

Meditation on Loving-kindness and Other Sublime States

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Preface

After some months of intensive practice of Metta Bhavana, my teacher asked me, “Do you now know how to practise metta?” I answered that as I had only grasped the basic framework there was still so much to do to have a complete picture. Even now I still feel inadequate for the work of writing a book on metta bhavana.

Firstly, my own experience is not wide enough. I would be better after guiding more people. While I was trying to hold some intensive metta retreats, I found most people still needed vipassana. Nevertheless there have been times when it was taught.

It was only when encouraged by my teacher that I finally decided to do something. Finally, I could only come up with the basic framework again, and in fewer words. I also suppose that knowledge should not be kept waiting. There are so many things I would like to have shared with some of my friends, who are now dead. It would have made their lives better and happier.

This work is aimed at the development of the deep and concentrated metta that is seldom spoken of, other than in textual sources. Although it is also based on textual sources, such as Buddhaghosa’s “Path of Purification”, the writing was done in simplified form in Kota Tinggi, in 1990, for easy reading. It is hoped that this book will help to fill the need to some extent. Surely all of us need much stronger and deeper metta! I have also drawn much from Mahasi’s “Brahma Vihara”, one of the best and most informative books on the subject available. I make no claim of any lofty attainments. I only put down what I understand and derive from talks by more experienced people, and from what little practice I have done.

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Metta Bhavana — Cultivation of Loving-kindness

The good symbol for Metta (loving-kindness) is the mother cradling her baby to sleep. The baby cradled to sleep will be the result. I can still remember that it was a good feeling when I was cradled to sleep by my mother. There is also a lot of joy when one is unselfishly caring for a friend. Such is loving-kindness and its results.

In the texts, metta is characterised by promoting the aspect of welfare. Amity, goodwill, friendliness and loving-kindness are some of the words used to describe this mental state. There is no better way to know it than to study it as it occurs in one's own mind and others'. It is a totally unselfish and pure state of mind that brings profit to oneself and others, now and hereafter.

The cultivation of this state of mind is called bhavana – normally translated as meditation. When we cultivate it, it becomes strong, powerful and useful. It brings us abundant, deep and intense peace and happiness.

The cultivation of it involves the following:

1. The concentration of metta. Concentrated, it becomes strong and powerful.
2. Metta is also trained so that it can be given to anybody. That is, it is flexible, versatile, universal and boundless.
3. When this potent force has become powerful we can make use of it to produce many marvels to make everyone's life better.

To do this effectively one needs the method. Acquiring the skill requires patience. With experience one improves.

Metta in Buddhism is a state of mind. Its object is the lovable being. It is the state of wishing to promote the welfare of the lovable being. In the Buddhist teachings, the doctrine of anatta – or non-self – occupies a position of prime importance. As such it may seem to be conflicting. This is because there are two types of truths, conventional (sammutti) and ultimate (paramattha).

Conventional truths are conceptual, and true only at the conventional level. When seen in an ultimate point of view (i.e. a mind freed from ideas, concepts) they do not exist. They are like shadows cast by realities. Therefore the “person” exists only conventionally. Ultimately, “he” can be experienced as mental and material processes. If you see things in this way you are looking at things as they really are, which is actually insight (vipassana). To develop this direct vision into reality is to practise insight meditation – vipassana bhavana.

At such a time, we cannot be having metta as the nature of the objects differs. Moreover, when we return to conventional realities or switch back to conceptual objects then we may have the metta again. That is why, comparatively, vipassana is more profound and superior. It frees one utterly from all sufferings of samsara (cycle of birth and death).

Metta however must not be underestimated, although it has its limitations. Most of us will need a lot of time before we have completed the work of insight cultivation. And even after that metta will still play a great role. Even Buddhas are not always without conceptual objects. Concepts occur together with the mental formations and processes.

In the discourse to Subha, the Buddha answers questions posed to him as to the reasons for long life and so forth. From the answers, we find that the kammic results that lead to long life, good health, beauty, following, wealth, noble birth – can be attributed to acts connected with loving-kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy.

Therefore the Four Sublime Abodes (Brahmavihara, i.e. loving-kindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity) act as a soothing balm to those still within the cycle of birth and death.

Besides these, we also see metta as an effective means:

1. to overcome anger as it is the opposite of these violent and destructive mental states,
2. to build up the required concentration base for the development of insight, because with metta, our mind concentrates rapidly,
3. for a healthy relationship with every living being – so important for a happy family, society and the world.

From this we can see that metta bhavana is something that should be practised to some degree by everyone. Without it one not only tends to fail in social and personal relationships but is also at a great disadvantage when involved in spiritual practice.



Samatha Bhavana — Cultivation of Tranquillity

Metta bhavana is one of the 40 themes for samatha bhavana listed in the Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga).

Samatha means tranquillity.

Bhavana means cultivation.

That is, the cultivation of loving-kindness is one way by which we can attain tranquillity.

Tranquillity or Samatha refers:

- I. firstly, to tranquillity freed of defilements. Truly the defilements of greed, hatred, delusion, jealousy, etc. are torturous and disturbing to the mind. The mind purified of these can truly be said to be peaceful.
- II. secondly, to unification with or concentration of the mind on its object. It is because the mind that wanders to manifold objects is scattered, weak and tends to be restless. The still, fixed and concentrated purity gives strength and stability to tranquillity.
- III. thirdly, to the removal of less peaceful states of mind which furthers and deepens the state of tranquillity. This is done when moving from the lower absorptions (jhana) to the higher ones. For example, while going from the first to second absorption, initial application (vitakka) has to be abandoned.

This book talks of the rupa jhanas in fivefold (as in the abhidhamma) rather than fourfold (as in the Suttas).

Bhavana refers to the repeated cultivation of these peaceful states, so that it lasts longer and is deeper. The wholesome state of mind here in this case will of course be the mind of loving-kindness. The depth of concentration reached is the fourth form absorption

(four rupajhana) in the fivefold classification. The objects of this mind may vary. In fact one can extend it to the unlimited number of beings. For this reason it is also called an immeasurable (appamanna).

In the development of the mind, one has to be holistic. The mind is involved with every aspect of life, and so every aspect ought to be considered. A good understanding of the teachings of the Buddha is important and with respect to meditation practice in particular.

The preliminary preparations given in the “Path of Purification” have appeared often in manuals and writings on meditation. It can also be applied to metta bhavana as well. We shall go through them briefly with reference to our subject.

1. Purity of morals

This is the restraint from immoral acts, particularly of body and speech. All unwholesome states oppose wholesome states and so it is one initial level of purification. Those done out of the root of anger, e.g. killing and slaughtering, would directly indicate a failure of metta. Those done out of greed and ignorance would be an indirect but nevertheless still opposing force. The first is the direct enemy and the second the close enemy. We are often more unwary of the second.

The four aspects of this are:

- I. observance of precepts – e.g. five, eight for laity.
- II. guarding of the senses – e.g. mindfulness when seeing, hearing, etc.
- III. purity of livelihood.
- IV. proper use of requisites (for monks).

2. Cutting off impediments

The impediments mean anything that can obstruct and hinder one’s practice. Ten impediments often quoted are:

- I. unsuitable dwelling
- II. family/supporters
- III. gains
- IV. class of students
- V. building work
- VI. travel
- VII. kin
- VIII. illness
- IX. books/study
- X. supernormal powers

Though these are not necessarily unwholesome, they can take away valuable time meant for the practice. They can also be a source of attachments, anger or other defilements, to which a beginner is especially vulnerable.

Therefore, they are best abandoned as much as possible. For a layperson it would be difficult to abandon them all.

With special inference in the case of metta bhavana would be those impediments concerning people (no. II, IV, VII). Here it may seem conflicting because one may ask – “Can you abandon them when you are to have loving-kindness?” We have to bear in mind that to really have strong metta for others, we have to establish ourselves firmly first. For example we need really strong and powerful metta and patience to be able to take a lot of nonsense from others. And so solitude and training has to come first. There will be time for all that later.

Another matter concerns psychic powers. To maintain them needs concentration itself. And so it would not be an impediment in metta bhavana. It seems to occur as an impediment more for vipassana only.

In samatha meditations the environment is at best very quiet and comfortable as it aids in the calming of the mind. A natural environment of trees and streams also adds to the peace and natural settling down of the mind. Fresh air and freedom from pests provide safety and health and remove anxiety, whilst cleanliness and orderliness are also to be noted as they help bring about concentration. Another factor is suitable companionship: such as fellow strivers with little or no anger, those who do not irritate or are not restless would make ideal companions if one should need them. Better will be those who have abundant metta or are accomplished in metta.

3. Suitable place

The Anguttara Nikaya says that a suitable environment ought to have the following:

- I. convenience – coming and going
- II. quiet – peace by day and night
- III. freedom from dangers
- IV. well-furnished in requirements
- V. presence of a guide

4. Competent guide

As in other forms of meditation, a good guide is an important factor for learning. It is best if we find one who is learned, well-restrained and accomplished in meditations. In this case it would be one accomplished in metta bhavana or the brahma vihara.

Then there is also the skill needed to teach and communicate.

5. Suitable subject of meditation

The subject here is of course loving-kindness (metta). Usually the practice of the four divine abidings (brahma vihara) are taken together. They all have a being/beings as the object, or we may say

that they are all a positive mental relationship for one or a group of beings.

This form of meditation is especially suitable for those who intend to overcome anger or anger-related problems (e.g. bad temper, jealousy, cruelty, fear, worry and anxiety).

It is also very practical as it creates good relationships between and among people. This makes life and work in society easy and happy. This meditation is also generally suitable for beginners for it brings quick results. It has been said that for one with metta the mind calms quickly. It is also fairly safe, without much complication.

Hence metta is one of the tranquillity meditations recommended for beginners.

6. Severing minor impediments

This finishes the minor bits of work to be done, i.e. tying up all loose ends which may cause some flurry or an unsettled state of mind.

7. Getting detailed or specific instructions on the meditation subject

Meditation, the development of individual mind, requires specific skills and direct practical experience. As such, although there are general implications, one will still require specific instructions that suit the individual's temperament and situation for maximum effectiveness.

Motivation is an important factor for the accomplishment of any task. For the successful cultivation of loving-kindness one has to have a lot of patience to persevere and overcome all sorts of difficulties.

Therefore the initial stage involves reflections on the following:

- I. benefits of patience, and
- II. benefits of loving-kindness, and
- III. the dangers of anger.

Such reflections can also be done as often as possible to serve as a frequent reminder and motivation.

- I. Patience means being able to accept a situation without flurry, anxiety and anger.
- II. When one is patient, one avoids a lot of unnecessary trouble.
- III. When one is patient, one is able to get a lot of good opportunities lost to the impatient.
- IV. When one is patient, one is able to go far in one's achievements, for there will always be some difficulties in any great undertakings.
- V. The patient man also overcomes a lot of anger in order to work with metta and other good virtues successfully.

We may also reflect on incidents in the lives of the Buddha and his disciples, how they overcame difficulties to achieve greatness with their patience.

One such story is the perfection of patience when the Buddha was still a Bodhisatta. Even when tortured, with his hands and legs cut off, he showed no anger. He merely asked the King who had ordered it done – “Do you think my patience is in my hands?” Finally the King had his heart cut out. Even then he showed no anger and was patient. He was called the bearer/practiser of patience – Khantivadi.

Similarly we can also reflect on the blessings of loving-kindness.

