

# The Craft of the Heart

by

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**Selections:** “On the Four Immeasurable Sublime Attitudes”, “On Radiating the Sublime Attitudes”, and “On the Rewards of the Four Immeasurables.”

from <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/thai/lee/craft.html>



## **On the Four Immeasurable Sublime Attitudes [toctoc](#)**

*Metta*: Develop thoughts of love and good will, hoping for your own happiness and that of others. This is like a fortress wall or a cardinal point.

*Karuna*: Develop thoughts of compassion toward yourself and others, aiming at helping yourself and others gain release from all forms of suffering and pain. This is another wall or cardinal point.

*Mudita*: Develop thoughts of appreciation, taking delight in the happiness you experience and in that experienced by others. This is another fortress wall or cardinal point.

*Upekkha*: Develop equanimity, keeping your mind unruffled when your activities or those of others go astray or lead to trouble in ways that are beyond your power to help. Keep watch over your mind to prevent it from being upset or affected in any way. This doesn't mean being cold or hard-hearted. If you can be of help, you should offer what help you can. Develop indifference only in those cases that are beyond help.

For these Sublime Attitudes to be fully developed, they must pervade your thoughts, words, and deeds. Only then will they be effective. Good will expressed in your deeds is like a wall one league thick; good will expressed in your words is still another league; good will expressed in your thoughts is still another league: altogether, three leagues thick. With compassion another three leagues, appreciation another three, and equanimity still another, you have a wall twelve leagues thick. When your thoughts, words, and deeds are protected on all sides in this manner, what do you have to fear?

This, of course, is simply an analogy. If you actually develop these qualities within yourself, you will see for yourself exactly how valuable they are. When your heart is free from fear, it will be able to reach concentration quickly and easily.



## On Radiating the Sublime Attitudes toctoc

If you want to, you can radiate thoughts of good will, etc., in extended form, either in Pali or in translation. Your thoughts should be directed in two directions: inwardly and outwardly.

*Inwardly:* Radiating good will, compassion, and appreciation to yourself means to do no evil, to take pity on yourself by abandoning evil, and to be appreciative of the aims of virtue and morality. To develop equanimity toward yourself means to be unruffled when the occasion calls for it. For instance, when you are ill and have done all you can to treat the illness, you should then limit your attention to the goodness in the heart.

*Outwardly:* To radiate thoughts of good will, etc., to others can be done in two ways: (a) radiating such thoughts specifically to those you know and love -- your parents, teachers, relatives, and close friends; and (b) radiating such thoughts in general to all living beings of all kinds, without specifying anyone in particular: seeing that we are all alike in having bodies and minds and in feeling pain, and so radiating thoughts of good will throughout the three realms -- the sensual realm, the realm of form, and the realm of formlessness -- without making distinctions or drawing lines. To radiate good will in this way is very powerful and gives the mind enormous strength.

The extended formula, in Pali and in translation, is as follows:

*Aham sukhito homi* (May I be happy.)

*Niddukkho homi* (May I be free from stress and pain.)

*Avero homi* (May I be free from animosity.)

*Abyapajjho homi* (May I free from oppression.)

*Anigho homi* (May I be free from trouble.)

*Sukhi attanam pariharami* (May I look after myself with ease.)

Once you feel complete good will toward yourself, you should share these feelings, spreading them to all others in general:

(METTA)

*Sabbe satta sukhita hontu* (May all living beings be happy).

*Sabbe satta avera hontu* (May all living beings be free from animosity.)

*Sabbe satta abyapajjha hontu* (May all living beings be free from oppression.)

*Sabbe satta anigha hontu* (May all living beings be free from trouble.)

*Sabbe satta sukhi attanam pariharantu* (May all living beings look after themselves with ease.)

(KARUNA)

*Sabbe satta sabba-dukkha pamuccantu* (May all living beings be freed from all suffering.)

(MUDITA)

*Sabbe satta laddha-sampattito ma vigacchantu* (May all living beings not be deprived of the good fortune they have attained.)

(UPEKKHA)

*sabbe satta kammassaka kamma-dayada kamma-yoni kamma-bandhu  
kamma-patisarana*

(All living beings are owners of their actions, are heirs to their actions, born of their actions, related through their actions, and live dependent on their actions. )

*Yam kammam karissanti kalyanam va papakam va tassa dayada bhavissanti*

(Whatever they do, for good or for evil, to that will they fall heir.)

This ends the formula for radiating the four Sublime Attitudes. To spread these thoughts without specifying this or that particular person is called developing the quality of immeasurability (*appamanna dhamma*).

If you have trouble memorizing the extended formula, you can reduce it to:

"*Metta*" -- thoughts of good will

"*Karuna*" -- thoughts of compassion

"*Mudita*" -- thoughts of appreciation

"*Upekkha*" -- thoughts of equanimity

Or if you want, you can simply express these thoughts in your own words.



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## **On The Rewards of the Four Immeasurables [toctoc](#)**

The four immeasurable Sublime Attitudes are genuinely worth developing because they are qualities that soothe the hearts of living beings in general throughout the world -- our parents, relatives, friends, companions, and all living beings of every sort. In addition, when the Sublime Attitudes are truly present in the heart, they can bring absolute respite from enmity, fear, and animosity. Thus the Buddha taught his followers: "Monks, when the release of the mind (from enmity, fear, and animosity) through good will is cultivated, developed, practiced often, used as a vehicle (leading to the desired goal), used as a foundation, nurtured unceasingly, made habitual, and constantly brought to mind, eleven rewards can be expected: One sleeps with ease, wakes with ease, and dreams no evil dreams. One is dear to human beings, dear to non-human beings, guarded by deities, and untouched by fire, poison, and weapons. One's mind is easily concentrated and one's complexion bright. One dies unconfused and -- if penetrating no higher -- is reborn in the Brahma worlds."

When a person acts, speaks, and thinks with good will, it soothes his or her own heart and is conducive to release from suffering. Those who develop these qualities as a constant practice will have the power to soothe the hearts of other living beings through the power of their good will. Thus to develop these qualities in thought, word, and deed is a genuine necessity for those who practice concentration.

In some places this practice is recommended only for those who are prone to anger. But as far as we are concerned here, you should practice this step first no matter what your disposition. If you *are* prone to anger, this practice will make it that much easier for you to concentrate your mind.

The four Sublime Attitudes have been compared to the four faces of Brahma surveying the four directions, or to fortress walls on all four sides of the heart. Whoever develops them will free the heart from fear and danger.

The development of the four Sublime Attitudes is especially beneficial in connection with the performance of meritorious acts. You should give alms with an attitude of good will, observe the precepts with an attitude of good will, and practice meditation with an attitude of good will.

When done in this way, your activities will bring powerful rewards. Thoughts of good will are like clean drops of rain that fall from the sky, refreshing and nourishing the grasses and trees.

Such thoughts are desired by all human races. Thus if you hope to develop merit, you should examine your heart at all times to see whether or not it is benevolent, so that whatever merit you may perform in thought, word, or deed will be truly conducive to future happiness.

The crucial element lies with the heart: If the heart lacks benevolence, you'll have a hard time protecting your words and deeds; but if the heart is truly benevolent, your words and deeds are bound not to be defiled. If words and deeds are defiled, though, they won't suffer the consequences of their defilement. The heart will. The heart is what reaps the results of all good and evil. This being the case, your next step should be to practice concentration so as to develop the heart.