



*Meditation on*  
LOVING-KINDNESS  
*and other sublime states*

Venerable Sujiva

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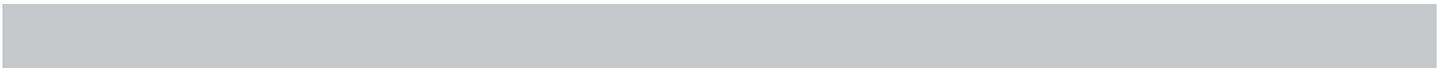
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## LET THE HEART SPEAK

**S**TEPHAN had wanted me to rewrite a book on loving-kindness many years ago. It is only now that I have started working on it, and only with his coaxing. There is really no good reason for me to procrastinate except that, there were (I thought) not enough good reasons to do it since there are many other things I would rather do, for instance, meditation.

Besides, I had another excuse... I needed more time to gather more experiences on the topic. After all, what was written in the last book, though concise, are still valid and quite sufficient.

So here I am, in his parent's holiday cottage in the outskirts of a little village of Richerenches, in Provence, France. Sitting under a Platane tree, I started writing down what was in the heart over the past few days, since we arrived from Berne.

The journey from Berne took several hours. On that very afternoon, after having a quick meal (cooked by Jitka), I laid down on the bed, openhearted and ready to receive any messages from the heart to rewrite this book. Then, there arose a light feeling of

flying, followed by images of birds soaring. First, the image was of a white bird with blue-tipped wings, then came the image of an owl. I noted that the owl has been a symbol of the house... the owner obviously has a liking for owls, as it can be seen in paintings, ceramic collections and even a clay owl fitted onto the roof of the house. Apparently, an owl once lived here but had long since vanished... a rare occurrence. I interpreted my visions of the birds as the heart wanting to make its flight to freedom. I had often used the image of a bird-in-flight during the practice of spreading loving-kindness to all directions.

The question is—what is the “heart”? We can immediately associate it with feelings or emotions, but I consider that as somewhat superficial. It has deeper meanings, deep enough to reach the profound meaning of life and existence itself.

Years ago, I came across an interesting book about some advice a lady gave to her granddaughter. Her last advice, also the title of her book, was: “Follow your heart”. That advice left an impact on me. I had noticed for some time already, how often I had gotten into real “hot soup” when I chose to follow the rational mind and ignored the “heart”. Therefore, to make important decisions, I would now consult the “heart”—which, to me is the intuition, a knowledge from within—It is close to feelings, but it carries with it clarity and is not “blind”.

The heart has to have its place, and be heard. We have ignored it much too often, especially with rational minded people who prefer to avoid the “deeper waters”. After some time, the toll accumulates and causes major problems to health and sanity. The problems are often seen in people who came to meditate with me. They complained of cramps and pains in the head, heart and

stomach. With mindfulness, it does not take long to associate the pain to stress... or feelings. In metta meditation, they often discover that the feelings which arise in their hearts are painful, not the joy they anticipated.

Feelings of pain and joy are closely connected to the “heart”. You cannot choose to experience one without the other. To be really happy, we need to understand all of them. It is very much the same with Vipassana-mindfulness practice as it is with metta. Give it your ears and open your heart. To truly understand where the heart is, one must not let the rational mind dictate. Instead, put the rational mind aside and let that subtle awareness within, which is intuition, function. This intuition, so alike feelings, so much together with it then awakens the heart to an inner core of conditions that has the answer to what we want. This intuition has its importance; it should not be mistaken as something wild to be tamed.

An old lady, who had once attended a retreat under my teacher came back and reported to me that the master gave her an insight into life. He told her that, without self-love, all else is useless.

Self-love? This seems to be difficult for people in the West, but in the Eastern countries it is taken for granted. What is self-love, really? Here, I have found the answer that connects the two meditations (Vipassana and Metta)—together they form the seed and fulfillment of spiritual life. It is the “heart” that connects these two.

Now I take the heart to be the true meaning of life and existence itself. Intuition is the inner eye for one to see beyond reasoning. They stem from the reality of existence, always bearing the questions of happiness and suffering—which I now realize are its

cries and songs—its voice. Yes, I daresay it traces its roots to “The Absolute” itself—to the heart of all things. It’s the ignorance of it that a sense of incompleteness arises, which in turn craves and grasps blindly, giving in to more unhappiness. Given the awareness, it surges in the noble search and fly to freedom. When it finds its true home, it finds true peace and rests in it forever. You may then say it becomes the source of everlasting happiness for the world.

I got up from my bed and started to pen down these thoughts.

These 10 days or so that I am here would be a period when the heart writes its story—at least on my past experiences on the development of loving-kindness. It will follow her (the heart) rhythms and whims. So in a way—this is a true holiday. And oh yes, you—the rational mind—please keep out of the way. Let the heart speak.

Are you still wondering what the heart means? Go take a look at the mirror. You will see its reflection.





## Meditation— Time and Place

**I**N a metaphorical sense, meditation is bringing the heart home. There are many other ways of saying it, such as, “knowing thyself”. Such quotes reach the core of it. If one prefers to be technical, one may define it as a process of conditioning that brings about realization of the absolute Truth, which is perfect peace. Within this process itself, there are many other processes.

One may have heard of many types of meditation, varied in their techniques and objects, but if they are to be genuine, they should at least be aimed at bringing about peace. They are broadly categorized into two forms:

- a* Tranquility meditation—which involves mainly, the development of concentration that reaches to levels of absorptions or near absorption.
- b* Insight meditation—which develops mindfulness to realize the truth of the three universal characteristics—impermanence, suffering and non-self—and thus, liberation.

All Buddhist meditation should be aimed at bringing about the absolute peace. Although the two types of meditation are distinct

practices by themselves, they can be linked and integrated. Finally, of course, it will have to be insight that brings about liberation.

The development of loving-kindness falls under the first category—tranquility meditation. But you will see that it can be practised and linked closely to Vipassana. Just as partners may play different roles, equal at times, at other times not, similarly loving-kindness will prove to be an excellent partner to Vipassana in whichever part it plays. To me, the practice of loving-kindness has become interwoven with Vipassana for within the “hearts” of everyone I know, are the same... Truth.

So, when we speak of metta meditation as tranquility exercise, we are dealing with deeper levels of concentration. Generally, we do not include our normal daily activities, but we should do so, as the mental states we have then provide the basic groundwork for developed states. Besides, as one will see later, concentration is often misunderstood and it can arise even in the most unexpected situations. Much practice adds weight to it.

But first, there are some basic conditions that cannot be ignored.

*a* MORALITY

Morality is the purity of mind concerning physical and verbal actions. In a positive aspect, it is the restraint from unwholesomeness. Often, it refers to the precepts that one follows, such as the five precepts of refraining from killing, stealing, having sexual misconduct, lying and indulging in intoxicants.

Our actions accumulate in our minds and will play up in time. If they are wholesome, they will have a potent force that is conducive to meditation. Therefore, morality forms

a harmonious and pure mental base from which the higher mind states grow.

However, do not worry if your behavior is not perfect, since behaviors are seldom perfect anyway. It is something we work at as we live on. It is enough to be sincere and determined in our efforts. Having attended meditation retreats, many have given up bad habits. Even regular daily practice have proven beneficial in this regard.

*b* RIGHT VIEWS

Right view is clear vision, the ability to distinguish between the real and the false, thus enabling one to make correct judgments and decisions along the path. It leads us to tread in the right direction and the definition of “right” is based on reality.

Traditionally, right view includes right view of action (*kamma*), distinguishing wholesomeness and unwholesomeness and their resultants. This right view forms the basis and directs us away from confusion, delusion and eventual suffering.

Next, comes right view of the four truths—suffering, its cause, cessation (of suffering) and the way (of practice) to the cessation. This right view surfaces perfectly upon realization but prior to that, it is based on concepts upon which we build experiences.

To begin with, the least we can do is to be rid of wrong views. Wrong views are strong clinging to beliefs that contradict reality—such as wrongly believing that there are no wholesome and unwholesome actions and their results; or wrongly believing there is no suffering in this world.

Such vehement denials are a sign of madness. What we must at least have is a clear and open mind to search and learn. Otherwise, wrong views and ideas will not only limit our growth but will mislead us to some pitiful state. Reading relevant literature and meeting with wise people will help in this aspect of securing right view.

*c* TIME

Meditation as we have seen, is a way of living... living mindfully, peacefully, moving in the direction of growth and understanding and, moving in the direction of spiritual goals. Therefore, we should be in this state, if not all the time, then at least as often as we can remember to do so. Not being in peace also means we are “lost”. Meditation can be categorized into:

*i* Intensive

*ii* Relaxed

There are no rigid rules as to how intensive or relaxed one can be, as long as the purity of mind is present. But intensive meditation generally means more effort is being put in and therefore, we can expect concentration levels to rise to higher peaks for longer spells. Often, these are periods when we can gain greater progress within a shorter time and the results are often more dramatic. One should spend more time doing this intensive manner of practice. The more relaxed pace however, can be practised in our daily lives and because of the longer period, progress is also possible if we are regular and determined. At such periods, mornings generally yield better concentration after a good night’s rest. Metta done is also more of the applied form.

*d* SUITABLE PLACE

For the development of tranquility, understandably, one should seek for quiet and comfortable surroundings, safe, with plenty of fresh air and nature. The house should provide for suitable food, ample shelter, space and ventilation. Simplicity calms one's mind better than elaborate complexities. Cleanliness also helps. There should not be too much work and fun around, to ensure maximum use of time for practice.

As such, this explains why many meditators resort to meditation centers and it is usually not difficult to find such a place if you have the means. When you have found the place, the next step is to find a suitable sitting spot. You will find some spots irresistible once you have seen it. Make it as appealing as possible. Don't forget to bring all buffers such as seating mats or stools if you find them necessary.

For beginners, the more important consideration will be the presence of a competent guide or suitable companionship at the place. Such guides would have to be compassionate, understanding and also diligent in their own practice.

*e* POSTURES

Meditation can and should be done in any posture, as it is a state of the mind. The seated posture however, is very suited to concentration for it remains still, relaxed, yet alert. However, I would insist on comfort, as from comfort comes relaxation and from relaxation, tranquility and concentration. Sit with legs crossed and spine straight (but not rigid). Where knees are stiff, cushions or low stools may

be used to raise the buttocks. This will help to keep the spine erect whilst preventing the onset of early pain. Failing which, one may resort to sitting on chairs but avoid leaning your back against anything, as it tends to encourage sloth. In tranquility meditation, one is usually encouraged to sit for long periods and so be prepared!

One cannot sit all the time and so, sitting is alternated with walking. Walking serves several purposes such as an exercise for health, balancing of faculties, as in the case of arousing energy or relaxation. It also helps to accustom one to be in metta concentration even while moving about. One may vary one's pace and speed to suit the state of mind or even stand still when concentration deepens.

Lying down is generally not encouraged as it has high tendency to encourage sloth. Too much lying down is also bad for health. The exception is when energy is excessively high—this posture is then helpful for them, even sleeping it off is recommended.





## What is Love?

**T**he Pali word *metta bhavana* can be translated as “loving-kindness meditation”. Some prefer to use the word “cultivation” for *bhavana* although it usually means “the practice of meditation”. The word “Loving-kindness” sounds a mouthful but it serves to give the right idea. Technically, it refers to the state of the mind that wishes for happiness and well-being to the object (a being).

I have another idea, which is to render “metta” as “falling in love”. To have concentration in Metta is to “fall deeply in love”. But this can be dangerous and so it is better to clarify what kind of love—it is selfless, spiritual love, not that which is carnal craving and attachment. The similarity of it with metta is that both are a matter of the “heart”. As a friend said—it is like falling in love except that it is peaceful.

How does one distinguish—a simple answer would be the presence of clear awareness or mindfulness.

## WHERE IS LOVE?

I can still remember a song to this title, sung by a little lost boy (named “Oliver”) in a movie. Like many, we look outside of ourselves for an ideal partner or companion to love and often find that it is not easy. One such person, after having meditated, realized that it comes from one’s heart. It is part of the mental properties and it can be cultivated. It gave him much relief and joy. When one can see and develop this, it will not be difficult to have love. To any being who comes within your mind field, there will be true and lasting love. Sure, you may say it is one-sided love, but then in many cases, it is a matter of time that it will be responded to, even if we do not ask for it.

## MINDFULNESS

“Clear awareness” is how I would prefer to define this state of mind, at least to a beginner in meditation. It refers to a Pali word “Sati” often translated as mindfulness. Like any state of mind, it takes on a different shade at different situations. But at the first level, it is a wholesome or pure state and as such, the awareness is endowed with the qualities of clarity (as opposed to dullness and confusion), peacefulness (as opposed to agitation and anxiety) and softness (as opposed to rigidity and aggressiveness). It is also within our willpower to produce whatever state of mind we wish to have. If we see how beneficial this mindfulness is, we will arouse more of it and at the same time learn more about it.

This clear awareness is developed in Vipassana meditation in a unique form, free from concepts and focuses on present experiences. It then becomes a penetrative observation that develop into realization. Elsewhere in worldly living, it can also

be applied to develop secular skills. In tranquility meditation such as Metta Bhavana, one uses it for refined mind control and understanding of the process.

### EXERCISING METTA TO ONESELF

The traditional method of practising loving-kindness begins by giving it to oneself. It seems to be a difficult start for many in the West, while taken for granted in the East. Here I have not attempted to point out the reasons for the difference but obviously clarification is needed in this important phase. Firstly, metta to oneself is not selfish. On the contrary, it is the wish to overcome selfishness and to do that, one has to first establish oneself spiritually ie spiritually happy. A simple argument is—you need to be happy before you can effectively wish another to be likewise. If the argument holds, then the next question would be how to make yourself happy. By reciting mechanically, “May I be safe...?” Certainly you need to mean not only what you say but also in your actions. Thus, I have formulated an approach that serves our purpose, and it can be used as a beginning for both metta and vipassana meditations.

As in any form of meditative exercise involved with concentration, the first part is relaxation. Take a few slow deep breaths to help one to relax. With each out-breath, exhale whatever stress one can. After a few times, let the breathing return to its natural state. The next step involves sweeping clear awareness through the body from head to toe. As one does it, that part of the body is made to relax, concurrently filling it with clear awareness. This process applies not just externally but includes internal organs such as brain, heart, lungs... and so on. Another point to

remember is: the clear awareness summoned has also two other properties besides clarity, ie peacefulness and softness. All these three qualities aggregate to the state of wholesomeness in a pure mind which, coupled with awareness, is the root of all goodness in life. One proceeds to sweep upwards and then downwards again. The process can be repeated until one reaches tranquility.

In Vipassana meditation, one proceeds to observe more clearly the sensations in this sitting posture, especially at the areas where contact is obvious. These sensations will then form the base of Vipassana objects that change from moment-to-moment as fluxes of energies.

In Metta however, the comfort of body and peaceful mental states are mindfully acknowledged, appreciated and further encouraged to develop. This will lead the mind into deeper tranquility and well-being. You may be amazed how happy you can be just by doing this!





## Aspirations

**T**raditionally in metta, we make use of four aspirations. Using it with understanding seems to be the key to its effectiveness and so, one would really have to mean what one says. They are:

*a* MAY I BE SAFE FROM DANGERS (*Avero homi*)

Can one be safe just by wishing? At first it appears to be just wishful thinking. But after examining deeper, it is not empty wishing. Mindfulness or clear awareness is involved. The pure wholesome mind can do wonders and the mind is very powerful. It's not just there and then, done frequently even into daily activities, the clear awareness actually protects, apart from generating wholesome kamma. Even at that moment, the mind is kept away from the root causes of suffering—greed, hatred and delusion and keeps one away from misery. Encouraged in this manner, the mind increases its clarity and purity.

*b* MAY I BE PEACEFUL AND FREE FROM MENTAL SUFFERING

*(Abyapajjho homi)*

I have used “peaceful” instead of “happy” to emphasize on the wholesome aspect of happiness and peacefulness is, more obviously, the opposite of agitation and restlessness. Having saturated oneself with clear awareness, the peaceful nature of the mind becomes clear and inclines one to settle into a deeper state of contentment and rest.

*c* MAY I BE HEALTHY, FREE FROM PHYSICAL SUFFERING

*(Anigho homi)*

Mind and body are interdependent. Many physical illness are stress-related. Likewise, meditation can heal. Clear awareness, peacefulness and softness brings about physical comfort. Sweeping it downwards from head-to-toe, settles and tranquilizes both body and mind; while sweeping upwards from toe-to-head energizes and rejuvenates. If one allows it to stay longer at any affected part of the body, I believe it will have positive results for that part. Eventually the body will settle into a state of deep rest while the mind sinks into deeper tranquility.

*d* MAY I TAKE CARE OF MYSELF AND LIVE HAPPILY

*(sukhi attanam pariharami)*

This last aspiration summarizes the practice to be happy at all times. It conditions the mind to carry on in like manner in all of one’s activities. However, at the time of meditation, it will encourage the deepening state of awareness and tranquility.

Yes, to repeat—the deepening or development of awareness and tranquility. How else is there to help oneself best

than to practise the spiritual awakening to everlasting peace? Vipassana (insight) itself is the best root condition for the development of metta. One then is truly happy, together with realization of the profound nature of existence.





## Recollections

**T**here is a difference between recollecting and remembering. In remembering, our mind runs to some object of the past. For example, we see an old photograph of ourselves as a child and this will run up some past things in our minds, such as toys we used to play with. Recollecting is also a form of remembering but done mindfully and consciously, and often systematically. For example, we try to recollect sequentially what happened yesterday, or virtues of the Buddha sequentially as enumerated in the Texts. Recollecting brings about concentration and there are “ten recollections” which are used as subjects of tranquility meditation.

In the beginning of metta meditation, we are advised to recollect the dangers of anger or blessings of patience and loving-kindness. This recollection is used as a motivation exercise as well as a reminder of the applied aspect of the practice.

### THREE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE

Once, I asked a Chinese man what patience is. He replied that it is like “the heart with a knife resting on it with a drop of blood”.

Actually he was just describing the Chinese calligraphy of the word “patience”. It is not easy to answer this question, for if one says one knows, then it must mean that one has patience and it is a quality which is not easy to “bear” or possess. By excusing us if we may not have much, but we may still have some, I will define what I understand it to be.

Patience is a state of mind, free from flurry and agitation. One who is impatient is without peace and is unable to withstand even the slightest discomfort. So, I have come to conclude that patience is the ability to hold the heart at peace, keeping it steady, mindful and be filled with love and compassion.

Its benefits are:

- a* It overcomes and avoids adversities
- b* It gives opportunity and time for goodness and love to grow and thus,
- c* It enables one to go far in one’s worldly or spiritual pursuits.

It would also help to recollect examples of how some wise persons practise patience.





## Blessings of Loving-kindness

I recalled an incident on how practising metta has benefited me. After a month of intense practice in Burma, I noticed something I never thought would have happened to me—putting on weight. Even before becoming a monk, I had been very skinny. My weight seldom exceeded over a hundred pounds and there were sunken cavities instead of flesh around the collarbones. The ribs and spines stood out although I wasn't particularly weak. Now, pieces of flesh appears miraculously even though I was eating less. Thinking back, I attributed it to the lack of joy then. I had always been too active and goal-orientated, neglecting the other part of life. I must also now say, that the joy has remained or even refined and matured with time, injecting new flushes of energy at every period of teaching and practice.

The other blessing it has given me is healthy relationships. Any relationship I believe, is based on two things—trust and communication between persons. With loving-kindness, it grows into a happy one. Anger destroys it, and so, without enough metta, it may quickly fall apart. My teacher used to call it, “super glue”. However, for it to be really lasting and deep, I feel that another

quality—wisdom or maturity is needed particularly for challenging situations. There is nothing quite like time-tested friendship—dependable and trustworthy. And if I may add, a sincere caring relationship that can be really strong and deep, yet without attachment, is itself, an achievement in life.

The third blessing, I would say, is peacefulness. It is a happiness that enables life and work to flow smoothly without much obstacles. It provides for easy concentration, which serves as a base for insight development and purification. In addition, it is also a healing and health promoting force. These blessings have been traditionally listed as eleven types:

- a* HE SLEEPS HAPPILY
- b* HE WAKES HAPPILY
- c* HE DREAMS NO BAD DREAMS

The first three benefits are connected with sleeping well. Sleep is a restorative process and should not be underestimated. Insufficient sleep makes one weak and miserable, as can be seen in insomniacs. After a good sleep, one wakes to start a better day with a happy state of mind, which in turn, makes others happy. Metta generates much joy and peace and so makes sleep easy and deep.

Life itself is like a stream that flows uninterruptedly from birth till death. Our experiences and thought processes are like the waves, bringing happy moments at times, at other moments, tragedies.

Dreams are also like that, except that it occur at subtler levels. They are affected by what we do and think during wakeful hours, besides other causes. They reflect conditioning and movements of the mind at a deeper level.

