



静心学堂丛书

The Mindful Peace Academy Collection

中英双语 Chinese-English Edition

四无量心的观修

The Contemplative Practice of the Four Immeasurables



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四无量心，即慈、悲、喜、舍四种愿心，且每一种都是无量的，即慈无量心、悲无量心、喜无量心、舍无量心。具体发愿内容为：“愿诸众生永具安乐及安乐因；愿诸众生永离众苦及众苦因；愿诸众生永具无苦之乐，身心怡悦；愿诸众生远离贪嗔之心，住平等舍。”四无量心虽是声闻乘的修行内容，但和大乘菩萨道“无缘大慈，同体大悲”的精神相通，也是培养菩萨情怀的重要内容。

那么，如何认识并修习四无量心？如何将这四句话变成自己的生命实践？

一、四无量心和三乘佛法

平常人虽然也有慈悲
但往往是狭隘而有分别的
纯度、广度、力度都不足
如何让这一念慈悲无限扩大
圆满佛菩萨那样的大慈大悲
需要发起“我要利益一切众生”的广大愿心
并以空性见去除其中杂质，提升愿心品质

三乘，即佛法修行的三个层次，分别是人天乘、声闻乘和菩萨乘。那么，四无量心和三乘修行是什么关系呢？

从人天乘的角度，修四无量心可以成就广大福报，在世间财源广进、事业顺利、家庭美满、人际关系和谐。更重要的是，未来能招感生天之福。四无量心又称四梵住，是大梵天的品德。在印度各宗教中，大梵天是神格最高的。具足四无量心，即与梵天同德，能生梵天。这在不少佛典都有记载，如《长阿含经》的“修四无量心，身坏命终，生梵天上”，《增一阿含经》的“行四梵行，慈悲喜护，于是寿终，得生梵天”，《佛本行集经》的“行四梵行，命终已后，生于梵宫”。

从声闻解脱道的修行来说，修四无量心可以成就无量心解脱。《中阿含经》说：“若有沙门、梵志在无事处，或至树下空安静处，心与慈俱，遍满一方成就游。如是二三四方，四维上下，普周一切。心与慈俱，无结无怨，无恚无诤，极广甚大，无量善修，遍满一切世间成就游。如是悲、喜心与舍俱，无结无怨，无恚无诤，极广甚大，无量善修，遍满一切世间成就游，是谓无量心解脱。”《杂阿含经》也说：“若比丘修习慈心，多修习已，得大果大福利。云何比丘修习慈心得大果大福利？是比丘心与慈俱，修念觉分，依远离，依无欲，依灭，向于舍。乃至修习舍觉分，依远离，依无欲，依灭，向于舍。”

从大乘菩萨道的修行而言，四无量心中的慈和悲，正是发起菩提心的基础。《道次第》关于菩提心修行的七因果中，就是由知母、念恩、报恩，而能修慈、修悲、修增上意乐，进而导向菩提心。从另一个角度说，修习菩提心又能圆满慈悲。平常人虽然也有慈悲，但往往是狭隘而有分别的，纯度、广度、力度都不足。如何让这一念慈悲无限扩大，圆满佛菩萨那

样的大慈大悲？需要发起“我要利益一切众生”的广大愿心，并以空性见去除其中杂质，提升愿心品质。

平等舍心，正是空性见的特征之一。凡夫做事都会带着我法二执，带着我相、人相、众生相、寿者相，总觉得我做了多少事，给了他人多少帮助，始终在二元对立的关系中，是有限且有漏的。只有不执著四相，不执著自己在度化众生，修习慈悲才能成为真正的菩萨行。

可见，四无量心和三乘佛法关系密切。

二、慈无量心

从个人来说

慈心使我们内心调柔
远离不良情绪，有益身心健康

从人际关系来说

慈心使我们处处为他人着想
避免自私自利、自以为是等凡夫串习
从经营企业来说，同样需要慈心利他

对内可以得到员工支持

对外可以得到大众认可

1. 慈的语义

慈，是与乐，给予他人快乐。无量，即广大无边。“愿诸众生永具安乐及安乐因”，就是发愿帮助一切众生，希望他们都能得到快乐，更重要的是，具足产生快乐的因。在因上努力，才能源源不断地招感乐果。

生起慈心的前提，首先是不讨厌众生，否则就不会希望对方过得开心；其次是不恼害，任何情况下都没有伤害对方的念头。但仅仅这样还不够，有些人虽然不讨厌也不恼害众生，但对众生形同陌路，毫无感觉，也是无法主动生起慈心的。这就需要把心打开，接纳众生，对他们的苦乐感同身受，才能进一步培养

慈爱之心，就像对待自己的至爱亲朋那样，真诚希望众生得到利益和安乐。

修习慈心要摆脱两种心理，一是贪著，一是嗔恨。慈心来自爱，但世间的爱是夹杂贪著和染污的。比如我们对孩子、父母、亲友的爱，虽然强烈，但因为建立在某种特殊关系上，往往带有不同程度的贪著。尤其在夫妻之间，还会因为爱产生极端的占有欲和排他性。所以这些爱是有副作用的。而慈心没有任何贪著和占有，纯粹只是希望众生快乐，不加分别，不求回报。如果修慈心时进入贪著、占有的状态，就意味着这种修习是失败的。进一步，还要克服嗔恨，这是修习慈心的最大障碍。只有彻底止息嗔心，才代表慈心的圆满成就。所以从佛教角度来说，一个爱憎分明的人，慈心是修不圆满的。哪怕他爱再多的人，只要其中还夹杂贪著或嗔恚，就不是真正的慈无量心。

2. 安乐及安乐因

修习慈心是希望众生得到安乐和安乐因。那么，

人生有哪些安乐？简单地说，有现前乐和究竟乐两种。现前乐，包括内在的身心健康，外在的诸事顺遂，是世人追求并为之努力的。但我们要知道，这些不过是人生的小确幸，是对痛苦的暂时缓解。健康，敌不过生死；顺遂，挡不住无常。只有证悟涅槃，才是究竟的无苦之乐。

安乐因，即得到安乐的条件。佛法以因缘因果看世界，我们希望得到乐果，就要探讨安乐之因，从源头努力。一个人拥有慈心，真诚利他，就是在耕耘福田，自然会招感福报，所以慈心是最好的安乐因。从个人来说，慈心使我们内心调柔，远离嗔恨等不良情绪，有益身心健康。从人际关系来说，慈心使我们处处为他人着想，避免自私自利、自以为是等凡夫串习，从而与他人和谐相处。从经营企业来说，同样需要慈心利他，对内可以得到员工支持，对外可以得到大众认可。如果一心考虑个人利益，是很难把企业做大做强的。可以说，慈心是放之四海而皆准的企业文化。

除了世间利益，慈心还能使我们成就究竟利益。修行解决的核心问题是我执，由此才能断烦恼、证涅

槃。如何破除我执？通常所说的，是依空性见禅修。事实上，慈心利他也是有力的助缘。当一个人内心总是装着别人，我执就会因得不到支持而弱化，遮蔽智慧的障碍也会随之减少。所以利他不仅能增长慈悲，还能开启智慧。

我们修习慈心，希望众生具足安乐，就要了解什么是真正的安乐，怎样培植安乐之因。否则往往是南辕北辙，以苦为乐。

3. 如何修习慈无量心

生起慈心并不难，事实上，每个人都有不同程度的慈心。但我们的慈心往往只是对少数人，且在特定情况下才能生起。而慈无量心是面对一切众生，时时保持这样的用心。这不仅是美好的愿望，也是高尚的人格。

如何才能成就这样的生命品质？《慈经》和《道次第》的七因果，都是修习慈心的指南。

(1) 《慈经》

《慈经》的修习方式，是从爱护自己开始，然后推己及人，把这份爱不断扩大。当然，这是清净正向的慈爱，不是出于我执的自恋和自私行为。怎么爱护自己？经中以四句话作了归纳——愿我无敌意、无危险，愿我无精神的痛苦，愿我无身体的痛苦，愿我保持快乐。这是《慈经》的观修重点，对自己如此，对众生也是如此。

第一句，“愿我无敌意、无危险。”世间一切冲突乃至战争都出自敌意，这使人始终处于紧张状态。因为敌意，我们和他人是对立的，和世界是对立的，同时还要防范来自他人的敌意。如果带着敌意看世界，这种敌意同样会投射到自己身上，感觉周围的世界充满危险，防不胜防。这是何其辛苦！当今世界有那么多天灾人祸，那么多动荡不安，都和人们内心的敌意有关。有道是“世界和平来自内心的和平”，那么内心的和平来自哪里？就是放下敌意，放下对立，这样才能化解彼此伤害的因，在根本上解除危险。

第二句，“愿我无精神的痛苦。”近年来，心理疾病患者急剧增多，已成为突出的社会问题。在我们身边，越来越多的人正遭受精神问题的困扰，轻则内心空虚，重则抑郁狂躁，有的甚至走上了绝路。当一个人的精神处于痛苦中，不论有多么丰足的物质条件，都是无法感受幸福的。

第三句，“愿我无身体的痛苦。”我们的五蕴身本是纯大苦聚，也就是老子说的“吾有大患，为吾有身”。当它健康时，还能保持相对平衡，不会造成多少困扰。一旦出现问题，不仅使身体遭受痛苦，还会令行动受限，进而影响心理，对生活、工作、学习造成一系列障碍。

第四句，“愿我保持快乐。”快乐来自能感受快乐的心。我们应该有这样的体会，长大后，越来越难得到孩提时那种纯真的快乐。当内心有了牵挂和束缚，就像背上沉重的负担，与快乐渐行渐远。所以我们要培养感受快乐的能力，这是过好今生的重要前提。

我们通过真切的祝愿，让自己生起慈心并安住于此。当慈心逐渐清晰、强烈、稳定时，再把这种愿望

传递出去。从自己传递到身边的父母、兄弟、姐妹、亲人、同参道友，进而传递到整个地区、国家乃至全世界。从生命形态来说，包括“一切活着的众生，一切有形体的众生，一切有名相的众生，一切有身躯的众生，所有雌性的，所有雄性的，所有圣者，所有非圣者，所有天神，所有人类，所有苦道中的众生”；从时空来说，包括陆地、水中、空中，包括东方、西方、北方、南方、东南方、西北方、东北方、西南方、下方、上方……对于一切众生，都全身心地真诚祝愿，愿他们“无敌意、无危险，无精神的痛苦，无身体的痛苦，愿他们保持快乐”。

《慈经》的修行主要有两方面，一是怎样生起慈心，一是怎样扩大慈心。平常人的慈心很狭隘，如何从小爱到大爱，从自己延伸到一切众生，必须通过观修来突破。所以我们念诵《慈经》时，不能只是有口无心念一念，而要随文入观，让其中每句话都成为发自内心的愿望，确实实地这样想。

