, how to tie your shoelaces, how to walk when you did not know how, and how to talk when you did not know how, teaching you words like "Mummy" and "Daddy" and so on, teaching you all the right words you need in everyday life. So dear, so very precious was this little child to its mother that when she lay you down to sleep in your cot, for her it was as if she was tearing out her own heart, red and beating, from her chest and abandoning it in a field. From then she brought you up until you could stand up straight and finally became an adult. (Lit. "the shins become (as sturdy as) pillars and the down (on the body) becomes (like) stalks."). This is *the kindness of teaching you the ways of the world*.

These four--producing your body, giving life, providing material needs, and teaching you the ways of the world--are the four sorts of kindness from the worldly point of view that you should remember.

From the point of view of the sacred Dharma, this mother of yours, who is so very kind, brought even this precious human body, with the eighteen freedoms and advantages, into being. All the favorable conditions for practicing and attaining enlightenment--food,

clothing, somewhere to stay, and material needs--not one of them could you acquire by yourself without mother beings. Remember that these things are due to their kindness.

At the beginning of the Bodhisattvas' path, without mother beings as the object it would be quite impossible to arouse the supreme bodhichitta. In the middle, again without mother beings as the object there would be nobody on which to train in the infinite Bodhisattva activities. And in the end, without there having been an object for arousing bodhichitta nor anyone on whom to train, there would be no perfect Buddhahood. So from the Dharma point of view too, mother beings are extraordinarily kind.

So remembering their kindness involves remembering their kindness from both points of view--Dharma and worldly life.

Wishing To Repay Their Kindness

Next say to yourself, "Now, this mother of mine, who is so kind, who has such exceptional kindness, has always given the gain and victory to her child, both in the present and in the past. She has taken all the loss and defeat upon herself and looked after me with her tremendous kindness. Now I have met with the teachings of the Mahayana, I have been accepted as a disciple by a spiritual teacher and I know what is the right path and what is the wrong. So now it is my turn. My mother concerned herself with my well-being in the past, and now it is time for me, as her child, to concern myself with her welfare." This is wishing to repay their kindness, giving rise to the longing to repay your mothers' kindness.

When you have recognized your enemy as your mother, remembered her kindness, and aroused a longing to repay that kindness, then do the same with your own mother and father, your relatives, your brothers and sisters, and so on, until toward the end of the session you see all beings as equal, without any attachment to friends or aversion to enemies, because they have all been your mother. This is the meditation on boundless impartiality.

When you meditate by analyzing things like this, you may grow weary and feel disinclined to continue. Then, without following the past, without anticipating the future, and without prolonging the present thought, simply leave the mind just as it is, without any manipulation or meddling. This is the samadhi of impartiality.

If you wish to meditate with elaborations once more, then analyze again. In this way alternate analyzing and resting, and so practice the meditation of sustained calm.

The conclusion of the session is as usual.

In the breaks between sessions, focus on any beings who have attachment or aversion and recognize them as your mother, remember their kindness, and so on, as before. Say to yourself, "May their minds be free from attachment and aversion. If only they could be free from it. I myself shall be the one to free them." And pray to the Three Jewels that they find such freedom.

Next meditate on impartiality without concepts. Our body and all others' bodies are composed of minute particles, and our minds are simply a continuous succession of instants arising and ceasing and not lasting as long as the next instant: in absolute truth none of them has any inherent existence. Yet on the conventional level, out of this emptiness that cannot be qualified as anything there arises the whole variety of interdependent phenomena, unceasingly. So we are led to the conviction that emptiness and interdependent arising are both equal in their ceaselessness. To rest in that state, without any manipulation or meddling, is the way to develop profound insight. Furthermore, in all the breaks between sessions consider beings that quarrel on account of their attachment and aversion, and reflect on the four links again and again:

- The link of aspiration (Here Khenpo Ngakchung has changed the usual order of these first two links.) "May they be free from the attachment and aversion in their minds, at all times and in all situations";
- The link of the wish: "If only they could be free";
- The link of the commitment: "I myself shall be the one to free them";
- And with these three links, prayer to the Three Jewels (the fourth link).

When you have meditated properly on impartiality like this during the sessions themselves, your mind may start to change a little. But if you do not continue to reflect in the breaks between sessions, you will revert to your former bad habits, like iron that glows red when heated in the fire but turns dull and black when it is pulled from the flames and left on the ground. So it is even more important to meditate in the breaks than in the sessions themselves. After meditating like this on impartiality, give up aversion toward enemies in the post meditation as well, give up attachment to relatives and friends, and consider everyone equal, all of them being your mothers and fathers.

