

ALL METTA

Guide to Why Practicing
Loving Kindness Meditation



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Introduction

This discourse is an exploration on loving kindness meditation in the original teachings of the Buddha, as found in the Suttas. The discussion will address why this practice serves as an ideal starting point for new meditators while maintaining its relevance for advanced practitioners. All topics are supported by textual references provided in the document.



Why Practice Loving Kindness Meditation
A Complete Guided to Mettā Bhāvanā

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHTMS6OX3Zo&t=11s>

This comprehensive discourse contains a substantial amount of information. Multiple viewings might be required to fully comprehend the matters discussed. This discussion is meant to give a broad overview which can be helpful to understand the motive that compels us to practice loving kindness meditation and its broader implications and importance in the teachings of the Buddha.

Some material might be slightly out of reach for those beginning on the path, but you are invited to listen and retain the information that feels relevant and accessible on the moment. Those interested can always watch it again later to deepen their understanding. This presentation is designed to serve as both an introductory overview and a reference resource for continued study.

This document is meant as a theoretical introductory resource to the practice of loving kindness meditation. Meditators will do well to remember that there is far more to be learned on the topic, and this learning must comprise of experiential knowledge. Attending a retreat remains the best way to truly learn how to achieve proficiency in any of the following theoretical notions, under official guidance and momentum of practice. The present document is humbly proposed as a suggested structure to assist meditators in learning the full scope of loving kindness practice. This present structure could be adapted to serve various other motives.

This exploration will be building upon the past two teachings given on the foundations of meditation practice. The previous talks were offered to prepare the grounds and to give more information on the relevance of loving kindness meditation in the Buddha's teachings. Please refer to the first talks of this series for a complete overview:

Summary of Past talks:

- Maharāhulovada sutta: Sequence of Development in Meditation
Buddha Teaches His Son Meditation | Loving Kindness to Mindfulness of Breathing
<https://youtu.be/vOYxQAnndU8?feature=shared>
- Velāma sutta: Meritorious Nature of Loving Kindness
More Valuable Than Gold | Meditation, Wisdom & Stream Entry
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0n1H4DT4fZU>



I. FOUNDATIONS

AWAKENING OF THE BUDDHA
• NATURE OF MENTAL STATES, KAMMA & EIGHTFOLD PATH

1. Right intention (Abyāpāda)

A. Four Noble Truths – The Source (Right View)

First, we need to understand the most basic knowledge about what the Buddha awoke to and what he taught. The Buddha awoke to the nature of mental states, wholesome and unwholesome (*Kusala & Akusala*). He understood that *taṇhā*, often translated as “*craving*” (or discontent, dissatisfaction, selfish desires, attachment...) is the source of humans’ *dukkhā* or “*suffering*” (Trouble, tension...).

<p><i>Katamā ca, bhikkhave, sammā-diṭṭhi?</i></p> <p><i>Yaṃ kho, bhikkhave, Dukkhe ñāṇaṃ, Dukkha-samudaye ñāṇaṃ, Dukkha-nirodhe ñāṇaṃ, Dukkha-nirodha-gāminiyā paṭipadāya ñāṇaṃ.</i></p> <p><i>Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sammā-diṭṭhi.</i></p>	<p>What is this right view?</p> <p>That is, Knowing trouble (when it arises); Knowing the cause of trouble; Knowing the release from trouble; Knowing the way to release the trouble.</p> <p>This is called right view.</p>
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[*SN V 45.8 Vibhaṅga Sutta*](#)

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

Note: I usually translate; *Right View* as *Wise Perspective* or *Wise understanding*; *Suffering* as *trouble* or *tension* (in the context of meditation). For the purpose of general compliance with classical Buddhist terminology and to facilitate a more universal understanding of this material, I use the common translation in this reference guide.

Furthermore, he realized that there were three roots of the unwholesome, which originate from *taṇhā* and fuel this endless cycle.

The three roots are:

1. *Lobha* (Greed)
2. *Dosa* (Hate)
3. *Moha* (Delusion)

<p><i>Tīṇimāni, bhikkhave, akusalamūlāni. Katamāni tīṇi?</i></p> <p><i>Lobho akusalamūlaṃ, doso akusalamūlaṃ, mohaakusalamūlaṃ.</i></p>	<p>Bhikkhus, there are these three unwholesome roots. What three?</p> <p>The unwholesome root of greed; hate; and delusion.</p>
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AN 3.69 Akusalamūlasutta

Note: I usually translate; *Lobha* as *Selfish Desires*; *Dosa* as *Aversion* or *Dislike*; *Moha* as *Lack of Discernment*.

Fortunately for us, his realization did not end here! He further realized that there were polar opposites to these three roots of the unwholesome, which he called the three roots of the wholesome, that are life-giving and originate from *selflessness* and bring an end to the cycle of *dukkhā*.

The three roots are:

1. *Alobha* (Non-Greed)
2. *Adosa* (Non-Hate)
3. *Amoha* (Non-Delusion)

<i>Tīṇimāni, bhikkhave, kusalamūlāni. Katamāni tīṇi?</i>	Bhikkhus, there are these three unwholesome roots. What three?
<i>Alobho kusalamūlaṃ, Adoso kusalamūlaṃ, amohokusalamūlaṃ.</i>	The wholesome root of non-greed; (Letting Go) non-hate; (Brahmavihāras) and non-delusion. (Discernment)

Note: I will usually opt for more applicable translations; *Alobha* as *Contentment*; *Adosa* as *loving kindness* (or any of the *Brahmavihāra*; *Amoha* as *Discernment*.

B. Eightfold Path - Right Intention

<i>Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammā-saṅkappo?</i>	What is right intention?
<i>Yo kho, bhikkhave, Nekkhamma-saṅkappo, Abyāpāda-saṅkappo, Avihiṃsā-saṅkappo</i>	That is, The intention of letting go. The intention of non-anger. The intention of harmlessness.
<i>Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sammā-saṅkappo.</i>	This is called right intention.

SN V 45.8 Vibhaṅga Sutta
Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

C. Meditation & Mental Development: Right Effort

Then, the Buddha prescribed a path of practice (the eightfold path) to apply this general solution into our own lives. This knowledge must be experiential and go beyond mere intellectual reasoning. This is what he called *bhāvanā* or *mental development*, often translated literally as “*meditation*.” Although, the term meditation can sometimes miss the broader quality of the term *bhāvanā*, which entails the development of wholesome mental qualities and the letting go of unwholesome ones. He indicated four practical steps to achieve that goal.

Four Steps of Right Effort

<p><i>Katamo ca, bhikkhave, sammā-vāyāmo?</i></p> <p><i>Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu</i></p> <p>1. Guarding from Unwholesome States</p> <p><i>Anuppannānaṃ</i> <i>Pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ</i> <i>Anuppādāya chandaṃ janeti</i> <i>Vāyamati vīriyaṃ</i> <i>Ārabhati cittaṃ</i> <i>Paggaṇhāti padahati.</i></p>	<p>What is Right Effort?</p> <p>That is,</p> <p>1. Guarding from Unwholesome States</p> <p>[As for yet] unarisen Unfavorable, unwholesome states of mind, One develops the desire not to give rise to them, Through dedicated practice, Continually devoting one’s mind to it, One undertakes this and makes an effort [in that direction].</p>
<p>2. Abandoning Unwholesome States</p> <p><i>Uppannānaṃ</i> <i>Pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ</i> <i>Pahānāya chandaṃ janeti</i> <i>Vāyamati vīriyaṃ</i> <i>Ārabhati cittaṃ</i> <i>Paggaṇhāti padahati,</i></p>	<p>2. Abandoning Unwholesome States</p> <p>As for already arisen Unfavorable, unwholesome states of mind, One develops the desire to let them go Through dedicated practice, Continually devoting one’s mind to it. One undertakes this and makes an effort [in that direction].</p>

