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# Confluence: Adoption and Adaptation of Loving-Kindness and Compassion Practice in Buddhist and Secular Contexts

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## Abstract

Contemporary Buddhists are adapting loving-kindness and compassion praxis. Using three vignettes, the author explores how the distinct practices of loving-kindness and compassion are being appropriated and altered both in Buddhist religious traditions, and in secular environments.

This discussion examines the adaptation process from two perspectives. First, this article explores how three teachers, North American, Taiwanese, and Tibetan-North American respectively, adapt loving-kindness and compassion practices, and what purposes these adaptations serve in their contexts. Second, the author highlights some textual sources the teachers use when adapting or secularizing loving-kindness and compassion practices. Primary focus is on the *Mettā Sutta* and the *Visuddhimagga*, perhaps the most influential Theravāda compendium in contemporary Buddhism. The phrases and categories of loving-kindness praxis in the *Visuddhimagga* now appear nearly verbatim in teachings of secular compassion practice. This cross-fertilization occurs directly between Buddhist traditions as well.

In the American example of Sojun Mel Weitsman, a foundational influence on modern Sōtō Zen Buddhism as developed at the Berkeley and San Francisco Zen centers, Weitsman presents his adaptation of the *Mettā Sutta* in response to his community's request for greater address given to love and compassion. In Taiwan, Ven. Bhikṣuṇī Zinai of the eclectically influenced Luminary International Buddhist Society incorporates adaptation of both the *Visuddhimagga* and *Mettā Sutta* in a secular Compassionate Prenatal Education program, which addresses the needs of expectant mothers using loving-kindness practice. Third, Tibetan Buddhist scholar Geshe Thupten Jinpa and coauthors incorporate phrasing and methodology of loving-kindness identical to that written in the *Visuddhimagga*, in addition to Tibetan Buddhist texts, as part of their secular program of Compassion Cultivation Training. Each of these adaptations reflect a concern with quality of life and well-being in their adaptation of canonical material.

In short, this paper provides a small amount of primary research documenting the cross-fertilization and adaptation of praxis and textual sources within contemporary, globalizing, Buddhism and the secular practices of loving-kindness and compassion derived from it.

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## Keywords

*Mettā*; Compassion; Immeasurables; Loving-kindness; adaptation

# 1. Introduction

In these pages, I explore the adoption and adaptation of distinct practices of loving-kindness and compassion both in Buddhist religious traditions and in secular programs. I introduce vignettes illustrating the purposes and general context in which three modern teachers—American, Taiwanese, and Tibetan, respectively—adapt loving-kindness and compassion practice. I then touch on how these practices relate to two textual sources from Pāli literature: the canonical *Mettā Sutta* and the *Visuddhimagga*, perhaps the most influential Theravāda compendium in contemporary Buddhism.

My intention here is to explore the cross-fertilization of praxis between Buddhist traditions, both in the context of secular education and in Buddhist teachings. In the course of this exposition, I invite consideration of how such adaptations, which are of course not limited to loving-kindness and compassion practice, may be situated in local or global Buddhist discourses within modernity. Given the limited scope of this article, however, I merely suggest possible points of resonance with such discourses, such as how these practices are framed in contexts of the self, well-being, community, and soteriology.

My research methodology was crafted around a series of eight ethnographic interviews of Buddhist teachers. The results of three interviews, selected for greatest geographic, ethnic, and religious variety, are presented here, along with brief supporting intertextual analyses. In these pages, I unpack the similarities and differences among the teachers' purposes, pedagogy, and approaches to soteriology in the communities they serve. Their voices clearly address these contemporary communities in the adaptation and adoption of loving-kindness and compassion practice, and their adaptations serve as particular examples of the ongoing changes in the global palimpsest of modernizing Buddhism.

## 2. Context and Purposes

### 2.1 Sojun Mel Weitsman

Our first subject teacher, Abbot Sojun Mel Weitsman (1929–), has been involved in the Sōtō Zen tradition since 1964.<sup>1</sup> In 1967, Weitsman cofounded Berkeley Zen Center with his teacher, Shunryu Suzuki 鈴木俊隆老師 (1904–1971), whose works are associated with Modern Buddhist ideas (McMahan 2008, 8). Weitsman was later appointed abbot at Berkeley Zen Center and also served as co-abbot of San Francisco Zen Center with Tenshin Reb Anderson (1943–) from 1988 to 1997.<sup>2</sup> During that time, Weitsman and Anderson introduced a version of the *Mettā Sutta* that Weitsman had adapted into San Francisco Zen Center’s liturgy (Weitsman 2013).

