

METTA SUTTA

Introduction

Background

- During the rainy season (vassana), some monks had retreated to the forest for meditation.
- The tree deities were upset as they had to dwell on the ground for the 3 months of the vassana.
- The tree deities then proceeded to harass the monks, hoping that they would leave.
- The monks sought the advice of the Buddha, who instructed them in the Metta Sutta for protection.
- The monks returned to the forest, practised the Metta Sutta, and permeated the atmosphere with thoughts of loving-kindness.
- The deities so affected by this power of love, allowed the monks to meditate in peace.

Metta

- What is "metta"?
 - Loving-kindness.
- What is "love"?
 - Affection, attachment, devotion, etc.
 - Of the ordinary, sensual, emotional, sentimental and worldly kind.
- "Metta" vs "Love":
 - Without desire.
 - Void of self-interest.
 - Not selective or exclusive.
- Example of "metta":
 - The love of a mother for her child, but extended to all beings, and practiced in one's daily life.

Metta Sutta

- Divided into 2 parts:
 - Moral Conduct; and
 - Method of Practice.

- Consists of 10 verses.

The 10 Verses

Verse 1

Verse 1

- *Karaṇīya matthakusalena*
Yam tam santam padam abhisamecca
Sakko ujū ca sujū ca
Suvaco c'assa mudu anatimāṇī
- He who is skilled in welfare,
and who wishes to attain that state of calm
should act thus:
he should be able, upright, perfectly upright,
obedient, gentle and humble.

1. Able, Honest and Humble

- "skilled in welfare":
 - Observe the 8 Precepts with Right Livelihood, i.e. the 5 Precepts (Panca Sila) + abstain from:
 - wrong speech (i.e. lying, slandering, harsh words and frivolous talk);
 - wrong action (i.e. killing, stealing and sexual misconduct); and
 - wrong livelihood (i.e. trading in arms, human beings, flesh, intoxicating drinks and poison).
- "state of calm":
 - Nibbana, the end of craving and suffering.
- "able":
 - The confidence and energy to practice morality, concentration and wisdom.
- "upright":
 - Completely honest in action and speech.
- "perfectly upright":
 - Completely honest even in thought.
 - Expels lust, ill-will, delusion and wrong views whenever they arise.
- "obedient":
 - Pleasant; receptive to criticism.

- “gentle”:
 - Polite, calm and unobtrusive.
- “humble”:
 - Not conceited or proud, despite one’s lineage, learning or other virtues.

Verse 2

Verse 2

- *Santussako ca subhara ca*
Appakicco ca sallahuka vutti
Santindriyo ca nipako ca
Appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho
- Contented, easily supportable, with few duties, of light livelihood, controlled in senses, prudent, not impudent, not greedily attached to families.

2. Contented, Wise, Serene and Impartial

- “Contented”:
 - Contentment, based on current status and income.
 - Necessary for concentration.
- “easily supportable”:
 - Frugal, able to make do with little. Else, difficult to satisfy and unable to develop loving-kindness.
- “with few duties”:
 - Not burdened with unnecessary responsibilities.
- “of light livelihood”:
 - Travel light, with just the essential requisites.
- “controlled in senses”:
 - Of all the 6 senses, to prevent the arising of defilements.
- “prudent”:
 - Discreet, knowing what is suitable to develop concentration.
- “not impudent”:
 - One should be polite, not rude.
 - To act and speak with awareness, so as to

avoid being physically, verbally or mentally rude.

- “not greedily attached to families”:
 - Detached, unbiased and unprejudiced.
 - Cf. parents who spoil their children with too much affection.

Verse 3

Verse 3

- *Naca khuddam samācare kiñci*
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyum
Sukhino va khemino hontu
Sabbe satthā bhavantu sukhittatā
- He should not commit any slight wrong such that other wise men might censure him. May all beings be happy and secure, may their hearts be wholesome!

3. Blameless and Kind

- “not commit any slight wrong”:
 - Completely blameless.
 - Establish morality with Right Action, Right Speech and Right Livelihood, so that one can begin to develop concentration on loving-kindness.
- “May all beings be happy ...”:
 - Recited to cultivate thoughts of loving-kindness.

Verse 4

Verse 4

- *Ye keci pāna bhūtatthi*
Tasā vā thāvarā va anavasesā
Dīghā vā ye mahantā vā
Majjhimā rassakānuka thūlā
- Whatever living beings there may be: feeble or strong, long, stout or medium, short, small or large, without exception; ...

4. Send Love to All Beings

- “without exception”:
 - Genuine loving-kindness is non-discriminatory, and must be extended to all beings, including animals.