2. Love

With impartiality, we have quelled attachment and aversion and developed an even-minded attitude toward everyone, by virtue of their having been our mothers and fathers. Now we need to meditate on love. At the beginning of a session, we meditate by focusing on individual beings, one by one," and by the end of the session we should meditate on all sentient beings.

First of all, imagine that your real mother is actually in front of you, just the same, in every respect, as when she was alive. (Lit. "Actually in front of you, with all her aggregates, dhatus, and ayatanas, just as they were when she was alive.") This mother of yours has not only been your mother on this one occasion but an inconceivable number of times. Reflecting on the countless times she has been your mother, recognize that all beings have been your mothers, as we find in the verse "To count one's mother's lineage...."

Now remember her kindness. You did not drop out of the sky like a thunderbolt or sprout from the ground like a flower. Your mother conceived and nurtured your body, keeping you in her womb for nine months and ten days, and so on. All the goodness in the food she ate, like an extra piece added to the wick in a butter lamp, passed through your navel. So remember her kindness in producing your body.

Then, when giving birth, apart from her jaws, every joint in her body was stretched open. For at least a week afterward she suffered, and even the idea of making love filled her with fear. You, her child, suffered as if you were being pulled through a hole in a drawplate. When you were born you were as good as dead, apart from the fact that you were still breathing, as has been described above. You could not tell which of the six realms you had come from, nor did you know where you had landed. If at this point this woman, in all her kindness, had not cared for you, you surely would have died. First, she separated you from the placenta, washed you with a warm stream of milk, cut the umbilical cord, and when you could so easily have died, she did not allow you to die, and so on. So remember her kindness in giving life.

Next, think about how she gave you your first food, her sweet breast milk, and so on, and remember her kindness in providing all your material needs.

After that, your mother was always around you, her mind so full of love for you it was as if she had left her own heart on the ground. She looked after you, thinking only of helping you, and cared for you until you knew and could understand things properly. So remember her kindness in teaching you the ways of the world.

Next, reflect on your mother's kindness from the Dharma point of view. In providing you with a place to live and all your material needs, she is a "field of benefit." In being your extraordinarily kind mother, she is a "field for meditating on love." These are the sorts of benefits she has brought you.

Yet in the past you did not give her the same sort of help. Whenever your dear old mother gave you advice about everyday things, telling you what to do and what not to do, you did not see fit to listen to her. "You ugly, sunburned old crisp," you would say, "Why don't you just drop dead?" It was as if you were smashing her kindly hands with a rock, (A Tibetan expression for ingratitude.) and this kind of thing was all due to your failing to remember her kindness.

Now, after remembering our mother's kindness, we come to repaying that kindness. If you think about what it is that this mother of yours really wants, it is to be happy, to have every kind of happiness: a comfortable existence with plenty of food and clothes, somewhere to live, and everything else she might need in this life; all the happiness of rebirth in the higher realms as a god or human being; even the simple pleasure of a warm sunny day or a good cup of tea. She does not want to suffer. Yet she possesses neither the causes of happiness--faith, the determination to be free, and bodhichitta--nor the happiness that results, from the happiness of the higher realms of gods and humans up to the bliss of buddhahood, and she continuously indulges in the causes of suffering. This extraordinarily kind mother of yours, who has neither happiness nor the causes of happiness, is the object on which you should focus, while the form love takes in your mind is to think, "In this life and throughout all her series of lives, may this mother of mine have these three-faith, determination to be free, and the precious bodhichitta-which are the causes of happiness. If only she could have these. I shall be the one to ensure she has them," and to pray to the Three Precious Jewels that she may have them.

Also think, "May she have the resulting happiness, from that of the higher realms of gods and humans up to the bliss of perfect Buddhahood. If only she could have such happiness. I shall be the one to help her have it, "and pray to the Three Jewels that she may be happy, reciting prayers like:

*Woe is me! Compassionate Three Jewels,
Victorious Ones, whose minds are full of love,
On us who suffer in samsara's six realms*

Bestow your blessings now and make us free.

From the Karling Shitro prayer book for practice in four sessions.

These prayers were collated here in one place for the convenience of beginners looking for the texts.