This decision addressed Weitsman’s finding of the lack of an English-language liturgy or specific practices in Sōtō Zen addressing kindness or compassion in a manner accessible to Westerners (Weitsman 2013).<sup>3</sup> He is a pragmatic teacher, informed by the

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<sup>1</sup> Readers should be aware that I have sporadically attended San Francisco Zen Center Dharma talks, workshops, and events since 2006. In 2014, I assisted in convening a retreat at which Sojun Weitsman was one of the teachers. The retreat occurred after our primary research interview, which was our first meeting. In the course of this research, I also attended two of Weitsman’s Dharma talks at Berkeley Zen Center.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about Berkeley Zen Center, see Herzog, 2011. For more information about Sojun Mel Weitsman, see the review of Erdstein and Wenger, n.d., in *Tricycle* magazine, winter 2010. See Gach 1998 for excerpts from a transcription of Weitsman’s installation as Berkeley Zen Center Abbot and stepping down as San Francisco Zen Center abbot; cf. also Colleen Morton Busch, “Always Beginner’s Mind: Zen Center at 50,” *Shambala Sun*, September 2012, for additional information about Weitsman’s involvement in San Francisco Zen Center.

<sup>3</sup> A preliminary scan of the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database 2012 Edition (<http://21dzk1.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-bdk-sat2.php?lang=en>), partly produced by the University of Tokyo, supports Weitsman’s impression that there is very little reference to *appamāṇa* in Japanese Zen literature. There are no occurrences of the expressions “immeasurable minds” (*muryōshin* 無量心) or “four immeasurables” (*shimuryō* 四無量) among the following works by Eihei Dōgen 永平道元: *Fukan Zazengi* 普勸坐禪儀 (T 82 no. 2580), *Gakudō Yōjinshū* 學道用心集 (T 82 no.

teachings of Shunryu Suzuki, who on more than one occasion told him “Zen is just Buddhism” (Weitsman 2014). Weitsman therefore introduced the modified *Mettā Sutta* chant as a response to students and residents who had asked, “Why don’t we ever talk about love or compassion?” (Weitsman 2014, 1).

Adding the practice of chanting mettā into the weekly liturgy was an intentional effort to introduce language evoking love and kindness in the minds and hearts of Zen practitioners, encouraging Sōtō Zen practitioners to relate these beneficial qualities to the wisdom so often spoken of in this lineage (Weitsman 2014).<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 Ven. Bhikṣuṇī Zinai 自齋法師

The second subject teacher is a highly educated *bhikṣuṇī*, Ven. Zinai (1961–), a senior member of the Luminary International Buddhist Society (香光尼眾佛學院), a well-respected group of *bhikṣuṇī* in

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2581), *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 (T 82 no. 2582), *Eihei Gen Oshō Juko* 永平元和尚頌古 (T 82 no. 2583) and *Eihei Shingi* 永平清規 (T 82 no. 2584). Nor did the expression appear in these works by Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾: *Denkōroku* 傳光錄 (T 82 no. 2585), *Zazen Yōjinki* 坐禪用心記 (T 82 no. 2586), *Shinjinmei Nentei* 信心銘拈提 (T 82 no. 2587), *Jisshu Chokumon Sōtaishū* 十種勅問奏對集 (T 82 no. 2588) *Keizan Shingi* 瑩山清規 (T 82 no. 2589). Michel Mohr, “*Appamāna* in Japanese Zen Literature,” October 28, 2013. There are three examples in the later *Tōrin goroku* 東林語錄 (T 82 no. 2598), which includes the sayings of the Sōtō teacher Manzan Dōhaku 叡山道白 (1636–1715): 東林語錄 (2598) 0596a03-0596a14: 依法修儀和前偈云。慈悲喜捨四無量。出沒去來三昧, 東林語錄 (2598) 0598a27-0598a28: 金剛座上遍界現身。慈悲喜捨和光同塵, and 東林語錄 (2598) 0598b19-0598b19: 示白衣妝。坐水月場。慈悲喜捨。地遠天長。 The two Chinese characters 慈悲 (Ch. *cíbēi* Jp. *jīhi*) corresponding to *maitrī* and *karuṇā* abound in Japanese Buddhist literature, although the compound came to mean “compassion,” eliding the previous nuances distinguishing them. Michel Mohr, “*Appamāna* in Japanese Zen Literature,” July 13, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> In a sense, Weitsman’s decision to adapt and introduce a version of the *Mettā Sutta* could be considered part of a pedagogical process scholar Sedgwick 2005 calls recognition/realization, an alternate lens through which to view the palimpsest of Western, as well as global and globalizing, contemporary Buddhism.

Taiwan affiliated with Chan Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> Zinai holds both an MA in Buddhist Studies and a PhD in Asian Comparative Studies and has worked with teachers in the Theravāda traditions as well as in her own lineage.

