

## What Do the Suttas Actually Have to Say About the Brahma Viharas (2 of 2)

**Leigh Brasington**

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**Leigh Brasington:**

Thank you. Thank you, Rob. Thanks for all of your work making all these Sati Center events happen. This is just such a rich jewel for the Saṅgha. So it's really nice.

Okay, so I'm gonna share my screen. I think this is where we got to last week, and I believe I mentioned this, that in my notes here I have the four *brahmavihāras* with eight translations of the *mettā* practice by various teachers, translators. And I will, in the chat—boy, will you show me the chat? Yes. In the chat, I will put in—okay. I think this is gonna work. Right. Here's the notes that I'll be working from. If you didn't download it last week, you can download it this week.

So what's here should be familiar. And then the next one is the four *brahmavihāras* with the Pāli. And following that, I have a sutta that has all four *brahmavihāras* in it. It's an interesting sutta, and it shows some of the context of the suttas. Can everybody see all the edges? Or is there—yes, nothing's cut off.

All right, good. It's cut off on my screen, I guess, because I'm sharing. So this is a Simile of the Cloth, which is, yeah, it's actually an important sutta from the *Majjhima Nikāya*, number seven. 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, literally going badly, is to be expected. The cloth that is pure and clean, no matter what dye is applied, looks good. That's because when the mind isn't corrupt, a good destination, going well, is to be expected. And what are the corruptions of the mind, the *upakkilesā*? This is actually a pretty interesting list of, yeah, where we go when it's not in a good direction.

Covetousness and immoral greed, ill will, anger, acrimony, disdain, contempt, jealousy, stinginess, deceit, deviousness, obstinacy, aggression, conceit, arrogance, vanity, and negligence. It's usually summed up as greed, hatred, and delusion. And you can very easily put each one of these under either greed, hatred, or delusion. Of course, greed and hatred are just manifestations of delusion. If we could get rid of the delusion, we'd also get rid of the greed and hatred.

One who understands these corruptions of mind gives them up. When they have understood these corruptions of mind for what they are and have given them up, they have experienced confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha. Confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha is one of the things

that happens at stream entry. In the suttas, it mentions confidence in the three jewels. It mentions morality that's dear to the noble ones, and overcoming of the first three of the fetters: the belief in a self, the view that there is a self here, a belief in the efficacy of rites and rituals, and doubt.

And so I don't know whether this is actually referring to stream entry or not, but pretty useful on the path. 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 connected with the teaching. When they're joyful, *pīti* springs up. When the mind is full of *pīti*, the body becomes tranquil. When the body is tranquil, they feel *sukha*. When they feel *sukha*, the mind becomes immersed in *samādhi*.

This is the *jhāna* summary. At least that's how I refer to it. The first four *jhānas*: *pīti*, that's the primary factor of the first *jhāna*, and to get into it you're going to need some pleasure to trigger it, and that's what the *pāmojja* is, the joy. It's usually translated as something like worldly joy or gladness. Gladness is a fairly good translation.

And then the *pīti* springs up. When the mind is full of *pīti*, the body becomes tranquil. Actually, body doesn't become tranquil till the *pīti* goes down, but tranquility is mentioned as an important factor of the second *jhāna*. Not in the commentaries—they got all messed up there—but in the suttas, tranquility is there. Once you're tranquil, you feel the *sukha*, the joy, happiness. And when you feel the *sukha*, then your mind becomes quite concentrated, when you can let go of the *sukha* and drop into equanimity of the fourth *jhāna*.

So basically what the Buddha is saying here is clean up your act, you know, get rid of all the greed, hatred, and delusion and all of its manifestations. Once you've done that, it puts you in a pretty happy state of mind, and you'll be able to enter the *jhānas* and become immersed in *samādhi*. And then you can do the *brahmavihāras*. Meditate with a heart full of love to each of the directions 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. And then one does the same for compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity.

Often we hear about using the *brahmavihāras* as access to the *jhānas*, and yes, that does work quite well. But more often than not in the suttas, we find *brahmavihāra* practice recommended after having been in the *jhānas*. And having played with that myself, it's really quite nice. It can be very intense. But it's, yeah, it's intensely nice to be hanging out with a heart full of love.

Knowing and seeing like this, one's mind is freed from the defilements of sensuality, becoming, and ignorance. And these words, you might notice, have *āsava* in them. Put a note down here. *Kāmāsava* is *kāma*, *āsava*, and *api*. Same for *bhava* and *avijjā*. So overcoming the *āsavas* is synonymous with full awakening. So basically what this sutta is saying is if you can clean up your act, concentrate your mind, and use your concentrated mind to do the *brahmavihāras*, that'll take you to full awakening.

When they're freed, they know they're freed, or when they're liberated, they know they're liberated. They understand: birth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what has to be done has

been done, there's nothing further here. This is called one who's bathed with the inner bathing. The sutta actually starts out with saying that ritual bathing found in Brahmanism, and Hinduism today, isn't actually going to do anything. And then the sutta ends with a further discourse, in verse, pointing out that physical bathing is pointless for purifying the deeds.

Instead, for the pure in heart and clean of deed, their vows will always be fulfilled. It's here that you should bathe, Brahman, making yourself a sanctuary for all creatures. So the bathing should be done in purity, morality, ethics, and then bathe in the *jhānas* and then bathe in the *brahmavihāras*. Any questions or comments on this particular sutta?

Okay. The next is a fairly famous sutta, the *Kālāma Sutta*, in the inquiring mind. Do you remember the old *Inquiring Mind*? I was very sad when *Inquiring Mind* went away. At one point they asked a number of teachers, What's your favorite sutta? The *Kālāma Sutta* was by far—I mean, the majority of the teachers said their favorite sutta was the *Kālāma Sutta*, which is interesting because the *Kālāma Sutta* also has the *brahmavihāras* in it.

And nobody mentioned the *brahmavihāras* as to why the *Kālāma Sutta* was their favorite sutta. They were all like, yeah, you gotta figure it out for yourself, but it doesn't quite say that. So we'll take a look at what it does say. So the Buddha visits the town of the Kālāmās named Kesaputta. After the polite greetings, the Kālāmās say to the Buddha, there are, sir, some ascetics and Brahmans who come here. They explain and promote only their doctrine while they attack, bad-mouth, disparage, and smear the doctrines of others.

Then other ascetics and Brahmans come. They promote their own and bad-mouth the others. We are doubting, we are uncertain. I wonder who of these respected ascetics and Brahmans speaks the truth and who speaks falsehood. The Buddha says, yeah, it's right you should be doubting and uncertain.

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 acceptance of a view after deliberation. Don't go by the appearance of competence, and don't think this 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, hatred, 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 the noble disciple is rid of desire, ill will, confusion, unconfused, aware, and mindful. So this is usually what we hear when the *Kālāma Sutta* is taught. Yeah, there's all this don't go by oral transmission, don't go by lineage, you know, and that we should be looking for teachings that promote

non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion. Or we could say that promote letting go, love, and wisdom, if we wanna phrase it positively. So, yeah, this is a really important teaching. And it's the importance of not getting locked into a view for any of the reasons other than it promotes love, generosity, and wisdom or something like that.

But that's not the whole sutta. Once you've done that, then you should do the *brahmavihāra* practices, pervading each quarter with *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* above, around, below, everywhere, and to all as to oneself. One abides pervading the all-encompassing world with the mind imbued with each of these, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility, and without ill will. The phrase to all as to oneself—we'll come across this a bit later. It shows up in some translations, and it doesn't show up in others. I particularly like it because, well, Western civilization seems to have a problem with self-love.

You know, people feel I don't deserve love or whatever. Okay. This is one of the major failings of Western civilization. It was interesting traveling to other cultures such as Tibet where that's just not heard of. That's not part of what the culture is there. And so I think that translating it to all as to oneself indicates that, yeah, the love that you're feeling for others should be at least equivalent to the love you're feeling for yourself. Right? And the love you feel for yourself should be at least equivalent to the love you're feeling for others. And the same for the other *brahmavihāras*.

When that noble disciple has a mind that's free of hatred and ill will, uncorrupted and purified, they've won four consolations in this very life. If there is another world and if there is the fruit and result of good and bad deeds, *kamma*, it is possible that with the break of the body after death I will be reborn in a good destination, in a heavenly world. If there is no other world and there is no fruit and result of *kamma*, still right here in this very life, I maintain myself in happiness without enmity and ill will, free of trouble. This is somewhat similar to Pascal's wager.

Pascal's wager, from Blaise Pascal in, what, fifteen hundreds, seventeen hundreds, I don't really remember—great mathematician—he felt that you should believe in God because if you believed in God and there was a heaven, then you'd get to heaven. If you believed in God and there wasn't a heaven, no big deal. But if you didn't believe in God and there was a heaven, oh, that was gonna get you in hell. That's really bad, and you don't want that. And if you don't believe in God and there's no heaven, well, no trouble.

This is what's known in the West as Pascal's wager, but it's not nearly as good as what we find in the suttas. There's another sutta, I've forgotten the number of it. I believe it's in the *Majjhima* in the sixties. But it's a much better exposition about, yeah, you should behave yourself just like this. You should act without ill will and hatred. Because if there is life after death, then you're gonna wind up in a good place. And if there's no life after death, then yeah, people are still going to think you're a good person, which is what we find in these first two.

The third one: Suppose evil comes to one who does evil. Then I will have no evil intentions towards

anyone. How can suffering afflict me since I do no evil deed? I'm not quite buying that. I do know that people who don't do evil sometimes experience *dukkha*. And so, all right. But I'm quite sure that if you don't do evil, you will experience less *dukkha*. So in that sense, it's going in the right direction.

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. This last one doesn't make a lot of sense to me. Okay? We may have a bad translation or something. I'm not sure. Evil doesn't come to one who does evil, then okay. But if I don't do evil, I'm okay. That sort of makes sense, but I'm not quite getting it.

The Kālāmās are pleased, go for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha. Karsten.

**Questioner:**

You're still muted. Actually, the last one does make sense to me. What it says is, okay, suppose there's no *kamma* in the ordinary sense, I'm still going to get benefits from this because I'm going to be purified, and that's enough. I think that's—

**Leigh Brasington:**

What it's saying too, but it's not well said.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, I understand. But I mean, I think it makes sense. In fact, I like the way you've compared it to Pascal's wager. Can I make a comment at this point? Or you want to—

**Leigh Brasington:**

Wait until—no, you finish. No, I was just going to ask any questions, and so go for it.

**Questioner:**

Okay. So comment. You know, there's a typical objection to Pascal's wager that it really isn't a connection to God. It's just self-interest. And here it's even more so. This all looks like forms of self-interest. And so we are reinforcing self-interest. Now you could say this is skillful means, maybe, but the emphasis, that is so much an emphasis on self-interest, seems in some ways to undermine *mettā*. We're doing *mettā* because it will purify us. We're doing *mettā* because no matter what happens it will be great for us. I'm not sure that's the reason we want to do *mettā*.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Right. I think it's skillful means for getting people to start doing *mettā*. This will be good for you. But yes, in an ultimate sense, it's not as helpful as, yeah, doing it because you realize it's gonna be helping you to be a better person in this world, which will benefit others. So I think that's true. And I've also heard the other complaint about Pascal's wager. Actually, if you believe in God and there isn't a God, you're deluded. And this isn't really a good way to go either.

