

What Do the Suttas Actually Have to Say About the Brahma Viharas

Class 1 of 2

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Leigh Brasington:

So the first thing I need to do is share my screen. What did the suttas actually say about the *Brahmavihāras*? I assume most of you have heard talks on the *Brahmavihāras*. Back in, oh, early two thousands, I was involved in an email discussion about how far can *Brahmavihāra* practice take you on the spiritual path. Does it only lead to rebirth in the Brahma realms? Can it take you to full awakening? Can it take you only to the third stage of awakening?

There were lots of views and opinions, as often happens. And there was no resolution, and I had to say, well, I can find suttas that say all of that. And then later on, I actually recently wrote a program that allows me to build a database online of topics, people, and places in the suttas. And I have, I don't remember, over 150 links now for various topics. One of the first topics I built was *Brahmavihāras*.

What are all the suttas that contain the *Brahmavihāras*? And it turns out there's 38 of them. And so I started looking, and then I, well, I should do *mettā* by itself, and I should do *karuṇā* by itself. So, yeah, I built that, and it was like, okay. Now I know what they say. I should maybe teach a course on that. So here we are. Right.

So this is what we could do over the next two weeks. It's a lot of stuff. Don't worry about it. Alright. So the four *Brahmavihāras*: *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, *upekkhā*. And I'll talk about in just a moment what these words mean.

The actual Pāli word we're referring to with *Brahma Vihāra* is *brahmavihāra*. It's one word. It's a compound of the two words *Brahma* and *vihāra*. Okay? Now remember, Pāli's an oral language, so they didn't have one word or two words. They had syllables.

When you're listening to me, you break up what I'm saying into words automatically. They don't have to say a word and indicate what it is. You just hear all these syllables, and you break it up in your mind. That's what they did when they wrote down the Pāli. They just wrote down the syllables one after another because remember, this had been chanted for centuries, literally. And so they just wrote down the syllables to chant.

And then later, people come along and break it up into words, and so they broke up *brahmavihāra* into one word, which makes sense because it's a concept. *Brahma* is a concept. *Vihāra* is a concept. But *brahmavihāra* is somewhat different.

But in the West, this has morphed into Brahma Viharas as two words. And so that's what I'll have in this, I think I'm sharing with you. And the long *ā* was dropped, of course, because in English we don't have diacritical marks. And throughout the book, actually, the notes today, unless I'm referring to the Pāli, I would use Brahma Vihara without any diacriticals and two words and capitalized, because that's probably what most people are familiar with.

So what do each of these mean? Well, *Brahma* means divine and inhabitant of the higher heavens, and *vihāra* means abode. This is from the Pāli-English dictionary that was created in the early twentieth century. In the modern online DPD, we find the definition where *Brahma* means divine, holy, and *vihāra* means dwelling and residence.

So we can translate this phrase as the four divine abodes or the four divine dwellings or the four divine abidings. These are the mental states that the Buddha recommended we hang out in. My teacher Ayya Khema said these are the only ones that he was really recommending. There are 38 suttas or groups of suttas that contain all four *Brahmavihāras*, and there's the link to what's on my website.

I'll give you these notes to download when we take our break so you don't have to write any of this down. And I also made a version of the index that contains all 38 suttas with a summary. And then here we have what we find in each of them. *Mettā* shows up in 87 suttas. *Karuṇā* shows up in 53 suttas. *Muditā* in 41.

Now *muditā*, but it's not all four *Brahmavihāras*, it only shows up in three suttas. Okay? And *upekkhā* shows up in 228 suttas, but that includes both the seven factors of awakening and description of *jhānas* three and four, and other uses of *upekkhā* outside of the *Brahmavihāras*. And I didn't try and go through and figure out all of them.

So *mettā*. Common translations that we hear: loving-kindness, this is the big one. Most people that are talking about *mettā* talk about loving-kindness. Loving friendliness, love, friendliness, benevolence, goodwill, enmity, sympathy. I'm not really buying the last two, but these are ones that I have found.

The PED gives us the root, the background from Sanskrit: love, amity, sympathy, friendliness, active interest in others. There are various definitions and explanations of *mettā*, and it doesn't give all of those. And DPD: goodwill, friendliness, benevolence. The far enemy is ill will or hatred.

So each of these four *Brahmavihāras* has a far enemy and a near enemy. A far enemy is the opposite. So the opposite of love, loving-kindness, friendliness, whatever, is ill will or hatred. And we find these in *Majjhima Nikāya* 62, although the phrase far enemy doesn't show up there. That's from the commentaries.

And near enemy is something that looks a bit like the *Brahmavihāra*. This case looks like *mettā*, but it's got some problems. And the near enemies are attachment, sentimentality, clinginess, or conditional love. Part of the teachings on *mettā* are, yes, to recognize the far enemy, but in particular, to recognize when you're caught in the near enemy.

Because you may think you're in a healthy mental state, but actually it's got usually far too much self-ego involved. My translation is unconditional love. Love is the opposite of hatred, but not just any form of love. It's unconditional.

Now by unconditional, it means you love someone because they're a someone. There are no conditions. It's not, you love them because they do nice things for you or because, well, whatever. Right? It's just here's a person, and you wish them well.

Love does seem to be a loaded word in Western culture. We have love and like. You know, people say, I love my new car. Oh, you don't love your new car. You might like it a lot. Alright? But that's not what's meant by love.

Now the unconditional part has nothing to do with a very bad translation of *asaṅkhata*, which winds up being translated as the unconditioned. This is a very common translation, and it's very wrong. In the first place, there are no articles in Pāli, so no *a*, *an*, or *the*. So *the unconditioned* is wrong on the first word.

And the word *asaṅkhata* is the negative past participle of *saṅkhāra*, which literally is making together. And it literally means without concocted or fabricated. So without fabricated. Love is fabricated. Right? If you love someone, you are fabricating this in your mind. You are doing it.

So it's not that wrong use of unconditional. It's just loving someone because they're someone and nothing else. Unconditional love means love is given with no strings attached. This is the same as the Greek *agape* in contrast to *eros*, erotic love, *philia*, brotherly love, *philautia*, self-love, as it embraces profound sacrificial love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstances.

Yeah. I mean, if you have a significant other, it's not always easy and comfortable. I know. I've been there. Right? But you still love them even if they're being obstreperous or whatever. Okay? At least, hopefully, you do. So this is what's talked about.

There's an excellent article by Ayya Khema on *mettā*. It's posted on my website, and it's going to be in the book that's coming out. The book is close. It'll be out in a month. And so there's a whole transcript of the talk. But there's a transcript on my website if you want to jump ahead. *Mettā* occurs in 87 suttas.

Karuṇā. Common translations are compassion and mercy. The PED says compassion. DPD says compassion, sympathy, kindness towards unfortunate beings. Interestingly enough, the *kar*, like *kamma*, *kar*, *kar*, that's action. So *karuṇā* is, well, it's love in action, especially love in action in the face of suffering.

That's where compassion comes in. Sometimes, yeah, all you can do is feel compassionate towards someone who's suffering, and there's not anything more you can do than that. Sometimes, yeah, there is something you do. And so if it's true compassion, you do what you can, hopefully without being attached to results.

If you do what you can to alleviate the suffering and it doesn't work, well, at least you did what you could do. And you have to be satisfied with that. Remember the movie *Do the Right Thing*? It came out quite a while ago. It's a good movie, but I like the advice. Do the right thing.

And then I read an article by Joanna Macy that said, don't be attached to the results. So I put the two together. Do the right thing. Don't be attached to the results. So in the face of suffering, compassion is the right thing to do. Just don't be attached to the results.

The far enemy is cruelty. The near enemy is pity. What is saying there's no shared screen? Can any other people see the screen? So I don't know what's going on. I have no idea.

So my translation, I want to hear what other people want as a translation of *karuṇā*. So you're going to have to wake up and type your translation of *karuṇā* into the chat. Let's see what we get. Hearing responsiveness, compassion, compassion without attachment, care, hearing tenderness, feeling with another, not turning away from suffering, unconditional love, which of course I'm using for *mettā*, compassion, unattached, equanimous responsiveness.

All of these are the opposite of cruelty. Active kindness, active response to the suffering, energy to alleviate suffering, selfless action, the suffering of others and wishing for it ending. All these seem to be translations of, as opposed to what's the opposite of cruelty. I think the opposite of cruelty is kindness, mercy.

So my translation: compassion or kindness. I like kindness because you can practice towards anyone whether they're suffering or not. Kindness is always an option. If someone is suffering, then you try to alleviate the suffering. You act with compassion. If someone is not suffering, you act with kindness.

So do I really want to say kindness is the right definition? After working on the book, it was like, yeah, I think the way it's used in the suttas, compassion is good. And there are other words that point towards kindness. Penelope, you have your hand up.

Questioner:

Yes. Sorry. It occurred to me. So what would be the difference between *karuṇā* and *anukampā*?

Leigh Brasington:

Oh, we'll get to that.

Questioner:

Oh, okay. Sorry.

Leigh Brasington:

Right. Another important word is *anukampā*, sometimes translated as sympathy or compassion. But a much better translation suggested by Gil Fronsdal is care. And again, you can practice to anyone whether they're suffering or not.

So the way that the two are used in modern times, compassion is towards those who are suffering, and *anukampā* is towards everyone. But when I look at the teachings on *karuṇā*, both of these could be towards anyone. And so sometimes it's kindness, it's compassion, and sometimes it's sympathy. It's often translated that way.

So, yeah, somebody put in the chat, what was it? Saw it flash by. Okay. It says the screen is too small. I have no idea what happened. I can make the font bigger. Is that better? Okay.

So interestingly enough, I'm working with Sujato's translation simply because he has all the suttas. And so I have a consistent translation, not necessarily the best. But Sujato, yeah, he translates both *anukampā* and *karuṇā* as compassion. Alright?

So I had to go through all of the places where I found compassion and see, alright, is it *karuṇā* or is it *anukampā*, or is it something else? And then there's another word, *anudayā*, which is also translated as compassion or sympathy. So I have a note from Bhikkhu Bodhi where he says that he translates *anukampā* as compassion pretty much everywhere. And I'm like, no. No. They're different words.

Okay. One of the problems is reading a translation of something. You're at the mercy of the translator. And the translator is trying to get their understanding across. And it may be accurate or it may not be accurate. Bhikkhu Bodhi does a pretty good job, but I want to really know what the Pāli words are underlying it.

And so it's another reason I really like *SuttaCentral* because there I can easily fix it so that I could see the Pāli. That's how I figured out how many of these were compassion and how many were *anukampā* and so forth. Okay. So now we've got three words: *karuṇā*, *anukampā*, and *anudayā*.

Karuṇā appears in 53 suttas, and *anukampā* appears a lot more often, more than three times as much, 179 suttas. So I had to go through all 200 and what, 20 suttas and figure which was which. But *anukampā* is not one of the *Brahmavihāras*. In the *Brahmavihāra* teachings, we always find *karuṇā*.

