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## THE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING EMPATHIC JOY (MUDITA) AND EQUANIMITY (UPEKKHA) FOR HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING

**Nguyen Thi Truc Le (Bhikkhuni Dieu Ngoc)**  
Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Buddhist Studies,  
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, A.P., India.

### ABSTRACT

*It is easy to see that the purpose of life is joy and happiness, but how to achieve happiness right now requires specific cultivation methods. Empathic Joy and Equanimity in the doctrine of Buddhism are considered good and effective remedies to help people achieve happiness and wellbeing. From here, it can be seen that nurturing and developing the mind is necessary to improve the moral value of people because only when the mind changes can life improve.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Empathic joy, Equanimity, Happiness, Wellbeing, Buddha, Buddhism.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In modern life, human life aims towards health, satisfaction and happiness in life. To get those things, people need to have an understanding as well as practice, promoting true values about their own life. Therefore, each person needs to have a path, a direction to achieve those goals. In order to be able to practice and have good behaviors to bring good effects in life, the Buddhist practice methods are essential because it has the ability to support people to be happy. In that respect, the Four Immeasurable Minds (*Brahmavihara*)<sup>1</sup> are loving-kindness, compassion; joy and equanimity are a very unique way of life. That is considered the behavior of the saints in Buddhism. Those are the four noble states of mind. It is always latent in each person. Therefore, people need to practice to discover and develop it. When people practice these qualities, it will bring practical benefits in the present as well as in other lives. In this article, because of the limitation of the topic, the writer presents the happiness and well-being, then two important spiritual factors that are joy and equanimity in the Four Immeasurable Minds and how to develop them so that human beings can attain happiness and well-being in life.

### 2. HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING:

Nowadays, we can see the importance of finding happiness as the goal of life. These are the states and emotions that express satisfaction and peace in life.

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<sup>1</sup> To be able to immerse in the *Brahma* world, people need to practice and enlarge the four minds which are loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity.

## 2.1. Happiness:

When it comes to happiness, people often speak immediately of the feelings in the present moment. Happiness is a human-created feeling by balancing positive and negative thoughts and emotions and being satisfied with the present life. It does not mean that those who live a happy life do not know sadness, anger, anger, etc. They still have negative emotions but they will think in a different, more positive, life-loving way. From there, they have peace of mind, thereby producing a good energy. That is happiness.

Moreover, the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that there are two types of happiness. It was Hedonia and Eudaimonia.<sup>2</sup> Hedonia is a kind of happy emotion that comes from the joys of life. For example, you get a promotion, you get a raise, your family's economy grows, your relationships with the people around you get better, etc. This kind of happiness we can easily perceive from our surroundings. Work, family, relationship, etc., will be a good bridge to help people find happiness. Besides, Eudaimonia is a kind of happiness created by virtue. In a typical example, in the *Mangala Sutta*<sup>3</sup>, the Buddha teaches about meaningful and valuable deeds to bring happiness and virtue in life. Wherever we are, we must live humbly, respectfully, self-control, live responsibly with ourselves and the society, etc. From these things, it will create noble happiness in life.

## 2.2. Well-being:

It is a concept that expresses a happy living condition. Happiness is about mental health as well as physical health. Humans need good health to create a good life. Follow a reasonable diet, have all the economic conditions, create good relationships and fulfill life aspirations. These are personal human interests. By achieving these, well-being is enjoyed by humans. To have good health, people need to have a reasonable lifestyle, a reasonable diet and an understanding of the functioning in them. For example, when we have stomach pain, we must know that we have stomach pain, from there, we need to have better measures, a more suitable diet to reduce the disease.

Besides, the development of positive emotions is equally important in affecting the health of the body. Body and mind are two elements that need to be in harmony with each other. We cannot have a good mind in a sick body. And vice versa, we will not have a healthy body when our mind contains too many negative things. Therefore, it is necessary to have positive emotions, good psychology to improve the health of the body and mental health. In life, we need to have a kind heart, compassion, love and sympathy so that life becomes a better and more meaningful one. Compassion reduces the hostility between people, creates good relationships and develops.

At the same time, it is the mind that is happy and accepting and letting go. These are two extremely important factors to have mental peace as well as a strong and healthy body. We also know that there are many difficulties in life. If we know how to overcome it, we will have lasting happiness. For example, when someone hurts someone, let us try to ignore their mistakes, happily accept and let go of them. By doing this, you give the other partner and also yourself a joy in life.

