

THE CONCEPT OF BRAHMAVIHARA AND PEACE

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Today, we live in a world beset with extraordinary problems. Man is constantly making mistakes; he reaches out for the wrong goals, uses wrong means, and glorifies wrong values. Many others try various means to resist old age, and predictable with little success. Human beings in fear of the situation they have themselves created want to find a way out, and seek some kind of solution. But there is none except that held out by the Buddha his message of non-violence and peace, love and compassion, of

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tolerance and understanding of truth and wisdom of respect and regard for all life of freedom from selfishness, hatred and violence.

Buddha's manifestation of loving thought based on knowledge. On one hand he is found to rouse the inner spirit of aspirants with words of great wisdom and on the other hand there are innumerable incidents in his life where he is found deeply moved by the grief suffered by any living being. It was indeed a march into the realm of the infinite love leaving behind the small circle of earthly love, the awakening of the eternal rigidity and hardness the lighting of the lamp of universal love by the flame of austere renunciation.

According to the Brahmavihara Sutta, Shakyamuni Buddha held that cultivation of the Brahmavihāras has the power to cause the practitioner to be re-born in the 'realm of the Brahma' (Sanskrit: "Brahmaloka"). The meditator is instructed to radiate out to all beings in all directions the mental states of: 1) loving-kindness or benevolence, 2) compassion, 3) sympathetic joy, and, 4) equanimity. These virtues are also highly regarded by Buddhists as powerful antidotes to those negative mental states (non-virtues) like avarice, anger, pride and so on. Buddha identifies the consummate Brahmaviharic qualities as nondifferent to "nirvana".

Brahmavihara:

Brahmavihāra is a term in Pāli and Sanskrit meaning "Brahma abidings", or "sublime attitudes." It may be phrased as "Brahma" and "vihāra" which is often rendered into English as "sublime" or "divine abodes". They are also called the "four immeasurable and are found in the Hinayana and Mahayana traditions of Buddhism, as well as in Bon. Different schools and texts interpret them slightly differently, and certain practices in some traditions change their order.

The Buddha's universal love may be well-defined named Brahmavihara" which consists of four unparalleled mental elements such as Metta (loving-kindness) Karuna (compassion), Mudita

(altruistic joy), Upekkha (equanimity). The four immeasurables are explained in the 'Visuddhimagga'-the path of purification (written by the scholar and commentator Buddhaghosha).

The Vaibhashika and Sautrantika traditions of the Sarvastivada school of Hinayana share Vasubandha's fourth- or fifth-century Auto-Commentary on "A Treasure-House of Special Topics of Knowledge" (Abhidharmakosha-bhashya) as a source for their presentation of the four immeasurable attitudes. The Tibetan Buddhist traditions also share this as one of their sources. Within the Mahayana tradition, the four immeasurable attitudes are mentioned in several popular sutras, such as The Sutra of the White Lotus of the Hallowed Dharma (Saddharmapundarika-nama Mahayana Sutta). The Sutra of the Great Final Release from all Sorrows (Mahaparinirvana Sutta).

Within the eighteen Hinayana Schools, the Theravada tradition of the four immeasurable attitudes derives from The Brahma Abodes Sutta (Brahmavihara Sutta), found in The Collection of Progressive Divisions (Anguttara Nikaya). There, Buddha specifies that each of the four is free of attachment, repulsion, and indifference, and is accompanied by mindfulness and alertness. Buddhaghosa's early fifth-century A.D. Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga) and Anuruddha's ninth-century A.D. All-Inclusive Text on Points from Special Topics of Knowledge (Abhidhammattha-sangaha) contain full explanations of their practice. The four immeasurable attitudes also appear in Indian Mahayana texts, such as A Filigree of Realizations (Abhisamayalamkara), a commentary by the future Buddha, Maitreya, on The Prajnaparamita Sutras. According to Maitreya, although these four attitudes may be attained with a mind still within the sphere of the plane of sensory desires, the attitudes developed with such a mind are not "immeasurable." The immeasurable forms of them are only those that are attained with a mind that has achieved an actual state of one of the four levels of mental stability.

