

5

Brahma, vihāra: The divine abodes

Theme: The practical cultivation of divinity in man

Piya Tan ©2007, 2011

1 Significance of the divine abodes

1.1 PATHOLOGICAL PERSISTENCE OF THE GOD-IDEA. While in prehistoric times and cultures, man's view of nature and the beyond ranges from animism (the sacred or God is in natural events and physical things) to pantheism (the sacred or God is everywhere), as civilization evolved, so does the idea of a *sole* God (monotheism), or a *single* God, almighty amongst others or other deities (polytheism and henotheism).

God is generally conceived or believed to be the supernatural creator and overseer of the universe. Theologians have tried to predicate various qualities to the many different God-ideas. The most common of such qualities include omniscience (unlimited knowledge), omnipotence (unlimited power), omnipresence (present everywhere at the same time), omnibenevolence (perfectly good) and eternal existence.

A universal attempt by such theologians and believers that is God is a “necessary” being and that he is the “greatest conceivable existent.”¹ In other words, these are simply attempts at defining something into existence (such as describing how a unicorn looks like, but believing that unicorns actually exist). It is important to know that we cannot define anything into existence. If we *believe* what we have defined or constructed, then it is a delusion.

The human need for some sort of God-idea is based on our pervasive ignorance of the true nature of things, especially life and death. We crave for life, and in so craving, we fear death. So we seek some sort of self-preservation. One of the key ideas invented by man for self-preservation is that of an abiding soul: since our bodies are impermanent, surely, we think, there must be some that survives and lives on forever, that is, the immortal soul. There are still various uncertainties in life, the weather, our personal fortunes, the safety and survival of our tribe or community, our health and so on: we need self-protection. The God-idea serves to answer this need for personal security.

Another universal idea underlying the God-idea is that of *power*. The God-idea empowers the believer, so that whoever constructs such an idea, or defines God's being, controls great power and is able to command others. Such people believe that this makes an orderly society possible and allows good to thrive in the world. But more often than not, we see throughout history, more wars, destruction, violence and exploitation have been done in the name of God than otherwise. The whole idea of western colonialism was based on the view that it was a white God who gave the white man the right and duty to convert the heathen world to God, whether the natives liked it or not. Such a triumphalist and exploitative notion still exists in religious evangelism today.²

1.2 GODLINESS IS WITHIN US. The persistent quest for a God-idea is a symptom of profound ignorance and pervasive craving amongst humans. Our ignorance is rooted in merely relying on our physical senses so that we live in a virtual world of what we sense. We are persistently looking for answers outside of ourselves. Since we do not really understand how our minds work, we identify our existence, or find meaning in life by collecting what our senses present us with.

Buddhist training begins with the understanding that we have a body, that is, our five physical senses, which, if properly trained will bring us personal satisfaction and peace. Humans have the capacity for language and communication, that is, speech, which if properly used can sustain a functional society, a healthy community, one that is conducive for mental development.

An ideal society, especially a spiritual community, is, first and foremost, characterized by its members' mutually and unconditionally accepting one another: this is lovingkindness. Instead of projecting such an all-embracing love to a God-idea, it is fully cultivated within our hearts and shone outwards to include all beings. As Dharma-spirited persons, we are moved by the pain and lack in others, and our

¹ R G Swinburne, “God” in Ted Honderich (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford Univ Press, 1995: 342 f.

² See “God is love—and more,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:28-30 (4.3).

compassion naturally works to remove such sufferings. The notion of a compassionate God is more likely to be an expression of its proponents' need of emotional support. Gladness is our spontaneous rejoicing in the happiness of others, just as a truly compassionate God would rejoice in our goodness, only this is more directly felt by us than mere piety.

Finally, we must also cultivate equanimity, the capacity for accepting people and things just as they are, even when they do not respond to our best efforts, or indeed even backslide. No matter how much effort we put in to save and succour others, there will always be those we are unable to reach or touch. With a mirror-like mind, we wholeheartedly accept the situation for the moment. For this too will pass.

The point is therefore clear. The Buddha teaches us not to worship God nor anyone nor anything.³ To worship is often to merely relegate ourselves to a helpless and dependent status. Instead, we have the capacity to cultivate the godly [Godly] qualities of lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity.⁴ Godliness is not a person, but qualities we can cultivate; it is not something to be worshipped for the sake of self-assurance, but it our own inclusive being of accepting others as we would ourselves, and working together joyfully, appreciatively, even equanimously, in spiritual growth.⁵

1.3 A PRE-BUDDHIST SYSTEM BUDDHICIZED?

1.3.1 Stories of the past. That the divine abodes are an ancient practice is evident from, for example, **the Makhā,deva Sutta** (M 83), which relates how an ancient king of Mithila, Makhā,deva (a direct descendent of Mahā Sammata), cultivates the divine abodes and is reborn in the brahma world.⁶ However, such a pre-Buddhist cultivation of the abodes can only bring one rebirth in the brahma-world, but not spiritual liberation.

Another well known canonical account of an ancient cultivation of the divine abodes is found in **the Mahā Govinda Sutta** (D 19). Mahā Govinda (that is, Joti,pāla), the royal purohit to rajah Disampati, it is said, goes into a four-month retreat, cultivating the four divine abodes, so that Brahmā Sanañ,kumārā himself appears to him. Jotipāla was the Buddha in that life.⁷ In the same Sutta, too, the Buddha is recorded as declaring to the heavenly minstrel (*gandhabba*), Pañca,sikha, that such a holy life (based on the four divine abodes in themselves), does not led to nirvana, but only rebirth in the brahma world.⁸

However, as scholars have observed, although the suttas say that the divine abodes were “pre-Buddhist,” they apparently occur only in the stories of the ancient past, that is, they occur many (probably countless) lives ago. There is no mention of the divine abodes (as we know them) in the pre-Buddhist brahminical texts, or that any such mentions in post-Buddhist works are probably borrowed from the Buddhists.⁹

Buddhaghosa, in fact, says that “at that time” (that is, up to the Buddha's time), the overcoming of the mental hindrances and the divine abodes were unknown to the non-Buddhists (SA 3:171).¹⁰ The suttas however make no such statement.¹¹ We could surmise then that the divine abodes are not unique to the Buddha's teaching (despite not being mentioned in the non-Buddhist texts of the time). Even then, it is the way that the Buddha teaches them that makes them unique. This is what we now will turn to.

³ See **Itṭha S** (A 5.43/3:47-49) = SD 47.2: also SD 2.1 (3) & SD 12.4 (2); also **Asi,bandhaka,putta S** (S 42.6/-4:311-314) = SD 39.9.

⁴ See eg **Te,vijja S** (D 13.31-35/1:247 f & 76-81/1:250-251) = SD 1.8.

⁵ See “The temple of God in within us,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:41 f (4.9).

⁶ M 83/2:75-83 = SD 60.8.

⁷ D 19/2:220-252 = SD 63.4. Comys add that in this Sutta, the holy life (*brahma,cariya*) is said to be the 4 illimitables (*appamañña*), ie, the divine abodes (DA 1:178; MA 2:42; ItA 1:109).

⁸ D 19.61/2:252 = SD 63.4; ItA 1:108.

⁹ Eg Yoga Śūtras of Patañjali (2nd cent BCE) and the 2nd-cen Jain writer Umāsvāti: see Winternitz 1936:53; Werner 1994:27; Miller 1996:9.

¹⁰ *Tiṭṭhiyānañ hi samaye pañca,nīvaraṇa-p,pahānaṃ vā mettādi,brahma,vihāra,bhāvanā vā n'atthi* (SA 3:171). However, his statement on the five hindrances might be far-fetched, as we do have sutta accounts, such as **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26), where the deep meditative states are said to arise as a result of the overcoming of the hindrances (M 26.15-16/1:163-167).

¹¹ See Aronson 1984:20-24.

1.3.2 Heaven is within. The Te,vijja Sutta (D 13) is an important record of why the Buddha rejects the brahmins' claim that they were the only way to God and to heaven. Firstly, charges the Buddha, none of these brahmins (or anyone else) has really seen *seen or met* God. The best we have are pious stories which cannot be verified. Secondly, while the brahmins claim to be God's spokesmen here, "born from God's mouth,"¹² but they are wealthy unlike God, and they have sex and enjoy sensual pleasures, while God does not. In other words, they do not at all reflect the qualities they claim that God has.¹³

While the Buddha unequivocally rejects the hypocrisy and high-handedness of the brahmins, he goes on to teach that **true godliness** is *within* everyone of us. The Buddha has liberated God, as it were: he is no more imprisoned in the heavens of the brahmins or the theologians, but freely lives in the hearts of all beings. The Buddha brings God right down to earth by declaring that godliness [Godliness] can be cultivated in our own hearts. Instead of some *belief* in an external deity, and preachers and priests making empty promises of heaven (which they themselves have neither seen nor reached), the Buddha teaches us to cultivate and feel these godly qualities of lovingkindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), gladness (*muḍitā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), so that we personally experience godliness and heaven right here and now.

Heaven is not an after-death place where only the chosen or faithful might go according to the fiat or whim of some priest or preacher. It is right here where we are, when our hearts are consistently filled with lovingkindness, that we empower ourselves and those around us to be truly happy. To show lovingkindness is to accept others as they are, like allowing good seeds to grow, giving them all the wholesome conditions so that they will blossom into shady and fruitful trees.

1.3.3 Heaven is liberating. The Mettā Sahagata Sutta (S 46.54), called Halidda,vasana Sutta by Buddhaghosa (Vism 4.49) gives us valuable information on the vital difference between the pre-Buddhist practice of the divine abodes, as practised, for example, by the wanderers, and the their cultivation as taught by the Buddha. When the wanderers claim that the Buddha is teaching the same meditation as theirs, the Buddha explains to the monks that the pre-Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) practice does not lead to "liberation of mind" [8.3].

The Buddha then details how the mind is liberated by each of the four divine abodes, that is, through the seven awakening factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*) of mindfulness, dharma-investigation, effort, zest, tranquility, concentration and equanimity.¹⁴ This is a more elaborate model for explaining the attainment of dhyana or full mental absorption.¹⁵

Another important document in this connection is **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26), which recounts the Bodhisattva's meditation tutelage under the two teachers:¹⁶ Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāma,putta (son of Rāma).¹⁷ Under Ālāra, the Bodhisattva learns to meditate up to the base of nothingness (*ākīñcaññ'āyatana*), while from Uddaka, Rāma's son, he learns to attain to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*n'eva,saññā,nā,saññāyatana*).¹⁸

However, these two meditations, sophisticated as they might be, are pre-Buddhist methods steeped in the soul-view, the *ātman* of the Upanishads. As such, the Bodhisattva does not attain the final break-

¹² Rgveda 10.90.12 (Puruṣa,śūkta); D 27.3 f/3:81 = M 93.5/2:148.

¹³ D 13/1:235-252 = SD 1.8.

¹⁴ Viz *sati sambojjhaṅga*, *dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga*, *viriya sambojjhaṅga*, *pīti sambojjhaṅga*, *passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*, *samādhi sambojjhaṅga*, and *upekkhā sambojjhaṅga* (S 46.54.12-15/5:118-121) = SD 10.11. See also **(Bojjhaṅga) Sila S** (S 46.3/5:67-70) & SD 10.15 esp (4).

¹⁵ See **Dhyana** = SD 8.4 (5).

¹⁶ See esp **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26.15-18/1:163-167) = SD 1.11 (details of the 2 teachers). Other texts recording the Buddha's quest for dhyana are found in: **Mahā Siha,nāda S** (M 12.44-61/1:77-82) = SD 1.13 (details of self-mortification); **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.20-31-44/1:242-249) = SD 1.12 (self-mortification); **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4/1:16-24) = SD 44.2 (overcoming fear in solitary practice).

¹⁷ Rāma (father of Uddaka Rāma,putta), is one of the 8 wise brahmin augurs who, on the 5th day of the Bodhisattva's birth, is invited by Suddhodana to foretell Bodhisattva's future, viz, Rāma, Dhaja, Lakkhaṇa, Manfī, Koṇḍañña (youngest of these eight, but the eldest of the 5 monks), Bhoja, Suyāma, and Sudatta (J 1:55 f).

