

THE FOUR BRAHMAVIHARAS

Four Boundless Attitudes to be developed

A. Sources on the Practice of the Four Brahmaviharas in the Theravada Tradition

References to **the Four Brahmaviharas as a group** can be found in the Sutta Pitaka of the Pali Canon¹ in the following places:

- Digha Nikaya: **D 13** (179) – see below; D 19 (352), D 25 (455), D 26 (474)
- Majjhima Nikaya: **M 7.13-17** (see below), **M 40.8-13** (still missing), **M 43.31-37** (by Sariputta, still missing), **M 52.8-11** (by Ananda, still missing), **M 62.18-21** (see below), **M 99.24-27** (see below)
- Anguttara Nikaya: A 3.66; 4/125,190; Five realizations that arise from concentration based on the brahmaviharas: A 5.27 (see below); 5.161 (see below); 6.13; 8.63 (see below); 10.20,208; 11.17
- Samyutta Nikaya: Systematic cultivation of ~: **S 42.8** (see below); S 46.53,54
- Khudakka Nikaya: Offering comfort and protection from the cold: Theragata 6.2

References to the four qualities individually can be found in the Sutta Pitaka in the following places:

1. Love (Metta, Maitri) also translated as Loving Kindness or Good Will is referred to in:

- Hiruvuttaka 27, p.19
- A 1.12
- A 1.6:4
- A 8.1
- D 33 (see below)
- Karaniya Metta Sutta (Discourse on Loving kindness): Sutta-nipata 1.8:143-152 and Khnp 9
- As a protection against harm: S 20.3 (see below), A 4.67
- As a factor leading to liberation: A 6.13
- Systematic practice of love: S 42.8 (see below)
- Eleven benefits of love: A 11.16
- Even more fruitful than giving: S 20.4-5
- Course of rebirths to be expected from those who cultivate love: A 4.125
- Maintain thoughts of love no matter how others address you: M 21 (see below)
- No one is dearer to one than oneself: Ud 5.1
- The radiant brightness of love: Iti 27 (see below)
- As a basis for the development of jhana: A 8.63
- Practicing love as a way to deal with annoying people: A 5.161 (see below)

2. Compassion (Karuna)

- As a factor leading to liberation: A 6.13
- Systematic practice of compassion: S 42.8 (see below)
- Practicing ~ as a way to deal with annoying people: A 5.161 (see below)

3. Joy (Mudita) also translated as Appreciative or Sympathetic Joy:

- A 3.96
- As a factor leading to liberation: A 6.13
- Systematic practice of joy: S 42.8 (see below)
- S 12:23
- M 63

4. Equanimity (Upekkha, Upeksha)

- M 106 (817)
- M 137 (1007, 1008)

- M 140 (1028)
 - As a factor leading to liberation: [A 6.13](#)
 - Systematic practice of ~: [S 42.8](#) (see below)
 - Equanimity with respect to the sense faculties: [M 152](#)
 - Three kinds of equanimity: [S 36.31](#); see also S 36.29
 - Practicing equanimity as a way to deal with annoying people: [A 5.161](#) (see below)
-

Sankha Sutta “The Conch Trumpet”, Samyutta Nikaya 42.8

(Here the Buddha first speaks about Kamma and then about the Four Brahmaviharas as a means to purify limited deeds and attitudes of mind.)

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

Translator's note: Although the Jains, like the Buddhists, teach a doctrine of the moral consequences of actions, the teachings of the two traditions differ in many important details. This discourse points out two of the major points where the Buddhist teaching is distinctive: its understanding of the complexity of the kammic process, and its application of that understanding to the psychology of teaching. The Buddha shows that a simplistic, fatalistic view of the kammic process is logically inconsistent, and also leads to unfortunate results for any person who, with a background of bad kamma, believes in it. The actual complexity of kamma, however, allows for a way in which past evil deeds can be overcome: through refraining from evil now and into the future, and through developing expansive mind states of good will, compassion, appreciation, and equanimity. In such an expansive mind state, the unavoidable consequences of past evil actions count for next to nothing. The Buddha also shows how his method of teaching is better than that of the Jains in that it actually can help free the mind from debilitating feelings of guilt and remorse, and lead to the overcoming of past kamma.ⁱⁱ

“On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Nalanda in the Pavarika Mango Grove. Then Asibandhakaputta the headman, a disciple of the Niganthas (Jains), went to the Blessed One and on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him: “Headman, how does Nigantha Nataputta (Mahavira) teach the Dhamma to his disciples?”

"Nigantha Nataputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way, lord: 'All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal... All those who indulge in illicit sex... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a corresponding state of rebirth].' That's how Nigantha Nataputta teaches the Dhamma to his disciples."

"If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta's words. What do you think, headman: If a man is one who takes life, then taking into consideration time spent doing and not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends taking life or the time he spends not taking life?"

"If a man is one who takes life, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing and not doing, whether by day or by night, then the time he spends taking life is less, and the time he spends not taking life is certainly more. If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta's words."

"What do you think, headman: If a man is one who steals... indulges in illicit sex... tells lies, then taking into consideration time spent doing and not doing, whether by day or by night, which time is more: the time he spends telling lies or the time he spends not telling lies?"

"If a man is one who tells lies, lord, then taking into consideration time spent doing and not doing, whether by day or by night, then the time he spends telling lies is less, and the time he spends not telling lies is certainly more. If it's true that 'Whatever one keeps doing frequently, by that is one led [to a state of rebirth],' then no one is destined for a state of deprivation or destined to hell in line with Nigantha Nataputta's words."

"There's the case, headman, where a certain teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell. All those who steal... All those who indulge in illicit sex... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.' A disciple has faith in that teacher, and the thought occurs to him, 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: "All those who take life are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell." There are living beings that I have killed. I, too, am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"[The thought occurs to him,] 'Our teacher holds this doctrine, holds this view: 'All those who steal... All those who indulge in illicit sex... All those who tell lies are destined for a state of deprivation, are destined for hell.' There are lies that I have told. I, too, am destined for a state of deprivation, am destined for hell.' He fastens onto that view. If he doesn't abandon that doctrine, doesn't abandon that state of mind, doesn't relinquish that view, then as if he were to be carried off, he would thus be placed in hell.

"There is the case, headman, where a Tathagata appears in the world, worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear knowing and conduct, well-gone, a knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those to be tamed, teacher of human and divine beings, awakened and blessed. He, in various ways, criticizes and censures the taking of life, and says, 'Abstain from taking life.' He criticizes and censures stealing, and says, 'Abstain from stealing.' He criticizes and censures indulging in illicit sex, and says, 'Abstain from indulging in illicit sex.' He criticizes and censures the telling of lies, and says, 'Abstain from the telling of lies.'

"A disciple has faith in that teacher and reflects: 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes and censures the taking of life, and says, "Abstain from taking life." There are living beings that I have killed, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the taking of life, and in the future refrains from taking life. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"[He reflects:] 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes and censures stealing... indulging in illicit sex... the telling of lies, and says, "Abstain from the telling of lies." There are lies that I have told, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the telling of lies, and in the future refrains from telling lies. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"Having abandoned the taking of life, he refrains from taking life. Having abandoned stealing, he refrains from stealing. Having abandoned illicit sex, he refrains from illicit sex. Having

abandoned lies, he refrains from lies. Having abandoned divisive speech, he refrains from divisive speech. Having abandoned harsh speech, he refrains from harsh speech. Having abandoned idle chatter, he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes non-covetous. Having abandoned ill will and anger, he becomes one with a mind of no ill will. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one who has right views.

"That disciple of the noble ones, headman – thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, non-bewildered, alert, mindful – keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will (love), likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, and all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will – abundant, expansive, and immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through good will is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.

"That disciple of the noble ones – thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, non-bewildered, alert, mindful – keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... appreciation (joy)... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, and all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity – abundant, expansive, and immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there."

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta the headman, the disciple of the Niganthas, said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to point out the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One – through many lines of reasoning – made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for all his life."

“The Simile of the Cloth”

Vatthupama Sutta, MN 7

Translated from the Pali by Nyanaponika Thera.
For free distribution only.

[In MN 7 the Buddha explains the practice of the four Brahmaviharas as being based on a preliminary, partial purification of mind. This leads into a basic state of peace and mindfulness in which one focuses on the four Brahmaviharas which then leads to deeper insight.]

1. Thus have I heard. Once the Blessed One was staying at Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks." -- "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, suppose a cloth were stained and dirty, and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink, it would take the dye badly and be impure in color. And why is that? Because the cloth was not clean. So too, monks, when the mind is defiled,^[1] an unhappy destination [in a future existence] may be expected.

"Monks, suppose a cloth were clean and bright, and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink, it would take the dye well and be pure in color. And why is that? Because the cloth was clean. So too, monks, when the mind is undefiled, a happy destination [in a future existence] may be expected.

3. "And what, monks, are the defilements of the mind?[2] (1) Covetousness and unrighteous greed are a defilement of the mind; (2) ill will is a defilement of the mind; (3) anger is a defilement of the mind; (4) hostility...(5) denigration...(6) domineering...(7) envy...(8) jealousy...(9) hypocrisy...(10) fraud...(11) obstinacy...(12) presumption...(13) conceit...(14) arrogance...(15) vanity...(16) negligence is a defilement of the mind.[3]

4. "Knowing, monks, covetousness and unrighteous greed to be a defilement of the mind, the monk abandons them.[4] Knowing ill will to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing anger to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing hostility to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing denigration to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing domineering to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing envy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing jealousy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing hypocrisy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing fraud to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing obstinacy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing presumption to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing conceit to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing arrogance to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing vanity to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing negligence to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it.

5. "When in the monk who thus knows that covetousness and unrighteous greed are a defilement of the mind, this covetousness and unrighteous greed have been abandoned; when in him who thus knows that ill will is a defilement of the mind, this ill will has been abandoned;... when in him who thus knows that negligence is a defilement of the mind, this negligence has been abandoned -- [5]

6. -- he thereupon gains unwavering confidence in the Buddha[6] thus: 'Thus indeed is the Blessed One: he is accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with [clear] vision and [virtuous] conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, the incomparable guide of men who are tractable, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed.'

7. -- he gains unwavering confidence in the Dhamma thus: 'Well proclaimed by the Blessed One is the Dhamma, realizable here and now, possessed of immediate result, bidding you come and see, accessible and knowable individually by the wise.

8. -- he gains unwavering confidence in the Sangha thus: 'The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has entered on the good way, has entered on the straight way, has entered on the true way, has entered on the proper way; that is to say, the four pairs of men, the eight types of persons; this Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the incomparable field of merit for the world.'

9. "When he has given up, renounced, let go, abandoned and relinquished [the defilements] in part,[7] he knows: 'I am endowed with unwavering confidence in the Buddha... in the Dhamma... in the Sangha; and he gains enthusiasm for the goal, gains enthusiasm for the Dhamma,[8] gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy is born in him; being joyous in mind, his body becomes tranquil; his body being tranquil, he feels happiness; and the mind of him who is happy becomes concentrated.[9]

10. "He knows: 'I have given up, renounced, let go, abandoned and relinquished [the defilements] in part'; and he gains enthusiasm for the goal, gains enthusiasm for the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy is born in him; being joyous in mind, his body becomes tranquil; when his body is tranquil, he feels happiness; and the mind of him who is happy becomes concentrated.

11. "If, monks, a monk of such virtue, such concentration and such wisdom[10] eats almsfood consisting of choice hill-rice together with various sauces and curries, even that will be no obstacle for him.[11]

"Just as cloth that is stained and dirty becomes clean and bright with the help of pure water, or just as gold becomes clean and bright with the help of a furnace, so too, if a monk of such virtue, such concentration and such wisdom eats almsfood consisting of choice hill-rice together with various sauces and curries, even that will be no obstacle for him.

12. "He abides, having suffused with a mind of loving-kindness[12] one direction of the world, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth, and so above, below, around and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides suffusing the entire universe with loving-kindness, with a mind grown great, lofty, boundless and free from enmity and ill will.

"He abides, having suffused with a mind of compassion... of sympathetic joy... of equanimity one direction of the world, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth, and so above, below, around and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides suffusing the entire universe with equanimity, with a mind grown great, lofty, boundless and free from enmity and ill will.

13. "He understands what exists, what is low, what is excellent,[13] and what escape there is from this [whole] field of perception.[14]

14. "When he knows and sees[15] in this way, his mind becomes liberated from the canker of sensual desire, liberated from the canker of becoming, liberated from the canker of ignorance.[16] When liberated, there is knowledge: 'It is liberated'; and he knows: 'Birth is exhausted, the life of purity has been lived, the task is done, there is no more of this to come.' Such a monk is called 'one bathed with the inner bathing.'[17]

15. Now at that time the brahman Sundarika Bharadvaja[18] was seated not far from the Blessed One, and he spoke to the Blessed One thus: "But does Master Gotama go to the Bahuka River to bathe?"

"What good, brahman, is the Bahuka River? What can the Bahuka River do?"

"Truly, Master Gotama, many people believe that the Bahuka River gives purification, many people believe that the Bahuka River gives merit. For in the Bahuka River many people wash away the evil deeds they have done."

16. Then the Blessed One addressed the brahman Sundarika Bharadvaja in these stanzas:[19]

Bahuka and Adhikakka,[20]

Gaya and Sundarika,

Payaga and Sarassati,

And the stream Bahumati --

A fool may there forever bathe, Yet will not purify his black deeds.

What can Sundarika bring to pass?
What can the Payaga and the Bahuka?
They cannot purify an evil-doer,
A man performing brutal and cruel acts.

One pure in heart has evermore
The Feast of Cleansing[21] and the Holy Day;[22]
One pure in heart who does good deeds
Has his observances perfect for all times.

It is here, O brahman, that you should bathe[23]
To make yourself a safe refuge for all beings.
And if you speak no untruth,
Nor work any harm for breathing things,

Nor take what is not offered,
With faith and with no avarice,
To Gaya gone, what would it do for you?
Let any well your Gaya be!

17. When this was said, the brahman Sundarika Bharadvaja spoke thus:

"Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama, as though he were righting the overthrown, revealing the hidden, showing the way to one who is lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms.

18. "I go to Master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha. May I receive the [first ordination of] going forth under Master Gotama, may I receive the full admission!

19. And the brahman Sundarika Bharadvaja received the [first ordination of] going forth under the Blessed One, and he received the full admission. And not long after his full admission, dwelling alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute, the venerable Bharadvaja by his own realization understood and attained in this very life that supreme goal of the pure life, for which men of good family go forth from home life into homelessness. And he had direct knowledge thus: "Birth is exhausted, the pure life has been lived, the task is done, there is no more of this to come."

And the venerable Bharadvaja became one of the Arahats.

(From "The Simile of the Cloth & the Discourse on Effacement", edited by Nyanaponika Thera, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988. Copyright ©1988 Buddhist Publication Society. Used with permission.)

Notes

1. "So too, monks, if the mind is defiled..." Commentary: "It may be asked why the Buddha had given this simile of the soiled cloth. He did so to show that effort brings great results. A cloth soiled by dirt that is adventitious (i.e., comes from outside; *agantukehi malehi*), if it is washed can again become clean because of the cloth's natural purity. But in the case of what is naturally black, as for instance (black) goat's fur, any effort (of washing it) will be in vain. Similarly, the mind too is soiled by adventitious defilements (*agantukehi kilesehi*). But originally, at the phases of rebirth(-consciousness) and the (sub-conscious) life-continuum, it is pure throughout (*pakatiya pana sakale pi patisandhi-bhavanga-vare pandaram eva*). As it was said (by the Enlightened One): 'This mind, monks, is luminous, but it becomes soiled by

adventitious defilements' (AN I.49). But by cleansing it one can make it more luminous, and effort therein is not in vain."

2. "*Defilements of the mind*" (*cittassa upakkilesa*). Comy.: "When explaining the mental defilements, why did the Blessed One mention greed first? Because it arises first. For with all beings wherever they arise, up to the level of the (Brahma heaven of the) Pure Abodes, it is first greed that arises by way of lust for existence (*bhava-nikanti*). Then the other defilements will appear, being produced according to circumstances. The defilements of mind, however, are not limited to the sixteen mentioned in this discourse. But one should understand that, by indicating here the method, all defilements are included." Sub.Comy. mentions the following additional defilements: fear, cowardice, shamelessness and lack of scruples, insatiability, evil ambitions, etc.

3. The Sixteen Defilements of Mind:

1. *abhijjha-visama-lobha*, covetousness and unrighteous greed
 2. *byapada*, ill will
 3. *kodha*, anger
 4. *upanaha*, hostility or malice
 5. *makkha*, denigration or detraction; contempt
 6. *palasa*, domineering or presumption
 7. *issa*, envy
 8. *macchariya*, jealousy, or avarice; selfishness
 9. *maya*, hypocrisy or deceit
 10. *satheyya*, fraud
 11. *thambha*, obstinacy, obduracy
 12. *sarambha*, presumption or rivalry; impetuosity
 13. *mana*, conceit
 14. *atimana*, arrogance, haughtiness
 15. *mada*, vanity or pride
 16. *pamada*, negligence or heedlessness; in social behavior, this leads to lack of consideration.
- The defilements (3) to (16) appear frequently as a group in the discourses, e.g., in Majjh. 3; while in Majjh. 8 (reproduced in this publication) No. 15 is omitted. A list of seventeen defilements appears regularly in each last discourse of Books 3 to 11 of the Anguttara Nikaya, which carry the title *Ragapeyyala*, the Repetitive Text on Greed (etc.). In these texts of the Anguttara Nikaya, the first two defilements in the above list are called greed (*lobha*) and hate (*dosa*), to which delusion (*moha*) is added; all the fourteen other defilements are identical with the above list.

4. "*Knowing covetousness and unrighteous greed to be a defilement of the mind, the monk abandons them.*"

Knowing (viditva). Sub.Comy.: "Having known it either through the incipient wisdom (*pubbabhaga-pañña* of the worldling, i.e., before attaining to Stream-entry) or through the wisdom of the two lower paths (Stream-entry and Once-returning). He knows the defilements as to their nature, cause, cessation and means of effecting cessation." This application of the formula of the Four Noble Truths to the defilements deserves close attention.

Abandons them (pajahati). Comy.: "He abandons the respective defilement through (his attainment of) the noble path where there is 'abandoning by eradication' (*samucchedappahana-vasena ariya-maggena*)," which according to Sub.Comy. is the "final abandoning" (*accantapahana*). Before the attainment of the noble paths, all "abandoning" of defilements is of a temporary nature. See Nyanatiloka Thera, *Buddhist Dictionary*, s.v. *pahana*.

According to the Comy., the sixteen defilements are finally abandoned by the noble paths (or stages of sanctity) in the following order:

"By the *path of Stream-entry (sotapatti-magga)* are abandoned: (5) denigration, (6) domineering, (7) envy, (8) jealousy, (9) hypocrisy, (10) fraud.

"By the *path of Non-returning (anagami-magga)*: (2) ill will, (3) anger, (4) malice, (16) negligence.

"By the *path of Arahantship (arahatta-magga)*: (1) covetousness and unrighteous greed, (11) obstinacy, (12) presumption, (13) conceit, (14) arrogance, (15) vanity."

If, in the last group of terms, covetousness is taken in a restricted sense as referring only to the craving for the five sense objects, it is finally abandoned by the path of Non-returning; and this is according to Comy. the meaning intended here. All greed, however, including the hankering after fine material and immaterial existence, is eradicated only on the path of Arahantship; hence the classification under the latter in the list above.

Comy. repeatedly stresses that wherever in our text "abandoning" is mentioned, reference is to the Non-returner (*anagami*); for also in the case of defilements overcome on Stream-entry (see above), the states of mind which produce those defilements are eliminated only by the path of Non-returning.

5. Comy. emphasizes the connection of this paragraph with the following, saying that the statements on each of the sixteen defilements should be connected with the next' paragraphs, e.g., "when in him... ill will has been abandoned, he thereupon gains unwavering confidence..." Hence the grammatical construction of the original Pali passage -- though rather awkward in English -- has been retained in this translation.

The disciple's direct experience of being freed of this or that defilement becomes for him a living test of his former still imperfectly proven trust in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. Now this trust has become a firm conviction, an unshakable confidence, based on experience.