Since 2008, Zinai has taught a program for pregnant women in Taiwan (Ci Xin Tai Jiao, 慈心胎教, translated into English as either “Compassionate Prenatal Education” or “Loving-kindness Prenatal Education”)<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the program, which she devised with the help of two clinical psychologists, is to help raise the self-esteem of women and support their readiness to be mothers. Another intention behind the program is to increase an expectant mother’s capacity to see the baby as a unique individual.<sup>7</sup>

The Luminary Society is generally open to diverse teachings, including those of Theravāda and Tibetan Buddhisms. This Mahayāna group incorporates not only the resources of other Buddhist schools, but humanitarian and scientific perspectives as well. Zinai links this perspective to the way the Buddha is depicted in the Pāli Canon, asbringing the teachings to people in language they could understand.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in early Buddhist literature, teaching is the most common expression of compassion associated with the Buddha and with *arahants* (*arhats*) (Anālayo, 2014, Chapter 2). The Luminary Society’s ecumenical, science-friendly pedagogy, however, harks less

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<sup>5</sup> The Luminary Buddhist Society began in a village temple dedicated to folk worship of Guanyin. The first abbess, Ven. Xinzhi, was appointed when local villagers registered the temple as a historical site in 1973. Her education and interest in promulgating Chinese Buddhism shifted the emphasis of the temple, although folk gatherings and rituals are still allowed. Cf. Cheng 2003.

<sup>6</sup> The term *Compassionate Prenatal Education* appears in literature by the Gaya Foundation, “2014 International Symposium for Transdisciplinarity on Individual and Social Transformation: Co-Create Global Well Being,” *The Atlas*, Gaya Foundation, June 14, 2014). Zinai referred to the program using both terms in our interviews.

<sup>7</sup> Venerable Zinai, interview by Dawn Neal, April 10, 2014 (unpublished).

<sup>8</sup> Zinai cites an online article analyzing the *Tevijja Sutta* (DN 13) to support her position: Nelson, Peter. “The Origins of ‘Skilful Means’ in Early Buddhism.” Buddhnet.

to early Buddhist literature than to a Mahayāna orientation incorporating modern influences, both global and Taiwanese.<sup>9</sup> In our exchanges, Zinai emphasized a kind of bodhisattva practice that includes considering benefit to others as a root cause of awakening, tacitly reframing the bodhisattva aspiration to embrace, even emphasize, pragmatic, modern concerns, including engagement in socially supportive activities.<sup>10</sup>

## 2.3 Compassion Cultivation Training

The third vignette concerns Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT), a training program intentionally crafted to be offered in secular environments.<sup>11</sup> Compassion Cultivation Training was developed by Geshe Thupten Jinpa (1958–), scholar, former Buddhist monk, and frequent translator for the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (Weiss 2014).<sup>12</sup>

Jinpa developed CCT during his time as a visiting scholar at the Stanford University–based Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE). The protocol was informed by conversation with a number of colleagues, including those from neuroscience, clinical and research psychology, and other Buddhist

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<sup>9</sup> For descriptions of globalizing Buddhist Modernism, see McMahan 2008, 225–49. The writings of modern Chinese Buddhists Taixu and Yinshun exert much influence on Taiwanese Buddhism and culture. For more on Tai Xu’s modernist writings and influence, as well as on Yinshun, also see Chu 2006, 1–30. Cf. also Hsu 1928.

<sup>10</sup> This emphasis also reflects the roots of the Luminary Society as a village temple serving a local neighborhood.

<sup>11</sup> I first encountered CCT in 2009, when I participated in a research study testing its efficacy. Cf. Jazaieri et al. 2012. Dr. Erika Rosenberg was my CCT instructor in the study (courses in 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. also [ccare.stanford.edu](http://ccare.stanford.edu). I thank Dr. Weiss for our timely interview. Unless otherwise noted, all information in this section derives from our interview and correspondence.



backgrounds.<sup>13</sup> These influences are reflected in the program's pedagogy: CCT includes elements of "psycho cognitive education," interactive dyads, and informal homework, as well as meditation training. In addition to the textual sources discussed here, Jinpa's development of the CCT also draws on aspects of Cognitive Based Compassion Training, developed by Geshe Tenzin Negi at Emory University.<sup>14</sup>

According to Jinpa, Compassion Cultivation Training is *not* intended to serve a soteriological purpose (Weiss 2014). Instead, Jinpa consciously crafted the program to be a transformative educational process aiding in the development of a sense of shared human traits so as to increase ethical understanding and conduct. Indeed, Jinpa has publicly stated that one benefit that Buddhism has to offer the world is a framework of ideas that can increase ethical and compassionate behavior, independent of the religious contexts in which the ideas were developed (Jinpa, Gordamer, and Omidyar 2012).

The center's website articulates a slightly different purpose in its description of the course, which states that the program is "designed to help you improve your resilience and feel more connected to others—ultimately providing an overall sense of well-being" (Center for Compassion and Altruistic Research and Education n.d.)

To sum up, then, the teachers discussed in this paper use loving-kindness and compassion practice in a variety of ways, which include modification of community liturgy for pedagogical purposes, offering secular trainings designed to increase ethical behaviors and enhance empathetic connection between people, and increasing emotional health and well-being in the individuals they teach. The purposes these teachers do *not* mention may be interesting to note as

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<sup>13</sup> Doty, James. "A Letter from Our Founder." <http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/about-compassion-cultivation-training-cct/a-letter-from-our-founder/>, accessed June 5, 2014. Cf. also Weiss 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Jinpa and Weiss, "Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)," Box IV. Also direct correspondence with Diego Hangartner, with grateful acknowledgement for his assistance with these references.

well. Although the immeasurables, or *Brahmaviharas*, are included in Buddhist texts such as the *Visuddhimagga* as practices for developing *samadhi*, none of our teachers employ them for this purpose. Nor is there any mention of teaching students loving-kindness or compassion practices to support any salvific outcome for the practitioners. Nonetheless, a soteriological change does figure prominently into the first textual adaptation I discuss below.

