

Mettāsahagata Sutta

SN V 46.54 Filled with Love

Translated by Ānanda

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Once,

The Awakened One was living with the Koliyans,
In a small Koliyan village named Haliddavasana.

Then, in the morning,
Many monks took their bowls and robes
And went to Haliddavasana for alms.
Then it occurred to those monks:

“It is very early to go for alms in Haliddavasana.
Perhaps we could visit the ashram of the wanderers of a different teaching.”

Arriving there, the wanderers all gathered to greet them.

After having rejoiced and been welcomed,
They sat down together.¹

The wanderers of a different tradition asked:

[The Samaṇa Gotama Teaches]

[Wanderers] “Friends,
The Samaṇa Gotama teaches Dhamma to his followers saying:

‘Come monks, let go of the five hindrances,
The impurities of the mind that impair [conscious] discernment,²

(1) Meditates with a heart filled with Love;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.

Above, below and everywhere across.
To all that is, all living beings,
In this boundless universe.

¹ Sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ sāraṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekamantaṃ nisīdiṃsu.

² ‘etha tumhe, bhikkhave, pañca nīvaraṇe pahāya cetaso upakkilese paññāya dubbalīkaṇe

*Meditate with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.³*

- (2) *Meditates with a heart filled with compassion;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

*Above, below and everywhere across.
To all that is, all living beings,
In this boundless universe.*

*Meditate with a heart filled with compassion,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.*

- (3) *Meditates with a heart filled with joy;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

*Above, below and everywhere across.
To all that is, all living beings,
In this boundless universe.*

*Meditate with a heart filled with joy,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.*

- (4) *Meditates with a heart filled with calm;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

*Above, below and everywhere across.
To all that is, all living beings,
In this boundless universe.*

*Meditate with a heart filled with calm,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.*

[We too!]

[Wanderers] We also friends, teach our students in this way saying:

³ *mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharatha, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ; iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharatha.*

*Come monks, let go of the five hindrances,
The impurities of the mind that impair [conscious] discernment,*

(1) Meditates with a heart filled with Love...

(2) Meditates with a heart filled with compassion...

(3) Meditates with a heart filled with joy...

*(4) Meditates with a heart filled with calm;
Suffusing one direction,
a second, a third, and a fourth.*

*Above, below and everywhere across.
To all that is, all living beings,
In this boundless universe.*

*Meditate with a heart filled with Love,
Vast, expansive, measureless,
Free from anger and impatience.*

*“Here friends, there is no difference, no distinction,
between other samaṇas and the Gotama’s discourses,
teachings and instructions.”⁴*

*When this was said, the monks neither rejoiced nor reproved.⁵
They stood up and left thinking:*

‘We shall learn the proper answer for this in the presence of the Buddha.

Then, the monks went to Haliddavasana for alms.

*Later in the afternoon,
After alms round,
They went to the Awakened One,
Paid loving respects,
Sat down in front of him and said:*

[Asking the Buddha]

[Monks] “Here Bhante... [all that had occurred]

⁴ *Idha no, āvuso, ko vīseso, ko adhippayāso, kiṃ nānākaraṇaṃ samaṇassa vā gotamassa amhākaṃ vā, yadidaṃ—
dhammadesanāya vā dhammadesanaṃ, anusāsaniyā vā anusāsaniṃ”ti*

⁵ *Atha kho te bhikkhū tesam aññatitthiyānaṃ paribbājānaṃ bhāsitaṃ neva abhinandiṃsu nappaṭikkosiṃsu.*

[The Buddha] “Monks, when this is said by wanderers of other traditions, you should ask them:

‘How is the liberation of the heart by Love developed?

Where does it lead to?⁶

What is its limit?⁷

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?⁸

How is the liberation of the heart by Compassion developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?

How is the liberation of the heart by Joy developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?

How is the liberation of the heart by Calm developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?’

“Asked in this way monks,
Practitioners from other teachings will be unable to proceed further
And they will [most likely] be at a loss.⁹

Why?

