

# METTĀ BHĀVANĀ

(MEDITATION ON LOVING-KINDNESS)

*Compiled by*

**Bro Teoh Kian Koon**

**With references taken from various sources**

For free distribution to **non-Muslims** only

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## (Biodata of Brother Teoh Kian Koon)

Brother Teoh graduated from University of Malaya in Civil Engineering in 1979. He has been a ***spiritual practitioner cum 'Meditator' since 1971***. Since his retirement in 2001 from his **Engineering career**, he has been **sharing** his ***understanding*** and ***experiences*** with those who are ***keen in their search*** for ***true happiness, peace, liberation*** from ***birth and death*** and ***all mental sufferings so that they can be a blessing to all by becoming more virtuous, nobler and wiser human being***. He gives **dharmatalks** and holds **meditation classes & retreats** and weekly **Dharma classes** at various **meditation centres, Buddhist societies** and places that invite him.

For *more details* of **Bro. Teoh's dharma activities** and his **Kalyāṇamittaship grouping** please login to his **dharmawebsite** at: <http://broteoh.com>

You can also view his video recordings at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCjClbc-7-upsZ2Kg5Re4pQ/videos>



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The earlier years' (early 80s) **Mettā Bhāvanā** books authored by **Venerable Bhāvanā** and **Ācharya Buddharakkhita** had benefited Bro Teoh a lot in the **early days of his cultivation**. Therefore, it is **Bro Teoh's sincere intention** to recompile these **Mettā Bhāvanā** books to **improve on its earlier version** and make it **more clear, comprehensive, useful,** and **better** so that it **can benefit more cultivators** who are interested in such topic.

**Special thanks** should be accorded to **Ācharya Buddharakkhita** for providing us with a very **complete** and **good base script** to enable his **Mettā** book to be recompiled and published as an Appendix in this book for free distribution.

## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is the donor's **sincere intention** that this **Mettā Bhāvanā** book be given **free to all who are interested** and **have the affinity to receive them**. I would like to take this opportunity **to thank** and **rejoice** in the **generosity** and **wholesomeness of all those Dhamma friends** (kalyāṇamitta) who **had donated** and **help out** in one way and other in **making this free distribution of dhamma Dāna possible**.

**Special thanks** should be accorded to **Sister Goh Lay Hong** who had **personally taken** the **initiative** to help type out the old **Mettā Bhāvanā** script for my **editing** and **recompilation** thereby enabling this **Mettā Bhāvanā** book to be printed for free distribution.

By the power of all these wholesomeness, **may all beings be well and happy, free from all mental and physical suffering, harm and danger, and may there be love, peace and joy, deep within their hearts** so that the **world** can be **more peaceful** with **greater harmony** always.

With Mettā always,  
Bro. Teoh Kian Koon  
(Dated: 31 August 2020)



### 3. METTĀ BHĀVANĀ

**Mettā** (Loving-kindness) is an **incredibly beautiful** and **unique mind state** which **purifies** the mind, dispelling anger, malice, hate, envy, jealousy, unhappiness, resentment, sorrow, and lamentation. Just **as a mother wishes the welfare, well-being and happiness** of her only child **so does her Mettā** wishes the welfare, well-being, and happiness of all beings irrespective of class, caste, creed, and race. It is also one of the **ten Perfections** (Pāramitās)\* that one must fulfil in the round of existence until one gain **perfect Enlightenment**. It is also one of the three **good roots** of karma (adosa or non-hate). As such, **mettā** is an **indispensable** and **essential virtue** needed for the **growth** and **purification** of humanity leading to the **growth** of a **loving, caring, peaceful, progressive, and healthy** society.

In the Buddha's teaching, **mettā** is only one of the 4 Brahma Vihāra (beautiful mind states of a Brahma). The other 3 are **Karuṇā** (compassion), **Muditā** (gladness at others' success and wholesomeness – an altruistic rejoicing mind state), and **Upekkhā** (equanimity state of mind).

'According to the Visuddhi magga, Mettā is a **purifying force** which has **good-will, well-being, happiness** and **friendliness** as its characteristics. Its **natural** function is to **promote good-will, happiness** and **well-being**. It is **manifested** as the **absence** of **ill-will**. Its **essence** is **seeing** and **acting** with **kindliness** and **love**. When it is absent, it **degenerates** into **selfishness, anger, hatred, affection, and desire** (these are its 'enemy within' which easily gains entry in its wake and must be **guarded against**). Its 'enemy without' is ill-will,

which finds its opportunities in the intervals when loving kindness is **not being actively cultivated with understanding.**'

*\*(See Ven. Narada's books, "Buddhism in A Nutshell" and "The Buddha and His Teaching" for more details)*

### **3.1. WHY CULTIVATE METTĀ BHĀVANĀ (Loving-kindness meditation)?**

In the *Discourse on the Benefits of Loving-kindness* (*Mettānisamsa Sutta*), the Buddha listed **11 benefits** that can be derived from **cultivating Mettā Bhāvanā**—and I am pleased to add that many of these benefits had being **confirmed** by **contemporary scientific research!**

The **11 great benefits of Loving-kindness** as listed by the Buddha are:

#### **1. You get to sleep well.**

When you go to bed having this feeling of loving-kindness toward yourself and others, you will be **relaxed** and peaceful and you get to sleep well and easily.

#### **2. You will wake up feeling good and having well-being.**

When you **get a good night's sleep**, you wake up **feeling rested** and **rejuvenated**. With a relaxed mind and body, you can connect with family members, friends, relatives, neighbors, colleagues

and even strangers in a genuine, happy, and well-mannered way. You feel fresh, uplifted, and joyful all day.

**3. You will not have nightmares while sleeping**

**4. Your body relaxes, and your heart is joyful and face radiant.**

Your body reflects your mind. **When you feel love for all beings, it shows on your face.** Seeing your **honest, relaxed, and joyful face**, others will **gravitate toward you** and **feel good and safe being around you.**

**5. Even animals and celestial beings can feel you and be drawn to you.**

When you **cultivate mettā**, your **mind generates a peaceful field of love vibration** around you. Children especially are tuned to this energy—and **non-humans** and **animals** can feel it too!

**6. Spirits and devas protect you.**

There are times we feel **guided and protected by beings beyond our sight.** Recognizing this as a kind of grace is a source of serenity. Whether it is literally true or there is some other causes and energy that gives us this sense of guidance and protection, the Buddha included this among the benefits of cultivating mettā.

## 7. Fire, poisons, and weapons will not harm you.

When we read stories of old, many of the elements are symbolic or mythic. The Buddha shared tales of adepts who **cultivated mettā** and were **protected** from fire, poisons, and weapons. He explained that greed, hatred, and delusion are the fires, the poisons, and the weapons against which mettā protects us.

In the **Fire Sermon** (Āditta pariyāya Sutta), the Buddha said that poison is of three kinds—greed, hatred, and delusion. These weapons, like daggers, he said, can cut your peace into pieces. In the *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha described bodily, verbal, and mental weapons. In the Udana, he said, “They quarrel, squabble, and argue with each other, stabbing each other with verbal daggers: ‘This is dharma. That is not.’” In the Dhammapada, the Buddha said, “**There is no fire like greed, no misfortune like hatred, no suffering like delusion, and no greater happiness than peace.**”

In a **well-known story** about the **power of mettā**, **Uttara**, a **devoted follower** of the Buddha, was **bereft**. She had been given in marriage to a man who did not have high regard for the Buddha, and so she had not seen the Buddha or his disciples for two and a half months. She was feeling forlorn, and her father suggested she **hire a courtesan to serve her husband** while she **joined the Buddha and his community** for the **final two weeks** of their **rainy-season retreat**. Uttara agreed and was able to serve the Buddha and his disciples as a cook and attend his teachings.

One day as he was looking out the window of his mansion, Uttara's husband saw her working in the retreat kitchen wearing a stained apron and **thought it pathetic** she was attending the retreat rather **than indulging** in the **luxuries of life** with him. Noticing his disdain for his wife, Sirima, the courtesan, began **plotting to harm Uttara** so she herself could become the man's wife. Sirima boiled some ghee and left the house to splash it on Uttara.

When Uttara saw the courtesan **coming to harm her**, she **meditated** on **loving-friendliness** and **remained completely at peace**.

At the same time, Uttara's maidservants also saw this foul deed unfolding and ran to stop Sirima. The maids tackled Sirima and began to pummel her, but Uttara intervened to save her attacker.

After that, Uttara bathed Sirima in warm water and massaged her body with herbs and oil to soothe her wounds. Sirima fell to the ground and begged Uttara's forgiveness. Uttara said she would forgive Sirima if the Buddha advised it.

The next day, Sirima asked the Buddha to **forgive** her for what she had tried to do. The Buddha asked Uttara how she felt as Sirima was pouring boiling ghee on her, and Uttara responded, "I was grateful to Sirima for serving my husband so I could spend two weeks with the noble community. I had no ill will toward her, only loving-friendliness." The Buddha commended her, "**Well done, Uttara. By not bearing ill will, you were able to conquer** the one

**who abuses you. By being generous, you conquered the one who is stingy. By speaking the truth, you conquered the one who lies.”** Upon the **advice** of the **Buddha**, **Uttara forgave Sirima**, and **Sirima took refuge** in the **Buddha**.

In another story, the **Buddha** was told of **Culasiva Thera**, who was **not at all affected by poison** because of his **profound cultivation of mettā**. A *Dhammapada* commentary tells of **four novice monks** who cultivated loving friendliness **so profoundly** and they were **unaffected by a weapon**. Not only were **disciples of the Buddha protected by mettā**, but in one **story a cow** was **spared** being shot with an **arrow** because of **her love and affection** nursing her calf.