同时，在“愿我的父母亲，我的导师、亲戚和朋友，我的同修……”时，眼前能呈现相应形象，如对

目前。我们的观修越清晰，对境越具体，表达祝愿时就会越真切。这样的念诵才能真正散播慈爱，成为慈心的修行。所以《慈经》本身就是观修仪轨，而且非常具体。关键是观想必须到位，用心必须专注，否则是没有力量的。

(2) 七因果

从对自己生起慈心到推己及人，对他人生起同样的慈心和祝愿，是观修的难度所在。怎样完成视他如己的转换？《道次第》是通过七因果和自他相换，引导我们生起慈悲，进而将这一心行无限扩大。这里重点介绍七因果，从知母、念恩、报恩，到修慈、修悲、修增上意乐，再到菩提心。

所谓知母，是从轮回视角看待自己和一切众生的关系。在无尽轮回中，我们生生死死，不知换了多少种身份，每一世都有父母、兄弟、姐妹等至爱亲朋。这些缘分使我们在流转中继续相遇，虽然彼此的身份和关系变了，却不能否定曾经的亲缘。《梵网经》的“一切男子是我父，一切女人是我母”，就是让我们把

一切男性看作父亲，把一切女性看作母亲。以这个思考为前提，看到众生和自己的切身关系，就会对他们心生慈爱，觉得有责任帮助他们获得快乐。

这个方法是不是对大家都管用呢？其实未必。今天的人对现世父母都不容易孝顺，何况无始以来的父母，就更没感觉了。所以在知母之后，关键是要念恩。人们之所以不孝顺父母，就是忘了他们的养育之恩，不觉得有什么恩情要报答。这就必须思惟：父母不仅给予我们生命，还含辛茹苦地抚育我们。如果没有父母的付出，我们根本无法长大成人，拥有现在的一切。他们的恩情，无论怎么报答都是报答不完的。

传统的儒家重视孝道，但对现代人来说，从儿时的家庭影响，到入学后所受的各种教育，都缺乏相关引导。正相反，现在大多数父母对儿女溺爱纵容，百依百顺。这就导致很多孩子对父母之恩没感觉，似乎所得一切都是理所当然的。如果不改变这种观念，不仅是学佛的障碍，还会影响为人处世的方方面面。现在很多人自私自利，自以为是，在很大程度上，就是不知念恩、不懂感恩导致的。

只有调整观念，念恩生敬，才会进一步想到报恩。为了报恩，才会生起慈心、悲心，进而通过增上意乐，把慈悲众生作为自己不可推卸的责任，导向菩提心。这是七支因果的修行思路。

4. 慈无量心和无缘大慈

慈心是一种健康、美好的正向心理。拥有慈心的人，内心必然是调柔安乐的，既能给自己带来福德，还能成就佛菩萨那样的生命品质，使众生感到慈心的摄受和利益。反之，一个充满嗔心的人，不仅自己焦躁痛苦，还会散发戾气，让周围的人恐惧不安。认识到慈心的价值，我们要积极培养它，让这一心行在生命中从无到有，从生起到坚固，从坚固到无限，乃至任何境界现前时，都能以慈心对待。那么世间就没有什么可以伤害我们了，也就是佛经所说的“慈心如大地，匪亦不能侵”。

《慈经》的由来，是比丘们在森林禅修时，被鬼神和精灵所干扰，佛陀让他们修习慈心，以此化解对立和恐惧。《增一阿含》中，佛陀也对比丘们开示说：

“若汝等行路为贼所擒，当执心意，无起恶情，当起慈悲喜护心，遍满诸方所，无量、无限、不可称计。持心当如地，犹如此地亦受于净，亦受于不净……亦受于恶，亦受于好，都无增减之心，起慈悲喜护之心，向一切众生。”在遇到恶人和危险时，如果以暴制暴，只会引发更多的对立和冲突。所以我们非但不能落入嗔恨，还要对一切有情生起无量慈心，才能从根本上解除危难，所谓“慈悲没有敌人”。

在菩萨道修行中，更强调的是无缘大慈。所谓无缘，即没有亲疏、好恶、贵贱等分别。从愿望到行为都建立于无限的所缘，都是平等的。《普贤行愿品》就阐述了这样的修心理路。我们可以在生起慈心的基础上，依《行愿品》的见地，把生活中的每个所缘当作修习对象，时时保持慈心，强化慈心。进而将这一慈心从有我提纯为无我，从有相升华为无相，从有限扩大为无限，最终圆满佛菩萨那样的无缘大慈。

三、悲无量心

不论修慈还是修悲
都要以平等舍心为基础
既不陷入贪著或嗔恨
也不特别针对某些人
否则，我们的慈悲
就是染污而非清净的
是有限而非无限的

1. 悲的语义

悲，是悲悯。“愿诸众生远离众苦及众苦因”，就是看到众生遭受痛苦，发愿把他们从苦海中救拔出来，希望他们远离所有痛苦，以及产生痛苦的因。进而付诸实践，以实际行动帮助众生离苦得乐。

悲心的修行必须以慈心为基础。因为对众生有一份慈爱，才会对他们的痛苦感同身受，不忍其受苦。孟子说：“今人乍见孺子将入于井，皆有怵惕恻隐之心。”为什么会心生悲悯？正是基于对孩子的慈爱。如果没有慈爱，没有感觉，就谈不上悲悯了。就像很多人把动物当作食材，手起刀落，活杀烹煮，对它们

的痛苦挣扎视而不见，觉得不过是在做菜而已，根本想不到这是剥夺生命，想不到动物正遭受割截之难，更想不到为它们解除痛苦。之所以无感，并不是因为他们特别残忍，而是对动物缺乏慈爱。

修习悲心也要摆脱两种心理，一是忧愁，一是伤害。悲心是出于悲悯，发愿为众生拔除痛苦，这种心行是强有力的。如果对众生之苦产生忧愁，甚至陷入其中，悲不自胜，用心就有偏差了。这意味着其中夹杂了贪著，是有染污的我执状态。此外，还要摆脱伤害众生的心。害属于嗔恨的分位心理，是嗔的表现方式之一。从佛法修行来说，只要对一个众生怀有嗔恨，就意味着你的悲心是不圆满的。必须彻底止息伤害，在任何情况下，对任何众生都没有丝毫嗔恨，才代表悲心的成就。

不论修慈还是修悲，都要以平等舍心为基础，既不陷入贪著或嗔恨，也不特别针对某些人。否则，我们的慈悲就是染污而非清净的，是有限而非无限的。所以修习慈悲是有次第的，必须渐次而行，否则很容易出现偏差。相关内容会在下面详细解说。

2. 众苦及众苦因

悲心是要帮助众生摆脱众苦及众苦因。那么，人生有哪些痛苦？《慈经》主要说到了身体和精神的痛苦，佛教中还有三苦、八苦等归纳。三苦，为苦苦、坏苦、行苦；八苦，为生苦、老苦、病苦、死苦、爱别离苦、怨憎会苦、求不得苦、五蕴炽盛苦。这些只是对痛苦的高度概括，如果展开说明的话，人生有着无量诸苦，数不胜数。我们希望众生远离痛苦，关键是解除苦因，这才是根本的解决之道。否则的话，苦是没完没了的。痛苦之因是什么？在佛教看来，主要包括往昔的业力和今生的烦恼。

第一是业力，即身口意为留下的心行力量。无始以来，我们的所行、所言、所思并不是发生后就结束的，还会成为种子，保存在生命系统中。一旦因缘成熟，这些业力就会招感相应的结果，回到我们身上，谁也无法幸免。善业会回来，不善业也会回来，甚至加倍返回，所谓业不作不得、业作已不失、业增长广大。我们现在的状态来自过去生的积累，从内在身心，

到外在的家庭出身、生存环境、人际关系，都离不开业力的影响。而我们现在的行为则会继续影响未来生命。由业感果的基本规律，是善有乐报，恶有苦报。所以说，不善业是造成人生痛苦的根本。

第二是烦恼，即贪嗔痴三毒，这是不善业产生的土壤。我们会因为贪著造作恶业，也会因为嗔恨造作恶业。而贪嗔的基础是痴，即无明、我执。只有彻底断除我执，转变对自我的错误设定，才能永离众苦之因。

我们希望众生都能永离众苦和众苦因，就要引导他们认清无明、我执的危害，进而断除贪著和嗔恨。只有息灭贪嗔痴，才能在根本上消除不善业。

3. 如何修习悲无量心

悲无量心的修习，同样要从自己开始，即《慈经》所说的“愿我无敌意、无危险，愿我无精神的痛苦，愿我无身体的痛苦……”我们看到有漏生命的过患，看到无明、我执、贪嗔痴和不善业带来的痛苦，才会

设法摆脱。这是修习悲心的动力。如果感受不到多少痛苦，就没有离苦的必要了。

世人忙来忙去，都是希望离苦得乐。遗憾的是，因为找不到痛苦根源，所以在改变痛苦的过程中，又制造了更多痛苦。我们通过学佛看到，痛苦之根是因为业力，因为贪嗔痴，因为无明我执，就要从源头解决。进一步，还要把这种愿望推己及人，从自己扩大到亲人、朋友，从所在地扩大到国家、世界，从人类扩大到六道，希望众生都能从因上究竟离苦。儒家所说的“亲亲而仁民”，也是从对至亲的爱，推广到六亲眷属，乃至天下苍生。

而在《普贤行愿品》中，菩萨的每一个愿力和行为，都是以尽虚空遍法界、十方三世一切众生为所缘，引导我们把心打开，将悲心扩大为无限。虚空有多大，心量就有多大。只要不陷入我执，心的存在就是无限。因为宇宙的本质就是心的本质。当我们建立无限的所缘，就可以把悲心投射到一切众生身上，无所不在。所以说，《行愿品》是成就悲无量心的重要指南。

4. 悲无量心和同体大悲

把悲心扩大为无限的关键，是认识到自己和六道众生为一体。具备这样的见地，会觉得帮助众生除苦是理所当然的。就像自己某个部位受伤了，手立刻会去救治，不会考虑要不要管。因为手和这些部位是一体的，属于本能反应。但从表面看来，我们和众生都是独立的个体，我是我，他是他，怎样才能把自己和众生视为一体？究竟来说，必须证悟空性，才能体会到自己和众生在本质上是无二无别的，不存在任何界限。所谓的隔阂，不过是缘起的显现而已。那么在证悟之前怎么办？就没办法修吗？其实不然。虽然我们并没有证悟空性，但可以通过闻思调整认识，通过观修激发情怀，这些都是修习悲心的基础。

和慈心同样，悲心本身就是宝贵的精神财富，是生命中的无价之宝，可以给自己和众生带来无尽利益。仅仅从心理品质的角度来说，我们也应该修习悲心，成就悲心。现在很多人喜欢收藏古玩，不惜一掷千金。其实对生命来说，古玩能解决什么？当我们陷入烦恼