1. Happily He Sleeps

2. Happily He Wakes
3. Dreams No Bad Dreams

These first three benefits involve sleeping peacefully, and should not be underestimated. Sleep is a restorative process and plays an important part in our lives. If we do not get proper sleep our body and mind in the day will be badly affected, and life will become miserable, as can be seen in the case of insomniacs.

For one who practises loving-kindness, his mind will bear no ill-will towards beings. His mind is also calm and filled with joy. These are conditions for easy and peaceful sleeping and when dreams do arise, the good states previous to sleep will have a good influence on these dreams.

After such good sleep, on waking up one would also be fit enough to take on the chores of daily life in a happy manner. This in turn makes all one meets happier.

In Buddhist psychology, the state of deep sleep is the life continuum consciousness, a state of mind without any thinking process. It is a result of kamma and acts as the mind door. When thought processes arise, the mind shifts from a passive to active state. Dreaming is also an active state that occurs in the mind. There are many reasons for dreams, of which four are quoted below:

- I. Thinking in the day carried forward even after one has cut off the awareness of one's surroundings.
- II. Thoughts that arise through imbalance of elements in the body, e.g. discomfort and illness. These strong sensations stir up thoughts.
- III. Spirits or deceased relatives trying to make contact.
- IV. Clairvoyance.

Dreams are often uncontrollable, as they occur after normal awareness is cut off. How they arise is affected by our own basic nature and habits. One who is used to having evil thoughts in the day will carry them forward into his dreams. Similarly one with good thoughts will have good dreams.

4. Loved By Human Beings

5. Loved By Non-Human Beings

We cannot avoid encountering other people or beings. Even a forest hermit may meet with wild animals! So it is best for all to tune into a favourable relationship. Metta is such a relationship that will foster welfare and benefit for each other. This makes a happy person, persons, families, communities, country, world and worlds. In this way one can avoid a lot of suffering.

6. Devas Protect Him

Devas are beings that exist in heavenly dimensions. Although we may not be able to see them they are known to exert influence on people's lives. For those who are virtuous and with loving-kindness for beings and devas, they may render help and protection.

7. Fire, Poison Or Weapons Will Not Befall Him

Metta is a protective mental force and its tendency is to bring about beneficial states and put away harmful conditions. Fire, poison and weapons often associated with harmfulness are likewise put aside. This force is present to some extent when one has metta in one's heart. The stronger the metta, the stronger it can be. But when this force is absent, the armour of metta is likewise absent. The story of the Bodhisatta perfecting metta is a good example.

8. The Mind Calms Down Easily

As happiness is the near cause of concentration, it is obvious why metta has this benefit. Therefore it is a subject of concentration which can calm down the mind easily even for beginners. This is especially true in those of angry temperament and those who undergo a lot of stress in work. Besides, it is also quite safe to do so after brief instructions.

9. The Complexion Of The Face Becomes Clear.

A happy face has a happy heart. It is pleasant to everyone. That's why you are advised to smile even if you don't feel happy. However in Buddhism, sincerity is also necessary otherwise it can be taken as hypocritical. Therefore metta serves as the best cosmetic for men and women, and for a good cause with good motives!

A good complexion is also a sign of good health. As a pure state of mind that brings benefits, it will also create beneficial substances in the body promoting good health. Conversely, how anger or other evil states of mind can cause illnesses such as gastritis and other psychosomatic illnesses is clearly known.

10. Death Takes Place Without Confusion

When death is to take place, it is very important to keep the mind in a pure state as it has a strong influence on the ripening of the good kamma that will decide the nature of the next existence.

One with metta will have good kammass that will bring about peaceful death far from violence. His good kamma ripens as if good friends and relatives come from afar to greet him. It will bring about favourable and pleasant signs that will bring him to a happy rebirth.

11. If It Goes No Further (i.e. He Has Not Realised The Fruit Of Arahatta) He Will Go To The Brahma World.

The four paths and fruitions are only attained through vipassana but metta can serve as a strong base of concentration. If this concentration has reached up to the absorptions (jhana) then it can bring rebirth in the brahma realms. If access concentration is reached it can give rise to existence in deva or human realms. Concentrated states are strong in kammic forces and being so are more likely to ripen over others.

The converse of the benefits of metta would be the dangers of anger. In brief one would quote the opposite of loving-kindness. One sleeps and wakes unhappily and dreams bad dreams. Humans, devas dislike him. Hounded he will be by enemies and demons. His life is likely to meet with violent dangers. His complexion is ugly and he suffers ill health. When death comes he dies confused and reaches the woeful states.

Anger being harmful, violent and aggressive would cause much harm to oneself and others by the committing of evil deeds through the body (e.g. killing, destroying, etc.), speech (cursing, slandering, lying, etc.) and mind. Displeasure or unhappiness of mind will always be there when there is anger. How can one be happy? More sadness, fear and terror will follow as a result of deeds done. In short, one does things which one will be sorry for.

One should see the terror of these states. They can be avoided but positive and persistent effort must be made. It is too easy to be lax and make excuses for harmful acts that once done, cannot be undone. Then suffering is sure to follow. The reflection of the dangers of anger can help us to overcome anger and develop metta.



Beginning Practice of Loving-Kindness

There is no one posture in which you cannot send thoughts of metta. In intensive metta exercises, one radiates loving-kindness all the time in whatever position one is in – standing, walking, sitting and (if not sleepy) lying down.

Usually sitting is alternated with walking. Gradually the sitting is lengthened.

When radiating metta while walking one does not really pay attention to the sensations or phenomena involved with the process of walking meditation as in vipassana. One just radiates as one walks along. As the concentration becomes more intense, slowing down would be only natural. At times one may just stand still and radiate. When the flow of metta ceases one will have to stop to arouse it again. The active nature of walking is involved with the energy faculty and hence helps keep up the arousing and sustaining of the flow of metta, i.e. the first and second jhana factors – initial and sustained application (vitakka, vicara). A suggested period for walking is one hour. It also serves as an exercise for physical health.

The best posture is sitting in the full lotus with both legs crossed, soles facing upwards. The back is straight and hands on the lap with palms on top of each other, facing upwards.

Because most people are not able to withstand the strain at the ankles, most may adopt half lotus, one leg crossed above the other. There are other variations like the Burmese method where both legs are folded, but not pressing on each other. There are sitting sideways postures, and so on.

Generally the posture has to be balanced, back straight and legs folded in. This helps to keep an alert mind whilst keeping the body fairly comfortable. In Samatha meditation this is very essential

especially at the start, after which one ought not to shift one's posture but remain still for long periods.

We can try to do it by relaxing from head to toe or toe to head, part by part, from externally the skin to internally, the bones and organs. Next we must make a resolution to put away all matters for the period of meditation. All matters must be put aside! Now is the time for meditation. Nothing else matters! If one is decisive enough most thoughts can be put away. Then we can make sure the mind is relaxed and peaceful. We also maintain an awareness or mindfulness or else it will fall to sloth.

After sitting in the desired posture, one ought to remain still with utmost relaxation to the point until the physical body is as if dead and not a single strain is felt. The body is as if it is not there at all. Then one may proceed to giving metta to oneself. When it is being done, try to do so very gently or else strain or restlessness may arise as well. Each thought aroused is as if it is a very small, subtle, soft bubble or mist suffusing out of the mind. In such a way we can preserve and increase the tranquillity.

Sometimes people think that giving metta to oneself is selfish. That is because they misunderstand what is being done and the mental state involved.

Actually it is a sincere and unselfish wish to progress onwards in the spiritual path. That is, to be happier and healthier to practise better because one can give up anger and all the unwholesome states of mind with this practice.

One thus makes these wishes or aspirations one after another and lets them sink deep into the mind creating far-reaching effects. One recites not just the words in the mind but rather sincerely makes the wish, understanding fully the meaning or idea.

They are:

May I be free from enmity

(Avero homi)

May I be free from mental suffering
(abyapajjho homi)

May I be free from physical suffering
(anigho homi)

May I take care of myself happily
(sukhiattanam pariharami)

This is done for the first five minutes (of the sitting) which should last at least an hour. It serves several purposes.

I. Setting Oneself Right.

One has to do this and this means having a pure objective that involves one's life in all its aspects. This would involve right livelihood, morality and so on. If this is not done, there is bound to be conflict during or outside meditation.

II. Motivation.

After seeing the need of oneself to be truly happy one can then understand better the need for others to be happy. It will serve to motivate and ease the outflow of metta for others.

III. Serves as preliminary concentration.

It is easier to arouse this sincere wish for oneself than for others. It makes an easier start to gain some degree of concentration which can develop to deeper levels as the practice progresses.

After this one can proceed to radiate metta to another person.

According to their relationship to one at the time of starting meditation, individuals may be classified into five categories:

1. extremely intimate (atipiya)
2. lovable (piya)
3. indifferent (majjhata)

4. unpleasant (apiya)
5. inimical/hostile (veri)

In selecting an individual as an initial object of metta bhavana, one is advised to choose the second, a lovable individual because metta can arise easily. The first may arouse attachment, the third may pose some difficulties and the fourth and fifth may arouse anger instead. One is also advised against giving it to the opposite sex as it may arouse lust. What if she is his own mother or he, her father? Usually it is not preferred for the unstable mind may wander to another of the opposite sex. The other individual not recommended is the deceased. It does not produce deep concentration as the person is no longer present and is already in a different state.

Therefore the lovable individual should be alive and of the same sex as one. “Lovable” means he (or she) inspires metta in you the moment you think of him. He would most likely be one with a lot of metta himself besides many other virtues like morality, concentration, wisdom, patience, humility and so on. It is someone whom you think of or meet with a lot of respect and friendliness. Someone whom you can call a true friend. If you have known him for some time and had spent many moments and events together with little or no misunderstandings, it would be better. Then you can call up all the good that he has done for you as well as the happy events in the past to arouse metta.

When you have chosen the individual then this shall be the soil and source from which your metta shall set its roots deep and spread far elsewhere.

The near cause of metta is the lovable person or being. Therefore we have to see the favourable aspect of the person or being.

One way is to think of his or her virtues or good qualities. We can perhaps enumerate them, e.g. he is

1. compassionate v1

2. understanding v2
3. etc... v3

The more we have of these the better. The mere thought of one will inspire metta. We may use this sparingly so that it will last us a long time.

For example, when we think about v1 metta arises. Every time it dies down, we can use v1 to stir it up again. After some time v1 may not be effective (for the time being), then we use v2 to arouse metta. We will then continue to use v2 to arouse metta. When it loses effectiveness we can return to v1 again. One can go on arousing metta with v1 and v2 until both do not seem to work. Then we proceed to v3.

The other way is to see the lovable-ness of the person and thus to arouse metta is to recall the events one has associated with him or her that would inspire metta. It may be the help given, gifts offered or just kind, gentle words. One would naturally have to avoid recalling unpleasant moments. We can again enumerate the events:

- | | | | |
|--------|----|-------------------------|----|
| Event: | 1. | gifts given at birthday | e1 |
| | 2. | help in time of stress | e2 |
| | 3. | counselling in career | e3 |
| | 4. | etc... | e4 |

We may apply the principle on the use of virtues to ensure ease of arousing metta.

When metta arises it has got to be sincere and come from the depth of one's heart. It should be encouraged to flow abundantly and freely without inhibition. There is nothing wrong with giving metta to anyone only that it is to be given in a suitable manner with wisdom and guarded against attachment.

When metta arises one enables and urges it on with the use of four aspirations.