## 3. EMPATHIC JOY AND EQUANIMITY:

Joy and equanimity are two wholesome minds associated with each other, supporting each other and doing causes and effects for each other. Equanimity causes artificial joy. When your mind does not waver in front of compliments, losses, fame, etc, it is easy to have joy in yourself and those around you.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.1. Empathic joy – Muditā:

Joy is one of the four noble qualities of the Four Immeasurable Minds. Happiness here is not pleasure, welcome, pretense makes excitement but it is real joy. Not only is it happy with the

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics Book*, first published Tue May 1, 2001, substantive revision Fri Jun 15, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> *Mahamangala Sutta*, Suttanipata II, pp. 258-269.

<sup>4</sup> Seager, Richard Hughes. *Buddhism in America*. Columbia University Press, 2012, p. 8.

achievements of oneself and one's loved ones, but it is also the joy of seeing others succeed. Be happy with the achievements that others have gained. For example, working in a company, if your colleague gets promoted by the director, you will be as happy in mind as you are getting promoted. Therefore, the joyful mind covers all objects, it is happy with all that others have accomplished.

### 3.2. Equanimity - Upekkhā:

*Upekkhā* is a virtue that is difficult to practice for practitioners. *Upekkhā* is a mind that balances good and evil. It realizes the nature of dhammas. It is not selfish in love, nor does it hate resentment, neither enjoyment nor elimination. For example, you get scolded by someone about your wrong doing. Instead of just then, you may have gotten angry and jarred with that person. But if you realize where you went wrong and you accept it so that you can try harder, then at that moment you will be grateful to someone who reminds you without resentment. This is a state of mind to balance between positive and negative thoughts and actions. It is really essential for practitioners to cope with the circumstances as well as people in today's developed society.

Moreover, through these two mental factors we can see many other aspects of the teachings of the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, etc. Here, the writer gives an example of the Four Noble Truths lying in two mental factors joy and equanimity. For example, your friend borrowed money from you without paying you back, you will surely be very angry (suffering), then you find out why that person did not pay you and you know that because due to being too poor (origin of suffering), when you know it, immediately you will stop anger (cessation), that is when your mind is in a state of equanimity, then you will find ways to help that friend to overcome the difficulty (the path of the cessation), right now your mind will be full of joy because you have sympathy and help your friend overcome the difficulty.

## 4. BENEFITS AND METHODS OF DEVELOPMENT TWO MENTAL FACTORS:

In order to have happiness as mentioned above, people need to practice and develop joy and equanimity. These two types of mind have the power to help practitioners gain the many benefits in life.

### 4.1. Empathic Joy:

When you practice and live with joy, you will feel the world around you very interesting and joyful. Between man and man there is a harmonious connection. There was no competition or jealousy. The characteristic of jealousy is always hidden in each of us, so in order to deal with jealousy, one need to practice and develop joyful mind. In the modern and developed world, people competing for status, jealousy of work, fame, etc. Even with religion, sometimes we will find that one religion is suspicious of another; this method is compared with another. We must ask the question why are we unhappy with the success and happiness of others? Surely you will have the answer for yourself. In the Dhammapada Verses, the Lord said that people give according to their faith and as they are pleased. Whoever therein is envious of others' food and drink does not concentration either.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in order to have a life without jealousy and painful but only joy without object limits, the practice and development of joy is essential.

### 4.2. Equanimity:

With regard to equanimity, if there is no equanimity, people will lead to selfishness towards those around them and society. Therefore, when practicing and developing this kind of mind, practitioners will easily feel their own change. Non-attachment is a very important benefit to humans. Often people think about bad things, bad consequences rather than good things. Instead of seeing large white patches, people only pay attention to the black ink stain on the shirt. In order to get rid of this negative attitude and have a life that is free from anything, to a person, or thing, keeping the mind balanced and clear, love and social relationships get better.

<sup>5</sup>Thich Minh Chau, *Kuddhaka-nikaya*, Mala vagga, Dhammapada 249.

Moreover, the development of mindfulness helps people become noble, transcends ordinary emotions and is always calm before everything like a lotus living in the mud but never being defiled. In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha taught that to good give up (attachment for everything, the saintly prattle not with sensual craving, whether affected by happiness or by pain, the wise show neither elation nor depression<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, the practitioner should practice and develop mindfulness.