### 3. Textual Adaptations

#### 3.1 Sōtō Zen adaptations of the *Mettā Sutta*

The first subject adaptation is of the *Mettā Sutta*, an early Buddhist text found in two collections within the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, the *Sutta Nipata*, and the *Khuddakapatha* anthology (Sn 1.8 and Khp 9). The *Mettā Sutta* is a short, poetic instruction on loving-kindness still chanted in monasteries around the world today.

In order to incorporate the *Mettā Sutta* into Sōtō Zen liturgy, Weitsman modified it several times, including changing the chanting style, from a lyrical form popular in Theravāda monasteries, to a monotone tone and uniform cadence, common in Sōtō Zen.<sup>15</sup> At first, he informally dubbed the altered liturgical chant the *Mettā Sutra*. Upon reviewing the adaptations, his co-abbot Reb Anderson suggested that the changes were substantial enough that it was no longer an accurate rendition of the *Mettā sutta*. The name of the chant was then changed, to “Meditation on Loving-kindness” (Weitsman 2013). Indeed, Weitsman’s adaptation included a significant soteriological change to the last line of the last couplet of the sutta:

*diṭṭhiñ ca anupaggamma, sīlavā dassanena sampanno.*

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<sup>15</sup> The author wishes to thank Dr. Paula Aria and Kazuaki Tanahashi for their clarifications on the details of Zen chanting. For further reading, Cf. Tanahashi, Kazuaki. *Zen Chants*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications. Forthcoming, 2015.

*kāmesu vineyya gedhaṃ, na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punareṭī ti.* (Sn 152)

This couplet was translated by K. R. Norman for the Pāli Text Society as:

Not subscribing to wrong views, virtuous, endowed with insight, having overcome greed for sensual pleasures, a creature assuredly does not come to lie again in a womb (Norman 1984, 24).<sup>16</sup>

Let us focus here on the phrase to “not come to lie again in a womb.” Many scholars, although not all, interpret it as referring to one of four specific levels of liberation in early, pre-Mahayāna Buddhism, that of an *anāgāmi* (*anāgāmin*), or *nonreturner*.<sup>17</sup> In Pāli literature, a nonreturner is destined for the Pure Abodes upon rebirth, as opposed to a fully liberated *arhat* (*arahant*), who will not be reborn at all.<sup>18</sup> The phrase “to lie again in a womb” refers to rebirth in a physical realm. Such specificity does not preclude rebirth in one of the nonmaterial realms, such as the Pure Abodes, present in many Buddhist cosmologies.

Such a distinction is not referenced in the translation Weitsman used. He drew upon a rendering of the *Mettā Sutta* in Lounsbery, a writer sympathetic to scientifically compatible interpretations of Buddhism, who presented Buddhism as a rational “ethico-philosophical system” (Lounsbery 1973, 3).<sup>19</sup> The last phrase of the translation she provides

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<sup>16</sup> Norman’s translation appears to be based on translations by I.B. Horner and Walpola Rahula, as he includes earlier, alternate, translations by them for sections of the *Sutta Nipāta* he updated. The current passage contains no alternate readings in his volume.

<sup>17</sup> While many Buddhist scholars and practitioners agree that the practice of mettā is considered to be a support for the full awakening of an *arahant* or *arhat* (skt), but not a direct means to it, there are dissenting voices. For arguments proposing mettā as a full path to liberation, see Gombrich 2009, 86-87. Cf. also Gombrich 1996, 114.

<sup>18</sup> See Buswell and Lopez 2013, entry: *anāgāmi*.

<sup>19</sup> Lounsbery was an American Buddhist living in France, who founded the Buddhist Society Les Amis du Bouddhisme in 1929. She was inspired and influenced by early Chinese Modernist Tai Xu (1890-1947), who wrote much about Buddhism’s compatibility with science and Western philosophy. For more information, see Pittman 2001, 330 n 114, who cites a death announcement in *La Pensee Bouddhique* 2/11 (July 1947): 23. See also Holmes H. Welch, *Buddhist Revival in China*, 1st ed.

reads:

He who is made perfect will never again know rebirth (Lounsbery 1973, 102–3).

Unlike scholars of ancient Buddhism, Weitsman approached the *Mettā Sutta* as a Buddhist teacher grounded in a modernizing lineage of Sōtō Zen. His understanding of mettā reflects a very different perspective than does the original or Lounsbery. In his words, “Mettā is what harmonizes the universe, what holds everything together. At the highest levels of [Mahayāna] understanding, mettā is emptiness” (Weitsman 2014). In other words, the earlier versions’ emphasis on rebirth has been supplanted by *śūnyatā*.