So, yep, the most important thing maybe that I came and said on that first retreat that I attended with her was I asked her a question, and her answer was, oh, there's nothing to believe in Buddhism. The Buddha said, come and see for yourself. I was raised as a Presbyterian preacher's kid, and my father was a literalist. You know? Literally Noah and the ark, Daniel in the lion's den, and all that. And so I rejected all of that stuff, and I rejected anything to do with spirituality because it was based on belief.

And so the fact that, yeah, the Buddha—there's nothing required in Buddhism, just come and see for yourself—was a real turning point for me on the spiritual path.

**Questioner:**

And I think that's probably one of the main reasons that this is the favorite sutta. It doesn't demand blind faith. And it's a challenge to all the religious teachings that seem to demand blind faith. And so people, especially growing up with Western religions, get very excited by this.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yes, I agree. I agree. Definitely.

**Questioner:**

Karen. Thanks, Leigh. *MN* seven, so *Majjhima Nikāya* seven, it talked about steps, you know, having steps to do.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Talked about what?

**Questioner:**

Steps. Yeah. There were steps to do. To let go, have generosity, love, wisdom. But it wasn't really clear, like on a day-to-day basis. Was there any guidance about this? What, you know, what would that look like?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, it's not in number seven, but it does show up in a lot of other suttas. One of my favorites for working on it is, okay, you need to gain more wisdom so that you will see how important this is. And so the teachings on *sīla samādhi paññā*: get a baseline of ethical behavior, concentrate your mind, and now investigate reality. And that seems to be the most common thing that shows up.

There's the gradual training, which shows up in approximately thirty different suttas, most famously in *Dīgha Nikāya* number two. It doesn't talk about the ethics there, but it does talk about, okay, you gotta keep the precepts. And then you need to guard your senses. And you wanna be mindful. You wanna be content with little. You want to have meditation practice, sit down and overcome the hindrances,

step through the *jhānas* to concentrate your mind, and then investigate reality by looking at *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*, the impermanent, unsatisfactory, coreless nature of reality.

And doing this investigation, in particular for your own being, your own physical body and mind, then you begin to see what's really going on, and then the ethical behavior becomes much more automatic. So that's another one that talks about that in some detail without mentioning exactly the steps that are given in *Majjhima* seven. But yeah, there are quite a number of suttas that lead in that direction, and we will come across some more here as well.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, thank you. You know, one thing I'm doing day to day is I printed out the *Mettā Sutta*, a translation I liked, and just put each phrase and then separate it by some space, and another phrase. So it's on several sheets of paper on the wall. And I just look at it every day and remind myself, like, you know, to be easy, to be easily satisfied and content and things like that, you know, that feel to me different from sutta study in terms of wisdom development and even concentration and even being mindful. I mean, reading those phrases kind of day to day reminds me, but I just sort of wanted to do that. I put them up on the wall and I've been enjoying doing that, but I was wondering, how does this fit into the greater scheme of things?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. It's part of what we've gotta do on the path. I wouldn't say there is a single sutta that gives the complete picture. You know, there—you know, keep the precepts, but what does all that entail and so forth. For those fifteen things at the beginning of the *Mettā Sutta*, I would highly recommend Ayya Khemā's book *The Path to Peace*, because she goes into detail discussing each of those fifteen qualities there, and the importance of them, and some about how you should go about doing each of them.

It's a series of three lectures that she gave, that one of my students gave me the transcripts for those, and I put them together into a book along with some other teachings from Ayya Khemā on *mettā*.

**Questioner:**

You mentioned that last week, but it hasn't come—I ordered a used copy. It hasn't come yet.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Oh, okay. So you're already on track for it.

**Questioner:**

I'm on it. Thank you. New to you, right? Thank you for that.

**Questioner:**

Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Other questions or comments on anything we've covered so far? Anita?

**Questioner:**

Maybe I'll—can I make one other thought? Can I ask one other question? Or somebody else first?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. Let me do Anita, and I'll get back to you.

**Questioner:**

Lee, thank you. I had a question about the gradual training, and I think *brahmavihāras* don't come in all of them. Right? I think there's only some suttas where it's mentioned.

**Leigh Brasington:**

There's only one sutta where it's really mentioned.

**Questioner:**

Why do you think that is?

**Questioner:**

I just wondered what your thoughts were. Why doesn't it fit neatly in the scheme?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, I think the Buddha is trying to teach *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*. When you look at the precepts as they're given in the gradual training, the first precept isn't just I undertake the training to refrain from killing living beings. It goes on to say, therefore, I will have benevolence towards all living beings. So it's sort of pointing in that direction. It's in there, but not as the *brahmavihāra* practice itself.

So the other thing is that probably the version that we have of the gradual training, because it was an oral tradition, the various ways that it was taught all got simplified down into pretty much what we get over and over again, as opposed to all the varieties of what the Buddha probably said. You know, he taught for forty-five years. Clearly, gradual training was an important part of what he taught. But, you know, did we get the full thing? Well, we find the *brahmavihāras* in one of them. How many others that didn't get preserved was the gradual training in? We don't know.

But we find the *brahmavihāras* in many other places. So I think it's just a matter of, one, he specifically was teaching these are the practices you need to go do if you're going to have a chance for full awakening. And keeping the precepts would involve basically doing what you would learn from doing the *brahmavihāra* practice. Just my guess.

**Questioner:**

So for practical purposes, I guess, where would you—I guess we start and we end with the *brahmavihāras*?

**Leigh Brasington:**

We find a bunch of suttas here where it's, yeah, do the *sīla* part and then do the *jhānas*, usually with the *jhāna* summary, and then do the *brahmavihāra*. So that's part of the practice. What I recommended was start every meditation period with *mettā*. And that's a great way to start. *Mettā* feels good. It puts you in a good mood. If you're going to practice *jhānas*, you already got some pleasure going.

So, yeah, when I'm on retreat, I usually spend anywhere from ten to twenty minutes doing *mettā* at the start of the sitting. And then I'll run through the *jhānas*, then I'll do my insight practice. But I'm doing long sittings. I'm doing hour-and-a-half, two-and-a-half-hour sittings because I sit in a chair, and I can do it. But, yeah, the idea of starting every meditation period with *mettā*, I think, is extremely important and would highly recommend it. So I would say it fits in right at the beginning. Okay.

**Questioner:**

Can we go back to the places where it pervades to this way and that way? It seems to pervade everywhere. It's an interesting, in some ways curious practice because I'm wondering, you know, I get the idea that the whole point is to be boundless. You're not going to have any stopping point. But I'm wondering how it is practically. I mean, I've done *mettā*, you know, one of the interesting things is to see where I stop. I mean, you know, to what extent do I want to extend it to all these people who are doing these horrible things, who are organizing ICE to do all these horrible things? I admit, I stop. I say, okay, maybe I can aspire to feel loving-kindness to them, but I really don't feel loving-kindness to them. And so this—I understand that this pushes me beyond that, but it feels like, what shall I say, a kind of spiritual bypass to try to go beyond that.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yes. Ayya Khemā used different *mettā* phrases than the ones we usually get taught. Her phrases are: May I be free from enmity, or may you be free from enmity. May you be free from hurtfulness. May you be free of troubles of mind and body, and may you be able to protect your happiness.

All right, so may you be free from hate. You can say that to anybody doing evil things. May you be free from hurtfulness. You can say that. That's pretty easy. May you be free of troubles of mind and body. Well, you certainly have troubles of mind if you're acting like that. Right? And maybe your troubles of mind are somewhat based in your troubles of body. You just physically don't feel well, so you're acting out. So, yeah, you can do that one.

And may you be able to protect your happiness. Well, the only happiness that can be protected is that that's gained through skillful means. So what you're saying is may you find a different source of happiness other than torturing people. May you find something that's actually based in wholesomeness.

And so, if you're doing your *mettā* practice and you get to someone difficult, you can switch to these different phrases.

The phrases are outlined in my forthcoming book. It should be out within a month. In the *Mettā* part, I have her phrases there. And it's also on my website right now, of course. You could click on my website, click on the Buddha—no, click on the heart where it says *mettā*, and it says something about original phrases or something like that there.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. You know, that's really great. I'm reminded of something of a Jewish refugee from Germany who decided to pray for Hitler. She said, pray that he would see the errors of his ways. She said, I'm not sure if it helped Hitler, but it made me feel better.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I mean, there's plenty of people that you can pray for or send *mettā* to in hopes they will see the error of their ways because certainly there's a lot of people out there whose error in their ways is causing a lot of *dukkha*.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

**Questioner:**

Thank you. That's very helpful.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Good. Victoria.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. Thank you, Leigh. Well, on this, we talked a little bit about this last week as I recall, but it just made me think about how, from a—you were talking about self-compassion at the beginning and how that's lacking in our culture and in Tibet it's a non-issue. And I was just thinking in this, because I know a lot of people in the practice who are experienced practitioners and yogis and very well-intentioned, and yet they're—well, that brings up another subject. I was gonna say they're stingy with their *mettā*, but that sounds judgmental.

So sort of two embedded questions. One is, like, to what degree do the *mettās*, or does the practice itself of the Dhamma, address the issue of being judgmental? So there's discernment, but then there's also judgment. Like, this is bad, this is good. This is—and, of course, the *mettās* give us an indication of what is skillful and what we're to do on the path, but that can easily, as in any spiritual tradition or any wisdom tradition for that matter, tip over the edge into a position of I know the truth and this person doesn't. And therefore—and then with *mettā*, you know, then there might be the temptation to

withhold *mettā* as we were just talking about. So I was just wondering to what degree is that addressed in the suttas in terms of how do we—well, you know what I'm saying. I don't have to say anymore.

**Leigh Brasington:**

So in the *Sutta Nipāta*, book four, there are two suttas at least that say you should not think of yourself as better than, less than, or even equal to anyone else. In other words, don't do the comparing. So it's something that's taught very early. The *Sutta Nipāta*, book four, is very early material, both in terms of early in the Buddhist teaching career, and the scholars say, yeah, this probably goes back. Book four may be the earliest material composition in the whole of the canon.

So you find stuff like that in there. That's just what I have off the top of my head. So it's very much don't be judgmental because when you're judgmental you're saying I'm better than you, and the Buddha says no, that's not useful at all.

**Questioner:**

Thank you. That's great. Thanks.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Malcolm.

**Questioner:**

Good morning, thanks Leigh. I'm just making a response to Carsten's comments and the questions about where do we end. And I was thinking about when I first met *mettā*, which was almost a hundred years ago—actually about fifty years ago—with Phra Khantipālo, and he would emphasize this saying, like this translation, whatever beings there are. And you know, one time I asked him about that, and I said, oh, you know, how do you—do you work out the—do you know where are all beings? And Khantipālo said all beings are in our heart.