The **Buddha** **taught that the six senses - seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and cognizing - are on fire. Any one of them is sufficient to consume us. The antidote, he taught, is to know reality.**

**Be mindful** and **see how sensations** and **various mind states** affect you. Think of your own experience; see **how much you are burnt** with the **fire of greed, hatred, and delusion**, and **how much you poison your mind** with **greed, hatred, and delusion**. When you **cultivate mettā**, **your breathing becomes calm** and you **feel so much love and compassion** that your mind **naturally** wishes **all beings** to have **well-being** and **happiness** and to live in **peace** and **harmony**.

## 8. Your mind can easily become calm.

Mettā stimulates a friendly feeling that makes us calm and happy. It truly is a wonderful way of life!

## 9. Your complexion brightens.

Mettā shows in your face. As you develop mettā, joy arises. At first it is barely noticeable, but as the joy increases, it **begins to pervade** your **whole mind and body**. Mettā does not rely on any time, place, or condition. Once aroused, it can remain present in you the rest of your life. Your face cannot hide what is going on in your mind. When you are angry, it shows on your face. When you are peaceful, everyone notices. The energy of mettā spreads through your **bloodstream and nourishes your whole being**. You look **bright and clear, calm, peaceful and radiant**.

## 10. You will die with a clear mind.

The thought of **dying peacefully** can be comforting. When we have **unresolved conflicts, death** can be **difficult**. **Loving-friendliness** can make **dying easier** for the **one dying**.

**There is a difference** between **true peace** and the **appearance** of peace. You **may seem cheerful**; you might **even make people laugh**. But when you are **approaching death, if greed, hatred, and delusion** are still **lurking deep down** in your **psyche**, that **joviality will vanish**. Cultivating loving-friendliness sinks into the depths of

your consciousness and makes your mind genuinely calm. With mettā, you will die peacefully, without confusion.

In the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, Samavati, the **wife of the king**, the Buddha had declared chief among those who cultivated mettā, was burned alive while leading a loving-friendliness retreat for women. **Magandiya** was the **culprit**. So proud of her rare beauty, Magandiya rejected suitor after suitor. One day her father saw the Buddha sitting under a tree and asked him to marry his daughter. The Buddha explained his **vow of celibacy** and declined in a way that **Magandiya found offensive**, and she was determined to **seek revenge**. Magandiya knew that Samavati was one of the Buddha's favorite laywomen disciple, so she set fire to the house where Samavati was leading a mettā retreat for 500 women. They all died in the fire.

As she lay dying, Samavati declared, **“Over many lifetimes our bodies have been burned repeatedly. As you pass from birth to death and back to birth, be heedful!”** Her words were **so powerful** that **the 500 women dying** alongside her were **inspired** to cultivate **mettā meditation** in their **final moments**. **Although their bodies were burned by fire, their minds were free.**

## 11. You will die in peace.

If at the time of death, you **do not yet comprehend the highest truth**, you will **still go to a realm of great peace**. If you have not completed the path of awakening before you die, the peaceful mental state generated by mettā will still allow you to be reborn in a **heavenly realm**.



Regardless of whether we consider heaven a real or figurative place, this portends well and encourages us to practice loving friendliness while we can.

"These eleven advantages, monks, are to be expected from the **release of heart by familiarizing** oneself with **thoughts of loving-kindness**, by **cultivation of loving-kindness**, by **constantly increasing these thoughts**, by **regarding loving-kindness as a vehicle** (of expression), and also as something to be **treasured**, by **living in conformity** with **these thoughts**, by **putting these ideas** into cultivation and by establishing them."

So, said the Blessed One. Those monks rejoiced at the words of the Blessed One.

**Mettā Bhāvanā** should be **developed** for at least 5-30 minutes per session for the following reasons:

1. To **improve mental and physical health** by **overcoming your own anger, resentments, grudges, and hatred**, by **developing tranquility**.
2. To **improve patience, tolerance and understanding**, resulting in more **harmonious human relationships** in the **home**, in **schools**, places of **work** and in **society** in general.
3. To **overcome hatred, ill will** and other **unwholesome thoughts** directed towards you. The solution is so simple, reason why initially some people tend to doubt it. You create an **atmosphere**

**of tranquility** simply by **sending out thoughts of love**, especially to **those** you think they **hate you**. Hate only feeds on hate so thought vibrations of hate, worry, or tension **which meet a screen of love** can **only dissolve** or be **turned back** on themselves.

4. For spiritual development. In the ‘Sutta Nipāta,’ the Buddha said, “The Cultivation or development of **loving kindness** brings to **perfection** all the **good states** beginning with **charity (Dāna)** resulting in the **fulfillment** of the ten perfections (Pāramitās). It is **an easy** and **pleasant method** to **develop samādhi, wisdom** and **compassion**, the **ultimate goals** of **all spiritual** development.

### 3.2. DANGER OF HATE

Before taking up this exercise, the beginner should, according to Visuddhimagga, first **consider the evil consequences of hatred**, and the **blessing of all-embracing kindness**. For as long as one has **not understood** the **evil consequences of hate as an evil root**, one will **not be able to overcome** it. Similarly, one **cannot reach a noble state of mind**, before **first understanding its blessing**. As it is said:

**Through hate, by hate overwhelmed, and fettered** in mind, one leads an **evil life** in **bodily deeds, words, or thoughts**, and **understands neither one’s own welfare, welfare of others, nor the welfare of both sides, according to reality**. If, **however, hatred is overcome**, one leads a **non-evil life**, neither in bodily deeds, words, nor in thoughts, and **according to reality one knows one’s welfare, the welfare of others, and the welfare of both sides**.

**Aṅguttara-Nikāya III Sutta 55.**

“A man who is angry and whose mind is assailed by hatred, may kill living things, destroy the happiness of others as well as himself, etc.”.

**Aṅguttara-Nikāya I. Sutta 157.**

### **3.3. OVERCOMING ANGER**

‘One who gives vent to anger is like a man who wants to hit another and picks up a burning ember or excrement in his hand and so first burns himself or makes himself stink. He is like a man who wants to throw dust at another against the wind and only covers himself with it ‘.

Oneself is everyone’s best friend,  
Himself does everyone love most,  
And yet in rage one kills oneself.  
Made blind by various vanities.

**Visuddhimagga**

There are **five ways** of **conquering anger** by which it can be entirely removed when it arises in a person. What are the five?

To a **person against whom hatred might arise**, one should develop **all-embracing kindness...compassion...equanimity**...or one should not pay him any attention...or one should picture to oneself the **law of the ownership of Karma**, i.e. **that this person too is the owner and heir of his deeds, that he is sprung from them, that his**

deed is his refuge, and that he will have his wholesome and unwholesome deeds as his inheritance.

**Āṅguttara-Nikāya V. Sutta 161**

There are **five modes of speech** that others **may use** when they address you. Their speech may be at **right time** or at a **wrong time**, **true** or **untrue**, **gentle** or **harsh**, **beneficial** or **harmful** and may be **accompanied** by **thoughts** of **loving kindness** or **hatred.**' He **exhorted** the **gathering of monks to train themselves** thus to **endure any of these types** of speech:

*'If, O monks, robbers or highwaymen should with a double-handled saw cut your limbs and joints, whoso gave way to anger there-at would not be following my advice. For thus **ought you to train yourselves:** 'Undisturbed shall our mind remain, no evil words shall **escape our lips**; **friendly** and **full of sympathy** shall remain, with **heart full of love**, free from **any hidden malice**. And those persons shall we penetrate with **thoughts, wide, deep, boundless, freed from anger and hatred.***

**Majjhima-Nikāya. Sutta 21**

**"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, and he robbed me"** those who harbor such thoughts **do not still** their **hatred**. **"He abused me, he struck me, he overpowered me, and he robbed me"** those **who do not harbor such thoughts still** their **hatred**. For hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world; by non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is the Law Eternal.

**Dhammapada verses 3-5**

#### 4. LOVING KINDNESS AS A CONTEMPLATION (Mettā Sutta)

What should be done by one skillful in good to gain the state of Peace?

He should act thus:

1. He should be **able, upright, and straight, obedient, gentle, and not proud.**
2. **Contented, easily supportable, with few tasks, living very lightly, with faculties serene, prudent, modest, and not greedily attached to families.**
3. He **should not do the slightest thing** for which **other wise men might blame** him. May all beings be happy and secure may they be of a blissful heart!
4. Whatever **breathing things there may be**, feeble or strong, long, or stout or middle sized, short, or small or thick, seen or unseen, whether dwelling far or near, including ....
5. Those who are born and those who are yet to be born – may all creatures **without** exception be of a **blissful heart!**
6. **Let no one deceive another or even slight him** at all anywhere. **Through provocation or resentment** let him **not wish** another ill.

7. Just as a **mother would protect her only child** even **at the risk of her own life**, even so let him develop a **boundless heart** towards every living thing.
8. Let **his thought of boundless loving kindness** pervade **the whole world** – above, below, and across without any obstruction, hatred, or enmity.
9. **While he stands or walks or while he sits or while he lies down, if he is free from drowsiness let him resolve upon this mindfulness.** This is **Divine Abiding** here, they say.
10. **Not falling into wrong views, virtuous and able to see 'life reality' (as it truly is), he purges** greed for sensual desires and comes **no more for conception** in a womb.

## 5. MEDITATION ON LOVING KINDNESS (Mettā Bhāvanā)

**Stage 1: Repeat mentally:**

“May I be **without enmity, without ill-will** and **untroubled**; may I **keep myself happy** and **peaceful always**”.

**Stage 2: Repeat mentally:**

(i) “May I be **without enmity, without ill-will** and **untroubled**; may I **keep myself happy** and **peaceful always**”.

(ii) Think of a **friendly person**, e.g. a **teacher, a monk, relatives, friends** and **recite** mentally:  
“May you be **without enmity, without ill-will** and **untroubled**; may you keep yourself happy and peaceful always”.

(iii) Think of a **neutral person** who is **neither friendly** nor **unfriendly** to you, and mentally recite:  
“May you be without enmity, without ill-will and untroubled; may you keep yourself happy and peaceful always”.

