CHAPTER 4

PHRA KHAMMAI'S TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

In the previous chapter, I have described Phra Khammai's life story, his activities in transnational contexts, his intentions, visions, and mission. I have also discussed how he has spread Buddhist practices as a *Dhammadūta* on the one hand, and as an educationist on the other. In this chapter, I intend to discuss his core teachings, including the teaching of meditation, which he has carried out in Europe, Asia, and in his home country Burma and Shan State. His mindfulness meditation (*samatha*) techniques have become well-established among Europeans as well as Asian people. His techniques based on the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* appears in the *Dīgha-nikāya*, *Mahāvaggapāli* (DN 2.9). In recent years, while he has been more focused on sharing the Vipassanā meditation approach for people who have already gained higher meditational experience, he is always pleased to share it with occasional practitioners who have limited time for meditation. He calls this '*Pīti Khammatthāna*,' 'joyfulness meditation.' He teaches this joyfulness meditation within the framework of *Brahmavihāra*, the four noble ways of living, appearing in the *Tevijja-sutta* of *Dīgha-nikāya* (DN 13). These texts are familiar to all Buddhist scholars and meditation masters. However, Phra Khammai's interpretation is unique among them within the context of Theravada Buddhism.

Among many other modern Buddhist leaders around the world, His Holiness the Dalai Lama manifests 'compassion in action' (Chapter 1), which can be understood in terms of spontaneous compassion with a scope limited to reasoned compassion brought about through analysis, which is thus stronger because it is voluntary and the result of training.[68] For His Holiness, the practice of compassion should start from the individual level, as he says, "…At 81, I believe [the problems of the world] cannot be resolved through prayers

[68] "His Holiness the Dalai Lama Speaks about Compassion in Action and Visits the Presidential Library at the Fox Center." 16 October 2013. http://www.dalailama.com/news/post/1015-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-speaks-about-compassion-in-action-and-visits-the-presidential-library-at-the-fox-center. Accessed: December 2015.

or government help. We have to begin the change at an individual level and then move on to neighborhood and society."[69] "Our basic human nature is compassionate because we start our lives in the lap of affection. Problems arise as a result of our predominantly self-centered attitude," said His Holiness. 'Compassion in action' is consists of actions to encounter the real cause of unhappiness and suffering, and how to find happiness and fulfillment. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen master, has formulated "Fourteen Precepts of Engaged Buddhism," (Chapter 1) practical guidelines for followers to be able to live in harmony with nature. An outspoken Thai engaged lay Buddhist, Sulak Sivaraksa, has reinterpreted the Five Buddhist Precepts (Chapter 1) with adaptations for modern Thai society. Now Phra Khammai, in line with all these 'engaged Buddhists,' expresses his ideology as "Buddhism in action," as Professor Gombrich puts it. My attempt is to analyze if Phra Khammai's use of Buddhist concepts of *Brahmavihāra* is universal and can be considered in line with engaged Buddhism. In line with this thinking, I detail how Phra Khammai teaches Buddhism in action. Local Shan Buddhism is arguably a form of holistic religion. Therefore, how does it go along with the mainstream of Theravada Buddhism in encountering globalization?

4.1 Teaching *Brahmavihāra*: The four noble ways of living

The teachings and practices of Phra Khammai in the following sections are either appeared in a book or video slips unloaded onlun The Buddhist concept of *Brahmavihāra* is well-known for meditation in the Buddhist world, and today has become very popular in the West. The *Brahmavihāra* can be conceptually taught and is easy to learn to reveal the core idea of what makes a Buddhist. This core concept requires no ritual practices nor textual studies, and it is not even necessary to become a Buddhist. The *Brahmavihāra* is also commonly practiced among other Buddhist traditions, such as Mahayana and Vajrayana, the Tibetan approach. The term *Brahmavihāra* has been translated into English in various ways, in some cases contradictory. Some interpret it according to their own understanding and experience. Meditation masters, Buddhist scholars, and scholars from other disciplines have understood the *Brahmavihāra* uniquely in their own rights.

[69] https://www.facebook.com/CompassionInActionFilm/. Accessed: December 2015.

The Four Sublime States of Mind, the Four Immeasurable Minds, the Four Supreme Emotions, the Four Sublime Attitudes, and so on, are some of the most popular translations. This concept occurs in the *Tevijja-sutta* ('Threefold Knowledge'), the *Sutta* number 13, in *the Digha-nikāya* of *Sutta-pitaka*. In the *Tevijja-sutta*, a training of the first *Jhāna* (Skt. *Dhyāna*), 'trance' or 'absorption' practice is mentioned as a foundation for the *Brahmavihāra*. The term is a combination of two words: '*Brahma*' (divine) + '*vihāra*' (abodes). It is a basis from which to generate the Four Supreme Emotions—the Divine Dwelling. With a mind full of these four emotions—namely, *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā*—one is said to enter 'the Realm of Brahma.' "It is important, however, to note that in this *sutta* context, the Buddha is using 'the Realm of Brahma' as an analogy for Nirvana (Pali: *Nibbāna*)," according to Leigh Brasington, an Oakland, California-based meditation master (Brasington, 2014).

In chapter 1, I mentioned that Phra Khammai was inspired by a few factors that led him to go abroad to study for higher levels of education. Notable among his reasons were that he saw that Shans' literacy skills and literary endeavors were lacking, and he recognized that reviving monastic education would require certain knowledge from abroad. Looking through the lens of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' narratives, Phra Khammai was perhaps in the early days inspired by nationalism and imagination. Nevertheless, through my research findings, his efforts go beyond such specificity in conceptions of ethnicity, nationality, regionalism, and geopolitics that were defined through such ideologies. Thus, he embodies 'transnationalism' and fits well within the context of my research.

While acknowledging the long-persisting problems of the Burmese nation-state, Phra Khammai demystifies the notion of ill-treatment or atrocities committed by one person toward another. During his golden jubilee birthday celebration, Phra Khammai delivered a speech titled "An Unbounded *Mettā*: Love Without Borders" to the assembled Shan devotees and monks in November 2014 in his hometown of Laikha. "Harboring ill-thought is a form of self-destruction," said Phra Khammai. He categorically demystified the notion that we can consider the marginalization of Shan literature, language, education, and equality as something coming from outsiders. These situations are

something within us, he explained, and we need to accumulate a 'fortunate environment' to eliminate them.

With *karuṇā* and *muditā* in balance, *mettā* is achieved to transcend discrimination, jealousy, ill thoughts, and atrocities between ethnicities and national boundaries. In his appreciation, Dr. Sai San Aik, a leading Shan intellectual, expresses his humble wish for Phra Khammai, "May he lead us to a peaceful co-existence and a much-needed inter-faith understanding." (Sai San Aik, 2014: 20). There is a hope that Phra Khammai can achieve what people wish, as "Phra Khammai is loved by all," according to Sai San Aik.

After several decades of interethnic atrocities in Burma, ill-thought and hatred toward one another seem to be natural results for obvious reasons. By practicing loving-kindness, the Buddhist concept of *mettā* can overcome these differences, according to Phra Khammai. "First of all, to develop *mettā*," he explains, "we need to have compassion for ourselves, and it should start with oneself; if one cannot have compassion toward his/her own life, it is hard for that person to have compassion toward others. *Mettā* exists only in between *karuṇā* (compassion) and *muditā* (sympathetic joy). *Mettā* does not exist in itself, but only in connection with *karuṇā* at 50 percent and *muditā* for another 50 percent. One needs to develop his compassion toward others, or be able to feel about the pain or suffering of the others; at the same time, he should be able to rejoice when the others or a person is well off and happy."[70] According to him, to have compassion toward someone is easier to develop than to be joyful when someone is in a better of position than ones self.