1. May he/she be free from enmity/danger
2. May he/she be free from mental suffering

3. May he/she be free from physical suffering
4. May he/she take care of himself/herself happily

The principle is that when we make each aspiration we do so with metta. This would arouse more metta to keep it flowing on. It is also important that we understand the meaning of these aspirations clearly and sincerely mean it. Before the metta from the first one dies down, we make it continue on by using the next. When we have used the fourth aspiration we start again with the first. This can go on indefinitely.

The second point is that when one aspiration, e.g., “May he be free from enmity”, is very effective and can produce strong metta which can last a long time, then we can let this flow go on as long as possible, in which case it would continue to deepen.

However, if the aspiration is not very effective, we may skip it or pass through it quickly.

A third point here is that there is a more positive aspect of each aspiration which can be borne in mind. If one intends to emphasise a more positive aspect it can be used with much effectiveness looking into the meaning of each aspiration.

1. May He/She Be Free From Enmity/Danger.

Enmity may refer to enmity within (e.g. defilement) and without us. A more positive aspect will be “May he have a lot of loving-kindness”. Therefore we may also use the wish “May he be safe”. Enmity may also mean any dangerous and harmful elements within (e.g. defilements, bad kammic results ripening) or without (e.g. catastrophes, accident etc.)

2. May He/She Be Free From Mental Suffering.

Mental suffering refers to mental anguish, sorrow, frustrations, fears, despair, irritation and all types of defilements that are present to no end, as well as the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned

existence. “May he/she be peaceful and happy” is a positive wish for this second aspiration.

3. May He/She Be Free From Physical Suffering.

Physical suffering will include all forms of physical discomfort, illness, ailments and incompleteness. It is possible that the wish can be put as “May he/she be healthy and strong”.

4. May He/She Take Care Of Himself/Herself Happily.

This means that we wish him (or her) to be able to carry out all the activities in his life or maintenance of life such as waking up, eating, caring for his livelihood, looking after his children, wife, house, while resting, carrying out his spiritual activities and even having peaceful sleep.

The last of those aspirations is by itself positive. The negative variant can be “May he not have any trouble, problems, obstacles in taking care of himself”.

I have tried this on myself and others and it does have a different effect psychologically, stronger towards well-wishing than negative phrasing which tends towards compassion and cancellation of suffering. This is therefore one part that is worth consideration. A possible alternative would be to use both, which would increase the aspirations from four to eight.

Here we also notice that too many aspirations for the beginner may not be beneficial to concentration. Hence we stick to just four aspirations.

Another modification can be considered if a further specification of the wish is required, such as “May he be free from the deadly disease of cancer which is afflicting him”, or maybe even a single wish for a son that he may be able to do well in his studies.

These are more specific and therefore not applicable all the time and to everyone. Nevertheless, it is a wholesome wish of metta

and, when made with strong and deep concentration, will have its effects.

At the beginning, the flow is not smooth and does not last long. One has to guard against just merely reciting the aspiration without feeling. One has to guard against indiscriminate and uncontrolled thinking (which leads to restlessness) while trying to arouse metta. One also has to guard against frustration if metta does not arise. Therefore it is very important that mindfulness is present when these hindrances arise.



Five Hindrances to Concentration/Absorption

Before the metta is continuous, the five hindrances may arise to hinder the progress.

1. Sensual Desire (Kama Raga)

Sensual desire arises commonly with an attractive object. This is one reason why we do not choose the extremely intimate person as the first object and also, based on the same reason, why we avoid one of the opposite sex. Even when giving metta to the good friend, you should avoid thinking of sensual moments (e.g. sightseeing etc.). Calmness and joy that arise abundantly in this meditation should also not be attached to when they arise during practice. One may note the “desire” or “attachment” with mindfulness till it goes away. Always remember not to be attached! Mindfulness is the key to this. Alternatively one may radiate metta to all beings for a short while to offset the attachment. Then bring one’s mind back to the pure and unselfish state of metta.

2. Ill-Will

Ill-will arises with the repulsive object. That is when we are sending metta to an unpleasant or hostile person. If anger arises one may resume with the persons (lovable) one started with.

Ill-will may also arise with frustration or unpleasant sensations. In such a case, try to ignore it and persist with the metta. If it fails, change to a more comfortable posture or setting.

3. Sloth And Torpor

This sluggish state of mind that can come with peacefulness often makes the meditator fall into deep sleep. Therefore when the mindfulness weakens, one has to be more energetic in arousing the metta. For example, one may radiate from one aspiration to another fairly rapidly. One can also try to make the metta more

intensely emotional. Doing more metta in the walking posture also encourages a more energetic flow of metta. One has to be very energetic to be able to do these. Activities like washing the face, rubbing the hands, sitting in brightness and open space, suitable conversation or reflection of the dangers of laziness and benefits of energy are general steps that can be taken.

4. Restlessness And Worry

Restlessness and worry arise owing to lack of mindfulness. If we have sufficient basic mindfulness, we would be able to watch that restless state or extraneous thoughts when they arise. So even if the mind does wander, we will soon be aware of it. Therefore we should make it a point to note the thinking as soon as it has arisen, then return to metta.

In the preliminary arousing of metta, when thinking is predominant, we have to be careful that it does not become uncontrolled, e.g. we may think of the person, then we think of what we did together. This may go on for some time before we realise we have forgotten about metta bhavana. Therefore to facilitate deep concentration one should stay with one person for an extended period of time. And when arousing metta, care has to be taken not to “overthink”. Once metta has arisen one has to maintain its flow in a way that it may deepen.

5. Sceptical Doubts

Sceptical doubt regarding the Three Gems or the method in the practice of metta may arise due to the lack of understanding of the Buddhist teachings etc. Here one has to note a sceptical “doubt” etc. till it is put aside. Another way is to reflect again on the benefits of metta and the danger of anger. If one tries hard enough one will progress and doubts too can be cast aside. Having an experienced guide at hand to clear one’s doubts concerning the practice is important.

Five Jhana Factors of Concentration/Absorption

In the initial stage, the main part is played by the first jhanic factor – initial application of mind (vitakka), the mental factor that lifts the mind and mental states to its object. In metta bhavana, it is the continuous bringing up of metta consciousness to its object – the person selected.

So when metta keeps flowing up we always make sure that we have the same person in mind. This part is concentration. Very often the mind will flit to other persons and if so, we can just let the metta flow on for a few seconds and return to the original one. Sometimes the new person seems to arouse stronger feelings than the original one intended and so we may be tempted to switch objects. It is best to return to the original one as there will always seem to have another better one when the original one becomes somewhat stale after some time. The test is the ability to go on with the same one for a long time.

Another problem involved at this stage is visualisation. Some practitioners may visualise the object, i.e. the person. This may be a help in some ways or it may also cause complications. The problem may arise with unmindful visualisations which can cause tension and stress over a period of time. Presently there are already two processes to take care of:

1. Metta
2. Concentration

Visualisation may come as a third process although connected with the second. One has to be careful not to visualise without metta or even mindfulness.

As the arousing by initial application predominates the first part of the concentration exercises, the next step is the sustained application (vicara) which is sustaining the metta consciousness

continuously onto its object. This can be seen as dragging or lengthening the flow of metta which would otherwise stop. In fact it is a product of continuous arousing. As a result, the momentum of the flow is built up. It continues even after one does not intend to radiate metta, and if one does, a minimal effort is needed. Therefore one has to try to drag on each aspiration as long as possible so that the metta is continuously flowing onto the person for a long time.

When this can be done, usually joy (píti) follows. The progress thus acquired removes sceptical doubts and brings calmness. Joy is a thrilled, joyful state of mind that comes with increasing concentration. Sometimes it comes with goose pimples or pleasantness (minor joy). It may come in flashes or sudden rushes of coolness (momentary joy), or it may make one feel lighter or hop or jump (uplifting joy), or one may feel overwhelmed in wave-like, joyful feelings and sway (overwhelming joy), or one feels the entire body and mind system suffused to every single particle with joy and comfort (suffusing joy).

It is certainly very pleasant and attractive when one first comes across these. In metta bhavana they can be abundant. The usual tendency is to become attached to them. As a result mindfulness is lost. Then complications arise. So when they become very strong one would have to keep them under control. One will have to keep up the mindfulness and note. If one's body starts swaying or tears start to fall uncontrollably, one would know that it has gone too far and one should wilfully stop it or get up. Then we should bear in mind that when the strong joy and emotions tend to be overwhelming, to ensure that the metta is truly unselfish, the mind can be kept detached as we radiate very softly and gently with mindfulness rather than in an intense manner. If we keep on radiating in this way the joy will become very subtle and tranquil. The mind will experience deep bliss (sukha) within or as if a very high and rapturous state. Again one must be guarded against attachment so that one can continue one's practice.

The final stage will be the sinking in, absorption or unification with the object. This is one-pointedness. Again there must be some mindfulness at the very quiet and still stage before absorption. Otherwise one may lapse into deep sleep or is pulled away by subtle thoughts. At this last phase, the Visuddhimagga quotes joy as overcoming restlessness, bliss as overcoming ill-will, and one-pointedness as overcoming sensual desires because it stops the mind from flitting to sense objects and fixes onto the meditation object.

Hence the five jhanic factors are:

1. Initial application (vitakka)
2. Sustained application (vicara)
3. Joy (píti)
4. Happiness (sukha)
5. One-pointedness (ekaggata)

In practice, these factors can be defined as follows:

1. Bringing the mind to the object (arousing, applying)
2. Keeping the mind with the object (sustaining, stretching)
3. Finding, having interest in the object (joy)
4. Being happy and content with the object (happiness)
5. Unifying the mind with the object (fixing).



Three Types of Concentration

There are three types of concentration that come with metta bhavana:

1. parikamma samadhi – preliminary concentration
2. upacara samadhi – access concentration
3. appana samadhi – fixed concentration

1. Parikamma Samadhi

Parikamma bhavana is the stage of doing the preliminary exercises. Some degree of one-pointedness or calmness is reached when radiating metta to the person as one is involved with active recitations.

2. Upacara Samadhi

When it comes very close as if about to sink or merge with the object we may consider it as access concentration. By then one has overcome the hindrances as it is close to fixed absorption. The mind has reached a very subtle and sleeplike state. If one is not careful one may fall asleep. One has to be mindful to maintain the flow of metta and yet not too energetic that it stirs it up to a restless state. At this state visions may creep in but one has to be mindful enough to maintain the flow of metta. The Visuddhimagga describes this state as a state when the barriers are broken. That is, at that time one's metta is developed to the state that one is as if one with the person. One cannot be said to have any less or more metta one has for oneself than another or a close one from a hostile one.

As concentration develops, the object of mind likewise becomes more refined and steady. It may be very gross ideas of the person at preliminary concentration to fine, transparent-like visualisations at access concentration. However the development of the object is not as obvious as in kasinas. So in initial stages the states of mind

and metta are more obvious and important criteria for checking one's development. With frequent meditation one can also be aware of the nature of this fine object. I remember that the first time I noticed it was the person outlined on a crystal-clear surface. It has appeared again in another way.