(iv) Think of an **enemy** or a **person who has offended** you, and mentally recite:

“May you be **without enmity, without ill-will** and **untroubled**; may you keep yourself happy and peaceful always”.

- (v) Think of the **people and all beings** in the locality where you live and mentally recite:

“May all beings be **without enmity, without ill-will** and **untroubled**; may they keep themselves happy and peaceful always”.

Then mentally recite as above when you think of **all beings in the whole town, in the whole country, in the whole universe.**

This **simple meditation helps people** to develop **friendliness towards all beings** and is **especially good** for those who have a **character disposed to hatred (dosa carita)**. It **overcomes anger, resentment, grudges, hatred, and selfishness**. The short and concise phrase ‘May all beings be **without enmity**’ should not be **underestimated**. For example, ‘**enmity**’ refers to **internal enemies i.e. defilements (unwholesome thoughts of unfriendliness, dislike etc.)**

#### **PRECAUTIONS:**

- (i) Unless you can distinguish between **Mettā**, Loving-Kindness which has no limits, and **Pema, infatuation** which is **restricted** to a **particular person** and **accompanied** by **unwholesome sexual** desire, do not



think a person (of the **opposite sex**) for cultivation of Mettā Bhāvanā.

- (ii) Try not to think of a **deceased** person during this meditation if it can give rise to **grief** and **remorse**, which are **unwholesome thoughts**. Otherwise **mettā** can be **radiated to all beings** including our **deceased** via wishing them **well-being and happiness** in whatever realm of existence they may take.

**(Visuddhimagga).**

This **meditation** should be **regularly practiced** daily for **5-30 minutes**. The meditator should be seated comfortably. The half lotus or full lotus posture is preferred but **any other comfortable sitting posture** would **still be suitable**.

The **eleven benefits** of this Mettā meditation mentioned by the Buddha are: -

**“If, O monks, all-embracing kindness, the liberation of mind, has been cultivated and developed, made one’s vehicle and foundation, is firmly established, brought to greatness and full perfection, one may expect these eleven-fold blessing:**

**One sleeps peacefully; awakes peacefully; has no evil dreams; is dear to men; is dear to spirits; heavenly beings protect one; fire, poison and weapons cannot do any harm; the scattered mind becomes composed; one’s features brighten up; one will have an**

untroubled death; and if one does not penetrate higher, one will be reborn in the Brahma-World”.

**Āṅguttara-Nikata X.Sutta 16.**

**General advice:**

**Living according to the 5 moral precepts is the foundation for getting good results in meditation and having the good life.** Reading the **Mettā Sutta is a good way to start** your meditation.

Many verses for **dedication of merits exist.** The example below is a translation from Pali by King Rama IV (King Mongkut) of Thailand.

“May the merits made by me Now or at other times be **shared amongst** all beings (Infinite, immeasurable).

By **rejoicing** in this cause, this **gift of merits** given by me,

May beings **all forever live, a happy life free from hate,**

May they find the **path secure** and their **Good and Noble wishes all succeed”.**

**Extracted from:**

*RECOLLECTIONS.* Compiled by Ven Bhikkhu Khantipalo.

(A devotional chanting manual for meditators).

## 6. METTĀ BHĀVANĀ AND THE FOUR PROTECTIVE MEDITATIONS IN BUDDHISM

To those who **need guidance** (on **mental purification**) the Buddha taught the “**Four Protective Meditations**” (Ven. Sarada; Ven. Buddhārakkhita). These are merely four topics or subjects of **contemplation** and **meditation**. Their **selection of a mass of topics** which one **may meditate** upon during one’s early attempts to **perfect spiritual training**, speaks very highly of the **practical wisdom** of the Buddha. These **four protective meditations** are: -

- (1) Meditation on the **Buddha** (*Buddhānussati*)
- (2) Meditation on **Loving-Kindness** (*Mettā Bhāvanā*)
- (3) Meditation on the **Impurities of the Body** (*kāyagatāsati*)
- (4) Meditation on **Death** (*Maranānussati*)

For the serious practicing Buddhist who wishes to take up intensive Insight Meditation, these protective meditations should be practiced first. Insight Meditation is based on **Mindfulness of in-and-out Breathing**, one of the **most important** meditation **exercises** in Buddhism.

### 6.1. METTĀ BHĀVANĀ

**Mettā Bhāvanā** has been described in **detail** first **because it is a simple yet important meditation** that can be cultivated with 100% safety. It is safe even to children of 5-6 years of age, and it is taught to children by the Ven. Buddhārakkhita and his disciples at the **Mahabodhi Society Meditation Centre** in Bangalore, India.

## 6.2. MEDITATION ON THE BUDDHA (Buddhānussati)

**Method:** Repeat mentally,

‘Indeed, the **Blessed One** is thus: the **accomplished destroyer of defilements**, a Buddha **perfected** by himself, **complete in clear knowledge and compassionate conduct**, **supremely good in presence and in destiny, knower of the worlds, incomparable master of those to be trained, teacher of devas and men, awakened and blessed, and the lord by skillful means apportioning Dhamma.** “

(Translation from Pali by Ven. Khantipalo).

According to the commentary, whenever one’s mind is unsteady and wanders unsatisfied to and fro – **just as an untamed bull runs hither and thither** – then **he should reflect upon the mundane and super-mundane qualities of the Enlightened One.** Hereby **his mind is cheered** and becomes gradually **free from the five mental Hindrances** (i.e. lust, anger, restlessness and worry, torpor and languor, skeptical doubt) leading to the **attainment of right Samadhi.** This meditation is the **antidote for all types of fears. Just as a man who finds it impossible with a blunt axe to cut a tree**, at first gets his axe sharpened in order to accomplish his purpose, just so the monk at **first tames and subdues his mind by means of the contemplation on the Buddha.**

This simple meditation is also safe even for young children. It may find **wider acceptance** amongst Malaysian Buddhists as the **antidote for the worries, fears, and neurosis** which **psychiatrists**

reported to be increasing in Malaysia (CAP Seminar, Penang, 1983). The main causes of these mental stress symptoms included pressure to do well in exams, pressure at work and a modern lifestyle.

### 6.3. MEDITATION ON THE IMPURITIES OF THE BODY (Kāyagatāsati)

**Method: Repeat mentally:**

Herein, O monks, the monk **contemplates this body** from the **sole of the foot upward, and from the top of hair downward, with a skin stretched over it, and filled with many impurities** : “*This body consists of (1-5) hairs of the head, hairs of the body, of nails, teeth, skin, (6-10) flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys (11-15) heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, (16-20) intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrements, and brain.\* (21-26) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, (27-32) tears, skin-grease, spittle, nasal mucus, oil of the joints, and urine.*’

***Dīgha-Nikāya. Sutta 22. Majjhima-Nikāya. Sutta 10.***

\*To the 32 parts of the body, mentioned in the Suttas (e.g. M.10 and D. 22) brain is added in the commentaries. According to Visuddhimagga IX, he who wishes to develop this contemplation should at first learn by heart the names of the 32 parts of the body, recite them again and again, and thereafter repeat them mentally. This should be done in groups. At first the five-fold ending with skin (i.e.1-5) should be learned by heart, forward and backward, and then recited; thereafter the fivefold kidney-group (6-10), then the fivefold

lung-group(11-15), then the six-fold brain group (16-20), then the six-fold fat-group(21-26), then the six-fold urine-group (27-32); hence : (1-5) hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin; (5-1) skin, teeth, nails, hair of the body, hair of the head; (6-10) flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys; (10-6) kidneys, marrow, bones, sinews, flesh, etc.

This meditation **overcomes lust and attachment to the body**. Specially recommended for those who have **a lustful character** (raga carita), but good for all Malaysian Buddhists, bombarded on all sides by the mass media with materials which tend to encourage lustful thought.

#### **6.4. MEDITATION ON DEATH (Maranānussati)**

**Method:** Repeat mentally,

One who wants to practice this meditation should, at stated times and every now and then, consider deeply, **‘Death will take place’**.

**Method:** Repeat mentally,

**Contemplation on Death, oh monks, developed and frequently practiced, brings high rewards and blessing, has the deathless as goal and end.** And how so? As soon, O monks, as the day draws to a close, or when the night vanished and the day breaks, there the monk says to himself: *‘Truly, there are many possibilities of dying: a serpent may bite me, or a scorpion*

or centipede may sting me, and thereby I may lose my life. But this would be for me an obstruction. Or I may stumble and fall; or the food taken by me may disagree with me. Bile, phlegm, or prinking gases may become stirred up. Men or evil spirits may attack me. And **thereby I may lose my life. But that would be for me an obstruction.**' Here, the monk must consider: **Are there still found in me unsubdued evil and unwholesome things which, if I should die today or in this night, would lead me to misfortune birth (in the next life)?**

Now **if the monk's reflections notice that there are still unsubdued evil and unwholesome things found in him, then he should use his utmost determination, energy exertion, perseverance, steadfastness, mindfulness and clear comprehension to subdue these evil and unwholesome things.**

The **meditation is especially good for people with intelligent character (Buddhi carita).** It **overcomes vanity, pride, selfishness, and fear of death, via the realization of the impermanence of the body.**

This **meditation frequently practiced provides the best motivation to turn away from the materialistic rat race today. For Buddhists, this means taking the Dharma or teachings of the Buddha more seriously, beginning with charity and morality.**

**With Mettā always,  
Bro. Teoh (31 August 2020)**

## 7. APPENDIX – The Philosophy and Cultivation of Universal Love

### Mettā

#### (The Philosophy and Cultivation of Universal Love)

by

Ācharya Buddharakkhita

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### Introduction

The Pāḷi word *mettā* is a multi-significant term meaning **loving-kindness, friendliness, goodwill, benevolence, fellowship, amity, concord, inoffensiveness, and non-violence**. The Pāḷi commentators define *mettā* as the **strong wish for the welfare and happiness** of others (*parahita-parasukha-kamana*). **Essentially** *mettā* is an **altruistic attitude of love and friendliness** as **distinguished** from



**mere amiability** based on self-interest. Through mettā one **cannot hate, nor be offensive, and renounces bitterness, resentment, and animosity** of every kind, developing instead **a mind of friendliness, accommodativeness and benevolence** which **seeks the well-being and happiness of others**. True mettā is **devoid** of self-interest. It evokes within **a warm-hearted feeling of friendliness, fellowship, empathy, and love**, which grows **boundless** with **practice** and **overcomes** all social, religious, racial, political, and economic barriers. Mettā is **indeed a universal, unselfish, and all-embracing love**.

