

Anne C. Klein

Week 4, *Embodied Love: Core Tibetan Trainings for an Unbounded Heart*

August 25th, 2014

“Joy”

All right, then. So for a while now we’ve been reflecting on these qualities of equanimity—or balance—lovingkindness, compassion. Today we go to delight, often translated as joy. And if you’re like me, you’ve probably begun to remember moments in your life when somebody offered you one of those qualities, showed you what it was, planted a little seed in you, so you felt a connection to it, were inspired, maybe. And that’s very wonderful because our practice really is about our lives and we want to connect our practice with our lives, with things that have happened to us in the past and, most especially, with how we move about in our lives going forward.

When I think of equanimity I think of my teacher, one of my teachers who came to my house, and to my surprise made his way up to my little study *cum* meditation place, which nobody ever goes to and which is quite a mess. And my experience around my life as a child was whenever a kind of adult figure like my parents walked into my room some sort of declination followed—very strong judgments followed: “This is not how what your room should look like. This is not how it should be.”

So naturally I had a pattern of reaction and concern, a certain amount of trepidation here as this most esteemed lama from Tibet coming into my absolutely unprepared and messy domain. And he comes upstairs and I kind of hold my breath and he looks around, specially to my so-called alter area, which has all kinds of stuff, alter-type stuff, strewn all over it and he looks around and he says, “Yogini! Wonderful!” And, you know, it was just such a moment of feeling. He was equanimous. He wasn’t judging. He was, like, oh, it’s okay for me to be as I am, to have a moment of experiencing myself in the presence of someone who I respected tremendously, who I thought was going to lay down some pretty serious judgment and didn’t. And it was lovely. So that’s just a moment for me. And I encourage you to reflect on your own moment where these kinds of gifts have been given to you by someone or other.

In cultivating these boundless states as we are seeing we are looking at our suffering. That is to say, we are really moving forward from the teaching of the first two noble truths to recognize conditioning is always suffering, because it’s always unstable, it’s always unsatisfactory, which may be a better way to translate this first noble truth. Fundamentally, there’s an un-satisfactoriness that pervades our situation because nothing is ever stable and we are beings who really, really want stability. So that’s a problem. And then we are looking into the causes of our

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suffering, which is really our own—in our language, our own reactivity. We are pain—pain is pain, but suffering is our emotional, psychological, historically grounded, based on our childhood and so forth, patterns of reaction to pain.

So as we do these practices, we are really grounded in the teachings of the first two truths. We are recognizing the face of our own pain and the way that we contribute to it. And something else is also happening as we are perhaps starting to see. That is, as I mentioned, Longchenpa and Jigme Lingpa were particularly emphasized, that we are also offered a passage to ceasing those reactive patterns, the third noble truth, ceasing the causes of our suffering. And doing that by moving along a path, in this case, the four steps that we’ve outlined by which we explore our relationship to the four boundless states.

So the first two truths are the story of samsara, the third and fourth truths are the story of freedom from samsara and these boundless states encompass both of those stories. There’s a very complete teaching. It doesn’t mean it’s the only teaching we’ll engage in but it’s a very, very complete teaching because what we are seeing is that as the energy, the force, the habituation to, for example, attachment begins to resolve, then we can have an experience really of freedom from attachment.

As the experience of turning away from suffering resolves, we can have an experience of freedom from running away or trying to control suffering, as we’ve been talking about. And then we have that very precise type of seeing that we talked about last time, becomes available to us. Or in traditional language we would say this is the discriminating wisdom of a fully matured spiritual state with loving compassion, with—that’s the cultivation of compassion with the cultivation of love as we begin to see through, quite literally, through keeping our attention on the attachment that may arise in place of love. We are able to open to a space—attachment is distorted vision. Hatred is distorted vision. But pure love is just clarity, like a clear lake. And that clarity is a natural characteristic of space—the space that we are—just as precision is a natural characteristic of a well-lit sky. This clarity is analogous to the mirror-like wisdom, in traditional language, free of distortion.

And equanimity, as we have said, the wisdom of sameness and the wisdom of reality itself. And we have seen that each of these boundless states captures a particular affliction that is a cause of suffering: equanimity counters pride and

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obscurations, love counters hatred, compassion counters attachment, and joy counters particularly painful afflictions of jealousy.

Jealousy, like all of the other afflictions, is rooted in a certain sense of what the world owes me and what is appropriate and how much attention I should be getting from my wonderful qualities and it being quite unbearable that so-and-so is getting more attention for their not-so-wonderful qualities. Who hasn't experienced jealousy? It's pretty painful.

And when we are able to be released from jealousy, then there's really just joy in anyone's happiness. So we cultivate that. And whatever happiness arises, it makes you happy. Once this minor detail of overcoming the sense of *this should be my happiness* occurs.