They are called "Brahma abodes" because the four Brahma realms of the plane of ethereal forms (form realm) correspond, in turn, to the four immeasurable attitudes and to the four levels of mental stability (Skt. dhyana, Pali: jhana). The Brahma gods in the first Brahma realm have immeasurable love; those in the second, immeasurable compassion; those in the third, immeasurable joy; and those in the fourth, immeasurable equanimity. Similarly, practitioners of the first level of mental stability have absorbed concentration on immeasurable love; practitioners of the second level have it on immeasurable compassion, and so forth. Since the word brahma means pure, excellent, or sublime, practitioners who develop these immeasurable attitudes live with pure, sublime states of mind like Brahma gods.

Buddha Shākyamuni is asked the way to fellowship/companionship/communion with Brahma. He replies that he personally knows the world of Brahma and the way to it, and explains the meditative method for reaching it by using an analogy of the resonance of the conch shell of the Ashtamangala.

A monk suffuses the world in the four directions with a mind of benevolence, then above, and below, and all around – the whole world from all sides, completely, with a benevolent, all-embracing, great, boundless, peaceful and friendly mind ... Just as a powerful conch-blower makes himself heard with no great effort in all four (cardinal) directions, so too is there no limit to the unfolding of [this] heart-liberating benevolence. This is a way to communion with Brahma.

The Buddha then says that the monk must follow this up with an equal suffusion of the entire world with mental projections of compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity (regarding all beings with an eye of equality).

METTA:

Mettā is loving-kindness, friendliness, benevolence, amity, friendship, good will, kindness, love, sympathy, and active interest in others. The first of the four sublime states (Brahmavihāras). The statements regarding the use of loving-kindness (metta) traditionally employ one or more of the following devices, often using a stock formula:

- mental purification
- a verse for wishing others well
- pervading all directions and all beings with loving-kindness.

Essentially metta is an altruistic attitude of love and friendliness as distinguished from mere amiability based on self-interest. True metta is devoid of self-interest. It evokes within a warm-hearted feeling of fellowship, sympathy and love, which grows boundless with practice and overcomes all social, religious, racial, political and economic barriers. Metta is indeed a universal, unselfish and all-embracing love.

The cultivation of loving-kindness (mettā bhāvanā) is a popular form of meditation in Buddhism. In the Theravadin Buddhist tradition, this practice begins with the meditator cultivating loving-kindness towards themselves, then their loved ones, friends, teachers, strangers, enemies, and finally towards all sentient beings.

Mettā signifies friendship and non-violence, "a strong wish for the happiness of others" and also less obvious or direct qualities such as showing patience, receptivity, and appreciation. Loving-kindness is a very specific feeling — a caring for the well-being of another living being, independent of approving or disapproving of them, or expecting anything in return.

KARUNA:

The word usually translated as "compassion" is karuna, which is understood to mean active sympathy or a willingness to bear the pain of others. In practice, prajna gives rise to karuna, and karuna gives rise to prajna. Truly, you can't have one without the other. They are a means to realizing enlightenment, and they are also enlightenment manifested.

The Buddha taught that to realize enlightenment, a person must develop two qualities: wisdom and compassion. Wisdom and compassion are sometimes compared to two wings that work together to enable flying, or two eyes that work together to see deeply.

In the West, people think of "wisdom" as something that is primarily intellectual and "compassion" as something that is primarily emotional, and that these two things are separate and even incompatible. We're led to believe that fuzzy, sappy emotion gets in the way of clear, logical wisdom. But this is not a Buddhist understanding.

The Sanskrit word usually translated as "wisdom" is prajna (in Pali, panna). I understand this word could also be translated as "consciousness," "discernment," or "insight." The many schools of Buddhism understand prajna somewhat differently, but generally we could say that prajna is understanding or discernment of the Buddha's teaching, especially the teaching of anatta, no self.

MUDITA:

Mudita in Buddhism is joy. It is especially sympathetic or vicarious joy, the pleasure that comes from delighting in other people's well-being rather than begrudging it. The traditional paradigmatic example of this mind-state is the attitude of a parent observing a growing child's accomplishments and successes.

