

Karaniya Metta Sutta

THE HYMN OF UNIVERSAL LOVE





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Dedication

To my parents, who from a young age, taught me the practice of loving-kindness through practical example. They always saw the good in others, spoke kindly about people, and maintained this compassion even in challenging situations. Their kindness, despite how others behaved, had a profound impact on my understanding and practice of compassion as a child.

This book is also dedicated to Ven. Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero, my mentor, who elevated this practice to an even deeper level. Even in the face of unkindness and mistreatment, he consistently embodies compassion, offering help and extending kindness regardless of how others treat him. His unwavering ability to see the good in people and extend kindness and love in all circumstances acted as a practical living example of the words of the Buddha and his teachings of *Metta*. This book is a reflection of this influence on my life.

Acknowledgements

This book was inspired by the wisdom and guidance of Ven. Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero, whose teachings have touched the lives of so many. Over the years, I have observed countless guests at our retreat centre, Plantation Villa, who came to the monk burdened by anger, aversion, or unhappiness.

Recognising this, Ven. Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero often instructed me to guide these individuals in the study and practice of the *Metta Sutta*. Over time I have seen how some of these individuals transformed themselves through listening, learning and practicing this Sutta. In some cases the individuals did not learn the meaning, they just listened to the chanting of this Sutta. It is through witnessing such real-life examples, as well as experiencing the peace it has brought into my own life, that I have come to deeply appreciate the power of *Metta*. This is what lead me to write this book, offering a comprehensive explanation of the *Metta Sutta*, including its background, meaning, and practical applications for everyday life.

This understanding of the *Metta Sutta* and seeing it in action by some of the Buddhist monks I have had the good fortune to associate with, and witnessing its power has led to the production of this book. It is with this deep appreciation and respect for these teachings that I dedicate this book, hoping it may bring the same transformation and peace to others.

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Introduction

The *Karaniya Metta Sutta*, also known as the *Metta Sutta*, contains the Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness. The *Sutta* is written in Pali, the language used during the Buddha's time (563 B.C.-483 B.C.) The Pali word *Metta* is simply translated as loving-kindness, compassion, and non-violence. It defines a strong wish for the welfare and happiness of others, embodying an outward, altruistic attitude of love and kindness—the opposite of self-interest.

***Metta* evokes a warm, kind feeling of friendship, love and care, boundlessly encompassing and embracing all beings.**

The Buddha promoted *Metta* as a quality to develop in order to keep the mind calm and peaceful. *Metta*—often translated as Loving Kindness—is sometimes misunderstood as forcing love or

compassion upon others, even when one might not genuinely feel it. Instead, it is actually a form of radical acceptance of everything happening to and around us. When we accept any situation, whether pleasurable or not, it brings a sense of calmness to the mind.

Accepting What is Beyond Our Control

When we do not or cannot find it in ourselves to accept and be content with a situation, aversion grows within us, building on the mind's nature to control things and situations to please us. You can think of aversion as the mental habit of wanting to push away things we don't like or find unpleasing to us whether it is discomfort, pain, difficult emotions or sadness and anger. This resistance creates more suffering as it creates tension in the mind and removes its peace.

Tension, restlessness and conflict arise from aversion. In life and during our daily existence, we face many situations that we cannot change or control which may be displeasing to us. We usually react to these situations with thoughts and feelings rooted in aversion such as frustration, anger, stress, and unhappiness. This non-acceptance, conflict, or

aversion in the mind does not change this situation or circumstance we are facing. It only causes suffering to our mind as the mind becomes more agitated and restless. In contrast, a more skillful approach would be to practice acceptance. Radical acceptance of any situation (whether pleasurable or not) brings calmness to the mind. This calmness brings greater clarity to see and understand the situation without bias or judgement. When our mind is calm, we feel happy and at peace. A mind free from agitation and suffering can naturally grow compassion and kindness as one can clearly see the suffering of other beings. This mind leads to a heart that is more open to focusing outward on the well-being of others, rather than being restricted by self-centred concerns fueled by one's own suffering.

It is a skillful practice to accept situations that are beyond our control, make skillful changes where possible, and remain content in circumstances where we cannot create change.

Selfless Love and Compassion

In general, we tend to be primarily focused on ourselves or our own self-interest. Everything we

think and do is rooted in making us happier or releasing our suffering.