<p>3. Bringing up Wholesome States</p> <p><i>Anuppannānaṃ Kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ, Uppādāya chandaṃ janeti Vāyamati vīriyaṃ Ārabhati cittaṃ Paggaṇhāti padahati.</i></p>	<p>3. Bringing up Wholesome States</p> <p>As for yet unarisen Wholesome states of mind, One develops the desire to give rise to them, Through dedicated practice, Continually devoting one's mind to it. One undertakes this and makes an effort [in that direction].</p>
<p>4. Maintaining Wholesome States</p> <p><i>Uppannānaṃ Kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ Ṭhitiyā Asammosāya Bhiyyobhāvāya, Vepullāya, Bhāvanāya Pāripūriyā chandaṃ janeti Vāyamati vīriyaṃ Ārabhati cittaṃ Paggaṇhāti padahati.</i></p> <p><i>Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, sammā- vāyāmo.</i></p>	<p>4. Maintaining Wholesome States</p> <p>As for already present wholesome states, One develops [the desire to sustain them], for their increase, growth maturation development and culmination, Through dedicated practice, Continually devoting one's mind to it. One undertakes this and makes an effort [in that direction].</p> <p>This is called wise practice.</p>

[*SN V 45.8 Vibhaṅga Sutta*](#)

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

2. Inherent Qualities

A. Qualities of Mental States

One of the most important foundations for anyone beginning on this journey is to understand the nature and intrinsic qualities of mental states. The Buddha's awakening was partly centered around his discovery of two different kinds of mental states, wholesome (kusala) and unwholesome (akusala). On retreat, this is usually discussed at length on the second day. I have given plenty of talks on this particular topic, many of them are available here:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbFvYEW0YpWAFpQU3yJEQ-UIEF2UUK7EN>

MN 19 Dvedhāvitakka Sutta

Discerning Thoughts into Two

*Before my complete Awakening monks,
While I was a bodhisatta,
Not yet a fully awakened, I reflected:*

*"Let me meditate,
discerning and dividing my thoughts in two."*

[Unwholesome Thoughts]

*From then on monks, I gathered on one side:
Thoughts of outward desire,
Thoughts of anger,
Thoughts of harm.*

[Wholesome Thoughts]

*And I gathered on the other side:
Thoughts of contentment,
Thoughts of non-anger,
Thoughts of harmlessness...*

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/mn-19/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

AN 5.200 Nissāraṇīya Sutta

Breaking Free

“Monks, there are five elements for breaking free. What Five?

[1. Outward Attraction]

One reflects upon outward attraction: ⁱ

‘The latching mind ⁱⁱ
does not rejoice,
it is not clear;
it is unsettled
and unliberated. ⁱⁱⁱ

Then, one reflects upon letting go: ^{iv}

‘The mind that lets go rejoices,
it is clear,
established
and liberated.’ ^v

Moreover, that mind is happy,
well-developed,
elevated,
emancipated
and completely unshackled
from latching on; ^{vi}

Then, one becomes liberated
from the obsessive and oppressive
mental movements ^{vii} arisen from desire,
And one does not experience those sensations any longer. ^{viii}

This is said to be breaking free from outward desires. ^{ix}

[2. Anger]

Then, one reflects upon anger thus:

The angry mind
does not rejoice, ^x
it is not clear;
it is unsettled
and unliberated.

Then, one reflects upon freedom from aversion thus:

‘The mind freed from anger rejoices,
it is clear,
established
and liberated.’

‘Moreover, that mind is happy,
well-developed
elevated,
emancipated
and completely unshackled
from anger.’

Then, one is freed
from the obsessive and oppressive
mental movements arisen from anger
And one does not experience those sensations any longer.

This is said to be breaking free from aversion.

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/an-5-200/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

B. Elements of Freedom

DN 33 Saṅgīti sutta

(Also AN 6.13 Nissaraṇīya sutta)

(17) ‘Six elements making for deliverance (*nissaraṇīyā-dhātuyo*): Here, a monk might say:

(a) “I have developed the emancipation of the heart (*ceto-vimutti*) by loving-kindness (*mettā*), expanded it, made it a vehicle and a base, established, worked well on it, set it well in train. And yet ill-will still grips my heart.” He should be told: “No! do not say that! Do not misrepresent the Blessed Lord, it is not right to slander him thus, for he would not have said such a thing! Your words are unfounded and impossible. If you develop the emancipation of the heart through loving-kindness, ill-will has no chance to envelop your heart. This emancipation through loving-kindness is the cure for ill-will.”

Or (b) he might say: “I have developed the emancipation of the heart through compassion (*karuṇā*), and yet cruelty still grips my heart . . .”

Or (c) he might say: “I have developed the emancipation of the heart through sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and yet aversion (*arati*) still grips my heart . . .” [249]

Or (d) he might say: “I have developed the emancipation of the heart through equanimity (*upekhā*), and yet lust (*rāgo*) grips my heart.”

Or he might say: “I have developed the signless emancipation of the heart (*animittā ceto-vimutti*),¹¹⁰³ and yet my heart still hankers after signs (*nimittānusāri hoti*) . . .”

Or (f) he might say: “The idea ‘I am’ is repellent to me, I pay no heed to the idea: ‘I am this.’ Yet doubts, uncertainties and problems still grip my heart . . .” [250] (*Reply to each in similar terms to (a)*).

Translation by Maurice Walshe

C. A Conduit of Wisdom

When loving kindness is being developed, because of its inherent positive quality, unwholesome states become clearer and more obvious. Therefore, loving kindness acts as a conduit for wisdom and discernment. The more it is experienced, the more unwholesome states will contrast against its bright and uplifted nature, making them more discernable. Hence, making it easier to see how they bring trouble to our lives. Seeing them in this light, with wisdom, they are easily given up.

D. Love and Happiness

As human and social beings, our sense of happiness greatly lies on our ability to love and the “need to feel loved.” We all want to be happy and feel love, this is our most basic need, which comes before the physical world. Our capacity to love is directly linked to our sense of wellbeing. But often, we get hurt along the way, whether it was from a broken relationship, difficult family upbringing, mental or physical abuse and traumatic experiences. These experiences make us defensive and to protect ourselves, we simply shutdown certain memories and experiences to avoid the constant pain. This works in the short term but creates problems in the long run.

Practicing loving kindness meditation under proper guidance, we will have the opportunity to open to those painful experiences and change our perspective towards them. This results in healing and better resilience. Loving kindness meditation will ask us to open our hearts, and if any hurt is found there, it will be necessary a meditator to see it and heal it. Various perspectives and methods can be used like forgiveness and compassion practices to achieve a regulated state of harmony and love again. In that role, loving kindness is unique, whereas we can no longer lie to ourselves and hide our hurt and distract ourselves from it. It will grow clear and obvious that any unwholesome state of hurt that was previously accumulated is currently impeding our progress. Therefore, loving kindness meditation is also a chief healer, which will force us to be honest and truthful with ourselves and what we might hold secretly in a corner of the heart.

When that work is done, the meditation becomes effortless and the heart buoyant. The work can be tedious at times; but the repercussions are felt in every aspect of one’s life afterwards. As the state of our mind precedes everything in our lives, when our minds and hearts are clear, pure and vibrant, life becomes easy and uplifted.

3. Biology & Science of Love and Compassion

A. Compassion and the Vagus Nerve

When we feel compassionate, empathetic, caring, loving, we activate the vagus nerve, which is a part of our parasympathetic nervous system and is involved in downregulating our body's stress response to external adversity.

*"When you feel compassion,
The vagus nerve is activated,
Because it slows your heart rate
It opens you up to other people,
It allows you to vocalize,
It allows you to look people in the eyes.*

*When we meditate, the vagus nerve is activated,...
And then we activate the vagus nerve, because it orients you to be open,
To the world and to other people..."*

~Dacher Keltner

The vagus nerve is part of our **social engagement system**, which has evolved in mammals to facilitate community resilience. When the vagus nerve is stimulated, our vital organs calm down, heart rate and breathing rhythms slow down, we become more calm, centered and open to others. This is the system that allows us to build relationships and be open and receptive to others. It allows us to move out of sympathetic activation (fight or flight mode) and access higher mental structures within the brain, for more "evolved" thinking processes and make sound decisions which can include other people around us. It helps us shift from survival instincts to thriving communal living.

