

Metta Bhavana

Loving-kindness Meditation

Ven. Dhammarakkhita



E-mail: bdea@buddhanet.net
Web site: www.buddhanet.net

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Loving-kindness Meditation
Venerable Dhammarakkhita

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Enquiries:

Ms. Savanraya Vipatayotin (Nay)
Dhammodaya Meditation Centre
45/1 Mu 4 Tambol Thanon — Khat
Ampur Muang, Nakhon Pathom 73000, Thailand

Tel. (66-1) 8109632. Fax. (66-2) 2712633

Website: <http://www.rissir.com/dhammodaya>

E-mail: dhammodaya@hotmail.com

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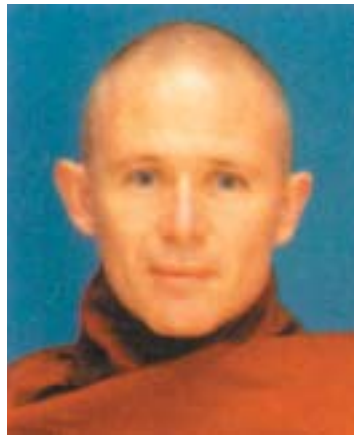
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Metta Bhavana

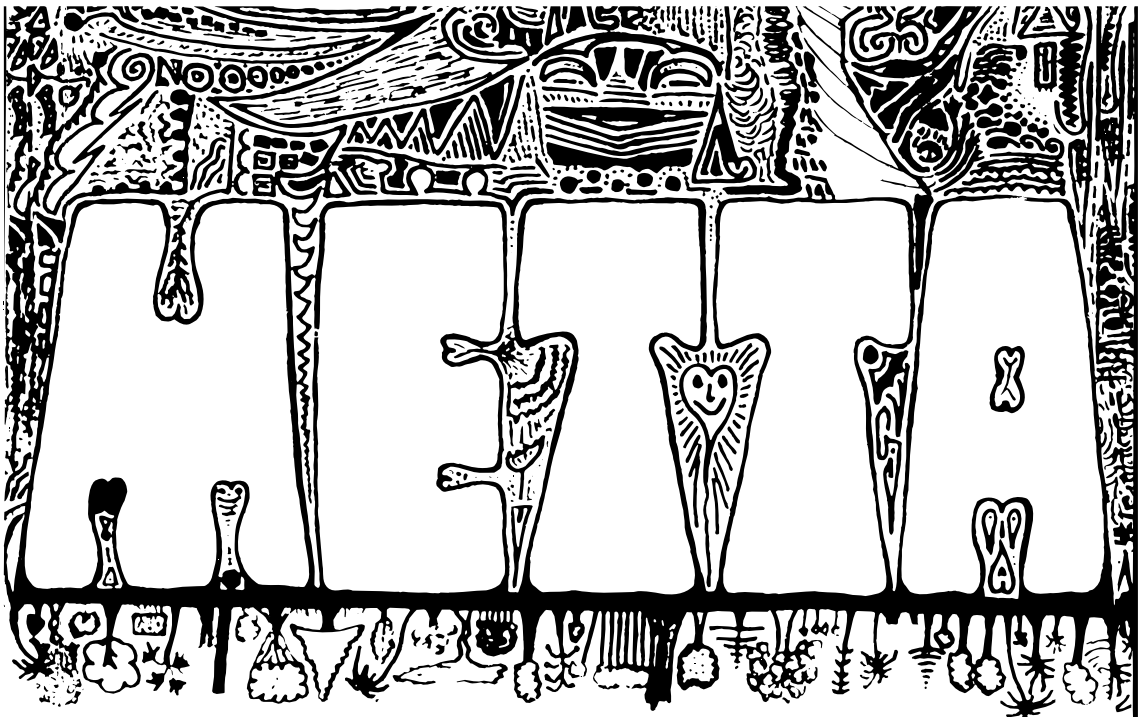
Loving-kindness Meditation

Venerable Dhammarakkhita



Venerable Dhammarakkhita is an Australian Buddhist Monk of the Myanmar Theravada tradition. He has been a monk for about eight years. After extensive and intensive practice in vipassana-mindfulness/insight meditation in Australia and Myanmar, his teacher Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw instructed him to teach vipassana in Myanmar, Singapore and East and West Malaysia. Venerable Dhammarakkhita spent three years successfully establishing a monastery in South Africa. These days he teaches by invitation in Myanmar, Japan and Thailand and gives talks wherever he goes.

*“If you truly love yourself,
you’ll easily love another;
If you truly love yourself,
you’ll never harm another.”*



Introduction

This short explanation on how to practise Metta Bhavana or Loving-kindness Meditation was given as a three-day weekend retreat at Dhammodaya Meditation Centre in Nakhon Pathom in Thailand. Mae-chee Boonyanandi, a Thai Buddhist nun, has invited Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw of Myanmar to be the patron of the Centre.