6. "*Unwavering confidence (aveccappasada)*. Comy.: "unshakable and immutable trust." Confidence of that nature is not attained before Stream-entry because only at that stage is the fetter of sceptical doubt (*vicikiccha-samyojana*) finally eliminated. Unwavering confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are three of four characteristic qualities of a Stream-winner (*sotapaññassa angani*); the fourth is unbroken morality, which may be taken to be implied in Sec. 9 of our discourse referring to the relinquishment of the defilements.

7. "*When he has given up... (the defilements) in part (yatodhi)*: that is, to the extent to which the respective defilements are eliminated by the paths of sanctitude (see Note 4). *Odhi*: limit, limitation. *yatodhi* = *yato odhi*; another reading: *yathodhi* = *yatha-odhi*.

Bhikkhu Ñānamoli translates this paragraph thus: "And whatever (from among those imperfections) has, according to the limitation (set by whichever of the first three paths he has attained), been given up, has been (forever) dropped, let go, abandoned, relinquished. "

In the *Vibhanga* of the Abhidhamma Pitaka, we read in the chapter *Jhana-vibhanga*: "He is a bhikkhu because he has abandoned defilements limitedly; or because he has abandoned defilements without limitation" (*odhiso kilesanam pahana bhikkhu; anodhiso kilesanam pahana bhikkhu*).

8. "*Gains enthusiasm for the goal, gains enthusiasm for the Dhamma (labhati atthavedam labhati dhammavedam)*.

Comy.: "When reviewing (*paccavekkhato*)* the abandonment of the defilements and his unwavering confidence, strong joy arises in the Non-returner in the thought: 'Such and such defilements are now abandoned by me.' It is like the joy of a king who learns that a rebellion in the frontier region has been quelled."

*["Reviewing" (*paccavekkhana*) is a commentarial term, but is derived, apart from actual meditative experience, from close scrutiny of sutta passages like our present one.

"Reviewing" may occur immediately after attainment of the jhanas or the paths and fruitions (e.g., the last sentence of Sec. 14), or as a reviewing of the defilements abandoned (as in Sec. 10) or those remaining. See *Visuddhimagga*, transl. by Ñanamoli, p. 789.]

Enthusiasm (*veda*). According to Comy., the word *veda* occurs in the Pali texts with three connotations: 1. (Vedic) scripture (*gantha*), 2. joy (*somanassa*), 3. knowledge (*ñāna*). "Here it signifies joy and the knowledge connected with that joy."

Attha (rendered here as "goal") and *dhamma* are a frequently occurring pair of terms obviously intended to supplement each other. Often they mean letter (*dhamma*) and spirit (or meaning: *attha*) of the doctrine; but this hardly fits here. These two terms occur also among the four kinds of analytic knowledge (*patisambhida-ñāna*; or knowledge of doctrinal discrimination). *Attha-patisambhida* is explained as the discriminative knowledge of "the result of a cause"; while *dhamma-patisambhida* is concerned with the cause or condition.

The Comy. applies now the same interpretation to our present textual passage, saying: "*Attha-veda* is the enthusiasm arisen in him who reviews his unwavering confidence; *dhamma-veda* is the enthusiasm arisen in him who reviews 'the abandonment of the defilement in part,' which is the cause of that unwavering confidence..." Hence the two terms refer to "the joy that has as its object the unwavering confidence in the Buddha, and so forth; and the joy inherent in the knowledge (of the abandonment; *somanassa-maya ñāna*)."

Our rendering of *attha* (Skt.:*artha*) b; "goal" is supported by Comy.: "The unwavering confidence is called *attha* because it has to be reached (*araniyato*), i.e., to be approached (*upagantabbato*)," in the sense of a limited goal, or resultant blessing.

Cf. Ang 5:10: *tasmim dhamme attha-patisamvedi ca hoti dhammapatisamvedi ca; tassa atthapatisamvedino dhammapatisamvedino pamojjam jayati...* This text continues, as our present discourse does, with the arising of joy (or rapture; *piti*) from gladness (*pamojja*). *Attha* and *dhamma* refer here to the meaning and text of the Buddha word.

9. The Pali equivalents for this series of terms* are: 1. *pamojja* (gladness), 2. *piti* (joy or rapture), 3. *passaddhi* (tranquillity), 4. *sukha* (happiness), 5. *samadhi* (concentration). Nos. 2, 3, 5 are factors of enlightenment (*bojjhanga*). The function of tranquillity is here the calming of any slight bodily and mental unrest resulting from rapturous joy, and so transforming the latter into serene happiness followed by meditative absorption. This frequently occurring passage illustrates the importance given in the Buddha's Teaching to happiness as a necessary condition for the attainment of concentration and of spiritual progress in general.

* [Here the noun forms are given, while the original has, in some cases, the verbal forms.]

10. "Of such virtue, such concentration, such wisdom" (*evam-silo evam-dhammo evam-pañño*). Comy.: "This refers to the (three) parts (of the Noble Eightfold Path), namely, virtue, concentration and wisdom (*sila*-, *samadhi*-, *pañña-kkhandha*), associated (here) with the path of Non-returning." Comy. merely refers *dhammo* to the path-category of concentration (*samadhi-kkhandha*). Sub.Comy. quotes a parallel passage "*evam-dhamma ti Bhagavanto ahesum*," found in the Mahapadana Sutta (Digha 14), the Acchhariya-abbhutadhamma Sutta (Ma-

jjh. 123), and the Nalanda Sutta of the Satipatthana Samyutta. The Digha Comy. explains *samadhi-pakkha-dhamma* as "mental states belonging to concentration."

11. *"No obstacle,"* i.e., for the attainment of the path and fruition (of Arahatsip), says Comy. For a Non-returner who has eliminated the fetter of sense-desire, there is no attachment to tasty food.

12. *"With a mind of Loving-kindness" (metta-sahagatena cetasa).* This, and the following, refer to the four Divine Abidings (*brahma-vihara*). On these see Wheel Nos. 6 and 7.

13. *"He understands what exists, what is low, what is excellent" (so 'atthi idam atthi hinam atthi panitam...' pajanati).*

Comy.: "Having shown the Non-returner's meditation on the Divine Abidings, the Blessed One now shows his practice of insight (*vipassana*), aiming at Arahatsip; and he indicates his attainment of it by the words: 'He understands what exists,' etc. This Non-returner, having arisen from the meditation on any of the four Divine Abidings, defines as 'mind' (*nama*) those very states of the Divine Abidings and the mental factors associated with them. He then defines as 'matter' (*rupa*) the heart base (*hadaya-vatthu*) being the physical support (of mind) and the four elements which, on their part, are the support of the heart base. In that way he defines as 'matter' the elements and corporeal phenomena derived from them (*bhutupadayadhamma*). When defining 'mind and matter' in this manner, 'he understands what exists' (*atthi idan'ti*; lit. 'There is this'). Hereby a definition of the truth of suffering has been given."

"Then, in comprehending the origin of that suffering, he understands 'what is low.' Thereby the truth of the origin of suffering has been defined. Further, by investigating the means of giving it up, he understands 'what is excellent.' Hereby the truth of the path has been defined."

14. *"... and what escape there is from this (whole) field of perception" (atthi uttari imassa saññaga-tassa nissaranam).* Comy.: "He knows: 'There is Nibbana as an escape beyond that perception of the Divine Abidings attained by me.' Hereby the truth of cessation has been defined."

15. Comy.: "When, by insight-wisdom (*vipassana*), he thus knows the Four Noble Truths in these four ways (i.e., 'what exists,' etc.); and when he thus sees them by path-wisdom (*magga-pañña*).

16. *Kamasava bhavasava avijjasava.* The mention of liberation from the cankers (*asava*) indicates the monk's attainment of Arahatsip which is also called "exhaustion of the cankers" (*asavakkhaya*).

17. *"Bathed with the inner bathing" (sinato antarena sinanena).* According to the Comy., the Buddha used this phrase to rouse the attention of the brahman Sundarika Bharadvaja, who was in the assembly and who believed in purification by ritual bathing. The Buddha foresaw that if he were to speak in praise of "purification by bathing," the brahman would feel inspired to take ordination under him and finally attain to Arahatsip.

18. *Bharadvaja* was the clan name of the brahman. *Sundarika* was the name of the river to which that brahman ascribed purifying power. See also the Sundarika-Bharadvaja Sutta in the *Sutta Nipata*.

19. Based on Bhikkhu Ñanamoli's version, with a few alterations.

20. Three are fords; the other four are rivers.

21. The text has *Phaggu* which is a day of brahmanic purification in the month of Phagguṇa (February-March). Nanamoli translates it as "Feast of Spring."

22. Uposatha.

23. "*It is here, O brahman, that you should bathe.*" Comy.: i.e., in the Buddha's Dispensation, in the waters of the Noble Eightfold Path.

In the *Psalms of the Sisters (Therīgāthā)*, the nun Punnika speaks to a brahman as follows:

Nay now, who, ignorant to the ignorant,
Hath told thee this: that water-baptism
From evil kamma can avail to free?
Why then the fishes and the tortoises,
The frogs, the watersnake, the crocodiles
And all that haunt the water straight to heaven
Will go. Yea, all who evil kamma work --
Butchers of sheep and swine, fishers, hunters of game,
Thieves, murderers -- so they but splash themselves
With water, are from evil kamma free!

(Transl. by C. A. F. Rhys Davids, from *Early Buddhist Poetry*, ed. I. B. Horner Publ.)

A Teaching on the Four Sublime States (Brahmaviharas)

by Nyanaponika Thera

Contemplations on Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity

(The teaching shows the equivalents of the Mahayana practice of Mind Training in the Theravadin Tradition.)

Source: The Wheel Publication No. 6, ISBN 955-24-0109-7; Copyright © 1993 Buddhist Publication Society

Introduction

Four sublime states of mind have been taught by the Buddha: Love or Loving kindness (*metta*), Compassion (*karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy (*mudita*), and Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

In Pali, the language of the Buddhist scriptures, these four are known under the name of *Brahma-vihāra*. This term may be rendered by: excellent, lofty or sublime states of mind; or alternatively, by: Brahma-like, god-like or divine abodes (*viharas*).

These four attitudes are said to be *excellent* or *sublime* because they are the right or ideal way of conduct towards living beings (*sattesu samma patipatti*). They provide, in fact, the answer to all situations arising from social contact. They are the great removers of tension, the great peace-makers in social conflict, and the great healers of wounds suffered in the struggle of existence. They level social barriers, build harmonious communities, awaken slumbering magnanimity long forgotten, revive joy and hope long abandoned, and promote human brotherhood against the forces of egotism.

The Brahmaviharas are incompatible with a hating state of mind, and in that they are akin to Brahma, the divine but transient ruler of the higher heavens in the traditional Buddhist (an-

cient Indian) picture of the universe. In contrast to many other conceptions of deities, East and West, who by their own devotees are said to show anger, wrath, jealousy and "righteous indignation," Brahma is free from hate; and one who assiduously develops these four sublime states, by conduct and meditation, is said to become an equal of Brahma (*brahma-samo*). If they become the dominant influence in his mind, he will be reborn in congenial worlds, the realms of Brahma. Therefore, these states of mind are called *God-like, Brahma-like*.

They are called *abodes (vihara)* because they should become the mind's constant dwelling-places where we feel "at home"; they should not remain merely places of rare and short visits, soon forgotten. In other words, our minds should become thoroughly saturated by them. They should become our inseparable companions, and we should be mindful of them in all our common activities. As the Metta Sutta, the "Song of Loving Kindness" (S 1.8 and Khp 9), says:

When standing, walking, sitting, lying down,
Whenever he feels free of tiredness
Let him establish well this mindfulness –
This, it is said, is the Divine Abode.

These four – love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity – are also known as the limitless or *boundless states (appamañña)*, because, in their perfection and their true nature, they should not be narrowed by any limitation as to the range of beings towards whom they are extended. They should be non-exclusive and impartial, not bound by selective preferences or prejudices. A mind that has attained to that boundlessness of the Brahmaviharas will not harbor any national, racial, religious or class hatred.

But unless rooted in a strong natural affinity with such a mental attitude, it will certainly not be easy for us to effect that boundless application by a deliberate effort of will and to avoid consistently any kind or degree of partiality. To achieve that, in most cases, we shall have to use these four qualities not only as principles of conduct and objects of reflection, but also as subjects of methodical meditation. That meditation is called *Brahma-vihara-bhavana*, the meditative development of the sublime states. The practical aim is to achieve, with the help of these sublime states, those high stages of mental concentration called *jhana (dhyana)*, "meditative absorption." The meditations on love, compassion and sympathetic joy may each produce the attainment of the first three absorptions, while the meditation on equanimity will lead to the fourth jhana only, in which equanimity is the most significant factor.

Generally speaking, persistent meditative practice will have two crowning effects: first, it will make these four qualities sink deep into the heart so that they become spontaneous attitudes not easily overthrown; second, it will bring out and secure their *boundless* extension, the unfolding of their all-embracing range. In fact, the detailed instructions given in the Buddhist scriptures for the practice of these four meditations are clearly intended to unfold gradually the boundlessness of the sublime states. They systematically break down all barriers restricting their application to particular individuals or places.

In the meditative exercises, the selection of people to whom the thought of love, compassion or sympathetic joy is directed, proceeds from the easier to the more difficult. For instance, when meditating on loving kindness, one starts with an aspiration for one's own well-being, using it as a point of reference for gradual extension: "Just as I wish to be happy and free from suffering, so may *that* being, and may *all* beings be happy and free from suffering!" Then one extends the thought of loving kindness to a person for whom one has a loving respect, as, for instance, a teacher; then to dearly beloved people, to indifferent ones, and finally to enemies, if any, or those disliked. Since this meditation is concerned with the welfare of the living, one

should not choose people who have died; one should also avoid choosing people towards whom one may have feelings of sexual attraction.

After one has been able to cope with the hardest task, to direct one's thoughts of loving kindness to disagreeable people, one should now "break down the barriers" (*sima-sambheda*). Without making any discrimination between those four types of people, one should extend one's loving kindness to them equally. At that point of the practice one will have come to the higher stages of concentration: with the appearance of the mental reflex-image (*patibhaganimitta*), "access concentration" (*upacara samadhi*) will have been reached, and further progress will lead to the full concentration (*appana*) of the first jhana, then the higher jhanas.

For spatial expansion, the practice starts with those in one's immediate environment such as one's family, then extends to the neighbouring houses, to the whole street, the town, country, other countries and the entire world. In "pervasion of the directions", one's thought of loving kindness is directed first to the east, then to the west, north, south, the intermediate directions, the zenith and nadir.

The same principles of practice apply to the meditative development of compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, with due variations in the selection of people. Details of the practice will be found in the texts (see *Visuddhimagga*, Chapter IX).

The ultimate aim of attaining these Brahma-vihara-jhanas is to produce a state of mind that can serve as a firm basis for the liberating insight into the true nature of all phenomena, as being impermanent, liable to suffering and unsubstantial. A mind that has achieved meditative absorption induced by the sublime states will be pure, tranquil, firm, collected and free of coarse selfishness. It will thus be well prepared for the final work of deliverance which can be completed only by insight.

The preceding remarks show that there are two ways of developing the sublime states: first by practical conduct and an appropriate direction of thought; and second by methodical meditation aiming at the absorptions. Each will prove helpful to the other. Methodical meditative practice will help love, compassion, joy and equanimity to become spontaneous. It will help make the mind firmer and calmer in withstanding the numerous irritations in life that challenge us to maintain these four qualities in thoughts, words and deeds.

On the other hand, if one's practical conduct is increasingly governed by these sublime states, the mind will harbour less resentment, tension and irritability, the reverberations of which often subtly intrude into the hours of meditation, forming there the "hindrance of restlessness." Our everyday life and thought has a strong influence on the meditative mind; only if the gap between them is persistently narrowed will there be a chance for steady meditative progress and for achieving the highest aim of our practice.

Meditative development of the sublime states will be aided by repeated reflection upon their qualities, the benefits they bestow and the dangers from their opposites. As the Buddha says, "What a person considers and reflects upon for a long time, to that his mind will bend and incline."

The Basic Passage on the Four Sublime States from the Buddha (DN 13)

I. "Here, monks, a disciple dwells pervading one direction with his heart filled with loving kindness, likewise the second, the third, and the fourth direction; so above, below and around; he dwells pervading the entire world everywhere and equally with his heart filled with loving kindness, abundant, grown great, measureless, free from enmity and free from

distress.

II. Here, monks, a disciple dwells pervading one direction with his heart filled with compassion, likewise the second, the third and the fourth direction; so above, below and around; he dwells pervading the entire world everywhere and equally with his heart filled with compassion, abundant, grown great, measureless, free from enmity and free from distress.

III. Here, monks, a disciple dwells pervading one direction with his heart filled with sympathetic joy, likewise the second, the third and the fourth direction; so above, below and around; he dwells pervading the entire world everywhere and equally with his heart filled with sympathetic joy, abundant, grown great, measureless, free from enmity and free from distress.

IV. Here, monks, a disciple dwells pervading one direction with his heart filled with equanimity, likewise the second, the third and the fourth direction; so above, below and around; he dwells pervading the entire world everywhere and equally with his heart filled with equanimity, abundant, grown great, measureless, free from enmity and free from distress.”

Contemplations on the Four Sublime States

I. Love (*Metta*)

Love, without desire to possess, knowing well that in the ultimate sense there is no possession and no possessor: this is the highest *love*.

Love, without speaking and thinking of "I," knowing well that this so-called "I" is a mere delusion.

Love, without selecting and excluding, knowing well that to do so means to create love's own contrasts: dislike, aversion and hatred.

Love, embracing all beings: small and great, far and near, be it on earth, in the water or in the air.

Love, embracing impartially all sentient beings, and not only those who are useful, pleasing or amusing to us.

Love, embracing all beings, be they noble-minded or low-minded, good or evil. The noble and the good are embraced because *love* is flowing to them spontaneously. The low-minded and evil-minded are included because they are those who are most in need of *love*. In many of them the seed of goodness may have died merely because warmth was lacking for its growth, because it perished from cold in a loveless world.

Love, embracing all beings, knowing well that we all are fellow wayfarers through this round of existence – that we all are overcome by the same law of suffering.

Love, but not the sensuous fire that burns, scorches and tortures, that inflicts more wounds than it cures – flaring up now, at the next moment being extinguished, leaving behind more coldness and loneliness than was felt before.

Rather, *love* that lies like a soft but firm hand on the ailing beings, ever unchanged in its sympathy, without wavering, unconcerned with any response it meets. *Love* that is comforting coolness to those who burn with the fire of suffering and passion; that is life-giving warmth to those abandoned in the cold desert of loneliness, to those who are shivering in the frost of a loveless world; to those whose hearts have become as if empty and dry by the repeated calls for help, by deepest despair.

Love, that is a sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Love, that *is* strength and *gives* strength: this is the highest *love*.

Love, which by the Enlightened One was named "the liberation of the heart," "the most sublime beauty": this is the highest *love*.

And what is the highest manifestation of *love*? To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden, and realized to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

II. Compassion (*Karuna*)

The world suffers. But most men have their eyes and ears closed. They do not see the unbroken stream of tears flowing through life; they do not hear the cry of distress continually pervading the world. Their own little grief or joy bars their sight, deafens their ears. Bound by selfishness, their hearts turn stiff and narrow. Being stiff and narrow, how should they be able to strive for any higher goal, to realize that only release from selfish craving will effect their own freedom from suffering?

It is *compassion* that removes the heavy bar, opens the door to freedom, makes the narrow heart as wide as the world. *Compassion* takes away from the heart the inert weight, the paralyzing heaviness; it gives wings to those who cling to the lowlands of self.

Through *compassion* the fact of suffering remains vividly present to our mind, even at times when we personally are free from it. It gives us the rich experience of suffering, thus strengthening us to meet it prepared, when it does befall us.

Compassion reconciles us to our own destiny by showing us the life of others, often much harder than ours.

Behold the endless caravan of beings, men and beasts, burdened with sorrow and pain! The burden of every one of them, we also have carried in bygone times during the unfathomable sequence of repeated births. Behold this, and open your heart to *compassion*!

