

The background is an abstract composition of flowing, curved lines in various shades of teal and blue, set against a white background. The lines create a sense of movement and depth, with some areas appearing more saturated than others.

THE
SUBLIME
ATTITUDES

The Sublime Attitudes

A STUDY GUIDE
ON THE BRAHMAVIHĀRAS

Prepared by

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu

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questions about this book may be addressed to:

Metta Forest Monastery
Valley Center, CA 92082-1409
U.S.A.

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Introduction

I : HEAD & HEART TOGETHER

The sublime attitudes (*brahmavihāras*) are the Buddha's primary heart teachings—the ones that connect most directly with our desire for true happiness. They're the qualities of heart that motivated the Buddha to find awakening and then to teach the path of awakening to others. At the same time, they function as part of the path itself. This means that the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings—its "head" aspect—has to be understood in terms of these heart qualities. At the same time, though, these heart qualities have to be understood in terms of the "head" teachings on how cause and effect, in our actions, can bring about genuine happiness. Only when head and heart are brought together in this way can the path yield its full results.

The term *brahmavihāra* literally means, "dwelling place (*vihāra*) of *brahmās*." *Brahmās* are beings who live in the higher heavens, dwelling in an attitude of unlimited goodwill, unlimited compassion, unlimited empathetic joy, and unlimited equanimity. These attitudes are unlimited both in the sense that they extend to all beings, and in the sense that they can be applied to all situations where they are appropriate. For example, you can extend empathetic joy to all who are happy, regardless of whether you like them. Similarly, you can feel compassion for all who are suffering, regardless of what they did to bring on that suffering. These unlimited attitudes can be developed—and for the path to thrive, they *have* to be developed—from the more limited versions of these emotions that we normally experience in the human heart.

Of these four attitudes, goodwill (*mettā*) is the most fundamental. It's a wish for true happiness, both for yourself and for others. Because the highest level of true happiness comes from within, your true happiness need not conflict with that of anyone else. Thus goodwill can be extended to all beings without contradiction or hypocrisy.

The next two attitudes are essentially applications of goodwill. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is what grows out of goodwill when you see suffering: You want the suffering to stop. Empathetic joy (*muditā*) is what

grows out of goodwill when you see happiness: You want that happiness to continue.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is a different attitude, in that it acts as an aid to and a check on the other three. When you encounter suffering that you can't stop no matter how hard you try, you need equanimity to avoid creating additional suffering and to channel your energies to areas where you *can* be of help. You also need equanimity to strengthen your endurance when meeting with difficulties or needing to make sacrifices in the course of striving for greater happiness. In this way, equanimity isn't cold-hearted or indifferent. It simply makes your goodwill more focused and effective by opening your heart to the lessons of your head.

Which means, of course, that your head has to be giving the right lessons. This is where it's important to understand the brahmavihāras within the context of Buddhist practice, in particular the Buddha's teachings on what happiness is and how it can best be attained. And yet this is an aspect of brahmavihāra practice that is often lacking in the West, creating many misunderstandings about what the various brahmavihāras mean, how they are practiced, and the effect they are supposed to have.

The purpose of this study guide is to clear up some of these misunderstandings, first by looking at the place of the brahmavihāras in the context of the noble eightfold path—the teaching that provides the overall context for all Buddhist practice—and in particular the path factor of right view, both on the mundane and transcendent levels. Then, having established this context, it discusses seven common misunderstandings about brahmavihāra practice, showing both how these misunderstandings can create obstacles to effective Buddhist practice and how they can be corrected with reference to right view. This is then followed by a set of readings that provide further correctives to the misunderstandings, at the same time illuminating additional points so that brahmavihāra practice can be truly effective in leading to a happiness that's lasting and true.

II : IN THE CONTEXT OF RIGHT VIEW

In the Buddha's eightfold path to awakening, the brahmavihāras can act as part of two of the eight factors: the second factor, right resolve; and the eighth, right concentration ([§6.2](#)). Right resolve is defined as the resolve for renouncing sensuality, the resolve for non-ill will, and the resolve for

non-cruelty. The resolve to act on goodwill is equivalent to the second of these resolves; the resolve to act on compassion, to the third. As part of right resolve, goodwill and compassion provide the motivation to act on the insights of right view—which is the first factor—into the nature of action and its power to bring about the end of suffering. In other words, goodwill and compassion take these insights and resolve to use them to direct your thoughts, words, and deeds to bring about the end of suffering and to attain true happiness.

As part of right concentration, all four brahmavihāras can function as objects of jhāna, the strong levels of concentration that strengthen the mind's ability to make the sublime attitudes truly unlimited. The concentration based on these attitudes can also provide the mind with the steadiness and inner strength it needs for discernment to break through to total release.

Because the brahmavihāras function both toward the beginning and again toward the end of the path, they have an interactive relationship with all the other path factors. On the one hand, they provide the motivation to practice right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness both for one's own good and for the good of others. On the other hand, the development of concentration based on the brahmavihāras requires, as a prerequisite, that you work on making your thoughts, words, and deeds harmless, for otherwise your concentration will be undermined by hypocrisy.

Actually, all the factors of the path have an interactive relationship, interpenetrating and strengthening one another along the way. This means that the brahmavihāras, as elements in right resolve and right concentration, also strengthen right view, the first factor of the path, just as right view gives them guidance.

To begin with, right view is not simply a collection of facts about the world. Instead, it focuses attention on a single problem, which is an issue of goodwill and compassion: how to understand causality in a way that helps put an end to suffering. In this way, the brahmavihāras provide direction for the use of discernment on the path.

At the same time, the brahmavihāras in the context of the path take their guidance from right view so that they don't flounder around in wishful thinking or ineffectual resolves. Instead, grounded in a clear

understanding of cause and effect, they are focused on the most effective ways of achieving their aspirations.

This guidance is provided by right view both on its mundane and on its transcendent levels.

The mundane level of right view teaches the principle of kamma: that we experience happiness and sorrow due to a combination of our past and present intentions. If we act with unskillful intentions—based on ill will, cruelty, resentment, or passion, either for ourselves or for others—we’re going to suffer. If we act with skillful intentions, we’ll experience happiness.

The fact that happiness and sorrow are dependent on present, and not just past, intentions is what allows the brahmavihāras to be effective in the first place. If everything depended on our past actions, we—and all other beings—would simply be passive victims or beneficiaries of forces over which we had no present control. But because our present intentions play a crucial role in determining whether we are to experience mental pleasure or pain now and into the future, the attitudes that influence our present intentions in a skillful direction can have a real effect in leading to happiness. The extent to which we can encourage others to develop similar attitudes will have a real effect on their happiness as well. Even when people have done unskillful things in the past, the quality of present skillful intentions and attitudes can mitigate those effects dramatically.

In this way, the teaching on kamma not only explains why the brahmavihāras can be effective means to happiness but also provides the reasons that motivate us to develop these attitudes: We need to strengthen them so that we can make our intentions more trustworthy.

At the same time, the teaching on kamma shows what it means to aim at genuine happiness. Because happiness has a cause—skillful action—your wish for happiness has to focus on the cause. Otherwise it will have no effect. This lesson applies to the sublime attitudes both when directed to yourself and when directed to others. Goodwill for yourself means being determined to act skillfully; goodwill for others means hoping that they will understand the causes for true happiness and act in line with that understanding. Compassion means compassion not only for people who are suffering, but also for people who are acting in ways that will create more suffering. Empathetic joy applies not only to people who are happy but also to people who are acting in ways that will lead to true happiness.

Equanimity applies not only to sufferings that are beyond one's control but also to actions that one cannot prevent.

All of this means that if you really want other people to be happy, you don't just treat them nicely. You also want them to learn how to create the causes for happiness. The best way to do this is to show them through the example of your own behavior. If possible, you can also encourage them to follow your example. At the very least, you don't thwart their attempts to act skillfully. This is how the brahmavihāras function in the context of mundane right view.

The transcendent level of right view takes the teaching on kamma and applies it to the mental processes that cause suffering—and that can be redirected to alleviate suffering—within the mind. The technical term for the kamma of mental processes is *saṅkhāra*, or fabrication—not fabrication in the sense of lying, but fabrication in the sense of intentionally putting things together. All experience at the senses—the five physical senses and the mind taken as a sixth sense—follows the general principle of kamma in that it is fabricated through past and present intentions. Past intentions provide the raw material for present experience. From this raw material, your present intentions—sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously—select and shape what you actually experience in the present. These present intentions also add to the range of raw material from which you will select and shape experiences in the future. The selecting and shaping is what is meant by fabrication.

There are three types of fabrication: bodily, verbal, and mental (§6.3). Bodily fabrication is the in-and-out breath, because the way you breathe is the most fundamental physical process determining how you experience your body. It's also the form of fabrication that brings thoughts “into the body”—as when anger changes the way you breathe—turning them from mere thoughts into emotions with a bodily component. Verbal fabrication consists of directed thought and evaluation, the two mental processes that shape how you frame sentences in talking to yourself. Directed thought focuses on a topic; evaluation asks questions and comments on it. Mental fabrication consists of feelings—of pleasure, pain, and neither pleasure nor pain—and perceptions, the words and images that underlie your thought processes. Feelings and perceptions are the most basic factors in shaping your mental states.

These three types of fabrication interact with one another. The way you breathe affects your feelings and thoughts; pleasant and unpleasant feelings affect your breath; your perception of the breath affects the way you breathe as well as providing the underlying images and words that directed thought and evaluation use in composing sentences in the mind.

If these fabrications act under the influence of ignorance—i.e., ignorance of what suffering is, what fabrications cause it, what its cessation is, and what fabrications lead to its cessation—then they lead to suffering. However, if this ignorance can be replaced with knowledge, and that knowledge can inform the processes of fabrication, those fabrications can then form the path to the goal of the cessation of suffering, which is something unfabricated—or beyond conditions (§6.1).

This is why the Buddha's most basic form of meditation—mindfulness of in-and-out breathing—focuses on perceiving the present experience of body and mind in terms of these three fabrications, and seeing the effect these fabrications have in causing pleasure or pain (§6.4). In doing so, it brings clear knowledge to these fabrications, making them part of the path. The Buddha's directions for how to meditate on the breath come in the form of verbal fabrications. The steps of breath meditation focus on developing sensitivity to bodily and mental fabrication as they occur; and they don't stop with simple sensitivity. They also encourage the meditator to master cause and effect around these fabrications so as to bring them to calm. For example, you can learn how to calm the mind by breathing in a soothing way, and to calm the breath by holding in mind a perception that allows for a smooth flow of energy throughout the body. In this way the Buddha's instructions for breath meditation show how to fabricate the present experience of body and mind in a way that fosters the tranquility and insight that bring the path to completion.

The mastery of fabrication gained through this practice can then be applied to all emotions and mental states so as to deconstruct unskillful ones and replace them with more skillful ones. The opposites of the brahmavihāras—ill will, cruelty, resentment, and passion (§5.12)—are a case in point. The knowledge and sensitivity you've gained with regard to fabrication enables you to analyze these emotions in terms of their component parts, encouraging you to see how the way you breathe, speak to yourself, and hold onto feelings and perceptions sustains these emotions

in a way that causes unnecessary suffering and stress. The mastery you've gained in calming fabrications allows you to change these component factors so that you can develop the brahmavihāras in their place.

The Buddha's discourses aid in this direction by providing alternative ways of thinking, evaluating, and perceiving that encourage you in this practice and provide you with strategies to carry it through. In other words, with their vivid images and similes they provide models of verbal and mental fabrications that help you see the drawbacks, say, of ill will; encourage you to perceive the brahmavihāras as more skillful responses to the situation that has sparked ill will; and show how to reframe your understanding of the situation that sparked ill will, so that you can genuinely develop goodwill in its place.

For instance, when you pass judgment on another person's behavior, the underlying perception in your mind may be that you are sitting on a judge's bench, the other person stands accused beneath you, and you are unaffected by whatever suffering you would like to see that person undergo. In a case like this, you might feel it beneath you to look for that person's good qualities as a way of encouraging goodwill or compassion for the person instead. [AN 5:162 \(§6.7\)](#), however, provides an alternative perception of the situation: You need to appreciate that person's good qualities in the same way that a person trembling with thirst needs water. Otherwise, your own goodness will die. In fact, your need for this water is so great that you should be willing to endure the "indignity" of looking for that person's good qualities, in the same way that a desperately thirsty person would be willing to get down on all fours to slurp up the puddle of water in a cow's footprint.

Similarly, [MN 21 \(§6.9\)](#) provides a series of similes that encourage you to perceive goodwill as vast and impregnable, and to perceive as pitiful and weak the insults that otherwise might tempt you to abandon your goodwill. Goodwill, it says, is like space, like the river Ganges, like the great earth. The insults you meet with are like a person who wants to draw pictures in space, burn up the Ganges with a torch, or get rid of the earth by digging, spitting, and urinating here and there on the ground. Simply holding this mental fabrication in mind can help you endure many slights that you otherwise would find hard to handle in a skillful way. In fact, the same passage states that even if bandits were to carve you up savagely into pieces

you should still have goodwill for them. When you keep this perception in mind, the slights and insults of ordinary human life become easier to bear.

[Khp 9 \(§1.2\)](#) provides another useful mental fabrication: You should develop and protect your goodwill for all in the same way that a mother would protect with her life her only child.

In addition to providing useful examples of mental fabrication for discouraging ill will and developing goodwill, the discourses provide examples of useful verbal fabrications as well. When you encounter abusive or thoughtless speech, [MN 21](#) encourages you to check any ill will that might arise in response by reminding yourself that speech of this sort is a normal part of human experience. People all over the world are subjected to harsh, false, and untimely speech every day, so there's no need to feel that you've been singled out for particularly outrageous treatment. Other passages provide examples of phrases to keep in mind when trying to develop positive feelings of goodwill, such as this example from AN 10:176 ([§1.3](#)): "May these beings be free from animosity, free from oppression, free from trouble, and may they look after themselves with ease!" Or this from [Khp 9 \(§1.2\)](#): "Happy, at rest, may all beings be happy at heart. Whatever beings there may be—weak or strong, without exception, long, large, middling, short, subtle, blatant, seen & unseen, near & far, born & seeking birth: May all beings be happy at heart. Let no one deceive another or despise anyone anywhere, or through anger or irritation wish for another to suffer."

The discourses also provide useful examples of mental and verbal fabrication for developing equanimity. [SN 15:3 \(§6.13\)](#) encourages you, when faced with loss, to hold in mind the perception that the tears you have already shed over the loss of loved ones through the many eons of wandering on is greater than the water in the oceans. [AN 5:49 \(§6.12\)](#) encourages a verbal fabrication: "It doesn't happen only to me that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. And if, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy." Paradoxically, reflection on the

universality of suffering helps to lessen the sting of your own personal loss: You're not being singled out for unfair treatment, for loss and suffering are common throughout the cosmos.

MN 28 (§6.10) encourages a long verbal fabrication for developing equanimity in the face of unpleasant words and physical attacks, beginning with the reflection that all these unpleasant sensations develop through physical contact. You wouldn't be feeling the pain of unpleasant words if a sound hadn't made contact at your ears. You wouldn't be feeling a physical attack if you didn't have a body that something could strike. If, by reflecting in this way, you can leave the event just at the contact—without adding the complaining commentary that the mind usually adds to such events—it helps to depersonalize the situation, and you free the mind from a huge load of unnecessary suffering and stress.

When you have gained skill in using these forms of fabrication in daily life, you can use them to develop the brahmavihāras beyond the level of right resolve to the various jhānas, or levels of right concentration. This is because the levels of concentration begin with the three types of fabrication and then, when mastering those fabrications, bring them to stillness and calm.

The discourses provide only very sketchy instructions for how to develop the brahmavihāras to this level, perhaps because the verbal fabrications used in developing these themes into right concentration are the same as those for developing the brahmavihāras in daily life. However, the discourses do provide a vivid perception—a mental fabrication—for indicating the type of mind state that this practice should foster: “That disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill... compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, expansive, limitless, without hostility, without ill will—just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty.”

As with all the objects of right concentration, you can be quite conscious at the beginning of just how fabricated the concentration based on the

brahmavihāras can be. However, as the practice progresses and these states become easier to access, this fact often fades into the background. This does not mean, though, that they become unfabricated; simply that the mind offers less resistance to the processes of skillful fabrication. Nevertheless, meditators can easily miss this point, and the discourses provide cautionary tales of people who, thinking that their practice has reached an unconditioned level, practice no further.

In fact, the levels of concentration developed through the brahmavihāras are not only conditioned—and thus subject to falling away—they also provide a focus for self-identification as you hold to those levels as you or yours (§7.4). This self-identification is a form of clinging that brings suffering. Thus the brahmavihāras, on their own, can't take you to the end of the path.

The next step is to use your head—your discernment—to focus on the fabricated nature of even the refined pleasure and calm provided by the brahmavihāras (§§7.9–7.10). Your purpose here is to help the heart develop dispassion for all fabricated phenomena. Because passion is what drives the processes of fabrication, once dispassion is absolute, all fabrications cease and the mind “unbinds,” gaining total release from suffering and reaching the highest possible happiness: the goal toward which the brahmavihāras ultimately aim (§§7.11–7.14).

After the experience of the deathless, the mind returns to the experience of the world of the senses, but now with a sense of being detached from the pleasures and pains they display. This is because the mind's own internal sense of wellbeing and freedom is so absolute that it feels no need to feed on the input of the senses ever again.

When you've reached this level—full awakening—your own task in searching for happiness is done. Head and heart have completed the work they need to do together for your own sake. However, having perfected the path, you can provide an inspiring example and accurate advice to others in *their* search for happiness. In this way, the act of attaining your own true benefit helps others attain theirs as well. The fully awakened person is thus the one who most effectively embodies the brahmavihāras in thought, word, and deed.

This is how the brahmavihāras relate to the Buddhist path.

III : SEVEN MISUNDERSTANDINGS

When understood in context, the brahmavihāras are effective tools on the path to awakening. But unfortunately, now that the brahmavihāras have come to the West, they have often been taken out of context, giving rise to confusion about their nature and role. This may be because they deal with emotions that are common human property, so people feel that they intuitively understand them without needing to have their Buddhist context explained. Or it may be because the West has such a long tradition concerning the religious role of selfless love. Seeing that goodwill resembles selfless love, many people have assumed that the Buddha's teachings on this topic fit neatly in with what they have learned from Western religions.

Whatever their cause, these assumptions have given rise to some misunderstandings around brahmavihāra practice that are serious enough to get in the way of awakening. Most prominent among this sort of misunderstanding are these:

- 1) *Mettā*, the first brahmavihāra, means love or lovingkindness.
- 2) The practice of the brahmavihāras is a form of prayer.
- 3) *Mettā* is best expressed by acts of uncritical tenderness.
- 4) The brahmavihāras are part of the innate nature of the human heart.
- 5) Other people deserve our *mettā*, either because of their own innate goodness or because we are all one.
- 6) The brahmavihāras are purely heart qualities, needing no input from the analytical mind.
- 7) The brahmavihāras are, in themselves, a complete path to awakening.