Bad dreams reflect an unhealthy mental state and so, will also mean near effects of unwholesome kamma, a sign to be careful of. Loving-kindness with its joy and peace can turn it around for the better.

*d* HE IS LOVED BY HUMAN BEINGS

*e* HE IS LOVED BY NON-HUMAN BEINGS

*f* DEVAS PROTECT HIM

Metta brings happiness not only to oneself but also to others. It is infectious and healing. There is never enough of it! The heart is an unending source of it! No wonder such a person is loved by humans and non-humans alike, such as animals. Devas are a form of unseen spirit—intelligence that have certain powers to influence human beings, in offering protection or giving fore-warnings.

*g* FIRE, POISON OR WEAPONS WILL NOT BEFALL HIM

Metta is a benevolent form that can block off harmful forces. Fire, poison and weapons that are often associated with harm, are likewise, put aside. In this sense, metta is also called a protection, an armour; its power depending on the degree of its concentration.

*h* THE MIND CALMS DOWN EASILY

One of the reasons why some people find it impossible to calm down is because they have much things disturbing them. Especially so are those who have suffered traumas and carry deep seated fears and anger. Aggressive thoughts of revenge and depression deny them any peace of mind. For them, the saying, “Hatred does not overcome hatred; only by love is hatred appeased”, is most appropriate. Such

people often need an extended period (maybe some years) of practice before their mind can come close to any deep concentration. We also notice how slight irritations (such as from insects and noise) can immediately upset a good sitting.

There is much joy in metta, and with happiness being the proximate cause of concentration, the mind can calm down easily.

*i* THE COMPLEXION BECOMES CLEAR

The face often mirrors the mind. We often put it in another way—the body and mind are interdependent, although many do know how to conceal their feelings and thoughts from expressing itself! But if there is metta, it will shine through, beaming a smile that brightens up situations. And as a statement goes—Smile and the world will be worth living...

A good complexion is also a sign of good health. Pure states promote health while unwholesome states produce harmful substances eg stress produces gastritis. Many illnesses are stress related, including heart attack and cancer—two of the world's main killers. Metta, therefore is a healer's medicine to rid manifold illnesses.

*j* DEATH TAKES PLACE WITHOUT CONFUSION

It is very important that death takes place mindfully, peacefully without confusion. Maximum effort is needed to prevent pain and discomfort at that time. One is also best left to be at peace and detached, having accepted that one's life will end. A peaceful death, as Buddhists know, is a strong and crucial factor in determining a happy rebirth.

For one who has been meditating and with much metta, this takes place peacefully, as I have witnessed in some cases. Just as stated in the Texts, one's joyful and good kamma will ripen to receive one like good relatives and friends. It will be like a good dream materialising.

*k* IF HE GOES NO FURTHER (IE NOT REALIZED THE FRUIT OF ARAHATTA) HE WILL GO TO THE BRAHMA WORLD

The four paths and fruitions are realizations that can come only through insight meditation. But, metta serves as a strong base for it. If concentration has reached absorption, then he can be reborn in the brahma realms. Otherwise, it can give rise to future existences as humans or devas. Concentrated states are powerful kammic forces which have more potency to ripen than other states.

A concise reflection can be done on just any one of these. This would enhance the fulfillment of this particular benefit, as well as serving to motivate.

Another way is to recollect a moment of incident which was especially happy due to metta. The happy state in turn encourages more joy and generates further metta and concentration.





## Dangers of Anger

Conversely, the dangers of anger can also be reflected upon to encourage one in the practice of metta. This is particularly relevant for those with angry temperament. Just recall a moment or incident when one was angry and reflect on the pain and suffering at that moment and the harmful effects thereafter. This method which we may have ignored and overlooked otherwise, should be sufficient to spur up energy. Only then, one may learn to check it at its early stage before it is too late.

Alternatively, just as in the eleven blessings of metta, one may also systematically recollect the adverse effects of anger:

- a* He sleeps unhappily (and with difficulty)
- b* He wakes up unhappily
- c* He dreams bad dreams
- d* Humans dislike him
- e* Non-humans dislike him
- f* Devas do not protect him and demons haunt him!
- g* He is likely to meet with violence and dangers

- h* His complexion is ugly and he suffers ill health
- i* He dies confused
- j* His mind is agitated and is difficult to calm down
- k* When he dies, he falls into the woeful states.





## Forgiveness Meditation

**T**his recollection is actually a form of compassion meditation, but I use it here as a preparatory exercise and in this case, it is mainly directed at oneself. The main purpose is to forgive oneself, then only one can also forgive others. The logic behind it is simple and yet it can be difficult because emotions can be blindly powerful, falling out of control of the conscious will.

It surprises some people when I say that nothing is unforgivable. “Not forgiving” just means hanging on to hatred for whatever reasons one may have. It is an absolutely silly act because it harms oneself as well as others. Forgiving merely takes away the thorns embedded in the heart. If that is still not good enough reason, then think of human beings as imperfect creatures and defilements make them mad. Nevertheless, they also have good qualities which can be cultivated. Compassion is the key factor. When directed at oneself, it removes remorse replacing it with the resolution to put away pride and make amends.

As a practice, one may try to trace one’s life, starting from this very day, slowly back to as far as one can recall. When we recall

any wrong doings on our part, we accept it as our human failings. For any emotions or feelings that arise, we soothe it with the thought—“I am not perfect but I am determined to practise, change and put things right. Even if I have to sort out things by being humble, I will do it.”

Here, care must be exercised for some, particularly perfectionists, to see the extent they can take. Otherwise, counseling from a good friend may be necessary. While going through this process, it is important not to make too many or harsh judgements. Thinking is tricky and it can turn into a nightmare. The idea is to empty the heart of remorse and grudges. During that process, we can also recall incidents when we may be wronged by others. Then, it is necessary to forgive them. Compassion is again the key, but its concentration practice will be dealt with in another chapter. If too much remorse arises, it is only wise to revert to giving metta to oneself. If you continue this practice, you will be surprised how light you will feel and it's much easier to concentrate and have metta.





## Rejoicing Meditation

**T**n this case, it is a rejoicing of one's abilities and goodness, particularly drawing on those moments when joy arose in one's metta. Then, one has the ability to open one's heart and love. It is also sympathetic joy meditation, but directed more to oneself.

Trace again the events in one's life, starting from this very day and recall what good deeds you have done—such as helping someone, practising generosity or purifying your mind in meditation and so on. When joy arises, rejoice with the thought, “How happy am I to be of human birth, endowed with great potential for spiritual progress and to be able to love all beings.”

Induce, especially, those moments when you were very happy and filled with metta. One may dwell longer if one finds it effective in bringing up this joy. Recall as far as one can remember—even to the childhood happy days with your family. This practice uplifts and makes it easier for one to arouse metta towards others.

Further extension of this subject can be found later in the chapter on Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*).



## Acceptance Meditation

**A**gain, this is an adaptation from another sublime abiding, equanimity and is used directed at oneself. In this case, we need some understanding. First, at the simplest level—birth, old age, sickness and death overcomes everyone and it is unavoidable. It is the process of life itself. The response is peaceful acceptance. This does not mean we do not seek for a doctor when we are old and sick. We make the best of situations when our minds are calm and at the same time, work out the best kammic effects.

On the second level, we contemplate the law of kamma and its results, in that, all beings including us are subjected to it. Kamma are moral or immoral acts of the mind responsible for the resultant situations and experiences of living beings. It can be termed also as great creative force. More explanation can be found in the chapter on Equanimity.

Recollections of kammic effects can be found from traditional sources. I have shared them effectively with people who find it

difficult to accept life's situations, particularly losses and separation from loved ones. Theoretically, it may not seem to be effective and so, repetitive recollection is needed to give deeper impressions on the mind. It is best, of course, to have deep insight into reality—impermanence etc. But, this can come about only after the mind has first calmed down.

### CONTEMPLATION FOR EQUANIMITY OR ACCEPTANCE

- a* I am of the nature to age  
I have not gone beyond aging  
When old age comes, I will be at peace with it.
- b* I am of the nature to be sick  
I have not gone beyond sickness  
When sickness comes, I will be at peace with it.
- c* I am of the nature to die  
I have not gone beyond death  
When death comes, I will be at peace with it
- d* All things that are dear and delightful to me  
Will change, will vanish  
When that happens, I will be at peace with it
- e* I have kamma as my true property  
I have kamma as my true inheritance  
I am born of my own kamma  
Kamma is my true relative  
I have kamma as my true refuge  
Whatever kamma I shall do  
Whether good or evil  
Of that I shall be the heir

I accept responsibility for my own action  
Strive to avoid all evil  
Strive to perform good  
Purify the mind from all defilements  
And be at peace with everything.





## Two Types of Metta Practice

**T**here are two types of metta practice

- a* One is done to develop deep absorption (*jhanas*)
- b* The other is to develop wholesome pure states that will make one's life happy, accumulate good kammic potential (merits) which is helpful for one's spiritual path

The practice of metta in the first type has to be specific to produce the desired level of concentration, while the second type can be more varied and flexible.

The first type is done more in an intensive and formal manner while the other can be done in general daily activities. When one's concentration has been built up, it can also occur quite easily in less intensive periods.

This book will emphasize more on the first form, while mentioning a little on the second as well.

### SUBJECTS OF METTA

Once one has radiated metta to oneself sufficiently (which may be an initial 5 minutes), then one can proceed to give metta to another. The chosen person resembles the soil upon which the seed

is planted and grows. As such, a correct choice is important. Especially so if one intends to develop deep concentration, then one will have to use the chosen person as an object for an extended period of time. It is like choosing a roommate or housemate to live with. He or she will be in your mind throughout the day.

## SELECTING THE INDIVIDUAL OR SUBJECT

Some guidelines are given in the traditional texts. Firstly, it describes certain people whom we should **not** use as the first object to begin with in developing deep concentration of metta.

### *a* THE OPPOSITE GENDER

The reason for this is understandable—to avoid sensual attachment such as lust. What if she is your own mother or grandmother? Surely you do not have... For conservatives, it is a Big NO! Frankly, I think we can use our discretion and consider case-to-case basis before making a conclusion. If one thinks it is within reasonable limits of safety, then one can try it out. I have known some who did, and were quite happy with the results.

I have also met a person who asked—what if I am a homosexual? That just proves the point—the main reason is to prevent attachment and lust, which with concentration, can become too powerful. This is also the good reason for being cautious.

### *b* ONE WHO IS DEAD

The reason for not choosing the dead, as quoted in the *Visuddhimagga* text (path of purification), is that it will not conduce to absorptions. There it gave an example of a monk who practised using his deceased teacher as the

object and failed to get absorptions. But when he used it on an alive person, he gained these levels of concentration. I have often wondered why, and it would seem that the object (person) and the reality behind it has some bearing on the mind of the meditator. Perhaps, lingering doubts as to what form he has taken after death, is enough to block unwavering concentration.

What then, if one does not aspire for absorption? If so, I don't see any reason to object—it will be just like what Buddhist may do while transferring merits or recollecting the virtues of our parents and teachers.

*c* AN INTIMATE PERSON

This is someone whom you like very much and has become very close to. Someone whom you may think will make an ideal subject for your metta practice. But hold a minute to ponder and ask yourself—Do I have attachment to this person? If it is a clear YES! then, change your choice to another. To such persons you have to learn to radiate metta in a lighter and more detached manner. Then, only will the deeper concentrations develop.

*d* THE INDIFFERENT OR NEUTRAL PERSON

These are people whom you never really consider as important in your life. They are around very much like trees and buildings; maybe a little more, if I may sound too impersonal. It also includes people you are not acquainted with. As such, it is not so easy to generate metta, much less strong metta if you are a beginner in the practice. Later, when one sees goodness in everyone, it will be easier.

*e* THE DISLIKED PERSON (*apiya puggala*)

This is someone you don't like, but not to the extent of hate. It may be his baldness, his moustache, her body odour or her talkativeness. Whatever it may be, it still doesn't suit your taste and temperament. In a way, the problem may be a reflection on your attributes—lack of open-mindedness, hidden prejudices or other kammic causes. The point is, you will have to work with it for sometime before concentration can be reached. But if one has firstly developed strong metta with the other persons, it will be much easier.

*f* THE INIMICAL PERSON OR ENEMY

This is someone whom you really have a problem with, particularly, hatred is involved. He may have wronged you so terribly and that you think it justifies revenge. This is the most difficult of the cases and is usually given the last approach. If one is on the right practice and has developed compassion and understanding with the other easier persons, then it can also be done—by mentally transforming the enemy into a friend. Firstly, you must not treat him as an enemy, but more like a “lost soul”.

## THE LOVABLE PERSON

This is the subject you take as the main object to develop deep metta concentration. He is someone who inspires metta to arise spontaneously in you. Therefore, he must be someone endowed with qualities that you admire such as love (*metta*), understanding, courage and so on. He will also be of a temperament compatible to yours, besides other things. Someone whom you don't mind living with for long periods.

It may not be easy to find someone exactly with these qualities and so, one may have to settle for something close to that.

There are some other factors I would like to consider:

*a* PROXIMITY

People whom we are in close proximity seems to work better. For example, if I use one whom I see around often, it would seem to work easier than one who's far away. And even if I use the second, visions of the proximate one may keep appearing. I think it has to do with habitual association and in the statement "seeing is believing".

*b* LONG ASSOCIATION

Longer periods of association deepen relationships, be it for better or for worse. Choose the better ones, as the saying goes—"new friends are like silver, the old are gold." All the years of working out things together develops understanding and there will be many events to recall to inspire metta. And, although unpleasant events too may be remembered, work through them with metta and mindfulness, and try to stick to the pleasant events.

*c* CONSIDERING SPIRITUALITY IN EVERY PERSON

My first object when practising concentrated metta was my teacher. He had a lot of metta and I also desired a strong base of practice which will last till I die. Seeing him endowed with many spiritual qualities made it easier and sustains longer. As I go on to develop metta concentration towards others, I came upon another important aspect of spirituality that is universal. It is very important for development of universal metta to have a heart as "big" as the universe. It is simply, seeing the great potential present

in everyone. Human beings for example, have pure minds with potential for doing much good. To rephrase—Given the training, they can give much love and everyone needs much love. In insight meditation, we see beings with the possibility of getting enlightenment. To this day, this observation has enabled me to send deep concentrated metta to whoever he may be. Even to a stranger, it will be as easy as a “piece of cake”.

*d* OTHER CHOICES

Unfortunately, some people simply cannot find a suitable person to radiate to, and so resort to pet animals—such as cats, dogs, birds, etc. I have also noticed that this does work although I have not come across many who tried.

At times the person may have “numbed” himself so much that he has to turn to compassion instead. Often this works better, as seeing suffering in others can easily stir up feelings of compassion.

At times, we are caught in a dilemma—too many good choices (not common situations, I dare say) or too many “second-grade” choices (which is not an uncommon situation). As to this, I would say—take a pick and stick to it for sometime, and don’t be fickle. You have time to change to others if it doesn’t work.

## AROUSING OF METTA

Having selected a person you think is suitable as the object, then try to stick to it. Sometimes it may be possible to have a second and third person as a standby (not like items in a menu card, not like spare tyres when one is punctured but like good friends that

are always ready to lend a hand). This is more suitable to adopt if you do regular daily meditation. In intensive practice, we try to stick to one person (object) for days or weeks.

*a* BEING PRESENT

It also helps to imagine the person being close to one till one senses his presence, including his feelings. If you can do it well, do not be surprised that you *are* mentally close to him. Try it when the subject is *actually present* and you will get to this feeling.

If you have given metta to yourself (ie make yourself happy) and the subject is suitable, then metta should flow out spontaneously. Encourage it to keep flowing and do not hold back the emotions. There is nothing wrong with having much metta—instead it's something that is better than material joy.

At this point, I would also like to mention visualization. By visualization, I mean seeing the person with your inner eyes (at the mind door / sense), just as if your eyes are open. Although this method does help, not many people can do it easily. What is important is the flow of metta in one and if one is able to keep the thought to the “person”, it is sufficient. Trying desperately to visualize causes other problems—such as head tensions, frustrations and so on. Also, mere visualization is not metta and sometimes people end up visualizing without mindfulness at all!

One may then ask, how can concentration develop without a clear object? From my experience, the object will become clearer as one continues to practise. A free flow of metta ensures firstly, the purity of the mind. At this juncture, constantly directing it to the “person” arouses

objects of the person in different ways. With the increase of the concentration (jhānic factors) the objects can become clearer and brighter, until it is sufficient to produce absorptions. This method I found, is less restrictive to the mind and so, metta flows out unimpeded.

*b* REFLECTIONS

One can also arouse metta by thinking about,

- i* The good events in which one has participated such as, receiving gifts during birthday, counseling in career, help given in times of stress etc.
- ii* The virtues of the person such as compassion (v1), wisdom (v2), humility (v3) etc.

If you have a good store of these, make a list of them and it will last you a lifetime if you use them sparingly. They are like spark plugs to start the engine with. Suppose you use the first virtuous quality (v1) and metta arises and flows, just before it stops, use (v1) again. It can be done repeatedly until it does not seem to be any more effective for that time. Then as a change, use the second virtue (v2) and being afresh, it stirs up the flow again. This is repeated until ineffective, at which time you can return to (v1), which will work again. The interchange can continue until you resort to another virtue—(v3).

*c* FREE ASSOCIATION METHOD

A friend of mine finds it difficult to arouse metta in the traditional and systematic manner. He feels it is artificial and prefers a natural and spontaneous arising. So he imagines situations that happened before in the past or may happen in the future...

Example—on imagining that he sees a friend coming back from work, having had a bad day, understandably, he would go and put his hand on the friend’s shoulders and ask, “hey, what’s the matter?” or when he imagines another friend carrying her new baby in her arms, he would congratulate her...

There can be many people involved in a period of free association but when the mood is present, then, it can be narrowed to one.

Such free association can be imaginative, like thinking of young children, sick people etc, to arouse loving-kindness. Sometimes it is compassion and sometimes it is sympathetic joy, but it does not matter, for they are also shades of metta.

One thing however has to be cautioned—that the thinking has to be controlled, and is permitted just enough for the flow of metta. Otherwise, thinking can result in much restlessness and wander off to sensual cravings or even anger and sadness.

*d* RECITATIONS

Recitations are often done as a first step to concentration. Holding one’s mind on the words recited helps to keep it from wandering, while understanding its meaning produces those distinct mental qualities. There are metta recitations, a common one used is given in the appendix of the book. It has its roots in the Texts and contain the formulas or aspirations used traditionally in metta practice. Reciting skillfully creates not only initial concentration, but also sets the mood as they are done softly, gently and sweetly with loving-kindness.

After that, one can proceed easily to radiate loving-kindness to oneself and others.

*e* ASPIRATIONS

Making aspirations is an important aspect of meditation practice. When we make an aspiration, we incline the mind to work in a specific direction and purpose. Depending on the nature of aspiration, the resultant mental states differ. One has to be specific and careful because the mind is very powerful, and so attention has to be given to its wordings, mental states and implications. For example, an aspiration—“May my practice bring me happiness”, is too general—because it does not state the type of happiness and usually people associate happiness with joy. Joy on the other hand, can be carnal or spiritual.

The aspiration “May the practice purify my mind” is more precise in its spiritual inclination but its directive is not specifically far-reaching. It is better rephrased as, “May my practice lead to insight knowledge that can purify my mind completely with realization of Truth (Nibbana)” — with the right understanding (at least theoretically) of what Truth or Nibbana means.

The prime mental state involved here is “cetana” or volition. It is the creative force of the mind to bring about happenings, often called “kamma”. Depending on its associated states, different results are produced. To be sure that these are wholesome, there must be mindfulness. In the metta practice, it should be accompanied by metta—reflective of the aspirations worded.

Often, we also know of people who find it problematic.

It is because they could not make a wish without craving. When they say, “I wish”, it means, “I crave for...” Wishing can be realistic or unrealistic. If it is unrealistic, then it reflects craving rooted in delusion. For example, a person may wish, “May I attain Nibbana in this sitting.” This can safely be concluded as unrealistic. Because, except for people with really special potential (which are extremely rare), then it is “fat (unrealistic) hope”.

When we say, “May my practice lead to Nibbana”, it does not mean that we expect to reach to that state in one sitting or even in this lifetime. We mean only to give the mind the directive. There will be more realistic subgoals of immediate relevance, like, “May I relax the body...” One has to ensure the presence of mindfulness, and not craving, when one makes the aspiration.

Another important point when making aspirations is that one should believe in the efficacy of it. It is not just empty wishing. The practice does bring about results, to the intended party as well. I remember when I was in Burma and was sending metta to a friend in Malaysia. After sometime, I received a letter from him, inquiring if I had been sending metta to him. Incidentally, he was not someone very close. Therefore, I was surprised when he accounted for that period during which he was always in a joyful state while thinking of me (which he does not usually do).

