

Antidotes to not understanding how to achieve Enlightenment:

Bodhicitta

(from In Search of the Stainless Ambrosia, Jewel Ornament of Liberation, Jewel Treasury of Advice and Transformation of Suffering)

by Khenchen Konchog Gyaltzen Rinpoche

It is not enough to wish others loving-kindness and compassion; we must have methods for effecting this attitude. These methods are known as absolute bodhicitta and relative bodhicitta. Absolute bodhicitta is a special insight into the pervading nature of emptiness - mind which is clear, profound, indestructible, and free from elaboration and afflictive emotions. In Vajrayana system, this realization is known as Mahamudra. Mahamudra is a vast and complex subject, so one needs great purification and dedication to understand and, especially, to realize it. Mahamudra dispels all confusion and clear the mind, like the sky free from all clouds, and lets us see it as it is. Relative bodhicitta consists of both the desire to reach Enlightenment for others, which is called aspiration bodhicitta, as well as taking the practical steps necessary to do it, which is called the action bodhicitta.

The supreme mind of bodhicitta is like an unspoiled seed.

Without it, it is impossible to achieve perfect Enlightenment.

Therefore, cherish the cultivation of the mind of mahayana.

This is my heart's advice.

(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)

Aspiration bodhicitta

Having aspiration bodhicitta is that one eagerly wishes to achieve Enlightenment (or the search for the pure wisdom of the Buddha) for the benefit of all sentient beings without discrimination. Wherever there are beings, there are afflicting emotions and karma, and where these exist, there are different levels of suffering. So we must cultivate the determination to free all beings from these sufferings.

There are four conditions for cultivating the mind of bodhicitta:

1. One should see the spiritual master as the Buddha himself : Visualize in front of you a jeweled throne supporting a lotus, sun and moon discs upon which seated the varja master in the state of Buddhahood. He is surrounded by the lineage lamas, and countless Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, yidams, and Dharma protectors. Meditate that all are complete forms of wisdom and compassion.
2. One should take refuge in the Mahayana way : Take refuge in the Mahayana way means that one should take refuge until Enlightenment is achieved.
3. One should practice the four immeasurable attitudes : They are loving-kindness, compassion, joy for others' peace and happiness and great equanimity.

Loving-kindness is the desire that all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness. The more you long for the happiness of all the beings, the more you feel no separation between them and yourself. All your body, speech and mind will form a field of loving-kindness towards all sentient beings. That means that when you act, you act sincerely. When you talk, you will use gentle words and speak the truth. When you think of others, you think of how of they might have happiness and peace. Thus all actions can be transformed into peace, into Dharma.

Loving-kindness is like a warrior victorious in battle.

In an instant, it annihilates all the hordes of maras without exception.

Meditate on all beings as your parents.

This is my heart's advice.

(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)

Compassion is the desire to free others from suffering and the causes of suffering. Compassion is the mind free from hatred. Flooded by afflictive emotions, beings create the cause of suffering. With the causes of suffering, there will surely be the results of suffering. Look at such causes and the immense sufferings as a result. Develop the compassionate wish that all beings as limitless as space be free from suffering and achieve Enlightenment, the ultimate peace.

Supreme compassion is like a skillful mother nurturing her child.

Abandoning comfort, it engages in the benefit of others.

Therefore, generate the courage of the altruistic thought.

This is my heart's advice.

(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)

Joy means to rejoice at others' peace and happiness and hope that they will increase. Pride, envy, jealousy are the real enemies of love and compassion, since they blind us to others' good qualities. Rejoicing at others' happiness is the antidote to those obscurations.

Equanimity means feeling neither hatred for enemies nor attachment to loved ones, but instead, feeling love and compassion for all beings equally. See all sentient beings as your parents, children, relatives, and friends who each bring us the opportunity for Enlightenment.

4. One should make offerings to accumulate merits and wisdom, do purification practice and rejoice in others' virtues. One should request that the wheel of teachings be turned, and that the master not enter nirvana until all beings are enlightened. One should dedicate all the merit of virtue.

Offer all your possessions and those of others. The best offering is one's root virtue and meditation practice, including the arising and completion processes.

Concerning purification practices, purify of motivation is most important. We must also purify all non-virtuous actions which have arisen from afflicting emotions such as the five heavy negative karmas. The method of purification exists through four powers: remorse, the practice of the antidote, the avoidance of evil, and reliance.

a) Remorse means thinking of how one has uselessly created negative karma, of how it has engendered suffering, and of the importance of separating oneself from non-virtue. For example, if you eat poison unintentionally, you immediately feel the need to cleanse yourself of it by any means. In the same way, we must at all costs rid ourselves of negative karma.

b) The practice of the antidote includes such meditation practices as compassion, wisdom, visualization and recitation of mantras, and especially the practice of Mahamudra.

c) The avoidance of evil means understanding that as negative action will bring immense suffering, one must absolutely avoid it.

d) The power of reliance includes taking refuge, cultivating bodhicitta and taking empowerments.

Even to practice one of these powers will help purify negative karma, so if one practices them all, one will definitely purify all negative karma. Vajrasattva meditation is one of the best methods of purification.

Rejoicing in others' virtues is the antidote to jealousy. Rejoice in the Buddha's activities, which have established beings in the Enlightenment state, as well as rejoice in the virtuous actions of all others.

By dedicating the merit, we bring together all virtues and great qualities of ourselves and others, and of the Buddhas of the Three Times, hoping that by this power all sentient beings will be freed of suffering and achieve complete Enlightenment.

The beneficial results of cultivating the aspiration path are

- Entering into the Bodhisattva family, one receives the Bodhisattva training that cuts the root of non-virtuous action.
- The seed of Enlightenment is planted within oneself.
- One achieves limitless merit and wisdom.
- One pleases all the Buddhas.
- One benefits all beings.
- One quickly achieves complete Enlightenment.

The practice of the aspiration path includes

- ? Not abandoning any sentient beings
- ? Recollecting the beneficial effects of bodhicitta
- ? Meditating that bodhicitta is the seed of Enlightenment, the wish-fulfilling gem, and the shelter in which all can seek safely.

To develop the strength of bodhicitta, one should

- Practice the two accumulations (merit and wisdom).
- Practice the bodhicitta attitude constantly through loving-kindness and compassion.
- Repeat the bodhisattva vow at least once a day.
- Recollect the discipline.
- Avoid the four negative actions and develop the four positive actions. The four negative actions are: lying to a spiritual master or other realized beings, causing regret or doubt in others' virtuous actions unnecessarily, abusing other bodhisattvas and deceiving other beings for one's own profit. The four positive actions are not lying to master or to other realized beings even at the risk of one's own life, establishing all sentient beings in virtuous Mahayana behavior, seeing all the bodhisattvas as the Buddha and making known their good qualities everywhere and selflessly benefiting all beings with pure motivation.

Aspiration bodhicitta is like a traveler setting out on a journey.

Before long, he will arrive at Buddhahood.

Therefore, make a pure aspiration.

This is my heart's advice.

(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)

The action bodhicitta

The action path is reached through the study and practice of the six paramitas. The word paramita comes from param, beyond the seashore, and ita, arrival across the ocean of samsara, and means the perfection of wisdom. It also implies achieving the state of Buddhahood and the method to do so. The six paramitas are: generosity, moral ethics, patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom.

The bodhicitta of activity is like a well-built channel.

Through that, one can - without care - perfect the two accumulations.

Merit will continually arise.

This is my heart's advice.

(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)