Many of these misunderstandings arise from not viewing the brahmavihāras in the context of the Buddha's teachings on kamma and fabrication. Because they are so widely entrenched, it's worthwhile going into detail as to why they are actually detrimental on the path, and how a proper understanding of kamma and fabrication can help avoid that detriment. Delineating clearly what the brahmavihāras are *not* helps to clarify what they *are*.

What follows is a discussion, one by one, of exactly how these misunderstandings deviate from the Buddha's original teachings on the brahmavihāras, and how they can be corrected by examining what those teachings actually have to say about the issues that these misunderstandings raise.

This discussion is supplemented by the reading passages given in the second part of the book. These passages—drawn from the Pali Canon, the earliest extant record of the Buddha's teachings—have also been arranged in seven sections, corresponding to the seven sections in the discussion, so that you can easily find the material on which the discussion is based and explore it further.

The purpose of this presentation is to clear away any obstacles that might block the use for which the brahmavihāras were intended: as part of a path to the happiness of total release.

Misunderstanding # 1: Mettā means love or lovingkindness.

The Pali word for love is not *mettā*. It's *pema*. As the Buddha points out, *pema* is partial by nature. When you love people, you tend to love anyone who treats them well, and to hate anyone who mistreats them. And there are cases where you love anyone who mistreats the people you hate (§1.1). For this reason, love is not a good basis for an attitude that is universally skillful toward all.

Because *mettā* is essentially an impartial wish for happiness, it's best translated as goodwill. When goodwill is developed in line with right view, it understands that beings will be happy only from understanding and acting on the causes of genuine happiness, rather than from winning special favor with you. In this way, when you extend thoughts of *mettā* to others, you're not offering to make them happy, as you might in a loving relationship. Instead, you're expressing the wish that they take responsibility for their happiness themselves. If there's anything you can do to help them in this direction, you're happy to provide help; but you realize that—because they need to be willing to work for genuine happiness—you can only do so much. In this way, goodwill won't conflict with equanimity when you've reached the point beyond your ability to help.

This understanding of mettā is borne out in the passages where the Buddha recommends phrases to hold in mind when developing thoughts of mettā. These phrases provide his clearest guide not only to the emotional quality that underlies mettā, but also to the understanding of happiness that explains why it's wise and realistic to develop mettā for all.

The first set of phrases comes in a passage (§1.3) where the Buddha recommends thoughts to counter ill will. These phrases conclude with the wish that all beings “look after themselves with ease.” In other words, you're not saying that you're going to be there for all beings all the time. And most beings would be happier knowing that they could depend on themselves rather than having to depend on you. If you really wish others well, it's best to wish them the happiness of independence and self-reliance.

Another set of mettā phrases, in the famous *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* (§1.2), includes a wish that all beings avoid the causes that would lead them to unhappiness:

Let no one deceive another
or despise anyone anywhere,
or through anger or resistance
wish for another to suffer.

In repeating these phrases, you remember that people will find true happiness only if they understand the causes for happiness and act on them. They also have to understand that true happiness is harmless. If it depends on something that harms others, it's not going to last (§5.4). So again, when you express goodwill, you're not saying that you're going to be there for others all the time. Instead, you're hoping that all beings will wise up enough to be there for themselves.

The same discourse (§1.2) goes on to say that when you're developing this attitude, you should protect it with all your vigilance and strength.

As a mother would risk her life
to protect her child, her only child,
even so should one cultivate a limitless heart
with regard to all beings.

This passage has to be read carefully and in context. It's sometimes understood as saying that we should be willing to sacrifice our lives to protect all others, in the same way that a mother would sacrifice her life for the sake of her child. Putting aside the fact that such a requirement is simply impossible to carry out, there is nowhere in the Canon where the Buddha states this as a moral responsibility. You can't stop all those who want to mistreat their fellow beings. The best you can do to protect others is to adhere in all cases to the precepts against doing harm, so at the very least they will suffer no harm from you.

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. [Similarly with the precepts against stealing, illicit sex, lying, and taking intoxicants.]" [\(§5.8\)](#)

There *are* passages, however, where the Buddha says that you should protect your goodwill with your life, even when others are intent on killing you in a savage way:

"Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely into pieces with a two-handled saw, he among you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding. Even then you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic, with a mind of goodwill, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with an awareness imbued with goodwill and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves." [\(§6.9\)](#)

So in the Buddha's image of the mother protecting the child, the child represents your goodwill—something you need to protect devotedly to make sure that your virtuous intentions don't waver, even in the most difficult situations. Harm can happen most easily when there's a lapse in

your goodwill, so you do whatever you can to foster this attitude at all times. This is why, as the Buddha says toward the end of the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta*, you should stay determined to practice this form of mindfulness: the mindfulness of keeping in mind your wish that all beings be happy, to make sure that it always informs the motivation for everything you do.

Finally, there's a passage (§1.4) where the Buddha teaches the monks a chant for spreading goodwill to all snakes and other creeping things they encounter in the wilds. Strikingly, the chant concludes with the sentence, "May the beings depart." This wisely takes into consideration the truth that living together is often difficult—especially for beings of different species that can harm one another—and the happiest policy for all concerned is often to live harmlessly apart.

These different ways of expressing mettā show that mettā does not equal lovingkindness. Mettā is better thought of as goodwill, for two principal reasons. The first is that goodwill is an attitude you can express for everyone without fear of being hypocritical or unrealistic. It recognizes that people will become truly happy not as a result of your caring for them but as a result of their own skillful actions, and that the happiness of self-reliance is greater than any happiness coming from dependency.

The second reason is that goodwill is a more skillful feeling to have toward those who would react unskillfully to your lovingkindness. There are people who, when seeing that you want to express lovingkindness, would be quick to take advantage of it. There are also people you've harmed in the past who would rather not have anything to do with you ever again, so the intimacy of lovingkindness would actually be a source of pain for them, rather than joy. And there are plenty of animals out there who would feel threatened by any overt expressions of love from a human being. In these cases, a more distant sense of goodwill—that you promise yourself never to harm those people or those beings, and that you wish them well—would be better for everyone involved.

This doesn't mean that lovingkindness is never an appropriate expression of goodwill. You simply have to know when it's appropriate and when it's not. If you truly feel mettā for yourself and others, you can't let your desire for warm feelings of love and intimacy blind you to what would actually be the most skillful way to promote true happiness for all.

Misunderstanding # 2: The practice of the brahmavihāras is a form of prayer.

As the Buddha points out, if people could find happiness simply through the power of prayer, no one in the world would be short-lived, ugly, unhappy, or poor. Happiness has to come from taking actions that function as the causes of happiness (§2.1). To perform these actions, you need to set your resolve on them, because they take effort. And because the thoughts on which you resolve bend your mind in their direction, you have to train your resolves so that they lead consistently in a skillful direction (§2.5). This is why the brahmavihāras are a *practice*, something you work on again and again. You try to make them unlimited so that even in difficult circumstances you will keep in mind the need to act in ways that cause harm to no one—neither yourself nor others.

For these reasons, the practice of the brahmavihāras is a matter, not of prayer, but of resolve.

Misunderstanding # 3: Mettā is best expressed by acts of uncritical tenderness.

The word *mettā* is closely allied with the word *mitta*, or friend. It's the quality of heart that one genuine friend offers to another. There are many kinds of friendship—true and false, skillful and unskillful—and it's obvious that the quality of *mettā* the Buddha recommends is that of a friendship skillful and true.

The Pali Canon recognizes two types of worthwhile friends. The first is the *loyal* friend: One who is generous and steadfast, working for your benefit even when times are difficult, encouraging you when you're right, correcting you when you're wrong, and willing even to sacrifice his or her life for your sake (§§3.1–3.2). The second type of friend is the *admirable* friend: one whose behavior is exemplary in terms of conviction, virtue, generosity, discernment, and—if possible—in the noble attainments; and who encourages you to emulate his or her good qualities in yourself (§§3.3; 3.6–3.7).

As the Buddha says, the loyal friend is to be treasured; the admirable friend is to be emulated. The loyal friend is obviously one who feels love

(*pema*) for you, and so is partial toward you. For this reason, this sort of friend, even though worth treasuring, is not the best model for developing universal goodwill, because partiality stands in the way of a mind state that's truly universal. Still, it's worth noting that even the loyal friend doesn't adopt an uncritical attitude toward your behavior, and doesn't encourage you to engage in activities—such as killing, stealing, illicit sex, lying, and taking intoxicants—that would go against the precepts of moral virtue. Because this sort of friend desires your true wellbeing, he or she can be critical and stern to prevent any moral lapses on your part.

The same is true of the admirable friend, who is the ideal model for the development of universal goodwill. This sort of friend is even more scrupulous in wanting you to avoid evil actions and to develop the best and highest qualities of the heart and mind. This is the sort of friend you try to be to the whole world when you develop thoughts of unlimited goodwill.

What this means in embodying the brahmavihāras is that not all acts of tenderness are in line with genuine goodwill; not all critical thoughts or words are harmful.

The Canon makes this point in many ways. To begin with, it states very clearly that a spiritual teacher should not engage in physical intimacy with a student. This is an area where a great deal of damage has been done—in schools, churches, and spiritual communities—over the centuries. However, the Vinaya—the section of the Canon containing the rules by which the monks should live—prohibits this form of behavior in no uncertain terms. A monk who has sexual intercourse with anyone at all is immediately expelled. If a monk even suggests that someone would benefit from having sex with an advanced spiritual practitioner—such as himself—he has to undergo a severe penance.

From the Buddha's point of view, acts of goodwill and compassion must fall within the bounds of the precepts if they are to be genuinely friendly—and he offers no room for the idea that goodwill or compassion can ever be used as excuses for breaking the precepts. In fact, it's only through adhering strictly to the precepts that you are forced to confront subtle unskillful attitudes within yourself that you otherwise might not have noticed or whose long-term harm you might not have seen.

There may be short-term benefits that come from breaking the precepts, but they are outweighed by the long-term harm they cause. If you break a

precept, you harm yourself in creating bad kamma; you harm others in the impact of your actions on them and in setting them a bad example. And it's important to understand what the Buddha counts as harm. It may be necessary to sacrifice your comforts—and sometimes your health and even your life—for things you hold in higher esteem, but that doesn't count as doing yourself harm. True harm is when you abandon the principles of right speech, right action, and right livelihood on the path (§3.5).

Because an understanding of “right” and “wrong” requires critical judgment, the Buddha indicates that there is a place for critical thoughts and words in an attitude of genuine friendship because genuine friendship includes wanting what is right for your friend. Hurting your friend's feelings when aiming at his or her welfare does not count as harm. The image the Buddha gives is of a child who has placed a sharp object in its mouth. You have to get the object out, even if it means drawing blood, for if you let the child swallow the object, it will cause itself even greater harm. In the same way, the Buddha would speak harsh words when and where he saw that they needed to be harsh to have a beneficial effect (§3.4).

His general principle on right speech is that he would speak words that are true and beneficial—note that he does not entertain the idea that false words could be beneficial—knowing when to state those words in pleasing ways, and when to state them in unpleasant ways. In other words, there are cases where pleasant words are *not* wise expressions of goodwill or sympathy. In all cases, his motive is compassionate: the welfare of those who are listening. And as he notes in his discussions of worthwhile friends, this is a quality not only of an admirable friend, but also of a loyal one. It's an expression both of love and of goodwill.

All of this means that mettā is best expressed in your own external behavior by words and deeds that set an upright example to others, and by encouraging others—harshly or gently, as the case may require—to be upright in their behavior as well.

Misunderstanding # 4: The brahmavihāras are part of the innate nature of the human heart.

The Buddha never attributed an innate nature of any kind to the heart—good or bad. In fact, in [AN 4:199](#), he identified the thoughts “I am good”

and “I am bad” among the “craving-verbalizations” that ensnare the mind. If you assume that the heart is basically bad, you won’t feel capable of following the path, and will tend to look for outside help to do the work for you. If you assume that the heart is basically good, you’ll feel capable but will easily get complacent. You won’t exert the scrupulous effort needed to develop the brahmavihāras at all times.

So even though the Buddha’s primary focus was on the *citta*—which can be translated as both *heart* and *mind*—he nowhere defined what the *citta* is. As he said in [SN 22:36](#), if you define yourself, you limit yourself. So instead he focused his assumptions on what the mind can *do*.

To begin with, the mind can change quickly. Normally a master of the apt simile, even the Buddha had to admit that he could find no adequate analogy for how quickly the mind can change ([§4.1](#)). We might say that it can change in the flash of an eye, but it’s actually faster than that.

And it’s capable of all sorts of things. Neither inherently good nor inherently bad, it can do a huge variety of good and bad actions. In the Buddha’s words, the mind is more variegated than the animal kingdom. Think of the many species of fish in the sea, birds in the sky, animals on the land and under the ground, whether extant or extinct: All of these species are products of minds—the acts of mind that caused those beings to be born in those bodies—and the mind can take on a wider variety of forms than even that ([§4.2](#)).

This variety comes from the many different choices the mind makes under the influence of ignorance and defilement. But the mind doesn’t always have to be defiled. Past kamma is not entirely deterministic. Even though past kamma shapes the range of options open to the mind in the present, it doesn’t have to determine present kamma—the intentions by which the mind chooses to fabricate actual experiences from among those options. Thus present kamma can choose to continue creating the conditions for more ignorance, or not, because present choices are what keep ignorance alive. Although no one—not even a Buddha—can trace back to when the defilement of ignorance first began, the continued existence of ignorance depends on conditions continually provided by unskillful kamma. If these conditions are removed, ignorance will disband ([§4.3](#)).

This is why the Buddha said that the mind is luminous, stained with defilements that come and go ([§4.4](#)). Taken out of context, this statement

might be misconstrued as implying that the mind is inherently good, kind, or awakened. But in context the Buddha is simply saying that the mind, once stained, is not permanently stained. When the conditions for the stains are gone, the mind becomes luminous again. But this luminosity is not an awakened nature. As the Buddha states, this luminous mind can be developed. In the scheme of the four noble truths, if something is to be developed it's not the goal; it's part of the path to the goal. After this luminosity has been developed in the advanced stages of concentration, it can be used to help pierce through ignorance, and then—as with all the factors of the path—it is put aside so as to allow the goal to be fully experienced.

What this means is that the brahmavihāras are not innate in the heart or mind, but then neither are their opposites. The heart is capable of either, and which attitudes you fabricate is a matter of choice. This is why the Buddha spent so much time explaining how and why the brahmavihāras should be fabricated and developed to an unlimited level. If these attitudes were innate to the heart, there would be no need for a “how” or a “why.” The brahmavihāras would simply be there, and he would have told you to let them unfold on their own. But because the heart can just as simply go in the other direction, the Buddha did the responsible thing in warning of the dangers of the untrained heart, and did such a thorough job of displaying the benefits of—and explaining the means for—getting it trained.

In fact, it's just as well that the brahmavihāras are not innate to the heart, for if they were, they would get in the way of total release. You'd need to stay in a universe where there would be objects for your goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. You would never reach the freedom of a dimension where awareness has no need for objects at all.

Misunderstanding # 5: Other people deserve our mettā, either because of their own innate goodness or because we are all one.

This is a misunderstanding on two levels.

The first level concerns other people: Just as we are not innately good, neither are they. Their hearts are as vastly variable as ours.

And the Buddha never said that we are all one. When asked if the cosmos is a oneness or a multiplicity, he declined to answer, as the question

was irrelevant to the practice for ending suffering (§5.1). He taught the interdependence of events, not as a celebration of oneness or interconnectedness, but as a way of showing that all interdependent events are unstable and destined to pass away. On their own, they don't provide a reliable happiness. The appropriate way to respond to this insight is to use interdependent events skillfully, with knowledge, to reach a dimension totally free from dependency of any kind.

As for the oneness that can be experienced in meditation, the Buddha saw that it was a fabricated state, and so wasn't the ultimate attainment (§5.2). As with all states of concentration, he saw the danger in giving a metaphysical meaning to the experience—as a ground of being or ultimate reality—and instead advised the meditator to see how the state was fabricated so as to develop dispassion for it and to achieve freedom from its limitations.

So the Buddha never stated that all beings are good, or that we are all one. These ideas have nothing to do with his motivation for teaching the brahmavihāras or ours for developing them.

This leads to the second level of misunderstanding here. The fact is, we don't develop the brahmavihāras toward others because they deserve it. If we did, the unskillful parts of the mind could easily find proof that beings don't deserve our goodwill or compassion at all. The truth is, though, that we develop the brahmavihāras because we need these attitudes for the sake of our own happiness and protection.

This realization grows from a quality the Buddha called heedfulness (*appamāda*), and that he identified as the source of all good and skillful qualities in the mind (§5.3). In other words, we act skillfully toward others not because we're innately kind or because they deserve it. We do so because we realize that if we don't, it will lead to our long-term suffering. The principle of kamma shows that, if we want to live peacefully and harmoniously in this life, we need to develop the brahmavihāras toward all. If we want to train our hearts to the point where we can depend on them not to create bad kamma in the present or on into the future, we need these attitudes to be universal in our hearts.

Heedfulness even helps to protect us from our past kamma: Because our present experience is shaped both by past and by present kamma, the attitudes we bring to the potentials we encounter from our past kamma can

play a huge role in determining whether we will shape those potentials into pleasure or pain. If the mind is expansive and unlimited—a quality developed through the brahmavihāras—then the results of past bad actions will hardly be felt, in the same way that, if a river is filled with clean water, a lump of salt thrown into the river won't make the water unfit to drink. However, if the mind is narrow and restricted, the results of past bad actions will be like a lump of salt thrown into a small cup of water: The water will be overwhelmed by the salt (§5.14).

So, through heedfulness, we develop the brahmavihāras primarily for our own protection. And through protecting ourselves, we protect others as well (§5.10).

Misunderstanding # 6: The brahmavihāras are purely heart qualities, needing no input from the analytical mind.

Although it is possible to develop warm feelings without much help from the head, the brahmavihāras are much more than warm feelings. As we've already noted, you have to practice them within the context of right view concerning kamma and fabrication if you want to make them a part of the path.

We've also noted the ways in which an awareness of the three types of fabrication can help (a) in dismantling any attitudes that get in the way of the brahmavihāras, (b) in fashioning the brahmavihāras in their place, and (c) in making the brahmavihāras universal. And we've noted some of the ways in which a knowledge of kamma helps to understand what it means to have goodwill for all—wishing that they act on the causes of true happiness—and that we express that goodwill best by being a good example in our own behavior.

But it's worth paying attention to two further ways in which an understanding of kamma helps in developing the brahmavihāras. The first way deals with situations in which you might be tempted to treat people with equanimity when in fact a more appropriate response would be compassion or empathetic joy. The second way deals with the opposite problem: not being able to feel equanimity when in fact that is the appropriate attitude to develop. In other words, the analytical mind is

useful for determining which brahmavihāra to develop at which place and time.

a) A proper understanding of kamma helps to correct the false idea that if people are suffering they deserve to suffer, so you might as well be equanimous and just leave them alone. When you catch yourself thinking in those terms, try to keep four principles in mind.

First, remember that when you look at people, you can't see all the karmic seeds from their past actions. They may be experiencing the results of past bad actions, but you don't know when those seeds will stop sprouting. Also, you have no idea what other seeds, what wonderful latent potentials, will sprout in their place.