In one of Weitsman’s early adaptations of Lounsbery’s version, he rendered the final phrase as:

One who achieves the way will no longer perpetuate the endless cycles of suffering for oneself or others. (Weitsman 1985a, 2013).<sup>20</sup>

Weitsman unpacked this passage in a 1995 Dharma talk in which he taught his adaptation of the *Mettā Sutta* line by line. In this talk, he depicted rebirth as an ancient Indian idea, incorporated by the Buddha as a metaphor for suffering and the end of suffering (Weitsman 1995a, 10–11). He reframed the idea of rebirth as a teaching about whether or not a person will “keep being reborn moment by moment in the cycle of suffering,” wherein suffering is continually re-created for the self and for others through a sense of attachment in interactions and conversations. In fact, Weitsman explicitly states, “The teachings of Zen are not so concerned with what happens after this life, but in how to be truly present in now” (Weitsman 1995a). In another Dharma talk the same year, he verified that he had settled on a new adaptation:

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(s.l.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 60, and *The Seeker’s Glossary of Buddhism* (New York: Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada, 1998), 292, 412.

<sup>20</sup> Weitsman dates this adaptation to around 1984–85, when he introduced it to Berkeley Zen Center. It would not, however, have been introduced to San Francisco Zen Center until 1988 or later.

One who achieves the way will be freed from the duality of birth and death. (Weitsman 1995b, 2; quote from Weitsman 2014).

In this adaptation, Weitsman decisively reinterprets the last statement of the *Mettā Sutta* to reflect what he refers to as a Mahayāna ending. In doing so he changed the sutta’s soteriological context from the framework of rebirth to a non-dual perspective of birth and death based on his understanding of mettā and emptiness (Weitsman 1995b, 1).

Weitsman made another set of wording changes he considered important (Weitsman 2013). The Lounsbury version, and indeed most English translations of the sutta, render the Pāli grammar as third person singular—for example, “Let no one deceive another.”<sup>21</sup> Weitsman introduced a version using the first-person plural: “Let us not deceive another” (Weitsman 1985b). He later introduced a first-person singular version—“Let me not deceive another”—to Berkeley Zen Center (Weitsman 1985a).

Weitsman made these changes for specific pedagogical purposes. With the first change, he emphasized the importance of Zen practitioners cultivating these qualities within themselves as a community. The second change was intended to emphasize how important it is for each individual to cultivate the qualities of loving-kindness in themselves. In other words, Weitsman increasingly emphasized personal cultivation of *mettā* and other helpful qualities.

This is a significant shift in implicit pedagogy: Sōtō Zen rhetoric generally emphasizes non-doing and tends not to employ language or practices overtly cultivating the wholesome qualities of *mettā* or *karuṇā*. By introducing the *Mettā Sutta*, Weitsman chose to adapt a text from the Pāli Canon and employ it as pedagogical skillful means for his Sōtō Zen community.

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<sup>21</sup> “Let no one deceive another, nor despise any being in any state; let none by hatred wish harm to another” (Lounsbury 1973). The original Pāli reads: “na paro param nikubbetha, nātimaññetha katthaci na kañci byārosanā paṭighasaññā, nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.”

### 3.2 The *Visuddhimagga* and Contemporary Adaptations of Mettā and Compassion Practice

In contrast to Weitsman's, both Zinai and Jinpa's adaptations are crafted to omit soteriological concerns from their trainings. Both teachers also rely on a meditation methodology as opposed to chanting. In this methodology, people follow a process of focus on specific meditation objects: living beings of designated categories, such as oneself, or a neutral person.

Before examining these adaptations, I present a brief introduction to loving-kindness and compassion practice as systematized in the second text under discussion today, the *Visuddhimagga*. The *Visuddhimagga*, or Path of Purification, is considered both a work of reference and a detailed manual for meditation masters.<sup>22</sup>

The ninth chapter of the Path of Purification is entitled the *Brahmavihāra-niddesa*, rendered by Ñāṇamoli as "Description of Concentration—the Divine Abidings." It describes a precise formula for loving-kindness practice and proffers specific phrases to be used.<sup>23</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* also lists the categories of people for whom loving-kindness should be cultivated: those of oneself, a teacher, a dearly loved person, a neutral person, a hostile person, and all beings (VM IX.8-13).<sup>24</sup>

The putative author of the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa, details specific functions for the categories within each Immeasurable or

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<sup>22</sup> The *Visuddhimagga* is attributed to the scholar-monk Buddhaghosa and represents a prodigious, meticulous organization of extant Buddhist teachings on meditation, rendered into the Pāli language Ñāṇamoli 2009), xviii, xlvi. The following two paragraphs are adapted from Neal 2012.

<sup>23</sup> For example: "May I keep myself free from enmity, affliction and anxiety and live happily."

<sup>24</sup> Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification = (Visuddhimagga)*, trans. Ñāṇamoli (Taipei, Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2009), IX.8-13.