3. Appana Samadhi

When the mind becomes fixed onto the object it sinks and merges into it to become as if one. The result is the development of a different form of consciousness called (jhana citta) absorption. Very often people say this is like falling into a state deeper than sleep. Yet on emerging one is aware that at that period one is in bliss and is still having metta for the person. It has been claimed that the state is so sleep-like that one may not be aware that one has entered into it, especially when it first occurs in only very short moments. However with frequency it should become obvious. How long one takes to reach up to this level is very much of an individual capability. If we go into intensive meditation, it should not take too long. Those who have undergone vipassana meditation, whose mind is already flexible and wholesome, should be even quicker. There are four types of these absorptions (in the five-fold classification) in metta bhavana. They are called the first jhana, second jhana, third jhana, and fourth jhana. As for the fifth jhana, it can be attained only in the development of equanimity – upekkha bhavana.



Factors in Developing Deep Concentration

The ability of bringing up the meditation object of concentration to the point of access concentration just before absorption involves the building up of the mental factors of concentration skilfully so that it becomes powerful enough to fall into absorption.

Some important factors in development of deep concentration are given here:

1. Mindfulness

Mindfulness being the main controlling faculty of the mind is of course indispensable. It brings the mind to the point of concentration skilfully. Besides it guards against defilements and extraneous thoughts. Then it causes us to take the appropriate action to remedy it. It also keeps the mind flexible, workable, soft, and so on. Therefore there must be plenty of mindfulness at various depths. It however will have to be that suited to the tranquillity form of concentration and not insight form.

Comparatively in tranquillity meditation, the concentration faculty is much stronger than the energy faculty and so its unique balance has to be maintained. It has also to be continuous and as a result, it would be advisable for many to set up a strong grounding of mindfulness through various satipatthana exercises before one embarks on intensive samatha bhavana.

2. Detachment

Right concentration is often referred to as concentration detached from the five senses. We can understand this if we know that our object is solely that of the mind door. Its concentration is that above the five sense doors. If we still have rampant cravings for sense pleasures, we can never get near the absorptions. However if one is really detached, then it lifts one off from the valleys of the five senses. Detachment has the power to remove the bondages that tie us to the lower worlds. When metta comes with

pleasantness and joy, the detached attitude is an important consideration.

3. Patience

Patience is the opposite of impatience or anger which is associated with agitation. If we preserve patience, our mind by itself will calm down. In this case, patience is synonymous with the undisturbed aspect of tranquillity. It can remain with the object for longer periods of time, for with non-anger there follows equanimity, another factor of concentration.

Texts also inform us that to guard the concentration, we need to take into consideration the seven suitabilities. These external things are

1. residence
2. village where one seeks for food
3. conversation
4. company
5. food
6. season, and
7. postures.

We can consider how these can influence our concentration and hence select the one which is conducive.



Ways of bringing about Concentration

I have noticed that concentration can be brought about in a number of ways. These below are a few of them.

1. Following closely and concentrating into the object: this is the normal procedure used by beginners in developing concentration. The important point here is that
 - I. It has to be done with mindfulness.
 - II. In metta bhavana, it has to have metta. Then we shut out all other objects – e.g. forms and sounds, and keep the mind onto the object and nothing else.
2. Recalling the states of mind present in deep concentration and developing it through will power. In the second case one just has to bring one's mind to stillness and draw it into states which are progressively deeper, subtler and more tranquil. This second method works better when one has experienced such states before.
3. By means of the mastery through resolution. A resolution is a certain decisive condition of the mind. By feeding the mind with wishes or intentions that are carefully worded, one makes it follow a certain mapped-out path of development. This case is used for going to the specified jhanic states. For one well-versed in this practice, the mind would respond accurately and quickly to the resolution made. It is like feeding the computer with questions and getting results.



Mastering an Absorption

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

1. mastery in adverting
2. mastery in entering
3. mastery in staying on
4. mastery in emerging
5. mastery in reflection

1. Mastery In Adverting

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

2. Mastery In Entering

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

3. Mastery In Staying Long

This is the ability to stay as long as one wishes in that absorption. One can stay in for as long as seven days at a stretch. Adequate

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

4. Mastery In Emerging

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

5. Mastery In Retrospection/Reflection

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

- I. The reflection of the consciousness that has just passed. From it one can identify which absorption it is and the factors that constitute it. However one will have to be familiar first with what all these are through experience and guidance. Usually for first-timers it is unfamiliar.

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

It is similar to the first mastery which involves adverting the mind to the jhana factors. Immediately following it is the reflection. It is through this reflection that there is awareness that one knows which absorption one has entered as well as the unsatisfactoriness of the lower factors. For example, reflection on initial and sustained application will form a base for the attainment of the higher jhanas.

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

Resolutions to see the factors:

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

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

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

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

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



Change in the Object of Metta

One may then proceed with a change of the object, i.e. the individual used as object of metta. This approach of keeping to one person till the mastering of absorption allows one who practises metta bhavana to develop deep concentration.

In usual practice, however, one may not go so far. Often one switches objects even on reaching access concentration. Some switch even before that but it is inadvisable, as one is still within the power of the defilements and so does not produce appreciable effects.

The practice of metta bhavana is not for deep concentration or absorptions, but for the sake of happier living and good kamma or perfections can be done by many different approaches. The change of objects helps us to be flexible and finally universal in the nature of the metta we develop.

We develop metta progressively to all the levels of concentration to the persons in the following order:

1. lovable person (puja puggala)
2. intimate person (atipiya puggala)
3. neutral person (majjhata puggala)
4. repulsive person (apiya puggala)
5. inimical person (veri puggala)

1. Puja puggala – Lovable Person

This has been dealt with earlier in this book. The rest, (2-4) below, are done later because pure metta may be more difficult to arouse.

2. Atipiya puggala – The Very Intimate Person

The intimate person is avoided at the start because of the tendency of attachment. Therefore if we are to send metta successfully we have to ensure that there is no attachment. Hence we would be giving it as if at a distance and not very close, light and soft, and not intense. Of course we have to have mindfulness close at hand to maintain its purity and guard against attachment. It is like giving metta without personal involvement. If one is unable to stop attachment from arising, it will only be wise to return to the first individual. Only then do we recognise the differences of the types of metta present. It will help to put things right. If one has got the feel of this then we can radiate and care for our very close ones without getting into the trouble that comes with attachment, i.e. pride, jealousy, possessiveness, etc. One can also know how to give metta to the opposite sex. It is one more step towards universal metta.

3. Majjhata puggala – Indifferent Person

There are many people who fall under this category. He may be the roti or newspaper man, your neighbour, or even your barber. A friend said she felt a loss when she discovered her roti man, who had been delivering the bread all these years, had died when he went back to India. She had not even really tried to be more friendly. We do let all these opportunities of friendship (that could make each other's lives happier) pass by. If we can see this point, it will be easier to arouse metta towards indifferent individuals. Of course, by then they are no longer indifferent people. But then again, there are still many more.

“Borrowing” Metta

Another factor contributing to being able to give metta to the neutral individual is by borrowing metta from the metta done to the lovable person. Having done much metta to the lovable person the momentum developed will naturally give such feelings to others. Then one can call on a neutral person. Frequent practice will make the “neutral person” lovable as well.

This habitualisation of metta is important in the development of metta whether towards deeper concentration, wider versatility or applied practice in daily life.

4. Apiya puggala – Unpleasant Person

Sometimes we meet with people we do not like. Very often we may not even know why and very often our dislike is not justifiable. It may even be groundless. Even if we may have some reason to dislike a person we should not. In any case it does not fall into enmity. Nevertheless the repulsion and some anger or irritation make it more difficult than it needs to be to arouse metta.

We can perhaps begin by asking ourselves why we do not like that person. We would, in a lot of cases, find the reasons weak or groundless. We can further remove any dislike by seeing into the dangers of dislike or anger. Further seeing into the benefits of metta will provide a strong motivational force. “Borrowing” from the momentum of the previous metta should keep one continuing in the development of metta to such a person. That is why, if anger arises in giving metta to such a person, one returns to oneself or the lovable individual. With practice we will be quite adept in overlooking people’s faults and be very much less a demanding fusspot of a person.

5. Veri puggala – The Enemy Or Hostile Person

The enemy shares the similarity of being associated with dislike and anger. But in this case the feelings of hatred are deeper and the reasons may be justifiable along common lines of reasoning.

The Dhammapada, verse four, says:

“He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me”, in those who do not harbour such thoughts hatred is appeased.

It all boils down to the plain fact that hatred is never justifiable or good. One should never consider another an enemy. If one can

think of things in this way it would make it easier. However if the injustice is still being carried out it will be more difficult.

To be able to do metta to such a person, we must firstly make sure that we are morally in the right. Secondly, we should also bear in mind all the reasons to have metta for that person.

For example, we were all close friends in some past life and finally we all want happiness.

If we send metta to him it also does not mean we condone his bad actions or will keep on allowing him to do the bad things to us. In actuality, giving metta means making the wish that he no longer does these things but does otherwise.

If one is unable to, one is advised to return to oneself and the lovable person.

To be able to give metta to such a person means your metta has advanced by a stride. Then you may say that you have no enemies although others may not think so. But certainly you will be much happier.

The saying “To hate is human, but to forgive is divine”, is most relevant to this case. Although the first part is questionable, metta is certainly a Divine abiding.

Traditionally, in a complete course of metta, one has to go through all the different levels of absorptions and their masteries – with all these other individuals as described – with respect to the practice of using the lovable being as the object.

We can see that one can develop strong and deep metta with regard to all types of individuals including the “enemy”. We would be able to look upon anyone as our close brothers and sisters.

The mind is the forerunner of all states. And if metta is so powerful it is not surprising it is able to turn enemies into friends.

When one is able to do this, one may proceed to develop universal and boundless metta to all beings.



Universal Metta to All Beings

There are two types of pervasion:

- I. Unspecified pervasion (anodhiso pharana)
- II. Specified pervasion (odhiso pharana)

Unspecified Pervasion

In the texts the unspecified pervasion of metta is metta given to beings not of any specified types. They are:

1. sabbe satta –
all beings (sentient beings with feelings)
2. sabbe pana –
all living things (beings that breathe and live)
3. sabbe bhuta –
all creatures (beings that arise owing to their kamma)
4. sabbe puggala –
all individuals (beings seen as individuals)
5. sabbe attabhavapariyapanna –
all personalities (beings with personalities)

These five actually convey the same meaning – i.e. beings. However, different words are used. It helps to break the monotony, increase perception and, hence, concentration.

Unspecified pervasion is usually done more successfully (i.e. with mastery of absorptions, etc.), only when the sending of metta to individuals, such as the lovable being, as an object has first been done. Firstly, this is because it is easier to develop concentration on an individual. We can understand this when we look into the more extended nature of the unspecified object. Hence a tendency to disperse the concentration. It is as if a light to be spread out

over a wider space has to be brighter. It will not be necessary if just access concentration is required.

Secondly, when we say “all” we really mean to include the hostile ones, otherwise deep inside we may mean “all except”...

Definitely one cannot visualise all beings. One has only to bear in mind just what it means. It is as if one does not have any object, only the metta for all beings is developed. As concentration deepens one cannot help but notice that it often occurs in an expanded nature, and is very light and blissful.

One needs to go through the four aspirations with respect to the five “unspecified” objects repeatedly:

1. May all beings be free from enmity/danger
Sabbe satta avera hontu
2. May all beings be free from mental suffering
Sabbe satta abyapajja hontu
3. May all beings be free from physical suffering
Sabbe satta anigha hontu
4. May all beings take care of themselves happily
Sabbe satta sukhi attanam pariharantu

May all living things..., may all creatures..., may all individuals..., may all personalities...

One does this until absorptions have been reached and mastered.