And this misery may well be our own destiny again! He who is without *compassion* now, will one day cry for it. If sympathy with others is lacking, it will have to be acquired through one's own long and painful experience. This is the great law of life. Knowing this, keep guard over yourself!

Beings, sunk in ignorance, lost in delusion, hasten from one state of suffering to another, not knowing the real cause, not knowing the escape from it. This insight into the general law of suffering is the real foundation of our *compassion*, not any isolated fact of suffering.

Hence our *compassion* will also include those who at the moment may be happy, but act with an evil and deluded mind. In their present deeds we shall foresee their future state of distress, and *compassion* will arise.

The *compassion* of the wise man does not render him a victim of suffering. His thoughts, words and deeds are full of pity. But his heart does not waver; unchanged it remains, serene and calm. How else should he be able to help?

May such *compassion* arise in our hearts! *Compassion* that is sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Compassion that *is* strength and *gives* strength: this is highest *compassion*.

And what is the highest manifestation of *compassion*? To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden and realized to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

III. Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*)

Not only to compassion, but also to *joy with others* open your heart!

Small, indeed, is the share of happiness and joy allotted to beings! Whenever a little happiness comes to them, then you may rejoice that at least one ray of joy has pierced through the darkness of their lives, and dispelled the grey and gloomy mist that enwraps their hearts.

Your life will gain in joy by sharing the happiness of others as if it were yours. Did you never observe how in moments of happiness men's features change and become bright with joy? Did you never notice how joy rouses men to noble aspirations and deeds, exceeding their normal capacity? Did not such experience fill your own heart with joyful bliss? It is in your power to increase such experience of *sympathetic joy*, by producing happiness in others, by bringing them joy and solace.

Let us teach real joy to men! Many have unlearned it. Life, though full of woe, holds also sources of happiness and joy, unknown to most. Let us teach people to seek and to find real joy within themselves and to rejoice with the joy of others! Let us teach them to unfold their joy to ever more sublime heights!

Noble and sublime joy is not foreign to the Teaching of the Enlightened One. Wrongly the Buddha's Teaching is sometimes considered to be a doctrine diffusing melancholy. Far from it: the Dhamma leads step by step to an ever purer and loftier happiness.

Noble and sublime joy is a helper on the path to the extinction of suffering. Not he who is depressed by grief, but one possessed of joy finds that serene calmness leading to a contemplative state of mind. And only a mind serene and collected is able to gain the liberating wisdom.

The more sublime and noble the joy of others is, the more justified will be our own *sympathetic joy*. A cause for our *joy with others* is their noble life securing them happiness here and in lives hereafter. A still nobler cause for our *joy with others* is their faith in the Dhamma, their understanding of the Dhamma, their following the Dhamma. Let us give them the *help* of the Dhamma! Let us strive to become more and more able ourselves to render such help!

Sympathetic joy means a sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Sympathetic joy that is strength and gives strength: this is the highest joy.

And what is the highest manifestation of *sympathetic joy*? To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden, and realized to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

IV. Equanimity (*Upekkha*)

Equanimity is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight.

Looking at the world around us, and looking into our own heart, we see clearly how difficult it is to attain and maintain balance of mind.

Looking into life we notice how it continually moves between contrasts: rise and fall, success and failure, loss and gain, honour and blame (the eight worldly dharmas). We feel how our heart responds to all this with happiness and sorrow, delight and despair, disappointment and satisfaction, hope and fear. These waves of emotion carry us up and fling us down; and no

sooner do we find rest, than we are in the power of a new wave again. How can we expect to get a footing on the crest of the waves? How can we erect the building of our lives in the midst of this ever restless ocean of existence, if not on the Island of Equanimity.

A world where that little share of happiness allotted to beings is mostly secured after many disappointments, failures and defeats;

a world where only the courage to start anew, again and again, promises success;

a world where scanty joy grows amidst sickness, separation and death;

a world where beings who were a short while ago connected with us by *sympathetic joy*, are at the next moment in want of our *compassion* – such a world needs *equanimity*.

But the kind of equanimity required has to be based on vigilant presence of mind, not on indifferent dullness. It has to be the result of hard, deliberate training, not the casual outcome of a passing mood. But equanimity would not deserve its name if it had to be produced by exertion again and again. In such a case it would surely be weakened and finally defeated by the vicissitudes of life. True equanimity, however, should be able to meet all these severe tests and regenerate its strength from sources within. It will possess this power of resistance and self-renewal only if it is rooted in insight.

➤ Equanimity based on the insight into kamma

What, now, is the nature of that insight? It is the clear understanding of how all these vicissitudes of life originate, and of our own true nature. We have to understand that the various experiences we undergo result from our kamma – our actions in thought, word and deed – performed in this life and in earlier lives. Kamma is the womb from which we spring (*kamma-yoni*), and whether we like it or not, we are the inalienable "owners" of our deeds (*kamma-ssaka*). But as soon as we have performed any action, our control over it is lost: it forever remains with us and inevitably returns to us as our due heritage (*kamma-dayada*). Nothing that happens to us comes from an "outer" hostile world foreign to ourselves; everything is the outcome of our own mind and deeds. Because this knowledge frees us from fear, it is the first basis of equanimity. When, in everything that befalls us we only meet ourselves, why should we fear?

If, however, fear or uncertainty should arise, we know the refuge where it can be allayed: our good deeds (*kamma-patisarana*). By taking this as our refuge, confidence and courage will grow within us – confidence in the protecting power of our good deeds done in the past; courage to perform more good deeds right now, despite the discouraging hardships of our present life. For we know that noble and selfless deeds provide the best defence against the hard blows of destiny, that it is never too late but always the right time for good actions. If that refuge, in doing good and avoiding evil, becomes firmly established within us, one day we shall feel assured: "More and more ceases the misery and evil rooted in the past. And this present life – I try to make it spotless and pure. What else can the future bring than increase of the good?" And from that certainty our minds will become serene, and we shall gain the strength of patience and equanimity to bear with all our present adversities. Then our deeds will be our friends (*kamma-bandhu*).

Likewise, all the various events of our lives, being the result of our deeds, will also be our friends, even if they bring us sorrow and pain. Our deeds return to us in a guise that often makes them unrecognizable. Sometimes our actions return to us in the way that others treat us, sometimes as a thorough upheaval in our lives; often the results are against our expectations or contrary to our wills. Such experiences point out to us consequences of our deeds we did not foresee; they render visible half-conscious motives of our former actions which we tried to hide even from ourselves, covering them up with various pretexts. If we learn to see

things from this angle, and to read the message conveyed by our own experience, then suffering, too, will be our friend. It will be a stern friend, but a truthful and well-meaning one who teaches us the most difficult subject, knowledge about ourselves, and warns us against abysses towards which we are moving blindly. By looking at suffering as our teacher and friend, we shall better succeed in enduring it with equanimity. Consequently, the teaching of kamma will give us a powerful impulse for freeing ourselves from kamma, from those deeds which again and again throw us into the suffering of repeated births. Disgust will arise at our own craving, at our own delusion, at our own propensity to create situations which try our strength, our resistance and our equanimity.

➤ Equanimity based on the insight into anatta

The second insight on which equanimity should be based is the Buddha's teaching of no-self (*anatta*). This doctrine shows that in the ultimate sense deeds are not performed by any self, nor do their results affect any self. Further, it shows that if there is no self, we cannot speak of "my own." It is the delusion of a self that creates suffering and hinders or disturbs equanimity. If this or that quality of ours is blamed, one thinks: "I am blamed" and equanimity is shaken. If this or that work does not succeed, one thinks: "My work has failed" and equanimity is shaken. If wealth or loved ones are lost, one thinks: "What is *mine* has gone" and equanimity is shaken.

To establish equanimity as an unshakable state of mind, one has to give up all possessive *thoughts of "mine"*, beginning with little things from which it is easy to detach oneself, and gradually working up to possessions and aims to which one's whole heart clings. One also has to give up the counterpart to such thoughts, all egoistic *thoughts of "self"*, beginning with a small section of one's personality, with qualities of minor importance, with small weaknesses one clearly sees, and gradually working up to those emotions and aversions which one regards as the centre of one's being. Thus detachment should be practiced.

To the degree we forsake thoughts of "mine" or "self" equanimity will enter our hearts. For how can anything that we realize to be foreign and void of a self cause us agitation due to lust, hatred or grief? Thus the teaching of no-self will be our guide on the path to deliverance, to perfect *equanimity*.

Equanimity is the crown and culmination of the four sublime states. But this should not be understood to mean that equanimity is the negation of love, compassion and sympathetic joy, or that it leaves them behind as inferior. Far from that, equanimity includes and pervades them fully, just as they fully pervade perfect equanimity.

The Interrelations of the Four Sublime States

How, then, do these four sublime states pervade and suffuse each other?

Unbounded *love* guards *compassion* against turning into partiality, prevents it from making discriminations by selecting and excluding and thus protects it from falling into partiality or aversion against the excluded side.

Love imparts to *equanimity* its selflessness, its boundless nature and even its fervour. For fervour, too, transformed and controlled, is part of perfect *equanimity*, strengthening its power of keen penetration and wise restraint.

Compassion prevents *love* and *sympathetic joy* from forgetting that, while both are enjoying or giving temporary and limited happiness, there still exist at that time most dreadful states of suffering in the world. It reminds them that their happiness coexists with measureless misery, perhaps at the next doorstep. It is a reminder to *love* and *sympathetic joy* that there is more

suffering in the world than they are able to mitigate; that, after the effect of such mitigation has vanished, sorrow and pain are sure to arise anew until suffering is uprooted entirely at the attainment of Nibbana. *Compassion* does not allow that *love* and *sympathetic joy* shut themselves up against the wide world by confining themselves to a narrow sector of it. *Compassion* prevents *love* and *sympathetic joy* from turning into states of self-satisfied complacency within a jealously-guarded petty happiness. *Compassion* stirs and urges *love* to widen its sphere; it stirs and urges *sympathetic joy* to search for fresh nourishment. Thus it helps both of them to grow into truly boundless states (*appamañña*).

Compassion guards *equanimity* from falling into a cold indifference, and keeps it from indolent or selfish isolation. Until *equanimity* has reached perfection, *compassion* urges it to enter again and again the battle of the world, in order to be able to stand the test, by hardening and strengthening itself.

Sympathetic joy holds *compassion* back from becoming overwhelmed by the sight of the world's suffering, from being absorbed by it to the exclusion of everything else. *Sympathetic joy* relieves the tension of mind, soothes the painful burning of the compassionate heart. It keeps *compassion* away from melancholic brooding without purpose, from a futile sentimentality that merely weakens and consumes the strength of mind and heart. *Sympathetic joy* develops *compassion* into active sympathy.

Sympathetic joy gives to *equanimity* the mild serenity that softens its stern appearance. It is the divine smile on the face of the Enlightened One, a smile that persists in spite of his deep knowledge of the world's suffering, a smile that gives solace and hope, fearlessness and confidence: "Wide open are the doors to deliverance," thus it speaks.

Equanimity rooted in insight is the guiding and restraining power for the other three sublime states. It points out to them the direction they have to take, and sees to it that this direction is followed. *Equanimity* guards *love* and *compassion* from being dissipated in vain quests and from going astray in the labyrinths of uncontrolled emotion. *Equanimity*, being a vigilant self-control for the sake of the final goal, does not allow *sympathetic joy* to rest content with humble results, forgetting the real aims we have to strive for.

Equanimity, which means "even-mindedness," gives to *love* an even, unchanging firmness and loyalty. It endows it with the great virtue of patience. *Equanimity* furnishes *compassion* with an even, unwavering courage and fearlessness, enabling it to face the awesome abyss of misery and despair which confront boundless *compassion* again and again. To the active side of *compassion*, *equanimity* is the calm and firm hand led by wisdom – indispensable to those who want to practice the difficult art of helping others. And here again *equanimity* means patience, the patient devotion to the work of *compassion*.

In these and other ways equanimity may be said to be the crown and culmination of the other three sublime states. The first three, if unconnected with equanimity and insight, may dwindle away due to the lack of a stabilizing factor. Isolated virtues, if unsupported by other qualities which give them either the needed firmness or pliancy, often deteriorate into their own characteristic defects. For instance, loving kindness, without energy and insight, may easily decline to a mere sentimental goodness of weak and unreliable nature. Moreover, such isolated virtues may often carry us in a direction contrary to our original aims and contrary to the welfare of others, too. It is the firm and balanced character of a person that knits isolated virtues into an organic and harmonious whole, within which the single qualities exhibit their best manifestations and avoid the pitfalls of their respective weaknesses. And this is the very function of equanimity, the way it contributes to an ideal relationship between all four sublime states.

Equanimity is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight. But in its perfection and unshakable nature equanimity is not dull, heartless and frigid. Its perfection is not due to an emotional "emptiness", but to a "fullness" of understanding, to its being complete in itself. Its unshakable nature is not the immovability of a dead, cold stone, but the manifestation of the highest strength.

In what way, now, is *equanimity* perfect and unshakable?

Whatever causes stagnation is here destroyed, what dams up is removed, what obstructs is destroyed. Vanished are the whirls of emotion and the meanderings of intellect. Unhindered goes the calm and majestic stream of consciousness, pure and radiant. Watchful mindfulness (*sati*) has harmonized the warmth of faith (*saddha*) with the penetrative keenness of wisdom (*pañña*); it has balanced strength of will (*virīya*) with calmness of mind (*samādhi*); and these five inner faculties (*indriya*) have grown into inner forces (*bala*) that cannot be lost again. They cannot be lost because they do not lose themselves any more in the labyrinths of the world (*samsara*), in the endless diffuseness of life (*papañca*). These inner forces emanate from the mind and act upon the world, but being guarded by mindfulness, they nowhere bind themselves, and they return unchanged. Love, compassion and sympathetic joy continue to emanate from the mind and act upon the world, but being guarded by *equanimity*, they cling nowhere, and return unweakened and unsullied.

Thus within the Arhat, the Liberated One, nothing is lessened by giving, and he does not become poorer by bestowing upon others the riches of his heart and mind. The Arhat is like the clear, well-cut crystal which, being without stains, fully absorbs all the rays of light and sends them out again, intensified by its concentrative power. The rays cannot stain the crystal with their various colours. They cannot pierce its hardness, nor disturb its harmonious structure. In its genuine purity and strength, the crystal remains unchanged. "Just as all the streams of the world enter the great ocean, and all the waters of the sky rain into it, but no increase or decrease of the great ocean is to be seen" – even so is the nature of *holy equanimity*.

Holy equanimity, or – as we may likewise express it – the Arhat endowed with holy equanimity, is the inner centre of the world. But this inner centre should be well distinguished from the numberless apparent centres of limited spheres; that is, their so-called "personalities," governing laws, and so on. All of these are only apparent centres, because they cease to be centres whenever their spheres, obeying the laws of impermanence, undergo a total change of their structure; and consequently the centre of their gravity, material or mental, will shift. But the inner centre of the Arhat's equanimity is unshakable, because it is immutable. It is immutable because it clings to nothing.

Says the Master (Buddha Shakyamuni, Udana 8.3):

"For one who clings, motion exists; but for one who does not cling, there is no motion. Where no motion is, there is stillness. Where stillness is, there is no craving. Where no craving is, there is neither coming nor going. Without coming or going, there is neither arising nor passing away. Without arising or passing away, there is neither this world nor a world beyond, nor a state between. This, verily, is the end of suffering."

The benefits of meditating the 4 Brahmaviharas (Maharahulovada Sutta, MN 62.18-21)

The Buddha says to Rahula, is then 18 year old son: "Rahula, develop the meditation of loving kindness; if you develop the meditation of loving kindness, all malevolence will be overcome. Rahula, develop the meditation of compassion; if you develop the meditation of compassion, all aggressiveness will be overcome. Rahula, develop the meditation of joy; if you develop the meditation of joy, all discontentment (*arati*) will be overcome. Rahula, develop the meditation of equanimity; if you develop the meditation of equanimity, all reluctance will be overcome."

The Practice of Loving Kindness (*Metta*) as taught by the Buddha in the Pali Canon

Compiled and translated by Ñānamoli Thera

Source: The Wheel Publication No. 7; ISBN 955-24-0005-8

Introduction

The word "love" – one of the most compelling in the English language – is commonly used for purposes so widely separated, so gross and so rarefied, as to render it sometimes nearly meaningless. Yet rightly understood, love is the indispensable and essential foundation no less for the growth and purification of the individual as for the construction of a peaceful, progressive and healthy society.

Now love can be considered in two principal moods: that of lovers for each other, and that of a mother for her child. In its spiritualised form, love can draw its inspiration from either the one or the other. Spiritual love idealizing the love of lovers is often conceived as a consuming flame, and then it sometimes aspires to purification through torture and the violence of martyrdom. But spiritual love that looks for guidance to the love of a mother for her child uplifts itself to the ideal of the pure fount of all safety, welfare and spiritual health (and a mother best serves her child if she guards her own health). It is this latter kind which the Buddha takes as the basis for his teaching of universal love.

Where Greek distinguishes between sensual *eros* and spiritual *agape* English makes do with only the one word "love." But the Pali language, like the Sanskrit, has many words covering many shades of meaning. The word chosen by the Buddha for this teaching is *metta* from *mitta*, a friend (or better "the true friend in need").

Metta in the Buddha's teaching finds its place as the first of four kinds of contemplation designed to develop a sound pacific relationship to other living beings. The four are: *metta*, which will be rendered henceforward by "loving kindness," *karuna*, which is "compassion" or "pity", *mudita* which is "gladness at others' success", and *upekkha*, which is "onlooking equanimity". These four are called Divine Abidings (*brahmavihara*), perhaps because whoever can maintain any one of them in being for even a moment has lived for that moment as do the Highest Gods (the Brahma Deva).

In the Buddha's teaching these four Divine Abidings, the "greatest of all worldly merit", if practiced alone, without insight into the true nature of existence, can lead to rebirth in the highest heavens. But all heavenly existence is without exception impermanent, and at the end of the heavenly life-span – no matter how long it may last – the being dies and is reborn according to his past actions. This is because some craving for existence (for being or even for non-being) and some sort of view of existence that is not in conformity with truth still remain latent in him, to burst out again when the result of the good actions is spent. And where he will be reborn after that is unpredictable though it is certain that he will be reborn.

The Buddha's teaching of Insight is – in as few words as possible – the training in knowledge and seeing of how it is that anything, whatever it may be whether objective or subjective, comes to be; how it acquires existence only through dependence on conditions, and is impermanent because none of the conditions for its existence is permanent; and how existence, always complex and impermanent, is never safe from pain, and is in need of a self – the will-

o'-the-wisp idea, the rainbow mirage, which lures it on, and which it can never find; for the comforting illusion has constantly to be renewed. And that teaching also shows how there is a true way out from fear of pain. In its concise form this is expressed as the Four Noble Truths: the truth of suffering, the truth of suffering's origin (craving or need), the truth of suffering's cessation (through abandonment of craving), and the truth of the way leading to suffering's cessation. These four truths are called the teaching peculiar to Buddhas (*Buddhanam samukkamsika-desana*) since the discovery of them is what distinguishes Buddhas.

The way (the fourth Truth) is also called the Middle Way because it avoids the two extremes of sensual indulgence and of self-mortification. Its eight members are: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The practice of loving kindness alone will give effect in some measure to all the members except the first: but it is only with right view (without self-deception) that Nibbana can be reached. Right View gives insight into the real nature of existence of being and non-being, with all its mirages and deceptions, and it is only with its help that the practice of loving kindness is perfected, lifted out of the impermanence of even the highest heavens, and directed to the true cessation of suffering.

That true cessation comes with the elimination of deception by wrong views and with the exhaustion of the stream of craving in its two forms of lust and hate. This extinction of lust, hate and delusion, is called Nibbana.

* * *

The discourses that follow show (in that order) the wretchedness of all anger and hate (there is no righteous anger in the Buddha's teaching); the rewards of loving kindness; the practice of loving kindness as a meditation and contemplation; its result in rebirth; the seeing of all things and all existence as impermanent, suffering and not-self, that is needed in order to have a vision in conformity with truth, without which the first stage of unshakable deliverance cannot be reached (for it is with this insight into how being comes to be that it is seen why the price of birth and life, even in heaven, is death); and lastly the attainment of Arahantship, by which all lust, hate, and delusion are overcome, lust for being and even for non-being cured, and rebirth ended for good.