Because monks, it is not their field, [not their domain].¹⁰

Monks, I see nobody in this world
of Devas and Māras and Brahmas,
of samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas

⁶ *Gatika* (adj.) 1. going to, staying with, in *bhikkhu*° a person living with the *bhikkhus*. — 2. leading to: *yam*° what they lead to (of the 5 *indriyas*). — 3. having a certain *gati*, leading to one of the four kinds of rebirth:

⁷ *Parama* (adj.) [Vedic *parama*; superl. formation of *para*, lit. “farthest,” cp. similarly, although fr. diff. base, Lat. *prīmus*] highest, most excellent, superior, best;

⁸ “*Evaṃvādino, bhikkhave, aññatitthiyā paribbājakā evamassu vacanīyā*
‘kathaṃ bhāvitā panāvuso, mettācetovimutti, kiṅgatikā hoti, kiṃparamā, kiṃphalā, kiṃpariyosānā Pariyosāna (nt.)
[pari+osāna of ava+sā] 1. end, finish, conclusion

⁹ *Evaṃ puṭṭhā, bhikkhave, aññatitthiyā paribbājakā na ceva sampāyissanti, uttariṅca vighātaṃ āpajjissanti.*

¹⁰ *Yathā taṃ, bhikkhave, avisayasmiṃ. Visaya* [cp. Sk. *viśaya*, fr. *vi+śi*] 1. locality, spot, region; world, realm, province, neighbourhood

*this era of kings and people,
Who could satisfy a person's mind by answering this,
Other than the Truth-Finder
or one of his disciples
or one who has heard it from them.”¹¹*

[Radiant Love]

How is the liberation of the heart by Love developed?

*Where does it lead to?
What is its limit?
What is its fruit?
What is its culmination?*

Here monks,

- (1) One develops the awakening support of awareness, filled with Love;¹²
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.¹³*
- (2) One develops the awakening support of discernment, filled with Love
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (3) One develops the awakening support of inspiration, filled with Love;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (4) One develops the awakening support of joy, filled with Love;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (5) One develops the awakening support of calm, filled with Love;
Supported by letting go,*

¹¹ *Nāhaṃ taṃ, bhikkhave, passāmi sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya, yo imesaṃ pañhānaṃ veyyākaraṇena cittaṃ ārādheyya, aññatra tathāgatenā vā tathāgatasāvakena vā ito vā pana sutvā.*

¹² *Mettāsahagataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti,*

¹³ *Vivekanissitaṃ virāganissitaṃ nirodhanissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ.*

Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

(6) One develops the awakening support of mental collectedness, filled with Love;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

(7) One develops the awakening support of steadiness of mind, filled with Love;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.

[Balance of Mind]

[One trains:]¹⁴

'Let me live, unattached¹⁵ to what is favorable.¹⁶
One then lives, unattached to that.¹⁷

[One trains:]

'Let me live, accepting what is unfavorable.¹⁸
One then lives, accepting that.¹⁹

[One trains:]

'Let me live, unattached to both favorable and unfavorable.'
One then lives, unattached to that.²⁰

[One trains:]

¹⁴ For a more complete explanation of cultivating balance of mind through detachment and accepting, see AN V 144 *Tikaṇḍakī Sutta - Purpose of Unattractiveness*

¹⁵ *Paṭikkūla* (adj.) [paṭi+kūla] lit. against the slope; averse, objectionable, contrary, disagreeable. — app° without objection, pleasant, agreeable. — nt. °m loathsomeness, impurity -saññā (āhāre) the consciousness of the impurity of material food. *Paṭikulyatā* (f.) [fr. paṭikūla, perhaps better to write patikkulyatā] reluctance, loathsomeness. Note: I find using the words 'repulsive' and 'unrepulsive' to remain exactly within the Buddha's skillful play on words in Pāli here, create problems in present cultural context, and to contemporary minds. Therefore, I choose another road which leaves behind the word play but, in my understanding, remains more truthful to the idea behind the words.

¹⁶ Not welcoming the attractive. This can also be interpreted as being unattracted to the attractive: the attractive here may be meant as sensory gratification (*Kāma*) and unattraction as letting go or detachment (*Viveka*), which equates to another way of explaining the first *jhāna*.

¹⁷ So sace *ākaṅkhati* 'appaṭikūle paṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan'ti, paṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati.