As we'll see in probably next week, apparently the *Brahmavihāras* existed prior to the Buddha. There are other religions that also taught the four *Brahmavihāras*. So the Buddha adopted what was there, but he spoke of *anukampā* more often. *Muditā*. Sympathetic joy is the one that I think occurs the most often.

When I first heard sympathetic joy, I had no clue what it meant. I mean, it meant just as much to me as *muditā*. Right? Okay. What are you talking about? Empathetic joy, that's a little bit better. Appreciative joy, rejoicing. Yeah. Rejoicing, we got it down to one word, but there's other places that the word rejoicing would be a good translation as well.

The PED is soft-hearted, kindness, sympathy, often in a triad of *mettā*, active love; *karuṇā*, preventive love; and *muditā*, disinterested love. I thought this was interesting. I've never heard anybody teach it like that. And it says SNA. This is the commentary to the *Suttanipāta*. So this is fairly late. This is several centuries after the Buddha. I'll put it in.

The DPD: *muditā*, past participle of happy, glad, literally becomes softened. That's without the long *ā*. With the long *ā*, it's feminine. Happiness, appreciation, sympathetic joy. The far enemies are envy, jealousy, schadenfreude, discontent.

The near enemy, I say, is identification. We've also heard it as hypocrisy. Okay. You say, oh, that's so nice that that happened to you. I mean, you're being a hypocrite because you're thinking, why didn't it happen to me? Okay? And so if you're believing your hypocritical thing, you're trapped by the near enemy.

My translation is appreciative joy. And I want to translate it that way because sympathetic joy and empathetic joy imply joy only for others. And yet if we look at what's in the suttas, we find, yeah, you can appreciate your own joy. And I have two chapters on that in the book about how important it is to appreciate your own good fortune.

Not so that you can think, I'm better than everybody else because I'm having good fortune, but it's something that you really should do. It's appreciate the good fortune that we have, especially considering the low self-esteem epidemic that we find in Western civilization. Maybe if you can really appreciate how much good fortune you do have, you won't have such low self-esteem. You realize, yeah, the world is actually treating you fairly nicely. *Muditā* occurs in 41 suttas.

Thirty-eight of those are when all four of them occur and occurs by itself in only three suttas. We'll take a look at those. *Upekkhā*. Equanimity, even-mindedness. Looking on, that's what it literally means. Hedonic neutrality or indifference. And I scratched out indifference because I'd say that's the near enemy.

It's used as the zero point between joy and sorrow in the teachings on *vedanā*. You know, there is *sukha vedanā*, there's *dukkha vedanā*, and there's *adukkhamasukha vedanā*. Right? So neither suffering nor happiness. But sometimes you find something like that, and it does use *upekkhā* there.

Disinterestedness, I should strike that one out as well. Because if you're looking on, you're interested. Neutral feeling, okay. Equanimity, sometimes equivalent to *adukkhamasukha*. That would be literally without *dukkha*, without *sukha*. The DPD: looking on, mental poise, mental balance, equanimity, equipoise, nonreactivity, composure. I think the DPD did a much better job at this point.

And as we can see, it's literally looking on. It's *upa* plus *īkṣ*. Okay. So looking on, paying careful attention, being fully engaged. But also it has the sense of being in balance. So equipoise. And I think equanimity is a very good translation.

Upset, freaked out, overexuberant, repulsion, these are the far enemy. So, yeah, panic. But also your

team wins the championship and you go out and turn over trash cans and set police cars on fire. Yeah. That's not being equanimous. Right? That's the far enemy.

The near enemy is apathy, indifference. It looks a lot like equanimity. You're there. You're not being shook by whatever this terrible thing is. But that's because you're apathetic or you have indifference. Where I went to college, there were complaints about the student body being apathetic. And so somebody organized a meeting to discuss apathy. Unfortunately, nobody came.

My translation is equanimity. I think that's a very good translation. *Upekkhā* occurs in 228 suttas, but this includes references to *upekkhā* whether as a *Brahmavihāra*, a *jhāna* factor, one of the seven factors of awakening, or some other reference. And I didn't go through and break them all out to get the exact numbers.

But I do have a list of suttas where equanimity occurs, not all of them, but a bunch of them that I found where equanimity occurs as a *Brahmavihāra* without all four *Brahmavihāras*. We'll get to that next week. And then I mentioned that the near and far enemies are found in *The Longer Advice to Rāhula*, which is *Majjhima Nikāya* 62.

And *Majjhima Nikāya* 62 is an interesting sutta. It jams a bunch of teachings together. I seriously doubt that this was actually given by the Buddha to his son. But he may have given the teachings to his son, and somebody just put it all together in the sutta.

So in the sutta, the Buddha advises Rāhula to meditate like the five elements. It's the four elements, air, water, fire, earth, and space is the fifth element. It's an immaterial element. So in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, you don't have it mentioned because the elements show up under the materiality, *rūpa*, the first foundation. The space is immaterial.

And then the Buddha advises to meditate on the four *Brahmavihāras* and on ugliness and impermanence, and then practice the 16 steps of mindfulness of breathing. In the meditating on the *Brahmavihāras*, each one overcomes its far enemy, although the phrase far enemy is not used. Meditate on *mettā*, for when you meditate on *mettā*, any ill will will be given up.

Meditate on *karuṇā*, for when you meditate on *karuṇā*, any viciousness, cruelty will be given up. Meditate on *muditā*, for when you meditate on *muditā*, any discontent, dissatisfaction will be given up. But this sort of implies, you know, if you're meditating on *muditā* and it overcomes discontent, it somehow makes you more contented.

Does somebody else having good fortune generally make you contented? No. That would not really be it. But meditating on your own good fortune, that might make you content. So here's the first hint we have that *muditā* is to be done for oneself. But yeah. Since there really aren't any selves, do it for everybody.

Meditate on *upekkhā*. For when you meditate on *upekkhā*, any repulsion, irritation will be given up. Now that one surprised me. But yeah. Okay. So the result of practicing the *Brahmavihāras* in this

sutta is that they overcome ill will, cruelty, discontent, repulsion.

And so for *mettā*, we have the *Mettā Sutta*. I'm going to see if there are any questions on anything that we've covered so far before we jump into the *Mettā Sutta*. Victoria.

Questioner:

Yeah. Thank you. I have a million questions. I'll just reduce them for the moment. I have heard lots of teachings on the *Brahmavihāras*, but I'm so excited now to hear yours.

So what you were saying about *muditā* a few minutes ago, I was thinking about the connection between *muditā* and gratitude because gratitude is like a big thing, as I'm sure you know, right now. Everybody is teaching it and doing workshops and retreats. That if you were going to take, maybe it's arbitrary, take one of the *Brahmavihāras*, if the *Brahmavihāras* are, like, the essentials, which is the way I feel about them in my own practice, would you tap in, if you were doing gratitude practice, would you sort of attach that as it were to the *muditā* as opposed to the other *Brahmavihāras* of your heart?

So that it's more, I don't know what I'm asking exactly, but yeah. The gratitude is a big thing. I wanted to kind of weave it in because you were talking about, you know, essentially, you were saying, you know, look at all the good things you have in your life.

Leigh Brasington:

Right. Yeah. I would say that gratitude is an outgrowth of practicing *muditā* for yourself. In other words, you recognize the good stuff, and you're grateful to whatever, the people, the situation, whatever, that made it so that you have joy arising in your life. You appreciate the good thing in your life. You have appreciative joy. So I would say that *muditā* is the doorway to gratitude.

Questioner:

Right. That sounds perfect. Thank you. And then my other question was, well, one of many. Just a quick one. That in other talks I've heard on *upekkhā*, they talk about looking over, the preposition is over rather than on. And I kind of liked that the first time I heard it because I thought if you're looking over, you have, like, as it were, the cosmic view so you don't get tangled up in affliction or suffering because that's what gives you the equanimity. Like, you're kind of looking from above to see that, oh, this isn't such a big deal or whatever.

Do you know what I'm saying? So I just wondered about that preposition. Could it also be translated over? Because that's what I've heard, and I don't know Pāli.

Leigh Brasington:

I think that's a mistranslation. I would say it's wrong. Because if it's true *upekkhā*, you're looking on. You're engaged. You're fully engaged. You're not back and looking at it. That's more of a stance of indifference.

It's that you're fully engaged. You clearly see what's going on, and it's not knocking you out of balance.

You may be displeased by what you're seeing. Okay? But you're still in balance. You're not panicking. You're not becoming overexuberant or anything like that, and you're also not indifferent.

So I think looking on is actually far more accurate, and that's what the Pāli literally means. It does not say looking over.

Questioner:

Thank you for that. And I hope all your esteemed colleagues around the world will take that to heart because, well, that's a big difference.

Leigh Brasington:

So now I need to write another chapter in my book that says, *upekkhā*'s not looking over. It's looking on. It's, yeah. Okay.

Questioner:

Yeah. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Okay. Someone else had their hand up.

Questioner:

Just, I was curious about the definition of *karuṇā* being just kindness without the suffering. And I was thinking maybe that's because to be human, according to the *Four Noble Truths*, is to suffer unless you're an arahant. So it pretty much goes without saying for a large part, without mentioning the suffering part. But I always thought of it as energy to reduce the suffering, or to reduce the suffering in yourself or others.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. But we're not suffering 100% of the time. The Buddha never said life is suffering. You hear that all the time. There's no place in the suttas where the Buddha says life is suffering. He says suffering happens. You know, they used to put that on bumper stickers. *Dukkha* happens. Oh, they used a more literate Anglo-Saxon word rather than the Pāli word, but it's the same thing.

But it's not all the time, hopefully. I mean, there's lots of times in my life where there's joy or just calm or whatever. And so if I meet somebody who's joyful, I can be kind to them. If I meet somebody who's just calm, I can be kind to them. So I would say that's still *karuṇā* at that point.

So I think kindness broadens the range of *karuṇā*, and compassion says, yeah, if you're encountering someone who's suffering or yourself who's suffering, then this is what you want to do to alleviate that suffering. Penelope.

Questioner:

I don't want to belabor the point about the translation, the difference between over and on, but I really appreciate on because for me, *upekkhā* means equanimity, equipoise in the midst of—

Leigh Brasington:

Yes.

Questioner:

—not at a distance from.

Leigh Brasington:

Exactly. You're fully engaged. Thank you. Thomas.

Questioner:

Yes. So you encourage us to think of *muditā* as taking joy in our own happiness and success. But that doesn't exclude taking joy in happiness of others.

Leigh Brasington:

Oh, yeah. No. It's everything you've been taught plus your own happiness as well. Definitely take joy in other people's happiness. That's extremely important.

Questioner:

I had a question that sort of came out of reflecting on the simile of the saw. If you were being cut up into pieces and the robbers were taking great joy in that, would you, would the arahant take joy in their joy?