时，当我们要离开世界时，收藏能帮得上什么忙？只有正向心行和善业，才能让我们远离烦恼，并在生死关头成为引导，招感来生乐果。认识到悲心的珍贵，我们就要积极培养，使悲心增长广大，进而以空性见将之提纯并无限扩大，使其成为心相续中的主导力量。

四、喜无量心

修习随喜必须摆脱两种心理

一是有贪著的欢喜

二是不乐，即不喜欢

随喜本来是自利利他的心行

但如果夹杂贪著

就会使这一心行被染污，不再平等

而不乐则和嗔恨、嫉妒有关

只要内心有丝毫嗔恨和嫉妒

就无法全然开放地随喜他人

1. 喜的语义

喜，是喜悦、随喜。当我们看到众生修习善行，看到众生的成就和利益，发自内心地为之欢喜，由衷赞叹。随喜看似简单，不需要什么特殊能力，也不需要多少财力支持，只要愿意，每个人都能做到。其实不然。很多时候，我们看到别人做好事，有成就，得利益，不是为对方高兴，反而羡慕嫉妒恨，甚至因为仇富，将不良情绪升级为冲突、破坏和伤害。这种心态正是出于我执，只想自己得到利益，才会将他人所得视为对自己的侵犯，心怀敌意。

修习随喜必须摆脱两种心理。一是有贪著的欢喜，

二是不乐，即不喜欢。随喜本来是自利利他的心行，但如果夹杂贪著，就会使这一心行被染污，不再平等。而不乐则和嗔恨、嫉妒有关。只要内心有丝毫嗔恨和嫉妒，就无法全然开放地随喜他人。

2. 何为无苦之乐

快乐有两种，一是有苦之乐，佛法称为坏苦；一是无苦之乐，即喜无量心所祝愿的“愿诸众生永具无苦之乐，身心愉悦”。世人得到的快乐，不论来自家庭、感情，还是财富、事业，都是以贪嗔痴为基础，是不稳定的，在本质上是痛苦的，有漏的。所谓快乐，只是对痛苦的暂时缓解，一旦失去平衡，就会乐极生悲。

但佛法告诉我们，除了世间的有苦之乐，还有出世间的无苦之乐，那就是涅槃乐。这种快乐是没有任何副作用，且源源不断的。因为它不是建立于某个外境，而是彻底断除烦恼后，由觉性散发的宁静、欢喜和自在。修习喜无量心，不仅要随喜众生得到世间利

益，更要随喜他们的修行成就，希望他们都能拥有究竟的快乐。

3. 如何修习喜无量心

修习喜无量心也需要次第。我们可以按《慈经》所说，首先随喜自己的善行和修行成就。因为随喜自己比较容易，有利于调动欢喜心。当然要注意定位，不能产生粘著，更不能因此自大、自满、自以为是。然后再把这份随喜扩大到身边的人，首先是和自己有关的六亲眷属，再到同事朋友，再到没关系的人。当随喜心强大之后，进一步扩大到原来不喜欢的人。随喜的修习次第非常重要，如果开始就以仇人作为对境，通常是修不起来的。所以要从自己开始，然后是自己喜欢且愿意随喜的人。当随喜心得到强化后，才有力量逐步向外扩展。

《普贤行愿品》也阐述了随喜功德的修行，属于十大愿王之一：“言随喜功德者，所有尽法界虚空界，十方三世一切佛刹极微尘数诸佛如来，从初发心，为

一切智，勤修福聚，不惜身命，经不可说不可说佛刹极微尘数劫。一一劫中，舍不可说不可说佛刹极微尘数头目手足。如是一切难行苦行，圆满种种波罗蜜门，证入种种菩萨智地，成就诸佛无上菩提及般涅槃，分布舍利。所有善根，我皆随喜。及彼十方一切世界，六趣四生，一切种类，所有功德，乃至一尘，我皆随喜。十方三世一切声闻及辟支佛，有学无学，所有功德，我皆随喜。一切菩萨所修无量难行苦行，志求无上正等菩提广大功德，我皆随喜。如是虚空界尽，众生界尽，众生业尽，众生烦恼尽，我此随喜无有穷尽，念念相续，无有间断，身语意业，无有疲厌。”

这一随喜的窍诀在于，以尽虚空遍法界、十方三世一切佛刹为所缘，把心彻底打开。凡夫的心中往往只装着自己、家庭，或是工作、事业，再大一点就是地区、民族、国家。而我们现在是要建立无限的所缘，这就必须把心打开。心量越小，所缘就越小；心量越大，所缘就越大。其实心本身是无限的，只是我执使它变得狭隘。当我们通过对无限所缘的观修，就能让心回归本来状态。这是无限、无相、无住的心，也是

明心见性所要见的心。

在修行对象上，《慈经》是让我们从自己开始随喜，然后由内向外扩展，而《行愿品》则是从佛菩萨开始随喜，是从上而下的。这一施設の善巧在于，我们肯定不会嫉妒佛菩萨，所以随喜佛菩萨功德更为容易，而且很真诚。当我们通过随喜佛菩萨建立相关心行，就可以扩大到六道众生，成就喜无量心。

4. 为什么要修随喜

和慈悲一样，随喜本身就是美好的生命品质。如果我们拥有随喜心，对他人的善行、利益、成就见闻随喜，就像自己做了善行或得到利益一样，不仅自己欢喜，也能让大家心生欢喜。因为我们看到和传递的都是正能量，当对方感受到这种善意，就会在受到鼓励的同时回馈善意，彼此增上。反之，嫉妒者因为容不下他人，整天闷闷不乐。心量越小，嫉妒的对象就越多，不愿看到的善行、利益和成就也越多，甚至会吧别人的一切所得变成自己生气的素材，简直有生不

完的气。这样的心态不仅让自己痛苦，当它表现出来，还会和他人形成对立，使大家都不喜欢你。不必说学佛修行，即使世间的和生活和工作都会产生障碍。

除了让自己和众生欢喜，随喜还能成就无量功德。每个人的能力有限，精力有限，财力有限，但随喜之心可以是无限的。虽然我们没因缘修一切善行，但只要真诚随喜他人的善行，所获功德和对方是一样的。如果发心更为广大的话，所得甚至会超过对方。在世间做其他事往往会有力不从心的遗憾，但修习随喜的话，只要有心就足够了。可以说，随喜是一本万利的修行，只要懂得怎么修，时时刻刻都能积累成佛资粮。从世间法来说，随喜也是人际关系的润滑剂，作用很大。现在有句话叫“人脉就是钱脉”，怎么建立人脉？离不开随喜。对他人真诚随喜，能使我们广结善缘，快速消除人与人之间的隔阂，使双方其乐融融，做起事来自然顺缘具足。

此外，随喜还能弱化我执。我执重的人是很难随喜的，看到他人的成就，总是习惯性地挑剔甚至批评。长此以往，会使我执越来越重，越来越自以为是，越

来越与他人对立。反之，当我们广泛随喜他人，而不是执著自己的所知所行时，我执就会因为得不到支持而减弱。需要注意，随喜并不是溜须拍马，更不是出于某种目的谄媚他人，前提必须是他人的长处、利益、善行、功德，然后真诚随喜。

总之，随喜既可以破除我执，集资净障，成就菩萨道的修行，还能增长福德，实现世间利益。对于学佛修行和世间法来说，都是极好的“生财之道”，没理由不修！我们不仅要修习随喜，更要使之无限扩大。

五、舍无量心

可能有人会觉得
没有爱恨就是没有立场
甚至是冷漠的表现
事实上，当我们平等看待众生时
不仅可以放下仇恨
还能对众生具足无二无别的慈悲
不会厚此薄彼
这非但不是冷漠
反而是大慈、大悲、大爱

1. 舍的语义

舍的含义包括两方面，一是舍弃，二是平等。四无量心的相关内容是：“愿诸众生远离贪嗔之心，住平等舍。”

所谓舍弃，即舍弃贪嗔，而在根本上是舍弃我执，由此才能生起平等之心。凡夫人格是以我执为基础的，这就势必会有好恶分别。当我们带着好恶看世界，将进一步引发贪嗔，对喜欢的粘著，是为贪；对不喜欢的排斥，是为嗔。当心陷入贪嗔，就会动荡不安。嗔固然让人痛苦，其实贪也同样让人痛苦。同时，贪嗔还会使人强化自己设定的局限，无法平等对待众生。

没有平等的话，不论修习慈悲还是随喜，都不可能是无量的。

从四无量心偈颂的次第来说，首先是慈无量心，其次是悲无量心、喜无量心，最后才是舍无量心。但在实际修行中，我们要生起无量的慈心、悲心和喜心，必须以舍心为基础。只有克服贪嗔，才能平等看待众生，以一切众生作为修习慈悲和随喜的所缘对象。

2. 如何修习舍无量心

舍无量心的修行，首先要选择中庸的对象，既不是所贪所嗔，也没什么利害关系。这样修起来不容易有干扰。进一步是对亲友修，其中又根据亲密程度分为上中下三等，上等最为亲密，而中下次之。修习舍心是从下等亲友开始，因为关系最疏远，贪著程度相应最轻。修到一定程度，能对他们平等看待，不起贪嗔，再选择中等乃至上等的亲友。比如自己的父母、儿女、配偶，就属于上等贪著对象。当然，搞不好也可能是上等出离对象。关系太亲近了，带来的对境和

伤害也会特别强烈，所谓爱之深，恨之切。

对亲人生起平等舍心之后，接着再对嗔恨对象修习。和亲友一样，这些对象也可根据嗔恨程度分为上中下三等，上等为特别讨厌，中等为普通讨厌，下等只是有点讨厌。在修习舍心时，同样先从下等对境开始，其次是中等，最后才是自己特别讨厌的对象。修习舍心是培养平等心的过程，随着平等心的壮大，对境难度才能随之升级。如果不注重次第，直接面对最困难的对境，很可能立即败下阵来。

在《道次第》等经论中，也提供了修习舍心的理路，让我们学会从轮回的眼光看待爱恨情仇。就今生来看，爱的人爱得如胶似漆，难以割舍；恨的人恨得咬牙切齿，势不两立，怎么可能平等？这就要从轮回的角度思考。生命不是从今生开始的，还有无始以来的过去。现在所爱的人，可能是往昔仇人，也曾做过伤害自己的事；现在所恨的人，可能是往昔爱人，也曾爱得死去活来。只不过世事流转，我们忘了这一切而已。即使不说轮回，仅从现世的变迁来看，爱恨情仇也不是固定的。相爱者反目成仇、对立者化敌为友