¹⁸ See **The Buddha discovered dhyana** = SD 33/1b (2.2 & 3).

through into nirvana, that is, until he totally abandons the soul-view, the fetter that holds humans back to this world and cyclic life. The divine abodes, as taught and practised by Buddhists, are liberating because they break down the barriers between I and though, self and other. There is only boundless and unconditional love, compassion, joy and peace.¹⁹

2 The divine abodes as a set

2.1 DEFINITIONS OF THE DIVINE ABODES.

2.1.1 Divine qualities internalized. The four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*)²⁰ are a set of very ancient meditations going back even before the Buddha's time, but which the Buddha successfully adopted and adapted as a skillful means or a bridge for the theistic brahmins and others. The Buddha's method is that of internalizing the godly qualities of Brahmā, so that it becomes effectively a non-theistic personal experience.

As a Buddhist practice, the divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity—are the most popular of the “calmness” (*samatha*) practice, that is, a meditation for inducing as profound mental stillness, which if properly cultivated can lead on to dhyana.²¹ From **the Dhamma, saṅgaṇī** and its commentary, **the Attha, sālinī**, we can deduce that, on the worldly level (*lokiya*), each of the four abodes can be present in any of our activities.²²

The divine abodes are said to be “perfect, divine” (*brahma*) because of they are the best of emotions and because of their faultless nature. As positive emotions, they are the best ways to relate to others. Just as the High Gods (*brahmā*) are fearless, even so these emotions infuse such godliness in us. There are called “immeasurable” (*appamāṇā* or *appamaññā*) because they can reach out to immeasurable beings.²³

2.1.2 Primacy of lovingkindness. Of the four abodes, the first, the cultivation of lovingkindness (*mettā, bhāvanā*), is an especially essential practice. It is the basis for any self-perception and for any wholesome dealing with others, as the elders Nandiya and Kimbila (addressing the Buddha) declare in **the Cūḷa Gosīṅga Sutta** (M 31): “This is how, bhante, we are living in concord, with mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, seeing each other with kindly eyes.”²⁴

Lovingkindness (*mettā*), or unconditional love or all-inclusive acceptance, is the foundation for these divine qualities in the sense that we must start with cultivating lovingkindness successfully before proceeding on to the other levels of divine abodes. Why is lovingkindness alone spoken of so distinctly? Because, says Buddhaghosa, it is the foundation of all the four divine abodes; and also on account of its fulfilling all of the wholesome states beginning with giving.²⁵

Lovingkindness, in other words, is always present in each of the other three abodes. It is the presence of lovingkindness in compassion, in gladness, and in equanimity, that makes each of them “divine” or “perfect” (*brahma*), that is, unconditional and all inclusive.

2.1.3 Similarity and difference

2.1.3.1 SIMILARITY OF THE DIVINE ABODES. The elder Upatissa, in his **Vimutti, magga** (on which Buddhaghosa based his own **Visuddhi, magga**), remarks, “[I]t should be understood that the four immea-

¹⁹ See **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59/3:66-68 = V 1:13 f) & SD 1.2 (1.2).

²⁰ See eg **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223 f).

²¹ See **Dhyana** = SD 8.4.

²² Dhs 1; Dhs:R §250 nn; DhsA 128-130, 132 f. For Buddhaghosa's comy, see DhsA 192-197.

²³ DhsA 192-197; Vism 263-270. For a description of the immeasurable or divine abodes with similes, see **Tevijja S** (D 13.76-79/1:251) = SD 1.8. On the divine abodes with the elements, see **Vuṭṭha Vass'āvāsa S** (A 9.11.4/4:375 f) = SD 28.21. On how the divine abodes limit karma, see **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.206/5:299) = SD 2.10.

²⁴ *Evam kho mayaṃ, bhante, samaggā sammodamānā avivadamānā khīr'odakī, bhūtā aññaṃ aññaṃ piya, cakkhūhi sampassantā viharāmā ti* (M 31.6+7/1:206 f) = SD 44.11. The same remark is made by rajah Pasenadi in **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89.11/2:120 f) = SD 64.10. Also at **Bahu, vedanīya S** (M 59.5/1:398), **Upakkilesa S** (M 128.11+12/3:156×4), **Pañcak'aṅga S** (S 4.20/4:229), **Parisa Vg** (A 2.5.2/1:70), **Parisā S** (A 393.3+4+5/1:243×3), **Bhaṅga S** (A 3.122/1:275+276), **Samaya S** (A 5.54.11/3:67), **Anāgata Bhaya S 2** (A 5.78.5/3:104); **Nm** 11:132; V 1:351×4.

²⁵ Vism 9.124/325. On the primacy of lovingkindness, see further **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7) = SD 30.7 (1.2.1.2).

surables are of one nature though their signs are different. Thus owing to the suppression of tribulation, owing to the object which comprises beings, owing to the wish to benefit, they fulfill one characteristic.”²⁶ In simple terms, the four divine abodes share one common characteristics in that they are directed to all beings with the desire for their benefit.

This universal pervasion of goodwill is clearly evident in the stock passages that define the divine abodes, thus:

(1) With a heart of **lovingkindness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, exalted, boundless, *without hate, without ill will*.

(2) Then with a heart of **compassion** he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with compassion that is vast, exalted, boundless, *without hate, without ill will*.

(3) Then with a heart of **gladness** he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with gladness that is vast, exalted, boundless, *without hate, without ill will*.

(4) Then with a heart of **equanimity**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with equanimity that is vast, exalted, boundless, *without hate, without ill will*.
(**Tevijja Sutta**, D 13.76-79/1:250 f) = SD 1.8²⁷

2.1.3.2 “TO EVERYONE AS WELL TO HIMSELF.” We need to look closely at all the four stock passages above, which are conflated for easier reading of the underscored phrase:

With a heart of (**lovingkindness**, | **compassion**, | **gladness**, | **equanimity**,) he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will.

The underscored phrase, “**to everyone as well as to himself**” (*sabb’attatāya*) is sometimes missed by some translators. The phrase *sabb’attatāya* is resolved as *sabba* (“all”) and *attā* (“self”). It makes good sense that we must not leave ourselves out of the cultivation. For, we cannot pervade the universe (meaning both the world of beings and our own awareness of that world) if we do not have that quality ourselves.²⁸ [3.3.1.3]

²⁶ (Tr from Chin) N R M Ehara, Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera, Kandy, 1961; Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, 1977:194.

²⁷ *So mettā, saḥagatena cetasā ekam disam pharivā viharati. Tathā dutiyam. Tathā tatiyam. Tathā catuttham. Iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabb’attatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokam mettā, saḥagatena cetasā vipulena maha-g, gatena appamāṇena averena avyāpajjena pharivā viharati.* **D** 13.76-79/1:251×4, **17.2.4/2**:186, **19.46/2**:242, **59/2**:250, 25.-17/3:50×2, 26.28/3:78×2, **33.1.11(6)/3**:224×2; **M** 7.13/1:38×2, **40.9/1**:283×2, **43.31/1**:297×2, **50.14-15/1**:335×4, **52.-8/1**:351×2, **55.6-11/1**:369, **55.6/1**:370, **83.5-10/2**:76×2, 17-19/2:77×2, 78×2, 82×2, **97.32-35/2**:195×2, **99.24-27/2**:207, 208, **127.7/3**:146×2; **S** **41.7/4**:296×2, **42.8.17/4**:322×2, **42.13.4.1/4**:351, **42.13/4**:352×2, 354, 355×2, 356 f, **46.54/5**:115, 16×4, 117-121; **A** **3.63.6/1**:183×2, **3.65.15/1**:192×2, **3.66.13/1**:196, **4.125/2**:129×2, **4.126/2**:129+130, **4.190.4/2**:184, **5.192.3/3**:225×2, **9.18.10/4**:390, **10.208/5**:299+300, **11.17/5**:344+345; **Nc:Be** 248, 304; **Pm** **5.20/-2**:39; **Vbh** (ch on *Appamañña*) 272×4, 273×2, 274×2, 275×2, 276×2, 282×4; **Vism** **9.44/308** (foll by comy). See SD 33.9 (3.5) for details of refs.

²⁸ On how this practice can lead to spiritual liberation, see **Brahma, vihāra** S (A 10.208/5:299) = SD 2.10.

2.1.3.3 “VAST,...EXALTED,...BOUNDLESS.” Each of the sutta definitions of the four divine abodes [2.1], describes itself as being “vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will.” We will now briefly examine these key terms (underlined). More fully, the phrase reads “**a mind...vast, exalted, boundless, free from hate, free from ill will**” (*cetasā vipulena maha-g, gatena appamāṇena averena avyāpajjhena*).

This phrase describes a meditator who is *fully focussed*. The word “**vast**” or “bountiful” (*vipula*) means that he has attained samadhi or full concentration, and as such is “**exalted**” or “great” (*maha-g, -gata*), that is, free (least temporarily) of all the mental hindrances,²⁹ and thereby attained to dhyana [7.4].

Only such a mind can truly be “**boundless**” or “measureless” (*appamāṇa*) because, at least momentarily, going beyond conceit, the meditator *does not measure anyone but sees all beings as they really are*, without regarding anyone as a stranger or an enemy, or harbouring any negative thought, so that he is “**free from hate, free from ill will**” (*averena avyāpajjhena*).

2.1.3.4 WITHOUT HATE, WITHOUT ILL WILL.” Note that each of the four passages mention the same phrase, “without hate, without ill will,” showing the presence of lovingkindness. Then, after each definition, there follows this refrain:

Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāsetṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation [meditation], Vāsetṭha, by this liberation of the mind [9.3] through lovingkindness, any karma done in a limited way [9.4] neither remains nor persists there.

This, Vāsetṭha, is the way to fellowship with Brahmā [God].

The refrain, using the parable of the conch-blower, gives us a good idea on how our lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity to radiate should pervade the world beyond ourselves. Another common imagery used by meditation teachers is that of a radiant white lotus shining in the centre of our heart, with its light brightening up both our body and mind, as well as our surrounding and beyond. We will look closer at these key-words in the refrain below [3, 8].

2.1.3.5 DIFFERENCE OF THE DIVINE ABODES. How different are each of the four divine abodes? Their difference lies only in how each abode is directed toward a specific kind of person or situation. Loving-kindness is directed to all beings alike, whatever their separate conditions might be. All beings are accepted just as they are. Compassion is a kind of “top-down” regard for other beings, when they facing pains, misfortunes or difficulties. Gladness is a “upward-regarding” rejoicing, an appreciative joy, in the goodness and happiness of others, especially when they are in a better situation than we are. And finally, equanimity is an on-looking reflection on beings as they really are, faring according to their karma.

On a higher level of understanding, this unconditional regard for self and others are a remedy, at least while we are dwelling in the abode, say, being suffused with lovingkindness, towards the measuring of others. If we lack lovingkindness, especially when we are spurred on by greed, we tend to measure ourselves against in terms of *having* (wealth, possessions, influence) and *being* (beauty, status, power). The purpose of the divine abodes, in a way, is to close such false gaps and dichotomy of self and other, so that we regard others as we would accept ourselves.³⁰

2.2 A MOMENT OF PRACTICE

2.2.1 Finger-snap and cow’s udder. A set of three discourses known as **the Cūḷ’accharā Sutta** (A 1.6.3-5) presents the Buddha as declaring that if even for just the moment of a finger-snap,³¹ a monk (that is, a meditator) associates with (*āsevatī*), cultivates (*bhāvetī*), or mentally attends to (*manasikaroti*) a thought of lovingkindness, he is called a monk. His meditation is not in vain. He acts in accordance with

²⁹ See *Nīvaraṇa* = SD 32.1.

³⁰ Conceit (*māna*) is a tricky latent tendency (*anusaya*) that can only be fully uprooted at the level of arhatood. See *Anusaya* = SD 31.3 (4).