Leigh Brasington:

No. I point out multiple times in the book that the only joy that can be appreciated is that it's obtained through wholesome means. If somebody's getting their joy through unwholesome means, well, you know, the Buddha mentioned karmic consequences. So if they're getting their joy through unwholesome means, it's not actually a source of joy. It's a source of future unpleasantness.

So there's no reason to take joy in anyone else's ill-gotten joy. In fact, that would be counterproductive. If they see you're doing it, that would encourage them to continue. So you only take joy in karmically valid sources of joy. I mean, you hear somebody tell a joke, it's kind of racist or whatever, misogynist. You know, you don't laugh at it. You don't take joy in this unwholesome thing.

And that again would be, yeah, *muditā*'s not there. But somebody tells a great joke and you laugh. Yeah. It's joy. Appreciate it. Appreciate the quality of their joke.

Questioner:

I guess this comes out of my, I have a daily *mettā* practice. And when difficult, without getting too specific, when difficult public figures and events come to mind, I have a question in my mind. How do I regard, maybe *upekkhā* is the best I can do there, if I can do that?

Leigh Brasington:

So I had, I don't think I put these, maybe I did in this handout, I had some different phrases for difficult people, and Ayya Khema used them for everybody. May you be free of enmity. May you be free of hurtfulness. May you be free of troubles of mind and body. May you be able to protect your happiness.

The only happiness that can be protected is that which is gained through wholesome activities. Right? So certainly, the least favorite politician, you can wish that they'd be free from cruelty because that's probably why they're your least favorite politician. You can wish they'd be free from hurtfulness. That's another reason they're your least favorite politician.

You can wish that they'd be free of troubles of mind because their mental troubles are probably why they're being cruel and hurtful. Right? And you can hope that they'd be free of troubles of body because that may be just why their mind is all messed up. Right? And yeah, you hope they can find some wholesome sources of happiness because that's the only kind that could be protected.

And so, yeah, when that least favorite politician comes along in my *mettā* practice, I just switch to those phrases because it's much easier than to try to say, may you be happy. I don't want you to be happy. I want you to be miserable. You're making everybody else miserable. I mean, yeah, that's the usual reaction. But I can say, may you be free from cruelty.

Questioner:

Yeah. Almost like radiating *mettā* to the hungry ghost realms or something like that.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Exactly. Exactly.

Questioner:

Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

I would say it's to the *asuras* if someone is being cruel. The warring gods. Victoria.

Questioner:

Well, I'm wondering, like, when talking about the *muditā* for oneself, in general, I think it's a Western affliction, I mean, to use that term loosely, isn't it, that we don't, I mean, the *Brahmavihāras* are meant to be, we should be dwelling in the heavenly abodes too, not just thinking about other people dwelling there. I mean, in general, in practice, all four of the *Brahmavihāras*, we should be practicing for ourselves as well as for the other.

And then I always think of the oxygen mask syndrome, of if we don't, you know, because when I had a child and traveled with her from the first week of her life, and I just couldn't accept that idea that, like, no way am I putting an oxygen mask on myself first, no way. And then the stewardess kindly pointed out if you pass out, you're of no use to your child. And then suddenly I realized, oh, that makes perfect sense.

And so I've always looked at these practices, you know, it's overcoming that especially American tendency towards lack of self-compassion. And remember, if it starts with us and then we can actually practice effectively. And then in terms of practicing for our enemies, like in the Christian tradition, you know, pray for your enemies, forgive your enemies, what else can we, you know, that's our power

as spiritual practitioners, is give extra *mettā* to our so-called enemies or the people who are afflicting others or the cruel people in our society.

They need it most of all because they're living in a state of constant delusion. And their cruelty, as you pointed out, comes from that suffering that they themselves are enduring and have endured. So if anything, I feel like they need more than, they need all of our focus to heal society. Does that make sense?

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Makes great sense. It's difficult to send *mettā* to your least favorite politician. But, yeah, they need it really badly. And so find a way to do it. And Ayya Khema's different phrases were really helpful for me.

I was teaching in a prison, and the guys go, we can't give *mettā* to these guys. This guy beat me up last week. And I taught them these phrases, and the next time I saw them, they were very appreciative. Yeah. Find a way to wish the person finds a way out of their morass of *dukkha* that's causing so many problems for themselves and others.

Questioner:

Exactly. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Alright. Malcolm.

Questioner:

Hi there. Nice to see you again.

Leigh Brasington:

Nice to see you.

Questioner:

Yeah. So there's two comments that I want to make. Whenever I've read about appreciative joy or *muditā* in the suttas, it's always about someone else's experience, like someone else's joy. But I kind of agree with you, but the way I've worked with it is, well, there's nobody out there anyway. I mean, there's no self here anyway. This is the teachings of the Buddha.

So for me to create, oh, I'm going to send it to Leigh, it's really just my creation of a self about you. So I do look at it as just *muditā*. It's just *muditā*, and it's just the experience of *muditā*, and there's no self experiencing that. And so I can't differentiate myself from you. I mean, there's no difference between you and me. There's just *muditā*.

And another comment I want to make, and I thought I read it in some sutta, but you may know the sutta. There was a kind of a way of relating to people, and one would start with *mettā*. And if that wasn't successful, then you'd move to compassion. And I think if that wasn't successful in terms of relating to another, you would move to equanimity, *upekkhā*.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. We'll come across that sutta.

Questioner:

And it's something to do with a horse, or training a horse, I think. But I can't remember it completely.

Leigh Brasington:

I don't have the whole sutta, so I don't remember whether there's a horse associated with it. You know, I found all these suttas, and I extracted out the part on the *Brahmavihāras*, but we'll come across that sutta. Yeah. So three of the *Brahmavihāras* show up in that particular sutta, but not the *muditā* part.

But, yeah, from an ultimate level, there are no selves. There's just, well, the way I put it, streams of dependently arising processes interacting. But often, since we're not there yet, we have to work with the selves. Myself and my self needs to be loved even though it's a fiction, and that other person's self needs to be loved even though their self is a fiction.

So I think working with the practice from the level of there being selves works quite well. And the way that it's phrased is generally in terms of selves. I mean, the Buddha spoke sometimes about selves, and sometimes he talked about not-self, and sometimes he says this, nothing is either self or not-self. When you get to the deepest level, the whole idea of conceptualizing existence and nonexistence is just not a good idea, but that's for a different book.

So this one is more on the relative level. But, yeah, you're right. There aren't really any selves there, so there should be no limitation on where you send *mettā*.

Questioner:

Do you refer to a term called *appamāṇa*?

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. I don't think I use *appamāṇa* in the book, but, yeah, it's a good one.

Questioner:

Yeah.

Leigh Brasington:

Right. Alright. It's eight minutes to the top of the hour. Why don't we take a break.

So we're quite lucky in that we have the *Mettā Sutta* to tell us in detail what *mettā* is and how we should go about working with it. So on the screen now, hopefully, you can see three translations of the *Mettā Sutta*. Yes? No? Yes? Okay. Good.

Middle one is one that I did. The left one is a literal translation also that I did, but with some help from someone who knows Pāli. And then on the right is the more familiar one from Amaravati. So we'll just go through the sutta.

This is what is to be done by one who's skilled in wholesomeness and who seeks the state of peace. This is clearly different from Amaravati's, and who knows the path of peace. This is an extremely contentious translation. I have 24 translations of the *Mettā Sutta* on my website side by side.

The majority of them have something like seek, but there's a minority that have something like knows, and others where you can't even tell what exactly is there. The word I believe is *santaṃ padaṃ*. Notice I have a footnote here. See Gombrich page seven for details as to why it's seek and not knows. Okay? And so, yeah, you'll have to read that later.

But basically Gombrich points out exactly what's going on. It says the sutta is not showing on the screen. Everybody else seeing it? Okay. I get thumbs up from everyone else, Catherine. I don't know what's going on. It's got to be on your end, and I have no idea. Sorry.

So anyhow, you can check out Gombrich. There's a link to it, page seven. Okay. So this is what is to be done by one who's skilled in wholesomeness, in other words keeping the precepts, and who seeks the state of peace. And what follow are 15 conditions that you need to do as a preliminary to finding peace.

Ayya Khema has a brilliant book on this called *The Path to Peace*. And in my book, I get to this point and I say, yeah, read Ayya Khema's book. I'm not going to say anything more. I mean, she did such a good job, writing anything else, yeah, would be ridiculous.

So the 15 are: be able, straight, and upright, easy to speak to, mild, flexible, and humble, contented and low-maintenance, not overly busy, and living lightly, calm and wise and unassuming, not greedy with one's supporters. This is pretty good advice for everybody. I won't go into detail. Like I say, read Ayya Khema's book. It's brilliant.

But this is what Buddha is saying. One would not do the slightest thing that wise people would criticize. Think about it. Have you ever done something that was questionable? You're doing it in secret. Nobody's going to know. And what if the wise people found out? Would they approve?

Well, you can use this as a guide every time you want to do something. What if wise people found out I was doing this? What would they say? Right? If wise people would complain, then maybe you shouldn't do it.

Another way of looking at this is somewhat different, is the fourth precept, the precept on right speech. If you're about to do something and you want to keep it secret, but if somebody were to ask you, did you do that, would you be tempted to lie and say, no, I didn't do that? Yeah. Maybe that's a guide you shouldn't do it. I think actually the fourth precept is the most powerful one for keeping you on track.

Because if you never do anything that you would later feel compelled to lie about, you're probably keeping all the precepts. And the same thing here. One would not do the slightest thing that wise people would criticize. And then the heart of the sutta:

May all be at ease and safe.
May all beings be happy.
Whatever living beings they are, moving or stationary, omitting none,
whatever long or large, medium, short, or small,
seen or unseen, living far away or near,
those born or to be born,
may all beings be happy.

One would not defraud another or despise any being anywhere.
One would not wish suffering on another because of anger or ill will.
As a mother would protect with her life her own child, her only child,
so too for all beings one would cultivate a boundless heart.
With love for the whole world one would cultivate a boundless heart
above, below, and across, unrestricted and friendly, without hostility.
Whether standing, walking, seated, or lying down, free from drowsiness,
one should sustain this mindfulness.
This, they say, is divine abiding here.

Now to me, that sounds like it should be the end of the sutta. I mean, it's a beautiful hymn to love. Nothing Buddhist about it at all. And you know what? I think it was the original end of the sutta. That's why I put my translation in italics.

The last verse appears to be a later addition. See Sujato, first paragraph, last sentence. Also, the phrase returns to a womb again does not occur in any other suttas. This apparently was added to make it explicitly Buddhist.

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

So, yeah, this last verse makes it very much a Buddhist teaching. But I actually prefer it with just nine verses. The number poetry, it depends on the number of syllables in a verse. And the first nine are very consistent, and the last one is very weird. And so I think it was a later addition. It was put in there to make it very, very Buddhist.