But first, before coming to these discourses, some details from the meditation manual, the *Visuddhimagga* or "Path of Purification," will not be out of place. There *Metta* (loving kindness) is defined as follows:

"Loving kindness has the mode of friendliness for its characteristic. Its natural function is to promote friendliness. It is manifested as the disappearance of ill-will. Its footing is seeing with kindness. When it succeeds it eliminates ill-will. When it fails it degenerates into selfish affectionate desire."

The *Visuddhimagga* recommends going to some quiet place, where one can sit down in a comfortable position. Then, before starting the actual meditation, it is helpful to consider the dangers in hate and the benefits offered by forbearance: for it is a purpose of this meditation to displace hate by forbearance, and besides, one cannot avoid dangers one has not come to see or cultivate benefits one does not yet know.

Then there are certain types of persons towards whom loving kindness should not be developed in the first stages. The attempt, at the outset to regard a disliked person as dear to one is fatiguing, and likewise trying to regard a dearly loved friend with neutrality, and when an enemy is recalled anger springs up. Again it should not be directed towards members of the opposite sex, to begin with, for this may arouse lust.

Right at the start, the meditation of loving kindness should be developed towards oneself repeatedly in this way: "May I be happy and free from suffering" or "May I keep myself free from hostility and trouble and live happily" (though this will never produce the full absorption of contemplation). It is by cultivating the thought "May I be happy" with oneself as example, that one begins to be interested in the welfare and happiness of other living beings, and to feel in some sense their happiness as if it were one's own: "Just as I want happiness and fear pain, just as I want to live and not to die, so do other beings." So first one should become familiar with pervading oneself with loving kindness. Only then should one choose someone who is liked and admired and much respected. The meditation can then be developed towards him, remembering endearing words or virtues of his, and thinking such thoughts about him as "may he be happy." (In this way the full absorption of contemplation, in which the word-meditation is left behind, can be attained.)

When this has become familiar, one can begin to practice loving kindness towards a dearly beloved companion, and then towards a neutral person as very dear, or towards an enemy as neutral. It is when dealing with an enemy that anger can arise, and all means must be tried in order to get rid of it. As soon as this has succeeded, one will be able to regard an enemy without resentment and with loving kindness in the same way as one does the admired person, the dearly loved friend, and the neutral person. Then with repeated practice, jhana absorption (*dhyana*) should be attained in all cases. Loving kindness can now be effectively maintained towards all beings; or to certain groups of beings at a time, or in one direction at a time to all; or to certain groups in succession.

Loving kindness ought to be brought to the point where there are no longer any barriers set between persons, and for this the following example is given: Suppose a man is with a dear, a neutral and a hostile person, himself being the fourth; then bandits come to him and say "we need one of you for human sacrifice". Now, if that man thinks "Let then take this one or that one", he has not yet broken down the barriers, and also if he thinks "Let them take me but not these three", he has not broken down the barriers either. Why not? Because he seeks the harm of the one he wishes to be taken and the welfare of only the other three. It is only when he does not see a single one among the four to be chosen in preference to the other three, and directs his mind quite impartially towards himself and the other three, that he has broken down the barriers.

Loving kindness has its "enemy within" in lust, which easily gains entry in its wake, and it must be well guarded against this. The remedy for lust is the contemplation of ugliness (in the body) as in the Satipatthana Sutta (Digha Nikaya Sutta 22 and Majjhima Nikaya Sutta 10). Its "enemy without" is its opposite, ill-will, which finds its opportunities in the intervals when loving kindness is not being actively practiced. (Full details will be found in Chapter IX of the *Visuddhimagga*)

In many discourses the Buddha lays emphasis on the need to balance contemplative concentration with understanding. The one supplies the deficiencies of the other. Concentration alone lacks direction; understanding alone is dry and tiring. In the discourses that follow the simile of a mother's love for her child is given. Now the incomparable value of a mother's love, which sets it above all other kinds, lies in the fact that she understands her child's welfare – her love is not blind. Not love alone nor faith alone can ever bring a man all the way to the cessation of suffering, and that is why the Buddha, as the Supreme Physician, prescribes the development of five faculties in balanced harmony: the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and understanding.

So concentration of love in its highest form – the form that only the Buddha, and no one else, has given – seen as a means to the end, becomes absolutely purified in one who has gained

personal experience of the "supreme safety from bondage" (*anuttaram yogakkhemam*), which is Nibbana, as the ultimate welfare of beings. For he knows from his own experience that their welfare is only assured permanently when suffering has been diagnosed, its origin abandoned, its cessation realized, and the way maintained in being. Then he has verified the Four Noble Truths for himself and can properly evaluate beings' welfare.

“Bhikkhus, it is through not discovering, not penetrating to four truths that both you and I have been trudging and travelling through the roundabout of rebirths for so long.” (Digha Nikaya, Vol. II, p.90)

For the benefit of all those who have not yet done this, the way has been discovered and pointed out by the Buddha and its practicability attested by the Arahants. The last discourse given in this collection, in fact, shows how this personal discovery and penetration to the Four Noble Truths can be achieved by using loving kindness as the vehicle.

The Practice of Loving kindness

1. The Wretchedness of Anger (Anguttara Nikaya 7:60, spoken by the Buddha)

The seven things that befall one who is angry

“Bhikkhus, seven things gratifying and helpful to an enemy befall one who is angry, whether a woman or a man. What are the seven?

Here, bhikkhus, an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him be ugly." Why is that? No enemy relishes an enemy's beauty. Now when this person is angry, a prey to anger, ruled by anger, be he ever so well bathed, and well anointed, with hair and beard trimmed, and clothed in white, yet he is ugly through his being a prey to anger. This is the first thing gratifying and helpful to an enemy that befalls one who is angry, whether a woman or a man.

Also an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him lie in pain." Why is that? No enemy relishes an enemy's lying in comfort. Now when this person is angry, a prey to anger, ruled by anger, for all he may lie on a couch spread with rugs, blankets and counterpanes with a deer-skin cover, a canopy and red cushions for the head and feet, yet he lies only in pain through his being a prey to anger. This is the second thing gratifying to an enemy that befalls one who is angry, whether a woman or a man.

Also an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him have no prosperity." Why is that? No enemy relishes an enemy's prosperity. Now when this person is angry, prey to anger, ruled by anger, he mistakes bad for good and he mistakes good for bad, and each being taken wrongly in the other's sense, these things for long conduce to his harm and suffering, through his being a prey to anger. This is the third thing gratifying and helpful to an enemy that befalls one who is angry, whether a woman or a man.

Also an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him not be rich." Why is that? No enemy relishes an enemy's having riches. Now when a person is angry, a prey to anger, should he have riches gained by endeavour, built up by the strength of his arm, earned by sweat, lawful and lawfully acquired, yet the king's treasury gathers (in fines) through his being a prey to anger. This is the fourth thing gratifying and helpful to an enemy that befalls one who is a prey to anger, whether a woman or a man.

Also an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him not be famous." Why is that? No enemy relishes an enemy's having fame. Now when a person is angry, a prey to anger, ruled by anger, he loses whatever fame he may have acquired by diligence through his being a prey to

anger. This is the fifth thing gratifying and helpful to an enemy that befalls one who is a prey to anger, whether a woman or a man.

Also an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him have no friends." Why is that? No enemy relishes and enemy's having friends. Now when this person is angry, a prey to anger, ruled by anger, the friends he may have, his companions, relatives and kin, everyone will keep away from him through his being a prey to anger. This is the sixth thing gratifying and helpful to an enemy that befalls one who is a prey to anger, whether a woman or a man.

Also an enemy wishes thus for his enemy: "Let him on the dissolution of the body, after death, reappear in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell." Why is that? No enemy relishes an enemy's going to a good destination. Now when this person is angry, a prey to anger, ruled by anger, he misconducts himself in body, speech and mind, and by his misconduct in body, speech and mind, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell, through his being a prey to anger. This is the seventh thing gratifying and helpful to an enemy that befalls one who is angry, whether a woman or a man."

"When anger does possess a man;
He looks ugly; he lies in pain;
What benefit he may come by
He misconstrues as a mischance;
He loses property (through fines)
Because he has been working harm
Through acts of body and speech
By angry passion overwhelmed;
The wrath and rage that madden him
Gain him a name of ill-repute;
His fellows, relatives and kin
Will seek to shun him from afar;
And anger fathers misery:
This fury does so cloud the mind
Of man that he cannot discern
This fearful inner danger.
An angry man no meaning knows,
No angry man sees the Dhamma,
So wrapped in darkness, as if blind,
Is he whom anger dogs.

Someone a man in anger hurts;
But, when his anger is later spent
With difficulty or with ease,
He suffers as if seared by fire.
His look betrays the sulkiness
Of some dim smoky smouldering glow.
Whence may flare up an anger-blaze
That sets the world of men aflame.
He has no shame or conscience curb,
No kindly words come forth from him,
There is no island refuge for
The man whom anger dogs.

Such acts as will ensure remorse,
Such as are far from the true Dhamma:
It is of these that I would tell,
So hearken to my words.

Anger makes man a parricide,
Anger makes him a matricide,
Anger can make him slay the saint
As he would kill the common man.
Nursed and reared by a mother's care,
He comes to look upon the world,
Yet the common man in anger kills
The being who gave him life.

No being but seeks his own self's good,
None dearer to him than himself,
Yet men in anger kill themselves,
Distraught for reasons manifold:
For crazed they stab themselves with daggers,
In desperation swallow poison,
Perish hanged by ropes, or fling
Themselves over a precipice.
Yet how their life-destroying acts
Bring death unto themselves as well,
That they cannot discern, and that
Is the ruin anger breeds.

This secret place, with anger's aid,
Is where mortality sets the snare.
To blot it out with discipline,
With vision, strength, and understanding,
To blot each fault out one by one,
The wise man should apply himself,
Training likewise in the true Dhamma;
"Let smouldering be far from us."
Then rid of wrath and free from anger,
And rid of lust and free from envy,
Tamed, and with anger left behind,
Taintless, they reach Nibbana."

2. How to get rid of Anger

2a. Dhammapada, verses 3-5, and Majjhima Nikaya 128, spoken by the Buddha

“ ‘He abused me, he beat me,
He worsted me, he robbed me.’
Hate never is allayed in men
That cherish suchlike enmity.

‘He abused me, he beat me,
He worsted me, he robbed me.’
Hate surely is allayed in men
Who cherish no such enmity.
For enmity by enmity

Is never in this world allayed.
It is allayed by amity –
That is an ancient principle.”

2b. Anguttara Nikaya 5:161, spoken by the Buddha

“Bhikkhus, there are these five ways of removing annoyance, by which annoyance can be entirely removed by a bhikkhu when it arises in him. What are the five?

Loving kindness can be maintained towards a person with whom you are annoyed: this is how annoyance with him can be removed. Compassion can be maintained towards a person with whom you are annoyed; this too is how annoyance with him can be removed. Onlooking equanimity can be maintained towards a person with whom you are annoyed; this too is how annoyance with him can be removed. The forgetting and ignoring of a person with whom you are annoyed can be practiced; this too is how annoyance with him can be removed. Ownership of deeds in a person with whom you are annoyed can be concentrated upon thus: ‘This good person is owner of his deeds, heir to his deeds, his deeds are the womb from which he is born, his deeds are his kin for whom he is responsible, his deeds are his refuge, he is heir to his deeds, be they good or bad.’ This too is how annoyance with him can be removed. These are the five ways of removing annoyance, by which annoyance can be entirely removed in a bhikkhu when it arises in him.

3. Loving Kindness and its Rewards

3a. Majjhima Nikaya 21.19-20, Kakacupama Sutta, “The Simile of the Saw” – Our Commitment to Love, Compassion and Equanimity, by the Buddha

“Bhikkhus, there are five modes of speech that others may use when they address you. Their speech may be timely or untimely, true or untrue, gentle or harsh, for good or harm, and may be accompanied by thoughts of loving kindness or by inner hate.

Suppose a man came with a hoe and a basket, and he said, ‘I shall make this great earth to be without earth’; and he dug here and there and strewed here and there, and spat here and there and relieved himself here and there, saying, ‘Be without earth, be without earth.’ What do you think, bhikkhus, would that man make this great earth to be without earth? – No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because this great earth is deep and measureless; it cannot possibly be made to be without earth. So the man would reap weariness and disappointment.

Suppose a man came with lack or gamboges or indigo or carmine, and he said, ‘I shall draw pictures, I shall make pictures appear, on this empty space.’ What do you think, bhikkhus, would that man draw pictures, would he make pictures appear, on that empty space? – No, venerable sir. Why is that? Because that empty space is formless and invisible; he cannot possibly draw pictures, make pictures appear there. So the man would reap weariness and disappointment.

So too, bhikkhus, there are these five modes of speech that others may use when they address you. Their speech may be timely or untimely, true or untrue, gentle or harsh, for good or for harm, and may be accompanied by thoughts of loving kindness or by inner hate. Now this is how you should train yourselves here: ‘Our minds will remain unaffected, we shall utter no bad words, we shall abide friendly and compassionate, with thoughts of loving kindness and no inner hate. We shall abide with loving kindness in our hearts extending to that person, and we shall dwell extending it to the entire world as our object, with our hearts abundant, exalted, and measureless in loving kindness, without hostility or ill-will.’

That is how you should train yourselves. Even were bandits savagely to sever one after the other of your limbs with a two-handed saw, he who entertains hate on that account in his

heart would not be one who carried out my teaching. Bhikkhus, you should keep this instruction on the Simile of the Saw constantly in mind.” (MN 21:19-20)

The same sutra in German:

MN 21:19-20, Ausschnitt aus dem Kakacupama Sutta, „Das Gleichnis von der Säge“, übersetzt von Vimalo Kulbarz

"Andere mögen euch zur rechten oder zur falschen Zeit ansprechen, sie mögen wahr oder unwahr sprechen, sanft oder schroff, zum Guten oder zum Schaden, mit einem Geist der Liebe oder des Hasses. Dann solltet ihr euch darin üben: 'Dies wird mich nicht aus der Fassung bringen, ich werde keine bösen Worte äußern. Freundlich und mitfühlend werde ich bleiben, frei von Abneigung, und diesen Menschen mit einem Herzen begegnen, das von liebender Güte durchtränkt ist. Frei von Feindseligkeit und Übelwollen werde ich dann, indem ich sie als Ausgangspunkt nehme, die ganze Welt mit liebevollem Gemüt durchdringen, unerschöpflich, erhaben, unermesslich, mit weitem Geist.' So solltet ihr euch üben. Ihr Bhikkhus, sogar wenn Banditen euch barbarisch Glied für Glied mit einer Doppelgriffsäge in Stücke teilen würden, würde derjenige, der einen verdorbenen Geist ihnen gegenüber entstehen ließe, meine Lehre nicht befolgen."

3b. Itivuttaka 27: "The Radiant Brightness of Loving Kindness", by the Buddha

"Bhikkhus, whatever kinds of worldly merit there are, all are not worth one sixteenth part of the heart-deliverance of loving kindness; in shining and beaming and radiance the heart-deliverance of loving kindness far excels them.

Just as whatever light there is of stars, all is not worth one sixteenth part of the moon's; in shining and beaming and radiance the moon's light far excels it; and just as in the last month of the Rains, in the Autumn when the heavens are clear, the sun as it climbs the heavens drives all darkness from the sky with its shining and beaming and radiance; and just as, when night is turning to dawn, the morning star is shining and beaming and radiating; so too, whatever kinds of worldly merit there are, all are not worth one sixteenth part of the heart-deliverance of loving kindness; in shining and beaming and radiance the heart-deliverance of loving kindness far excels them."

3c. Anguttara Nikaya 11:16, "Eleven Blessings of Loving Kindness", by the Buddha

"Bhikkhus, when the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is maintained in being, made much of, used as one's vehicle, used as one's foundation, established, consolidated, and properly managed, then eleven blessings can be expected. What are the eleven?

A man sleeps in comfort; he wakes in comfort; he dreams no evil dreams; he is dear to human beings; he is dear to non-human beings; the gods guard him; no fire or poison or weapon harms him; his mind can be quickly concentrated; the expression of his face is serene; he dies without falling into confusion; and, even if he fails to penetrate any further, he will pass on to the world of High Divinity, to the Brahma world."

3d. Samyutta Nikaya 20:3 "Maintaining and Furthering of Loving Kindness", by the Buddha

"Bhikkhus, just as clans with many women and few men are readily ruined by robbers and bandits, so too any bhikkhu who has not maintained and furthered the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is readily ruined by non-human beings. And just as clans with few women and many men are not readily ruined by robbers and bandits; so too any bhikkhu who maintains and furthers the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is not readily ruined by non-human beings. So, bhikkhus, you should train in this way: The heart-deliverance of loving kindness will be maintained and furthered by us, used as our vehicle, used as our foundation, established, consolidated, and properly managed. That is how you should train."

3f. *Anguttara Nikaya 1:53-55, 386* “A True Bhikkhu cultivates Loving Kindness”, the Buddha
“Bhikkhus, if a bhikkhu cultivates loving kindness for as long as a finger snap, he is called a bhikkhu. He is not destitute of *jhana* meditation, he carries out the Master's teaching, he responds to advice, and he does not eat the country's alms food in vain. So what should be said of those who make much of it (who further and deepen it)?”

3e. *Digha Nikaya 33, “Loving Kindness as the Antidote for Ill Will”, by the Arahant Sariputta*

“Here, friends, a bhikkhu might say: ‘When the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is maintained and furthered by me, used as my vehicle, used as my foundation, established, consolidated, and properly managed, ill-will nevertheless still invades my heart and remains.’ He should be told: ‘Not so. Let the worthy one not say so. Let him not misrepresent the Blessed One. It is not good to misrepresent the Blessed One. The Blessed One would not express it thus.’ Friends, it is impossible, it cannot happen when the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is maintained and furthered, used as one's vehicle, used as one's foundation, established, consolidated, and properly managed, that ill-will could invade the heart and remain. This is because the heart-deliverance of loving kindness is the escape from ill-will.”

4. Loving kindness as a Contemplation

4a. *The “Karaniya Metta Sutta”, by the Buddha*

(Sutta Nipata 1.8143-152, and KHP 9) translated from the Pali by Piyadassi Thera.

Translator's Introduction: While the Buddha was staying at Savatthi, a band of monks, having received subjects of meditation from the master, proceeded to a forest to spend the rainy season (*vassana*). The tree deities inhabiting this forest were worried by their arrival, as they had to descend from tree abodes and dwell on the ground. They hoped, however, the monks would leave soon; but finding that the monks would stay the vassana period of three months, harassed them in diverse ways, during the night with the intention of scaring them away. Living under such conditions being impossible, the monks went to the Master and informed him of their difficulties. Thereon the Buddha instructed them in the Metta sutta and advised their return equipped with this sutta for their protection. The monks went back to the forest, and practicing the instruction conveyed, permeated the whole atmosphere with their radiant thoughts of metta or loving kindness. The deities so affected by this power of love, henceforth allowed them to meditate in peace.

The discourse gets divided into two parts. The first detailing the standard of moral conduct required by one who wishes to attain Purity and Peace, and the second the method of practice of metta.

"He who is skilled in (working out his own) well being, and who wishes to attain that state of Calm (Nibbana) should act thus: he should be dexterous, upright, exceedingly upright, obedient, gentle, and humble.

"Contented, easily supportable, with but few responsibilities, of simple livelihood, controlled in the senses, prudent, courteous, and not hanker after association with families.

"Let him not perform the slightest wrong for which wise men may rebuke him. (Let him think:) 'May all beings be happy and safe. May they have happy minds.'

"Whatever living beings there may be – feeble or strong (or the seekers and the attained) long, stout, or of medium size, short, small, large, those seen or those unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born as well as those yet to be born – may all beings have happy minds.

"Let him not deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere. In anger or ill will let him not wish another ill.

"Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings.

"Let him radiate boundless love towards the entire world – above, below, and across – unhindered, without ill will, without enmity.

"Standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is 'Noble Living' here.

"Not falling into wrong views – being virtuous, endowed with insight, lust in the senses discarded – verily never again will he return to conceive in a womb."