Metta and its closely related mental state—compassion—have been known to have healing properties—both physically and mentally. It is a proven fact. Of main

importance when we make the aspirations is the metta state, and the meaning of the words will make it more exact for the scope to be covered.

Traditionally, we make use of the four aspirations towards oneself.

I *Avera Hontu*

May you (he or she) be safe from dangers

II *Abyapajja Hontu*

May you (he or she) be peaceful, free from mental suffering

III *Anigha Hontu*

May you (he or she) be healthy, free from physical suffering

IV *Sukhi attanam pariharantu*

May you (he or she) take care and live happily

#### I. MAY YOU BE SAFE FROM DANGERS

Security forms a very basic condition for happiness. However, in Buddhism, there is no permanent security in this impermanent cycle of existence except in Nibbana. This can be very disconcerting but it is a fact that we have to learn to accept. Having accepted it will lead us on the path to progress. The aspiration also indicates the direction of spirituality. Dangers here refers to both external and internal forms. External, as in people trying to harm us or in mishaps and accidents which can be fatal. Internal, in terms of our defilements and unwholesome kamma. Both are interrelated. However, we know that by being mindful or in radiating metta, the mind is in a pure state. At such times and even after, it is free from defilements—the root causes of suffering and

of the cycle of samsara itself. Being mindful and pure, with loving-kindness and compassion, one can form an external shield from danger.

Metta is a protective force and there are protective metta recitations. There was a story that when the Bodhisatta was having metta, even arrows could not harm him, but when without it, he was injured. Therefore, the blessing—fire, poison, weapons do not come near (to harm) him, is not without basis. However, one's concentration must also be strong.

There are positive and negative aspects of each wish. The positive aspect here is safety. It does not just mean the absence of danger, but a presence and sense of well-being, convenience and smoothening of one's life and practice. Only then, one is free to devote oneself to the lofty and refined spiritual practice.

## II. MAY YOU BE AT PEACE, FREE FROM MENTAL SUFFERING

I have used “at peace” instead of “happy” to emphasize its spiritual aspect. Peace is closer to tranquility and is more related to purity of mind. Mental suffering is the negative aspect that one wishes to overcome and it encompasses states of fear, frustration, depression, despair, anger, worry, cravings, delusion, wrong views and so on. An interesting point is the need to recognize its presence before being able to dispel them effectively. Insistent denial by just saying there's no “I” or “mine” does not work unless your insight is genuine and strong. In another case, it indicates a need to exercise strong and active metta.

## III. MAY YOU BE HEALTHY, FREE FROM PHYSICAL SUFFERING

This aspiration is intended for the physical well-being of the person. As mentioned earlier, first we must acknowledge that there

is real physical suffering. Then, the healing of it and the positive aspect of good health. Here it involves physical energies and concerns matters such as rest, vitality, long life and so forth.

#### IV. MAY YOU TAKE CARE AND LIVE HAPPILY

This is a more general aspiration which covers all other aspects. It takes the practice and the blessings to the rest of the person's life and activities. Taking care means maintaining oneself in washing, eating, working and sleeping etc—in short, living happily.

As mentioned before, except for the last aspiration, there are both positive and negative connotations of the situation. I think both need to be recognized and dealt with. In order to be more concise and for simplicity, I just use positive aspects—be safe, be peaceful, be healthy, live happily and I find it more effective and assertive than its negative connotation. However, if dangers etc are obvious and imminent then it is more practical to use the negative connotation.

So, while practising metta, you can mentally place someone you care for in front of you. If you have aroused the metta to flow, the aspirations will sustain their continuity. Otherwise, making the aspirations again with the right state of mind can also arouse metta, an energy that flows out from yourself to the other party.

When you make the first wish, may you be safe... this force flows onwards to the person and forms a protective shield, not only externally but also internally in body and mind. In fact, it envelops both you and the other person, bringing together with it joy, peace and well-being.

As you make the second wish, feel the peace and joy issuing from your mind/heart to the other person's heart; that you can feel the happiness of the other party too.

On approaching the third wish, imagine the force saturating the body of the person and creating physical well-being—at first comfortable and restful, then rejuvenating it with vitality. If any part is in need of healing, special deliberation can be given to that.

Lastly, the fourth wish is more general. Just allow a continuous flow of metta to the person—saturating him until it envelops and submerges both you and him into a deep peaceful sea of metta.

There is a point to note here. The force or energy one perceives when sending metta can be both physical and mental. Some even visualize it as a form of light. This is a form of imagery which can be done but one should not forget that metta is the main purpose and one's first task is to keep it pure, genuine and concentrated for more powerful depths. The applied aspects can wait, otherwise it may digress and weaken the practice.

The principle in using these four aspirations is similar to using situations and virtues to arouse metta. Each aspiration is capable of arousing metta and if already arisen, to sustain its continuity. Metta arises and flows after using the first aspiration (a<sup>1</sup>). Then it will ebb but before stopping altogether, it can be recharged by the second aspiration (a<sup>2</sup>). The same is done by the third aspiration (a<sup>3</sup>) and fourth (a<sup>4</sup>), to revitalise or maintain the flow.

After this, one returns to a<sup>1</sup> and the cycle can be repeated indefinitely.

The second point to note is that some aspirations may be more effective than others. The more effective aspiration can be used frequently while the less effective used briefly, and later even aborted. Finally, it should be an automatic, peaceful flow of metta directed at its object—the person one is sending to.

How about adding more aspirations or even changing them? one may ask. I think four aspirations suffice, as too many may

confuse the beginner. Besides, these four cover a wide horizon in one's life. Of course, one can choose, add or just be more specific in wishing for the person and situation. For example, we may use the wish—"May he or she do well in his or her examination"... for a student on the brink of an examination; "May he or she be cured of cancer"... for one suffering from such illness, and so on.

Often, I have used "May he or she grow in metta" or "progress well in one's meditation". These have also been effective as they are related to the spiritual practice.





## The Five Hindrances

**T**he five hindrances is a classification of mental defilements that are unwholesome forces that hinder the development of right concentration or tranquility. These forces obstruct one away from truth, peace and eventually, will bring about much suffering. These are:

1. sensual craving
2. ill-will
3. sloth and torpor
4. restlessness and worry
5. skeptical doubts

It is interesting to note that the Texts have also listed them as opposing forces to the factors of concentration shown below:

Sensual craving	—	one-pointedness
Ill-will	—	joy
Sloth and torpor	—	initial application
Restlessness and worry	—	happiness
Skeptical doubt	—	sustained application

They are also the proximate and direct enemies of the sublime abodes.

	PROXIMATE ENEMY	DIRECT ENEMY
Loving-kindness	Attachment	Hatred
Compassion	Grief	Cruelty
Sympathetic joy	Merriment	Jealousy
Equanimity	Unintelligent/ indifferent	Instability/ agitation

In the development of concentration in metta meditation, the same hindrances apply. One has first to recognize them and take the appropriate action.

## 1. SENSUAL CRAVING

Sensual craving is the craving and attachment which arises with pleasant and attractive sense objects. That is the reason why a beginner is advised against using the intimate person or opposite gender. Even when thinking of another person, sensual desire can arise—such as thoughts of happy times, or indulging in drinking during those “happy hours”. When they arise, it should be quickly taken note of mindfully and revert the mind to its rightful state—metta. If that is not possible, then begin again by giving metta to oneself.

Sensual cravings arise when the heart is starved. Often one doesn’t notice this and thinks instead, of the happiness that one seeks for and finds. In our sensual world, there are usually sense pleasures which do not really give satisfaction. Instead they encourage greater thirsts. It can become so habitual and intoxicating that it encroaches as second nature to us.

Therefore one needs to heed this and to realize that gratification comes about not through more craving but the abandonment of it. Sensual craving may not arise when one has tasted

the joy of renunciation or of detached wholesome states of mind. Metta with its abundant pure joy, is often easier to recognize and so can be suitably practised by many. Later, when all cravings are abandoned, one can proceed further to find realization.

Sometimes, attachment to the abundant joyful feelings can also arise with the practice. Many would not even notice that attachment has arisen as it happens so naturally. So usually, meditators ought to be wary when joy arises but they should not be fearful of it. Joy after all, is a factor of concentration and arises with pure states of mind.

After some practice, one can clearly differentiate whether it is joy or craving that arises. Just be on a look out for the presence of peacefulness or restlessness. The joy that arises with craving can be intense and restless. The moment it is absent, the mind will sink quickly into a deep, restful, cool and peaceful tranquility. Mindfulness is the key. If you are unsure, arouse some detachment and see what happens.

Another method is to radiate metta to someone else or to all beings before returning to the first chosen object. The change will hold the metta while concentration is also held back briefly. It is better to be safe than to be sorry. But usually, under guidance, things ought not to go unbridled. If craving proves to be strong, one is advised to practise loathsomeness or impurity of the body to offset it. A gentler way would be to practise some form of right concentration, which produces purity of mind. Of particular relevance would be insight (*Vipassana*) meditation, which emphasizes on mindfulness.

## 2. ILL-WILL OR HATRED

One may feel strange that while practising metta this should arise. Although it is true that it is remote when metta is strong but before that, it is a direct foe. Particularly true are those with hateful temperament with a history of traumas. Hence, the preliminaries of recollections, metta to oneself and selection of object, should be done properly. One can only expect slow (but necessary) development and be patient. In more difficult cases, the development of compassion can be resorted to, instead of metta. Often in such cases or even in those minor ones, the feelings of hurt can be so painful that they constrict and shut down the “heart”. Steps to open it are done carefully, and initially, it can be painful. In serious cases, therapy and counseling may be necessary. Without a free flow of feelings from the heart, development of metta will be very difficult. Knowing how to forgive, and knowing that hatred can only be overcome by love, helps. Do not be fearful of feelings—but rather to recognize and accept them just like accepting a crying child and then appeasing him. The process has to be genuine and sincere to oneself, otherwise, healing becomes more difficult.

Hatred and ill-will arise with a repulsive object, and that is why the disliked and hostile person is avoided at the initial stages. Still other repulsive objects such as unpleasant sensations, noise etc can irritate. Try to ignore them or use plentiful of wise considerations such as kamma, non-self, etc to give emotions some rationality. Arouse more joy and when concentration picks up, they should not disturb anymore. Failing that, one can again revert to mindfulness to balance back the state of mind.

### 3. SLOTH AND TORPOR

Sloth and torpor is that sticky, lazy, weak and sluggish state of mind. Physical fatigue propels it, so too would other physical factors like too much food and sleep. When physical causes are detected, the steps to correct the situation is simple—such as rest for fatigue, and moderation for excessive food and sleep. But when causes are mental, then they fall clearly under sloth and torpor.

As a clarification, sleeping itself is technically not sloth and torpor. The former is a state of rest when thought processes do not arise and the mind returns to a basic passive state. But generally, people do not discriminate, and sloth and torpor leads to shutting off the sense doors, which result in sleep.

On this, steps need to be taken to stir up energy. It can be done by contemplating on the dangers of sloth or the benefits of energy. Contemplation of death and imminent suffering stirs up the sense of urgency, while recollections of the Buddha, the Teachings and virtues of the disciples, will inspire.

In metta, recollecting the blessings of metta and the dangers of anger helps to motivate. Alternatively, stirring up more intense emotions if you can or increasing the frequency of making the four aspirations or adopting the walking posture also helps greatly.

The other general ways include switching to perceiving light, rubbing hands and face, going out to an open space to expand the mind, or for fresh air and so on.

### 4. RESTLESSNESS AND WORRY

These are agitated states of mind that make it difficult for you to settle down. Like a restless sea, there is no peace. Worry or remorse (sometimes translated as unhappiness over things done or undone)

disturbs the peace within, and the mind tries impatiently to resolve the issues. As for restlessness, the cause of it is often not clear because it may be just due to a hectic lifestyle. But of course there are reasons, it is only up to us to identify them and take the appropriate action. Having a right attitude towards life (and meditation) helps. For example, if we act with great expectations and if we fail to achieve our targets, we get frustrated. Or we may end up making judgments instead of just observations on the situation. In meditation, we should remember that we need to have peace that comes from clarity before more can be done. So we revert to the basic establishment of mindfulness of the present moment. In metta, this is quite synonymous with giving metta to oneself. If those thoughts and thinking are not so restless or urgent, we take notice of it mindfully, let it go and then return to metta on the object (person). Settle for a peaceful, joyful and restful type of metta rather than pounding on the aspirations. One may also ask why one is so restless. This usually gives light to the possible causes, which, when identified, solutions can be sought for. If there is real anxiety over family matters and relationship problems, use metta on those people or situations and they will be shelved for some time. Otherwise, you may need to seek help and counseling.

## 5. SKEPTICAL DOUBTS

Skeptical doubts here refer to the skeptical doubts concerning the right path of practice. A distinction must be drawn between genuine investigation, which seeks the path, and perplexity of mind which comes out of confusion and hence, disbelief. The former involves the wisdom faculty that seeks for answers and should be encouraged at appropriate times. The latter is skeptical

doubt—they arise for people who try to think out answers beyond their capabilities and so end up frustrated and perplexed. It may also come about when their expectations are not fulfilled. It arises with restlessness.

The solution to this is to acquire knowledge, which clarifies. To achieve this, one should be well-read or well-informed. Having teachers and friends, who are ready to listen, is helpful. In metta meditation, such is also the case, but once the basic conditions are present, progress should not be too slow and so skeptical doubts will not seriously arise. If they do arise—deal with them in the same way as in restlessness—by taking mindful note of it and then seek solution from a more experienced practitioner whenever possible.

## CONCENTRATION

What is concentration? It is actually translated from the Pali word, “Samadhi”. A Pali text on meditation—The Path of Purification, defines it as the unification of the wholesome (pure) consciousness with its object. The term, concentration, however, describes only one aspect of the actual meaning. There are 3 aspects of Concentration that we are striving to develop:

### a SAMADHI AS TRANQUILITY

The word tranquility is used to emphasize purity. The defilements rooted in craving, anger and delusion have the quality of being restless and agitated. Peacefulness or tranquility is the direct opposite of that state, and is what we are striving for. The aspect brings about a peaceful heart. Therefore this is of foremost consideration to ensure that we are not going in the opposite direction of wrong concentration.

b SAMADHI AS ONE-POINTEDNESS

One-pointedness is synonymous with concentration, by focusing or being fixed to one object. However, prior to it, the condition of purity must be present. It will then be safe to allow the power and magnification that comes with one-pointedness to function suitably. It's just like lights and reeds which are weak when scattered all over the place, but when they are brought together, they become powerful. This is the strong "heart".

c SAMADHI AS REFINEMENT

Anger is gross, loving-kindness is fine

Craving is gross, detachment is fine

Delusion is gross, clarity is fine

The above statements are obvious. However, there are also further superlatives of it within the pure state of mind itself. For example, equanimity is finer than joy. These are what differentiate the levels of absorptions. This is the deep, subtle heart.

## WHY CONCENTRATION

There are many reasons why people take up concentration practice. The motives have to be considered properly before undertaking the practice, as it would determine the direction and progress.

The motives should never be out of selfishness! If the motives are doubtful or unwholesome, conflicts and problems will surely arise. The main aim in the practice should be to purify the mind and to seek true tranquility. However, it does not mean that the practice will not bring benefit to the worldly or mundane life.

Obviously, the first blessing that the practice brings is the overcoming of stress. Stress is the result of unwholesome states of mind. Tranquility is the direct opposite of stress. More stress or defilements require more purity and tranquility to overcome it. One with right concentration is a peaceful and happy person. With such peacefulness, one is able to conduct one's life and duties efficiently, amicably and lives happily.

There are many approaches that bring about happiness and to overcome stress in daily life. For example, there are healing techniques that require concentration. When one is concentrated, he can generate ideas and creativity. Whatever it may be, the state of right concentration has to be attained first. In secular living, defilements are always present—it is easy to be attached even to concentration and then complications like pride and so on will arise.

Another motive for practising concentration meditation is related to the practice itself, which is to develop really peaceful and blissful states of absorptions. Having tasted these states, one will find sensual pleasures inferior. The practice also promises rebirths in the lofty brahma planes. In addition, when such concentrations are developed, one also gains supernatural powers and skills such as, the ability to read minds, levitation and so on. These are very attractive and so, strong attachment can arise. Nonetheless, even if we fail to attain higher spiritual realizations, there are still the spiritual attainments that keep us away from ignoble states.

As we see it, the most worthy cause for concentration is that it can form the foundation for the growth of insight. It is the most noble of the motives as it is based on the goal of absolute dispassion. All Buddhist tranquility meditations have this goal in mind. However, different levels of concentration must be developed

before one switches from tranquility to insight practice. It depends very much on the individual, his object and situation.

## LEVELS OF CONCENTRATION

- a* PARIKAMMA SAMADHI—preliminary concentration
- b* UPACARA SAMADHI—access concentration
- c* APPANA SAMADHI—fixed concentration

### PARIKAMMA SAMADHI (*preliminary concentration*)

At this stage, one is still doing the preliminary exercises of trying to develop the skills in the practice. Some degree of one-pointedness and calmness can be reached by one, for example, when he is doing the recitations while radiating metta.

The object here is the preliminary object (parikamma nimmita) which is the initial object. By contemplating on the initial object, an imprint of it (referred to as the grasp sign or uggaha nimitta) can be developed in the mind.

### UPACARA SAMADHI (*access concentration*)

When one's mind settles closely to the object as if about to sink or merge with it, we may consider it as access concentration. By then, one should have clearly overcome the hindrances and will be moving towards fixed absorption. The mind in this state is very subtle and sleeplike. All sense objects are now absent. One then has to be careful not to doze off (sleep), but try to maintain the flow of concentration, such as metta.

The Text describes this state in metta meditation, as one when barriers are broken down. It means that one's metta has been developed to the state of "being one with the person (object of

metta)”. In this state, one cannot differentiate whether one has more or less metta for oneself or for another, or whether it’s intimate or hostile.

At this level, the object is often called the mirror image (*patibhaga*)—or counter image, developed from the original one. It is a pure concept, usually very bright and crystalline. However, it varies with the types and levels of concentration. The deeper it is, the purer it will be. In metta meditation however, the object is not as obvious as those methods that employ visualizations.

#### APPANA SAMADHI (*fixed concentration*)

When concentration is sufficient, the mind becomes merged with the object and fixes on it. The result is the expansion or upliftment to a different plane of consciousness. These absorptions are very deep and powerful states, alike falling into a deep sea, yet one is aware of it only on emergence. It has been claimed that the state is so subtle that one may not be aware of having entered into it, especially when it occurs only in very short moments. With frequency, the process should become obvious. The object here is the counter or mirror image as in access concentration. There are various levels of absorption.

There is another type of concentration known as momentary concentration (*khanika samadhi*). This type of concentration is unique to insight (Vipassana) meditation practice. It is based on moment-to-moment changes of reality, which is the object of one-pointedness. Its strength is equivalent to access concentration. As this is a book on metta, we will not delve further into this topic.



# Conditions for Bringing About Concentration

## SECTION ONE

“When things are rightly set, the music and magic begins”. Things arise through conditions. Concentration is like music. When the stage is set, the audience are seated, and all the musicians in the orchestra are waiting for the maestro to wave the magic wand, then only will the music begin. In our practice, the maestro equates to the “will power”. The music is likened to the “singing of the ecstatic heart”.

What are the conditions?

### *a* THE PHYSICAL STATE

We have talked about the time and place; let us now look at the body. Bodily comfort is conducive to the development of tranquility concentration. Health condition is relevant, but more important is to be relaxed at that particular moment. A relaxed body conditions or brings about a relaxed mind. Due to the hectic schedules and demands of the modern world, stress is a common

occurrence which can build up physical tension. I have discovered that this is the first key factor to tranquility. On the other hand, if one is not careful and is too relaxed, sleep follows. But if however, we maintain clarity, and there are no excessive restlessness or defilements, tranquility develops. The key word here is: RELAX.

*b* DETACHMENT

Some people may drop off to sleep as soon as their head touches the pillow. Why can't others do the same? The reason is because they are obsessive thinkers. Old habits die-hard—problems are brought home from the office and to bed. Problems, problems, problems... there will always be problems. We must learn to put them aside—at least for a moment, for sleep and rest, for meditation and for real inner peace.

Some reminders usually work, for example, “It is useless to think about these now, as thinking won't help, but some peace and calmness will.” Give valid reasons and tell the mind to, “Let go” or “Be detached”. Alternatively, one may resort to other ways, like recitation, but one still needs the basic detachment. One will be doing that in metta meditation anyway. The keyword here is: LET GO.