Drawing from several of Phra Khammai's sermons in Shan, Burmese, and English on the Buddhist concept of *Brahmavihāra*, the 'noble ways of living,' I have come to realize that this is the core of Phra Khammai's teachings and meditational practices. If my understanding of his explanation of *Brahmavihāra* is correct, the theoretical diagram (Figure 4.1) may be drawn as underneath. According to the diagram, *mettā* or 'loving-kindness' as it is usually translated into English, is at the bottom. The diagram also indicates *mettā* does not exist independently, and thus it cannot be cultivated in isolation.

[70] Phra Khammai's Dhamma-talk delivered on his 50th golden jubilee birthday celebration at his hometown Laikha in 2014.

In other words, if one does not develop *karuṇā*, or 'compassion,' and *muditā*, or 'sympathetic joy,' one does not have *mettā* in him or her self. To develop *karuṇā*, first, one must have compassion for oneself, in case he/she has encountered with failure or un-satisfactoriness. In such an encounter, once he/she is able to feel and see *karuṇā* for himself/herself, then it can extend to family members and friends, then to the people ones knows; next, to unknown people, and lastly even to one's enemy or people one does not like. At last, one will have removed these five barriers, stumbling blocks or walls, in order to have the full energy of *karuṇā*. To be able to have *muditā*, sympathetic joy, one is also required to practice the removal of blockages. The last concept is *upekkhā*, literally understood in English as tranquility or equanimity. It is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight. The role/function of *upekkhā* in this context is to keep *karuṇā* and *muditā* in balance. *Upekkhā* is very often misunderstood as negligence, indifference, or inattentiveness among Buddhists, regardless of the tradition one belongs to (Chodron, 2003; Hanh, 1997; Nyanaponika, 1999). Interestingly, Burmese, Thai, Shan and Sri Lankan Buddhists understand the term *upekkhā* in similar fashions. Phra Khammai challenges the traditional understanding of *upekkhā* by saying it should be understood only in the context of *karuṇā* and *muditā* within the *Brahmacariya* framework in which both happen to be positive aspects of emotions. On the contrary, many other Buddhist scholars' explanations are out of this context as they look at it in terms of both positive and negative aspects of emotions.

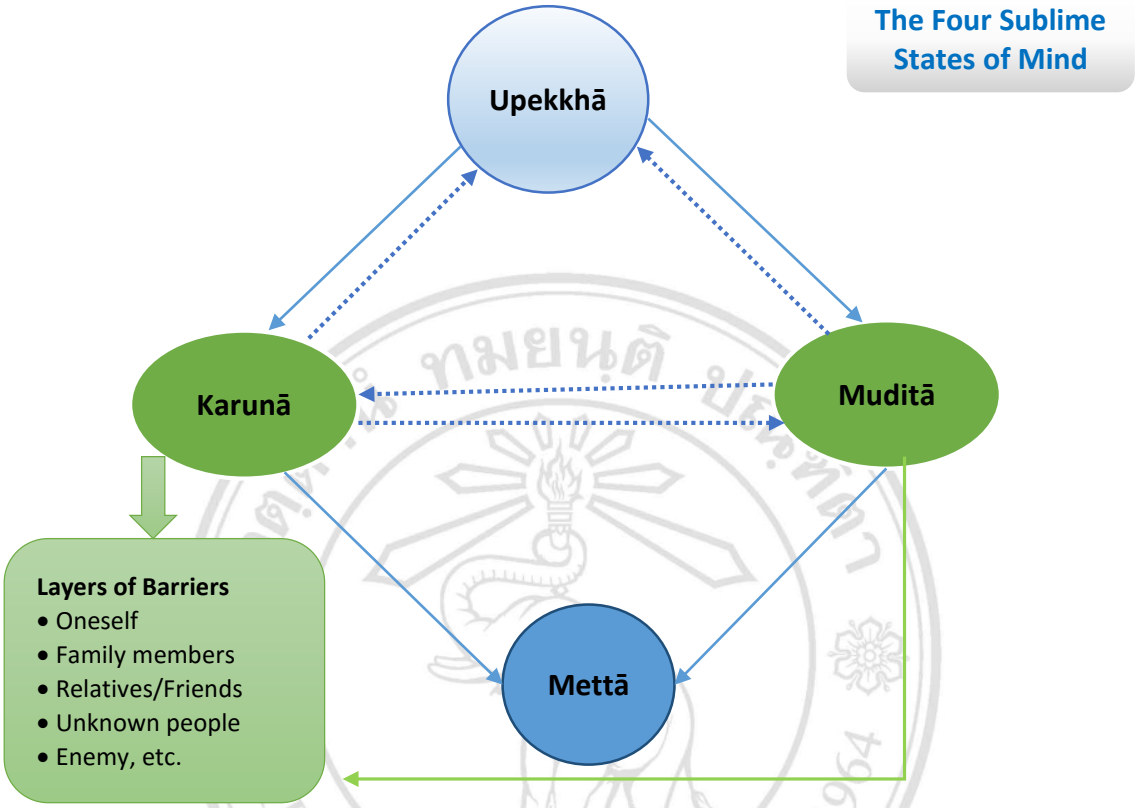

Figure 4.1 Conceptualizing the Buddhist concept of *Brahmavihāra*

In the past centuries, all major Buddhist traditions attempted to interpret *upekkhā* (in Pali) or *upekṣā*[71] (in Sanskrit) as negative in meaning. Nyanaponika Thera, a German Theravada Buddhist scholar, explains, "Looking into life, we notice how it continually moves between contrasts: rise and fall, success and failure, loss and gain, honor and blame" (Nyanaponika, 1999). Due to this traditional interpretation, I suggest that it is no wonder that among the non-academic Buddhist believers, the role/function of *upekkhā* is understood in a negative sense. However, following the Sanskrit etymological explanation, it is perhaps the closet we can infer the meaning. Therefore, the term *upekṣā* may be inferred as a functional meaning, which is "to look over," meaning "to control" or "to balance." Thus, *upekkhā* is "the controller" of *karuṇā* and *muditā* in this context. I

[71] '*upa*' is a prefix, '*ikṣ*' the root, and '*ā*' a feminine noun suffix. Arthur A. MacDonell. 2004. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. New Delhi and Chennai: Asian Educational Services.

agree with all definitions given by Buddhist scholars. However, the extended meanings together with the role and function of *upekkhā* beyond its context is misleading.

4.2 Meditation principles and techniques

The current practice of Phra Khammai's meditation techniques and methods are likely to have been learned and experienced over several decades in the past from many teachers and traditions in Burma. In addition, he has also learned meditation techniques from Ajarn Chah of the Thai forest tradition. Apart from the Theravada context, he is said to have learned the Tibetan meditation tradition Vajrayana as well. As his home monastery in Laikha is a branch of the Mahasi tradition, and Phra Khammai would have been familiar with its practice since his younger days. Later on, Mogok Vipassanā, Goenka, and Pha Auk came into his focus for training. The technique applied among the related teachers are quite different from one another. When the assistant monk at the Oxford center was asked what type of meditation is used, he did not name a particular method that is being employed. Therefore, my best guess is that mixed methods that have been learned from several teachers in Burma are used. Mahasi tradition employs the movement of one's abdomen to observe if it grows or shrinks. This technique requires one to note the abdomen's movement without interruption as much as is possible. Certainly, Phra Khammai is not overly concerned about the exact method of meditation from any tradition. He would employ it if it is useful, beneficial, and applicable. In this sense, he is best described as a pragmatist.