In contrast to a mind of such self-interest, *Metta* promotes an altruistic attitude of love and benevolence that works towards the well-being and happiness of others. The focus is always outward -the practice is to let go of our egos and our own self-serving desires. *Metta* works well when it is an unconditional universal love with a complete outward feeling. It is not *Metta* when it degenerates into a feeling of worldly affection.

What this means is that true *Metta* is not the same as ordinary, attachment-based affection or emotional love that we often experience in our relationships with friends or romantic partners. Through honest reflection, one can see that this worldly love is rooted in self-interest. We love our partners, family and friends for as long as they keep us happy – for a time they make us feel happy and calm. When their thoughts, words or actions bring displeasure to our minds, our love is quickly replaced with frustration, sadness or anger which can even lead us to cut ties or break off these relationships altogether.

Metta instead is an unconditional and selfless form of love that is extended to all beings, without expecting anything in return. It is a pure, boundless state of love

that is not influenced by our judgement of others, personal desires, attachments, or emotions.

When *Metta* "degenerates" into worldly affection, it becomes more about clinging, attachment or personal liking, which is conditional and often centred around "What can I get from this relationship?" or "I love this person because they make me feel good." This kind of affection is rooted in desire and attachment, making it fragile and fleeting.

In the practice of true *Metta*, the focus is purely on the happiness and comfort of the other and not oneself. It is at its highest when it is elevated to a level of complete selflessness. As an example: wishing love and kindness on one who may be unkind to us. This is done through radical acceptance of this particular circumstance without judgement or aversion, which leads to our minds being calm. Through this calmness of our mind and the clarity it brings we can see how others' unkind actions are a result of their own suffering. Seeing this leads to kindness in our hearts and minds leading to thoughts of *metta* – a strong wish for the other to be free from suffering. In return, it frees our own mind from attachments and aversion bringing about more peace and calmness within ourselves.



The Story Behind the Metta Sutta

During the time of the Buddha, (563 B.C.- 483 B.C.) the story is told that five hundred monks received individual meditation instructions after visiting the Blessed One (*the Buddha*). They each received particular meditation techniques suitable to their temperaments and together they travelled to the foothills of the Himalayas to spend four months in intensive meditation. Still, to the present date, many Buddhist monks spend July - October of every year solely in meditation, now known as the annual “rains retreat”.

In those days, a month or two before the rains retreat started, monks from all parts of the country would assemble wherever the Buddha lived in order to receive direct instruction from the Supreme Master. Afterwards, they would return to their monasteries, forest dwellings or hermitages to make a vigorous attempt at spiritual liberation.

This particular group of five hundred monks visited the Buddha, who at the time was staying at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove in the monastery built by Anathapindika. As they wandered between villages to find a suitable place to meditate, they found a beautiful hillock at the foothills of the Himalayas. This, according to the commentary, "appeared like a glittering blue quartz crystal: it was embellished with a cool, dense, green forest grove and a stretch of ground strewn with sand, resembling a pearl net or a silver sheet, and was furnished with a clean spring of cool water."

The *bhikkhus* (monks) were captivated by the sight and decided to spend their rains retreat in that idyllic grove. After the monks had settled contentedly, each one selected a tree to meditate under, both day and night. It is said that these great trees were inhabited by tree deities (gods) who had their own celestial mansions built there, with the trees serving as their base.

The deities were worried by the arrival of these monks who they feared would be loud, litter and harm the beautiful natural surroundings thereby polluting their heavenly abode. As day after day passed and the monks continued to occupy the bases of the trees, the deities decided to frighten the monks away by showing them terrifying objects,

making dreadful noises, and creating a sickening stench. They materialised all these terrifying conditions and afflicted the monks. The monks soon grew pale and could no longer concentrate during meditation. As the deities continued to harass them, they lost even their basic mindfulness, and their minds seemed to become smothered by the oppressive visions, noise, and stench. When the monks assembled to wait upon the senior-most Elder of the group, each one recounted his experiences.

The Elder suggested, "Let us go, brethren, to the Blessed One and place our problem before him. There are two kinds of rains retreats—the early and the late. Though we will be breaking the early one by leaving this place, we can always undertake the late one after meeting the Lord." The monks agreed, and they set out at once, it is said, without even informing the devotees.