Unspecified pervasion of metta enables us to develop a universal type of metta. It makes us give metta equally to each and every being without giving more to any one. Hence it is universal, flexible, versatile and stable. It can therefore help to enhance our ability to communicate and see to the needs of all groups as a

whole, hence executing impartial decisions beneficial to all.
“Happy is the one who bears no ill-will to any living creature.”

One who has thoroughly developed this state of mind will truly experience ecstatic happiness.

Specified Pervasion

In the case of specified pervasion, the groups are well defined. It is true that each of us may bear certain preferences for, or grudges against, different groups of people. Hence our relationships to them differ. It also implies that the metta given to each group can be unique in its own way with respect to attitude, expression, satisfaction of needs etc. Their effects and benefits, as we will see, also differ.

In tradition, we have seven such groups but these can be seen to come from three, as each of these three groups would cover most – if not all – of the beings.

They are as follows:

Group A: Sabbe itthiya – all female kind
 Sabbe purisa – all male kind

Metta to the opposite sex can be more freely done in groups, as it is less likely to develop strong attachment to anyone.

As there are possibly some men-haters or women-haters, it should do them good to remove such hatred. Then there may be the other extreme who should learn more with regards to unselfish love. All these show that the healthy, pure metta relationship has to be learned. Ability to give metta to them equally well is the real way to effect a truly female – or for that matter male – liberation.

The four aspirations are made first to the female kind and then to the male kind to gain the levels of concentration, mastery, and so forth.

Group B: Sabbe ariya – all nobles

i.e. the community which comprises those who have experienced any of the four stages of attainment (stream winner, once-returner, non-returner and arahatta.)

Sabbe anariya – all the beings of the world outside the previous group (i.e. nobles).

It is obvious that the first group would be easier to give metta to than the second group. Then there is also metta to be developed within the two groups.

Obviously, it builds up a healthy relationship between people striving for peace. It instils metta and cohesiveness within the spiritual community, smoothing it, fixing it and building it up into a potent force that spreads to others outside as described in anariya.

For the more advanced, compassion would tend to arise and for the slower, respect, a form of sympathetic joy. When we make sure we are developing metta, we instil something more – friendliness. Otherwise the distance may be too wide for effective communication, and metta can help bridge the gap.

Hence we radiate metta to them with the same four aspirations to gain the respective absorptions and mastery.

Group C: Sabbe deva – all deities

i.e. celestial beings of devas and brahmas

Sabbe manussa – all humankind

Sabbe vinipatika – all unhappy states

i.e. those of the woeful realms of animals, petas, asuras, and hell beings.

What impresses us here is that the group barriers posed by different realms of existence can be removed when it comes to metta. Advantages such as “devas protect him” speak for themselves. We also have forest monks with metta who live among wild animals such as tigers. The first step for effectiveness is the recognition that there are such worlds and beings. The second step is metta and not fear, for as the saying goes – what they fear, they hate. The third step is to see the blessings of metta and disadvantages of anger.

The motivation should drive us on to practise metta to deep concentration using the method as described for the others.

It is obvious that when we give metta to deities who enjoy more sensual happiness, the metta may shade into sympathetic joy and to the suffering beings shade into compassion. With humans we see the human fellowship and what is radiated therefore becomes more distinctly metta. However if we can look with understanding that all these are beings who may be our friends in this or past lives, then a tone of friendship metta can be aroused.

Unspecified pervasion can be done to all the seven groups, one after another, with the four aspirations to gain the concentration. It allows us to give very strong metta to specific groups of beings in their context:

1. Sabbe itthiyo: May all female kind
2. Sabbe purisa: May all male kind
3. Sabbe ariya: May all nobles
4. Sabbe anariya: May all worldlings
5. Sabbe deva: May all deities
6. Sabbe manussa: May all humans
7. Sabbe vinipatika: May all unhappy states

If we wish, we may even expand further to the different races, different religions, all age groups and those in different habitats, etc. In Malaysia – where multi-cultural differences occur, it ought to be a regular practice. In the Karaniyametta Sutta we can see some of these mentioned: whatever beings that exist:

1. weak or strong without exceptions
2. long, big, short, tiny, medium-sized, bulky, small
3. seen and not seen
4. near and far
5. those who are to come into existence
6. those who have come into existence
7. those who do not seek rebirth

The division is countless.

Each, as we see, will help to overcome the anger which causes that particular social malady and bring about the benefits.



Directional Metta

One may then practise metta in the following ways:

1. Unspecified pervasion in the ten directions.
2. Specified pervasion in the ten directions.
3. Both unspecified and specified pervasion in the ten directions.

The ten directions are:

1. purtthimaya disaya:
in the eastern direction.
2. pacchimaya disaya:
in the western direction.
3. uttaraya disaya:
in the northern direction.
4. dakkhinaya disaya:
in the southern direction.
5. puratthimaya anudisaya:
in the south-eastern direction.
6. pacchimaya anudisaya:
in the north-western direction.
7. uttaraya anudisaya:
in the north-eastern direction.
8. dakkhinaya anudisaya:
in the south-western direction.
9. hetthimaya disaya:
in the direction below.
10. uparimaya disaya:
in the direction above.

Radiating in the directions brings in the spatial concept often associated with beings. It also brings about mental expansion.

How does one radiate metta in the ten directions?

We can start by sitting facing east as it would be easiest to radiate in front of us. There are many ways of doing this but I shall just use the simplest way. That is, we sit to radiate metta to all beings in the east with the wish:

1. sabbe puratthimaya satta – avera hontu
2. sabbe puratthimaya satta – abyapajja hontu
3. sabbe puratthimaya satta – anigha hontu
4. sabbe puratthimaya satta – sukhi attanam pariharantu

(May all beings in the eastern direction be

1. free from enmity.
2. free from mental suffering.
3. free from physical suffering.
4. able to take care of themselves happily.)

We can first think of the limitless expansion that stretches eastwards, and the beings all along the way. Then, as we arouse the metta – and together with the first aspiration – we let it flow on and on as if the mind is travelling far into space.

To quote an example: once I was doing metta and my mind flew as if into space, travelling at a great speed – as if through the spatial universe – and it was metta all the way... and the bliss of it! When metta is decreasing, we continue with the next aspiration to arouse and continue its flow.

After the four aspirations, we can do it in the western direction. We can then go on until the concentrations are reached.

One aspect to note is this:

Although we may in the process get the impression that the mind is going places and we may even see those places, we should disregard them but continue radiating metta in that direction to beings.

With experience and improvement we should experience a much expanded course. Breaking the space concept, we can also send metta effectively to any who may stay very far away. Our minds can even feel for all beings with awareness, however widespread they may be. Besides, we can learn to shoot metta into people effectively whenever they are around – even if they are behind you!

In the same way we can radiate metta in the specified way in the ten directions. That is, we use the four aspirations in ten directions to the five groups, starting with “May all beings...” until “May all take care of themselves happily”. We do this until all the concentrations are mastered. Finally we combine the unspecified groups (five) and specified groups (seven) and radiate to them each in the ten directions, one after another, starting with “May all beings...” to “May all unhappy states take care of themselves happily”.

One final combination of these makes up 528 aspirations in all. Each capable of going into the four absorptions.

Unspecified Pervasion:

5 x 4 aspirations 20

Specified Pervasion:

7 x 4 aspirations 28

Unspecified Directional:

5 x 10 x 4 aspirations 200

Specified Directional:

7 x 10 x 4 aspirations 280

Total: 528

These 528 aspirations are sometimes recited in brief to include all the groups, directions, and aspirations combined, or in full, one by one, which would take a longer time. The more actual applications would be in the metta bhavana itself, where it is the climax of metta for all beings and to the highest level of concentrations. Here one enters into 528 absorptions because each aspiration is capable of bringing up one.

Recitation in the protective chanting includes many suttas and verses. Some invoke the blessings that come with the Triple Gem, others call upon deities to help in times of trouble. At other times asseverations of truth are made. These, when recited for the welfare of others, are done so with faith, truthfulness, and metta. The recitation itself gives us concentration. If we understand what is recited it would be more effective.

There are a number of recitations which are more specifically involved with metta blessing. The well-known one is the Karaniya Metta Sutta, the “blessings of loving-kindness, 528 metta and so on...!” As we can see, they are part of metta bhavana. As for other parittas, they also involve giving metta to the audience.

A selection of metta recitations are given in the appendix.



Metta in Daily Life

In our daily lives we are engaged in manifold activities. When we are less busy we may try to get whatever deep concentration we can reach. At other times when we meet with people or animals, we can mentally have thoughts of metta. These thoughts of metta, even though they may be only thoughts for a start, play a very important part. We know people disagree even at the most insignificant things. Many strained relations and enmities can be dissolved if we can just forgive and overlook the past and start anew. Very often it may be just “tension in the air” which we cannot pinpoint. Metta can create the mental atmosphere conducive to goodwill as well as spark off whatever good speech and actions that follow.

So besides mental action, we also have to express it in words or other forms of communications to others. Speaking gently, with kindness, truthfulness and for the benefit of others are elements of right speech.

Actions of metta are actions such as lending help materially or spiritually, giving medical and nursing attention to the elderly or kindness for animals, courtesy, hospitality, etc.

Therefore metta in daily life is more active and expressive in nature. In families and offices where there is frequent metta shown, it becomes a house or dwelling that is truly happy.

One thing to bear in mind is that according to the situation, the other brahma vihara may play a part. This is compassion when there are people suffering and sympathetic joy for those doing very well. And when the things are beyond our control, we have to reflect on kamma to be equanimous. These three are complementary to bringing about a more stable and appropriate relationship. Even to the same person, it may be appropriate to use one or another at different times.

As for what will be suitable for the best outcome, we would have to exercise wisdom. So another important part is to exercise metta with wisdom. Otherwise, we may produce results opposite to our expectations. As the saying goes, “The way to hell is paved with good intentions”. A good example is a lot of Dr Quacks giving strange herbal remedies for strange and undiagnosed diseases. They may kill or cure! Metta without wisdom may also land us with countless problems, i.e. people trying to take advantage of us.

So we may take note as to:

- (i) when and when not to use metta.
- (ii) If we use it, how much and in what way.

As to ‘in what way’ we can perhaps look into the Sigalovada Sutta where a chart of human relationships is given by the Buddha.

1. Parent And Child

Duties Of Parents

- I. restrain him from evil
- II. support him in doing good
- III. teach him some skills
- IV. find him a suitable wife
- V. hand over his inheritance

Duties Of Child

- I. supports them after having being supported by them
- II. performs their duties for them
- III. keeps up family tradition
- IV. acts worthy of his heritage
- V. after their deaths, distributes gifts on their behalf

Clearly the loving-kindness relationship between them involves responsibility and gratefulness. Normally metta and compassion do arise spontaneously in parents, but gratefulness has to be learned by the child. However, if the morality of parents is in question, then the child would suffer.

2. Teachers And Pupils

Duties Of Teachers

- I. give thorough instructions
- II. make sure they have thoroughly learned their lessons
- III. give thorough grounding in skills
- IV. recommend them their friends and colleagues
- V. provide security in all directions

Duties Of Pupils

- I. rise to greet them
- II. wait on them
- III. are attentive
- IV. serve them
- V. master the skills taught

Here again the loving-kindness relationship is compassion and respectfulness. This occurs more frequently when the question of money is not involved. Otherwise the teachers' dissatisfaction with their career may interfere with the relationship.

