

# What do the Suttas Actually Say about the Brahma Viharas?

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Sati Center for Buddhist Studies



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# The Four Brahma Vihāras

The Four Brahma Viharas are

Mettā

Karunā

Muditā

Upekkhā

The actual Pāḷi word that we are referring to with “Brahma Vihara” is *brahmavihāra* – one word, not two. It is a compound of the words *brahma* and *vihāra*. In the West, this Pāḷi word has morphed into “Brahma Vihara” (with the *ā* converted to a plain *a*). Throughout this book, unless referring to Pāḷi, I will use “Brahma Vihara” since that is probably more familiar to most readers of this work.

*Brahma* means "divine" – "an inhabitant of the higher heavens" according to one definition in the PED. *Vihāra* means "abode" according to one definition in the PED.

In the [DPD](#) we find a definition where *brahma* means "divine; holy" [√brah + ma]. *Vihāra* in the [DPD](#) is "dwelling; residence".

Thus, we can translate this phrase as "The Four Divine Abodes" or "The Four Divine Dwellings" or even "The Four Divine Abidings."

There are 38 Suttas (or groups of Suttas) that contain all four Brahma Viharas:  
<https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/bv-all.htm>

There is also a version of this index that contains summaries of all 38 Suttas (or groups):  
<https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/bv-all2.htm>

**Brahma Viharas - All** 38 Sutta Links

**Brahma Viharas - All (with a summary of each sutta)** 38 Sutta Links

**Mettā** ("love") 87 Sutta Links

**Karunā** ("compassion") 53 Suttas

**Muditā** ("rejoicing") 41 Sutta Links

**Muditā, but not all 4 Brahma Viharas** 3 Suttas

**Upekkhā** ("equanimity") 228 Sutta Links

# Mettā

## Common Translations:

Loving-Kindness, Loving Friendliness, Love, Friendliness, Benevolence, Good Will, Amity, Sympathy

## PED:

Mettā (f.) [abstr. fr. mitra=mitta, cp. Vedic maitraṇ. According to Asl. 192 (cp. Expos. 258) derived fr. mid to love, to be fat: "mejjati mettā siniyhatī ti attho"] love, amity, sympathy, friendliness, active interest in others. There are var. defns & explns of mettā

## DPD:

goodwill (towards); friendliness (to); benevolence (for) [√mitt + \*ā]

## Far Enemy:

Ill-will or Hatred

## Near Enemy:

Attachment, Sentimentality, Clinginess, Conditional Love

## My Translation

Unconditional Love

This has nothing to do with the mistranslation of *asaṅkhata* as "the unconditioned". That very bad translation leads to making an object out of *nibbāna*. But there are no articles ("a", "an", "the") in Pāli, so "the" is wrong. "*Asaṅkhata*" is the negative of the past participle of *sankhāra* (lit. makeingtogether); it literally means (*a*) without (*saṅkhata*) concocted or fabricated, so "without fabricated".

Unconditional Love means the the love is given with no strings attached. This is the same as the Greek word "Agape" (ἀγάπη) – in contrast to "Eros" (erotic love), "Philia" (brotherly love), or "Philautia" (self-love), as it embraces a profound sacrificial love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance.

Excellent article by Ayya Khema on Mettā: <http://leighb.com/ayyametta.htm>

Mettā occurs in 87+ Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/metta.htm>

# Karunā

Common Translations:  
Compassion, Mercy

PED:  
Compassion

DPD:  
compassion; sympathy; kindness (towards unfortunate beings); lit. action

Far Enemy:  
Cruelty

Near Enemy:  
Pity

My Translation

Compassion, Kindness – You can practice Karunā towards anyone, whether or not they are suffering. Kindness is always an option.

Another important word is Anukampā – sometimes translated as "sympathy" or "compassion". But a much better translation, suggested by Gil Fronsdal, is "care." And again, you can practice Anukampā towards anyone, whether or not they are suffering.

Another less well known word is Anuddayā which is translated as "compassion (for); sympathy (for)."

Karunā occurs in 53+ Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/karuna.htm>

Anukampā occurs in 179+ Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/anukampa.htm>

But Anukampā is not one of the Brahma Viharas.

# Muditā

Common Translations:

Sympathetic Joy, Empathetic Joy, Appreciative Joy, Rejoicing

PED:

Soft-heartedness, Kindliness, Sympathy

Often in triad mettā ("active love" SnA 128), karuṇā ("preventive love," ibid.), muditā ("disinterested love," ibid.)

DPD:

mudita - pp. happy; glad; lit. became soft [√mud + ita]

muditā - fem. happiness (for); appreciation; sympathetic joy [√mud + ita + ā]

Far Enemies:

Envy, Jealousy; Schadenfreude; Discontent

Near Enemy:

Identification

My Translation:

Appreciative Joy

Muditā occurs in 41+ Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/mudita.htm>

Muditā occurs by itself in only 3 Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/muditaonly.htm>

# Upekkhā

Common Translations:

Equanimity, Even Mindedness

PED:

"looking on", hedonic neutrality or ~~indifference~~, zero point between joy & sorrow; disinterestedness, neutral feeling, equanimity. Sometimes equivalent to *adukkham-asukha* (without dukkha – without sukha).

DPD:

looking on; mental poise; mental balance; equanimity; equipoise; non-reactivity; composure  
[upa + √ikkh + ā] = near, upon + see. So literally "looking on"

Far Enemy:

Upset, Freaked Out, Over Exuberant; Repulsion

Near Enemy:

Apathy, Indifference

My Translation:

Equanimity

**Upekkhā** occurs in 228+ Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/upekkha.htm>, but this includes any reference to Upekkhā, whether as a Brahma Vihara, Jhāna factor, one of the 7 Factors of Awakening, or some other reference.

# The Longer Advice to Rāhula - MN 62

## MN 62

The Buddha advises Rahula to meditate like the 5 elements, on the 4 BVs, on ugliness & impermanence; then practice the 16 steps of mindfulness of breathing. Meditating on each BV overcomes its 'far enemy' (altho the phrase 'far enemy' is not used):

"Meditate on Mettā. for when you meditate on Mettā, any ill-will/hatred (*byāpādo*) will be given up."

*byāpādo* = dislike; ill-will; hatred; hostility; enmity; malevolence (towards);

lit. going wrong [vi + ā + √pad + \*a]

"Meditate on Karunā. for when you meditate on Karunā, any cruelty/viciousness (*vihesā*) will be given up."

*vihesā* = harm; cruelty; viciousness; brutality;

[vi + √his + \*ā]

"Meditate on Muditā. for when you meditate on Muditā, any discontent/dissatisfaction (*arati*) will be given up."

*arati* = dissatisfaction; dislike; discontent; aversion; boredom listlessness;

lit. non-delight [na + √ram + ti]

"Meditate on Upekkhā. for when you meditate on Upekkhā, any repulsion/irritation (*paṭigho*) will be given up."

*paṭigho* = aversion; repulsion; resistance; irritation; conflict;

lit. striking against [pati + √ghaṭ + a]

[Composite]

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RESULT: In [MN 62](#), practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas overcomes ill-will, cruelty, discontent, and repulsion.

## The Mettā Sutta – Sutta Nipata 1.8

This is what is to be done  
by one who is skilled in wholesomeness,  
and who seeks the state of peace:

Be able, straight, and upright,  
easy to speak to,  
mild, flexible, and humble,  
contented and low maintenance,  
not overly busy and living lightly,  
calm, and wise, and unassuming,  
not greedy with one's supporters.  
One would not do the slightest thing  
that wise people would criticize.

May all be at ease and safe,  
may all beings be happy!

Whatever living beings there are,  
moving or stationary, omitting none,  
whatever long or large,  
medium, short or small,  
seen or just unseen,  
living far away or near,  
those born and to-be-born,  
may all beings be happy!

One would not defraud another,  
or despise any being anywhere.  
One would not wish suffering on another  
because of anger or ill-will.

As a mother would protect with her life  
her own child, her only child,  
so too, for all beings  
one would cultivate a boundless heart.

With love for the whole world,  
one would cultivate a boundless heart,  
above, below, and across,  
unrestricted and friendly, without hostility.

Whether standing, walking, seated,  
or lying down, or free from drowsiness,  
one should sustain this mindfulness.  
This, they say, is divine abiding here.

*Avoiding views,  
virtuous, and endowed with insight,  
one would dispel greed for sense desires,  
never again returning to a womb.*

– Translated by Leigh Brasington

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RESULT: In the Mettā Sutta practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to the state of non-  
returner, if not full liberation (neither results in returning to a womb).

Literal Translation of the Metta Sutta: <https://leighb.com/mettasuttaliteral.htm>  
24 translations of the Metta Sutta side-by-side: <https://leighb.com/mettasuttas.htm>  
Sutta Central translations of [Snp 1.8](#)

# The Benefits of Mettā - AN 8.1 and AN 11.15

## AN 8.1

You can expect eight benefits when the heart's release by love has been cultivated, developed, and practiced, made a vehicle and a basis, kept up, consolidated, and properly implemented. What eight?

You sleep at ease.

You wake happily.

You don't have bad dreams.

Humans love you.

Non-humans love you.

Deities protect you.

You can't be harmed by fire, poison, or blade.

If you don't reach any higher, you'll be reborn in a realm of divinity.

A mindful one who develops limitless love weakens the fetters, seeing the ending of attachments.

Loving just one creature with a hateless heart makes you a true person. Sympathetic for all creatures, a noble one creates abundant merit.

The royal potentates conquered this land and traveled around sponsoring sacrifices—horse sacrifice, human sacrifice, the sacrifices of the 'casting of the yoke-pin', the 'royal soma drinking', and the 'unimpeded'.

These are not worth a sixteenth part of the mind developed with love, as all the constellations of stars aren't worth a sixteenth part of the moon's light.

Don't kill or cause others to kill, don't conquer or encourage others to conquer, with love for all sentient beings, you'll have no enmity for anyone."

## AN 11.15

You can expect eleven benefits when the heart's release by Mettā has been cultivated, developed, and practiced, made a vehicle and a basis, kept up, consolidated, and properly implemented:

You sleep at ease.

You wake happily.

You don't have bad dreams.

Humans love you.

Non-humans love you.

Deities protect you.

You can't be harmed by fire, poison, or blade.

Your mind quickly enters concentration.

Your face is clear and bright.

You don't feel lost when you die.

If you don't penetrate any higher, you'll be reborn in a divine realm.

# Mettā in Some Suttas without All 4 Brahma Viharas

## **DN 8: The Lion's Roar to the Naked Ascetic Kassapa** – *Mahāsīhanādasutta*

“One who develops a heart of *mettā*, free of enmity and ill will, realizes the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom in this very life, and lives having realized it with their own insight due to the ending of defilements.”

## **DN 12: With Lohicca** – *Lohiccasutta*

“Is someone who creates difficulties for others acting kindly or unkindly?”

“Unkindly, sir.”

“But does an unkind person have *mettā* in their heart or hostility?”

“Hostility, sir.”

“And when the heart is full of hostility, is there right view or wrong view?”

“Wrong view, worthy Gotama.”

## **MN 4: Fear and Dread** – *Bhayabheravasutta*

“Before my awakening—when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening—I too thought, 'Remote lodgings in the wilderness and the forest are challenging. It's hard to maintain seclusion and hard to find joy in solitude. The forests seem to rob the mind of a mendicant who isn't immersed in samādhi.' Then I thought, 'There are ascetics and brahmins full of ill will, with malicious intentions who frequent remote lodgings in the wilderness and the forest. Those ascetics and brahmins summon unskillful fear and dread due to the defilement of being hateful and having bad intention. But I don't frequent remote lodgings in the wilderness and the forest with hate and bad intentions. I have a heart full of *mettā*.' Seeing this heart full of *mettā* in myself, I felt even more unruffled about staying in the forest.”

## **MN 9: Right View** – *Sammādiṭṭhisutta*

“And what is the skillful? Avoiding killing living creatures, stealing, and sexual misconduct; avoiding speech that's false, divisive, harsh, or nonsensical; contentment, good will, and right view. This is called the skillful.

And what is the root of the skillful? Contentment, *mettā*, and Understanding. This is called the root of the skillful.”

## **MN 21: The Simile of the Saw** – *Kakacūpamasutta*

“if anyone criticizes..., if someone strikes....

‘My mind will not degenerate. I will blurt out no bad words. I will remain full of sympathy, with a heart of *mettā* and no secret hate.’”

## **MN 93: With Assalāyana** – *Assalāyanasutta*

## **MN 96: With Esukārī** – *Esukārīsutta*

“For all four castes/classes are capable of developing a heart of *mettā*, free of enmity and ill will.”

## **MN 128: Corruptions** – *Upakkilesasutta*

### **Dhp 5**

“Never is hatred laid to rest by hate, it’s laid to rest by love: this is an ancient teaching.”  
*Averena ca sammanti*: – Averena = kindness; friendliness; lit. not hatred [na + √vīr + \*a]  
[This famous quote doesn't actually contain the word *mettā*; it literally says, "Hate is laid to rest by non-hatred."]

