

Believers, Contemplatives, and the Future of Human Civilization, Part 6
The Cultivation of Emotional Intelligence
October 12, 2024
B. Alan Wallace

- For human civilization to overcome the current metacrisis and truly flourish in the future, there must be a global shift from the meaningless triad of scientific materialism—hedonism—consumerism to the meaningful triad of (1) the view of a participatory universe, (2) the prioritization of eudaimonia, or genuine well-being, over hedonism, and (3) the cultivation of a meaningful and beneficial way of life over consumerism.
- Three elements of a meaningful life: the cultivation of genuine well-being, virtue, and wisdom
- Prioritization of genuine well-being over mundane pleasure
 - Hedonic pleasure, derived from what we can get *from the world* and dependent upon pleasant sensory and mental stimulation
 - Genuine well-being, derived from what we *bring to the world* and not dependent upon pleasant sensory or mental stimulation
- Three kinds of genuine well-being
 - Well-being arising from a clear conscience and contentment
 - Well-being gained through samādhi (including the cultivation of the four immeasurables)
 - Supreme well-being of complete freedom from suffering and its causes through vipaśyanā

Closing passage from the *Kesamuttisutta* (translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi, slightly modified):

“Thus, Kālāmas, when we said: ‘Come, Kālāmas, do not go by oral tradition ... But when you know for yourselves: “These things are wholesome; these things are blameless; these things are praised by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to welfare and happiness,” then you should live in accordance with them,’ it is because of this that this was said.

“Then, Kālāmas, that noble disciple, who is thus devoid of longing, devoid of ill will, unconfused, introspective, ever mindful, dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness ... with a mind imbued with compassion ... with a mind imbued with empathetic joy ... with a mind imbued with impartiality, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with impartiality, vast, exalted, measureless, without enmity, without ill will.

“This noble disciple, Kālāmas, whose mind is in this way without enmity, without ill will, undefiled, and pure, has won four assurances in this very life.

“The first assurance he has won is this: ‘If there is another world, and if there is the fruit and result of good and bad deeds, it is possible that with the breakup of the body, after death, I will be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.’

“The second assurance he has won is this: ‘If there is no other world, and there is no fruit and result of good and bad deeds, still right here, in this very life, I maintain myself in happiness, without enmity and ill will, free of trouble.

“The third assurance he has won is this: ‘Suppose evil comes to one who does evil. Then, when I have no evil intentions toward anyone, how can suffering afflict me, since I do no evil deed?’

“The fourth assurance he has won is this: ‘Suppose evil does not come to one who does evil. Then right here I see myself purified in both respects.’

“This noble disciple, Kālāmas, whose mind is in this way without enmity, without ill will, undefiled, and pure, has won these four assurances in this very life.”

- Loving-kindness
 - The near-enemy (false facsimile) of loving-kindness is self-centered attachment, for like an enemy it masquerades as a friend; malice is its far enemy (diametric opposite); its proximate cause is seeing lovability in beings; it succeeds when it makes ill will subside, and it fails when it produces self-centered attachment.
 - Buddha: “Here, monks, a disciple dwells pervading one direction with one’s heart filled with loving-kindness, likewise the second, the third, and the fourth direction; so above, below and around; one dwells pervading the entire world everywhere and equally with one’s heart filled with loving-kindness, abundant, grown great, measureless, free from enmity and free from distress.” [*Dīgha Nikāya* 13]
 - The fruits of loving-kindness: You see everyone as loveable, without attachment or hostility, and everyone sees you as loveable. You accumulate great merit, and loving-kindness will purify karma that would otherwise cast you into the miserable realms of existence
 - In the Pāli canon, among the Buddha’s disciples, the [Arhat Subhūti](#) was most renowned for his cultivation of loving-kindness imbued with wisdom as his path to liberation, and was therefore deemed the one “most worthy of gifts” and the one who “lived remote and in peace.”
- Compassion
 - Three levels of compassion corresponding to three levels of suffering
 - Blatant suffering
 - The suffering of change
 - Pervasive suffering of conditioned existence
 - The near enemy of compassion is despair; cruelty is its far enemy; its proximate cause is to see the helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering, with the possibility of alleviating that suffering; it succeeds when it makes cruelty subside and fails when it produces despair.
- Empathetic joy
 - Its near enemy is hedonism; its far enemy is envy and cynicism; its proximate cause is seeing beings’ success; it succeeds when envy and cynicism subside, and it fails when it produces hedonism.
 - The point of cultivating empathetic joy: When you witness joyful beings, take delight, wishing that they never be parted from this joy and that they find the joy of omniscience.
 - The criteria of having cultivated empathetic joy: You have no envy, and sublime joy arises.