³¹ “Even for just the moment of a finger-snap,” *accharā, sañghāta, mattam*. Also in **Velāma S** (A 9.20/4:395 f) = SD 16.6 (§5b).

the Teacher's teaching. He follows his advice. He does not eat the country's alms in vain.³² How much more so if he were to often cultivate it!³³

The Okkha Sutta (S 20.4) similarly says that even if we were to give a hundred pots of food, morning, noon and evening, even better is to cultivate a mind of lovingkindness, in the morning, at noon, or in the evening, for just the moment it takes “to pull the udder-teat.” this is the way we should cultivate the liberation of mind by lovingkindness, often cultivate it, make a habit of it, make it our basic practice, keep it constant, build it up, fully undertake it.³⁴

2.2.2 A spiritual friend. Some people have tried doing lovingkindness meditation by themselves without any teacher. They have even a deep calm, even bliss. But without some level of wisdom, we might fear these wonderful feelings, or simply do not know the value of such states. This is where a meditation teacher as a spiritual friend helps to clarify and strengthen our faith and effort in the practice.

Although we can, in theory, learn meditation from a book (like this own), sooner or later, we should find a proper teacher, someone experienced and compassionate, to guide and inspire us. Such a teacher will ensure that we are doing the meditation rightly and effectively. After all, lovingkindness is about wholesome networking with unconditional love. The teacher is like an “old flame” with which we light our own candle, and then we shine on our own, lighting up the lives of others as we go along.³⁵

2.2.3 Sleep happily. The Buddha reminds us that cultivating lovingkindness even for a moment is to practise his teaching. For, all good things start with a single thought. Even if we have no time to sit in meditation, there is one moment in our life we should never neglect in keeping it positive. That is the moment just before falling asleep.

As we comfortably lie down to end the day, we should clear our mind up of the past and the outside: renounce the world for the night. Tell ourselves all those happy thoughts we like or need: “May I be well, may I be happy, may I be at peace with myself.” and similarly to those who are important to us. Fall asleep happily, and wake up happily: this will change our lives for good.

2.3 SOURCES ON THE DIVINE ABODES. For the basic text, see **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Khp 9 = Sn 1.8).³⁶ For more advanced methods, see **Mettā Sahagata Sutta** (S 46.54).³⁷ For more descriptions or information on the divine abodes, see the following suttas and their translation notes:

Te, vijja Sutta	the divine abodes with similes	D 13.76-79/1:251 = SD 1.8
Vuṭṭha Vass'āvāsa Sutta	the divine abodes with the elements	A 9.11.4/4:375 f = SD 28.21
Brahma, vihāra Sutta	how the divine abodes limit karma	A 10.206/5:299 = SD 2.10
Gārava Sutta	how respect relates to divine abodes	S 6.2 @ SD 12.3 (1.2.3)

The Tevijja Sutta (D 13) is the only sutta of the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya (Sīla-k, khandha Vagga), where the discourse does *not* lead up to arhathood. It closes with the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*).³⁸

3 Lovingkindness

3.1 WORDINGS AND STRATEGY. The usual wordings used in most cultivations of lovingkindness³⁹ (*mettā, bhāvanā*) are based on this pericope found in three suttas of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, thus:

³² Comy say that there are 4 ways in which a monks use his alms: (1) an immoral monk uses them (undeservedly) like a thief; (2) a virtuous ordinary person who does not reflect on them is like a debtor; (3) a trainee (*sekhā*, ie one of the 7 saints, short of the arhat-become) uses them as an inheritance; (4) an arhat uses them as a proper owner.

³³ A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f = SD 2.13

³⁴ S 20.4/2:264 = SD 2.14.

³⁵ See **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness** = SD 8.1.

³⁶ Khp 9/8 f = Sn1.8/143-152/25 f = SD 38.3.

³⁷ Also known as Halidda, vasana S (S 46.54/5:115-121) = SD 10.11.

³⁸ On Gombrich's remarks here, and Bodhi's response, see 1997:294 & SD 1.8(1).

³⁹ On the meaning and scope of *mettā*, see **Spiritual friendship** = SD 34.1 (2.5)

He is one with a mind free of ill will, a mind without any evil thought, thinking,⁴⁰
 May these beings be free from hate; *ime sattā averā hontu*
 may they be free from suffering;⁴¹ *avyāpajjā (hontu),*
 may they be free from trouble;⁴² *anīghā (hontu)*
 may they continue to be happy!” *sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu*
 (A 10.176, 10.200, 10.207)⁴³

These sentences can be subverbally (mentally) repeated as such, or a couple of them could be repeated in a proper way so as to *feel* the lovingkindness [7.3]. We could also use other related wordings as needed, for example, “May I be well. May I be happy. May I be safe. I accept myself just as I am. I forgive myself completely. The door of my heart is open to me.”

The full sequence for the cultivation of lovingkindness, then, is as follows:

- (1) To self: “May I be free from anger.
 May I be free from hate.
 May I be from suffering.
 May I be free from trouble [difficulties].
 May be continue to be happy.”
- (2) To someone dear.
- (3) To someone neutral.
- (4) To someone hostile or negative [4.2].
- [5] To all beings.

The stage of directing lovingkindness “to all beings” can be further expanded *locationally* or *geographically*:

- (5) To everyone in the room or the vicinity.
- (6) To everyone in the whole house or building.
- (7) To everyone in the neighbourhood.
- (8) To everyone in the whole country.
- (9) To everyone in the countries or region nearby.
- (10) To everyone throughout the world.
- (11) To all beings throughout the universe (breaking the barriers) [8.3].

It is vital that we do not merely recite the words, as they could become rote without feeling. The proper way is to mindfully verbalize or subverbalize⁴⁴ the words a couple of times. Then be mentally silent and feel it in our body and mind accordingly, or radiate the feeling to the intended subjects. [3.3.3]

When radiating lovingkindness over a larger area, it might help to visualize a radiant white lotus (or a favourite flower, white or a light colour is best) in the centre of our hearts, radiating its light, brightening our body and mind, and outwards brightening up the whole room and everyone in it. Then we could vis-

⁴⁰ *Avyāpanna, citto hoti appaduṭṭha, mana, saṅkappo.*

⁴¹ “Be free from suffering,” *avyāpajjhā* (also *avyāpajja*; v1 *avyābajjha*): (1) not to be injured or harmed; harmless or non-injuring; free from suffering (*niddukkha*, ItA ad It 16,5*): M 1:90,1; A 3:285,17 = 5:329,25, 5:210,14; J 6:-287,7*; M 2:115,22-23; see CPD ¹a-vyāpajja; (2) freedom from suffering: U 10,20* = V 1:3,28*; J 6:286,20*; S 4:371,29; A 4:246,8; Dhs 33, 36, 313, 1056; Vbh 169,29.

⁴² “Be free from evil,” *anīgha*, resolved as *an + īgha*, instead of *a + nigha* (affliction, trouble, woe). The ideas connoted by *a-nigha* overlap with the preceding “free from hate, free from suffering”.

⁴³ The whole pericope: *avyāpanna, citto hoti appaduṭṭha, mana, saṅkappo: ime sattā averā hontu avyāpajjā, anīghā sukkhī attānaṃ pariharantū ti*. Cunda Kammāra,putta S (A 10.176.10/5:267): this is Be reading; Ce Ee Se has only: *ime sattā averā avyāpajjā, anīghā sukkhī attānaṃ pariharantū ti*; **Niraya Sagga S 1** (A 10.200/5:285), **Saṅcetanika S 1** (A 10.207/5:296) = A 10.206. Cf A 2:3, 228, 253.

⁴⁴ To “verbalize” here means to say it out just loud enough for us to hear it ourselves, while to “subverbalize” is to say it mentally.

ualize our lovingkindness as the bright light of the sun shining and the gentle light of the full moon shining all over the world. [3.3.1.2]

3.2 THE SUBJECTS OF LOVINGKINDNESS

3.2.1 Ourselves. There are two basic subjects or focusses in the cultivation of the divine abodes: self and others. The term “others” comprise those dear to us, the neutral, and the hostile. The dead should never be the subject of our cultivation of the abodes.⁴⁵

In the cultivation of lovingkindness, it is usually easy to begin with ourselves. For those who find it difficult to do this, self-directed cultivation should be done at the very last stage, just before closing the practice, as stated in this well known pericope:

With a heart of **lovingkindness**, he dwells suffusing one quarter, the second, the third, the fourth. Thus above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, he dwells suffusing the whole world with lovingkindness that is vast, exalted, boundless, without hate, without ill will. (D 13.76/1:250) = SD 1.8

When there is a healthier level of self-acceptance, then we can gently follow the traditional sequence of subjects, but still closing with ourselves as the last subject. This is to keep the lovingkindness, as it were, alive all the time within us, using it whenever we need to.⁴⁶

3.2.2 The others. Buddhaghosa instructs further instructs us not to use one of the opposite sex as the subject of our abode cultivation. However, sexuality is such a complicated affair, it is safer to restate this advice: *we should avoid directing our lovingkindness too early in our practice.*

Such subjects (including parents and close relatives) are best left to one of the later stages, when our **lovingkindness** is strong enough. If however we also have difficulties in cultivating lovingkindness towards any humans, then we could try directing it to other beings, such as our pets or animals that we know and love.⁴⁷

In an extreme situation (where we might not even like animals), then we could use even an inanimate object, such as plants, as the subject (visualize ourselves working lovingly with them). If all these do no work, then it would be wise to go back to or begin with a more suitable meditation, especially the breath meditation).⁴⁸

3.2.3 The negative subject. As beginners, we often find it difficult, even disastrous, to direct lovingkindness to someone we do not like, especially someone who has hurt or harmed us in some way. If the memory is still painful, it is best to avoid such a subject, and to focus on building up the lovingkindness with wholesome subjects until we are really positive.

It is important to understand here that we are not “wanting” the negative person to prosper in any way, but rather to find closure to the pain. An open wound smarts, and is easily infected and festers. If there is no wound in our hand, we might safely carry even poison in it (Dh 124). Focus of forgiving ourselves, if it helps: “I’m OK. I accept myself just as I am.” [3.4]

The next important to note is that the negative *memory* of an *event*, not a person. The person has now changed, or is probably dead, by now. Even if he seems to prosper, like everyone else, he has his own problems, even now. It is a dead event, a memory coffin, that we are carrying around. We must leave it buried in the past. If not, it would prevent us from truly living and enjoying the present. Now is the time to emerge from the tight cocoon of painful old memories to fly freely in the open air of lovingkindness.

⁴⁵ If we wish to dedicate merits to a deceased person (ie if his consciousness still lingers around or is a preta), then it should be done when we have finished our meditation. Although this is a form of lovingkindness, it must not be a part of the practice proper, as an idea of the dead could lead to speculations, sadness, fear, or some other negative emotions. On dedicating merit to the dead (ie the pretas), see (**Saddha**) **Jāpussoṇi S** (A 10.77/5:269-273) = SD 1.6a & **Tirokuḍḍa S** (Khp 7/6 = Pv 1.5/4 f) = SD 2.7.

⁴⁶ For other details, see Vism 9.77-83/314 f.

⁴⁷ See “Animals go to heaven,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:225-227 (16.1).

⁴⁸ On practical aspects of the breath meditation, see **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118) @ SD 7.13 (4).

If our directing lovingkindness to the negative person is still difficult, we should return to an earlier stage of lovingkindness, or recall some good qualities he has, or recall our own happiness and resilience; otherwise, switch to the breath meditation for some stillness and then return to cultivate the lovingkindness.⁴⁹

3.2.4 Negative situations. Often enough, some unhappy incidents or perceptions might pop up in our meditation. Or, we could be troubled by a nagging discomfort or pain. Or, by someone shuffling or snoring. We should at once, or at the right time, direct our lovingkindness to these situations and perceptions. Or, we could simply *smile* in our hearts at them. This is a mental strategy in allowing ourselves to let go of those distractions.

Another helpful strategy of overcoming distractions from other people (such as someone making a disturbing noise, or whose handphone suddenly went off) is to put ourselves in their place. We know that we have created this distraction unintentionally, or we should not be doing this, but somehow it happened. So we fully forgive ourselves; we fully forgive them, and with them all well. Or, we could simply smile at our faculties, congratulating them at how clearly sensitive they are! Once our lovingkindness is well grounded, we would not be troubled by such distractions at all.

