



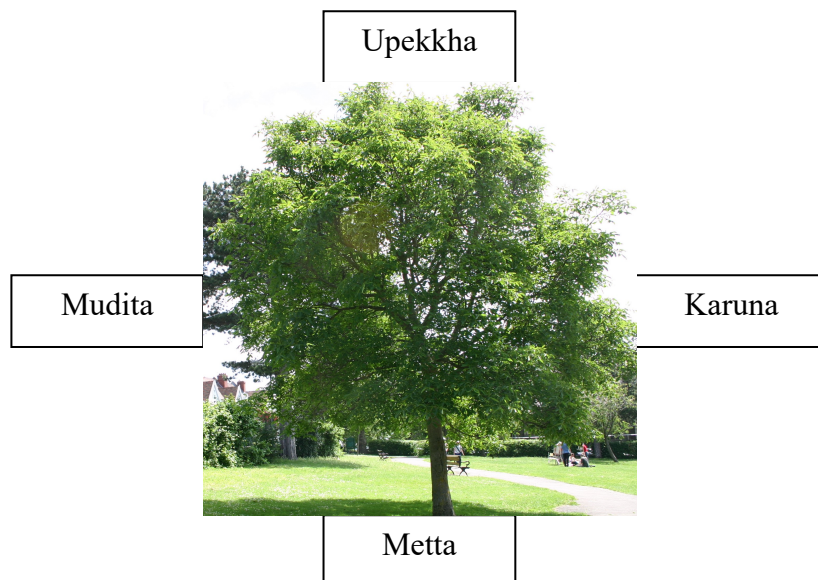
## Ratnasambhava and Positive Emotion

### 3: Brahma Viharas

The radiant, unbounded love of the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of the metta bhavana, on encountering someone or ‘something in me’ will naturally respond skilfully – with appreciative delight in what is positive (mudita), with forbearance (kshanti) and compassion (karuna) for what is not.

So Mudita and Karuna are the forms or modalities that metta assumes in response on the one hand to what is either pleasant or skilful, and on the other to what is either painful or unskilful. (Pleasant doesn’t always mean skilful, nor does unpleasant always mean unskilful).

The natural skilful response to an awareness that pleasure and pain are woven together in to human experience is equanimity (upekkha). These four forms of positive emotion are called the divine abidings (brahma viharas).



Metta is the basic positive emotion, and the emotional basis for skilful action. When we get the flavour of metta and recognize we are coming from that, we can be confident of the ethics of what we do.

All the other brahma vihara practices begin with a stage of self-metta, and the practice is to connect with metta, then see the new tone that this metta takes on as we bring to mind people in different circumstances.

### ***Two varieties of Mudita***

Mudita is the response of metta to either

- Pleasure, good fortune
- Skilfulness, exemplification

Good fortune and skilful behaviour don't necessarily go together, so there are two flavours of the mudita bhavana.

Traditionally, the mudita bhavana begins with the cultivation of self-metta, followed by bringing to mind a "boon companion" - an exemplar whom one admires. This draws out the quality of mudita as a response to skilfulness: the kalyana or the good.

It is also valuable to explore the response of metta to simple worldly pleasure, well being, and good fortune – in those of no particular kin or kindness. Each aspect of the brahmaviharas cultivates positive emotion in a particular context, and challenges reactivity in that context. Cultivating mudita towards the simple good fortune and pleasure of those who have not done anything obvious to 'deserve' it challenges the views that their good fortune is not deserved, or that they must be suffering really.

### ***Two varieties of Karuna***

Karuna is the response of metta to either

- Painful experience, misfortune
- Unskilfulness

Misfortune and unskilful behaviour don't necessarily go together, so there are two flavours of the karun bhavana.

Traditionally the karuna bhavan begins with the cultivation of self-metta followed by bringing to mind someone who is suffering. This draws out the quality of karuna as a response to suffering.

It is also valuable to explore the response of metta to unskilfulness. Cultivaing karuna in response to a recognition of unskilful behaviour challenges any tendency towards being condemnatory or calculatingly judgemental, with a view of karma along the lines of 'they'll get their come-uppance'

### ***Upekkha***

Upekkha is the response of metta towards a recognition of humanity:

- That in humanity, there is

Joy and woe are woven fine,  
A clothing for the soul divine,  
Under every grief and pine,  
Runs a joy with silken twine.  
It is right it should be so,  
We were made for joy and woe,  
And when this we rightly know,  
Through the world we safely go.

William Blake: Auguries of Innocence

- That human experience is a blend of skilful and unskilful responses: meeting this with understanding for the unskilful and appreciation for the skilful

It is a subtle practice, challenging directly the tendency of the mind towards avidya or ignorance: the desire not to be concerned with, not to know about.

The upekkha bhavana starts with the cultivation of self-metta, followed by bringing to mind a neutral person: someone to whom we have no particular connection or reason for concern. We don't know whether they are suffering or enjoying good fortune: whether they behave skilfully or unskilfully.

In staying with the practice, we are challenging the tendency of the mind to slip away from what holds no interest for us – so directly challenging avidya: the desire not to know about, not to be involved with what is of no personal concern – what offers no benefit and poses no threat to us.

All that we have in common with the neutral person is what we hold most deeply in common with all: our common humanity, our innate awareness, our potential for enlightenment.

If we can stay with the metta, and stay with the neutral person, recognizing our common ground in our common humanity and human potential, upekkha emerges as the response of metta to the nature of humanity and human experience.