Mae-chee Boonyanandi's daughter, Nay, a resident and co-founder of Dhammodaya with her mother, was my skillful translator. The talks have been meticulously transcribed into both English and Thai by Widhanya (Khun Knot) and this English version is edited by me. Since this is my own work, I've taken some literary license and added some more points which have come to light through my own practice since I gave the talks in 2000. However, the body of the text and the meaning of the message remains largely the same. Please be aware that I had to speak simply and in short sentences for easy translation and comprehension which may not always be so smooth to read. Also, the grammar used is spoken, not formal written grammar.

In this text, there are some words from the ancient Pali language, the scriptural language for Theravada Buddhism. Those words are in bold type with the meaning in brackets upon first meeting them, afterwards they are printed normally. The following glossary will help you to quickly reference the meanings. The glossary is not comprehensive.

I use the words metta and loving-kindness in the same way. Metta translates as loving-kindness. This is not simply

love, nor just kindness, nor is it only love and kindness, it is kindness which has a quality of love and care about it. I also call it “well-wishing”: Unconditional well-wishing for the safety, happiness, good health and comfort of any living being or beings, including oneself. In my talks, I use the words loving-kindness and metta interchangeably, sometimes even in the same sentence.

Metta is universal and doesn't belong to any people, race or religion but it is open and free for anyone to try and see for themselves. Both Buddhists and Non-Buddhists enjoy the way of metta all over the world, it's soothing for modern people.

I am completely responsible for any errors or misdirections that are contained herein. I'm neither a scholar nor a writer, just someone who has practised loving-kindness according to the instructions as we find them today. This is not a complete or perfect set of instructions, it is just some advice that I once gave. My mind, my own experience is always evolving, even as I write this. Nothing, nobody is perfect because everything is changing. People practise and teach metta in many different ways. I, too, have found my own style and share it for those who seek. Ultimately, it is the quality of one's heart that is important and not the intricacies of the technique.

It is my sincere wish that you may find something useful for your life amongst these pages of simple words and may you share your loving-kindness with your friends, family and all living beings.

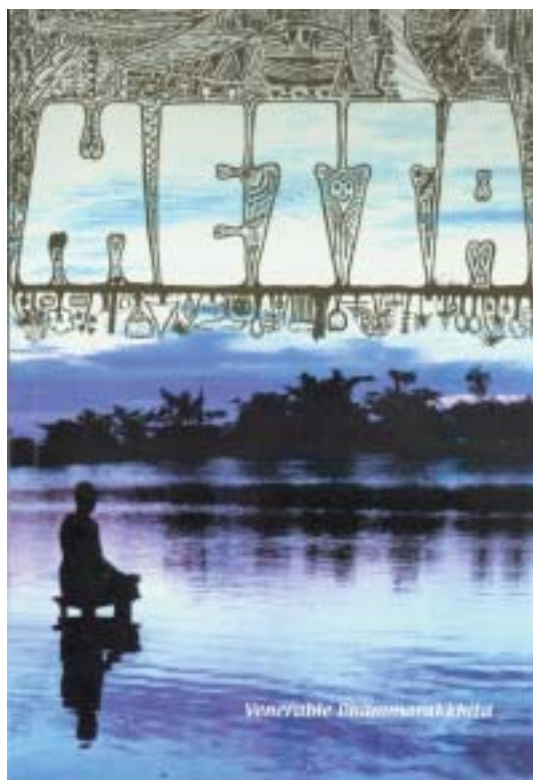
“May all beings live in Peace and harmony.”

Dhammarakkhita

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A Simple Glossary

Anatta – Impersonal nature of mind and matter/no self.

Avijja – Ignorance.

Chanmyay Sayadaw – (Burmese/Myanmar) – Chanmyay means peaceful and Sayadaw means respected teacher.

Devaloka – Heaven.

Dhamma – Natural Law/Buddha's teachings.

Dhammarakkhita – Guardian/protector of the Dhamma.

Dhammodaya – Flourishing teaching of the Buddha.

Dosa – Aversion/hatred.

Dukkha – Suffering/dissatisfaction/imperfection.

Kuti – Meditation hut.

Lobha – Desire/greed.

Metta Bhavana – Loving-kindness meditation.

Moha – Confusion/delusion.

Nama – Mind.

Nibbana – Enlightenment.

Noble Eightfold Path – Eight factors that can lead to enlightenment.

Pannya – Wisdom.

Kupa – Matter.