They all arrived at Savatthi, and went straight to the Blessed One, prostrated at his feet, and related their frightful experiences, requesting another place for them to complete their rains retreat in their attempt at achieving enlightenment. The Buddha, using his supernormal power, scanned all of India but found no place more suitable than the same spot in the Himalayas where the monks could achieve spiritual liberation. He told them, "Monks, go back to that

same spot! It is only by striving there that you will destroy inner taints. Fear not! If you wish to be free from the harassment of the deities, learn this sutta. It will serve as a theme for meditation and as a formula for *paritta* (protection)."

The Master then recited the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*—the Hymn of Universal Love—which the monks learned by heart in the presence of the Lord. They then returned to the same place.

As the monks neared their forest dwellings, reciting the *Metta Sutta* and meditating on its underlying meaning, the hearts of the deities were filled with warm feelings of goodwill. So moved, they materialised in human form and received the monks with great piety. They took their bowls, led them to their rooms, provided water and food, and then, resuming their normal form, invited the monks to meditate under the trees without hesitation or fear.

Furthermore, during the three months of the rains retreat, the deities not only cared for the monks in every way but also ensured that the area remained completely silent. In this perfect tranquillity, by the end of the rainy season, every one of the five hundred monks had attained the pinnacle of spiritual perfection, becoming *arahants* (enlightened beings).

Such is the power inherent in the *Metta Sutta*. Whoever recites the sutta with firm faith, invoking the protection of the deities and meditating on *Metta*, will not only safeguard themselves in every way but also protect those around them, making spiritual progress that can be tangibly verified. No harm can ever befall those who follow the path of *metta*.



The Karaniya Metta Sutta

Hymn of Universal Love

**Karaṇīyam-atthakusalena, yan-tam' santam'
padam'abhisamecca:**

What should be done by one skilled in
goodness, who knows the path of peace:

**sakko ujū ca sūjū ca, suvaco cassa mudu
anatimānī,**

he ought to be able, straightforward, and
upright, gentle in speech, humble, without
conceit,

**santussako ca subharo ca, appakicco ca
sallahukavutti,**

contented and easily satisfied, unburdened
with duties, and light in living,

**santindriyo ca nipako ca, appagabbho kulesu
ananugiddho,**

with faculties at peace, prudent, not proud,
and greedless among the families,

**na ca khuddam' samācare kiñci yena viññū
pare upavadeyyum.**

he should not do the slightest thing that the
wise would later reprove (with him).

**“Sukhino vā khemino hontu, sabbe sattā
bhavantu sukhittā!**

“(May all beings) be happy and secure, may all
beings in their hearts be happy!

**Ye keci pāṇabhūtatti tasā vā thāvarā vā
anavasesā,**

Whatever living beings there may be, whether
they are weak or strong, omitting none,

**dīghā vā ye mahantā vā, majjhimā
rassakāṇukathulā,**

whether they be long or great, of middle
(size), short, tiny, or of compact (body),

**diṭṭhā vā ye ca addiṭṭhā, ye ca dūre vasanti
avidūre,**

those who are seen, and those who are
unseen, those who live far away, those who
are near,

**bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā sabbe sattā bhavantu
sukhitattā!"**

those who are born, and those who still seek
birth may all beings in their hearts be happy!"

**Na paro param' nikubbetha, nātimaññetha
katthaci nam'kañci,**

Let none deceive another, or despise any
being in any state,

**byārosanā paṭighasaññā nāññam-aññassa
dukkham-iccheyya.**

let none through anger or ill-will wish harm
upon another.

**Mātā yathā niyam' puttam' āyusā
ekaputtam-anurakkhe,**

In the same way as a mother would protect
her child, her only child, with her life,

**evam-pi sabbabhūtesu mānasam' bhāvaye
aparimāṇam.**

So with a boundless heart should one cherish
all living beings,

**Mettañ-ca sabbalokasmim' mānasam' bhāvaye
aparimāṇam;**

Towards the entire world he should develop
the measureless thought of friendliness and
kindness,

**uddham' adho ca tiriyañ-ca, asambādham'
averam' asapattam.**

Spreading upwards to the skies and
downwards to the depths, outwards and
unbounded, freed from hatred and ill-will.