*"When we are in safe states, we can access higher cortical functions,
but when we are in danger states, those systems turn off and we are defensive."*

*"...Using newer mammalian structures, evolutionary newer structures,
to inhibit very primitive defensive systems..."*

-Dr. Stephen Porges

For more information, consult Dr. Stephen Porges work on the Polyvagal theory and Dr. Dacher Keltner and the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkley, on the study of Awe and Human emotions.

B. Aware Nature of Love

Genuine love and care are synonymous with awareness. Love comes with awareness and attention, in fact, it is made from it! Just like mothers and fathers care for their children, they must be aware of their needs, they must be in tune with their child's wellbeing, and to achieve this, they must be caring, present and attentive. This is found, not only on a biological level, but also in the suttas.

Khp 9 Metta Sutta

Discourse on Boundless Love

Mātā yathā niyaṃ-putta,

Just as a mother would for her child,

Māyusā eka-puttam-anurakkhe;

Look after her only child with her own life,

Evampi sabba-bhūtesu,

In the same way, towards all beings,

Mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.

One develops a boundless heart.

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/khp-9/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

Iti 1.27 Mettābhāvanā Sutta

The Development of Boundless Love

“For one who develops the feeling of Love,

With boundless presence;

The fetters wear away,

One can witness the ending of acquisitions.

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/iti-27/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

4. Liberation of the Mind

A. Liberation of the Mind by Boundless Love

The inherent wholesome power of Loving kindness was such that the Buddha often called it *Mettācetovimutti*, “the liberation of the mind by boundless love.” The commentaries mention that it is called like this because of the absence of its opposite unwholesome state which is anger or ill-will. Although, it is good to remember that all four brahmavihāras were called “liberations of the mind.”

AN 1.17 Liberation of the mind by loving-kindness

“Bhikkhus, I do not see even one other thing on account of which unarisen ill will does not arise and arisen ill will is abandoned so much as the liberation of the mind by loving-kindness (*Mettācetovimutti*). For one who attends carefully to the liberation of the mind by loving-kindness, unarisen ill will does not arise and arisen ill will is abandoned.”

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Meanwhile another way of understanding this could be that loving kindness (or any of the brahmavihāras), when practiced boundlessly, completely nullify and abrogate any unwholesome or limited, selfish mental states that could already exist or in the process of settling. Therefore, irradiating unwholesome states, keeping them at a distance, far away, and clearing the “mental space” thoroughly. See the next topic on the analogy of the conch for a bright example of this principle.

B. Analogy of the Conch

A useful reference where we find a common analogy that the Buddha used to describe the wholesome potency and cleansing power of boundless love meditation. Once practiced in all directions, it overpowers any unwholesome states or limited actions.

SN 42.8 Saṅkhadhama Sutta

Sounding the Conch of Dhamma

Then, chief, this virtuous seeker,
Void of longing,
Void of impatience,
Uninfatuated,
Fully conscious and continually present,^{xi}
Meditates with a heart filled with Love,
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.^{xii}

Thus above, below and everywhere across
To all living beings
in this boundless universe.^{xiii}

One meditates with a heart filled with boundless love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.^{xiv}

Chief, imagine mighty conch blower
Who could effortlessly let his sound be known
to the four directions.^{xv}

*In the same way chief,
When the release of mind
By Boundless Love is developed and cultivated
Any previous selfish actions
Cannot remain,
It cannot stay.*

“yaṃ pamāṇakatam kammaṃ, na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatitṭhati.”

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/sn-42-8/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

5. Measureless Liberation of the Mind

A. Un-Limited Nature

The four Brahmavihāras were also called *appamāṇā cetovimutti*, “the measureless liberation of the mind.” This is due to the boundless nature of those practices, when they are performed in a completely open manner, and also, as we saw earlier, because of their completely wholesome nature as seen in the analogy of the conch.

SN 41.7 Godatta Sutta

Unlimited Samādhi

“...the liberation of the mind by measurelessness
the liberation of mind by nothingness,
the liberation of mind by emptiness,
and the liberation of the mind by signlessness. ^{xvi}

Are these different in name
and different in meaning or
are these the same in meaning
and different in name only?”

“Bhante, there is a way by which one can understand
these terms to be both, different in meaning, and different in name.

And there is also a way by which one can understand
these terms to be the same in meaning but different only in name.”

[1. Different in Meaning]

“Bhante, the way by which one can understand
These terms to be both, different in meaning, and different in name is this:

[A. Deliverance by Measurelessness]

[I. Boundless Love]

First, Bhante,
(1) One lives and meditates
filling one’s heart full of Love
and radiating it in one direction

a second,
a third,
and a fourth.

Above, below, and across,
everywhere,
to all living beings in this boundless universe.

One lives and meditates,
filling one's heart full of Love
and radiating it with
vastness,
expansiveness
and measurelessness
without a trace of anger or resentment.

(2) One lives and meditates
filling one's heart full of compassion...

(3) One lives and meditates
filling one's heart full of joy...

(4) One lives and meditates
filling one's heart full of calm...

This is called deliverance by measurelessness.

...

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/sn-41-7/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

SN 41.7 Godatta Sutta

Unlimited Samādhi

...

[2. Same in Meaning]

And here is the way by which one can understand
These terms to be the same in meaning, but different only in name.

[A. Unshakable Measurelessness]

Bhante,

Selfishness is a maker of limits, (*Rāgo pamāṇakaraṇo*),
hate is a maker of limits,
and delusion is a maker of limits.

In those who have defeated the mental disturbances, (*khīṇāsavassa*)
these [three roots] are relinquished,
shaven at the root,
turned into a palm stump,
obliterated,
and they are no longer subject to arise in the future. ^{xvii}

Of all deliverances of mind by measurelessness,
the unshakable deliverance of mind
is said to be the highest. ^{xviii}

Because the unshakable deliverance of mind is
void of selfishness,
void of hate
and void of delusion. ^{xix}

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/sn-41-7/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

B. Measureless Mind vs. Concentrated Mind

The Buddha taught the development of a mind that was boundless, even without the brahmavihāras. The latter only come to support the kind of mental freedom that the Buddha taught, which leads to nibbāna. Beyond wholesome states themselves, we are reminded that their nature also brings the mind to a completely open state (as seen in the biology of love). In the later stages of meditation, that boundless mind lets go of all supports, which is essential for entering nibbāna.

This corroborates the evidence that concentration practices where the mind is made narrow and limited seem less relevant. In the following teaching, the Buddha begins this meditation instruction by reiterating that the mind must be made boundless, meaning, without hindrances, before launching into an elaborate teaching on various meditation methods.

MN 106 Āneñjasappāya Sutta Conducive to the Steadfast State

[Sensory Gratification]

“Sensory gratification is

Fleeting,

Hollow,

Deceptive,

The way of thieves,

It is a makeshift illusion,

The mutterings of those who are lost.”

(1) “Sensory gratification here and now
or sensory gratification that is to come;

(2) Sensory perceptions here and now,
or sensory perceptions that are to come,

Both alike belong to the realm of the [unwholesome],

The domain of [the unwholesome],

The bait of [the unwholesome],

The pasture of [the unwholesome].

[1. The Way to the Unshakeable]

This is where,

harmful unwholesome mental states like

Jealousy,
Resentment,
And violence are given rise.

And these constitute an obstacle
for the wise meditator in training.

Therefore, monks, a wise meditator understands:

- (1) 'Sensory gratification here and now
or sensory gratification that is to come;
- (2) Sensory perceptions here and now
or sensory perceptions that are to come,

Both alike belong to the realm of the [unwholesome],
The domain of the [unwholesome],
The bait of the [unwholesome],
The pasture of the [unwholesome].

This is where,
Harmful unwholesome mental states like

Jealousy,
Resentment,
And violence are given rise.

And these constitute an obstacle
for the wise meditator in training.'

[1.1. Boundless Mind]

'Perhaps could I meditate,
With a vast and completely expanded mind,
Having gone beyond the world,
With a resolved mind.

For if I were to meditate,
With a completely expanded mind,
Having gone beyond the world,
With a resolved mind:

Harmful unwholesome mental states of
Jealousy,
Resentment,
And violence would not come to be.