So I always continue to think about that like that. And also when I've studied with Anālayo, Anālayo talking about the four *brahmavihāras*, he would talk about them as boundless states of mind rather than, you know, sort of rather than a dualistic type of me and them out there. It was just filling my mind with this quality. So that there's no—like, you know, like that boundless consciousness or consciousness of boundless infinite space, remember that, how you talk? It's about like—and that's the benefit of this particular state of mind.

Maybe, you know, sometimes I sit in my little hut here and I have all sorts of thoughts about other people. But when I sit and look clearly at what that is, it's just my mind. So when I fill my mind with boundless *mettā*, it's just filling that state of consciousness. And if there are other beings, well, so they're being filled. All the other beings are in there in my heart. So it's just a comment. It's the way I've worked with that.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Nice, Malcolm. Yeah. And another thing that's interesting, it starts out with the directions. So I did ten weeks of *brahmavihāra* practice once when I was at the Forest Refuge, and I found working with the directions and so forth—so I would spend the day sending *mettā* to everybody east of me that I could think of. You know? And then, you know, west and north and south. That's the traditional way they say it in the suttas. All right? And so I worked the directions.

And then above, so I'm sending it to people at higher elevations, and I'm sending it to the birds. And then I would do below. That's the sea creatures. And at that point, I was 1,200 feet above sea level, so people down lower. You know, it's just beginning to spread out more and more around. Okay. So now I'm trying to send it to all the creatures here and everywhere.

And so it was like a day on each of the directions, a day on above, a day on below, a day on around, and then everywhere. And with the everywhere, there was no limit. It was just radiating out. And having spent a week getting good at radiating *mettā*, then it was possible to beam it to everywhere. And yeah, there was the planet, but it eventually got to the whole universe. And it went out faster than the speed of light. It just filled the whole universe.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. Hi, Leigh. Thank you for these sessions. Yeah. I have only one question which I was thinking since last one week, so let me phrase it properly. So when we practice *brahmavihāras* or the, like, *mettā karuṇā*, is that only something which we do in meditation, but actually in real life, we need not do anything of that sort? Which means we—so I will give an example also.

Like I know a couple where one of the partners is a very smooth talker. He does meditation. It seems like he is living in *brahmavihāras*, but actually, he is very controlling of the other partner, very hypocritical, okay? So publicly, he's very good, like as he feels totally immersed in meditation, but actually he's not. So the other partner calls me many times, but I also have a limit in how much I can listen to complaints because I cannot do anything. Yeah. Okay, I cannot change either of them, okay? So, one way is like I stop attending their calls. What else, what should I do? Or I do *brahmavihāras*, I don't know.

Because if I don't show any empathy or real compassion, so that means really I'm not doing anything. I will just say, okay, I will send them goodwill in meditation. So what should be done in these kind of situations?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, it's tricky. So sitting and doing the *brahmavihāras* is really good. Okay, excellent. But manifesting them in action is where we're trying to go. And that's a bit more difficult. Okay? And so if this person is doing the *brahmavihāras* in the meditation but then acting not in harmony with that, yeah, they're not really doing the practice. They're just reciting the practice. And that's not so useful.

As for how do you work with other people that need more help, that's always a difficult question. How

do you actually interact with them in a way that's helpful? And my background is in computers and not in psychotherapy, but it sounds like this couple needs couples counseling. That if one of the partners is unhappy, whether the other partner is happy or not, it's not a partnership. It's something that needs working on. So if that was happening to me, I would be recommending that they go to couples counseling and talk about what the problems are.

**Questioner:**

I told them already. Only one of the partners shares that with me. I told this person already that you have to go to therapy. The other partner who is controlling, who actually controls all the finances, who has all the money control, he controls the other partner, and he thinks that he's perfect and he's the one who is hypocritical, and he will not go for therapy either. Actually, he can give you and me therapy advice. He will not go to any therapy. Okay. He thinks he's so smart. Okay? So I feel I am helpless, so I don't know. Means other than sending them goodwill in my meditation, I don't see I can do anything else, but then I see, like, maybe even I am a hypocrite because I'm not doing anything really other than just sending them goodwill in meditation, so I don't know any other solution.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, I mean, it's a really difficult situation. There are times when we see very clearly this is a problem. This needs to be taken care of. Here's the thing that can take care of it. And the people aren't interested. And so the partner who's very controlling, yeah, he doesn't want to go to therapy because he might lose his control. You know? He might have to share more. And to convince somebody that it actually will be to their benefit is really difficult. I don't have a solution for you. Yeah, it's really sad.

**Questioner:**

So in case of *brahmavihāra*, I can still do meditation, send them goodwill, like my *mettā*, *karuṇā*. I think that is only what I can do in this situation.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. And if you're with the two of them and he acts controlling, then you want to support his partner as best you can. You know? And so that the person is seeing that, yeah, he's not being supported in what he's doing. His partner is being supported against him. That's one thing to do, but this is a difficult situation.

**Questioner:**

Oh, yeah. That person is so smart. He has some kind of marketing background. Publicly, he is super good. Yeah. Publicly you cannot actually say that he is doing all this in his personal life. Like his background is in marketing and sales, so publicly he is super good as if he is the most empathetic partner, he cares for the other partner, whereas actually in private life, it is not like that.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I've known other people like that. Politicians are like that. Yeah. Okay. The last two people before we move on. Karen.

**Questioner:**

Well, just a quick comment to Himjit actually, and to the situation, because many of us probably have a difficult couple in their life, you know, where this sort of thing is dynamic. And I heard from a teacher something I thought was really lovely that really helped me in the case of a couple that I want at least one member of the couple to be in my life and I don't want to be in the middle. And that is that the Buddha really pointed to generosity as being the core of things, and the core even maybe of the *brah-mavihāras*. I don't know if you would agree. But so if I just approach the situation with generosity to them and to the situation, but also to myself where I know I've got a limit.

You know, that I can take this for about, in my case, three to thirty-six minutes. And then I've got to sort of go to the bathroom or check out or find a way to remove myself because it's too painful to watch sometimes. Yeah. So that's all I wanted to say.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Good. Thank you. You. Victoria.

**Questioner:**

Oh, oh, thanks. I didn't hear that. Yeah. Well, this recent conversation now just sort of heightens my interest in this whole issue of ultimately—you know, because as you know, I come from the Christian tradition where prayer, it's said, you know, prayer is not like a magic potion or something that you can change everything in the world. You pray intercessory prayer for all the people and concerns. But it softens our hearts. It helps us. It works on us because God doesn't need our prayers. God doesn't need anything. But we are working on our own.

So in terms of this, we're working on our own *kamma*. It's like the five recollections. The final one is that sense of response: I'm only responsible for my own *kamma*, my own life, my own path. And then it takes the sting out of seeing all these afflictive things in the world around us that we wish would be otherwise, realizing that we can't control them. And yet if we're diligent in our own practice, we will be a force for the better, you know, in healing the world. The kind of, like, almost like *tikkun olam* in the Jewish tradition, the sense of, like, I always see the *mettā* practice as like a *tikkun olam* kind of thing, like just sending out love and warmth and light and healing from, you know, as much as I can so that at least I'm not contributing to the darkness. Does that make sense?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Right. Yeah. Yeah. We're doing this practice primarily for ourselves because we're converting ourselves to be more loving, more compassionate, etcetera. Whether it impacts somebody else, me sitting on my cushion and being loving while I'm doing the practice, it doesn't matter. It's changing me

in the good direction. And that's why I'm doing it. I hope it helps the other person. But whether it does or not, it doesn't matter. It's definitely going to change me.

And then the next time I interact with them, I will be interacting in a loving way with them. So it will benefit them when we interact, whether it benefits them or not while I'm doing the practice.

**Questioner:**

Right. So it's like I always think of *paññā*. Like at the end of the day, the more wisdom we have, the more capacity to be a force for good in the world.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, exactly.

**Questioner:**

Okay, thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Right. Okay, so moving along here. So *karuṇā* in suttas without all four *brahmavihāras*: the Buddha Vipassī surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha out of compassion for sentient beings, and then many devas come to see the Buddha, including a host of devas, a host of the devas of love and compassion. These are late suttas. This is mythological, but the word compassion showed up there, so I put it in.

The next one is interesting. The Buddha says, I surveyed the world with an eye of a Buddha because of my compassion for sentient beings. And he sees the ones with little dust and much dust, are keen faculties and not. So in the Mahāyāna tradition, it's taught that the Buddha sought enlightenment out of compassion for the world, but that's not found in the suttas. Compassion doesn't show up until after the Buddha's awakened. He was trying to find his way out of *dukkha*. Basically, how am I gonna deal with old age, sickness, and death? When he finds the way out, the compassion arises at that point.

And so he surveys the world out of compassion for sentient beings. And we find that occurring over and over again. We have the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*. Then the Buddha, the compassionate great seer. Okay? Again, he's known as the compassionate one.

A sutta like the moon: they teach others because of the natural excellence of the teaching, out of compassion, kindness, and care. This is instructions to the monks on how they should teach the lay people. And so we have three words in Pāli here: *karuṇā*, which is usually translated as compassion; *anuddayam*, I'm really not very familiar with this word, kindness is a good translation; *anukampā*, care is a very good translation. And these three, they're not exactly the same, but I think this is another example of Pāli taking three very close related words and using it for emphasis. In other words, if

someone is teaching the Dhamma to someone else, they're doing it out of compassion, only out of compassion. This is the heart of it all. They're teaching it to help the other person.

When compassion is developed and cultivated, it's very fruitful and beneficial. How? And this one: cultivate the seven factors of awakening with the concept of compassion, based on seclusion, dispassion, cessation, maturing in release. And it doesn't give any more details. This occurs for each one of the *brahmavihāras*, that you should develop and cultivate it with the seven factors of awakening. And so, yeah, we don't get a lot of detail on this. But when practicing the seven factors of awakening, we should have an underlying sense of compassion there. And I'm not going to go into the seven factors of awakening here. But they're quite important.

This sutta, the next one, *AN 5.161*: you should develop love, compassion, equanimity for a person you resent. You should disregard them, pay them no attention. You should focus on the ownership of *kamma* for that individual. They doing bad stuff isn't going to get them out of their trouble. This is how you get rid of resentment. And the second sutta: you should ignore that person's impure behavior and think of them with nothing but compassion, kindness, and care. Again the same words that we had up here. Oh, may this person give up bad conduct so they are not reborn in a bad place. Or, you know, you can think of your least favorite politician. Oh, may this person give up bad conduct so they're not causing suffering for themselves and others. That'll work.

How can you just watch while someone is being harassed? Don't you have any compassion for someone being harassed? So, yeah, we are instructed that we need to take action. You can't just sit there when someone is causing trouble, causing *dukkha* to another. You can't just watch. You need to have compassion, and compassion is action. Do what you can.