Okay. It's not bad Buddhism, but it somewhat limits the power of the first nine verses. Because the first nine verses, I don't care what your spiritual tradition is, this is the heart of it. I mean, certainly Jesus would be 100% behind this. Yeah. So, yeah, it's a brilliant thing.

And what are we supposed to do? We're supposed to love everybody, wish them well, not cause them harm, don't defraud them, etcetera. As I mentioned, I have 24 translations of the *Mettā Sutta* side by

side. So we have the Pāli and then Andy Olendzki, Amaravati, and it just goes across. And then two of them by Ñāṇamoli, Gunaratana, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Bhikkhu Sujato, San Francisco Zen Center, Tibetan one, Gil Fronsdal, Clara Lynn, and then mine's at the end.

And again, this is linked from the handout here. I should probably give you the handout. Let's see. If I do this, do that, do that. Okay. So to get to this, I put it in the chat. This will take you to what I'm doing as a handout. Okay?

So the result of practicing the *Mettā Sutta*, at least to the state of a nonreturner, if not full liberation. Both third stage and fourth stage, one never again returns to a womb. Okay? Questions on the *Mettā Sutta*? Okay. If there aren't any, everybody's busy downloading the notes. Right?

The benefits of *mettā*. So this is two suttas found in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. In AN 8.1, we have: you can expect eight benefits when the heart's release by love has been cultivated, developed, and practiced, made a vehicle and a basis, kept up, consolidated, and properly implemented. What eight?

You sleep at ease. You wake happily. You don't have bad dreams. Humans love you. Nonhumans love you. Deities protect you. You can't be harmed by fire, poison, or blade. If you don't reach any higher, you'll be reborn in a realm of divinity.

Well, the last three, I don't know about. The first ones, yeah, definitely. I don't know about deities. Somebody asked the Buddha about, are there gods? And the Buddha said, oh, people say there are gods, but he couldn't give a definitive answer. You can't be harmed by fire, poison, or blade, I don't think that one's going to work. And if you don't reach any higher, you'll be reborn in the realm of divinity, I don't know about rebirth. Okay? I have no data that I can really get behind. I just don't know.

Excuse me. A mindful one who develops limitless love weakens the fetters, seeing the end of attachments. Loving just one creature with a hateless heart makes you a true person. Sympathetic for all creatures, a noble one creates abundant merit. The royal potentates conquered this land and traveled about sponsoring sacrifices, or human sacrifice, the sacrifice of casting the yoke-pin, the royal soma drinking, and the unimpeded. These are not worth a sixteenth part of the mind developed with love, as all the constellations of stars aren't worth a sixteenth part of the moon's light.

Don't kill or cause others to kill. Don't conquer or encourage others to conquer. With love for all sentient beings, you'll have no hatred for anyone. This is also a *Mettā Sutta*, not quite as detailed.

And then at *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 11.15, we have 11 benefits, which are the same as what's found up above with three more added. Your mind quickly enters concentration. Yes. *Mettā* practice can definitely be used as an access method for the *jhānas*, which the Buddha defined as right concentration. So this is definitely true. Your face is clear and bright. Yeah. If you're a loving person, you generally tend to be seen in a different way than if you're coming across as hateful.

You don't feel lost when you die. Oh, good. Alright. If you don't penetrate any higher, you'll be reborn in the divine realm, which is what we had before. Victoria.

Questioner:

Yes. Well, here it is again. The what was, if you don't reach any higher was the previous one. If you don't penetrate any higher. It sounds to, I don't know if I'm misunderstanding, it sounds like hubris, like a warning against kind of like Icarus, Daedalus and Icarus kind of thing.

Leigh Brasington:

No. No. No. No. If you don't penetrate high enough to become fully awakened and not be reborn, then you will at least be reborn in—

Questioner:

Okay. Okay. Got it. Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Right. Yeah. Refers to instructions like that fairly frequently in the suttas. If you don't get any further, you'll be born in one of the higher realms. Thomas.

Questioner:

Is there a, certainly rebirth is part of the Buddhist doctrine. If you do not understand it in a cosmological sense, do you think it's just a cultural accretion, or does it have a psychological meaning, to take rebirth?

Questioner:

I don't know. Just wondering.

Leigh Brasington:

How much time have we got? Can we go to 5 after, Rob? Because, you know, it's going to take at least till 3 after for me to get through this question. I know. It's a huge topic.

And there is a huge amount of discussion about did the Buddha actually believe in rebirth? I can point you to suttas that would indicate, no, he was just teaching it as skillful means. I can point you to suttas that would indicate, yeah, he totally bought it. I can point you to suttas where it was just part of the culture. It's not a clearly defined thing.

Certainly, the Buddha taught rebirth to people that didn't have a deep Buddhist background. Okay? But to the advanced monks, he's teaching *anattā*. Right? If there's nobody there, then what's going to be reborn? In what I think is the most profound sutta in the Pāli Canon, which is *Samyutta Nikāya* 12.15, the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*, the Buddha is asked about right view.

And he answers, this world for the most part depends upon a duality, upon the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. But one with right view does not take a stand about myself. So if you truly understand what's going on, you wouldn't take a stand to say I exist. You wouldn't take a stand

to say I don't exist. You wouldn't take a stand to say, did I exist in the past? You wouldn't take a stand to say, I will exist in the future. You say the concept of existence actually isn't the best way to view the world.

There's another sutta that I really like, *Majjhima Nikāya* 38. After a long discussion on dependent origination, the Buddha says to the monks who are apparently fairly clued in from what we see from what went before, he says, monks, knowing and seeing in this way in terms of dependent origination, would you run back to the past wondering, was I? Was I not? What was I? What did I become? No, venerable sir.

Knowing and seeing in this way, would you run forward to the future wondering, will I be? Won't I be? What will I be? What will become of me? No, venerable sir. Monks, would you be inwardly perplexed about the present wondering, am I? Am I not? What am I? What is this being? Where does it come from? What will happen to it? No, venerable sir.

Monks, are you saying this just because I'm your teacher? No, venerable sir. Are you saying this because you know it from your own experience? Yes, venerable sir. Good, monks. It's good you know this from your own experience.

So basically what the Buddha is saying is if you deeply understand dependent origination, then the question of was I in the past, will I be in the future evaporates. Just like if you fall off the edge of the world, does it hurt? I mean, if you fall off the edge of the world, if you land on something, that would probably hurt. Right? But if you don't land and just fall, would you reach terminal velocity and just keep falling, or would you get faster and faster and set you on fire? That would hurt.

What if you didn't get set on fire and you just kept falling, you'd starve to death? That would hurt. So if you fall off the edge of the world, does it hurt? Well, the question disappears completely when there's no edge of the world.

The question of how am I going to be reborn, what am I going to be reborn as, disappears completely when the self disappears. At least that's my reading of what the Buddha has to say. But he lived in a culture where he couldn't just come out and say that. Because people were like, oh, this guy doesn't know.

I mean, people have their immortality projects. If the Buddha went around threatening people's immortality projects, nobody was going to listen to him far enough, long enough, deeply enough to understand really what he was teaching at the deepest level. And so as a skillful means, he tapped into the culture and what they said.

And all the heavens were there, and he goes, yeah, yeah, but those are impermanent too. You'll fall back down to earth because when you're in the heaven, it's too nice. You won't practice. And so you'll fall back down to earth or lower. And this is a good place to practice. So you should practice now. I mean, he was just trying to get people out of *dukkha*, and the method was get them to practice.

So there's my long-winded answer to your question. Hopefully, it's helpful.

Questioner:

I'll resist the temptation for follow-up.

Leigh Brasington:

Right. Malcolm?

Questioner:

Yes. I have some, I mean, I don't want to extend the discussion too much, but I was reflecting on Anālayo's view on that last phrase on the *Mettā Sutta*. And he says it's an indication that you can't fully get awakened with *mettā* practice, and you need insight basically to wake up. But he says that in a way that what they're referring to in that last paragraph is the nonreturner.

So it'll get you as far, if you do *mettā* practice or the *Brahmavihāras*, that they will get you as far as the nonreturner, but you have to have insight to become fully awakened. And just the other thing about rebirth, I was—

Leigh Brasington:

Wait. Wait. Let me do that first. Let me do that first before we get to rebirth. Definitely, the last verse of the *Mettā Sutta* indicates that if you're just doing *mettā* practice, it can take you only as far as the third stage of awakening, nonreturner.

But there are other suttas, and some of them indicate, no, you can just be reborn in one of the Brahma realms. And others indicate, no, you can get all the way to awakening. And others indicate, sure, you can get all the way to awakening, but there's more you've got to do to get all the way to awakening. So it's not definitively answered, as we will see as we look at the suttas. So, Malcolm, back to you on rebirth.

Questioner:

And the rebirth one, I was at a workshop on dependent arising with a Mahāyāna monastic. And, you know, it was really, really quite good. And what had occurred to me when they were talking about rebirth was that beings don't come back to *saṃsāra*. Like, I was wondering how, with Mahāyāna Buddhism, people come back to save all sentient beings. And I said, well, if they're awakened, they don't come back again.

But what I realized was that they weren't born into *saṃsāra* anymore. Like, they were free from *saṃsāra*. And that was the way I could understand that. So that was just a comment.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. There is so much that can be said about rebirth. And, yeah, like I say, people have immortality projects, and you can find support for your immortality project scattered throughout Buddhism from the early suttas all the way to the end. And all I can say is I don't know. I don't know.

Questioner:

Yeah. There's nobody that goes on. I mean, it's just this—

Leigh Brasington:

There's nobody here in the first place. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Thanks. Yeah. Victoria.

Questioner:

Well, yeah. Immortality projects. I love that term. Yeah. I can't help thinking about that parable in the gospels where the rich man is planning to build his new barns. He is so prosperous. He has to keep building more barns to store his grain and etcetera. And then God says, you fool, this very night your life will be required of you.

And that sense of getting to, you know, to, again, everyone's thinking about mindfulness these days because we're all so stressed out. I always think in the context of rebirth in any tradition or afterlife or whatever, at any second we could die. I mean, we could all die right now while we are having this conversation. So in that sense, I always think we should just do the best we can, you know, like we were just talking about with the *Mettā Sutta*. In the moments we have, that's all we really have.

And then in that sense, then the rebirth can be whatever it is or isn't. We don't know anyway. So that's kind of the way I look at all the spiritual traditions of the afterlife, is that I don't think we're meant to be preoccupied with that because, first of all, we can't determine it really. We just do the best we can from minute to minute and while we're here in this earthly plane.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Yeah.

Questioner:

Sorry. I didn't mean for that to sound like a homily.

Leigh Brasington:

But, yeah, you're right. I mean, you can't do anything about your rebirth other than, okay, it's pretty common through all religions, if you behave yourself here, you'll get a good rebirth, so behave yourself. But if this is it, you better live a good life. You know? Grab for all the gusto.

