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Gay Buddhist Fellowship

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

The Four Immeasurable Minds

By Thich Nhat Hanh

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During the lifetime of the Buddha, those of the Brahmanic faith prayed that after death they would go to Heaven to dwell eternally with Brahma, the universal God. One day a Brahmin man asked the Buddha, "What can I do to be sure that I will be with Brahma after I die?" and the Buddha replied, "As Brahma is the source of Love, to dwell with him you must practice the *Brahmaviharas*—love, compassion, joy, and equanimity." A *vihara* is an abode or a dwelling place. Love in Sanskrit is *maitri*; in Pali it is *metta*. Compassion is *karuna* in both languages. Joy is *mudita*. Equanimity is *upeksha* in Sanskrit and *upekkha* in Pali. The *Brahmaviharas* are four elements of true love. They are called Immeasurable, because if you practice them, they will grow every day until they embrace the whole world. You will become happier, and those around you will become happier, also.

The Buddha respected people's desire to practice their own faith, so he answered the Brahmin's question in a way that encouraged him to do so. If you enjoy sitting meditation, practice sitting meditation. If you enjoy walking meditation, practice walking meditation. But preserve your Jewish, Christian, or Muslim roots. That is the way to continue the Buddha's spirit. If you are cut off from your roots, you cannot be happy.

According to Nagarjuna, the second-century Buddhist philosopher, practicing the Immeasurable Mind of Love extinguishes anger in the hearts of living beings. Practicing the Immeasurable Mind of Compassion extinguishes all sorrows and anxieties in the hearts of living beings. Practicing the Immeasurable Mind of Joy extinguishes sadness and joylessness in the hearts of living beings. Practicing the Immeasurable Mind of Equanimity extinguishes hatred, aversion, and attachment in the hearts of living beings.

