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A GUIDED MEDITATION ON RELATIVE BODHCITTA

The following is a transcript of one of two guided meditations from the *Guided Meditations on Relative Bodhicitta* CD. The audio files of this transcript are available for download free of charge on the Mangala Shri Bhuti website on the Listen webpage . If you would like to directly order the CD with both guided meditations for \$15 please visit our online recording store.

Shamatha means a calm abiding state without hindrances. The mind and the body are in this state, and the body is restful.

Most of you have probably experienced this state, so when you practice shamatha, you know you're not just searching through an ocean for some jewel that doesn't exist. That's important. The point of this guided meditation is to get to the shamatha state. Of course, this meditation has to be practiced over and over again, but from the beginning, based on your experience, you will know roughly how to get there.

Sit up straight. If you can sit in a full lotus like the Buddha under the bodhi tree, or in a half lotus, that is good. But what's more important is keeping your spine very erect. Sitting on a cushion can be helpful. You can join your hands on your lap, or, as in the Dzogchen lineage, put your palms on your knees. Keep your shoulders balanced and relaxed—not pulled back too far, and not too crunched in.

For the gaze, with eyes partly closed, look downward about two meters in front of you. You can breathe through your nostrils or your mouth. Your head is a little bit down, with your chin closer to your neck. Curl your tongue and

rest it against the back of your upper teeth. Or, if that's too difficult, just leave your tongue as it is.

Breathe very naturally. Don't breathe too hard, or too shallowly; and don't hold your breath. If your breath is not natural, it's important to make it so.

That is the physical posture. Every detail of the posture is significant. They all help clear the energy in the body and calm the mind. So let's first get the posture right.

If there is tension anywhere in your body, instead of trying to fix it, bring your mind there. Relax and let go of the tension with your out-breath. All tensions in the body are created by wind moving through. Bring your mind there, bring your awareness there, and let go of the tension when you exhale. Soon, you'll realize the tension is gone, unless it's a big tension. But even a big tension can be resolved, if you work this way, over and over.

Once you are comfortable in your body and feel that you are settling, start to count your breaths. Count up to 21, counting each out-breath and in-breath together as one. You can count with your fingers on each knee: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. Do two rounds of ten, and for the final number use your pinkie again.

Now don't move. Just be there. Check your mind. Is it calmer? Is it in the calm abiding state? Check your body. Is it in the calm abiding posture? If it's still not fully there, you can go back to counting.

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES

*May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness,
May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering,
May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.
May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice.*

1: EQUANIMITY

Now close your eyes. And think, “I’m going to develop a mind of limitless equanimity.”

Bring up someone you have resentment, anger, or judgments toward. With an exhale, let go of those feelings.

Then bring up another person toward whom you have neither aggression nor attachment. Make these two people equal in your mind, with no aggression or attachment to either.

Then bring up someone for whom you have a lot of love and care, but also a lot of attachment. With your out-breath, let go of the attachment. Let go of what tugs on your heart. Just keep your love and care. Love is a feeling of tender heart, tender connection. Care is similar, but with an emphasis on having that person’s best interest in your mind.

Now create this scene in your mind. You have a father, a mother, and a sworn enemy who’s about to kill you. According to this script, get the image as clear as possible in your mind. Reflect on the script, the storyline. You are the director and you are in the movie.

Reflect upon your relation to your father, to your mother, and to the sworn enemy who’s about to kill you. Feel the emotions of love, care, and attachment to your parents. Feel the fear, anger, and aggression toward your sworn enemy who’s threatening your life. Then dissolve the scene and immediately create a new one.

Now you are sitting on a porch holding your baby on your lap. A dog is coveting a fish that you are eating. You give it a piece of fish, but it wants more. You feel irritated. You kick the dog and say, “Shoo! Go away!” Your child is

crying. You rock your child and try to breastfeed as you eat. The dog won't away, which makes you more and more angry. Your child keeps crying. You feel your heart going toward your child's need, as you breastfeed and rock to calm the child down. And you are trying to finish your lunch. Create this scene vividly, reflecting on the script.

Then, all of a sudden, you realize the fish you are eating is your previous life's father. The dog you are kicking is your previous life's mother. The child you are holding is your previous life's sworn enemy, who killed you.

Look at your relations to these beings and your feelings toward them. See how they have changed from one lifetime to another. See how there is no basis for any of the solid feelings you have toward enemies and loved ones, no basis for all your attachment and hatred.

Then come back to the people of your present life from the first contemplation: the person you resented, the neutral person, and your loved one. With your out-breath, let go of your attachments to your loved one even more. Keep just the tender love and care.

Then try to bring that tender love and care to the neutral person, reflecting on how he or she has been similarly dear to you in past lives.