3.3 LOVINGKINDNESS AS ENGAGEMENT

3.3.1 Directions of practice

3.3.1.1 VERTICAL ENGAGEMENT. The four divine abodes must be cultivated in two *directions*, as it were, that is, vertically and horizontally. Vertically, each abode has to be cultivated in ourselves, towards ourselves. Initially, we can do this in two ways: by **subverbalizing** and by **visualizing**. The most common way to begin cultivating lovingkindness is to verbalize or subverbalize the lovingkindness, as given above [3.1]. *Verbalizing* (the words can be heard) should only be done at the beginning or when we feel distracted. Once we feel calm enough, we should go on to *subverbalize* the lovingkindness.

Subverbalizing of lovingkindness must be done mindfully a couple of times, followed by a profoundly silent moment to *feel* it in our body and mind. After saying, “May I be happy,” a couple of times, we remain silent, and feel *happy* in body and mind, that is, our whole being. We can go on doing this for as long as we feel like it. And then go on to another sentence, and so on.

We should then go on to direct lovingkindness in this way for everyone: the dear person, the neutral person (or everyone in the room or nearby), and the hostile person (which is optional, if this is difficult) [3.2.3]. When we feel a good sense of thought-free peace or bliss, simply feel it and enjoy for as long as it takes. When we notice any hint of its subsiding or any distraction arising, we can either simply *smile* “in your heart” at the feeling, either the peace or the oncoming distraction. Otherwise, go back to the subverbalizing.

At any of these stages—whether directing lovingkindness to ourselves, or to any other individual—we should vary our method as necessary. If we find our subverbalizing is becoming sort of routine, or just before that happens, we should go on to visualize the lovingkindness.

Visualizing lovingkindness means we recall some really happy event or activity as if it were occurring right *now*. For example, we recall, as a child, enjoying ourselves on a swing, joyfully feeling the breeze, or, as a student, receiving a prize, or, more recently, winning a competition, or enjoying ourselves as a family or friends gathering. Or we could recall how we are attending to our favourite pet (still living), or carefully tending to our plants.

Visualizing *nature*, too, is very helpful for most people. We could visualize the gentle lapping of waves on a peaceful bright day at the beach, or sitting in a beautiful mountain valley, feeling its spaciousness extending right to the horizon, or a clear moonless night sky glittering with a billion stars. Visualize as if it is happening right here, right now.

It is important *not* to be lost in the words or details. They are simply a skill means to *feel* lovingkindness. Once we feel the peace or joy of the event or activity, then gently let go of the visualizing, and fully focus on the feeling itself.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ If anger persists, see *Āghāta Paṭivinaya S* (A 5.161/3:185 f) = SD 12.23 & Vism 9.14-39/298-306.

⁵⁰ Further on visualizing in lovingkindness, see **Love** = SD 38.4 (7.4.1).

3.3.1.2 HORIZONTAL RADIATION. Other than the first stage of lovingkindness, that is, directing it to our own selves, we can direct it to more than one subject or alternate them, if we like or are able to. Generally, when subverbalizing, it is easier to direct our lovingkindness to *one* subject at a time, or perhaps two. Beyond that, when sending lovingkindness to *a group of subjects*, it is easier to visualize them, that is, to first subverbalize the lovingkindness and then visualize the subjects. When we are better at our practice, then we might even be able to right away visualize the subjects with lovingkindness without even any subverbalizing, or with a minimum of it. [3.3.2]

The suttas next instruct us to extend our lovingkindness “**above, below, across, everywhere**” (*uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi*) [2.1.3.1]. This is the “horizontal” or directional radiating (*pharitvā*) of the lovingkindness (or the divine abode). This stage of lovingkindness practice begins, after “the dear person,” when we start directing our lovingkindness to everyone in the room or nearby. If we cannot visualize them, then we should simply “feel” their presence, have a sense of connection with them, or using their names (of we know them).

Again here, it is vital to, first, subverbalize or feel the lovingkindness, and then silently “send” it to the subjects. One effective way to extend our lovingkindness *spatially* (such as our neighbourhood), as we have noted, is visualize ourselves or our lovingkindness as a radiant white lotus in our hearts [3.1]. Or, we could visualize ourselves as the bright sun or radiant moon, shining our light upon others (especially when directing lovingkindness to the whole world).

While we are extending our lovingkindness spatially to the neighbourhood, the whole country, the surrounding countries, the whole world, and outer space (in due course), we should, if we are inclined to, also visualize certain significant individuals, such as family members, friends, neighbours, co-workers and people we know. Sometimes, even those we do not know, but are familiar face, might appear to us: we direct our lovingkindness to them all the same.

3.3.1.3 ENDING THE SESSION. On the cultivation of lovingkindness, we begin with ourselves and close the practice with ourselves, too [2.1.3.2]. It is naturally easy to begin directing lovingkindness to ourselves, as we generally like ourselves best.⁵¹ For those of us who, for some reason, dislike ourselves, then we need to focus on the practice closing, when we should be able to allow some level of self-acceptance when we have had some success with lovingkindness earlier on.⁵² [3.4]

If we have been visualizing the radiant white lotus [2.1.3.4], then we should close by visualizing all this radiance returning into the lotus in our hearts, keeping our minds and bodies radiant with lovingkindness. This light of lovingkindness is cleansing, purifying and healing our minds and bodies. Visualize our whole being radiant with lovingkindness.

This is especially helpful and healing when we are ill or having some hurt or pain somewhere on or in our bodies. Direct the lovingkindness to that area, visualize it healing itself. In fact, during moments of illness, when we have a lot of time to meditate, this is a good way of expediting our healing process. In the early stages of our health problem or illness, we might even slow down or altogether heal ourselves with such lovingkindness.

Generally, we should close our lovingkindness meditation with visualizing how the radiant white lotus is closing its petals, but still radiant, always radiant: *the lovingkindness is always there in our hearts when we need it*. Lovingkindness should not merely be a meditation, but it should pervade every moment of our lives in our every action.⁵³

3.4 Overcoming self-hate. Self-hate, low self-esteem and related perceptions may arise in us at some points in our lives. For some of us, however, such difficulties are bad enough to prevent us from actually cultivating lovingkindness to ourselves. The disadvantages of such a negative self-perception range from

⁵¹ See eg (Piyā) Mallikā S (S 3.8/1:75 = U 5.1/47) = SD 38.7.

⁵² See “What if we keep on making the same mistake?” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys 2: Healing Words*, 2011:158-160 (ch 56).

⁵³ See “Lovingkindness is simply healing,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:26 f (4.2) & “Your mind: use it or lose it,” in *Revisioning Buddhism*, 2011:35-37 (ch 11).

being self-destructive (even suicide)⁵⁴ to persistently hurting those we love or who love us. In other words, we are never happy on account of such a misperception.

First of all, we need to understand and accept all this as a *misperception*. We were not born with low self-esteem, self-hate or self-related problems. In the course of our lives, various people and situations *conditioned* us to feel we way we do. If we have enough presence of mind, we could examine these conditions, drag them out of the lurking places in the depths of our latent tendencies, expose them for what they are, and set them free with love.

Self-love is the immediate antidote to self-hate, and it begins with accepting ourselves just as we are, warts and all. If we do not accept ourselves, no one really will. We would then be a mere shell hardened by self-hate or self-pity, but hollow inside, waiting to be inflated further by a father-figure or false guru, until the bubble bursts.⁵⁵

One immediate wholesome step is, just before falling asleep, to simply say, “I’m really OK. I accept myself as I am.” Repeat this over and over until you fall asleep. Sleep happily. This is the beginning of self-acceptance.⁵⁶ Once you feel ready, go on to the full cultivation of lovingkindness.

When our lovingkindness is strong, we go on to let go of all the other thoughts to focus on the meditation sign, that is, the pure feeling itself—that is, as it were for all the four people: self, the dear one, the neutral person, and the hostile. We are on the way to breaking the barriers.

It is wise to remember that we should never begin this cultivation with someone we are physically attracted to, nor with a dead person [3.2.1]. This also applies to all the other three divine abodes.

3.5 LOVINGKINDNESS AS LIVING KINDNESS

3.5. Psychological tools

3.5.1 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS. Although the divine abodes are meditative practices and states, they are also useful as psychological tools for wholesome professionalism and for a healthy social relationship. The four divine abodes are the benchmark of a true professional. First, as professionals, we must not only be really good in our work, but we must also *love* it, and we must have a positive attitude towards our clients. We need to listen to them unconditionally, so that we understand their needs and can respond to them effectively.

Secondly, even when they are being difficult, we must *compassionately* examine their complaints or dissatisfaction, and respond positively. This is a positive understanding of the saying, “the customer is always right.” Thirdly, when our clients respond well or are satisfied, we too are *appreciatively joyful*. At the end of the day, despite our every effort, we satisfy some, dissatisfy some, but this is all part of the professional process. We look on *equanimously*, so that we can professionally access the situation as a whole and learn how to work better and be more happy with our work.⁵⁷

3.5.2 SOCIAL EMOTIONS. The divine abodes should not only be meditative practices, but they should also pervade every moment of our waking lives: “While standing, moving, sitting, or lying down, as long as one is free from drowsiness, one should keep to this mindfulness.”⁵⁸ We must cultivate the divine abodes in all our four postures, especially in relations to others.

In the presence of others, we need to accept them as they *are*, that is, we must carefully listen to what they are saying and how they are saying it, so that we can fully understand and appreciate them, even when they are negative. Indeed, our lovingkindness could heal such negativity, or at least mitigate the situation. We should not only listen with the ears, but as with our hearts.

⁵⁴ See “So you want to kill yourself?” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:17-19 (2.4).

⁵⁵ See “Emotional independence or emotional alienation,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys 2: Healing Words*, 2011: 153-156 (ch 54).

⁵⁶ See “Ill will and mental cultivation,” in Piya Tan, *Revisioning Buddhism*, 2011:40-42 (ch 13) & “What if we keep on making the same mistake?” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys 2: Healing Words*, 2011:158-160 (ch 56).

⁵⁷ See “Truly professional,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys 2: Healing words*, 2011:115-117 (ch 40).

⁵⁸ *Tiṭṭham caram nisinnō vā | sayāno vā yāvata’assa vigata,middho | etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya* (Sn 151 = Khp 9.8/8) = SD 38.3.

When the person we are with is negative, we need to crank up our lovingkindness to an even higher level, as it were. We need to show our compassion, that is, an unconditional acceptance of this difficult situation, even if we think the person does not deserve it. If we put ourselves in the other person's shoes, we would surely feel that we are at least well heard, so that the difficulty is already on the mend.

In our social relationships, we often see others doing *better* than us or having *more* than we have. Again, if we play a vicarious role, looking from the other side, we probably realize that the person has put in some effort, or that circumstances are such that he is enjoying those benefits. At least, we should accept the reality of the situation, if we are ever to rise above it. With gladness, we easily connect with others, feeling the joys of others.

Finally, we do not always, if ever, have full control of the situation, especially people, so that despite everything good that we have done, there will always be those who are not pleased with us, or that some things might remain the same, or even worsen. The wheel of life is always turning, we be able to keep it on a certain positive course, but there is only so much we can do. In fact, there is only so much we need to do. Having done what needs to be done, we have to let the spinning wheel move on. We can only look on with equanimity, as people move on according to their karma, and the world turns on the various attending conditions.

3.5.2 Buddhaghosa's parable. In the field of human conflict, those who die for us we call "fallen heroes." Those who defend us and the values that we cherish, and continue to do so are called true "living heroes." Buddhaghosa gives a famous parable of the four persons and the bandit.

Once, a monk was sitting with someone dear, a neutral person, and a hostile person. A bandit comes along and demands only one of them for a human sacrifice. If the monk says, "Take me," he lacks self-love; if he says, "Take this or that person," he lacks other-love. But, he says, "Let no one die," and he convinces the bandit not to kill. He has the greatest love of all.