**Tiṭṭham' caram' nisinno vā, sayāno vā
yāvatassa vigatamiddho,**

Standing, walking, sitting, lying, free from
drowsiness,

**etam' satim' adhiṭṭheyya, brahmam-etam'
vihāram' idha-m-āhu.**

he should be resolved on this mindfulness, for
this is said to be the sublime abiding,

**Diṭṭhiñ-ca anupagamma, sīlavā dassanena
sampanno,**

Without going near a (wrong) view, virtuous,
and endowed with (true) insight,

**kāmesu vineyya gedham; na hi jātu
gabbhaseyyam'punar-eti ti.**

being free from sense desires, he does not
come to lie in a womb again.





Understanding the Metta Sutta

in two parts

To understand and be able to practice the teachings of the *Metta Sutta*, it must be laid out into two parts:

1. The first part of the discourse outlines the qualities and virtues necessary to truly cultivate loving-kindness within oneself. These are traits that The Buddha taught to perfect ourselves and should be nurtured through the consistent practice of loving-kindness in our day-to-day moral conduct, actions and behaviours.
2. The second part of the discourse outlines the practice of *Metta* or loving-kindness as a technique of meditation that will eventually lead to *samadhi* (a higher state of meditative absorption or consciousness, essential for the attainment of spiritual liberation). *Metta* meditation leads to a total commitment to loving-kindness through all bodily, verbal and mental activities.



Part One

QUALITIES ONE MUST DEVELOP

Teachings of Right Conduct

The premise behind the teachings in part one of the *Metta Sutta* is that to access the higher faculties of the mind, one needs to calm the mind. This is done through the consistent practice of developing *sīla* ‘right conduct’, a principle contained within the Eight Fold Path of The Buddha. Right conduct is where all actions, words and thoughts of a person are always wholesome. It brings happiness and peace of mind, never giving rise to remorse, worry or restlessness of mind. As outlined below, right conduct includes both the fulfillment of virtues as well as abstinence and self-restraint.

**na ca khuddam’ samācare kiñci yena
viññū pare upavadeyyum’**

he should not do the slightest thing
whereby others who are wise might find
fault (with him).

In the first part of the *Metta Sutta*, The Buddha lists out the qualities one needs to develop to fully

practice loving-kindness. These are summarised below:

14 Qualities to Develop and Perfect the Practice of Loving-Kindness

1. **Sakko** - be able
one needs to be skilled in goodness, and knows the path of peace. A person who wants to practice this path must have the ability, the will and wanting to do everything to a high standard.
2. **Ujū ca** - straightforward (honest)
the able and skillful person should be honest, straightforward, and have integrity in their thoughts, words, and actions. Many who turn to meditation or spirituality can still be dishonest—both with others and with themselves. For example, they may outwardly appear spiritual to impress the world, yet fail to truly practice it in their daily lives.
3. **Sūjū ca** - upright
being extremely honest (Sū in Sūjū is an intensifier for Ujū). The fact that this is

mentioned twice emphasises the need for honesty and integrity in the development of the spiritual path.

4. **Suvaco cassa** - gentle in speech

being gentle in speech through practicing obedience. Many people following a spiritual path or meditation practice compare themselves with their teacher, guide or noble friend when their mind gets a little stronger or developed. There is a tendency for people to become disobedient.

5. **Mudu** - humble

being mild, gentle and modest. This allows the person to be flexible and avoid stubbornness. Not enforcing or being dogmatic in their own opinion. Being flexible thereby freeing the mind to expand.

6. **Anatimānī** - without conceit

being down to earth and staying humble, avoiding excessive pride. Generally as one goes through the practice they can become conceited and proud. All of this takes them away from the practice. Being gentle, humble, obedient and without pride, are all important qualities one needs to develop to further their

practice. Most teachers and true noble friends may not openly show their abilities and levels of achievement. This is why it is difficult to identify *arahats* (enlightened beings). When one becomes proud and disobedient, thinking they know everything, it can be easy to get lost trying different things but in the end, it drives them away from the ultimate goal of spiritual liberation or permanent peace.

7. **Santussako ca** - easily satisfied
being easily satisfied and content. When one reflects on what they want but do not have, defilements develop in the mind. Desire arises which can never be truly satisfied. This can lead to aversion, dissatisfaction, frustration or anger. Therefore, one who is not content with what they have cannot meditate as the mind becomes clouded with tension.
8. **Subharo ca** - easy to support
being satisfied with the basics and living with simplicity, making it easy for others to care for or assist you. Therefore not being a burden to others. When one is undemanding and grateful one develops modest expectations and appreciation of whatever is given, making it easy for others to offer help.