Those being given up,
my mind will be unenclosed,
limitless and well developed. ^{xx}

“Practicing in this way
And often meditating in this way,
The mind becomes clear and calm. ^{xxi}

With this clear and serene awareness,
one arrives at the Steadfast at that time; ^{xxii}

Separating from the body after death,
one is directly liberated by discernment;

And it is possible that, if their consciousness rolls onwards
It goes into the Steadfast state. ^{xxiii}

Monks this is called the first way
conducive to the Steadfast.

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/mn-106/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda



II. MEDITATION

MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS
A STRONG LEGACY WITH ITS ROOTS IN THE SUTTAS

6. Sutta Analysis: Brahmavihāras & Breath Meditation

All Four Brahmavihāras instructions are mentioned:

DN: 5 times

MN: 12 times

SN: 4 times

AN: 14 times

(Not mentioning all other suttas where Loving Kindness is mentioned in different context)

Complete Mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpānassati) instructions are mentioned:

DN: 0 (No mention, only short version on Awareness of Body in Mahasatipatthāna Sutta)

MN: 2 (Additionally, 2 short versions on Awareness of Body at MN 10 & MN 119)

SN: 16 (All in the Ānāpānassati Saṃyutta. A chapter dedicated to mindfulness of breathing)

AN: 1

It is found at the beginning of MN (**MN 7 Analogy of the cloth** and **MN 21 Analogy of the Saw**) which is a crucial place for many teachings that lay the foundations of meditation. Then Later in the **MN62 the Greater advice to Rāhula**.

Then, in **MN 40 Cula-Assapura Sutta - The Shorter Discourse at Assapura:**

So too, bhikkhus, if anyone from a clan of nobles goes forth from the home life into homelessness, and after encountering the Dhamma and Discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, *develops loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity, and thereby gains internal peace, then because of that internal peace he practises the way proper to the recluse, I say.*

And if anyone from a clan of brahmins goes forth...

If anyone from a clan of merchants goes forth...

If anyone from a clan of workers goes forth... “

13. “Suppose there were a pond with clear, agreeable cool water, transparent, with smooth banks, delightful. If a man, scorched and exhausted by hot weather, weary, parched, and thirsty, came from the east or from the west or from the north or from the south or from where you will, having come upon the pond he would quench his thirst and his hot-weather fever.

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

In the # 6 - **MN 52 Atthakanagara Sutta - The Man from Atthakanagara**

“8. “Again, a bhikkhu abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will. He considers this and understands it thus: ‘This deliverance of mind through loving-kindness is conditioned and volitionally produced. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.’ If he is steady in that, he attains the destruction of the taints. But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints... without ever returning from that world.” ...

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Then in many others as the way to Brahmā, and as past lives of the Buddha...

7. The Mind Quickly Becomes Collected

In the eleven benefits of loving kindness, a famous teaching, there seems to be an interesting statement which escapes most conversation about meditation. The Buddha stated that when the mind is well developed in loving kindness, it becomes rapidly collected. A statement he did not venture to say about any other meditation practices.

AN 11.16 Mettānisamsa sutta

Eleven Benefits of Boundless Love

“When the liberation of the mind

through Boundless Love is:

Practiced,

Developed,

Cultivated,

Used as vehicle,

Made a foundation,

Consolidated,

Accumulated

and thoroughly undertaken,^{xxiv}

Eleven benefits are to be expected.

(1) One sleeps happily,

(2) One wakes happily,

(3) One is not disturbed by nightmares,

(4) One is loved by all humans,

(5) One is loved by all non-humans,

(6) One is protected by the Devas,

(7) One does not come upon fire or poison or knife,

(8) One’s mind quickly enters samādhi,

(tuvaṭṭaṃ cittaṃ samādhīyati)

(9) One’s features are bright,

(10) One dies without going astray,

(11) And if one hasn’t gone beyond (Nibbāna), one goes to the Brahmīc plane.

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/an-11-16/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

8. Finger-snap

In this short exhortation, the Buddha explains that a person who would generate loving kindness, even just for the time of a finger-snap, would be practicing jhāna and following his instruction.

AN 1.53-55 Accharāsaṅghāta Sutta

Finger Snap

53. Practicing Love for a Finger snap

“If even for the time of a finger snap,

A monk practices^{xxv} with a mind of Love

I say that he is one who lives practicing ^{xxvi} jhāna

One who practices the teacher’s teaching,

One who applies his instructions,

And one eats the country’s alms undeluded. ^{xxvii}

What to say then of one who would cultivate it. ^{xxviii}

54. Developing Love for a Finger snap

“If even for the time of a finger snap, bhikkhus

A monk develops ^{xxix} to have a mind of Love, ...

55. Attending with Love for a Finger snap

“If even for the time of a finger snap,

A monk attends ^{xxx} with a mind of Love, ...

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/an-1-51-60/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

9. Practical Aspects

A. True Love is Selflessness

True love is not looking to receive from people and external conditions. It is only giving. True, genuine Love covers all three right intentions: It is giving (nekkhama), it is the opposite of anger (avyāpāda) and it is the foundation for mercy or non-cruelty (avihiṃsa). Although, to practice this kind of universal Love, one needs to understand it properly. There are many ways in which one can practice and still develop unskillful habits. But when it is practiced with wisdom and discernment, boundless love leads to selflessness (anatta). In fact, the stronger the quality of release (nekkhama) is in a practitioner, the better and more mature the ability to practice boundless love will be. It is possible to understand such principles from experiential knowledge, but it can also be found in more advanced teachings on loving kindness:

AN 4.126 Loving-Kindness (2)

“Bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four?

(1) “Here, bhikkhus, some person dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without enmity, without ill will.

He contemplates whatever phenomena there pertain to form, feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as misery, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as non-self. With the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in companionship with the devas of the pure abodes. This is a rebirth not shared with worldlings.

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

B. Loving Kindness is Tangible.

It gives something to do at first. In the realm of meditations that aim at developing mental states instead of fixed objects, loving kindness is a clear vehicle that can be felt and experienced tangibly. Navigating emotion-based meditations can be challenging at first for the lack of substantiality in the subjects of meditation. This is where loving kindness comes in as a powerful and palpable vehicle of awareness to help us rise above the hindrances. It is usually the most accessible and most defined of the Brahmavihāras.

C. Boundlessness & Detachment

Boundlessness makes it unattached to any object. Hence, it does not develop desire towards a particular object. When practiced at the early stages of meditation, with thinking and reflection, certain subjects are recommended to avoid developing physical attraction.

SN 46.54 Accompanied by Lovingkindness

Here monks,

(1) One develops the awakening support of awareness,
filled with Love;^{xxx}

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in surrender.^{xxxii}

Similarly for all seven factors of awakening...

<https://heartdhamma.com/sutta/sn-46-54/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

10. Guidance & Requirements

One of the main challenges nowadays is that the practice of loving kindness meditation has been reduced to the mere repetition of identical sentences that aim at wishing well to beings in all directions. While this approach is perhaps not unwholesome, it is limited and confining. It is not easy for everyone to genuinely feel loving kindness only by repeating these sentences. **The feeling can be more tangible when an appropriate “object” is found.** More personal themes are better at uplifting the mind, as long as they do not bring along other unwholesome states.

First, to experience the true power and potential of loving kindness meditation, the importance of the feeling must be emphasized. **Meditators need to experience the feeling of loving kindness withing their own bodies and minds.** To achieve this, a more personal memory or recollection may be used. Some imagination and verbalization can be utilized at first.

Second, a meditator must train to prolong the duration of the feeling. **This is not to be achieved by force, rather, by letting go and wisdom.** Some guidance will likely be necessary at this level as well. During this process, the **verbalization and imagination will have to calm down** and become more spacious.

Third, a meditator must bring the feeling of loving kindness in their heart, body and mind, to maturation and allow it to **fade into the stability of blissful poise** or boundless calm.

This process will most likely need to be monitored by a teacher competent in this path of practice. There are many pitfalls and blind corners where meditators can be impeded. It is not easy to find one's way during the initial attempts. **There is a natural sequence to this process, and a common mistake is to overlook one of these steps and to lose one's way.** Some meditators might also attempt to “make these steps happen” while they should simply happen on their own when the practice is properly understood.