Mettā makes one a pure font of well-being and safety for others. ***Just as a mother gives her own life to protect her child, so mettā only gives and never wants anything in return.*** To promote one's own interest is a primordial motivation of human nature. When this urge is transformed into the desire to promote the interest and happiness of others, **not only** is the **basic urge of self-seeking** overcome, but **the mind becomes universal** by identifying its own interest with the interest of all. By making this change one also promotes one's own well-being in the best possible manner.

Mettā is the protective and immensely patient attitude of a mother who forbears all difficulties for the sake of her child and ever protects it despite its misbehaviour. Mettā is also the attitude of a friend who wants to give one the best to further one's well-being. If these **qualities of mettā** are **sufficiently cultivated** through *mettā-bhāvanā* — the meditation on universal love — the **result is the acquisition** of a **tremendous inner power** of love **which preserves, protects, and heals both oneself and others**.

Apart from its higher implications, today mettā is a pragmatic necessity. In a world menaced by all kinds of destructiveness, **mettā in deed, word and thought is the only constructive means** to bring **concord, peace, and mutual understanding**. Indeed, mettā is the supreme means, for it forms the fundamental tenet of all the higher religions as well as the basis for all **benevolent activities intended to promote human well-being**.

This present booklet aims at exploring **various facets of mettā** both in theory and in practice. The examination of the **doctrinal and ethical side of mettā** will proceed through a study of the popular *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta*, the Buddha's "Hymn of Universal Love." In connection with this theme we will also look at several other **short texts** dealing with mettā. The explanation of mettā-bhāvanā, the **meditation** on universal love, will give the **practical** directions for developing this type of contemplation as set forth in the main meditation texts of the Theravada Buddhist tradition, the *Visuddhimagga*, the *Vimuttimagga* and the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.

## 1. The Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta: Hymn of Universal Love

- 1 Karaṇīyaṃ atthakusalena  
Yaṃ taṃ santaṃ padaṃ abhisamecca  
Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca  
Suvaco c'assa mudu anatimānī

He who is skill in **working out** his own well-being, and wish

to attain to the **state of perfect peace** (nibbāna), should act thus:  
He should be **able, honest and upright,**  
**Gentle in speech, obedient and not proud.**

- 2 Santussako ca subharo ca  
Appakicco ca sallahukavutti  
Santindriyo ca nipako ca  
Appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho

**Contented, easily supportable,**  
Not **overly busy** (with few responsibility), and **simple in living.**  
**Tranquil** in his senses (with **sense restraint**), **prudent,**  
And **courteous,** not **fawning** on families.

- 3 Na ca khuddaṃ samācare kiñci  
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ  
Sukhino vā khemino hontu  
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā

Also, he **must refrain** from **any slightest wrong** action  
That gives the **wise reason** to **reprove** him.

(Then let him cultivate the **following kind thought**:)

**May all beings be well and secure,**  
**May all beings be happy!**

- 4 Ye keci pāṇabhūt'atthī  
Tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā  
Dīghā vā ye mahantā vā  
Majjhimā rassakāṇukathulā

**Whatever living creatures** there be,  
**Without exception,** weak or strong,  
Long, huge, or middle-sized,  
Or short, minute, or bulky,

- 5 Diṭṭhā vā yeva adiṭṭhā  
Ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre  
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā  
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā

Whether visible or invisible,  
And those living far or near,  
The born and those seeking birth,  
**May all beings be well and happy!**

- 6 Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha  
Nātimaññetha katthacinaṃ kañci  
Byārosanā paṭighasaññā  
Nāññāmaññassa dukkha miccheyya

Let **none deceive or decry**  
**another anywhere;**  
Let **none wish others harm**  
**In resentment or in hate.**

- 7 Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttāṃ  
Āyusā ekaputtam anurakkhe

Evam̐pi sabbabhūtesu  
Mānasam̐ bhāvaye aparimāṇam̐

**Just as a mother would protect  
her only child with her life  
even so let one cultivate  
a boundless love towards all beings.**

8 Mettañ ca sabba-lokasmim̐  
Mānasam̐ bhāvaye aparimāṇam̐  
Uddham̐ adho ca tiriyañca  
Asambādham̐ averam̐ asapattam̐

**Cultivate an all-embracing mind of love  
For all beings throughout the universe,  
Above, below, and across — unhindered  
Love that is without hatred or enmity.**

9 Tiṭṭhañ caraṇ nisinno vā  
Sayāno vā yāvat'assa vigatamiddho  
Etaṇ satim̐ adhiṭṭheyya  
Brahmam̐ etaṇ vihāram̐ idhamāhu

**Standing, walking, sitting, or reclining,  
As long as he is awake, let him develop  
this awareness (mindfulness) with all his might:  
This, they say is 'Noble Living' here.**

10 Diṭṭhiñca anupagamma sīlavā  
Dassanena sampanno  
Kāmesu vineyya gedhaṃ  
Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punare tī'ti

**Not falling into wrong views and wrong beliefs,**  
being virtuous, **endowed with insight, craving and**  
**lust in the senses discarded** — verily never again  
will he return to conceive in a womb."

## 2. The Background to the Mettā Sutta

The historical background which led the Buddha to expound the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta* is explained in the commentary written by **Ācariya Buddhaghosa**, who received it from an unbroken line of Elders going back to the days of the Buddha himself.

It is told that five hundred monks received instructions from the Buddha in the techniques of **meditation** suitable to **their individual** temperaments. They then went to the foothills of the Himalayas to spend the **four months** of the rains' retreat by living a life of **withdrawal** and **intensive meditation**. In those days, a month or two before the rains' retreat started, monks from all parts of the country **would assemble** wherever the **Buddha lived** to **receive direct instruction** from the **Supreme Master**. Then they would go back to their monasteries, forest dwellings or hermitages to make a **vigorous attempt** at spiritual **liberation**. This was how these **five hundred monks** went to the Buddha, who was staying at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove in the monastery built by Anāthapiṇḍika.

After receiving instructions, they went in **search of a suitable place**, and during their wandering they soon found **a beautiful hillock** at the foothills of the Himalayas. This, according to the commentary, "**appeared like a glittering blue quartz crystal**: it was embellished with a cool, dense, green forest grove and a stretch of ground strewn with sand, resembling a pearl net or a silver sheet, and was **furnished with a clean spring of cool water**." The bhikkhus were captivated by the sight. There were a few villages nearby, and a small market-town ideal as alms-resort. The monks spent a night in that idyllic grove and the next morning went to the market-town for alms.

The **residents there were overjoyed** to see the monks, since **rarely did a community of monks come to spend the retreat** in that part of the Himalayas. These **pious devotees** fed the monks and begged them to stay on as their guests, promising to build each a hut near the grove on the sandy stretch so that they could spend their days and nights plunged in meditation under the **ancient boughs** of the **majestic trees**. The bhikkhus agreed and the devotees of the area soon built little huts in the fringe of the forest and provided each hut with a wooden cot, a stool, and pots of water for drinking and washing.

After the monks had settled down contentedly in these huts, each one selected a tree to meditate under, by day and by night. Now it is said that **these great trees were inhabited by tree-deities** who had a celestial mansion built, **appropriately using the trees as the base**. These deities, **out of reverence** for the meditating monks, **stood aside** with their families. **Virtue** was revered by all, particularly so **by deities**, and when the monks sat under the trees, the deities, who

were householders, did not like to remain above them. The deities had thought that the monks **would remain only for a night or two**, and **gladly bore** the **inconvenience**. But when day after day passed and the monks kept occupying the bases of the trees, the deities wondered when they would go away. They were like dispossessed villagers whose houses had been commandeered by the officials of visiting royalty and they kept watching anxiously from a distance, wondering when they would get their houses back.

These **dispossessed deities discussed the situation** among themselves and **decided to frighten** the monks away by showing them **terrifying objects**, by making **dreadful noises** and by **creating a sickening stench**. Accordingly, they materialized all these terrifying conditions and afflicted the monks. The monks soon grew pale and could no longer concentrate on their subjects of meditation. As the deities continued to harass them, they **lost** even their **basic mindfulness**, and their **brains seemed** to become **smothered** by the **oppressing visions, noise, and stench**. When the monks assembled to wait upon the senior Elder of the group, each one recounted his experiences. **The Elder suggested: "Let us go, brethren, to the Blessed One and place our problem before him.** There are two kinds of rains' retreat — the early and the late. Though we will be breaking the early one by leaving this place, we can always take upon ourselves the late one after meeting the Lord." **The monks agreed and they set out at once, it is said, without even informing the devotees.**

By stages they arrived at Sāvattihī, went to the Blessed One, prostrated at his feet, and **related their frightful experiences**, pathetically requesting another place. The **Buddha, through his**



supernormal power, scanned the whole of India, but finding no place except the same spot where they could achieve spiritual liberation, told them: "*Monks, go back to the same spot! It is only by striving there that you will affect the destruction of inner taints. Fear not! If you want to be free from the harassment caused by the deities, learn this sutta. It will be a theme for meditation as well as a formula for protection (paritta).*

Then the Master recited the *Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta*— the Hymn of Universal Love — which the monks learned by rote in the presence of the Lord. Then they went back to the same place.