*c* PATIENTLY AND SKILLFULLY AROUSE THE PURE STATE OF MIND

In our current context, it is the metta feelings or consciousness. This state differentiates it from other types of concentration and corresponding results. The ways or methods have been described in a previous chapter. It is aroused to the point that the flow is continuous and automatic. Only then, will it become like a powerful and

strong current that cannot be intercepted. The key word here is: METTA

*d* ESTABLISHING IT ONTO ITS OBJECT

Once the flow is there, one has just to make sure that the flow is directed to its object and not dissipated elsewhere. It is like the sailor having his hands firmly guiding the rudder in the right direction, amidst strong winds and waves. As it deepens (or become more stable), he can rest (sit back) more. The key word here is: KEEP TO THE OBJECT

*e* At a certain point, one must allow the mind to change into the altered or developed state. It may come like sinking or flying. Let it go, let it fly. Trust it, as it has built up a strong momentum of metta. It is like letting the conscious mind sleep for a deeper level to take over. The key word here is: LET IT TAKE ITS COURSE.

## SECTION TWO

### FIVE JHANIC (CONCENTRATION) FACTORS

The way to look at the development of concentration is by way of the five Jhanic (absorption) factors. These are mental states predominant in bringing about deep concentration, like the absorptions. The levels of absorptions are also distinguished by these factors:

*a* INITIAL APPLICATION (*Vitakka*)

In the initial phase of the practice, this mental state functions primarily in lifting the mind to its object. Often, it has been described as “thinking”—a word which I consider as being too general in metaphysical terminology.

It is actually the sending of metta to the intended person. To continue sending it, we would, firstly, need to have metta ourselves—this is the arousing aspect. We must ensure that it is metta and not craving, and make sure that we have plenty of it. In the beginning, it is just like looking and digging for spring water. If we dig deep enough, the water will start to trickle in droplets and if we continue digging, the water will start to flow. However, in the process of digging, we will encounter unwanted and unexpected things such as snakes, frogs and maybe, even gold. It depends on what is in one's mind. However, eventually, a lot of feelings and emotions will arise. Once the flow starts, we must ensure that it is channelled to the object of meditation.

In the beginning of your meditation, you will have many intruders—people you would rather put aside till another time—the “Broom Hilda” and “Hagar the Horrible” etc. Give them metta too but do not stay with them. Return to the lovable person as your main object of meditation. Uncontrolled, it can lead to thoughts outside of metta and one will eventually become restless.

The key word here is: AROUSE

*b* SUSTAINED APPLICATION (*Vicara*)

When metta has been aroused and directed to its object, the next step is to sustain it. The force that sustains the metta is known as sustained application. It is the continuous flow of metta mentally. It is like dragging a cart on the road until the momentum is reached, then it becomes easier as if it will run on its own. At a certain

point, no obvious effort will be needed, as metta will flow naturally and will stay with the object. It is like sailing on the sea or skiing down a hill. On the other hand, when there is too much energy, you get washed along more than you prefer and even sleep becomes difficult. When that happens, you will know that you have aroused too much energy.

The keyword here is: FLOW WITH IT.

*c* JOY (*Piti*)

Joy is like melody of the heart. It comes in rhythms and beats. When the flow is smooth and steady, the momentum will definitely increase and joy appears in waves. This joy is the third factor of concentration. With a pure state of mind, it is experienced as thrills, uplifting lightness, overwhelming waves of coolness and joy that suffuses every cell of the body. These exhilarating experiences can become overwhelming and it is common for attachment to arise. When joy arises, one does not push it away, but instead, encourage its occurrence at the beginning with clear awareness. When it overwhelms to the point of affecting clarity, and when attachment becomes imminent, then be aware that it is time to refine it.

The keyword here is: MAKE WAVES.

*d* HAPPINESS/BLISS

When joy becomes refined and metta concentration is developed further, it settles deep into the heart—like sweet honey. The sweetness comes with peacefulness, quietude and stillness. The point here is the refinement of metta concentration. Only then can deep concentration occur.

It is like being covered and wrapped with layers and layers of fine silk till one sinks or slips into a sea of bliss.

The keyword here is: REFINEMENT.

e) ONE-POINTEDNESS

This is the fixing of the metta concentration to the object itself. It is like being absorbed into it, merged with it until the subject-object relation seems unidentifiable. A clear change of level occurs before this state—like sinking or dropping into a hole or flying off a cliff. Although it often happens gradually, it can sometimes be sudden too.

The keyword here is: SURRENDER COMPLETELY TO METTA

As you can see, the five factors dominate at each level of concentration development. For example, although one-pointedness may be present at the initial stage, it is still weak. It becomes obvious and dominant at the last phase. When one-pointedness is strong, you will reach a point when absorption occurs.

In short, we may see the development of concentration in three stages:

- 1 Struggling stage—like trekking uphill, when one is building up the momentum of metta concentration
- 2 Sailing stage—like surfing or skiing, when the momentum has the force to maintain itself effortlessly for some time
- 3 Taking off stage—like bungee jumping or parapetting (jumping off a cliff), when one goes beyond normal concentration to an altered state

## SECTION THREE

Commentaries often speak of eleven conditions that lead to concentration and it would be beneficial to consider them here:

### 1 PURIFICATION OF BASIS

This refers to one's cleanliness and orderliness. It can also be extended to simplicity. How one lives is a reflection of one's surroundings. If one's surroundings and habits are clean and in order, then, one's mind will also be such. Cleanliness and orderliness is conducive to the development of concentration.

The keyword here is: CLEAN AND ORDERLY.

### 2 IMPARTING EVENNESS TO SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

The spiritual faculties are namely—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. Mindfulness imparts evenness and is the factor that balances energy and concentration. Energy is active and concentration is stillness. Too much energy will result in restlessness, whereas too little energy will give rise to laxity. On the other hand, too little concentration will also result in restlessness.

However, for the purpose of metta practice, we need to develop more concentration but not to the point of losing our focus. A balanced state is the state that develops into absorption concentration, which may be more energetic at first and will later be refined into subtle tranquility. Mindfulness is the balancing factor.

The keyword here is: BALANCE

### 3 SKILL IN TAKING UP THE SIGN (OBJECT) OF MEDITATION

Having a suitable and strong object of meditation determines the speed and progress one may make in developing concentration. If the object one chooses is unsuitable, the progress will not only be slow, but also disturbing.

However, the object of meditation is not the only criteria that affect our practice. Another important factor is the motive—this is clearly illustrated when we are learning to deal with objects that are not easy in metta meditation, such as a hostile person. In addition, the objects will change as concentration develops from the preliminary object (*parikamma nimitta*) to the grasped image (*uggaha nimitta*) and then to the counter image (*patibhaga nimitta*). We need to learn how to handle this before we can become adept at it. This condition also generally means that one needs to acquire this skill, and that of knowing, retrospectively, what happened when certain steps were taken. The best methods or ways can then be adopted.

- 4 Inciting the mind when the mind becomes lax.
- 5 Restraining the mind when excessive or restless energy arises
- 6 Gladdening the mind when dissatisfaction arises
- 7 Regarding the mind without interference when it is functioning properly or according to the practice.

The last 4 points above are connected with mindfulness—the second factor of imparting evenness. Inciting the mind means arousing the energy factor, and notes (5) to (7) above addresses the concentration factor at 3 dif-

ferent situations. When properly exercised, the concentration will settle in smoothly.

Inciting the mind helps to arouse the metta consciousness for the concentration to develop. How one does that has been dealt with under the section on Hindrances—ie Sloth and Torpor. For example, one may recollect the benefits of metta and energy, dangers of sloth and anger and so forth. Reciting at a quicker pace is also applicable. The point I would like to emphasize is that Energy can be activated with mindfulness and metta. Secondly, we ought to know how much and when it is needed in order to avoid restlessness.

Restraining the mind that is too active or distracted also requires energy. It has to be the type of restraining that brings about concentration. For example, thoughts can be active and generally it would need a tranquil state and attitude to curb them, while dreamy thoughts need more alertness.

Gladdening the mind is done when one is depressed and dissatisfied. Joy is very necessary and has been known to be a concentration (Jhana) factor. Reflection of the happy moments or objects of inspiration (eg the Triple Gem for Buddhists) can be used.

As for Note (7), where we need to regard the mind without interference, it is appropriate not to disrupt the balance when the practice is progressing smoothly. Being enthusiastic, one may tend to put in more energy and this will upset the balance. This balanced flow however will not last forever and so one will need to be aware of when,

and how to balance it again. Keyword: Use intelligence to deal with the situation.

8 DISASSOCIATING FROM THE AGITATED.

9 ASSOCIATION WITH THE COLLECTED.

Whom we associate with can influence our minds. It is especially a relevant point to consider for beginners who often need more mutual support. In metta meditation, it would therefore be wise for them to avoid those who are restless and of angry temperament. One who chooses to be with those having loving-kindness and are tranquil will not only be inspired, but will also be able to receive ready advice.

10 REFLECTION ON BENEFITS OF ABSORPTION AND EMANCIPATION.

In general, this point applies to other exercises but here again we refer more specifically to metta absorptions. As for the benefits, one can reflect on the same 11 blessings of metta.

11 INCLINATION TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONCENTRATION FACTOR.

Here we refer to an inclination towards concentration. It is like a strong tendency brought about by impulses and volitions. At first one is conscious and knows its advantages, necessity and importance. Later, it goes into the deeper levels of the mind like a preprogrammed path. This is where it relinquishes the “conscious will” to embark beyond the “ordinary mind”. It may take time to develop to this and we should do so carefully so that it does not get out of hand or take us onto undesired direction.



## Absorptions and Mastery of Absorptions

**A**bsorptions (*jhana*) are deep states of concentration. When described as the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> absorption in the Suttas, they refer to specific levels of deep concentration.

Those states are “fixed” (*appana*) where the mind becomes completely absorbed in the object and it is possible to remain in that state while all the other senses and thoughts are cut off for as long as up to 7 days. All bodily feelings, sounds, smells, tastes and (of course) sight, are absent. Even at the mind door, there is just the mirror image (*patibhaga nimitta*), and its present object, with the mind absorbed in it. There are no discursive thinking. It is so subtle (deeper than deep sleep) that those who experience it may describe it as entering a “void”. With time and familiarity, one will be able to recognize this state upon emerging from it. The experiences of the different levels and its differing objects varies. One would also expect its description to vary from person to person. All the reading and supportive theory merely provide conceptual ideas of what they are or thought to be. There are also differences in opinion as to what is a true absorption (jhanic)

experience and which, is not. To know with certainty, one would need the real experience of it.

There are different types of absorptions. According to the Sutta, there are 4-form absorptions and 5-form absorptions in the Abhidhamma classification. As I do not wish to dwell into controversies of analysis of experiences, I would only encourage you to seek for someone (or perhaps more than one) who is competent in this field.

In Metta meditation (as well as that of compassion and sympathetic joy) one can achieve as far as the 3<sup>rd</sup> form absorption while equanimity meditation allows one to reach the 4<sup>th</sup> form absorption.

The predominant factors at each of the different form absorptions are as follows:

1 <sup>st</sup> absorption (Jhana)	Initial application Sustained application Joy Happiness One-pointedness
2 <sup>nd</sup> absorption	Joy Happiness One-pointedness
3 <sup>rd</sup> absorption	Happiness One-pointedness
4 <sup>th</sup> absorption	One-pointedness equanimity

The following concerning the Mastery of absorptions is taken from the chapter in my previous book, where one must master one absorption before moving to the next higher level.

When one is sure (eg through suitable guidance) to have experienced an absorption, then one can make resolutions (*adhitthana*) to master it. There are five aspects of mastery:

1 MASTERY IN ADVERTING

This is the mastery of being able to bring up (make an object of) one of the five jhanic factors, one after another immediately upon emerging from jhana. It is brought about by making resolutions.

2 MASTERY IN ENTERING

“Entering” means the shifting of the sensual sphere concentration to a form sphere (jhanic consciousness). It involves the switching off of the normal sense sphere consciousness to that of the absorption. One has to be familiar as to what the absorption is. One also has to have the factors of concentration sufficiently developed. Mastery of resolution is also important. When one knows that preparations have been well made, and faculties developed to the near access, then the mind flies off to absorption or sinks into the object by the switching of the will power to direct the powers and development of previous practice towards the required direction. It is like jumping off the diving board into the pool. It is like letting go of everything.

3 MASTERY IN STAYING LONG

This is the ability to stay as long as one wishes in that absorption. One can stay in for as long as seven days at a stretch. Adequate preparations, we are told, are very

important. When we are not worried eg about lunch or appointments, the mind is at rest to go on. Preparations may involve making sure no one will disturb us over a period of time and all important matters are put aside. Having cleaned the body and made a very thorough practice that will bring about lengthy sitting, with the making of suitable resolution for a fixed period, one enters and abides therein. Usually one has to be trained to lengthen the period of the absorption by making successive resolutions for increasing periods.

#### 4 MASTERY IN EMERGING

“Emerging” means emerging from the state of absorption. Its precision can be based on, firstly, the point of time. This depends firstly, whether one is able to hold on that long first (ie the mastery of abiding). But if one is able to, the precision is exactly when. It is said that it can be done to the accuracy of the required second. Secondly, it is based on the event or occasion. For example, one may decide to emerge if anyone comes to knock at the door, or as in suttas, the Sangha or Buddha summons! All these abilities will depend on practice and mastery through resolution.

#### 5 MASTERY IN RETROSPECTION/REFLECTION

“Reflection” here is the reflection of the absorption from which one has just emerged. Reflection here does not mean thinking but full awareness of the components that make up what has just occurred. Therefore, the reflection is done only immediately after emergence. It can occur in two ways

- 1 The reflection of the consciousness that has just passed. From it one can identify which absorption it is and the

factors that constitute it. However one will have to be familiar first with what all these are through experience and guidance. Usually for first-timers it is unfamiliar.

- II Reflection by the use of resolution. Here one resolves to witness the factors of concentration present in the absorption just passed. Through the power of the resolution, one will witness, one by one, the factors.

It is similar to the first mastery which involves adverting the mind to the jhanic factors. Immediately following it is the reflection. It is through this reflection that there is awareness that one knows which absorption one has entered as well as the unsatisfactoriness of the lower factors. For example, reflecting on initial and sustained application will form a base for the attainment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Jhana. Similarly, reflect on joy to attain the 3<sup>rd</sup> Jhana and to attain the 4<sup>th</sup> Jhana, one will have to reflect on happiness to proceed to equanimity meditation and aspire for the 4<sup>th</sup> Jhana.

This reflection has often to be made many times but care must be made not to overdo it, as it will develop a strong dispassion for it as one sees the faults. Then one will be unable to enter into that absorption even if one resolves to.

Resolutions to see the factors:

- May I see the 1st factor of that absorption.
- May I see the 2nd factor of that absorption.
- May I see the 3rd factor of that absorption.
- May I see the 4th factor of that absorption.
- May I see the 5th factor of that absorption.

After having seen them, eg one may know one was within the first absorption and then one may proceed on again to the process of adverting and work towards the second. After the next absorption, one can again see the factors of absorption that make it up and then work up to the third and fourth absorption in the same way.

Once one has gained the five-fold mastery of the jhanas one to four, then one may further the mastery by gaining them:

- I in the direct ascending order ie  
1-2-3-4.
- II in the reverse or descending order ie  
4-3-2-1.
- III in the ascending and descending order ie  
1-2-3-4-4-3-2-1.
- IV in skipping of absorptions ie  
1-3-4-2.
- V in weaving of absorptions ie  
1-2-1-2-3-2-3-4-3-4-3-2-3-2-1-2.

Such practice enables one to be very familiar with these states of mind, to gain them easily and move about with ease.





## Changing the Object of Metta

When one has acquired the skill and ability of entering into deep levels of concentration with the lovable person, one may proceed to the other types of individuals.

Metta, whether with deep concentration or otherwise, should be boundless. On the other hand, it should be strong in all cases so that the practice can be directed in varying depths to the following persons in the order shown below:

- 1 lovable person
- 2 intimate
- 3 neutral
- 4 repulsive
- 5 inimical

The sequence may be understandable and each type poses its own specific problems and implications. With the ability and versatility developed through the practice, it is possible to make all of them “lovable” not only in your mind but also in the real sense. Isn’t that wonderful?

### THE LOVABLE PERSON

This has been dealt with earlier in this book. The rest of the individuals (2-5) follows after the lovable person, as pure metta is difficult to arouse.

### THE INTIMATE PERSON

This is someone whom you feel really close to. It may be an offspring, a sibling, a spouse or a time-tested comrade—someone who has gone through thick and thin with you. For most people however, such intimacy causes attachment to arise which in turn brings about suffering when the relationship turns turbid, or in being separated. Then one ought to learn to be wise in giving unselfish, unconditional love which never fails to heal and grow.

If attachment has become so strong or over-heated, contemplate first on the recollections—such as on kamma (Equanimity) or Death and Impermanence.

Contemplate also on the dangers of craving and attachment. Then when one is ready, radiate it at a distance. Feelings of joy can be strong but try to keep it light and refined and you will be surprised how quickly concentration can set in. At times, it is the attachment to joy that restricts! Whenever attachment arises, return to metta on oneself to establish one's mindfulness again.

Through constant practice, then one will be able to distinguish whether it is metta or attachment, and the different types of metta that are suitable to be applied.

When you are able to develop deep absorption even on the intimate person, then you will be able to improve your close relationship and to love the other even more without hurting either party.

### THE NEUTRAL PERSON

There are a lot of such persons, ranging from those you don't know, just known or have known for a long time in whom you have no special interest. In indifferent and over-individualist societies, this is common. They also make up the "teeming millions" of Asia.

But look at the potential present—there are so many people whom you can give metta to and to grow. Each individual as mentioned before is endowed with human virtues, spiritual qualities, the ability to give love and need to receive love. What we need to do is to start with one, preferably one you know who is around and meets often, like a working colleague, newspaper man, or whoever!

The first step involves invoking emotion. See the goodness and potential of a human being, of friendship and of metta. If you are in contact with the person, get to know the person and express the gentleness, peacefulness and joy of metta in words, action and thoughts. You may be amazed at the response and the progress of your concentration. Also see how quickly metta spreads around—it is infectious and your heart field will widen tremendously.

Another way metta can be given to the neutral person is by "borrowing" metta from the momentum which has been built-up while giving metta to the earlier persons (lovable, intimate). Such momentum still lingers on even after the change of objects. This explains why we need to return to the lovable person as the object when metta cannot be generated.

### THE REPULSIVE PERSON

With this person, we are approaching more difficult aspects—"dangerous" aspects, as there is the hidden enemy of metta—hatred. Hatred arises more in oneself than in the other party. For

example you may say, “I don’t like her—she’s too talkative”, or “I don’t like him, he’s got a wide mouth”. In the practice of metta, you can counter these negative thoughts by positively thinking—“talkativeness has its good points” or “you don’t have to like his mouth, you can like his heart”... and so on.

Firstly, you need to ask yourself why you dislike him or her. You may be surprised to find that many, if not all reasons, are groundless. At the same time, be aware of the anger present, see into its danger and unreasonableness and cast it away. With the path unhindered, now see the potential goodness and opportunity for friendship and love. You will also be surprised how wonderful these people can be. Just like how the princess turned the ugly toad into a handsome prince with a kiss. Imagine, the ability to give full love to such a person with deep concentration is a milestone achievement in the practice.

#### THE INIMICAL/ HOSTILE PERSON

Have you seen the face of your real enemy and how horrible he looks? Yet the true “enemy” is the defilements in us and of them, hatred is the direct foe of metta. We are advised not to treat them as “enemies” but rather as weaknesses, illnesses or “lost souls”.

On the other hand, we can see it more positively as hidden opportunities to practise metta.

The hostile person is the most difficult of the objects to handle. Not just because of our deep seated hatred but also because we often consider it justifiable to hate. To overcome hatred, we should abide in the Dhammapada—“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me—in those who do not harbor such thoughts, hatred is appeased”.

A good practice begins firstly, by removing ill-will mentally. Look into the issue impartially. One must first be morally right in behavior. If one is justifiably right, then we can begin to contemplate on the dangers of anger, and possibility of forgiveness when there are human failings. Next, we can proceed to recall the blessings of metta and then to arouse metta. Sending metta to a person does not mean condoning his bad actions. It just means we wish him to change to become better. It is a matter of going back to basics.

If one still fails in the above process, then one is advised to revert to radiating metta to oneself. An alternative is to try using compassion instead, and then, equanimity.

Imagine being able to give concentrated metta to such a hostile person. It will be as good as achieving a miracle.

As a further thought—what about animals like spiders, scorpion and snakes, which are often feared—which grouping would they come under? I hope you will consider them as “lovable”.

When one is able to go through all these types of individuals and attain to the various levels of absorptions and their mastery, then one will be ready for genuine, universal love.





## Universal Metta to All Beings

**U**niversal metta is the unconditional love for all beings. The mind, therefore, expands its horizon to cover all forms of life. It must therefore be really open, flexible and versatile to receive every being into the heart—like an open palm to receive all into its fold; like an open flower, beautiful and inviting. As one proceeds to directional metta, its spatial implication is apparent, like a bird speeding in a direction. Such a mind that finds no barriers, expands into what seems like “a universal consciousness of love”.

