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can't accomplish own benefit, embracing welfare of others is inherently joyful, 4 Immeasurables in detail, Dharma won't bear fruit without confidence

[00:06:10] It would be fair to say... I think... that most of us... maybe all of us... come together this morning in order to engage in our meditation practice. In order to... calm our bodies and minds. In order to have some sense of... personal flourishing, personal contentment. ... Fair to say, that approach is the norm. ... It's also fair to say... with some certainty... that this plays a role in why we do not succeed. ... We cannot accomplish our own benefit. ... We can... play a role in our own benefit, but we cannot accomplish our own benefit... without the help of others.

[00:08:11] Fortunately... the others... do not need to know that we're using them for our own benefit. But we fool ourselves... when we... sit down to practice in order to accomplish our own benefit. We thereby set in place a very large obstacle. On the other hand, it's not really realistic... to suggest... that we do anything else. So it's a little bit... one of those conundrums... that appears to have no exit.

[00:09:15] In our Dharma practice... which includes our meditation... and our understanding of things... related to the meditation and our understanding of things that are *not* related to our meditation, largely what we call samsara, or the world of confusion. ... Generally... we begin with... a conceptual understanding of our practice, of our meditation. And often we never go beyond that. We rely upon that... conceptual understanding because we're so thoroughly trained... in the conceptual. So thoroughly rewarded... by successfully understanding the conceptual... it is sometimes difficult for us to see... the authentic, functional... path... to fulfillment.

[00:11:05] And yet, from another side... still fair to say... most of us would agree... that there is nothing more important to us than our... human relationships with each other. ... And in those human relationships... the conceptual understanding... is often the cause of conflict, disagreement. ... So here we come together and it's helpful... for us to first understand... that... our focus, our attention, our *intention*... really does need... to be focused on the benefit of others. And amongst all of the... wildly esoteric practices in this tradition... which are renowned... for their effectiveness... in bringing about insight, deep understanding... but often difficult to enter into those practices *effectively*. And *again*... the reason for that difficulty is... we *enter* into those practices... somewhat unfortunately... in order to bring great benefit to others. But others sometimes only include one.

[00:14:09] So again, to remind ourselves... we cannot accomplish our own... great benefit. We can buy a new car. Can eat at a nice restaurant. We cannot attain enlightenment... without... the help of others. We can *trick* others into helping us... but also that will *not* work. We need to understand the connection... between focusing on the benefit of others... and our own benefit. And we need to trick *ourselves*... into thinking... that the *only* benefit that's necessary *is* the benefit of others. Put in our own benefit, not only in second place, but third and fourth and all the way down the line. ... And the *magic* is that through that process... we *will* accomplish our own benefit because we will accomplish the benefit of all beings. Anything less than that... excludes ourselves. So from that perspective, when we understand it... we understand... what it is that we must do.

[00:16:39] So I thought this morning... I have to confess. I rarely know what to say... until... I've heard it. [laughs] I'm slightly closer to the source than you are... [laughter] so I suppose I hear it first... but not by much. So we are scheduled this morning to engage in the practice of shamatha, which we will do.

[00:17:30] To reiterate and summarize, shamatha is the... practice by which we... first recognize... our own... we all love hyperbole, don't we... our own insanity. How crazy we are, how much we want to be happy and peaceful and harmonious with everyone and all the things we do in order to make sure none of those things occur. I think that's a fair definition of insanity. And when we fail, we blame our neighbors. Which is also fairly said to be insanity. And when our society, our culture... goes along with that, it's fair to say, it also is insane. Not in the sense of crazy running around... harming others in certain ways, but certainly not accomplishing our own benefit.

[00:19:09] Shamatha is the process by which we... *recognize* our... crazy mind activities. And again, we often feel like, I want to practice shamatha in order to benefit myself. In order to... abandon all of the things that cause me pain and anguish... and embrace all the things that... cause me happiness, peace, comfort and so on. And the open *secret* to that... is not actually to abandon one's own welfare, but to embrace the welfare of others. ... Embracing the welfare of others is almost, you could say, inherently joyful. So one might ask, what took so long?!

[00:20:36] And so in order to get through today's agenda... we will begin first with the... refuge prayer. Refuge is sooo important. Those of us who have... recited the refuge prayer... literally a hundred thousand times or more... it's so easy to lose track of why we did that. Though we can recite why we did it, it's not always clear... that we have the experience of having done it. We turn our minds *back* to refuge in all the worldly things... which were originally the reasons for reciting those hundred thousand recitations. There's nothing wrong with all of those insane things. We all do that. What's important, and the antidote to all of it, is to see it.

