

THE CONTINUOUS PRACTICE OF BODHICHITTA: Nurturing One's Soft Spot

A. *Absolute bodhichitta practice*

Generally associated with awakening to the experience of shunyata, this practice introduces us to a fluid, open way of thinking and to the unlimited dimension of being. It is primarily a formal meditation practice based on shamatha-vipashyana (or mindfulness-awareness). By clearly seeing the illusory nature of thoughts and experience, things become flexible and workable. This essential openness is fundamentally inseparable from relative bodhichitta practice.

B. *Relative bodhichitta practice*

Generally associated with awakening compassion, this practice introduces us to the open and unlimited capacity to love and care about each other. There are two types: (1) practices of aspiring and (2) practices of entering.

1. *Practices of aspiring*

a. practices for cultivating the four limitless ones

- (1) unlimited friendliness (maitri)
- (2) compassion
- (3) joy
- (4) equanimity

b. formal meditation practice of tonglen

c. the three noble principles

- (1) in the beginning: start with the motivation of compassion
- (2) in the middle: maintain a nongrasping attitude
- (3) in the end: share the merit with all beings

d. the daily life practice of relative bodhichitta

- (1) arousing maitri and compassion
- (2) doing tonglen "on the spot"

2. *Practices of entering*

The daily life practices of the six paramitas, which lead us to the inseparable experience of shunyata and compassion.

1. generosity
2. discipline
3. patience
4. exertion
5. meditation
6. wisdom (prajña)

C. *Lojong practice*

The practice of working with the forty-nine slogans of mind training, which includes both absolute and relative bodhichitta practice.