But first, the concept of all beings has to be grasped. How do you visualize all beings? Obviously it’s more of an idea than visual concept. One has just to bear in mind what it means. How about unseen beings like spirits?

I would proceed to do it spatially, thinking of them all around in the room, house, property, area, city, district, country and further extended to the world and universe. One need not go into absorptions, as at this juncture, the objective is to grasp the concept of “all beings” and to feel how a really opened “heart” is like.

Then, think of those you know and recognize, subsequently extending to creatures that you are familiar with—house cat, the mouse that squeaks at night and so on. Acknowledge the presence of other creatures around that you are not aware of. Then, let the “open heart” cover “all of them”. When you can take in “all beings in the world” you can then feel how much more open the heart is—completely the reverse of a constricted heart which is confined by anger, craving and delusion.

In radiating metta to all beings, there are 2 types of pervasion:

1. Unspecified pervasion (*anodhiso phasana*)
2. Specified pervasion (*odhiso phasana*)

#### UNSPECIFIED PERVASION (*anodhiso phasana*)

This is metta given to beings without specifying the types. It is therefore, a sending of metta without discrimination—regardless as to all males, females, young or old, near or far and so forth. This is like an open letter meant for everyone in the public.

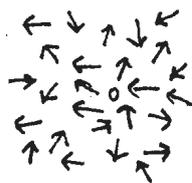
Traditionally unspecified pervasion is given in 5 forms:

1. all beings (*sabbe satta*)—sentient beings with feelings
2. all living things (*sabbe pana*)—beings that breath and live
3. all creatures (*sabbe bhuta*)—beings arising out of their kamma
4. all individuals (*sabbe puggala*)—beings seen as individuals
5. all personalities (*sabbe attabhava pariyapanna*)—beings with personalities

These 5 forms actually convey the same meaning. Different words are used to break the monotony and to approach the “being” from a different perspective in order to increase the perception of it and hence, increase concentration.

Unspecified pervasion is best done after having radiated metta successfully to the different individuals, starting from the lovable to the hostile. In the deeper recesses of our minds, it will be meaningful if we have included them as “all” beings. Otherwise, it would be fruitless if there are still reservations to mean “all” except “Hagar the Horrible”.

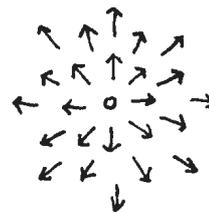
Let’s say you are spreading metta to all beings in the vicinity. Bring to your mind all beings around the area—people of all sorts and animals such as dogs, cats, birds, ... ants and even “unseen” beings, leaving out nothing and nobody. Feel the energy from the metta heart spreading outwards to fill the whole area. At first, it can be somewhat scattered or haphazard (Diagram A)—now here, now there. You will feel it wandering and roaming the area. If you can identify it as energy, vibrations and waves, you will sense it in your mind as it spreads and expand (Diagram B). It’s important to abandon the concept of the body. After several expansions, the perimeter will change into an expansive perception of “all beings”. As one expands the coverage, feel the metta feelings and consciousness spreading like a sea of loving energy, rolling in waves to the horizon or rays of light glowing and expanding outwards. A variation of this is a spiral vortex expanding outwards (Diagram C). The important point of such imagery is not to forget that it is the metta that comes with them, and beings are the object. Otherwise, it may turn into just pure visualization exercises.



A. Haphazard expansion



B. Vortex expansion



C. Radiating expansions

Finally, it will become an expanding flow of metta. The object or individual beings will appear to be insignificant. It's just metta for all beings.

Aspirations can be used in each case, to increase the momentum or prolong the flow depending on the faculties at that moment. The 4 aspirations are:

1. May all beings be safe from dangers
2. May all beings be peaceful, free from mental suffering
3. May all beings be healthy, free from physical suffering
4. May all beings take care and live happily,

These 4 aspirations can similarly be applied to the other unspecified pervasions repeatedly:

May all living things be safe from dangers... live happily

May all creatures... individuals... personalities... live happily

After that one can return to "May all beings... live happily" and so on.

When concentration has picked up, it can also reach the absorptions.

#### SPECIFIED PERVASIONS (*odhiso phasana*)

In the case of specified pervasions, the groups are well defined. Each group exhibits their particular behaviors and qualities. It will therefore be relevant to take note of each group's characteristic and determine whether it corresponds to the "lovable", "neutral", or "repulsive" grouping. With this, one will know how to act and what type of metta to arouse and so on.

Each of us differs in our preferences, prejudices or even attitude to be corrected and virtues to be cultivated. Our reaction to the groupings is a reflection of it. Learning this as we practise should

help us to improve ourselves and our relationships with other groups. Eventually, when deep concentration arises, we would know that we have made progress.

Traditionally there are 7 groups which can be reclassified into 3 categories:

- |   |                      |   |                           |
|---|----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | male kind            | } | gender differentiation    |
| 2 | female kind          |   |                           |
| 3 | realised individuals | } | spiritual differentiation |
| 4 | ordinary folks       |   |                           |
| 5 | deities              | } | rebirth differentiation   |
| 6 | humans               |   |                           |
| 7 | unfortunate ones     |   |                           |

#### MALE (*Purisa*) & FEMALE KIND (*Itthiyo*)

The characteristic difference is not just gender but also cultural. In the first, sense cravings may arise and in the second, anger may arise if there has been injustice. We must firstly correct any wrong attitude in our minds. If there is anger and craving, then there is also delusion. For example, an unbalanced person who says “all men are unfaithful” or “all women are weak” should change his views. There are certainly differences in behavior in both genders. There are also positive and negative qualities which vary between individuals and groups. What is important is to be unbiased and not to generalize. Secondly, we should accept that we are all human beings with differing potentials.

As food for thought, should we include beings which are:

- 1 hermaphrodite?
- 2 sexless?

If we do, that would then cover all beings!

Again the 4 aspirations applied to these groups when one is doing metta may lead to absorptions and mastery.

REALISED INDIVIDUALS (*ariya*) & ORDINARY FOLKS (*anariya*)

The difference between these 2 groups is in terms of spiritual attainments. In Theravada Buddhism, there are 4 types of realized individuals:

*Arahata*—worthy one

*Anagami*—non returner

*Sakadagami*—once returner

*Sotapanna*—stream winner

All of the above would have experienced the “unconditioned reality” to varying extents, with the highest level of attainment reached by becoming a worthy one. At each level, defilements in varying stages are being uprooted with eventual termination of rebirth.

The ordinary folks include all good and foolish folks. In actuality, you will rarely, if ever, come across a really evil person. We’d rather look at them as weak or “sick” and need compassion. Conversely, to be totally “good” is to have “realized”. Most would come as in-betweens.

In any case, it’s not easy to know who has “realized” and guessing would not help to ascertain this either.

Alternatively, we could classify them as:

*a* spiritually inclined beings

*b* spiritually uninclined beings

Again, be careful how you respond to this. If you consider yourself spiritually superior, then pride may arise. But if you consider others more superior than yourself, you may develop inferiority complex. The solution to both situations is to replace

them with humility and respect. Then the feeling of fellowship and faith will arise instead, and metta follows. When metta arises, we can again make use of the 4 aspirations to drive the flow into the absorptions and gain mastery of them.

This understanding is crucial to harmony in spiritual societies, not just within a religious system or tradition, but also between them. Sectarianism can be divisive and lead to unintended hatred. Breaking down the barriers between oneself and others or between spiritual levels, leads to better communication and increases trust so that the community can advance. Even on our own, as one radiates to those spiritually higher or less inclined beings, it will broaden our commitment and relationship in a spiritual way.

#### DEITIES, HUMANS & UNFORTUNATE BEINGS

The above 3 groups are classified in accordance with the type of rebirth in Buddhist cosmology.

Deities are celestial beings of the heavenly or brahma realms.

Humans—are humankind. It is interesting to note that the Buddhist commentaries speak of other types of human realms with life-span that can far exceed ours.

Unfortunate beings—are those born as hungry ghosts, hell beings or animals as a result of unwholesome kamma. Their faculties are usually lower when compared to humans.

It is not possible to know of the existence of all types of beings, especially those whom you have not seen or cannot see. A large percentage of the world's population do not believe in deities or ghosts. Therefore, one has either to accept their existence as a possibility or ignore them until research evidences can be found to prove their existence.

The interesting point here is that one can radiate to them and break the barriers. This does not mean that I encourage communication with them but rather of a harmonious co-existence for the happiness of the society. Such practice would also help to eliminate fear of the unknown—particularly if you are one subjected to “superstitions”.

You can treat all of these beings as you do with all the other individuals and transform them as lovable beings.

However, naturally the devas would incline one to have sympathetic joy whereas unfortunate beings need more compassion.

Whatever they are, when the barriers are broken, only the “being” matters. As in other groups, one can proceed to practise until you advance to absorptions and gain mastery of them.

In the Buddha’s discourse on loving-kindness, more classifications are possible such as:

- 1 Weak or strong without exceptions—(strength)
- 2 Long, big, short, tiny, medium sized, bulky, small—(size)
- 3 Seen or not seen—(visibility)
- 4 Near and far—(distance)
- 5 Those who are to come into existence (rebirth)  
Those who have come into existence (rebirth)  
Those who do not seek (rebirth)

Divisions made with regard to beings can be countless. One can make them to suit one’s needs and situations, to remove ill-will, bring about goodwill and promote spirituality, concentration and insight.



## Directional Metta

When one has acquired the skill in radiating metta to all beings and their various groupings, then one may use the aspirations and proceed to do the same in 10 directions as follows:

7 specified pervasions x 4 aspirations x 10 directions

5 unspecified pervasions x 4 aspirations x 10 directions

The 10 directions mentioned are:

- 1 Eastern direction (*puratthimaya disaya*)
- 2 Western direction (*pacchimaya disaya*)
- 3 Northern direction (*uttaraya disaya*)
- 4 Southern direction (*dakkhinaya disaya*)
- 5 South East direction (*puratthimaya anudisaya*)
- 6 North West direction (*pacchimaya anudisaya*)
- 7 North East direction (*uttaraya anudisaya*)
- 8 South West direction (*dakkhinaya anudisaya*)
- 9 Direction below (*hetthimaya disaya*)
- 10 Direction above (*uparimaya disaya*)

Directional metta is based on the concept of space and makes use of the 10 directions for mental expansion. In doing so, one

breaks down the barriers imposed by distance and space. Then one can send metta effectively to anyone as if one is just beside you, or more correctly, within you. Sending metta to each person in each direction, one after another, requires much energy, but the concentration accumulated is powerful. In total there are 528 aspirations of metta:

Unspecified pervasions:	5 x 4 aspirations	= 20
Specified pervasions:	7 x 4 aspirations	= 28
Unspecified directional:	5 x 4 x 10 directions	= 200
Specified directional:	7 x 4 x 10 directions	= <u>280</u>
		528

Each of these is capable of reaching an absorption.

You may start with the first direction, “May all beings in the East direction be safe from dangers” until you finally end with “May all personalities in the direction above take care and live happily”.

For directional metta, you must first focus on the limitless space that extends in one direction. Try going to the hilltop lookout point or the seashore. Throw your vision to as far as your eyes can reach and get the sense of distance. Then close your eyes, arouse the metta and let it flow in that direction. When the flow is smooth and powerful, merge your awareness and flow with it. It can go on indefinitely. Forget the form of the body and let it be as though there’s no body. Imagery can also help. Often I make use of the image of a bird created in the mind with metta energy. You may see it as bright and graceful metta. Fixing the awareness to it, let it lift up powerfully and fly in the direction—spreading loving-kindness all along the way. The aspirations of metta made each time give it a special impetus that comes in

waves. Alternatively, one may choose other images such as an angel showering bright lights of metta or one may also choose a cloud carrying cool, fresh showers of metta. Be imaginative and creative in the practice.





## Ways of Working out Metta

**T**here are different ways of cultivating metta:

*a* INTENSIVE/ NOT INTENSIVE

We have already mentioned that metta meditation can be practised to gain absorptions or just to gain a wholesome happy life, and gain access concentration. In the first, it is usually done intensively, ie continuously for the entire day alternating walking, sitting and even during other activities such as eating and answering the calls of nature. One must be radiating loving-kindness all the time. One also keeps to radiating to a single person till he reaches the absorptions.

Non-intensive metta is more flexible and can be done in varying degrees of intensity. One need not stick to a single person even within a sitting. It is generally more versatile but its effect should not be underestimated. A little love still goes a long way.

*b* SOLITARY/ GROUP MEDITATION

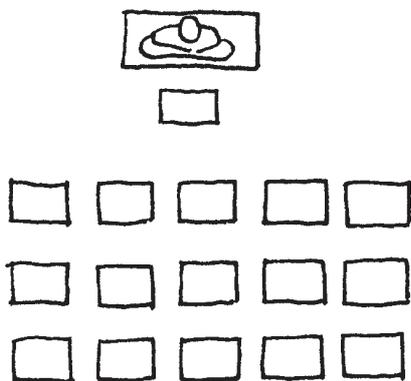
Solitary meditation is usually more conducive to tranquility meditation as it is usually more quiet and less likely to run

into misunderstanding with others. But one has to be determined or else laziness and boredom will creep in. It's more suited for people who are independent and established in the practice.

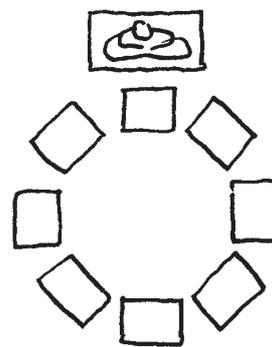
Group meditation has its positive effects. It is especially so for beginners who may need some support. This can be clearly felt in the energy during the retreat. In metta retreats, the force of metta can be strongly felt, and so it will be reassuring to have friends around. What is needed is more space, good organization and control and it will be perfect. Otherwise, in group meditations, there can be more distractions.

## GROUP DYNAMICS

In the past years, I have experimented with metta done in groups and they produce favorable results. For example, sitting in a circle (the metta circle) would be more effective than the normal squarish arrangement. Facing each other, it is easier to give metta to one another.

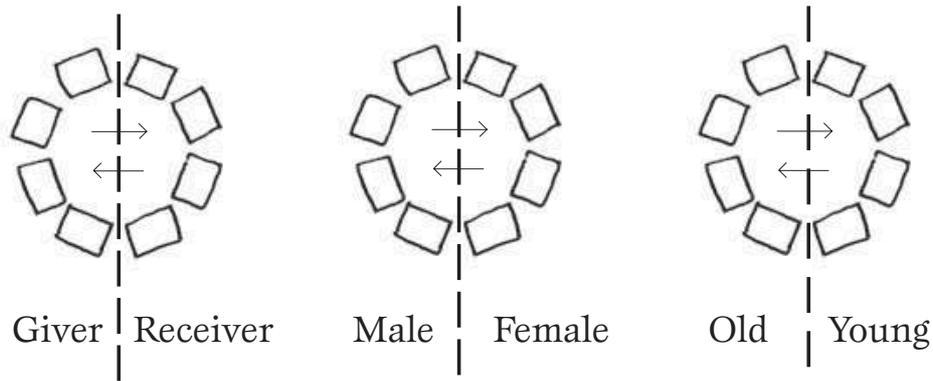


Squarish Arrangement

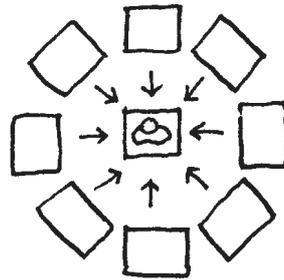


Circular Arrangement

While doing group metta one can learn to give and receive metta by dividing the participants into two sections where roles are exchanged alternately.



One can also put someone in the centre eg for healing, and results can be encouraging.



There are many more variations if one is creative and the larger the group, the stronger the effect will be. As the group's concentration improves, the effects improve likewise. However, what is certain is that the group cohesion will grow and conflicts reduced.



## Metta and the Four Brahma Viharas

**M**etta, together with compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*) are classified as the 4 Divine Abodes (*Brahma Viharas*). “Brahma” means divine or noble. The Path of Purification—a text on meditation, qualifies it as the sense of “best and immaculate”. Those who practise it have immaculate minds like Brahma gods. Vihara means abode and therefore, practising the Brahma Viharas is like abiding/living like brahmas—who live blissfully, without hatred. These 4 Abodes are attitudes towards beings that bring about favorable relationship. They can also be extended towards an immeasurable scope of beings and are so called “Immeasurables”.

Karuna and mudita are actually shades of metta. Karuna sees into the suffering of beings and seeks to remove it, while Mudita sees into their happiness and rejoices. Metta can be applied to both situations like a friend that brings happiness. But karuna and mudita also have their special qualities and effects as we shall see later.

Upekkha however, stands out in the sense that it arises with neutral feelings. It is a balanced attitude towards beings, which comes about through understanding of the conditions, particularly the law of kamma. It serves to balance the other 3 Abodes which tend to be more emotional and also serves as the base to reach the 4<sup>th</sup> absorption.

A Thai creation depicts the Brahma god as a 4-faced deity. Frankly, I think it looks like a monster but nevertheless, innovative. Each face has a different expression—loving, compassionate, rejoicing and equanimous. There are no angry, lustful or deluded faces. Often it is placed outside homes, temples and hotels to represent hospitality to all.

## COMPASSION (KARUNA)

Compassion is the heart that seeks to relieve the suffering in others. Its cultivation is similar to that of metta, sharing the same 11 blessings and brings about the 3<sup>rd</sup> absorption.

Generally, it is easier to arouse if one is able to, or is not afraid, to see the suffering present in others. For a start, contemplate on the dangers of cruelty (its direct foe) and the blessings of compassion.

Then select an unfortunate, suffering being as the object. Do not select an intimate person as grief may arise, nor a hostile person as one may not be able to avoid feeling pleased about it. Choose neither the dead nor opposite sex. Select one whose suffering is apparent so that compassion arises easily—One whom you have been acquainted with for sometime is preferred.

Take to suffering by visiting friends in hospital and visit orphanages, nursing homes, rehabilitation centres or funeral

parlors. Mental asylums have been described as “living hell”, displaying the extremes of mental suffering in the world where their inmates have gone berserk!

Suffering can be classified into 3 types:.

- 1 mental and physical pain
- 2 suffering because of defilements
- 3 suffering of being in samsara

1 Mental and physical pain are termed “apparent suffering” because it is easy to understand them as suffering. Of the two, mental pain can be much worse although both are inter-related. Sometimes, people may be able to conceal their mental pain and so we need to get to know them better to understand.

2 Suffering from defilements is a form of mental suffering which may not be obvious. On the other hand, they may seem to be quite happy. For example, a deranged person can be laughing day and night. People indulging in intoxicants are seemingly happy too. There are also those who laze around like slugs and those who are so busy that they do not see the essential meaning of existence. One needs some wisdom to be able to understand it as suffering.

3 Suffering of being in samsara is the suffering that come with repeated rebirths in the cycle of Birth and Death. There are existences where sufferings are beyond one’s imagination. There are those that are deemed blissful. Generally one can conclude that there is still too much suffering and danger in repeated rebirths and one can happily decide to do without them. But most people are

not able to recollect past lives or even consider it a possibility. If one is able to understand and accept it, then there can arise that great compassion peculiar to highly spiritual people like The Buddha.

The skills to be acquired in Karuna is empathy—to be able to feel the pain, anguish, despair, sorrow of another. Yet one has to remain clearly aware, whilst allowing and encouraging feelings of compassion to flow out. The greater the suffering perceived, the more the compassion will overflow. At this point one must remember to keep the suffering being as an object and not allow yourself to suffer with it. There is a thin line between compassion and grief—its near enemy. When it over-runs, then it is no longer compassion, but grief, (sadness rooted in ill-will), has taken over.

When that happens, then start again. Return to establishing mindfulness and metta in oneself. Contemplate on kamma to bring about equanimity. The feelings can be very strong. Keep firmly on the clarity. Maintain that peacefulness and gentleness. Then, when karuna surges, you may behold an incredible powerful force whose energy needs to be controlled and refined.

Once, I was sending compassion to a roommate who was sick. It wasn't serious. But it got the better of me and I was looking frantically for help. The problem was that it happened in the middle of the night when all the yogis in the centre were fast asleep. Fortunately, I managed to quickly return to my "senses". Without wisdom, sometimes, we can be overcome by emotions and end up looking quite foolish.

Traditionally the aspiration used is "May he/she be free from suffering" (*Dukkha pamuccantu*)

It is used in the same way as the 4 aspirations in metta

bhavana—to arouse compassion, to sustain it until a momentum and flow picks up and have a “life” of its own. Then keep it to the object long enough with refinement, and concentration will soon set in.

I have also preferred to increase the number of aspirations to prevent monotony:

May he/she be free from physical suffering

May he/she be free from mental suffering

May he/she be free from samsaric suffering.