The same Sutra in German:

Das „Karaniya Metta Sutta“ (*Sutta Nipata 1.8; KHP 9*)

Das Hohe Lied der Liebe von Buddha Shakyamuni

Bist du geschickt im eigenen Wohl
und möchtest wahren Frieden (Nirwana) erlangen,
dann sei fähig, ehrlich und aufrecht,
leicht zu unterweisen, sanft und von geringem Stolz
zufrieden, leicht zu unterstützen,
mit wenigen Pflichten, einfach lebend,
besonnen und umsichtig,
liebenswert, ohne Wohltäter zu umwerben,
selbst die geringste Handlung unterlassend,
die von den Weisen gerügt würde.

(Kultiviere dann den Gedanken:)
Möge es allen Wesen wohl ergehen,
mögen sie in Sicherheit sein, mögen alle Wesen glücklich sein!

Was immer es für Wesen geben mag,
alle ohne Ausnahme, schwach oder stark,
groß, gedrungen, von mittlerem Wuchs oder klein,
winzig oder massig, sichtbar und unsichtbar,
nah oder fern lebend, geboren oder Geburt suchend,
mögen alle diese Wesen glücklich sein!

Möge niemand irgendwo seine Gefährten
betrügen oder verachten.
Mögen niemand dem anderen Schaden wünschen
aus Abneigung oder Hass.

So wie eine Mutter, die ihr Leben geben würde,
um ihren Sohn, ihr einziges Kind, zu schützen,

genauso sei du erfüllt von Gedanken grenzenloser Liebe für alle Wesen.

Nähre einen allumfassenden Geist der Liebe
für alle, in allen Universen –
oberhalb und unterhalb und überall um uns herum –
uneingeschränkte Liebe, frei von Feindseligkeit und Hass.

Ob du stehst, gehst, sitzt oder dich hinlegst,
solange du bewusst bist,
entwickle diese Achtsamkeit mit aller Kraft –
das ist, was wir hier Verweilen im Reinen nennen.

Nicht mehr an verkehrten Ansichten festhaltend
voller Tugend und Einsicht in die Wahrheit,
das Verlangen nach Sinnesvergnügen überwunden,
wirst du nie wieder in eine Gebärmutter zurückkehren.

5. Methodical Practice

5a. From the Patisambhidamagga, ascribed to the Arahant Sariputta

“The heart-deliverance of loving kindness is practiced with unspecified extension, with specified extension, and with directional extension.

That with unspecified extension is practiced in five ways as follows: May all beings be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss. May all breathing things... all creatures... all persons... May all those who are embodied be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss.

That with specified extension is practiced in seven ways as follows: May all women be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss. May all men... all Noble Ones... all who are not Noble Ones... all deities... all human beings... may all those in the states of deprivation be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss.

That with directional extension is practiced in ten ways as follows: May all beings in the eastern direction be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss. May all beings in the western direction... in the northern direction... in the southern direction... in the eastern intermediate direction... in the western intermediate direction... in the northern intermediate direction... in the southern intermediate direction... in the downward direction... May all those in the upward direction be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss.

May all breathing things...

May all creatures...

May all persons...

May all who are embodied...

May all women...

May all men...

May all Noble Ones...

May all who are not Noble Ones...

May all deities...

May all human beings...

May all those in the states of deprivation in the eastern direction be freed from enmity, distress and anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss... May all those in states of deprivation in the upward direction be freed from enmity, distress, anxiety, and may they guide themselves to bliss.

5b. From the Abhidhamma Pitaka, Appamannavibhanga, ascribed to the Buddha

“And how does a bhikkhu abide with his heart imbued with loving kindness extending over one direction? Just as he would feel friendliness on seeing a dearly beloved person, so he extends loving kindness to all creatures.”

The brahmaviharas practiced without Insight in the Four Truths

5c. Majjhima Nikaya 99.23-27, by the Buddha

‘Master Gotama, I have heard it said that the Monk Gotama teaches the path to the retinue of the High Divinity (*Brahma*). It would be good if Master Gotama would teach me that.’ – ‘Then listen and attend carefully to what I shall say.’ – ‘Even so, sir,’ the student Subha Todeyyaputta replied. The Blessed One said this:

“And what is the path to the retinue of the High Divinity? Here a bhikkhu abides with his heart imbued with loving kindness (compassion, joy, equanimity) extending over one quarter, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter, and so above, below, around, and everywhere and to all as to himself; he abides with his heart abundant, exalted, measureless in loving kindness (compassion, joy, equanimity), without hostility or ill-will, extending over the all-encompassing world. While this heart-deliverance of loving kindness (compassion, joy, equanimity) is maintained in this way, no action restricted by limited measurement is found there, none persists there. Just as a vigorous trumpeter could easily make himself heard in the four directions, so too when the heart-deliverance of loving kindness (compassion, joy, and equanimity) is maintained in this way no action restricted by limited measurement is found there, none persists there. This is a path to the retinue of the High Divinity.”

The brahmaviharas practiced with Insight in the Four Truths

5d. Anguttara Nikaya 4:125, by the Buddha

“Here, bhikkhus, a certain person abides with his heart imbued with loving kindness extending over one quarter, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter, and so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides with his heart abundant, exalted, measureless in loving kindness, without hostility or ill-will, extending over the all-encompassing world.

He finds gratification in that, finds it desirable and looks to it for his well-being; steady and resolute thereon, he abides much in it, and if he dies without losing it, he reappears among the gods of a High Divinity's (*Brahma's*) retinue. Now, the gods of a High Divinity's retinue have a life-span of one aeon. An ordinary person (who has not attained the Noble Eightfold Path) stays there for his life-span; but after he has used up the whole life-span enjoyed by those gods, he leaves it all, and (according to what his past deeds may have been) he may go down even to hell, or to an animal womb, or to the ghost realm.

But one who has given ear to the Perfect One stays there (in that heaven) for his life-span, and after that he has used up the whole life span enjoyed by those gods, he eventually attains complete extinction of lust, hate and delusion in that same kind of heavenly existence. It is this that distinguishes, that differentiates, the wise hearer who is ennobled (by attainment of the

Noble Path) from the unwise ordinary man, when, that is to say, there is a destination for re-appearance (after death, but an Arahant has made an end of birth).”

5e. Anguttara Nikaya 4:126, by the Buddha

“Here, bhikkhus, a certain person abides with his heart imbued with loving kindness extending... over the all-encompassing world. Now, whatever therein (during that state of contemplation) exists classifiable as form, classifiable as a feeling (of pleasure, pain, or neutrality), classifiable as perception, classifiable as determinative acts, or classifiable as consciousness, such ideas he sees as impermanent, as liable to suffering, as a disease, as a cancer, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as being worn away, as void, as not-self. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears (as a Non-Returner) in the retinue of the Gods of the Pure Abodes (where there are only those who have reached the Noble Path and where extinction of greed, hate and delusion is reached in less than seven lives without return to this world). And this kind of reappearance is not shared by ordinary men (who have not reached the Noble Eightfold Path).”

5f. Anguttara Nikaya 3:66, by the Arahant Nandaka

“Thus I heard. On one occasion the venerable Nandaka was living at Savatthi in the Eastern Monastery, Migara's Mother's Palace. Then Migara's grandson, Salha, and Pekhuniya's grandson, Rohana, went to the venerable Nandaka, and after salutation they sat down at one side. When they had done so the venerable Nandaka said to Migara's grandson Salha:

‘Come, Salha, do not be satisfied with hearsay or with tradition or with legendary lore or with what has come down in scriptures or with conjecture or with logical inference or with weighing evidence or with a liking for a view after pondering it or with someone else's ability or with the thought ‘The monk is our teacher.’ When you know in yourself ‘These things are unprofitable, liable to censure, condemned by the wise, being adopted and put into effect, they lead to harm and suffering,’ then you should abandon them.

What do you think? Is there greed?’ – ‘Yes, venerable sir.’ – ‘Covetousness is the meaning of that, I say. Through greed a covetous man kills breathing things, takes what is not given, commits adultery, and utters falsehood, and he gets another to do likewise. Will that be long for his harm and suffering?’ – ‘Yes, venerable sir.’ –

‘What do you think, is there hate?’ – ‘Yes, venerable sir.’ – ‘Ill-will is the meaning of that, I say. Through hate a malevolent man kills breathing things... Will that be long for his harm and suffering?’ – ‘Yes, venerable sir.’ –

‘What do you think? Is there delusion?’ – ‘Yes, venerable sir.’ – ‘Ignorance is the meaning of that, I say. Through ignorance a deluded man kills breathing things... Will that be long for his harm and suffering?’ – ‘Yes, venerable sir.’

‘What do you think? Are these things profitable or unprofitable?’ – ‘Unprofitable, venerable sir.’ – ‘Reprehensible or blameless?’ – ‘Reprehensible, venerable sir.’ – ‘Condemned or commended by the wise?’ – ‘Condemned by the wise, venerable sir.’ – ‘Being adopted and put into effect, do they lead to harm and suffering, or do they not, or how does it appear to you in this case?’ – ‘Being adopted and put into effect, venerable sir, they lead to harm and suffering. So it appears in this case.’ – ‘Now that was the reason why I told you ‘Come Salha, do not be satisfied with hearsay... When you know in yourself ‘These things are unprofitable,’ then you should abandon them.’

‘Come Salha, do not be satisfied with hearsay... or with the thought, ‘The monk is our teacher.’ When you know in yourself: ‘These things are profitable, blameless, commended by the wise,

being adopted and put into effect they lead to welfare and happiness,' then you should practice them and abide in them.

What do you think? Is there non-greed?' – 'Yes, venerable sir.' – 'Uncovetousness is the meaning of that, I say. Through non-greed an uncovetous man does not kill breathing things or take what is not given or commits adultery or utter falsehood, and he gets another to do likewise. Will that be long for his welfare and happiness?' – 'Yes, venerable sir.' –

'What do you think? Is there non-hate?' – 'Yes, venerable sir.' – 'Non ill-will is the meaning of that, I say. Through non ill-will an unmalevolent man does not kill breathing things... Will that be long for his welfare and happiness?' – 'Yes, venerable sir.' –

'What do you think? Is there non-delusion?' – 'Yes, venerable sir.' – 'True knowledge is the meaning of that, I say. Through non-delusion a man with true knowledge does not kill breathing things... Will that be long for his welfare and happiness?' – 'Yes, venerable sir.'

'What do you think? Are these things profitable or unprofitable?' – 'Profitable, venerable sir.' – 'Reprehensible or blameless?' – 'Blameless, venerable sir.' – 'Condemned or commended by the wise?' – 'Commended by the wise, venerable sir.' – 'Being adopted and put into effect, do they lead to welfare and happiness, or do they not, or how does it appear to you in this case?' – 'Being adopted and put into effect, venerable sir, they lead to welfare and happiness. So it appears to us in this case.' – 'Now that was the reason why I told you 'Come Salha, do not be satisfied with hearsay... when you know in yourself 'These things are profitable...' then you should practice them and abide in them.'

'Now a disciple who is ennobled (by reaching the Noble Path), who has rid himself in this way of covetousness and ill-will and is undeluded, abides with his heart imbued with loving kindness extending over one quarter, likewise the second quarter, likewise the third quarter, likewise the fourth quarter, and so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides with his heart abundant, exalted, measureless in loving kindness without hostility or ill-will extending over the all-encompassing world. He abides with his heart imbued with compassion... gladness... equanimity extending over the all-encompassing world. Now he understands this state of contemplation in this way: 'There is this (state of Divine Abiding in me who has entered the Stream). There is what has been abandoned (which is the amount of greed, hate and delusion exhausted by the Stream-entry Path). There is a superior goal (which is Arahantship). And there is an ultimate escape from this whole field of perception.'

'When he knows and sees in this way, his heart is liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When liberated (by reaching the Arahant Path), there comes thereafter the knowledge that it is liberated. He knows that birth is ended, that the Divine Life has been lived out, that what had to be done is done, and that there is no more of this to come. He understands thus: 'Formerly there was greed which was bad, and now there is none, which is good. Formerly there was hate, which was bad, and now there is none, which is good. Formerly there was delusion, which was bad, and now there is none, which is good.' So here and now in this very life he is parched no more (by the fever of craving's thirst, his fires of greed, hate and delusion are) extinguished and cooled out; experiencing bliss, he abides (for the remainder of his last life-span) divinely pure in himself."

An Extract of the Samadhi Sutta of (Immeasurable) Concentration, Anguttara Nikaya 5.27

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

"Wise and mindful, you should develop immeasurable concentration [i.e. concentration based on immeasurable good will (love), compassion, appreciation (joy), and equanimity]. When, wise and mindful, one has developed immeasurable concentration, five realizations arise right within oneself. Which five?

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is blissful in the present and will result in bliss in the future.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is noble and not connected with the baits of the flesh.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is not obtained by base people.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'This concentration is peaceful, exquisite, the acquiring of serenity, the attainment of unity, not kept in place by the fabrications of forceful restraint.'

"The realization arises right within oneself that 'I enter into this concentration mindfully, and mindfully I emerge from it.'

"Wise and mindful, you should develop immeasurable concentration. When, wise and mindful, one has developed immeasurable concentration, these five realizations arise right within oneself."

Sankhitta Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya 8.63

In Brief: The Brahmaviharas, Mindfulness, and Concentration

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

Translator's note: This discourse is important in that it explicitly refers to the practice of the four frames of reference (the four foundations of mindfulness) as a form of concentration practice, mastered in terms of the levels of jhana.

Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "It would be good if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief so that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone in seclusion: heedful, ardent, and resolute."

"But it is in just this way that some worthless men make a request but then, having been told the Dhamma, think they should tag along right behind me."

"May the Blessed One teach me the Dhamma in brief! May the One Well-gone teach me the Dhamma in brief! It may well be that I will understand the Blessed One's words. It may well be that I will become an heir to the Blessed One's words."

"Then, monk, you should train yourself thus: 'My mind will be established inwardly, well-composed. No evil, unskilful qualities, once they have arisen, will remain consuming the mind.' That's how you should train yourself.

"Then you should train yourself thus: 'Good-will (Love), as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed

this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought and evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; and then you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: 'Compassion, as my awareness-release... Appreciation (Joy), as my awareness-release... Equanimity, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought and evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: 'I will remain focused on the body in and of itself – ardent, alert, and mindful – putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought and evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should train yourself: 'I will remain focused on feelings in and of themselves... the mind in and of itself... mental qualities in and of themselves – ardent, alert, and mindful – putting aside greed and distress with reference to the world.' That's how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought and evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought and no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, then wherever you go, you will go in comfort. Wherever you stand, you will stand in comfort. Wherever you sit, you will sit in comfort. Wherever you lie down, you will lie down in comfort."

Then that monk, having been admonished by an admonishment from the Blessed One, got up from his seat and bowed down to the Blessed One, circled around him, keeping the Blessed One to his right side, and left. Then, dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, and resolute, he in no long time reached and remained in the supreme goal of the holy life for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing and realizing it for himself in the here and now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus he became another one of the Arahants.

Khaggavisana Sutta “A Rhinoceros Horn”, Sutta Nipata I.3 (35-75)

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

Translator's note: The refrain in this sutta is a subject of controversy. The text literally says, "Wander alone like a 'sword-horn,' which is the Pali term for rhinoceros. The commentary, however, insists that this term refers

not to the animal but to its horn, for the Indian rhinoceros, unlike the African, has only one horn. Still, some scholars have noted that while the Indian rhinoceros is a solitary animal, rhinoceros horns don't wander, and that in other verses in the Pali canon, the phrase "wander alone like..." takes a person or an animal, not an animal part, for its object. Thus, for example, in Dhp 329 (repeated below), one is told to "wander alone like a king renouncing his kingdom, like the elephant in the Matanga woods, his herd." It's possible that the rhinoceros was chosen here as an example of solitary wandering both because of its habits and because of its unusual single horn. However, in a translation, it's necessary to choose one reading over the other. Thus, because wandering "like a rhinoceros" sounds more natural than wandering "like a horn," I have chosen the former rendering. Keep in mind, though, that the singularity of the rhinoceros' horn reinforces the image.

There is evidence suggesting that the verses here were originally separate poems, composed on separate occasions, and that they have been gathered together because of their common refrain.

“Renouncing violence for all living beings,
harming not even a single one,
you would not wish for offspring, so also not for a companion?
Wander alone like a rhinoceros.

For a sociable person there are allurements (attachments);
on the heels of allurement, there is pain.
Seeing allurement's drawback,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

One, whose mind is enmeshed in sympathy
for friends and companions, neglects the true goal.
Seeing this danger in intimacy,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Like spreading bamboo which becomes entwined,
is concern for offspring and spouses.
Like a bamboo sprout, not getting entangled,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

As a deer in the wilds, unfettered,
goes for forage wherever it wants:
the wise person, valuing freedom,
wanders alone like a rhinoceros.

In the midst of companions, whether staying at home
or going out wandering, one is prey to requests.
Valuing the freedom, meaningless for others,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

There is sporting and pleasure in the midst of companions,
and abundant fondness for offspring.
Feeling disgust at the prospect of parting from those who'd be dear,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

At home in all four directions (of the brahmaviharas),
Without aversion, content with whatever you get,
enduring troubles with no dismay,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

They are hard to please, some of those gone forth,
and even more so those living the household life.

Shedding concern for the offspring of others,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Cutting off the householder's marks (e.g. hair and beard)
like a kovilara tree that has shed its leaves,
prudent one, cutting all household ties,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

If you gain a mature companion,
a fellow traveller, right-living and wise,
overcoming all dangers,
go with him, gratified and mindful.

If you don't gain a mature companion,
a fellow traveller, right-living and wise,
wander alone like a king leaving his defeated kingdom,
like the elephant in the Matanga wilds, his herd.

We praise the joy of companionship – yes!
Those on a par or better should be chosen as friends.
If they're not to be found, living faultlessly,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Seeing radiant bracelets of gold,
well-made by a smith,
clinking, clashing, two on an arm,
wander alone like a rhinoceros,

[Think:] 'In the same way, if I were to live with another,
there would be careless talk or abusive.'
Seeing this future danger,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Because sensual pleasures, elegant, honeyed, and charming,
bewitch the mind with their manifold forms –
seeing this drawback in sensual strands –
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

[Think:] 'It is a calamity, an ulcer, a plague,
it brings disease, misery and danger for me.'
Seeing this danger in sensual strands,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Cold and heat, hunger and thirst,
wind and sun, horseflies and snakes:
enduring all these, without exception,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

As a great white elephant, with massive shoulders,
of noble kind avoids all herds,
and lives in the wilds wherever he wants,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

[Think:] 'There's no way that one delighting in company
can touch even momentary release.'
Heeding the Solar Kinsman's (Buddha's) words,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Transcending the contortion of views,
the sure way attained, the path gained,
[realize:] 'Not led by others, knowledge has arisen in me',
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

With no greed, no deceit, no thirst, no hypocrisy –
delusion and blemishes blown away –
with no inclinations for all the world, every world,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Avoid the evil companion disregarding the goal,
intent on the out-of-tune way.
Don't take as a friend someone heedless and hankering.
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Consort with one who is learned, who maintains the Dhamma,
a great and quick-witted friend.
Knowing the meanings, subdue your perplexity,
[then] wander alone like a rhinoceros,

Free from longing, finding no pleasure
in the world's sport, love, or sensual bliss,
abstaining from adornment, speaking the truth,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Abandoning offspring, spouse,
father, mother, riches, grain, relatives,
and sensual pleasures altogether,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

'This is a bondage, a baited hook; there's little happiness here,
next to no satisfaction, all the more suffering and pain.'
Knowing this, circumspect,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Shattering fetters,
like a fish in the water tearing a net,
like a fire not coming back to what's burnt,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Eyes downcast, not footloose,
senses guarded, with protected mind,
not oozing – not burning with lust,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Taking off the householder's marks (lay clothes)
like a coral tree that has shed its leaves,
going forth in the ochre robe,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Showing no greed for flavours, not careless,
going from house to house for alms,
with mind unenmeshed in this family or that,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Abandoning barriers to awareness,
expelling all defilements – all –
non-dependent, cutting aversion and attachment,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Turning your back on pleasure and pain,
as earlier with sorrow and joy,
attaining pure equanimity, tranquillity,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

With persistence aroused for the highest goal's attainment,
with mind unsmear'd, not lazy in action,
firm in effort, with steadfastness and strength arisen,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Not neglecting seclusion, absorption,
constantly living the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma,
comprehending the danger in states of becoming,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Intent on the ending of craving and heedful,
learned, mindful, not muddled,
certain – having reckoned the Dhamma – and striving,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Unstartled, like a lion at sounds.
Unsnared, like the wind in a net.
Unsmear'd, like a lotus in water:
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Like a lion – forceful, strong in fang,
living as a conqueror, the king of beasts –
resort to a solitary dwelling.
Wander alone like a rhinoceros.