Nevertheless, the most two important texts which Phra Khammai used to base his meditation technique are the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* ("The Discourse on the Establishing of Mindfulness"), as appears in the *Majjhima-nikāya*, and the *Mahasatipaṭṭhāna-sutta* ("The Discourse on Great Foundation of Mindfulness") in the *Dīgha-nikāya*. These two *suttas* have been widely studied in the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism, acting as the foundation for mindfulness meditational practices. In brief, these two *suttas* stress the practice of *sati* (mindfulness) for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinguishing of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, and finally, for the realization of *Nibbāna*. Phra Khammai, like other meditational masters, has taken this as his fundamental foundation for Buddhist practices, for the

development of his spiritual life, and as instruction for others who require proper guidance.

Moreover, as I glean from Phra Khammai's booklets as well as from several video and audio clips of his *Dhamma* talks from the past few years, Phra Khammai teaches four kinds of meditation, namely: *mettā* meditation, meditation on the qualities of the Buddha, meditation on the impersonality of the body, and meditation on death. These four, according to Phra Khammai, if practiced earnestly and correctly, help in the development of the Vipassanā practice. And conversely, Vipassanā meditation assists us achieve deep understanding of these four meditation practices. They are mutually approving and supportive, and that is why together these four are known as 'supportive meditation'. He explains, "They are largely reflective types of meditation, rather than trying to watch sensations and thoughts momentarily, as in Vipassanā. They help the mind to focus. Once fully developed, they also tend to influence the way we think. Three of them—*mettā*, meditation on the impersonality of body, and meditation on death—help us directly to acquire the 'right thought factor' of the Noble Eightfold Path because their nature is that of goodwill, non-violence, and detachment (Phra Khammai, 2000: 9)."

4.2.1 *Mettā* meditation

Being one of the most important concepts in Buddhism, mettā or loving-kindness becomes an object of focus in meditation is not strange. For this and other related Buddhist teachings, *mettā* becomes a widely practiced among Theravada Buddhist communities, such as the Burmese, Thai, and Sri Lankan. "Very often in many places," explains Phra Khammai, "the practitioners would immediately understand it as *mettā* meditation. *Mettā* meditation comes as a set, comprising four components: *mettā*, *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkhā* (balanced mind). *Mettā* does not exist by itself, but within the framework of four components." (Phra Khammai, 1999: 9-10).

Although the first three components, *mettā*, *karuṇā*, and *muditā*, are well understood, nevertheless it is very often among the Theravada Buddhist conception, either Burmese, Thai, or Sri Lankan, that *upekkhā* means being indifferent to someone or something. This

is often mistakenly taken to mean the *upekkhā* which is a part of *mettā.* In reality, *upekkhā* that is a part of *mettā* is not an attitude of ignoring and being indifferent towards something, but rather a balanced mind that is not swayed or affected either by the suffering object of *karuṇā* or the pleasant object of *muditā*. It always retains the spirit of *mettā*, which is the very foundation of its existence. When we talk about *mettā*, the other three concepts are also included. "However, in practice, all the four cannot be done at the same time. We have to begin with *mettā*. Whether or not we progress to the other three elements depends on how we are progressing with *mettā* practice. We could not start off with *karuṇā*, *muditā*, or *upekkhā* because each of the last three is a specialized advancement of *mettā*. *Mettā* is an inclusive primary practice that develops itself into the qualities of the heart, such as *karuṇā*, and is essential to furthering these qualities." (Phra Khammai, 1999: 10).

It is likely that over time Phra Khammai's understanding of *Brahmavihāra* has changed or improved in quality. The above explanation was given over 15 years ago. He suggests to start with *mettā*. On the other hand, in his talk on *Pīti-khammatthana*, a *Dhamma* talk delivered in Hsenwi at its hundredth anniversary of the Satipatthana Meditation Foundation, he suggests otherwise, to begin with *karuṇā*.[72]

"What is *mettā*?" The Buddhist concept of *mettā* is detailed in the *Metta-sutta, of Suttanipata*, pp. 143-152 in Dīdha-nikāya. As Phra Khammai explains, "it is the desire to see peace and success in one's life. The desire to be free from harm is also *mettā*. This good intention is to be developed and extended to members of one's family and friends. As it progresses, you have to gradually extend it to all in the world, including one's enemies. The desire to see them doing well and happy in their life is the spirit of *mettā* in full action. When one wants to see his/her progress socially, economically, and spiritually is again *mettā*. When we wish ourselves good health and prosperity, we are purely developing the awareness of goodwill to ourselves—promoting love for ourselves and avoiding danger, harm, and enmity." (Phra Khammai, 1999: 10).

[72] A video clip of Phra Khammai's "Brahmavihara: the Four Sublime Stages of Mind (4)". Public Internet Domain. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdRkwhFba5M. Accessed: September 2015.

Phra Khammai continues: "*Mettā* is to begin with goodwill through which one wishes to see welfare and well-being for oneself. In this world, all living creatures should love themselves and have an awareness of this feeling. They should then extend this feeling to those nearby, such as parents, family members, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and teachers. This is the way to start spreading or expanding *mettā*. There are some who start by saying, 'May all creatures in the east be well and happy.' Some practice *mettā* with only the whole world as their meditation object, overlooking the people nearest and dearest to themselves. Without being able to develop *mettā* fully for themselves or their friends, how can one expect to expand *mettā* to the whole world? It is not logical. That could become a futile effort and sometimes almost a prayer intended for mere public display.

Phra Khammai has an idea of universalizing the Buddha's teaching as he explains the nature of *mettā* (loving-kindness). He describes, "As *mettā* is universal in dimension by nature, we have to have wholesome feelings, not only for ourselves, but for other people as well. Otherwise, *mettā* can lose its true nature and be overcome by its invisible attackers: attachment and selfishness. That is no longer *mettā* in the Buddhist sense because it has been bounded. *Mettā* by its true character gravitates toward a gradual diminishing of the border between one and one's family, friends, and strangers, and between oneself and the enemy. Prejudice, favor, and fear are the manifestations of the opponents of *mettā*; they create a mental boundary between those you like and those you do not like. *Mettā* works to diminish and eliminate such bias and discrimination. *Mettā* gives a universal dimension to the way we think and act. With *mettā* come virtues, such as friendliness and honesty. One who has sufficiently developed *mettā* is exceptionally thoughtful, caring, and gentle. He is patient and willing to listen to someone else's point of view.[73] *Mettā* seeks to transform the inner character of a person while offering peace and a confident outlook on life."

Phra Khammai warns: "There are people who do not have the feeling of goodwill even for themselves. They do not strive to improve themselves; they may even harm

[73] *Suvaco* is the quality mentioned in the *Metta-sutta*.

themselves or place themselves in danger. Therefore, those people who seek to improve their life righteously and avoid harming themselves are at least practicing the awareness of *mettā* for themselves. They need only proper guidance to extend it to others." (Phra Khammai, 1999: 12).

