

Loving Kindness Sutta & Method

Metta Sutta

- The Buddha | Verses 1, 2 of 10

1. One who seeks to promote one's welfare,
Who seeks good and has obtained peace,
Should be able, honest and upright,
Gentle in speech, meek and not proud.
 2. Contented, one ought to be easy to support,
Not over-busy, and simple in living.
Tranquil in senses, let one be prudent,
And not brazen, nor fawning on families.
 3. Also, one must refrain from any action
That gives the wise reason to reprove.
Then let one cultivate the thought:
May all beings be happy!
May they be joyous and live in safety.
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Traditional Method of Lovingkindness Practice

- Acharya Buddhārakkhita

1. Sit down in a comfortable posture in a quiet place — a meditation room, a quiet place, nature, or any other place providing privacy and silence. Keeping the eyes closed, repeat the word “metta” a few times and mentally conjure up its significance — love as the opposite of hatred, resentment, malevolence, impatience, pride and arrogance, and as a profound feeling of good will, sympathy and kindness promoting the happiness and well-being of others.
2. Now visualize your own face in a happy and radiant mood. Visualize seeing your face in the mirror, and recall yourself in a happy mood. Wrap yourself in this uplifted mood during meditation. A person in an uplifted mood cannot become angry or harbor negative thoughts and feelings. Having visualized yourself in a happy frame of mind, now charge yourself with the thought;

“May I be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may I live happily.”

As you suffuse yourself in this way with the positive thought-force of love, you become like a filled vessel, its contents ready to overflow in all directions.

3. Next, visualize your meditation teacher, or choose some other person who has been helpful to you or a person you admire. See that person in a happy frame of mind and project the thought: “May this person be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may he live happily.”

Then think of other people who are to be revered, and who are also living — role models, teachers, parents and elders, and intensely radiate towards each one of them the thought of metta:

“May they be free from hostility, free from affliction, free from distress; may they live happily.”

The visualization must be clear and the thought-radiation must be “willed” in a focused heart felt way. If the visualization is hurried or the wishing is performed in a perfunctory or mechanical way, the practice will be of little diluted, for then it will be merely an intellectual exercise of thinking about metta. One must clearly understand that to think about metta is one thing, and to do metta, to actively project the will-force of loving-kindness, is quite another.

4. Having radiated thoughts of metta in the order already mentioned — oneself, the meditation teacher and other revered persons — one should now visualize, one by one, one's dear ones perhaps beginning with the members of one's family if that is appropriate, suffusing each one with abundant rays of loving-kindness.
5. Next, one should visualize neutral people, people for whom one has neither like nor dislike, such as one's neighbors, colleagues in one's place of work, bare acquaintances, and so on.
6. Having radiated loving thoughts on those in the neutral circle, one should now visualize persons for whom one has dislike, hostility or prejudice, even those with whom one may have had a temporary misunderstanding. As one visualizes disliked persons, to each one mentally repeat:

“I have no hostility towards him/her, may he/she also not have any hostility towards me. May he/she be happy!”

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

Visualization: “calling to mind” or visualizing certain objects, such as a person, a certain area or a direction or a category of beings. In other words it means imagining the people towards whom thoughts of love are to be projected or spread.

Radiation: The projection of certain thoughts promoting the well-being of those persons towards whom one’s mind is directed.

A metta-thought is a powerful thought-force. It can actually effect what has been willed. For wishing well-being is willing and thus is creative action. In fact, all that humans have created in different fields is the result of what we have willed, whether it is a city or a hydro-electric project, a rocket going to the moon, a weapon of destruction, or an artistic or literary masterpiece.

Radiation of thoughts of metta, too, is the development of a willpower that can effect whatever is willed. It is not a rare experience to see diseases cured or misfortunes warded off, even from a great distance, by the application of the thought-force of metta. But this thought-force has to be generated from the heart in an authentic, intentional and focused way.

It is only when one is free from hostility, affliction and distress that one “lives happily,” and can conduct oneself with ease and happiness. Thus all these terms are interconnected.

The order of these visualizations, one after the other, by taking the path of least resistance, in a graduated sequence, progressively the circle widens as does the mind itself. One must start the meditation on metta by visualizing oneself, and thereafter a person for whom one has reverence, then one’s dear ones, then neutral people, then hostile persons. As one radiates thoughts of love in this order, the mind breaks all barriers between oneself, a revered one, a dear one, a neutral one and a hostile one. Everyone comes to be looked upon as accessible and included in the healing wish of loving-kindness.

In the *Visuddhimagga*, Acariya Buddhaghosa gives a very apt analogy for the breaking of the barriers:

“Suppose bandits were to come to the meditator who is sitting in a place with a respected, a dear, a neutral, and a hostile or wicked person and demand, ‘Friend, we want one of you for the purpose of offering human sacrifice.’ If the meditator were to think, ‘Let him take this one or that one,’ he has not broken down the barriers. And even if he were to think, ‘Let none of these be taken, but let them take me,’ even then he has not broken down the barriers since he seeks his own harm, and metta meditation signifies the well-being of all. But when he does not see the need for anyone to be given to the bandits and impartially projects the thought of love towards all, including the bandits, it is then that he would break down the barriers.”

Metta Sutta (continued) **- The Buddha | Verses 4, 10 of 10**

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

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

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

7. Just as with one’s own life
A parent shields from hurt
a child, an only child,
Let all-embracing thoughts
For all beings be yours.

8. Cultivate an all-embracing mind of love
For all throughout the universe,
In all its height, depth and breadth —
Love that is untroubled
And beyond hatred or enmity.

9. As you stand, walk, sit or lie,
So long as you are awake,
Pursue this awareness with gratitude,
An infinite good will toward the entire world

10. Holding no more to wrong beliefs,
With virtue and endowed with insight,
And freed from sense appetites,
Freed from duality of birth and death,
one is not, to this world, born again.