### **SN 10.4: With Mañibhadda** – *Mañibhaddasutta*

“It’s always auspicious for the mindful; the mindful prosper in happiness. Each new day is better for the mindful, but they’re not freed from enmity. But someone whose mind delights in harmlessness, all day and all night, with *mettā* for all living creatures—they have no enmity for anyone.”

### **SN 20.3: Families** – *Kulasutta*

### **SN 20.4: Rice Pots** – *Okkhāsutta*

### **SN 20.5: A Spear** – *Sattisutta*

“You should train like this: ‘We will develop the heart’s release by *mettā*. We’ll cultivate it, make it our vehicle and our basis, keep it up, consolidate it, and properly implement it.’ That’s how you should train.”

### **SN 46.51: Nourishing** – *Āhārasutta*

“What starves the arising of ill will, or, when it has arisen, starves its increase and growth? There is the heart’s release by *mettā*. Frequent rational application of mind to that starves the arising of ill will, or, when it has arisen, starves its increase and growth.”

### **SN 46.62: Love** – *Mettāsutta*

“When *mettā* is developed and cultivated it’s very fruitful and beneficial. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated it leads to great benefit. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated it leads to great sanctuary from the yoke. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated it leads to great inspiration. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated it leads to dwelling in great ease.”

### **SN 47.19: At Sedaka** – *Sedakasutta*

“How do you look after others by looking after yourself? By development, cultivation, and practice of meditation. And how do you look after yourself by looking after others? By acceptance, harmlessness, *mettā*, and sympathy.”

[*khantiyā, avihimsāya, mettacittatāya, anudayatāya*]

### **AN 1.17**

“I do not see a single thing that prevents ill will from arising, or, when it has arisen, abandons it like the heart’s release by *mettā*. When you apply the mind rationally on the heart’s release by *mettā*, ill will does not arise, or, if it has already arisen, it’s given up.”

### **AN 1.53**

### **AN 1.54**

### **AN 1.55**

“If, monastics, a monastic cultivates/develops/focuses a mind of *mettā* even as long as a

finger-snap, they're called a monastic who does not lack absorption, who follows the Teacher's instructions, who responds to advice, and who does not eat the country's alms in vain. How much more so those who make much of it!"

### AN 1.261

"The foremost of my laywomen who dwell in *mettā* is *Sāmāvati*."

### AN 1.398

"If one develops the heart's release by *mettā*, even as long as a finger-snap they are called one who does not lack *mettā*. ... How much more so those who make much of it!"

### AN 1.508

"They develop the faculty of faith together with *mettā*."

### AN 3.68: Followers of Other Religions – *Aññatitthiyasutta*

"If they ask, 'What is the cause, what is the reason why hate doesn't arise, or if it's already arisen it's given up?' You should say: 'The heart's release by *mettā*.' When you apply the mind rationally on the heart's release by *mettā*, hate doesn't arise, or if it's already arisen it's given up. This is the cause, this is the reason why hate doesn't arise, or if it's already arisen it's given up.'"

### AN 3.69: Unskillful Roots – *Akusalamūlasutta*

"*Mettā* is a root of the skillful. When a loving person chooses to act by way of body, speech, or mind, that too is skillful. When a loving person, not overcome by hate, doesn't cause another to suffer under a false pretext—by execution or imprisonment or confiscation or condemnation or banishment—thinking 'I'm powerful, I want power', that too is skillful. And so these many skillful things are produced in them, born, sourced, originated, and conditioned by *mettā*."

### AN 4.67: The Snake King – *Ahirājasutta*

"I love the footless creatures,

*Apādakehi me mettāṃ,*

the two-footed I love,

*mettāṃ dvipādakehi me;*

I love the four-footed,

*Catuppadehi me mettāṃ,*

the many-footed I love.

*mettāṃ bahuppadehi me."*

[This sutta is about practicing *mettā* to prevent harm by snakes and other creatures.]

### AN 5.124: A Carer (2nd) – *Dutiyaupaṭṭhākasutta*

"A carer with five qualities is competent to care for a patient. What five? They're able to prepare medicine. They know what is suitable and unsuitable, so they remove what is unsuitable and supply what is suitable. They care for the sick out of *mettā*, not for the sake of material benefits. They're not disgusted to remove feces, urine, vomit, or spit. They're able to



## AN 9.20

“It would be more fruitful to undertake the training rules—not to kill living creatures, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or consume intoxicants—than to go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha with a confident heart. It would be more fruitful to develop a heart of *mettā*—even just as long as it takes to pull a cow’s udder—than to undertake the training rules. It would be more fruitful to develop the perception of impermanence—even for as long as a finger-snap—than to do all of these things, including developing a heart of *mettā* for as long as it takes to pull a cow’s udder.”

## AN 10.30: Kosala (2nd) – *Dutiyakosalasutta*

Then King Pasenadi entered the Buddha’s dwelling. He bowed with his head at the Buddha’s feet, caressing them and covering them with kisses, and pronounced his name: “Sir, I am Pasenadi, king of Kosala! I am Pasenadi, king of Kosala!”

“But great king, for what reason do you act with such utmost deference for this body, conveying your manifest *mettā*?”

"Because of my gratitude and thanks for the Buddha;  
he is ethical, possessing ethical conduct that is mature, noble, and skillful;  
he lives in the wilderness, frequenting remote lodgings in the wilderness and the forest;  
he is content with any kind of robes, almsfood, lodgings, and medicines and supplies for the sick;  
he is worthy of offerings dedicated to the gods, worthy of hospitality, worthy of a religious, donation, worthy of greeting with joined palms, and is the supreme field of merit for the world;  
he talks about self-effacement that helps open the heart: about fewness of wishes, contentment, seclusion, aloofness, arousing energy, ethics, concentration, wisdom, freedom, and the knowledge and vision of freedom;  
he enters the four absorptions when he wants, without trouble or difficulty;  
he has realized the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom in this very life, and lives having realized it with his own insight due to the ending of defilements."

## AN 10.44: At Kusinārā – *Kusinārasutta*

“establish your heart in *mettā* for your spiritual companions first.”  
[if one wants to accuse another]

## Dhp 368

“One who dwells in *mettā*,  
devoted to the Buddha’s teaching,  
would realize the peaceful state,  
the blissful stilling of fabrications.”  
["dwells in *mettā*" is *mettāvihārī*, lit. "*mettā* dwelling"]

## Iti 22: The Benefits of Love – *Mettasutta*

“One should practice only good deeds, whose happy outcome stretches ahead. Giving and

moral conduct, developing a mind of *mettā*: having developed these three things yielding happiness, that astute one is reborn in a happy, pleasing world.”

**Iti 27: The Meditation on Love – *Mettābhāvanāsutta***

“Of all the grounds for making worldly merit, none are worth a sixteenth part of the heart’s release by *mettā*. Surpassing them, the heart’s release by *mettā* shines and glows and radiates.

A mindful one who develops  
limitless *mettā*  
weakens the fetters,  
seeing the ending of attachments.

*Mettā* for just one creature with a hateless heart  
makes you a good person.  
Sympathetic for all creatures,  
a noble one creates abundant merit.

The royal potentates conquered this land  
and traveled around sponsoring sacrifices—  
horse sacrifice, human sacrifice,  
the sacrifices of the ‘casting of the yoke-pin’,  
the ‘royal soma drinking’, and the ‘unimpeded’.

These are not worth a sixteenth part  
of the mind developed with *mettā*,  
as starlight cannot rival the moon.

Don’t kill or cause others to kill,  
don’t conquer or encourage others to conquer,  
with *mettā* for all living creatures—  
you’ll have no enmity for anyone.”

**Iti 60: Grounds for Making Merit – *Puññakiriyavatthusutta***

“One should practice only good deeds,  
whose happy outcome stretches ahead.  
Giving and moral conduct,  
developing a mind of *mettā*:

having developed these  
three things yielding happiness,  
that astute one is reborn  
in a happy, pleasing world.”

**Iti 93: Fire – *Aggisutta***

“But as to those committed day and night  
to the teaching of the Buddha:

they extinguish the fire of greed,  
always perceiving the not-beautiful;

while those supreme persons  
extinguish the fire of hate with *mettā*;  
and the fire of delusion with the wisdom  
that leads to penetration.”

**Snp 2.1: Gems** – *Ratanasutta*

“So pay heed, all you [celestial] beings,  
have *mettā* for humankind,  
who day and night bring offerings;  
please protect them diligently.”

**Snp 3.5: With Māgha** – *Māghasutta*

“One free of greed, rid of anger,  
developing a heart of limitless *mettā*,  
spreads that limitlessness in every direction,  
ever diligent day and night.”

**Snp 4.16: With Sāriputta** – *Sāriputtasutta*

“In one's search for awakening—as accords with the teaching—  
...one should touch creatures firm or frail with *mettā*.”

**Thag 3.7: Vāraṇa** – *Vāraṇattheragāthā*

“Someone with a mind of *mettā*,  
sympathetic for all creatures:  
a person like that  
brims with much merit.”

**Thag 14.1: Revata of the Acacia Wood** – *Khadiravaniyarevatattheragāthā*

“I'm friend and comrade to all,  
sympathetic for all beings!  
I develop a mind of *mettā*,  
always delighting in harmlessness.”

**Thag 17.1: Phussa** – *Phussattheragāthā*

“Be easy to admonish,  
courteous in speech,  
and respect one another.

Have hearts of *mettā* and *karuṇā*,  
and please do keep your precepts.  
Be energetic, resolute,  
and always staunchly vigorous.”

# **Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Brahmin Students Discuss What is the Correct Path to the Company of Brahmā**

## **DN 13: The Three Knowledges**

Thus I have heard. Once the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans together with a large Saṅgha of five hundred bhikkhus when he arrived at a village of the Kosalan brahmins named Manasākaṭa. [Manasākaṭa is mentioned only in this sutta.] He stayed in a mango grove on a bank of the river Aciravatī to the north of Manasākaṭa.

Now at that time several very well-known well-to-do brahmins were residing in Manasākaṭa. They included the brahmins Caṅkī, Tārukkha, Pokkharasāti, Jānussoṇi, Todeyya, and others.

Then as the students Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja were going for a walk they began a discussion regarding what is the path and what is not the path.

Vāseṭṭha said this: “This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of Brahmā; namely, that explained by the brahmin Pokkharasāti.”

Bhāradvāja said this: “This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of Brahmā; namely, that explained by the brahmin Tārukkha.”

But neither was able to persuade the other. So Vāseṭṭha said to Bhāradvāja, “Bhāradvāja, the ascetic Gotama—a Sakyan, gone forth from a Sakyan family—is staying in a mango grove on a bank of the river Aciravatī to the north of Manasākaṭa. Come, let’s go to see him and ask him about this matter. As he answers, so we’ll remember it.”

## Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Students Vist the Buddha

So they went to the Buddha and exchanged greetings with him. When the greetings and polite conversation were over, they sat down to one side and Vāseṭṭha told him of their conversation, adding: “In this matter we have a dispute, a disagreement, a difference of opinion.”

“So, Vāseṭṭha, it seems that you say that the straight path is that explained by Pokkharasāti, while Bhāradvāja says that the straight path is that explained by Tārukkha. But what exactly is your disagreement about?”

“About what is the path and what is not the path, Ven. Gotama. Even though brahmins describe different paths—the Adhvaryu brahmins, the Taittirīya brahmins, the Chāndogya brahmins, the Cāndrāyaṇa brahmins, and the Bahvṛca brahmins—all of them still lead someone who practices them to the company of Brahmā.

It’s like a village or town that has many different roads nearby, yet all of them meet at that village. In the same way, even though brahmins describe different paths—the Adhvaryu brahmins, the Taittirīya brahmins, the Chāndogya brahmins, the Cāndrāyaṇa brahmins, and the Bahvṛca brahmins—all of them still lead someone who practices them to the company of Brahmā.”

# Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: None of the Bramins Have Seen Brahmā

“Do you say, ‘they lead someone’, Vāsetṭha?”

“I do, Ven. Gotama.”

“Do you say, ‘they lead someone’, Vāsetṭha?”

“I do, Ven. Gotama.”

“Do you say, ‘they lead someone’, Vāsetṭha?”

“I do, Ven. Gotama.”

“Well, of the brahmins who are proficient in the three Vedas, Vāsetṭha, is there even a single one who has seen Brahmā with their own eyes?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“Well, has even a single one of their teachers seen Brahmā with their own eyes?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“Well, has even a single one of their teachers’ teachers seen Brahmā with their own eyes?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“Well, has anyone back to the seventh generation of teachers seen Brahmā with their own eyes?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“Well, what of the ancient seers of the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas, namely Atṭhaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Vessāmitta, Yamadaggi, Aṅgīrasa, Bhāradvāja, Vāsetṭha, Kassapa, and Bhagu? They were the authors and propagators of the hymns. Their hymnal was sung and propagated and compiled in ancient times; and these days, brahmins continue to sing and chant it, chanting what was chanted and teaching what was taught. Did they say: ‘We know and see where Brahmā is or what way he lies’?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“So it seems that none of those brahmins have seen Brahmā with their own eyes, and not even the ancient seers claimed to know where he is. Yet the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas say: ‘We teach the path to the company of that which we neither know nor see. This is

the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of Brahmā.’