11. Analogy of the Cloth | Meditation Instructions

The teaching of the Analogy of the cloth is a particularly excellent starting point for those interested in learning more about the Buddha's meditation instructions. It offers an incomparable elaboration of the path with:

1. Preliminary of discerning between the two kinds of mental states.
2. Followed by the Recollections of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha...
3. Then, referring to the further practice: "There is this, there is the inferior, there is the superior, and there is a release beyond this entire field of perception."

MN 7 Vatthupama Sutta

Analogy of the Cloth

[Boundless Love]

One Meditates,
With a heart filled with Boundless Love;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth. ^{xxxiii}

Above, below,
And everywhere across.
To all living beings
In this boundless universe. ^{xxxiv}

One meditates with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless, ^{xxxv}
Free from anger and impatience.

... compassion... ... joy... ... calm...

[Beyond Concepts]

One understands: ^{xxxvi}

"There is this, ^{xxxvii}

There is the base, ^{xxxviii}

There is the sublime, ^{xxxix}

And there is a release beyond this field of conceptual thinking." ^{xl}

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/mn-7/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

12. Boundless Love, Jhānas & Satipatthanas

In this concise teaching, we find instructions for practicing the Brahmavihāras alongside the levels of meditation (jhānas), which serve as a particularly resourceful and explicit meditation instruction from the Buddha himself.

AN 8.63 Saṅkhitta Sutta

Concise Instruction

“In this case, monk, you should train in this way:

I will develop a mind that is still and well-established within, ^{xli}

And existing harmful,

Unwholesome states of mind

will not take over and settle. ^{xlii}

This is how you should train monk.

Celestial Abodes

1. Boundless Love

From there monk,

When the mind is still and well established within,

And existing harmful,

Unwholesome states of mind

do not take over and settle.

Then, you should train in this way:

“I will develop and cultivate the release of mind
by Boundless Love:

Make it a vehicle,

Make it a foundation,

Practice it,
Accumulate it
And undertake it thoroughly.”^{xliii}

This is how you should train monk.

While you develop and cultivate this meditation^{xliv},
You should develop it:

With thinking and imagination,
Without thinking but with imagination,
Without thinking nor imagination,^{xlv}

With joy,
Without joy,^{xlvi}
With constant delight,
With constant calm.”^{xlvii}

<https://heartdhamma.love/sutta/an-8-63/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

13. Factors of Awakening | Further Practice

SN 46.62 Lovingkindness

At Sāvattthī. “Bhikkhus, when lovingkindness is developed and cultivated, it is of great fruit and benefit.

“And how, bhikkhus, is lovingkindness developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness accompanied by lovingkindness ...

he develops the enlightenment factor of equanimity accompanied by lovingkindness, based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. It is in this way that lovingkindness is developed and cultivated so that it is of great fruit and benefit.”

(ii. One of two fruits)

“Bhikkhus, when lovingkindness is developed and cultivated, one of two fruits is to be expected: either final knowledge in this very life or, if there is a residue of clinging, the state of nonreturning...

(iii. Great good)

Bhikkhus, when lovingkindness is developed and cultivated, it leads to great good...

(iv. Security from bondage)

“Bhikkhus, when lovingkindness is developed and cultivated, it leads to great security from bondage...

(v. Sense of urgency)

“Bhikkhus, when lovingkindness is developed and cultivated, it leads to a great sense of urgency...

(vi. Dwelling in comfort)

“Bhikkhus, when lovingkindness is developed and cultivated, it leads to dwelling in great comfort...

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

14. Complete Maturation of the Brahmavihāras

The *Mettāsahagata Sutta* is probably the crown jewel on loving kindness meditation instructions. In this teaching, monks meet with practitioners of other traditions who claim to practice the brahmavihāras just as the monks following the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha clarifies how to thoroughly practice boundless love alongside the seven factors of awakening, the cultivation on disadvantages towards mental balance and explains the jhānic limit of each brahmavihāra.

SN 46.54 Mettāsahagata sutta
Filled with Love

How is the liberation of the heart by boundless love developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?

Here monks,

(2) One develops the awakening support of awareness,
filled with Love; ^{xlvi}

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation. ^{xli}

(3) One develops the awakening support of discernment,
filled with Love

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

(4) One develops the awakening support of inspiration,
filled with Love;

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,

Culminating in relaxation.

- (5) One develops the awakening support of joy,
filled with Love;

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

- (6) One develops the awakening support of calm,
filled with Love;

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

- (7) One develops the awakening support of mental collectedness,
filled with Love;

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

- (8) One develops the awakening support of steadiness of mind,
filled with Love;

Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

[Balance of Mind]

[One trains:] ⁱ

‘Let me live, unattached ⁱⁱ to what is favorable. ⁱⁱⁱ

One then lives, unattached to that. ^{liii}

[One trains:]

‘Let me live, accepting what is unfavorable.’^{liv}

One then lives, accepting that.^{lv}

[One trains:]

‘Let me live, unattached to both favorable and unfavorable.’

One then lives, unattached to that.^{lvi}

[One trains:]

‘Let me live, accepting both favorable and unfavorable.’

One then lives, accepting to that.^{lvii}

[One trains:]

‘Having discarded both the favorable and unfavorable,

Let me live, calm, present and fully conscious.

Calm, one then meditates, present and fully conscious.^{lviii}

One meditates, having arrived at the liberation of the beautiful.^{lix}

Monks, I say that the liberation of the heart by Love
has the beautiful as its limit.

Here for a wise monk who has not discerned a higher liberation.^{lx}

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/sn-46-54/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

15. Mettā & Vipassanā

MN 52 Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta

...

3. When the householder Dasama had completed his business at Pāṭaliputta, he went to the venerable Ānanda at Beluvagamaka near Vesāli. After paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and asked him:

"Venerable Ānanda, has any one thing been proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, wherein if a bhikkhu abides diligent, ardent, and resolute, his unliberated mind comes to be liberated, his undestroyed taints come to be destroyed, and he attains the supreme security from bondage that he had not attained before?"⁵⁵⁰

"Yes, householder, one such thing has been proclaimed by the Blessed One."

"What is that one thing, venerable Ānanda?"

4. "Here, householder, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.

He considers this and understands it thus: 'This first jhāna is conditioned and volitionally produced.⁵⁵¹ But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.'

If he is steady in that, he attains the destruction of the taints.⁵⁵² But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints because of that desire for the Dhamma, that delight in the Dhamma, then with the destruction of the five lower fetters he becomes one due to reappear spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes] and there attain final Nibbāna without ever returning from that world.

"This is one thing proclaimed by the Blessed One who knows and sees, accomplished and fully enlightened, wherein if a bhikkhu abides diligent, ardent, and resolute, his unliberated mind comes to be liberated, his undestroyed taints come to be destroyed, and he attains the supreme security from bondage that he had not attained before.

(Same for the four first jhānas)

...

8. "Again, a bhikkhu abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

He considers this and understands it thus: 'This deliverance of mind through loving-kindness is conditioned and volitionally produced. But whatever is conditioned and volitionally produced is impermanent, subject to cessation.'

If he is steady in that, he attains the destruction of the taints. But if he does not attain the destruction of the taints...without ever returning from that world.

"This too is one thing proclaimed by the Blessed One... wherein if a bhikkhu abides diligent, ardent, and resolute...he attains the supreme security from bondage that he had not attained before.

(Same for compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity...)

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi

16. Final Knowledge and Non-Return:

AN 4.126 (6) Loving-Kindness (2)

(1) “Here, bhikkhus, some person dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without enmity, without ill will.

He contemplates whatever phenomena there pertain to form, feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as misery, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as non-self. With the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in companionship with the devas of the pure abodes. This is a rebirth not shared with worldlings.

Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi



III. OVERVIEW

MERITS & PAST LIVES DEVELOPING THE BRAHMAVIHARAS

17. Many Past Lives of Buddha: Developing the Brahmavihāras

The Buddha himself spent lifetimes developing those sublime states (Brahmavihāras). Even though he clearly stated that they do not lead all the way to nibbāna, he still practiced them for lifetimes to accumulate the wholesome basis to break through to awakening. We would do wisely to consider developing these, at least to a noticeable extent, as a strong preliminary foundation to any kind of spiritual life or practice that aims towards liberation!