At times I have even resorted to an approach such as this:

May he/she be free from suffering today

May he/she be free from suffering tomorrow

May he/she be free from suffering the day after

... and so on and it still works

However, there has to be a word of caution. Too many aspirations can be distracting. Using a number of them skillfully produces familiarity and effectiveness. One has to be careful not to be carried away by unrealistic aspirations—false hopes!

Karuna is a force that is directly involved with healing and as such can be useful for those who are in the art of healing. It is also special in Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who intend to develop the Great compassion. What is of relevance here is that suffering must be accepted as a reality before the reverse can occur, i.e. the compassion aroused removes one's suffering leading to happiness. One has to allow time for the healing process to mature. Then the peaceful mind of compassion will override the pain and disease. When this happens, naturally a rejoicing transformation will take place.

After much practice, again we find that the force or flow of

karuna is all that matters. Words are not important. It's just the feeling flowing to its object.

On attaining the absorptions and their mastery with the different individuals, (in the order of dear one, neutral one and then repulsive and the hostile one), the hostile person can be used too, if one is able to see the hostile person as having great mental suffering as well.

Following that one can also proceed to radiate compassion to the 5 unspecified groups, 7 specified group and finally in the 10 directions.

1. *Sabbe satta dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all beings be free from suffering
2. *Sabbe pana dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all living things be free from suffering
3. *Sabbe bhuta dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all creatures be free from suffering
4. *Sabbe puggala dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all individuals be free from suffering
5. *Sabbe attabhava pariyapanna dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all personalities be free from suffering
6. *Sabbe itthiyo dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all females be free from suffering
7. *Sabbe purisa dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all males be free from suffering
8. *Sabbe deva dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all deities be free from suffering
9. *Sabbe manussa dukkha pamuccantu*  
May all humans be free from suffering

10 *Sabbe vinipatika dukkha pamuccantu*

May all unhappy states be free from suffering

## 10 DIRECTIONS

In the Easterly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the Westerly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the Northerly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the Southerly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the South-Easterly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the North-Westerly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the North-Easterly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the South-Westerly direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the Below direction

may all beings be free from suffering

In the Above direction

may all beings be free from suffering

## SYMPATHETIC JOY (*MUDITA*)

Sympathetic joy is the heart that rejoices at another's happiness. It is like having double joy and it is not surprising to find that it is more blissful than metta or karuna. But it is also rarer compared

to the other 2, especially in unfortunate countries. More often, seeing someone happier than oneself may, instead, give rise to its direct enemy—envy. Because of that, it is an effective remedy for those who wish to overcome that defilement. The proximate cause is the happy or prospering being, its object. It also means to be able to see the happiness in others. In a way it balances well with karuna and may be said to be a more positive aspect of metta.

Find places where there is happiness and feel their joy, upliftment and good fortune. Happiness can arise from 2 sources:

- 1 material benefits
- 2 spiritual happiness

As for material benefits, visit and see the comforts and power invested in people with material wealth. This also includes physical health and strength. Appreciate that those are advantages. Hence also realize that these do not come easily and are not easy to upkeep. Cravings and other defilements can readily ruin them and so spiritual happiness is superior. Visit places where spirituality is practised and people who are devoted to the purification and liberation of the heart. Feel their peacefulness and spiritual joy.

There may be places where generosity is free flowing, or where people observe restraint and good conduct. Those places where they delve deeply into meditation would be better.

Their spiritual wealth will bring much safety and happiness in the future. When one can see all these, one can rejoice. In rejoicing, one also sees the happiness in that and the folly of envy. However, just as in the other Abodes, it also has its near enemy—the joy that comes with attachment to worldly life—such as enjoying of one’s material benefits with craving, and so one must guard against this aspect.

The special quality of Mudita is appreciation—the ability to see the benefits and blessings in everything wisely, otherwise one may end up as a ruthless opportunist.

To begin, we select the intimate person. Being close to him/her, it is very easy to rejoice at his/her success and happiness. For anyone else, it may not be as easy. The deceased and opposite sex are also avoided for similar reasons.

Joy begets joy. When one really feels the happiness, let the object be impressed and infused onto one's mental state with clarity. A characteristic of mudita is that it tends to be light compared to karuna and metta, and may seem flimsy at first. It is also not a state commonly arising in people. So one has to be patient and keep on arousing it. Once it gathers momentum, it can really lift one's spirit. I remember a person who rejoices so often that she seems to float as she walks. The moment she rejoices "It is well! Sadhu!"; it seems she almost takes off.

Once Mudita has arisen, traditionally we use the aspiration;

May he not lose whatever repleteness gained  
*(yatha laddha sampatito mavigacchantu)*

It could be extended to the 4 favourable worldly conditions:

1. May he not lose whatever gains acquired  
*(yatha laddha sampatito mavigacchantu)*
2. May he not lose whatever fame acquired  
*(yatha laddha yasasto mavigacchantu)*
3. May he not lose whatever praise acquired  
*(yatha laddha pasanisato mavigacchantu)*
4. May he not lose whatever happiness acquired  
*(yatha laddha sukhato mavigacchantu)*

One can also include the positive aspect of it—“May he continue to keep whatever gains acquired”.

For simplicity, I have also used the following aspirations:

- 1 May he not lose whatever material/physical benefits gained
- 2 May he continue to have whatever material/physical benefits gained
- 3 May he not lose whatever spiritual happiness gained
- 4 May he continue to have spiritual happiness gained.

More positive aspect may be added or used instead ie “May he acquire even more material benefits... spiritual happiness”.

Finally, just as in metta, as a continuous flow of mudita gathers momentum, words are no longer important. In fact the “flow” is more like rising mist and clouds that become like a whirlwind, producing a shrill and excruciating ecstasy. Using clear awareness, establish the flow with refinement and tranquility, keeping it to the object until it settles into the absorptions and gaining mastery of them.

Then one can proceed to the other individuals in the sequence of the neutral person and then the hostile person. You could also develop mudita further to specified and unspecified pervasions and then in the 10 directions.

## MUDITA IN 10 DIRECTIONS

*Sabbe satta yatha laddha sampattito maviggacchantu*

May all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.

One then applies it to all the other 11 classes of beings. After that one continues with 10 directions for each class:

- 1 In the Easterly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 2 In the Westerly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 3 In the Northerly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 4 In the Southerly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 5 In the South-Easterly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 6 In the North-Westerly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 7 In the North-Easterly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 8 In the South-Westerly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 9 In the Below direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
- 10 In the Above direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.

## EQUANIMITY (UPEKKHA)

Equanimity is the balanced and even state of mind that arises from seeing beings as result conditions. In Buddhist practice it arises through the effects of wholesome and unwholesome actions (kamma). For this, one would need to have an understanding of what this means.

Equanimity comes with neutral feeling and so is often misunderstood as being “cold”. In actual fact, it is most profound and can lead to the deeper concentrations. For example, of the 4 Divine Abodes (Brahma Viharas), only the practice of equanimity can enable one to reach the fourth absorption.

Every time I looked at the mirror when I was practising the divine abodes, there were distinctly different facial expressions—a face with metta is pleasing, with compassion—soft, with sympathetic joy—happy. But when it came to equanimity, “oh, no!”—it looked like a stoned face with penetrating, emotionless eyes. But looking within, the mind was more than appealing. It was soft, tranquil and peaceful. The only thing missing was joy, but in its absence, all the other refined and beautiful states were eminent. As the saying goes, “Judge a man not by his looks, but by his heart!

The blessings of equanimity are also similar to those of metta. It does have its own uniqueness (as mentioned earlier)—promoting access to deeper levels of concentration and being more profound. With it, one also can work, think and judge more efficiently. One with equanimity is most dependable!

The virtue that comes with equanimity is firstly, understanding, followed by acceptance and then stability. The resulting concentration is strong and durable.

Such understanding is not easy to acquire. It requires study, observation and contemplation. Equanimity is a sign of maturity! One approach to it is to see the dangers of a fickle and fluctuating mind. The states are restless in nature and in such states, there are much craving, anger and delusion. Such sufferings! Then, observe those states which are comparatively, more stable and concentrated. How much more peaceful they are.

Another way of doing it is by shifting from one absorption to the next, and dropping off the grosser Jhanic factors, leaving only the finer. At the last stage, when one contemplates on the grossness of “happiness” compared to equanimity and one-pointedness—it opens the way to the fourth absorption.





## What is Kamma?

For those who are not acquainted with the doctrine, it is only appropriate to offer a brief explanation, since the understanding of it plays an important part in the development of equanimity.

Kamma literally means “action”. The Buddha specified it as “volition”. These definitions do not make much sense to one who is unfamiliar with the Teachings. To simplify its meaning, some verses have described it as—“mind is the forerunner of all states, mind is chief, mind made are they. If one speaks or acts with an evil mind, suffering follows one... With a pure mind, happiness follows one.”

In plain words, the mind creates the world we live in and the creation hinges on “volition”—translated from the pali word “cetana”. It’s the “will” which is the active force involved in the creation although there is a passive aspect of it. States of mind—wholesome or unwholesome, associated with this, determine whether the results would give happiness or suffering.

Unwholesome states are rooted in greed, anger, delusion and it is not difficult to see why it is so. Looking at it specifically, greed

is like hunger/thirst, anger—violence, delusion—blindness and hallucinations. For example, when one is angry, its force naturally brings about violence and the seed/potential, thus planted, can resonate violence in the future. The fearful aspect is that it can span over numerous lifetimes.

Conversely, non-greed is freedom, non-hatred is love, and non-delusion (wisdom) is light/brightness. One who acts with love for example, will draw the same response from others and promotes health, friendship, comfort and so on.

We do not say that everything is due to kamma but we can say that it is the key factor that brings about any experience of an individual. It brings the mind and conditions to come together.

For example, when we wish to practise metta bhavana, our will power summons and brings about the conditions to look for the teacher, method, place, time and so on. This is obvious. But as metta practice progresses, we experience deeper happiness. Our change in character and overcoming of anger brings changes in our lives. It sounds simple but is also profound. The study of the mind can reveal deeper and intricate forces of creation, and that happens within—which brings about far-reaching and unexpected results that span over numerous lifetimes.

The reverse can be said of hatred, which brings about poor health, loss of friends, gaining of enemies, loss of wealth, loss of sleep, bad dreams and unhappy rebirth.

In the equanimity meditation, select a neutral person to start with. Again, it is better if he is one whom you've been acquainted with for sometime. You know his background, behavior and so forth. This does not guarantee full understanding of his kamma and its results since these conditions span over lifetimes. But

generally, a person's behavior conditions his surroundings and life, and so to an extent, it can be apparent. Equipped with knowledge about kamma from studies and other observations, it is possible to generate some equanimous state of mind.

Traditionally, in the same way as the 4 aspirations for metta, the statement used to step up the flow and concentration is:

“He/she has kamma as his/her true property”  
(*kammasakata hotu*)

The recollection on acceptance in an earlier chapter, can also be applied here. The use of more than one statement can help overcome monotony. But in this case, we direct it not to ourselves but another. So we may increase the statements to:

- 1 He has kamma as his true property
- 2 He has kamma as his true heritage
- 3 He has kamma as his true birth
- 4 He has kamma as his true relation
- 5 He has kamma as his true refuge

The whole recollection can be repeated as well

After having attained absorptions and mastery with the neutral person, one can proceed to do the same with the others—from the dear one to the hostile. After that, you can proceed to practise on the specified and unspecified pervasions and finally to the 10 directions too.

#### COMBINING THE FOUR BRAHMA VIHARAS

As we can see, the 4 divine abidings are different attitudes towards beings, and although each is different with its own unique characteristics, they are also very good attitudes and strike blameless, favourable or balanced relationships with others. They

can bring much peace and happiness in the troubled world we live in, which are torn by ignorance, pride, jealousy, stinginess, suspicions, greed, anger and so on.

Once the Deva king Sakka asked the Buddha, “Why do beings who wish to be free from anger and ill-will, who do not want to quarrel and be ill-treated, who pray for happiness, peace and freedom, are yet not free from danger and suffering?”

The Buddha’s answer was that all these conflicts, hatred, dangers and suffering are because of envy and miserliness.

One becomes envious when one wants to be happier than another but cannot do so. People like that also cannot stand others who are happier than themselves. Miserliness is not wanting others to share in one’s happiness and does not want another to be as happy as oneself. The result is a lot of fighting and quarrelling. These have their roots in anger and anger stems from greed and ignorance.

The 4 divine abidings are the immediate answer to ease such conflicts. Verse 5 from the Dhammapada says —

Hatred is not overcome by hatred

It is overcome by Love

This is the eternal Law.

When we see the different elements of brahma viharas we can say that although they are all good attitudes, one of them may be more suitably applied to a certain situation. If we are clear as to which one we can call up strongly so that the state fits well in the situation, we get to do what we wish for effectively.

For example, when there is jealousy around, we produce a lot of sympathetic joy. This should give a good example to offset this negative tendency prevailing.

When there is stinginess we practise generosity with metta and karuna. Hence verse 223 from the Dhammapada says —

Conquer anger by love  
Conquer evil by good  
Conquer the miser by liberality  
Conquer the liar by truth.

The same would be most applicable if such defilements do arise within ourselves. One important point here is that to overcome stronger anger one will need stronger love and so too between jealousy and sympathy, stinginess and liberality, cruelty and compassion. If one is unable to, one may need to resort to strong equanimity or detachment and understanding.

In another sutta one is advised that when one meets with a really hostile person and metta does not work, one resorts to compassion. If that too fails, one is advised to have equanimity.

Another application of combinations arises within one's meditation itself.

This practice involves not only the suitability of individuals or jumping of absorptions but also the changing of the divine abidings with skill. For example, we can choose to enter the first 2 absorptions in metta, the 3rd in compassion, the 4th in sympathetic joy and the 5th in equanimity. We can then try the first two in compassion, 3rd in sympathetic joy, 4th in metta and 5th in equanimity. There can be many combinations but the 5th has to be equanimity.

Then we can try switching likewise with different types of individuals, specified and unspecified pervasion and directional. And with each aspiration one may choose to enter a certain type of chosen divine abiding and absorption. Such skill in mind control

needs training but definitely it brings much happiness and peace to oneself.

Such a practice brings strong positive emotions at anytime whenever we wish for them and also gives us the flexibility of mind and relationships. Truly, people can change, and can change very quickly. If we do not adapt we can become very hurt or shocked.

A question may be asked:

Can we change all around like this when we have not attained any absorption?

The answer is yes, but it may not be very strong owing to the dispersed nature of the objects and different states of mind, and so may not lead to absorptions. But when practised properly, it can give us flexibility and favourable attitudes towards beings or people in any situation.

Often, people do recite the aspirations concerning the 4 divine abidings, one following another.

For example,

*Sabbe satta... avera, abyapajjha, anigha, sukhiattanam pariharantu, dukkha pamuncantu, yatha laddhasampattito, mavigacchantu, kammassaka...*

“May all beings; All living things; All creatures; All individuals; All personalities;

May all female kinds; All noble ones; All who are not nobles; All deities; All humans;

All those in happy states; May they be free from enmity; Be free from suffering; Take care of themselves happily; May they be free from suffering; May whatever repleteness possessed not be lost; Have kamma as their true property”.



## Practising Metta in Daily Life

**T**he faster pace and manifold activities of daily life usually do not permit the development of deep concentration, but it does not mean it is not possible to develop it. Development on the other hand, can occur in different ways as in the growth of a tree. It has to grow or else it may die.

This is where we find metta more useful if it is applied into daily life for us to see its beneficial effects. You may be surprised how far it can reach.

In the world, we find ourselves in many situations. Sometimes we get what we expect, sometimes, not. But whatever the situation we try to be calm, cool and to avoid trouble. It is better to improve the situation and be happy. It has to do with making the right decision and doing it right. Does it sound familiar? The crucial point is that the mind has much to do with this.

Having metta as a mental state works in most cases. That positive, joyful beneficial force opens doors, paves the way to removing suffering and brings joy. But there will be issues that need time to resolve, needing wisdom which we have yet to acquire and levels of concentration we are still trying to develop.

As such, we need to be flexible. At this point, we need to exercise as much wisdom as we can muster. Take a moment to think. Have clear comprehension of the purpose and suitability.

In daily life, as in formal exercises and retreats, metta does not arise (easily) all the time. There will be times when other mental states are necessary. The natural alternative is to practise mindfulness instead, for example when you are on a road, you need to heed traffic lights and do not think of someone with strong emotion. When you are in a queue, giving way to another person requires metta, so too is helping a hitchhiker. Again you will notice that wisdom and discretion has to be exercised so that you do not pick up someone harmful.

In typing a document you need to heed the words lest you type them incorrectly. But when writing to someone, metta will infuse itself into the letter with the right notes.

Secondly, metta can be interchanged with the other sublime abodes—compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). These are beautiful states in any relationships. When meeting with someone who is suffering, compassion arises; someone who is happy—sympathetic joy, someone who is beyond one's help—equanimity; otherwise have loving-kindness generally for all.

Let's take a day in the life of an individual. He wakes up, washes himself, takes breakfast and then goes to work. A child may need to go to school. Work varies. After that there can be entertainment, rest, dinner and then back to bed.

Is there really no time for us to practise metta ?

Metta usually arises with its object—a living being. So, as long as we deal with people or beings, it is natural and suitable to have

metta or one of the other sublime abodes. At the breakfast table for example, there is plenty of opportunity. How about a pleasant smile and greeting (sincere of course). Offer a seat, dish out (or cook) goodies for others. If you are in a queue, don't push. If you speak—use right and good speech. Praise the work (sincerely again) or sympathize with anyone in stress. Often it is also very good to remain silent, mindful or be radiating loving-kindness. The only drawback is that you may feel so good that you don't feel hungry! But, as teachers will tell you—you've got to eat!!

Then, you may have to be on the road. If you happen to be the driver, heed the traffic lights and road signs; do not think of someone emotionally. However, by giving way to others, be it someone crossing the road or someone impatiently trying to overtake you, you practise metta. It also makes your journey safer. Impatience and recklessness are the chief causes of accidents. A great test may be when you are caught in a traffic jam. You may end up practising patience or noting phenomena instead. But you can also, in such cases, have compassion for all those trapped on the road or reflect with gratitude if you think you are not any worse off. In any case, it is the exercise of the right state that counts, and metta works in most instances.

Now you find yourself at work. One can meet everyone around with a metta smile or greeting. There may be some occupations that do not have to deal with people, and so one will have to practise mindfulness. But in most cases, we deal with people such as your superiors and colleagues. To resolve each of these situations, you can refer to the Sigalovada Sutta, a discourse to Sigala. The same sutta reveals how we can treat the child at school and the wife at home and vice versa.

There will however, be some occupations which require metta and for metta practitioners those would be the ideal choice.

Such occupations may involve;

- i* Education—teachers, for example, can tell you where the satisfaction comes from.
- ii* Health and welfare services—doctors, nurses etc have plenty of opportunity to exercise compassion. So too are those working to rehabilitate drug addicts or those working with the poor.
- iii* Service industry—in restaurants, spas or where one serves other’s needs—one meets people of all sorts and these places become the training ground for applied metta.

There are some things that I discovered in my years of teaching meditation. Firstly, when there is really metta, one does not get tired. On the other hand one’s energy become vitalized. This is especially strong when it is mutual. However, there are cases which can be extremely negative. Often they are like parasites that sap whatever energy they can into a bottomless pit. When one is unable to handle this, one has to say NO! regardless of how pathetic the situation is.

Coming home to the family should make one feel happy. Home is where you’ll find your close and dear ones, or at least that was what homecoming was meant to be. Staying close together for long periods is a lesson to be grapple with. Many couples don’t make it, so they break-off while others hold on grudgingly. Metta can help to resolve most cases; I mean strong and constant metta. Understanding is also indispensable. Taking time off together to be happy is crucial. When everyone lives in their own world with little

communication, they head for different directions even if they do not quarrel. Unfortunately they often do, before they break-off.

Another thing that one may do is to take up a recreational activity. It is important to have one's own time to be happy (in the right way, of course!), ie metta for oneself. Or we may meet with friends whom we like and enjoy being with. Here is where metta can grow easily while participating in something healthy and wholesome. Do you have any suggestions? How about taking walks and appreciating nature, sports etc.

One activity we should not forget is our spiritual life in the community. For Buddhists, it will be time spent in the temples. Here is where our thoughts and actions depart from the mundane. Metta in spiritual life is important. It is not just helping the more ignorant, but also a fellowship that gains support and meeting with the more experienced who inspire and lead. Often much can be done at such places, for example, offering your services as cooks, drivers, cleaners, translators, printers, electrician etc

In metta retreats, the group metta sessions are often the most powerful. Similarly in the office and during working hours where people interact, the best relationships can be formed.

Then, when one turns to bed—one can recollect the day to take account of what had happened and what can be done to improve. Finally, a session of metta promises good sleep and dreams.

Other than the ordinary days, there are days of significance—one should make sure that metta or the other related states can be applied.

Some of these significant days are:

- Birthdays—birth of new relationship with metta—starting it right.