So grab for the gusto and lead a good life, and you've taken care of both, and don't worry about it. And besides, the Buddha says neither one of those apply because there's no beings here in the first place. So—

Questioner:

And that's the beauty of the *Brahmavihāras* for me, is that, like, who could ask for anything more? Like, if I only have this minute and then I'm going to die in a minute, what a wonderful way to go out, like thinking about the *Brahmavihāras*. They are heavenly abodes wherever they lead. Like, we can be there now. Okay. Anyway, thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Anita. Yeah.

Questioner:

Thanks, Leigh. I just wondered how you reconcile with one of the three direct knowledges, seeing past lives. How do you interpret that?

Leigh Brasington:

It literally says one remembers previous dwellings. Okay? And then it says one life, two lives, three lives. When we look at the suttas and look at the Āgamas, the Chinese versions of those suttas, some of the suttas that have the Buddha remembering past lives on the night of his awakening in the suttas, in the Āgamas, the corresponding text doesn't have him remembering past lives.

So is this inserted later? Was he sitting there thinking, well, I was with my father, and then I went off and I studied at Takkasilā, and then I was with the first teacher and the second teacher, and then I was doing those austerities with those five guys? Was that what he was remembering, or was he really remembering his past lives?

If we take it literally, he said he remembered one life, two lives, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of world expansion, many eons of world contraction, many eons of world expansion and contraction. I have a math background, so I did the math. Right?

Well, I don't know eons, but a hundred thousand. This is four hours. Right? This is the first watch of the night. That's four hours. So we have to divide a hundred thousand into four hours. You can probably do the math in your head right quick and you come up with seven seconds for each lifetime.

And he's remembering seven things about each life, name, clan, pleasure, pain, food, I don't remember what all they are. You can look it up. And so that's one forty-ninth of a second to remember each thing. And you can't say, but he's the Buddha, because that ain't going to happen for another eight hours. So I don't think it's meant to be taken literally.

There's a brilliant saying from Stephen Batchelor in his book, I think it's *After Buddhism*, where he says that basically what the Buddha is saying, he's couching the fact that we should look at our lives as not me, the center of the universe, but we have arisen from all the stuff that has gone on before us. And furthermore, we will act and that will go off into the future as well. We're just a blip in this huge range of thing that's going on.

But the Buddha didn't phrase it that way because he was in a culture that believed in past lives and multiple lives and future lives. So he phrased it that way. And so the next thing of seeing beings passing away and re-arising according to their *kamma*, do you think on the night of his enlightenment the Buddha was sitting around going, guy died, oh, that couple's having sex, he's going to be born as their kid? I just can't see the Buddha doing that for four hours. So I think it should be taken more

metaphorically. Joe.

Questioner:

Hi, Leigh. I asked you this, I think during one of your storytelling sessions. And you gave me an answer. But I want to respond. It goes back to the last verse of the *Mettā Sutta*, which you've already sort of deprecated. But I once, during a retreat, asked Ajahn Amaro about this interpretation that I had, which was not being born again into this world.

And you said at the time that I asked you the question that it pretty specifically uses words that have to do with real human birth, as I remember.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. The literal is, oh, I don't have it here. Never again returning to a womb. That's very much literal human birth.

Questioner:

Right. So I just wanted to ask you in terms of dependent origination. The way Ajahn Amaro always used to talk about dependent origination, he would always carry it through to birth and then old age, sickness, and death. And so I tend to look at it, please advise me if I'm misguided here, but I tend to look at it in terms of dependent origination. That is, if you don't hold to fixed views, etcetera, then maybe you're going to avoid this long chain of dependent origination.

And in that sense, you will not be born again into this world. In other words, the way I tried to explain it was, if in this moment you cling to something, you identify with something, you attach to something, then you start a chain of dependent origination where in this moment, you know. But if you don't do that, you're not free for life, but you're free for this moment from being born again into *samsāra*. Okay. I'm done.

Leigh Brasington:

I think that's valid. I think there's more going on than even that. Okay? Because this is based on the chain, the links, which is part of dependent origination, but I think more important is a general principle. And so I wrote a book on dependent origination and emptiness, and I think the understanding of general principle, this arises because of that. If that doesn't happen, this doesn't arise.

And the way that's used throughout the suttas, I think, is very, very edifying. And so what you're saying is correct, but I think there's more. So the book is free to download. It came out right after Ajahn Amaro came out with his free-to-download book on dependent origination. So you can read both of them together.

Questioner:

Well, could I respond to that? I mean, I wasn't saying that that was all. I was just—

Leigh Brasington:

But—

Questioner:

No. I think from my background in physics, I have a tendency to think that I agree. I think your description of streams of dependent processes, etcetera, is perfect. I mean, you just look around, and that's what you see.

Leigh Brasington:

That's all I see. Yeah. Yep.

Questioner:

Alright. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Sure. Okay. So there are a bunch of suttas that *mettā* occurs in that are not *Brahmavihāra* suttas. And so the first one: one who develops a heart of *mettā*, free from enmity and ill will, realizes the undefiled freedom of heart and freedom by wisdom in this very life, and lives having realized it with their own insight due to the ending of defilements.

So this would imply that one who develops a heart of *mettā*, which means free of enmity and ill will, realizes the undefiled freedom of heart. Freedom by wisdom is awakening. But it only occurs in later suttas. We don't find this in early suttas. But this particular sutta, do the *mettā* thing real good, and you'll get fully awakened in this very life, having realized it due to their own insight. So apparently the *mettā* will give you the insight from this sutta. Alright? That's one.

Is someone who creates difficulties for others acting kindly or unkindly? Unkindly. Does an unkind person have *mettā* in their heart or hostility? Hostility. But when the heart is full of hostility, is it right or wrong view? Wrong view. So *mettā* is part of right view or at least avoiding wrong view.

The Buddha says before his awakening, when he was an unawakened but intent on awakening, he thought remote lodgings in the wilderness and forests are challenging. It's hard to maintain seclusion and hard to find joy in solitude. The forest seemed to rob the mind of a mendicant who isn't immersed in *samādhi*. Then I thought, there are ascetics full of ill will with malicious intents who frequent remote lodgings. Those ascetics and brahmins summon unskillful fear and dread due to the fact of being hateful and having bad intentions.

But I don't frequent remote lodgings and have bad intentions. I have a heart full of *mettā*. Seeing this heart full of *mettā* in myself, I felt even more unruffled about staying in the forest. So it's a powerful thing.

Oops. What is skillful? Avoiding killing living creatures, stealing, sexual misconduct, avoiding speech that's false, divisive, harsh, or nonsensical, contentment, goodwill, and right view. This is skillful. And what is the root of the skillful? Contentment, *mettā*, and understanding. Right? Contentment overcomes greed. *Mettā* overcomes hate. Understanding overcomes delusion.

And someone brought up the *Simile of the Saw*. If anyone criticizes, strikes, my mind will not degenerate. I will blurt out no bad words. I will remain full of sympathy with a heart of *mettā* and no secret hate. All four caste classes are capable of developing *mettā*.

And then this is very famous. Never is hatred laid to rest by hate. It's laid to rest by love. This is an ancient teaching. But *mettā* doesn't appear there. Literally, it says hate is laid to rest by not-hatred, and it uses a different word.

It is always auspicious for the mindful. The mindful prosper in happiness. Each new day is better for the mindful. But they are not freed from enmity. But someone whose mind delights in harmlessness all day and all night, with *mettā* for all living creatures, they have no enmity for anyone.

We should train like this. We will develop a heart, the heart's release by *mettā*. We'll cultivate it, make it our vehicle, our basis, keep it up, consolidate, and properly implement it. This is how you should train. You can see *mettā* shows up over and over again here.

What starves the arising of ill will, or when it has arisen, starves its increasing growth? There is the heart's release by *mettā*. Frequent rational application of mind to that starves the arising of ill will or makes it go away. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated, it's very fruitful and beneficial. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated, it leads to great benefit. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated, it leads to great sanctuary from the yoke. That would be full awakening.

When *mettā* is developed and cultivated, it leads to great inspiration. When *mettā* is developed and cultivated, it leads to dwelling in great ease. How do you look at others by looking after yourself? By development, cultivation, and practice of meditation. And how do you look after yourself by looking after others? By acceptance, harmlessness, *mettā*, and sympathy. So, yeah, put your own oxygen mask on first. Right?

You look after others by development, cultivation, and practice of meditation. And how do you look after yourself? Acceptance, harmlessness, *mettā*, and sympathy. I do not see a single thing that prevents ill will from arising when it arises better than a heart's release by *mettā*. When you apply mind rationally on the heart's release by *mettā*, ill will does not arise or it's given up. Karen.

Questioner:

Thank you. This is beautiful, wonderful. Thank you. You know, I find it really inspiring to read about people who have developed *mettā* in life, real people. And I'm rereading and actually listening to *A Cave in the Snow*, you know, about Tenzin Palmo, who went to live at 14,000 feet and eight months of snow and all kinds of hardships. And how did she do that?

And it really brings to life these suttas, you know, that she really did the practice 24/7 for twelve years and was able to live on practically nothing and dig her way out of avalanches, this tiny British woman. And I'm wondering if people have other books to recommend. I'll put that one in the chat in case anybody hasn't read it. It's so beautiful.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. I've heard really good things about it. I haven't read it. But, yeah, there are books out there about *mettā* and what people manage to do with it. Yeah.

This goes on and on. Followers of other religions, if they ask, what is the cause, what is the reason why hate doesn't arise, or if it has arisen, it's given up, the heart's release by *mettā*. *Mettā* is a skillful root. When a loving person acts by way of body, speech, and mind, that too is skillful.

The loving person, not overcome by hate, doesn't cause another to suffer under false pretext by execution, imprisonment, confinement, condemnation, or banishment, thinking I'm powerful, I want power. That too is skillful. So there are many skillful things produced in the unborn source and originated condition by *mettā*.

The snake king is interesting. This is a sutta about practicing *mettā* to prevent harm by snakes and other creatures. I love the footless creatures, the two-footed I love. I love the four-footed, the many-footed I love. *Mettā* shows up in each line there.

Here's one for doctors and nurses. A carer with five qualities is competent to care for a patient. What five? They're able to prepare medicine. They know what is suitable and unsuitable, so they remove what is unsuitable and supply what is suitable. They care for the sick out of *mettā*, not for the sake of material benefits. They're not disgusted to remove feces, urine, vomit, or spit. They're able to educate, encourage, fire up, and inspire the patient with a Dhamma talk from time to time.