In fact, it is harder to live for those we truly love and things we truly cherish. The Buddha does not die for us: he *lives* for us. No greater love has a man than this, that he lives for us, teaching us that we have the capacity and power to free ourselves from suffering.⁵⁹

4 Compassion

4.1 THE FIRST SUBJECT OF COMPASSION. In the cultivation of **compassion** (*karuṇā, bhāvanā*), the first subject should *someone unfortunate or having some difficulty*. (Note that this is different from a "hostile or negative person, who is placed last in this cultivation.) In this connection, **the Vibhaṅga** says:

And how does a monk dwell pervading one direct with his heart filled with compassion? Just as he would feel compassion on seeing a person who is miserable, of evil ways, so he pervade all beings with compassion.⁶⁰ (Vbh 273)

We must add here that, this starting point for compassion could also be a non-human, such as a hurt animal, or even nature that is badly violated by humans, and so on. In such cases, we visualize the miserable state of the subject, such as his limbs cut off, sitting in a shelter with a bowl before him, flies all over his face, or covered with maggot-infested wounds, moaning in pain, and so on.

If we are unable to find such a negative person, then we can cultivate compassion towards a current evil-doer, who, even though is happy now, would be like someone who is caught and punished for his crime, or face the painful karmic results of his own actions.⁶¹ In special situations, such as when we are upset with a loved one, we could reflect that even such a beloved have gone through significant difficult-

⁵⁹ Vism 9.40-41/307 & 9.108/321. This reflection is based on a section in the essay on **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.18. See also "Unconditional love," in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:22-25 (4.1).

⁶⁰ *Kathaṇ ca bhikkhu karuṇā, saḥagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharivā viharati? Seyyathā'pi nāma ekaṃ puggalam duggataṃ durūpetam disvā karuṇāyeyya, evam eva sabbe satte karuṇāya pharati.*

⁶¹ For other details, see Vism 9.77-83/314 f.

ies in the past, and would surely face some sort of difficulties in the future. Right now, we direct our compassion to them unconditionally.

4.2 THE REMAINING SUBJECTS FOR COMPASSION. Having aroused our compassion for someone suffering or unfortunate, we then go on to direct our compassion to *a dear person* (as noted above) [4.1], then *a neutral person* (such as those around us, towards whom we have no special feeling), and then *a hostile person*.

Although it is possible to put a hostile person in the first stage of the cultivation of compassion, this is not easy if our compassion is weak (unlike say the Buddha or the saints). However, this is a good place for such a person if he has fallen into great difficulties. We can easily direct compassion to such a subject, reflecting that it is not worth being hateful towards anyone, even a hostile person or some who has hurt us, as even such a person has to face misfortune and suffering in due course.

When the compassion is strong, we go on to let go of all the other thoughts to focus on the meditation sign, that is, the pure feeling itself—that is, as it were for all the four people: the dear one, the neutral person, the hostile, and ourselves. We are on the way to breaking the barriers.

5 Gladness

5.1 THE FIRST SUBJECT OF GLADNESS. Gladness or appreciative joy is like a mother's happiness at her child's happiness⁶² [3.5.2]. It should be here noted here that although we have some sort of mental list of those who are dear, neutral or hostile to us, these are at best current perceptions, subject to various conditions beyond our control. For example, even someone dear to us might face suffering or difficulties. This is when we would put this person first in the cultivation of compassion [4.2].

In the cultivation of gladness, it is easiest to start with a dear person who is for some reason very happy. It is this new situation that makes him the best subject for the first stage of gladness. We should not begin this cultivation with someone we are physically attracted to, nor with a dead person [3.2.1]. Even if a dear friend is not happy now, we could recall his past happiness and use that memory as the subject of this first stage, knowing that he would be happy again in the future.

5.2 THE REMAINING SUBJECTS FOR GLADNESS. After directing gladness to the dear person, we go on successively to a neutral person, and then a hostile person. Should resentment arise towards the hostile person, we should revert to the cultivation of lovingkindness [3.2]. When the gladness is strong, we go on to let go of all the other thoughts to focus on the meditation sign, that is, the pure feeling itself—that is, as it were for all the four people: the dear one, the neutral person, the hostile, and ourselves. We are on the way to breaking the barriers.

6 Equanimity

6.1 THE FIRST SUBJECT OF EQUANIMITY. This divine abode can only be properly and fully cultivated when we have attained the third dhyana. In other words, only when we have really felt zest and joy, can we really keep a mind that is stable and unattached to other thoughts and external circumstances.

Hence, we should first be thoroughly familiar with the first three dhyanas. Having developed each dhyana, we emerge, reflecting on its shortcomings in it, especially its grossness.⁶³ We should go on to reflect on the special benefit of equanimity because it is peaceful.

6.2 THE REMAINING SUBJECTS FOR EQUANIMITY. Then, we extend the equanimity successively to a person who is normally neutral, followed by a dear one, a close friend and finally ourselves.⁶⁴ Next we regard with equanimity both the neutral person and the dear person, breaking the barriers. After that, we

⁶² Vimm:ESK 191; Vism 9.108/321.

⁶³ On how to let go of the dhyana-factors successively, see (**Pañcāla,caṇḍa**) **Sambādha S** (A 9.42/4:449-451) & SD 33.2 (1.3). See also **Dhyana** = SD 8.4 (7) (What happens when we attain dhyana?)

⁶⁴ Note that for this stage, the sequence is as follows: a “neutral person” (*majjhata,puggala*), a “dear one” (*piya,-puggala*), a “close friend” (*soṇḍa,sahāya*), and lastly the self (*attā*) (Vism 9.89/317).

work on removing the barriers between the neutral person and the close friend. Then, the barriers between the neutral person and the self are removed.

Having removed the barriers separating all the four kinds of people, we go on to cultivate the meditation sign. The cultivating of the equanimity and the breaking of the barriers work to clear away the final vestiges of discriminating thought, so that our mind is calm and clear to see only the sign of equanimity. If we do this properly, we will attain the fourth dhyana.

7 Refining the divine abodes

7.1 NEAR AND FAR ENEMIES. Buddhaghosa, in his *Visuddhi, magga* discusses the finer aspects of the divine abodes in terms of “near enemies” (*āsanna, paccatthika*) and “far enemies” (*dūra, paccatthika*).⁶⁵ Here are the relevant excerpts from **the Visuddhi, magga**, also found in **the Attha, sālinī** (Dhamma, saṅgaṇī Commentary):

98. And here each one has two enemies, one near and one far.

The divine abode of **lovingkindness [319]** has **lust** (*rāga*) as its near enemy,⁶⁶ since both alike see good qualities. Lust behaves like **an enemy** who lurks *close by* a man, and easily finds an opportunity. So lovingkindness should be well protected from lust.

Ill will (*vyāpāda*) is its far enemy. As it is different from lust, it is like an enemy dwelling in the mountains. So lovingkindness must be cultivated away from any danger from that. For, it is not possible to cultivate lovingkindness and feel anger at the same time.⁶⁷

99. The divine abode of **compassion** has **grief** (*domanassa*) based on household life as its near enemy, since both alike see failure. Such grief has been described, beginning with these words (in **the Sa’āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta**, M 137), thus:

“From regarding a non-reception of *visual forms* as not receiving what are cognizable by *the eye* that are wished for, desired, agreeable, gratifying, and associated with worldliness; or, when one recalls what was formerly received that has passed, ceased, changed—**grief** [displeasure] arises. A grief such as this is called a grief of the household life. ...etc.”⁶⁸

Cruelty (*vihimsā*) is its far enemy. It is different from grief. So compassion must be cultivated away from any danger from that. For, it is not possible to cultivate compassion and be cruel to living beings at the same time.

100. The divine abode of **gladness** has **joy** (*somanassa*) based on the household life as its near enemy, since both alike see success. Such joy been described, beginning with these words (in **the Sa’āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta**, M 137), thus:

“From regarding a reception of *visual forms* as a reception cognizable by *the eye* that are wished for, desired, agreeable, gratifying, and associated with worldliness; or, when one recalls what was formerly received that has passed, ceased, changed—**joy** arises. A joy such as this is called a joy of the household life. ...etc.”⁶⁹

And **aversion** (*arati*) is its far enemy. It is different from joy. So gladness should be cultivated away from any danger from that. For, it is not possible to cultivate gladness and be discontented with remote dwellings and higher wholesome states at the same time.

101. The divine abode of **equanimity** has **ignorant indifference** (*aññāṇ’upekkhā*) based on the household life as its near enemy, since both alike ignore faults and virtues. Such ignorant indifference has been described, beginning with these words (in **the Sa’āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta**, M 137), thus:

⁶⁵ Vism 9.98-101/318-320.

⁶⁶ “Since it is able to corrupt owing to its similarity, like an enemy with the face of a friend, **lust is the near enemy of lovingkindness**” (*tasmā mitta, mukha, sapatto viya tulyākārena dūsanato rāgo mettāya āsanna, paccatthiko*, VismT: Ee 309: Be 1:380). VismT = Param’attha, mañjūsā.

⁶⁷ **Saṅgiti S** (D 22): the 6 elements of escape (from suffering) (*nissaraṇīyā, dhātu*) (D 33.2.2(17)/3:247 f).

⁶⁸ M 137.12/3:218 = SD 29.5.

⁶⁹ M 137.10/3:217 = SD 29.5.

“On seeing a visible object with the eye equanimity arises in the foolish infatuated ordinary man, in the untaught ordinary man who has not conquered his limitations, who has not conquered future [kamma] result, who is unperceiving of danger. Such equanimity as this does not surmount the visible object. Such equanimity as this is called equanimity of the household life.”⁷⁰

Lust and aversion (*rāga, paṭigha*) are its far enemies. They are different from ignorance. Therefore, equanimity must be cultivated away from any danger from that. [320] For, it is not possible to look on with equanimity and be lustful or resentful⁷¹ at the same time.

(Vism 9.98-101/318-320 = DhsA 193 f)

In summary, we have these near and far enemies of the four divine abodes, thus:

	<u>Near enemy</u>		<u>Far enemy</u>	
Lovingkindness	lust	(<i>rāga</i>)	ill will	(<i>vyāpāda</i>)
Compassion	grief	(<i>domanassa</i>)	cruelty	(<i>vihimsā</i>)
Gladness	household joy	(<i>gehasita somanassa</i>)	aversion	(<i>arati</i>)
Equanimity	ignorant indifference	(<i>aññāṇ’upekkhā</i>)	lust and aversion	(<i>rāga, paṭigha</i>)

When the divine abodes are not properly cultivated, our emotions as listed here might remain or even grow. “Near enemy” (*āsanna, paccatthika*) refers to an emotion that appears to resemble the abode, but in reality is not a truly wholesome feeling. For example, lusting after someone and showing lovingkindness both have a sense of liking someone, but *lust* has a powerful sense of selfishness, while lovingkindness is only true with selflessness. It is easy to mistake lust for lovingkindness, and not always easy to distinguish between the two.

Ill will is the “far enemy” (*dūra, paccatthika*) of lovingkindness, meaning that there are contrary to one another. They are incompatible and cannot really exist at the same time in a person. We simply cannot have lovingkindness for someone and hate him at the same time. We have to ensure that this negative emotion does not arise during our practice. But if it does arise, then we must examine and review the conditions that brought it about, and correct them.

Grief is the “near enemy” of compassion means that it is easy to mistake grief for compassion. Grief here is a sense of loss and helplessness. It also manifests itself as pity for another. All this suggests that we are unable to really uplift the subject from his suffering or difficulty. Compassion, on the other hand, is a feeling informed by wisdom.

We see a blind man heading towards ditch, and seeing the danger, we at once warn him or guide him to a safe path. Or, we know that someone or a group of people are needlessly heart-sick and suffering because they do not know the Buddha’s mind teachings. So we make every effort to educate them on the nature of the mind and in meditation.

Cruelty is clearly the “far enemy” of compassion, as it is its direct opposite. They are incompatible: a cruel person is clearly not compassionate. In actual cultivation of compassion, the far enemy is unlikely to arise as the practice is already founded on lovingkindness. However, when externally or socially expressed, such conflicting emotions might arise, especially when we are face with difficulties.

Household joy or worldly delight is the “near enemy” of gladness, as one can easily be mistaken for the other. For example, someone we like or someone famous (such as a foreign teacher) does a service,

⁷⁰ M 137.14/3:219 = SD 29.5.