Six famous teachers of the past, free of putrefaction, staunch, harmless, compassionate, gone beyond sensuality. Teach me out of compassion. And then we have the *Theragāthā*, and we have *Aṅgulimāla's* where again he refers to the Buddha as the compassionate great seer. Have hearts of love and compassion, and please keep your precepts, and the great sage of compassion. So these are the suttas that contain compassion outside of the four *brahmavihāras*. So not a lot of them, but it gives you a sense of what the context is.

Any comments or questions on these suttas before we take a short break? I mentioned this sutta earlier, and it's entitled *Like the Moon*, and it's the attitude to have when teaching the Dhamma. It's interesting. We all encounter Dhamma teachers, and maybe, maybe just check out what their attitude is at some point. Because 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, because you should approach families. So a teacher should not force themselves on people. They should be kind of back.

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. May they listen to the Dhamma from me. Having listened, may they understand the Dhamma. Having understood, may they practice 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. Such a one's teaching of the Dhamma is pure. And the footnote, this is from Bhikkhu Bodhi. He says, I generally translate both *karuṇā* and *anukampā* as compassion. I wish he hadn't done that. You know, had to go through every place in there where it's compassion and figure out, all right, is this *karuṇā* or *anukampā*? And not only did Bhikkhu Bodhi do it, so did Ajahn Sujato, which is where I was looking.

This is usually successful as the two seldom occur together, but the present passage is a rare exception. Thus, I use tender concern for *anukampā*. I just use care. That's Gil Fronsdal's translation. I think it's good. The commentary glosses *anuddaya* as the protective state and *anukampā* with tenderheartedness and says that both are synonymous with *karuṇā*. And so I just translated as one teaches the Dhamma out of compassion, kindness, and care. We think of compassion as something towards those who are suffering. But kindness can be towards anyone, and care can be towards anyone. So, yeah, if we take these three together, yeah. We're doing this because it's a good thing to do, the intrinsic excellence of the Dhamma.

*Muditā*. *Muditā* is probably the stepchild of the four. It just doesn't get talked about as much either in the suttas or by current teachers. It shows up in three suttas only that I could find where, you know, it's not part of all four *brahmavihāras*. There's the *Muditā Sutta*. The *muditā* is developed and cultivated. It's very fruitful and beneficial. And how is it developed and cultivated? With the seven factors of awakening. And again, there's no more detail than we had for *karuṇā*. Okay, so all right, that doesn't really tell us much about what *muditā* is.

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 *brahmavihāra*. That is the heart's release by *muditā*. When they are joyful—and notice this word contains *mudita* without a long ā as part of it—so joy, clearly. *Pīti* arises. From *pīti*, tranquility. From tranquility, *sukha*. From *sukha*, *samādhi*.

So again, we have the *jhāna* summary arising, but this time not from *pāmojja* but from *muditā*. And this is our best description in all the suttas about what *muditā* is. As people living in harmony, appreciating each other—that's why I like appreciative joy—without quarreling, blending like milk and water, regarding each other with kindly eyes, they brim with much merit. At that time, they live in a *brahmavihāra*. So, yeah. The rejoicing at others' good fortune, yeah. I mean, that would be part of it, but it seems to be bigger than that. But yeah, we don't get much there.

And then the third of the suttas, because there are these three things: discontent, harmfulness, and conduct contrary to the Dhamma. These are the three things. There are three other things that are

to be developed for the abandoning of these first three. *Muditā* is to be developed for the abandoning of discontent. Harmlessness developed for abandoning harmfulness. Conduct according to the Dhamma to be developed for conduct contrary to Dhamma. These three things are to be developed for abandoning of the three former things.

So this would indicate that *muditā* is the opposite of discontent. Well, the opposite of discontent would be content. Again, it doesn't really give us the rejoicing at the good fortune of others, but it does imply that it's for yourself. You're content for yourself. But, yeah, we don't really get the usual definition of *muditā* found in the suttas. There are—well, they're called suttas—there are more collections in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, and one of them is *Vimānavatthu*, heavenly mansions. And in there, we find very much a description of someone rejoicing at someone else's good fortune. Only they don't use the word *muditā*. I talk about this in the book that's coming out, so you can take a look when you get to that. But, yeah, we don't find the usual definition of *muditā* here.

I still think appreciative joy is a good translation, and it works with this *AN* 3.95, appreciating each other, in harmony, no quarreling, blending like milk and water, etc. I put a footnote here. This sentence is a *jhāna* summary, and I talk about it in my sutta indexes where it shows up in thirty-two suttas. Often in the *jhāna* summary, the *jhānas* arise dependent on abandoning hindrances. But here they arise dependent on *muditā*. And I have a whole chapter in my concentration on the *jhāna* summary if you want more.

There are Pāli words that include *mudita* without a long ā as part of them. And one of the more famous ones is the seer Asita in his daily meditation saw the bright-clad gods of the host of the Thirty-three and their lord Sakka joyfully celebrating, waving streamers in exuberant exaltation. Seeing the gods rejoicing, *muditamanī*. Right? It's a different word, but they're rejoicing, elated. He paid respects and said this there. Why are the community of gods in such excellent spirits? Why they take up streamers and whirl about?

Being intent on awakening, a peerless gem has been born in the human realm for the sake and welfare and happiness in Lumbinī, a village in the Sākiyan land. That's why we're so happy, in such excellent spirits. So this sounds a lot like *muditā* even though the word isn't *muditā*, it's *muditamanī*. There are a lot of words that have *mudita* with a short a as part of them. *Muditamanī* means with glad in mind, having a happy heart, elated. *Mudita*, short a, happy, glad, literally means to become soft.

And then *samādhita*, pleased, happy with, and pleased with attachment, excitement, being, becoming, existing, with mental phenomena, sensual pleasures, pride, craving, grasping, forms, feeling, perception, fabrications. And there are two suttas here that have a bunch of those words in them, in case you want to look. And if you want to see the Pāli, you can click on this, and this on my website tells you how to find the Pāli. Okay? If you're in SuttaCentral, Bhikkhu Sujato's has the Pāli. The idea is basically go to the upper right-hand corner, find views, and click on that, and then click on line by line or side by side, and then the language of your choice if you want to activate the dictionary, and then

go back to the sutta. I think that's it for this. Penelope, you had your hand up.

**Questioner:**

I did, but I realized it was such a picayune idea that it's just, again, it's a question of translation. I was surprised that it was with exuberant exaltation and not exultation. Because my mind went, oh, it must be exultation. But no, no, no. It's exaltation. And I'm wondering why. So it's just a question of translation, I guess. Maybe something being exalted is more—I mean, to me it seems like it should be exultant, not exalted. You see what I'm saying?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yes, yes, I agree with you, and I hadn't noticed that because I'm a bit dyslexic, I guess.

**Questioner:**

Oh, maybe a typo. Okay.

**Leigh Brasington:**

I don't know. This is a copy and paste from SuttaCentral. So this is what Bhikkhu Sujato put. So you would have to ask Bhikkhu Sujato why he put that, or look up the Pāli using—

**Questioner:**

The word shows, and see what—

**Leigh Brasington:**

The word is and then look up that word.

**Questioner:**

I will do that. Thank you so much.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yes. All right. Victoria.

**Questioner:**

Well, apropos of that, I just wanna say that this isn't my question. But interestingly enough, when the Hebrew is translated in the Hebrew scriptures into English, there's often a mix-up between exaltation and exultation in English, which I think is, yeah, people are just not paying enough attention to the English, actually. So it's interesting to find it here again.

My question was actually, is there—it's so interesting to see *mudita* in words that are unwholesome qualities. So there's unwholesome *muditā*. Is that the case with—I mean, I just can't remember now. Is that the case with the other *brahmavihāras*, or is *muditā* alone in that regard, that there's an unwholesome version of *muditā* where you're rejoicing in the unwholesome?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. With *mettā*, there's—I think I found seven different words that would get translated as love. You know? And so love of craving. Okay. But it's using a different word. It's not using *mettā*. Whereas *muditā*, yeah, it's just the joy, happiness. *Muditā* certainly seems to have happiness, joy as the underlying thing. And so being happy about unwholesome stuff, it uses that word. I don't know of any examples using *karuṇā*, but there may be.

For *upekkhā*, there actually—there's unwholesome equanimity. You're equanimous about something, but the something is unwholesome. And I think we'll come across that when we look at the suttas about equanimity. But I did come across something like that when I was doing the research for this. So for *mettā*, it doesn't use *mettā*. It uses different words. For *karuṇā*, I don't remember any. *Muditā*, it uses *mudita* without the long ā. *Upekkhā*, there are various ranges of *upekkhā*. And there's a lot of suttas on *upekkhā*, two hundred, but *upekkhā* gets used in many different ways. So that's part of why.

**Questioner:**

Interesting. Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Right. Yeah. *Muditā*—some people say it's the most difficult one to learn because we wanna feel good about ourselves, and to rejoice because somebody else is feeling good, yeah, it's just not a part of the culture. I mean, we don't have the word *muditā* in English. We don't have an easy translation of it. When somebody told me sympathetic joy, that meant as little to me as the word *muditā*. I had no idea what they were talking about. Sympathetic joy? Appreciative joy, that's a little better, I think, and does bring in that you can appreciate your own joy.

And I do have two chapters in the book on your own practicing *muditā* for yourself, appreciating your own good fortune. That's actually quite important, I think. But yeah, it's not one that's that easy, and it so goes against the culture that, yeah, people have trouble with it. It was the last one that I felt, oh, this is what they're talking about. You know, love, I knew about love. Compassion, yeah, okay. Equanimity. *Muditā*? It took several years before I felt I was getting a sense of that. Catherine?

**Questioner:**

Do other languages, particularly Eastern languages, have a phrase for *muditā*?

**Leigh Brasington:**

I don't know about Eastern languages. German has two, but they're not well known. I do have them. Okay, let's see. Okay, this is the book. All right. And *sumādhita*. I think it's here. The far enemy is *Schadenfreude* in German. Mhmm. And down here someplace—okay. There is *Freudenfreude* in

German. I took German in college. I never came across this word. And Google translates it as joyful joy. I don't think that's going to work in English. It's a translation from Anita.

Friedrich Nietzsche—I came up with *Mitfreude*, which is feeling of joy with. *Mit* is with. And so it's there in German. And so the closest I found in English is compersion, which was apparently coined by members of a now defunct polyamorous community in San Francisco. So that's, you know, one of your sexual partners is having a good time with someone else and you have joy for them. But that's a little problematic as well, and nobody knows compersion anyhow. So, right, I didn't include it.

But yeah, I don't know about other languages. It would be interesting to see. I would suspect Sanskrit has something similar to *muditā*. We could look at—and we want the one with the long ā here. *M u d u*, I think that's happy or soft. The red is the Sanskrit, so etymological relationship to mood, which is soft but I think also happy. Yeah, it's not really much there in the dictionary. So, yeah. But it could well be in other languages. I just simply don't know, and I didn't, you know, plug *muditā* in and then start trying to translate it into other languages and see what it would come up with.