的反转，生活中常常都在发生。所谓的爱和恨，都只是当下的一种情绪，爱不是恒常的，不必执著；恨也不是固定的，不必在意。这些思考都在帮助我们建立舍心。

可能有人会觉得，没有爱恨就是没有立场，甚至是冷漠的表现。事实上，当我们平等看待众生时，不仅可以放下仇恨，还能对众生具足无二无别的慈悲，不会厚此薄彼。这非但不是冷漠，反而是大慈、大悲、大爱。

众生因为我执，就会处处以自我为中心。事实上，我执只是自己的错误设定，以此作为轮回的支撑。有了这个参照标准，我们会觉得，哪些人和我有关，哪些人和我无关，从而形成亲疏远近等一整套关系，再由这些关系发展出爱恨情仇。事实上，这些支撑和参照都是莫须有的，本身都是出自错误设定。如果去除我执，从缘起的眼光看待，我们和他人乃至一切众生之间的关系都是扁平化的，并没有所谓的中心。我是如此，世界也是如此。宇宙有中心吗？法界有中心吗？

舍心的修行关键在于去除我执，这样才能去除中心，进而去除围绕中心而建立的关系，以平等心面对法界众生。只有在平等基础上，我们才能将慈悲和随喜扩大到一切众生，建立广大且无分别的慈悲和随喜。

和平常心相应的，还有平衡、平静、平常，这些都是心的本来状态，也是生命中最为珍贵的品质。当我们回归本心，就能平等无别地看待众生，如如不动地面对世界。这种强大的安静可以平息所有妄想，如此，内心只有慈悲，只有对众生的深深随喜，才能在入世的同时保有出世的超然。

六、仁爱、博爱与慈悲

只有通过修行证悟空性
了知一切都是因缘假相
三世诸佛与六道众生在本质上是无分别的
所谓“心佛及众生，是无差别”
有了这样的见地
才能确信利他就是利己，爱人就是爱己
从而建立无限的大爱

对于人类社会的和谐发展，爱是不可或缺的重要动力。因为有爱，世界才会充满温暖。传统文化和宗教对世界的贡献之一，就是传递大爱。比如儒家倡导仁爱，基督教倡导博爱，佛教倡导慈悲。这就使很多人觉得：宗教都是教人行善的，都差不多。是这样吗？如果不是，这三种爱到底有什么不同？

1. 有染污和无染污

什么是有染污和无染污的爱？区别就在于，这种爱是否带有贪著和占有。一般人讲到爱的时候，往往没有对此作出区分。比如儒家所说的爱，是从对父母、

配偶、子女、兄弟、姐妹的爱开始，然后到朋友之间的爱、上下级之间的爱、对社会大众乃至天地万物的爱。这是一个对象逐渐扩大的过程，但没有对爱的本身加以界定。基督教所说的博爱，重点也是对小爱的扩大，同样没有对爱的本身作出区分。事实上，对身边亲人的爱往往是带有贪著的，如果不在从小爱到大爱的过程中解决这个问题，是无法真正平等的，也就不可能遍及一切。

而佛教会把爱分为两种。我们所熟悉的，是带有贪著、占有的爱，几乎涵盖世间一切的爱。我们分析后就会发现，不论世人所爱的对象是什么，都在不同程度上带着贪著和占有，夫妇之间如此，父母对儿女如此，乃至我们对物品的爱也是如此。虽然爱是一种付出，但贪著和占有却使这些爱受到染污，带来种种副作用。在很多经典中，佛陀都说到“无明为父，贪爱为母”，告诉我们爱的过患。在关于生命流转的十二因缘中，也是由“爱、取、有”，导向“生、老死”。可以说，爱是生死轮回的根本，也是世间一切痛苦烦恼的根本。如果我们想出离解脱，就要从根本

上断除有染污的爱，否则就会没完没了地造业感果，生死无尽。

断除有染污的爱，并非六亲不认，更不是对众生冷漠无感，而是升华为没有染污的爱，也就是佛法所说的大慈大悲。在佛教修行中，慈悲和智慧是最为重要的两大项目，必须对一切众生建立平等、无私的爱。这种爱没有亲疏远近的分别，不是出于贪著，不是为了占有，更不想要什么回报，所以它是没有任何副作用的，也不会像世间的爱那样，随着时间而淡化或变质。

区分两种不同的爱，我们就知道，什么是应该解决的，什么是应该保留和发展的。

2. 有我和无我

儒家和其他宗教的爱都是从身边亲友开始，有次第地由近及远，逐步扩大范围，最后是爱社会大众。这样的爱是有我的，即使爱再多的众生，作为中心的“我”是不变的。

而佛教所说的爱虽然从有我开始，但最后必须升华到无我的境界，否则就无法和修行相应。所以在《金刚经》中，佛陀一再提醒我们，菩萨在利益众生的过程中，要无我相、无人相、无众生相、无寿者相，如果有我、人、众生、寿者四相，就不是菩萨。因为有我就是有中心，所修就是世间善法，是有相而有限的。

3. 平等和不平等

儒家说仁爱，是以孝悌为基础，对亲人和普罗大众是有分别的；基督教说博爱，是以信仰上帝为前提，对教徒和异教徒是有分别的，对人类和动物也是有分别的。而佛教所说的慈悲，是无缘大慈，同体大悲，这就必须建立在平等的基础上。只有内心完全平等，没有丝毫亲疏、贵贱的差别，才能包容一切，对众生生起广大无边的爱。就如阳光普照一切，从不拣择；又如大地承载万物，从不排斥。

4. 有限和无限

儒家和基督教的爱仅限于人类，并没有将动物当作人那样去爱，也不包括种种看不见的众生。而佛教所说的慈悲，是以利益一切众生为对象，是无限的。当然，如果没有空的智慧，所谓的无限只是一个概念，是想象中的，并不能打破自他之间的界限。儒家和其他宗教没有空性正见和依此建立的修行，也就无法真正把自己和众生视为一体，这种爱必然是有限而非无限的。只有通过修行证悟空性，了知一切都是因缘假相，三世诸佛与六道一切众生在本质上是无分别的，所谓“心佛及众生，是三无差别”。有了这样的见地，才能确信利他就是利己，爱人就是爱己，从而建立无限的大爱。

七、结束语

四无量心是佛法的重要修行
希望大家把这四句话作为定课内容之一
通过每天的发愿提醒自己
同时在生活中不断忆念
最重要的是
真正把这些内容作为自己的愿心

四无量心是佛法的重要修行，希望大家把这四句话作为定课内容之一，通过每天的发愿提醒自己，同时在生活中不断忆念。最重要的是，真正把这些内容作为自己的愿心，发自内心地由衷祈愿。这就需要通过观修，把心调整到和众生相应的频道，生起慈悲喜舍，安住于此，持续稳定，再把这无量的愿心散播出去。如此，不仅是对众生的祝福，对自己也是最好的修行，可以在祝福过程中被这种正向心行所加持。





**THE CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE
OF THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES**

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The Four Immeasurables have four aspirations: loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, each immeasurable. They are Immeasurable Loving-kindness, Immeasurable Compassion, Immeasurable Joy, and Immeasurable Equanimity. The specific vows are: “May all beings enjoy happiness and the causes of happiness; may all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering; may all beings always possess joy free from suffering, with contented body and mind; may all beings abide in equanimity, devoid of greed and aversion.” Although the Four Immeasurables are part of the practice in the Sravaka Vehicle, they resonate with the spirit of the Mahayana Bodhisattva Path—“unconditional loving-kindness

and universal compassion of oneness.” Hence, they are also important for cultivating the Bodhisattva spirit.

Yet, how to understand and practice the Four Immeasurables? And how to make these four sentences the practice of our life?

I

THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES AND THE THREE VEHICLES

The Three Vehicles in Buddhism refer to the three levels of Buddhist practice: the Vehicle of Humans and Devas, the Vehicle of Sravaka, and the Vehicle of Bodhisattvas. What is the relationship between the Four Immeasurables and the Three Vehicles?

From the perspective of the Vehicle of Humans and Devas, cultivating the Four Immeasurables can reap vast blessings, manifesting in worldly prosperity, successful careers, harmonious families, and positive relationships. More importantly, it can attract the blessings of future

rebirth in the heavens. The Four Immeasurables, also known as the Four Brahmaviharas, embody the virtues of the Great Brahma, the highest deity in various Indian religions. Perfecting the Four Immeasurables aligns one with the virtues of Brahma and leads to rebirth in the Brahma heavens. This is documented in numerous Buddhist sutras, such as in the *Dirgha Agama* (*Long Discourses of the Buddha*), which states, “By cultivating the Four Immeasurables, one can be reborn in the Brahma heavens after death.” In the *Ekottara Agama* (*Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*), it also says, “Cultivate the four Brahma practices of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, and at the end of life, attain rebirth in the Brahma heavens.” Similarly, the *Abhiniskramana Sutra* (*Sutra of Great Renunciation*) states, “Cultivate the four Brahma practices, and after death, be born in the Brahma palace.”

From the perspective of the Sravaka path to liberation, cultivating the Four Immeasurables can attain the liberation of immeasurable minds. The *Madhyama Agama* (*Middle-Length Discourses*) states, “If a monk or ascetic,

in a place of tranquility, or a quiet and empty space under a tree, unifies his mind with loving-kindness and suffuses one direction with it, achieving mastery; Similarly, it permeates the second, third, and fourth directions, as well as the four intermediate directions, and also above and below, encompassing everything. With the mind unified with loving-kindness, free from entanglements, resentments, anger, and disputes, it becomes immensely vast, greatly expansive, and immeasurably well-cultivated, pervading all worlds with mastery. Similarly, with compassion, joy, and equanimity, the mind becomes free from entanglements, resentments, anger, and disputes. It is immensely vast, greatly expansive, and immeasurably well-cultivated, pervading all worlds with mastery. This is called the liberation through the immeasurable minds.” The *Samyukta Agama (Connected Discourses)* also says, “If a bhikkhu cultivates a mind of loving-kindness and practices it extensively, he will attain great results and great benefits. How does a bhikkhu practicing loving-kindness attain great results and great benefits? Such a bhikkhu, with a mind unified in loving-kindness, cultivates the awakening

factors of mindfulness. This cultivation relies on detachment, the absence of desire, cessation, and aims at renunciation. Similarly, cultivating the awakening factors of equanimity relies on detachment, the absence of desire, cessation, and the pursuit of renunciation.”

In the practice of the Mahayana Bodhisattva Path, loving-kindness and compassion among the Four Immeasurables are precisely the foundation for cultivating bodhicitta. The *Lamrim (Gradual Path to Enlightenment)* describes the Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect of cultivating bodhicitta. It starts with recognizing all sentient beings as our past mothers, remembering their kindness, and repaying their kindness. This leads to the cultivation of loving-kindness, compassion, and extraordinary aspiration, ultimately leading to the arising of bodhicitta. From another perspective, cultivating bodhicitta enhances and completes loving-kindness and compassion. While ordinary people may possess some level of loving-kindness and compassion, they are often limited and discriminative, lacking purity, broadness, and intensity. How can we infinitely

expand this thought of loving-kindness and compassion, so we can achieve the great loving-kindness and universal compassion of Buddhas and bodhisattvas? We need to arouse the vast aspiration of “benefiting all sentient beings” and purify the mind with the view of emptiness, thereby elevating the quality of this aspiration.

