

## Drepung Loseling Monastery's Spiritual Development Program

### The Foundation Series; April 11, 2020

#### Class Four: *The Four Immeasurables--Love, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity*

##### The four immeasurables: an introduction

They are cultivated to extend towards immeasurable sentient beings with a mind free of bias, and, in their standard forms, are states of jhana that supersede the minds of desire realm. Also known as 'Brahmaviharas', they are peaceful resting places for our mind. *Love* is characterized by a feeling of friendliness. *Compassion* is characterized by a feeling of concern over suffering. *Joy* is characterized by taking delight in the success and fortune. *Equanimity* is characterized by a balanced mind with space for proper appreciation of the situation.

##### Application in our conventional relationships with others in daily life

*Love* should be our basic attitude towards the beings. When seeing sentient beings' suffering, we should respond with *compassion*, thus abandoning fear and disgust, and do what we can to be of assistance. When we witness their happiness, success, virtue, and good qualities, our response should be *joy*—the opposite of jealousy. When our aim for others' welfare is accomplished, we remain balanced and *equanimous*. We should also practice equanimity when others are not receptive to the help we extend to them.

##### Pali Tradition:

###### How to generate love:

Begin with yourself with the goal to generate love towards all others. Recite the formula: "May I be happy and free from suffering. May I be free from hostility, affliction, and anxiety. May I live happily."

Next, move on to cultivate love for someone you respect and hold in high regard.

Gradually extend your love to someone dear to you.

Then to a neutral person.

Next, to an enemy, someone you are hostile or critical of (though not every one of them reciprocates the same).

(If you can't get past these disturbing feelings, return to the previous persons, and come back gradually to the enemy).

Next, break down the barriers by seeing the five individuals as equal and generate love equally.

Then extend to people living in one direction, beginning with one dwelling, slowly moving to the rest.

This way, direct love to the four cardinal directions, one at a time, and then to the intermediate directions, and then above and below, pervading the entire world.

Then extend everywhere without specifying directions, realms, social status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender. etc.

**What to do if hostility persists:**

(If you can't get past these disturbing feelings, return to the previous persons, and come back to the enemy).

Remember the disadvantages of hostility. Dwelling in animosity is self-sabotaging.

Determine to remain unaffected, and try to imbue your mind with love.

Reflect on the person's good qualities when he is in a congenial situation.

Reflect on the harmful karma he is creating and the suffering that will result from it.

Resort to reasoning along the line of ultimate truth: what is there to be really angry at?

Push yourself to make a gift to the person.

Recite the formula: "May you be happy and free from suffering. May you be free from hostility, affliction, and anxiety. May you live happily,"

When the recitation becomes mechanical, use your own words.

Imagine one's enemy experiencing the happiness you wish him to have.

**How to generate compassion:**

Contemplate the disadvantages of lacking compassion and advantages of having it.

Begin with yourself as an example with the goal to generate compassion towards all others.

Then move on to someone in great suffering, someone you can directly see in person, or someone creating horrendous destructive karma, even if he appears happy at the moment.

Even if they are not experiencing gross suffering at the moment, reflect on their condition of being under the control of afflictions and karma.

Gradually extend your compassion to someone dear to you.

Then to a neutral person.

Then an enemy ...

**How to generate joy:**

Begin with yourself as an example with the goal to rejoice in the goodness of all others.

Gradually extend your joy towards a dear person who is good-natured and happy, and whose happiness and success is worthy of rejoicing at.

Then to a neutral person.

Then an enemy ...

**How to generate equanimity:**

Begin with a neutral person.

Then move on to a dear one.

Then an enemy.

Then oneself ...

**Sanskrit Tradition**

***Short version:***

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes. (*Love*)

May all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes. (*Compassion*)

May all sentient beings not be separated from sorrow less bliss. (*Joy*)

May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment, and anger. (*Equanimity*)

***Long version:***

***Love:***

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had happiness and its causes.

May they have these.

I shall help them to have these.

May I be inspired to be able to do so.

***Compassion:***

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from suffering and its causes.

May they be free.

I shall help them to be free.

May I be inspired to be able to do so.

***Joy:***

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were never parted from higher rebirth and liberation's excellent bliss.

May they never be separated from these.

I shall help them to be never separated from these.

May I be inspired to be able to do so.

***Equanimity:***

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.

May they abide in this.

I shall help them to abide in this.

May I be inspired to be able to do so.

The phrase "and its causes" is explicitly added when generating love and compassion, so that the sentient beings will create causes for happiness and cease creating causes for suffering.

**Signs to look for success or failure in the cultivation of four immeasurables**

*Love:* We succeed if it eliminates malice/hatred, and fail when it degenerates into selfish affection or attachment.

*Compassion:* We succeed if it reduces cruelty, indifference, complacency and fail when it degenerates into personal distress.

*Joy:* We succeed if it reduces jealousy and boredom, and fail when it degenerates into over excitement over meaningless experiences.

*Equanimity:* We succeed if it makes anger and attachment subside, and fail when it degenerates into apathy and indifference.

**The role of wisdom understanding emptiness**

Combining the four immeasurables with wisdom is done by viewing their agents, objects, and actions as empty of inherent existence as well as by remembering the constancy of change.

**Far and near enemies of each of these four qualities, their opposites and impostors:**

**Loving-kindness:** ill-will/possessive love; **Compassion:** cruelty/personal distress; **Sympathetic joy:** envy or jealousy/frivolous joy; **Equanimity:** anger-attachment/indifference or apathy.