¹⁸ Welcoming the unattractive. This can also be interpreted as accepting disturbances and distractions (*Viviceva akusalehi dhammehi*) which could equate to another way of describing the second aspect of the first *jhāna*. Leaning towards the calm steadiness of mind of the second, third and fourth *jhānas*.

¹⁹ 'paṭikūle appaṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan'ti, appaṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati.

²⁰ 'appaṭikūle ca paṭikūle ca paṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan'ti, paṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati.

*'Let me live, accepting both favorable and unfavorable.'
One then lives, accepting to that.²¹*

[One trains:]

*'Having discarded both the favorable and unfavorable,
Let me live, calm, present and fully conscious.
Calm, one then meditates, present and fully conscious.²²*

One meditates, having arrived at the liberation of the beautiful.²³

*Monks, I say that the liberation of the heart by Love
has the beautiful as its limit.*

Here for a wise monk who has not discerned a higher liberation.²⁴

[Radiant Compassion]

How is the liberation of the heart by compassion developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?

Here monks,

*(1) One develops the awakening support of awareness, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,*

²¹ *'paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca appaṭikūlasaññī vihareyyan'ti, appaṭikūlasaññī tattha viharati.*

²² *'Appaṭikūlañca paṭikūlañca tadubhayaṃ abhinivajjetoṃ upekkhako vihareyyaṃ sato sampajāno'ti, upekkhako ca tattha viharati sato sampajāno. Here the Buddha interestingly explains a four-steps process (Another outlook on the four jhānas?) on cultivating detachment from the pleasant and accepting the unpleasant which seems to build a similar equanimity, in phrasing and meaning, to the third and fourth jhānas. One might wonder why joy is not particularly mentioned here in this process, and emphasis is strong on cultivating mental steadiness. To understand this, we need to remember that Love, compassion and joy, are very uplifted, happy states. They naturally come with a special kind of wholesome joy within them. Though, practicing the brahmaviharas, if meditators leave the 'universal' aspect of the Love, compassion or joy, they might find themselves creating attachments around them, that is very likely the reason why the Buddha here puts emphasis on remaining balanced in might, unaffected by external experiences while practicing the Divine Abidings.*

²³ *Subhaṃ vā kho pana vimokkhaṃ upasampajja viharati. Subha (adj.) [Vedic śubhas fr. subh; cp. sobhati] shining, bright, beautiful; auspicious, lucky, pleasant; good (nt.) welfare, good, pleasantness, cleanliness, beauty, pleasure. Subhaṃ: "The Beautiful" Sometimes is used by the Buddha to denote an equivalent state to the 4th jhāna. Most translators have been using the 'attractive' term 'The Beautiful' but this has also given rise to much questioning. Subha does not exclusively mean 'beautiful'. It can also mean 'The pleasant' which is then very close to the definition of the 'steady awareness' described by the Ariyas as a 'pleasant abiding' of the third jhāna and beyond. (Yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti: 'upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī'ti) The Beautiful is this 'pleasant abiding of the Ariyas'. See SN II 14.11 Sattadhātu Sutta - Seven Elements <https://www.heartdhamma.com/connected-discourses/> MN 137, AN VIII 66 Vimokkha Sutta, DN 16 Mahānidāna Sutta.*

²⁴ *Subhaparamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, mettācetovimuttiṃ vadāmi, idhapaññassa bhikkhuno uttarivimuttiṃ appaṭivijjhato.*

*Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

- (2) *One develops the awakening support of discernment, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (3) *One develops the awakening support of inspiration, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (4) *One develops the awakening support of joy, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (5) *One develops the awakening support of calm, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (6) *One develops the awakening support of mental collectedness, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (7) *One develops the awakening support of steadiness of mind, filled with Compassion;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

[Balance of Mind]

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, unattached to what is favorable.
One then lives, unattached to that.*

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, accepting what is unfavorable.
One then lives, accepting that.*

[One trains:]

'Let me live, unattached to both favorable and unfavorable.'

One then lives, unattached to that.

[One trains:]

'Let me live, accepting both favorable and unfavorable.'

One then lives, accepting to that.