The first time I went to India I was at the airport—Kennedy Airport—and I had a very dear aunt, my Ilenani, who was elderly at that time and who had been diagnosed with cancer. I was going away for a year. I knew she wasn't going to live long; she must be suffering a lot. And my mother said, “Call her, call her.” And I thought, “Ew, here I am, you know, in my twenty-something, headed to India, great adventure, very excited and happy and how's she going to relate to that?” It still moves me very much to remember that phone call. And I called her up and I said, almost apologetically, “I'm going to India.”

And she was just pleased for me. She said, “That's wonderful. Have a great time.” She didn't have anything of what I expected, which is probably how I would've reacted of, “Well, that's great for you, but I'm dying,” you know? Somebody could easily have that reaction. So that was a great gift for me, okay? Kind of modeling just—she was just happy. She didn't make a big deal of it either, going on and on about how excited she was, which probably would've come across and been phony. She just said very warmly, you know, “Have a wonderful trip.”

So when we can cultivate this real freedom from jealousy, there's tremendous joy and it's a tremendous gift to others. And we do this—we use the same steps as we did in our other meditation and we'll go through those. Before we do, I want to say a couple of other things about the encompassment of this practice.

I've mentioned a couple of times how each of these four boundless states is related with a certain element. There are practices around the elements—Ken

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McLeod talks about this in his book. These are complementary practices to become even more fully aware of our various kinds of reactions. When we understand that the path has different facets, which include coming to know our own stuff, that’s very significant. Learning about wisdom in this tradition—Buddhism is a wisdom tradition. Every tradition within the Buddhist tradition has a way of expressing and cultivating wisdom.

So if we’re interested in the wisdom aspect of the five wisdoms that are associated with the four boundless states we might want to look into that and look more into the connection among these kinds of practices, look more deeply into how all of these afflictions and the suffering that we experience are so rooted in the distortion of our own perception. That’s really what obscuration and ignorance is. We can’t see what’s actually there and we’re learning that to a degree, by cultivating these practices. I hope you will be doing these practices, getting some benefit out of them, reading around in what interests you. Pema Chodron’s books are also wonderful, “Start from Where You Are,” “The Wisdom of No Escape”—all of these, the practice of giving and taking is a kind of culminating practice that is not part of this retreat but is very significant.

If you are interested in following up with some of this in the way that we do, please visit our—we’re having a retreat September 12th on the four immeasurables. We will be going more deeply into the material that we have looked at already. And you’re welcome to participate in that or to keep track of our programs; all our programs are broadcast and available as downloads. Because the path—one of my teachers said, as is often said in the Buddhist tradition, you know, the path, the tradition—is a wholeness. Just as the boundless states, as we’re starting to see, are a kind of hologram, your relationship to one kind of brings you into relationship with the other.

So we said it’s like a sheet of paper or a square of any kind: If you take ahold of one corner and turn it, the whole thing turns. The whole wheel turns. So the whole wheel turns as we do this practice, these practices and the whole wheel can be amplified also, our understanding of the different passages through which we turn are also of use. What’s most important in practice is continuity. You’ve probably seen already that there’s tremendous resistance to practice, perhaps particularly to some of these practices, “I don’t want to think about sufferings. Why can’t I just sit and be quiet and watch my breath?” Because there’s much to learn, there’s much to see. Calm is crucial but it is not yet wisdom unless we allow it to become a beacon that inquires deeply into how things are and in this way our practice of

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the four boundless states, our practice inquiring into how we hold our sense of self in the world and whether that really makes sense or not, then this becomes really a passage for us out of suffering.

And that’s what we’re looking for: we need insight. So if you get discouraged, cultivate joy, which is our closing meditation, talk to a friend. To go deeply into these practices you really need a teacher you can trust, so find one. Many, maybe most of you, already have one; that’s wonderful. We are beings who need guidance and we also acknowledge in saying that that we don’t do this or any profound practice really by ourselves. We have the help of our teachers. We also have the help of reality itself, that sky, that space, that we’ve been taking about all along, that is the place in which these clouds arise, dissolve, and that space itself, our nature, our Buddha nature, our stainless space, which is such that these qualities are eternally forever inviolably present, which is why we can hope to uncover them through our practice, is part of what helps us.

So if you have practices of refuge, or prayers to your teacher, your lineage—we haven’t introduced them into this retreat because they’re people from so many different traditions or none perhaps here—but at the end of the session it’s also good to ask, open yourself to receiving some kind of help, to support you in your practice. And we will incorporate that very briefly today and you can incorporate it into all your sessions. If you already have a way of doing that—guru yoga, for example, is wonderful. You can do that in connection with these practices because your guru, after all, is an expression, an embodiment of reality, certainly is the presence of all of these qualities. Okay.