- Marriage and anniversaries—metta in commitment and faithfulness is deep but is challenging.
- Death and funerals—a time for compassion, comfort or equanimity.
- Departures and arrivals.
- Family reunions—time to reestablish good ties—“to catch up”—sources of metta.
- Festivals—Wesak celebration is rejoicing and reminders of good things.
- Renunciation—to be a monk or nun.

Renunciation is a renunciation of evil or even mundane life. It allows the growth of wholesomeness and it definitely includes metta. To say that spiritual life grows in wisdom is true, but it is also equally true to say that it grows in metta.

## CONCENTRATED METTA IN DAILY LIFE

Although concentrated metta is usually possible to achieve during formal meditation sessions—such as when sitting still in a meditation hall, it must not be construed as impossible in daily life. For example, considerable concentration is needed in playing squash or in times of handling danger. It only means the object is different and deep concentration need not last long.

For concentration to be possible in daily activities, frequent drilling is needed. Familiarity allows for precision and involvement, with minimal anxiety. When one has been practising and going into deep concentration frequently, it arises easily even in daily situations. In such cases, one must maintain clear

comprehension of suitability—ie knowing when and where to be in such deep concentration and how to control it.

With training, one will be able to put away all else and be deeply concentrating in metta even if it's for a few minutes or seconds. It's like taking a short nap and even that short time can do wonders to rejuvenate your body or enliven the situation you are in.

Take an example of putting a child to sleep. This is a situation that can allow you to try short concentration practice. You may recite metta verses and close your eyes to radiate metta. While taking up your phone and listening to the caller, you can also radiate metta to the caller in a concentrated manner. When you have to talk or move about, it is not so easy but it can also be done intermittently.

#### FORMAL METTA EXERCISES IN DAILY LIFE

This is when you are actually seated on your meditation cushion and meditating. You can also walk for some minutes so as to build up momentum and concentration. Morning is ideal after a good rest but anytime in the day can be possible. Usually, it takes half an hour to settle down but with regular practice, concentration can set in earlier. One must never underestimate these daily sittings, which are often overlooked by those who have attended longer retreats. They consider these brief periods of little use. That is because they expect too much. Those regular short sittings do have effects on daily life, without which, anger can grow rapidly and cause much sorrow.

#### WORK A MIRACLE

By a miracle, I mean a beautiful thing or happening which occurs out of or beyond our expectations. In this sense, we can work

miracles with metta. There will be greater miracles if we have stronger metta.

#### THE MIRACLE AT HOME AND SOCIETY

Once a friend said she had disagreements with a member of the family who shared the same house with her. I told her to do metta regularly to that person. Strangely enough the situation changed and they became closer. She was surprised because she admitted that her concentration was really not too deep. Life would be much happier if all of us are very good friends. This is especially relevant to those we are living or frequently associating with. Whether it is a family house, office, temple or any social organisation, why not regularly hold metta sessions together? Call all the family members every morning and radiate metta to each other. After that, we can have a good heart-to-heart talk. A lot of quarrels and misunderstandings can be ironed out. Then the home is a real home; a place where there are people you'd like to be with. The same also applies to the temple, office or any social organisation.

#### THE MIRACLE OF HEALING

When we meet with sick people, we can radiate compassion to them. The mind we believe is a powerful force. Where the divine abidings are concerned, they can bring about healing.

For a start, it will definitely help to boost the sick person's morale. A happier mind suffers less and also helps the body to recover faster. Once, I had a friend suffering from cancer. The pain as one can expect was terrible. I tried to use my mind to relieve his pain. What I noticed in my effort was that it first came with setting his mind at peace, for mind does influence mind. Following

that, I noticed that there were physical forces that arose with that peaceful mind. These are restorative and helpful. In the end it did help to overcome, if not a lot, then some pain.

Why not try out with regular visits to the sick, the old and suffering. One can do it alone, better still in a group. Radiate compassion to the suffering. Feel the peaceful compassion from your mind envelops and penetrates his. Feel the vibrations that come with the compassion likewise envelop and penetrate his body. Do so with deep concentration. Do so for long periods. Relieve the suffering of others.

#### THE MIRACLE IN THE FOREST

The forest represents a place where danger lurks at every corner. Wild animals such as tigers and snakes move around freely. Unseen spirits or even demons may abound. When we are in such a situation, it is very important that we have enough metta to overcome our fears and dangers.

A favourable citation of the power of metta is the incident when the Buddha himself was faced with a ferocious drunken elephant charging at him. The Buddha showered metta onto the animal and brought it to its senses. It sat down at the feet of the Buddha. I have also heard of a forest monk whose metta was so strong that even a tigress chose to bear and wean her cubs under his hut.

Animals are normally very sensitive to metta and may sometimes respond better than humans!

In another incident, I walked casually into the forest and found myself lost and the night was setting in. Then I remembered someone told me that a way to get out of such a situation was to radiate metta to the tree spirits. I did so and found myself out in

another direction very soon. Coincidence? Well, it helped firstly to stop any panic. It preserved the mindfulness to get my bearings right. I do not know if the tree spirits helped me, but the way out seemed to be exceedingly smooth. In other stories, the deities do lend a helping hand to people with metta in times of danger or trouble.

The arahant Subhuti, foremost in metta, once meditated in a field. The deity refused the rain to fall! This caused worry among the farmers. But when a hut was erected for him, the rain poured.

It is usual for Buddhists to gather together in times of danger or trouble to do recitations and metta to the world, to the deities and all beings, to summon up the blessings of the Triple Gem and so on. It is believed to be effective in preventing and averting dangers.

#### THE GREAT MIRACLE

There may be many other miracles where the power of metta worked wonderfully to relieve the sufferings of beings. But in working these, we must remember not to have selfish motives—to feel proud or attached to these things.

Of all these miracles, the greatest miracle metta gives is the miracle of purification. When we have metta, our defilements are overcome. Special reference can be made of ill-will or anger. It soothes us as much as an antidote that removes the snake's poison that burns in the body.

#### METTA AND ROLE PLAY

In the Sigalovada Sutta, a well-known discourse given by the Buddha to Sigala with respect to lay life, one is advised on how to

treat different relationships and duties to each other. Understandably, the advice given was related to the culture of India at that time. However, many are still relevant today, even in western societies.

In the Sutta, Sigala was taught to worship in six directions. The Buddha told him that the directions refer to the different relationships which one may have:

Parent—child.

Teacher—pupil

Husband—wife

Master / employer—servant / employee

Ascetics / spiritual leaders—laymen / followers

In life we find ourselves in different situations. Unfortunately, all men are not created equal. Or as some may say, some men are more equal than others. This is not to deny human rights, but rather to recognise the realities that make human rights relevant and so work for the better or make the best of it. Of course, there are those who are more fortunate and so have an advantage. There are also those less fortunate and take to a lower birth. Ignorance (and perhaps more) leads to avarice, envy, fuelling distrust and conflict.

Understanding realities such as impermanence, suffering and non-self mould us with the right attitude towards compassion, gratitude and love. Then, one may understand that we may be subjected to role-situations, which if we play them correctly, brings about peace and happiness. And as roles change, you also change wisely with it.

One may also be aware that any kind of relationships must necessarily involve people. When one does not play it right, the relationship will dip. A person with a pure mind will at least, be

free from guilt but he needs much metta and wisdom to save the link.

On studying the sutta, I noticed that a pure, good relationship is that which is between friends. In the other types of relationships mentioned above, there are discriminatingly “role-stratas” which are “special” cases for the practice of metta. Generally, one has first to be “friends” for a true relationship to flourish. Otherwise when there is no love, even father—son is merely a functional role as dictated by situation and society. The basic conditions needed to form the foundation are (1) Trust and (2) Communication.

Here, I would like to ask, “would you make a friend of someone you have no trust in?” Obviously your answer is No. Can you have a relationship with someone you have no communication with? Again the answer is No.

One may argue that universal metta considers everyone a friend, and can affect them even though you may not know them. That is true, but for most people their metta is not so strong to influence friendship to blossom. If it does, then trust and communication must also be present.

The duties of friends to each other are:

- 1 Buying gifts
- 2 Having kind words
- 3 Looking after one’s welfare
- 4 Treating one as they would treat themselves
- 5 Keeping their words

The duties of companions towards each other include:

- 1 Looking after one when one is inattentive.
- 2 Looking after one’s property when one is inattentive.
- 3 Being refuge to one when one is afraid.

4 Not deserting one when one is in trouble.

5 Showing concern for one's children.

The relationship here can be seen as mutual self-respect, sincere care, protection and love for each other in speech, body and mind. Of special commendation is when one protects and offers refuge to a friend. A friend in need is a friend indeed. At dire times, then you would know who your true friends are.

## ROLE VIRTUE

*a* **Parent** Compassion, responsibilities—love.

**Child** Gratefulness, appreciation, respect—love.

Parents are often praised for being the child's first friend or brahmas, etc. Those who have been parents will know the sacrifices they have made. One parent told me that it is not difficult if you really love the child. As such, the child is expected to be grateful by being obedient and so forth. In life, situations are more complicated than that. Parents may not be educated and spiritual. On the other hand, children are often unaware of the nature of life and what adults think. The result is the generation gap. Can metta resolve this? With worldly knowledge and spiritual wisdom, it should, although some may think that spiritual wisdom should be given more importance.

The duties of parents to the child are:

- 1 Restrain him from evil
- 2 Support him in doing good
- 3 Teach him some skills
- 4 Find a suitable husband / wife for him
- 5 Hand over inheritance to him

In turn, the duties of child are:

- 1 Support after being supported
- 2 Perform duties
- 3 Keep family tradition
- 4 Act worthy of inheritance
- 5 After their deaths, distribute gifts on their behalf.

It is interesting that the relationship of parent-child may change somewhat when the child grows up and parents become dependent on them. Then the child takes the upper hand.

*b* **Teacher** Compassion

**Pupil** Respectfulness

This relationship is quite similar to that of parent-child except that it is less intimate. In the past, teachers always had the upperhand owing to their skills and knowledge. Some are severe, others lenient, with a majority of in-betweens. Reasoning tells us that different degrees of strictness suit different students. As the Buddha once said, training his disciples were like training horses. Some moves at the shadow of the whip, some on seeing the whip and some only on being whipped. Then there are groups that will not budge even when whipped. In other words, “whipping” may be necessary for some. And for those who are incorrigible, he turned away with equanimity. In the past, some of the domineering teachers had also turned into authoritarian dictators whom students shun in fear, or resort to rebel against.

It can be seen in modern egalitarian societies that such role-strata discrimination is not emphasized today. It’s the friendship bond between the teacher and student that makes learning meaningful and fruitful.

After some years of teaching meditation, I've drawn the same conclusion. To be a teacher, one needs wisdom—worldly and spiritual—this is what makes the difference in being a teacher.

Secondly, students have different needs and potentials, and so attention given to them must vary. Ideally as much attention as possible should be given—with metta, but time is also a limiting factor for individuals. Nonetheless, if properly guided, students will feel grateful.

The duties of a teacher would be:

- 1 give thorough instructions
- 2 make sure they have thoroughly learned their lessons
- 3 give thorough grounding in skills
- 4 recommend them to friends and colleagues
- 5 provide security to all who are under duress

The duties of a student are:

- 1 rise to greet their teachers
- 2 wait on them
- 3 be attentive
- 4 service
- 5 master skills taught

### *c* **Husband** Trust and Faithfulness

#### **Wife** Trust and Faithfulness

During the Buddha's time, the male counterpart had the upper-hand and yet faithfulness is mentioned both ways. One would think that it should be the most intimate of all relationships. Physically, it should be so, but mentally, it depends. In some societies, it may be just a role played to procreate the needs of a society or clan. However, in many modern western societies, the

inequality of roles between husbands and wives have been weeded out. Even so, this again does not guarantee metta.

It is interesting to note that the Buddha mentioned four ideal types of wives—the motherly, the sisterly, the friend and the maid. Many real instances have indicated to us that a marriage is successful only when there is enough metta. Mere sensual satisfaction or wealth often leads to eventual separation.

The duties of a husband to the wife are:

- 1 Honouring her
- 2 Not disparaging her
- 3 Being faithful
- 4 Giving her authority
- 5 Providing adornments

The duties of a wife to the husband are:

- 1 Properly organizing her work
- 2 Tends to servants
- 3 Being faithful
- 4 Protecting store
- 5 Skillful and diligent in work

*d* **Master/Employer** Compassion, generosity

**Student/employee** Trustworthiness, diligent

The dependency of the employer on his employees varies. As in other cases, sometimes the employer takes advantage of his position to meet his own needs by exploiting and/or suppressing his employees. In worst scenarios, the enslaved employees have no choice but to rebel and oust the despot, or sometimes may resort to killing them, as in the Russian revolution. In more egalitarian societies, the employer's power may be more restricted by law

enforced by the government. Otherwise, the problem may still persist. Again, wisdom and compassion are indispensable. Sometimes, the roles played may change, as for instance where a senior staff may be passed-over in a promotion in favor of a junior, who may then become the superior. Whether it is justifiable or not, he will have to swallow his pride.

The duties of a Master to his servants are:

- 1 assigning work according to strength
- 2 supplying food and wages
- 3 looking after them when ill
- 4 sharing delicacies
- 5 letting off work during rest hours

The duties of servants to the master are:

- 1 getting up before the master
- 2 going to bed after him
- 3 taking only what is given
- 4 doing work properly
- 5 bearers of his praise and good reputation

e. **Priests, monks or renunciates** Wisdom/Compassion

**Laymen** Humility, Reveration

The role here is similar to that of the teacher-pupil, with more emphasis on spiritual matters. The priest/monk, who devotes his life to his purpose is presumed to have an advantage in facing up to life's mysteries and tragedies. But robes (external facade) do not make a person a monk and so complications may arise, if he is not what he purports to be. Spirituality therefore, is beyond external appearances. When one recognizes this, then there will be no trouble. Seeing the importance of fellowship in spiritual

sharing makes this relationship not just beautiful but deep. In egalitarian society, the importance of role-play is often put aside. Instead, virtues that both layman and monks have, are always given much merit. It may be healthy to do so provided that the layman has clear comprehension derived from actual practical exposure, and not from books.

The duties of ascetics/brahmins/monks to devotees are generally:

- 1 restrain him from evil
- 2 encourage him in good
- 3 be benevolent and compassionate to him
- 4 teach him what is not heard
- 5 point out to him the way to heaven

The duties of laymen are:

- 1 show kindness in actions
- 2 show kindness in speech
- 3 show kindness in thoughts
- 4 invite them to the house
- 5 supply requisites

Finally, we may conclude that the roles befall on one naturally in life; such as parent-child. Other roles may develop later such as husband-wife. We cannot ignore such realities particularly in certain Asian societies where relationships and status discrimination are the norm. As long as the roles are played properly, ie the dominant person does not exert despotism, but be compassionate, and the oppressed are not too outrageous.

It would be important to note sometimes, that role-playing can complicate a relationship. Firstly, in playing the roles, one party's ego and conceit may be inflated while the counterpart's gets

deflated. Ego conceit is a very sensitive and touchy issue. One can be very infuriated when offended or hoodwinked when praised, missing out on important points and therefore make the wrong decisions.

Secondly, there are expectations in role-play and these expectations vary with individuals and cultures. It is difficult to know what another's expectations are, and so, it is very easy to make errors. By having higher expectations one will be disappointed and if others expect much of you, it is necessary to set things right. On the other hand, if one has no expectations of another, it makes one flexible. At its worse, it may also mean that one expects the expected to happen. If one has strong awareness, it will enable him to accept whatever the consequences.

It is also interesting to note that when roles are played rightly, the good mental states like metta, compassion and sympathetic joy grow with time. The reverse mental states would likewise emerge if roles were not rightly played.

Mindfulness guards us from these while wisdom will guide us on how we can manage these roles skillfully. Generally, the virtuous qualities should be reinforced if the relationship is to improve, while the negative tendencies extradited. Metta is in the forefront of these positive virtues. What these virtues are, and how they work with metta, will be the topic of the next chapter.

Like meditation, if the virtues are recognized, they can be cultivated to form a wholesome supportive base for role-playing. It will ensure a healthy relationship even if the roles change, or are given less emphasis, as in the more egalitarian societies of the west. This is because the goodness and suffering present in every being are emphasized more; not the roles. It also helps to arouse

equanimity when things fall apart badly. For example, when couples separate, they can still remain as friends. Then one will find that each role is something special, a unique playing field where lessons can be learnt. It is noteworthy that different people fit very well into certain roles but can be quite hopeless in others. Success can only come with flexibility, and metta with understanding.





## The Metta Sutta

**T**hrough the Karaniyametta Sutta (the discourse on how loving kindness is practised), one can find a concise but complete advice given by the Buddha on the practice of loving-kindness. It is divided into 2 sections:

- i* The virtues which form the base of metta practice. These qualities are important for proper communication and conduct.
- ii* The conditions for development of the qualities of loving-kindness and beyond.

The Metta sutta commenced with the statement—”This is what should be done by one who wishes to attain the state of peace”. It is a mission statement of the practice—that sincere wish for the state of peace (often referred to as Nibbana). It was given to monks as a recommendation for the development of loving-kindness, as they were frightened by spirits in a forest. The advice however, is relevant in many other cases especially for those who have constant association with people and creatures, and those with angry temperament.

Under the first section of the Sutta, let us look into the 15 qualities as enumerated and investigate how they are related to metta practice itself.

1 CAPABLE (*Sakka*)

Capability in one's own material and spiritual welfare will determine how much service one can be of help to others. A poor man cannot help another much in the material sense. An immoral man cannot inspire or guide others in the development of virtues. Capability also means having the potential and resourcefulness. Although spirituality is most important here, we cannot ignore the importance of material needs, especially when one must first need to survive. As someone commented once, "Even to go to Nibbana, one needs money ". It is true in the west where retreats can be awfully expensive. From a spiritual sense, capability must be coined with confidence, the key to all wholesome states. To be able to love others, one must first have the ability to love oneself. Charity begins at home. To some extent, one should develop these aspects as a base for greater progress in metta (eg for metta concentration) as well as for the welfare work.

2. STRAIGHT/FRANK (*Uju*)

Straight forwardness and frankness is a sign of sincerity. Unless one is true to oneself, one cannot be true to others. And unless there is heart to heart communication, the relationship cannot deepen. This is especially pertinent to sensitive issues, and the involved parties need to change or adjust. It is applicable to all folds of work as well as private

life. Even in meditation, this is true. One has to look frankly at oneself—of one's weaknesses and strengths and what needs to be done. This is not always easy. One also needs to look into another's strengths and weaknesses and decide how far one wants the relationship to proceed and what sacrifices to make. Again, this requires taking note of things mindfully so that wisdom can arise before metta is free to flow with minimal obstructions and dangers, to its ultimate satisfaction. Frankness and prudence should go hand in hand.

3 EXTREMELY HONEST/STRAIGHT (*Suhuju*)

This extreme honesty and sincerity may be construed as one which can last for a long period of time and withstand great test. It signifies the reliability and deep trust that one can give. To a person of such quality, people will readily open their hearts and approach them in times of need. Such a person would obviously be of strong principle, courage and understanding. In short, he is extremely reliable.

4 ONE SHOULD BE MEEK (*Suvaco*)

Meekness means one who is obedient and not stubborn. Stubbornness on the other hand implies conceit or anger, or even laziness and so will not listen to others even if they wish him well. How then can he learn and improve himself (and metta as well) effectively? We must realize that we can learn much from others' criticism and even so from children. Definitely people would find it easier to work and live with a meek person.

However meekness should not be mistaken as weakness, which would mean being subservient, dependent and at the same time helplessly having to accept injustices, harassment and other harmful influences. Meekness is accompanied by non-aggressiveness, gentleness and humility that makes the mind pleasing, soft and accepting—key qualities of loving-kindness that enables effective communication.

5 GENTLE (*Mudu*)

Gentleness is opposed to harshness. Harshness is often aggressive and can be hurting because people can be sensitive. Pride in people is like an open wound. To cure it, we should be gentle. The gentleness displayed must be as if one is softly patting a child to sleep. With softness, stress does not arise but instead, joy will, and concentration quickly follows. In such a state, metta is easily aroused and grows. It's better not to say anything or act when there are traces of anger in the heart. Gentleness in our thoughts, speech and action can work wonders besides helping us in avoiding unnecessary conflicts. It is worthwhile learning to be gentle.

6. NOT PROUD (*Anatimani*)

Pride or conceit is very much related with the craving for existence and thus to the root of ignorance. It can be very dangerous when one who is powerful is offended. Then the anger that follows is destructive. Being “not proud” softens this internal demon and exorcised it from us. Seen positively, it is the virtue of humility, which has been described as the emblem of the wise. Thus he avoids stepping on others as well as not getting caught up with an ego trip.

When one is proud, it will be difficult for him to see the good points and needs of others. One may even put others down in order to emulate oneself. It is good to bear in mind that “there is so much good in the worst of us, and so much fault in the best of us”. By doing so, then concentration on impermanence will finally uproot conceit.