Then think that the person toward whom you've had resentment, anger, and judgments, has also been, in many lifetimes, a dear loved one. So why not spread your love and care to this person?

If you are struggling, know that you are just struggling with your mind. Know that this mind, which is struggling to hold on, is the cause of all your suffering. So put more effort into working with your mind.

If you can extend your tender love and care to these three people equally, then spread it even more, extend it to all sentient beings. Spread it out limitlessly, like the limitless sky. Extend it to all beings that live. And then stay there,

with the calm abiding feeling of equanimity, and with the tender love and care.

Now check your mind. Compare it to how it was before. Is it more clear, alert, and calm? If it is more clear, alert, and calm, where does that come from? It comes from your concentration, your practice of shamatha with the four immeasurables as the object. Concentration on the script and the scene unfolds your mind. Make a note of your mental state.

2: *LOVING-KINDNESS*

Then think, “Now I am going to practice loving-kindness.” Create another scene. This time you are living in a city like New York. You have your father, your mother, your wife or husband, your children, and your close brothers and sisters living nearby you. Get that scene clear in your mind. Work on the script to make the scene clear and vivid.

Then reflect in your mind what happens to your father, to your mother, to your husband or wife; what happens to your children, to your close brothers and sisters, to your relatives and friends. Reflect on how what happens to them concerns you. If something good happens to them, you are happy. If something bad happens to them, you are sad, pained. Reflect on how in your daily life you wish your children to be happy; you do everything you can to make them happy. Reflect on how you want your spouse to be happy; you want all the causes and conditions for your spouse to be happy. You go through your whole day trying to cater to your loved ones’ happiness. Reflect on how you want your parents to be happy; how you want your brothers and sisters to be happy; how you want your friends and relatives to be happy. You cater to their happiness, doing anything you can to bring about the right causes and conditions.

This is called loving-kindness. It is not attachment, because attachment is to yourself more than to them. Loving-kindness is just focused on them. Realize how one is clean, while the other is not.

Then reflect on your own desire for happiness. That desire is always there. The search for the causes and conditions to fulfill your happiness is always there. This desire for happiness and its causes and conditions is what you naturally extend to your loved ones.

Now think about how all the people in New York have that desire for happiness and are searching for its causes and conditions. At first, you can exclude your enemies and the people you dislike. Think about all the people running around on the street and riding the subways—the New Yorkers, the tourists, everyone. Embrace their wish to be happy as your wish. Embrace their search as your search.

Extend that loving-kindness, which you already know how to extend to your loved ones, to all the people in New York. For the time being, you can exclude your enemies from this wish, unless you don't need to.

Extend that loving-kindness to all the people in New York. Feel their wish and search for happiness as deeply as you feel your own. Feel how their wish is always there. Feel how much they are struggling in their search for happiness.

Create scenarios about how much they are struggling. Create realistic scenarios about their search for happiness. Whenever they move their body even one inch, it is in search of happiness. Think about how early they have to get up, how late they have to go to bed. Think about how hard they work, all through the day, for that happiness. Feel their struggle in search of happiness.

Wish them to have the happiness they are searching for. Imagine how happy they would be if they could fulfill their happiness. Imagine how happy you would be, as a witness to their struggle. Imagine how much relief you would feel if they found that happiness.

That is your natural loving-kindness. Embrace that, and wish all of them to be happy, and to have the causes and conditions of happiness that they are searching and struggling for.

Now extend that wish, those warm, kind feelings, to all the people in New York, and include those you dislike. Try to extend it to those who have caused you harm and pain. Reflect on how this is all due to karma, which always changes. Reflect on how your enemies were once no different from the people you think of as neutral, or from your close ones. They have also been close to you. So work specifically on being kind to them. Devote some time to working on your mind specifically to be kind to them. Reflect on the equanimity scenario.

Why do we feel resentment or anger? It is because we are hurt. Can hurt or pain come about without our own karmic involvement, either in this life or the last life? No. So take responsibility for your karma, and in exchange for your pain, extend loving-kindness. Work on the pain, work on the aggression, work on the judgment, let go of them when you exhale.

Make any thoughts going toward your enemies be kind. Think, "May they find their happiness, may they find their sources of happiness." Work to have kind thoughts, kind feelings, a kind heart toward all the people of New York, including the ones you didn't use to have these thoughts about.

Realize how all beings in samsara, in the universe, have this longing to be happy. They are all searching for happiness. So extend thoughts and feelings of loving-kindness toward all beings, limitless as space. Even though you cannot count all the beings, extend to all them.

Then let go of conceptual thought. Just be with your state of mind. See where your mind is now, how it is calmer, clearer. You have not only more peace in your mind, but a

deeper, more tender heart. Know that that comes from your shamatha practice of the four immeasurables.

