



VISION

Five Wisdom Energies practice is based on the traditional buddhist teachings of the five buddha families and a basic attitude of openness or friendliness called "maitri." Formerly called Maitri Space Awareness practice, it was first created and developed under the guidance of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

FIVE ENERGIES IN OUR WORLD

The energies of both the outer, physical world and the inner, psychological world can be experienced as five different archetypal patterns or families. These families can manifest as either sanity or neurosis, intelligence or confusion. Each energy manifests in the world in many ways—colors, personality types, emotional tones, areas of the body, sense perceptions, the elements, types of landscapes, and seasons. In becoming familiar with the vivid and dynamic quality of each energy style, one begins to see its inherent wisdom.

THE PRACTICE

The practice is done by maintaining a particular posture in a colored environment, either with glasses or in specifically designed rooms. Each posture evokes a pattern of energy specific to each of the five Buddha families, and both the “neurotic” and “sane” aspects are experienced directly. Sitting meditation provides the necessary settledness, spaciousness, and clarity to interact fully with the energies and encourages integration of the energies and points out how to work with those energies in everyday life. A shift in viewpoint begins to occur—from seeing these qualities as neurosis to seeing them as inherent wisdom. In this way, one discovers maitri, or loving kindness, toward oneself and others.

LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE

This practice cultivates:

- precise and expansive awareness
- the capacity to accommodate the full spectrum of human experience
- a compassionate attitude
- skill in benefiting others

The journey with the practice can go through various stages:

- becoming more aware of our personality patterns and making friends with ourselves
- becoming aware of other people’s styles and developing compassion for them
- transmuting our energy through intensification to experience a more sane version of our style and become more discriminating of others’ styles



THE ROOMS

Five specially designed rooms with different architecture, color, and lighting highlight one of each of the five energy styles inherently existing in the practitioner. The buddha room is a muted white with indirect lighting. The vajra room is a deep blue with narrow horizontal windows. The ratna room is a golden yellow with huge circular windows. The padma room is an enticing red illuminated by large rectangular windows. The karma room is a brilliant green with a green light coming from an overhead octagonal window. A specific posture is maintained within each of the rooms.

THE MAITRI GLASSES

While the practice in the rooms is done individually, group practice is the rule whenever the rooms are not available, the maitri glasses are then used.

ENERGY EXPLORATION AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

In Maitri Five Wisdom Energies practice, we discover our relationship to the energies simply and directly through the basic elements of experience: body, emotions, and environment.

Exploring the energies in experiential situations gives people the opportunity to vividly see their energetic qualities as they arise. Creative expression is a skillful way of contacting the energies more fully, making them more vivid, and bringing them into our daily life. Moreover, the discipline of creating art focuses and embraces experience. Art expression of all kinds—poetry, journal writing, music, movement, acting and visual art—can become a mirror to see one's actions more clearly.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Maitri Five Wisdom Energies practice is a vehicle for self-discovery and a ground for working with others. It is for anyone who desires to live their life more fully and have skillful ways to relate with others. Because the teachings of the Five Energy styles are basic, they can be useful personally as well as professionally.

- People interested in personal growth
- Helping Professionals (mental health, arts therapists, facilitators, mediators)
- Educators (teachers, principles and administrators)
- Leaders of learning organizations
- Artists (visual art, dance, theater, and music)

Since 2002 the Five Wisdom Energies Practice is part of the core curriculum of the Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies. It is presented as an experiential introduction to Vajrayana. It is part 4 of the first cycle of studies.



COMMENTARY

1. Fundamentally, Maitri practice has a mahayana flavor with a vajrayana view. It works with the mahayana understanding of maitri, or friendliness toward oneself and others, within the context of space awareness practice, which is associated with Mahamudra and Ati teachings. However, it can be presented and experienced in terms of the three yanas:
 - hinayana – making friends with oneself, understanding patterns, mirror quality;
 - mahayana – developing compassion for others,
 - vajrayana – practitioners roar becomes the Lions Roar, works with co-emergence, an understanding of space, a skillful means to develop Mahamudra and Ati realization.
2. In terms of body speech and mind, Maitri practice can be viewed as follows: body - posture, environment, community container, schedule, practiced staff; speech - energy, community, communication, expression, working with others, exchange; mind- space.
3. The understanding of the word space can be seen as follows: vipashyana - space around thoughts, spaciousness; vajrayana - solidity of space, the blue pancake, conventionally ego is solid and space is to be manipulated; here, space is solid and we're open/fluid. Three aspects of space:
 1. indestructible (it's solid),
 2. accommodating (totality),
 3. stops ego on the spot (space equated with death). In practice, the body can be experienced as hollow and space as solid.
4. Awareness in this practice is a twenty-four-hour-a-day attentiveness to whatever is arising. From an Ati point of view space and awareness are inseparable.
5. A community container allows for both intensification of energy and the sense of accommodation of that energy: the danger surfaces as the maitri permeates. The role of community in the practice is a very mahayana approach: relationship, communication, expression, humor, relating to earth, living together, eating, potential for more collaborative efforts, working with creative expression.
6. Though the basic practice is done as presented above, there are diverse contexts or arenas for programs. They are as follows: 1. Public and vajrayana programs at Shambhala Centers and practice centers, 2. Education and professional training for therapists, health professionals, educators, artists, business people, 3. Therapeutic work (Maitri Therapeutic Community (residential), Maitri Therapeutic Groups), 4. Alternative settings (personal growth centers, etc.)
7. Maitri works with the five Buddha families as a practice but also acknowledges that the teachings of the five Buddha families are in the public domain and available for anyone to work with as they wish.