9. **Appakicco ca** - free from or unburdened by duties
one who is not overly busy. A person trying to further their practice needs to only take work to the level their mind can handle because otherwise the mind is not able to relax or move further in meditation or spiritual development.
10. **Sallahukavutti** - light in living
one who lives simply keeps the mind light. Not carrying many worries or burdens of life in their mind.
11. **Santindriyo ca** - with faculties at peace
gentle or peaceful in action or tranquil in their senses.
12. **Nipako ca** - prudent
being tactful and prudent. The person needs to be wise, practical and sensible.
13. **Appagabbho** - not forward
not being forward or brazen. These are not seen as qualities that would help one develop their spirituality.

14. **Kulesu ananugiddho** - greedless among the families
not being tied to family lines or pride of class or creed. This prevents one from truly practicing.

These 14 qualities are developed through consistent and dedicated practice. Abstinence and self-discipline enable one to avoid doing even the slightest thing that the wise would reprove. Through this practice, one is fully able to express and perfect *Metta* through mental, bodily and verbal action.

**Sukhino vā khemino hontu, sabbe sattā
bhavantu sukhittā!**

(May all beings) be happy and secure,
may all beings in their hearts be happy!



Part Two

THE PRACTICE OF LOVING-KINDNESS

The Practice

In the second part of the *Metta Sutta*, the Buddha explains the ways in which one should practice loving-kindness towards ‘all living beings’ through a form of visualisation in meditation. The below outlines the rest of the verses of the sutta that indicate who and what to visualise spreading loving-kindness towards during meditation.

Firstly, the Buddha taught that to practice Metta in meditation, one should start by spreading it by the size, shape, and visibility of the body of beings and by where they are in relation to oneself:

**Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi tasā vā thāvarā vā
anavasesā,**

If there is any being existing that is suffering from fear, who have overcome their fear or any other being,

**dīghā vā ye mahantā vā, majjhimā
rassakāṇukathūlā,**

those who can be seen, and those who are too small to be seen (or those who are unseen),

**diṭṭhā vā ye ca addiṭṭhā, ye ca dūre vasanti
avidūre,**

those who live far away and those who are
near,

**bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā sabbe sattā bhavantu
sukhitattā!**

those who are born, and those who still seek
birth may all beings in their hearts be happy!"

*Secondly, the Buddha continues to list all of the
unwholesome thoughts, words or actions one should
avoid:*

**Na paro param' nikubbetha, nātimaññetha
katthaci nam'kañci,**

May no one cheat another, May no one
despise or insult another,

**byārosanā paṭighasaññā nāññam-aññassa
dukkham-iccheyya.**

May no one cause suffering to another
through their words or action due to anger or
resentment. May all beings not want suffering
for another.

Thirdly, the Buddha describes the extent to which one should practice loving-kindness:

**Mātā yathā niyam' puttam' āyusā
ekaputtam-anurakkhe,**

In the same way as a mother would protect
her child, her only child, with her life,

**evam-pi sabbabhūtesu mānasam' bhāvaye
aparimāṇam:**

so too towards all beings one should develop
limitless Metta.

**Mettañ-ca sabbalokasmim' mānasam' bhāvaye
aparimāṇam;**

Towards the entire world, one should develop
limitless Metta.

**uddham' adho ca tiriyañ-ca, asambādham'
averam' asapattam:**

above, below, and across (the middle),
without barriers, hate, or enmity.

**Tiṭṭham' caram' nisinno vā, sayāno vā
yāvatassa vigatamiddho,**

Standing, walking, sitting, lying, whatever
action one is engaged in,

**etam' satim' adhiṭṭheyya, brahmam-etam'
vihāram'idha-m-āhu.**

he should be resolved to be in the
mindfulness within the bounds of the four
Brahma Viharas.

*The four Brahma Viharas (qualities) outlined below are
considered divine because they represent love and
goodwill toward all sentient beings and lead to a
sublime and compassionate state of being.*

metta - loving-kindness, acceptance

karuna - compassion, kindness

mudita - sympathetic joy, rejoicing in the happiness of
others

upekkha - equanimity

*Finally, the Buddha explains how a deep practice of
Metta can lead one towards 'nibbana', spiritual
enlightenment or liberation by removing all
defilements of the mind:*

**Diṭṭhiñ-ca anupagamma, sīlavā dassanena
sampanno,**

Without going near a (wrong) view, virtuous,
and endowed with (true) insight,

**kāmesu vineyya gedham; na hi jātu
gabbhaseyyam'punar-etī ti.**

having removed greed towards sense
pleasures, he does not come to lie in a womb
again.



