

How to cultivate lovingkindness (2 of 2)

[An excerpt from [SD 60ab Meditation in Society](#), © Piya Tan 2022]

9.1.3 Breaking the barriers

9.1.3.1 As we continue to thus cultivate lovingkindness, we will find that our **lovingkindness** towards those people we *like and respect*, and those *very dear* to us, becomes even the other kinds of people. We may take them to be the same kind of people to us. We are left with the original 4 types of person, that is:

- (1) ourself
- (2) a dear person: someone whom we like and respect
- (3) a neutral [indifferent] person: someone for whom we have no feelings
- (4) someone we dislike (a hated person). [9.1.1.1]

We must continue cultivating lovingkindness towards these 4 kinds of people until it feels balanced and without distinctions. Even though we cannot attain lovingkindness dhyana with ourself as meditation object, we still need to include ourself in order to balance the 4 types. To do this, we need to re-establish the 4th dhyana, especially the white-kasiṇa 4th dhyana. [8.6.2]

9.1.3.2 Otherwise, the 1st dhyana, or at least some level of concentration will do, to start with. On emerging from dhyana, with our mental radiance, direct the lovingkindness to ourself for about a minute; then, towards someone we like; then, to someone we feel indifferent to; and then someone we hate—each one up to the 3rd dhyana.

Then, briefly direct to ourself again, and the other 3 types with a different person or persons in each case. Remember to cultivate thus with each of the 4 phrases, “May this good person be free from danger,” and so on, each up to the 3rd dhyana.

Thus, each time, we should direct lovingkindness to a different person in each of the 3 types: a person we like, one we are indifferent to, and one we hate. Do this again and again, with different groups of four, many times, so that our mind is continuously cultivating lovingkindness without interruption, without distinctions. When we are able to cultivate **lovingkindness dhyana** towards any of the 3 persons without distinction, we will have achieved what is called “**breaking down the barriers**” (*bheda*).¹

9.1.4 The categories of beings

9.1.4.1 Once we have mastered cultivating lovingkindness to all the 5 levels—to ourself, a dear person, a neutral person, someone we hate, and breaking the barriers—we can go on to further develop our lovingkindness with the method taught by the arhat Sāriputta as recorded in **the Paṭisambhidāmagga**.² His method comprises **22 categories** by which we extend our lovingkindness, that is: 5 unspecified categories (*anodhiso pharaṇā*), 7 specified categories (*odhiso pharaṇā*) and 10 directional categories (*pharaṇā*). Instead of the word “cultivation” (*bhāvanā*), the term “radiation” (*disā pharaṇā*) is used here.

(1) The 5 unspecified categories (*anodhiso pharaṇā*) or method of mettā radiation are:

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|------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) all beings | <i>sabbe sattā</i> |
| (2) all life [breathe] | <i>sabbe pāṇā</i> |

¹ On breaking the barriers, see SD 38.5 (7.2.2).

² Pm 14/2:130-139, *Metta Kathā* (Pm:Ñ 317-323). Qu at Vism 9.49-58/309-311. For a sutta analysis and an Abhidhamma analysis of the 4 divine abodes, see Vbh ch 13/272-284 *Appamañña Vibhaṅga*.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (3) all creatures | <i>sabbe bhūtā</i> |
| (4) all people | <i>sabbe puggalā</i> |
| (5) all that have a personality | <i>sabbe atta,bhava,pariyāpannā</i> |

(2) The 7 specified categories (*odhiso pharaṇā*) are:

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| (6) all women | <i>sabbā itthiyo</i> |
| (7) all men | <i>sabbe purisā</i> |
| (8) all noble ones | <i>sabbe ariyā</i> |
| (9) all who are not noble ones | <i>sabbe anariyā</i> |
| (10) all devas | <i>sabbe devā</i> |

(3) The 10 directional categories (*disā pharaṇā*) are:³

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|------------------------------------|---|
| (13) in the eastern quarter | <i>puratthimāya disāya</i> |
| (14) in the western quarter | <i>pacchimāya disāya</i> |
| (15) in the northern quarter | <i>uttarāya disāya</i> |
| (16) in the southern quarter | <i>dakkhiṇāya disāya</i> |
| (17) in the southeastern direction | <i>puratthimāya anudisāya⁴</i> |
| (18) in the northeastern direction | <i>pacchimāya anudisāya</i> |
| (19) in the northwestern direction | <i>uttarāya anudisāya</i> |
| (20) in the southwestern direction | <i>dakkhiṇāya anudisāya</i> |
| (21) in the quarter below | <i>heṭṭhimāya disāya</i> |
| (22) in the quarter above | <i>uparimāya disāya</i> |

9.1.4.2 To cultivate lovingkindness in these ways, we should, as before, first attain the white-kasina 4th dhyana [8.6.2]. Then, we cultivate lovingkindness towards ourself, a person we respect or who is dear to us, one we are indifferent to, and one we hate, until there are no barriers between them and us. Then, we use the meditative radiance to see all the beings in the building or vicinity, to cover as large an area as we can visualize. Once the beings are clearly seen, we can cultivate lovingkindness towards them according to **the 5 unspecified categories**, and **the 7 specified categories** (that is, the 12 categories of beings).