The mind of equanimity is one of the characteristics of emptiness. Ordinary beings tend to attach to the self and dharmas, as well as forms of self, others, sentient beings, and longevity. They always feel that they do many things and help many people, but they are chained by dualistic opposition, which is limited and defiled. Only by not clinging to the four forms and the “self” as the liberator of sentient beings can they become true bodhisattvas by practicing loving-kindness and compassion.

In summary, the Four Immeasurables and the Three Vehicles in Buddhism are closely interrelated.

II

IMMEASURABLE LOVING-KINDNESS

1. Semantics of Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness is endowing joy and bringing happiness to others. Immeasurable means broad and boundless. “May all beings enjoy happiness and the causes of happiness.” is a vow to help all sentient beings, wishing them happiness and, more importantly, fulfilling the causes of happiness. By diligently cultivating the causes, one can continuously attract the fruit of happiness.

The prerequisites for cultivating loving-kindness are two-fold. First, avoid disliking others, as such feelings obstruct

the sincere wish for their happiness. Second, refrain from any intent to irritate and harm others, ensuring that no thoughts of harming others arise in any situation. However, simply steering clear of these two is not enough. Some people, although they do not dislike, irritate, or harm others, are indifferent towards them, and lack any mental connection, as if they are strangers. Consequently, their loving-kindness cannot actively arise. To truly foster loving-kindness, we must open our minds and embrace all beings, empathizing with their joys and sorrows. We should further cultivate loving-kindness just as we do for our dearest loved ones, sincerely wishing for their well-being and happiness.

Meanwhile, to cultivate loving-kindness, one must break free from two mental barriers: greed and aversion. While loving-kindness stems from love, worldly love is often mixed with greed and defilement. For example, our strong love for children, parents, relatives, and friends is based on specific relationships and accompanied by varying levels of greed. Particularly between spouses, love can lead to

extreme possessiveness and exclusivity. Therefore, such love comes with side effects. Genuine loving-kindness, however, is free from any greed or possessiveness; it is a pure wish for the happiness of all beings, without bias or expectation of anything in return. If one's cultivation of loving-kindness becomes tainted with greed or possessiveness, it signifies a failure in practice. Furthermore, one must overcome aversion, the greatest obstacle in cultivating loving-kindness. Only by completely eradicating aversion can the perfection of loving-kindness be achieved. Therefore, from a Buddhist perspective, a person who clearly distinguishes between likes and dislikes cannot fully cultivate loving-kindness. No matter how many people they love, if the love is intertwined with greed or aversion, it does not embody the true mind of immeasurable loving-kindness.

2. Happiness and the Causes of Happiness

To cultivate loving-kindness is to wish for all beings to attain happiness and the causes of such happiness. What,

then, are the forms of happiness that manifest in life? Broadly speaking, there are two: temporary and ultimate happiness. Temporary happiness includes internal well-being, such as physical and mental health, and external success in various aspects—these are the goals worldly individuals relentlessly pursue and strive for. Yet, it's essential to realize that these are merely fleeting moments of fortune in life, offering only temporary relief from suffering. Health cannot conquer the cycle of life and death; success cannot escape the destined impact of impermanence. Only by realizing nirvana can one attain ultimate bliss free from suffering.

The causes of happiness refer to the essential conditions required to attain happiness. In the Dharma, the world is perceived through dependent origination and causality. Hence, to attain happiness, one must first delve into its causes and strive to cultivate them. In particular, when one possesses loving-kindness and sincerely benefits others, they are farming a field of merit, naturally yielding the wholesome fruits of blessings. Therefore, loving-kindness

is the most profound cause of happiness. On an individual level, loving-kindness softens our hearts, distancing us from adverse emotions like aversion and fostering mental and physical well-being. Regarding interpersonal relations, loving-kindness inspires us to prioritize the needs of others, steering clear of selfishness, egoism, self-righteousness, and other mundane habits, thereby promoting harmonious interactions. In managing a business, cultivating loving-kindness and altruism is also essential. Internally, one can gain employee support; externally, one can secure recognition from the public. It is difficult to make a business large and strong if they focus solely on their personal interests. It can be said that loving-kindness is a universally applicable corporate culture.

Beyond worldly benefits, loving-kindness also navigates us towards ultimate benefits. The core issue addressed in Buddhist practice is self-attachment, and overcoming this is essential for eradicating afflictions and realizing nirvana. How do we break free from self-attachment? Usually, it relies on the meditation of emptiness. In fact,

loving-kindness and altruism also serve as a powerful contributing factor. When one's mind is constantly filled with care for others, self-attachment weakens due to the lack of sustenance, and the barriers obstructing wisdom subsequently diminish. Therefore, altruism not only cultivates loving-kindness and compassion but also unlocks wisdom.

When we cultivate loving-kindness and wish for all beings to attain happiness, we must understand what true happiness is and how to cultivate its causes. Otherwise, blind efforts may lead in the opposite direction, where suffering is mistaken as happiness.

3. How to Cultivate Immeasurable Loving-kindness?

Cultivating loving-kindness is not difficult; in fact, everyone possesses loving-kindness to varying degrees. However, our loving-kindness is often constrained to a select few and arises only in specific circumstances. Immeasurable loving-kindness, on the other hand, is about consistently

maintaining this mental state towards all beings without discrimination. This is not just a nice wish but also a reflection of a virtuous character.

How can we achieve such character? The *Metta Sutta* and the Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect in the *Gradual Path to Enlightenment* serve as guidelines for cultivating this loving-kindness.

1) The *Metta Sutta*

The practice outlined in the *Metta Sutta* begins with loving oneself and then extends that love to others, continuously expanding this love. Of course, such loving-kindness is pure and positive, not a narcissistic and selfish action stemming from self-attachment. How to practice this self-care? The answer is summarized into four sentences in the sutra: “May I be free from enmity and danger. May I be free from mental suffering. May I be free from physical suffering. May I take care of myself happily.” This is the key focus of contemplation in the *Metta Sutta*: just as you

do this for yourself, so should you do it for all beings.

The first sentence is, “May I be free from enmity and danger.” Enmity is the root of all conflicts and even wars. It always keeps individuals in tension. Due to enmity, we position ourselves against others and the world, always on guard against any enmity directed at us. Yet, viewing the world through the lens of enmity only projects that same animosity back onto ourselves, making the world seemingly fraught with danger and trapping us in an endless cycle of defense. What a burden that is! The numerous natural disasters, human-made calamities, and the pervasive unrest in today’s world are all tied to the enmity rooted in people’s minds. It is often said, “The world’s peace stems from our inner peace.” And where does this inner peace originate? It comes from letting go of enmity, from dropping opposition, thereby dissolving the causes of mutual harm and eliminating danger at its root.

The second sentence is “May I be free from mental suffering.” In recent years, there has been a significant rise in

the number of individuals suffering from mental illnesses, posing a pressing societal concern. More and more people around us are struggling with mental distress, ranging from inner void to extreme conditions of depression and mania. Some have even reached the point of despair. When someone is mentally suffering, even with abundant material conditions, they are incapable of experiencing true happiness.

The third sentence is “May I be free from physical suffering.” Our body, composed of the five aggregates, is essentially a gathering of great suffering; as Laozi says, “I have great affliction because I have a body.” When healthy, it remains in a relative balance without causing much trouble. When not healthy, it not only causes physical pain but also restricts our activities, subsequently affecting our mental state and posing numerous obstacles in our lives, work, and studies.

The fourth sentence is, “May I take care of myself happily.” Happiness arises from a mind capable of experiencing

joy. We may have such experience that as we grow older, childhood's pure and unadulterated joy becomes increasingly hard to attain. When the mind is laden with concerns and constraints, it's like carrying a heavy burden, gradually distancing itself from joy. Hence, cultivating our ability to feel and embrace joy is pivotal, as it is a fundamental element for leading a fulfilling life.

Through these four sincere wishes, we nurture loving-kindness within ourselves and allow it to settle. As this loving-kindness gradually becomes clearer, stronger, and more stable, we extend the wishes outward. Starting with ourselves, we radiate this loving-kindness to our parents, siblings, relatives, spiritual companions, and then to our entire community, nation, and the whole world. In terms of life forms, this includes "all living beings, all beings with form, all beings with names, all beings with bodies, all females, all males, all noble ones, all worldlings, all deities, all humans, all beings in the realms of suffering." In terms of time and space, it encompasses all beings inhabiting land, water, and air in every direction: east, west, north,

south, southeast, northwest, northeast, southwest, as well as below and above... For all sentient beings, we sincerely wish them: “May they be free from enmity and danger. May they be free from mental suffering. May they be free from physical suffering. May they take care of themselves happily.”

The practice of the *Metta Sutta* involves two aspects: how to give rise to loving-kindness and how to expand it. The loving-kindness of ordinary people is often very limited. To expand it from small love to great love, from oneself to all sentient beings, one must break through by means of contemplative practice. Therefore, when reciting the sutta, it is essential to engage oneself wholeheartedly and carefully contemplate the text, allowing each sentence to resonate as a sincere wish emanating from within and genuinely embracing them.

Moreover, during chanting like “May my parents, teachers, relatives and friends, fellow Dharma farers...,” it’s crucial to vividly envision the corresponding figures as if they

were present before us. The clearer our contemplation during practice, the more concrete our focus and the more heartfelt our wishes will be when delivering them. Such chanting can enable the true spread of kindness and fulfill the practice of loving-kindness. Therefore, the *Metta Sutta* itself serves as a contemplative practice ritual, and it is very specific. The key is to achieve accurate visualization and maintain focused attention; without these, the practice lacks potency.

2) Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect

Transitioning the focus of loving-kindness and well-wishes from oneself to others is where the challenge of the contemplation lies. How to accomplish this transformation that involves seeing others as oneself? The *Gradual Path to Enlightenment* approaches this through the Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect and the practice of exchanging self and others, guiding us to generate loving-kindness and compassion, and then infinitely expand the two mindsets. Here, the focus will be placed on the

former, the Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect, from recognizing all sentient beings as our past mothers, remembering their kindness, repaying their kindness, cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, and extraordinary aspiration, to ultimately generating bodhicitta.

Recognizing all sentient beings as our past mothers involves perceiving the relationship between ourselves and all sentient beings from the perspective of samsara. In the endless cycle of rebirth, we have undergone countless lives, adopting various identities, each with its own circle of parents, siblings, and beloved relatives and friends. These karmic connections lead us to encounter each other continuously in the flow of life. Although our identities and relationships change with each life, the past bonds of kinship cannot be denied. The *Brahmajala Sutra* states, “All men are my fathers; all women are my mothers.” It encourages us to regard all males as fathers and all females as mothers so that we can start to see our profound connection with all sentient beings, thereby feeling the loving-kindness and a

sense of responsibility to help them attain happiness.