*To the Master and Buddhas, guardians of wandering beings,
Who labor for the good of all that lives,
Those mighty ones who scatter every fear,
From this day forth I go for refuge.
In the Dharma that resides within their hearts,
That scatters all the terrors of samsara,
And in the multitude of Bodhisattvas,
Likewise I will perfectly take refuge.
Gripped by dread, beside myself with terror,
To Samantabhadra I will give myself;
And to Manjushri, the melodious and gentle, I entrust myself entirely.
To him whose loving deeds are steadfast, o my guardian,
Avalokita, I cry out from depths of misery,
"Protect me now, who am so full of sin."
Now to the noble one, Akashagarbha,
And to Kshitigarbha, from my heart I call.
And all protectors, great, compassionate,
To them I go in search of refuge.
And to Vajrapani, holder of the diamond,
The very sight of whom will rout
All dangers like the deadly host of Yama,
To him indeed I fly for safety.
Formerly your words I have transgressed,
But now I see these terrors all around.
To you indeed I come for help,
And pray you, swiftly save me from this fear.*

These are verses from the Way of the Bodhisattva, with a few words altered to suit the context.

*Courageous One, you who possess the power of compassion-
Linked as we are by the force of karmic connections from the past,*

Do not linger uncaring, neither neglect me, nor remain idle.

Look on me now with heartfelt love, compassionate lord of Buddhas.

From "Rudra's Lament and Confession"

When you feel permeated with happiness and bliss in this way, leave the mind as it is, without trying to stop thoughts and without following them.

Regarding the above, confidence in the law of cause and effect is the cause of being born in the higher realms, determination to be free is the cause of liberation, and bodhichitta is the cause of perfect Buddhahood.

All this, from recognizing beings as one's mother up to wishing that she possess happiness and its causes, is the analytic meditation. Leaving the mind without blocking thoughts or following them is the samadhi of love.

In the breaks between sessions, you should constantly practice loving deeds and words. Have loving thoughts, thinking, "I must bring these old mothers every temporary and ultimate happiness." Act lovingly toward the older generation and even your domestic animals, and avoid hitting them or mistreating them; talk to them lovingly, not harshly or with unpleasant words. As for loving thoughts, as much as you wish all possible temporary happiness and ultimate bliss for beings, you should actually do everything you can to achieve it.

To practice love without concepts is to arrive at a certainty and conviction that although subject, object, and action may well appear, they are without any intrinsic existence

3. Compassion

In meditating on compassion, the approach of Apu (*Apu* is a Tibetan honorific. Here it refers to Paltrül Rinpoche) and Lord Atisha is to begin by meditating on your present mother. According to Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, you meditate by concentrating on a sentient being on the point of being killed, such as a sheep going to the slaughter, or on someone who is sick or suffering, and then considering that they are either you or your old mother. Whichever way you choose will do.

Let us suppose that as a beginner you start by meditating on your own mother. Picture this old mother of yours in front of you, clearly, exactly as she is. Begin by acknowledging that

she has been your mother not only once but many times over. Then remember her kindness- in giving you your body, in providing your material needs, in putting up with all manner of difficulties and hardship and fondly looking after you, in watching over you by day and guarding you all through the night. And her kindness in teaching you the ways of the world: she taught you to talk when you did not know how to talk, how to walk when you could not walk, how to eat when you did not know how, and how to put on your clothes when you did not know how to get dressed; she cared for you from childhood to youth and from youth to adulthood, until you could really know and understand things. Then remember her kindness from the Dharma point of view, how the freedoms and advantages are all due to her, and so on, as before.

Next, give rise to a wish to repay her kindness. What is it such a kind mother as this would want? What she wants is to be happy, and yet she does not know how to achieve by herself the causes of happiness, namely faith, the determination to be free, and bodhichitta. She does not have a teacher, a spiritual friend, and even if she did have one, she would not carry out his instructions. It is just as the way of the Bodhisattva says:

They long for joy, but in their ignorance

Destroy it, as they would a hated enemy. (*Way of the Bodhisattva 1,28, last two lines. The first two lines make up the next quote below.*)

She destroys the very causes of happiness, positive actions, as if she had seen her greatest enemy. Though she has no wish to suffer, she indulges unhesitatingly in negative acts, the very causes of suffering:

Beings long to free themselves from misery,

But misery itself they follow and pursue.