On the aspect of visible and invisible enemies of *mettā*, Phra Khammai explains "*mettā* practice can easily be derailed, especially in the absence of mindfulness. The goodwill nature of *mettā* could change into that of attachment and lust, both of which have magnetic potential. They are an invisible hindrance to *mettā*. It is extremely difficult to combat them. Ill-will and anger are the opposite of goodwill and loving-kindness. They have destructive forces within and without. They are the well-known and visible enemies of *mettā*. All the hindrances to *mettā*, both visible and invisible, are direct emotional responses from within, which require awareness and concentration to detect and bring under control." (Phra Khammai, 2000).

Phra Khammai explains: "Actually, *mettā* meditation cannot proceed in the absence of mindfulness. The Buddha has made it clear that one must establish mindfulness to sustain *mettā*. We have to have a sustained awareness (*sati*), indeed, of all the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhanga*) to develop *mettā*.[74] The Buddha has also advised anyone to help his relatives or friend, if really concerned for them, to practice mindfulness meditation (*Satipatthana*). *Mettā* and mindfulness practices are often taught together (Phra Khammai, 1999: 12)."[75] In relation to awareness (sati) Phra Khammai relates how Shan Buddhists understand and actually apply in their daily life. It is clear from the following passage:

> In the Shan Buddhist culture, people often make a vow after donating something to the Buddha or pagoda or the Sangha. It has become like a prayer through which one asks something from God in other religions.

[74] *Mettāsahagatasutta, Bojjhanga-samyutta, Samyutta-nikaya*.

[75] *Metta Sutta, Satipatthana-samyutta, Samyutta-nikaya*.

> Many Shans would pray for the intelligence of Venerable Sariputta, the brightest among the immediate disciples of the Buddha, the miracle power of Venerable Maha Moggallana, the luck of Venerable Sivali, the handsome appearance of Venerable Kaccayana, the excellent health of Venerable Bakula and a beautiful voice as sweet as the sound of piano. They want everything and all in one. You can just see their devotion and admiration of those Arahants (Saints). There is an undeniable unskillful focus that keeps driving them to do what is nevertheless a good thing: sharing and refraining from harming others. Nevertheless, because of unskillful thoughts they are being driven by that desire rather than being guided by understanding in doing what they do (Phra Khammai, 1999: 50).

As far as foreseeable, the Shans seem want to live an ideal life with all good features in as they combined many arahants who possessed different skills or mastered, and exemplarily life of those disciples of the Buddha were gifted with unique features. The Shans imagine that their ideal life is expected to come in a package.

Phra Khammai also explains that *mettā* meditation is not merely recitation of the *Mettā-sutta*, the discourse on loving-kindness. It is about bringing and developing an awareness of the fact that we love ourselves; we do not wish any harm to befall ourselves. Moreover, it is about extending such good thoughts to others. It is also about evolving qualities of the heart, as mentioned earlier. To do that, right effort must be in place. Nevertheless, without mindfulness, we may not know where and when to make an effort. It comes down to mindfulness, once again.

On the other hands, "*Mettā* meditation" as in mindfulness meditation, 'breathing' does not merely mean to breath (Phra Khammai, 2000: 12-13), "is not just chanting a formula either," Phra Khammai further clarifies: "There are many formulas translated directly from the Pali texts or based on one like 'May I be happy,' which is a well-known formula.[76] It is not enough just to memorize the formula or stanza and recite it like a mantra. It does not work that way. It requires mindfulness and reflection on the issues

[76] For the monastic community, a formula in Pali like *'Aham avero homi, avyapajjo homi, anigho homi, sukhi attanam pariharami,'* etc. is most often used. One must know the meaning and use reflective energy while chanting it.

such as happiness and suffering, as well as the person who is the meditation object (Phra Khammai, 1999: 13)."

Phra Khammai assures us that "Developing *mettā* is, in fact, instrumental in overcoming frustration within oneself. This gradual reduction of frustration is the first benefit that one reaps from *mettā* meditation." As one becomes cheerful and hopeful, he is well liked and loved by many. Aversion, irritation, agitation, and anger will be greatly reduced as the practice goes forward. An arrogant attitude that tends to belittle others will also vanish. In the absence of *mettā*'s aura, contempt and an 'I don't care' type of attitude can sour all the good will. Our daily life is often disturbing, disappointing and complicated. If your *mettā* practice is sufficiently advanced, you will seek a contented, simple and unconfused life (Phra Khammai, 1999: 13)."

In order to have access to *mettā* practices correctly, Phra Khammai instructs us: "We need to be introspective to find out whether or not we have any of these qualities within us. To be able to do this, we need to practice Vipassanā meditation. If through this meditation practice, we discover that we lack a certain quality, we should then apply correct effort. We should reflect on the individual words of the *Mettā-sutta* and assess ourselves on whether we possess those qualities. This is another way of practicing *mettā*." (Phra Khammai, 1999: 13-14).

4.2.2 *Karuṇā* and *muditā*

It is very important to embrace *karuṇā* (compassion) and *muditā* (sympathetic joy) right from the beginning. In *mettā* meditation practice, there should be a meditation object in order to be able to understand things objectively. Phra Khammai recommends that the first object is none other than oneself. The second object is people who are around us.

Symbolically, he explains the concept of *karuṇā* with the direction of the east, which is the direction of wisdom and having compassion as one lets things go. Here things are like those of hatred, unpleasant and ill thoughts, to let them go by forgiving, while the west begs for an 'agitated mind.' In another perspective, this pair is like our right and left hands. They both work together to get the job done. The four sublime *Dhamma mettā* works are like a pyramid with four slopes—they support each other.

The idea of sharing is to become a selfless person. Looking at painful things in oneself or suffering alone, not being satisfied with oneself is called '*atta*' in Pali. In other words, this means a selfish person. Again, *mettā* does not exist independently, but within the *karuṇā* and *muditā*.

A person may be chosen as an object of *mettā* meditation. All the objects can be mainly put into two categories or two senses: *dukkhita*, one that is suffering, a sense of negativity, and *sukhita*, the other that is happy or successful, a sense of positivity. For an example, Phra Khammai would choose his own mother as the object of meditation using *mettā*. "If she is suffering from a headache, I wish for her to be free from suffering, which is the headache. To have this goodwill requires *mettā* (loving-kindness) as its foundation. As I appreciate her suffering, compassion is born. This is because she is a suffering object," Phra Khammai explains.

"When she is happy," he continues, "I wish her happiness sustained with *mettā*. As I treasure her happiness, joy comes into existence. The same object, my mother, is giving rise to both compassion and joy. This is due to the fact that I set out with *mettā* practice to have a dimension that is wide enough to embrace and give rise to both compassion and joy. The issue of the headache is relevant to develop attentiveness. It is an issue, which is in my mind at the present."

He continues the explanation, "When she is anxious, I would say 'May you be free from anxiety and may you be happy.' My good wish for her to be free from anxiety is a compassionate feeling, which originates from *mettā*, while the latter, a wish for her happiness, is necessarily a joyous one, also firmly established in *mettā*. *Mettā* sets out, therefore, to develop *karuṇā* and *muditā*."

In *mettā* meditation, both feelings of being compassionate and joyous come into play. In the news, we see people who suffer from malnutrition and natural disasters such as earthquakes, storms, or tsunamis, or human created disasters such as war, and people starving from hunger. During such observations, Phra Khammai says, "we are observing a suffering object [for *karuṇā* and *mettā* meditations]. We immediately develop *karuṇā* if *mettā* is already inherent within us. A person practicing *mettā* meditation on a suffering

object develops compassion." In other words, *mettā* is transformed into compassion. "When we hear that a certain group of people is being oppressed, you develop compassion if *mettā* has already been developed. Of course, without mindfulness, this *mettā* could lead to anger over the oppressor, and you may react accordingly. Here you can see the importance of mindfulness that will help calm the anger."