3. Husband And Wife

Duties Of Husband

- I. honouring her
- II. not disparaging her

- III. being not unfaithful
- IV. giving her authority
- V. providing her with adornments

Duties Of Wife

- I. properly organising her work
- II. tending to servants
- III. not being unfaithful
- IV. protecting stores
- V. skilful and diligent in all she has to do

The metta relationship here hinges on trust and faithfulness. As you may expect, the Indian lady in those days was often considered more as a maid. The Buddhist clause of handing over authority to her demonstrates that her position was more than that. The other aspects of good wives – the motherly, sisterly or friendly aspects – show the favourable relationship the Buddhist looks for.

4. Friends And Companions

Duties Of Friends

- I. buying gifts
- II. having kind words
- III. looking after one's welfare
- IV. treating one as they would treat themselves
- V. keeping their word

Duties Of Companions

- I. looking after one when one is inattentive
- II. looking after one's property when one is inattentive
- III. being a refuge to one when one is afraid

- IV. not deserting one when one is in trouble
- V. showing concern for one's children

The metta relationship here involves sincere care and protection for each other, with mutual self-respect obviously playing a part.

5. Master And Servants

Duties Of Master

- I. arranging their work according to their strength
- II. supplying food and wages
- III. looking after them when ill
- IV. sharing delicacies with them
- V. letting them off work at the right time

Duties of Servants

- I. getting up before him
- II. going to bed after him
- III. taking only what is given
- IV. doing their work properly
- V. bearers of his praise and good reputation

The metta relationship here hinges on generosity on the master's part and diligence and trustworthiness on the part of the servant.

6. Ascetics, Brahmin And Laymen

Duties Of Spiritual People (Or Renounced)

- I. restrain him from evil
- II. encourage him in good
- III. are benevolently compassionate towards him
- IV. teach him what he has not heard

V. point out to him the way to heaven

Duties Of Laymen

- I. show kindness in bodily deed
- II. show kindness in speech
- III. show kindness in thought
- IV. keep open house for them
- V. supply their bodily needs

The above is more or less like the teacher-pupil relationship, except here it covers a more spiritual form of education.

An elucidation in these relations would be compassion on the upper hand and humility and obedience on the other. There is then a reciprocation between generosity and diligence. Trust and faithfulness also play a part in the relationship. If the role by one party is not fulfilled, e.g. the servant is lazy, we may expect the relationship to suffer. Then it depends largely on the virtue of the other party (e.g. the employer), whether his compassion or patience lasts long.

As to how the other virtues play in the workings of metta, we can see it in the Karaniya Metta Sutta itself.



The Conditioned Nature of Metta

In the first part of the metta sutta we come across conditions important for one who wishes to develop metta. If we study them we can see into their relevance and the way it works as it concerns our practice of it in our daily lives.

1. He should be capable

Capability in his own materiality and spiritual welfare will determine how much of a service he can give to others. Surely an immoral man cannot urge another or practise morality effectively. He himself has to know how. Similarly you cannot help another materially if you do not have anything yourself. Capability involves human potential and resource. One must have confidence to carry it out, e.g. the cultivation and the application of metta.

2. He should be frank

Frankness or straightforwardness is a sign of sincerity. One has to be true to oneself as well as to others, and unless one can be true to oneself, one cannot be so to others. One has to establish a good heart-to-heart communication to have metta. When there is trust then the working metta can grow unhindered. This covers all folds of work including running businesses. In meditation, too, this quality is important. One has to relate honestly as to the progress of one's meditation. Only then can the teacher guide one effectively. Reflection on our motive of what we do puts us back in the right place. Morality can help us here, too.

3. Extremely honest

This extremely honesty and sincerity may be translated as one which can extend for a long period of time and under great tests. It signifies the dependability and deep trust that one can give. To one with this quality, people would readily open their hearts and go to

them in times of trouble. Obviously one with such a quality is a person of strong principle, courage and understanding.

4. One should be meek

Meekness means one who is obedient, and not stubborn. Again a person who is stubborn does not listen to others even if they wish him well. How then can his metta be developed effectively? We must realise that we can learn a lot from others' criticism and we can even learn to listen to children. It also says a lot for the anger and pride present. Definitely, people would like to work or live with a meek person.

5. Gentle

Gentleness in our thoughts – and thus speech and action – can work wonders, besides avoiding a lot of unnecessary conflicts. Harshness is hurtful, as people can be very sensitive. Gentleness on the other hand is pleasing and soothing, like patting a child to sleep. People's pride is like an open wound. To cure it we have to be gentle. As they say – mildness controls better than anger. It's better to speak softer, and work carefully. Never say or do anything when there is a trace of anger in the heart. When gentleness is in the mind it keeps it soft, then stress does not settle in. On the other hand it helps concentration to settle in quickly and joy follows. Metta is also easily aroused. Learning to be gentle is worthwhile.

6. Not proud

Metta has a lot to do with seeing others as being as important as oneself. Pride on the other hand is self-centred, and so a proud person cannot properly see others' good points or understand their needs well. Such understanding is fundamental in the arousing of metta. So when we learn that “there is so much good in the worst of us, and so much fault even in the best of us”, we can see each other better. Contemplation of impermanence also helps in the elimination of conceit.

In daily life it is even more obvious when trying to apply metta. People's pride is hurt when they are put down. So they would rather not communicate unless they have to.

7. Contented

Contentment means being satisfied with what is available or suitable. A discontented person has anger and greed. It is not easy to work or live with a greedy person. If there's a lot of greed in one trying to practise metta, one may let greed defile what are otherwise purely wholesome deeds. Being contented also means that one will have a lot of extra material things and time. One who is discontented never has enough.

In monks, contentment helps in their practice as well as giving a good impression to people.

8. Easy to support

“Subharo” in Pali actually means “easy to support”. This was said in reference to monks in the Karaniya Metta Sutta, a sermon given to monks. Hence, being easy to support by laypeople is giving them less burdens even, if one has to suffer a lot more. This is one way of giving metta to them. Nevertheless, everyone has to depend on another in some way. If we are too demanding or particular, then we become a nuisance and a pain in the neck for others. So what can be done without – so as not to trouble others – then that we shall do without. Taking chases people away, giving brings people in. If we must borrow, then we must return, better if we return more than we borrowed. Gratefulness begets appreciation.

9. Have few duties

To develop any form of meditation it is best that we spend all our time and effort in it. In that way we can get deep concentration and fast. This also goes for metta – even in daily life. If we are to develop greater and deeper metta for others, such as our family and friends, we will have to spend a greater amount of time with

them. As the saying goes – they can have the money but not the love. Time, therefore, is the important factor. Whole-hearted involvement is another.

10. Frugal

This refers to monks who are light in their living. Light refers to having few possessions, so that one may move about easily and freely with few worries and attachments. Wherever one may be or go, one is flexible and versatile enough to fit into practice.

11. Serene in faculties

The faculties are those of the senses – eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. To be calm in these means that we are neither excited with attachment to whatever is pleasurable that is seen, heard, etc. nor disturbed by any unpleasant object. Even with neutral objects, one is mindful and not deluded. The exercise of restraint keeps the mind calm and controlled. It keeps the mind free from defilements. This contributes greatly to the deepening concentration of the mind. It will really strengthen and deepen the metta very much – as when exercising metta where there is no distraction and weakness.

12. Prudent

Prudence refers to the knowledge as to what is suitable and advantageous, especially in the spiritual sense. With reference to metta bhavana, it will have specific implications as to what are the best internal and external conditions to have so that metta can develop best. In daily life we find that this is all the more important. Metta without wisdom can be dangerous. We may do more harm than good to ourselves and to others. An example is a well-meaning correction of another's mistake at a wrong time, place or person which may cause anger instead of appreciation. It is always better to reflect and think twice as to how best to help another.

13. Free from rudeness

Rudeness is coarseness in behaviour. Deeper states of consciousness are refined states of mind. To develop metta we have to refine our thoughts, speech and body. This involves practising a lot of mindfulness and wisdom. It also involves proper behaviour, politeness, etiquette and morality. Such refinement will definitely help us avoid a lot of trouble and misunderstanding when dealing with people in our daily lives.

14. Not favouring in families

This condition just means not going around currying favour. This happens when one is defiled by greed and attached to what others can give. Usually it will not be too long before it becomes obvious to others. We will then become a prey of, as well as a prey on, others. Attachment or greed is the failure of metta. It fails because its enemy, attachment, has won. Then the magic is gone and only some nightmare awaits.

15. Should not do even the slightest thing which other wise men might deplore

Wise men deplore all unwholesome actions, and any of these counteracts the pure mind of metta. All forms of evil – no matter how insignificant – should not be underestimated, and are best avoided. Mindfulness, again, becomes all important as the guarding and guiding factor – even in metta bhavana itself.



Metta and Other Brahma Vihara

Metta is one of the four brahma vihara. Brahma, in this case, has been translated as divine or noble. The word – as qualified in the path of purification – is meant in the sense of best and immaculate. This is because being best and immaculate is the best attitude towards beings, and those who practise it have immaculate minds like those of the Brahma gods.

Vihara means abiding and living. And so, those who practise these are said to be abiding or living in the divine or noble way.

The four brahma vihara are:

1. Metta: loving-kindness
2. Karuna: compassion
3. Mudita: sympathetic joy
4. Upekkha: equanimity

These four are attitudes towards other beings. They are also favourable relationships. They can also be extended towards an immeasurable scope of beings and so are called immeasurables.

In a way the first three are different shades of each other. Compassion (karuna) and sympathetic joy (mudita) can overlap with metta but not with each other. Compassion sees into the suffering of beings while sympathetic joy sees into their happiness. Metta can be applied to both situations. Equanimity, however, differs in the sense of being a detached (yet with understanding) state. The cultivation of the first three into absorptions has been described as similar and is attainable to the fourth lower rupa jhanas, while equanimity enters only in the fifth. Hence the other three have to be cultivated before the absorption of equanimity can be reached.

Karuna bhavana is the cultivation of compassion. In the cultivation it can be brought into concentration and absorption just like metta

bhavana. The benefits of the practice are similar to the 11 benefits described for metta bhavana.

In karuna bhavana, however, compassion is aroused instead of loving-kindness. It is actually a more specific type of metta that is applied or arises when one is able to see the suffering of another. It is an emotion that arises when we see someone suffering, then feel sorry for him and have a strong wish to relieve him of his suffering.

Whilst metta must not be mistaken for attachment, karuna must be distinguished from sadness or grief. The thing that makes us sure is a strong and firm mindfulness that keeps the quaking mind strong and determined. So here we will find a heavier, yet stronger, emotion. And to balance it and make it lighter, we ought to remember to nurture softer and lighter tones of mental states while we are developing the concentration of karuna.

The direct enemy of metta is anger, and that of karuna is cruelty and so the ways of removing it are similar to that for removing anger.

The general steps of the cultivation can be similar, i.e.

1. contemplation of dangers of anger or cruelty
2. contemplation of benefits of compassion
3. growing compassion for a suffering being

The object of compassion is a suffering being and so we have to see the suffering of a being.

For a start, it should not be anyone too close – which could cause grief. It should not be a hostile one that we could even be glad about it! The opposite sex and the dead are also not suitable. We are advised not to consider whether the person is dear, neutral or hostile. Instead we ought to choose one who we can clearly see as suffering.

Suffering can take three forms. Suffering as:

1. physical and mental pain
2. suffering because of defilements
3. suffering of samsara

In a way we have to know exactly how the person feels. Sometimes we may even have to think hard and be with him and listen to him often to know him better.