Many Buddhist teachers interpret joy more broadly as an inner spring of infinite joy that is available to everyone at all times,

regardless of circumstances. The more deeply one drinks of this spring, the more secure one becomes in one's own abundant happiness, and the easier it then becomes to relish the joy of other people as well.

Joy is also traditionally regarded as the most difficult to cultivate of the four immeasurables (brahmavihārā: also "four sublime attitudes"). To show joy is to celebrate happiness and achievement in others even when we are facing tragedy ourselves.

UPEKKHA:

Upekkhā is the Buddhist concept of equanimity. This is a purifying mental state cultivated through meditation on the Buddhist path to prajñā (wisdom) and bodhi (enlightenment).

In the Pali canon and post-canonical commentary, upekkha is identified as an important step in one's spiritual development in a number of places:

“The real meaning of upekkha is equanimity, not indifference in the sense of unconcern for others. As a spiritual virtue, upekkha means equanimity in the face of the fluctuations of worldly fortune. It is evenness of mind, unshakeable freedom of mind, a state of inner equipoise that cannot be upset by gain and loss, honor and dishonor, praise and blame, pleasure and pain. Upekkha is freedom from all points of self-reference; it is indifference only to the demands of the ego-self with its craving for pleasure and position, not to the well-being of one's fellow human beings.

True equanimity is the pinnacle of the four social attitudes that the Buddhist texts call the 'divine abodes' boundless loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity. The last does not override and negate the preceding three, but perfects and consummates them.” It is a mind in balance, free of discrimination, above distinction, and rooted in insight.

Equanimity, or learning to accept both loss and gain, praise and blame, success and failure with detachment, equally, for oneself and

for others; equanimity means "not to distinguish between friend, enemy or stranger, but regard every sentient being as equal. It is a clear-minded tranquil state of mind - not being overpowered by delusions, mental dullness or agitation."

CONCLUSION:

Brahmavihara the traditional order of the four is love, compassion, joy, and equanimity; the four do not have a fixed order of practice. For beginners, it is more suitable to meditate on equanimity first; otherwise, the other three attitudes will be partial and will not extend to everyone equally. This practice is to gain more than an intellectual understanding of this truth, to liberate ourselves from the delusion and thereby put an end to both ignorance and craving. If the meditation does not produce results tending to this consummation - results which are observable in the character and the whole attitude to life - it is clear that there is something wrong either with the system or with the method of employing it. It is not enough to see lights, to have visions or to experience ecstasy.

Brahmavihara concept is the Buddhist origin; the ideas themselves are in no way sectarian. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement uses them in public meditation events in Sri Lanka bringing together Buddhists, Hindu, Muslims, and Christians.

Buddhists believe that the minds of all living beings are totally interconnected and interrelated, whether they are consciously aware of it or not. To use a simple analogy for the interconnection, each being has his or her own transmitting and receiving station and is constantly broadcasting to all others his or her state of mind and is constantly receiving broadcasts from all others. Even the most insignificant thoughts in our minds have some effect on all other beings. How much the more so do our strong negative emotions and our acting out of them in direct or indirect forms of physical violence. In other words, each thought in the mind of each and every one of us brings the world either a little closer to brink of global disaster or helps to move the world a little farther away from the brink.

Brahmavihara is the most universally beneficial form of discursive meditation, and can be practiced in any conditions. Thoughts of universal, indiscriminating benevolence, like radio waves reaching out in all directions, sublimate the creative energy of the mind. With steady perseverance in Brahmavihara a point can be reached at which it becomes impossible even to harbor a thought of ill-will. True peace can only come to the world through minds that are at peace. If people everywhere in the world could be persuaded to devote daily to the practice of Brahmavihara we should see more real advance towards world peace and security than international agreements will ever bring us. It would be a good thing if, in this new era of the Buddha Sangha, people of all creeds could be invited to take part in a world-wide movement for the practice of "Brahma Bhavana" and pledge themselves to live in accordance with the highest tenets of their own religion, whatever it may be. In so doing they would be paying homage to the Supreme Buddha and to their own particular religious teacher as well, for on this level all the great religions of the world unite.

People practicing it will lead to overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, the destruction of suffering and grief. And lastly can help eradicating from the mind the root causes of various conflicts and wars.

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