⁷¹ “Be resentful,” *paṭihaññissati*, which Ñāṇamoli notes as: “*Paṭihaññati*, ‘to be resentful’: not in PED; the verb has been needed to correspond to ‘resentment’ (*paṭigha*), as the verb ‘to be inflamed with greed’ (*rajjati*) corresponds with ‘greed’ (*rāga*).” (Vism:Ñ n15: 4th ed 346, 5th ed 791f). *Paṭihaññati* is actually given by PED & PTC under *paṭihanati* (to strike against, ward off, keep away, destroy, M 1:273), as its passive form (It 103; J 1:7; DhsA 72). Both Childers (DPL) & Andersen (*Pali Glossary* 1901) der it from *paṭihanti*, but is syn with *paṭihanati*. Buddhādatta (*Concise Pali Dict*) has *paṭihaññati*: “to be struck against, to be afflicted.”

we at once applaud it, but the reality is that we have a deep bias for the person or hope to gain some favour from him.

Or, we might show *aversion* towards someone we do not like or a poor local Buddhist worker who has done something really good. We might even think that the person we do not like is not really capable of anything good or great at all. In fact, this is a feeling of bias or cynicism.

Equanimity is the most tricky of the divine abodes, because its “near enemy,” *ignorant indifference*, can be easily mistaken for it. If we were Buddhist leaders or workers, and we were to say that local Buddhists have not done enough past karma (*pāramī*) as some famous teachers or wealthy leaders have done, and so we neglect to help or support them. The point is that we do not really care for the real problems that Buddhism face, but are mostly drawn to grand public activities where we are in the forefront and hobnob with politicians and the elite. This is a sad example of ignorant indifference on our part.

Or, we might zealously sacrifice our time and resources promoting foreign ethnic Buddhist groups, organize tours to these foreign Buddhist lands, even gaining honours from foreign VIPs. However, when needy local Buddhists seek our assistance and advice, we give them the silent treatment or simply turn them away, seeing neither glamour nor reward in local enterprises, then this could be a manifestation of *lust and aversion* in us, that is, lust for personal recognition, and aversion towards those who are helpless but not up to our measure.

7.2 THE ABODES AND BEYOND

7.2.1 The full cultivation. The cultivation of the divine abodes is a set of spiritual exercises, invoking the most wholesome of emotions or feelings in us. Here, “**feeling**” means a wholesomely direct experience of life and others. With *words*, we tend to construct perceptions of others and to measure our experiences. Such tendencies can become so habitual in us that we never really know or feel people, nor are we capable of celebrating the joy and good in whatever is before us: we are living in our own virtual world of self-created ghosts and demons.

If such a mentality is carried to extremes, when our perceptions and projections become so real, yet so private and limited, then we are heading for the mire of madness. The divine abodes are not only an assurance against madness or psychological abnormality, but they are the best tools for cultivating our highest, even divine, qualities, that is, of joyfully living life in its wholesome fullest.

Buddhaghosa recommends that *lovingkindness* is for the purification of one who has much ill will; *compassion*, for one with much cruelty; *gladness*, for one with much aversion; and *equanimity*, for one with much lust. Attention, too, must be directed to all beings in four ways, that is, promoting welfare, removing suffering, rejoicing in the goodness and success of others, and a healthy unconcern. He illustrates this ongoing practice as follows:

And one abiding in the immeasurable states should practise lovingkindness and the rest like a mother with four sons, namely, a young child, a sick child, an adolescent, and one busy with his own affairs. Now, she wants the young child to grow up; she wants the sick child to get well; she wants the adolescent to long enjoy the benefits of youth, but is not at all bothered about the one busy with his own affairs. (Vism 9.108/321)

7.2.2 “Breaking the barriers.” As a positive emotion, our lovingkindness is successful when we are able to allay, even remove, our resentment for a negative person (especially someone who has hurt or harmed us). In other words, we are able, in our meditation, to regard this negative person just as we regard someone positive, a dear friend, or a neutral person. This is known as “breaking the barriers” (*sīma, sambheda*). Then, we sustain our cultivation for a while, without any barrier or limit, enjoying mental impartiality towards all the four kinds of persons, that is, self, a dear person, a neutral person, and a hostile person. (Vism 9.40/307)

Psychologically, what we are doing here is an internal self-cleansing, ridding ourselves of any negative imprints or memories, corpses and coffins, we have been lugging along so that they haunted and hin-

dered us in our quest for happiness. Now they are no more, left buried in the graves of the past forever. We are victims no more, but victors of our own hearts.⁷²

Lovingkindness here has empowered us to give closure to past pains, so that we never negatively react at the slightest emotional provocation. Our hands are healed of all cuts and wounds, and may even carry poison (Dh 124). We have become all new, healed and energized with positive emotions, able to tap our creative potentials and living happily as well as benefitting others and the world. Before we go on to what happens after this [7.4], let us examine another vital aspect of lovingkindness which reflects the essence of Buddhist practice.

7.3 LOVINGKINDNESS AS RENUNCIATION

7.3.1 The stages of letting go. Meditation, in its highest reality, is *an exercise in renunciation*, when properly done and enjoyed, can be more noble than becoming a monastic merely to wear the cloth. In simple terms, it can be explained in terms of “solitude” (*viveka*), that is, bodily solitude (*kāya, viveka*), mental solitude (*citta, viveka*) and solitude from acquisitions (*upadhi, viveka*). “Solitude” here does not mean “loneliness,” as it is a very blissful state: rather, it has a liberating sense of “aleness.”

“**Bodily solitude**” refers to the ideal state as a physical preparation for meditation, that is, finding a proper place for meditation, and adopting the most comfortable posture that keeps us our minds alert. An ideal place for meditation is defined in the suttas as “a forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a gully [gorge], a hillside cave, a cemetery, a remote forest [jungle grove], the open air, a heap of straw.”⁷³ A shorter list of three places, probably later, is mentioned in **Anāpāna, sati Sutta** (M 118):

Here, monks, a monk who has gone to the forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty abode, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before him.
(M 118.17/3:82)

“**Mental solitude**” is strictly speaking the attainment of dhyana⁷⁴ itself. More generally, it refers any state of wholesome mental concentration, especially one accompanied with calm and bliss. Technically, dhyana refers to a focussed mental state of profound calm and joy, after all the five mental hindrances⁷⁵ have been given up.

“Solitude from the acquisitions” refers to the goal of meditation, especially arhathood or non-return. “Acquisitions” (*upadhi*) (usually plural) are the substrates of existence, essentials of being, worldly possessions as a source of rebirth. The Majjhima Commentary mentions four kinds of acquisitions: the aggregates (*khandh’upadhi*), defilements (*kiles’upadhi*), volitional formations (*abhisāṅkhār’upadhi*), and the cords of sense-pleasure (*kāma, guṇ’upadhi*).⁷⁶ It is also possible to take this highest level of solitude as the “nirvana with remains” (*sōpadhisesa nibbāna*),⁷⁷ that is, full awakening here and now.⁷⁸

⁷² See “Don’t own the pain,” in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys 2: Healing Words*, 2011:59-62 (ch 19).

⁷³ This stock phrase of 9 places conducive to meditation are found at D 1:72, 207, 2:242, 3:49; M 1:181, 269, 274, 346, 440, 441, 2:162, 226, 3:3, 35, 115-117; A 2:210, 3:92, 100, 4:436, 5:207; Nm 1:26, 140, 2:341; Miln 369.

⁷⁴ See **Dhyana** = SD 8.4 (5).

⁷⁵ The five mental hindrances are desire for sensual pleasures, ill will, sloth and torpor, restless and remorse, and doubt: see **Nīvaraṇa** = SD 32.1.

⁷⁶ MA 2:112, 3:169, 5:60.

⁷⁷ A 9.12.4/4:379; It 2.2.7/38 f; ItA 165.

⁷⁸ “Acquisitions,” *upadhi*, substrates of existence, essentials of being, worldly possessions as a source of rebirth. Comy mentions 4 kinds of acquisitions: the aggregates (*khandh’upadhi*), defilements (*kiles’upadhi*), volitional formations (*abhisāṅkhār’upadhi*), and the cords of sense-pleasure (*kāma, guṇ’upadhi*) (MA 2:112, 3:169, 5:60). It is also possible to take this as the “nirvana with remains” (*sōpadhisesa nibbāna*) (A 9.12.4/4:379; It 2.2.7/38 f; ItA 165), ie, full awakening here and now. For a fuller expl, see the viveka, nissita formula, see **Viveka, nissita** = SD 20.4; see also “Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas” = SD 13.1 §4.2c n.

On a practical level, the first two solitudes apply. Only the first, bodily solitude, deals with body, while the rest deals with the meditating mind. Let us examine these practical aspects of meditation further.

7.3.1 Verbalizing. In the cultivating of lovingkindness, we begin, just as in any meditation, by finding a suitable place and sitting in a comfortable posture. However, as **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Sn 8 = Khp 9) reminds us: “While standing, moving, sitting, or lying down, as long as one is free from drowsiness, one should keep to this mindfulness.”⁷⁹ In other words, we should keep on radiating lovingkindness every moment of our waking life, unless we are doing some other kind of meditation.

We usually begin our lovingkindness meditation by verbalizing (saying out) or subverbalizing (mentally saying) the words of lovingkindness [3.1]. As we focus on the sounds as well as the meaning of the words, this attention is directed away from distractions, and begins to settle down. As we become more settled, we should only subverbalize the lovingkindness, so that we now attend to the *thought* of lovingkindness, that is, as we gently let go of the body, as it were.

7.3.2 Subverbalizing. As the mind settles, we go on focussing on the thoughts of lovingkindness, letting go of the words. As already described [3.3.1.1], here we mentally say (subverbalize) the lovingkindness, and then silently *feel* it in our minds and bodies. This should not be rushed, but sustained for as long as possible.

When we are more certain of the subverbalizing process, the mind of lovingkindness, we could, if we are inclined to, alternate this with visualizing of memories of happy events and activities [3.3.1.1]. These subverbalizing and visualizing should be done as long as we need to. We will know that we should move on to the next stage when we feel that the subverbalizing (the mental words) becoming “too loud,” that is, we feel that we do not need it any more.

7.3.3 Visualizing. Once we feel that ready to let go of the “thoughts” of lovingkindness, we keep on only visualizing the lovingkindness. As already advised, in the visualizing, we should take care not to go astray with the memory. Instead we should focus on the *feeling* of the visualization.

Once the lovingkind feeling is strong enough (again we will naturally feel this), then we let go of the visualizing efforts, too. There is only the feeling of lovingkindness pervading our body and mind. In other words, we neither hear any words nor think any thoughts, at least for a brief time (which is often good enough).

7.3.4 Fully feeling. Like breath meditation, lovingkindness should be cultivated without any expectation. We simply sit like a fresh beautiful flower enjoying the bright sunlight. We directly feel the lovingkindness directly, without a thought, without a word. In such moments, we *are* lovingkindness.

However, after some time, when there is any distraction, we only need to gently smile at it, then let it go. Or, if we sense our focus weakening, we could smile at the lovingkindness or the bliss; or we could gently whisper, “Peaceful” or “Joyful” or “Happy,” or something similar, just enough to keep the mind focussed. In fact, once we are fully immersed in lovingkindness, we do not need to make any more effort. It just happens, and we can only blissfully *enjoy* it until it is time for us to emerge from it.

7.3.6 Reviewing. It is important to understand that all thinking and knowing (as we understand, any way) stop in deep meditation. In lovingkindness meditation, too, there is this expansive, selfless, blissful, radiant calm and clarity into which we dissolve as it were. Then the time comes when our biological clock will reintegrate us, as it were, back into the “real” world.

In fact, the real lovingkindness, the most effective kind, occurs *after* this kind of profound thought-free state, that is, dhyana. Having emerged from dhyana, we then, if we like, radiate lovingkindness to wherever or whomever we wish, including ourselves. This will be very easy and enjoyable as the bliss and clarity are so powerful, so that the mind is profoundly focussed and highly energized. Let us take a step back and examine how we get into dhyana, in the first place.