There's a saying in some Buddhist circles that if you want to see a person's past actions, you look at his present condition; if you want to see his future condition, you look at his present actions. This principle, however, is based on a basic misperception: that we each have a single karmic account, and what we see in the present is the current running balance in each person's account. Actually, no one's karmic history is a single account. It's composed of the many different seeds planted in many places through the many different actions we've done in the past, each seed maturing at its own rate. Some of these seeds have already sprouted and disappeared; some are sprouting now; some will sprout in the future. This means that a person's present condition reflects only a small portion of his or her past actions. As for the other seeds, you can't see them at all.

This reflection helps you when developing compassion, for it reminds you that you never know when the possibility to help somebody can have an effect. The seeds of the other person's past bad actions may be flowering right now but they could die at any time. You may happen to be the person who's there to help when that person is ready to receive help.

The same pattern applies to empathetic joy. Suppose that your neighbor is wealthier than you are. You may resist feeling empathetic joy for him because you think, "He's already well-off, while I'm still struggling. Why should I wish him to be even happier than he is?" If you find yourself thinking in those terms, remind yourself that you don't know what your karmic seeds are; you don't know what his karmic seeds are. Maybe his good karmic seeds are about to die. Do you want them to die any faster? Does his happiness diminish yours? What kind of attitude is that?

The second principle to keep in mind is that, in the Buddha's teaching, there's no question of a person's "deserving" happiness or "deserving" pain. The principle of kamma is an impersonal one: that there are actions leading to pleasure and actions leading to pain. In this way, it's not a respecter of persons; it's purely an issue of actions and results. Good people may have some bad actions squirreled away in their past. People who seem horrible now may have some wonderful actions in theirs. You never know. The Buddha didn't create the principle of kamma, or say that it's good or just. He simply pointed out the way actions produce results.

So there's no question of a person's deserving or not deserving pleasure or pain. There's simply the principle that actions have results and that your present experience of pleasure or pain is the combined result of past and present actions. You may have some very unskillful actions in your past, but if you learn to think and act skillfully when those actions bear fruit in the present, you don't have to suffer.

A third principle applies to the question of whether the person who's suffering "deserves" your compassion. Because no human being has a totally pure karmic past, if you make a person's purity the basis for extending your compassion, there will be no one to whom you can extend it.

Some people resist the idea that, for example, children born into a warzone, suffering from brutality and starvation, are there for a karmic reason. It seems heartless, they say, to attribute these sufferings to kamma from past lives. The only heartlessness here, though, is the insistence that people are worthy of compassion only if they are innocent of any wrongdoing. Actually, people who are doing wrong are just as deserving of our compassion as those who are being wronged. There's no need to like or admire the people for whom you feel compassion. All you have to do is wish for them to be happy. Then you do what you can to alleviate the suffering that comes from past mistakes and to stop the mistaken behavior that causes suffering now and into the future. The more you can develop this attitude toward people you *know* have misbehaved or are misbehaving, the more you'll be able to trust your intentions in any situation.

The fourth principle to remember concerns the kamma you're creating right now in reaction to other people's pleasure and pain. If you're resentful of somebody else's happiness, someday when you get happy there's going

to be somebody resentful of yours. So ask yourself: Would you want that? Or if you're hard-hearted toward somebody who's suffering right now, someday you may face the same sort of suffering. Would you want people to be hard-hearted toward you? Always remember that your reactions are a form of kamma, so be mindful to create the kind of kamma that gives the results you'd like to see.

b) The principle of kamma is also important to understand when you want to feel goodwill and compassion at times when equanimity would actually be more appropriate. No matter how unlimited the scope of your good wishes, their effect is going to run into limits. In the first place, there are limits to your own time and energy. In the second, there are bound to be people whose past actions are unskillful and who cannot or will not change their ways in the present. And there are times when your own past kamma gets in the way of your present desires for happiness. This is why you need equanimity as your reality check. When you encounter areas where you can't be of help, you learn not to get upset. When you encounter areas where you can't change your circumstances, or you meet up with obstacles in your path to awakening, you learn not to resent the fact. Think about the universality of the principle of kamma: It applies to you—and to everyone else regardless of whether you like them or not.

Accepting this fact puts you in a position where you can see more clearly what *can* be changed, where you *can* be of help. In other words, equanimity isn't a blanket acceptance of things as they are. It's a tool for helping you to develop discernment as to which kinds of suffering you have to accept and which ones you don't. For example, someone in your family may be suffering from Alzheimer's. If you get upset about the fact of the disease, you're limiting your ability to be genuinely helpful. To be more effective, you have to use equanimity as a means of letting go of what you *want* to change and focusing more on what *can* be changed in the present.

Understanding this point can help you see equanimity as a positive thing, and you find it easier to develop it when you need to.

These are some of the ways in which the heart of the brahmavihāras benefits from the insights offered by the head of right view.

Misunderstanding # 7: The brahmavihāras are, in themselves, a complete path to awakening.

The brahmavihāras provide a peaceful abiding in the here and now, and—as the Buddha points out—after death can lead to rebirth in the Brahmā worlds. In terms of the path to awakening, however, they function directly—as we have noted—in only two of the eight factors of the path: right resolve and right concentration. To lead all the way to awakening, they need the assistance of all the factors of the path acting together.

To begin with, [Khp 9 \(§1.2\)](#) shows that the development of goodwill needs to be based on developing virtue in word, deed, and livelihood so as not to be hypocritical. This point applies to the other brahmavihāras as well.

Other discourses show why the concentration developed through the brahmavihāras needs to be supplemented by discernment to lead all the way to awakening.

[AN 4:125 \(§7.8\)](#), for example, states that each of the brahmavihāras, when practiced on its own, leads to rebirth in a particular Brahmā world, with goodwill leading to the lowest of the four—the Ābhassara, or Radiant Brahmās—and equanimity leading to the highest, the Vehapphala, or Sky-fruit Brahmās. [DN 1](#) indicates that although these levels are not destroyed with the destruction of the rest of the universe at the end of each cosmic cycle, the beings who live there can still fall from those levels and experience rebirth on a lower plane elsewhere when a new universe evolves.

In fact, [AN 4:125](#) states explicitly that a person who practices the brahmavihāras without having become a noble disciple—in other words, without having reached the first level of awakening—can, after having lived out the life span of a Brahmā in any of these four Brahmā worlds, be reborn in any of the lowest realms of the universe: in hell, as an animal, or as a hungry ghost. Thus the attainment of a Brahmā world is not equivalent to nibbāna, which constitutes total release from the universe as a whole.

Two other discourses show clearly that the difference between nibbāna and union with Brahmā is anything but an idle issue, for it touches on the long-term consequences of choices made at the moment of death. Both discourses state clearly that if a dying person has his mind set on any of the

Brahmā worlds, he should be told the drawbacks of those worlds so that he can set his mind on the higher goal of release.

The first discourse (§7.6) makes this point in a fairly poignant manner. The brahman Dhanañjānin, a former student of Ven. Sāriputta, is dying and asks for Sāriputta to visit him. Dhanañjānin has been negligent as a meditator, and Sāriputta, on arrival, reflects, “These brahmins are set on the Brahmā world. What if I were to teach Dhanañjānin the brahman the path to union with the brahmas?” So he teaches him the way to union with the Brahmās, and Dhanañjānin, on dying, is actually reborn in a Brahmā world. However, when Sāriputta returns to the Buddha, the latter chides him for directing Dhanañjānin to an inferior goal at the moment of death when he could have directed him to a higher one.

The second discourse (§7.7) explains why the Brahmā worlds are an inferior attainment. In this discourse, the Buddha’s cousin, Mahānāma asks the Buddha for instructions on how to advise a wise person who is about to die. The Buddha replies that if the dying person is plagued by worries about his family, he should be reminded that his worries at this point cannot help his family, so he should let those worries go. If he is fixated on human sensual pleasures, he should be told that human sensual pleasures are no match for the pleasures of the sensual heavens, so he should focus his mind on those heavens instead. If he’s fixated on the pleasures of the sensual heavens, he should be told that even those are inferior to the pleasures of the Brahmā world, and he should instead focus his thoughts there.

If the dying person is fixated on the Brahmā world, he should be told that even the Brahmā world is “inconstant, impermanent, and included in self-identification.” In other worlds, the Brahmā worlds are unstable, and the beings reborn there still have a sense of identification with the five clinging-aggregates: form, feeling, perception, fabrications, and consciousness. Because this identification is a fetter dropped even at the first stage of awakening, the Brahmā worlds are inferior to that level of attainment. For this reason, the dying person should be told to focus on the cessation of identification. If he can do that as he dies, then even though he may be a layperson, his release is in no way inferior to the release of a monk whose mind is released.

The limitations of the Brahmā worlds are directly connected to the limitations of the brahmavihāras as a path. This connection is especially

clear when we read the Buddha's remarks to Mahānāma in conjunction with [AN 4:178 \(§7.4\)](#). This discourse points out that it's possible to develop a state of concentration based on the brahmavihāras and yet still feel no interest in bringing an end to self-identification. This shows that the brahmavihāras on their own are not enough to arouse that interest. Something more is needed—such as the reflection on the inconstancy, stress, and not-selfness of that state of concentration—to arouse the interest needed to bring self-identification to an end.

Another discourse ([§7.5](#)) makes a similar point: that it's possible to develop a strong state of equanimity in the higher levels of concentration and yet still cling to that equanimity. Only when there is the added determination not to fashion a sense of identification around the equanimity ([§6.16](#)) can that clinging be abandoned.

So it's obvious that the unlimited attitudes of the brahmavihāras do have at least one limit: On their own, they cannot lead to awakening. As a practice, they can't by themselves bring about dispassion for self-identification, and so they can lead only to an inferior goal in which self-identification is present as well.

But when the levels of concentration based on the brahmavihāras are analyzed in terms of the fabrications of which they are composed, the mind can develop dispassion around them ([§§7.9–7.10](#)). In this way, even though the brahmavihāras are not the whole path to awakening, they can play an important part.

To summarize, the correctives for the seven misunderstandings are these:

- 1) *Mettā* means goodwill.
- 2) The practice of the brahmavihāras is an act of resolve to act skillfully for the sake of genuine happiness.
- 3) *Mettā* is best expressed externally through your own virtue and by encouraging others to be virtuous as well.
- 4) Because the heart is neither innately good nor innately bad, the brahmavihāras must be intentionally developed.
- 5) We develop the brahmavihāras toward others, not because they deserve it, but primarily for the sake of our own welfare and protection.

6) The brahmavihāras require the help of the analytical mind—one that understands the processes of kamma and fabrication—so that they can be developed skillfully and in an appropriate way.

7) The brahmavihāras act as a motivation to follow the path to awakening, at the same time functioning directly as two factors in the eightfold path: right resolve and right concentration. However, all eight factors of the path need to be developed to arrive at the goal of total release.

When properly understood in these ways, the brahmavihāras can help lead to genuine wellbeing and happiness, both on the mundane level of the worlds of the senses, and on the transcendent level of nibbāna. For this reason, their practice is well worth the time and effort involved—for your own good and for the good of all.

Readings

1. METTĀ DEFINED

§1.1 “Monks, these four things are born. Which four? Love [*pema*] is born of love. Aversion is born of love. Love is born of aversion. Aversion is born of aversion.

“And how is love born of love? There is the case where an individual is pleasing, appealing, & charming to (another) individual. Others treat that individual as pleasing, appealing, & charming, and the other one thinks, ‘This individual is pleasing, appealing, & charming to me. Others treat this individual as pleasing, appealing, & charming.’ He gives rise to love for them. This is how love is born of love.

“And how is aversion born of love? There is the case where an individual is pleasing, appealing, & charming to (another) individual. Others treat that individual as displeasing, unappealing, & not charming, and the other one thinks, ‘This individual is pleasing, appealing, & charming to me. Others treat this individual as displeasing, unappealing, & not charming.’ He gives rise to aversion for them. This is how aversion is born of love.

“And how is love born of aversion? There is the case where an individual is displeasing, unappealing, & not charming to (another) individual. Others treat that individual as displeasing, unappealing, & not charming, and the other one thinks, ‘This individual is displeasing, unappealing, & not charming to me. Others treat this individual as displeasing, unappealing, & not charming.’ He gives rise to love for them. This is how love is born of aversion.

“And how is aversion born of aversion? There is the case where an individual is displeasing, unappealing, & not charming to (another) individual. Others treat that individual as pleasing, appealing, & charming, and the other one thinks, ‘This individual is displeasing, unappealing, & not charming to me. Others treat this individual as pleasing, appealing, & charming.’ He gives rise to aversion for them. This is how aversion is born of aversion.

“Monks, these are the four things that are born.

“Now, on the occasion when a monk, quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, enters & remains in the first jhāna—rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation—then any love of his that is born of love does not come about. Any aversion of his that is born of love... any love of his that is born of aversion... any aversion of his that is born of aversion does not come about.

“On the occasion when a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enters & remains in the second jhāna—rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation, internal assurance—then any love of his that is born of love does not come about. Any aversion of his that is born of love... any love of his that is born of aversion... any aversion of his that is born of aversion does not come about.

“On the occasion when a monk, with the fading of rapture, remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, senses pleasure with the body, and enters & remains in the third jhāna—of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding’—then any love of his that is born of love does not come about. Any aversion of his that is born of love... any love of his that is born of aversion... any aversion of his that is born of aversion does not come about.

“On the occasion when a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain, as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress, enters & remains in the fourth jhāna—purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain—then any love of his that is born of love does not come about. Any aversion of his that is born of love... any love of his that is born of aversion... any aversion of his that is born of aversion does not come about.

“On the occasion when a monk, through the ending of effluents, enters & remains in the effluent-free awareness-release & discernment-release, having directly known & realized them for himself right in the here & now, then any love of his that is born of love is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Any aversion of his that is born of love... any love of his that is born of aversion... any aversion of his that is born of aversion is abandoned, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump,

deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.” — [AN 4:200](#)

§1.2 This is to be done by one skilled in aims
who wants to break through to the state of peace:
Be capable, upright, & straightforward,
easy to instruct, gentle, & not conceited,
content & easy to support,
with few duties, living lightly,
with peaceful faculties, astute,
modest, & no greed for supporters.

Do not do the slightest thing
that the wise would later censure.

Think: *Happy, at rest,*
may all beings be happy at heart.
Whatever beings there may be—
weak or strong, without exception,
long, large,
middling, short,
subtle, blatant,
seen & unseen,
near & far,
born & seeking birth:
May all beings be happy at heart.

Let no one deceive another
or despise anyone anywhere,
or through anger or irritation
wish for another to suffer.

As a mother would risk her life
to protect her child, her only child,
even so should one cultivate a limitless heart
with regard to all beings.
With goodwill for the entire cosmos,
cultivate a limitless heart:
above, below, & all around,

unobstructed, without hostility or hate.
Whether standing, walking,
sitting, or lying down,
as long as one is alert,
one should be determined on this mindfulness.
This is called a Brahmā abiding
here & now.

Not taken with views,
but virtuous & consummate in vision,
having subdued desire for sensual pleasures,
one never again
will lie in the womb. — *Khp 9*

§1.3 “And how is one made pure in three ways by mental action? [1] There is the case where a certain person is not covetous. He doesn’t covet the belongings of others, thinking, ‘O, that what belongs to others would be mine!’ [2] He bears no ill will and is not corrupt in the resolves of his heart. [He thinks,] *‘May these beings be free from animosity, free from oppression, free from trouble, and may they look after themselves with ease!’* [3] He has right view and is not warped in the way he sees things: ‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed. There are fruits & results of good & bad actions. There is this world & the next world. There is mother & father. There are spontaneously reborn beings; there are contemplatives & brahmans who, faring rightly & practicing rightly, proclaim this world & the next after having directly known & realized it for themselves.’ This is how one is made pure in three ways by mental action.” — *AN 10:176*

§1.4 On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī in Jetā’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now, at that time in Sāvatthī a certain monk had died after having been bitten by a snake. Then a large number of monks went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there they said to him, “Lord, just now in Sāvatthī a certain monk died after having been bitten by a snake.”

“Then it’s certain, monks, that that monk didn’t suffuse the four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will. For if he had suffused the four

royal snake lineages with a mind of good will, he would not have died after having been bitten by a snake. Which four? The Virūpakkha royal snake lineage [the lineage of the nāgas], the Erāpatha royal snake lineage, the Chabyāputta royal snake lineage, the Dark Gotamaka royal snake lineage. It's certain that that monk didn't suffuse these four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will. For if he had suffused these four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will, he would not have died after having been bitten by a snake. I allow you, monks, to suffuse these four royal snake lineages with a mind of good will for the sake of self-protection, self-guarding, self-preservation."

I have goodwill for the Virūpakkhas,
goodwill for the Erāpathas,
goodwill for the Chabyāputtas,
goodwill for the Dark Gotamakas.
I have goodwill for footless beings,
goodwill for two-footed beings,
goodwill for four-footed beings,
goodwill for many-footed beings.
May footless beings do me no harm.
May two-footed beings do me no harm.
May four-footed beings do me no harm.
May many-footed beings do me no harm.
May all creatures,
all breathing things,
all beings
—each & every one—
meet with good fortune.
May none of them come to any evil.
Limitless is the Buddha,
limitless the Dhamma,
limitless the Saṅgha.
There is a limit to creeping things:
snakes, scorpions, centipedes,
spiders, lizards, & rats.
I have made this safeguard,
I have made this protection.

May the beings depart.
I pay homage
to the Blessed One,
homage
to the seven
rightly self-awakened ones. — [*AN 4:67*](#)

§1.5 *This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:* “Monks, don’t be afraid of acts of merit. This is a synonym for what is blissful, desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming—i.e., acts of merit. I directly know that, having long performed meritorious deeds, I long experienced desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming results. Having developed a mind of good will for seven years, then for seven eons of contraction & expansion I didn’t return to this world. Whenever the eon was contracting, I entered the [realm of] Radiance. Whenever the eon was expanding, I reappeared in an empty Brahmā-abode. There I was Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Unconquered Conqueror, Total Seer, Wielder of Power. Then for thirty-six times I was Sakka, ruler of the gods. For many hundreds of times I was a king, a wheel-turning emperor, a righteous king of Dhamma, conqueror of the four corners of the earth, maintaining stable control over the countryside, endowed with the seven treasures—to say nothing of the times I was a local king. The thought occurred to me, ‘Of what action of mine is this the fruit, of what action the result, that I now have such great power & might?’ Then the thought occurred to me, ‘This is the fruit of my three [types of] action, the result of three types of action, that I now have such great power & might: i.e., generosity, self-control, & restraint.’”

Train in acts of merit
that yield the foremost profit of bliss—
develop generosity,
a life in tune,
a mind of goodwill.
Developing these
three things
that bring about bliss,
the wise reappear
in a world of bliss

unalloyed. — [*Iti 22*](#)

§1.6 “When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the *knowledge of recollecting my past lives*. I recollected my manifold past lives, i.e., one birth, two... five, ten... fifty, a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, many eons of cosmic contraction, many eons of cosmic expansion, many eons of cosmic contraction & expansion: ‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of pleasure & pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-arose here.’ Thus I recollected my manifold past lives in their modes & details.