As the monks neared their forest dwellings reciting the *Mettā Sutta*, thinking and meditating on the underlying meaning, the hearts of the deities became so charged with warm feelings of goodwill that they materialized themselves in human form and received the monks with great piety. They took their bowls, conducted them to their rooms, caused water and food to be supplied, and then, resuming their normal form, invited them to occupy the bases of the trees and meditate without any hesitation or fear.

Further, during the three months of the rains' residence, the deities not only looked after the monks in every way but made sure that the place was completely free from any noise. Enjoying perfect silence, by the end of the rainy season all the monks attained to the pinnacle of spiritual perfection. Every one of the five hundred monks had become an arahant.

Indeed, such is the **power intrinsic** in the *Mettā Sutta*. Whoever with firm faith will recite the sutta, invoking the **protection of the deities and meditating on mettā**, will not only safeguard himself in every way but will also **protect all those around him**, and will **make spiritual progress** that can be **actually verified**. No harm can ever befall a person who follows the path of mettā.

### 3. Three Aspects of Mettā

The *Mettā Sutta* consists of **three parts**, each of which focuses on a **distinct aspect** of mettā. The **first part (lines 3 to 10)** covers that aspect which requires a **thorough and systematic application** of loving-kindness in **one's day-to-day conduct**. The **second part (lines 11 to 20)** expresses loving-kindness as a **distinct technique of meditation or culture of mind** leading to *samādhi* — **higher consciousness** induced by absorption. And the **third part (lines 21 to 40)** underlines a **total commitment to the philosophy of universal love** and its **personal, social, and empirical extensions** — loving-kindness through all bodily, verbal, and mental activities.

Mettā has been identified as that specific factor which "ripens" the accumulated merit (*puñña*) acquired by the **ten ways for the acquisition** of merit (*dasapuñña-kiriyavatthu*), such as the **cultivation of generosity, virtue**, etc. Again, it is mettā which brings to maturity the **ten exalted spiritual qualities** known as "perfections" (*pāramitā*).

The practice of mettā thus can be **likened to bringing into being a great tree**, from the **time the seed is sown to the time the tree is**

**heavily laden with luscious fruits and sends forth its sweet odour far and wide, attracting myriads of creatures to it to enjoy its tasty and nutritious bounty. The sprouting of the seed and the growth of the plant are, as it were, brought about by the first part of the sutta. In the second part the tree, robust and developed, is fully covered with fragrant and beautiful flowers, riveting all eyes upon it.**

As a pattern of behaviour, the **first aspect of mettā makes one's life grow like a tree, useful, generous, and noble. Mettā, as meditation, effects that spiritual efflorescence whereby one's entire life becomes a source of joy for all. The third part envisages in this imagery the fruition of that process of spiritual development whereby one brings about an all-embracing application of spiritual love which can powerfully condition society as a whole and lead one to the heights of transcendental realization.**

The **human mind is like a mine holding an inexhaustible storehouse of spiritual power and insight. This immense inner potential of merit can be fully exploited only by the cultivation of mettā, as is clear from the description of mettā as that "maturing force" which ripens the dormant merits. In the *Maṅgala Sutta* it is said that only after one has affected an elevating interpersonal relationship (by resorting to good company, etc.) does one choose the right environment for the merits of the past to find fruition. This finding of fruition is exactly what mettā does. Mere avoidance of wrong company and living in a cultured environment is not enough; the mind must be cultivated by mettā. Hence the allusion to the fruition of past merit.**

## 4. The Ethics of Mettā

Ethics, in the Buddhist context, is **right conduct**, which brings **happiness** and **peace** of mind, and **never gives rise to remorse, worry or restlessness** of mind. This is the **immediate psychological benefit**. **Right conduct** also leads to a **happy rebirth**, enabling an aspirant to **progress further** on the **onward path to spiritual liberation**. It is also the **basis for progress** in *Dhamma here and now*. In other words, **right speech, right action, and right livelihood** of the Buddha's **Noble Eightfold Path** constitute **right conduct** in the **best sense**.

Buddhist ethics is **twofold**: **fulfilment of certain virtues** (*cāritta*), and **precepts of abstinence** (*vāritta*). **Cāritta**, as found in the **Mettā Sutta**, is as follows:

[He] Should be **able, honest** and **upright**,  
**Gentle in speech, meek** (quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on) and **not proud**.

**Contented**, he ought to be **easily supportable**,  
**Not overly-busy**, with **few responsibility** and **simple in living**.  
**Tranquil** in his senses, with **sense restraint** and **prudent**,  
And **courteous**, not **fawning on families**.

**Vāritta** is covered by the next gāthā:

Also, he must **refrain from any action that gives the wise reason to reprove him**.

**Cāritta** and **vāritta** are thus **cultivated through mettā expressed in bodily and verbal action**; the resultant **inner happiness and altruistic urge** is reflected by the **aspirant's mettā of mental action, as found in the conclusion of the stanza**:

**May all beings be well and secure,  
May all beings be happy!**

The **ethics of mettā** thus provides **not only subjective well-being, or the opportunity to progress in Dhamma here and now and to enjoy a happy rebirth in the future, but it means the giving of fearlessness and security — *abhayadāna* and *khemadāna*.**

**An analysis of the behaviour-pattern and traits commended by the Mettā Sutta for meaningful interaction, both with reference to persons individually and to society, provides ample insight into the great implications of the sutta for mental health.**

Ability is **not just mere efficiency or skill, but means doing a thing well, out of consideration for others, so that one may not cause inconvenience to others.** As an able man can become **very conceited**, the **practitioner is advised to be "honest and upright,"** while being **"gentle in speech, meek and not proud"** - indeed a **perfect synthesis and an equilibrium of traits.**

He who is ***contented*** is **"easy to support."** **Frugality, from consideration of others, is a noble trait.** To the extent that **one's own needs are cut down as an example to others and as a means not to inconvenience them, to that extent one shows refinement.** The more

**gross** and **materialistic** a person becomes, the more **his needs increase**. The yardstick to judge the mental health of a given society is thus the **diminution of needs** the **element of contentment** and **satisfaction**.

A **materialistic and egocentric life** is characterized **not only by an increase in wants** but also by *restlessness*, showing itself in being **over-busy and overactive** and **lacking in moderation** and **self-restraint**. **Mettā**, which **promotes the well-being of all**, naturally must **be built** on such **qualities of sober humanism as are reflected** in **having a few meaningful and select tasks** which **conduce to the maximum well-being** of all concerned.

**Living a simple life** as an expression of mettā involves a **reorientation of one's outlook and conduct**, even in our **competitive, pleasure-seeking and possession-minded world**. A **man of simple living is gentle**, yet **efficient and effective**, and **has restraint over his sense-faculties**, being **moderate, frugal, and controlled**. **Mental culture through meditation** for such a person **becomes natural and effortless**: hence the attribute "**tranquil in his senses**."

**Mettā in conduct** includes the **exercising of *prudence practical wisdom***. It is only a **sagacious and wise person** who can really cultivate mettā in all its varied forms in daily life, and through all modes of human relationship. Self-righteousness, arising from a sense of being better or more devout than others, can be (and often is) a masquerade of spiritual practice. To be courteous, not fawning on families" thus is a pointer for the person of mettā **not to indulge in self-righteousness of any form**.

Further, the **practitioner of mettā is advised to refrain from any action, even social conventions, for which a wise man may reprove him as lacking in prudence or propriety.** It is not good enough that one should be good, but **one should also appear to be good, in consideration not only of one's own well-being but also of others' well-being.** An **exemplary life is to be lived for the benefit of all, for the welfare of society.**

**A person living thus now plunges into the cultivation of the all-embracing mind of mettā through definite techniques of meditation as envisaged in the remaining part of the sutta.**

**Mettā is also called a paritta - a spiritual formula capable of safeguarding one's well-being, protecting one against all dangers, and rescuing one from mishaps and misfortunes.**

When the monks could not stay and meditate in that beautiful forest provided with all facilities because the deities were hostile to them, they had to leave the place. And when they were armed with the **protection of the Mettā Sutta, which they recited and meditated upon** throughout their journey, by the time they reached the place, the **deities were full of friendly feelings** and already waiting for them. **Hostility had been turned into hospitality.**

The **protection of paritta works both subjectively and objectively.** Subjectively, as **mettā cleanses and strengthens the mind, it also awakens the dormant potentials, resulting in the spiritual transmutation of the personality.** Transformed by **mettā, the mind is no longer haunted by greed, hatred, lust, jealousy, and those**

other mind-polluting factors which are one's real enemy and source of misfortune.

Objectively, mettā as a thought-force can affect any mind anywhere, developed, or undeveloped. The radiation of mettā can not only calm a person or remove the darts of hate from within him, but in some cases can even cure him of severe illness. It is a common experience in Buddhist countries to see how people are cured from all sorts of diseases and freed from misfortunes through the recitation of paritta. Thus, mettā is a real healing power. In this way does mettā act as a paritta, a healing formula affording safeguards.

## 5. The Psychology of Mettā

The Pāli commentaries explain:

One **loves** all beings:

- (a) by the **non-harassment** of all beings and thus **avoids** harassment.
- (b) by **being inoffensive** (to all beings) and thus **avoids** offensiveness.
- (c) by **not torturing** (all beings) and **thus** avoids torturing.
- (d) by the **non-destruction** (of all life) and **thus avoids** destructiveness.
- (e) by being **non-vexing** (to all beings) and **thus avoids** vexing.
- (f) by **projecting the thought, "May all beings be friendly and not hostile"**.
- (g) by **projecting the thought, " May all beings be happy and not unhappy"**;



(h) by **projecting the thought, "May all beings enjoy well-being and not be distressed."**

In these **eight ways one loves all beings**; therefore, it is called **universal love**. And since one conceives (within) this quality (of love), it is of the mind. And since this mind is free from all thoughts of ill-will, the aggregate of love, mind and freedom is defined as *universal love leading to freedom of mind*.