3: *COMPASSION*

Then think, “Now I’m going to meditate on compassion.” Take pleasure in your mind. Enjoy what you are doing with your mind. And then create another scenario.

You are wherever you are, say Los Angeles. You have parents, a spouse, children, friends. Somehow your child has gone down the wrong path. Your child has gotten into drugs and gangs; has come under the influence of negative friends; has committed a crime against other people; is in prison. Your child is about to receive capital punishment.

Your heart goes out so much to your child. You feel so much compassion. Feel how you would want to save your child from such punishment. You would do anything to find a solution, so that your child would not be executed. How would you feel in the day, how would you feel at night? Whom would you plead? Whom would you solicit?

Though this scenario is not real for you, it does happen, and it is real for those it happens to. Putting yourself in their shoes makes you feel so compassionate, so concerned, so deeply wanting to save the child, willing to do anything.

Realize this is your mind, your compassionate mind. Recognize the compassionate potential within you. Compassionate mind can manifest in you. Then go back to the scenario.

Forget that you are here imagining. Be as if you are there. Feel all the emotions. The time is coming closer. You feel tremendous compassion as the time approaches. Day and night you think about how to save your child. What can you do? Are you angry? Who can you get angry with? Can you get angry with the law, the legislators, the child himself or herself? Can you get angry with the friends, with yourself? Who can you get angry with, and what is the point of getting angry?

So you can only feel tremendous compassion, which is your heart going to the pain about to be inflicted on your child. You imagine what your child must be going through, and you go through it as well. You feel vulnerable, but still look for any possible ways to save your child.

You are willing to sacrifice anything. If you could sell your house and save your child, you would be willing. If you could sell your car and save your child, willing. If you could use all your savings and save your child, willing. Look at your mind, willing to do so much out of compassion. Because of compassion, your mind is not tight, but very generous. If you have to smile, you will smile. If you have to plead, you will plead. If you have to do anything, you will do it, because of the urgency to save your child.

Now dissolve that scene. Create a scene of animals being lined up to be slaughtered right in front of you. They can't run, they can't escape. They have no control over their life. They can't say what they like or what they don't like. They are about to be slaughtered for food, for clothing, for their bones.

These animals don't want to suffer. They go through all their suffering just as your child does. So why not have the same compassion?

In this way, generate compassion toward all the animals who are about to be slaughtered. Today alone, how many chickens will get their heads chopped off? Think about that and extend your compassion toward them. Wish them to be free. Wish them to be free from any karma they have created.

Think about all the pigs in the world that will be killed just today. Wish them to be free. Wish them to be free from such suffering, and from the causes of suffering that they have created. Think about all the cows and bulls that will be slaughtered just today. Extend your compassion to them. Wish them to be free from suffering and the karma of suffering. Think about all the lambs, sheep, and goats that

will be slaughtered today. Extend your compassion to them and wish them to be free from suffering and the karma of suffering.

Think about all the seafood that, today alone, will be caught and consumed. In their wish to be free from suffering, these creatures are no different from your own child. Wish them to be free from suffering and the karma of suffering.

Be willing to at least practice compassion. At least plead to the buddhas and bodhisattvas to come to these animals' aid. Solicit anyone who has any power to come and help them. Dedicate all your merit on their behalf. Vow to dedicate all your merit to empty the suffering of samsara.

Then go to all the different realms at your leisure. In a similar way, reflect on the sufferings there, and extend your compassion to those beings: in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the human realm, the asura realm, and the god realm. Beyond these, in the form realm and the formless realm, there are the suffering of change and the suffering of everything composite. So extend compassion to all beings and wish them to be free from all suffering. Wish that their karma to be caught in the circle of existence come to an end.

Wish that the suffering of samsara come to an end for each and every being. Plead to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Solicit all virtuous beings to have compassion. Dedicate all the merit you have accumulated or will accumulate, in the past, present, and future, on the behalf of beings.

And then let go of the conceptual mind and just rest. Reflect upon your mind. See how it has become awake, agile. See how your heart, which was previously hard as a rock, has become soft, tender, moist with compassion.

This is your compassionate mind. This mind comes from the practice of shamatha on immeasurable compassion. Do not mistake this for suffering. This compassion ends all your suffering and all the suffering of beings. It is the seed of

Buddhahood. A single teardrop falling from your eye purifies many lifetimes of negativity. So don't be afraid to cry on behalf of these beings.

This time you are crying for beings. In all our past lifetimes, every time we have cried, we have cried for ourselves. This time, the tears are the same, but their source is different. We have cried so much for ourselves, that if we gathered all our tears, they would be equal to an ocean. But there has been no benefit. A single teardrop from this kind of compassionate cry purifies so much of our wrongdoing. So be happy that you have the compassionate mind. And then rest again.