“This was the first knowledge I attained in the first watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

“When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the *knowledge of the passing away & reappearance of beings*. I saw—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma: ‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech & mind, who reviled noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—with the breakup of the body, after death, have reappeared in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, & mind, who did not revile noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—with the break-up of the body, after death, have re-appeared in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ Thus—by means of the divine eye, purified & surpassing the human—I saw beings passing away & re-appearing, and I discerned how they are inferior & superior, beautiful & ugly, fortunate & unfortunate in accordance with their kamma.

"This was the second knowledge I attained in the second watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute.

"When the mind was thus concentrated, purified, bright, unblemished, rid of defilement, pliant, malleable, steady, & attained to imperturbability, I directed it to the *knowledge of the ending of effluents* [*āsavas*]. I discerned, as it had come to be, that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress... These are effluents... This is the origination of effluents... This is the cessation of effluents... This is the way leading to the cessation of effluents.' My heart, thus knowing, thus seeing, was released from the effluent of sensuality, released from the effluent of becoming, released from the effluent of ignorance. With release, there was the knowledge, 'Released.' I discerned that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"This was the third knowledge I attained in the third watch of the night. Ignorance was destroyed; knowledge arose; darkness was destroyed; light arose—as happens in one who is heedful, ardent, & resolute." — [*MN 4*](#)

§1.7 Hunger: the foremost illness.

Fabrications: the foremost pain.

For one knowing this truth

as it actually is,

unbinding

is the foremost bliss.

Freedom from illness: the foremost good fortune.

Contentment: the foremost wealth.

Trust: the foremost kinship.

Unbinding: the foremost bliss. — [*Dhp 203–204*](#)

2. PRAYER VS. RESOLVE

§2.1 Then Anāthapiṇḍika the householder went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him: “These five things, householder, are welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world. Which five?

“Long life is welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world.

“Beauty is welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world.

“Happiness is welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world.

“Status is welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world.

“Rebirth in heaven is welcome, agreeable, pleasant, & hard to obtain in the world.

“Now, I tell you, these five things are not to be obtained by reason of prayers or wishes. If they were to be obtained by reason of prayers or wishes, who here would lack them?

“It’s not fitting for the disciple of the noble ones who desires long life to pray for it or to delight in doing so. Instead, the disciple of the noble ones who desires long life should follow the path of practice leading to long life. In so doing, he will attain long life, either human or divine.

“... the disciple of the noble ones who desires beauty should follow the path of practice leading to beauty... *the disciple of the noble ones who desires happiness should follow the path of practice leading to happiness.* In so doing, he will attain happiness, either human or divine... the disciple of the noble ones who desires status should follow the path of practice leading to status...

“It’s not fitting for the disciple of the noble ones who desires rebirth in heaven to pray for it or to delight in doing so. Instead, the disciple of the noble ones who desires rebirth in heaven should follow the path of practice leading to rebirth in heaven. In so doing, he will attain rebirth in heaven.” — [AN 5:43](#)

§2.2 “Suppose a man were to throw a large boulder into a deep lake of water, and a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart,

(saying,) ‘Rise up, O boulder! Come floating up, O boulder! Come float to the shore, O boulder!’ What do you think? Would that boulder—because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people—rise up, come floating up, or come float to the shore?”

“No, lord.”

“So it is with any man who takes life, steals, indulges in illicit sex; is a liar, one who speaks divisive speech, harsh speech, & idle chatter; is greedy, bears thoughts of ill-will, & holds to wrong views. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world!’—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. ...

“Suppose a man were to throw a jar of ghee or a jar of oil into a deep lake of water, where it would break. There the shards & jar-fragments would go down, while the ghee or oil would come up. Then a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart (saying,) ‘Sink, O ghee/oil! Submerge, O ghee/oil! Go down, O ghee/oil!’ What do you think? Would that ghee/oil, because of the prayers, praise, & circumambulation of that great crowd of people sink, submerge, or go down?”

“No, lord.”

“So it is with any man who refrains from taking life, from stealing, & from indulging in illicit sex; refrains from lying, from speaking divisive speech, from harsh speech, & from idle chatter; is not greedy, bears no thoughts of ill-will, & holds to right view. Even though a great crowd of people, gathering & congregating, would pray, praise, & circumambulate with their hands palm-to-palm over the heart—(saying,) ‘May this man, at the break-up of the body, after death, reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell!’—still, at the break-up of the body, after death, he would reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.” — [SN 42:6](#)

§2.3 I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Then Subha the student, Todeyya’s son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged

courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, what is the reason, what is the cause, why baseness & excellence are seen among human beings, among the human race? For short-lived & long-lived people are to be seen, sickly & healthy, ugly & beautiful, uninfluential & influential, poor & rich, low-born & high-born, stupid & discerning people are to be seen. So what is the reason, what is the cause, why baseness & excellence are seen among human beings, among the human race?"

"Student, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Action is what differentiates beings in terms of baseness & excellence."

"I don't understand the detailed meaning of Master Gotama's statement spoken in brief without explaining the detailed meaning. It would be good if Master Gotama taught me the Dhamma so that I might understand the detailed meaning of his brief statement."

"In that case, student, listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, Master Gotama," Subha the student responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: "There is the case, student, where a woman or man is a killer of living beings, brutal, bloody-handed, given to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. If, on the break-up of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is short-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a short life: to be a killer of living beings, brutal, bloody-handed, given to killing & slaying, showing no mercy to living beings.

"But then there is the case where a woman or man, having abandoned the killing of living beings, abstains from killing living beings, and dwells with the rod laid down, the knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, & sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. If, on the break-up of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a good destination, a heavenly

world—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is long-lived wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a long life: to have abandoned the killing of living beings, to abstain from killing living beings, to dwell with one's rod laid down, one's knife laid down, scrupulous, merciful, & sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings.

“There is the case where a woman or man is one who harms beings with his/her fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is sickly wherever reborn. This is the way leading to sickness: to be one who harms beings with one's fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is not one who harms beings with his/her fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is healthy wherever reborn. This is the way leading to health: not to be one who harms beings with one's fists, with clods, with sticks, or with knives.

“There is the case, where a woman or man is ill-tempered & easily upset; even when lightly criticized, he/she grows offended, provoked, malicious, & resentful; shows annoyance, aversion, & bitterness. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is ugly wherever reborn. This is the way leading to ugliness: to be ill-tempered & easily upset; even when lightly criticized, to grow offended, provoked, malicious, & resentful; to show annoyance, aversion, & bitterness.

“But then there is the case where a woman or man is not ill-tempered or easily upset; even when heavily criticized, he/she doesn't grow offended, provoked, malicious, or resentful; doesn't show annoyance, aversion, or bitterness. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is beautiful wherever reborn. This is the way leading to beauty: not to be ill-tempered or easily upset; even when heavily criticized, not to be offended, provoked, malicious, or resentful; nor to show annoyance, aversion, & bitterness.

"There is the case where a woman or man is envious. He/she envies, begrudges, & broods about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, & veneration. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is not influential wherever reborn. This is the way leading to being uninfluential: to be envious, to envy, begrudge, & brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, & veneration.

"But then there is the case where a woman or man is not envious. He/she does not envy, begrudge, or brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, or veneration. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination... If instead he/she comes to the human state, he/she is influential wherever reborn. This is the way leading to being influential: not to be envious; not to envy, begrudge, or brood about others' gains, honor, respect, reverence, salutations, or veneration.

"There is the case where a woman or man is not a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, or lighting to contemplatives or brahmans. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation... If instead he/she comes to the human state, he/she is poor wherever reborn. This is the way leading to poverty: not to be a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, or lighting to contemplatives or brahmans.

"But then there is the case where a woman or man is a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, & lighting to contemplatives & brahmans. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is wealthy wherever reborn. This is the way leading to great wealth: to be a giver of food, drink, cloth, sandals, garlands, scents, ointments, beds, dwellings, & lighting to contemplatives & brahmans.

"There is the case where a woman or man is obstinate & arrogant. He/she does not pay homage to those who deserve homage, rise up for those for whom one should rise up, give a seat to those to whom one should give a seat, make way for those for whom one should make way, worship those who should be worshipped, respect those who should be

respected, revere those who should be revered, or honor those who should be honored. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is low-born wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a low birth: to be obstinate & arrogant, not to pay homage to those who deserve homage, nor rise up for... nor give a seat to... nor make way for... nor worship... nor respect... nor revere... nor honor those who should be honored.

"But then there is the case where a woman or man is not obstinate or arrogant; he/she pays homage to those who deserve homage, rises up... gives a seat... makes way... worships... respects... reveres... honors those who should be honored. Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination... If instead he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is highborn wherever reborn. This is the way leading to a high birth: not to obstinate or arrogant; to pay homage to those who deserve homage, to rise up... give a seat... make way... worship... respect... revere... honor those who should be honored.

"There is the case where a woman or man when visiting a contemplative or brahman, does not ask: 'What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, having been done by me, will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?' Through having adopted & carried out such actions, Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. If, on the break-up of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she will be stupid wherever reborn. This is the way leading to stupidity: when visiting a contemplative or brahman, not to ask: 'What is skillful? ... Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?'

"But then there is the case where a woman or man when visiting a contemplative or brahman, asks: 'What is skillful, venerable sir? What is unskillful? What is blameworthy? What is blameless? What should be cultivated? What should not be cultivated? What, having been done by me,

will be for my long-term harm & suffering? Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?' Through having adopted & carried out such actions, on the break-up of the body, after death, he/she reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. If, on the break-up of the body, after death—instead of reappearing in a good destination, a heavenly world—he/she comes to the human state, then he/she is discerning wherever reborn. This is the way leading to discernment: when visiting a contemplative or brahman, to ask: 'What is skillful?... Or what, having been done by me, will be for my long-term welfare & happiness?'

"So, student, the way leading to short life makes people short-lived, the way leading to long life makes people long-lived. The way leading to sickness makes people sickly, the way leading to health makes people healthy. The way leading to ugliness makes people ugly, the way leading to beauty makes people beautiful. The way leading to lack of influence makes people uninfluential, the way leading to influence makes people influential. The way leading to poverty makes people poor, the way leading to wealth makes people wealthy. The way leading to low birth makes people low-born, the way leading to high birth makes people highborn. The way leading to stupidity makes people stupid, the way leading to discernment makes people discerning.

"Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and have their actions as their arbitrator. Action is what differentiates beings in terms of baseness & excellence." — [MN 135](#)

§2.4 "And what is right resolve? Being resolved on renunciation, on freedom from ill will, on harmlessness: This is called right resolve." — [SN 45:8](#)

§2.5 The Blessed One said, "Monks, before my self-awakening, when I was still just an unawakened Bodhisatta, the thought occurred to me: 'Why don't I keep dividing my thinking into two sorts?' So I made thinking imbued with sensuality, thinking imbued with ill will, & thinking imbued with harmfulness one sort, and thinking imbued with renunciation, thinking imbued with non-ill will, & thinking imbued with harmlessness another sort.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with sensuality arose in me. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with sensuality has arisen in me; and that leads to my own affliction or to the affliction of others or to the affliction of both. It obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding.'

"As I noticed that it leads to my own affliction, it subsided. As I noticed that it leads to the affliction of others... to the affliction of both... it obstructs discernment, promotes vexation, & does not lead to unbinding, it subsided. Whenever thinking imbued with sensuality had arisen, I simply abandoned it, destroyed it, dispelled it, wiped it out of existence.

"[Similarly with thinking imbued with ill will and thinking imbued with harmfulness.]

"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with sensuality, abandoning thinking imbued with renunciation, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with sensuality. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with non-ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmfulness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmlessness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmfulness.

"Just as in the last month of the Rains, in the autumn season when the crops are ripening, a cowherd would look after his cows: He would tap & poke & check & curb them with a stick on this side & that. Why is that? Because he foresees flogging or imprisonment or a fine or public censure arising from that [if he let his cows wander into the crops]. In the same way I foresaw in unskillful qualities drawbacks, degradation, & defilement, and I foresaw in skillful qualities rewards related to renunciation & promoting cleansing.

"And as I remained thus heedful, ardent, & resolute, thinking imbued with renunciation arose in me. I discerned that 'Thinking imbued with renunciation has arisen in me; and that leads neither to my own affliction, nor to the affliction of others, nor to the affliction of both. It fosters discernment, promotes lack of vexation, & leads to unbinding. If I were to think & ponder in line with that even for a night...even for a day...even for a day & night, I do not envision any danger that would come from it, except that thinking & pondering a long time would tire the body. When

the body is tired, the mind is disturbed; and a disturbed mind is far from concentration.’ So I steadied my mind right within, settled, unified, & concentrated it. Why is that? So that my mind would not be disturbed.

“[Similarly with thinking imbued with non-ill will and thinking imbued with harmlessness.]

“Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with renunciation, abandoning thinking imbued with sensuality, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with renunciation. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with non-ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with non-ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmlessness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmfulness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmlessness.

“Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been gathered into the village, a cowherd would look after his cows: While resting under the shade of a tree or out in the open, he simply keeps himself mindful of ‘those cows.’ In the same way, I simply kept myself mindful of ‘those qualities.’

“Unflagging persistence was aroused in me, and unmuddled mindfulness established. My body was calm & unaroused, my mind concentrated & single. Quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities, I entered & remained in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, I entered & remained in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. With the fading of rapture I remained equanimous, mindful, & alert, and sensed pleasure with the body. I entered & remained in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—I entered & remained in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain.” — [MN 19](#)

3. METTĀ IN WORDS & DEEDS

§3.1 “Monks, a friend endowed with seven qualities is worth associating with. Which seven? He gives what is hard to give. He does what is hard to do. He endures what is hard to endure. He reveals his secrets to you. He keeps your secrets. When misfortunes strike, he doesn’t abandon you. When you’re down & out, he doesn’t look down on you. A friend endowed with these seven qualities is worth associating with.

“He gives what is beautiful,
hard to give;
does what is hard to do;
endures painful, ill-spoken words.

His secrets he tells you;
your secrets he keeps.

When misfortunes strike,
he doesn’t abandon you;
when you’re down & out,
doesn’t look down on you.

A person in whom these traits are found,
is a friend to be cultivated
by anyone wanting a friend.” — [AN 7:35](#)

§3.2 “Householder-son, these four are to be known as non-friends, counterfeit friends: One who takes exclusively is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend. One who is good only in word is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend. One who speaks flattery is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend. A companion in dissipation is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend.

“On these four grounds is a person who takes exclusively to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend: He takes exclusively. He wants a lot for a little. When there is danger, he doesn’t do what should be done. He associates for his profit. On these four grounds a person who takes exclusively is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend.

"On these four grounds is a person who is good only in word to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend: He converses about the past. He converses about the future. He does meaningless favors. When there are things to be done in the present, he claims to have suffered loss. On these four grounds a person who is good only in word is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend.

"On these four grounds is a person who speaks flattery to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend: He approves of your evil actions. He approves of your admirable (actions). He speaks praise to your face. He speaks dispraise behind your back. On these four grounds a person who speaks flattery is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend.

"On these four grounds is a companion in dissipation to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend: He's your companion when indulging in fermented & distilled liquors that are a cause for heedlessness. He's your companion when indulging in prowling the streets at the wrong hours. He's your companion when frequenting festivals. He's your companion when indulging in the heedlessness of gambling. On these four grounds a companion in dissipation is to be known as a non-friend, a counterfeit friend. ...

"Householder-son, these four are to be known as friends who are loyal: One who is helpful is to be known as a friend who is loyal. One who is pleased & pained together with you is to be known as a friend who is loyal. One who points out your benefit is to be known as a friend who is loyal. One who is sympathetic is to be known as a friend who is loyal.

"On these four grounds is a helpful person to be known as a friend who is loyal: He protects you when you are heedless. He protects your belongings when you are heedless. He is a refuge when you are in danger or fear. When business duties have arisen, he provides you with twice the capital required. On these four grounds a helpful person is to be known as a friend who is loyal.

"On these four grounds is a person who is pleased & pained together with you to be known as a friend who is loyal: He tells you his secrets. He keeps your secrets. When there are calamities, he doesn't abandon you. For your benefit he would give even his life. On these four grounds a person who is pleased & pained together with you is to be known as a friend who is loyal.

“On these four grounds is a person who points out your benefit to be known as a friend who is loyal: He prevents you from evil actions. He establishes you in what is admirable. He lets you hear what you haven’t heard before. He points out the way to heaven. On these four grounds a person who points out your benefit is to be known as a friend who is loyal.

“On these four grounds is a sympathetic person to be known as a friend who is loyal: He doesn’t delight in your bad fortune. He delights in your good fortune. He stops those who speak in dispraise of you. He rejoices in those who speak in your praise. On these four grounds a sympathetic person is to be known as a friend who is loyal.” — *DN 31*

§3.3 “And what is meant by admirable friendship? There is the case where a layperson, in whatever town or village he may dwell, spends time with householders or householders’ sons, young or old, who are consummate in virtue. He talks with them, engages them in discussions. He emulates consummate conviction in those who are consummate in conviction, consummate virtue in those who are consummate in virtue, consummate generosity in those who are consummate in generosity, and consummate discernment in those who are consummate in discernment. This is called admirable friendship.” — [*AN 8:54*](#)

§3.4 As he was sitting there, Prince Abhaya said to the Blessed One, “Lord, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others?”

“Prince, there is no categorical yes-or-no answer to that.”

“Then right here, lord, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed.”

“But prince, why do you say, ‘Then right here, lord, the Nigaṇṭhas are destroyed’?”

“Just yesterday, lord, I went to Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta and... he said to me... ‘Come now, prince. Go to Gotama the contemplative and on arrival say this: “Lord, would the Tathāgata say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others?” If Gotama the contemplative, thus asked, answers, “The Tathāgata would say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others,” then you should say, “Then how is there any difference between you, lord, and run-of-the-mill people? For even run-of-the-mill people say words that are unendearing & disagreeable to others.” But if Gotama the contemplative, thus asked, answers, “The Tathāgata would not say words

that are unendearing & disagreeable to others,' then you should say, "Then how, lord, did you say of Devadatta that 'Devadatta is headed for a plane of deprivation, Devadatta is headed for hell, Devadatta will boil for an eon, Devadatta is incurable'? For Devadatta was upset & disgruntled at those words of yours." When Gotama the contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up. Just as if a two-horned chestnut were stuck in a man's throat: He would not be able to swallow it down or spit it up. In the same way, when Gotama the contemplative is asked this two-pronged question by you, he won't be able to swallow it down or spit it up."

Now at that time a baby boy was lying face-up on the prince's lap. So the Blessed One said to the prince, "What do you think, prince? If this young boy, through your own negligence or that of the nurse, were to take a stick or a piece of gravel into its mouth, what would you do?"

"I would take it out, lord. If I couldn't get it out right away, then holding its head in my left hand and crooking a finger of my right, I would take it out, even if it meant drawing blood. Why is that? Because I have sympathy for the young boy."

"In the same way, prince:

[1] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial [or: not connected with the goal], unendearing & disagreeable to others, he does not say them.