[00:21:58] We are not bad. We are good. In fact... from the Buddhist perspective... we are *inherently* good... *not* inherently bad. That's another tradition. Let us be careful to *stick* to the one we're in. We are inherently good, but we often *identify* with our own misunderstandings about the nature of our own minds. The nature of our relationships with others. The causes of happiness. The causes of misery. All these things. But none of that changes the proposition that we are inherently good. Inherently even awakened! Which is code for... we are buddhas. ... So many buddhas! So few recognize their own nature. ... No one who understands... conceptually or otherwise, will say... we need to *fix*... that misunderstanding. ... We don't need to fix anything. We're fine just like we are. The issue isn't that we are broken. The issue is that we don't recognize our inherent perfection. This is what the Buddha said. So, a good place to start... if one wishes to... gain the benefit in this tradition.

[00:24:21] I want to step through... first of all then, before beginning the shamatha... the Four Immeasurables... having had a couple of conversations and realizing... how difficult it is... to grasp the *profundity* of those Four Immeasurables. In a nutshell, the Immeasurables... we can easily memorize and recite. Immeasurable loving kindness, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy, sometimes we say empathetic or sympathetic joy... but that requires a bit of commentary... and immeasurable equanimity.

[00:25:23] They all sound so good. ... They don't work... without... the inclusion of others. And so when we think of immeasurable loving kindness... which is such a beautiful phrase,

immeasurable loving kindness. What could be warmer? More attractive? More compelling? Immeasurable loving kindness. And recently, a few days back... in the conversation, it was clear... that the meaning of that was taken to be... that I will be the beneficiary of that loving kindness... which fundamentally neutralizes the entire thing.

[00:26:40] There is only one way... in this tradition, *really*... to accomplish... and recognize... the full meaning of our own inherent perfection, and that is to focus... *ideally* ... entirely upon the benefit of others. And even that, most of us will say... that also sounds very good. Already warm and fuzzy, the idea that... we might each focus in that way on the benefit of others. Would we not like to do that? ... So when I mentioned that in the conversation... the person, who had been practicing a long time, was surprised.

[00:28:09] So when we think of loving kindness, and by the way, just to say... those Four Immeasurables... can be taught and understood in any order. Can change the order at any time... whenever you feel like it. Because each one of them contains the other three... fully. In fact, I remember going all the way back into the early 70s... when the old monk Kalu Rinpoche said that the entire Dharma is contained in every syllable of every word in the Dharma. So you utter any of it, and it's all there! ... It's very hard to have confidence in that. So one of our first jobs is to gain confidence. Confidence. Our Dharma will bear no fruit without confidence. So we need to... have some means to feel... like what we're doing is actually really more than *just* functional, it's *super* functional.

[00:29:41] Loving kindness is the... mental state... where we hold the wish... that all beings engage in the activities... the mental activities, the verbal activities, the physical activities that will be the *cause* for experiencing... the highest states. And when we say, *immeasurable* loving kindness, it means... *no one is excluded*. ... So, if today you walk out and you walk down the street and... good to think to yourself... what was that loving kindness? You meet someone on the street you've never seen before... and as you approach and walk by them... you can make the wish that what they are doing... and what they will do... will be the *causes*... of the removal of all confusion, all dissatisfaction... and that they will experience their own inherent purity, which is to say their own buddha awakened nature.

[00:31:30] If you could do that... a hundred times a day, your Dharma would excel... at an extraordinary rate. But if you did it only once a day, you would notice the difference. So, that's pretty good all by itself! And if you don't notice the difference, it's because you've been doing it *more* than once a day. Shame on you... [laughing] to be so kind.

[00:32:14] The other immeasurable, compassion, is the wish that... those who *experience*... suffering... but do not see the role that they play and have played and will play... we hold the wish... that they will, by whatever means, divest themselves... of the causes of suffering. And we make that wish over and over again, *especially*... for those with whom we have difficult relationships. ... Especially!

[00:33:14] Of course, we would like to divest ourselves of the causes of suffering also for ourselves. But the *wish* that *others*... will do that... is where the fruit is. ... Even, if you make the mistake of thinking I'm doing this in order to benefit *myself*... if you intentionally do it in order to benefit others, you will gradually turn... in that *appropriate* direction.

