

Four Heavenly Abodes

Movements and attunement as performed by Darvesha MacDonald
at Wilderness Camp 2000.

capo 5

G C D G
Metta Karuna Mudita Upekha

Em Am D Em
Metta Karuna Mudita Upekha

(Alternate chords: using no capo, first verse is C, F, G, C, second verse is Am, Dm, G, Am.)

Dance Movements:

Metta Karuna Mudita Upekha

Begin by facing partner, right hand to right hand, covering with the left hands. Sing the four wishes to your partner, then progress past right shoulder.

Meet second partner, left hand to left hand, then covering with the right hands. Sing the four wishes to your partner, then progress past left shoulder.

Continue grand right and grand left, clasping hands and covering them, singing the four wishes to your partner and progressing.

The dance ends with all coming in, singing, arms around.

Attunement:

These words are from the Buddhist tradition, in Pali, the language which the Buddha spoke. These are called the Four Heavenly Abodes, a place to dwell

Metta is Loving Kindness,
Karuna is Compassion,
Mudita is Sympathetic Joy (vicarious joy, the opposite of jealousy),
Upekha is Equanimity (even tempered, undisturbed, no preferences)

As you meet your partners, silently wish them these blessings:

Metta – may you be free from danger, happy, peaceful, strong, healthy, and have ease of being.

Karuna – may you be free from suffering.

Mudita – may your wisdom and goodness ever increase.

Upekha – although I have these wishes for you, you are the heir to your own karma. Your happiness depends on your own actions and not my wishes for you.

Commentary:

"...Another important teaching to cultivate was known to the Theravadins as the Brahma Viharas or Four Heavenly Abodes and to the Mahayanists as the Four Immeasurables. These four are the cultivation of loving kindness, known in Pali as Metta or in Sanskrit as Maitri, compassion or Karuna, sympathetic joy or rejoicing in the good fortune of others, known as Mudita and a balanced or non-discriminating mind, known as Upekha..."

<http://www.buddhistcouncil.org/pureland.htm>

Metta (Love) is characterized as promoting the welfare of others. Its function is to desire welfare. It is manifested as the removal of annoyance. Its proximate cause is seeing the loveableness in beings. It succeeds when it makes ill-will subside, and it fails when it gives rise to selfish affection.

Karuna (Compassion) is characterized as promoting the removal of others' suffering. Its function is not bearing others' suffering. It is manifested as kindness. Its proximate cause is seeing helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering. It succeeds when it makes cruelty subside, and it fails when it gives rise to sorrow.

Mudita (Sympathetic joy) is characterized as joy in the success of others. Its function is being free from envy. It is manifested as the elimination of aversion. Its proximate cause is seeing other beings' success. It succeeds when it makes aversion subside, and it fails when it gives rise to merriment.

Upekkha (Equanimity) is characterized as promoting equipoise towards beings. Its function is to see the equality in beings. It is manifested as quieting like and dislike. Its proximate cause is seeing the ownership of deeds thus: "Beings are heirs to their deeds. Whose, if not theirs, is the choice by which they will become happy, or will be free from suffering, or will not fall away from the success they have reached?" It succeeds when it makes like and dislike subside, and it fails when it gives rise to the indifference of ignorance based on the household life.

Visuddhimagga 318 (The Path of Purification, by the great Indian monk Buddhaghosa, 5th century AD.)

<http://www.escribe.com/religion/dhamma/m10010.html>

Metta – promoting the welfare of all beings, clearly seeing the agreeable side of all beings, wishing for the world's welfare and happiness, kindness.

Upekha – promoting neutrality, reflecting upon all beings inheriting the results of their karma, impartiality towards the desirable or the undesirable, subsiding of attraction and repulsion.

<http://world.std.com/~minding/mlpartbl.html>

Sanskrit Roots:

Maitri or Maitreya (Sanskrit) [from *mitra* friend, a name of the spiritual sun]
Friendly, benevolent, kind, a friend of all creatures

Karuna (Sanskrit) compassion

Mudita (Sanskrit) delight

Upeksha (Sanskrit) [from *upeksh* to consider carefully + the verbal root *iksh* to look at]

June 8, 2004 email from Anahata Iradah:

"The Heavenly Abodes", The Four Immeasurables

The finale of the suite of dances is a recapitulation of the teachings that have been transmitted in the dances that came before.

This dance originated in New Zealand at a Buddhist Meditation Center. Tim Harris, the former steward of the "Te Moata" retreat centre on the Coromandel Peninsula, sang the Pali words of the Four Immeasurables. As he was singing the four qualities of the Brahma Viharas, Nick Prater a former New Zealand dance leader who frequented Te Moata, transformed it into a movement meditation. With permission from both of these gentlemen, Prema and I added our own touch. We sing it currently in Pali, Tibetan, English and Portuguese. Our variation of the original dance includes a slower partner progression to allow the dancer more time to focus on manifesting each quality with every partner.

Movements

Choose partners and make a note which circle you are in if there are many concentric circles. Look over this partners shoulder and see a new pair of eyes looking back at you. If it is a novice group, look to a third partner as well.

Place right hands together as if in a greeting, and cover with the left hand. This simple act is done with kindness.

I usually then suggest that everyone closes their eyes, and I remind the circle of each quality in turn. I say something like "When we sing the word Metta, we bathe our partner in loving kindness, the warmth of our human friendliness. When we sing Karuna, allow yourself to be receptive to what your partner is feeling, with the slight trembling of the heart of compassion. When you sing Mudita, wish your partner boundless joy, independent of your own circumstances. When we sing Upekkha, bathe your own feeling body with the acceptance of things just the way they are right now. Not pushing anything away or craving anything. See if you can feel each quality distinctly, skillfully flowing from one to the other without preference. Now open the eyes and begin."

With each partner we sing, Metta, Karuna, Mudita, Upekkha, Metta, Karuna, Mudita, Upekkha.

Then we walk past this partner and extend our left hand to our new partner and cover with the right hand. In this way we proceed around the circle in a very slow grand right and left.

After several repetitions of Pali we often sing in English, "Abide in love and compassion, dwell in joy and equanimity, abide in love and compassion, dwell in joy and peace." Then we also sing in Tibetan, "Champa, Nyingje, Gawa, Tong Nyam, Champa, Nyingje, Gawa, Tong Nyam." These teachings may be adapted to any language or culture you are working in. Just make sure the translator fully understands the essence of the quality s/he is translating. It may take a few distillations to find precise words that do justice to the teachings.

After the group has experienced everyone within their own circle, I often open up the partnerships to greet anyone, anywhere in the room. I suggest that groups of 2 or 3 are just fine. This allows for people to find folks they haven't seen in a while, or possibly with whom they have quarreled and feel it is time for a meeting of ways.

At the right moment, I gather the circles back in and ask everyone to come in arms around. Together we send our prayers out to our families, friends, our teachers, guides, the world leaders and the whole planet. We dedicate any merit generated by our sincere practices for the benefit of all sentient beings. In this way we end the cycle and the embodiment of the Heavenly Abodes of consciousness.