[2] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, unendearing & disagreeable to others, he does not say them.

[3] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, but unendearing & disagreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them.

[4] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be unfactual, untrue, unbeneficial, but endearing & agreeable to others, he does not say them.

[5] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, unbeneficial, but endearing & agreeable to others, he does not say them.

[6] In the case of words that the Tathāgata knows to be factual, true, beneficial, and endearing & agreeable to others, he has a sense of the proper time for saying them. Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has sympathy for living beings." — [MN 58](#)

§3.5 “Monks, there are these five kinds of loss. Which five? Loss of relatives, loss of wealth, loss through disease, loss in terms of virtue, loss in terms of views. It’s not by reason of loss of relatives, loss of wealth, or loss through disease that beings—with the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. It’s by reason of loss in terms of virtue and loss in terms of views that beings—with the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. These are the five kinds of loss.” — [AN 5:130](#)

§3.6 “And who is the individual who practices neither for his/her own benefit nor for that of others? There is the case where a certain individual doesn’t practice for the subduing of passion within him/herself and doesn’t encourage others in the subduing of passion; he/she doesn’t practice for the subduing of aversion within him/herself and doesn’t encourage others in the subduing of aversion; he/she doesn’t practice for the subduing of delusion within him/herself and doesn’t encourage others in the subduing of delusion. Such is the individual who practices neither for his/her own benefit nor for that of others.

“And who is the individual who practices for his/her own benefit and for that of others? There is the case where a certain individual practices for the subduing of passion within him/herself and encourages others in the subduing of passion; practices for the subduing of aversion within him/herself and encourages others in the subduing of aversion; practices for the subduing of delusion within him/herself and encourages others in the subduing of delusion. Such is the individual who practices for his/her own benefit and for that of others.” — [AN 4:96](#)

§3.7 “A monk endowed with five qualities practices both for his own benefit and for that of others. Which five?

“There is the case where a monk is himself consummate in virtue and encourages others to be consummate in virtue. He himself is consummate in concentration and encourages others to be consummate in concentration. He himself is consummate in discernment and encourages others to be consummate in discernment. He himself is consummate in release and encourages others to be consummate in release. He himself is consummate

in the knowledge & vision of release and encourages others to be consummate in the knowledge & vision of release." — [AN 5:20](#)

4. THE NATURE OF THE HEART & MIND

§4.1 “I don’t envision a single thing that is as quick to reverse itself as the mind—so much so that there’s no satisfactory simile for how quick to reverse itself it is.” — [AN 1:49](#)

§4.2 “Monks, have you ever seen a moving-picture show [an ancient show similar to a shadow-puppet show]?”

“Yes, lord.”

“That moving-picture show was created by the mind. And this mind is even more variegated than a moving-picture show. Thus one should reflect on one’s mind with every moment: ‘For a long time has this mind been defiled by passion, aversion, & delusion.’ From the defilement of the mind are beings defiled. From the purification of the mind are beings purified.

“Monks, I can imagine no one group of beings more variegated than that of common animals. Common animals are created by mind [i.e., each animal’s body is the result of that animal’s kamma]. And the mind is even more variegated than common animals. Thus one should reflect on one’s mind with every moment: ‘For a long time has this mind been defiled by passion, aversion, & delusion.’ From the defilement of the mind are beings defiled. From the purification of the mind are beings purified.” — [SN 22:100](#)

§4.3 “Monks, a beginning point for ignorance—[such that one might say], ‘Before this, ignorance did not exist; then it came into play’—cannot be discerned.’ This, monks, has been said. Nevertheless, it can be discerned, ‘Ignorance comes from this condition.’ And I tell you, ignorance has its food and is not without food. And what is the food for ignorance? ‘The five hindrances,’ it should be said. And I tell you, the five hindrances have their food and are not without food. And what is the food for the five hindrances? ‘The three forms of misconduct’ ... And what is the food for the three forms of misconduct? ‘Lack of restraint of the senses’ ... And what is the food for lack of restraint of the senses? ‘Lack of mindfulness & alertness’ ... And what is the food for lack of mindfulness & alertness? ‘Inappropriate attention’ ... And what is the food for inappropriate attention? ‘Lack of conviction’ ... And what is the food for lack of conviction? ‘Not hearing the

true Dhamma' ... And what is the food for not hearing the true Dhamma? 'Associating with people of no integrity' [or: 'not associating with people of integrity'], it should be said....

"Just as when the devas pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on the upper mountains: The water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the branches of the mountain ravines & gullies. When the branches of the mountain ravines & gullies are full, they fill the little lakes. When the little lakes are full, they fill the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are full, they fill the great ocean. Such is the food of the great ocean, and thus is it made full. In the same way, when not associating with people of integrity is made full, it fills [the conditions for] not hearing the true Dhamma... lack of conviction... inappropriate attention... lack of mindfulness & alertness... lack of restraint of the senses... the three forms of misconduct... the five hindrances. When the five hindrances are made full, they fulfill [the conditions for] ignorance. Such is the food of this ignorance, and thus is it made full.

"Now, I tell you, clear knowing & release have their food and are not without food. And what is their food? 'The seven factors for awakening [*sambojjhaṅga*],' it should be said. And I tell you, the seven factors for awakening have their food and are not without food. And what is the food for the seven factors for awakening? 'The four establishing of mindfulness [*satipaṭṭhāna*]' ... And what is the food for the four establishing of mindfulness? 'The three forms of right conduct' ... And what is the food for the three forms of right conduct? 'Restraint of the senses' ... And what is the food for restraint of the senses? 'Mindfulness & alertness' ... And what is the food for mindfulness & alertness? 'Appropriate attention' ... And what is the food for appropriate attention? 'Conviction' ... And what is the food for conviction? 'Hearing the true Dhamma' ... And what is the food for hearing the true Dhamma? 'Associating with people of integrity,' it should be said....

"Just as when the devas pour rain in heavy drops & crash thunder on the upper mountains: The water, flowing down along the slopes, fills the branches of the mountain ravines & gullies... the little lakes... the big lakes... the little rivers... the big rivers. When the big rivers are made full, they fill the great ocean. Such is the food of the great ocean, and thus is it made full. In the same way, when associating with people of integrity is made full, it fills [the conditions for] hearing the true Dhamma...

conviction... appropriate attention... mindfulness & alertness... restraint of the senses... the three forms of right conduct... the four establishing of mindfulness... the seven factors for awakening. When the seven factors for awakening are made full, they fill [the conditions for] clear knowing & release. Such is the food for this clear knowing & release, and thus are they made full." — [AN 10:61](#)

§4.4 "Luminous, monks, is the mind. And it is defiled by incoming defilements. The uninstructed run-of-the-mill person doesn't discern that as it has come to be, which is why I tell you that—for the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person—there is no development of the mind."

"Luminous, monks, is the mind. And it is freed from incoming defilements. The well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns that as it has come to be, which is why I tell you that—for the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones—there is development of the mind." — [AN 1:51–52](#)

5. MOTIVATION FOR THE BRAHMAVIHĀRAS

§5.1 Then a brahman cosmologist went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Now, then, Master Gotama, does everything exist?”

“‘Everything exists’ is the senior form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then, Master Gotama, does everything not exist?”

“‘Everything does not exist’ is the second form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then is everything a Oneness?”

“‘Everything is a Oneness’ is the third form of cosmology, brahman.”

“Then is everything a plurality?”

“‘Everything is a plurality is the fourth form of cosmology, brahman.

Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the Dhamma via the middle: From ignorance as a requisite condition come fabrications... consciousness... name-&-form... the six sense media.” — [*SN 12:48*](#)

§5.2 “There are these ten totality-dimensions. Which ten? One perceives the earth-totality above, below, all-around: non-dual [*advayaṃ*], immeasurable. One perceives the water-totality... the fire-totality... the wind-totality... the blue-totality... the yellow-totality... the red-totality... the white-totality... the space-totality... the consciousness-totality above, below, all-around: non-dual, immeasurable. These are the ten totality-dimensions. Now, of these ten totality-dimensions, this is supreme: when one perceives the consciousness-totality above, below, all-around: non-dual, immeasurable. And there are beings who are percipient in this way. Yet even in the beings who are percipient in this way there is still aberration, there is change. Seeing this, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with that. Being disenchanted with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is supreme, and even more so toward what is inferior.” — [*AN 10:29*](#)

§5.3 “Just as the footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant, and the elephant’s footprint is reckoned the foremost among them in terms of size; in the same way, all skillful qualities

are rooted in heedfulness, converge in heedfulness, and heedfulness is reckoned the foremost among them.” — [AN 10:15](#)

§5.4 I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. Now at that time King Pasenadi Kosala was together with Queen Mallikā in the upper palace. Then he said to her, “Is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?”

“No, your majesty,” she answered. “There is no one dearer to me than myself. And what about you, your majesty? Is there anyone dearer to you than yourself?”

“No, Mallikā. There is no one dearer to me than myself.”

Then the king, descending from the palace, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he [reported his conversation with Queen Mallikā].”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Searching all directions
with your awareness,
you find no one dearer
than yourself.

In the same way, others
are thickly dear to themselves.
So you shouldn’t hurt others
if you love yourself. — [Ud 5:1](#)

§5.5 I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery. And on that occasion, a large number of boys on the road between Sāvatthī & Jeta’s Grove were hitting a snake with a stick. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvatthī for alms. He saw the large number of boys on the road between Sāvatthī & Jeta’s Grove hitting the snake with a stick.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Whoever hits with a stick
beings desiring ease,

when he himself is looking for ease,
will meet with no ease after death.

Whoever doesn't hit with a stick
beings desiring ease,
when he himself is looking for ease,
will meet with ease after death. — [Ud 2:3](#)

§5.6 I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. And on that occasion, a large number of boys on the road between Sāvatthī & Jeta's Grove were hitting a snake with a stick. Then early in the morning the Blessed One adjusted his under robe and—carrying his bowl & robes—went into Sāvatthī for alms. He saw the large number of boys on the road between Sāvatthī & Jeta's Grove catching little fish. Seeing them, he went up to them and, on arrival, said to them, "Boys, do you fear pain? Do you dislike pain?"

"Yes, lord, we fear pain. We dislike pain."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

If you fear pain,
if you dislike pain,
don't anywhere do an evil deed
in open or in secret.

If you're doing or will do
an evil deed,
you won't escape pain
catching up
as you run away. — [Ud 5:4](#)

§5.7 "There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones reflects thus: 'I love life and don't love death. I love happiness and abhor pain. Now if I—loving life and not loving death, loving happiness and abhorring pain—were to be killed, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me. And if I were to kill another who loves life and doesn't love death, who loves happiness and abhors pain, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to the other. What is displeasing & disagreeable to me is displeasing & disagreeable to

others. How can I inflict on others what is displeasing & disagreeable to me?' Reflecting in this way, he refrains from taking life, gets others to refrain from taking life, and speaks in praise of refraining from taking life. In this way his bodily behavior is pure in three ways.

"And further, he reflects thus: 'If someone, by way of theft, were to take from me what I haven't given, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to commit adultery with my wives, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to damage my well-being with a lie, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to divide me from my friends with divisive speech, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to address me with harsh speech, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me.... If someone were to address me with idle chatter, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to me. And if I were to address another with idle chatter, that would be displeasing & disagreeable to the other. What is displeasing & disagreeable to me is displeasing & disagreeable to others. How can I inflict on others what is displeasing & disagreeable to me?' Reflecting in this way, he refrains from idle chatter, gets others to refrain from idle chatter, and speaks in praise of refraining from idle chatter." — [SN 55:7](#)

§5.8 "Now, there are these five gifts, five great gifts—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that are not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and are unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans. Which five?

"There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, abandoning the taking of life, abstains from taking life. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the first gift, the first great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans....

“And further, abandoning taking what is not given [stealing], the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking what is not given. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the second gift, the second great gift... and this is the fifth bonanza of merit....

“And further, abandoning illicit sex, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from illicit sex. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the third gift, the third great gift....

“And further, abandoning lying, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from lying. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fourth gift, the fourth great gift....

“And further, abandoning the use of intoxicants, the disciple of the noble ones abstains from taking intoxicants. In doing so, he gives freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings. In giving freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of beings, he gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, freedom from animosity, and freedom from oppression. This is the fifth gift, the fifth great gift—original, long-standing, traditional, ancient, unadulterated, unadulterated from the beginning—that is not open to suspicion, will never be open to suspicion, and is unfaulted by knowledgeable contemplatives & brahmans.” — [AN 8:39](#)

§5.9 “Monks, these six conditions are conducive to amiability, that engender feelings of endearment, engender feelings of respect, leading to a

sense of fellowship, a lack of disputes, harmony, & a state of unity. Which six?

“There is the case where a monk is set on bodily acts of goodwill with regard to his fellows in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“And further, the monk is set on verbal acts of goodwill with regard to his fellows in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“And further, the monk is set on mental acts of goodwill with regard to his fellows in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“And further, whatever righteous gains the monk may obtain in a righteous way—even if only the alms in his bowl—he does not consume them alone. He consumes them after sharing them in common with his virtuous fellows in the holy life....

“And further—with reference to the virtues that are untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, ungrasped at, leading to concentration—the monk dwells with his virtue in tune with that of his fellows in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“And further—with reference to views that are noble, leading outward, that lead those who act in accordance with them to the right ending of suffering & stress—the monk dwells with his views in tune with those of his fellows in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs....

“These are the six conditions that are conducive to amiability, that engender feelings of endearment, engender feelings of respect, leading to a sense of fellowship, a lack of disputes, harmony, & a state of unity.” — [AN 6:12](#)

§5.10 The Blessed One said, “Once upon a time, monks, a bamboo acrobat, having erected a bamboo pole, addressed his assistant, Frying Pan: ‘Come, my dear Frying Pan. Climb up the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.’

“‘As you say, Master,’ Frying Pan answered the bamboo acrobat and, climbing the bamboo pole, stood on his shoulders.

“So then the bamboo acrobat said to his assistant, ‘Now you watch after me, my dear Frying Pan, and I’ll watch after you. Thus, protecting one another, watching after one another, we’ll show off our skill, receive our reward, and come down safely from the bamboo pole.’

“When he had said this, Frying Pan said to him, ‘But that won’t do at all, Master. You watch after yourself, and I’ll watch after myself, and thus with

each of us protecting ourselves, watching after ourselves, we'll show off our skill, receive our reward, and come down safely from the bamboo pole.'

"What Frying Pan, the assistant, said to her Master was the right way in that case.

"Monks, the establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, 'I'll watch after myself.' The establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, 'I'll watch after others.' When watching after yourself, you watch after others. When watching after others, you watch after yourself.

"And how do you watch after others when watching after yourself? Through pursuing [the practice], through developing it, through devoting oneself to it. This is how you watch after others when watching after yourself.

"And how do you watch after yourself when watching after others? Through endurance, through harmlessness, through a mind of goodwill, & through sympathy. This is how you watch after yourself when watching after others.

"The establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, 'I'll watch after myself.' The establishing of mindfulness is to be practiced with the thought, 'I'll watch after others.' When watching after yourself, you watch after others. When watching after others, you watch after yourself." — [SN 47:19](#)

§5.11 "Monks, for one whose release of awareness through goodwill is cultivated, developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, eleven benefits can be expected. Which eleven?

"One sleeps easily, wakes easily, dreams no evil dreams. One is dear to human beings, dear to non-human beings. Devas protect one. Neither fire, poison, nor weapons can touch one. One's mind gains concentration quickly. One's complexion is bright. One dies unconfused and—if penetrating no higher—is headed for the Brahmā worlds." — [AN 11:16](#)

§5.12 "This is the escape from ill will: goodwill as an awareness-release....

"This is the escape from viciousness: compassion as an awareness-release....

"This is the escape from resentment: empathetic joy as an awareness-release."

"This is the escape from passion: equanimity as an awareness-release." — [AN 6:13](#)

§5.13 "What do you think, Kālāmas? When lack of greed arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?"

"For welfare, lord."

"And this ungreedy person, not overcome by greed, his mind not possessed by greed, doesn't kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person's wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term welfare & happiness."

"Yes, lord."

"What do you think, Kālāmas? When lack of aversion arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?"

"For welfare, lord."

"And this unaversive person, not overcome by aversion, his mind not possessed by aversion, doesn't kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person's wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term welfare & happiness."

"Yes, lord."

"What do you think, Kālāmas? When lack of delusion arises in a person, does it arise for welfare or for harm?"

"For welfare, lord."

"And this undeluded person, not overcome by delusion, his mind not possessed by delusion, doesn't kill living beings, take what is not given, go after another person's wife, tell lies, or induce others to do likewise, all of which is for long-term welfare & happiness."

"Yes, lord."

"So what do you think, Kālāmas: Are these qualities skillful or unskillful?"

"Skillful, lord."

"Blameworthy or blameless?"

"Blameless, lord."

"Criticized by the observant or praised by the observant?"

"Praised by the observant, lord."

“When adopted & carried out, do they lead to welfare & to happiness, or not?”

“When adopted & carried out, they lead to welfare & to happiness. That is how it appears to us.”

“So, as I said, Kālāmas: ‘Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, “This contemplative is our teacher.” When you know for yourselves that, “These qualities are skillful; these qualities are blameless; these qualities are praised by the observant; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to welfare & to happiness”—then you should enter & remain in them.’ Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“Now, Kālāmas, one who is a disciple of the noble ones—thus devoid of greed, devoid of ill will, undeluded, alert, & resolute—keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.

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

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

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

“Now, Kālāmas, one who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires four assurances in the here & now:

“‘If there is a world after death, if there is the fruit & result of actions rightly & wrongly done, then this is the basis by which, with the break-up of the body, after death, I will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.’ This is the first assurance he acquires.

“‘But if there is no world after death, if there is no fruit & result of actions rightly & wrongly done, then here in the present life I look after myself with ease—free from hostility, free from ill will, free from trouble.’ This is the second assurance he acquires.

“‘If evil is done through acting, still I have willed no evil for anyone. Having done no evil action, from where will suffering touch me?’ This is the third assurance he acquires.

“‘But if no evil is done through acting, then I can assume myself pure in both respects.’ This is the fourth assurance he acquires.

“One who is a disciple of the noble ones—his mind thus free from hostility, free from ill will, undefiled, & pure—acquires these four assurances in the here & now.” — [AN 3:66](#)

§5.14 “There is the case where a trifling evil deed done by a certain individual takes him to hell. There is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by another individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual takes him to hell? There is the case where a certain individual is undeveloped in body [unable to resist the influence of pleasure], undeveloped in virtue, undeveloped in mind [unable to resist the influence of pain], undeveloped in discernment: restricted, small-hearted, dwelling with suffering. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual takes him to hell.

“Now, a trifling evil deed done by what sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment? There is the case where a certain individual is developed in body, developed in virtue, developed in mind, developed in discernment: unrestricted, large-hearted, dwelling with the unlimited. A trifling evil deed done by this sort of individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment.

"Suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into a small amount of water in a cup. What do you think? Would the water in the cup become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?"

"Yes, lord. Why is that? There being only a small amount of water in the cup, it would become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink."