- Tsongkhapa: “To rejoice in the good deeds of oneself and others is the best way to create good karma with the least effort.”
- Impartiality
 - Its near enemy is aloof indifference; attachment and aversion are its far enemies; its proximate cause is seeing the responsibility for one’s deeds (*karma*); it succeeds when attachment and aversion subside, and it fails when it produces aloof indifference.
 - The criterion for having trained one’s mind in impartiality: Impartiality toward oneself and others and toward friends and enemies, to the point that envy and hostility do not arise toward anyone.
 - The benefits of cultivating impartiality: Profound and peaceful realizations arise, including the impartial realization that all phenomena are primordially unborn.
 - The fruits of impartiality: The mind is unclouded by attachment and hostility, and one realizes the nature of reality as spontaneously actualized. Relatively, there is no near and far, and ultimately, one realizes the actual nature of nondual reality.
- The Liturgy of the Four Immeasurables
 - May all beings be endowed with happiness and its causes.
 - May all beings be free of suffering and its causes.
 - May all beings never be parted from well-being, free of dissatisfaction.
 - May all beings dwell in impartiality free of attachment and hostility for those near and far.
- Objectless Four Immeasurables
 - *Heart Sūtra*: “At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called ‘Profound Illumination.’ Also, at that time, the bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara beheld the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates *also* as empty of inherent nature.”
 - When the cultivation of the four immeasurables has all sentient beings as its meditative object, with an emphasis on impermanence, it is said to take the phenomenal nature (*dharma*) of sentient beings as its meditative object.
 - When the meditative object is the actual nature of all phenomena (*dharmatā*), the aspect of the mind is immeasurable in that it is devoid of any meditative object.

Great Compassion, etc. and Bodhicitta in the Mahāyāna

- *Kevaddha Sutta*: “The monk Kevaddha asked the Buddha, “Where do the four great elements—earth, water, fire, and air—cease without remainder?” The Buddha replied, “Monk, you should not ask your question in this way ... Instead, this is how the question should have been put: “Where do earth, water, fire, and air find no basis? And the answer is: ‘Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all-luminous. That’s where earth, water, fire and air find no basis. *There* both long and short, small and great, fair and foul—there ‘name and form’—completely vanish. With the cessation of [conditioned] consciousness this all vanishes.” [Dīgha Nikāya I 223]
- *Uttaratantra* (v. 27): “Because the perfect Buddhakāya emanates everywhere, because it is inseparable from suchness, and because all embodied beings have the lineage, they always possess buddha nature.”

- The liturgy of great compassion, great loving-kindness, great empathetic joy, and great impartiality
 - Why couldn't all beings be free of suffering and its causes? May we be free! I shall make it so. May my guru and personal deity bless me that I may be able to do so.
 - Why couldn't all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness? May we have them! I shall make it so. May my guru and personal deity bless me that I may be able to do so.
 - Why couldn't all beings never be parted from sublime happiness? May we never be parted! I shall make it so. May my guru and personal deity bless me that I may be able to do so.
 - Why couldn't all beings dwell in impartiality, free of attachment to those who are near and aversion to those who are far? May we so dwell! I shall make it so. May my guru and personal deity bless me that I may be able to do so.

Ultimate Bodhicitta in the Dzogchen Tradition

The Lake-Born Vajra (*The Vajra Essence*):

“First, in order to realize bodhicitta, one comes to understand, with discerning intelligence, the mode of being of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. This is called *aspirational bodhicitta*. In the end, making manifest the displays of the consummation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is called *engaged bodhicitta*. When people who do not realize this key point speak of generating bodhicitta, they refer to aspiring for the fruitional bodhicitta, accomplishing its causes, and engaging in a mere aspiration—which is not bodhicitta—as an object of conceptualization that can be focused upon as a referential object. Such talk is like giving a boy's name to a mere fetus in a pregnant woman's womb; they have not even caught the scent of a realization of engaged bodhicitta.”

“As a means for cultivating bodhicitta, this is far superior to other paths: To recognize that the nature of existence of the all-pervasive equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is your own essential nature. To do so is to actualize the most sublime of all ways of giving rise to bodhicitta. In the expanse of pristine awareness—the actual nature of reality, free of conceptual elaboration—without seeking, the self-emergent nature of all the ornamental wheels of the inexhaustible enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities of all the jinas and jinaputras of the three times is established. Ascertaining this and practicing it is the essential nature and the heart essence of all sādhanas and maṇḍalas combined, and this alone is the immutable accomplishment, so recognize it!”

For detailed instructions on the cultivation of śamatha and the four immeasurables, you may listen to the free podcasts of the teachings given during the first 8-week retreat offered by Lama Alan in Phuket, Thailand: <https://sbinstitute.com/product/fall-2010-shamatha-retreat/>