So, as always, you already know we sit, we sit deeply, we are aware of the power and rising of the central corridor of our body. We are aware of our alignment. We gently rest our attention on our breath. And we do so for five, ten minutes.

And when we feel settled, we’re familiar with this feeling of settling that you let your inhalation guide your attentions all the way down, drop down to the center of your belly, three fingers down from your navel, three fingers in. It’s fine to touch your navel, orient yourself or maybe you already know what that feels like; it feels like your center of gravity.

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And you sit there because here you touch really the ground of stability in your body for your experience, which is why we begin with equanimity, which resonates particularly with this place associated with the earth element.

Here’s a verse that Longchenpa quotes from [inaudible], he says, “On the well-prepared ground of equanimity, the flowers of love are scattered. They are fruitfully furthered by the shade of compassion and purified by the clear waters of joy.” And so we see how all four of these are really in a holographic kind of dance supporting each other, nourishing each other, making each other more and more possible and vibrant. And so you can acknowledge this if you wish by having a bit of a bead of light of your own attention at the places associated with these four boundless states and the five elements that they are also in conversation with: the center of your belly, the solar plexus—as if a kind of mirror is there, mirror-like wisdom of love being represented there, by ruby red orb of light.

Compassion, discriminating wisdom can light up there. To your throat, green associated with the swiftness of engaging in any activity. Once we dissolve the energy sop of jealousy, we have energy, we have joy—we have energy to do whatever is necessary. This is associated with the all-accomplishing wisdom. And in the center of our head, a circle of light expressing the wisdom of reality itself, which comes into place with equanimity. So equanimity really comes encompasses the whole in that sense.

So use stable—think what you know of joy—and somebody took joy in your success, in your joy, without coveting it or wanting it, wanting it for themselves, wishing you didn’t have it. That’s so beautiful to experience. So think of someone you don’t care for or think so well of, getting a raise, getting a job that you don’t get, getting accolades that you don’t get, and how do you feel about that? And how that’s painful because somehow it feels that you’re not getting your due, you’re not being recognized. Somehow it feels like this person is taking something away that should be yours, because you don’t yet feel enough in yourself.

You still want something from outside, most of us do. We’re just recognizing that. And as you can recognize that pattern of, “Oh, but I need this praise, I need this recognition, I need, I need, I need. I’m not enough, I’m not enough just the way I am.” So feel into that. It’s a tough one, honestly. You can take refuge, pray, feel all the bodhisattvas supporting you, taking delight in your practice, the very kind of delight that the dissolution of your jealousy will make possible for you. Finally,

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something begins to shift and the energy of that jealousy becomes a fulsome state of joy.

But it's not a joy that you are thinking about. It's just very natural. It's just a surging presence to whatever is and a delight in whatever happiness anyone has. As Shantideva famously says in his *Bodhisattvacaraya-avatara*, “If you as a practitioner of the Mahayana are gearing up to help everyone get the highest happiness of all, enlightenment itself, well, of course, you're happy whatever other happiness comes along.” And we often find that this isn't the case for us. When we do open to that joy, which is this fullness of presence associated with the all accomplishing, because everything is already complete.

We are complete within ourselves. The joy is an antidote to any kind of depression-like experience we have had through the cultivation of compassion. There's just joy that we want to share and so we stay with—in the third of these—we stay with our reactivity, our jealousy, until some kind of joy emerges in this fourth stage, which we will then work to extend to every area in our lives, noticing when we're able to take joy in other's success, when we're not; when we're able to take joy in our own success. Sometimes we can't because we're afraid other people will be jealous, because we ourselves are still in that place. It doesn't change over night. But it's just weather, it's just a pattern, it's just a reaction. It's not who we really are. And that's really the main thing that we're learning through all these practices, that whatever our reaction is, it's not really ours. It's something and we need to just keep our awareness on it. And there will be a shift and then we stay with that joy—what is this joy? Can't really say. And, yet, it's there. Feel it.

And we'll close with the simplest type of sharing of our merit, which is expanding with our “Ahhh” that open sound, “Ahhh” open-like space containing all the good qualities that we've been cultivating, expanding this out to the entire universe, sharing it with them, purifying the entire universe, so that all these pure beings of radiant joy with our home then dissolve into us. And we carry this into our life, step by step, day by day, week by week, year by year. Practice. Practice. We continue. Continuity is essential. So we'll close with this dedication.

The world is filled with the light of joy and equanimity and love and compassion and that light is all now collecting here.

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Remember always to rest at the end of your session. Just sit there. Remember to rest at the beginning of your session. Remember to relax. Relaxation gives rise to clarity, the clarity helps you relax. Hope this has been helpful to you. It will be helpful if you continue to practice whatever good intentions you began with, may they continue and further your practice. Continuity is the crucial thing. It's a slow process for anyone. It requires dedication. So may you have commitment to that. Thank you.