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? This being so, doesn’t their statement turn out to be unfounded?”

“Clearly that’s the case, Ven. Gotama.”

“Good, Vāsetṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

## **Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Simile of the Line of Blind Men**

Suppose there was a queue of blind men, each holding the one in front: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. In the same way, it seems to me that the brahmins' statement turns out to be comparable to a queue of blind men: the first one does not see, the middle one does not see, and the last one does not see. Their statement turns out to be a joke—mere words, vacuous and hollow.

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Do the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas see the sun and moon just as other folk do? And do they pray to them and exalt them, following their course from where they rise to where they set with joined palms held in worship?"

"Yes, Ven. Gotama."

"What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Though this is so, are the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas able to teach the path to the company of the sun and moon, saying: 'This is the only straight path, the direct route that delivers one who practices it to the company of the sun and moon'?"

"No, Ven. Gotama."

"So it seems that even though the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas see the sun and moon, they are not able to teach the path to the company of the sun and moon.

But it seems that even though they have not seen Brahmā with their own eyes, they still claim to teach the path to the company of that which they neither know nor see.

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? This being so, doesn't their statement turn out to be unfounded?"

"Clearly that's the case, Ven. Gotama."

"Good, Vāsetṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

# **Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Simile of the Most Beautiful Lady in the Land**

Suppose a man were to say, ‘Whoever the most beautiful lady in the land is, it is her that I want, her that I desire!’

They’d say to him, ‘Worthy man, that most beautiful lady in the land who you desire—do you know whether she’s an aristocrat, a brahmin, a peasant, or a menial?’ Asked this, he’d say, ‘No.’

They’d say to him, ‘Worthy man, that most beautiful lady in the land who you desire—do you know her name or clan? Whether she’s tall or short or medium? Whether her skin is black, brown, or tawny? What village, town, or city she comes from?’

Asked this, he’d say, ‘No.’

They’d say to him, ‘Worthy man, do you desire someone who you’ve never even known or seen?’

Asked this, he’d say, ‘Yes.’

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? This being so, doesn’t that man’s statement turn out to be unfounded?”

“Clearly that’s the case, Ven. Gotama.”

“In the same way, doesn’t the statement of those brahmins turn out to be unfounded?”

“Clearly that’s the case, Ven. Gotama.”

“Good, Vāsetṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

## Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Simile of the Staircase

Suppose a man was to build a staircase at the crossroads for climbing up to a stilt longhouse.

They'd say to him, 'Worthy man, that stilt longhouse that you're building a staircase for—do you know whether it's to the north, south, east, or west? Or whether it's tall or short or medium?'

Asked this, he'd say, 'No.'

They'd say to him, 'Worthy man, are you building a staircase for a longhouse that you've never even known or seen?'

Asked this, he'd say, 'Yes.'

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? This being so, doesn't that man's statement turn out to be unfounded?"

"Clearly that's the case, Ven. Gotama."

"In the same way, doesn't the statement of those brahmins turn out to be unfounded?"

"Clearly that's the case, Ven. Gotama."

"Good, Vāsetṭha. For it is impossible that they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

## Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Simile of the River Aciravatī

Suppose the river Aciravatī was full to the brim so a crow could drink from it. Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. Standing on the near shore, they'd call out to the far shore, 'Come here, far shore! Come here, far shore!'

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Would the far shore of the Aciravatī river come over to the near shore because of that man's call, request, desire, or expectation?"

"No, Ven. Gotama."

"In the same way, Vāsetṭha, the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas proceed having given up those things that make one a true brahmin, and having undertaken those things that make one not a true brahmin. Yet they say: 'We call upon Indra! We call upon Soma! We call upon Varuṇa! We call upon Īsāna! We call upon the Progenitor! We call upon Brahmā! We call upon Mahiddhi! We call upon Yama!'

So long as they proceed in this way it's impossible that they will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

Suppose the river Aciravatī was full to the brim so a crow could drink from it. Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. But while still on the near shore, their arms are tied tightly behind their back with a strong chain.

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Could that person cross over to the far shore?"

"No, Ven. Gotama."

"In the same way, the five kinds of sensual stimulation are called 'chains' and 'fetters' in the training of the Noble One. What five? Sights known by the eye, which are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing. Sounds known by the ear ... Smells known by the nose ... Tastes known by the tongue ... Touches known by the body, which are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing.

These are the five kinds of sensual stimulation that are called 'chains' and 'fetters' in the training of the Noble One. The brahmins proficient in the three Vedas enjoy these five kinds of sensual stimulation tied, infatuated, attached, blind to the drawbacks, and not understanding the escape. So long as they enjoy them it's impossible that they will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

Suppose the river Aciravatī was full to the brim so a crow could drink from it. Then along comes a person who wants to cross over to the far shore. But they'd lie down wrapped in cloth from head to foot.

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Could that person cross over to the far shore?"

"No, Ven. Gotama."

"In the same way, the five hindrances are called 'obstacles' and 'hindrances' and 'encasings' and 'shrouds' in the training of the Noble One. What five? The hindrances of sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. These five hindrances are called 'obstacles' and 'hindrances' and 'encasings' and 'shrouds' in the training of the Noble One.

The brahmins proficient in the three Vedas are obstructed, hindered, encased, and shrouded by these five hindrances. So long as they are so obstructed it's impossible that they will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

## Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: Encumbered With Possessions

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Have you heard that the brahmins who are elderly and senior, the teachers of teachers, say whether Brahmā is encumbered with possessions or not?”

“That he is not, Ven. Gotama.”

“Is his heart full of enmity or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is his heart full of ill will or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is his heart corrupted or not?”

“It is not.”

“Does he wield power or not?”

“He does.”

“What do you think, Vāsetṭha? Are the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas encumbered with possessions or not?”

“They are.”

“Are their hearts full of enmity or not?”

“They are.”

“Are their hearts full of ill will or not?”

“They are.”

“Are their hearts corrupted or not?”

“They are.”

“Do they wield power or not?”

“They do not.”

“So it seems that the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas are encumbered with possessions, but Brahmā is not. But would brahmins who are encumbered with possessions come together and converge with Brahmā, who isn’t encumbered with possessions?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha! It’s impossible that the brahmins who are encumbered with possessions will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā, who isn’t encumbered with possessions.

And it seems that the brahmins have enmity, ill will, corruption, and do not wield power, while Brahmā is the opposite in all these things. But would brahmins who are opposite to Brahmā in all things come together and converge with him?”

“No, Ven. Gotama.”

“Good, Vāseṭṭha! It’s impossible that such brahmins will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

But here the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas sink down where they have sat, only to drift apart, while imagining they’re crossing over to drier ground.

## **Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: The Students Request the Buddha to Teach Them the Path to Brahmā**

When he said this, Vāseṭṭha said to the Buddha, “I have heard, Ven. Gotama, that you know the path to company with Brahmā.”

“What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Is the village of Manasākaṭa nearby?”

“Yes it is.”

“What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Suppose a person was born and raised in Manasākaṭa. And as soon as they left the town some people asked them for the road to Manasākaṭa. Would they be slow or hesitant to answer?”

“No, Ven. Gotama. Why is that? Because they were born and raised in Manasākaṭa. They’re well acquainted with all the roads to the village.”

“Still, it’s possible they might be slow or hesitant to answer. But the Realized One is never slow or hesitant when questioned about the realm of Brahmā or the practice that leads to the realm of Brahmā. I understand Brahmā, the realm of Brahmā, and the practice that leads to the realm of Brahmā, practicing in accordance with which one is reborn in the realm of Brahmā.”

When he said this, Vāseṭṭha said to the Buddha, “I have heard, Ven. Gotama, that you teach the path to company with Brahmā. Please teach us that path and elevate this generation of brahmins.”

“Well then, Vāseṭṭha, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, Ven. sir,” replied Vāseṭṭha.

# **Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: Teaching the Path to Brahmā – Preliminaries**

“Herein a Tathagata arises in the world. He teaches the Dhamma that is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, possessing meaning and phrasing; he reveals the holy life that is fully complete and purified.

“A householder, or a householder’s child, or one born into some other family, hears the Dhamma. Having heard the Dhamma, they gain faith in the Tathagata. Endowed with such faith, they reflect: ‘The household life is crowded, a path of dust. Going forth is like the open air. It is not easy for one dwelling at home to lead the perfectly complete, perfectly purified holy life, bright as a polished conch. Let me then shave off my hair and beard, put on saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness.’

“After some time they abandon their accumulation of wealth, be it large or small; they abandon their circle of relatives, be it large or small; they shave off hair and beard, put on saffron robes, and go forth from the household life into homelessness.

“When one has thus gone forth, one lives restrained by the restraint of the Patimokkha, possessed of proper behavior and resort. Having taken up the rules of training, one trains oneself in them, seeing danger in the slightest faults. One comes to be endowed with wholesome bodily and verbal action, one's livelihood is purified, and one is possessed of moral discipline. One guards the doors of his sense faculties, is endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension, and is content with little. Endowed with these, one sits down, crosses the legs, holds the body erect, and sets up mindfulness before them.

“When one sees that the five hindrances are unabandoned within oneself, one regards that as a debt, as a sickness, as confinement in prison, as slavery, as a desert road.

“But when one sees that these five hindrances have been abandoned within oneself, one regards that as freedom from debt, as good health, as release from prison, as freedom from slavery, as a place of safety.

“When one sees that these five hindrances have been abandoned within himself, gladness arises. When one is gladdened, rapture arises. When one's mind is filled with rapture, one's body becomes tranquil; tranquil in body, one experiences happiness; being happy, one's mind becomes concentrated.

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The Preliminaries are from the Gradual Training found in approximately 30 suttas.

See this web page: <https://leighb.com/gtchart.htm>

and my free-to-download book on the Gradual Training: <https://leighb.com/gt>

# Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: Teaching the Path to Brahmā – The Four Brahma Viharas

One abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Mettā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Mettā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard without difficulty in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, though deep-felt *Mettā*. This is a path to company with Brahmā.

One abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Karunā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Karunā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard without difficulty in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, though deep-felt *Karunā*. This too is a path to company with Brahmā.

One abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Muditā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Muditā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard without difficulty in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, though deep-felt *Muditā*. This too is a path to company with Brahmā.

One abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Upekkhā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Upekkhā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard without difficulty in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, though deep-felt *Upekkhā*. This too is a path to company with Brahmā.

## Tevijja Sutta – DN 13: Conclusion

What do you think, Vāsetṭha? When a monastic meditates like this, are they encumbered with possessions or not?”

“They are not.”

“Is their heart full of enmity or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is their heart full of ill will or not?”

“It is not.”

“Is their heart corrupted or not?”

“It is not.”

“Do they wield power or not?”

“They do.”

“So it seems that that monastic is not encumbered with possessions, and neither is Brahmā. Would a monastic who is not encumbered with possessions come together and converge with Brahmā, who isn’t encumbered with possessions?”

“Yes, Ven. Gotama.”

“Good, Vāsetṭha! It’s quite possible that a monastic who is not encumbered with possessions will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā, who isn’t encumbered with possessions.

And it seems that that monastic has no enmity, ill will, corruption, and does wield power, while Brahmā is the same in all these things. Would a monastic who is the same as Brahmā in all things come together and converge with him?”

“Yes, Ven. Gotama.”

“Good, Vāsetṭha! It’s quite possible that that monastic will, when the body breaks up, after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.”

When he had spoken, Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja said to him, “Excellent, Ven. Gotama! Excellent! As if he were righting the overturned, or revealing the hidden, or pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes can see what’s there,

Ven. Gotama has made the teaching clear in many ways. We go for refuge to the Ven. Gotama, to the teaching, and to the monastic sangha. From this day forth, may the Ven. Gotama remember us as lay followers who have gone for refuge for life.”

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RESULT: In [DN 13](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas after keeping the precepts, guarding the senses, being content with little, and overcoming the hindrances leads to rebirth in the Brahmā Realm – for lay people.

[Early]

# Four Brahma Viharas - 8 Translations of Mettā Practice

‘Then, with his heart filled with loving-kindness, he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus he dwells suffusing the whole world, upwards, downwards, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with loving-kindness, abundant, unbounded, without hate or ill-will.

‘Just as if a mighty trumpeter were with little difficulty to make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this meditation by this liberation of the heart through loving-kindness he leaves nothing untouched, nothing unaffected in the sensuous sphere. This is the way to union with Brahmā.

Walshe, Maurice O’C. DN 13 - The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya (The Teachings of the Buddha) (p. 194). Wisdom Publications. Kindle Edition.

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He lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of Love, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of Love, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure.

Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard without difficulty in all the four directions; even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, though deep-felt Love.

T.W. Rhys Davids. DN 13 - [https://suttacentral.net/dn13/en/tw\\_rhysdavids](https://suttacentral.net/dn13/en/tw_rhysdavids)

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They meditate spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

Suppose there was a powerful horn blower. They’d easily make themselves heard in the four quarters. In the same way, when the heart’s release by love has been developed like this, any limited deeds they’ve done don’t remain or persist there. This is a path to company with Divinity.