As I understand from Phra Khammai's talk, the following story may include a simile of what *muditā* is about. When we hear of someone's success in a recent thesis defense, we feel happy. In this instance, the feeling developed is called *muditā*, a joyous feeling. We are happy to see someone doing well. In fact, it is usually quite easy to feel compassionate because suffering objects are by nature very moving. It is very powerful. It is now coincident with the civil war in Myanmar, a new attack launched by the Burma army in central Shan State since mid-October 2015 after the signing of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The government reasons its actions justified because the Shan State armed group refused to sign the agreement. The government troops launched the attacks not only on the Shan rebels, but also on villages and a temple in Monghsu that was supportive of them. As a result, two young novices, an elderly woman, and some villagers were seriously injured (Francis, 2015). Over three thousand people were displaced. This time, unlike any other time in the past, through social media networks people were alert and helpful, and donations began flooding in from many different organizations, including among Shan communities in Thailand. Looking through the images made available in social media, people were quite moved and found ways and means to get their donations to the affected people.

But in a normal time, people outside of a war zone would not mind if they were well or suffering. There is not much *muditā* at such a time. The point here is that it is more difficult to rejoice in someone else's achievements.

Moreover, Phra Khammai takes an example of Karl Marx's communism in the context of *karuṇā* and *muditā*. He compares communism to *karuṇā*, which is a good thing, but he said the leaders of communist countries have failed to apply *muditā* to be joyful when their citizens became distressed by the confiscation of their wealth. In his own words, "Communism developed as a response to the oppression of the working class. From the

Buddhist philosophical viewpoint, this oppression and poverty led to feelings of *karuṇā,* which in turn led to the formation of a system to dispel that oppression and exploitation. Communism was clearly built on compassion. However, the people who followed communism did not feel happy when they saw rich people. They, especially the communist leaders, had no joyous feelings. If they had feelings of *muditā,* they might not have nationalized or confiscated businesses that had been justly acquired, and thus they might have prevented the present economic and political collapse in Eastern Europe. Those leaders might even have survived until now" (Phra Khammai, 1999). Therefore, while developing *mettā,* he said: "We should assess ourselves to see whether we contain the necessary fundamentals that also give rise to both compassion and joy."

4.2.3 The role of *sati* (mindfulness)

The importance and role of mindfulness in *mettā* practice has been discussed earlier. People are moved when one sees a suffering object. Phra Khammai describes the nature of how people suffer/happy from countering with unfavorable/favorable objects in life: "You are happy to see someone doing well. You become joyous because of *muditā*. Emotionally, these two, compassion (*karuṇā*) and joy (*muditā*) are opposite. Consequently, when we encounter both emotions at different times, we can be put off balance emotionally. We may become more disposed towards *karuṇā* and become very sad. Alternatively, we may become inclined towards *muditā* and be pushed towards greed *(lobha)* or pride *(mana).* We need something to balance these two diametrically opposite emotions, and it is *sati* (mindfulness), which brings some balance. This is why we need to practice *mettā* along with Vipassanā meditation."

"Having reached this stage, mindfulness helps develop concentration (*samadhi*). Such a development is vital because without the presence of strong concentration, the mind can be off balance," warns Phra Khammai (1999: 16). In plain language, *upekkhā*, the last component of *mettā,* cannot be cultivated unless concentration is developed. However, concentration alone, without *mettā*, *karuṇā,* or *muditā,* does not bring about *upekkhā*. In the *Abhidhamma* teaching, as well as in the *jhana* factors, a very advanced concentration is associated with *upekkhā* and is called one-pointedness, or *ekaggatā* in Pali. One-pointedness, an aspect of concentration, helps the mind to balance itself.

Phra Khammai continues, “When mindfulness is present, our mind is kept in balance. When we meet a person who is suffering, we can help him without being overwhelmed by sorrow. We are able to keep ourselves under control. When we meet a happy person also, we can feel happy as well without becoming greedy or craving. People often feel jealous in such circumstances. If we can feel suffering without anger and the joy without jealousy, then this is what is known as *upekkhā*, equanimity.” (Phra Khammai, 1999: 16). This understanding is quite different from the Burmese and Thai word *upekkhā*, which they take to mean ‘to ignore.’ “An ignoring attitude cannot become an offshoot of caring *mettā*. The Pali’s *upekkhā* is, as discussed earlier, related to *samadhi* (concentration) and is developed with it. A person lacking in *samādhi* but who claims to be practicing *upekkhā* is probably just trying to ignore things,” said Phra Khammai (1999: 25).

The importance of *upekkhā*, and why we need to have a balanced mind, is explained in a lengthy sermon by Phra Khammai in Shan and Burmese. “The need to have this balance, in brief, is because of the opposition to one another of the two emotions: *karuṇā* and *muditā*. In the learning stage, mindfulness balances *karuṇā* and *muditā*, and thereby helps develop *upekkhā*, while in the reflective stage, the awareness of cause and effect contributes to *upekkhā* practice,” Phra Khammai explains.

“Furthermore, the learning stage is about developing and then using mindfulness or *sati* to grow *upekkhā*. It has to be said that the first thing we have to do to balance between two opposing emotions *karuṇā* and *muditā* is to use mindfulness/*sati* to create and maintain a balance. By becoming aware of the enemies of both *karuṇā* and *muditā* through ‘bare attention’ and dealing with them non-judgmentally, some kind of stability is created. In a more developed stage, which I call here the reflective stage, mindfulness will have already built up some form of understanding. The most relevant understanding here is that of *dukkha* and its causes; this may also be called wisdom. But here I present it as awareness of cause and effect. In simple words, one is emotionally stable at the learning stage by relying on the sustained presence of awareness, whereas in the reflective stage, one becomes emotionally secure because of the understanding of life as a whole in the context of cause and effect. It is a case of awareness being strengthened by understanding. Because of the two inseparable qualities, non-judgmental awareness and

wisdom, that an enlightened being like an *arahant* can feel the pain and joy of others appropriately while at the same time being fully conscious of suffering and the causes of suffering. Usually, when non-enlightened people feel *muditā*, they do not necessarily think of *dukkha*, unlike the Buddha. So, the reflective stage is certainly a more advanced progress." This is a brief explanation of what *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā* and *upekkhā* are, as given by Phra Khammai. And they are together known in Pali as '*Brahmavihāra*,' literally meaning 'the Brahma Abodes.' This concept is also widely applied in meditation practices among Mahayanists and Tibetan alike. Thich Nhat Hanh, the Zen master based in France, applies the term *Brahmavihāra* into English as the 'Four Immeasurable Minds,' while many others use the 'Four Sublime Stages of Mind.'

4.2.4 *Mettā* meditation techniques

Specified and unspecified objects: Phra Khammai defines meditation objects as either specified or unspecified, which a must to be chosen. According to him, a specified object could be a specific person whom one specifies by name or appearance. One is required to visualize the person in mind when directing *mettā* towards that person and wishing him or her good health and happiness.

Without particularizing any person, if we just say 'May all beings in the east or in the whole world be well and happy,' then this is an unspecified *mettā* object. This way of propagating *mettā* to an unspecified object is only possible and effective if done by a person who has already developed and attained a very powerful degree of *mettā* with a specified object. Otherwise, it will be ineffective.