At the right time consorting with the release
through love, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity,
unobstructed by all the world, any world,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

Having let go of passion, aversion, delusion;
having shattered the fetters;
undisturbed at the ending of life,
wander alone like a rhinoceros.

People follow and associate for a motive.
Friends without a motive these days are rare.
They're shrewd for their own ends, and impure.
Wander alone like a rhinoceros.

The “Hymn of Universal Love”, Karaniya Metta Sutta (Sutta Nipata 1.8)

Translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddharakkhita.

Who seeks to promote his welfare,
Having glimpsed the state of perfect peace,
Should be able, honest and upright,
Gentle in speech, meek and not proud.

Contented, he ought to be easy to support,
Not over-busy, and simple in living.
Tranquil his senses, let him be prudent,
And not brazen, nor fawning on families.
Also, he must refrain from any action
That gives the wise reason to reprove him.

(Then let him cultivate the thought:)

May all be well and secure,
May all beings be happy!

Whatever living creatures there be,
Without exception, weak or strong,
Long, huge or middle-sized,
Or short, minute or bulky,

Whether visible or invisible,
And those living far or near,
The born and those seeking birth,
May all beings be happy!

Let none deceive or decry
His fellow anywhere;
Let none wish others harm
In resentment or in hate.

Just as with her own life
A mother shields from hurt
Her own son, her only child,
Let all-embracing thoughts
For all beings be yours.

Cultivate an all-embracing mind of love
For all throughout the universe,
In all its height, depth and breadth –
Love that is untroubled
And beyond hatred or enmity.

As you stand, walk, sit or lie,
So long as you are awake,
Pursue this awareness with your might:
It is deemed the Divine State here.

Holding no more to wrong beliefs,
With virtue and vision of the ultimate,
And having overcome all sensual desire,
Never in a womb is one born again.

Additional Theravada teachings can be found in:

- **Metta: The Philosophy and Practice of Universal Love** (Acharya Buddharakkhita)
 - **The Power of Good Will** (Ajaan Lee)
 - **A Fistful of Sand** (Ajaan Suwat), about mudita
 - **Equanimity in Concentration and Discernment** in **The Wings to Awakening** (Thanissaro Bhikkhu)
-

B. Sources on the Practice of The Four Brahmaviharas in the Mahayana Tradition

Mögen alle Wesen glücklich sein und die Ursachen des Glücks besitzen.

Mögen sie frei von Leid und dessen Ursachen sein.

Mögen sie nie von der wahren, leidfreien Freude getrennt sein.

Mögen sie bei Nah und Fern frei von Anhaften und Ablehnen in großem Gleichmut verweilen.

“The 37 Practices of Bodhisattvas” by Thogme Zangpo

NAMO LOKESHVARAYA. Homage to the Mighty One of this World!

Continually I bow in respect with my three doors to the supreme lama and the protector Chenrezi who see that all phenomena neither come nor go and nevertheless seek only to benefit all beings. The perfect Buddhas, source of all goodness and joy, arise through perfecting the genuine dharma. Since this depends on knowing the practice, the practices of bodhisattvas will be explained.

Now, having obtained the great vessel of leisure and resources, difficult to find, to free yourself and others from the ocean of samsara, day and night without break to listen, reflect, and meditate is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Towards friends, attachment churns like water; toward enemies, hatred burns like fire; dark with ignorance one forgets what to adopt and reject. To give up one's homeland is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Abandoning negative places, emotional obscurations gradually decrease. With no distractions, virtuous activity naturally grows. Through a clear mind, certainty in the dharma rises. To rely on solitude is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Close friends and relatives separate; wealth gained with effort is lost; the guest – consciousness – leaves its lodging, the body, behind: to let go of this life is the practice of bodhisattvas.

When associating with bad friends the three poisons grow, listening, reflecting, and meditating degenerate, and loving-kindness and compassion are destroyed. To cast off such friends is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Relying on your spiritual friend defects disappear and qualities increase like the waxing moon. To care for this friend more than for your own body is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Bound themselves in the prison of samsara, whom could worldly gods protect? Therefore, to go for refuge to the Three Jewels who will not deceive you is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Suffering in the lower realms, so difficult to bear, results from negative actions, thus the Buddha taught. So even at the risk of your life, to avoid all negative actions is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Pleasures of the three realms are like dew on the tips of grass: their very nature is to evaporate instantly. To strive for supreme liberation, which never changes, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

When my mothers, who have cared for me from beginningless time, suffer, what's the point of my personal happiness? Therefore engendering bodhicitta, to liberate endless numbers of beings, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

The source of all suffering is the pursuit of one's own happiness whereas the source of perfect Buddhas is the intention to benefit others. Therefore, to exchange completely your happiness for the suffering of others is the practice of bodhisattvas.

If someone, in great desire, seizes all your wealth or makes another do so, to dedicate body, resources, and all virtue of the three times to this very person is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Even if others are about to cut off my head although I have not done the least bit of harm, out of compassion to take on their negativity is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Although someone spreads in the whole universe a legion of libel about myself, in return, with a mind full of loving-kindness, to tell of their good qualities is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Although in front of a huge gathering, someone speaks badly of me and exposes my hidden faults, seeing them as a spiritual friend, to bow with respect is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Although another, whom I cherished as my very child, sees me as an enemy, to love them even more, like a mother whose child is gravely ill, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Although a person who is my equal or less, through pride seeks to defame me, to respect as a teacher and to place them on my crown is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Although immersed in poverty and always scorned, plagued by grave illness and evil spirits too, to take on ourselves the negativities and suffering of all beings without losing heart is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Although famous, with crowds bowing down me, and affluent as the god of wealth, seeing the riches of samsara as insubstantial, to have no arrogance is the practice of bodhisattvas.

If we do not tame the enemy of our anger, but seek to tame external enemies, they will simply multiply. Therefore, with the army of loving-kindness and compassion to tame one's own mindstream is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Desired objects are like salt water – the more you enjoy them, the more craving increases. To give up instantly all things that give rise to attachment is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Things as they appear are your own mind, and from beginningless time mind itself is free of fabricated extremes. Knowing this and not being taken in by the features of subject and object is the practice of bodhisattvas..

When meeting with a pleasing object to see it as a rainbow in summer – a beautiful, but unreal appearance – and to give up attachment is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Diverse sufferings are like the death of a child in a dream; to take such delusions as real, how exhausting! So when we encounter difficult situations, to see them as delusions is the practice of bodhisattvas.

If those aspiring to enlightenment give even their body away, what need to mention external

objects? Without hope of return or good results, to be generous is the practice of bodhisattvas.

If when lacking discipline, we cannot even benefit oneself, our wish to benefit others becomes absurd. Therefore, with no desire for samsara, to maintain discipline is the practice of bodhisattvas.

For bodhisattvas aspiring to a wealth of virtue, anything that harms is a treasury of jewels. Training in patience, without ever getting hostile or angry, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

If shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, practising for their benefit alone, toil as if extinguishing a fire on their head, even more so, for the benefit of beings, to develop the diligence which is the source of all qualities, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Knowing that clear seeing, fully settled in mental calm, vanquishes all emotional obscuration, to stay in meditative stability that perfectly transcends the four formless absorptions, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Since perfect enlightenment cannot be attained when the five paramitas lack wisdom, to cultivate this wisdom, endowed with skilful means and without conception of the three aspects, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Not examining our own confusion, we can act contrary to dharma in a practitioner's guise. Therefore, always observing our own confusion and discarding it is the practice of bodhisattvas.

If bodhisattvas, through the power of emotional obscurations, speak of others' faults, they will harm themselves. Therefore, not to mention the faults of those who have entered the mahayana path is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Through wanting gain and honour arguments arise and the activities of listening, reflecting, and meditating decline. Therefore, to give up attachment to the households of friends, relatives, and donors is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Harsh words disturb the mind of others and mar a bodhisattva's conduct. Therefore, to give up harsh words not pleasing to others is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Once habituated to emotions, it is difficult to counter them with remedies. Mindful and alert practitioners will take up the weapon of the antidote and overcome the emotions of desire and all others as soon as they arise – such is the practice of bodhisattvas.

In brief, wherever we are and whatever we do, to benefit others, while staying continually mindful and alert to the state of our mind, is the practice of bodhisattvas.

So that the suffering of limitless sentient beings may be cleared away, with a wisdom permeated by three-fold purity to dedicate towards enlightenment all virtues gained by this effort is the practice of bodhisattvas.

Following the meaning of the sutras, tantras, and treatises and the teaching of genuine masters, I have given these thirty-seven verses of a bodhisattva's practice for the benefit of those who wish to train on the bodhisattva's path.

Since my intelligence is low and I am little trained, the art of this text will not delight the scholars. Yet since these practices of a bodhisattva are based on the sutras and the teachings of genuine masters, I believe they are free of confusion.

Since an inferior intellect such as mine has difficulty fathoming the great waves of a bodhisattva's activity, I pray that genuine masters will be patient with all the defects here – contradiction, incoherence, and so forth.

Through the virtue arising from these verses, may all beings through supreme bodhicitta both

relative and absolute, become like the protector Chenrezi, who remains in neither extreme of samsaric existence nor nirvanic peace.

For the benefit of myself and others, the monk Thogme (1295-1369), learned in scripture and logic, composed these verses at the Precious Cave of Ngülchu (in the "mercury" area of Western Central Tibet).

Jamgön Kongtrul Lodro Thaye in his Commentary on Mind Training:

„Selbst wenn wir letztendliche Buddhaschaft erlangen, so gibt es doch nichts weiter zu tun, als mit einem Mitgefühl jenseits aller Bezugspunkte ausschließlich zum Wohl anderer zu wirken.“

Shantideva:

„Wer schnellen Schutz für sich und andere wünscht, soll das Edelste der Geheimnisse praktizieren, sich selbst und andere auszutauschen.“

Damit ist nichts anderes gemeint, als die im Folgenden erklärte schrittweise Übung des Austauschens von sich und anderen. Alle anderen Übungen des Geistetrainings sind lediglich Variationen dieses einen Themas.

Das Üben des relativen Erleuchtungsgeistes

Dieses hat drei Teile: die Erklärungen zu den Vorbereitungen, zur Hauptpraxis und zur Praxis zwischen den Sitzungen.

Die Vorbereitungen: Nachdem wir wie beschrieben die vorbereitenden Übungen usw. ausgeführt haben, ist es notwendig, sich als Basis für das Geben und Annehmen (Tong-len) in Liebe und Mitgefühl üben. Hierfür stellen wir uns als erstes unsere Mutter aus diesem Leben vor uns vor:

„Von dem Augenblick an, wo sie mich in ihrem Leib empfing, hat sie meiner wegen große Anstrengungen auf sich genommen, hat Krankheit, Kälte, Hunger und vieles mehr durchgestanden, mich ernährt, mit Kleidung versorgt und rein gehalten. Sie hat mir Gutes beigebracht und mich von schädlichen Handlungen ferngehalten, so dass ich jetzt Buddhas Lehren begegnet bin und den Dharma praktiziere. Dafür bin ich ihr zutiefst dankbar!

Und nicht nur in diesem Leben, sondern bereits in unzähligen früheren Leben hat sie genau dasselbe getan. Während sie mein Wohl bewirkte, wanderte sie selbst in Samsara und erlitt eine Vielzahl von Leiden!“

Mit mitfühlender Haltung kontempliere dies mit aller Kraft.

Wenn sich ein Mitgefühl einstellt, das kein bloßes Lippenbekenntnis ist, und du damit vertraut geworden bist, dann übe dich darin, dieses schrittweise mit folgendem Gedanken immer mehr auszudehnen: „Sämtliche Lebewesen haben sich seit anfangsloser Zeit wie meine jetzige Mutter um mich gekümmert. Kein einziges hat mir noch nicht als Mutter geholfen.“

Meditiere zunächst über jene, wo es dir leicht fällt: deine Angehörigen, Vertrauten und Helfer sowie jene, die in den drei niederen Daseinsbereichen enormes Leid erfahren. Meditiere dann über Menschen in Not und jene, die in diesem Leben zwar glücklich sind, aber aufgrund ihrer großen Vergehen sofort nach dem Tod die Höllenbereiche erfahren werden.

Wenn du darin geübt bist, meditiere über jene, wo es dir schwerer fällt, Mitgefühl zu entwickeln: Übeltäter, Feinde, Dämonen usw. Dann meditiere über alle Lebewesen:

„Ohne es zu wollen, erfahren sie, meine Eltern, vielfaches großes Leid und sind obendrein im Besitz einer riesigen Saat von Ursachen für zukünftiges Leid. Wie sehr ich sie bedauere! Was kann ich nur für sie tun? Jetzt ist es an mir, ihre Güte zu erwidern und ihnen zu helfen, indem ich ihren Schmerz vertreibe und ihr Glück und Wohlergehen bewirke.“

Übe dich mit diesen Gedanken, bis es dein Geist kaum mehr aushalten kann.

Die Hauptpraxis:

(7) Übe Geben und Annehmen im Wechsel

und lasse die beiden auf dem Atem reiten

„Alle meine Eltern, auf die sich mein Mitgefühl richtet, erfahren Schmerz aufgrund ihres unmittelbaren Leides sowie aufgrund der Quellen zukünftigen Leides. Deshalb will ich die vielfältigen Leiden im Geistesstrom meiner Mütter zusammen mit all dem Karma und den Emotionen, die ihre Quellen sind, auf mich nehmen.“

Mit diesem Gedanken meditiere, dass dies alles zu dir kommt, und entwickle, wenn dies eintritt, mit aller Kraft ein freudiges Streben.

„Ohne zu zögern gebe ich vollständig meinen Körper, meine Freuden sowie die Tugend und das Glück aller drei Zeiten all den Lebewesen, meinen Eltern.“

Mit diesem Gedanken meditiere, dass jeder einzelne dieses Glück erhält, und entwickle, wenn dies so ist, mit aller Kraft ein freudiges Streben.

Um diese Vorstellungen deutlicher zu machen, denke zudem beim Einatmen, dass ausnahmslos alle Vergehen, Schleier und Leiden sämtlicher Wesen sich in Form von dichter Schwärze sammeln.

Diese tritt dann durch die Nasenlöcher ein und verschmilzt in dein Herz, wodurch die Wesen für immer von allem Übel und Leid befreit werden.

Wenn du ausatmest, stelle dir vor, wie all dein Glück und deine Tugenden in Form von Mondlicht aus den Nasenlöchern herausströmen und in strahlender Weiße in alle Lebewesen verschmelzen.

Denke, dass sie hierdurch alle auf der Stelle Buddhaschaft erlangen, und entwickle tiefe Freude.

Mache dieses ‚Reiten lassen des Gebens und Annehmens auf dem Atem‘ zur Hauptpraxis der Sitzungen und übe dich darin. Praktiziere es auch danach, wenn immer du dich daran erinnerst. Dies ist die Hauptpraxis des Geistestrainings.

Shantideva sprach ausführlich hierüber mit Worten wie:

„Wenn ich mein Glück nicht vollständig
gegen die Leiden anderer austausche,
werde ich keine Buddhaschaft verwirklichen
und auch in Samsara werde ich nicht glücklich sein.“

Die Praxis zwischen den Sitzungen:

(8) Drei Arten von Objekten, drei Gifte

und drei Wurzeln des Heilsamen

Bei angenehmen oder nützlichen Objekten kommt es zu Anhaften und Begierde, bei unangenehmen oder potentiell schädlichen Objekten reagieren wir mit Abneigung und Hass und bei neutralen Objekten entsteht gleichgültige Stumpfheit. So erheben sich ständig aufgrund

von drei Arten von Objekten die drei Geistesgifte. Die Praxis besteht darin, diese Emotionen unmittelbar bei ihrem Auftreten zu erkennen und, z.B. beim Erscheinen von Begierde, zu denken:

„Mögen sich alle Emotionen des Begehrens sämtlicher Wesen, so viele es auch geben mag, in meiner Begierde sammeln.

Mögen dadurch alle Wesen die Wurzeln des Heilsamen frei von Begierde besitzen.

Möge meine gegenwärtige Emotion ihre Emotionen beseitigen und mögen sie frei davon bleiben, bis sie die Buddhaschaft erreicht haben.“

Mache die gleichen Wünsche auch für Wut und die anderen Emotionen und bringe sie so auf den Weg. Dadurch werden die drei Geistesgifte zu drei grenzenlosen Wurzeln des Heilsamen.

(9) Übe bei allen Aktivitäten mit Merksprüchen

Übe dich zu allen Zeiten mit Sätzen wie den Worten des Edlen:

„Mögen ihre schädlichen Handlungen in mir heranreifen und meine heilsamen Handlungen ausnahmslos in ihnen reifen.“

Und in den Schriften der Kadampas heißt es:

„Allen Gewinn und Sieg opfere ich den Wesen, meinen Gebietern, und alle Verluste und Niederlagen nehme ich auf mich.“

Oder wie es Gyalsä Thogme ausdrückte:

„Mögen alle schädlichen Handlungen und alles Leid der Wesen in mir heranreifen und mögen alle meine heilsamen Handlungen und all mein Glück in den Wesen heranreifen.“

Wann immer möglich, praktiziere mit passenden Sprüchen wie diesen und entwickle ein starkes Sehnen.

(10) Beginne mit dem Prozess des Annehmens bei dir selbst

Um fähig zu sein, das Leid anderer auf dich zu nehmen, solltest du stufenweise vorgehen. Beginne den Prozess als erstes mit dir selbst: Nimm jetzt in Gedanken bereits alles Leid an, das in Zukunft noch für dich heranreifen wird. Wenn du darin geübt bist, nimm die Leiden anderer an.“

Torch of Certainty (Ngedön Drönme) by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye in the chapter on Bodhicitta:

Die vier Unermesslichen:

- Liebe ist der Wunsch, alle Wesen in die Begegnung mit dem ihnen noch unbekannten, neuen Glück zu führen und sie in heilsamen Handlungen, der Ursache des Glücks, anzuleiten.
- Mitgefühl ist der Wunsch, sie von ihrem gegenwärtigen Leid zu befreien und sie zu bewegen, in Zukunft nichtheilsame Handlungen, die Ursache des Leides, zu unterlassen.
- Freude ist das sich Erfreuen am gegenwärtigen körperlichen und geistigen Glück anderer.
- Gleichmut ist, sämtliche Lebewesen, die alle wie unsere Mütter sind, ohne Unterschied als gleichwertig und gleich wichtig zu betrachten. Dies beinhaltet, allen gegenüber dieselbe Haltung zu haben und weder an einigen zu haften, noch andere abzulehnen, denn sämtliche Wesen sind uns gleich nah oder fern.

In dieser Weise über die unermesslich vielen Lebewesen zu meditieren, die den Weltenraum bis an seine Grenzen füllen, ohne in Freund, Feind und neutral zu unterscheiden – das wird die „Vier

Unermesslichen“ genannt. Sie sind das Herz des Dharmas und sollten von dem Moment an, wo wir mit der Praxis des großen Fahrzeugs beginnen, zum Zentrum unserer Übung werden.

Hierbei sollten wir Liebe und die anderen Unermesslichen in unserem Geistesstrom hervorbringen, indem wir, den Anweisungen der Kadampa Tradition folgend, den (siebenfachen) Zusammenhang zwischen Ursache und Wirkung kontemplieren:

- Ich muss unbedingt, mit allen Mitteln, Buddhaschaft erlangen.
- Als dessen Ursache braucht es den Erleuchtungsgeist
- sowie dessen Ursache: Mitgefühl
- und als Ursache des Mitgefühls: Liebe
- und als deren Ursache das sich Bewusstwerden und Erinnern der (hilfreichen) Handlungen anderer sowie das Erwidern wollen dieser Güte,
- wobei es als dessen Ursache das Verständnis braucht, dass sämtliche Wesen unsere Väter und Mütter sind.