She does not want any of the sufferings of the three worlds of samsara, not even the paltry discomfort of being struck by a tiny spark from a fire or pricked by a thorn. And yet she creates the very cause of suffering, negative actions: when she performs physical actions, they are unvirtuous; when she talks, her words are unvirtuous; and when she thinks, her thoughts are unvirtuous. So what she truly desires and what she does are completely at odds, and she is harmed directly on account of the truth of suffering and harmed indirectly on account of the truth of the origin of suffering. She has both the cause of suffering and the suffering that results: the suffering of this life sends her on her way, the suffering of the next life waits to greet her, and the suffering of the intermediate state helps her across.

And that is not all, for when the negative actions she has committed just for her child's sake alone are fully ripened--quarreling and disputing with people, fighting off dogs, and even just crushing a single head louse--she will have to wander amid the infinite sufferings of the hell realms. She does not even recognize the danger of negative acts and see that they are the cause of suffering; she does not recognize the benefits of positive actions; and so day and night, without a break, she surrounds herself continuously with suffering. When you think, "Poor thing, how terrible," it is this very kind mother who is the object of your compassion. So think, "May she be free from the suffering that results, the suffering of the three worlds of samsaric existence. If only she could be free. I shall be the one to free her," and pray, "Precious Three Jewels, our unfailing refuge, let her be freed from this suffering; show her your greatest compassion and power.

"Then think, "May she be freed from the cause of suffering, all her karma and negative emotions. If only she were free. I shall be the one to free her," and pray to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Meditate in this way, alternating analytic and resting meditation. Then meditate one after another on your father and sister and so on, and then on the relatives on your father's side, your brothers, and uncles, and the rest. At the end, destroy the three types of suffering of all beings who fill the whole of space.

Then consider the suffering upon suffering in the three lower realms, the suffering of change in the two higher realms of gods and humans, and the all-pervading suffering of everything composite in the two higher worlds. (The world of form and the formless world.)

Consider the specific human sufferings: the fear of meeting hated enemies; the fear of losing loved ones; the suffering of not getting what one wants; the suffering of encountering what one does not want; and the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness, and death, and so on. Consider how beings are dogged by these sufferings in this life, greeted by suffering in the next life and bounded by suffering in the intermediate state, and think, "May they be free from these sufferings and their causes. If only they could be free. I shall be the one to free them," and pray to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Then establish the certainty that in all this, though subject, object, and action appear, they have no intrinsic existence.

In between sessions, meditate with compassion for any beings you see.

4. Sympathetic Joy

The training in sympathetic joy also begins by focusing on one's own mother. Acknowledge her as your mother, reflect on her kindness, long to repay that kindness, and meditate on both love, the wish that she possess happiness, and compassion, the wish that she be free from suffering. Then meditate on joy.

Imagine that this old mother of yours has obtained food, clothing, somewhere to stay, wealth, possessions, and influence; she has good qualities, a good family, a good name, happiness, and well-being. Whatever little she has of each of these, she is the object or focus, while the mental attitude or form this takes is to consider how much these things make her happy, to consider how much she needs them, and to consider how indispensable they are to her. This is meditating on joy. Think, "Whatever well-being and its cause—virtue—however small, my old mother may have, may these never decline nor be lost but go on increasing more and more. And may the causes of happiness-positive actions-and the resultant happiness never leave her. If only they would never leave her. I shall be the one to make sure they do not leave her," and pray to the Three Jewels.

Think, "May this happiness and the causes of happiness she has obtained never leave her but increase more and more. May they increase so much that she attains temporarily the higher realms of gods and humans, and ultimately the lasting happiness of liberation and omniscience. If only these would increase. I shall be the one to make them increase," and pray to the Three Jewels that the causes of happiness and the happiness that results increase. Meditate in this way, alternating analytic and resting meditation. This will lead to the certainty that although subject, object, and action may appear, they have no intrinsic existence.

In between sessions, at all times and in all situations, whenever beings are happy and well, instead of being jealous, train in being joyful. With regard to your Dharma brothers and sisters who are engaged in study, reflection, and meditation, think, "May they never be separated from the happiness and good qualities that come from these. May these never leave them but go on increasing more and more; oh, that these things may never leave them. "If you meditate on sympathetic joy like this, there can never be any loss or decline in your own study, reflection, and meditation.

As the child of one's mother, it is one's duty to do everything to make her happy. So once you have the thought "All sentient beings are my mothers, and I am their child," if they do manage to achieve some happiness on their own without your having to do anything about it, be glad. Meditating like this, there is no way you can go on and on being jealous.