[00:33:52] Loving kindness and compassion. Again, in any order. Then we have what we call joy. ... Generally, teachers will start with any one of these four. Some of them have their

favorites. So, you're getting mine... at this point. So I confess that only because... you may wish to have your own. Any one of these four is so imbued... with goodness... that whatever it is that you decide to use, you will not be able to escape... recognizing that goodness. ... Loving kindness. Compassion. Joy. Joy is... misunderstood. ... It's also understood... in different ways. So, that's where we get... some people who teach this will say, "Joy is the foundation of The Four Immeasurables." ... Could be, depending on how you teach it. [laughs] Others will say equanimity is because without equanimity, how do you have *Immeasurable* joy? *Immeasurable* compassion? You must have equanimity. But if you care *enough*... about others, the equanimity will come. And you will see it... anyway. So really, in a sense, I don't think makes a difference. Nonetheless, some will take a very hard view of it... and maybe that makes the difference too. Who cares! We want to... have our entire attention, one hundred plus percent, focused on the benefit of others. ... And just as a kind of forewarning, you will experience happiness in that process.

[00:36:02] It's so... contradictory. ... How is it that we could take all of our attention... and turn it to the benefit of others and experience *more* satisfaction... than when we put it all on ourselves? ... But that is the *truth*... that you can experience at any time that you try. So, some people focus on equanimity. Others focus on joy. But my experience is that joy is the *least* understood. I say that because I have understood it the least! So I assume that you are like me. [laughing] Another mistake. ... I'm certain that you suffer from *my* confusion. [more laughter] Therefore, I have to love you. [and more laughing] And pretty soon we're really talking crazy stuff.

[00:37:14] Joy is sometimes called empathetic joy or sympathetic joy. So, I will say what my sense of the joy is... and you have to go and explore and get some books and read and see what the other ones are. For me, the joy is about... recognizing in others... the things that they do that are going to bring them... happiness. Satisfaction. That will encourage them in the direction of kindness... and compassion. ... When you see someone who is engaging in things, you don't have to know all the reasons why something would be... helpful to them. Mostly we know. We already know what it is. You lied to your best friend. Your best friend found out. Now you're miserable. You could connect the dots. They're there to connect! If you care to. [laughs] Now your friend doesn't trust you. Then you blame your friend for not trusting. Pretty soon it's a big mess. So, when we see that that is resolved, we have a sense of sharing the *joy*... that something is being done to remove that confusion and that removing that confusion will result... in joy. And we *share* that joy... when we see that. So, the empathetic joy is not just... joy for joy's sake. It's the *symptom*... of having seen... what's happening. The symptom is we have joy.

[00:39:11] There is nothing more important to us than our relationships with each other, I think. Anyone who doesn't see that isn't looking. ... We care about our relationships. We care about what our friends and family... think of us. Whether they like us or not, they care about whether we think about them... well or not. And these things are the major influence on our relationships, making us feel happy or not... and so on. So we are talking here in The Four Immeasurables about four great categories of causes and conditions that bring about either... continued misery and confusion or... as Alan Wallace likes to say, flourishing.

[00:40:08] There's nothing wrong with standing in the way of our flourishing. ... But we will do well to recognize it. We are not evil for standing in the way of our flourishing. It's just confusion. No one... would like to suffer. We would all like to flourish and feel well-being all the time. Have good friends... all the time. When we don't, it's not because we're inherently bad. It's just confusion. This is fundamental to this tradition. ... So, empathetic joy. If you look around while you travel around during the day... and you see... individuals doing things... which look to you...

like that will bring unhappiness to them, what they're doing. *Blame is utterly inappropriate*. That comes back to us. We need to have a sense of... building. Somebody is doing something which will cause them pain. That is the *basis* of our growing understanding. I see what it is. Then we make the wish... that they will be free of that misunderstanding and engage in things in a more skillful way. ... All right?

[00:41:51] Loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. ... If you engage in shamatha... you can take each one of these and rest your awareness on it. So, we'll begin with the recitation of the refuge prayer. And when done... bring your awareness to each of those four, one by one. ... Relax. Let the meaning... of loving kindness and joy and compassion and equanimity... just rise in you. Focused, helpfully... on all sentient beings.

sangha [00:43:04] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:44:49] Relax, take one of these Immeasurables. Kind of hold it... in your mind's eye. ... Rest in your understanding of it. Without thinking about it too much. ... And hold the intention of it applying... to all sentient beings... no matter what their state... no matter what their intelligence... no matter what their appearances.

[00:45:45] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:48:34] *dedicating the merit*