Bhikkhu Sujato. DN 13 - <https://suttacentral.net/dn13/en/sujato>

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“He 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.

Nanamoli, Bhikkhu; Bodhi, Bhikkhu. MN 7 - The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya (The Teachings of the Buddha) (p. 118). Wisdom Publications. Kindle Edition.

<https://suttacentral.net/mn7/en/bodhi>

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He keeps pervading the first direction [the east] — as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth — with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu. AN 3.65 - <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.than.html>

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He lives having pervaded, with the thought of amity, one quarter; likewise the second; likewise the third; likewise the fourth; so above, below, and across; he dwells, having pervaded because of the existence in it of all living beings, everywhere, the entire world, with the great, exalted, boundless thought of amity that is free of hate or malice.

Soma Thera. AN 3.65 - <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.soma.html>

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“He dwells having pervaded one direction with a mind endowed with loving-kindness – likewise the second, the third, and the fourth. So above, below, around, and everywhere, to all as to himself, he dwells having pervaded the entire world with a mind endowed with loving-kindness – abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, and without aversion.

Suddhāso Bhikkhu. MN 7 - <https://suttacentral.net/mn7/en/suddhaso>

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He dwells, having suffused the first quarter with a mind of friendliness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; just so above, below, across; he dwells having suffused the whole world everywhere, in every way, with a mind of friendliness that is far-reaching, wide-spread, immeasurable, without enmity, without malevolence.

I.B. Horner. MN 7 - <https://suttacentral.net/mn7/en/horner>

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"He abides, having suffused with a mind of loving-kindness 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.

Nyanaponika Thera. MN 7 - <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.007.nypo.html>

# The Four Brahma Viharas - with Pālī

One abides with a mind  
*cetasā viharati*

pervading  
*pharivā*

a heart full of love  
*mettāsahagatena*

to one direction,  
*ekam disam*

and to the second,  
*Tathā dutiyam,*

and to the third,  
*Tathā tatiyam,*

and to the fourth,  
*Tathā catuttham.*

In the same way above, below,  
*Iti uddhamadho,*

across,  
*tiriyam,*

everywhere,  
*sabbadhi*

to all beings / all [like] oneself, (or: in every place) - maybe a textual corruption?  
*sabbattatāya, (or: sabbatthatāya) - note additional 'h' in 2nd version<sup>[2]</sup>*

one abides pervading  
*pharivā viharati*

a heart full of love  
*mettāsahagatena*

to the whole world  
*sabbāvantam lokam*

abundant,  
*vipulena*

expansive,  
*mahaggatena*

limitless,  
*appamāṇena*

free of enmity  
*averena*

and ill will.  
*abyāpajjena.*

Suppose there was  
*Seyyathāpi*

a powerful  
*balavā*

horn blower / trumpeter / conch blower.  
*saṅkhadhamo*

He would easily  
*appakasireneva*

make himself heard  
*viññāpeyya*

in the four quarters.  
*catuddisā.*

In the same way,  
*evameva kho,*

when the heart's release  
*cetovimuttiyā*

by love  
*mettāya*

has been developed  
*bhāvitāya*

like this,  
*evaṃ*

any limited  
*pamāṇakatam*

deeds one has done  
*kammaṃ*

don't remain  
*na taṃ tatrāvasissati*

or persist there.  
*na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati.*

This is  
*Ayampi kho*

a path  
*maggo*

to company  
*sahabyatāya*

with Brahma.  
*brahmānaṃ.*

Furthermore, a monastic meditates spreading a heart full of compassion ... “  
*Puna caparam bhikkhu karuṇāsahagatena cetasā ...pe...*

One meditates spreading a heart full of appreciative joy ...  
*muditāsahagatena cetasā ...pe...*

One meditates spreading a heart full of equanimity to one direction,  
*upekkhāsahagatena cetasā ekam disam pharivā viharati,*

and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth.  
*Tathā dutiyam. Tathā tatiyam. Tathā catuttham.*

In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, one spreads a heart full of equanimity to the whole world  
*Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantam lokam upekkhāsahagatena cetasā*

—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

—*vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharivā viharati.*

Suppose there was a powerful horn blower. He would easily make himself heard in the four quarters.

*Seyyathāpi balavā saṅkhadhamo appakasireneva catuddisā viññāpeyya;*

In the same way, when the heart's release by equanimity has been developed and cultivated like this, any limited deeds one has done don't remain or persist there.

*evameva kho evaṃ bhāvitāya upekkhāya cetovimuttiyā yaṃ pamāṇakataṃ kammaṃ na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati.*

This too is a path to company with Brahma.

*Ayampi kho brahmānaṃ saḥabyatāya maggo.*

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2. The following is from Bhikkhu Bodhi (personal correspondence): [\[Back\]](#)

This rendering, "to all as to himself," comes from Bhikkhu Nyanamoli. He based it on the word explanation in the Visuddhimagga, which offers two explanations:

*Sabbattatāyāti sabbesu hīnamajjhimukkaṭṭhamittasapattamajjhattādippabhedesu attatāya. "Ayaṃ parasatto"ti vibhāgaṃ akatvā attasamatāyāti vuttaṃ hoti. Atha vā sabbattatāyāti sabbena cittabhāgena īsakampi bahi avikkhipamānoti vuttaṃ hoti.*

Translation:

"*Sabbattatāya*: through 'selfness' in regard to all, classified as low, middle, and superior, as friends, foes, and neutral, etc. What is meant is: through their similarity to oneself, without making the distinction, 'This one is another being.' Or else: *Sabbattatāya* means with one's whole mind, not being the least bit distracted externally."

At present I do not agree with either of these explanations. Both, I believe, are based on a slight textual corruption. All editions now have *sabbattatāya*, which the Vism takes to be from *sabba + attā*. The first explanation is "all [like] oneself." The second is "with one's entire mind," where *attā* is identified with *citta*.

The correct reading should be *sabbatthatāya*. The '*ttha*' portion indicates place, as in *tattha* = there, *ettha* = here, *kattha* = where? etc. In this case, it is *sabba + ttha*. The [Digital Pāli Dictionary](#) gives: *sabbatthatā* fem. fact of being everywhere

So the line should be read: *sabbadhi sabbatthatāya* "everywhere, in every place ..."

We don't find this correct form in the standard passage on the brahmaviharas, but it occurs in the Udana, sutta no. 30, in a different context here:

*"... ye hi keci bhavā sabbadhi sabbatthatāya, sabbe te bhavā aniccā dukkhā vipariṇāmadhammā"ti.*

"Whatever states of existence there are, everywhere, in every place, they are all impermanent, dukkha, subject to change."

# The Simile of the Cloth - MN 7: Introduction

## MN 7: The Simile of the Cloth

A cloth that was dirty and soiled, no matter what dye is applied would look poorly dyed and impure in color. Why is that? Because of the impurity of the cloth. In the same way, when the mind is corrupt, a state of misery / a bad destination (lit. going badly) is to be expected.

A cloth that was pure and clean, no matter what dye is applied would look well dyed and pure in color. Why is that? Because of the purity of the cloth. In the same way, when the mind isn't corrupt, a good destination (lit. going well) is to be expected.

What are the corruptions (*upakkilesā*) of the mind?

Covetousness and immoral greed,  
ill will,  
anger,  
acrimony,  
disdain,  
contempt,  
jealousy,  
stinginess,  
deceit,  
deviousness,  
obstinacy,  
aggression,  
conceit,  
arrogance,  
vanity,  
and negligence are corruptions of the mind.

One who understands that these are corruptions of the mind gives them up. When they have understood these corruptions of the mind for what they are, and have given them up, they have experiential confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.

## The Simile of the Cloth - MN 7: The Jhāna Summary

When they have discarded, eliminated, released, given up, and relinquished to this extent, they find inspiration in the meaning and the teaching, and they find joy (*pāmojja*) connected with the teaching. When they're joyful, *pīti* springs up. When the mind is full of *pīti*, the body becomes tranquil (*passambhati*). When the body is tranquil, they feel *sukha*. And when feel *sukha*, the mind becomes immersed in *samādhi*.

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For much more on the Jhāna Summary, see [Right Concentration](#) chapter 16: The Jhāna Summary

# **The Simile of the Cloth - MN 7: The Four Brahma Viharas**

They meditate spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

They meditate spreading a heart full of compassion to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of compassion to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

They meditate spreading a heart full of appreciative joy to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of appreciative joy to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

They meditate spreading a heart full of equanimity to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of equanimity to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

# The Simile of the Cloth - MN 7: The End of the Āsavas

Knowing and seeing like this, their mind is freed from the defilements of sensuality,

*kāmāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati,*

becoming,

*bhavāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati,*

and ignorance.

*avijjāsavāpi cittaṃ vimuccati.*

When they're freed, they know they are freed. They understand: 'Birth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further here.' This is called a one who is bathed with the inner bathing."

[The sutta ends with a further discourse in verse pointing out that physical bathing is pointless for purifying dark deeds. Instead

For the pure in heart and clean of deed,

their vows will always be fulfilled.

It's here alone that you should bathe,

brahmin, making yourself a sanctuary for all creatures.]

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Note that *kāmāsavāpi* is *kāma* + *āsava* + *api* – and similar for *bhavāsavāpi* and *avijjāsavāpi*.

RESULT: In [MN 7](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to full liberation when combined with a pure mind and the *Jhānas*.

[Early]

# With the Kālāmas of Kesamutta - AN 3.65: Introduction

## AN 3.65: With the Kālāmas of Kesamutta

The Buddha visits town of the Kālāmas named Kesamutta. After polite greetings, the Kālāmas said to the Buddha,

“There are, sir, some ascetics and brahmins who come to Kesamutta. They explain and promote only their own doctrine, while they attack, badmouth, disparage, and smear the doctrines of others. Then some other ascetics and brahmins come to Kesamutta. They too explain and promote only their own doctrine, while they attack, badmouth, disparage, and smear the doctrines of others. So, sir, we’re doubting and uncertain: ‘I wonder who of these respected ascetics and brahmins speaks the truth, and who speaks falsehood?’”

“It is right, Kālāmas, for you to be doubting and uncertain. Please, Kālāmas, don’t go by oral transmission, don’t go by lineage, don’t go by testament, don’t go by canonical authority, don’t rely on logic, don’t rely on inference, don’t go by reasoned train of thought, don’t go by the acceptance of a view after deliberation, don’t go by the appearance of competence, and don’t think ‘The ascetic is our respected teacher.’ But when you know for yourselves: ‘These things are unskillful, blameworthy, criticized by wise people, and when you undertake them, they lead to harm and dukkha’, then you should give them up.

“And what leads to harm and dukkha? Greed, Hate, and Delusion.

“But when you know for yourselves: ‘These things are skillful, blameless, praised by wise people, and when you undertake them, they lead to welfare and happiness’, then you should acquire them and keep them.

“And what does not lead to harm and dukkha? Non-greed, absence of desire, moderation; non-hatred, kindness; wisdom, clear understanding.

“Then that noble disciple is rid of desire, rid of ill will, unconfused, aware, and mindful.

## With the Kālāmas of Kesamutta - AN 3.65: The Brahma Viharas

“They meditate pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Mettā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Mettā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

“They meditate pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Karunā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Karunā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will. spreading a heart full of compassion....

“They meditate pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Muditā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Muditā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

“They meditate pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Upekkhā*, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *Upekkhā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

# With the Kālāmas of Kesamutta - AN 3.65: The Results of Brahma Vihara Practice

“When that noble disciple has a mind that’s free of enmity and ill will, uncorrupted and purified, they’ve won four consolations in this very life.

- (1) ‘If there is another world, and if there is the fruit and result of good and bad deeds, it is possible that with the breakup of the body, after death, I will be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world.
- (2) ‘If there is no other world, and there is no fruit and result of good and bad deeds, still right here, in this very life, I maintain myself in happiness, without enmity and ill will, free of trouble.
- (3) ‘Suppose evil comes to one who does evil. Then, when I have no evil intentions toward anyone, how can suffering afflict me, since I do no evil deed?
- (4) ‘Suppose evil does not come to one who does evil. Then right here I see myself purified in both respects.’ This is the fourth consolation they’ve won.”

The Kālāmas are please and go for refuge to Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha.

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RESULT: In [AN 3.65](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to being reborn in a good place, a heavenly realm, if there is another world – for lay people. Whether or not doing evil leads to more evil, one is purified.

# Karunā in Suttas without All 4 Brahma Viharas

## **DN 14: The Great Discourse on the Lineage** – *Mahāpadānasutta*

Buddha Vipassī surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha, out of his compassion for sentient beings.

...

The monks are to teach for the welfare and happiness of the people, out of compassion for the world. [Late]

## **DN 20: The Great Congregation** – *Mahāsamayasutta*

Many devas come to see the Buddha including a host of the Devas of Love and Compassion. [Late]

[All of the following are quotes from the suttas; my comments are in brackets like this.]