Verse 5

Verse 5

- *Ditthā vā yeva aditthā*
Ye ca dūre vaṣanti avidūre
Bhūtā va sambhavesī vā
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā
- ... seen or unseen,
those dwelling far or near,
those who are born or those who are to be
born, may all beings be happy!

5. Seen or Unseen

- “seen or unseen”:
 - Although some beings are too small to be seen, one should still be aware of them and extend loving-kindness.
- “those dwelling far or near”:
 - Loving-kindness can be effective at any distance, just like a telephone call to say, “How are you?”
- “those who are born or those who are to be born”:
 - Life begins at conception, not just at birth.
 - E.g. a mother who is pregnant should give up smoking. Others should also treat her with care and kindness.

Verse 6

Verse 6

- *Naparo param nikubbetha*
Nātimāññetha katthaci nam kanci
Byārosanā patighasaññā
Nāñña maññassa dukkha’miccheyya
- Let none deceive another,
nor despise any person whatsoever in any

place.

Let him not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill-will.

6. Don’t Deceive or Harm Others

- “Let none deceive another”:
 - Else, devoid of good-will and compassion for others.
 - E.g. bogus monks, spiritual teachers, etc.
- “nor despise any person whatsoever in any place”:
 - Else, constitutes mental rudeness.
 - One should despise only immorality and ignorance, whether they are in others or oneself.
- “Let him not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill-will”:
 - One should dispel angry and hateful thoughts by reflecting on their dangers and disadvantages.

Verse 7

Verse 7

- *Mātā yathā nīyam puttam*
Ayusā ekaputta’manurakkhe
Evampi sabbha bhūtesu
Mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam
- Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life,
even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.

7. As A Mother Loves Her Child

- “Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life”:
 - Loving-kindness should be boundless, by comparing others with oneself.
- “even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings”:
 - Emphasises the limitless and unrestricted nature of loving-kindness.

Verse 8

Verse 8

- *Mettaṇca sabba lokasmim
Mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam
Uddham adho ca tiriyaṇca
Asambādhham averam asapattam*
- Let one cultivate thoughts of boundless love for the whole world:
above, below and across
without any obstruction,
without any hatred, without any enmity.

8. Send Love In All Directions

- Self-explanatory.

Verse 9

Verse 9

- *Tittham caram nisinno vā
Sayāno vā yāvat'assa vigatamiddho
Etam satim adhiṭṭheyya
Brahma'metam vihāram idha'māhu*
- Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is the noblest living here.

9. Meditate Constantly

- "Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake":
 - No lapses in concentration.
 - Meditation must be continuous to be effective; else, the mind wanders, defilements enter, etc.

Verse 10

Verse 10

- *Ditthimca anupagamma sīlavā
Dassanena sampanno
Kāmesu vineyya gedham
Nahi jātu gabbha seyyam punareti'ti*

- Not falling into wrong views, being virtuous and endowed with insight, he discards attachment to sensuous desires. He does not come again – for conception in a womb.

10. Free from Wrong View and Rebirth

- "Not falling into wrong views, being virtuous and endowed with insight":
 - Stream-winner.
- "discards attachment to sensuous desires":
 - Non-returner, so one is not born into a womb again.

Practising Loving-Kindness

Begin my extending loving-kindness towards yourself...

- May I be free from ill-will, enmity, affliction and suffering.
- May I be happy.
- May I not be parted from the good fortune I have attained.
- I am the owner of my *kamma* and must inherit its results.

Then, extend loving-kindness to the guardian deities of your house...

- May the guardian deities in this house be free from anger, enmity, affliction and suffering.
- May they be happy.
- May they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained.
- They are owners of their *kamma* and will inherit its results.

Next, extend loving-kindness to your parents, teachers, relatives and friends...

- May my mother and father, teacher, relatives and associates be free from anger, enmity, affliction and suffering.
- May they be happy.
- May they not be parted from the good fortune

they have attained.

- They are owners of their *kamma* and will inherit its results.

Then, extend loving-kindness to all kinds of living beings...

- May all sentient things, all breathing things, all beings, all persons, all individuals, all women, all men, all noble ones, all ordinary persons, all deities, all human beings, all those destined for the states of loss, be free from anger, enmity, affliction and suffering.
- May they be happy.
- May they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained.
- All beings are the owners of their *kamma* and must inherit its results.

Finally, extend loving-kindness in all directions.

- In the east, the south, the west, the north, the south-east, the south-west, the north-west, the north-east, below, and above: may all sentient things, all breathing things, all beings, all persons, all individuals, all women, all men, all noble ones, all ordinary persons, all deities, all human beings, all those destined for the states of loss, be free from anger, enmity, affliction and suffering.
- May they be happy.
- May they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained.
- All beings every where are the owners of their *kamma* and will inherit its results.