A carer with these five qualities is competent to care for a patient. And the sutta was mentioned earlier. You should develop *mettā* for a person you resent. That's how to get rid of resentment for that person. *Karuṇā, upekkhā*. Disregard a person you resent. If you focus on the ownership of *kamma* regarding that resentful person: this person is the owner of their *kamma*, heir to their *kamma*. *Kamma* is their womb, their relative, and refuge. They will be the heir to whatever *kamma* they do, whether good or bad. That's how to get rid of resentment for that individual.

You should develop the perception of the not-beautiful to give up greed, *mettā* to give up hate, and wisdom to give up delusion. Develop a mind of *mettā* for seven years. I'm not recommending that that be your only practice, but yeah. Ayya Khema says you should start every meditation period with *mettā*.

So, yeah, when your mind is steady and well settled internally and bad unskillful qualities that have arisen don't occupy your mind, then you should train like this. I will develop the heart's release by *mettā*. I will cultivate it, make it my vehicle, my basis, keep it up, consolidate, properly implement it. And then the next three, what we had earlier.

It would be more fruitful to undertake the training rules not to kill living creatures, steal, commit sexual misconduct, lie, or consume intoxicants than to go for refuge to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha with a confident heart. It would be more fruitful to develop a heart of *mettā* even as long as it takes

to pull a cow's udder than to undertake the training rules. It would be more fruitful to develop the perception of impermanence even for as long as a finger snap than to do all these things, including developing a heart of *mettā* for as long as it takes to pull a cow's udder.

So this one would tend to indicate that, yeah, *mettā* will take you a long way, but insight into impermanence will take you further. And then we have King Pasenadi really manifesting his *mettā* for the Buddha. Establish your heart in *mettā* for your spiritual companions first if you wish to accuse another. So somebody's done something wrong, make sure you're operating from *mettā* before you accuse them.

One who dwells in *mettā*, devoted to the Buddhist teaching, could realize the peaceful state, the blissful state of stilling fabrications. Dwelling in *mettā* is *mettāvihārī*, *mettā* dwelling. Once you practice only good deeds whose outcome stretches ahead, giving and moral conduct, developing a mind of *mettā*, having developed these three things yielding happiness, that astute one is born in a happy, pleasing world. So *mettā* will take you to one of the Brahma realms.

Of all the grounds for making worldly merit, none are worth a sixteenth part of the heart's release by *mettā*. Surpassing them, the heart's release by *mettā* shines and glows and radiates. A mindful one who develops limitless *mettā* weakens the fetters, seeing the end of attachments. *Mettā* for just one creature with a hateless heart makes you a good person. Sympathetic for all creatures, a noble one creates abundant merit.

Royal potentates conquered the land, traveled around sponsoring sacrifices. These are not worth a sixteenth part of the mind developed as *mettā*, as starlight cannot rival the moon. Don't kill or cause others to kill. Don't conquer or cause others to conquer. With *mettā* for all living creatures, you'll have no hate for anyone. So this would seem to indicate *mettā* would see the end of attachments. That would be, I guess, to the third stage of awakening. So, yeah, you're going to need a little more insight than just *mettā*. Thomas?

Questioner:

What is meant by the unimpeded in that paragraph about the royal potentates?

Leigh Brasington:

It's the name of some sacrifice. I have no idea what it is. Yeah. It's just the name of some sacrifice. Royal soma drinking, yeah, drinking hallucinogen, I think. I don't know what casting of the yoke-pin is. But these are all sacrifices.

Once you practice only good deeds whose happy outcome stretches ahead, giving and moral conduct, developing a mind of *mettā*, having developed these three things yields happiness, that astute one is reborn in a happy, pleasing world. So that one is born in the Brahma realms. But as to those committed day and night to the teaching of Buddha, they extinguish the fire of greed always perceiving the not-beautiful, while those supreme persons extinguish the fire of hate with *mettā* and the fire of delusion with wisdom that leads to penetration, leads to full awakening. Victoria.

Questioner:

Can you just scroll back to the one before the fire? Yeah. So is the giving in that one, is that *dāna*? Is the original? Okay. So that's the word? Okay.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. *Dāna* was what was there.

Questioner:

Okay. Thanks.

Leigh Brasington:

I'm pretty sure when you get this downloaded, you can click on this and then turn on the Pāli in Sujato's translation, and you can see for yourself. I'm not going to do that right now.

Questioner:

Fabulous. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

So pay heed, all you celestial beings. Have *mettā* for humankind. Stay at night, bring offerings, please protect them diligently. This is a famous sutta, the *Ratana Sutta*, the gem sutta, and it has this phrase. One free of greed, rid of anger, developing a heart of limitless *mettā* spreads that limitlessness in every direction, ever diligent day and night.

In one searching for awakening, as according with the teaching, one should touch creatures firm or frail with *mettā*. And then we get to some of the enlightened monks' verses after their awakening. Someone with a mind of *mettā*, sympathetic for all creatures, a person like that brims with much merit. I'm a friend and comrade to all, sympathetic for all beings. I develop a mind of *mettā*, always delighting in harmlessness.

Be easy to admonish, courteous in speech, respect one another, have hearts of *mettā* and *karuṇā*, and please do keep your precepts. Be energetic, resolute, and always staunchly vigorous. So these are the suttas that I found where *mettā* comes up not in the context of the four *Brahmavihāras*. And so they're all right here.

And if you want to look at them and get a bigger context, all you've got to do is click on it. So let's go back to the one up here, this one. So you click on it, and you pick Sujato, and you click Views. And you want English, and you want line by line. Right? And now we've got to find giving. There we go. And there's the word *dāna* right there. Okay?

So any of these that you have questions about. Now I know that went really fast. I have, I think, a link somewhere in here. On my website, I tell you how to find the Pāli real quickly. You've got to go to Sujato's version, and you've got to click on Views, and you've got to set this to English and this to line by line or side by side. Okay? Victoria.

Questioner:

The last one, the easy to admonish, can you unpack that a little? Because I feel like that's very fraught, at least in my life. What easy to admonish really means. Easy in the sense of skillful or do it whenever it seems appropriate? Can you talk about that a little bit?

Leigh Brasington:

Easy to be admonished.

Questioner:

Oh, to be admonished. Oh, so humble. Yeah. Meek. Right. Willing to be corrected.

Leigh Brasington:

Yes. Exactly.

Questioner:

Got it. Oh, that makes much more sense. Okay. Yes. Okay. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Okay. So now we have this long sutta next. Any other questions before we take another break? And then we'll do that sutta. That'll take us up to noon, I imagine.

Questioner:

Thank you. You may be coming on to this. My experience of the practice of *mettā* is that it directly confronts me with where the limits are that I see in terms of my self-identification. And the practice, pursuing the practices of *mettā* consistently calls into question where the boundary of that is. So it gradually extends it, gradually extends it, gradually extends it. So it's led me to conclude that *mettā* has a direct link with *anattā*. Yeah.

Are you going to look at, are there some suttas which directly address that, and are you going to be looking at them? Because I just find suttas where it says you should reflect on impermanence. Compared to *mettā* will get you a deeper insight. And I can't say I can see that in my experience. I struggle. Do you see, so I just wondered, yeah.

Leigh Brasington:

Okay. So we just looked at every instance of *mettā* in the suttas that isn't the four *Brahmavihāras*, and the four *Brahmavihāras* pretty much show up exactly the same way. We'll get to that next week. But there's not one that goes directly there.

But, yeah, if you're doing *mettā* and you're beginning to realize that, yeah, I'm not so separate from the person around me, that's beginning to take you in the direction of *anattā*. So, yeah, it does have that tendency. But I don't know of a sutta where it's spelled out. I mean, I found all the *mettā* suttas. And, yeah, there's the list of them, plus the ones where all four *Brahmavihāras* show up, but that's always the same thing over and over again, which we'll see in the sutta later.

Questioner:

Do you think it might be implied in the context where it's part of the four *Brahmavihāras*?

Leigh Brasington:

It says that one does it to all as to oneself, at least in some translations. So that's moving in that direction. There's no place where it's clearly implied. What's clearly implied is, yeah, you've got to take a deep look at either impermanence or *dukkha* or not-self. That's the sources of the insights that'll get you over the top.

Questioner:

Yeah. I just struggle to see a clear distinction. That's all.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. That's me. We don't find it clear, but I think it's a valid thing.

Questioner:

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Okay. Catherine.

Questioner:

Well, if we're supposed to see for ourselves, you know, how these practices work and what's true, and *mettā* in someone's experience really leads to *anattā*, then that's the answer. You know?

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Right? Do the practice. See where it takes you. That's the whole thing. On my first retreat with Ayya Khema, I asked her a question. I don't remember what the question was. She said, oh, there's nothing to believe in Buddhism. Buddha said, *ehi passiko*, come and see for yourself. That's when I decided, okay, this isn't just more religious mumbo jumbo. I can actually follow the path. Yeah. Very important. See for yourself.

Okay. So we're going to take another break. It's one minute past the top of the hour. This will be a nine minute break. Ten minutes past, come on back, and we'll do this sutta. I stuck a link in the chat that will lead to the easy way to find the Pāli in the suttas on the *SuttaCentral* website. It works pretty well. I wouldn't say that it's totally easy, but it works well enough.

And I use it to write my books, you know, find the sutta. Maybe I don't like Sujato's translation in particular, but I find the Pāli, which I like, and I'm off to the races. Definitely good to look up a sutta with multiple translations. I find no one is perfect, and I jump around as to who I really like.

Okay. So for those of you who are listening to the recordings, it's <https://leighb.com/paliinsuttas.htm>. Pāli in Suttas. Okay. You see my screen, I assume. Yes. Yes. Alright.

This is the sutta on the three knowledges. The three knowledges here refer to the Brahminical three

knowledges, so the three knowledges from Brahmanism. Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was wandering in the land of the Kosalans with a large *saṅgha* of bhikkhus when he arrived at the village of Manasākata. It's only mentioned in this sutta. He stayed in a mango grove near the bank of the river.

There were other brahmins living in the area. The students, Vāsetṭha and Bhāradvāja, were going for a walk, and they began this discussion of what is the path and what is not the path. One said this is the only straight path, the one taught by my teacher. The other one said, no, this is the only straight path, the one that delivers the one who practices it to Brahmā, the one by my teacher. But neither was able to persuade the other.

So Vāsetṭha said, the ascetic Gotama gone forth from the Sākiyan family is staying in a mango grove by the bank of the river. Let's go see him and ask him about this matter, and we'll remember what he says. So they went to the Buddha, exchanged greetings, and they told him what they've been discussing.

In this matter, we're having a dispute, a disagreement, a difference of opinion. So it seems that you each think your own teacher is right. What is your disagreement about? What is the path and what is not the path, Venerable Gotama? Even though the brahmins describe different paths, a bunch of different paths, all of them lead someone who practices them to the company of Brahmā. It's like a village or town with many different roads, yet all of them meet at the village.

In the same way, all these paths lead to Brahmā. Buddha says they lead? I do, Venerable sir. They lead someone? They do. Do you really say they lead? I do.