#### 4.3. Methods:

Before practicing the mind of joy and equanimity towards those around, one should first live and balance emotions, positive and negative states. From then on it is possible to manifest and practice these two mental factors with others. People should practice smiling to themselves every day. Be fully happy with what you have. Think of yourself as a happy person because you have a body full of senses. Therefore, you must regularly take care of your own health. You know, it is hard to joy in anything when the body is tired and sick. Notice that when you are healthy, you seem to have the world in your hand. Therefore, to have a happy mind and be able to develop it in the best way, the health of the body is an equally important factor.

Besides, mind training is not a simple thing. To practice these mental formations, it takes time to practice. For example, if you had a conflict with your friend and for some reasons they broke up with you. Surely you will be very sad, but you think that last time you lived well with them and prayed for them no matter where they are happy. If you can do that, your mind will be back in balance; you will still live and work normally. Thanks to the practice of equanimity, you no longer cling to matters between you and your friend.

And, it is easy to see that we are only joyful with our achievements and with those around us. The question arises here, why can not you be happy with the achievements of others? Develop a mind of joy so that we extend love, protection, view strangers as ourselves, and joy with their successes. Initially, let us practice with the people around us such as relatives, neighbors, then spread to colleagues, fellow people, etc. For example, when you see your coworkers being rewarded by a director, rejoice with them. And so, when you have your own success, others will also rejoice and be happy with you. How wonderful the world will be when people rejoice and encourage each other's achievements.

Besides, practice and develop equanimity to eliminate anger. For example, if someone says bad things about you, instead of getting angry, consider that it is due to misunderstandings. Therefore, your mind will become softer and calmer. Every day we need to practice so that they become a practice by ourselves. As a result, when something bad happens, our mind will correct itself and balance our mind. Moreover, our life circumstances will inevitably have unhappy times, difficult times. Therefore, the practice of bliss and equanimity is essential in life. Let's just think that, if we suffer, there will be other situations that are more miserable. We do not have a lot of money, but anyway, we can still sleep in the house instead of having people because the circumstances are so difficult, they do not have a house to live in. Develop a sense of joy to lead a happy life with what you have, and to live happily and positively with yourself and others. Besides, develop a mind of equanimity to have a balanced mind before all circumstances.

#### 5. Achieving happiness and well-being need to develop the two mental factors:

When we understand the practical benefits and know how to develop the two states of bliss and equanimity, we should practice observing ourselves every day by radically applying two mental factors. Observing the behavior of the body to see if it is good, observing the behavior of words to see whether or not and observing thoughts to see if we think positively or not. Just like that, life will achieve happiness and well-being.

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<sup>6</sup> Thich Minh Chau, *Kuddhaka-nikaya*, Pandita vagga, Dhammapada 83.

### 5.1. Observation behavior on the action of body:

When doing something, you should consider whether it is good for you and good for the person. For example, when you see that your wife is tired and has too much work to do, you should help her by sweeping the house, washing clothes, taking care of the children, etc and joy with her. Your mind thinks that this is the responsibility that you need to do to build a home with her. From there you will not be bothered to see it as your job. It is these actions that bring happiness to yourself and your family.

### 5.2. Observation behavior on the speech:

Words are also one of the powerful tools to help us have a peaceful life and have good social relationships. For example, when meeting business associates, you say nice words that make them happy and comfortable doing business with you. As a result, you develop your own career. In addition, when employees make mistakes at work, you should use peaceful words to remind them, encourage them and yourself not to stick with their mistakes but give them a chance. If you apply joy and mindfulness to these situations, you will surely have a lot of happiness in your life.

### 5.3. Observation behavior on thought:

Thoughts dominate actions and words. That is why in order to have good words and beautiful deeds we need to purify our own thoughts. Develop a mindset to keep your thoughts positive. Besides, develop equanimity so that your mind always has a balance between positive and negative thoughts. And always observe my mind to go the right path of these two mental factors.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the Four Immeasurable Minds are very valuable formations in life. In it, joy and equanimity occupy an equally important position. The practice of joyful mind creates a society without jealousy, without sorrow. The practice of equanimity creates a calm, sharp and peaceful person amid the storms of life. Therefore, everyone should practice and develop these mental factors then people will achieve happiness and well-being. When everyone's life is happiness and well-being, the society will become civilized and developed.

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