7.4 GETTING INTO DHYANA. For the divine abodes to work their fullest magic, as intended by the Buddha, we need to cultivate them to the level of dhyana. To experience the divine abodes on a dhyana

⁷⁹ *Tiṭṭham caram nisinnō vā | sayāno vā yāvat’assa vigata,middho | etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya* (Sn 151 = Khp 9.8/8) = SD 38.3.

level, that is, a purely mental experience of them in the total boundlessness, we need to directly feel the abode. In other words, we have to rise above the body, words and thoughts, so that there is no more perception of meditator and meditation object: there is only the divine abode, and we are that divine abode.

If we are cultivating lovingkindness, once we are fully immersed in the feeling (*not* the thought) of lovingkindness, “we” should simply attend to the pleasant feeling, and do nothing else. However, the presence of zest and joy (*pīti, sukha*), and even joy itself, means that the first three abodes can only reach up to the third dhyana. Equanimity is the only abode that is fully felt as the fourth abode. (Vism 90.111/322)⁸⁰

<u>Divine abode</u>	<u>Antidote for</u>		<u>Dhyana level</u>
Lovingkindness	the hateful	}	1 st -3 rd dhyana
Compassion	the cruel		
Gladness	the resentful		
Equanimity	the lustful	—	4 th dhyana

Once the divine abodes have been cultivated to the level of dhyana, and we have spend enough time familiarizing ourselves with them, inside out, so to speak, we can go on to do one of two things, that is, either turn to wisdom training, or go on to cultivate even higher still. Here, we will mention only the wisdom training aspect, and later discuss the liberation of mind [8.3].

Having spent enough time in dhyana each time, we then emerge from it, with a mind that is utterly calm and clear,⁸¹ which we then direct to reflecting on one of the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and not-self. We should begin with the perception on impermanence (*anicca, saññā*) and be fully familiar with it, so that it becomes the basis for streamwinning.⁸² [8.3]

8 Benefits of the four divine abodes

8.1 THE BENEFITS OF LOVINGKINDNESS. Mental focus, especially lovingkind focus, has many benefits. There are at least two discourses listing the benefits (*ānisaṃsa*) of cultivating lovingkindness. **The (Aṭṭha) Mettānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 8.1) lists eight benefits,⁸³ apparently, for those who do not meditate. **The (Ekā, dasa) Mettānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 11.16), on the other hand, gives the following list of **11 benefits** for one who cultivates lovingkindness:⁸⁴

- (1) One sleeps happily.
- (2) One wakes happily.
- (3) One sees no bad dreams.
- (4) One is dear to humans.
- (5) One is dear to non-humans.
- (6) One is protected by devas.
- (7) Fire, poison and weapons cannot harm one.
- (8) One’s mind easily concentrates.
- (9) One’s countenance is serene.
- (10) One dies unconfused.
- (11) And, if he penetrates no higher, he goes to the Brahma world.

(A 11.16/5:342) = SD 2.15; PmA 2:129; Miln 198; Araka J, J 169/2:61

⁸⁰ Further see Vism 112-118/322-324. On “how to attain dhyana,” see *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1 (8.7). See also **Dhyana** = SD 8.4.

⁸¹ On “directing the mind to cultivate insight,” see **The Buddha discovered dhyana** = SD 33.1b = SD 6.2.

⁸² On the ease of attaining streamwinning here and now, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1/3:225) = SD 16.7 & **Laymen saints** = SD 8.6 (14).

⁸³ A 8.1.3/4:150 f = SD 30.6.

⁸⁴ A 11.16/5:342 f = SD 2.15. Explained at Vism 9.59-76/311-314.

The Visuddhi, magga⁸⁵ explains these benefits as follows:

- (1) Instead of turning over and snoring, one falls asleep like entering a state of meditation attainment.
- (2) Instead of waking up in discomfort, groaning and yawning, one wakes up without contortions, like a lotus opening. (This benefit is omitted in A:ÑB.)
- (3) One has auspicious dreams, such as worshipping at a shrine, making an offering, listening to a Dharma talk, etc.
- (4) One is popular with others and in society.
- (5) One will not be harmed by negative energies around one or fall sick due to inexplicable causes.
- (6) One will be guarded by divine beings like parents guarding a child.
- (7) One will create a positive aura or environment around oneself that would not arouse negative emotions or reactions in others.
- (8) One's mind easily concentrates due to lack of negative thoughts that drain one's energies.
- (9) "Like a palmyra fruit loosened from its stem" (Vism 9.74), that is, one's countenance is relaxed, soothing, delightful.
- (10) One passes away peacefully as if falling asleep or one does so mindfully and happily.
- (11) If one is unable to attain arhathood, then after death one arises in the Brahmā world (dhyanic existence) as if waking up from sleep.

Benefit (1) is the result of freeing the mind of thought just before turning in. This helps us to fall asleep quickly. In fact, it is advisable to mindfully subverbalize a few line of lovingkindness, which help us to fall asleep quickly and to sleep well, too. Having, slept well in this way, it is likely that we would also get up in the manner of benefit (2). Benefit (3) also arises from the first point, because our last mental process is likely to flow into our sleep and sink into our unconscious mind, and habituated us in a positive manner.

Benefits (4-7) are clearly social benefits. A heart of lovingkindness would naturally be reflected in our faces in subtle ways. Animals (especially dogs and cats) normally responds positively to us on this account. There are traditional stories of how those who cultivate lovingkindness even when threatened with danger or death, safely avert them.⁸⁶ For those who believe in disembodied beings, we can say that, like humans, they are also attracted to positive emotions. Indeed, some of our kinder forebears, on account of their goodness, and even well-loved animals (especially pets),⁸⁷ are reborn as devas. They are likely to be our guardian angels. Lovingkindness, when regularly and properly cultivated us wholesome energy that exudes from our bodies and minds, forming an aura or force-field around us, as it were.

Benefits (8-10), which are not mentioned in **the (Aṭṭha) Mettānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 8.1), clearly arise from meditation-based lovingkindness.⁸⁸ Lovingkindness is conducive to mental focus by helping us let go of thoughts, especially negative ones. Such feelings make us happy, and so energizes us with a joyful interest in our meditation. If we habitually cultivate lovingkindness, then it is likely to arise during our last moments, propelling us into a good rebirth. And if our lovingkind mind is calm and clear, we would even go on to reflect on our true nature so as to arouse insight that is the basis for awakening.

8.2 LIMITATION OF KARMA. Here we will examine the underlined expressions in this refrain that follows each of the definitions of the four divine abodes [2.1], thus:

Just as a mighty conch-blower, Vāsetṭha, might with little difficulty make a proclamation to the four quarters, so by this cultivation [meditation], Vāsetṭha, by this liberation of the mind through lovingkindness, any karma done in a limited way neither remains nor persists there.

This, Vāsetṭha, is the way to fellowship with Brahmā [God].

⁸⁵ Vism 9.59-76/311-314.

⁸⁶ See, eg, the stories **Uttarā Nanda, māṭā**: see **Why some marriages fail** (DhA 17.3/3:308-313) = SD 3.8 (4) & **Sāmā, vaṭṭi** (DhA 2.1/1:220-226). Buddhaghosa relates how a hunter's spear bounced off a cow that was simply filled with love for its calf that it is suckling (Vism 9.72/313).

⁸⁷ See "Animals go to heaven," in Piya Tan, *Simple Joys*, 2009:225-227 (16.1).

⁸⁸ A 8.1.3/4:150 f = SD 30.6.

(D 13.76-79/1:250-251) = SD 1.8

We will examine the second phrase first, and the second one in some detail later [8.3]. The suttas [2.1.3.4] declare that when the divine abodes are properly cultivated, “any karma done in a limited way neither remains nor persists there.”⁸⁹

The Commentary on the Brahma, vihāra Sutta (A 10.208) says that “limited karma” refers to sense-sphere karma (*kāmāvacara, kamma*) (AA 5:77), and “unlimited karma” (*appamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*) refers to form-sphere karma. It is called “unlimited” because it is done by transcending the limit, for it is developed by way of specified, unspecified and directional pervasion.⁹⁰

The Commentary on the Saṅkha Sutta explains that “When (simple) lovingkindness is said, this can be interpreted either as access concentration or dhyana, but when it is qualified as ‘liberation of mind’ (*ceto, vimutti*) it definitely means dhyana or meditation dhyana (*jhāna*)” (SA 3:105). The point is that if a person masters the “liberation of mind by lovingkindness” at the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this dhyana attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm.⁹¹

The explanation, in simple terms, is that if we habitually pervade our being with lovingkindness, we are unlikely to consciously break any of the five precepts. If we do so, it is likely to be a result of a lapse of mindfulness, when the potential is less heavy than that of a deliberate conscious breach. Moreover, when we realize that we have broken a precept, we are likely to feel remorseful and would be diligent in correcting ourselves by being more mindful and restrained.

8.3 LIBERATION OF MIND

8.3.1 Liberation of mind through lovingkindness. In the formal cultivation of lovingkindness, when we have “**broken the barriers**” [7.2.2], we are said to have reached the apex of the practice. This fulfilment of lovingkindness can range from a feeling of profound self-acceptance, intense bliss, or best of all, dhyana, a direct and total experience of the thought-free mind. Since the mind is now completely free of any mental hindrance, that weaken the mind [7.3.1], it is fully liberated, albeit momentarily, but the bliss is felt as if it were timeless.

The technical term for such a state is “**liberation of mind**” (*ceto, vimutti*), sometimes also translated as “liberation by concentration,” that is, mental liberation as a result of destroying the mental hindrances. In this case, the mental liberation is gained through lovingkindness (*mettā ceto, vimutti*),⁹² or it could be further developed to attain the other three levels.

A term closely related to “liberation of mind” is “**liberation by wisdom [insight]**” (*paññā, vimutti*). Someone who is “liberated by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*), “may not have gained the eight liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes⁹³ are destroyed.”⁹⁴ In simple terms, the “eight liberations” refer to the various ways that dhyana can be attained. [8.3.2.2]

All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain the eight liberations, which include the four formless attainments (*samāpatti*), and the attainment of cessation (*nirodha*,-

⁸⁹ *Pamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ*, as in **Saṅkha(dhama) S** (S 42.8/4:322) & **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299) = SD 2.10.

⁹⁰ DA 2:406; MA 3:450; cf J 2:62.

⁹¹ See Vism 309-311/9.49-58; S:B 1149 n346; A:ÑB 315 n73.

⁹² D 3:248; M 1:297, 298, 3:146; S 4:296.

⁹³ “Mental influx,” *āsava* (lit “influx, outflow”), which comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influxes of (1) sense-desire (*kām ’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav ’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh ’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā’sava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 *influxes* (omitting that of views) is prob older and is found more freq in the suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). **The destruction of these influxes** (*āsava-k, khaya*) is equivalent to arhathood. See D 3:220, 275; A 2:163, 165; A 1:146, 192, 194; cf V 2:83; Sn 594, 656. See BDict: *āsava*.

⁹⁴ See **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70.16/1:478) & SD 11.1 (8.3.2) on the 8 liberations.

samāpatti), are called liberated both ways (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*), that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways.”⁹⁵

8.3.2 The abodes and the formless bases

8.3.2.1 LIBERATION THROUGH THE ABODES. The closing section of **the Metta Saha,gata Sutta** (S 46.54)⁹⁶ shows how, when a monk (that is, a meditator) cultivates the awakening-factors “accompanied by” (*sahagata*) one of the divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity⁹⁷—it can lead to liberation.⁹⁸ Each of these four practices comprises two further practices: the cultivation of the awakening factors (accompanied by the respective divine abode) by which one is liberated, and a choice of either (a) one of the five perceptions, or (b) a dhyana (temporary liberation): the scheme is here summarized:⁹⁹

Awakening-factor

accompanied by

[§12] Lovingkindness
[§13] Compassion
[§14] Gladness
[§15] Equanimity

(a) the 5 perceptions¹⁰⁰

one of the 5 perceptions
”
”
”

(b) dhyanas (ie liberation, vimokkha)

the liberation by the beautiful.
the base of infinite space.
the base of infinite consciousness.
the base of nothingness.