For each category, we should radiate lovingkindness in the usual 4 ways:

- (1) May **they** be free from danger.
- (2) May **they** be free from suffering [mental pain].
- (3) May **they** be free from misery [physical pain].
- (4) May **they** be well and happy.

“They” is, in each case, *one* of our 12 categories: all beings, all life, etc. Thus, we will be radiating lovingkindness in a total of 48 ways:

(5 specified categories + 7 unspecified categories) x 4 radiations = **48 ways**.

9.1.4.3 At this stage, Pa-Auk says that the beings in each of these categories should be clearly seen in the meditative radiance of our mind. For example, when we extend lovingkindness to all

³ Cf *catasso disā ca catasso anudisā ca heṭṭhā uparī ti dasa pi disā anuviloketvā*, “having surveyed the 10 directions, that is, the 4 quarters, the 4 intermediate directions, the nadir and the zenith” (J 1:53,14; cf D 1:222 = A 3:368; D 1:259 f; S 1:122 = 3:124; A 4:167,9; Vbh 272; MA 1:261,29; DA 1:194,3 UA 178,20).

⁴ This and the next 3 phrases, lit tr: *puratthimāya anudisāya*, “eastern intermediate direction”; *pacchimāya anudisāya*, “western intermediate direction”; *uttarāya anudisāya*, “northern intermediate direction”; *dakkhiṇāya anudisāya*, “southern intermediate direction.”

women, we should actually *see* (visualize) them within that area. We should also be able to see **the men, devas, beings in lower realms**, etc, in the determined area.

This is usually impossible for any ordinary person, but Pa-Auk is referring to someone who has attained the 4th dhyana or at least the 1st dhyana, and is cultivating the next 3 dhyanas.⁵ These dhyanas have to be well developed before we can master the radiation of lovingkindness in all 48 ways.⁶

Once we are proficient in this way, we should expand the determined area to include the whole monastery, the whole village, the whole township, the whole state, the whole country, the whole world, the whole solar system, the whole galaxy, and the whole of the infinite universe. Develop each of the expanded areas in the 48 ways up to the 3rd dhyana.

9.1.5 Cultivating lovingkindness in the 10 directions

9.1.5.1 The suttas teach us the cultivation of lovingkindness in 2 ways: **the personal method** [9.1.2-9.1.4] and **the directional method**, which we will now examine. The “**directions**” (*disa*) refers to the 10 directions—the 4 cardinal quarters, the 4 intermediate directions, the nadir and the zenith.⁷ Technically, they refer to the 48 categories in each of the 10 directions. According to Pa-Auk, we “should see all beings in the whole of the infinite universe” in each of the 10 directions in the 48 ways.

That way, we now get $10 \times 48 = 480$ categories of beings. When we add the original 48 categories of pervasion, we get a total of $480 + 48 = 528$ ways of categories of beings to direct our lovingkindness to! This is the kind of fact or statement that would move crowds and attract a huge following, and is an excellent teaching and religious strategy in Abhidhamma imagination. Clearly here, we are following Pa-Auk’s teaching, as his students would clearly say.

9.1.5.2 In contrast, we are reminded of the Buddha’s encouragement in **the Okkha Sutta** (S 20.4) that when we cultivate lovingkindness “even for a moment that it takes to milk a cow by a pull at the udder-teat,” is better than giving a hundred pots of food morning, noon and evening;⁸ and in **the Cūl’accharā Sutta** (A 1.6.3-5) that when a monk cultivates a thought of lovingkindness “for the moment of a finger-snap,” he acts in keeping with the Teacher’s teaching, and eats not the country’s alms in vain.⁹

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⁵ Pa-Auk’s instructions on these dhyanas in connection with the meditations described in his book, *Knowing And Seeing* (2019) is not always clear or consistent. For example, the meditator is said to have attained the 4th dhyana; then, he is said to start with the 1st dhyana (eg pp 59 f).

⁶ “This does not mean that the yogi can actually see every single woman, man, deva etc, within the determined area: it means that the yogi should extend loving-kindness with the intention that it is for every single woman, man, deva etc, and that insofar as he can, he should see them all.” (2019:87 n166)

⁷ The term “quarters” actually covers the intermediate zones, too, but is added clearly with the understanding that the directional spaces get progressively vaster in the outer perimeters. The terms “nadir” (lowest point) and “zenith” (highest point) are here used for brevity: they refer to the quarter below and the quarter above respectively.

⁸ **Okkha S** (S 20.4), SD 2.14.

⁹ **Cūl’accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5), SD 2.13. On a moment’s practice, see SD 38.5 (2.2).