



The Four Immeasurables

The so-called Four Immeasurables are used to develop great loving kindness (བྱམས་པ་ JAM PA, *maitri*), great compassion (སྙིང་རྗེ, NYING JE, *karuna*), great sympathetic joy (དགའ་འབྲུག་ GA WA, *mudita*), and great equanimity (བཏང་སྟོབས་ TANG NYOM, *upeksha*). The four are called "immeasurable" because they are thoughts directed at an immeasurable number of beings, and because one gains immeasurable merit from thinking about them.

ཚེད་མེད་བཞི།

TSE ME SHI

1: །སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེ་བ་དང་བདེ་བའི་རྒྱ་དང་ལྷན་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག།

SEM CHEN TAM CHE DE WA DANG DE WAY GYU DANG DEN PAR GYUR CHIK

2: །སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་དང་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་གྱི་རྒྱ་དང་བྲལ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག།

SEM CHEN TAM CHE DUK-NGEL DANG DUK-NGEL GYI GYU DANG DREL WAR GYUR CHIK

3: །སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་མེད་པའི་བདེ་བ་དང་མི་འབྲལ་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག།

SEM CHEN TAM CHE DUK-NGEL MED PAY DE WA DANG MI DREL WAR GYUR CHIK

4: །སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཉེ་རིང་ཆགས་སྤང་གཉིས་དང་བྲལ་བའི་བཏང་སྟོབས་ཚད་མེད་པ་ལ་གནས་

པར་གྱུར་ཅིག །།

SEM CHEN TAM CHE NYE RING CHAK DANG NYI DANG DREL WAY TANG NYOM TSE ME PA LA NE PAR GYUR CHIK.

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the causes of happiness
 May all sentient beings be freed from suffering and the causes of suffering
 May all sentient beings be inseparable from happiness that knows no suffering
 May all sentient beings abide in equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.

Geshe Wangyal, The Jeweled Staircase

First Line

སེམས་ཅན་ SEM CHEN is *sentient beings*. You will encounter this word quite a lot in Buddhist scriptures. སེམས་ SEM is *mind*, one of many other words for mind. ཅན་ CHEN is used to create an object holder, in this case someone who is holding a mind. Examples of similar constructs are:

དད་ཅན་ DE CHEN, *faithful*, and ལྷིང་ཇེ་ཅན་ NYING-JE CHEN, *the compassionate one*.

ཐམས་ཅད་ TAM CHE means *everyone*, so this qualifier is used for the noun.

བདེ་བ་ DE WA is *bliss, happiness*. You could also see the word བདེ་བ་ used to express this state. དང་ DANG is *and*, used to combine statements. བདེ་བའི་རྒྱུ་ DE WAY GYU is *causes of happiness*. རྒྱུ་ GYU is *cause*, the main causality, and so forth, something is happening due to something. The འི་ is the genitive, *of*, that binds the two parts, and you read it from right to left, so this becomes *the cause of happiness*.

ལྡན་ DEN is another word used to build new words for the ones that possess or have something, endowed with, similar to ཅན་. Using these two constructs, it is possible to build very complicated, new words, with a being or object having a specific attribute. In this case, we are talking about possessing all the causes for happiness. Also, we use the longer form of ལྡན་, ལྡན་པ་, DEN PA. Furthermore! It ends with a ར་, as in ལྡན་པར་. This is a general subordination particle, indicates a relationship between the statements before and follows next. ལྟར་ཅིག་ GYUR CHIK is *may it be*, a very common expression to express that something will happen, very common in prayers, verses of auspiciousness, dedications, and so forth.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the first line.

Second Line

This line again starts with སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་. ལྷུག་བསྐྱེད་ DUK-NGEL is the common word for *suffering*. དང་ is again the binding word and ལྷུག་བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་ DUK-NGEL GYI GYU is the *cause of suffering*, where ཀྱི་ GYU is the genitive particle.

དང་ is the binding word, and བྲལ་བ་ DREL WA is *free from*. Again, this word ends as བྲལ་བར་ DRELWAR, so there's a subordination particle embedded in this verb and it points at the last verb, ལྟར་ཅིག་.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the second line.

Third Line

This line, again, starts with སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ ལྷུག་བསྐྱེད་མེད་པ་ DUK-NGEL ME PA is *no suffering, where the མེད་པ་, not existent, will negate the first statement. You will see similar constructs where there's a definition, ending with མེད་ or མེད་པ་. But now it's getting interesting! This is actually མེད་པ་འི་, so this has a genitive embedded in the word. What's the next word? བདེ་བ་ DEWA, happiness. Hmm... happiness of no suffering, or the happiness that that knows no suffering, or the happiness that has no suffering. So it's a way to explain a situation where there's all happiness with no suffering incorporated. This is happiness outside the samsaric realm, as happiness in samsara has a component of suffering, it will end, will cause problems later, and so forth. This separates this immeasurable from the first immeasurable.*

དང་ is the binding word, and མི་འབྲེལ་ MI DREL is *not separated*, where འབྲེལ་ is *to be separated*, and མི་ MI is the negation word that makes this verb the opposite. Again, this ends as མི་འབྲེལ་བར་ with a sub-ordination particle so that it ties this together with ལྷུག་ཅིག་.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the third line.

Fourth Line

This again starts with སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་. Next, ཉེ་རིང་ NYE RING means *prejudice, discrimination*. ཉེ་ NYE is *near* (ཉེ་བར་), you see this a lot to explain something being close to another object. རིང་ means *far away*, the opposite. So it's interesting to see how combining these two words we get a new word that means that 'I'm close, and you are far away'.

ཚགས་ CHAK means *lust, attachment*. ལྷུང་ DANG is *aversion*, གཉིས་ NYI is *two*, or in this case *these two*. བྲེལ་བ་ DREL WA is *free from, separate from*. It has a genitive particle in the word, བྲེལ་བ་འི་ DREL WAY, so the next part is important. བཏང་སྟོམས་ TANG NYOM is *equanimity*. བཏང་ is to *allow to let go* and ྟོམས་ is *to be equalized*. However, this is still part of a bigger word construct. Next, ཚད་ TSE is *measure, size*, and this ends with ཚད་མེད་པ་ TSE ME PA, again a negation, so it's not measurable, or *immeasurable*. The whole meaning of བཏང་སྟོམས་ཚད་མེད་པ་ is *immeasurable impartiality, immeasurable equanimity*.

ལ LA is the 'pointer particle' that is pointing at something to happen or a place, an easy starting word to use in initial translation is *to*, but it all depends on the context. གནས་པ NE PA is *to abide, to stay*, the root is གནས *place, realm, state, location, domain*, and so forth. Again, this word ends as གནས་པར so it has a subordination particle that points at གུར་ཅིག་.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the fourth line.

This was a short overview of the ཚོད་མེད་བཞི་ Four Immeasurables verses. You will encounter these verses in many sadhanas, practice texts (རྒྱུ་བྱེད་ཐབས་ DRUP THAP, *means of achievement*). These verses are used to set the right motivation for the practice session, and for generating immeasurable merit for getting the achievements, so they are usually in the beginning of the text. Sometimes they are indeed listed as above, or with slight variations, sometimes they are actually embedded in the practice text, so you need a commentary from a qualified teacher to find where these are. There are also many so-called oral instructions related to how to meditate on these four verses.