Nonetheless, is this approach effective for everyone? Not necessarily. In today's world, we hardly show respect to our present parents, not to mention parents from countless past lives, towards whom we feel even less connection. Therefore, after recognizing all sentient beings as mothers, the crucial step is to remember their kindness. The lack of filial respect often stems from forgetting the nurturing kindness of our parents and not feeling a debt of gratitude. One must reflect: parents not only give us life but also laboriously nurture us. Without their sacrifices, we wouldn't have grown into adults and owned what we have today. Their kindness is so profound that no amount of reciprocation could ever suffice.

Traditional Confucianism places a strong emphasis on filial piety. However, for modern individuals, there is a lack of relevant guidance in both family and school education. On the contrary, many of today's parents tend to spoil and indulge their children, accommodating their every

whim. This leads to the youngsters taking everything they receive for granted and feeling indifferent to the kindness of their parents. If this mindset does not change, it not only poses an obstacle to Buddhist practice but also adversely affects all aspects of their social interaction. After all, the self-centeredness and self-righteousness prevalent among many today are, to a large extent, the result of failing to recognize and appreciate the kindness of others.

Only by adjusting this mindset and remembering their kindness with respect can we further think about repaying their kindness. In order to repay kindness, we must cultivate loving-kindness and compassion. This, in turn, leads us to the extraordinary aspiration of benefiting all sentient beings as our inescapable responsibility, ultimately guiding us to generate bodhicitta. This is the practice sequence of the Seven-Point Cause-and-Effect method.

4. Immeasurable Loving-kindness and Perfect Unconditional Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness is a healthy, beautiful, and positive state of mind. Individuals with loving-kindness possess inner tenderness, tranquility, and joy, bringing blessings to themselves and simultaneously developing wholesome qualities like those of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Their presence allows sentient beings to feel the inspiration and benefits of loving-kindness. Conversely, a person filled with aversion not only experiences internal agitation and suffering but also emits an aggressive energy that instills fear and unrest in those around them. Recognizing the value of loving-kindness, we should cultivate it actively, allowing this mindset to emerge, stabilize, and expand until it becomes infinite, reaching the point where it is always maintained regardless of the circumstances. In this way, nothing in the world can harm us, just as the sutra states, “Loving-kindness is like the great earth, impervious to the intrusion of any bandits.”

The *Metta Sutta* originated from a true story where a group of bhikkhus were disturbed by spirits and fairies during meditation in a forest. To calm their panic, the Buddha instructed them to cultivate loving-kindness to dissolve opposition and fear. In the *Ekottara Agama* (*Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*), the Buddha also taught bhikkhus that, “If you are seized by bandits while traveling, you should maintain your composure and not give rise to evil thoughts. You should cultivate the loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, extending them boundlessly, infinitely, and immeasurably in all directions. Keep your mind steady like the earth, just as the earth receives the pure and impure... the evil and the good, without any favor or discrimination. Cultivate the loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity towards all sentient beings.” When encountering evildoers and dangers, responding with violence only leads to more conflicts and opposition. Therefore, instead of succumbing to aversion, we should cultivate boundless loving-kindness for all sentient beings. Only through this can we fundamentally eliminate the danger, as the saying goes,

“Loving-kindness and compassion have no enemies.”

The practice of the Bodhisattva Path places greater emphasis on unconditional loving-kindness. “Unconditional” implies not making distinctions between close and distant, likes and dislikes, or noble and humble. From aspiration to action, the object of the practice is infinity, encompassing everything equally. The *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* elaborates on this approach. After generating loving-kindness, we could follow the perspective from the *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*, treating each object of perception in life as a practice, constantly maintaining and strengthening loving-kindness. Subsequently, transform this loving-kindness from being self to no-self, from having form to formless, and from being limited to limitless, ultimately achieving the perfect unconditional loving-kindness of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

III

IMMEASURABLE COMPASSION

1. Semantics of Compassion

Compassion is an expression of deep empathy. “May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering,” implies that seeing sentient beings struggling in the ocean of suffering, one aspires to rescue them from it, wishing them to be free from all suffering and their causes. Furthermore, they put this aspiration into practice and make concrete efforts to help all beings attain happiness by alleviating their suffering.

Cultivating compassion must be based on loving-kindness.

It is because we have loving-kindness towards sentient beings that we empathize with their suffering and cannot bear to see them suffering. Mencius said, “If people suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will all have feelings of worry, fear, sympathy, and compassion.” Why do we feel compassion? It is precisely because of our loving-kindness towards the child. Without loving-kindness, we wouldn’t feel anything, not to mention compassion. For instance, many people see animals merely as food ingredients. They kill and cook them alive, ignoring their painful struggle, thinking it’s just part of preparing a meal. They don’t even realize that they are taking a life or empathize with their suffering from being cut and killed, let alone alleviate this suffering. They are indifferent not because they are fierce, but because they lack loving-kindness towards animals.

To cultivate compassion, one must overcome two mental states: sorrow and harm. Compassion arises from empathy and the vow to relieve the suffering of sentient beings, and this is a powerful mindset. If we feel sorrow for the

suffering of sentient beings, become attached to it, and are overwhelmed by it, our compassion becomes misguided. This indicates that this compassion is mixed with greed, a tainted state of self-attachment. Additionally, we must avoid the intent to harm sentient beings. Harm is a sub-mental state of aversion and one of its manifestations. In Buddhist practice, as long as we harbor aversion towards even one sentient being, our compassion is incomplete. Complete compassion is achieved only when we completely cease harming others and harbor no aversion towards any sentient being under any circumstances.

Whether cultivating loving-kindness or compassion, the foundation lies in the mind of equanimity, avoiding greed or aversion, and not singling out specific individuals. Otherwise, our loving-kindness and compassion become tainted rather than pure, limited instead of limitless. Thus, the practice of loving-kindness and compassion follows a gradual path to avoid deviations. This will be elaborated in the following sections.

2. Suffering and the Causes of Suffering

Compassion aims to help sentient beings eliminate suffering and its causes. What is the suffering in human life? The *Metta Sutta* primarily addresses physical and mental suffering, while Buddhism also categorizes suffering into “Three Types of Suffering” and “Eightfold Suffering.” “Three Types of Suffering” include Suffering of Suffering, Suffering of Change, and All-pervasive Suffering. “The Eightfold Suffering” includes Suffering of Birth, Suffering of Aging, Suffering of Sickness, Suffering of Death, Suffering of Separation from Loved Ones, Suffering of Encountering the Unpleasant, Suffering of Not Getting What One Wants, and Suffering of the Five Aggregates. These categories only provide a broad overview of suffering. If they are fully elaborated, life encompasses countless suffering, too numerous to count. The key is eliminating the causes of suffering; this is the fundamental solution. Otherwise, suffering is endless. What are the causes of suffering? Buddhism believes that they mainly include past karma and present-life afflictions.

First is karma, a mental force generated by actions of body, speech, and mind. Since beginningless time, our actions, words, and thoughts do not simply disappear after they occur. Instead, they have become seeds stored in our life system. Once the causes and conditions are mature, this karma will produce corresponding results that come back to us, and no one can escape this. Wholesome karma will return, and so will unwholesome karma, sometimes even with greater force. As the saying goes, “Karma not created does not manifest, karma created is never lost, and karma grows extensively.” Our current state is a result of accumulated actions from past lives, encompassing everything from our internal physical and mental conditions to our external family background, living environment, and interpersonal relationships—all influenced by karma. Moreover, our present actions will continue to impact our future lives. The fundamental law of karma is that good deeds bring happiness, while bad deeds bring suffering. Thus, unwholesome karma is the root cause of life’s suffering.

Second are the afflictions, namely the three poisons of greed, aversion, and ignorance. These are the soil in which unwholesome karma grows. We create unwholesome karma out of greed and aversion, both of which are rooted in ignorance, delusion, and self-attachment. Only by completely eliminating self-attachment and transforming erroneous perceptions of the self can we permanently liberate ourselves from the causes of suffering.

We hope all sentient beings can permanently free themselves from suffering and the causes of suffering. To achieve this, we should guide them to see through the harmful effects of ignorance and self-attachment and then eliminate greed and aversion. Only by extinguishing greed, aversion, and ignorance can we fundamentally eradicate unwholesome karma.

3. How to Cultivate Immeasurable Compassion?

Cultivating immeasurable compassion also starts with oneself, as stated in the *Metta Sutta*, “May I be free from

enmity and danger. May I be free from mental suffering. May I be free from physical suffering ...” We see the flaws of contaminated life, and also the suffering caused by delusion, self-attachment, greed, aversion, ignorance, and unwholesome karma, thus seeking to be free from suffering. It is the motivation for cultivating a mind of compassion. If we do not feel suffering, there is no need to seek liberation from the suffering.

People are busy seeking happiness and liberation from suffering. Unfortunately, more suffering arises in the process of trying to change it because they fail to find the root causes of suffering. Through studying Buddhism, we see that the root of suffering lies in karma, greed, aversion, ignorance, and also in delusion and self-attachment. Therefore, we need to resolve these issues at the source. Furthermore, we should extend this aspiration from ourselves to relatives and friends, from the locality to the country, and from humans to all sentient beings in the six realms, wishing that all beings can ultimately be free from the causes of suffering. Confucianism emphasizes loving one’s family

and extending this love to the public. This means extending love from close family members to all relatives and eventually to all people in the world.

In the *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*, each vow and action of the bodhisattva is based on benefiting all sentient beings across the infinite space, throughout the Dharma realm, and in all ten directions and the three times (past, present, and future), guiding us to open our minds and expand compassion limitlessly. The vastness of space corresponds to the vastness of the mind. As long as we do not fall into self-attachment, our mind is inherently infinite because the essence of the universe is indeed the essence of the mind. When we establish an infinite focus, we can project compassion onto all sentient beings, becoming all-encompassing. Therefore, the *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* is a crucial guide to achieving immeasurable compassion.

4. Immeasurable Compassion and Universal Compassion of Oneness

The key to expanding compassion into infinity is to recognize oneself as one unity with all sentient beings in the six realms. With this understanding, helping others alleviate suffering is inevitable. Just as when a part of your body gets injured, your hand instinctively moves to treat it without considering whether to help or not. This is because your hand and the injured part are one unity, and it's an instinctive reaction. However, from a superficial level, we and sentient beings may seem like independent individuals—I am me, and they are them. How can we view ourselves and sentient beings as one unity? Ultimately, one must realize emptiness to comprehend that oneself and all sentient beings are fundamentally inseparable without any boundaries. Any perceived separation is merely a manifestation of dependent origination. What can we do before enlightenment? Does it mean we cannot practice? Not at all. Even though we may not have realized emptiness, we can still adjust our understanding through

learning and contemplation and stimulate our aspirations through reflective practice. These are the foundations for cultivating compassion.