4: SYMPATHETIC JOY

Then think, "Now I am going to meditate on sympathetic joy." Create a scenario of immense suffering in samsara, the kind of suffering that we all experience cycling through the six realms.

Create a scenario of two people suffering in the environment of hell. They are pulling a big cart full of heavy objects by straps tied to their foreheads. The person on the right thinks, "Since we both have to be here and suffer pulling this big load on our foreheads, why don't I do it alone?" So he asks Yama, "May I pull this alone and give my friend a break?" And Yama says, "All beings suffer for their own karma. No one can take another's karma." Yama smacks that person's head, and he becomes free from hell.

That person in hell was the Buddha, our own Buddha. That was the first time the altruistic mind was born in his heart. From that point, he went through five hundred negative lifetimes and five hundred positive lifetimes as he practiced the six paramitas and perfected the Bodhisattvayana path. In the end, under the bodhi tree, he became enlightened; he became free from the suffering of samsara and the circle of existence. And then, like the sun,

he illuminated the world, where there is so much ignorance, by his wisdom.

So rejoice in his freedom. Rejoice in his enlightenment and the causes of his enlightenment. Rejoice in all the benefit that he brings to the world.

Rejoice in the similar altruistic mind of all the bodhisattvas. Rejoice in their purification of the obscurations of samsaric mind, and in the freedom and qualities that they have gained. Rejoice in the shravaka arhats' and the pratyekabuddhas' abandonment of samsara. Rejoice in their cessation of samsara and its causes, and in the peace and bliss of their state of mind. Realize that somebody has done this. So why not rejoice as if it were your own accomplishment?

In samsara there is no ultimate happiness and freedom. You shouldn't think that there is when there isn't. Nonetheless, you can understand that what's not your cup of tea could be someone else's. You can serve a cup of tea the way someone else likes it, as long as there is no harm.

So rejoice in any kind of freedom or happiness that beings in samsara have. Rejoice in the happiness of Brahma, Indra, the gods and goddesses. Rejoice in the happiness of human beings who have wealth, leisure, food, housing, clothing, name, fame, power, family, children, good physique, talent, reputation, glory. Rejoice fully in anyone in samsara who has anything positive, that they enjoy as their cup of tea. Wish to serve by dedicating yourself to the welfare of all beings in samsara, and to bringing them out of samsara.

Rejoice without any hesitations, jealousy, or competitive mind. Samsara is so full of suffering, so if anyone gains any freedom or happiness, why not rejoice, even if it's within samsara and the realm of delusion? You don't want to be caught in that delusion, but you can still see what is a cup of tea for others and rejoice in serving that. You want to be a spiritual person who realizes delusion is

delusion and obtains the state of natural nirvana. Yet one who prefers hot water to espresso can still serve espresso to those who enjoy it.

So with this attitude, rejoice in anyone in samsara who has any freedom or happiness by any means. Wish them to have more and more; never decreasing, always increasing. And then wish them to be ultimately free from the suffering of samsara.

Then let go of your contemplations. Come back to your state of mind and see whether it is happy, gay. Know that this happy state comes from your vicarious satisfaction in what others have. This is the true state of happy, gay mind. It is the cleanest state of mind. You can always maintain this by practicing sympathetic joy, taking vicarious satisfaction in others' happiness and freedom.

Know that all these capacities are in your mind. Your mind has the capacity to concentrate. You can visualize the scene, which is called *nampa*. In your mind, you can run through a script, which is called *migpa*. *Nampa*, *migpa*, and concentration (*tsechik*) make the shamatha, or *shiné*, practice come out of your mind.

If you have the obstacle of having a wild mind and going off, you have to bring your mind back. If your obstacle is sleepiness and not being able to keep up, you have to keep up by doing it. But if you keep practicing, then most of the time, you will have no obstacles. If you concentrate on the scenes and the script, and work with the states of wildness (*göpa*) and dullness (*chingwa*), the capacity of *shiné* will naturally be there.

And now, having practiced shamatha based on the four immeasurables, we must give birth to aspiration bodhicitta. To do so, recite these lines three times:

*Just as all the buddhas of the past
Embraced the awakened attitude of mind,
And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas
Step by step abode and trained,*

*Just so, and for the benefit of beings,
I will also have this attitude of mind,
And in those precepts, step by step,
I will abide and train myself.*

Now close your eyes and make a genuine wish to be enlightened like the Buddha Shakayamuni, to save all beings from the suffering of samsara, and bring them to their own state of enlightenment.

That is the instruction on the shamatha practice.

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