The Perfection of Loving-Kindness as a Meditation Practice

The *Metta Sutta* meditation is a practice of visualising loving-kindness for all living beings. While it can first be practiced in a simplified form (as outlined on the next page), to truly follow the Buddha's teachings, one must reflect deeply and take this practice further.

If you read the second part of the *Metta Sutta* carefully, you will notice that the Buddha refers to a wide range of living beings and not just humans. This includes large animals, small animals, compact animals, and even beings that are still in their mother's womb, yet to be born. Imagining a fetus in

its mother's womb is not something people typically think of when practicing loving-kindness meditation. The Buddha did not omit anyone, which shows the incredible extent to which he emphasised universal compassion. Just as a mother would sacrifice her life to protect her only child, the Buddha taught that one should practice loving-kindness towards all living beings on earth with that same level of selflessness.

The following is a beginner's guide to practicing the meditation of loving-kindness: a starting point from which you can develop and grow your practice toward the depth that the Buddha speaks of in the second part of the *Metta Sutta*.

Beginners Introduction

Metta (Loving-Kindness) Meditation

This meditation uses the practice of visualisation, spreading loving-kindness in our minds to people who we know and love, people who are more neutral to us, and people who we find difficult. Then it leads towards imagining the whole world and the universe, projecting thoughts of loving-kindness onto all living beings, everywhere.

Steps for meditation practice:

- ❖ Sit down in a comfortable posture. It does not have to be in full lotus position as you would see on most statues or pictures of the Buddha. One can sit in any way that is comfortable. It is more important that you can hold the meditation without discomfort in the body. Otherwise, discomfort and pain in the body can disrupt the meditation practice. It is better to keep the spine as straight as possible as this aids concentration but try to keep your arms and legs relaxed. Try to find a quiet place to sit. For a regular practice, it is good to pick one spot that you would use regularly (a spot you do not use for other things such as reading, sleeping etc.) as it helps with the habit-forming nature of the mind.
- ❖ Now close your eyes and take a couple of deep breaths to let the body and mind relax.
- ❖ Once relaxed, with your eyes closed, visualise yourself being happy. It is almost like looking at yourself in the mirror. Imagine yourself happy, healthy and very content with life as it is now. Regardless of any imperfections that you may be facing in life, imagine yourself happy and content.

❖ Now wish yourself happiness, good health and contentment. So starting with ourselves we fill ourselves first with loving-kindness so much that it spills over outward. Wish your mind to be free from anger, jealousy, sadness and suffering. Wish yourself to be free of thoughts of wanting to harm or cheat another and instead to be able to rejoice in the happiness of other beings. You can even mentally repeat the following whilst visualising it:

- May I be happy
- May I be healthy
- May I be content
- May my mind be free of anger, jealousy, sadness and suffering
- May I never feel the need to harm another, or cheat another
- May I always be able to rejoice in the happiness of others

❖ Next, visualise all those that you love and care about: your family, loved ones, teachers etc. Then mentally repeat and visualise the above towards them:

- All those who I love and care about, May they be happy
- May they be healthy and content

- May their minds be free of anger, jealousy, sadness and suffering
 - May they never feel the need to harm another, or cheat another
 - May they always be able to rejoice in the happiness of others
- ❖ Next, visualise those that you are more neutral to you, that don't invoke a particularly strong feeling of love or hatred towards. Visualise the same for them.
- ❖ Visualise those who you find challenging or difficult to deal with. Those who may have hurt you. Spread loving-kindness to them by visualising the same.
- ❖ Now you can spread your loving-kindness by direction – visualising all beings in front, back, to the right of you, left, under, above, or by expanding out from where you are sitting, to the property you are in, to the village, country, continent, planet and any other being outside of this planet.
- ❖ Gradually direct your loving-kindness backwards again to yourself.