DN 17 Mahasudassana Sutta - A King's Renunciation

"2.1. 'Then King Mahāsudassana thought: "Of what kamma is it the fruit, of what kamma is it the result, that I am now so mighty and powerful?" [186] Then he thought: "It is the fruit, the result of three kinds of kamma: of giving, self-control, and abstinence."486

2.2. 'Then the King went to the great gabled chamber and, standing at the door, exclaimed: "May the thought of lust cease! May the thought of ill-will cease! May the thought of cruelty cease! Thus far and no further the thought of lust, of ill-will, of cruelty!"

Translation by Maurice Walshe

MN 83 Makhādeva Sutta

6. “For eighty-four thousand years King Makhādeva played childish games; for eighty-four thousand years he acted as vice-regent; for eighty-four thousand years he governed the kingdom; for eighty-four thousand years he led the holy life in this Makhādeva Mango Grove after shaving off his hair and beard, putting on the yellow robe, and going forth from the home life into homelessness.

“...By developing the four divine abodes, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he passed on to the Brahma-world.”

Iti 1.22 Mettā Sutta

Deeds of Goodness

This was said by the Exalted One,
spoken by the Arahant,
As I have heard:

“Do not be afraid of merit monks!” ^{lxi}

Merit is an expression
for what is desirable,
lovely,
delightful,
beneficial
and blissful.

For a long time monks,
I have directly experienced desirable,
lovely,
delightful,
beneficial
and blissful results
of often performing deeds of merit. ^{lxii}



[Because of] seven years spent
cultivating a heart of Boundless Love;

For seven aeons of contraction and expansion,
I was not led back [down] into this world. ^{lxiii}

When the Aeon collapsed,
I reached the plane of streaming radiance. ^{lxiv}
When the Aeon revolved open again,
I appeared in an empty Brahmic plane. ^{lxv}

There I was Brāhma,
 the Majestic Brāhma,
 Legendary,
 Unequaled,
 Omniscient,
 and Almighty. ^{lxvi}

Thirty-six times I became Sakka,
Known as Indra,
the king of the Devas.

Countless hundreds of lives
I was a wheel-turning,
vision-wielding,
righteous king of Dhamma
Ruling [by goodness] over the 4 continents.

I established stability over the land,
And I was graced by the seven treasures. ^{lxvii}

What to say then
of mere leadership over regional kingdoms.
It occurred to me to ponder:
“To what action of mine is this the fruit?
To what action of mine is this the result?
That I have become so powerful,
of such significant influence?”

And it occurred to me:
“It is the fruit of three things,
It results from three things, that is:
Giving,

Self-mastery,
And thoughtfulness. ^{lxviii}

Then he further said this:

“One should train in bright actions,
Which yield enduring happiness; ^{lxix}
Philanthropy, calmness
and developing a loving mind. ^{lxx}

Developed in these qualities,
The three sources of happiness, ^{lxxi}
The sage steadily walks forth,
In an untroubled and happy world. ^{lxxii}

This is what the Buddha said,
As I have heard it.

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/iti-22/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

18. Mettā & Nibbāna

Although it is clearly stated by the Buddha that loving kindness meditation and the brahmavihāras did not lead all the way to nibbāna, he alluded to them copiously as “the way proper for a recluse” (MN 40) or that one who would practice them for even just the time of a finger-snap would “practices the teacher’s teaching, apply his instructions, and eat the country’s generous alms undeluded (AN 1.53-550). His praise of mettā meditation was incontrovertibly elevated and widespread. It is only with the proper perspective though, that it can be brought to full realization, with the view of the noble ones, which sees the conditioned nature of reality, its transience and impersonal nature.

DN 19 Mahagovinda Sutta

59. “And the Great Steward dwelt suffusing one quarter with a mind filled with loving-kindness, then a second, then a third and a fourth quarter. He dwelt suffusing the whole world, up, down and across, everywhere, all around, with a mind filled with compassion, . . . with a mind filled with sympathetic joy, . . . with a mind filled with equanimity, . . . free from hatred and ill-will. And thus he taught his disciples the way to union with the Brahmā-world.

60. “And all those who had at that time been the Great Steward’s pupils and had fully mastered his teaching, were after death at the breaking-up of the body reborn in a happy sphere, in the Brahmā-world. . . .

“61. ‘Do you remember this, Lord?’ ‘I do, Pañcasikha. At that time I was the Brahmin, the Great Steward, and I taught those disciples the path to union with the Brahmā-world.

‘However, Pañcasikha, that holy life does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to super-knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna, but only to birth in the Brahmā-world, whereas my holy life leads unfailingly to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to super-knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. That is the Noble Eightfold Path, namely Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration.”

Translation by Maurice Walshe

19. Suttas on merits of Mettā: “Just as the Stars...”

Iti 1.27 Mettābhāvanā Sutta

Developing Boundless Love

“Monks, whatever vehicle or ground there is
for producing goodness,
and for the generation of acquisitions,^{lxxiii}

All of these are not worth one sixteenth
Of the liberation of the mind through Boundless Love.

Radiant, blazing and shining forth,
The liberation of the mind,
Through Boundless Love,
Surpasses them.

[The Moon]

Just like whatever radiance there is from the stars,
All of it is not worth one sixteenth of the moon’s radiance,

Radiant, blazing and shining forth,
The moon’s radiance surpasses them.

In the same way,
Whatever vehicle or ground there is for producing goodness,
And for the generation of acquisitions

All of these are not worth one sixteenth
Of the liberation of the mind through Boundless Love.

Radiant, blazing and shining forth,
The liberation of the mind,
Through Boundless Love,
Surpasses them.

[After the Monsoon]

Monks,
Just like in the last month of the monsoon season, in autumn,

When the sky is clear and the rain clouds have passed,
The sun rises above the dark mass,

Radiant, blazing and shining forth.
Winning over all of space,
Winning over darkness,
And driving it away,

In the same way,
Whatever vehicle or ground there is for producing goodness,
And for the generation of acquisitions;

All of these are not worth one sixteenth
Of the liberation of the mind through Boundless Love.

Radiant, blazing and shining forth.
The liberation of the mind,
Through Boundless Love,
Surpasses them.

[The Morning Star]

Monks,
Just like at the end of the night,
The morning star;

Radiates, blazes and shines forth.

In the same way,
Whatever vehicle or ground there is for producing goodness,
And for the generation of acquisitions;

All of these are not worth one sixteenth
Of the liberation of the mind through Boundless Love.

Radiant, blazing and shining forth.
The liberation of the mind,
Through Boundless Love,
Surpasses them."

This is the meaning of what the Awakened One said.
Further, he said:

“For one who develops [the feeling] of Love,
With boundless presence;
The fetters wear away,
Seen is the ending of acquisitions.

Having an unspoiled mind towards one being,
Lovingly, there is goodness therein.
But having a compassionate mind towards all beings,
The Ariya generates an abundance of merit.

Even when, having conquered this earth,
Filled with the living,
The virtuous king ^{lxxiv} sets out performing offerings;

Horse offerings, men offerings,
Food offerings, money offerings,
Unobstructed;

He does not partake in one sixteenth,
Of a mind well-developed in Boundless Love.
Like the moon’s radiance is to the stars.

One who does not kill nor causes to kill,
Who does not conquer nor causes to conquer.
With a heart of Love towards all living beings,
In such person, anger cannot be found.”^{lxxv}

This is also what was spoken by the Exalted One, as I have heard.

<https://heartdhamma love/sutta/iti-27/>

Translation by Bhikkhu Ānanda

20. Experiential Knowledge: Come, See for Yourself

Once again, individuals desirous of truly understanding these states for themselves must go beyond mere theoretical knowledge. This present document was created to facilitate a basic understanding of the broader scope and practice of loving kindness meditation and the Brahmavihāras.

Although, attending a retreat remains the best way to experience these states with assurance, under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher. This will increase a meditator's confidence in their own experience, as it will be supported by another experienced practitioner. Moreover, a longer period, dedicated uniquely to meditation, for example a 10-Day retreat, will offer meditators the chance to dive deeper and to experience these states tangibly. The momentum of practice generated on retreat also supports a meditator's growth on the path. The feeling and experience become more evident and leave a deeper impression on the heart and mind, which will carry through into one's daily activities and home practice afterwards.