"Now suppose that a man were to drop a salt crystal into the River Ganges. What do you think? Would the water in the River Ganges become salty because of the salt crystal, and unfit to drink?"

"No, lord. Why is that? There being a great mass of water in the River Ganges, it would not become salty because of the salt crystal or unfit to drink."

"In the same way, there is the case where a trifling evil deed done by one individual [the first] takes him to hell; and there is the case where the very same sort of trifling deed done by the other individual is experienced in the here & now, and for the most part barely appears for a moment." — [AN 3:101](#)

§5.15 "A disciple with faith in the Tathāgata reflects: 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures the taking of life, and says, "Abstain from taking life." There are living beings that I have killed, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the taking of life, and in the future refrains from taking life. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"[He reflects:] 'The Blessed One in a variety of ways criticizes & censures stealing... indulging in illicit sex... the telling of lies, and says, "Abstain from the telling of lies." There are lies that I have told, to a greater or lesser extent. That was not right. That was not good. But if I become remorseful for that reason, that evil deed of mine will not be undone.' So, reflecting thus, he abandons right then the telling of lies, and in the future refrains from telling lies. This is how there comes to be the abandoning of that evil deed. This is how there comes to be the transcending of that evil deed.

"Having abandoned the taking of life, he refrains from taking life. Having abandoned stealing, he refrains from stealing. Having abandoned

illicit sex, he refrains from illicit sex. Having abandoned lies, he refrains from lies. Having abandoned divisive speech, he refrains from divisive speech. Having abandoned harsh speech, he refrains from harsh speech. Having abandoned idle chatter, he refrains from idle chatter. Having abandoned covetousness, he becomes uncovetous. Having abandoned ill will & anger, he becomes one with a mind of no ill will. Having abandoned wrong views, he becomes one with right views.

“That disciple of the noble ones, headman—thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unbewildered, alert, mindful—keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill... compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, expansive, limitless, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch-trumpet blower can notify the four directions without any difficulty, in the same way, when the awareness-release through goodwill... compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity is thus developed, thus pursued, any deed done to a limited extent no longer remains there, no longer stays there.” — [SN 42:8](#)

6. FABRICATING SKILLFUL MIND STATES

§6.1 “Among whatever fabricated qualities there may be, the noble eightfold path—right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration—is considered supreme. Those who have confidence in the dhamma of the noble path have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.” — *Iti 90*

§6.2 “And what, monks, is right view? Knowledge with regard to [or: in terms of] stress, knowledge with regard to the origination of stress, knowledge with regard to the stopping of stress, knowledge with regard to the way of practice leading to the stopping of stress: This, monks, is called right view.

“And what, monks, is right resolve? Resolve for renunciation, resolve for non-ill will, resolve for harmlessness: This, monks, is called right resolve.

“And what, monks, is right speech? Abstaining from lying, abstaining from divisive speech, abstaining from harsh speech, abstaining from idle chatter: This, monks, is called right speech.

“And what, monks, is right action? Abstaining from taking life, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual intercourse: This, monks, is called right action.

“And what, monks, is right livelihood? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones, having abandoned dishonest livelihood, keeps his life going with right livelihood: This, monks, is called right livelihood.

“And what, monks, is right effort? [i] There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen. [ii] He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen. [iii] He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen. [iv] He generates desire, endeavors, activates persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, &

culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen: This, monks, is called right effort.

“And what, monks, is right mindfulness? [i] There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. [ii] He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. [iii] He remains focused on the mind in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. [iv] He remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This, monks, is called right mindfulness.

“And what, monks, is right concentration? [i] There is the case where a monk—quite secluded from sensuality, secluded from unskillful qualities—enters & remains in the first jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of seclusion, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. [ii] With the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, he enters & remains in the second jhāna: rapture & pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation—internal assurance. [iii] With the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhāna, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.’ [iv] With the abandoning of pleasure & pain—as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress—he enters & remains in the fourth jhāna: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. This, monks, is called right concentration.” — [SN 45:8](#)

§6.3 [Sister Dhammadinnā:] “In-&-out breaths are bodily; these are things tied up with the body. That’s why in-&-out breaths are bodily fabrications. Having first directed one’s thoughts and made an evaluation, one then breaks out into speech. That’s why directed thought & evaluation are verbal fabrications. Perceptions & feelings are mental; these are things tied up with the mind. That’s why perceptions & feelings are mental fabrications.” — [MN 44](#)

§6.4 “Now how is mindfulness of in-&-out breathing developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit?

"There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness to the fore. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.

"[1] Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' [2] Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' [3] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' [4] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

"[5] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to rapture.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to rapture.' [6] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to pleasure.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to pleasure.' [7] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to mental fabrication.' [8] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming mental fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming mental fabrication.'

"[9] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the mind.' [10] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in gladdening the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out gladdening the mind.' [11] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in steadying the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out steadying the mind.' [12] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in releasing the mind.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out releasing the mind.'

"[13] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on inconstancy.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on inconstancy.' [14] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on dispassion [*lit*: fading].' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on dispassion.' [15] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on cessation.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on cessation.' [16] He trains himself, 'I will breathe in focusing on relinquishing.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out focusing on relinquishing.'

"This is how mindfulness of in-&-out breathing is developed & pursued so as to be of great fruit, of great benefit." — [MN 118](#)

Antidotes to Anger & Ill Will

§6.5 “These seven things—pleasing to an enemy, bringing about an enemy’s aim—come to a man or woman who is angry. Which seven?

“...When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—then even though that he may be well-bathed, well-anointed, dressed in white clothes, his hair & beard neatly trimmed, he is ugly nevertheless, all because he is overcome with anger.

“...When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—then even though he sleeps on a bed spread with a white blanket, spread with a woolen coverlet, spread with a flower-embroidered bedspread, covered with a rug of deerskins, with a canopy overhead, or on a sofa with red cushions at either end, he sleeps badly nevertheless....

“... When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—then even when he suffers a loss, he thinks, ‘I’ve gained a profit’; and even when he gains a profit, he thinks, ‘I’ve suffered a loss.’ When he has grabbed hold of these ideas that work in mutual opposition [to the truth], they lead to his long-term suffering & loss....

“... When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—then whatever his wealth, earned through his efforts & enterprise, amassed through the strength of his arm, and piled up through the sweat of his brow—righteous wealth righteously gained—the king orders it sent to the royal treasury [in payment of fines levied for his behavior]....

“... When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—whatever reputation he has gained from being heedful, it falls away....

“... When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—his friends, companions, & relatives will avoid him from afar....

“... When a person is angry—overcome with anger, oppressed with anger—he engages in misconduct with the body, misconduct with speech, misconduct with the mind. Having engaged in misconduct with the body, misconduct with speech, misconduct with the mind, then—on the break-up of the body, after death—he reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad bourn, a lower realm, hell, all because he was overcome with anger.

“These are the seven things—pleasing to an enemy, bringing about an enemy’s aim—that come to a man or woman who is angry.” — [AN 7:60](#)

§6.6 “There are these ten ways of subduing hatred. Which ten?

[1] “Thinking, ‘He has done me harm. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred. [2] “Thinking, ‘He is doing me harm. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred. [3] “Thinking, ‘He is going to do me harm. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred.

[4] “Thinking, ‘He has done harm to people who are dear & pleasing to me. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred. [5] “Thinking, ‘He is doing harm to people who are dear & pleasing to me. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred. [6] “Thinking, ‘He is going to do harm to people who are dear & pleasing to me. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred.

[7] “Thinking, ‘He has aided people who are not dear or pleasing to me. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred. [8] “Thinking, ‘He is aiding people who are not dear or pleasing to me. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred. [9] “Thinking, ‘He is going to aid people who are not dear or pleasing to me. But what should I expect?’ one subdues hatred.

[10] “One doesn’t get worked up over impossibilities.

“These are ten ways of subduing hatred.” — [AN 10:80](#)

§6.7 Ven. Sāriputta said: “When a person is impure in his bodily behavior but pure in his verbal behavior, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when a monk who makes use of things that are thrown away sees a rag in the road: Taking hold of it with his left foot and spreading it out with his right, he would tear off the sound part and go off with it. In the same way, when the individual is impure in his bodily behavior but pure in his verbal behavior, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his bodily behavior, and instead pay attention to the purity of his verbal behavior. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

“When a person is impure in his verbal behavior, but pure in his bodily behavior, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a pool overgrown with slime & water plants, and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. He would jump into the pool, part the slime & water plants with both hands, and then, cupping his hands, drink the water and go on his way. In the same way, when the individual is impure in his verbal behavior but pure in his bodily behavior, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his verbal behavior, and instead pay attention to the purity of his bodily behavior. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

“When a person is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a little puddle in a cow’s footprint, and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. The thought would occur to him, ‘Here is this little puddle in a cow’s footprint. If I tried to drink the water using my hand or cup, I would disturb it, stir it up, & make it unfit to drink. What if I were to get down on all fours and slurp it up like a cow, and then go on my way?’ So he would get down on all fours, slurp up the water like a cow, and then go on his way. In the same way, when an individual is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, but periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, one should at that time pay no attention to the impurity of his bodily behavior... the impurity of his verbal behavior, and instead pay attention to the fact that he periodically experiences mental clarity & calm. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

“When a person is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and does not periodically experience mental clarity & calm, how should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a sick man—in pain, seriously ill—traveling along a road, far from the next village & far from the last, unable to get the food he needs, unable to get the medicine he needs, unable to get a suitable assistant, unable to get anyone to take him to human habitation. Now suppose another person were to see him coming along the road. He would do what he could out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for the man, thinking, ‘O that this man should get the food he needs, the medicine he needs, a suitable assistant, someone to take him to human habitation. Why is that? So that he won’t fall into ruin right here.’ In the same way, when a person is impure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and who does not periodically experience mental clarity & calm, one should do what one can out of compassion, pity, & sympathy for him, thinking, ‘O that this man should abandon wrong bodily conduct and develop right bodily conduct, abandon wrong verbal conduct and develop right verbal conduct, abandon wrong mental conduct and develop right mental conduct. Why is that? So that, on the break-up of the body, after death, he won’t fall into a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell.’ Thus the hatred for him should be subdued.

“And as for a person who is pure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and who periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, how

should one subdue hatred for him? Just as when there is a pool of clear water—sweet, cool, & limpid, with gently sloping banks, & shaded on all sides by trees of many kinds—and a person comes along, burning with heat, covered with sweat, exhausted, trembling, & thirsty. Having plunged into the pool, having bathed & drunk & come back out, he would sit down or lie down right there in the shade of the trees. In the same way, when an individual is pure in his bodily behavior & verbal behavior, and periodically experiences mental clarity & calm, one should at that time pay attention to the purity of his bodily behavior... the purity of his verbal behavior, and to the fact that he periodically experiences mental clarity & calm. Thus the hatred for him should be subdued. An entirely inspiring individual can make the mind grow serene.

“These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely.” — [AN 5:162](#)

§6.8 “When you give birth to hatred for an individual, you should develop goodwill for that individual... you should develop compassion for that individual... you should develop equanimity toward that individual... you should pay him no mind & pay him no attention... you should direct your thoughts to the fact of his being the product of his actions: ‘This venerable one is the doer of his actions, heir of his actions, born of his actions, related by his actions, and has his actions as his arbitrator. Whatever action he does, for good or for evil, to that will he fall heir.’ Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.” — [AN 5:161](#)

§6.9 “Suppose that a man were to come along carrying a hoe & a basket, saying, ‘I will make this great earth be without earth.’ He would dig here & there, scatter soil here & there, spit here & there, urinate here & there, saying, ‘Be without earth. Be without earth.’ Now, what do you think—would he make this great earth be without earth?”

“No, lord. Why is that? Because this great earth is deep & enormous. It can’t easily be made to be without earth. The man would reap only a share of weariness & disappointment.”

“In the same way, monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you: timely or untimely, true or false, affectionate or harsh, beneficial or unbeneficial, with a mind of goodwill or with inner hate. Others may address you in a timely way or an untimely way. They

may address you with what is true or what is false. They may address you in an affectionate way or a harsh way. They may address you in a beneficial way or an unbeneficial way. They may address you with a mind of goodwill or with inner hate. In any event, you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to that person's welfare, with a mind of goodwill, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with goodwill and, beginning with him, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with goodwill equal to the great earth—abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves.

"Suppose that a man were to come along carrying lac, yellow orpiment, indigo, or crimson, saying, 'I will draw pictures in space, I will make pictures appear.' Now, what do you think? Would he draw pictures in space & make pictures appear?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because space is formless & featureless. It's not easy to draw pictures there and to make them appear. The man would reap only a share of weariness & disappointment."

"In the same way, monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you.... In any event, you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to that person's welfare, with a mind of goodwill, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with goodwill and, beginning with him, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with goodwill equal to space—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves.

"Suppose that a man were to come along carrying a burning grass torch and saying, 'With this burning grass torch I will heat up the river Ganges and make it boil.' Now, what do you think? Would he, with that burning grass torch, heat up the river Ganges and make it boil?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because the river Ganges is deep & enormous. It's not easy to heat it up and make it boil with a burning grass torch. The man would reap only a share of weariness & disappointment."

"In the same way, monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you.... In any event, you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain

sympathetic to that person's welfare, with a mind of goodwill, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with goodwill and, beginning with him, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with goodwill equal to the river Ganges—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves.

"Suppose there were a catskin bag—beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling—and a man were to come along carrying a stick or shard and saying, 'With this stick or shard I will take this catskin bag—beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling—and I will make it rustle & crackle.' Now, what do you think? Would he, with that stick or shard, take that catskin bag—beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling—and make it rustle & crackle?"

"No, lord. Why is that? Because the catskin bag is beaten, well-beaten, beaten through & through, soft, silky, free of rustling & crackling. It's not easy to make it rustle & crackle with a stick or shard. The man would reap only a share of weariness & disappointment."

"In the same way, monks, there are these five aspects of speech by which others may address you: timely or untimely, true or false, affectionate or harsh, beneficial or unbeneficial, with a mind of goodwill or with inner hate. Others may address you in a timely way or an untimely way. They may address you with what is true or what is false. They may address you in an affectionate way or a harsh way. They may address you in a beneficial way or an unbeneficial way. They may address you with a mind of goodwill or with inner hate. In any event, you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic to that person's welfare, with a mind of goodwill, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading him with an awareness imbued with goodwill and, beginning with him, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with goodwill equal to a catskin bag—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves.

"Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely into pieces with a two-handled saw, he among you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding. Even then you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will

remain sympathetic, with a mind of goodwill, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with an awareness imbued with goodwill and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill will.’ That’s how you should train yourselves.

“Monks, if you attend constantly to this admonition on the simile of the saw, do you see any aspects of speech, slight or gross, that you could not endure?”

“No, lord.”

“Then attend constantly to this admonition on the simile of the saw. That will be for your long-term welfare & happiness.” — [MN 21](#)

Antidotes to Partiality

§6.10 “Now if other people insult, malign, exasperate, & harass a monk, he discerns that ‘A painful feeling, born of ear-contact, has arisen within me. And that is dependent, not independent. Dependent on what? Dependent on contact.’ And he sees that contact is inconstant, feeling is inconstant, perception is inconstant, consciousness is inconstant. His mind, with the (earth... liquid... wind... fire) property as its object/support, leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & released.

“And if other people attack the monk in ways that are undesirable, displeasing, & disagreeable—through contact with fists, contact with stones, contact with sticks, or contact with knives—the monk discerns that ‘This body is of such a nature contacts with fists come, contacts with stones come, contacts with sticks come, & contacts with knives come. Now the Blessed One has said, in his exhortation of the simile of the saw [[MN 21](#)], ‘Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely into pieces with a two-handled saw, he among you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding.’ So my persistence will be aroused & untiring, my mindfulness established & unconfused, my body calm & unaroused, my mind centered & unified. And now let contact with fists come to this body, let contact with stones, with sticks, with knives come to this body, for this is how the Buddha’s bidding is done.’

“And if, in the monk recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established, he feels

apprehensive at that and gives rise to a sense of urgency: 'It is a loss for me, not a gain; ill-gotten for me, not well-gotten, that when I recollect the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established within me.' Just as when a daughter-in-law, on seeing her father-in-law, feels apprehensive and gives rise to a sense of urgency (to please him), in the same way, if, in the monk recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established, he feels apprehensive at that and gives rise to a sense of urgency: 'It is a loss for me, not a gain; ill-gotten for me, not well-gotten, that when I recollect the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is not established within me.'

"But if, in the monk recollecting the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha in this way, equanimity based on what is skillful is established, then he is gratified at that. And even to this extent, friends, the monk has accomplished a great deal." — [MN 28](#)

§6.11 I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī at Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery. Now at that time a certain householder's dear & beloved little son, his only child, had died. Because of his death, the father had no desire to work or to eat. He kept going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"

Then he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties."

"Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, 'Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?'"

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

"But lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from

one who is dear." So the householder, not delighting in the Blessed One's words, rejecting the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and left.

Now at that time a large number of gamblers were playing dice not far from the Blessed One. So the householder went to them and, on arrival, said to them, "Just now, venerable sirs, I went to Gotama the contemplative and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As I was sitting there, Gotama the contemplative said to me, 'Householder, your faculties are not those of one who is steady in his own mind. There is an aberration in your faculties.'

"When this was said, I said to him, 'Lord, how could there not be an aberration in my faculties? My dear & beloved little son, my only child, has died. Because of his death, I have no desire to work or to eat. I keep going to the cemetery and crying out, "Where have you gone, my only little child? Where have you gone, my only little child?"'

"That's the way it is, householder. That's the way it is—for sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"But, lord, who would ever think that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear? Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.' So, not delighting in the words of Gotama the contemplative, rejecting them, I got up from my seat and left."

"That's the way it is, householder (said the gamblers). That's the way it is. Happiness & joy are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

So the householder left, thinking, "I agree with the gamblers."

Eventually, word of this conversation made its way into the king's inner chambers. Then King Pasenadi Kosala addressed Queen Mallikā, "Mallikā, your contemplative, Gotama, has said this: 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'"

"If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is."

"No matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Just as, no matter what his teacher says, a pupil endorses it: 'That's the way it is, teacher. That's the way it is.' In the same way, no matter what Gotama the contemplative says, Mallikā endorses it: 'If that was said by the Blessed

One, great king, then that's the way it is.' Go away, Mallikā! Out of my sight!"

Then Queen Mallikā called for the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha: "Come, brahman. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, showing reverence with your head to his feet in my name, ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, saying: 'Queen Mallikā, lord, shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And then say: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?' Whatever the Blessed One says, remember it well and tell it to me—for Tathāgatas do not speak untruthfully."

"Yes, madam," the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha responded to Queen Mallikā. Going to the Blessed One, on arrival he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: "Master Gotama, Queen Mallikā shows reverence with her head to your feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. And she says further: 'Lord, did the Blessed One say that sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear?'"