During the *Metta* meditation remember the spreading of loving-kindness is different from the worldly love we often experience. So the loving-kindness that spreads outwards from ourselves is one where it remains to be the same intensity for everyone you visualise; those who you love and care for, those who are more neutral to you, those who are difficult and those in the same country or continent. Remembering that our strive to practice *Metta* is not a worldly selfish love. It is a limitless, boundless, selfless love to all beings irrespective of who they are, their colour, nationality, race, beliefs, actions and behaviour.



The Healing Powers of The Metta Sutta

The *Karaniya Metta Sutta* is a *paritta* — a spiritual formula capable of safeguarding one's well-being, protecting one against all dangers, and rescuing one from mishaps and misfortunes.

As in the background story when the monks were chanting the *Metta Sutta* and meditating upon it, the deities became friendly and supportive towards them despite their previous hostility. In the end, the deities' hostility turned into them offering their hospitality!

The protection offered by *paritta*, works both subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, as *Metta* cleanses and strengthens the mind, it also awakens the dormant potentials, resulting in the spiritual transmutation of the personality. Transformed by *Metta*, the mind is no longer haunted by greed, hatred, lust, jealousy and those other mind-polluting factors which are one's real enemy and source of misfortune.

Objectively, *Metta* as a thought force is capable of affecting any mind anywhere, developed or undeveloped. The radiation of *Metta* can not only calm a person or remove the darts of hate from within him but in some cases can even cure him of severe illness.

It is a common experience in Buddhist countries to see how people are cured of all sorts of diseases and freed from misfortunes through the recitation of *paritta*. Thus *Metta* is a real healing power.”¹

The practice of *Metta* is the removal of negative traits by actively putting into practice the correlative positive virtues.

“According to the *Visuddhimagga*², *Metta* is a ‘solvent’ that ‘melts’ not only one’s own psychic pollutants of anger, resentment and offensiveness but also those of others. Since it takes the approach of friendship, even the hostile one turns into a friend.

¹ Extracted from the section “The ethics of *Metta*”, *Metta - The Philosophy and Practice of Universal Love*
By Acharya Buddhārakkhita 1995

² The *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification), is the ‘great treatise’ on Buddhist practice and Theravāda Abhidhamma written by Most Venerable Buddhaghosa Thero approximately in the 5th century in Sri Lanka. It is a manual condensing and systematizing the 5th century understanding and interpretation of the Buddhist teachings.

Metta is characterised as that which "promotes welfare." Its function is to "prefer well-being" rather than illness. It manifests as a force that "removes annoyance" and its proximate cause is the tendency to see the good side of things and beings and never the faults.



Metta Sutta Q&A

How do I balance loving-kindness for others with taking care of my own needs?

First, it's important to grasp the understanding that true Metta is a practice of giving up our sense of self and our 'needs'. If you consistently practice selflessness, kindness, and acceptance, naturally this will help to balance your relationships with others. Your mind will be much more peaceful and stable if you practice true Metta. Taking care of ourselves starts with taking care of the mind. For example, if you feel as though someone is being difficult towards you, or trying to take something from you, you are able to see how that person's self-interest or their own self-concern is troubling or agitating their mind. You can see that a mind that is trapped in thinking only of oneself, creates internal conflict and leads oneself to act in selfish ways. Then, without getting angry or upset or getting caught up in our own self-interest of what we feel is 'right' or 'wrong', we can easily practice compassion towards them. The answer to your question is that we should be less concerned with our own needs in the first place, and

focus more on developing a strong and stable mind that remains calm and has compassion in any situation.

How can I cultivate Metta in difficult situations, like when I feel angry or frustrated?

We must first recognise that when feelings of anger or frustration arise, on some level and to varying degrees we suffer. I think we can all agree that these types of emotions don't feel pleasant. Anger, if not dealt with in a mindful way, can be very destructive. If we see a person acting out of anger, perhaps lashing out at a loved one or directing harmful words at another, we can first recognise that the person on the receiving end suffers in some way, but the one engaging in those actions ultimately suffers more. The long-term effects of anger, frustration or aversion can be very harmful to one's mind, and one's ability to see a situation clearly. Developing the skill of *mindfulness*—becoming aware of our every thought—goes hand in hand with strengthening our ability to stay calm and compassionate in difficult situations. By staying present and observing without attachment or aversion, *mindfulness* encourages a deep awareness of both inner and outer experiences, allowing for greater peace and understanding. If we develop the ability to always be aware of our thoughts

and emotions, during the times when anger arises, we can choose to not let these feelings cloud the mind, and instead, see it as an opportunity to practice loving-kindness towards ourselves and others. The Buddha's path is about breaking the cycle of anger, hatred, and violence with compassion and wisdom so that we can move toward peace, healing, and liberation for all beings.