From the above passage it will be seen that mettā implies the **"outgrowing" of negative traits** by actively putting into **practice the correlative positive virtues**. It is only when **one actively practices non-harassment** towards all beings that one **can outgrow the tendency to harass** others. Similarly, it is with the other qualities of **inoffensiveness, non-tormenting, non-destroying and non-vexing in deed, word and thought** that one can **outgrow the negative traits of being offensive, of tormenting others, of destructiveness and of vexation**. Over and above such positive conduct and principled way of life, one further cultivates the mind through that **specific technique of meditation** called *mettā-bhāvanā*, which generates **powerful thoughts of spiritualized love that grow boundless, making consciousness itself infinite and universal**.

Thoughts that wish all beings to be friendly and never hostile, happy, and never unhappy, to enjoy well-being and never be distressed, imply not only sublimity and boundlessness, but also utter freedom of mind. Hence the appropriateness of the expression **"universal love leading to freedom of mind."**

As for the meanings of the **five aspects** opposed by mettā, **harassment** is the desire to oppress or damage; **offensiveness** is the tendency to hurt or injure; **torturing** is a synonym of the sadistic tendency to torment, subjecting others to pain or misery; **destructiveness** is to put an end to or to finish, the trait of the extremist and the iconoclast; **vexing** is to tax, trouble or cause others worry and strain. Each of these tendencies is rooted in antipathy and malevolence, and provides a contrast with mettā, both as a mode of conduct and as a psychological state or attitude of mind.

The substitution of a negative trait by the opposed positive course implies a very developed and mature approach to life. The ability to remain non-harassing, inoffensive, non-torturing, non-destructive and non-vexing means a very refined, beautiful, and loving mode of behaviour in a world where interaction between human beings creates so much tension and misery.

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, mettā is a "solvent" that "melts" not only one's own psychic pollutants of anger, resentment, and offensiveness, but also those of others. Since it takes the approach of friendship, even the hostile one turns into a friend.

Mettā is characterized as that which "**promotes welfare**." Its function is to "**prefer well-being**" rather than ill. It manifests as a force that "**removes annoyance**" and its **proximate cause is the tendency** to see the **good side** of things and beings and **never the faults**. **Mettā succeeds when it loves, and it fails when it degenerates into worldly affection.**

It will be **clear from this analysis** that only when **one tends to see the good in people**, and **prefers the welfare** of others, and **accordingly is inoffensive** (to remove any annoyance or hurt) and **actively promotes well-being**, does mettā function as a solvent. It is said that the ultimate purpose of mettā is to attain transcendental insight, and if that is not possible, it will **at least effect a rebirth** in the **sublime sphere** of the **Brahma world**, apart from **bringing inner peace** and a **healthy state of mind here and now**. Hence the Buddha's assurance in the *Mettā Sutta*:

**Holding no more to wrong beliefs,  
With virtue and vision of the ultimate,  
And having overcome all sensual desire,  
Never in a womb is he born again.**

**Love wards off ill-will**, which is the **most damaging** of emotions. Hence it is said: "For this is the escape from ill-will, friends, that is to say, the freedom of mind wrought by universal love" (**Dīgha Nikāya, III. 234**).

In the practice of mettā it is important to understand the emotions which nullify mettā either by being similar or being dissimilar. The *Visuddhimagga* calls them "the two enemies — the near and the remote. **"Greed, lust, worldly affection, sensuality — all these are said to be the "near enemies" because they are similar in tendencies. The lustful also sees the "good side" or "beauty," and therefore gets involved. Love should be protected from it lest the masquerades of these emotions deceive the meditator.**

**Ill-will, anger and hatred, being dissimilar emotions, therefore constitute the "remote enemy." The remote enemy can easily be distinguished so one need not be afraid of it, but one should overcome it by projecting a higher force, that of love. But one must be wary of the near enemy because it creates self-deception, which is the worst thing that can happen to an individual.**

It is said that mettā begins only when there is zeal in the form of a desire to act. Having commenced through earnest effort, it **can be continued only when the five mental hindrances** — sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt — **are put down. Mettā reaches consummation with the attainment of absorption (*jhāna*).**

## **6. Meditation on Mettā**

There are **various ways of cultivating mettā-bhāvanā, the meditation on universal love. Three of the principal methods** will be explained here. These instructions, based on canonical and commentarial sources, are intended to explain the **cultivation of mettā-meditation in a clear, simple and direct way** so that anyone **who is earnest** about taking up the cultivation will **have no doubts** about **how to proceed**. For full instructions on the theory and practice of mettā-bhāvanā the reader is referred to the *Visuddhimagga*, Chapter IX.

## **Method 1 (most effective method)**

**Sit down in a comfortable posture in a quiet place** — a shrine room, a quiet room, a park, or any other place providing privacy and silence. **Keeping the eyes closed, repeat the word "mettā" a few times and mentally conjure up its significance** — love as the opposite of hatred, resentment, malevolence, impatience, pride and arrogance, and as a profound feeling of good will, sympathy and kindness promoting the happiness and well-being of others.

Now **visualize your own face in a happy and radiant mood. Every time you see your face in the mirror, see yourself in a happy mood with a radiant smile and put yourself in this mood during meditation. A person in a happy mood cannot become angry or harbour negative thoughts and feelings. Having visualized yourself in a happy frame of mind, now charge yourself with the thought; "May I be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from sorrow, lamentation and distress; may I (this body and mind of mine) be well and happy always."** As you suffuse yourself in this way with the positive thought-force of love, you become like a filled vessel, its contents ready to overflow in all directions.

**Next, visualize your meditation teacher, if living; if not, choose some other living teacher or revered person. See him in a happy frame of mind and project the thought: "May my teacher be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may he be well and happy always, live happily."**

Then think of other people who are to be revered, and who are also living — monks, teachers, parents and elders, and intensely spread towards each one of them the thought of mettā in the manner mentioned already: "May they be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they be well and happy always, live happily."

The visualization must be clear, and the thought-radiation must be "willed" well. If the visualization is hurried or the wishing is performed in a perfunctory or mechanical way, the practice will be of little avail, for then it will be merely an intellectual pastime of *thinking about* mettā or 'parroting'. One must clearly understand that to *think about* mettā is one thing, and to *do* mettā, to actively project the will-force of loving-kindness, is quite another.

Having radiated thoughts of mettā in the order already mentioned — oneself, the meditation teacher and other revered persons — one should now visualize, one by one, one's dear ones beginning with the members of one's family, suffusing each one with abundant rays of loving-kindness. Charity begins at home: if one cannot love one's own people one will not be able to love others.

While spreading mettā towards one's own family members, care should be taken to think of a very dear one, like one's husband or wife, at the end of this circle. The reason for this is that the intimacy between husband and wife introduces the element of worldly love which defiles mettā. Spiritual love must be the same towards all. Similarly, if one has had a temporary misunderstanding or quarrel

**with any family member** or relative, he or she should be **visualized at a later stage** to avoid recalling the unpleasant incidents.

Next, one should **visualize neutral** people, people for whom one has **neither like nor dislike**, such as one's **neighbours, colleagues** in one's place of work, **bare acquaintances**, and so on. Having radiated loving thoughts on **everyone in the neutral circle**, one should **now visualize persons** for whom one **has dislike, hostility, or prejudice**, even those with whom one may have had a **temporary misunderstanding**. As one visualizes **disliked persons, to each one must mentally repeat: "I have no hostility towards him/her, may he/she also not have any hostility towards me. May he/she be well and happy ALWAYS!"**

Thus, as one visualizes the persons of the different circles, one **"breaks the barrier"** caused by likes and dislikes, attachment, and hatred. When one is able to regard an enemy without ill-will and with the same amount of goodwill that one has for a very dear friend, *mettā* then acquires a sublime impartiality, elevating the mind upward and outward as if in a spiral movement of ever-widening circles until it becomes all-embracing.

By *visualization* is meant "calling to mind" or visualizing certain objects, such as a person, a certain area or a direction or a category of beings. In other words, it means imagining the people towards whom thoughts of love are to be projected or spread. For instance, you imagine your father and visualize his face in a happy and radiant mood and project the thought towards the visualized image, mentally saying: "May he be well and happy! May he be free from

disease or trouble! May he enjoy good health." You may use any thought which promotes his well-being.

By **radiation** is meant, as explained above, the **projection of certain thoughts promoting the well-being of those persons** towards whom **one's mind is directed**. A **mettā-thought is a powerful thought-force**. It can **actually effect** what has **been willed**. For wishing well-being is **willing** and thus is **creative** action. In fact, all that man has created in different fields is the result of what he has willed, whether it is a city or a hydro-electric project, a rocket going to the moon, a weapon of destruction, or an artistic or literary masterpiece. Radiation of thoughts of mettā, too, is the development of a **willpower** that can effect whatever is willed. It is not a **rare experience to see diseases cured or misfortunes warded off**, even from a **great distance**, by the **application of the thought-force of mettā**. But this thought-force must be generated in an extremely **specific and skilful way**, following a certain sequence.

The formula for **radiating mettā** that is used here has come down from the ancient *Paṭisambhidāmagga*: "**May they be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they be well and happy always, live happily**" (*averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anīghā hontu, sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu*). The commentarial explanation of these terms is highly significant. "**Free from hostility**" (*averā*) means **absence of hostility** whether aroused on account of oneself or others, or on account of oneself because of others or of others because of oneself or others. One's anger towards oneself might take the form of self-pity, remorse, or a gripping sense of guilt. It can be conditioned by interaction with others. Hostility



combines anger and enmity. "Free from affliction" (*abyāpajjhā*) means absence of pain or physical suffering. "Free from distress" (*anighā*) means the absence of mental suffering, anguish, or anxiety, which often follows upon hostility or bodily affliction. It is only when one is free from hostility, affliction, and distress that one "lives happily," that is, **conducts oneself with ease and happiness**. Thus, all these terms are interconnected.