## **MN 26: The Noble Quest** – *Pāsarāsisutta* [Early]

## **MN 85: With Prince Bodhi** – *Bodhirājakumārasutta*

## **SN 6.1: The Appeal of Brahma** – *Brahmayācanasutta* [Late]

“I surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha, because of my compassion for sentient beings. And I saw sentient beings with little dust in their eyes, and some with much dust in their eyes; with keen faculties and with weak faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach. ... I saw sentient beings with little dust in their eyes, and some with much dust in their eyes.”

## **MN 86: With Aṅgulimāla** – *Aṅgulimālasutta*

“[Aṅgulimāla] venerated the Holy One’s feet, and asked him for the going forth right away.

Then the Buddha, the compassionate great seer,  
the teacher of the world with its gods,  
said to him, 'Come, monk!'  
And with that he became a monk.”

## **SN 16.3: Like the Moon** – *Candūpamāsutta*

“they teach others because of the natural excellence of the teaching, out of compassion, kindness, and care.”

[*kāruṇṇiṃ / anuddayaṃ / anukampaṃ*]

[compassion / kindness / care]

[ more in next chapter ]

## **SN 46.63: Compassion** – *Karuṇāsutta*

“When compassion is developed and cultivated it’s very fruitful and beneficial.

And how is compassion developed and cultivated so it's very fruitful and beneficial?

Here one cultivates the seven factors of awakening, accompanied by the perception/concept

of compassion, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release.”

**AN 5.161: Getting Rid of Resentment (1st) – Paṭhamaāghātapāṭivīnayasutta**

“You should develop love for a person you resent.

You should develop compassion for a person you resent.

You should develop equanimity for a person you resent.

You should disregard a person you resent, paying no attention to them.

You should focus on the ownership of karma regarding that individual: ‘This venerable is the owner of their karma and heir to their karma. Karma is their womb, their relative, and their refuge. They shall be the heir of whatever karma they do, whether good or bad.’ That’s how to get rid of resentment for that individual.”

**AN 5.162: Getting Rid of Resentment (2nd) – Dutīyāāghātapāṭivīnayasutta**

“You should ignore that person’s impure behavior and think of them with nothing but compassion, kindness, and care: ‘Oh, may this person give up bad conduct so they’re not reborn in a bad place.’”

[*kāruṇṇam / anuddayam / anukampam*]

[compassion / kindness / care]

**AN 5.166: Cessation – Nirodhasutta**

“How can you just watch while someone is being harassed? Don’t you have any compassion for someone who is being harassed?”

**AN 6.54: About Dhammika – Dhammikasutta**

“These six famous teachers,  
harmless ones of the past,  
free of putrefaction-stench, compassionate,  
gone beyond the fetter of sensuality.”

**Snp 5.6: The Questions of Dhotaka – Dhotakamāṇavapucchā**

“Teach me out of compassion, ...”

**Thag 16.8: Aṅgulimāla – Aṅgulimālattheragāthā**

“Then the Buddha, the compassionate great seer,  
the teacher of the world with its gods,  
said to him, ‘Come, monk!’  
And with that he became a monk.”

**Thag 17.1: Phussa – Phussattheragāthā**

“Have hearts of love and compassion,  
and please do keep your precepts.”

**Thag 19.1: Tālapuṭa – Tālapuṭattheragāthā**

“the great sage of compassion”

# Like the Moon - SN 16.3: The Attitude to Have When Teaching the Dhamma

SN 16.3: Like the Moon

At Savatthī. “Bhikkhus, you should approach families like the moon— drawing back the body and mind, always acting like newcomers, without impudence towards families. Just as a man looking down an old well, a precipice, or a steep riverbank would draw back the body and mind, so too, bhikkhus, should you approach families.

...

One teaches the Dhamma to others with the thought: ‘The Dhamma is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise. Oh, may they listen to the Dhamma from me! Having listened, may they understand the Dhamma! Having understood, may they practise accordingly!’ Thus one teaches the Dhamma to others because of the intrinsic excellence of the Dhamma; one teaches the Dhamma to others from compassion and sympathy, out of tender concern.<sup>[3]</sup> Such a one’s teaching of the Dhamma is pure.

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3. *Kāruṇṇaṃ paṭicca anudayaṃ paṭicca anukampaṃ upādāya*. I generally translate both *karuṇā* (of which *kāruṇṇaṃ* is a cognate) and *anukampā* as “compassion.” This is usually successful as the two seldom occur together, but the present passage is a rare exception; thus I use “tender concern” as a makeshift for *anukampā*. Spk glosses *anudaya* with *rakkhaṇabhāva* (the protective state) and *anukampā* with *muducittatā* (tender-heartedness), and says that both terms are synonymous with *kāruṇṇaṃ*. – Bhikkhu Bodhi [[Back](#)]

I translate this as "one teaches the Dhamma to others out of compassion, kindness, and care."  
– Leigh Brasington

# Muditā in Suttas without All 4 Brahma Viharas

## **SN 46.64: Rejoicing** – *Muditāsutta*

When *muditā* is developed and cultivated it's very fruitful and beneficial.

And how is *muditā* developed and cultivated so it's very fruitful and beneficial?

Here one cultivates the seven factors of awakening, accompanied by the perception/concept of *muditā*, which is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release.

## **AN 3.95: Assemblies** – *Parisāsutta*

In the same way, when people are in harmony, appreciating each other, without quarreling, blending like milk and water, and regarding each other with kindly eyes, they brim with much merit. At that time the people live in a Brahma Vihara, that is, the heart's release by *muditā*.

When they are joyful (*pamuditassa*), *pīti* arises, from *pīti* – tranquility, from tranquility – *sukha*, from *sukha* – *samādhi*.<sup>[4]</sup>

## **AN 6.113: Discontent** – *Aratisutta*

Bhikkhus, there are these three things. What three? (1) discontent, (2) harmfulness, and (3) conduct contrary to the Dhamma. These are three things. Three [other] things are to be developed for abandoning these three things. What three? (4) *Muditā* is to be developed for abandoning discontent. (5) Harmlessness is to be developed for abandoning harmfulness. (6) Conduct in accordance with the Dhamma is to be developed for abandoning conduct contrary to the Dhamma. These three things are to be developed for abandoning the former three things.

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[There are Pāli words that include *mudita* (note no long ā; it's different word from *muditā*) as part of them]:

## **Snp 3.11: About Nālaka** – *Nālakasutta*

The seer Asita in his daily meditation saw the bright-clad gods of the host of Thirty and their lord Sakka joyfully celebrating, waving streamers in exuberant exaltation.

Seeing the gods rejoicing (*muditamane*), elated, he paid respects and said this there:

“Why is the community of gods in such excellent spirits?

Why take up streamers and whirl them about?

...”

“The being intent on awakening, a peerless gem, has been born in the human realm for the sake of welfare and happiness,

in Lumbinī, a village in the Sakyan land.  
That's why we're so happy, in such excellent spirits.  
..."

[end of sutta quotes]

*muditamane* - with gladdened mind; having a happy heart; elated  
*mudita* - happy; glad (note no long ā)  
*mane* - having such a mind

**More example words:**

*pamudita* - pleased; delighted; happy

*pamuditassa* - pleased; delighted; happy

*muditassa* - happy; glad; lit. became soft

*sammudita* - pleased; delighted; happy (with) [*sam* + √*mud* + *ita*]

*ālayasammudita* - pleased with attachment; happy with clinging

*anupasamasammudita* - happy with excitement; not pleased with calm [anupasama + sammudita]

*bhavasammudita* - pleased with being; enjoying existence; happy to be

*dhammasammudita* - pleased with mental phenomena; enjoying thinking

*kāmasammudita* - pleased with sensual pleasure; delighted with sensual desire

*mānasammudita* - pleased with pride; happy with conceit [*māna* + *sammudita*]

*taṇhāsammuditaassa* - finding joy in craving

*upādānasammudita* - happy with grasping; pleased with clinging [*upādāna* + *sammudita*]

*rūpasammudita* - pleased with forms; enjoying sights; happy with shapes; happy with material form; pleased with materiality

*vedanāsammudita* - happy with feeling; pleased with felt sensation [*vedanā* + *sammudita*]

*saññāsammudita* - happy with perception; pleased with felt perception

*saṅkhārāsammudita* - happy with fabrications; pleased with felt concoctions

Here are two suttas that contain a number of examples of some of the words above:

**SN 44.6: With Sāriputta and Koṭṭhita (4th)** – *Catutthasāriputtakotṭhikasutta*

**AN 4.128: Incredible Things About a Tathāgata (2nd)** – *Dutiyatathāgataacchariyasutta*

(To see the examples of these words in Pāli, use this [information to make the Pāli visible](#).)

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4. This sentence is the Jhāna Summary, which appears in 32 suttas:

<https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/jhanasummary.htm>. Often in the Jhāna Summary, the jhānas arise dependent on the abandoning of the hindrances. But here they arise dependent on *muditā*. For much more on the Jhāna Summary, see **Right Concentration** chapter 16: The Jhāna Summary [[Back](#)]

# Upekkhā in Some Suttas without All 4 Brahma Viharas

***Upekkhā* appears often in the description of the 3rd and 4th Jhānas (118+ Suttas):**

"Further, with the fading away of rapture, one dwells in equanimity, mindful and clearly comprehending, and experiences happiness with the body. Thus one enters and dwells in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare: 'One dwells happily with equanimity and mindfulness.'

Further, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and grief, one enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which is neither pleasant nor painful and contains mindfulness fully purified by equanimity."

***Upekkhā* is often listed as one of the 7 Factors of Awakening (126+ Suttas).** Sometimes more information is given:

**DN 22, MN 10: The 4 Establishments of Mindfulness – *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*:**

"When one has the awakening factor of equanimity in them, they understand: 'I have the awakening factor of equanimity in me.' When they don't have the awakening factor of equanimity in them, they understand: 'I don't have the awakening factor of equanimity in me.' They understand how the awakening factor of equanimity that has not arisen comes to arise; and how the awakening factor of equanimity that has arisen becomes fulfilled by development."

***Upekkhā* is discussed in some suttas as other than 3rd/4th Jhāna or one of the 7 Factors of Awakening:**

*Upekkhā* shows up in multiple lists beside the 7 Factors of Awakening:

**DN 33: Chanting together – *Saṅgītisutta* [Late]**

**SN 48.31: The Pleasure Faculty – *Uppatipāṭikasutta***

**SN 48.40: Irregular Order – *Paṭhamakusalasutta***

"Five faculties: pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, and equanimity."

**SN 36.22: The Explanation of the Hundred and Eight – *Aṭṭhasatasutta***

"What are the five feelings? The faculties of pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, and equanimity."

**MN 115: Many Elements – *Bahudhātukasutta***

"There are these six elements: the elements of pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, equanimity, and ignorance."

[All of the following are quotes from the suttas; my comments are in brackets like this.]

## **DN 21: Sakka's Questions** – *Sakkapañhasutta*

For what reason do I declare there are two kinds of equanimity? Well, should you know of an equanimity: 'When I cultivate this kind of equanimity, unskillful qualities grow, and skillful qualities decline.' You should not cultivate that kind of equanimity. Whereas, should you know of an equanimity: 'When I cultivate this kind of equanimity, unskillful qualities decline, and skillful qualities grow.' You should cultivate that kind of equanimity. And that which is free of *vitakka* and *vicāra* is better than that which still involves *vitakka* and *vicāra*. That's why I said there are two kinds of equanimity.

["*vitakka* and *vicāra*" are best translated as "thinking and examining."  
[the "wrong" kind of equanimity sounds like the near enemy of equanimity.]

## **MN 28: The Longer Simile of the Elephant's Footprint** – *Mahāhatthipadopamasutta* [Late]

'[Now if dukkha arises] my energy shall be roused up and unflagging, my mindfulness established and lucid, my body tranquil and undisturbed, and my mind immersed in samādhi and unified. For this is how the instructions of the Buddhas are followed.' If, while recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, and the Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on the skillful becomes stabilized in them, they're happy with that. At this point, much has been done by that person.

## **MN 54: With Potaliya the Householder** – *Potaliyasutta*

'The Buddha said that sensual pleasures give little gratification and much suffering and distress, and they are all the more full of drawbacks.' Having truly seen this with right understanding, one shuns equanimity based on diversity and develops only the equanimity based on unity, where all kinds of grasping to the worldly pleasures of the flesh cease without anything left over.

## **MN 101: At Devadaha** – *Devadahāsutta*

And how is exertion and striving fruitful? It's when one doesn't bring suffering upon themselves; and one doesn't forsake legitimate pleasure, but they're not besotted with that pleasure. They understand: 'When I actively strive, I become dispassionate towards this source of suffering. But when I develop equanimity, I become dispassionate towards this other source of suffering.' So they either actively strive or develop equanimity as appropriate. Through active striving they become dispassionate towards that specific source of suffering, and so that suffering is worn away. Through developing equanimity they become dispassionate towards that other source of suffering, and so that suffering is worn away.

**MN 103: Is This What You Think Of Me? – *Kintisutta***

[Late]

Suppose you think this: ‘I will be troubled and the other individual will be hurt, for they’re irritable and acrimonious. And they hold fast to their views, refusing to let go. I cannot draw them away from the unskillful and establish them in the skillful.’ Don’t underestimate the value of equanimity regarding such an individual.