Well, of the brahmins who are proficient in the three Vedas, is there even a single one who's seen Brahmā with their own eyes? No, Venerable Gotama. Has one of their teachers seen Brahmā with their own eyes? No. What about back seven generations? No.

Well, one of the ancient seers of the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas, they composed the hymns, did they say we know and see Brahmā, or where Brahmā is, or where he lies? No, Venerable sir. So it seems none of these brahmins have seen Brahmā with their own eyes, nor have the ancient seers, and yet the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas say we teach the path to the company of Brahmā. This is the only straight path.

What do you think? This being so, doesn't that turn out to be unfounded? That's clearly the case, Venerable Gotama. Good. For it's impossible they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

Suppose there were a queue of blind men, each one holding on to the one in front, the first onto the one in front. The first does not see, the middle one does not see, the last one does not see. And in the same way, it seems the brahmins' statements turn out to be comparable to that queue of blind men. Their statement turns out to be a joke. Their words, vacuous and hollow.

Do the brahmins see the sun and the moon just as other folks do? Oh, yes. What do you think? Though

this is so, are the brahmins proficient in teaching the path to the company of the sun and moon? Remember, the sun and the moon at the time of the Buddha were gods. Right? So do the brahmins teach a way to get to these gods? No, Venerable sir.

So it seems the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas see the sun and the moon, and they're not able to teach the path to get to these gods. But even though they've not seen Brahmā, they claim to know the path. What do you think? Doesn't that seem to be unfounded? Clearly that's the case, Venerable Gotama. But for it is impossible they should teach the path to that which they neither know nor see.

Suppose a man were to say, whoever is the most beautiful lady in the land, it is her that I want, her that I desire. And they say to the worthy man, this most beautiful lady in the land whom you desire, do you know whether she's an aristocrat, a brahmin, a peasant, or a menial? He'd say, no.

This most beautiful lady, do you know her name or clan, whether she's tall or short or medium, whether her skin is black, brown, or tawny, what village, town, or city she comes from? He'd say no. Did you desire someone you've never known or seen? And he'd say yes. This being so, doesn't that statement turn out to be unfounded? Yes, Venerable sir.

In the same way, doesn't the statement of those brahmins turn out to be unfounded? Clearly, that's the case, Venerable sir. Suppose a man were to build a staircase at the crossroads for climbing up to a stilt house. They'd say to him, worthy man, that stilt longhouse you're building a staircase for, do you know whether it's to the north, south, east, or west, or whether it's tall, medium, or short? And he'd say no.

And they'd say, worthy man, are you building a staircase for a longhouse you've never seen or known? Yes. Doesn't that man's statement turn out to be unfounded? Yes. Brahmins are also unfounded? Yes.

Suppose this river was full to the brim so that a crow could drink from it. And then along comes a person who wants to cross to the far shore. Standing on the near shore, they'd call out to the far shore, come here, far shore. Come here, far shore. Will the far shore come over? No, Venerable Gotama.

In the same way, the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas proceed having given up those things that make one a true brahmin, having undertaken those things that make one not a true brahmin. Yet they say we call upon Indra, we call upon Soma, Varuṇa, all the other gods. So long as they proceed in this way, it's impossible that they will, with the breakup of the body after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

Suppose the river was full to the brim. Along comes a person who wants to cross, and he's on the near shore, and his arms are tied tightly behind his back with a strong chain. Do you think they could cross to the far shore? No, Venerable Gotama.

In the same way, the five kinds of sense pleasures are called chains and fetters in the training of the noble one. What five? Sights known by the eye, which are desirable, likable, agreeable, pleasant,

sensual, and arousing. Sounds known by the ears, smells known by the nose, tastes known by the tongue, touches known by the body, which are likable, agreeable, desirable, pleasant, and arousing. These are the five kinds of sensual stimulation called chains and fetters in the training of the noble ones.

The brahmins proficient in the three Vedas enjoy these five kinds of sensual stimulations, tied, infatuated, attached, blind to the drawbacks, and not understanding the escape. So long as they enjoy them, it's impossible they will, with the breakup of the body after death, be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

Suppose the river is full, then along comes a person who wants to cross over, but they lie down wrapped in cloth from head to foot. What do you think? Could this person cross to the far shore? No, Venerable Gotama.

In the same way, the five hindrances are called obstacles and hindrances, encasings and shrouds. The word literally means coverings, in the training of the noble one. What five? The hindrance of sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt. Brahmins proficient in the three Vedas are obstructed, hindered, encased, and shrouded by these hindrances. So long as they're obstructed, it's impossible that they will with the breakup of the body be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Have you heard that the brahmins who are elderly and senior, the teacher of teachers, say whether Brahmā is encumbered with possessions or not? That he is not. His heart is full of enmity or not? It is not. His heart is full of ill will or not? It is not. His heart is corrupted or not? It is not. Does he wield power or not? He does.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Are the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas encumbered with possessions or not? They are. Hearts full of enmity or not? They are. Hearts full of ill will or not? They are. Are their hearts corrupted or not? They are. Do they wield power or not? They do not.

So it seems the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas are encumbered with possessions, but Brahmā is not. But would brahmins who are encumbered with possessions come together and converge with Brahmā who isn't encumbered with possessions? No, Venerable Gotama. Good, Vāseṭṭha. It's impossible that those who are encumbered with possessions at the breakup of the body would be born in the company of Brahmā who isn't encumbered with possessions.

And the same for all the others, that the brahmins have enmity, ill will, corruption, do not wield power, where Brahmā is the opposite of these. Not going to converge. It is impossible that such brahmins with the breakup of the body after death will be reborn in the company of Brahmā.

But here, the brahmins proficient in the three Vedas sink down where they have sat, only to drift apart while imagining they're crossing over to drier ground. When this was said, Vāseṭṭha said to the Buddha, I've heard, Venerable Gotama, that you know the path to the company of Brahmā.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? Is the village nearby? Yes, it is. What do you think? Suppose one was born and raised there. As soon as they left the town, people ask him about the road to the village. Would they be slow or hesitant to answer? No, Venerable Gotama. Why is that? Because they were born and raised in Manasākata. They're well acquainted with all the roads to the village.

Still, it's possible they might be slow or hesitant to answer, but the *Tathāgata* is never slow or hesitant when questioned about the realm of Brahmā or the practices that lead to the realm of Brahmā. I understand Brahmā, the realm of Brahmā, the practice that leads to the realm of Brahmā, practicing according with which one is reborn in the realm of Brahmā.

When this was said, Vāseṭṭha said to the Buddha, I have heard, Venerable Gotama, that you teach the path to the company of Brahmā. Please teach us that path. Elevate this generation of brahmins. Well then, Vāseṭṭha, listen and apply your mind, and I will speak. Yes, Venerable sir.

Herein, a *Tathāgata* arises in this world. He teaches the Dhamma, which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, possessing meaning and phrasing, reveals a holy life that is complete and purified. Someone hears the Dhamma, gains faith. Endowed with faith, they reflect the household life is crowded, a path of dust. Going forth is open like the air.

It is not easy for one dwelling at home to lead the complete and perfected holy life. Let me shave off my hair and beard, put on saffron robes, and go forth from the household life to homelessness. They abandon their accumulation of wealth, their circle of relatives, shave off hair and beard, and go forth to homelessness.

When one has gone forth, one lives restrained by the precepts. *Pātimokkha* is the precepts. Possessed of proper behavior and resort, having taken up the rules of training, one trains in them, seeing danger in the slightest fault. One becomes endowed with wholesome bodily and verbal action. One's livelihood is purified. One possesses moral discipline.

One guards the doors of the sense faculties, endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension, is content with little. Endowed with these, one sits down, crosses one's legs, holds the body erect, and sets up mindfulness before oneself. This paragraph right here is the gradual training. I have a book on that, another free download. Okay?

So one lives according to the precepts. One guards the senses, is mindful, clear comprehending, content with little, and one sits down and sets up mindfulness before oneself. One starts practicing mindfulness. One sees that the five hindrances are unabandoned within oneself. When one sees that they're unabandoned, one regards that as debt, sickness, confinement in prison, slavery, a desert road.

But when one sees that the five hindrances have been abandoned, one regards that as freedom from debt, as good health, as release from prison, as freedom from slavery, as a place of safety. Usually what we find in the gradual training coming next is the four *jhānas*. But here we have: when one sees

that these five hindrances have been abandoned within oneself, gladness, *pāmojja*, arises.

When one is gladdened, rapture arises, *pīti*. When one's mind is filled with rapture, one's body becomes tranquil. Tranquil in body, one experiences happiness, *sukha*. Being happy, one's mind becomes concentrated, *samādhi*. This paragraph is what I call the *jhāna* summary.

It's often called the *pāmojja* pentad, because you've got *pāmojja*, gladness, *pīti*, rapture, tranquility, happiness, and *samādhi*. Okay? These are basically the first four *jhānas*. This is a summary of the first four *jhānas*. We often find this summary in locations where we would expect to see the *jhānas*. So instead of reciting the long description of each of the *jhānas*, it just puts the summary in. And that's what we find in this particular one.

So one hears the Dhamma, gains faith, goes forth, keeps the precepts, guards the senses, is mindful, content with little, abandons the hindrances, practices the *jhānas*, and then one abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with *mettā*. Likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth.

So above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, one abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with *mettā*, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility, and without ill will. Just as a mighty trumpeter makes himself heard without difficulty in all four directions, even so of all things that have shape or life, there is not one he passes by or leaves aside, but regards them all with a mindset free through deep-felt *mettā*. This is a path to the company of Brahmā.

And then it repeats identically for *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā*. This is the *Brahmavihāra* practice we find in almost every one of the 38 suttas where all four *Brahmavihāras* are mentioned, or we find a summary of this. Okay? This is the practice. You know, one pervades the quarters.

Now this pervading is somewhat different than the way it's usually taught with the phrases. Phrases come from the commentaries, from the *Visuddhimagga*. Okay? This actually is what we find in the suttas. It's the way to do it, plus what we find in the *Mettā Sutta*.

And one is to get the feeling of *mettā*, a heart-deep-felt sense of *mettā*, and then send it out in one direction, the east, the west, the north, the south. Okay? That's the way to do it. There's some good books by Bhikkhu Analayo on the pervading. His *Compassion and Emptiness* talks about that. It's a definitely highly recommended book.

I don't think I have it recommended here in the handout with this course, but it is linked from the book that will be coming out in a month. So after you read my book, you can read his book, or you can read partly through my book too. You come to the link and then read his book.

But yeah, this is the way it's taught, is to just sit down and have the ability to send the *mettā* to each of the directions below and above and all around. So that all things that have shape or life, not one is passed by, but all of them are regarded through deep-felt *mettā*.

And so in this sutta, this is a path to the company of Brahmā in the same way for each of the others. And I write some more about this in the book, but I'm not going to go into detail here. But this is what we find in almost all of the suttas that talk about the four *Brahmavihāras*.