By *order* is meant visualizing objects, one after the other, by taking the path of least resistance, in a graduated sequence, which progressively widens the circle and therewith the mind itself. The *Visuddhimagga* is emphatic about this order. **According to Ācariya Buddhaghosa, one must start the meditation on mettā by visualizing oneself, and thereafter a person for whom one has reverence, then one's dear ones, then neutral people, then hostile persons. As one radiates thoughts of love in this order, the mind breaks all barriers between oneself, a revered one, a dear one, a neutral one and a hostile one. Everyone comes to be looked upon equally with the eye of loving-kindness.**

In the *Visuddhimagga* Ācariya Buddhaghosa gives a very apt analogy for the breaking of the barriers: "Suppose bandits were to come to the meditator who is sitting in a place with a respected, a dear, a neutral, and a hostile or wicked person and demand, '**Friend, we want one of you for the purpose of offering human sacrifice.**' If the meditator were to think, '**Let him take this one or that one,**' he has not broken down the barriers. And even if he were to think, '**Let none of these be taken, but let them take me,**' even then he has not broken down the barriers since he seeks his own harm, and mettā

meditation signifies the well-being of all. But when he does not see the need for anyone to be given to the bandits and impartially projects the thought of love towards all, including the bandits, it is then that he would break down the barriers."

## Method 2

The first method of practicing meditation on mettā employs the projection of loving thoughts to specific individuals in order of increasing remoteness from oneself. The second method presents an *impersonal* mode of radiating mettā which makes the mind truly all-embracing, as suggested by the Pāḷi term *mettā-cetovimutti*, "the liberation of mind through universal love." The unliberated mind is imprisoned within the walls of egocentricity, greed, hatred, delusion, jealousy, and meanness. If the mind is in the grip of these defiling and limiting mental factors, for so long it remains insular and fettered. By breaking these bonds, mettā liberates the mind, and the liberated mind naturally grows boundless and immeasurable. Just as the earth cannot be rendered "earth less," even so the mind of mettā cannot be limited.

After completing the radiation of mettā towards selected persons, when the mind breaks the barriers existing between oneself and revered ones, beloved ones, friends, neutral ones and hostile ones, the meditator now embarks on the greater voyage of **impersonal radiation**, even as an ocean-worthy ship voyages through the vast, measureless ocean, nevertheless retaining a route and a goal as well. The **technique is as follows:**

**Imagine** the people **residing in your house** as forming an **aggregate**, then **embrace** all of them within your heart, radiating the **mettā thoughts**: "*May all those dwelling in this house be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily.*" Having visualized one's own house in this manner, one must now **visualize** the **next house**, and all its residents, and then the **next house, and the next, and so on, until all the houses in that street are similarly covered by all-embracing loving-kindness**. Now the meditator should take up the next street, and the next, until the **entire neighbourhood** or village is covered. Thereafter extension by extension, direction-wise, should be **clearly visualized** and spread with mettā-rays in abundant measure. In this way the entire town or the city is to be covered; then the district and the entire state should be covered and radiated with thoughts of mettā.

Next, one should visualize state after state, starting with one's own state, then the rest of the states in the different directions, the **east, south, west, and north**. Thus, one should cover the whole of one's country, geographically visualizing the people of this land **regardless of class, race, sect, or religion**. Think: "*May everyone in this great land abide in peace and well-being! May there be no war, no strife, no misfortune, no maladies! Radiant with friendliness and good fortune, with compassion and wisdom, may all those in this great country enjoy peace and plenty.*"

One should now cover the entire continent, country by country, in the eastern, southern, western, and northern directions. Geographically imagining each country and the people therein according to their looks, one should radiate in abundant measure thoughts of mettā:

*"May they be happy! May there be no strife and discord! May goodwill and understanding prevail! May peace be unto all!"*

Thereafter one should take up all the continents — Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North and South America — visualizing country by country and people by people, covering the entire globe. Imagine yourself at a particular point of the globe and then project powerful rays of mettā, enveloping one direction of the globe, then another, then another and so on until the whole globe is flooded and **thoroughly enveloped with glowing thoughts of universal love.**

One should now project into the **vastness of space powerful beams of mettā** towards all beings living in **other realms**, first in the **four cardinal directions** — east, south, west and north — then in the **intermediary directions** — northeast, southeast, southwest, northwest — and then above and below, covering all the ten directions with abundant and measureless thoughts of universal love.

### **Method 3**

According to the **cosmology of Buddhism** there are numberless world-systems inhabited by infinitely varied categories of beings in different stages of evolution. Our earth is only a speck in our world-system, which again is a minute dot in the universe with its innumerable world-systems. Towards all beings everywhere one should radiate thoughts of boundless love. This is developed in the next method of practice, the ***universalization*** of mettā.

The universalization of mettā is effected in these three specific modes:

1. generalized radiation (*anodhiso-pharaṇa*),
2. specified radiation (*odhiso-pharaṇa*),
3. directional radiation (*disa-pharaṇa*).

According to the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, the generalized radiation of mettā is practiced in five ways, the specified radiation in seven ways, and the directional radiation in ten ways. These ten directional ways may be combined with the five categories of general radiation and with the seven categories of specified radiation, as we will show. In each of these modes of practice, any of the four phrases of the standard mettā formula — "**May they be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily**" — may be used as the thought of radiation. Thus, four types of thought applied to five, seven, and 120 objects of mettā amount to 528 modes of radiation. Any of these can be used as a vehicle for attaining absorption (*jhāna*) through the technique of mettā-bhāvanā. (See *Vism.* IX, 58.)

## GENERALIZED RADIATION

The five ways of generalized radiation are as follows:

1. "May all beings (*sabbe sattā*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
2. "May all those that breathe (*sabbe pāṇa*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

3. "May all creatures (*sabbe bhūta*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
4. "May all those with individual existence (*sabbe puggala*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
5. "May all those who are embodied (*sabbe attabhāva pariyāpanna*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## **SPECIFIED RADIATION**

The seven ways of specified radiation are as follows:

1. "May all females (*sabba itthiyo*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
2. "May all males (*sabbe purisa*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
3. "May all the Noble Ones (*sabbe ariya*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
4. "May all world lings (*sabbe anariya*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

5. "May all gods (*sabbe deva*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
6. "May all human beings (*sabbe manussa*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
7. "May all those in states of woe (*sabbe vinipātika*) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## DIRECTIONAL RADIATION

The **ten ways of directional radiation** involve sending thoughts of mettā to **all beings in the ten directions**. This method, in its basic form, is applied to the class of *beings (sattā)*, the first of the five generalized objects of mettā. But it can be developed further by extending mettā through each of the five ways of generalized radiation and the seven ways of specified radiation, as we will see.

### I.

1. "May all beings in the eastern direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
2. "May all beings in the western direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
3. "May all beings in the northern direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
4. "May all beings in the southern direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

5. "May all beings in the north-eastern direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
6. "May all beings in the south-western direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
7. "May all beings in the north-western direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
8. "May all beings in the south-eastern direction be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
9. "May all beings below (in the downward direction) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."
10. "May all beings above (in the upward direction) be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## **II.**

1-10. "May all those that breathe life in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## **III.**

1-10. "May all creatures in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."



**IV.**

1-10. "May all those with individual existence in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

**V.**

1-10. "May all those who are embodied in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

**VI.**

1-10. "May all females in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

**VII.**

1-10. "May all males in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

**VIII.**

1-10. "May all Noble Ones in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

**IX.**

1-10. "May all worldlings in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## X.

1-10. "May all gods in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## XI.

1-10. "May all human beings in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## XII.

1-10. "May all those in states of woe in the eastern direction... above be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily."

## EXPLANATION

In this technique of universalizing mettā, each of the five categories of *generalized radiation* refers to the total dimension of animate, sentient, or organic existence, belonging to the three mundane spheres, namely, the **kāmaloka**, the sphere of sensory existence where desire is the primal motivation; the **rūpaloka**, the realm of the radiant Brahma gods with subtle form; and the **arūpaloka**, the realm of the formless beings with pure mental life. Whether it is a "being," or that which "breathes," or a "creature," or that which has "individual existence," or that which "is embodied" — all refer to the totality of animate existence, the distinction being that each term expresses comprehensively a certain aspect of life in its entirety.

While visualizing each category one should keep in mind the specific aspect expressed by its designation. If one trains the mind in the manner of a "mental drill" after having exercised it with the first two methods, the meaning of the five unspecified or generalized terms will become clear. By the time **one has completed the two methods, the consciousness will be sufficiently developed and all-embracing.** And with such a consciousness, when each of these universal concepts is grasped, the **universalization becomes effortless.** It may be pointed out that visualization of each of these is no longer of individual objects, but of a concept **which is total and all-embracing.** The radiation in this case becomes a "*flowing out*" of **love in abundant** measure towards the conceptualized mental object — all beings, all creatures, etc.

Each of the seven categories of *specified radiation* comprehends a part of the total range of life, and in combination with the others expresses the whole. *Itthi* refers to the female principle in general, incorporating all females among the devas, human beings, animals, demons, spirits, and denizens of hell. *Purisa* means the male principle evident in all the spheres of existence, and both *itthi* and *purisa* together comprehend the entirety. Again, from another angle, the *ariyas* or the spiritually transformed seers, and the *anariyas* or worldlings bound to the wheel of becoming, comprehend the totality. Ariyas are those who have entered the transcendental path; they are to be found in the human world and the celestial worlds and therefore they constitute the tip of the pyramid of sentient existence. Worldlings are in all the spheres of existence and constitute the body of the pyramid from the base to the tip, so to say. Likewise, the three

categories of *deva*, *manussa* and *vinipātika* — gods, human beings, and those fallen into states of woe — comprehend the totality in terms of cosmological status. Devas, the radiant celestial beings, comprise the upper layer, human beings the middle layer, and *vinipātikas* the lower layer of the cosmological mound.