It can be tedious to make real tangible meditation progress while only practicing alone at home for one to two hours every day. A meditation retreat will elevate one's practice and give a strong foundation to work from.

May you all make beautiful progress in this meditation,
May you all enjoy the fruits of a liberated mind,
May you all attain nibbāna!

Boundless Love,

Ānanda Bhikkhu

For more resources:

<https://heartdhamma love>

<https://www.youtube.com/@HeartDhamma>

ⁱ kāmaṃ manasikaroto

ⁱⁱ Kāmesu Cittaṃ: This is the “taking” mind, the “wanting” mind, for external things.

ⁱⁱⁱ kāmesu cittaṃ na pakkhandati nappasīdati na santiṭṭhati na vimuccati.

^{iv} Nekkhamma: Letting go, not taking on, also could be transl. as contentment. But ‘nekkhamma’ also means ‘ni+kāma’ (khamma) according to PED. The classical translation as ‘relinquishing’ is perhaps not so wrong but a little dusty and obscure. This nekkhamma is another way of describing the qualities of the first jhāna. ‘Vivicc’eva kāmehi’ as ‘quite removed from the senses, or letting go or disengaging from them.’

^v nekkhamme cittaṃ pakkhandati pasīdati santiṭṭhati vimuccati.

^{vi} Tassa taṃ cittaṃ sugataṃ subhāviṭṭhaṃ suvuṭṭhiṭṭhaṃ suvimuttaṃ suvisaṃyuttaṃ kāmehi; We find here another interesting location and use for the word ‘Sugata.’

^{vii} Āsava: Mental torrents, deluge, flood.

^{viii} ye ca kāmāpaccayā uppajjanti āsavā vighātāpariḷāhā, mutto so tehi, na so taṃ vedanaṃ vediyati.

^{ix} This vividly demonstrate the progress of an Ariyan follower through wisdom. Discerning wholesome states from unwholesome states with remarkable clarity and accuracy. Understanding the harmful, unstable nature of unwholesome states and the blissful stability in wholesome ones. Wise understanding of the four Ariyan truths directed towards wise effort in cultivating wholesome mental habits, the quintessence of the Buddha’s Teaching.

^x Abyāpādaṃ

^{xi} evaṃ vigatābhijjho vigatabyāpādo asammūḷho sampajāno paṭissato

^{xii} mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ.

^{xiii} Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantāṃ lokaṃ

^{xiv} mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggaṭṭhena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati.

^{xv} Seyyathāpi, gāmaṇi, balavā saṅkhadhamo appakasireneva catuddisā viññāpeyya;

^{xvi} appamāṇā cetovimutti, ākiñcaññā cetovimutti, suññatā cetovimutti, animittā cetovimutti

^{xvii} **Te khīṇāsavassa bhikkhuno pahīnā ucchinnamūlā tālāvatthukatā anabhāvaṅkatā āyatim anuppādadhammā.**

^{xviii} **Yāvatā kho, bhante, appamāṇā cetovimuttiyo, akuppā tāsā cetovimutti aggamakkhāyati.**

^{xix} Interestingly, the word **suññā** is here used within each individual type of deliverance of mind’s description to explain them as ‘void’ of greed, hate and delusion.

^{xx} Tesaṃ pahānā aparitāṇa me cittaṃ bhavissati appamāṇaṃ subhāviṭṭhaṃ’ti.

^{xxi} Tassa evaṃpaṭipannassa tabbahulavihārino āyatane cittaṃ pasīdati. Pasīdati [pa+sad] 1. to become bright, to brighten up. (mukha — vaṇṇo p.). — 2. to be purified, reconciled or pleased; to be clear & calm, to become of peaceful heart (mano or cittaṃ p.); to find one’s satisfaction in (loc.), to have faith. Pasīdana (nt.) [fr. pasīdati] calming, happiness, purification. Bhante Sujato chooses to translate Pasīdati as confidence here. “Practicing in this way and meditating on it often their mind becomes confident in this

dimension.” BS. Bhante Bhikkhu Bodhi also: “When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base.” BB.

^{xxii} Āneñjaṃ: ‘The Steadfast or Imperturbable’ is a state equivalent to the fourth jhāna and the immaterial planes of meditation (AN 4.190 Uposatha Sutta). It is explained in MN 125 Dantabhūmi Sutta, where the very last step of the of a disciple in higher monastic training (Anagāmī and arahant training) is to train in ‘Immobility’ with painful sensations. This happens only when the mental faculties have been properly developed and are ready for this last part of the practice and one has previously acquired strong confidence and understanding of the teaching because one has previously tasted the ‘nutritious food’ of meditation (The bliss and joy of meditation). Otherwise, ‘forcing equanimity’ towards pain too early in the training by not moving for example, can be very detrimental. Like a young child needs her parents to hold her hand to learn to walk. When she falls and hurts herself, the parents are loving and compassionate and help her get back on her feet. The parents don’t say: ‘Stop moving and crying! Can’t you see that pain is just in your mind? Don’t move!... Of course, they do not say that. They feel compassion for their child and they help her up. They explain to her kindly that this is what happens when we are not looking where we are walking. When we let the mind wander after the thousand distractions of this world (Especially for a young mind), carried away by distractions she was not aware of what she was doing. Showing her the hurt, the cause of it, the release from it and the proper path of life for it not to happen again. Yes, sensations are impersonal, we do not choose them, therefore, it is unwise to cling to them, one must train to let them go, releasing awareness from their grip. But a young mind still becomes overwhelmed. Why? Because it is young and undeveloped. Mental stability and one’s ability to remain within mental composure is a gradual process, a gradual training which occurs by development in wholesome states. This process can be entirely pain-free if done properly. Then, when the mind is developed, whether or not one wishes to be balanced in mind, painful feelings might arise but the mind will remain unshaken, naturally. Why? Because the mind is properly developed. The pain is completely optional, from the beginning. Forcing one to not move can in fact create much more tension than not, and interestingly, this is nowhere to be found in the suttas as some kind of meditation instructions that the Buddha gave. Not moving happens naturally after some time, this sutta explains how to arrive to this ‘Unshakeability’. When mental collectedness is strong, the mind becomes very steady, therefore the body also, no need to force this process. This is the natural way of how the seven supports of awakening work.

^{xxiii} Thānametaṃ vijjati yaṃ taṃsaṃvattanikaṃ viññāṇaṃ assa āneñjūpaṇaṃ. Taṃsaṃvattanikaṃ viññāṇaṃ: Evolving consciousness.

^{xxiv} Āsevitāya bhāvitāya bahulikatāya yānikatāya vatthukatāya anuṭṭhitāya paricitāya susamāraddhāya

^{xxv} Āsevatī [ā + sev] to frequent, visit; to practise, pursue, indulge, enjoy

^{xxvi} Arittajjhāno: Aritta: a rudder. Or Ritta [pp. of riñcati; cp. atireka] devoid, empty, free, rid.

^{xxvii} Satthusāsanakaro Ovādapatikaro Amoghaṃ raṭṭhapiṇḍaṃ bhuñjati’.

^{xxviii} Ko pana vādo ye naṃ bahulīkaronti

^{xxix} Bhāveti

^{xxx} Manasi karoti

^{xxxi} Mettāsahagataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti,

^{xxxi} Vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.

^{xxxi} So mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ.

^{xxxi} Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantāṃ lokāṃ

^{xxxi} mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati;

^{xxxi} So ‘atthi idaṃ, atthi hīnaṃ, atthi paṇītaṃ, atthi imassa saññāgatassa uttari nissaraṇaṃ’ ti pajānāti.

^{xxxi} Starting from the very wholesome mental states of the brāhmavihāras, one can assess and tell wholesome states from unwholesome states better. This is called wisdom or discernment.

^{xxxi} The worldly mind, entangled in sense desires, dislikes and carelessness. (Lobha, dosa, moha)

^{xxxi} He mind of the brāhmavihāras upwards. The jhānic mind, the higher mind (Adhicitta). Unaffected by sense desires, dislikes and carelessness. (Alobha, adosa, amoha). Generosity, letting go, contentment, Boundless Love, Boundless Compassion, Boundless Joy, Boundless Calm and beyond.