"That's the way it is, brahman. That's the way it is. Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear. And it's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvattḥī there was a woman whose mother died. Owing to her mother's death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvattḥī there was a woman whose father died... whose brother died... whose sister died... whose son died... whose daughter died... whose husband died. Owing to his death she went mad, out of her mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to

crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my husband? Have you seen my husband?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvattthī there was a man whose mother died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my mother? Have you seen my mother?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvattthī there was a man whose father died... whose brother died... whose sister died... whose son died... whose daughter died... whose wife died. Owing to her death he went mad, out of his mind, and wandering from street to street, crossroads to crossroads, would say, 'Have you seen my wife? Have you seen my wife?' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.

"Once in this same Sāvattthī there was a wife who went to her relatives' home. Her relatives, having separated her from her husband, wanted to give her to another against her will. So she said to her husband, 'These relatives of mine, having separated us, want to give me to another against my will,' whereupon he cut her in two and slashed himself open, thinking, 'Dead we will be together.' It's through this line of reasoning that it may be understood how sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear."

Then the brahman Nāḷijaṅgha, delighting in & approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and went to Queen Mallikā. On arrival, he told her all that had been said in his conversation with the Blessed One.

Then Queen Mallikā went to King Pasenadi Kosala and on arrival said to him, "What do you think, great king? Is Princess Vajirī dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, Princess Vajirī is dear to me."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in Princess Vajirī?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in Princess Vajirī would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"Now what do you think, great king? Is the noble Queen Vāsabhā dear to you? Is [your son] General Viḍūḍabha dear to you? Am I dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, you are dear to me."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in me?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in you would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'

"Now what do you think, great king? Are [your subjects] the Kāsis & Kosalans dear to you?"

"Yes, Mallikā, the Kāsis & Kosalans are dear to me. It's through the might of the Kāsis & Kosalans that we use Kāsi sandalwood and wear garlands, scents, & ointments."

"And what do you think? Would sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair arise in you from any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans?"

"Mallikā, any change & aberration in the Kāsis & Kosalans would mean an aberration of my very life. How could sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair not arise in me?"

"Great king, it was in connection with this that the Blessed One—the One who knows, the One who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—said, 'Sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair are born from one who is dear, come springing from one who is dear.'"

"It's amazing, Mallikā. It's astounding: how deeply the Blessed One sees, having pierced through, as it were, with discernment. Come Mallikā: Give me the ablution water." Then King Pasenadi Kosala, rising from his seat and arranging his upper robe over one shoulder, paid homage in the direction of

the Blessed One with his hands palm-to-palm in front of his heart, and exclaimed three times:

“Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!

Homage to the Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened!” — [MN 87](#)

§6.12 Once the Blessed One was staying near Sāvattthī in Jetā’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍikā’s monastery. Then King Pasenadi the Kosalan went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down, sat to one side. Now, at that time Queen Mallikā died. Then a certain man went to the king and whispered in his ear: “Your majesty, Queen Mallikā has died.” When this was said, King Pasenadi the Kosalan sat there miserable, sick at heart, his shoulders drooping, his face down, brooding, at a loss for words. Then the Blessed One saw the king sitting there miserable, sick at heart... at a loss for words, and so said to him, “There are these five things, great king, that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world. Which five?

“‘May what is subject to aging not age.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to illness not grow ill.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to death not die.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to ending not end.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“‘May what is subject to destruction not be destroyed.’ This is something that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.

“Now, it happens to an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person that something that is subject to aging ages. With the aging of what is subject to aging, he does not reflect: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to aging will age. To the extent that there are beings—past & future,

passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to aging will age. And if, with the aging of what is subject to aging, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the aging of what is subject to aging, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, & becomes distraught. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person pierced by the poisoned arrow of sorrow, tormenting himself.

“And further, it happens to an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person that something that is subject to illness grows ill... that something subject to death dies... that something subject to ending ends... that something subject to destruction is destroyed. With the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he does not reflect: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. And if, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he sorrows, grieves, laments, beats his breast, & becomes distraught. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person pierced by the poisoned arrow of sorrow, tormenting himself.

“Now, it happens to an instructed disciple of the noble ones that something that is subject to aging ages. With the aging of what is subject to aging, he reflects: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to aging will age. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to aging will age. And if, with the aging of what is subject to aging, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the aging of what is subject to aging, he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow

pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.

“And further, it happens to an instructed disciple of the noble ones that something that is subject to illness grows ill... that something subject to death dies... that something subject to ending ends... that something subject to destruction is destroyed. With the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he reflects: ‘It doesn’t happen only to me that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. To the extent that there are beings—past & future, passing away & re-arising—it happens to all of them that what is subject to destruction will be destroyed. And if, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, I were to sorrow, grieve, lament, beat my breast, & become distraught, food would not agree with me, my body would become unattractive, my affairs would go untended, my enemies would be gratified and my friends unhappy.’ So, with the destruction of what is subject to destruction, he does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. This is called an instructed disciple of the noble ones who has pulled out the poisoned arrow of sorrow pierced with which the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person torments himself. Sorrowless, arrowless, the disciple of the noble ones is totally unbound right within himself.

“These are the five things, great king, that cannot be gotten by a contemplative, a brahman, a deva, a Māra, a Brahmā, or anyone at all in the world.”

Not by sorrowing,
not by lamenting,
is any aim accomplished here,
not even a bit.
Knowing you’re sorrowing & in pain,
your enemies are gratified.

But when a sage
with a sense for determining what is his aim
doesn’t waver in the face of misfortune,
his enemies are pained,
seeing his face unchanged, as of old.
Where & however an aim is accomplished

through
eulogies, chants, good sayings,
donations, & family customs,
follow them diligently there & that way.
But if you discern that
your own aim
or that of others
is not gained in this way,
acquiesce (to the nature of things)
unsorrowing, with the thought:
'What important work
am I doing now?' — [AN 5:49](#)

§6.13 “From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. What do you think, monks? Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—or the water in the four great oceans?”

“As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.”

“Excellent, monks. Excellent. It’s excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.

“This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—not the water in the four great oceans.

“Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating & wandering this long, long time—crying & weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing—are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

“Why is that? From an inconceivable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating & wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries—enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released.” — [*SN 15:3*](#)

§6.14 [*Pāṭācārā recounts the Buddha's words:*]

“You don’t know
the path
of his coming or going,
that being who has come
from
where?—
the one you lament as ‘my son.’

But when you know
the path
of his coming or going,
you don’t grieve after him,
for that is the nature
of beings.

Unasked,
he came from there.
Without permission,
he went from here
—coming from
where?—
having stayed a few days.

And coming one way from here,
he goes yet another
from there.

Dying in the human form,
he will go wandering on.
As he came, so he has gone—
so what is there
to lament?"

Pulling out
—completely out—
the arrow so hard to see,
embedded in my heart,
he [the Buddha] expelled from me
—overcome with grief—
the grief
over my son.

Today—with arrow removed,
without hunger, entirely
unbound—
to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha I go,
for refuge to
the Sage. — *Thig 6:1*

\$6.15 [*Ubbiri recalls the Buddha's words:*]

"‘Jīva, my daughter,
you cry in the woods.
Come to your senses, Ubbiri.
84,000
all named Jīva
have been burned in that charnel ground.
For which of them do you grieve?"

Pulling out
—completely out—
the arrow so hard to see,
embedded in my heart,

he expelled from me
—overcome with grief—
the grief
over my daughter.

Today—with arrow removed,
without hunger, entirely
unbound—
to the Buddha, Dhamma, & Saṅgha I go,
for refuge to
the Sage. — *Thig 3:5*

§6.16 “‘The thirty-six emotions to which beings are attached should be known’: Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said? Six kinds of household joy & six kinds of renunciation joy; six kinds of household distress & six kinds of renunciation distress; six kinds of household equanimity & six kinds of renunciation equanimity.

“And what are the six kinds of household joy? The joy that arises when one regards as an acquisition the acquisition of forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, connected with worldly baits—or when one recalls the previous acquisition of such forms after they have passed, ceased, & changed: That is called household joy. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation joy? The joy that arises when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, past or present, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change: That is called renunciation joy. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of household distress? The distress that arises when one regards as a non-acquisition the non-acquisition of forms cognizable by the eye—agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, connected with worldly baits—or when one recalls the previous non-acquisition of such forms after they have passed, ceased, & changed: That is called household distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation distress? The distress coming from the longing that arises in one who is filled with longing for the unexcelled liberations when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—he sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, past or present, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change and he is filled with this longing: ‘O when will I enter & remain in the sphere that the noble ones now enter & remain in?’ This is called renunciation distress. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of household equanimity? The equanimity that arises when a foolish, deluded person—a run-of-the-mill, untaught person who has not conquered his limitations or the results of action & who is blind to danger—sees a form with the eye. Such equanimity does not go beyond the form, which is why it is called household equanimity. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“And what are the six kinds of renunciation equanimity? The equanimity that arises when—experiencing the inconstancy of those very forms, their change, fading, & cessation—one sees with right discernment as it has come to be that all forms, past or present, are inconstant, stressful, subject to change: This equanimity goes beyond form, which is why it is called renunciation equanimity. [Similarly with sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, & ideas.]

“‘The thirty-six emotions to which beings are attached should be known’: Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.

“‘With regard to them, depending on this, abandon that’: Thus was it said. And in reference to what was it said?

“Here, by depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation joy, abandon & transcend the six kinds of household joy. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation distress, abandon & transcend the six kinds of household distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation equanimity, abandon & transcend the six kinds of household equanimity. Such is their abandoning, such their transcending.

“By depending & relying on the six kinds of renunciation joy, abandon & transcend the six kinds of renunciation distress. Such is their abandoning, such is their transcending. By depending & relying on the six

kinds of renunciation equanimity, abandon & transcend the six kinds of renunciation joy. Such is their abandoning, such their transcending.

“There is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity; and there is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

“And what is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity? There is equanimity with regard to forms, equanimity with regard to sounds... smells... tastes... tactile sensations [& ideas: this word appears in one of the recensions]. This is equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity.

“And what is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness? There is equanimity dependent on the sphere of the infinitude of space, equanimity dependent on the sphere of the infinitude of consciousness... dependent on the sphere of nothingness... dependent on the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. This is equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness.

“By depending & relying on equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness, abandon & transcend equanimity coming from multiplicity, dependent on multiplicity. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.

“By depending & relying on non-fashioning [*atammayatā*], abandon & transcend the equanimity coming from singleness, dependent on singleness. Such is its abandoning, such its transcending.

“Depending on this, abandon that’: Thus was it said. And in reference to this was it said.” — [MN 137](#)

§6.17 Ven. Sāriputta said, “Friends, just now as I was withdrawn in seclusion, this train of thought arose to my awareness: ‘Is there anything in the world with whose change or alteration there would arise within me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair?’ Then the thought occurred to me: ‘There is nothing in the world with whose change or alteration there would arise within me sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, & despair.’”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to Ven. Sāriputta, “Sāriputta my friend, even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher would there arise within you no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair?”

“Even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher, my friend, there would arise within me no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair.

Still, I would have this thought: ‘What a great being, of great might, of great prowess, has disappeared! For if the Blessed One were to remain for a long time, that would be for the benefit of many people, for the happiness of many people, out of sympathy for the world; for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human & divine beings.’”

“Surely,” [said Ven. Ānanda,] “it’s because Ven. Sāriputta’s I-making & mine-making and conceit-obsessions have long been well uprooted that even if there were change & alteration in the Teacher, there would arise within him no sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, or despair.” — [SN 21.2](#)

§6.18 So Ven. Ānanda & Cunda the novice went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to him, “Lord, just now Cunda the novice said to me, ‘Venerable sir, Ven. Sāriputta has totally unbound. Here are his bowl & robes.’ It was as if my body were drugged, I lost my bearings, things weren’t clear to me, on hearing that Ven. Sāriputta had totally unbound.”

“But, Ānanda, when he totally unbound, did Sāriputta take the aggregate of virtue along with him? Did he take the aggregate of concentration... discernment... release... the aggregate of knowledge & vision of release along with him?”

“No, lord.... It’s just that he was my instructor & counselor, one who exhorted, urged, roused, & encouraged me. He was tireless in teaching the Dhamma, a help to his companions in the holy life. We miss the nourishment of his Dhamma, the wealth of his Dhamma, his help in the Dhamma.”

“But, Ānanda, haven’t I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Just as if the largest limb were to fall off of a great tree composed of heartwood, standing firm; in the same way, Sāriputta has totally unbound from this great community of monks composed of heartwood, standing firm. What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“Therefore, Ānanda, each of you should remain with your self as an island, your self as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. Remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as your refuge, without anything else as a refuge. And how does a monk remain with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? How does he remain with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings... mind... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk remains with his self as an island, his self as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as his refuge, without anything else as a refuge. For those who—now or after I am gone—remain with their self as an island, their self as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, the Dhamma as their refuge, without anything else as a refuge, they will be the highest of the monks who desire training.” — [SN 47:13](#)

§6.19 How blissful it is, for one who has nothing
who has mastered the Dhamma,
is learned.
See him suffering, one who has something,
a person bound in body
with people. — [Ud 2:5](#)

§6.20 How blissful it is, for one who has nothing.
Attainers-of-wisdom
are people with nothing.
See him suffering, one who has something,
a person bound in mind
with people. — [Ud 2:6](#)

7. FURTHER PRACTICE

§7.1 “You should train yourself thus: ‘My mind will be established inwardly, well-composed. No evil, unskillful qualities, once they have arisen, will remain consuming the mind.’ That’s how you should train yourself.

“Then you should train yourself thus: ‘Goodwill, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

“When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: ‘Compassion, as my awareness-release.... Empathetic joy, as my awareness-release.... Equanimity, as my awareness-release, will be developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, & well-undertaken.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

“When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, you should then train yourself thus: ‘I will remain focused on the body in & of itself.... feelings in & of themselves.... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—putting aside greed & distress with reference to the world.’ That’s how you should train yourself. When you have developed this concentration in this way, you should develop this concentration with directed thought & evaluation, you should develop it with no directed thought & a modicum of evaluation, you

should develop it with no directed thought & no evaluation, you should develop it accompanied by rapture... not accompanied by rapture... endowed with a sense of enjoyment; you should develop it endowed with equanimity.

"When this concentration is thus developed, thus well-developed by you, then wherever you go, you will go in comfort. Wherever you stand, you will stand in comfort. Wherever you sit, you will sit in comfort. Wherever you lie down, you will lie down in comfort." — *AN 8:63*

§7.2 "Mindful & astute, you should develop limitless concentration [i.e., concentration based on limitless goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, or equanimity]. When, mindful & astute, you have developed limitless concentration, five realizations arise right within yourself. Which five?

"... 'This concentration is blissful in the present and will result in bliss in the future'.... 'This concentration is noble & not connected with the baits of the flesh'.... 'This concentration is not obtained by base people'.... 'This concentration is peaceful, exquisite, the acquiring of calm, the attainment of unity, not kept in place by the fabrications of forceful restraint'.... 'I enter into this concentration mindfully, and mindfully I emerge from it.'

"Mindful & astute, you should develop limitless concentration. When, mindful & astute, you have developed limitless concentration, these five realizations arise right within yourself." — [*AN 5:27*](#)

§7.3 "There is the case where a monk develops *mindfulness* as a factor for awakening accompanied by goodwill, dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. He develops *analysis of qualities* as a factor for awakening... *persistence* as a factor for awakening... *rapture* as a factor for awakening... *calm* as a factor for awakening... *concentration* as a factor for awakening... *equanimity* as a factor for awakening accompanied by goodwill, dependent on seclusion... dispassion... cessation, resulting in letting go. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome. If he wants, he remains percipient of loathsomeness in the presence of what is not loathsome & what is. If he wants, he remains percipient of unloathsomeness in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not. If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is

not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or he may enter & remain in the beautiful liberation. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through goodwill has the beautiful as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is awareness-release through compassion developed, what is its destiny, what is its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by compassion... etc.... If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or, with the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, thinking, ‘Infinite space,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through compassion has the dimension of the infinitude of space as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is awareness-release through empathetic joy developed, what is its destiny, what is its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by empathetic joy... etc.... If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or, with the complete transcending of the dimension of infinitude of space, thinking ‘Infinite consciousness,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through empathetic joy has the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.

“And how is awareness-release through equanimity developed, what is its destiny, what is its excellence, its reward, & its consummation?

“There is the case where a monk develops mindfulness as a factor for awakening accompanied by equanimity... etc.... If he wants—in the presence of what is loathsome & what is not—cutting himself off from both, he remains equanimous, alert, & mindful. Or, with the complete transcending of the dimension of infinitude of consciousness, thinking ‘There is nothing,’ he enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. I tell you, monks, awareness-release through equanimity has the dimension

of nothingness as its excellence—in the case of one who has penetrated to no higher release.” — [SN 46:54](#)

§7.4 “There is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, but as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind doesn’t leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is not to be expected. Just as if a man were to grasp a branch with his hand smeared with resin, his hand would stick to it, grip it, adhere to it; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, but as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind doesn’t leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is not to be expected.

“Now, there is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, and as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is to be expected. Just as if a man were to grasp a branch with a clean hand, his hand would not stick to it, grip it, or adhere to it; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the cessation of self-identification, and as he is attending to the cessation of self-identification his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the cessation of self-identification. For him the cessation of self-identification is to be expected.

“Now, there is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, but as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind doesn’t leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is not to be expected. Just as if there were a waste-water pool that had stood for countless years, where a man were to block all the inlets and open all the outlets, and the sky were to not rain down in good streams of rain: the breaching of the waste-water pool’s embankment would not be expected; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of

ignorance, but as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind doesn't leap up, grow confident, steadfast, or firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is not to be expected.

"Now, there is the case where a monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, and as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is to be expected. Just as if there were a waste-water pool that had stood for countless years, where a man were to open all the inlets and block all the outlets, and the sky were to rain down in good streams of rain: the breaching of the waste-water pool's embankment would be expected; in the same way, the monk enters & remains in a certain peaceful awareness-release. He attends to the breaching of ignorance, and as he is attending to the breaching of ignorance his mind leaps up, grows confident, steadfast, & firm in the breaching of ignorance. For him the breaching of ignorance is to be expected." — [*AN 4:178*](#)

§7.5 When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One: "There is the case, lord, where a monk, having practiced in this way—'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. Now, would this monk be totally unbound, or not?"

"A certain such monk might, Ānanda, and another might not."

"What is the cause, what is the reason, whereby one might and another might not?"

"There is the case, Ānanda, where a monk, having practiced in this way—(thinking) 'It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon'—obtains equanimity. He relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it. As he relishes that equanimity, welcomes it, remains fastened to it, his consciousness is dependent on it, is sustained by it [clings to it]. With clinging/sustenance, Ānanda, a monk is not totally unbound."

"Being sustained, where is that monk sustained?"

"The dimension of neither perception nor non-perception."

"Then, indeed, being sustained, he is sustained by the supreme sustenance."

“Being sustained, Ānanda, he is sustained by the supreme sustenance; for this—the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception—is the supreme sustenance. There is (however) the case where a monk, having practiced in this way—‘It should not be, it should not occur to me; it will not be, it will not occur to me. What is, what has come to be, that I abandon’—obtains equanimity. He does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it. As does not relish that equanimity, does not welcome it, does not remain fastened to it, his consciousness is not dependent on it, is not sustained by it [does not cling to it]. Without clinging/sustenance, Ānanda, a monk is totally unbound.”