**Questioner:**

Right. All right. Well, thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. Malcolm.

**Questioner:**

I can speak Thai, and the word that they use is *mudita*.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Okay, so the Thai word for *muditā* is *mudita*.

**Questioner:**

My Thai's not fantastic, understand that. But the question I have is, I think you mentioned this last week, but I just wanted to kind of clarify it again. And I've actually got two questions. Why do you think that in the suttas they never really talk about *muditā* for oneself? I mean, it's always appreciative joy, it's always, you know, sympathetic joy and empathetic joy, as if you're picking it up from someone else. The other question is that—

**Leigh Brasington:**

Wait, wait, one question at a time, please. So it says to all as to oneself over and over again when you're doing all four *brahmavihāras*. So I would say that yes, it is to yourself in the *brahmavihāras*. Okay? And so I'm gonna go with that.

**Questioner:**

Okay. No. That's great. That's great. As all is to oneself. As all is to oneself. Yep. The second question is about—and I think you mentioned this last week, but I just wanted to kind of go over it again. And that is gratitude, and the word for gratitude. I don't know the word for gratitude in Pāli, but I mean, is there a word, and why is it differentiated? And I've, you know, taught this as like, I think that gratitude is like a cousin of *muditā*. I mean it's not quite the same. Experientially it's felt differently. I mean, it's just not in your heart, but there's an uplift with *muditā*, whereas with gratitude there's more of a softening, and it's like the sunset if you want to compare it to Anālayo's reference to the sun and the moon in terms of the feeling upliftings.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. I think there is a Pāli word for gratitude. We can actually look it up quickly here. If I go here, here we go. Okay, so here we go.

**Questioner:**

I think that's it. There—

**Leigh Brasington:**

Are two words in Pāli that—this is the one I'm familiar with.

**Questioner:**

How do you say that?

**Leigh Brasington:**

For some reason, I can't click it. Well, there you go. So there is a different word, and it doesn't have *muditā* as part of it.

**Questioner:**

Thankfulness, appreciativeness. It's like, you know, when you have *muditā* for yourself about the things you've done, you know, like, you know, I can have some appreciation of the work I've done towards something. Yeah. And it kinda—it—

**Leigh Brasington:**

And it doesn't even have to be something that you've done. You know, you just suddenly appreciate your circumstances. You know, someone has done something nice for you, and it's, oh, it's so nice that they did this nice thing for me. So, you know, and you have appreciation for them doing the nice thing, and you have appreciation for yourself having experienced this nice thing.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. But it's so similar. Like, you know, there's a different felt sense about it. Like there's a different sign for it.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah.

**Questioner:**

There's a different sign for it, but it's so similar that, you know, I wonder why it's not included in *muditā*. Yeah.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Well, I think we'll come across this, but there's a sutta where some followers of another religion say, we do the four *brahmavihāras*. So I think this predates the Buddha. And so the Buddha just co-opted these four and taught them as opposed to coming up with them. So—

**Questioner:**

I'm just thinking about that word again. I think in Thai, gratitude is—I mean, there's a similar, you know, picks up Pāli words, so it looks like it's pretty similar to that.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Right. Yeah. Okay. Thanks, Clay.

**Questioner:**

Sure.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Okay. *Upekkhā* appears in the description of both the third and fourth *jhāna*. One dwells in equanimity in the third, and the fourth *jhāna* contains mindfulness fully purified by equanimity. So basically the idea is if you get to *jhāna* four, you're now going to have the best kind of mindfulness which you can then turn to your insight practice, because that mindfulness is fully purified by equanimity.

And that shows up in 118 suttas. *Upekkhā* is listed as one of the seven factors of awakening. That's in 126 suttas. And the four establishments of mindfulness says that when one has the awakening factor of equanimity in them, they understand it's in me. When they don't, they understand they don't. And they understand how that has not arisen comes to arise, and how it becomes fulfilled by development. So basically, are you equanimous or not? And if not, how can you make the equanimity arise? And if it has arisen, how do you bring it to perfection?

But that's not the *brahmavihāras*. That's another use. That's, yeah, over two hundred suttas using equanimity in a different way. It shows up in other suttas not as the third or fourth *jhāna* or the seventh factor of awakening but in multiple lists. And so there are the five faculties of pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, and equanimity. And the five feelings, which are the same, and the six elements.

Elements is a really interesting word, *dhātu*. I found two elements, three, four, five, several five, several sixes, etc. There are the six elements of pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, equanimity, and

ignorance, which just adds ignorance to the previous two. And then it shows up in a whole bunch of different suttas. For what reason do I declare there are two kinds of equanimity? We should 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 you should know an equanimity: when I cultivate that equanimity, unskillful qualities decline, skillful qualities grow. You should cultivate that kind of equanimity.

And that equanimity which is free of *vitakka* and *vicāra* is better than that which still involves *vitakka* and *vicāra*. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* are thinking and examining. So we have two teachings on two kinds of equanimity, but this answers an earlier question. There's an equanimity that promotes unskillful qualities and diminishes skillful qualities. That should not be practiced, and it is indeed the word *upekkhā*. The wrong kind of equanimity sounds a lot like the near enemy of equanimity. Remember the near enemy is apathy, and so if you're apathetic, you're not really being compassionate because you're not really engaged. Equanimity, as we saw last week, means looking on or standing near, so you're fully engaged. Penelope.

**Questioner:**

I guess I'm confused as to why they just don't use the word indifference or apathy instead of using the word *upekkhā* for both kinds of equanimity if one is wholesome and one isn't.

**Leigh Brasington:**

I don't know Pāli well enough to answer that question. They may have only had the word *upekkhā*, and so they talked about it that way. But I just don't know enough to say.

**Questioner:**

Okay, thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Okay, Thomas.

**Questioner:**

Yes. So what I take from the first passage there is that it is the presence of *vitakka* and *vicāra* which distinguishes wholesome from unwholesome equanimity.

**Leigh Brasington:**

You know, I would say these are two separate teachings. There's the wholesome and unwholesome equanimity because skillful qualities decline or increase. And there's another one which is equanimity with the thinking and equanimity without thinking. And it's better if it doesn't have thinking. So I think there's four kinds of equanimity taught here. Two are good and two are bad. That's my take on this. It doesn't spell it out like that.

And I'm wondering, with *vitakka* and *vicāra*, this sentence, I wonder if that was a later insertion because it would certainly make more sense if it wasn't there.

**Questioner:**

Right. I mean, *vitakka* and *vicāra* being factors of the first *jhāna*, subsequently abandoned.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Actually, *vitakka* is the most common word I found in the suttas. Okay? Not only in the first and second *jhāna* is it mentioned, it's mentioned over nine hundred times. So thinking is, yeah, thinking is important. *Vitakka* and *vicāra* often are mentioned together in the first two suttas, and so it could be *vitakka* and *vicāra*, you get equanimity but you're not in the *jhānas*. If you get it without *vitakka* and *vicāra*, you are in the *jhānas*. Okay? The higher *jhānas*. Okay? So we don't really know. All we have is this one sentence, which makes two additional kinds of equanimity, and then it says there's two kinds. So it's a little unclear.

The longer Simile of the Elephant's Footprint: now if *dukkha* arises, my energy shall be roused up and unflagging, my mindfulness shall be established and lucid, my body tranquil and undisturbed, my mind immersed in *samādhi* and unified. For this is how the instructions of the Buddha are followed. If we're recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, 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. So basically, can you be equanimous when *dukkha* arises? If so, much has been done. Catherine.

**Questioner:**

I just wondered if you would elaborate a little bit about how you can have equanimity with *vitakka*. And what kind of thinking and examining are we talking about? I would imagine it's different from investigation, you know?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. It could be you're investigating some *dukkha*. All right? And you're thinking, oh, yeah, okay. This is not good, but I can handle it. All right? I can really deal with this in a way because I have these skills, and you've gotten this equanimity because you've been thinking about it. But it's not as good as if the equanimity is just there. The *dukkha* arises, and you're not knocked off balance. You don't have to think and get the skills because your equanimity is so strong. That would be my guess about it.

**Questioner:**

So it's more of something that goes beyond thinking and beyond words?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. Yeah. It's a very stable feeling, and that's what we're looking for. In the progress of insight, which is found in the *Visuddhimagga*, in the commentaries, the tenth of the sixteen steps is

equanimity about formations. Okay? And that's a very deep unshakable equanimity. Someone who has arrived at that state can look at something that's attractive, see it's attractive, and not be attracted. There's no words. It's just, yeah, it's just there.

Or they can look at something that's repulsive, know it's repulsive, and not be repulsed. It's a really stable form of equanimity. It doesn't need words to keep it there or anything else. It's not, I can handle this, I don't need to go there. It's just solid. And I think that's probably what it's pointing towards.

**Questioner:**

Okay.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Victoria.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. On that point, to sort of go back to what we were talking about earlier, if we think of the *brahmavihāras* as heavenly abodes, there's this sense that dwelling in them is beyond cognition or mental processing or making choices or decisions, that there's a kind of—there's—I mean, that's the way I—so I'm wondering if you could speak to that. Maybe the sense of, even to go back to our *mettā*, like selective *mettā* or judging or all of these things. Those are all mental processes that we go through to judge or, you know, if we're actually really practicing the *brahmavihāras* and dwelling in those abodes, wouldn't that sort of relate to this in the sense that, like you said, it's natural. We don't have to think or examine or say, okay, now I'm going to make a conscious decision that I'm going to do this or that. It's getting to the point—

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. I mean, like the moon sutta that we had just a little moment ago, when teaching the Dhamma you should teach from a state of compassion, kindness, care, right? But you're teaching the Dhamma, and you're trying to understand, okay, what can I say that's going to be helpful to these people? So it's not like you're just there, but this is the underlying attitude you have while you're doing that.

So yes, sometimes you're just there, particularly when doing the practice, you might be just there. But you want to carry the practice out into the world. And I talk a lot about carrying the practice out into the world in the book. So, yeah, there's both. There's dwelling in the heavenly palace and just hanging out, and then there's taking that attitude out into the world and using it to deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

**Questioner:**

Right. Right. Yeah. No. What I meant more was, like, don't second-guess the *brahmavihāras*. That I guess that's what I'm trying to drive at. Like, *vitakka* and *vicāra*, I mean, that's what I get out of that

sentence. It's like, don't get it all tangled up second-guessing and judging. The equanimity that, like you said, is just kind of natural and neutral, it can be maintained better.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. What you want is equanimity that doesn't need things pushing to keep it in place. It's just there.

**Questioner:**

Right, that's what I meant.

**Questioner:**

Yeah.