Identifying negative and positive conditions: Depending on situation, time, and space, Phra Khammai would adapt examples taken from the current situation, such as something that is currently happening. For instance, he would advise followers to think of two negative conditions that one does not wish to have, and two positive conditions or things that one wishes to have. In other words, think of desirable and undesirable things in one's life. "We will start our practice based on these settings," then the practice of meditation is begun. And very often, he would give an example of his own experiences. For instance, over 10 years ago, he suffered from a gastric ulcer, which woke him up in the middle of

the night with pain. Very often he suffered from a lack of sleep. Sometimes when he accepted lunch invitations, if the food offered was very spicy, he would end up simply eating rice and yoghurt. He has encountered these difficulties for several years. He has said, *mettā* meditation helped him to overcome the situation in the course of time, as he became mindful of these difficulties and with a feeling of *mettā* for himself. "My first wish is, 'May I get rid of the gastric ulcer.' Secondly, my wish is to be free from bad company, to be far away from them, and not to have to meet them. I will simply meditate, 'May I be free from bad company.' These are the two most obvious wishes for me as far as negative situations are concerned," explains Phra Khammai.

The two positives are to be able to meditate and to study successfully, as they are the most important and burning issues. To incorporate them into *mettā* practice, Phra Khammai categorically defines the following three steps, which are helpful as he states:

Step One

First, choose oneself as the meditation object. Say to oneself in one's mind, 'May I be free from gastric ulcers. May I be free from bad company. May I be able to meditate more and successfully, and may I be advancing as I wish with my research study.' This is repeated two to five times.

Step Two

Next I direct my mind to another person, for example, to my mother, visualizing her and wishing thus, 'May she be free from gastric ulcers. May she be free from bad company. May she be able to meditate successfully. May she be advancing in her *Dhamma* study.'

Actually, it should be a relevant issue for her. I may say, 'May she be well and happy, may she be free from anxiety and worry.' Good health and happiness are positive things I want her to enjoy. Anxiety and worry are things undesirable, and I do not want her to have them. We need to choose two negative and two positive issues, and cultivate *mettā* first for ourselves and then for a specific person.

By this practice, we develop *sati* (mindfulness) of our feelings of well-being, our desire to be free from harm and suffering, and this then leads to the development of *mettā* for ourselves. From then on, we can extend the same *mettā*, first to our parents if they are still alive, second to our existing family members, and then to close friends. We direct our *mettā* to them individually, one by one.

Step Three

We next have to choose a neutral person. He or she may be someone from work or someone one encounters in society. This person has to be known to you but one towards whom you have not formed any like or dislike. He or she is entirely neutral. We then direct our *mettā* to that person in the same way as we did before (Phra Khammai, 2000: 18-19).

Range and spectrum of *mettā*: While developing the first level *mettā* meditation, it is important to bear in mind who are the people who should be inclusive in the range of our *mettā*, and who are not yet. Phra Khammai suggests, "One should forget the people he/she has been in conflict with or had arguments with for the time being. Only when one has made some good progress in our *mettā* meditation should we include them. Some say that they have just gritted their teeth and cultivated *mettā* for people they have had a fight with. I cannot imagine what type of *mettā* is being directed to them. This is just not possible. The border between your acquaintances and the neutral person has to be eliminated first before you can effectively cultivate *mettā* towards your enemy. We do not start with the opposite sex either, as this can arouse lust. Nor do we begin with those who have died, for this can stir up sorrow."

Pīti is a Pali term for delight, joy, pleasure, and happiness. First of all, one is required to recall about oneself whether he/she has done a good thing in the recent past that one can appreciate. "Try to find out what kind of *pīti* one could have had in the past." Pīti means an appreciation, appreciation for oneself; that is also what the Buddha himself has aimed for and became a 'Buddha' with such that he could appreciate himself (*Buddhatthacariya*). Then, think about your friend, what he has been good at, in which way you can appreciate it. This is *pīti* for relatives and friends (*Ñātatthacariya*).

Think about the people whom you do not know personally, but who you learned something about what he/she has done or been good at things and you can appreciate with. This is *pīti* for the rest of beings (*Lokatthacariya*). "The aim of Vipassanā meditation is, in brief, to be happy—to be continuously happy," said Phra Khammai (2000: 6).

Based at Oxford, Phra Khammai's teaching of meditation has become popular among foreign people. From the list of meditation retreats that he has conducted, between 1996 and 2000, he has taught meditation classes every Tuesday at the Sri Saddhatissa International Buddhist Centre in London. In 2000, he carried out a ten-week meditation class at Red Bridge Buddhist Cultural Centre, East London. In addition, every year and many times a year since 1998, he has conducted meditation retreats for university students and general interested people in many parts of the UK. For one retreat, a different amount of time is used. It has ranged from one day to ten days—for example, a one-day retreat organized for students of Trinity College, University of Cambridge, in 2004; a five-day retreat on *mettā* at the Samatha Trust Meditation Centre in Wales, UK, in 1998; and nine-day retreat at Hill End Centre, Oxford, in 2012.

Besides organizing meditation retreats in the UK, he has conducted Vipassana retreats in many countries in Europe, such as Poland, Spain, Hungary, and Spain. This is done in cooperation with the Buddhist colleges and association, which are increasingly being set up in Europe with the influence of other popular Buddhist movements such as those led by the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, for example. For example, he conducted a retreat at the Hungarian Vipassana Association in 2008 and at the Dharma Gate Buddhist College in 2013. Both are located in Budapest, Hungary. Outside Europe, he also has conducted retreats at Burmese temples in the USA and Canada.

In Southeast Asia, he has conducted meditation retreats most often in Thailand, the country that he is closely familiar with, as he had stayed for an extended there before he left for Sri Lanka. He has conducted one-week retreats at the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand in Bangkok in 2009 and 2010. Besides Thailand, he has often conducted meditation retreats in Singapore at the branch of the Oxford Buddha Vihara, set up by himself.

4.2.5 Timetable for regular Buddhist practitioners

The following table shows the daily routine, weekly, monthly, and special schedules for OBV at Oxford Center providing meditative experiences and learning Buddhism in a new environment. This public announcement has been made on its official website, oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk (Vihara, 2015).

Table 4.1 Meditation and Buddhist Study schedules at the Oxford Buddha Vihara

Meditation & Buddhist Study

- Chanting and meditation at 7pm every evening
- Meditation and discussion every Friday night
- Classes exploring the Buddha's teaching
- Individual and group residential retreats
- Buddhist activities for children and young people
- Weekend meditation retreat on the second weekend of the month

(Saturday & Sunday at 09:00 - 17:00)

Daily Chanting and Meditation in the Evenings: The OBV website announces everyone is welcome to participate in the daily chanting and meditation, which is from 19.00–20.30. One does not need to book a place in advance. An interested practitioner can just walk in and join the chanting and meditation session with the monks. A few *Dhamma* friends usually come and join the session every day, with the exception of Friday, as there is no formal *Dhamma* talk or teaching scheduled on this day. However, there is always an opportunity to discuss or ask questions about the *Dhamma* with monks or the people who are present. And as usual, the Vihara is very generous to provide for the *Dhamma* service free of charge. The website announces, "… and hot beverages and biscuits are usually provided at the end of the session, again, free of charge."