“It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding. For truly, the Blessed One has declared to us the way to cross over the flood by going from one support to the next. But what is the noble liberation?”

“There is the case, Ānanda, where a disciple of the noble ones considers this: ‘Sensuality here & now; sensuality in lives to come; sensual perceptions here & now; sensual perceptions in lives to come; forms here & now; forms in lives to come; form-perceptions here & now; form-perceptions in lives to come; perceptions of the imperturbable; perceptions of the dimension of nothingness; perceptions of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception: That is an identity, to the extent that there is an identity. This is deathless: the liberation of the mind through lack of clinging/sustenance.’” — [*MN 106*](#)

§7.6 Then Ven. Sāriputta, having adjusted his under robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe, went to Dhanañjānin’s home. On arrival, he sat down on a prepared seat and said to him, “I trust you are getting better, Dhanañjānin? I trust you are comfortable? I trust that your pains are lessening and not increasing? I trust that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing?”

“I am not getting better, Master Sāriputta. I am not comfortable. My severe pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening. Extreme forces slice through my head, just as if a strong man were slicing my head open with a sharp sword.... Extreme pains have arisen in my head, just as if a strong man were tightening a turban on my head with a tough leather strap.... Extreme forces carve up my stomach cavity, just as if an expert butcher or his apprentice were to carve up the stomach cavity of an ox with a sharp

butcher's knife.... There is an extreme burning in my body, just as if two strong men, seizing a weaker man with their arms, were to roast and broil him over a pit of hot embers. I am not getting better, venerable sir. I am not comfortable. My severe pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

"What do you think, Dhanañjānin? Which is better: hell or the animal womb?"

"The animal womb is better than hell, Master Sāriputta."

"... Which is better: the animal womb or the realm of the hungry ghosts?"

"... the realm of the hungry ghosts...."

"... the realm of the hungry ghosts or human beings?"

"... human beings...."

"... human beings or the Devas of the Four Great Kings?"

"... the Devas of the Four Great Kings...."

"... the Devas of the Four Great Kings or the Devas of the Thirty-three?"

"... the Devas of the Thirty-three...."

"... the Devas of the Thirty-three or the Devas of the Hours?"

"... the Devas of the Hours...."

"... the Devas of the Hours or the Contented Devas?"

"... the Contented Devas...."

"... the Contented Devas or the Devas Delighting in Creation?"

"... the Devas Delighting in Creation...."

"... the Devas Delighting in Creation or the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others?"

"... the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others...."

"... the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others or the Brahmā world?"

"Did Master Sāriputta say, 'Brahmā world'? Did Master Sāriputta say, 'Brahmā world'?"

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Sāriputta, "These brahmins are set on the Brahmā world. What if I were to teach Dhanañjānin the brahmin the path to union with the Brahmās?" (So he said:) "Dhanañjānin, I will teach you the path to union with the Brahmās. Listen and pay careful attention to that. I will speak."

"As you say, master," Dhanañjānin the brahmin responded to Ven. Sāriputta.

Ven. Sāriputta said: “And what is the path to union with the Brahmās? There is the case where a monk keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with good will, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with good will—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. He keeps pervading the first direction with an awareness imbued with compassion... empathetic joy... equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity—abundant, expansive, immeasurable, without hostility, without ill will. This, Dhanañjānin, is the path to union with the Brahmās.”

“In that case, Master Sāriputta, pay homage to the Blessed One’s feet with your head in my name and say ‘Lord, Dhanañjānin the brahman is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to the Blessed One’s feet.’”

So Ven. Sāriputta—when there was still more to be done, having established Dhanañjānin the brahman in the inferior Brahmā world—got up from his seat and left. Then, not long after Ven. Sāriputta’s departure, Dhanañjānin the brahman died and reappeared in the Brahmā world.

And the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, Sāriputta—when there was still more to be done, having established Dhanañjānin the brahman in the inferior Brahmā world—has gotten up from his seat and left.”

Then Ven. Sāriputta went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, Dhanañjānin the brahman is diseased, in pain, severely ill. He pays homage with his head to the Blessed One’s feet.”

“But why, Sāriputta—when there was still more to be done, having established Dhanañjānin the brahman in the inferior Brahmā world—did you get up from your seat and leave?”

“The thought occurred to me, lord, ‘These brahmans are set on the Brahmā worlds. What if I were to teach Dhanañjānin the brahman the path to union with the Brahmās?’”

“Sāriputta, Dhanañjānin the brahman has died and reappeared in the Brahmā world.” — [MN 97](#)

§7.7 “Mahānāma, a discerning lay follower who is diseased, in pain, severely ill should be reassured by another discerning lay follower with four reassurances: ‘Be reassured, friend, that you are endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One... verified confidence in the Dhamma... verified confidence in the Saṅgha... virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the wise, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.’

“Mahānāma, when a discerning lay follower who is diseased, in pain, severely ill has been reassured by another discerning lay follower with these four reassurances, he should be asked: ‘Friend, are you concerned for your mother & father?’ If he should say, ‘I am...,’ he should be told, ‘You, my dear friend, are subject to death. If you feel concern for your mother & father, you’re still going to die. If you don’t feel concern for your mother & father, you’re still going to die. It would be good if you abandoned concern for your mother & father.’

“If he should say, ‘My concern for my mother & father has been abandoned,’ he should be asked, ‘Friend, are you concerned for your wife & children?’ If he should say, ‘I am...,’ he should be told, ‘You, my dear friend, are subject to death. If you feel concern for your wife & children, you’re still going to die. If you don’t feel concern for your wife & children, you’re still going to die. It would be good if you abandoned concern for your wife & children.’

“If he should say, ‘My concern for my wife & children has been abandoned,’ he should be asked, ‘Friend, are you concerned for the five strings of human sensuality?’ If he should say, ‘I am...,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, divine sensual pleasures are more splendid & more refined than human sensual pleasures. It would be good if, having raised your mind above human sensual pleasures, you set it on the Devas of the Four Great Kings.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above human sensual pleasures and is set on the Devas of the Four Great Kings,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, the Devas of the Thirty-three are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Four Great Kings. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas of the Four Great Kings, you set it on the Devas of the Thirty-three.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas of the Four Great Kings and is set on the Devas of the Thirty-three,’ he should be told,

‘Friend, the Devas of the Hours are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Thirty-three... the Contented Devas are more splendid & more refined than the Devas of the Hours... the Devas Delighting in Creation are more splendid & more refined than the Contented Devas... the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others are more splendid & more refined than the Devas Delighting in Creation... the Brahmā world is more splendid and more refined than the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others, you set it on the Brahmā world.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Devas Wielding Power over the Creations of Others and is set on the Brahmā world,’ he should be told, ‘Friend, even the Brahmā world is inconstant, impermanent, included in self-identification. It would be good if, having raised your mind above the Brahmā world, you brought it to the cessation of self-identification.’

“If he should say, ‘My mind is raised above the Brahmā worlds and is brought to the cessation of self-identification,’ then, I tell you, Mahānāma, there is no difference—in terms of release—between the release of that lay follower whose mind is released and the release of a monk whose mind is released.” — [SN 55:54](#)

§7.8 “There is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the devas of Brahmā’s retinue. The devas of Brahmā’s retinue, monks, have a lifespan of an eon. A run-of-the-mill person having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry ghosts. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between

an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.

“And further, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with compassion: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the Ābhassara [Radiant] devas. The Ābhassara devas, monks, have a lifespan of two eons. A run-of-the-mill person having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry ghosts. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.

“And further, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with empathetic joy: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there—fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the Subhakiṇha [Beautiful Black] devas. The Subhakiṇha devas, monks, have a lifespan of four eons. A run-of-the-mill person having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry ghosts. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.

“And further, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east] — as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth — with an awareness imbued with equanimity. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. He savors that, longs for that, finds satisfaction through that. Staying there —fixed on that, dwelling there often, not falling away from that—then when he dies he reappears in conjunction with the Vehapphala [Sky-fruit] devas. The Vehapphala devas, monks, have a lifespan of 500 eons. A run-of-the-mill person having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry ghosts. But a disciple of the Blessed One, having stayed there, having used up all the lifespan of those devas, is unbound right in that state of being. This, monks, is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor, between an educated disciple of the noble ones and an uneducated run-of-the-mill person, when there is a destination, a reappearing.” — [AN 4:125](#)

§7.9 “There is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction [the east]—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth —with an awareness imbued with goodwill. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill: abundant, expansive, limitless, free from hostility, free from ill will. He regards whatever phenomena there that are connected with form, feeling, perception, fabrications, & consciousness, as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a disintegration, an emptiness, not-self. At the break-up of the body, after death, he reappears in conjunction with the devas of the Pure Abodes. This rebirth is not in common with run-of-the-mill people.”

“[Similarly with compassion, empathetic joy, & equanimity.]” — [AN 4:126](#)

§7.10 Ven. Ānanda: “And further, a monk keeps pervading the first direction [the east] with an awareness imbued with goodwill, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth. Thus above, below, & all around, everywhere, in its entirety, he keeps pervading the all-

encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with goodwill—abundant, expansive, unlimited, without hostility, without ill will. He reflects on this and discerns, ‘This awareness-release through goodwill is fabricated & intended. Now whatever is fabricated & intended is inconstant & subject to cessation.’ Staying right there, he reaches the ending of the effluents. Or, if not, then—through this very Dhamma-passion, this Dhamma-delight, and from the total wasting away of the five lower fetters—he is due to arise spontaneously (in the Pure Abodes), there to be totally unbound, never again to return from that world.

“This too, householder, is a single quality declared by the Blessed One—the one who knows, the one who sees, worthy & rightly self-awakened—where the unreleased mind of a monk who dwells there heedful, ardent, & resolute becomes released, or his unended effluents go to their total ending, or he attains the unexcelled security from the yoke that he had not attained before.

“[Similarly with awareness-release through compassion, through empathetic joy, & through equanimity.]” — [MN 52](#)

§7.11 “If the thought should occur to you that, when defiling mental qualities are abandoned and bright mental qualities have grown, and one enters & remains in the culmination & abundance of discernment, having known & realized it for oneself in the here & now, one’s abiding is stressful/painful, you should not see it in that way. When defiling mental qualities are abandoned and bright mental qualities have grown, and one enters & remains in the culmination & abundance of discernment, having known & realized it for oneself in the here & now, there is joy, rapture, serenity, mindfulness, alertness, and a pleasant/happy abiding.” — [DN 9](#)

§7.12 Some Nigaṇṭha ascetics: “But, friend Gotama, it’s not the case that pleasure is to be attained through pleasure. Pleasure is to be attained through pain. For if pleasure were to be attained through pleasure, then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha would attain pleasure, for he lives in greater pleasure than you, friend Gotama.’

“Surely the venerable Nigaṇṭhas said that rashly and without reflecting... for instead, I should be asked, “Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or master Gotama?”

“Yes, friend Gotama, we said that rashly and without reflecting... but let that be. We now ask you, master Gotama—Who lives in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or master Gotama?”

“In that case, Nigaṇṭhas, I will question you in return. Answer as you like. What do you think? Can King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha—without moving his body, without uttering a word—dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for seven days & nights?”

“No, friend.”

“... for six days & nights.... for five days & nights... for a day & a night?”

“No, friend.”

“Now, I—without moving my body, without uttering a word—can dwell sensitive to unalloyed pleasure for a day and a night... for two days & nights... for three... four... five... six... seven days & nights. So what do you think? That being the case, who dwells in greater pleasure: King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha or me?”

“That being the case, master Gotama dwells in greater pleasure than King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha.” — [MN 14](#)

§7.13 On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Āḷavī on a spread of leaves by a cattle track in a siṃsapā forest. Then Hatthaka of Āḷavī, out roaming & rambling for exercise, saw the Blessed One sitting on a spread of leaves by the cattle track in the siṃsapā forest. On seeing him, he went to him and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I hope the Blessed One has slept in ease.”

“Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one.”

“But cold, lord, is the winter night. The ‘Between-the-Eights’ is a time of snowfall. Hard is the ground trampled by cattle hooves. Thin is the spread of leaves. Sparse are the leaves in the trees. Thin are your ochre robes. And cold blows the Verambhā wind. Yet still the Blessed One says, ‘Yes, young man. I have slept in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, I am one.’”

“In that case, young man, I will question you in return. Answer as you see fit. Now, what do you think? Suppose a householder or householder’s son has a house with a gabled roof, plastered inside & out, draft-free, with

close-fitting door & windows shut against the wind. Inside he has a throne-like bed spread with a long-fleeced coverlet, a white wool coverlet, an embroidered coverlet, a rug of kadali-deer hide, with a canopy above, & red cushions on either side. And there a lamp would be burning, and his four wives, with their many charms, would be attending to him. Would he sleep in ease, or not? Or how does this strike you?"

"Yes, lord, he would sleep in ease. Of those in the world who sleep in ease, he would be one."

"But what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of passion so that—burned with those passion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those passion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that passion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease.

"Now, what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of aversion so that—burned with those aversion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those aversion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that aversion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump, deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising. Therefore he sleeps in ease.

"Now, what do you think, young man? Might there arise in that householder or householder's son any bodily fevers or fevers of mind born of delusion so that—burned with those delusion-born fevers—he would sleep miserably?"

"Yes, lord."

"As for those delusion-born fevers—burned with which the householder or householder's son would sleep miserably—that delusion has been abandoned by the Tathāgata, its root destroyed, made like a palmyra stump,

deprived of the conditions of development, not destined for future arising.
Therefore he sleeps in ease.

“Always, always,
he sleeps in ease:
the brahman totally unbound,
who doesn’t adhere
to sensual pleasures,
who’s without acquisitions
& cooled.
Having
cut all ties
& subdued fear in the heart,
calmed,
he sleeps in ease,
having reached peace
of awareness.” — [AN 3:35](#)

§7.14 I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Anupiyā in the Mango Grove. And on that occasion, Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā’s son, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, would repeatedly exclaim, “What bliss! What bliss!”

A large number of monks heard Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā’s son, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaim, “What bliss! What bliss!” and on hearing him, the thought occurred to them, “There’s no doubt but that Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā’s son, doesn’t enjoy leading the holy life, for when he was a householder he knew the bliss of kingship, so that now, on recollecting that when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, he is repeatedly exclaiming, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’”

So they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they told him, “Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāḷigodhā’s son, lord, on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, repeatedly exclaims, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’ There’s no doubt but that Ven. Bhaddiya doesn’t enjoy leading the holy life, for when he was a householder he knew the bliss of kingship, so that now, on recollecting that when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, he is repeatedly exclaiming, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’”

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call Bhaddiya, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, friend Bhaddiya.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, and on arrival he said to him, “The Teacher calls you, friend Bhaddiya.”

Responding, “As you say, my friend,” to the monk, Ven. Bhaddiya, Kāligodhā’s son, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Is it true, Bhaddiya that—on going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’?”

“Yes, lord.”

“What compelling reason do you have in mind that—when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—you repeatedly exclaim, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’?”

“Before, when I was a householder, maintaining the bliss of kingship, lord, I had guards posted within and without the royal apartments, within and without the city, within and without the countryside. But even though I was thus guarded, thus protected, I dwelled in fear—agitated, distrustful, & afraid. But now, on going alone to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, I dwell without fear, unagitated, confident, & unafraid—unconcerned, unruffled, my wants satisfied, with my mind like a wild deer. This is the compelling reason I have in mind that—when going to the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or to an empty dwelling—I repeatedly exclaim, ‘What bliss! What bliss!’”

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

From whose heart
there is no provocation,
& for whom becoming & non-becoming
are overcome,
he—beyond fear,
blissful,
with no grief—
is one the devas can’t see. — [*Ud 2:10*](#)

§7.15 When a sage,
a brahman through sagacity,
has known for himself,
then from form & formless,
from pleasure & pain,
he is freed. — *Ud 1:10*

Glossary

Arahant: A “worthy one” or “pure one.” A person whose mind is free of defilement and thus not destined for further rebirth. A title for the Buddha and the highest level of his noble disciples.

Āsava: Effluent; fermentation. Four qualities—sensuality, views, becoming, and ignorance—that “flow out” of the mind and create the flood of the round of death and rebirth.

Atammayatā: A state of mind in which one does not create a sense of identity around one’s practices.

Brahmā: A deva inhabiting the higher heavenly realms of form or formlessness.

Brahman: A member of the priestly caste, which claimed to be the highest caste in India, based on birth. In a specifically Buddhist usage, “brahman” can also mean an arahant, conveying the point that excellence is based not on birth or race, but on the qualities attained in the mind.

Deva (devatā): Literally, “shining one.” A being on the subtle levels of sensuality, form, or formlessness, living either in terrestrial or heavenly realms.

Dhamma: (1) Event; action; (2) a phenomenon in and of itself; (3) mental quality; (4) doctrine, teaching; (5) *nibbāna* (although there are passages describing *nibbāna* as the abandoning of all dhammas). Sanskrit form: *Dharma*.

Gotama: The Buddha’s clan name.

Jhāna: Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single sensation or mental notion. This term is related to the verb *jhāyati*, which means to burn with a still, steady flame.

Kamma: (1) Intentional action; (2) the results of intentional actions.
Sanskrit form: *Karma*.

Nāga: A magical serpent with powers similar to those of a deva.

Nibbāna: Literally, the “unbinding” of the mind from passion, aversion, and delusion, and from the entire round of death and rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace. In the time of the Buddha, the fire property was believed to cling to its fuel while burning, and to be released when it let go. When used to describe the liberated mind, this image implies that the mind is not trapped by fabrications. Rather, it is trapped by its own clinging to fabrications and it will find freedom when it learns to let go.
Sanskrit form: *Nirvāṇa*.

Sambojjhaṅga: Factor for awakening. There are seven sambojjhaṅgas that, when fully developed, lead to full awakening. They are: mindfulness, analysis of qualities, persistence, rapture, calm, concentration, and equanimity.

Saṅgha: On the conventional (*sammati*) level, this term denotes the communities of Buddhist monks and nuns; on the ideal (*ariya*) level, it denotes those followers of the Buddha, lay or ordained, who have attained at least stream entry.

Satipaṭṭhāna: Establishing of mindfulness. The four satipaṭṭhānas are equivalent to the four exercises listed under right mindfulness in passage §6.2, and the Dhamma-refuge described in §6.18.

Tathāgata: Literally, “one who has become authentic (*tatha-āgata*)” or “one who is truly gone (*tathā-gata*).” An epithet used in ancient India for a person who has attained the highest religious goal. In Buddhism, it usually denotes the Buddha, although occasionally it also denotes any of his arahant disciples.

Vinaya: The monastic discipline. The Buddha’s name for his own teaching was “this Dhamma-&-Vinaya.”

Abbreviations

<i>AN</i>	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
<i>Dhp</i>	<i>Dhammapada</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
<i>Iti</i>	<i>Itivuttaka</i>
<i>Khp</i>	<i>Khuddakapāṭha</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Saṃyutta Nikāya</i>
<i>Thig</i>	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
<i>Ud</i>	<i>Udāna</i>

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