*Brahmavihāra*. For example, in the case of generating *mettā* for oneself, Buddhaghosa does not recommend that the practitioner simply focus on an aspiration that they themselves be happy or attempt absorption. Instead, the meditator is urged to use oneself as an example: “Just as I want to be happy and dread pain, as I want to live and not die, so do other beings, too” (VM IX.10).<sup>25</sup> This, he states, causes the wish for other beings’ welfare and happiness to arise. It is, in fact, using the self as an example that he argues makes the practice of generating *mettā* for oneself congruent with earlier texts such as the *Mettā Sutta* and the *Vibhaṅga* (VM IX.10).<sup>26</sup>

The detailed description of loving-kindness practice serves as a template and reference for subsequent, shorter instructions for the practice of compassion and the other *Brahmavihāras*. The instruction to focus on oneself, however, is unique to *mettā* and is not repeated. Instead, the first category of being changes with each subsequent Divine Abiding. For compassion, the categories include “a wretched, unlucky, or unfortunate being,” followed by a dear person, neutral person, hostile person, and all beings (VM IX.78,80, 340-41). The categories and phrases introduced in the *Brahmavihāra-niddesa* instructions are still used and modified today, as is shown below.

### 3.3 The Luminary Research Institute’s Prenatal Education program

Ven. Zinai uses both the *Visuddhimagga* and *Mettā Sutta* as primary sources for the loving-kindness practice portion of her prenatal education program (Zinai 2014a). She incorporates *mettā* as depicted in the *Visuddhimagga* and *Mettā Sutta*, reframing it as an expression

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<sup>25</sup> The emphasis and language Buddhaghosa uses regarding cultivating loving-kindness for the self as an example is also seen in CCT practices focused on developing compassion. Cf. Rosenberg 2011a.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed analysis of the evolution from use of illustrative language in the *Vibhaṅga* to more literal instruction in the *Visuddhimagga*, specifically regarding compassion meditation, cf. Anālayo 2014, 4–5.

of *bodhicitta*. From a soteriological perspective, however, Zinai clearly states that she does not consider either loving-kindness or compassion practice on its own to be sufficient for full liberation.<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the intended effect for the recipients of the Prenatal Education program is explicitly not salvific but one of greater emotional peace. Zinai emphasizes that self-caring is a basis for being able to relate peacefully and positively with others. In fact, Zinai recounted her inspiration to offer these teachings after direct experience of the emotional, psychological, and relational benefits of practicing loving-kindness.<sup>28</sup>

Zinai's students included Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. Therefore she presented two different forms of adapted loving-kindness practice. For non-Buddhists, she based her teaching on the *Mettā Sutta*.<sup>29</sup> For those of Buddhist background, she followed the categories of beings outlined in the *Visuddhimagga* (Zinai 2014a, 2–3).

Zinai also introduced adaptations, adding two preliminary practices to both sets of loving-kindness meditation instruction. These new practices were self-forgiveness and self-acceptance, both of which Zinai refers to as “practical forms of mettā for oneself.” She attributes adding self-forgiveness to the influence of one of her teachers, Dr. Rina Sircar, a former Theravāda nun and professor emeritus of Asian and Comparative Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies (Zinai 2014b).

Zinai's delivery of the Compassionate Prenatal Education Program

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<sup>27</sup> Zinai's position is congruent with much current analysis of the soteriological role of the *appamānas* in early Buddhism, pace Gombrich 2009. Cf. Martini 2011, 137–80; Dhammadinnā 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Venerable Zinai, Questionnaire on teaching Loving-kindness and Compassion in a Ch'an Monastery, Word Document, May 29, 2014b.

<sup>29</sup> Ven. Zinai instructed non-Buddhist students to send good wishes to three categories of the many kinds of beings included in the sutta's recitation: themselves, others, and all sentient beings.



incorporates not only Sircar's approach but also the ideas of the clinical psychologists with whom she has worked and her experiences as a teacher of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a meditation protocol used in thousands of secular environments and scientific studies over the past forty years.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.4 CCT Adaptations and Textual Sources

Compassion Cultivation Training is another example of such a protocol. Jinpa based Compassion Cultivation Training on a compilation of Tibetan Buddhist texts that he has translated into English, entitled *Mind Training: The Great Collection (Theg-pa chen-po blo-sbyong rgya-rtsa)*. It comprises a set of the most important early works of *blo-sbyong*, a form of Tibetan Buddhist practice that uses short, pithy phrases to serve as instructions for the cultivation of compassion and *bodhicitta* (G'zon-nu-rgyal-mchog, Dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan, and Jinpa 2006, xiii). Jinpa considered *Mind Training* so important to the CCT that he used a shorter version of it as a textbook in the CCT teacher training program he co-designed with Dr. Leah Weiss.<sup>31</sup>

His textual adaptations, significantly for our present purposes, include categories of meditative focus. In *Mind Training*, the first category of mother has special significance. Each loving-kindness or compassion meditation starts with contemplating one's mother, often visualizing her in distress.<sup>35</sup> This initial contemplation is followed by the reflection that all beings have been one's mother—a way of generalizing the cultivated loving-kindness or compassion. The meditation is often then extended to the specific categories of friends and family, neutral people, enemies, and all sentient beings (Jinpa

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<sup>30</sup> For a synopsis of MBSR's ubiquity and recent meta-analysis of 26 vetted, randomized studies on its efficacy, see de Vibe et al. 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Except where otherwise indicated, Dr. Weiss is the primary source for this section.