Wer dies versteht, beginnt das Kultivieren von Liebe damit, zunächst die Güte der eigenen Mutter zu kontemplieren. Dann dehnen wir diese Kontemplation in ähnlicher Weise mehr und mehr auf alle Lebewesen aus und schließen darin alle ein, die leben und atmen.

Shantideva schreibt im Shiksha-samuccaya im 9. Kapitel: „Worin besteht die innere Freude (*mutita*)? Es ist die innere Heiterkeit, das Glück der Verwirklichung, das aus dem Nicht-Verhaftetsein des Geistes kommt, aus der Hingabe an die Lehren der Erleuchteten, aus der Klarheit und Sicherheit, die ihre Grundlage in der Tugend und Wahrhaftigkeit haben. Es ist die Glückseligkeit der Meditation, das Gefühl der Zufriedenheit, die geistige Haltung der Demut und Großzügigkeit, die überall das Gute sieht und sich der eigenen Unvollkommenheit bewusst ist. Es ist die Freude am Geben...“

Der Kostbare Schmuck der Befreiung, Gampopa, Kapitel 7

Die Meditation der Liebe und des Mitgefühls

als Gegenmittel für das Haften am friedvollen Glück des Nirwana

Was verstehen wir unter »Haften an friedvollem Glück«? Gemeint ist der Wunsch, ausschließlich für sich selbst *Nirwana*¹, die Befreiung von Leid, erreichen zu wollen und aus mangelnder Liebe für die übrigen Lebewesen nicht für das Wohl anderer zu handeln. Dies ist die Einstellung der kleineren Fahrzeuge, wie sie in folgendem Zitat zum Ausdruck kommt:

»Um meines eigenen Wohles willen muss ich
das Wohl anderer – obwohl sie so viele sind – fallenlassen.
Wenn ich dem eigenen Wohl den Vorrang gebe,
wird es sich am besten verwirklichen.«

Wenn aber Liebe und Mitgefühl in uns erwacht sind, können wir es aus Zuneigung zu anderen Wesen nicht ertragen, nur uns selbst zu befreien. Deshalb meditieren wir über Liebe und Mitgefühl. Meister *Manjushrikirti* sagte:

»Ein Praktizierender des großen Fahrzeugs sollte sich auch nicht für
einen einzigen Augenblick von Liebe und Mitgefühl trennen.«

¹*Friedvolles Glück* bezieht sich auf das Nirwana der Hörer und Alleinverwirklicher, deren Wege auch die kleineren Fahrzeuge genannt werden.

Und:

»Das Wohl anderer bewirken wir nicht durch Hass,
sondern indem wir uns mit Liebe und Mitgefühl um sie kümmern.«

A. Das Entwickeln von Liebe

1. Einteilung

Wir unterscheiden drei Arten von Liebe:

Liebe, die auf Lebewesen ausgerichtet ist,
Liebe, die auf die Natur der Dinge ausgerichtet ist, und
Liebe frei von Bezugspunkten.

In dem *von Aksayamati erbetenen Sutra* steht hierzu:

»Die auf Lebewesen ausgerichtete Liebe findet sich bei Bodhisattvas, die gerade eben den Erleuchtungsgeist entwickelt haben. Die auf die Natur der Dinge ausgerichtete Liebe findet sich bei Bodhisattvas, welche in die Praxis eingetreten sind. Liebe frei von Bezugspunkten findet sich bei Bodhisattvas, die imstande sind, die Ungeborenheit des Seins zu ertragen.«
(vgl. S.103)

2. Bezug

Hier werden wir nur die erste Art von Liebe besprechen, welche die Gesamtheit aller Lebewesen als Bezugspunkt hat.

3. Ausdruck

Eine liebevolle Geisteshaltung drückt sich in dem Wunsch aus, dass alle Wesen Glück finden mögen.

4. Methode: Die Meditation über die Güte unserer Mütter

Die Wurzel von Liebe ist, Dankbarkeit zu entwickeln, indem wir uns an die Güte anderer Lebewesen erinnern und über ihre Fürsorge nachdenken. Von allen Wesen erwies uns in diesem Leben unsere Mutter die größte Güte. Worin besteht die Güte einer Mutter? Sie ist vierfach:

die Güte, unseren Körper hervorzubringen,
die Güte, unseretwillen große Mühsal auf sich zu nehmen,
die Güte, unser Leben zu schützen, und
die Güte, uns mit der Welt vertraut zu machen.

So steht es auch in *Befreiende Weisheit in 8000 Versen*:

»Du fragst, warum?
Die Mutter hat uns geboren
und dadurch viel Mühsal auf sich genommen.
Sie schützte unser Leben
und machte uns mit allem Wichtigen in der Welt vertraut.«

Die Güte, unseren Körper hervorzubringen

Unser Körper war nicht gleich, mit einem Mal, ausgewachsen, voller Kraft und von gesundem Aussehen. Nur allmählich wuchs er im Bauch der Mutter vom ovalen zum länglichen Embryonalstadium und so weiter heran. Dabei formte er sich aus den essentiellen Bestandteilen,

die aus ihrem Fleisch und Blut stammten, und wurde durch die Kraft ihrer Nahrung gestärkt. Während unser Körper entstand, ertrug unsere Mutter so manches an Scham, Unwohlsein und Leid. Auch nach unserer Geburt war sie es, die uns Winzlinge nährte und schützte, bis wir so stark waren wie Ochsentreiber.

Die Güte, Mühsal auf sich zu nehmen

Als wir auf die Welt kamen, hatten wir nichts anzuziehen, waren nicht geschmückt, besaßen nichts und hatten keinerlei Vorräte. Außer einem schreienden Mund und einem leeren Bauch besaßen wir rein gar nichts und waren völlig nackt und unbedarft. Wir kamen in ein fremdes Land, ohne eine einzige Person zu kennen. Da gab uns die Mutter zu essen, damit wir keinen Hunger litten, gab uns zu trinken, damit wir keinen Durst hatten, kleidete uns, damit uns nicht kalt war, und schenkte uns Dinge, damit uns die Armut nicht drückte. Es war aber nicht etwa so, dass sie ihrem Kind nur das schenkte, was sie selbst nicht mehr brauchte. Nein, sie gönnte sich selbst kaum Essen, Trinken und neue Kleidung, denn es ging ihr nicht darum, sich dieses Leben angenehmer zu machen. Auch verzichtete sie darauf, ihre geringe Habe zu nutzen, um durch wohltätiges Spenden für ihr Wohlergehen in späteren Leben vorzusorgen. Tatsächlich widmet sich eine Mutter dem Ernähren und Aufziehen ihres Kindes, ohne auf ihr eigenes gegenwärtiges und zukünftiges Glück zu achten.

Auch fand sie das für unser Wohlergehen Notwendige nicht etwa auf angenehme und einfache Weise, sondern nahm schädliche Handlungen, Leid und Plackerei in Kauf, um für ihr Kind zu sorgen. Aus Liebe zu uns beging sie so manche nichtheilsame Handlung wie Fischen, Schlachten und dergleichen. Sie nahm vielerlei Leid auf sich, wenn sie auf dem Markt handelte oder von früh bis spät auf dem Feld und anderswo arbeitete. Den morgendlichen Rauhreif nahm sie als ihr Schuhwerk und die Sterne der fallenden Nacht als Kopftuch, ihre eigenen Beine waren ihr Pferd und ihre ins Haar geflochtenen Bänder die Peitsche. Ihre Waden setzte sie den Hunden aus und ihr Gesicht bot sie den Männern dar – und das alles ihrem Kind zuliebe.

Zudem behandelte sie diesen unbeholfenen, von irgendwoher gekommenen Fremdling mit größerer Liebe als ihre eigenen Eltern, ihren Lama und andere Menschen, wie gütig diese auch sein mochten. Liebevoll blickte sie ihr Kind an, umhegte es mit warmer Zärtlichkeit, neckte und streichelte es, wiegte es in ihren Armen und sprach mit sanfter Stimme: »Du Freude, mein Liebling, mein Sonnenschein, oh du Schatz, mein Herzchen, LuLu, wie machst du deine Mutter glücklich!«

Die Güte, unser Leben zu schützen

Anfangs wussten wir Mund und Hände nicht zu gebrauchen und hatten weder die Fähigkeit noch die Kraft für irgendwelche schwierigeren Aufgaben. Als wir schwach und empfindlich waren wie ein Wurm, zu nichts nutze und unfähig zu denken, da hat uns unsere Mutter nicht im Stich gelassen, sondern umsorgte uns mit allem, was nötig war. Sie nahm uns auf ihren Schoß, schützte uns vor Feuer und Wasser, bewahrte uns vor Stürzen, hielt alles fern, was uns hätte Leid zufügen können, und betete für uns. Aus Angst, wir könnten krank werden oder sterben, hat sie geistliche Hilfe gesucht, hat Wahrsagungen und Horoskope machen lassen und um Schutzformeln, Schriftlesungen und religiöse Zeremonien gebeten. Es ist kaum zu fassen, an was alles sie gedacht hat, um ihr Kind am Leben zu erhalten.

Die Güte, uns mit der Welt vertraut zu machen

Als wir auf die Welt kamen, waren wir noch nicht diese gescheiten, ihres Urteils sicheren Leute mit wachem Blick und scharfen Sinnen. Außer zu weinen, nach fürsorglicher Hilfe zu schreien und mit Armen und Beinen zu strampeln, konnten wir nichts. Als wir noch nicht einmal wussten, wie man isst, lehrte unsere Mutter uns essen. Wir wussten nicht, wie man Kleider anlegt und sie brachte uns das Anziehen bei. Wir konnten nicht gehen und sie lehrte uns laufen. Wir konnten nicht sprechen und sie lehrte uns sprechen: »Sag ›Ma‹ und dann ›Mama‹ « und so fort. Sie brachte uns viele praktische Fertigkeiten und nützliche Dinge bei, bis wir in all diesen zunächst fremden Bereichen genauso oder ähnlich geschickt wurden wie sie.

Zudem war unsere Mutter nicht etwa nur jetzt, in diesem Leben, unsere Mutter: Da wir schon seit anfangslosen Zeiten im Daseinskreislauf kreisen, ist sie schon unzählige Male unsere Mutter gewesen. Im *Sutra des Anfangslosen Daseinskreislaufs* heißt es:

»Würde jemand alle Erde, Steine, Pflanzen und Wälder dieser Weltensphäre in Form kleiner Wacholdersamen zusammenlegen, so wäre es immerhin möglich, dass ein zweiter diese zählte und nach einiger Zeit damit fertig würde. Hingegen zu zählen, wie oft ein einziges Wesen bereits unsere Mutter war, ist völlig unmöglich.«

Und in dem *Brief an einen Freund* lesen wir:

»Wollte man für jedes Zusammentreffen mit unserer Mutter ein Lehmkügelchen so klein wie Wacholdersamen zählen, so würde die gesamte Erde dafür nicht ausreichen.«

Jedes Mal, als sie unsere Mutter war, erwies sie uns die eben beschriebene Güte. Da also die Güte deiner Mutter unermesslich ist, übe dich darin, den aufrichtigen Wunsch zu entwickeln, ihr Herz zu erfreuen, ihr nützlich zu sein und sie glücklich zu machen.

Aber nicht nur sie, sondern alle anderen Lebewesen ebenfalls waren deine Mütter, und die Güte, die sie alle dir erwiesen, war ebenso groß wie die deiner jetzigen Mutter. Falls du dich nun fragst, ob sich die Zahl all dieser Lebewesen ermessen lässt, dann bedenke: Lebewesen finden sich überall, soweit der Raum reicht. So steht im *Sutra Wunschgebet der rechten Lebensweise*:

»Erst dort, wo der Himmelsraum seine Grenze erreicht, ist auch die Grenze aller Lebewesen.«

So sollten wir uns voller Aufrichtigkeit darin üben, eine Haltung zu entwickeln, in der wir allen Wesen – bis an die Grenzen des Raumes – alles wünschen, was zu ihrem Wohl und Glück beiträgt. Wahrhafte Liebe ist, wenn dieser Wunsch entsteht. Der *Schmuck der Mahayana Sutren* sagt:

»Bodhisattvas behandeln alle Wesen wie ihr einziges Kind. Aus dem Mark ihrer Knochen wünschen sie mit großer Liebe, immer auf diese Weise zu ihrem Nutzen zu wirken.«

»Groß« ist die Liebe dann, wenn sie uns Tränen in die Augen treibt oder sich uns die Härchen auf der Haut aufstellen. Und »unermesslich« wird sie, wenn sie in dieser Weise für alle Wesen gleichermaßen entsteht.

5. Das Maß der Entwicklung

Liebe ist voll entwickelt, wenn wir nicht mehr nach eigenem Glück streben, sondern einzig den Wunsch haben, dass alle Wesen glücklich sein mögen.

6. Qualitäten

Die Qualitäten solcher Praxis sind unermesslich. Im *Mondlicht Sutra* steht:

»Mit unermesslichen, vielfältigsten Opfergaben
Millionen und Abermillionen von Welten zu füllen
und den großen Edlen darzubringen
wird von einem liebenden Geist bei weitem übertroffen.«

Es bringt bereits unermessliche Verdienste, sich der Meditation liebender Güte auch nur für einen Moment zu widmen. So sagt die *Juwelenkette*:

»Selbst wenn wir dreimal täglich
aus dreihundert Kochtöpfen fürstliche Mahlzeiten verteilen würden,
käme dies nicht an die positive Kraft
eines einzigen klaren Augenblickes der Liebe heran.«

Selbst wenn wir noch nicht Erleuchtung erlangt haben, entstehen aus Liebe bereits acht Vorzüge, die in der *Juwelenkette* erwähnt werden:

»Du wirst von Göttern und Menschen geliebt
und auch von ihnen beschützt.
Du bist glücklich und erlebst viele Freuden.
Weder Gift noch Waffen schaden dir,
müheless erreichst du deine Ziele
und wirst in Brahmas Welt geboren.
Selbst wenn du noch nicht befreit bist,
erlangst du diese acht Vorzüge der Liebe.«

Zudem ist die Meditation der Liebe vortrefflich, um sich selbst wie auch andere zu schützen, wie im Falle des Brahmanen *Mahadatta* bzw. des Königs *Maitribala*.² Wird Liebe in dieser Weise praktiziert, ist es auch nicht schwierig, sich in Mitgefühl zu üben.

B. Das Entwickeln von Mitgefühl

Der *Merkvers* hierzu lautet:

Einteilung, Bezug und Ausdruck,
Meditationsmethode, Maß der Entwicklung
und Qualitäten – in diesen sechs Punkten
ist unermessliches Mitgefühl zusammengefasst.

1. Einteilung

Wir unterscheiden drei Arten von Mitgefühl:

²In einem seiner früheren Leben war Buddha Shakyamuni als *Mahadatta* der Sohn von König *Maitribala*. Um den darben den Menschen zu helfen, verschenkte er mit der Erlaubnis seines liebevollen Vaters, der ihn bei allem unterstützte, sämtliche Schätze an die Untertanen. Als das aber nicht ausreichte, um ihr Leid zu beseitigen, machte er sich auf, um wunscherfüllende Edelsteine von den Nagas zu holen. Dabei schützte ihn seine uneigennützig e Liebe vor angreifenden Dämonen und vor dem Gift der Schlangen, die das Nagaschloss bewachten. Seine Reise hatte Erfolg und brachte Glück und Wohlergehen für das ganze Land.

Mitgefühl, das auf Lebewesen ausgerichtet ist,
Mitgefühl, das auf die Natur der Dinge ausgerichtet ist, und
Mitgefühl frei von Bezugspunkten.

Das *auf Lebewesen ausgerichtete Mitgefühl* entsteht, wenn wir das Leid der Wesen in den niederen Daseinsbereichen und anderswo sehen.

Das *auf die Natur der Dinge ausgerichtete Mitgefühl* entsteht, wenn wir über die vier edlen Wahrheiten meditieren und die beiden Arten von Ursache-Wirkungsbeziehungen³ verstehen, denn hierdurch wendet sich unser Geist von dem Glauben an Beständigkeit und konkrete, feste Existenz⁴ ab und wir sehen, wie andere Wesen in Täuschung leben, weil sie Ursache und Wirkung nicht verstehen und an vermeintlich Beständigem und Solidem festhalten.

Das *Mitgefühl frei von Bezugspunkten* entsteht, wenn wir in meditativer Ausgeglichenheit die Leerheit aller Phänomene erkennen und sich dadurch ein besonderes Mitgefühl für Wesen zeigt, die an vermeintlich Wirklichem festhalten. So heißt es:

»Wenn ein Bodhisattva in meditativer Ausgeglichenheit durch die Kraft der Meditation (seine Erkenntnis) vollendet, entsteht in ihm ein besonderes Mitgefühl für jene, die vom Dämon des Fürwirklichhaltens besessen sind.«

2. Bezug

Hier werden wir nur die Meditation der ersten dieser drei Formen des Mitgefühls besprechen – das Mitgefühl, das sich auf alle Lebewesen bezieht.

3. Ausdruck

Eine mitfühlende Geisteshaltung drückt sich in dem Wunsch aus, dass alle Wesen frei von Leid und dessen Ursachen sein mögen.

4. Methode: Die Meditation über das Leid unserer Mütter

Wir meditieren mit Hilfe der Verbindung zu unserer Mutter, die uns dieses Leben schenkte:

Wenn wir uns vorstellen würden, dass unsere leibliche Mutter gerade hier vor uns von anderen zerschnitten, in Stücke zerhackt, gekocht und verbrannt würde oder dass durch extreme Kälte an ihrem Körper Frostbeulen entstehen, aufgehen und bersten würden, so würde bestimmt großes Mitgefühl in uns entstehen. In solch einer Lage befinden sich die Wesen, die in den Höllen geboren wurden und die mit Sicherheit alle bereits unsere Mütter waren. Wo sie doch solch unermessliches Leid erfahren, wie könnte da nicht Mitgefühl in unserem Herzen entstehen? Übe dich in Mitgefühl, dem Wunsch, sie alle vom Leid und dessen Ursachen zu befreien.

Und ebenso: Wenn unsere Mutter an einem Ort wäre, wo sie unter Hunger und Durst litte, wo Krankheit und Fieber sie plagen würden, wo sie voller Furcht und Schrecken wäre, ohne jegliche Hoffnung und jeden Mut, so würde gewiss großes Mitgefühl in uns entstehen. In solch

³Das Verständnis der *beiden Arten von Ursache-Wirkungsbeziehungen* ist ein Wissen darüber, (1) was Leid (*Samsara*) hervorruft und (2) was jenseits von Leid (in *Nirwana*) führt.

⁴Mit dem Glauben an *Beständigkeit* und *konkrete, feste Existenz* ist die Vorstellung einer unabhängigen und unvergänglichen Existenz von Lebewesen und Dingen gemeint.

einer Lage sind die Wesen, die als hungrige Geister geboren wurden und die alle mit Sicherheit unsere Mütter waren. Wo sie doch von solchem Leid geschlagen sind, wie sollte da nicht Mitgefühl in unserem Herzen entstehen? Übe dich in Mitgefühl, dem Wunsch, sie alle vom Leid zu befreien.

Weiterhin: Wenn unsere Mutter an einem Ort wäre, wo sie alt und schwach und völlig machtlos von anderen geknechtet, zur Arbeit gezwungen, getreten, geprügelt, geschlachtet und zerschnitten würde und dergleichen mehr erleiden müsste, so würde bestimmt Mitgefühl entstehen. In solch einer Lage sind die Wesen, die als Tiere geboren wurden und die alle mit Sicherheit unsere Mütter waren. Wo sie doch von solchem Leid getroffen sind, wie sollte da nicht Mitgefühl in unserem Herzen entstehen? Übe dich in Mitgefühl, dem Wunsch, sie alle vom Leid zu befreien.