When compassion arises we can thus keep it flowing on and deepening the concentration in the process as described in metta bhavana.

However traditionally the aspiration is dukkha pamuccantu – may he be free from suffering. It is clear that the degree and quality of compassion comes with the degree of understanding of what suffering is.

Sometimes I have tried to extend this one wish to more than one to overcome monotony.

For example,

- May he be free from mental suffering
- May he be free from physical suffering
- May he be free from samsaric suffering

Samsaric suffering also includes sufferings in woeful states like hell.

Once I even said:

- May he be free from suffering today
- May he be free from suffering tomorrow
- etc., and so on – and it worked!

However, I strongly believe that any ventures outside traditional methods that have been time-tested should be exercised with discretion and care.

When compassion and strong concentration have reached their depth and power, one would be able, as in metta bhavana, to enter into the first absorption. The attainments of its mastery as well as other higher absorptions are also similar to metta bhavana in approach. Then one may radiate metta to the dear person, neutral person, unpleasant person and then hostile person in succession. Finally one can also proceed to the specified and unspecified pervasion of karuna in the ten directions.

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

Ten Directions

- In the Easterly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the Westerly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the Northerly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the Southerly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the South-Easterly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the North-Westerly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the North-Easterly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the South-Westerly direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the Below direction
 may all beings be free from suffering
- In the Above direction
 may all beings be free from suffering

Repeat ten directions for all living things, all creatures, all individuals, all personalities, all female kinds, all male kinds, all nobles, all common folk, all deities, all humans and all unhappy states. All these total 132 aspirations ($12+120 = 132$).

Karuna in daily life involves welfare work – ranging from old folks to spastic children, and kindness to animals to transference of merits to unhappy spirits (petas). It would be most applicable in hospitals and welfare services, where there are suffering beings. Sasana work which involves spiritual education and helps to

relieve daily sufferings and samsaric sufferings also needs compassion. Even in educational institutions like schools compassion is applicable. However compared to metta it may not be so widely applicable because one may not see any obvious suffering and people too don't like to be seen as suffering either. Therefore it does not arise as often in daily life though it may arise easier when the situation is present.

For Bodhisattas of aspiring Buddhas, it becomes the motivating force for supreme enlightenment. In such a case one has to develop the great compassion – maha karuna – through deep reflection of the beings suffering in samsara.

Mudita means sympathetic joy or rejoicing at others' happiness and prosperity. It is the opposite of jealousy or envy, and therefore it is suitable for one wishing to overcome it.

The object and near cause of sympathetic joy is the prospering or happy being. So one who wishes to develop mudita should select such a person who is doing well spiritually and materially. Preference will of course be given to spiritual happiness as it is a more true and lasting type. Material gains may include good wealth, good health or good looks and so on.

Usually it is not easy for this state of mind to arise, especially when one sees another doing better than oneself. It is often easier to feel indifferent or even jealous! For a lot of people it has to be cultivated. So for a start one is advised to do it to a very intimate person. One is more likely to rejoice in his happiness owing to the closeness. Anyone lesser may be more difficult. The opposite sex and the dead are also not suitable for the beginner for the very same reasons as given in the section on metta.

One can arouse the mudita on the very close person by feeling how happy and prosperous he is. When one sees one's very good friend happy, one rejoices as well. Then one urges more of such states to arise, develop them and be concentrated.

One makes use of the wish:

1. May he not cease from having whatever material gains acquired.
2. May he not cease from having whatever spiritual happiness attained.

We may also extend it in the more positive sense:

1. May he continue to have whatever material gains acquired and may he gain even more.
2. May he continue to have whatever spiritual happiness attained and may he gain even more.

In another suggestion, an author gives the aspiration with reference to the four favourable worldly conditions, i.e.

1. gains or prosperity
2. glory or fame
3. honour or praise
4. happiness

Hence it will be as follows:

1. Yatha laddha sampattito mavigacchantu
May he not lose whatever gains acquired.
2. Yatha laddha yasato mavigacchantu
May he not lose whatever glory/fame acquired.
3. Yatha laddha pasamsato mavigacchantu
May he not lose whatever honour/praise acquired.
4. Yatha laddha sukhato mavigacchantu
May he not lose whatever happiness acquired.

A more positive translation of the above may also be rendered as the following:

1. May he continue to have whatever gains he has acquired.
2. May he continue to have whatever fame he has acquired.
3. May he continue to have whatever praise he has acquired.
4. May he continue to have whatever happiness he has acquired.

As one radiates mudita to the close companion one will eventually also deepen in concentration to arrive at the first absorption. Then one can follow up to reach the fourth absorption but stop short of the fifth in the same way as in metta bhavana. Then one can do the same to the dear person, neutral person, disagreeable person and the hostile person. Finally one arrives at the specified pervasion, unspecified pervasion and the ten directional mudita.

One cannot help but notice the fact that mudita is a lighter emotion than the previous two. In fact it is like a high pitch or fine clouds that lift one up high and quickly.

As such it may not be so clear at the start and would require a lot of exertion. One has to be patient or else frustration may set in. When aroused plentifully one can notice its distinct feeling, usually described as more blissful compared to the previous two. It can be so blissful that one feels almost sour in the bones and high in the head.

In mudita one should be careful that one does not fall into joyful attachment to – and satisfaction with – worldly things. One has to remember one's mindfulness and keep the mind in control and detached. Otherwise it is very easy to fall prey to such

attachments. Keeping the wishes more to spiritual happiness is playing safe.

Envy on the other hand is its direct enemy. One has to make sure it does not arise to obstruct development of mudita. One should then reflect on the demerits of envy if it should arise. Its demerits can be similar to that of anger but special reference can be made with regards to lack of friends, attendants and helpers because one regards anyone who can do better than oneself as one's own enemy.

Mudita in ten directions

Sabbe satta yatha laddha sampattito maviggacchantu

May all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.

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

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

7. In the North-Easterly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
8. In the South-Westerly direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
9. In the Below direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.
10. In the Above direction may all beings not cease from having whatever gains acquired.

Comparatively, the occurrence of mudita in daily life is even less common. One condition is that one has to be among people who are doing well spiritually or materially. It is not easy to be good in both. Moreover one needs to be very good natured, with closeness to many and unselfish to have spontaneous and easy mudita. When we meet such people we see them so uplifted that they seem to be floating.

It is therefore advisable to frequent places where there are good people around or where meritorious actions are done or virtues practised. They serve as a source of inspiration as well as rejoicing. For example, when we hear of or see someone doing charity, no matter how small the sum, we ought to rejoice fully instead of commenting that he could have given more.

When we see someone meditating strenuously we rejoice at his diligence. When people come to listen to dhamma talks we rejoice at their interest. Rejoicing helps us to see even the least significant of anyone's good qualities.

At home we can rejoice as long as anyone is happy. Even when we ask "How did you sleep last night?" and when we find that he slept well, we can rejoice at that. Rejoicing adds happiness upon happiness until it becomes really blissful.

All this rejoicing is normally not done but can be cultivated. Please remember to do that if you are practising mudita, snatch at the smallest opportunity. Rejoicing or sympathetic joy has much to do with gratefulness, humility, wholesomeness and loyalty. It gives us a good emotional attitude towards those who are doing well or better than us.

The fourth divine abiding is equanimity, which is a balanced and even state of mind that arises on seeing that all beings will reap the results of their good and bad actions.

Therefore for more effective practice, one would need to study and understand what kamma is, and how these actions can bring about their results.

Comparatively this state of mind is far more detached, and also often misunderstood as being cold. Usually it is more suitable to apply the other three divine abidings first, and when they fail or when it is unwise to do so, one will then resort to equanimity. For example, when it is too difficult to change a wicked man's heart, it is best to keep a distance and save the effort for someone else where it can work better. In another case it may be someone who cannot escape death. Here we can use compassion and then maintain an equanimous state when he dies. Equanimity also occurs frequently when much detachment is summoned when one devotes effort to one's own purification first.

In the practice of upekkha bhavana one first selects the neutral person. Bearing him in mind one reflects that he is the owner of his own kamma. The understanding factor will play an important part, e.g. in the beginning, because it is very easy to be caught by its close enemy – mere dullness, indifference, where one may just be reciting mentally “all beings have kamma as true property” like a parrot. When one does so with understanding, the even state of mind with regard to the person arises.

Traditionally the words used are:

Kammassaka hotu – He is the owner of his own kamma.

One repeats this to continue the state of equanimity. Whilst doing so the concentration will develop. When the mind does so sufficiently it will enter into absorption.

However equanimity meditation enters only into the fifth form absorption owing to its indifferent feeling and so on. Hence it is possible only when the other three divine abidings have been mastered.

If one has not, one will at most reach access concentration. Nevertheless it can also help us balance our minds in our daily lives.

To bring the mind over to equanimity from the other divine abidings one has to reflect on the peacefulness and quietness of equanimity first as it will serve as a motivation to detach oneself from the joyful states and then move higher to the more peaceful fifth absorption.

Equanimity has always been thought of as being cold and unfeeling, and so many people turn away from it. In actuality it is a very nice state – peaceful, subtle, soft and so on. All the other pure and beautiful mental factors such as lightness, softness, quietness, flexibility, and rectitude become very obvious. So too with faith, detachment, acceptance and so on. If one can think of it as such, one will want to have such a state of mind more often. With such a balanced state one can definitely carry out one's work more efficiently.

When one has done so successfully with the neutral person, one can proceed to the dear one and the rest in the same way. After that it will also be done on specified, unspecified and directional pervasion.

For example:

Sabba satta kammassaka... etc.

All beings have kamma as true property... etc.

As we can see, the four divine abidings are different attitudes towards beings, and although each is different, with its own unique characteristics, they are also very good attitudes and strike blameless, favourable or balanced relationships with others. They can bring much peace and happiness in the troubled world we live in, which is torn by ignorance, pride, jealousy, stinginess, suspicion, greed, anger and so on.

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

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

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

The four divine abidings are the immediate answer to ease such conflicts.

The Dhammapada says –

Hatred is not overcome by hatred

It is overcome by Love

This is the eternal Law.

(Dhpd. 5)

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

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

When there is stinginess we practise generosity with metta and karuna. Hence the Dhammapada says –

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

(Dhpd. 223)

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

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

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

This practice involves not only the suitability of individuals or jumping of absorptions but also the changing of the divine

abidings with skill. For example, we can choose to enter the first two absorptions in metta, the third in compassion, the fourth in sympathy and the fifth in equanimity. We can then try the first two in compassion, third in sympathy, fourth in metta and fifth in equanimity. There can be many combinations but the fifth has to be equanimity.

Then we can try switching likewise with different types of individuals, specified and unspecified pervasion and directional. And with each aspiration one may choose to enter a certain type of chosen divine abiding and absorption. Such skill in mind control needs training but definitely it brings much happiness and peace to oneself.

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

The question may be asked:

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

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

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

For example,

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



Ways of Working out Metta

The cultivations of metta in an intensive manner for absorptions/deep concentration can be done on a solitary basis or in groups.

Solitary meditation is conducive to tranquillity meditations as it is usually more quiet and less likely to run into misunderstandings with others.

Alternatively, group meditation involves more people and although some may pose distractions, the group effect and effort can be of mutual help and support. If we can be a little selective as to who comprises the group it can smoothen things out.

The joint group effort can arouse and combine potent mental forces into a more powerful force. It should first reinforce each of us by our radiating of metta to each other in the group. Then we can radiate outwards.