**Questioner:**

No props. Yeah, thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

So, *MN 54*. The Buddha said that sensual pleasures give little gratification and much suffering and distress, and they're full of drawbacks. Having truly seen this with right understanding, one shuns equanimity based on diversity and develops only equanimity based on unity, where all kinds of grasping to worldly pleasures of the flesh cease without anything left over. So, you want equanimity basically not because of all that's going on out there, but equanimity because it's a stable place for you to come from. I think that's what this means. Yeah. It doesn't give a lot of data, but we will see more as we're looking at this. Malcolm?

**Questioner:**

Yeah, thanks, Leigh. I've just put up in the chat line a paper that I read about the ten different kinds of equanimity. And this was really, when I read this paper, it was really helpful for me to understand the different types of equanimity. And it lists the equanimity of the *jhānas* as you've described them in the fourth *jhāna*. And it also talks about the equanimity of formations, which is what I understand from practicing insight meditation, for example. You have a sense of equanimity about the way things are.

There's the equanimity of feelings, which is like unworldly neutral feelings. I think you can say they're neutral in terms of equanimity. And there's also the equanimity as a *brahmavihāra*. And my understanding of this is that one has the state of mind that is equanimous, and it's radiated out filling the space in all directions. Whatever beings there are, their hearts are touched by that equanimity. So that's the way I've sort of developed an understanding of it in trying to understand the differences between all these different ways of understanding equanimity. And I've put the paper up in the chat line.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Good. People can take a look at it. Yeah, thank you. All right. Doran, did you have a question?

**Questioner:**

Just to talk about equanimity based on diversity versus that that comes from within. One take on it is with regard to sensual pleasures in that sutta, based on diversity is kind of like saying, I've been there, done that. I've been through all these sensual pleasures, been there, done that. I'm not fazed by it anymore. The Buddha says that's one way to achieve equanimity, but the better way is to achieve it from within, to get that internal equanimity that comes through the *jhānas*. And some people refer to it as one of the *jhānas*, through meditation, through practice.

But another point to make about the different definitions of equanimity, the standard one is unfazed, unfazed by highs and lows of life and everything else. In the *brahmavihāra*, as I've seen it described in two different ways, one of which was just mentioned previously, the equality and the undiscerning quality of our sending out our *mettā*, completely equal to all beings, you know, even the coronavirus, all beings, if you can call that a living thing, virus. Some people say viruses are not. Just completely equal. No discernment. No comparison. No better or worse. Equal love to all.

That's one. The other one has to do with the definition of compassion as a two-directional street where, you know, *mettā* is all from the heart out, one direction out, whereas compassion involves a bit of back and forth, putting our mind in the mind of the other person, understanding what's going on there, and feeling some mercy. That can lead, as we know from health care workers and social workers, can lead to empathic distress. It's a very difficult emotional exercise. So the equanimity in the *brahmavihāras*, one way in which some teachers teach it is to balance out the other *brahmavihāras*, the fourth one being the one that says, I'm going to have care, but just as much for myself as for any other being. You're kind of equating, and balancing the amount of care that you need to take care of yourself and the other—the oxygen mask idea.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, that's good. Yeah. I think of it as a diamond with equanimity at the bottom, balancing out everything else. Love at the top, compassion and *muditā* on the sides, and it's all balanced on equanimity. So yeah, very good.

Okay, back to the suttas because we're gonna need to take another break very soon. Heaven's exertion is striving fruitful if 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 that source of suffering, but when I develop equanimity I become dispassionate towards that other source of suffering. So either they actively strive and develop equanimity as appropriate, or develop equanimity as appropriate. Through active striving they become dispassionate towards that specific sort of suffering, so that suffering is worn away. Through devel-

oping equanimity they become dispassionate towards that other source of suffering, so the suffering is worn away.

So sometimes you've actually got to work at it, and sometimes you just can deal with whatever the *dukkha* is by being equanimous. And there's legitimate pleasure. Okay? Sometimes Buddhism gets a bad rap about there's no pleasure or anything. Yeah, there is legitimate pleasure. The *jhānas*, for example. The feeling of *mettā*, the feeling of generosity. These are considered legitimate pleasures. And that's not an exhaustive list. There are probably quite a few others. So sometimes the striving, sometimes just being generous, actually helps you deal with the *dukkha*. Okay? Other times, yeah, you just gotta realize you can't fix the whole world.

Suppose you think 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. Yeah, difficult people. It helps a lot if you can be equanimous when dealing with them. You don't get sucked into them. Not that you can solve all the difficulties, but it's gonna be more helpful.

When one practices like this, it might not be, it might not be mine, it will not be, it will not be mine. Giving up what exists, what has come to be, in this way one gains equanimity. One doesn't approve, welcome, or cling to that equanimity, so their consciousness doesn't have that as a support and fuel for grasping. One is free of grasping, becomes awakened. So, yeah, it might not happen like you want it to happen. Can you be equanimous with that without grasping at that equanimity? Tricky. Definitely tricky.

So this is from the sutta on mindfulness of breathing and a couple others. Whenever one practices breathing while observing impermanence, or observing fading away, or observing cessation, or observing letting go—and those are steps thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen of the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing—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.

So when doing the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing and seeing the impermanence, it's really not going to work if you're not equanimous at that point. That's what the previous twelve steps are about. They get you to a stage where you do have equanimity. So when you're seeing impermanence and observing the fading away and observing cessation and letting go, you're able to do this with an equanimous mind.

This sutta is a fairly long one, and it has a lot of stuff, and I don't think we'll get to it before we take a break. When consciousness follows after the third or fourth *jhānas*, attached, fettered to gratification and bliss with equanimity, the mind is stuck internally. When consciousness doesn't follow after that, equanimity is not attached, etc., the mind is said not to be stuck. And how, Ānanda, is there the

supreme development of the faculties in the training of the noble ones? When one sees a sight with their eyes, and the other senses, in them arises what is agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable.

One understands what is agreeable, what is disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable have arisen in me. That is conditioned, crude, dependently originated. But this is peaceful and sublime, namely equanimity. In other words, when the agreeable comes, don't get lost in it. When the disagreeable comes, don't get lost in it. Can you be with equanimity? If so, the equanimity becomes stabilized.

It's like how a person with clear eyes might open their eyes and then shut them, this is blinking, or they might shut their eyes and then open them. Such is the speed, the swiftness, the ease with which, when anything agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable, equanimity becomes stabilized. The training of the noble ones, this is a supreme development of the faculties regarding the objects known by the senses. So as quick as a blink of the eye, you should be able to generate equanimity, hopefully, maybe.

Don't be intoxicated by a pleasant touch. Don't tremble at a painful touch. Look on with equanimity at the duality of pleasant and painful contacts without favoring or opposing anything. Yeah, if you can do that, that's pretty powerful. Not easy to do.

And what is equanimity even more spiritual than that not of the flesh? That is the equanimity of the fourth *jhāna*. When one who is into the defilement reviews their mind free from greed, hatred, and delusion, equanimity arises. This is called equanimity even more spiritual than the equanimity of the fourth *jhāna*. This one is about, if one's head or clothes were on fire, would you put it out? Oh yeah, we'd work really hard at that. Well, he might do that, but definitely you should make such an effort to understand the Four Noble Truths.

You could possibly sit there. Equanimity shows up in this one. Where is it? One might look on equanimously at one's blazing hair or clothes. Probably not a good idea. Right? You need to make effort. And the same thing, you don't want to look on equanimously at *dukkha* and think, oh yeah, it's just *dukkha*. You want to make the effort to understand the Four Noble Truths, to actually manifest them, to stop the craving.

There are two kinds of happiness: happiness as pleasure, and happiness with equanimity. Happiness with equanimity is the better. These suttas, along with the description of the third *jhāna*, indicate that *upekkhā* is not always emotionally neutral. It can definitely be happy equanimity. Sometimes we hear about equanimity being a neutral state of mind. It's an unruffled state of mind. It can be neutral. Sometimes, yeah, it's definitely neutral. But there are other times, such as the sutta and in the description of the third *jhāna*, where you have happy equanimity.

And this is again about being equanimous with someone who's not particularly good to hang out with. One committed to the higher mind should focus on three bases from time to time: concentration,

exertion, and equanimity. If you just work on concentration, *samādhi*, the mind will incline to laziness. In other words, you find a nice state and you just hang out there and that's it. Now, if one focuses solely on exertion, it will become restless. Right? And if you focus solely on equanimity, you won't get the *samādhi* you need for the defilements.

So when one is dedicated to the higher mind, you pick the one appropriate at that time. And their mind becomes pliable, workable, radiant, not brittle, and becomes rightly immersed in *samādhi* for the ending of the defilements.

Got a few more here. Six qualities: one with six qualities can realize supreme peace. What six? Keep their mind in check, exert the mind, encourage the mind, watch over the mind with equanimity, have excellent convictions, delight in *Nibbāna*. The *Rhinoceros Horn Sutta* is a very early sutta. When you put pleasure and pain behind you and former happiness and sadness, and gain equanimity serene and pure, live alone like a horned rhino. And some scholars think these first three lines are a reference to the fourth *jhāna*. I would agree.

And then finally: eyes downcast, not footloose, devoted to *jhāna*, one would be very wakeful, grounded in equanimity, serene, once you cut off worrisome habits of thought. And we're four minutes past the break time I was aiming for, and no hands are up. So we're now going to take a break, and we'll be back at eleven after to take a look at a bunch of suttas that have—we'll skip that. You can look at it. We'll look at more suttas concerning all four *brahmavihāras*. Okay, short break.

So there are more suttas that contain all four *brahmavihāras*, and we're gonna look at some of them. I don't think we'll have time for all of them. This is *MN 40*: how does a monastic practice in the way that is proper for an ascetic? They give up covetousness, ill will, irritability, acrimony, disdain, contempt, jealousy, stinginess, deviousness, deceit, corrupt wishes, and wrong view. Giving these up is the proper way.

They see themselves purified of these bad qualities. Seeing this, joy arises, then *pīti*, then tranquility, then *sukha*, then *samādhi*. In other words, they step through the *jhānas*, and then they practice the four *brahmavihāras*. In the same way, someone has gone forth from the lay life to homelessness, from any caste. Right after the teachings, having developed these *brahmavihāras*, they gain inner peace. Because of that inner peace they are practicing the way proper for an ascetic.

Someone who has gone forth, and when they realize undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom in this very life, and they live having realized that through their own insight due to the ending of defilements, they're an ascetic because of the ending of defilements. That's full awakening. So inner peace can arise from the *brahmavihāras*. But if you can also do the freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom—that's a phrase that shows up in later suttas to indicate full awakening. But freedom of heart, that's the *brahmavihāra* practice. And freedom by wisdom, that's the insight practice. You got to do both of them to get the full awakening. At least that's my understanding of this.