^{xl} “This is peaceful, this is sublime, namely, the stilling of all conditioned processes, breaking free from mental limitations, the complete calming of Tension, appeasement, release, Nibbāna.” AN III 32 Ānanda Sutta

^{xli} Ajjhattaṃ me cittaṃ t̥hitaṃ bhavissati susaṇṭhitaṃ.

^{xlii} Allusion to Sammā-Vāyamo: Wise Practice or Sammāppadāna: Wise Endeavor.

^{xliii} ‘Mettā me cetovimutti bhāvitā bhavissati bahulikatā yānikatā vatthukatā anuṭṭhitā paricitā susamāradhā’ti. Here again, a fairly common and meaningful statement of the Buddha on how to properly cultivate meditation. This means more than just sitting meditation, this means “all the time, genuinely, whole-heartedly, while walking, standing, sitting, lying down”, this is the “proper” here.

^{xliv} Samādhi

^{xlv} Savitakkampi savicāraṃ bhāveyyāsi, avitakkampi vicāramattaṃ bhāveyyāsi, avitakkampi avicāraṃ bhāveyyāsi,

^{xlvi} Sappītikampi bhāveyyāsi, nippītikampi bhāveyyāsi

^{xlvii} Sātasahagatampi bhāveyyāsi, upekkhāsahagatampi bhāveyyāsi. Upekkhā: Often translated as “Equanimity”, I prefer poise, grace, calm, stability, confidence, self-composure, steadiness. R.D. calls it self-possession. Poise: late Middle English (in the sense ‘weight’): from Old French pois, peis (noun), peser (verb), from an alteration of Latin pensum ‘weight’, from the verb pendere ‘weigh’. From the early senses of ‘weight’ and ‘measure of weight’ arose the notion of ‘equal weight, balance’, leading to the extended senses ‘composure’ and ‘elegant bearing’. (Oxford American College Dictionary)

^{xlviii} Mettāsahagataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti,

^{xlix} Vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.

¹ For a more complete explanation of cultivating balance of mind through detachment and accepting, see AN V 144 Tikaṇḍakī Sutta - Purpose of Unattractiveness

^{li} Paṭikkūla (adj.) [paṭi+kūla] lit. against the slope; averse, objectionable, contrary, disagreeable. — app^o without objection, pleasant, agreeable. — nt. °m loathsomeness, impurity -saññā (āhāre) the consciousness of the impurity of material food. Paṭikulyatā (f.) [fr. paṭikkūla, perhaps better to write patikkulyatā] reluctance, loathsomeness. Note: I find using the words ‘repulsive’ and ‘unrepulsive’ to remain exactly within the Buddha’s skillful play on words in Pāli here, create problems in present cultural context, and to contemporary minds. Therefore, I choose another road which leaves behind the word play but, in my understanding, remains more truthful to the idea behind the words.

^{lii} Not welcoming the attractive. This can also be interpreted as being unattracted to the attractive: the attractive here may be meant as sensory gratification (Kāma) and unattraction as letting go or detachment (Viveka), which equates to another way of explaining the first jhāna.

^{liii} So sace ākaṅkhati ‘appaṭikūle paṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan’ti, paṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati.

^{liv} Welcoming the unattractive. This can also be interpreted as accepting disturbances and distractions (Viviceva akusalehi dhammehi) which could equate to another way of describing the second aspect of the first jhāna. Leaning towards the calm steadiness of mind of the second, third and fourth jhānas.

^{lv} ‘paṭikūle appaṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan’ti, appaṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati.

^{lvi} ‘appaṭikūle ca paṭikūle ca paṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan’ti, paṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati.

^{lvii} ‘paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca appaṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan’ti, appaṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati.

^{lviii} ‘Appaṭikūlaṇca paṭikūlaṇca tadubhayam abhinivajjetvā upekkhako vihareyyam sato sampajāno’ti, upekkhako ca tattha viharati sato sampajāno. Here the Buddha interestingly explains a four-steps process (Another outlook on the four jhānas?) on cultivating detachment from the pleasant and accepting the unpleasant which seems to build a similar equanimity, in phrasing and meaning, to the third and fourth jhānas. One might wonder why joy is not particularly mentioned here in this process, and emphasis is strong on cultivating mental steadiness. To understand this, we need to remember that Love, compassion and joy, are very uplifted, happy states. They naturally come with a special kind of wholesome joy within them. Though, practicing the brahmaviharas, if meditators leave the ‘universal’ aspect of the Love, compassion or joy, they might find themselves creating attachments around them, that is very likely the reason why the Buddha here puts emphasis on remaining balanced in might, unaffected by external experiences while practicing the Divine Abidings.

^{lix} Subham vā kho pana vimokkham upasampajja viharati. Subha (adj.) [Vedic śubhas fr. subh; cp. sobhati] shining, bright, beautiful; auspicious, lucky, pleasant; good (nt.) welfare, good, pleasantness, cleanliness, beauty, pleasure. Subham: “The Beautiful” Sometimes is used by the Buddha to denote an equivalent state to the 4th jhāna. Most translators have been using the ‘attractive’ term ‘The Beautiful’ but this has also given rise to much questioning. Subha does not exclusively mean ‘beautiful’. It can also mean ‘The pleasant’ which is then very close to the definition of the ‘steady awareness’ described by the Ariyas as a ‘pleasant abiding’ of the third jhāna and beyond. (Yam tam ariyā ācikkhanti: ‘upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī’ti) The Beautiful is this ‘pleasant abiding of the Ariyas’. See SN II 14.11 Sattadhātu Sutta - Seven Elements <https://www.heartdhamma love/connected-discourses/> MN 137, AN VIII 66 Vimokkha Sutta, DN 16 Mahānidāna Sutta.

^{lx} Subhaparamāham, bhikkhave, mettācetovimuttiṃ vadāmi, idhapaññassa bhikkhuno uttarivimuttiṃ appaṭivijjhato.

^{lxi} “Mā, bhikkhave, puññānaṃ bhāyittha.

^{lxii} Abhijānāmi kho panāhaṃ dīgharattaṃ katānaṃ puññānaṃ...

^{lxiii} Satta vassāni mettacittaṃ bhāvetvā satta saṃvaṭṭavivaṭṭakappe nayimaṃ lokam punarāgamāsiṃ.

^{lxiv} Saṃvaṭṭamāne sudaṃ, bhikkhave, kappe ābhassarūpago homi;

^{lxv} vivaṭṭamāne kappe suññaṃ brahmavimānaṃ upapajjāmi.

^{lxvi} mahābrahmā abhibhū anabhibhūto aññadatthudaso vasavattī.

^{lxvii} anekasatakkhattuṃ rājā ahoṣiṃ cakkavattī dhammiko dhammarājā cāturato vijitāvī

janapadattāvariyappatto sattaratanasamannāgato.

^{lxviii} seyyathidaṃ dānassa, damassa, saññaṃ assā ’’ti.

^{lxix} “Puññaṃ eva so sikkheyya, āyataggaṃ sukhudrayaṃ;

^{lxx} Beautiful parallel between dama and samacariya, sañña and mettacitta bhavaya. I choose to draw on the meaning of this meaningful parallel for my translation here, rather than the classical meaning attributed to these words in the PED. Dānañca samacariyañca, mettacittañca bhāvaye.

^{lxxi} Ete dhamme bhāvayitvā, tayo sukhasamuddaye;

^{lxxii} This translation is slightly adapted to fit a more 'western audience.' Here, the original meaning is in regard to rebirth in a blissful existence. *Abyāpajjam sukhaṃlokaṃ, paṇḍitoupapajjati*"ti.

^{lxxiii} Yāni kānici, bhikkhave, opadhikāni puññakiriyavatthūni.

The Generation of acquisition in this case means wholesome Kamma.

^{lxxiv} The virtuous king, in buddhism, rules the land without stick or sword, without violence. He rules by the Dhamma, by virtue and generosity.

^{lxxv} Mettaṃso sabbabhūtesu, veraṃ tassa na kenaci