What do you think, Vāseṭṭha? When one meditates like this, are they encumbered with possessions or not? They are not. Is their heart full of enmity or not? It is not. Ill will? Not. Corrupted? Not. Do they wield power? Yes.

So it seems that monastics are not encumbered with possessions and neither is Brahmā. Would a monastic who is not encumbered with possessions come together and converge with Brahmā who isn't encumbered with possessions? Yes, Venerable Gotama. Good. It seems that a monastic has no ill will, hatred, corruption, and does wield power, while Brahmā is the same. Quite possible that with the breakup of the body, they will be born in the company of Brahmā.

When he had spoken, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja said, excellent, Venerable Gotama, excellent. As if one were setting upright the overturned, revealing the hidden, pointing out the path to the lost, or lighting a lamp in the dark so people with clear eyes could see what's there, Venerable Gotama has made the teachings clear in many ways. We go for refuge to the Venerable Gotama, to the teachings, to the monastic *saṅgha*. From this day forth, may Venerable Gotama remember us as lay followers who've gone for refuge for life.

So in this particular sutta, practicing the four *Brahmavihāras* after keeping the precepts, guarding the senses, being content with little, overcoming the hindrances, practicing the *jhānas*, leads to rebirth in the Brahma realms. And this was given to lay people. Right? So to get a little further, you're going to have to be a little more serious, I suppose, than being a lay person according to the suttas.

Right? But, you know, mostly people at the time of the Buddha didn't have an hour-long meditation practice every morning. So hopefully some of us are practicing diligently enough to get further. So this is the practice given. I saw Victoria had her hand up when I had this up. So questions. Victoria.

Questioner:

Yeah. Going back to the senses, I was thinking as they were being enumerated, because elsewhere the mind is also, I mean, a sense door in that case. Right? But I was thinking just to myself how, especially for this discourse, it feels like the mind is a huge hindrance. I mean, more than, so I just wondered about that. Like, it enumerates the traditional five senses in this sutta, but doesn't mention the mind in that context as a sense door. So I wondered if you could comment on that.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. We do find that at times where it's the five strands of sense pleasures that are getting people in trouble. And that's basically looking at your five external senses and seeing how you get hooked. And then other places, the mind is brought in. And I don't really see any significance of when and where it's brought in.

Often in the cases where there's a layperson involved, you're more likely to find the five as opposed to the six. But that's a generalization. It's not always true. So maybe that's what's going on here. The Buddha, knowing about what their teachers teach, and the teachers teach the five strands of sense pleasures, and so that's what they're talking about.

Also, it's easier to see when somebody is hooked on one of the five strands of sense pleasures than it is to see when their mind is hooked on something. Right? They can cover up their mind and behave in public like they're not hooked. But if you see them ordering themselves on food or looking at whatever or demanding the music be a certain way, then you can see they're attached to the five sense pleasures. And that's what most of us are dealing with all the time.

Only, you're right, we have to work with the mind because that's the big one. That's the one that has to be given the most attention.

Questioner:

Sorry. So you said you didn't want to generalize, but that's an interesting point that he is here speaking to lay people and maybe tweaking it because for monastics, it's like the bar is raised higher. Does that—

Leigh Brasington:

Yes. Yes. Yeah. Yeah. It's—

Questioner:

Like in the Christian tradition, it's kind of like, or the Judeo-Christian, we have the Ten Commandments, and then Jesus raises the bar. Like, what's in your mind is breaking the commandment. Forget about the, you know, the mind defilement comes before the deed or the action.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Yeah.

Questioner:

So here, the Buddha is kind of just dealing with the senses in that sense.

Leigh Brasington:

Right. What the Buddha was doing was knowing who he was speaking to, what their background was, and what they could take in. And so he changed what he had to say. So he's not being consistent. He's not doing metaphysics. I know there's such a thing as Buddhist metaphysics, but, yeah, that's later.

He wasn't doing metaphysics. He's just trying to get people to practice. And so he teaches these guys a practice that they're all hot for, and it works. They become lay followers, and then eventually they become monks. And then eventually, I believe Vāsetṭha becomes fully enlightened.

So, you know, he didn't hit them with a full load right there at the beginning. They want to know the way to Brahmā. Oh, sure. I'll tell you the way to Brahmā. Do this practice. And then they come and

ask him some more questions, he gives them more practice, you know, guiding them along, and then finally they ask to become monks. And this he does over and over again.

Vacchagotta is one of my favorite people in the suttas, and he comes to the Buddha over and over again asking questions. And eventually he asks to become a monk. Eventually he becomes enlightened. But he was from a different spiritual tradition. So, yeah, this is very, very common. Thank you. Thomas.

Questioner:

Is there any place in the suttas where it says that the practice of *Brahmavihāras* fulfills the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*?

Leigh Brasington:

I don't think it says it fulfills the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, but we will next week get to some places where the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* and the *Brahmavihāras* show up. In MN 118, they both show up, but it's the mindfulness of breathing that fulfills the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* there.

I don't think it ever talks about it as the *Brahmavihāras* fulfilling the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*. Thinking over it, I don't remember anything like that. I did look through all the suttas last night. You know? It was like, alright, I've got to look at my notes again before I teach, and I don't recall seeing that.

Questioner:

Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Doran.

Questioner:

Yeah. Thank you so much for these teachings. So much fun to go through the suttas on *mettā*. So I was curious about this directional practice. That's the impression that I had, that that's the only thing in the suttas in terms of practice, is above and below, around and everywhere. Basically, the six directions of a cube.

And one question is whether that's the only thing in the suttas pretty much as far as practice is recommended. And the other question is whether these practices existed before the Buddha in the Brahminical traditions, and if they did, how did they practice the *Brahmavihāras*? I think this directional practice is unique to the Buddha, but I'm not sure. Thank you.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. I don't know. I think the *Brahmavihāra* practice existed before the Buddha, but I don't know how it was practiced then, so I can't say. This directional above, below, and all around is about all we find. We get hints of other ways like the *Mettā Sutta*. Alright, that's giving us a bit more. But it doesn't really give a lot more.

Since then, of course, the commentaries develop the phrases, and that's what's usually taught. My teacher, Ayya Khema, came up with visualizations. She's a very visual person, and so she had lots of ways to visualize. Visualize the sun in your heart, and the sun is radiating *mettā*, and you think of someone and you radiate *mettā* to that particular person, and then another person, then a group, and so forth.

So more like the phrases, but instead of saying a phrase, may you be happy, you visualize the *mettā* going out. You visualize the feeling of happiness going out. But that's, again, a later development. And so mostly what we find is just what's up on the screen right now, these four ways of doing it.

Like I said, there's a little bit more, and we will come across that next week. But, yeah, this is about it. Alright. Thank you.

Questioner:

Sure.

Leigh Brasington:

Joe.

Questioner:

First of all, just wanted to say that I enjoy your books and your teachings very much, Leigh. Thank you. They have a certain resonance for me. So I wanted to say that and that I have intense respect for you as a teacher.

Having said that, I want to address something that could be seen as questionable. So it has to do with *papañca*, mental proliferation. And it seems to me that getting too far and too deep into very nuanced kinds of questions may not be helpful. It seems like the mind may just want to do that. And I just don't know if it's actually helpful.

In some sense, it's like returning over and over again to first principles in physics. Going back to basic things that are obvious and understood to inform your view about things that are not so well understood. And so as all this discussion was going on, I kept considering greed, hate, and delusion. You know, it seems like if one were to fully penetrate that, that one might be very close to being enlightened, whatever that means. So I guess that's about all. I just wondered what your thought might be.

Leigh Brasington:

Yeah. Well, I would say that fully penetrating greed, hatred, and delusion is enlightenment. That's what it's going to be. Because if there's no greed, there's no clinging, there's no hatred, okay, then it's not going to be clinging to the absence of. So craving and clinging is taken care of there. It's no delusion. You act in harmony with the way things are. And so, yeah, you're not deluded about a self or anything like that. So that is full awakening.

As for going back to first principles, I highly recommend it. Yeah. And saying, okay, what you've got to

do on the spiritual path is overcome greed, hatred, and delusion, and walking out of the room is not sufficient. So now how much more should I say based on what I've learned with my practice?

So, yeah, you come to the three-hour presentation with me, and you're going to get some stuff that's right down the center of the road of what's promised. And you're going to get me wandering off if somebody asks the questions about something else. And, yeah, that's how I am. I want to try and answer people's questions and try and understand what they're asking and so forth.

But, you know, I try to keep it on the path of where we're going. I said to Rob when we were talking before we let everybody in from the waiting room, I said, I'm going to try and at 11:45 get it to the point where I can turn it back over to you for some brief words at the end, and then I'm going to do a guided *mettā*. So, you know, I sort of used the time up like I was planning to, and I hope at least some of what I've said has been useful, and I hope that a lot of what I've said has actually been accurate.

But you've got to figure this out for yourself. This is just one ex-hippie computer programmer presenting his understanding of what the Buddha had to say. It's up to you to figure out what's really going to work. Does that address your concerns?

Questioner:

Yes. It does. And as I said, I certainly mean no disrespect. Everyone has to determine for themselves when they're in the state of mental proliferation and it's doing no good, and when it's clarifying their understanding. And certainly, just to say, oh, yeah, I'm going to dispense with greed, hate, and delusion, I don't understand how you could do that without long contemplation.

Leigh Brasington:

Exactly. Exactly. Okay. We're going to do a guided *mettā*. 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 brightly shining sun, a sun with beautiful golden rays that fills you from head to toe. Now think of someone you really care about and let the sun in your heart send its beautiful golden rays to fill that person from head to toe. Think of other people you care about. Bring them to mind one by one and fill each of them with the golden rays from the sun in 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 fill each of them with the golden rays of the sun of your heart. Someone you find difficult, let the sun in your heart shine on that person as well. Let the golden rays from the sun in your heart shine on everybody on this retreat.

And now let the sun in your heart grow brighter and brighter so that it starts filling your whole neighborhood. Everybody, the dogs, the cats, the squirrels, the birds. Keep opening your heart wider and wider. It fills your town, your city. Golden rays of *mettā* from your heart start filling the countryside. All the animals out there, deer, insects, rabbits, skunks.

Just keep opening your heart wider and wider so your love goes out to everybody on the continent.

It's getting more and more. Golden rays from your heart reaching out all over the world to every living being, humans, animals, birds, fish, insects, reptiles, forests, and fields. Fill them all with the golden light from the center of your heart.

Notice as these golden rays of love go out from the center of your heart, the very first thing they do is fill you. May all beings everywhere be happy. May any merit from today's sharing of the Dhamma be for the benefit and liberation of all beings everywhere.

And I don't have a bell or gong, so you can hear it over Zoom. But you can keep on practicing, and I hope to see you all next week. Care.