This is an interesting sutta. A wealthy merchant asks Ānanda, is there one thing the Buddha has explained so that one's mind is freed, their *āsavas* are ended, and they arrive at the supreme sanctuary from the yoke? In other words, from *dukkha*. Ānanda says there is: practicing the *jhānas* one, two, three, four, practicing the *brahmavihāras*. And in there, even this heart's release by the *brahmavihāra* is fabricated and produced by intentions. They understand that whatever is fabricated and produced by intention is impermanent, liable to cessation. Abiding in that, they attain the ending of the *āsavas*. In other words, deep enough insight into the impermanent nature of any of the *brahmavihāras* or the *jhānas* can lead to the ending of the *āsavas*, which is equivalent to full awakening.

If, however, they don't attain the ending of the *āsavas*, with the ending of the five lower fetters they're reborn spontaneously because of their passion and love for meditation. That would mean that we get to the third stage of awakening, the ending of the five lower fetters. They are awakened there, they're a non-returner, and they don't return to the world. And these are more things that have been described. And then furthermore there are the four—three of the four higher *jhānas*: limitless space, limitless consciousness, and nothingness. They can also take you there.

And the merchant is very happy because Ānanda has given him not one but eleven things he can do, and he gives food and robes to the Saṅgha. The same sutta appears in the *Aṅguttara*, and these eleven practices—the four *jhānas*, the four *brahmavihāras*, the first three of the immaterial states—can also be undertaken for a bunch of stuff and giving up a bunch of stuff. Anyhow, practicing the four *brahmavihāras* can lead to full awakening or the state of a non-returner.

This is a Brahman who's dying. He was a corrupt official, and Sāriputta met him and convinced him to give up his corruption. But at some later point he became sick, suffering, gravely ill. He requested Sāriputta visit him. Sāriputta finds him very ill and teaches him a path to the company of Brahmā, and teaches him the *brahmavihāra* practice. And the Brahman requests Sāriputta say that the Brahman is sick, suffering, gravely ill. He bows with his head to your feet. Then Sāriputta left, goes to see the Buddha.

And the Buddha said, why didn't you just give him that? How come you didn't help him get enlightened? Ah, these Brahmans, they love the *brahmavihāras*. And then the Buddha says that the Brahmin has passed away and is born in the Brahmā realms. It's a rare instance of someone taking rebirth due to deathbed *kamma*. This official had been very corrupt, stealing from people for a long time before he encountered Sāriputta. But because he practiced the *brahmavihāras* as he was dying, apparently managed to wind up not in hell. This sutta is also curious because the Buddha seems to chastise Sāriputta for not teaching him a deeper practice.

Subha and the Buddha have a long discussion about various things, and then the student asks, I hear you know the path to Brahmā. Teach me that path. And it's the *brahmavihāra* practice. Subha declares himself a lay follower. On his way back to his lodgings, he encounters the Brahman Jāṇussoṇi, who shows up in fourteen suttas. And as part of their conversation Jāṇussoṇi says, you praise the

ascetic Gotama with high praise. Subha replies, who am I to praise the ascetic Gotama? It's praised by the praise that's the best among gods and humans.

Five things is the Brahmā's prescribed for making merit and succeeding in the skillful, prerequisite of the mind for developing a mind free from enmity and ill will. *MN 118* is the famous mindfulness of breathing sutta. And in that sutta, at the start, the Buddha talks about the Saṅgha, bhikkhus practicing, well, the things in bold here. These first are the thirty-seven factors of awakening: four foundations of mindfulness, four kinds of right striving, four bases of spiritual power, five faculties, five powers, seven factors of enlightenment, and the Noble Eightfold Path. Total of that is thirty-seven.

It's the thirty-seven factors of awakening. I assume the thirty-seven factors of awakening is a later teaching. So the fact that it appears in the sutta would indicate that the sutta as we have it is a later sutta. But the practices that are found in here, all of them, the thirty-seven, the *brahmavihāras*, perception of impermanence, meditation on *asubha*, dullness or not beautiful, all of those show up in lots of different places, as well as the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing. So the Buddha says, yeah, people are practicing all those things I've taught. Here are the sixteen steps of mindfulness of breathing, and he lays it out.

They fulfill the four foundations of mindfulness. I find that a little questionable myself. It's a very commonly taught thing, but I just don't see how the second four match mindfulness and fade out. But that's me, and that's a different thing. Anyhow, the four foundations of mindfulness fulfill the seven factors of awakening because they fulfill mindfulness, which is the first factor, and the first factor supports the second, supports the third, etc. It's a brilliant sutta. I just think it's a later composition as we have it right now.

Godatta asks the layman whether the liberations of measureless, nothingness, emptiness, and signless are different states or just different words for the same thing. And it's basically looking at liberation from different angles. You know, this is a cell phone. That's the screen. That's the back with the camera. That's the side that's got the buttons. And that's the side that doesn't have the buttons. Now which one is the real cell phone? Well, no, you're looking at it from different angles. And so that's what this is here.

And so the *brahmavihāras* are the limitless release of the heart, okay, or the measureless. Nothingness is the seventh *jhāna*. Emptiness, everything is empty of self and what belongs to the self. And signless, this would be being in a state where *saññā*, our perception or conceptualization, isn't taking place. You're still aware of sensory input, but you're not conceptualizing it. You're not focused on the signs. These are—that's how they're different, but they all are about awakening. Greed, hatred, delusion are makers of limits, so the limitless release of the heart by practicing the *brahmavihāras* overcomes greed, okay, hatred, yes, and delusion. These are some things, so if you can practice the no-thingness, you get beyond something. They're makers of signs. When you can get beyond the signs, then you end the *āsavas*, and this is the awakening.

This is probably a late sutta. This is the one that combines the four *brahmavihāras* with the seven factors of awakening. It's in here. You can download it. I put the link in the chat. I can put it in again if people want. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. It's a good idea, but I can't teach you that because I don't fully get it.

This is another one where there's multiple things going on. Monastics attain to the gods because they've practiced the four *jhānas*. They've attained to Brahmā because they practice the *brahmavihāras*. They've attained to the imperturbable world by practicing four immaterial states, that is *jhānas* five, six, seven, eight. And to nobility they truly understand the Four Noble Truths. So the *brahmavihāras* are part of that, but nobility requires a breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths.

This is an interesting sutta. Someone says: I've developed the heart's release by *mettā*. I've cultivated it, made it my vehicle, etcetera, but somehow ill will still occupies my mind. They should be told no, not so. Don't say that. Don't misrepresent the Buddha. That's not good. It's impossible. It cannot happen that the heart's release by *mettā* has been developed and properly implemented, and that somehow ill will still occupies the mind. For the heart's release by *mettā* is the escape from ill will. So if you're doing *mettā* fully, completely, got it full on, ill will will not arise.

The same thing with *karuṇā* and cruelty, *muditā* and discontent, and *upekkhā* and desire. So this is one way you can check up on your *brahmavihāra* practice. Okay. You say you've mastered *upekkhā*, and yet desire still arises. No. You haven't mastered *upekkhā*. Right? And then one who says, I'm rid of conceit, but I am still arises, no, they've missed it, missed out on that one as well. And oh, before that there was a signless release of the heart, yes, they follow after signs. So this is an interesting sutta in that it gives you a way to check up on have you actually fully accomplished any of these six practices, four of these practices being the *brahmavihāras*.

And then at the very end of the *Rhinoceros Horn Sutta*, this is the last three verses: in time cultivate freedom through *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā*, not upset by anything in the world. Live alone like a one-horned rhino. Having given up greed, hatred, 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 an ulterior motive. Impure folks cleverly profit themselves. Live alone like a one-horned rhino.

So practicing the *brahmavihāras* leads to not being upset by anything in this world. I also wonder if the last verse is a later addition. It's got more lines than the others. All the rest of the whole sutta is four lines, the last one being live alone like a one-horned rhino. This last one's got five lines. And so unafraid at the end of life seems like a good ending. I mean, the end of life is commonly thought of as an ending. So I wonder about that. But the advice here: cultivate the *brahmavihāras* so you will not be upset by anything in the world.

And then there are a whole bunch of other suttas containing all four *brahmavihāras*, but I'm gonna stop and see if there are any questions or comments before we attempt to tackle those. Victoria.

**Questioner:**

Thank you, Leigh. Well, I've been holding since before the break my question about the one-horned rhino from the little excerpt before. Now in the larger context, it seems, yeah, I mean, of course, if you live totally alone, then nobody's gonna irritate you because there's nobody there to irritate you. But it feels a little bit—I mean, that's even going beyond, like, the monastic. If you're a monastic and you're in a community, then you're gonna have a lot of people that irritate you. So I'm just wondering about the—like, is that kind of a—I mean, it's kind of obvious, and it also feels a little bit like a cop-out. I don't know.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Well, one of the things that we find frequently in the suttas is that people request instructions from the Buddha. Please, Venerable Sir, give me a practice I can do. I wish to retire to the forest. And then they go off into the forest for some period of time. Usually, it says not a long time because the Buddha doesn't give them something to go to the forest until they're fairly advanced, but they go off and they practice like alone, like a one-horned rhino, for some time. And they come back awakened.

And so I would think that this sutta is encouraging people to undertake that training when they're prepared. But it's a very early sutta, and we don't really know the circumstances of it or anything. It's just there. It doesn't give any who it's given to, where it was given, or anything like that. But most of the scholars say it's very early material. I would take it as this is advice when you've got your background and you know what you're supposed to do. Go off and practice by yourself and then come back when you're awakened, and then you can go teach other people.

**Questioner:**

That's—

**Questioner:**

So would that be a kind of implicit second clause, that when you have become enlightened, go back into society or whatever to teach the Dhamma?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Well, what happens is apparently when someone becomes awakened, their compassion is aroused and they start teaching. You know, it's a side effect of awakening. I mean, all right, full awakening is no more sense of self. That's one of the fetters you give up. Conceit is usually translated as conceiving of a self. But there are all these beings around and there's *dukkha*, and I'm not separate from them.

So just like if this hand is caught, this hand doesn't go, oh, you stupid hand. It's right there helping. If you're awakened, you don't go, oh, you stupid person. You're right there helping in the same way because you recognize the interconnectedness. And so that's a side effect of full awakening. It's not a second clause. It's a side effect. And it seems to be a really useful one.

**Questioner:**

So it's natural. Yeah, it's like the bodhisattva vow. It's a natural thing to want to help others. Okay. Yeah. Thank you. That makes perfect sense. Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Okay. Torah.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. One of those suttas we glossed over very quickly, and I was curious about your view. There is a mapping in *Samyutta Nikāya* 46.54. There's a mapping where he says that if you take any of these *brahmavihāras* to their culmination, the loving-kindness becomes the beautiful. But then he maps into the *arūpas* where *karuṇā* becomes the base of infinite space and *muditā* becomes infinite consciousness and equanimity becomes nothingness. And I'm curious if you have an explanation of that mapping or any view. I mean, one can come up with a story always.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Right. And I don't have a good story. I do know that Bhante Vimalaramsi, who founded TWIM, his way of teaching the *jhānas*, uses this sutta to talk about the importance of practicing *karuṇā* to get to the fifth *jhāna* and so forth. Okay, so I'm assuming he took it from this particular sutta. This is the only place I found it. I mean, you know, I was looking for all the *brahmavihāra* suttas. And when I came across it, it was like, oh, this is where Bhante Vimalaramsi got these ideas.