**MN 106: Conducive to the Imperturbable – *Āneñjasappāyasutta***

One who practices like this: ‘It might not be, and it might not be mine. It will not be, and it will not be mine. I am giving up what exists, what has come to be.’ In this way one gains equanimity. one doesn’t approve, welcome, or keep clinging to that equanimity. So their consciousness doesn’t have that as support and fuel for grasping. One free of grasping becomes awakened.

**MN 118: Mindfulness of Breathing – *Ānāpānassatisutta***

**SN 54.10: With Kimbila – *Kimilasutta***

**SN 54.13: With Ānanda (1st) – *Paṭhamaānandasutta***

Whenever one practices breathing while observing impermanence, or observing fading away, or observing cessation, or observing letting go—at that time one meditates observing phenomena—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of covetousness and displeasure for the world. Having seen with wisdom the giving up of covetousness and displeasure, one watches over closely with equanimity.

[observing impermanence, observing fading away, observing cessation, and observing letting go are steps 13, 14, 15 and 16 of the 16 Steps of Mindfulness of Breathing]

**MN 137: The Analysis of the Six Sense Fields – *Salāyatanavibhaṅgasutta***

[This sutta discusses the relation of the six sense fields to emotional and cognitive processes.]

[see next chapter]

**MN 138: A Summary Recital and its Analysis – *Uddesavibhaṅgasutta***

When consciousness follows after that equanimity [of the 3rd or 4th Jhāna]—tied, attached, and fettered to gratification in that bliss with equanimity—the mind is said to be stuck internally.

When consciousness does not follow after that equanimity [of the 3rd or 4th Jhāna]—not tied, attached, and fettered to gratification in that bliss with equanimity—the mind is said to be not stuck internally.

**MN 152: The Development of the Faculties** – *Indriyabhāvanāsutta* [Early - possibly]

“And how, Ānanda, is there the supreme development of the faculties in the training of the Noble One? When one sees a sight with their eyes [sound with their ears... odor with their nose... flavor with their tongue... touch with their body... mind-object with their mind], in them arises what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable. One understands: ‘What is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and what is both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That’s conditioned, crude, and dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity.’ Then the agreeable, the disagreeable, and the both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. It’s like how a person with clear eyes might open their eyes then shut them; or might shut their eyes then open them. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable that arose in them cease, and equanimity becomes stabilized. In the training of the Noble One this is called the supreme development of the faculties regarding [objects] known by the eye/ear/nose/tongue/body/mind.”

**SN 35.94: Untamed, Unguarded** – *Adantaaguttasutta*

Don’t be intoxicated by a pleasant touch,  
and don’t tremble at a painful touch.  
Look with equanimity at the duality  
of pleasant and painful contacts,  
without favoring or opposing anything.

**SN 36.31: Not of the Flesh** – *Nirāmisasutta*

And what is equanimity even more spiritual than that not of the flesh [equanimity of 4th Jhāna]? When one who has ended the defilements reviews their mind free from greed, hate, and delusion, equanimity arises. This is called equanimity even more spiritual than that not of the flesh.

**SN 56.34: Clothes** – *Celasutta*

“Bhikkhus, if one’s clothes or head were ablaze, what should be done about it?”

“Venerable sir, if one’s clothes or head were ablaze, to extinguish one’s blazing clothes or head one should arouse extraordinary desire, make an extraordinary effort, stir up zeal and enthusiasm, be unremitting, and exercise mindfulness and clear comprehension.”

“Bhikkhus, one might look on equanimously at one’s blazing clothes or head, paying no attention to them, but so long as one has not made the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths

as they really are, in order to make the breakthrough one should arouse extraordinary desire, make an extraordinary effort, stir up zeal and enthusiasm, be unremitting, and exercise mindfulness and clear comprehension. What four? The noble truth of dukkha ... its origin ... its cessation ... the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of dukkha.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, an exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is dukkha.’ ... its origin ... its cessation ... An exertion should be made to understand: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of dukkha.’”

### **AN 2.72, AN 2.75**

“There are these two kinds of happiness. What two? Happiness with pleasure and happiness with equanimity. These are the two kinds of happiness. The better of these two kinds of happiness is happiness with equanimity.”

[these suttas, along with the description of the third jhāna ('One dwells happily with equanimity and mindfulness.') indicate that *upekkhā* is not always emotionally neutral – there definitely can be happy equanimity]

### **AN 3.27: You Should be Disgusted – *Jigucchitabbasutta***

Who is the individual you should regard with equanimity, and not associate with, accompany, or attend? It's an individual who is irritable and bad-tempered. Even when lightly criticized they lose their temper, becoming annoyed, hostile, and hard-hearted, and they display annoyance, hate, and bitterness. ... You should regard such an individual with equanimity, and you shouldn't associate with, accompany, or attend them. Why is that? Thinking, ‘They might abuse or insult me, or do me harm.’ That's why you should regard such an individual with equanimity, and you shouldn't associate with, accompany, or attend them.

### **AN 3.102: Basis – *Nimittasutta***

One committed to the higher mind should focus on three bases from time to time: the basis of concentration (*samādhi*), the basis of exertion (*paggaha*), and the basis of equanimity (*upekkhā*).

If one dedicated to the higher mind focuses solely on the basis of *samādhi*, it's likely their mind will incline to laziness. If one focuses solely on the basis of exertion, it's likely their mind will incline to restlessness. If one focuses solely on the basis of equanimity, it's likely their mind won't properly become immersed in *samādhi* for the ending of defilements.

But when one dedicated to the higher mind focuses from time to time on the basis of *samādhi*, the basis of exertion, and the basis of equanimity, their mind becomes pliable,

workable, and radiant, not brittle, and has become rightly immersed in *samādhi* for the ending of defilements.

**AN 6.85: Peace** – *Sītibhāvasutta*

One with six qualities can realize supreme peace. What six? It's when one keeps their mind in check when they should. They exert their mind when they should. They encourage the mind when they should. They watch over the mind with equanimity when they should. They have excellent convictions. They delight in nibbana. One with these six qualities can realize supreme peace.

**SnP 1.3: The Rhinoceros Horn** – *Khaggavisāṇasutta* {Early}

When you've put pleasure and pain behind you,  
and former happiness and sadness,  
and gained equanimity serene and pure,  
live alone like a horned rhino.

[some scholars think this could be a very early reference to the 4th jhāna since the first 3 lines above closely match the standard description of the 4th jhāna]

**SnP 4.16: With Sāriputta** – *Sāriputtasutta*

Eyes downcast, not footloose,  
devoted to absorption (*jhāna*), one would be very wakeful.  
Grounded in equanimity, serene,  
one should cut off worrisome habits of thought.

# The Analysis of the Six Sense Fields - MN 137: Their Relation to Emotional and Cognitive Processes

## MN 137: The Analysis of the Six Sense Fields

Seeing a sight with the eye, one is preoccupied with a sight that's a basis for happiness or sadness or equanimity. Hearing a sound with the ear ... Smelling an odor with the nose ... Tasting a flavor with the tongue ... Feeling a touch with the body ... Becoming conscious of an idea with the mind ....

...

And in this context what are the six kinds of worldly equanimity? When seeing a sight with the eye, equanimity arises for the unlearned ordinary person—a foolish ordinary person who has not overcome their limitations and the results of deeds, and is blind to the drawbacks. Such equanimity does not transcend the sight. That's why it's called worldly equanimity. When hearing a sound with the ear ... When smelling an odor with the nose ... When tasting a flavor with the tongue ... When feeling a touch with the body ... When knowing an idea with the mind, equanimity arises for the unlearned ordinary person—a foolish ordinary person who has not overcome their limitations and the results of deeds, and is blind to the drawbacks. Such equanimity does not transcend the idea. That's why it's called worldly equanimity. These are the six kinds of worldly equanimity.

And in this context what are the six kinds of renunciate equanimity? When you've understood the impermanence of sights—their perishing, fading away, and cessation—equanimity arises as you truly understand through right understanding that both formerly and now all those sights are impermanent, suffering, and perishable. Such equanimity transcends the sight. That's why it's called renunciate equanimity. When you've understood the impermanence of sounds ... smells ... tastes ... touches ... ideas—their perishing, fading away, and cessation—equanimity arises as you truly understand through right understanding that both formerly and now all those ideas are impermanent, suffering, and perishable. Such equanimity transcends the idea. That's why it's called renunciate equanimity. These are the six kinds of renunciate equanimity.

...

Therein, by relying on the six kinds of renunciate equanimity, give up the six kinds of worldly equanimity. Therein, by relying on the six kinds of renunciate equanimity, give up the six kinds of renunciate happiness.

There is equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity, and equanimity that is unified, based on unity.

And what is equanimity based on diversity? There is equanimity towards sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. This is equanimity based on diversity.

And what is equanimity based on unity? There is equanimity based on the dimensions of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception. This is equanimity based on unity.

Therein, relying on equanimity based on unity, give up equanimity based on diversity. That's how it is given up.

Relying on *atammayatā*, give up equanimity based on unity. That's how it is given up. 'Therein, relying on this, give up that.'

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A literal analysis of the word *atammayatā* gives us: *a* (not), *tam* (that), *maya* (to make, create, fabricate, or produce), and *tā* (the state of being or suffix “-ness”). Thus, *atammayatā* is “the state of not being made up by, or made up from, that (thing or condition).” The most common translations seem to be "non-identification" or "determined". But from the contexts above and the literal meaning, these are rather poor choices. *Atammayatā* is the quality of experience prior to, or without, subject/object duality. Since *atammayatā* is the state of not being made up by/from that (thing or condition), it can be simply translated as "non-concocting/non-fashioning any state". It's the state of experiencing the world raw – prior to conceptualizing sensory input – as discussed in the chapters **Snp 5.1 - Ajita** and **Experiencing the World Raw** in my book **[On The Way To The Far Shore](#)**.

The process of passing beyond equanimity based on diversity – infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception – and arriving at a non-dual state (*atammayatā*) is very similar to what is found in **MN 121**: The Shorter Discourse on Emptiness – *Cūḷasuññātasutta*, where the Buddha teaches passing beyond these 4 Immaterial State to the signless concentration of mind (*animitta cetosamādhī*).

## **More Suttas Containing all Four Brahma Viharas**

# The Shorter Discourse at Assapura - MN 40: Practice in the Way that is Proper for an Ascetic

MN 40: The Shorter Discourse at Assapura

The Buddha addresses the monks:

“How does a monastic practice in the way that is proper for an ascetic?”

“Any monastic who has given up covetousness, ill will, irritability, acrimony, disdain, contempt, jealousy, stinginess, deviousness, deceit, corrupt wishes, and wrong view is practicing in the way that is proper for an ascetic, I say. And that is due to giving up these stains, defects, and dregs of an ascetic, these grounds for rebirth in places of loss, to be experienced in bad places.

“They see themselves purified from all these bad, unskillful qualities. Seeing this, joy (*pāmojja*) springs up. Being joyful, rapture (*pīti*) springs up. When the mind is full of rapture, the body becomes tranquil (*passambhati*). When the body is tranquil, they feel *sukha*. And when blissful, the mind becomes immersed in *samādhi*.

“They meditate spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

“They meditate spreading a heart full of compassion ...

“They meditate spreading a heart full of appreciative joy ...

“They meditate spreading a heart full of equanimity ....

“In the same way, suppose someone has gone forth from the lay life to homelessness—whether from a family of aristocrats, brahmins, peasants, or menials—and has arrived at the teaching and training proclaimed by a Realized One. Having developed love, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity in this way they gain inner peace. Because of that inner peace they are practicing the way proper for an ascetic, I say.

“And suppose someone has gone forth from the lay life to homelessness—whether from a family of aristocrats, brahmins, peasants, or workers—and they realize the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom in this very life. And they live having realized it with their own insight due to the ending of defilements. They’re an ascetic because of the ending of defilements.”

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RESULT: In [MN 40](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to inner peace. Additionally, if one can realize the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom, they can end the āsavas, thereby becoming fully awakened.

# The Wealthy Citizen - MN 52: 4 Jhānas, 4 Brahma Viharas, 3 Immaterial States

## MN 52: The Wealthy Citizen

A wealthy merchant asks Ānanda, “Is there one thing that has been rightly explained by the Blessed One such that practicing it, a diligent, keen, and resolute monastic’s mind is freed, their āsavas are ended, and they arrive at the supreme sanctuary from the yoke?”

“There is, householder: when a monastic practices the first jhāna, if they reflect: ‘Even this first jhāna is fabricated and produced by intentions’ (*abhisāṅkhatam abhisañcetaṃ*). They understand: ‘But whatever is fabricated and produced by intentions is impermanent and liable to cessation.’ Abiding in that they attain the ending of the āsavas. If however, they don’t attain the ending of āsavas, with the ending of the five lower fetters they’re reborn spontaneously, because of their passion and love for that meditation. They are awakened there, and are not liable to return from that world. This is one thing that has been rightly explained by the Blessed One: practice which is diligent, keen, and resolute, frees one’s mind, āsavas are ended, and they arrive at the supreme sanctuary from the yoke.