Like loving-kindness, compassion is a precious spiritual treasure, a priceless treasure in life that can bring endless benefits to oneself and all beings. Even from the perspective of mental qualities, we should cultivate and achieve compassion. Nowadays, many people enjoy collecting antiques, sparing no expense. However, what real issue can antiques solve in life? How can our collections help us when we are mired in trouble or when we are about to leave this world? Only positive mindsets and wholesome karma can distance us from afflictions and serve as guidance at the time of death, bringing about pleasant results in future lives. Realizing the preciousness of compassion, we should actively cultivate and grow it, and further purify and expand it infinitely with the view of emptiness, making it the dominant force in the continuity of the mind.

IV

IMMEASURABLE JOY

1. Semantics of Joy

Joy, in this context, refers to delight and rejoicing. When we see sentient beings practicing virtuous deeds, achieving success, and gaining benefits, we feel genuinely happy for them and sincerely praise them. Rejoicing seems simple; it doesn't require any special abilities or much financial support. As long as we are willing, anyone can do it. But in reality, it's not that easy. Often, when we see others doing good deeds, achieving success, or gaining benefits, instead of being happy for them, we feel envy, jealousy, and resentment. Sometimes, this jealousy turns into conflict,

destruction, and harm due to a hatred of the rich. This mindset stems from self-attachment; we only want to benefit ourselves, so we see others' gains as a threat and become hostile.

To cultivate rejoicing, we must overcome two mental obstacles. The first is joy tainted with greed, and the second is dislike or displeasure. Rejoicing is originally a mind that benefits both oneself and others, but if it is mixed with greed, it becomes tainted and no longer equal. Dislike, on the other hand, is related to hatred and jealousy. As long as there is even a trace of aversion and jealousy in our minds, we cannot fully and openly rejoice in the joy of others.

2. What Is Joy Free from Suffering?

There are two types of happiness: one is happiness with suffering, referred to as Suffering of Change in Buddhism; the other is happiness free from suffering, which is the immeasurable joy, wishing that “may all beings always possess joy free from suffering, with contented body and

mind.” The happiness experienced by people, whether it comes from family, relationships, wealth, or career, is based on greed, aversion, and ignorance. It is unstable, fundamentally painful, and contaminated. Such happiness is only a temporary alleviation of suffering, and when balance is lost, extreme joy turns into sorrow.

Buddhism, however, tells us that besides the worldly happiness with suffering, there is transcendental happiness free from suffering, which is the bliss of nirvana. This happiness has no side effects and is unceasing because it is not based on external circumstances. Instead, it arises from the complete eradication of afflictions, constantly emanating serenity, joy, and freedom from the awakened nature. Practicing immeasurable joy involves not only rejoicing in the worldly benefits that sentient beings have gained but also rejoicing in their spiritual accomplishments, wishing them to possess the ultimate happiness.

3. How to Cultivate Immeasurable Joy?

Cultivating immeasurable joy also entails a gradual approach. As suggested in the *Metta Sutta*, we should first rejoice in our own virtuous actions and spiritual achievements because this is relatively easy and conducive to activating a joyful mind. However, it's essential to maintain a balanced approach: we should not become attached, arrogant, complacent, or self-righteous. Then, we can extend this rejoicing to those around us, starting with our relatives, then to colleagues and friends, and eventually to strangers. Once our rejoicing becomes stronger, we can further expand it to people we dislike. Thus, the gradual practice of rejoicing is crucial. If we practice rejoicing, starting with an enemy, this generally does not work. Therefore, we can practice rejoicing in ourselves first, and then extend it to people we like and are willing to rejoice in. Only after our ability to rejoice strengthens can we have the power to gradually extend it to other sentient beings.

The *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* also expounds on the practice of rejoicing in the merits of others, which is one of his ten great vows: “To rejoice in the merits of others, we start with rejoicing in all the Buddhas and Tathagatas of the ten directions and three times, as numerous as the minutest dust particles in all Buddha lands throughout the infinite space and Dharma realm. From the moment they first aroused the thought of enlightenment for all wisdom, they diligently cultivated and accumulated merits, not sparing their lives, as numerous as the minutest dust particles in inexpressibly inexpressible numbers of Buddha lands. During each eon, they would sacrifice their heads, eyes, hands, and feet, as numerous as the minutest dust particles in inexpressibly inexpressible numbers of Buddha lands. Through such difficult and arduous practices, they perfected various paramitas, attained different stages of Bodhisattva wisdom, achieved supreme enlightenment, and entered the final nirvana of all Buddhas, with their relics divided and distributed. I rejoice in all their wholesome roots. Furthermore, I rejoice in all the merits of sentient beings in

the six realms and four kinds of birth throughout the ten directions and all worlds, down to one dust particle. I also rejoice in the merits of all Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas of the ten directions and three times, whether they are still learning or have completed their learning. I rejoice in all the difficult and arduous practices undertaken by all bodhisattvas in their aspiration for supreme enlightenment. Thus, even if the realm of infinite space ends, the realm of sentient beings ends, the karma of sentient beings ends, and the afflictions of sentient beings end, my rejoicing is endless, thought after thought without even an instant of ceasing. And my actions of body, speech, and mind will never tire of this.”

The key to practicing rejoicing lies in completely opening our minds, taking as our focus the infinite space and Dharma realm, and all Buddha lands in the ten directions and the three times. Ordinary beings often fill their minds only with themselves, their families, work, or careers. At most, they extend this to their region, ethnicity, or country. Now, we need to establish an infinite focus by

opening the mind. The smaller our mind, the smaller our focus; the larger our mind, the larger our focus. In reality, the mind itself is infinite; it is only self-attachment that makes it narrow-minded. By meditating on this infinite focus, we can return the mind to its original state. This mind is infinite, formless, and non-abiding. It is also the mind in which we shall realize emptiness.

In terms of the object of practice, the *Metta Sutta* teaches us to start with rejoicing in ourselves and then expand this rejoicing outward, while the *Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva* starts with rejoicing in the virtues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, adopting a top-down approach. This approach is ingenious because we are unlikely to feel envious of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, making it easier and more sincere to rejoice in their merits. By establishing a mindset of rejoicing in the virtues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, we can extend this practice to all sentient beings across the six realms, thereby accomplishing immeasurable joy.

4. Reasons for Practicing Rejoicing

Similar to loving-kindness and compassion, rejoicing itself is a beautiful quality of life. If we harbor a mind of rejoicing, taking joy in the good deeds, benefits, and achievements of others as if they were our own, it not only brings happiness to ourselves but also inspires joy in everyone around us. This is because we are witnessing and conveying positive energy. When others feel this kindness, they are encouraged and reciprocate with kindness, mutually enhancing each other's growth. In contrast, those who are jealous and cannot tolerate the accomplishments of others live in constant discontent. The smaller one's mind, the more numerous the objects of envy, and the greater the unwillingness to see others' good deeds and successes. They may even use others' achievements as fuel for their own anger, endlessly generating negativity. This mindset not only causes personal suffering but, when expressed, also creates conflict with others, making one generally disliked. This is detrimental not just to spiritual practice in Buddhism, but even to worldly life and work.

In addition to bringing joy to oneself and all beings, rejoicing also cultivates immeasurable merits. While each person's abilities, energy, and financial resources are limited, the mind of rejoicing can be limitless. Even if we can't personally practice all virtuous deeds, sincerely rejoicing in others' good deeds yields the same merits as theirs. With a more expansive aspiration, the merits we gained could even exceed those of the original doer. In worldly pursuits, there is often regret from unfulfilled potential, but in practicing rejoicing, simply having the intention is sufficient. Rejoicing can be seen as an incredibly beneficial practice—understanding how to cultivate it allows for the constant accumulation of merits for enlightenment. In terms of worldly affairs, rejoicing also acts as a lubricant and plays a significant role in social interactions. As the saying goes, "Your network is your net worth." How does one build this network? It's inseparable from the practice of rejoicing. Sincerely rejoicing in others' accomplishments helps us build positive connections, quickly dissolve barriers between people, bring mutual happiness, and naturally create favorable conditions for success.

Moreover, rejoicing can diminish self-attachment. Those with a strong sense of self-attachment find it difficult to rejoice in others, habitually finding fault or even criticizing others' achievements. Over time, this only strengthens self-attachment, increases self-righteousness, and intensifies opposition to others. In contrast, when we widely rejoice in others' accomplishments, without clinging to our own knowledge and actions, self-attachment weakens due to a lack of reinforcement. It's important to note that rejoicing is not about flattery or ingratiating behavior for ulterior motives, but rather a genuine appreciation of others' positive attributes, benefits, virtuous actions, and merits.

In conclusion, rejoicing can break down self-attachment, accumulate rewards, and clear obstacles, thus advancing on the path of the bodhisattva. It also enhances virtue and fosters worldly benefits. From both the perspectives of Buddhist practice and secular affairs, rejoicing is an excellent means of "wealth creation," making it an endeavor well worth pursuing. We should not

only cultivate rejoicing but also strive to expand it boundlessly.

V

IMMEASURABLE EQUANIMITY

1. Semantics of Equanimity

The term “Equanimity” encompasses two aspects: renunciation and equality. In the context of the Four Immeasurables, it is expressed as, “May all beings abide in equanimity, devoid of greed and aversion.”

Renunciation involves relinquishing greed and aversion, fundamentally abandoning self-attachment, thereby cultivating a mind of equality. The personality of ordinary people is based on self-attachment, which inevitably leads to likes and dislikes. With likes and dislikes, we see the

world, further fueling greed and aversion—clinging to likes is greed, and rejecting dislikes is aversion. When the mind is caught in the grips of greed and aversion, it becomes unsettled and restless. Notably, aversion is painful, but greed also inflicts suffering. Moreover, they strengthen self-imposed limitations, preventing us from treating all beings equally. Without this equanimity, it is impossible to cultivate boundless loving-kindness, compassion, or rejoicing.

The sequence of the Four Immeasurables begins with loving-kindness, followed by compassion, rejoicing, and finally, equanimity. However, in practice, to cultivate immeasurable loving-kindness, compassion, and rejoicing, we must first establish a foundation of equanimity. Only by overcoming greed and aversion can we view all beings equally and regard them as the focus for practicing loving-kindness, compassion, and rejoicing.

