

## The Four Brahma Viharas: Four Divine Abodes

The Centered Path, Part 8 of Buddhist Basics

Thus I have heard...

The best ways to approach your practice and daily lives.

### **Loving Kindness (Metta)**

Two entire sutras are dedicated to this (Metta Sutta and Prajna Paramita or Heart Sutra) Think of gentle loving kindness. This is towards all sentient beings, and ourselves...

### **Compassion (Karuna)**

This is when Metta meets suffering, we see and know what suffering is and does (because we have meditated and developed some wisdom)

### **Empathetic (Sympathetic) Joy (Mudita)**

More the act of appreciating joy wherever and with whomever it happens.

### **Equanimity or non-attachment (Upeksha)**

'Even mindedness' Calmly watching as life happens we are not moved, like a mountain.

A direct link to Hinduism, the four faced god Brahma possesses these four attributes. Although not a 'God' of Buddhism, Brahma was respected and mentioned as a god in the sutras and offered valuable lessons that deserved to be mentioned and respected.

These four are powerful ways to live, maintain harmony, resolve differences and promote healing. They should become a place where our minds and hearts 'live' (abides). I.e. "This is just where my heart and mind are..." These four attributes, when used as an intention for being, are an amazing way to transform the entire world just from our point of view.

Each of these viharas are intertwined like everything in Buddhism, they support and temper each of the others so that we do not get lost in them. (attached)

Unbound love prevents compassion from becoming partial. Compassion reminds us that happiness and love are impermanent and changing. Equanimity helps us to see them all as they are, without emotional charge and attachments. Joy gentles the mind, includes all in the possibility of compassion and loving kindness both towards and away.

As a meditation, dwell in each of the abodes completely, think of examples. In the process, remember to include not only those you are fond of, but yourself and those with which you may have difficulties and those you do not know and have no influence on or from (animals, bugs, etc). Remember, what you practice you get good at!

Says the Master: *For one who clings, motion exists; but for one who clings not, there is no motion. Where no motion is, there is stillness. Where stillness is, there is no craving. Where no craving is, there is neither coming nor going. Where no coming nor going is, there is neither arising nor passing away. Where neither arising nor passing away is, there is neither this world nor a world beyond, nor a state between. This, verily, is the end of suffering.— Udana 8:3*