2005).<sup>32</sup>

The category of mother does not appear in the CCT. Instead, the program begins with cultivating compassion toward a dearly loved one in difficult circumstances, apparently replacing the category of distressed mother. It continues, in order, with cultivating compassion toward oneself, then loving-kindness toward oneself, which serves as a basis for cultivating compassion for others, including neutral people, difficult people, and all beings (Gzön-nu-rgyal-mchog, Dkon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan, and Jinpa 2006).<sup>33</sup>

The CCT thus contains three categories that are not included in the meditations in *Mind Training*. These include compassion for “a dearly loved one” and loving-kindness for oneself, both of which appear in the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>34</sup> As it happens, Compassion Cultivation Training shares all but one of its categories with the *Visuddhimagga*. The one exception, a new category of compassion toward oneself, appears in neither the *Visuddhimagga* nor in Jinpa’s translation of *Mind Training*. Moreover, self-compassion as a term or idea occurs in

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<sup>32</sup> *Mind Training* contains a variant in which practitioners transition from initial contemplation of their mother to considering all beings as having been one’s mother, to contemplating friends and family, neighbours and countrymen, people of the region, the entire world, and the remaining continents, as well as other planes of existence (known as the six realms).

<sup>33</sup> Some of the categories used in the CCT appear in two commentaries within Jinpa’s translation of *Mind Training*. The commentaries are on *Parting from the Four Clings*, by Drakpa Gyaltzen, (1147–1216). The commentaries are Sengé, by Gyaltzen 529–39 (see page 535) and Rinchen, by Gyaltzen 541–66 (see page 559). Different versions of “meditation on loving-kindness” are described in several texts within *Mind Training* as well, including the *Guide to the Heart of Dependent Origination* (author uncertain) 423–39 (meditations on 424–26). This commentary also contains the preparatory aspiration “Bless me so that loving-kindness, compassion, and awakening mind arise in me” (423). In one of these meditations, compassion is seen to arise naturally out of loving-kindness. Readers should be aware that I have intentionally omitted meditations referring to loving-kindness as part of *Atisha’s Seven-Point Mind Training*, as Jinpa stipulates the translated term “loving-kindness,” in these cases, does not refer to *mettā*.

<sup>34</sup> To be fair, while the category of “dearly loved one” is not specifically mentioned in *Mind Training*, the categories of mother and “friends and family” may be considered to be quite similar.

no major works of Pāli literature at all, nor in the extant translated Chinese Agamas.<sup>35</sup>

The use of self in *Mind Training* is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that, in the compendium, the self is not an object of practitioner loving-kindness. As we know, however, loving-kindness for oneself is a separate, phrase-based practice in the *Visuddhimagga*, justified on the basis of its nature as a skillful means, using oneself as an example to understand the importance of well-wishing toward others.<sup>36</sup>

In CCT, the self is also used an example, to engender well-wishing through a sense of common humanity. Some phrases are nearly identical to those in the VM, for example: “Just like me this person wants to be happy. Just like me this person wishes to be free from suffering.”<sup>37</sup> Other phrases couch happiness in more contemporary, psychological terms, such as being free from feeling inadequacy, rejection, loneliness, and depression. Jinpa and Weiss state their rationale in terms of emotional maturity: Without learning to connect with one’s own needs and feelings compassionately, “It is difficult to genuinely develop compassion for others” (2013, Box IV, Loc 7481).

In all, CCT includes a much greater concern with self-love than any of the Buddhist source texts we have been discussing—or, for that matter, any currently popular Pāli texts. This emphasis on self-love is consistent with one of the program’s stated purposes: increasing practitioners’ subjective sense of well-being.

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<sup>35</sup> Panel conversation with Anālayo and Jan Nattier, IABS, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Loving-kindness is cultivated for oneself in order to provide the practitioner an example, to arouse “the desire for other beings’ welfare and happiness.” VM IX.10, 323, referencing Vibhanga. 272. Buddhaghosa’s presentation cites the Vibhanga but represents a more literal instruction than earlier depictions of the practice as depicted there. Cf. Anālayo 2014, 5, for more analysis of a tendency toward literalism in the *Visuddhimagga* with regard to compassion practice.