However, since I teach *jhānas* somewhat differently, yeah, I don't see the matching. It doesn't really make any sense to me. Sorry, I don't have a good way. It's here. And if Bhante Vimalaramsi hadn't died, you might be able to ask him, but he died a few years ago. But there are people teaching in his tradition, and maybe they know something about it, but I don't.

Catherine.

**Questioner:**

You went quickly over a different sutta, and you said that you put the link in the chat previously, and you would put it again. So I wondered if you would put the link in again, please.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. This one probably. Or anyhow, yeah, I will. Let's see if I do this, and I can go to chat. And—

**Questioner:**

Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Okay. This is the notes that I've been working from. So was there anything else that I rushed over too quickly for people that they wanna talk about in this list before we go finish it up with a short summary?

Okay. So we have, to start, two mythological suttas, an elaborate story of a past life of the Buddha as a legendary king who renounced all to practice meditation, which included practicing the *jhānas* followed by the four *Brahmavihāras* and rebirth in a Brahmā realm. And he was a layperson. And mostly we find that laypeople can get to the Brahmā realms by practicing the *Brahmavihāras*, but it's not always like that. We find laypeople can practice the *Brahmavihāras* and get to full awakening. Laypeople can practice the *Brahmavihāras* and a few other things and get to full awakening. So it's really not definitive.

But this one was a layperson who got to the Brahmā realms. This same thing is another number 19, that's a mythical one. Now the steward who goes forth has many followers, practices *Brahmavihāras*, and he winds up in the Brahmā realms after death. *Āṅgulimāla's Roar?* This discourse gives an especially good example of a dialogue between religions. He insists that he's not interested in making anyone give up their teachers or practices, but only to help people let go of suffering.

The Buddha recommends the fourfold restraint. That's the precepts on killing, stealing, and speech. Don't crave for sense pleasures. That includes the third precept, giving up the hindrances, practicing the four *Brahmavihāras*, the psychic powers, insight practice, and finally achieving liberation. So here, you know, you don't have to be a Buddhist. You just do this. If you do it well, you'll find liberation. But *Brahmavihāra* is only part of the practice that's necessary.

The Buddha gives a detailed account of the fall of a kingly lineage in the past. This is an interesting mythological sutta. Anyhow, at the end of the myth the Buddha teaches that with practice you will grow in the lifespan, four bases of power: beauty, ethics, happiness, the *jhānas*, wealth, *Brahmavihāras*, and power, liberation. This is where Maitreya, future Buddha, comes in only as *Metteyya*, the future Buddha, the Buddha of love. And this is the sutta in which he shows up. And like I say, it's a late sutta, it's a mythological one, but it's interesting.

Thirty-three and thirty-four list the *Brahmavihāras*. That's about it. Forty-three, this is a series of question and answers between Sāriputta and Mahākoliṭṭha. I think it's a very late sutta. The limitless release of heart-mind is the four *Brahmavihāras*. We've seen that in other places as well.

Number 50, Māra, the trickster, god of death, tries to annoy Mahāmoggallāna. He not only fails, but is subject to a stern warning of the danger of attacking the Buddhist disciples. One should practice the four *Brahmavihāras* to ward off Māra. Yeah. I mean, if you're being loving towards people, you're probably not gonna hurt them. In other words, that devil sitting on your shoulder, whispering in your ear, it's not going to be heard because you're practicing the *Brahmavihāras* and so forth.

Fifty-five, this is with Jīvaka on eating meat. The Buddha's personal doctor, Jīvaka, hears criticism of Buddhist policy regarding eating meat. People say that the Buddha is not a real spiritual practitioner

because he's not a vegetarian. 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. So if you take the monks to a seafood restaurant and they're told to pick out the fish or the lobster that they're gonna eat, they can't eat that.

Right? Or more likely, if they are invited to a family's house and they're sitting there before the meal and they hear squawking in the backyard and then chicken curry is served, they can't eat it, right? Because they suspect that what they heard was the chicken being killed for the chicken curry. Also, by practicing the four *Brahmavihāras*, one eats alms food untied, uninfatuated, unattached, seeing the drawback and understanding the escape. Any greed, hatred, or delusion that might give rise to cruelty, discontent, or repulsion has been given up by the *Tathāgata*. So this is an interesting sutta.

The Buddha was not a vegetarian. Devadatta came to him, and amongst the five ascetic practices he wanted the Buddha to undertake for the Saṅgha was being a vegetarian. The Buddha goes, not practical. The people who get our food are not vegetarians. You should eat what's in your bowl. But if you suspect an animal was killed for you, you can't eat it.

So a mythological story about a king who renounces his kingdom, goes forth, practices the *Brahmavihāras*. He's born in the Brahmā realms. This is one of only two suttas that tie together *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā* to the phrase *Brahmavihāra*. They're the *Brahmavihāras*, but it's explained only in this one and one other sutta which we will come across. A layperson becomes confused when encouraged to develop the limitless and expansive liberations, asks Anuruddha to explain what they are. The limitless release of the heart-mind is the four *Brahmavihāras*.

So this is a very similar teaching to the one we find at *Samyutta* 41:7 just earlier. Keep the precepts, become rid of desire, rid of ill will, unconfused, aware, mindful, then practice the four *Brahmavihāras*. And this one has the simile of the horn blower, the conch blower. How a conch blower can be heard to the four directions, you should send your *mettā* to the four directions. When the heart's released by each of the four *Brahmavihāras*, developed and cultivated like this, any unwholesome *kamma* done doesn't remain there or persist.

Now, this is interesting. You want to overcome your bad *kamma*? Practice the *Brahmavihāras*. I don't think it means that you still won't get the consequences of your bad actions, right? But you will, if you practice the *Brahmavihāras*, improve the tendency to do bad actions. I think that's what it means. Okay? You still might have to deal with the consequences.

But this is an interesting sutta, and I actually put it higher up in the list in the book that will be coming out. We find another sutta with Pascal's wager: practicing the *Brahmavihāras* protects me no matter what view is correct, whether or not there is an afterlife. This sutta includes the *jhāna* summary as a preliminary practice to the *Brahmavihāras*, and it results in rebirth in the heavenly realm for a layperson. One who practices even a little the *jhānas* or the *Brahmavihāras* is one who's following the teacher's instruction.

So there's a whole series of suttas at AN 4.95 through 5.74. One who develops all these different things together with the four *Brahmavihāras*, the four *jhānas*, etc. This one is called one who does not like these qualities, faculty of faith, energy, etc., who follows the teacher's instructions, responds to advice, and does not eat the country's alms in vain. So do it a little, okay. Do it a lot, it's great.

The divine and luxurious bed is practicing the four *Brahmavihāras*. The eighth precept is not lying in divine and luxurious beds, high and divine luxurious beds. Instead, practice the four *Brahmavihāras*. With that, all postures become divine. Three thirty-six, a sutta on how to navigate among different spiritual options when one is rid of desire, ill will, unconfused, aware, mindful, and practices the four *Brahmavihāras*. This leads to welfare and happiness and to the end of the *āsavas*.

So you got to do the *sīla* part, and then maybe the *Brahmavihāras* will take you the whole way. There are two on love here, practicing the four *Brahmavihāras* resulting in rebirth in the company of the retinue of Brahmā. An ordinary person dies there and falls to lower realms. A disciple of the Buddha passes into liberation, presumably a disciple of the Buddha who's done more practice than the *Brahmavihāras*. One who practices the *Brahmavihāras* and contemplates the five *khandhas*, the five aggregates, as *anicca* and *dukkha*, upon death is reborn in the company of the gods of the Pure Abodes.

And with the Brahman Doṇa, the Brahman Doṇa accuses the Buddha of not respecting Brahmans. So the Buddha responds by analyzing the different kinds of Brahman. *Brahmavihāra* practice makes one equal to Brahmā. *Jhāna* practice equal to a god. Further discussion of what makes one a Brahmā, this is the other sutta that ties together *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā* with the phrase the four *Brahmavihāras*.

Mukh asks for teachings before going on retreat. He's told to settle the mind, abandon unskillful qualities, then practice the four *Brahmavihāras* in conjunction with the four *jhānas* and the four establishments of mindfulness. And he becomes enlightened. So yeah, this is what to do. Settle the mind, abandon unskillful qualities, practice the four *Brahmavihāras*, the four *jhānas*, and the four establishments of mindfulness. That's all you need to do. Go on retreat and do it. It makes it easier.

Practicing the four *Brahmavihāras* leads a limitless and well-developed mind that would not do bad deeds. This leads to non-returning unless one has penetrated to higher freedom. Higher freedom being full awakening. And so that's all the suttas on the *Brahmavihāras*.

So the link to the PDF for this particular retreat, all the notes that I've been putting up on the screen, will become the link to the book when the book comes out. I'm hoping to get it out maybe by March 20, because, well, that's when the course on the sixth sense-spheres for Sati Center is happening, and so that I can announce it, that it's out. If not, I will announce it. It'll be out in a few days, I hope. I don't have much more to do, but I'm leaving to teacher retreat next week, and so I don't know if I'll get it all finished by the twentieth. But you have the link for the book. And right now, it will give you the notes for this course. And in a month or so, it will give you the book.

So in order to begin, please put your attention on your breath for a few moments. Look into your heart,

and you will find a flower garden, a garden full of the most amazing varieties of flowers, the garden of your heart. And now imagine that you go for a stroll through the garden of your heart, enjoying its beauty. Not only the beautiful colors, but the wonderful smells as well. Just enjoy your time hanging out in the garden of your heart.

Now think of someone that you care about and pick a nice bouquet of flowers from the garden of your heart and present it to this person you care about and see the joy on their face. Of other people you're close to, bring them to mind one by one and pick each of them a nice bouquet of flowers from the garden of your heart. Think of your acquaintances, people like your neighbors, your coworkers, people you see in stores and restaurants you frequent. Again, bring them to mind one by one and pick them a nice bouquet of flowers from the garden of your heart. Think of someone you find difficult and pick that person a nice bouquet, maybe of herbs that helps them overcome their difficult nature, or flowers.

Flowers to give to everybody on this retreat. Notice how the flower garden is bigger than when you started. All the flowers you picked have been replaced, and the garden is much larger. You can give flowers out to everybody in your neighborhood, everybody in your town, your city. You can give flowers to everyone on the continent, happy people, rich people, poor people, sick people, people in prison, whoever there is, give them some flowers.

The garden of your heart is so much larger now that you can give flowers to everybody on the planet. Now put your attention back on yourself, back in your own heart. Notice how huge the flower garden is. It's a strange thing about love. The more you give it away, the more you got. May all beings everywhere be happy.

So may any merit from these teachings be for the benefit and liberation of all beings everywhere. And thank you both for attending, your good questions, and for your generosity. Take care, and, hopefully, I'll see you all on March 20 for the next course.