“Furthermore, practicing the second jhāna, ... third jhāna, ... fourth jhāna .... They are awakened there, and are not liable to return from that world.

“Furthermore, abiding pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *Mettā ...*, *Karunā ...*, *Muditā ...*, *Upekkhā ...*. Then they reflect: ‘Even this heart’s release by *Mettā/Karunā/Muditā/Upekkhā* is fabricated and produced by intentions.’ They understand: ‘But whatever is fabricated and produced by intentions is impermanent and liable to cessation.’ Abiding in that they attain the ending of the āsavas. If however, they don’t attain the ending of āsavas, with the ending of the five lower fetters they’re reborn spontaneously, because of their passion and love for that meditation. They are awakened there, and are not liable to return from that world. This is one thing that has been rightly explained by the Blessed One: practice which is diligent, keen, and resolute, frees one’s mind, āsavas are ended, and they arrive at the supreme sanctuary from the yoke.

“Furthermore, by passing entirely beyond bodily sensations, by the disappearance of all sense of resistance and by non-attraction to the perception of diversity, seeing that space is limitless, one reaches and remains in Experience of Limitless Space. ... Limitless Consciousness. ... No-thingness. Then they reflect: ‘Even this attainment of the Experience of Limitless Space/Limitless Consciousness/No-thingness is fabricated and produced by intentions.’ They understand: ‘But whatever is fabricated and produced by intentions is impermanent and liable to cessation.’ Abiding in that they attain the ending of the āsavas. If however, they don’t attain the ending of āsavas, with the ending of the five lower fetters they’re reborn spontaneously, because of their passion and love for that meditation. They are awakened there, and are not liable to return from that world. This is one thing that has been

rightly explained by the Blessed One: practice which is diligent, keen, and resolute, frees one's mind, āsavas are ended, and they arrive at the supreme sanctuary from the yoke.”

The wealthy merchant said to Ānanda, “Suppose a person was looking for the entrance to a treasure trove. And all at once they'd come across eleven entrances! In the same way, I was searching for the door to freedom from death. And all at once I found eleven doors to freedom from death for cultivation. Suppose a person had a house with eleven doors. If the house caught fire they'd be able to flee to safety through any one of those doors. In the same way, I'm able to flee to safety through any one of these eleven doors to freedom from death.”

The merchant then gives food and robes to the Sangha.

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This same sutta appears at [AN 11.16](#).

These eleven practices should also be undertaken for the complete understanding ... complete ending ... giving up ... ending ... vanishing ... fading away ... cessation ... giving away ... letting go  
of  
greed ... hate ... delusion ... anger ... acrimony ... disdain ... contempt ... jealousy ... stinginess ... deceitfulness ... deviousness ... obstinacy ... aggression ... conceit ... arrogance ... vanity ... negligence. [AN 11.982](#) - 1151.

RESULT: In [MN 52](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas are 4 of 11 practices that can lead to either full awakening or the state of non-returner.

# With Dhanañjāni - MN 97: Sāriputta teaches the 4 Brahma Viharas to a Dying Brahmin

MN 97: With Dhanañjāni

The brahmin Dhanañjāni is a corrupt official in Rājagaha. Sāriputta teaches him that principled and moral conduct is better than unprincipled and immoral conduct.

Some time later Dhanañjāni became sick, suffering, gravely ill. He requests that Sāriputta visit him. Sāriputta does visit and finds Dhanañjāni very ill. Sāriputta says. "Dhanañjāni, I shall teach you a path to the company of Brahma. Listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.

“One meditates spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

“One meditates spreading a heart full of compassion ...

“One meditated spreading a heart full of appreciative joy ...

“One meditates spreading a heart full of equanimity ....”

“Well then, Ven. Sāriputta, in my name bow with your head at the Buddha’s feet. Say to him: ‘Sir, the brahmin Dhanañjāni is sick, suffering, gravely ill. He bows with his head to your feet.’” Then Sāriputta, after establishing Dhanañjāni in the inferior realm of the company of Brahma, got up from his seat and left while there was still more left to do. Not long after Sāriputta had leave, Dhanañjāni passed away and was reborn in the realm of the company of Brahmā.

Then Sāriputta went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down to one side, and said, “Sir, the brahmin Dhanañjāni is sick, suffering, gravely ill. He bows with his head to your feet.”

“But Sāriputta, after establishing Dhanañjāni in the inferior realm of the company of Brahma, why did you get up from your seat and leave while there was still more left to do?”

“Sir, I thought: ‘These brahmins are devoted to the realm of Brahma. Why don’t I teach him a path to the company of Brahma?’”

“And Sāriputta, the brahmin Dhanañjāni has passed away and been reborn in the realm of the company of Brahma.”

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RESULT: In [MN 97](#) is a rare instance of someone taking rebirth due to deathbed kamma. And again practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to being reborn in a heavenly realm – for a lay person. This sutta is curious because the Buddha seems to chastise Sāriputta for not teaching Dhanañjāni a deeper practice.

# With Subha - MN 99: The Student Subha and the Buddha have a Long Discussion, ending with the 4 Brahma Viharas

MN 99: With Subha

The student Subha was residing at a certain householder’s home and said, “Householder, I have heard that Sāvattḥī does not lack for perfected ones. What ascetic or brahmin might we pay homage to today?”

“Sir, the Buddha is staying near Sāvattḥī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. You can pay homage to him.”

Subha went to the Buddha and exchanged greetings with him and they engaged in a long discussion about who succeeds on the spiritual path, making merit, the five hindrances, and the five kinds of sensual pleasures. They also discuss *pīti* that is apart from sensual pleasures and unskillful qualities – the first and second jhānas. And they discuss the five things that the brahmins prescribe for making merit and succeeding in the skillful: being truthful, fervent, chaste, doing lots of recitation, and being very generous. The Buddha says, “I say that joy connected with the skillful is a prerequisite of the mind for developing a mind free of enmity and ill will. I say that these five things prescribed by the brahmins for making merit are prerequisites of the mind for developing a mind free of enmity and ill will” because they lead to joy connected with the teaching.

Subha then asks, “Ven. Gotama, I have heard that the ascetic Gotama teaches a path to company with Brahmā. Please teach me that path.”

“Well then, student, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.

“First, one abides pervading the first quarter with a heart full of Mettā, and the second, and the third, and the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they pervade the whole world with a heart full of Mettā—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

“Just as if a mighty trumpeter were with little difficulty to make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this meditation by this liberation of the heart through Mettā they leave nothing untouched, nothing unaffected in the sensuous sphere. This is a way to union with Brahmā.

“Furthermore, one abides pervading the first quarter with a heart full of Karunā ...

“One abides pervading the first quarter with heart full of Muditā ...

“One abides pervading the first quarter with a heart full of Upekkhā ... This too is a way to union with Brahmā.”

Subha declares himself a lay follower of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. On the way back to his lodging, he encounters the brahmin Jānussoni who says as part of their conversation, “Mister Bhāradvāja praises the ascetic Gotama with high praise indeed.”

Subha replies, “Who am I to praise the ascetic Gotama? He is praised by the praised as the best among gods and humans. The five things that the brahmins prescribe for making merit and succeeding in the skillful he says are prerequisites of the mind for developing a mind free of enmity and ill will.”

Jānussoni bows in the direction of the Buddha.

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The Student Subha appears in 3 Suttas: <https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/studentSubha.htm>

The Brahmin Janussoni appears in 14 Suttas:

<https://leighb.com/suttaidxs/BrahminJanussoni.htm>

RESULT: In [MN 99](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to union with Brahma. Again this is sutta is given to a lay person.

# Mindfulness of Breathing - MN 118: The Brahma Vihara Practices are Some of the Practices the Monks Do

## MN 118: Mindfulness of Breathing

In the introduction of this famous sutta, the Buddha describes the Sangha of bhikkhus, including:

“In this Sangha of bhikkhus there are bhikkhus who abide devoted to the development of the **four foundations of mindfulness**—such bhikkhus are there in this Sangha of bhikkhus. In this Sangha of bhikkhus there are bhikkhus who abide devoted to the development of the **four right kinds of striving**...of the **four bases for spiritual power**...of the **five faculties**...of the **five powers**...of the **seven enlightenment factors**...of the **Noble Eightfold Path**—such bhikkhus are there in this Sangha of bhikkhus.

“In this Sangha of bhikkhus there are bhikkhus who abide devoted to the development of **loving-kindness** ...of **compassion**...of **appreciative joy**...of **equanimity**...of the **meditation on foulness**...of the **perception of impermanence**—such bhikkhus are there in this Sangha of bhikkhus. In this Sangha of bhikkhus there are bhikkhus who abide devoted to the development of **mindfulness of breathing**.”

Then the Buddha teaches the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing, how they fulfil the four foundations of mindfulness, and how the four foundations of mindfulness fulfil the seven enlightenment factors which fulfil true knowledge and deliverance.

# With Godatta - SN 41.7: The Four Brahma Vihara are the Limitless Release of the Heart/Mind

Venerable Godatta asks the layman Citta whether the liberations of measurelessness, nothingness, emptiness, and signlessness are different states, or just different words for the same thing. Citta explains that they are both: they are terms for different meditation experiences, but may also be used for perfection or arahantship.

## SN 41.7: With Godatta – *Godattasutta*

In what way do these things differ in both meaning and phrasing?

“One meditates spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, one spreads a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

“One meditates spreading a heart full of compassion ...

“One meditated spreading a heart full of appreciative joy ...

“One meditates spreading a heart full of equanimity .... This is called the limitless release of the heart.”

What is the release of the heart through nothingness? It’s when a monastic, going totally beyond the experience of limitless consciousness, aware that ‘there is nothing at all’, enters and remains in the experience of no-thingness. This is called the release of the heart through nothingness.

What is the release of the heart through emptiness? It’s when a monastic has gone to a wilderness, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, and reflects like this: ‘This is empty of a self or what belongs to a self.’ This is called the release of the heart through emptiness.

What is the signless release of the heart? It’s when a monastic, not focusing on any signs, enters and remains in the signless concentration of the heart. This is called the signless release of the heart.

That's the way in which these things differ in both meaning and phrasing.

What’s the way in which they mean the same thing, and differ only in the phrasing?

Greed, hate, and delusion are makers of limits. Greed is something, hate is something, and delusion is something. Greed, hate, and delusion are makers of signs. One who has ended the defilements (*āsavas*) has given these up, so they are unable to arise in the future. The unshakable release of the heart is said to be the best kind of release of the heart. That unshakable release of the heart is empty of greed, hate, and delusion.

This is the way in which they mean the same thing, and differ only in the phrasing.”  
[Late - probably]

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RESULT: In [SN 41.7](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to the limitless release of the heart.

# Full of Love - SN 46.54: Combining the Four Brahma Vihara with the Seven Factors of Awakening.

SN 46.54: Full of Love

Some wanderers tell some Buddhist monastics that they, too, teach the five hindrances and the four Brahma Vihara meditations, so what is the difference?

Upon hearing of this, the Buddha says the difference is in the destination, apex, fruit, and culmination. When one develops the heart's release by *Mettā* together with the awakening factors which rely on seclusion, fading away, and cessation, this ripens as letting go. They are then able to

meditate perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive,  
meditate perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive,  
perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and the repulsive,  
meditate perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and the unrepulsive,  
meditate staying equanimous, mindful and aware, rejecting both the repulsive and the unrepulsive.

The apex of the heart's release by *Mettā* is the beautiful, I say, for one who has not penetrated to a higher freedom.

When one develops the heart's release by *Karunā* together with the awakening factors....unrepulsive. Or else, going totally beyond perceptions of form, by the disappearance of all sense of resistance and by non-attraction to the perception of diversity, aware that 'space is limitless', one enters and remains in the experience of limitless space. The apex of the heart's release by *Karunā* is the experience of limitless space, I say, for one who has not penetrated to a higher freedom.

When one develops the heart's release by *Muditā* together with the awakening factors....unrepulsive. Or else, going totally beyond the experience of limitless space, aware that 'consciousness is limitless', one enters and remains in the experience of limitless consciousness. The apex of the heart's release by *Muditā* is the experience of limitless consciousness, I say, for one who has not penetrated to a higher freedom.

When one develops the heart's release by *Upekkhā* together with the awakening factors....unrepulsive. Or else, going totally beyond the experience of limitless consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing at all', they enter and remain in the experience of nothingness. The apex of the heart's release by equanimity is the experience of nothingness, I say, for one who has not penetrated to a higher freedom.

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RESULT: In [SN 46.54](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to various releases of the heart-mind – but there seems always to be a higher freedom available. Again, this is a sutta given to

lay people.

This sutta is also interesting in that it correlates *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* with the first three immaterial states of limitless space, limitless consciousness, and nothingness respectively.

For more on this sutta, see "Talk 6: SN 46.54" at <https://www.thenoblesearch.com/talks>

# Sabbath - AN 4.190: Some Have Attained to the Gods, to Brahmā, to the Imperturbable, to Nobility

## AN 4.190: Sabbath

There are monastics staying in this Saṅgha who have attained to the gods. There are monastics staying in this Saṅgha who have attained to Brahmā. There are monastics staying in this Saṅgha who have attained to the imperturbable. There are monastics staying in this Saṅgha who have attained to nobility.