Work a Miracle

By a miracle, I mean a beautiful thing or happening which occurs out of or beyond our expectations. In this sense we can work miracles with metta. There will be greater miracles if we have stronger metta.

The Miracle At Home And In Society

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

The Miracle Of Healing

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

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

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

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

The Miracle In The Forest

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

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

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

In another incident I walked casually into the forest and found myself lost and the night was setting in. Then I remembered someone told me that a way to get out of such a situation was to radiate metta to the tree spirits. I did so and found my way out by another direction very soon. Coincidence? Well it helped, firstly, to stop any panic. It preserved the mindfulness to get my bearings right. I do not know if the tree spirits helped me, but the way out seemed

to be exceedingly smooth. In other stories the deities do lend a helping hand to people with metta in times of danger or trouble.

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

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

The Great Miracle

There may be many other instances where the power is made to work wonderfully to relieve the sufferings of beings. But we must remember not to have selfish motives – to feel proud or attached to these things.

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



Metta and Vipassana

If one wants to be totally free from all suffering, one will have to practise vipassana – insight meditation. This is because the objects of brahma vihara have beings, a concept, as their object. To gain wisdom that reaches beyond birth and death one has to see into things as they really are, i.e. realities.

But if one has developed metta or other brahma vihara then one stands at an advantage. The mind can concentrate easily. Once the mind is calm, one can emerge to do the work of mindful observation of the mind and body processes. It can help us overcome tiredness and stress of watching a lot of pain. One who does insight after establishing oneself in metta bhavana first is called samatha yanika, i.e. one who makes tranquillity one's vehicle.

One may also develop metta after one has begun insight cultivation, or one may even do it hand-in-hand. But usually, because of lack of time and need for concentrated effort, one of them is done first to some degree of accomplishment to serve as a support for the other.

Where metta serves as a support for the complete cutting away of all defilements to win freedom from samsara, then metta is at its noblest. Often one may be at a loss as to which to practise first, or how to combine, or when to do it.

Usually I would advise that one first attends at least a period of vipassana retreat. This would enable one to get firstly a grasp of the most essential part of Buddhist meditation – the way out of samsara, at least at the basics. Secondly, one also gets to learn about, and how to use, the all-important factor of mind control – mindfulness.

Then one can proceed to learn the basic method of developing loving-kindness. It is best to go for a retreat to develop deep

concentration and get a real feel for it. Then one can learn to combine the two. It is important that we get a thorough grasp of the method. To do that it is best that we put whole-hearted effort into learning one method first. In trying to combine the two we have to be decisive as to when to practise which one.

For example, one may decide to do 15 minutes of metta, followed by vipassana. Then one may feel that, before the time is up, the vipassana objects are becoming very clear and so one is tempted to switch. Or one's metta may make one feel so good that one is in a dilemma whether or not to switch. A decisive action should put away all these conflicts. A decisive action also ought to be founded on wisdom.

If we want a full session of metta, then we may use the morning sessions for metta and the evening for vipassana, or vice versa. It is not wise to forsake any one, for both are important.

One may devote more metta in the case where one's life involves dealings with lots of people. It may also necessitate more time for metta if one's temperament is prone to ill-will and bad temper.

A suitable balance can be drawn up when you sit down to consider what you want and what is good for you.



Appendix

~ Recitation ~

As far up as the highest existence
As far down as the lowest existence
In the entire universe
Whatever beings that move
on earth,
on water
or
in air
may they be free
from suffering and enmity
from physical suffering and danger

Metta

Avero homi
Abyapajjo homi
Anigho homi
Sukhiattanam pariharami

Mama matapitu
Acariya ca
Nati mitta ca
Sabrahmacarino ca
Avera hontu
Abyapajja hontu
Anigha hontu
Sukhiattanam pariharantu

Imasmim
Arame
Sabbe yogino
Avera hontu
Abyapajja hontu
Anigha hontu
Sukhiattanam pariharantu

Imasmim arame
Sabbe bhikkhu
Samanera ca
Upasaka
Upasikayo ca
Avera hontu

uttarim
appativijjhanto
brahmalokupago hoti
mettaya, bhikkhave,
cetovimuttiya, asevitaya,
bhavitaya, bahulikataya,
yanikataya, vatthukataya,
anutthitaya, paricitaya,
susamaraddhaya.

ime ekadasanisamsa
patikankha ti

idamavoca
bhagava
attamana
te bhikkhu
bhagavato
bhasitam
abhinandunti

Karaniya Metta Sutta

Karaniyam atthakusalena
Yam tam santam
 padam abhisamecca

Sakko
Uju ca
Suju ca
Suvaco
C'assa mudu
Anatimani

Santussako ca
Subharo ca
Appakicco ca
Sallahukavutti
Santindriyo ca
Nipako ca
Appagabbho
Kulesu ananugiddho

Na ca khuddam
 samacare kinci
Yena vinnu pare
Upavadeyyum
Sukhino va
 khemino hontu
Sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitata

Ye keci pana bhutatthi
Tasa va
Thavara va
Anavasesa

Digha va ye
Mahanta va
Majjhima
Rassakanukathula
(rassaka-anuka+ thula)

Dittha va
Yeva adittha
Ye ca dure vasanti avidure
Bhuta va sambhavesi va
Sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta

Na paro param nikubbetha
Natimannetha katthacinam kanci
Byarosana patighasanna
Nannamannassa dukkhamiccheyya

Mata yatha niyam puttam
Ayusa ekaputtam anurakkhe
Evampi sabba bhutesu
Manasambhavaye aparimanam

Mettanca sabbalokasmim
Manasam bhavaye aparimanam
Uddham adho ca tiriyanca
Asambadham averam asapattam

Titthan caram
Nisinno va
Sayano va
Yava tassa
Vigatamiddho
Etam satim adhittheyya
Brahmametam viharam
idhamahu

Ditthica anupagamma
Silava
Dassanena sampanno
Kamesu vineyya gedham
Na hi jatugabbhaseyyam
Punareti ti

Loving-kindness

May I be free from enmity/danger
May I be free from mental suffering
May I be free from physical suffering
May I take care of myself happily

May my father and mother
And teachers
Relatives and friends
And fellow brahma farers
May they be free from enmity
Be free from mental suffering
Be free from physical suffering
Take care of themselves happily

In this
Monastery/grove
All yogis/meditators
May they be free from enmity
Be free from mental suffering
Be free from physical suffering
Take care of themselves happily

In this monastery/grove
May all bhikkhus
And samaneras

Laymen
And laywomen
Be free from enmity

Mettanisamsa Sutta

Evam me suttam
Ekam समयam
Bhagava
Savatthiyam
Viharati
Jetavane
Anathapindikassa arame
Tatra kho
Bhagava
Bhikkhu amantesi
Bhikkhavoti
Bhadante ti
Bhikkhu bhagavato
Paccassosum
Bhagava
Etadavoca
Mettaya
Bhikkhave
Cetovimutthiya
Asevitaya
Bhavitaya
Bahulikataya
Yanikataya
Vatthukataya
Anutthitaya

Discourse on Blessings of Loving-kindness

Thus have I heard
At one time
The Exalted One
In Savatthi
Dwelling
At Jeta's Grove
In Anathapindika's Park/Monastery
There indeed
The Exalted One
Addressed the monks
"O Monks"
"(Yes) Ven. Sir"
The monks, (to) the Exalted One
Replied
The Exalted One
Spoke thus
From loving-kindness
"O Monks
(That arises) from emancipation of mind
(Fondly) associated/cultivated
Developed
Made much of
Made the vehicle
Made a basis of
Established

Discourse on Loving-kindness that should be Done

What should be done by one skilled in good,
wishing to attain the state of peace, is this
(he should be) capable
and frank

and extremely honest
meek
and gentle
not proud

And contented
and easy to support
and few duties
frugal
and serene in faculties
and prudent
not rude
not fawning on families

He should not do
 even the slightest thing
which other wise men
might deplore
(then he should think)
 may they be happy and safe
 may all beings be happy

Whatever living things that exist
weak
or strong
without exception
long
or big
or medium-sized
short, small or bulky

Those seen (visible)
or even unseen (not visible)
and those dwelling near or far
or creatures that still seek to be

may all beings be happy

Let no one deceive another
nor despise anyone anywhere
in anger or ill-will
let them not wish each other harm

Just as a mother might guard her son
with her life, her only child
just so towards all beings
let him cultivate boundless mind

Let loving thoughts for all the world
be maintained boundlessly
above, below and all around
unchecked, without hate or enmity

Standing, walking
or sitting
or lying down
so long as he
is not sleepy
he should develop this mindfulness

this is called divine abiding here

And not falling into (wrong) views
virtuous
endowed with vision
removing greed for sensual pleasures
he will surely not be born in any womb
again

Khandha Parittam

1. virupakkehi me mettam
mettam erapathehi me
chabyaputtehi me mettam
mettam kanhagotamakehi ca
2. apadakehi me mettam
mettam dipadakehi me
catupadehi me mettam
mettam bahupadehi me
3. ma mam apadako himsi
ma mam himsi dipadako
ma mam catuppado himsi
ma mam himsi bahuppado
4. sabbe satta sabbe pana
sabbe bhuta ca kevala
sabbe bhadrani passantu
ma kinci papamagama
5. appamano buddho
appamano dhammo
appamano sangho
pamanavantani sirimsapani
ahi vicchika
satapadi unnanabhi
sarabhu musika
kata me rakkha
kata me paritta
patikkamantu bhutani
soham namo bhagavato
namo sattanam sammāsambuddhanam

The Group Protection

1. From me there is metta (loving-kindness) for the Virupakkhas
for the Erapathas there is metta from me
from me there is metta for the Chabyaputtas
for the Kanhogotamas too there is metta from me
2. From me there is metta for the footless
for the two-footed there is metta from me
from me there is metta for the four-footed
for the many-footed there is metta from me
3. Let not the footless harm me
let not the two-footed harm me
let not the four-footed harm me
let not the many-footed harm me
4. All beings, all living things
all creatures, none exempted
may all see good fortune
may no harm come near
5. Measureless is the Buddha
measureless is the Dhamma
measureless is the Sangha
but finite are the creeping things
snakes, scorpions
centipedes, spiders
lizards, rats
made by me is this warding
made by me is this protection
may those beings go away
I revere the Exalted One
I revere the seven Sammasambuddhas

... Aspiration ...

As a mother, at the risk of her life,
Watches over her only child,
Let him cherish an unbounded mind
For all living beings.
Let him have love for the whole world,
And develop an unbounded mind,
Above, below and all around,
Boundless heart of goodwill, free of hatred,
Standing, walking, sitting or lying down,
So long as he be awake,
Let him cherish this thought,
This is called divine abiding here.

~ Karaniyametta Sutta ~

Venerable Sujiva...

... is a well-known Buddhist Theravadin monk who has devoted his life to the teaching of vipassana meditation in Malaysia. He is also very well-respected by his students for his compassion, skilful guidance and deep understanding of the Buddha's teaching. The Venerable has conducted countless vipassana retreats at the Santisukharama hermitage in Kota Tinggi, Johor, Malaysia since 1982. Another milestone in the development of vipassana meditation occurred in 1996 when he began conducting retreats abroad, particularly in Australia.

The Venerable donned the robes shortly after graduating from the University of Malaya with an honours degree in Agricultural Science in 1975. During his monastic training, he practised under several distinguished meditation masters, notably Ovacariya Sayadaw U Pandita of Burma.

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