2. How to Cultivate Immeasurable Equanimity?

To cultivate immeasurable equanimity, we begin with a neutral object—an object neither of greed nor aversion nor involved in any significant personal interests. This approach is not easy to involve interference. Further, we practice with family and friends. They are divided into three tiers based on intimacy: the most intimate, the intermediate intimate, and the least intimate. To cultivate equanimity, we start with the least intimate friends and family, because this intimacy is the least, and the greed is the weakest. As equanimity grows to a certain level, we can view them equally, without greed or aversion. Next, we extend this equanimity to the intermediate and even the most intimate family and friends. For instance, the most intimate ones are our parents, children, and spouses. Yet, they may also become the best ones to break free from greed. As we know, when relationships are too intimate, the potential harm to ourselves and others are more intense, as the saying goes, “The deeper the love, the sharper the aversion.”

After developing equanimity towards loved ones, we move on to practice with those we dislike. Like friends and family, these disliked individuals can also be categorized into three levels based on the intensity of our aversion: strongly disliked, moderately disliked, and slightly disliked. When practicing equanimity, we start with the slightly disliked individuals, then move to the moderately disliked ones, and finally to those we strongly dislike. Cultivating equanimity is a process of developing an equal mind. As our equanimity strengthens, we can gradually handle more challenging situations. If we don't follow this gradual approach but directly handle the most difficult situations first, we are likely to fail immediately.

In texts like the *Gradual Path to Enlightenment*, there are also methods for practicing equanimity, teaching us to view love and hatred from the perspective of samsara. In this lifetime, we may love someone deeply, finding it hard to let go, or hate someone intensely, feeling completely opposed to them. How can we view them equally? This requires thinking from the perspective of samsara. Life

did not begin with this current existence; it stretches back through countless past lives. The person we love now may have been an enemy in a past life, possibly having harmed us. Similarly, the person we hate now may have been a beloved one in the past, having loved us deeply. We simply forget these connections due to the cycles of existence. Even if we don't consider past lives, love, and hatred are not fixed even within this life. People who love each other can become enemies, and those who oppose each other can become friends. These reversals often occur in life. Love and hate are just temporary emotions at the moment; love is not permanent, so we shouldn't cling to it, and hate is not fixed, so we shouldn't dwell on it. All these reflections help us develop equanimity.

Some may think that having no love or hate means having no stance or even being indifferent. In fact, when we view all beings equally, we not only let go of hatred but also develop an equal and impartial compassion towards all beings. This is not indifference; rather, it is great loving-kindness, great compassion, and great love.

All sentient beings tend to be self-centered due to self-attachment. In reality, self-attachment is just a mistaken assumption we create to support the cycle of samsara. With this self-attachment as a reference, we distinguish who is related to us and who is not, forming a complex web of relationships that give rise to love and hate. However, these references and supports, originating from incorrect assumptions, are baseless. If we eliminate self-attachment and see everything from the perspective of dependent origination, our relationships with others and all sentient beings are flattened, without any central focus. This applies to ourselves as well as to the world. Does the universe have a center? Does the Dharma realm have a center?

The key to practicing equanimity lies in eliminating self-attachment. By doing so, we eliminate the central focus and the relationships built around it, allowing us to face all beings in the Dharma realm with an equal mind. Only on the basis of equality can we extend loving-kindness, compassion, and rejoicing to all sentient beings,

establishing vast and impartial loving-kindness, compassion, and rejoicing.

Moreover, the balanced, tranquil, and ordinary mindsets embody the original state of the mind and the most precious qualities in life. They align with equanimity. When we return to our true nature, we can view all beings equally and face the world with unwavering calmness. This powerful tranquility can quell all delusions, allowing our minds to be filled only with compassion and deep rejoicing for all beings. In this way, we can maintain a transcendent detachment even while engaging in the world.

VI

BENEVOLENCE, UNIVERSAL LOVE, AND COMPASSION

For the harmonious development of human society, love is an indispensable and important driving force. It is because of love that the world is filled with warmth. Traditional cultures and religions contribute to the world by spreading great love. For instance, Confucianism advocates benevolence, Christianity promotes universal love, and Buddhism advocates loving-kindness and compassion. This may lead many people to think that all religions essentially teach the same kindness. Is this true? If not, what distinguishes these forms of love?

1. Tainted and Untainted Love

What is tainted love, and what is untainted love? The distinction lies in whether such love is tainted with greed and possessiveness. Commonly, when people speak of love, they do not make this distinction. For instance, Confucianism teaches that love begins with affection for parents, spouses, children, and siblings, and then extends to love among friends, between superiors and subordinates, society at large, and even all things in the universe. This is a process of gradually expanding the object of love, but it does not define the nature of love itself. The universal love in Christianity also focuses on expanding from small and personal love without distinguishing the nature of love itself. In fact, the love for one's immediate family often involves greed. Without addressing this issue in the transition from narrow to broad love, true equality cannot be achieved, nor can it extend to everything.

Buddhism distinguishes between two types of love. The one we are familiar with is tainted with greed and

possessiveness, encompassing nearly all forms of worldly love. Upon analysis, we find that regardless of the object of love, there is invariably a degree of greed and possessiveness, be it in the relationship between spouses, parents, and children, or even our love for objects. Although love involves giving, greed and possessiveness taint this love, leading to various negative side effects. In many sutras, the Buddha spoke of “ignorance as the father and attachment as the mother (of suffering),” highlighting the dangers of love. In the teachings on the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination related to the cycle of life, it is also stated that “craving, grasping, and becoming” lead to “birth, aging, and death.” Thus, tainted love is considered the root of the cycle of rebirth, and the fundamental cause of all suffering and afflictions in the world. If we want to achieve liberation and escape from this cycle, it is essential to eliminate tainted love; failing to do so results in an endless cycle of creating and experiencing karma, trapping us in perpetual birth and death.

Eliminating tainted love does not mean disowning family

or being indifferent and unfeeling toward all beings. Instead, it's about transforming it into an untainted love, referred to as "great loving-kindness and great compassion" in Buddhism. In Buddhist practice, compassion and wisdom are the two most essential aspects, and one must cultivate an equal, selfless love for all beings. This love makes no distinction between the close and distant relationships. It is not driven by greed, does not aim for possession, nor does it seek any form of return. Consequently, this love is free from side effects; it neither fades nor deteriorates over time like worldly love.

By distinguishing these two different types of love, we come to understand what needs to be resolved and what should be preserved and developed.

2. Self and No-self

In Confucianism and other religions, love begins with close family and friends, and gradually expands to a broader range, ultimately extending to love for society.

Such love involves a sense of self, where even if one loves numerous beings, the central self remains unchanged.

In Buddhism, love initially begins with a sense of self, but it must eventually transcend to a state of no-self. Otherwise, it cannot align with the path of cultivation. In the *Diamond Sutra*, the Buddha repeatedly reminds us that, in the process of benefiting sentient beings, bodhisattvas must have no forms of self, others, sentient beings, or longevity. If they have the forms of self, others, sentient beings, and longevity, then they are not bodhisattvas because having a self creates a self-centeredness. Thus, the practice becomes a worldly virtue, which is form-attached and limited.

3. Equality and Inequality

The benevolence in Confucianism is grounded in filial piety, where there is a distinction in the love shown towards family and the general public. The universal love in Christianity is based on faith in God, with differences between

believers and non-believers, as well as between humans and animals. However, loving-kindness and compassion in Buddhism mean “unconditional loving-kindness and universal compassion of oneness,” which must be based on equality. Only when our mind is completely equal, without the slightest difference between close and distant, noble and humble, can we embrace everything and generate boundless love for all beings: like sunlight that shines equally on everything without discrimination; also like the earth that supports all things without exclusion.

4. Limited and Unlimited

Confucian and Christian love is limited to humans, excluding animals and unseen beings. Buddhist compassion, aiming to benefit all beings, is limitless. However, without the wisdom of emptiness, limitlessness is just a conceptual imagination, so one cannot break the boundaries between self and others. Confucianism and other religions, lacking the correct view of emptiness and the practice based on it, cannot genuinely perceive themselves and sentient

beings as one. Such love is inevitably limited, not limitless. Only through practicing and realizing the nature of emptiness can one truly understand that everything is a false appearance due to causes and conditions. This realization allows one to recognize that all past, present, and future Buddhas and all beings in the six realms are fundamentally no different. As the sutra says, “Minds, Buddhas, and sentient beings are fundamentally no different.” With this understanding, one can firmly believe that benefiting others is benefiting oneself, loving others is loving oneself, thus establishing boundless great love.

VII

CONCLUSION

The practice of the Four Immeasurables is a vital part of Buddhist cultivation. I encourage everyone to incorporate these four sentences into your daily practice routine, reminding yourself of daily aspirations and continually recalling them in your daily lives. Most importantly, these teachings should be embraced as heartfelt wishes, earnestly and sincerely. It requires contemplative practice to tune the mind to resonate with all beings, cultivating loving-kindness, compassion, rejoicing, and equanimity. Once your mind abides in these states consistently and steadily, spread this boundless aspiration outward. Therefore, this not only brings blessings to other beings, but

also serves as the best practice for ourselves, allowing us to be blessed by these positive mindsets in the process of blessing others.

国际静心协会、静心学堂简介

国际静心协会（简称 MPI）是 2021 年成立于瑞士苏黎世的非盈利组织，旨在向全球传播佛法智慧和禅意生活。

静心学堂为“国际静心协会”旗下的核心公益品牌，致力于传承生命觉醒教育，为现代人提供安顿身心、安身立命之道。我们推广的静心学堂课程体系，为汉传佛教济群长老以四十年修学所证，对当代佛教教育作出的探索，包括禅意生活、智慧人生和觉醒之道。同时，我们将在世界各地营造具有禅意的空间、彼此增上的氛围，为大众修学保驾护航。

“静心学堂丛书”呈现了禅意生活、智慧人生的部分课程。我们衷心希望，更多人由此了解生命觉醒的教育，共享东方智慧给人类带来的福祉。

Mindful Peace International & Mindful Peace Academy

Mindful Peace International (MPI), established in 2021 in Zurich, Switzerland, is a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading Buddhist wisdom and promoting a Chan-inspired life globally.

The Mindful Peace Academy serves as the core public welfare brand under Mindful Peace International. We are dedicated to passing on education about life awakening and offering modern individuals ways towards physical and mental well-being, thereby helping them ground themselves and discover their life's mission. The curriculum we promote at the Mindful Peace Academy has been authenticated through forty years of study and practice by Master Jiqun, an eminent elder of Han Buddhism. It represents an exploration of contemporary Buddhist education, encompassing teachings on the Chan-inspired Life, the Wisdom for Living, and the Path to Awakening. Moreover, we are committed to creating Chan-inspired spaces and fostering mutually enriching environments worldwide to safeguard the public's learning journey.

The *Mindful Peace Academy Collection* showcases a selection of courses on the Chan-inspired Life and the Wisdom for Living. We sincerely hope that through these courses, more individuals will engage with life awakening education and share in the blessings that Eastern wisdom brings to humanity.

本书由善信

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