When humility arises, it can then grow into appreciation, gratefulness (which is sympathetic joy) as well as respectfulness, which in turn is linked with faith.

#### 7 CONTENTED (*Santutthi*)

Contented means being satisfied with whatever is available. One who is discontented is dissatisfied (ie frustrated then becomes angry or sad) and so craves for what he thinks will make him happy. Again, one must firstly uproot the unwholesome anger as well as selfish greed which contaminates any good acts done and complicates and erodes the effective function of metta. Contentment then positively allows for the growth and joy in spiritual life.

A relevant question had been asked—how do we practise contentment? In the worldly life, would it not dampen our ambitions? The answer is: it depends on how much of spiritual life that you want. The more you want of it, more worldly pleasures will have to be foregone. Whatever the case may be, definitely you cannot ignore your spiritual needs. Contentment does not mean not striving for spiritual aims. On the other hand, it means having non-greed and acceptance of realities as well. On analysis, it will be seen that it sets a key footing for further mental development

## 8 EASY TO SUPPORT (*Subhara*)

The original discourse was given to monks who were advised not to be demanding of laymen who support them. This is one way to practise metta—not to be troublesome to others even if one has to undergo some suffering. However, one should not be proud to admit it when one needs help.

We need to be dependent on others at times. Even a hermit in the forest does come out for certain needs. A good relationship does not mean just giving but also accepting. It's part of appreciation. So if we must ask for something, do not ask for too much. If we must borrow, return whatever is borrowed and if possible, return with more. Gratefulness begets appreciation. It forms a supportive link in the golden chain of metta.

## 9. HAVE FEW DUTIES (*Appakicco*)

Any relationship needs time to develop. Communication is often not easy and trust grows slowly. To give metta to someone, you need to spend time with, and, for them. Often parents are too busy making a living, leaving their children to themselves and so their relationships suffer; as the children may have money but not love. The same applies to spiritual life and development of loving-kindness. We need to spend time in retreats for quick and effective progress. Having few duties allow for the needed time. This is the underlying factor for contentment.

## 10 FRUGAL (*Sallahukavutti*)

Being frugal has much to do with contentment as well. One does not take more than one's need and so, cuts off much

craving. Not burdened by possessions and duties, one moves easily and freely with little worries. Wherever one may go, one can be flexible, versatile as well as be considerate, and so this quality fits well with metta practice and its development.

#### 11 RESTRAINT/ SERENE IN FACULTIES (*Santindriyo*)

The sense faculties of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are pathways of thought. They make up the world we live in and there, we respond morally or immorally. In the control and development of the mind, one restrains unwholesome and restless thoughts, compose and collect the mind till it becomes serene. Then deeper concentration can arise. First, morality is important, then concentration, and followed by insight. One can only achieve this through mindfulness at the 6 sense doors, guarding it from defilements. This contributes greatly to calming of the mind and development of concentration. Metta then becomes strong and deep, not easily shaken by defilements and far-reaching in its effect.

#### 12 Prudent (*Nipako*)

Prudence refers to the knowledge of what is suitable and advantageous, particularly in the spiritual sense. Having a wholesome motive, and with metta is often not sufficient. For eg, by giving unwanted advice, it may arouse anger. Giving a wrong advice can also be disastrous. Where there are others who take advantage of our goodwill in helping them, we can still safeguard ourselves by preserving anonymity. While practising metta bhavana, one will have

to consider whether one's actions and conditions are suitable for its development. Prudence is necessary especially in daily life and in the more advanced stage of meditation, it is wisdom.

13 FREE FROM RUDENESS (*Appagabbho*)

Rudeness refers to coarse behavior. As we practise and develop our states of mind, it filters into deeper levels of refinement. Morality, concentration and wisdom are such levels. So too the different levels of absorptions. The least advantage is the successive removal of defilements. Positively it is the development of pure states. Outwardly, we see it in the way we act and speak when dealing with people. Generally, the more metta one has, the more refined will be his behavior. Its gentleness is highlighted here, guided by prudence.

14 NOT FAVOURING FAMILIES (*Kulesu ananugiddho*)

This means not going currying favor. It demonstrates the presence of greed and attachment to what others have to offer. It will not be too long before it becomes obvious and disgusting. When attachment arises, metta is contaminated. That's when the magic is gone and a nightmare begins.

15 ONE SHOULD NOT DO EVEN THE SLIGHTEST THING WHICH OTHERWISE MEN MIGHT DEPLORE (*Nacakhudam Samacare Kinci Yena Vinnu Pare Upavadeyyum*)

Wise men deplore all unwholesome actions. Any of these counteracts the pure mind of metta. All forms of evil, no matter how insignificant it seem to be, should not be underestimated and so are best avoided. Mindfulness of

actions and guarding of the senses becomes all important  
in the development of metta and its concentration.

*Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhitata*

... (then he should think) may they be happy and safe

*Ye Keci Pana Bhutathi*

whatever living beings that exist

*Tasa Va Thavara Va Anavasesa*

weak or strong without exception

*Digha Va Ye mahanta Va Majjhima*

long or big or medium sized

*Rassakanuka Thula*

small, short or bulky

*Dittha Va Yeva Adittha*

those seen (visible) and unseen (not visible)

*Yeca Dure Vasanti Avidure*

and those dwelling near or far

*Bhuta Va Sambhavesi Va*

or creatures that still seek to be

*Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhitatta*

May all beings be happy

*Na Paro Param Nikubbetha*

Let no one deceive another

*Natimannetha Katthacinam Kanci*

Nor despise anyone anywhere

*Byarosana Patighasanna*

In anger or ill-will

*Nanamannassa Dukkhamiccheyya*

Let them not wish each other harm

*Mata Yatha Niyam Puttam*  
Just as a mother might guard her son  
*Ayusa Ekaputtam Anurakkhe*  
With her life, her only child  
*Evampi Sabba Bhutesu*  
Just so towards all beings  
*Manasambhavaye Aparimanam*  
Let him cultivate boundless mind  
*Mettanca Sabbalokasmim*  
Let loving thoughts for all the world  
*Manasam Bhavaye Aparimanam*  
Be maintained boundlessly  
*Uddham Adho Ca Tiriyanca*  
Above, below and all around  
*Asambadham Averam Asapattam*  
Unchecked, without hate or enmity  
*Titthan Caram Nisinno Va Sayano Va*  
Standing, walking or sitting or lying down  
*Yava Tassa Vigatamiddho*  
So long as he is not sleepy  
*Etam Satim Adhittheyya*  
He should develop this mindfulness  
*Brahmametam Viharam Idhamahu*  
This is called divine abiding here.

Following the list of advice concerning the different virtues, the Buddha gave the method as for the pervasion of loving-kindness to the different types of beings, and finally unbounded universal metta in all directions. One is advised to do it in all postures. A final advice for avoiding wrong views and developing

right views will prepare one for insight, the path that liberates one from the cycle of birth and death.

In effect, the Buddha advised on:

- 1 the method
- 2 diligence in practice
- 3 overcoming wrong views
- 4 setting forth right view/insight
- 5 attainment of complete liberation

#### 1 METHOD

The method of metta meditation is given briefly here. A detailed description is given in Buddhagosha's "Path of Purification". The method given in this book is based on that text.

#### 2 DILIGENCE

The meaning of this word is obvious. All talk and no practice won't get one anywhere. It's not meant to be just an intellectual study. Whether in its application to daily life or in meditation proper, much energy is needed, but more so for meditative concentration. Thus the phrase—whether "standing, walking, sitting or lying down"—...suggests the importance of diligence in an intensive metta retreat.

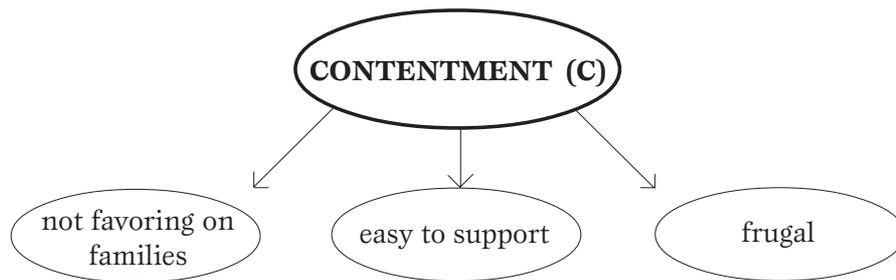
- 3 Notes 3 and 4 mentioned above will be dealt with in the next chapter on Metta and Vipassana.

## AN ANALYSIS

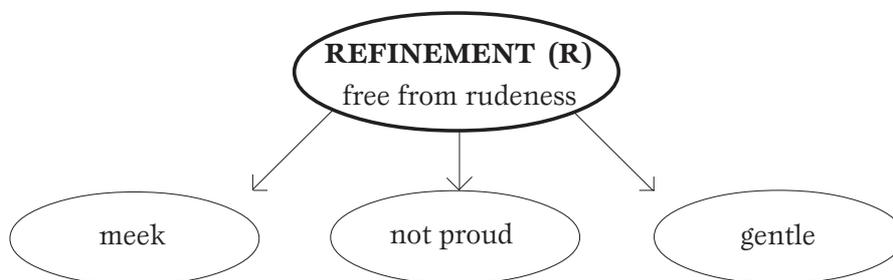
As a summary to the metta sutta, I have made an analysis and listed the virtues or points below:

- I    AIM: one wish to attain the state of peace
- II   QUALITIES:
  - 1    Capable
  - 2    Frank/straight
  - 3    Extremely honest
  - 4    Meek
  - 5    Gentle
  - 6    Not proud
  - 7    Contented
  - 8    Easy to support
  - 9    With few duties
  - 10   Frugal
  - 11   Exercise restraint/serene in faculties
  - 12   Prudent
  - 13   Not rude
  - 14   Not favoring families
  - 15   Should not do even the slightest thing which wise men  
      might deplore
- III  ACTIONS TO TAKE
  - 1    Radiation of metta to beings (method)
  - 2    Practise it in all postures
- IV  THE PATH OF INSIGHT
  - 1    Not falling into wrong views
  - 2    Endowed with vision
  - 3    Not to be reborn again

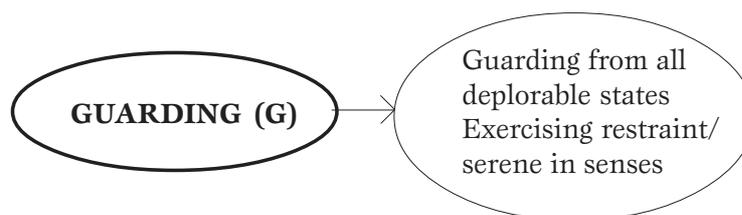
I have noticed that one can categorize some of these virtues together and others can be linked to the entire system of training. For example, contentment (II-7) is the base or virtue from which one becomes easy to support (II-8), frugal (II-10) and not favoring on families (II-14)



When one is free from rudeness (II-3), one may also become meek (II-4), gentle (II-5) and not proud (II-6)



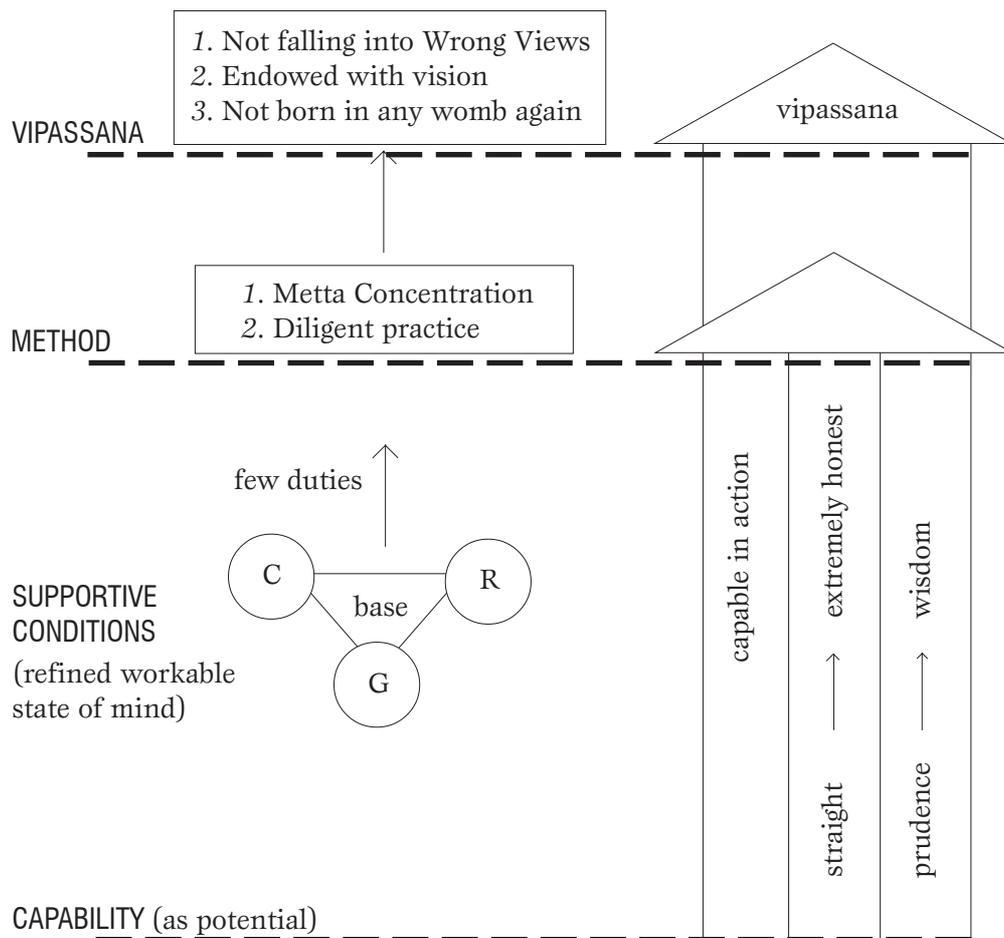
Guarding from all deplorable states (II-15) and exercising restraint/ serene in senses (II-11) are basically the same, one is referring to the restraint in actions while the other is on a broader perspective.



These 3 groups form the basic virtues for development of metta  
 The remaining qualities of Capability (II-1), straight-forwardness (II-2), extremely honest (II-3) seems to apply throughout the whole training, with (2) and (3) as offshoots of (1). Prudence would also need to be exercised at each step along the way (II-12).

The only quality not being mentioned earlier is (II-9)—having few duties, and this is not only a pre-requisite of contentment (with worldly need) but also allows ample time for practice.

A diagrammatic representation of the whole analysis is shown below:



From this analysis a few outstanding points are noted:

- 1 Restraint as expected, is required for all good states to develop
- 2 Refinement brings out the softness, which gives metta that special appeal, joy and concentration
- 3 From contentment—other conducive conditions for practice arise—such as time, clarity etc
- 4 Prudence provides the guiding light all along the way.





# Metta and Vipassana

(Loving-kindness and Insight)

If one wants to be completely free from suffering and to achieve the best of spiritual life, one will need to practise insight meditation to realize the absolute truth and peace. The two meditation differ with regard to their objects and results, but a combination that is beneficial is possible. In other words, one who has cultivated metta will definitely be at an advantage but it will also mean more time, and skills would be needed to learn both methods.

The last part in the metta sutta concerns matters relating to insight:

- i* Removing/avoiding wrong views
- ii* Being endowed with vision (right views)
- iii* Not to be born again

Wrong views refer to those personal views concerning existence which contradicts reality, such as taking what is impermanent as permanent, suffering as happiness, non-self as self. These 3 characteristics of existence (impermanence, suffering, and non-self)

are actually different words to convey the idea of reality so that it can be understood by an ordinary man. “Views” (*Ditthi*) in Buddhism technically means something more than wrong opinions or ideas. It means strong wrong belief, robust enough to influence one’s thinking, actions and speech in one’s life. It is central in terms of the working of one’s mind and kamma. When wrong views are present, then it is not possible for deep realization to occur.

It is also surprising to note that even a person who achieved levels of deep absorption in loving-kindness, can harbor wrong views.

For one who has not undergone vipassana training, it is understandable that while dealing with superficial concepts, it is possible to err in thoughts and conclusions, even though he may be a profound thinker. This is because these deeper truths and realities lie beyond concepts and have to be experienced directly by penetrative awareness.

But that should not stop one from performing wholesome actions with compassion and love; it just means that deep realization of reality is not there. Deep metta absorptions too are based on concepts and one can make a false conclusion that those experiences are the absolute. Hence, it is necessary to heed the warning of “not falling into wrong views”.

“Vision” in this context, means “Insight”—that experiential understanding of reality. The key word is “non self” which is often misunderstood. “Non-Self” is a negative definition. It serves to remove the idea of an everlasting self in the mind body processes. But there is the positive meaning to it—the natural occurrence of phenomena—its characteristics and all that can be clearly experienced directly with clear bare awareness which becomes more profound as awareness deepens. As the topic is beyond the scope of

this book, it suffices to say that the method of Vipassana is the method of developing the “insight awareness” till one reaches complete realization, which goes beyond birth and death. That is when radical purification from the defilements takes place with transformation and liberation.

How does one combine insight and metta practice? The first issue here concerns their seeming contradictions. Just like one who once asked me “When you see all as just phenomena, or realities, metta seems so superficial. So what’s the purpose of it?”

It is true that the 2 types of objects cannot occur together at the same moment to the mind and it is for this very reason that the 2 meditations differ. One is the concept of a being (eg a person), the other a reality (mind and body process or 3 characteristics). But when we consider that the concepts arise from the realities, then there is importance and meaning to both of them. Concepts and realities are like 2 levels or channels. The first involve the conventional world people live in, the second the inner mechanism underlying it. So we cannot really separate the two.

For example, when we practise insight meditation, we learn that there are no persons but just processes. It would seem meaningless when we return to the conventional world. After sometime, one will find that it is still possible to have metta and perhaps even stronger than before. That’s because insight practice brings deep peace within oneself, which is actually metta to oneself. Thus fulfilled, one is then able to give more to others. Secondly, we are all part of the evolution of nature. We should be able to see the goodness and possibilities in others and we are not as distinct as we seem to think. This understanding should make metta really expand universally.

The second issue is more a practical one. ie how can we combine the 2 meditations. It is possible in 3 ways:

- 1 Practise metta first then followed by insight practice
- 2 Practise insight first then followed by metta practice as a support
- 3 Practise both metta and insight meditation simultaneously

The following paragraphs explain each of these ways further:

1. In the first case, the question that may arise is “how much/far do I go before I switch to insight practice?”. At least one is expected to reach access concentration where the hindrances are suppressed so that it can form a base for insight practice. One may also go all the way in metta practice if one has the opportunity and time.
2. In the second case, metta can be done when one has at least a clear grasp of insight practice, presumably after reaching the 4<sup>th</sup> insight knowledge of arising and dissolution. One may also do so before that, say, when the basic techniques or exercises are learned, but one will still be susceptible of “falling into wrong views” or get caught up with “the imperfections of insight” which are abundant in tranquility meditation.
3. There are various ways of doing this. One way is to practise one and the other alternatively as one thinks appropriate. Still it is practising one at a time, but during a retreat it is as if one is practising both. In this case, one should have at least a base for either so that conflict does not arise. To avoid further conflicts, one can also make clear resolutions for the conditions and time to practise each. In this manner,

it helps to avoid problems of switching, which is also an additional skill to acquire.

Another criteria is that while practising metta meditation, there must be mindfulness of the processes. On the reverse, when the insight practice is deep and habitual enough, mindfulness automatically arise with metta practice. It would seem contradictory but the mind can be very efficient and swift in the switching of the two types of meditations.

For beginners, they will encounter these questions only after they have acquired a base for both, which can be after a period of practice or retreat in either one method.

As for daily practice, it is not necessary to develop deep absorptions and so one is free to choose whichever way one finds suitable. For example, one may decide to do 15 minutes of metta, then followed by vipassana for the rest of the hour. Then one may feel that before the 15 minutes is over, the vipassana objects become so clear that one is tempted to switch immediately. Or in the other case, one's metta may be going so well that one wants to continue. Usually I would advise one to be decisive as to when to switch to avoid conflicts although it is more a personal choice than a mandatory one. Alternatively, one may use a full session (ie in the morning) for metta and the evening sitting for vipassana.

There will also be times when one need to be just on metta because one is dealing excessively with people during those times. On the other hand, to prepare ourselves for a vipassana retreat, it is also advisable to spend the periods in daily life for just vipassana.

Temperament is also a factor to consider. If one is of the angry temperament, then metta will be very useful, maybe, even necessary. Then, one will need to spend more time on it than the other. Prudence should be exercised.

Finally, one would have to set foot onto the path of insight and it is best not to wait too long. Vipassana practice after all, leads the Heart to its *true home*, where it can find everlasting rest, refuge and peace. Isn't that what we are looking for?



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