The "mental drill" in terms of *directional radiation*, the radiation of *mettā* to the above twelve categories of beings in the ten directions, makes the universalization of *mettā* a most exhilarating experience. As one mentally places oneself in a particular direction and then let love flow out and envelop the entire region, one literally transports the mind to the sublimest heights leading to *samādhi*, concentrated absorption of the mind.

When one projects this total wish for others to dwell happily, free from hostility, affliction and distress, not only does one elevate oneself to a level where true happiness prevails, but one sets in motion powerful vibrations conducing to happiness, cooling off enmity, relieving affliction and distress. It will be seen, therefore, that universal love simultaneously infuses well-being and happiness and removes the mental and physical suffering caused by the mental pollutants of hostility, enmity, and anger.

## 7. The Blessings of *Mettā*

Monks, **when universal love leading to liberation of mind is ardently practiced, developed, unrelentingly resorted to, used as one's vehicle, made the foundation of one's life, fully established, well**

**consolidated and perfected, then these eleven blessings may be expected. What eleven?**

*One sleeps happily; one wakes happily; one does not suffer bad dreams; one is dear to human beings; one is dear to non-human beings; the gods protect one; no fire or poison or weapon harms one; one's mind gets quickly concentrated; the expression of one's face is serene; one dies unperturbed; and even if one fails to attain higher states, one will at least reach the state of the Brahma world.*

[AN 11.16](#) [Mettā (Mettanisaṃsa) Sutta: Good Will]

*Mettā cetovimutti* — universal love leading to liberation of mind — signifies the attainment of samādhi, absorption based upon meditation on mettā. Since mettā liberates the mind from the bondage of hatred and anger, selfishness, greed, and delusion, it constitutes a state of liberation. Every time one practices mettā, for however short a period, one enjoys a measure of freedom of mind. Measureless freedom of mind, however, is to be expected only when mettā is fully developed into samādhi.

The various applications of mettā, as indicated by the terms "practiced, developed," etc., signify a well-structured force brought about not only by specific hours of meditation, but also by converting all one's deeds, words and thoughts into acts of mettā.

By "practiced" (*āsevitā*) is meant the ardent practice of mettā, not as a mere intellectual exercise, but by committing oneself wholeheartedly to it and making it life's guiding philosophy, something which conditions one's attitudes, outlook, and conduct.

By "developed" (*bhāvita*) is implied the various processes of inner culture and mental integration effected by the practice of meditation on universal love. Since meditation brings about unification of mind by integrating the various faculties, it is called development of mind. The Buddha taught that the entire mental world is developed by the practice of meditation on universal love, leading to mind's liberation and the transformation of the personality.

"Unrelentingly resorted to" (*bahulīkata*) emphasizes repeated practice of mettā all through one's waking hours, in deed, word and thought, and maintaining the tempo of mettā-awareness throughout. Repeated action means generation of power. All the five spiritual powers, namely, faith, vigour, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, are exercised and cultivated by the repeated practice of mettā.

"Used as one's vehicle" (*yānīkata*) signifies a "total commitment" to the ideal of mettā as the only valid method for the solution of interpersonal problems and as an instrument for spiritual growth. When mettā is the only "mode of communication," the only vehicle, life automatically is a "divine abiding" as mentioned in the Mettā Sutta.

"Made the foundation of one's life" (*vatthukatā*) is making mettā the basis of one's existence in all respects. It becomes the chief resort, the haven, the refuge of one's life, making one's refuge in the Dhamma a reality.

"Fully established" (*anuṭṭhitā*) refers to a life that is firmly rooted in mettā, has anchorage in mettā under all circumstances. When mettā is effortlessly practiced, not even by error does one violate the laws of universal love.

"Well consolidated" (*paricita*) means one is so habituated to mettā that one remains effortlessly immersed in it, both in meditation as well as in one's day-to-day conduct.

"Perfected" (*susamāradhā*) indicates a mode of completeness through total adherence and development, leading to that fully integrated state in which one enjoys perfect well-being and spiritual felicity, indicated by the passage detailing the eleven blessings of mettā.

The benefits of mettā are indeed great and comprehensive. For a follower of the Buddha this is one supreme instrument that can be wielded with advantage everywhere.

## 8. The Power of Mettā

The **subjective benefit** of **universal love** is evident enough. *The enjoyment of well-being, good health, peace of mind, radiant features, and the affection and goodwill of all are indeed great blessings of life accruing from the practice of mettā-meditation. But what is even more wonderful is the impact which mettā has on the environment and on other beings, including animals and devas, as the Pāḷi scriptures and commentaries illustrate with several memorable stories.*

‘Once the Buddha was returning from his alms round together with his retinue of monks. As they were nearing the prison, in consideration of a handsome bribe from Devadatta, the Buddha's evil and ambitious cousin, the executioner let loose the fierce elephant Nālāgiri, which was used for the execution of criminals. As the intoxicated elephant rushed towards the Buddha trumpeting fearfully, the Buddha projected powerful thoughts of mettā towards it. Venerable Ānanda, the Buddha's attendant, was so deeply concerned about the Buddha's safety that he ran in front of the Buddha to shield him, but the Buddha asked him to stand aside since the projection of love itself was quite sufficient. The impact of the Buddha's mettā-radiation was so immediate and overwhelming that by the time the animal neared the Buddha it was completely tamed as though a drunken wretch had suddenly become sober by the magical power of a spell. The tusker, it is said, bowed down in reverence in the way trained elephants do in a circus’.

The *Visuddhimagga* records the case of one landlord of Pāṭaliputra (modern Patna), Visākha by name. It seems he had heard that the island of Sri Lanka was a veritable garden of Dhamma with its innumerable shrines and stupas adorning the isle. And blessed with a favourable climate, the people were highly righteous, following the Teaching of the Buddha with great fervour and sincerity.

Visākha decided to visit Sri Lanka and spend the rest of his life there as a monk. Accordingly, he made over his great fortune to his wife and children and left home with a single gold coin. He stopped for some time at the port town of Tamralipi (modern Tamluk) waiting for a ship,



and during that time engaged himself in business and made a thousand gold coins.

Eventually he reached Sri Lanka and went to the capital city of Anuradhapura. There he went to the famous Mahāvihāra and asked the abbot's permission to enter the Saṅgha. As he was led to the chapter house for the ordination ceremony, the purse containing the thousand gold coins dropped out from under his belt. When asked, "What is it?" he said, "I have a thousand gold coins, sir." When he was told that a monk cannot possess any money, he said, "I don't want to possess it, but I wanted to distribute it among all who come for this ceremony." Accordingly, he opened his purse and strewed the entire yard of the chapter house, saying, *"Let no one who has come to witness Visākha's ordination depart empty-handed."*

After spending five years with his teacher, he now decided to go to the famous Cittalapabbata forest, where a good number of monks with supernatural powers lived. Accordingly, he went to the jungle-monastery of Cittalapabbata. On his way he came to a fork in the road and stood wondering which way to turn. Since he had been practicing mettā-meditation assiduously, he found a certain deva living in the rock there, holding out a hand pointing the road to him. After reaching the Cittalapabbata jungle-monastery, he occupied one of the huts.

Having stayed there for four months, as he was thinking of leaving the next morning, he heard somebody weeping, and when he asked, "Who is that?" the deva living in the manila tree at the end of the

walkway said, "Venerable sir, I am Maniliya (i.e., belonging to the manila tree)."

"Why are you weeping?"

"Because you are thinking of going away from here."

"What good does my living here do you?"

"Venerable sir, so long as you live here, the devas and other non-human beings treat each other with kindness. When you are gone, they will again start their wrangling and quarrels."

"Well, if my living here makes all of you live at peace, it is good." And so, he stayed on for another four months. It is said that when he again thought of going, again the deity wept. So, this Elder stayed on permanently and attained Nibbāna there. **Such is the impact of mettā-bhāvanā** on others, even among invisible beings.

There is also the famous story of the cow. It seems that a cow was giving milk to her calf in a forest. A hunter wanting to kill her flung a spear which, when it struck her body, bounced off like a palm leaf. So mightily powerful is mettā — loving-kindness. This is not the case of one who has developed *mettā-samādhi*. It is a simple case of the consciousness of love for the offspring.

Indeed, the power of mettā can never be told enough. The commentaries to the Pāḷi canon are replete with stories, not only of monks, but also of ordinary people who overcame various dangers,

including weapons and poison, through the sheer strength of mettā — selfless love.

But let not mettā be mistaken as a mere sentiment. It is the power of the strong. If the leaders from different walks of life were to give mettā a fair trial, no principle or guideline to action would be found to possess greater efficiency or fruitfulness in all spheres.

In everything man is the ultimate unit. If man decides to substitute mettā as a policy of action for aggression and ill-will, the world will turn into a veritable abode of peace. For it is only when man shall have peace within himself, and boundless goodwill for others, that peace in the world will become real and enduring.

## About the Author

Ven. Ācharya Buddharakkhita is founder and president of the Mahā Bodhi Society in Bangalore, India. In 1956 he was a member of the editorial board of the Sixth Buddhist Synod in Rangoon, which brought out a complete edition of the Pāḷi canon. Since then he has written numerous books and translations of Buddhist texts, which have been published in many countries. Best known is his classic English rendering of the Dhammapada, published by the BPS under the title *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom*. He also edits and publishes a monthly magazine, *Dhamma*.

An internationally recognized meditation master, he has lived and taught abroad, and founded the Buddhayoga Meditation Society in the United States. He has also taught Buddhology at the Nalanda Pāḷi Postgraduate Institute, Bihar University. Passionately committed to putting Buddhist principles into practice, he has achieved distinction for multi-faceted humanitarian activities in his native India.

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