<sup>37</sup> Specific phrases quoted from Rosenberg 2011b. It is worth noting that while CCT teachers do include those who draw their inspiration primarily from early Buddhist teachings, including Theravāda developments, Rosenberg is a teacher trained in the *Nyingma* Tibetan Buddhist lineage.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I choose to highlight several distinctions and common threads among these adaptations.<sup>38</sup> While all three adaptations entail a shift in emphasis toward the self, this is more formalized in the meditation trainings. As mentioned, Thupten Jinpa's Compassion Cultivation Training program includes a new category, self-compassion, not described in the Buddhist texts we have covered. The CCT also adopts "loving-kindness for self" from the *Visuddhimagga*. Bhikṣuṇī Zinai's Prenatal Program adds the categories of forgiveness and self-acceptance, both of which are framed as forms of cultivating *mettā* for oneself. Finally, Sojun Weitsman changes the language of the *Mettā Sutta* itself, emphasizing a first-person perspective.

Furthermore, Jinpa and Zinai adapted these practices to increase a sense of well-being in the individuals they serve. Zinai's program framed this quality as self-esteem, while the CCT couched it in terms of individual well-being. Arising in a Zen community context, Weitsman's language is somewhat different: He clearly frames *mettā* to his students as a perspective and set of attitudes capable of reducing both internal suffering and the suffering of others in daily interactions.

In fact, all these teachers address relational, or community, concerns. Weitsman adopted the *Mettā Sutta* to respond to a wish in his community for greater attention to love and compassion. Jinpa and Zinai's adapted practices also address relational concerns, such as Zinai's concern with empathic attunement and respect for

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<sup>38</sup> While textual adaptation plays a part in each of these vignettes, one theme that reappeared in all interviews was the importance of person-to-person interaction (transmission) and personal experience and understanding. There was indeed an important textual component in each of these cases of adaptation. However, the teachers making them placed at least as much importance on personal and interpersonal—shall we say practical, visceral, or embodied connections—as they did on source texts. The texts provided a means. The motivations, however, proved to be a combination of the inspiration of their teachers, the needs of the community, and their own experiences and understandings.

individuality and Jinpa’s stated wish to increase ethical behavior.

Finally, each of these adaptations focus on how loving-kindness and compassion practice may cultivate well-being and quality of this life rather than salvific aims in future lives of their students. In Weitsman’s case, he engendered a soteriological change resonant with a Mahayāna emphasis on emptiness. In his rhetoric, however, he focused on the experience of this life—the present moment. Necessarily, Jinpa’s secular CCT excises overt salvific concerns entirely, and Zinai’s community program does not address the soteriological goals of its students. Zinai, however, underscored the positive soteriological effect of increasing the well-being of students for *teachers* on the bodhisattva path. It is possible such benefits are not lost on other Mahayāna teachers offering adapted meditation trainings as well.

Regardless of context or soteriological perspective, these teachers synthesize elements of early Buddhist, or Theravāda, praxis into their own schemata. The *Mettā Sutta* and elements of the *Visuddhimagga* have been appropriated into Mahayāna, ecumenical, or putatively secular contexts, combined with liturgical or psychological techniques in order to address personal and relational, as much as spiritual, needs in contemporary terms.

## Abbreviations

DN	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
Khṃ	<i>Khuddakapatha</i>
Sn	<i>Sutta Nipāta</i>
VM	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>

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## 合流：慈悲修行在佛教與世俗脈絡下的接受與調適

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### 摘要：

當代佛教徒正在調整慈悲修行。作者透過三個例子來探討目前慈悲修習在佛教教內與世俗脈絡中如何被使用以及調適。

本文的討論從以下兩個面向來檢視此改變的過程。第一、本文探討美國、台灣與北美藏人三位指導老師如何調適慈悲修習，以及此調適的目的。第二、本文特別指出這些指導老師調適或者世俗化慈悲修習的佛教文獻根據，主要著重在《慈經》與《清淨道論》（本論或許是當代佛教最有影響力的上座部佛教禪修論著）。《清淨道論》中對於慈悲修習的用語與分類幾乎是一字不差地被用在目前在世俗的慈悲禪修。這種互補也同樣出現在不同的佛教傳統中。

其次，美國的 Sojun Mel Weitsman 老師對柏克萊與舊金山發展的現代日本曹洞宗有重要的影響。他對《慈經》的使用，也做一些調適來符合他的社群對於慈與悲的需要。而在台灣，「香光尼僧團」的自薦法師結合《清淨道論》與《慈經》，並加以調適後運用在世俗的親子教育上，這個做法可以滿足母親期待慈悲修習的需要。第三，藏傳佛教的 Thupten Jinpa 格西與他的共同作者，在藏傳佛教文獻之外，同時結合《清淨道論》的慈心修習的用語與方法來作為他們的世俗慈悲修習的訓練課程的一部分。

這三個例子對於慈悲修習與佛教文獻的調適與運用反映出他們對生命的品質與福祉的重視。

總的來說，本文提供初步的第一手研究，記錄當代全球化佛教中，佛教傳統與世俗的互補、對於禪修方法與禪修文獻的調適，以及從中發展出來的世俗的慈悲修習。

關鍵詞：

慈、無量、悲、調適