Friday Evening Meditation and Chanting: "Everybody is welcome, especially beginners, to meditation," announces the OBV website. At the same time, it explains why we need to meditate, explaining: "Chanting and meditation can both calm and bring peace to your mind. Meditation helps to first control your mind and then to understand your

emotions." At the Oxford Buddha Vihara, there is communal chanting, followed by a meditation class every Friday evening. The chanting starts at 7:00 p.m. and is in Pali. The actual chanting session lasts for 30 minutes. Following the Vihara's practice provides one relaxation and comfort. It advises the practitioners: "Please do not be put off by the fact that you do not know how to and what to chant in Pali, as there are chanting books available in the shrine room, in Romanized Pali with English translations beneath each stanza, as well as in Thai and Burmese scripts, for people in their preference native language respectively."[77]

At the Oxford center, the meditation session usually begins at 7:30 p.m., and instructions for beginners are provided by Phra Khammai himself, or an assistant monk. This is mainly conducted in English, but may be in Thai or Burmese as well depending on who is present. Phra Khammai has been conducting such weekly meditation classes in the United Kingdom since 1996, and Venerable Dr. Pannyavamsa, a native of Kengtung, one of the assistant residential monks, has been assisting him since October 2004. Since 2012, Phra Mahasena, a BA graduate from MCU in Bangkok and a master's graduate from Sri Lanka, has been assisting with several duties at OBV.

After about 30–40 minutes of sitting meditation, this is followed by a session of *Dhamma* discussion, during which the attendees may ask questions or discuss matters related to his/her meditation practice. This group discussion allows practitioners to gain clarification about what they have experienced, learn from fellow practitioners' experiences, and get individual guidance and instruction from the monks regarding their meditation process and progress.

Monthly Meditation Retreat: A full two-day Vipassana meditation retreat is conducted usually on the second weekend of every month, unless there is a special ceremony over that weekend. The exact dates for these retreats can be confirmed by ringing the OBV in advance.

The Programme: The retreats start at 9:00 a.m. Saturday and end at 5:00 p.m. Sunday. The daily timetable consists of a short introduction to meditation, followed by sitting and

[77] Ibid.

walking meditation sessions, done alternatively. Each session may be from 40-45 minutes with a 15-20 minute break in between.

The daily meditation begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 5:00 p.m., with a break for lunch from 11:00-12:00 noon. Meditation sessions resume at 1:00 p.m. with a session of Relaxation Meditation lasting 40 minutes, and then resumes the cycle of sitting and walking meditation as usual until 5:00 p.m. On Saturdays, there is an evening chanting and meditation session from 7:00-8:30 p.m. For resident practitioners, breakfast is at 6:00 a.m., and practitioners are free to join in the morning chanting and meditation from 8:30-9:00 a.m.

Fees, Food, and Accommodation: The Centre does not charge anyone who attends the meditation retreats or Buddhist study courses, either in the short- or long-term. The notice says, "…You do not need to bring food for yourself, unless you wish to. The Vihara will provide it for you. If you are coming from afar and need accommodation at the Vihara, you will need to book at least two weeks in advance as sleeping space is limited. Again, there is no charge for the accommodation. But voluntary donations to the Vihara are most welcome." The provisions of free food and accommodation for the visitors, meditation participants, and Buddhist learners come from the funds that are drawn from various devotees on a monthly bank standing order and the committees and memberships of the Vihara.

Special instructions, however, are made public for resident-meditators and non-resident-meditators alike. For instance: "If possible, please bring your own bed-linens (bed sheet, pillow case and duvet cover – all singles). However, in exceptional circumstances these can be requested from the Vihara, but we would appreciate very much if they are washed, dried, and ironed before you leave. Mattresses, pillows, duvets, and sleeping bags are provided by the Vihara." In addition, the Vihara also specifies for non-residents: "If you plan to join the retreat without staying overnight at the Vihara, please let us know at least two days in advance so that arrangements for meals can be made." And then, for the resident meditators: "If you are planning to stay at the Vihara throughout the period of the retreat, you may wish to come to the Vihara on Friday afternoon. Please let us know

when you book your accommodation at the Vihara. Please let us know when you will be leaving as well."

Special Meditation Retreat: The official Vihara website announces that special meditation retreats are conducted a few times a year for serious and advanced practitioners. This is usually arranged by special request. The duration may be for a week or 10 days. Due to limitation of space and the presence of many distractions, especially at weekends at the Vihara, a hall is hired at a suitable distance from the Vihara to run the meditation retreat. For such retreats, there is usually a charge to cover the cost of hiring the hall and meals. The Vihara also makes announcements for these retreats sent via email to devotees who are on the OBV's mailing list.

Besides Buddhist teachings and meditation practices, Phra Khammai also focuses on working with the people and engaging with social activities. Of the many *Dhamma* talks he has delivered in recent years are a type generating 'positive thinking' with an attitude toward looking at things positively. In other words, he is best described as a pragmatist, for his approach is to think of others positively (Nang Ei Ei Zar & Nang Ing Kham, 2014). For instance, he would not view a person in any situation as the culprit of wrong-doing. He would first attempt to understand the person from a positive point of view.

His doctoral thesis is an argument between idealists and pragmatists over monastic education both in Thailand and Burma, and how its future would shape the monastic institutions. As I understand it, he appeals for a pragmatist to shape the monastic educations and together with institutions as a whole. It is clear that he is ready to modernize Buddhist education to include some secular subjects, such as mathematics and English, in its curriculum. This means that he uses the Buddhist concept of cariya, meaning practice or striving. Cariya has three dimensions: 1) Lokatthacariya, striving for the worldly benefits; 2) Ñātatthacariya, striving for the family, relatives and nations; and 3) Buddhatthacariya, striving towards attainment of Buddhahood. Phra Khammai explains these three dimensions of cariya do not necessarily work in sequence, but should be practiced at the same time. This passage occurs in the *Ratana-sutta* of *Khuddaka-nikāya*. This *sutta* is one of the most popular for chanting after *Mangala-sutta* and Karaniya-mettāsutta among the Theravadin Buddhists. The Buddha himself had practiced

the triple duties before he actually became fully enlightened and became a Buddha. “I myself did not wait for my Ph.D graduation to help others. Long before that, I already began to help as many young monks as possible to come to Sri Lanka for their studies,” said Phra Khammai.[78]

4.3 Academic works and writings

As shown in his résumé, which is attached in the appendix of this thesis, Phra Khammai has been active in teaching, supervising graduate students, writing, and engaging in many Buddhist-related forums. For his teaching experiences during 1985–1986, Phra Khammai taught Pali and *Abhidhamma* at Sasana Mandaing Pali University, in Pegu, Myanmar. During 1992–1996, he taught *Majjhima-nikaya* and *Vinaya-pitaka* to students in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Later, during 2007–2009, he taught Buddhism and research methodology at many universities, such as University of Oxford in the UK, Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in Bangkok, Thailand, and Nalanda Mahavihar (Deemed University), in Bihar, India. Also back in Myanmar, he became a professor of the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University in Yangon in 2006 and has been an examiner for most of the Ph.D theses of students there. With the ITBMU, he organizes annually an international conference on Buddhist meditation and psychology.

After his Doctor of Philosophy graduation from St. Anne’s College, University of Oxford, UK, in 2004, Phra Khammai has supervised postgraduate students who study Buddhist/religious studies at various universities, for example, the Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies of the University of Kelaniya and Peradeniya University, Sri Lanka; Somaiya Centre of Buddhist Studies, Mumbai University, India; College of Religious Studies, Mahidol University and Mahachulalongkorn University, Thailand. He has also sat in as an external examiner for numerous thesis examinations at the University of London, UK, and Mahamakut Buddhist University, Thailand. Besides, he is also a member of the editorial committee for the Buddhist Studies Review of the United Kingdom Association of Buddhist Studies. Since 2008, he has been an editor for the *Journal of the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities* and *Journal of the*

[78] Informant, personal contact, September 2015.