Stellen wir uns zudem vor, unsere Mutter würde, ohne achtzugeben, auf den Rand eines tausend Meilen tiefen Abgrundes zulaufen und es gäbe niemanden, der ihr zurufen könnte: »Pass auf, ein Abgrund!« Sie wäre kurz vor dem Absturz in diesen Abgrund, wo sie großes Leid erfahren würde und aus dem sie kaum je wieder herauskommen könnte. Welch großes Mitgefühl würde da entstehen! In gleicher Weise stehen Götter, Menschen und Halbgötter am Rande des unermesslichen Abgrundes der niederen Daseinsbereiche. Sie sind so unvorsichtig, dass sie sich nicht von nichtheilsamen Handlungen und Vergehen abwenden, und sie haben keinen spirituellen Ratgeber. Wenn sie abstürzen und das Leid der drei niederen Daseinsbereiche erfahren, aus denen so schwer zu entinnen ist, wie sollte da nicht Mitgefühl in unserem Herzen entstehen? Übe dich in Mitgefühl, dem Wunsch, sie alle vom Leid zu befreien.

5. Das Maß der Entwicklung

Mitgefühl ist voll entwickelt, wenn die Fesseln der Selbstliebe durchtrennt sind und man den echten Wunsch verspürt – ohne dass dies bloß Worte wären – alle Wesen von Leid zu befreien.

6. Qualitäten

Die Qualitäten solcher Praxis sind unermesslich. So lesen wir in der *Klaren Äußerung zur Verwirklichung des Mitfühlend Schauenden (Tschenresi)*:

»Gäbe es nur eine einzige Qualität
und wir bekämen durch sie
alle Qualitäten der Buddhas in die Hand –
welche könnte das sein? Es ist das große Mitgefühl.«

Im Sutra *Vollkommene Zusammenfassung des Dharma* steht:

»Großer Erhabener! Es ist so: Dort, wo das kostbare Rad
eines Weltenherrschers ist, dort sind auch seine Truppen.
Großer Erhabener! Ebenso sind dort, wo es das große Mitgefühl
eines Bodhisattvas gibt, auch alle Qualitäten der Buddhas.«

Und im Sutra *Geheimnis der Sogegangenen* findet sich:

»Herr des Geheimen!⁵
Die Wurzel, aus der das ursprüngliche Gewahrsein

⁵ Der Herr des Geheimen ist der große Bodhisattva *Vajrapani*, der die geheimen Tantras vor Mißbrauch schützt.

der Allwissenden entsteht, ist das Mitgefühl.«

Abschließende Betrachtung

Wenn wir nun aufgrund von Liebe und Mitgefühl wünschen, dass alle Wesen Glück erlangen und frei von Leid sein mögen, dann haben wir kein Interesse mehr daran, nur für uns selbst glücklichen Frieden zu erlangen. So wirkt die freudige Bereitschaft, zum Wohle der Wesen Buddhaschaft zu verwirklichen, als Gegenmittel für unser Anhaften an Frieden (*Nirwana*).

Wenn in dieser Weise Liebe und Mitgefühl in unserem Wesensstrom entstehen, dann werden andere uns lieber und wichtiger als wir selbst. (Hierzu findet sich in der *Lampe des Erleuchtungsweges*:)

»Wer das Leid im eigenen Wesensstrom erkennt
und dadurch mit seinem gesamten Wesen den Wunsch verspürt,
das Leid aller anderen zum völligen Versiegen zu bringen,
der ist ein Mensch der höchsten Art.«

Dieses und ähnliche Zitate beschreiben die Gesinnung hochstehender Menschen, wie zum Beispiel des Brahmanen *Mahadatta*. (s.S.102)

An Explanation of the Four Limitless Attitudes by Machik Labdrön

Extract from the Collected Teachings of Machikma (Machik Namshe), chapter 5,

rough translation by L. Lhundrup

Limitless love

First there is the *love with sentient beings as reference point*. There is not one among all those living beings – consisting of those who have harmed us and all the others – who haven't been our father and mother in the past. Countless times, an incalculable number they have acted as our real mother⁶. And without consideration for their own body, wealth or whatever concerned them they have cared for us. They nursed us enduring many difficulties. They took upon themselves negative acts, suffering, harsh words and so on, difficulties of many kinds which we haven't even heard of. And in such a way beings have been our mothers. Consider this! When you see now these mothers in their suffering then develop the wish: «In order to free these mothers from suffering and to be of help I offer all my body, wealth, root of virtues etc. to these mothers. Until samsara is emptied I will accomplish the benefit of beings in order that all of them, my mothers, sentient beings, possess happiness and the causes of happiness which is virtuous activity in all its aspects.» Thinking this develop and act with a one-pointed mind of strong aspiration. This is called love with reference to beings.

Love with phenomena as reference point: «In the ultimate nature there is nothing which really exists but nevertheless – on the relative level, based on my former mothers, these sentient beings, in order that myself, I obtain enlightenment – I absolutely have to accomplish the benefit of all of these mothers due to the extreme kindness which they have shown to me. All phenomena have not a hair tip of true existence. They are like a dream, illusory. Due to not understanding this and holding on to illusory appearances as real these sentient beings perform only non-virtuous acts as a result of which they endure endless suffering.»

⁶ lit. mother of flesh

Thinking about this you decide: «I will guide all of them on the path of enlightenment and show them self-aware primordial awareness through freeing them from the ignorance of clinging to a self.» This is called love with phenomena as a reference⁷.

Love without reference point: The object of this meditation on love, our mothers, sentient beings, as well as ourselves, and the essence of love itself, all three are in reality non-existent, empty of any essence of their own. Yet the empty, unobstructed radiance manifests as this loving mind aspiring to benefit them. This mind whose nature is clarity is free of all the extremes of mental elaborations, without any dualistic clinging, dwelling in the centre of open space. Keeping the self-aware mind stream is called great love or love without reference point. It is necessary to train in this for a long time until our mind has completely mixed with it. This is then called limitless love.

Limitless compassion

Compassion with sentient beings as reference point: «These mothers who have shown such great kindness to us are tortured by unhappiness and suffering. They abide in the causes of suffering and experience the fruits of suffering. They do not know the means to abandon suffering nor do they possess the conditions to abandon suffering. They do not follow an authentic lama. They are like blind without a guide. All these mothers, they are unable to help themselves. They have no freedom at all. Under the influence of violent emotions they behave like madmen⁸ and perform many kinds of non-virtue with the fruit of continue to err in samsara in general. Specifically they will encounter the insupportable suffering of the three lower realms where there is no hope for protection whatsoever. In their suffering they don't even have one instant of pause to reflect. Their experience is like the continuous flow of a river. Oh, what pity!» Think like this and meditate on it until tears shake you. «Seeing that in this way our mothers possess such suffering and the cause of this is clinging to a self where there is no self, clinging to real what is not existing, believing the impermanent to be permanent and thinking the suffering to be happiness, grasping to the sense pleasures of this life which are only a dream they then take again and again the path to lower existences. Oh, what a compassion for these mothers! How heart-turning! I will work to free all of them from suffering.» This is compassion with sentient beings as reference point.

Compassion with phenomena as reference point: «Our mothers who are always accompanied by suffering are also always under the power of clinging to themselves. And because of this the thought of impermanence or similar thoughts do not arise, even for an instant. They might want to practice one practice of dharma, but even then when they try: due to realistic clinging and confused erroneous concepts and assumptions about reality their dharma practice does not enter the path. Rather their emotions increase. They are struck by pride. And again they create the causes for samsara. Oh, you unsurpassable mothers! What compassion I feel for you! What compassion! What pity! In order to liberate all these mothers who are never separate from this believe in reality, in order to cut them off from the root of suffering – the clinging to this reality, and to show them the self-aware wisdom based on the understanding of non-reality I will have to guide all of them to buddhahood and to establish them in this wisdom, which differentiates everything. Through this they will be liberated from suffering and the causes of suffering.» This attitude is called compassion with phenomena as reference point.

Compassion without reference point: In all of this the object of compassion, the subject which gives rise to compassion and compassion itself – all three of them – do not have an actual reality. They are empty of an essence of their own. This emptiness is unobstructed radiance, the mind of great compassion constantly in the state free of dualistic clinging, similar to

⁷ One could also call it: Love due to a clear perception of reality and the true causes of suffering of beings, i.e. ego-clinging and clinging to phenomena as being real.

⁸ Or: drunkards

space. This is what is called compassion without reference point.

It is said: «Emptiness has compassion as its heart.» Realizing this is called limitless compassion.

Limitless joy

As long as one has not understood that all sentient beings, our kind mothers are the base and condition for such love and compassion to arise in the mind, there will be clinging to enemies and friends. One will be under the influence of one's negative karma and experience limitless suffering in samsara. Thinking: «All this suffering of these beings, my mothers, I will take it completely upon myself. My own happiness and virtue, whatever I have, I will give to sentient beings. And I will rejoice in this. In order to guide all of my mothers to happiness, as long as samsara is not emptied I make the wish that their suffering and the causes of their suffering as well as their evil acts and the causes and fruits of their evil acts will ripen in me. I will rejoice in seeing all my mothers being established in supreme joy. Offering my body, my possession, my fortune, my power together with the roots of virtue of the three times to my father and mother and not considering having even a single instant of peace and well-being for myself, accomplishing the benefit of beings in this way – may all my mothers have happiness and the causes of happiness!» Thinking like this called training in joy.

«Concerning sentient beings in general, and particularly the evil-doers, I take upon myself illness, suffering, difficult circumstances, enemies, obstacles – whatever arises without any cowardliness. I take upon myself all of the suffering of all sentient beings to let it ripen in myself, and I will rejoice in experiencing their suffering myself.» To have freed all sentient beings from their suffering gives rise to a special joy. This joy is certainly not an ordinary state of mind. We should concentrate on it and free it in this way from any partiality. This is extremely important. Understanding all of this to be free from any inherent reality and thus remaining free of clinging – knowing it to be just like a dream or an illusion – this is called limitless joy.

Limitless equanimity

Due to this love, compassion and joy a truly benevolent mind towards sentient beings arises, a great love which makes us feel a great attachment towards sentient beings. If this mind is then free of any partiality, it is the mental attitude, the bodhicitta of mahayana. However, this love of being attached in one's mind as well as the essence of ourselves are empty, and knowing this emptiness there is no attachment. In this state of mind the non-attachment and the non-attached are inseparable in acting. And this mind is unmoved by whatever arises, whatever it might be. This state is the empty natural ground on which the benevolent mind of attachment to all beings, this mind which completely cares for other beings, comes to peace in the dharmata (nature of phenomena) becoming one with all dualistic movements. This then is called equanimity.

The wish: «May I be able, me alone, to take on the great burden of liberating all sentient beings from the suffering of samsara!» is called the superior motivation. This mind of great benevolence towards all sentient beings as well as the attachment to all sentient beings and the hatred – they do exist in ordinary beings. The object of the mind of attachment and hatred: sentient beings, the one attached or hating: ourselves the subject, and desire and hatred them-

selves – we should examine what their true nature is. We should ask ourselves: «Do sentient beings who are the object of our attachment, their body, mind and suffering really exist or not?» This we should really investigate well. Discovering the absence of any reality there is no more object of clinging. And the great freedom of conceptualization, free of clinging arises. The same we should do with hatred. We should examine whether body, mind or suffering of this really exist. Analyzing the person concerning body, mind and suffering the great freedom of conceptualization will arise. Desire and hatred being liberated in their own basic nature, dharmata, the great emptiness, the dimension of equal taste arises and one is free of attachment and aversion. This is called great equanimity.

Becoming established in the recognition of this truth and then firmly abiding in this truth is called limitless equanimity.

Concerning these four limitless qualities it is extremely necessary that we first train our mind properly, then develop a fervent aspiration, then completely enter this state of mind and finally become completely trained in this mind.⁹

B. Sources on the Practice of the Four Brahmaviharas in the Vajrayana Tradition

It should be noted that the preceding passages by Jamgön Kongtrul, Dje Gampopa and Machik Labdrön are all from Vajrayana Masters. However, precise references to the Four Brahmaviharas can be not only be found in the general explanations of the tantric masters but also in the Vajrayana practices themselves.

(further quotes need to be added)

In the Buddha's tantric teachings the divinities are seen as the expression of these four enlightened qualities for the benefit of each and every sentient being. This is the case on different levels: body, speech, and mind. Let us take the example of the practice of Avalokiteshvara.

Body: His four arms are the symbol of his complete union with the four Brahmaviharas. In one of the corresponding practice texts ("The Six Syllable Prayer" by Tsultrim Zangpo) we find: "His face expresses the one essence, the Dharmakaya. The eyes, method and wisdom, look half open with compassionate regard. The hands, the four boundless states, are fine and subtle..."

Speech: The six syllable mantra of Avalokiteshvara (OM MANI PADME HUNG) is said to be the expression of enlightened compassion and of the four Brahmaviharas. The explanation is found in the commentary "Continuous Rain to Benefit Beings" of the 15th Karmapa Khakhyab Dorje:

„Das Mantra der sechs Silben von Avalokiteshvara vereint in sich die Kraft des ursprünglichen Gewährseins aller Buddhas und fließt über mit der gesammelten Energie und Kraft seines Mitgefühls und all seiner erleuchteten Aktivität. Die Silbe OM entsteht aus der spontanen Schöpferkraft des fünffachen ursprünglichen Gewährseins des Edlen. Die Silbe MA entsteht ... aus seiner grenzenlosen Liebe. Die Silbe NI entsteht aus der spontanen Schöpferkraft seines großen, allumfassenden, anstrengungslosen Mitgefühls. Die Silbe PAD entsteht ... aus seinem grenzenlosen Gleichmut. Die Silbe ME entsteht ... aus seiner grenzenlosen Freude. Die Silbe HUNG entsteht ... aus seinem grenzenlosen Mitgefühl, das alle Wesen wie die eigenen Kinder

⁹ The four terms are in Tibetan: lo chang, lo'i mö, lo jug, and lo jong.

betrachtet.“

This mantra is probably the most recited mantra in the Buddhist world, at least it is so in the Tibetan tradition. In order to keep one's mind continuously tuned in to the four limitless attitudes (relative and ultimate bodhicitta), the practitioner will keep on reciting the mantra all day long, whenever he has the mind free and some time for it. In the practice sessions one imagines that the sound of the mantra penetrates all directions of the universe and all the various realms of existence, reaching out to every single sentient being without exception. The whole world, all space, begins to vibrate with love, compassion, joy, and equanimity...

Mind: On the level of mind, there are the attitudes which we develop in prayers and the visualizations which we use along with the prayers and in the absorption phase.

The “Six Syllable Prayer” by Tsultrim Zangpo starts out with: “We take refuge in the protector Avalokiteshvara, develop and bring forth the mind of enlightenment for the benefit of the six kinds of beings, our mothers, and contemplate love, compassion, joy and equanimity. ...

In the practice text “Benefit of Beings filling all Space” we find the thoughts of the four Brahmaviharas symbolized by light rays that penetrate the whole universe:

„Nachdem wir so mit einsgerichtetem Geist gebetet haben, strömen Lichtstrahlen aus dem Körper des Edlen und reinigen unreine, karmische Erscheinungen und verwirrte Wahrnehmung. Die äußere Welt wird das Land Wahrer Freude (Sukhavati). ...Die Wesen in den sechs Bereichen werden durch das Licht von allen körperlichen und geistigen Krankheiten, schädlichen Handlungen und Schleiern gereinigt. Es beseitigt ihr Leid, macht sie glücklich... und bringt sie mit wahrer Freude in Verbindung – wie das Licht einer Lampe, das alle Dunkelheit vertreibt. Die Lebewesen werden zu Körper, Rede und Geist des mächtigen Tschenresi – Erscheinungen, Klang und Bewusstheit werden untrennbar von der Leerheit.“

What has been shown for the very well known and widely practiced Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezi) practice basically holds true for all other yidam practices (such as Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, Medicine Buddha etc.): There is always this visualization of light emanating to all beings, the visualization of their complete purification and transformation, establishing them in state of perfect relative and ultimate happiness, free of all suffering. And finally all is re-absorbed and one rests in natural, non-created openness, in the realization of the emptiness of all phenomena. This is the union of relative and ultimate Bodhicitta.

Whatever mantra or yidam practice is taught in the Vajrayana, there are always two phases or aspects to the practice: the developing stage (utpattikrama) and the completion stage (sampannakrama).

The developing stage is the phase where one develops the visualization and one's relative Bodhicitta. Stabilizing the visualization serves to develop deeper mental calm, the capacity to let the mind dwell on the wholesome. This is following the Buddha's advice to first practice shamatha before engaging in the contemplation of the Four Brahmaviharas. The dynamic aspect of the visualization (with the emanation of light rays etc.) serves to accomplish the benefit of others as well as our own: it is active Bodhicitta, the deepening and putting into practice of the four limitless ones.

The completion stage is the dissolution of whatever has been visualized into natural, non-fabricated mind, enhancing the realization of emptiness. It serves to develop wisdom, deep understanding of reality. This is in keeping with Buddha Shakyamuni's instruction to join the practice of the Four Brahmaviharas with wisdom, an understanding of non-self.

Both stages are necessary for a complete practice. In the Kagyu lineage one is strongly encouraged to penetrate one's developing stage practices with the awareness of the dissolution stage in order to enter the inseparability of compassion and wisdom, or in other words: skilful

means and emptiness.

ⁱ **siehe Glossar vom Schmuck der Befreiung** Der Palikanon (*tripitaka, tipitaka*) mit seinen 72 Büchern wurde in seiner heutigen Form zwischen 20 Jahre vor und 50 Jahre nach Beginn der christlichen Zeitrechnung in Sri Lanka niedergeschrieben. Er besteht, so heißt es traditionell, aus drei „Körben“ oder Sammlungen: die Lehrreden, der Vinaya und der Abhidharma.

- Der „Korb der Lehrreden“ (Sutta-Pitaka) des Palikanon ist für unsere Arbeit als Therapeuten am relevantesten. Er umfasst vier große Sammlungen:

DN = Digha Nikaya (Sammlung der 34 längeren Lehrreden, zus. 621 S.)

MN = Majjhima Nikaya (Sammlung der 152 mittellangen Lehrreden, zus. 1482 S.)

SN = Samyutta Nikaya (Sammlung der 56 gruppierten Lehrreden, zus. 1344 S.)

AN = Anguttara Nikaya (Angereihte Sammlung)

Zudem zählen zum Korb der Lehrreden auch die verschiedenen Texte der Sammlung kürzerer Lehrreden (Khudakka Nikaya):

IT = Itivuttaka (die Sammlung: „So wurde es gesagt“)

DP = Dhammapada (der „Wahrheitspfad“, eine Sammlung ausgewählter Zitate, kürzere Sammlung)

SNIP = Sutta-nipata (72 frühbuddhistische Lehrdichtungen, zus. 220 S.); diese Sammlung gilt als sprachlich ältestes Werk im Palikanon; die verbindliche mündliche Version, die dann niedergeschrieben wurde, stammt vermutlich aus dem 4.Jh.v.Chr.

JT = Jataka (Die Vorleben des Buddha)

UD = Udana (Inspirierende Verse)

Thera = Theragata (Aussprüche der Mönche, Schüler des Buddha)

Theri = Therigata (Aussprüche der Nonnen, Schülerinnen des Buddha)

- Der „Korb der Hinweise zu authentischem Verhalten“ (Vinaya-Pitaka) umfasst die Regeln zu Ethik und Verhalten für Praktizierende sowie Hinweise für ein harmonisches Zusammenleben in der Sangha. Ein kleiner Teil davon gilt für alle buddhistischen Praktizierenden, der größere Teil aber vor allem für die monastisch Ordinierten.
- Der „Korb des Höchsten Dharma“ (Abhidharma-Pitaka) fasst die Unterweisungen Buddhas in systematisierter, mehr abstrakter Form zusammen. Sprachlich scheint es sich um die Arbeit späterer buddhistischer Meister zu handeln, welche die Lehrreden Buddhas, die im Korb der Lehrreden zu finden sind, auf diese Weise kondensiert und strukturiert haben. Obwohl es sich hier, wie manchmal gesagt wird, um eine knappe Darstellung der „buddhistischen Psychologie der Befreiung“ handelt, ist diese Pali-Zusammenstellung nicht unumstritten. Andere Schulen haben andere Abhidharma-Basiswerke, auf die sie sich berufen und die einzelne Punkte leicht anders darstellen.

ⁱⁱ For a fuller discussion of the complexity of the kammic process, see ["Kamma and the Ending of Kamma"](#) in *The Wings to Awakening*.