Can I really feel Metta for people I dislike or those who have hurt me? For example, should I really practice Metta even towards someone who has committed a crime or killed someone?

Even though it may be difficult at first, we all have this ability to cultivate Metta (loving-kindness), even towards people we dislike or those who have hurt us. The Buddha taught that Metta is about unconditional goodwill and compassion for all beings, including those who may have caused harm. People often hurt others because of their own pain or mental suffering. While this doesn't justify their actions, knowing this helps generate compassion for their faults as a human being. While the Buddha clearly states in his teachings that one should not kill, steal or harm others, he also emphasises the importance of seeing the underlying causes of harmful actions, such as ignorance, jealousy, greed, and hatred. These states

of mind are often the roots of suffering and lead people to commit harmful acts. Practicing compassion doesn't mean accepting or excusing harmful actions. Instead, it's about recognising the pain behind them and wishing for the transformation of that person. Compassion seeks to end suffering, which includes helping others change their harmful ways if possible.

I already have a meditation practice where I focus on my breath and I find visualisation difficult, what should I do?

Instead of visualising, you can try to use simple phrases to generate feelings of kindness, such as "May I be happy. May I be free from suffering." or "May all my loved ones be happy. May all my loved ones be free from suffering." Repeat these phrases slowly, letting the feelings naturally arise without needing to picture anything. Reflect on these feelings, and see how this might soften your heart, or bring a sense of peace or relaxation. Then you can move on to repeat the phrase, "May the difficult people in my life be happy. May the difficult people in my life be free from suffering." Gradually then you can extend this feeling outwards to all living beings. Another method is to focus on a photograph or a real-life image of a loved one before you enter into

meditation, which might make things easier when you come to visualise that person in your mind.

What should I do if I don't feel genuine Metta while meditating?

If you struggle to get to a place of loving-kindness, instead you can try practicing some form of present-moment awareness and meditative relaxation, ideally while still in a sitting position. Once you have established this, you can then return to the Metta practice. Start first with an open attention, by sensing sounds around, sensations on your body, feeling the movement and the pace of the breath. Allow your mind to move around these three things, establishing a sense of awareness of the present moment. Once you have brought your attention to the present moment, now practice relaxing your body while sitting with your spine upright. You can do this by guiding your mind to different parts of the body and gently softening there, imagine a warm glow moving through your body, relaxing everything that it touches. Try bringing your attention to the centre around your heart and soften there, imagine you are perceiving the world, your body, and your mind from this space. Once you feel more settled, you can try coming back to the Metta meditation. If this still doesn't work, don't try to

attempt the whole meditation. You can stay with a thought or an image of a loved one (a person, or a pet) someone for who it is easy to feel love and compassion, and stay meditating with this feeling of loving-kindness. *Metta* is not something that can be forced, rather it is a practice of cultivation that will get stronger over time, so don't worry if when you start out practicing it doesn't feel natural or doesn't come easy. Start with the very basics, and the rest will eventually come.



May All Beings Be Happy



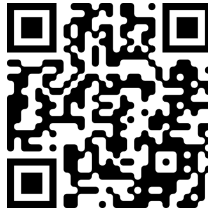
'The Buddha Hall' - Plantation Villa UK, Ruxton Farm, Hereford, England

**“Dukka paththaatha niddukka,
Baya paththaatha nibbaya,
Soka paththaatha nissoka,
Honthu sabbepi paanino!”**

“May all beings who are suffering be free of suffering,
May all beings who are in fear be free of fear,
May all beings who are sad be free of sadness,
May all beings be happy and comfortable!”

Listen to the Metta Sutta Online

You can listen to a recorded chanting of the *Metta Sutta* by Most Venerable Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero on the Plantation Villa Youtube channel,
www.youtube.com/@plantationvilla
or scan the QR code to listen now:



KARANIYA METTA SUTTA

In this concise exploration of the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*, the Buddha's timeless teachings on loving-kindness are brought to life through it's historical context, real-life applications, and meditative practices. This book offers readers a deep understanding of how to cultivate compassion, selflessness, and a peaceful mind for oneself and others.



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