And how has a monastic attained to the gods? Quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unskillful qualities, one enters and remains in the first jhāna, second jhāna, third jhāna, fourth jhāna. That's how a monastic has attained to the gods.

And how has a monastic attained to Brahmā? One meditates spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

One meditates spreading a heart full of compassion ...

One meditated spreading a heart full of appreciative joy ...

One meditates spreading a heart full of equanimity .... That's how a monastic has attained to Brahmā.

And how has a monastic attained to the imperturbable? By practicing the four immaterial states.

And how has a monastic attained to nobility? It's when they truly understand: 'This is dukkha' ... 'This is the origin of dukkha' ... 'This is the cessation of dukkha' ... 'This is the practice that leads to the cessation of dukkha'. That's how a monastic has attained to nobility."

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RESULT: In [AN 4.190](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to attaining to Brahma. This does not appear to be full awakening for the monastics; if taken literally, the 4 Brahma Viharas lead to rebirth in the realm of Brahma.

# Elements of Escape - AN 6.13: Antidotes for ill will, thoughts of harming, discontent, desire, signs, doubt & indecision.

## AN 6.13: Elements of Escape

"There are these six elements of escape. What six?"

"One who says: 'I've developed the heart's release by *mettā*. I've cultivated it, made it my vehicle and my basis, kept it up, consolidated it, and properly implemented it. Yet somehow ill will still occupies my mind.' They should be told, 'Not so! Don't say that. Don't misrepresent the Buddha, for misrepresentation of the Buddha is not good. And the Buddha would not say that. It's impossible, it cannot happen that the heart's release by *mettā* has been developed and properly implemented, yet somehow ill will still occupies the mind. For it is the heart's release by *mettā* that is the escape from ill will.'

"One who says: 'I've developed the heart's release by *karuṇā*. I've cultivated it, made it my vehicle and my basis, kept it up, consolidated it, and properly implemented it. Yet somehow the thought of harming still occupies my mind.' They should be told, 'Not so! ... For it is the heart's release by *karuṇā* that is the escape from thoughts of harming.'

"One who says: 'I've developed the heart's release by *muditā*. I've cultivated it, made it my vehicle and my basis, kept it up, consolidated it, and properly implemented it. Yet somehow discontent still occupies my mind.' They should be told, 'Not so! ... For it is the heart's release by *muditā* that is the escape from discontent.'

"One who says: 'I've developed the heart's release by *upekkhā*. I've cultivated it, made it my vehicle and my basis, kept it up, consolidated it, and properly implemented it. Yet somehow desire still occupies my mind.' They should be told, 'Not so! ... For it is the heart's release by *upekkhā* that is the escape from desire.'

"One who says: 'I've developed the signless release of the heart. I've cultivated it, made it my vehicle and my basis, kept it up, consolidated it, and properly implemented it. Yet somehow my consciousness still follows after signs.' They should be told, 'Not so! ... For it is the signless release of the heart that is the escape from all signs.'

"One who says: 'I'm rid of the conceit "I am". And I don't regard anything as "I am this". Yet somehow the dart of doubt and indecision still occupies my mind.' They should be told, 'Not so! Don't say that. Don't misrepresent the Buddha, for misrepresentation of the Buddha is not good. And the Buddha would not say that. It's impossible, it cannot happen that the conceit "I am" has been done away with, and nothing is regarded as "I am this", yet somehow the dart of doubt and indecision still occupies the mind. For it is the uprooting of the conceit "I am" that is the escape from the dart of doubt and indecision.'

"These are the six elements of escape."

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RESULT: In [AN 6.13](#) correctly practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to escape from ill will, escape from thoughts of harming, escape from discontent, and escape from desire.

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This same teaching also appears in

**DN 33: Chanting together** – *Saṅgītisutta* [Late]

**DN 34: Up to Ten** – *Dasuttarasutta* [Late]

# The Rhinoceros Horn - Snp 1.3: Wander Alone like the One Horned Rhinoceros

## [Snp 1.3](#): The Rhinoceros Horn

This very early Sutta in verse recommends living alone like a one horned rhino. The last three verses are as follows:

In time, cultivate freedom through  
Mettā, Karunā, Muditā, and Upekkhā.  
Not upset by anything in the world,  
live alone like a one horned rhino.

Having given up greed, hate, and delusion,  
having burst apart the fetters,  
unafraid at the end of life,  
live alone like a one horned rhino.

They befriend you and serve you for their own sake;  
these days it's hard to find friends  
lacking ulterior motive.  
Impure folk cleverly profit themselves—  
live alone like a one horned rhino.      {Early}

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RESULT: In [Snp 1.3](#) practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to not being upset by anything in the world.

# Other Sutta that Contain All Four Brahma Viharas

## **DN 17: King Mahāsudassana** – *Mahāsudassanasutta*

An elaborate story of a past life of the Buddha as a legendary king who renounced all to practice meditation, which includes practicing the Jhānas followed by the 4 Brahma Viharas; rebirth in a Brahma realm. [Late]

[RESULT: rebirth in a Brahma realm – for a lay person]

## **DN 19: The Great Steward** – *Mahāgovindasutta*

A myth about a Steward who goes forth, and has many followers. He practices the 4 Brahma Viharas and upon his death, he is reborn in Brahma realm.

[RESULT: rebirth in a Brahma realm – for a lay person]

## **DN 25: The Lion’s Roar at the Monastery of Lady Udumbarikā** – *Udumbarikasutta*

This discourse gives an especially good example of dialog between religions. The Buddha insists that he is not interested in making anyone give up their teacher or practices, but only to help people let go of suffering. The Buddha recommends practicing the 4-fold restraint (precepts 1, 2, 4, don't crave for sense-pleasures); giving up the hindrances; practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas, the psychic powers, and insight practice; and finally achieving liberation.

[Late]

[RESULT: the 4 Brahma Viharas are part of the multiple practices given that lead to liberation]

## **DN 26: The Wheel-Turning Monarch** – *Cakkavattisutta*

The Buddha gives a detailed account of the fall of a kingly lineage of the past, and the subsequent degeneration of society. But far in the future, another Buddha, Metteyya, will arise in a time of peace and plenty. At the end of this myth, the Buddha teaches that with practice, you will grow in lifespan (4 bases of power), beauty (ethics), happiness (4 Jhānas), wealth (4 Brahma Viharas), and power (liberation) . [Late]

[RESULT: the 4 Brahma Viharas are part of the multiple practices given that lead to liberation]

## **DN 33: Reciting in Concert** – *Saṅgītisutta*

An extended listing of Buddhist doctrines arranged in numerical sequence. The 4 limitless states are the 4 Brahma Viharas; also the Brahma Viharas are part of 6 elements of escape.

[Late]

## **DN 34: Up to Ten** – *Dasuttarasutta*

This is similar to the previous sutta, but with a different manner of exposition. The 6 elements of escape are: the 4 Brahma Viharas, the signless release of the heart-mind, being rid of the conceit “I am.” [Late]

## **MN 43: The Great Elaboration** – *Mahāvedallasutta*

A series of questions and answers between Sāriputta and Mahākotṭhita, examining various

subtle and abstruse aspects of the teachings. The limitless release of the heart-mind is the 4 Brahma Viharas. [Late]

[RESULT: leads to the limitless release of the heart-mind]

### **MN 50: The Rebuke of Māra – *Māratajjanīyasutta***

Māra, the trickster and god of death, tried to annoy Moggallāna. He not only failed but was subject to a stern sermon warning of the dangers of attacking the Buddha's disciples. One should practice the 4 Brahma Viharas to ward off Mara. [Late]

[RESULT: the 4 Brahma Viharas ward off Mara]

### **MN 55: With Jīvaka on Eating Meat – *Jīvakasutta***

The Buddha's personal doctor, Jīvaka, hears criticisms of the Buddha's policy regarding eating meat, and asks him about it. The Buddha says that in three cases that meat may not be eaten: if it's seen, heard, or suspected that an animal was killed specifically for the monastic. Also by practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas, one eats almsfood "untied, uninfatuated, unattached, seeing the drawback, and understanding the escape." Any greed, hate, or delusion that might give rise to cruelty, discontent, or repulsion has been given up by the Tathāgata.

[RESULT: One eats almsfood untied, uninfatuated, unattached, seeing the drawback, and understanding the escape.]

### **MN 83: About King Maghadeva – *Maghadevasutta***

A mythological story about a king who renounces his kingdom, goes forth, and practices the 4 Brahma Viharas. Having developed these 4 Brahma Viharas, when his body broke up, after death, he was reborn in a good place, a Brahma realm. This is one of two suttas that ties *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* to the phrase "Brahma Viharas."

[RESULT: leads rebirth in a Brahma realm – for a lay person]

### **MN 127: With Anuruddha – *Anuruddhasutta***

A lay person becomes confused when encouraged to develop the "limitless" and "expansive" liberations, and asks Venerable Anuruddha to explain whether they are the same or different. The limitless release of the heart-mind is the 4 Brahma Viharas.

[This is similar to the teaching we found at [With Godatta – SN 41.7](#)]

[RESULT: leads to the limitless release of the heart-mind]

### **SN 42.8: A Horn Blower – *Sāṅkhadhamasutta***

Keep the precepts; become rid of desire, rid of ill will, unconfused, aware, and mindful; then practice the 4 Brahma Viharas (with the similes given in this sutta). When the heart's release by each of the 4 Brahma Viharas has been developed and cultivated like this, any unwholesome karma done, doesn't remain or persist there.

[RESULT: leads to any unwholesome karma done, not remaining or persisting there]

### **SN 42.13: With Pāṭaliya – *Pāṭaliyasutta***

An early form of Pascal's wager: practicing the Brahma Viharas protects me no matter what view is correct – e.g. whether or not there is an afterlife, etc. This sutta includes the Jhāna summary as preliminary practice to Brahma Viharas.

[RESULT: practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas leads to rebirth in a heavenly realm – for a lay person]

### **AN 1.395-401**

One who practices (even a little) the Jhānas, or Brahma Viharas is one who follows the Teacher's instructions, who responds to advice, and who does not eat the country's alms in vain.

### **AN 1.495-574**

“One develops the faculty of faith ... the faculty of energy ... the faculty of mindfulness ... the faculty of concentration ... the faculty of wisdom ... the power of faith ... the power of energy ... the power of mindfulness ... the power of concentration ... the power of wisdom together with the four Jhānas, ... together with *mettā*, ... together with *karuṇā*, ... together with *muditā*, ... together with *upekkhā*. That one is called a one who does not lack [these qualities], who follows the Teacher's instructions, who responds to advice, and who does not eat the country's alms in vain. How much more so those who make much of it!”

### **AN 3.63: At Venāgapura – Venāgapurasutta**

The divine high and luxurious bed is practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas.  
[RESULT: all postures become divine]

### **AN 3.66: With Sālha and His Friend – Sālhasutta**

A sutta on how to navigate among different spiritual opinions. When one is rid of desire, rid of ill will, unconfused, aware, and mindful, then practice the 4 Brahma Viharas.  
[RESULT: leads to welfare and happiness, and to the end of the *āsavas* – awakening]

### **AN 4.125: Love (1st) – Paṭhamamettāsutta**

Practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas will result in rebirth in the company of the retinue of Brahma. An ordinary person dies from there and falls into the lower realms; a disciple of the Buddha passes from there into liberation.  
[RESULT: rebirth in the company of the retinue of Brahma]

### **AN 4.126: Love (2nd) – Dutiyamettāsutta**

One who practices the Brahma Viharas and contemplates the 5 khandas as *anicca & dukkha*, upon death is reborn in the company of the gods of the pure abodes.  
[RESULT: rebirth in the company of the gods of the pure abodes]

### **AN 5.192: With the Brahmin Doṇa – Doṇabrāhmaṇasutta**

The brahmin Doṇa accuses the Buddha of not respecting brahmins, so the Buddha responds by analyzing the different kinds of brahmin. Brahma Vihara practice makes one equal to Brahma; Jhāna practice makes one equal to god; further discussion on what makes one a brahmin. This is one of two suttas that ties *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* to the phrase "Four Brahma Viharas."  
[RESULT: Brahma Vihara practice makes one equal to Brahma]

**AN 8.63: A Teaching in Brief** – *Samkhittasutta*

A monk asks for teachings before going on retreat. He is told to settle the mind and abandon unskillful mental qualities; then practice the 4 Brahma Viharas in conjunction with the 4 Jhānas and the 4 establishments of mindfulness.

[RESULT: That monk soon realized the supreme culmination of the spiritual path – liberation]

**AN 10.219: The Body Born of Deeds** – *Karajakāyasutta*

Practicing the 4 Brahma Viharas yields a limitless and well developed mind that would not do bad deeds, this leads to non-return unless one has penetrated to a higher freedom.

[RESULT: leads to non-return unless one has penetrated to a higher freedom]

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