International Association of Buddhist Universities, which belong to Thailand's Mahamakut Buddhist University and Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University, respectively. His writings, mostly in English, focus on Buddhist principles such as *Brahmavihāra*, meditation, monastic education, and Buddhist history, including relations between the state and the *Sangha*, especially in Myanmar and Thailand. A possible missing topic is identified by Professor Richard Gombrich in his "An Appreciation…" He expresses regret at not seeing Phra Khammai's academic work on his authoritative subjects, such as Buddhist monastic life in Myanmar, Thailand, or Britain, yet published (Gombrich, 2014: 60). Nevertheless, the titles published include some of his best-known English writings on Theravada meditation practices. I believe they are well reflect Phra Khammai's teaching on Buddhism in action (see full references in his résumé in the Appendix A: 222). His published works include:

The Dhamma *Made Easy* (1999) is the first-ever *Made Easy* title in the series, and the first book in English published by Phra Khammai. A meaningful passage of the book explains: "It is important that we understand about what we are doing. To be aware of something we are undertaking is the Buddhist way of doing things, which is technically called 'Right Understanding.' There is more chance for Right Understanding when 'Right Mindfulness' is present." The book contains a collections of his talks given in Britain from July 1996 to November 1997. They are not meant to be academic papers, but rather talks or 'discussions' compiled through the 15 months of his *Dhammadūta* journey, collected to make the *Dhamma* easy and accessible for many readers. He encourages the people to use their wisdom to understand the various Buddhist practices that they encounter.

Blessings…You Can D.I.Y.: The Mangala-sutta *and its Reflection on Life, Education, Family, Social Matters, Ethics, and Mind Training* (2012). This title explores the principles of the Buddha's teachings on self-reliance. Phra Khammai explains that the Buddha taught that one has to depend on oneself to create good in one's life and the opportunities it presents. Regarding the idea of blessings from a third party, Phra Khammai explains that this is ruled out in Buddhism. This underlines a difference in the concept of blessings in Buddhism and other beliefs. It reveals the Buddha's main point

in the *Mangala-sutta* is that blessings come form our own efforts, and those efforts have many dimensions: educational, social, economic, psychological, and spiritual. This title also highlights the different types of efforts one should make in order to be blessed. These range from maintaining strong friendships, staying in favourable locations, achieving good education, improving personality, engaging in philosophy, and attempting to attain liberation from suffering.

Mindfulness Meditation Made Easy (1999). This is second title in the *Made Easy* series on meditation practices designed for people with busy routines. It contains a collection of *Dhamma* talks given by Phra Khammai during a six-day-long retreat held at Birmingham in the UK. The theme of retreat was based on the conventions of Theravada Buddhism. The talks emerged in a syllabus format that covered not only various presentations of mindfulness (*sati*), but also four other kinds of reflective meditation. The author claims to help introduce readers to the practice of meditation with a holistic approach.

Different Aspects of Mindfulness: A Collection of Talks on Mindfulness Meditation (2000). This title is not a part of the *Made Easy* series. This is an indication that an advanced level of Vipassana or mindfulness meditation will be introduced. This level of Vipassana practice focuses on a mental discipline that has non-judgemental awareness (or bare awareness) as its forte. It is the major instrument applied to observe one's experiences, thoughts, and emotions. Awareness and acceptance of the transitory nature of these phenomenon will lead to a discovery of their true nature, and this understanding may ultimately liberate the mind from the cycle of defilements.

"Can a Buddhist be a Wealthy Man?" (2003). In this scholarly article, Phra Khammai challenges the traditional understanding in Buddhism that a true Buddhist should not be concerned with accumulating wealth. In other words, Phra Khammai discusses the Buddhist concept of economics in relation to wealth. This paper argues that wealth is far from being evil, and on the contrary should be regarded as essential for a peaceful society, in which encouraging environments exist for one to make steady progress on the spiritual path. If anything, poverty should be condemned. The Buddha says the greatest illness is hunger. It has affected the greatest number of people on earth and for as long as human society has existed. The Buddha himself praised righteuous earning and hard work,

including wealthy persons, in his time. As an example, Phra Khammai details the story of millionaire Anathapindika Visakha, a wealthy and generous Buddhist devotee who donated a monastery to the Buddha and the *Sangha*.

"Idealism and Pragmatism: A Dilemma in the Current Monastic Education Systems of Burma and Thailand" (2007). This scholarly article is the gist of the author's doctoral thesis, completed in 2004. The article highlights the situation of Buddhist monastic education in Burma and Thailand since the 1890s. Monastic education in both countries resisted the introduction of secular subjects. These subjects ranged from astrology, medicine, healing, carpentry, the skills of the blacksmith and goldsmith, and martial arts (Phra Khammai, 2007: 13). As to the lack of consensus among monastic scholars on the definition of the objectives of monastic education, the argument has centered on idealism versus pragmatism. The conservatives hold idealism as their value, while the reformists hold pragmatism. However, on a practical level, the life of a *Bhikkhu* will be interwoven with those around him. Those who join the order may not all have had liberation from suffering as their immediate aspiration. If the number of such worldly and aspiring *Bhikkhus* increased, it could cause an institutional problem, which would reflect the reality of the society in which the ideal *Bhikkhu* lives (Phra Khammai, 2007: 16).

4.4 Summary

This chapter has focused on Phra Khammai's teachings and practices, representative of the two primary aspects of his life: being a spiritual teacher as well as a practitioner on the one hand, and being an academic who writes and teaches at a variety of institutions on the other. This study has revealed that his spiritual teachings and practice are in-line with the ideology of *Brahmavihara*, the four sublime teachings of Buddhist concepts commonly found not only in Theravada approaches, but also in other traditions, such as Tibetan and Mahayana. However, it is Theravada that has given more attention to this when it comes to Buddhist practices. The Dalai Lama's compassion in action is based on one of the components of *Brahmavihara*. Likewise, Thich Nhat Hanh, has invented a new approach to Buddhism that he calls 'engaged Buddhism' in which he outlines fourteen principles. Both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh have experienced political turmoil and revolution, war, chaos, and insecurity in their own countries. They have both come

up with new approaches to Buddhism to deal with these human-created problems. In a very similar vein, Phra Khammai, during the 1980s, experienced civil war in his homeland Shan State. Furthermore, the crisis of Shan cultural identities and the weakening of Shan monastic education have contributed to his increasing awareness of, and concerns about, the state's ideology and hegemony.

Of his many writings in Shan, Burmese, and English, I selectively presented some of Phra Khammai's key important topics relevant to Buddhism in action in this chapter. Among them, "Can a Buddhist be a Wealthy Man?" is remarkable in that it can be understood in line with the concept of 'Buddhist economics' from P.A. Payutto's *Middle Way* (1994: 24) and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's theory of 'Dhammic socialism' (Santikaro, 1996: 167), as well as work by E. F. Schumacher (2010: 53). All of these scholars based their arguments on the Buddhist concept of the 'middle way'. Phra Khammai's vision, although he does not explicitly discuss Buddhist economics, is relevant and on par with the same platform with others. Being a Theravada Buddhist scholar and a *Dhammāduta* missionary monk, his focus is more on universal doctrines manifested through Buddhist academia and education.