[One trains:]

'Having discarded both the favorable and unfavorable,

Let me live, calm, present and fully conscious.

Calm, one then meditates, present and fully conscious.

Having entirely gone beyond all perception of form,
With the awareness of sensory impact fading away,
Turning away from the awareness plurality,
Knowing: 'There is Endless Space'
One understands and abides in the plane of endless space.

Monks, I say that the liberation of the heart by Compassion
has the plane of endless spaciousness as its limit.²⁵

Here for a wise monk who has not discerned a higher liberation.

[Radiant Joy]

How is the liberation of the heart by Joy developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?

Here monks,

(1) One develops the awakening support of awareness, filled with Joy;

Supported by letting go,

Calming down,

Release,

Culminating in relaxation.

(2) One develops the awakening support of discernment, filled with Joy;

Supported by letting go,

Calming down,

Release,

²⁵ *Ākāsānañcāyatanaparamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, karuṇācetovimuttiṃ vadāmi,*

Culminating in relaxation.

- (3) *One develops the awakening support of inspiration, filled with Joy;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (4) *One develops the awakening support of joy, filled with Joy;
Rooted in letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (5) *One develops the awakening support of calm, filled with Joy;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (6) *One develops the awakening support of mental collectedness, filled with Joy;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*
- (7) *One develops the awakening support of steadiness of mind, filled with Joy;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

[Balance of Mind]

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, unattached to what is favorable.
One then lives, unattached to that.*

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, accepting what is unfavorable.
One then lives, accepting that.*

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, unattached to both favorable and unfavorable.'
One then lives, unattached to that.*

[One trains:]

'Let me live, accepting both favorable and unfavorable.'

One then lives, accepting to that.

[One trains:]

*'Having discarded both the favorable and unfavorable,
Let me live, calm, present and fully conscious.*

Calm, one then meditates, present and fully conscious.

*Having gone entirely beyond the plane of endless space,
Knowing: 'There is Endless Consciousness'
one understands and abides in the plane of Endless Consciousness.*

*Monks, I say that the liberation of the heart by Joy
has the plane of endless consciousness as its limit.²⁶*

Here for a wise monk who has not discerned a higher liberation.

[Radiant Calm]

How is the liberation of the heart by calm developed?

Where does it lead to?

What is its limit?

What is its fruit?

What is its culmination?

Here monks,

*(1) One develops the awakening support of awareness, filled with Calm;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

*(2) One develops the awakening support of discernment, filled with Calm;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

*(3) One develops the awakening support of inspiration, filled with Calm;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

(4) One develops the awakening support of joy, filled with Calm;

²⁶ *Viññāṇaṅcāyatanaparamāhaṇi, bhikkhave, muditācetovimuttiṃ vadāmi,*

*Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

*(5) One develops the awakening support of calm, filled with Calm;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

*(6) One develops the awakening support of mental collectedness, filled with Calm;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

(7) *One develops the awakening support of steadiness of mind, filled with Calm;
Supported by letting go,
Calming down,
Release,
Culminating in relaxation.*

[Balance of Mind]

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, unattached to what is favorable.
One then lives, unattached to that.*

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, accepting what is unfavorable.
One then lives, accepting that.*

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, unattached to both favorable and unfavorable.'
One then lives, unattached to that.*

[One trains:]

*'Let me live, accepting both favorable and unfavorable.'
One then lives, accepting to that.*

[One trains:]

*'Having discarded both the favorable and unfavorable,
Let me live, calm, present and fully conscious.
Calm, one then meditates, present and fully conscious.*

*Having gone entirely beyond the plane of endless space,
Knowing: 'There are no objects'²⁷
He understands and abides in the plane of objectlessness.*

Monks, I say that the liberation of the heart by calm has the plane of objectlessness as its limit.²⁸

Here for a wise monk who has not discerned a higher liberation.

²⁷ *Kiñcana* (adj. - nt.) [*kiñ+cana*, equal to *kiñ+ci*, indef. pron.] only in neg. sentences: something, anything.

²⁸ *Ākiñcaññāyatanaparamāhaṇi, bhikkhave, upekkhāceto vimuttiṃ vadāmi,*