The “beautiful” (*subha*) here refers to **dhyana** [7.4], while the term “beauty element, or beautiful element” (*subha, dhātu*), refers to both the dhyana and its object, namely, a dhyana arisen on the basis of lovingkindness.¹⁰¹

8.3.2.2 THE 8 LIBERATIONS. The dhyana-states mentioned above form the third, fourth, fifth and sixth of the eight liberations (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*), and are listed in **the Mahā Sakul’udāyi Sutta** (M 77):¹⁰²

The 1st liberation is that of one with physical form who sees physical forms (*rūpī rūpāni passati*).

The 2nd liberation is that of one who does not see physical form internally, but sees physical forms externally (*ajjhataṃ arūpa, saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*).

⁹⁵ The differences between the 2 types of liberation are given in **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f).

⁹⁶ S 46.54.12-15/5:118-121 = SD 10.11; called Halidda, vasana S at Vism 4.49/130.

⁹⁷ For stock def see: **Cakka, vatti Siha, nāda S** (D 26.28a(4)/3:48) = SD 36.10 (said to be “in the wealth for a monk (*bhikkhuno bhogasmim*),” **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223); **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.31/1:297) = SD 35.1, **Aṭṭhaka, nāgara S** (M 52.8-11/1:351 f) = SD 41.2 (leading to either arhathood or non-return), **Jīvaka S** (M 55.6/1:-369) = SD 43.4, **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.32-33/2:195) = SD 4.9, **Subha S** (M 99.24-27/2:207 f) = SD 38.6, **Anuruddha S** (M 127.7/3:146) = SD 54.10; **Go, datta S** (S 41.7/4:296); (**Saṅgha**) **Uposatha S** (A 4.190.4/2:184) = SD 15.10b, **Dasama Gaha, pati S** (A 11.17.5-6/5:344) = SD 41.2; **Pm** 2:39; **Vbh** 13.1-2/272, 699/282, see 272-284 for comy.

⁹⁸ See **Metta Saha,gata S** (S 46.54/5:115-121) & SD 10.11 (3).

⁹⁹ So noted in Upatissa’s **Vimutti, magga**: (Tr from Chin) N R M Ehara, Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera, Kandy, 1961; Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, 1977:195.

¹⁰⁰ On the 5 perceptions, see **Mettā Saha,gata S** (S 46.54.12-15/5:119-121) & SD 10.11 (2).

¹⁰¹ Pm 2:39; SA 3:172 f. The Attha, sālinī, the Commentary on the Dhamma, saṅgaṇī, however, takes “the beautiful” here as referring to dhyana attainment through a colour device (*kaṣiṇa*) [viz earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red, white, light and space] that is fully purified (DhsA 191). As **Analayo** notes, this gloss goes against the teachings of the Paṭisambhidā, magga (2009:146 f). See **Metta Sahagata S** (S 46.54.12/5:119) = SD 10.11.

¹⁰² M 77.22/2:12 f ; MA 3:255; the 4 dhyanas here are also listed in **Satta Dhātu S** (S 14.11/2:149-151). Only the 4 dhyanas mentioned here are noted in detail. For full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f) = SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37. See also **Aṭṭha Vimokkha** = SD 62.5 & Analayo 2009: 141-148.

The 3rd liberation is that of one liberated after contemplating the idea of the beautiful (*subhan't'eva adhimutto hoti*). This is said in reference to the attainment of form dhyana (*rūpa jhāna*) by means of concentrating the mind on perfectly pure and bright colours as the *kaṣiṇa*-object. **The Paṭisambhidā, magga** says that this mental state is also produced through the cultivation of the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), as a result of which all beings appear perfectly pure and glorious, and thus the mind turns to the beautiful (Pm 5.20/2:39).

These first three are said in connection with *kaṣiṇa* meditation by way of the “bases of sovereignty” or “bases for transcendence” (*abhibhāyatana*), that is, one of the 8 stages of mastery over the senses through dhyana (*jhāna*).¹⁰³ The following four (4-7) are the formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*):

The 4th liberation. Through the utter transcending of the perception of physical form, the passing away of the perception of impingement [*paṭigha*, sense-contact], and non-attention to the perception of diversity, contemplating, “Space is infinite,” one enters and dwells in the base of the infinity of space.

The 5th liberation. Through the utter transcending of the infinity of space, contemplating, “Consciousness is infinite,” one enters and dwells in the base of the infinity of consciousness.

The 6th liberation. Through the utter transcending of the base of the infinity of consciousness, contemplating, “There is nothing,” one enters and dwells in the base of nothingness.

The 7th liberation. Through the utter transcending of the base of nothingness, one enters and dwells in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This is the seventh liberation.

The 8th liberation. Through the utter transcending of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, one enters and dwells in the cessation of perception and feeling.

The Commentary on **the Mahā Sakuludāyi Sutta** (M 77)¹⁰⁴ says that these liberations are the mind’s full (but temporary) release from the opposing states and its full (but temporary) release by delighting in the object (MA 3:255, cf 255-259).¹⁰⁵

8.4 EXPERIENCING NOT-SELF. We started off this study by mentioning that it is the Buddha’s discovery of not-self (*anattā*) that makes the divine abodes unique in the history of religion. Firstly, the Buddha not only rejects the notion of an almighty creator-God, but gives us a most viable alternative in the divine abodes. In other words, God is not out there in some ethereal heaven or some theological state, but to be cultivated right here in our own being.

Whether we take God as a person, a being or spirit, it is the godly qualities that really matter to us, that is, love, compassion, joy and peace. These are divine qualities we can cultivate as lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity. These abodes must be cultivated beyond any conception of person, being or spirit. Only then they are truly boundless and unconditional.

As **Edward Conze** has long ago noted, “The chief purpose of Buddhism is the extinction of separate individuality, which is brought about when we cease to *identify* anything with ourselves.”¹⁰⁶ To identify with something is, ironically, to see a *separateness*—“I” and “thou,” “I am that”—just as it is to measure ourselves against others. This is the basis for a serious wrong view—that of self-identity view (*sakkāya, diṭṭhi*)—which prevents us from attaining the most basic of liberations, that of streamwinning.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.24/2:110); **Mahā Sakuludāyi S** (M 77.22/2:13); **Abhibhāyatana S** (A 8.65/4:305), **Kosala S** (A 10.29/5:61). **The Dhamma, saṅgaṇī** apparently regard the *abhibhāyatana* as being “concerned with the mastery and facility in certain aspects of *jhāna* practice” (Gethin, 2001:267). See Dhs 45-52 where the 8 *abhibhāyatana* (with slight variations from the Nikāya formulation) are treated as an aspect of *jhāna* that is of the form realm (*rūpāvacara*); cf DhsA 187-190. See BDict: abhibhāyatana.

¹⁰⁴ M 77.22/2:13.

¹⁰⁵ See **Aṭṭha Vimokkha** = SD 62.5.

¹⁰⁶ E Conze, *Buddhism: Its essence and development*, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1951:106.

¹⁰⁷ See **Entering the stream** = SD 3.3.

Theology is rooted in the grammar of religiosity, and attempt to define and defend God. The divine abodes teaches us to rise above the grammar of religion, beyond being and having, beyond any person, first, second or third, to cultivate the divine qualities within ourselves by breaking all bonds with worldliness so that we can include all beings in our hearts. The cultivation of the divine abodes is not only an experience of the spaciousness of being, but is also a basis for the direct experience of true reality itself, that is liberating. The divine abodes are truly a viable alternative to religion.

— — —

Bibliography

- Analayo (Theodor P Steffens) (b 1962)
 2009 *From Craving to Liberation: Excursions into the thought-world of the Pāli discourses.* ” [Rev ed of Analayo’s entries into Encyclopaedia of Buddhism: Rāga, Sukha, Taṇhā, Thīnamiddha, Uddhaccakukkuccam Upekkhā, Vedanā, Vedanānupassanā, Vibhavataṇhā, Vicikicchā, Vimokkha, Vimuttāyatana, Vimutti, Virāga, Vyāpāda, and Yathābhūtañāna-dassana.] New York: Buddhist Association of the US, 2009. Free book, various reprs.
- Aronson, Harvey B
 1980a *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980. Repr 1986.
 1980b “Motivation to social action in Theravāda Buddhism: Uses and misuses of traditional doctrines,” in A K Narain (ed), *Studies in History of Buddhism.* Delhi: B R Publishing Co, 1980.
 1984 “Buddhist and non-Buddhist approaches to the sublime attitudes (*brahma-vihāra*),” in Dhanmapāla et al (eds), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalava Saddhatissa*, Sri Jayewardenapura Kotte (Sri Lanka): Univ of Jayewardenepura, 1984:16-24.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu
 2011 “The need of the hour: A new vision and scale of values are necessary for safeguarding our world,” in *Tricycle* fall 2011. <http://www.tricycle.com/feature/need-hour>
- Burton, Lloyd
 2011 “The jhanas and the brahmaviharas.” Leigh Brasington’s website: <http://www.leighb.com/jhnbrmvhr.htm> 29 Nov 2011.
- Gethin, Rupert M
 1998 *Foundations of Buddhism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Miller, Barbara Stoler
 1979 “On cultivating the immeasurable change of heart: the Buddhist brahma-vihāra formula,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 1979:209-221.
 1996 *Yoga: Discipline of Freedom: the Yoga Sutra Attributed to Patanjali; a Translation of the Text, with Commentary, Introduction, and Glossary of Keywords.* Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1996.
- Ñāṇamoli Thera
 1987 *The Practice of Loving Kindness*, Wheel 7, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1987. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nanamoli/wheel007.html>
- Narada Thera
 1962 *Brahma Vihāra.* Colombo: Vajirarama, 1962.
- Nyanaponika Thera
 1993 *The Four Sublime States: Contemplations on love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity*, Wheel 6, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993.

- http://www.vipassana.com/meditation/four_sublime_states.php;
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html>.
- Pandita, U
 2006 *The state of mind called beautiful*, tr Vivekānanda, ed K Wheeler, Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2006.
- Salzberg, Sharon
 1995 *Lovingkindness: The revolutionary art of happiness*, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1995.
 2005 *The force of kindness: change your life with love and compassion*, Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2005.
- Sharma, Arvind
 1982 “The significance of the Brahmaviharas in Theravada Buddhism.” *Pali Buddhist Review*, 6,1 1982:37-40.
- Shaw, Sarah
 2006 *Buddhist meditation: an anthology of texts from the Pāli canon*, Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2006.
- Tan, Piya
 2009 *Simple Joys*, Singapore: The Minding Centre, 2009.
<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/category/new-simple-joys-by-piya-tan>
 2011a *Revisioning Buddhism*, Singapore: The Minding Centre, 2011.
<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/category/new-simple-joys-by-piya-tan>
 2011b *Simple Joys 2: Healing Words*, Singapore: The Minding Centre, 2011.
<http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/category/new-simple-joys-by-piya-tan>
- Upatissa [Vimm]
 1961 *The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaga)* [Vimm:ESK] [Chinese tr, Sanghapala of Funan] tr N R M Ehara, Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera, Colombo: D R de Silva, 1961. Repr Kandy: Buddhist Publication Soc, 1977.
- Vetter, Tilmann
 1988 *The ideas and meditative practices of early Buddhism*. Leiden: E J Brill, 1988.
- Visuddhācāra, 1953-
 2001 *Hello—with love and other meditations*. Illus by Boey Mei Chee. Penang: Inward Path, 2001. 48 pp
 2002 *Metta—the Practice of Lovingkindness Meditation—for happier life*. Penang: Inward Path, 2002. 26 pp.
- Wallace, Allan B
 2007 *Contemplative Science: Where Buddhism and neuroscience converge*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2007:118-124.
- Werner, Karel
 1994 *The Yogi and the Mystic*, London: Routledge, 1994.
- Winternitz, Maurice
 1936 “Problems of Buddhism,” in *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* ns 2,1 May 1936:41-56.
- Wynne, Alexander
 2007 *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation*. Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism. London: Routledge, 2007.

111128; 111205; 111207; 120117