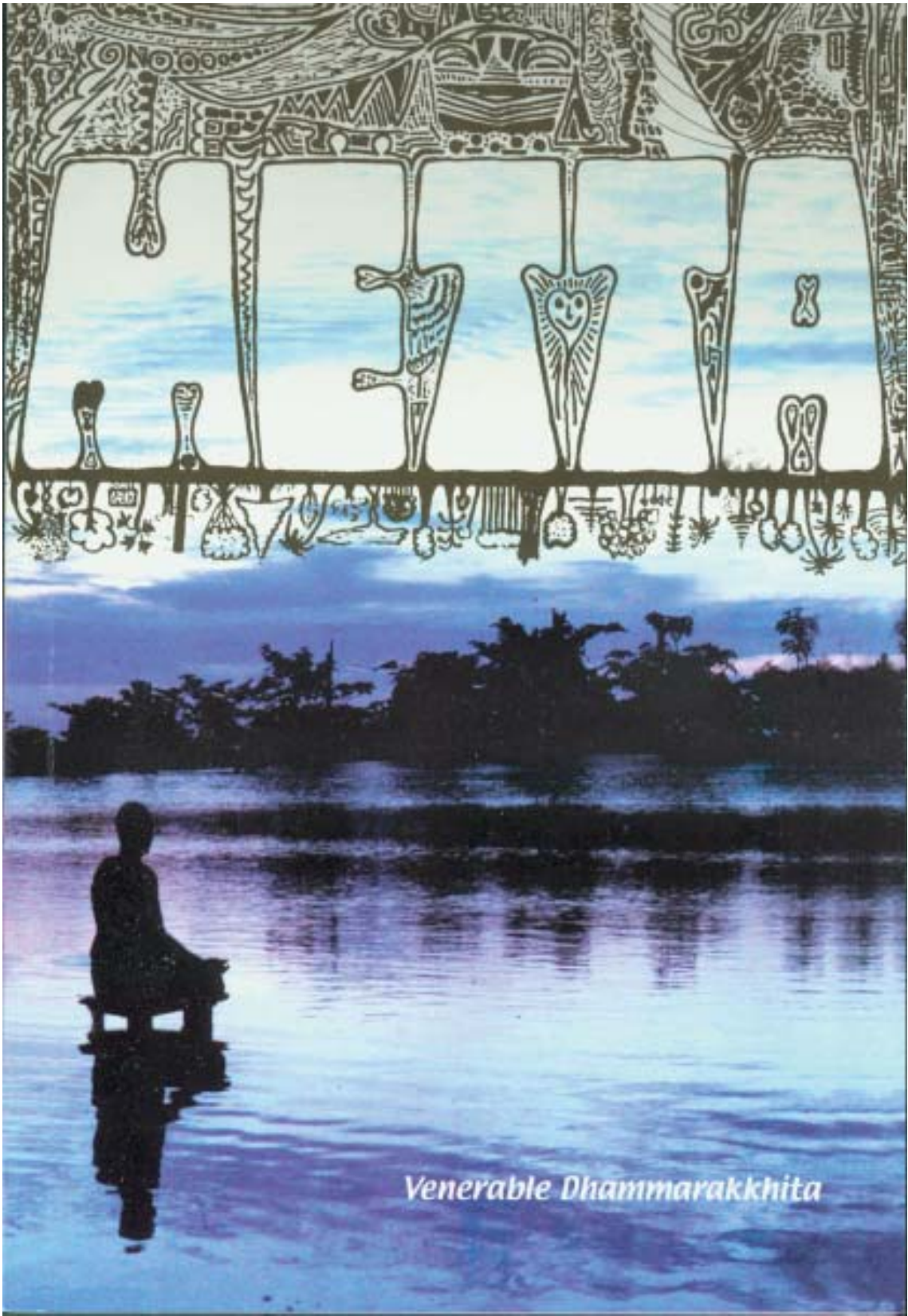
Samadhi – Concentration/tranquility.

Samatha – Concentration/tranquility development/meditation.

Sila – Morality.

Theravada – Teaching of the elders.

Vipassana – Mindfulness/insight.



Venerable Dhammarakkhita

Metta Bhavana — Loving-Kindness Meditation

ONE FRIDAY MORNING...

First of all, I'm surprised so many people can come here on a Friday and it is nice to see so many people. It is very noticeable though, that there are only three men (two men and a monk) out of the twenty-five people in front of us.

This is going to be a somewhat relaxed and gentle time and just to make you feel more comfortable, we can dispense with the word “meditation”, we can just use the word loving-kindness or simply, developing loving-kindness. We also use the word “cultivating”. Cultivating means growing. If you cultivate rice for example, you clear the field and prepare it nicely, then you plant the small rice plants. Afterwards, you care for the field while the rice is growing. So, first of all, by simply coming to the retreat centre, we are in the conducive environment for developing our heart to make it ready for loving-kindness to grow. Then we plant the seeds by listening and practising. Because we don't have so much time this morning to give the full explanation, I want to give you some practical points to get started with developing loving-kindness.

Firstly, there is the fact that loving-kindness is something that all beings have, it is common to all beings. However, the degree of our obstructions, hindrances or mental defilements varies. By seeing through these defilements, by removing them, we can tune into our natural and pure heart of loving-kindness.

There are four phrases that are given in Buddhism for developing loving-kindness. You may be familiar with the lines:

Aham avero homi. (May I be free from enmity and danger)

Abayabajjo homi. (May I be free from mental suffering)

Aniggo homi. (May I be free from physical suffering)

Sukhi attanam pariharami. (May I take care of myself, happily)

That is metta for oneself.

For others, the Pali lines change:

Avera hontu. (May you/they be free from enmity and danger)

Abayabajjo hontu. (May you/they be free from mental suffering)

Anigga hontu. (May you/they be free from physical suffering)

Suki attanam pariharantu. (May you/they take care of yourself/themselves, happily)

That is more of an “official” translation of the Pali words but there are other ways of using those phrases. I want to share with you through my own experience and tell you the way that I practise loving-kindness.

The way I usually recite the four phrases in English are:

“May I be safe from inner and outer harm”.

“Inner harm” means suffering that we cause ourselves through fear and worry, also through anger and impatience.

“Outer harm” means any physical danger or external danger. So, the phrase means, “May I be free from mental suffering, from physical suffering”. Please remember that this is not the exact translation from the Pali words.

The next line is:

“May I be happy and peaceful”.

“Happy and peaceful” are mental states. In the first half of the first line, we say, “May we be free from mental suffering,” and in the second line we are saying, “May we be happy and peaceful”. Mental suffering is negative and happy and peaceful is positive.

Then, the third line says:

“May I be healthy and strong”.

The third line refers to our body, our physical condition. The second half of the first line says, “...may I be safe from outer harm”. That is, free from physical suffering — the negative aspect – and then the third line is the positive, “May I be healthy and strong”.

The last line, the fourth line, is:

“May I be able to take care of myself, joyfully”.

This means, “May everything in my life be comfortable and convenient”. In another way it says, “May everything in my life work out just fine”.

When we look at all four of these lines, we can see that the wishes are very holistic or very complete with regard to our lives. We always begin with loving-kindness towards ourselves. Some people mistake this for being selfish. However, that idea of selfishness, that criticism, only arises out of misunderstanding the true meaning of metta. If you don't really have metta in your own heart or your metta is not strong, then, if you are trying to give out metta, it doesn't work very well and it is not very

effective. First, you should know the quality of metta within your own heart. You wouldn't give a poor quality present to somebody, would you? Particularly to someone that you care about. In the same way, we don't send out poor quality metta. We should send out rich quality metta.

These four phrases of loving-kindness are natural wishes that all beings have for themselves. When you consider these four lines, you may consider their opposite meanings. When we consider the first line; Do you want mental suffering? Do you want physical suffering? No. No living being wants any mental or physical suffering. Considering the second line, no-one wants to be unhappy or restless or angry. Considering the third line; then nobody wants to be unhealthy or sick or weak. And considering the last line, nobody wants things to go wrong in their lives. So these natural wishes for our own well-being, our own goodness, naturally arise in our mind. Contained in these four lines are the natural wishes that all beings have in their own hearts. They have these natural feelings and wishes towards themselves and towards other beings.

Loving-kindness, metta, is not the same as love. Love has some self-interest in it. Love has attachment in it. Often our love is conditional. We love people as long as they are nice to us. We love people as long as they love us back but if they don't love us or they are not nice to us, then it is very difficult to love them. So our love depends on the conditions of our desire. It is the same as animals or other beings as well. If they are nice to us, we love them but then, if they are not nice to us, we don't love them. This means that there is a condition present.

Loving-kindness is unconditional, which means just well-wishing, wishing the goodness, the wellness of ourselves and of other beings and not expecting anything in return. Even though we wish for ourselves these phrases, they may or may not be true for us now or in the future but we may wish for them to be true anyway... without expectation but with openness and joy. This actually can be difficult. That's why we need to start with ourselves. If you truly have loving-kindness for yourself, then you can truly have loving-kindness for others. If you truly have metta for yourself, then you'll cause no harm to other beings.

A really important point about loving-kindness towards yourself is that it is the only metta that is guaranteed. Your own loving-kindness is the only guaranteed metta. If you send loving-kindness to any other being, you are not one hundred percent certain that they receive one hundred percent of your loving-kindness. The same if any being is sending loving-kindness to you, you cannot be sure that you'll receive a hundred percent of their loving-kindness. However, if you develop loving-kindness for yourself, this is the only sure way, the certain way, to attain one hundred percent loving-kindness in your heart.

When you really feel that loving-kindness in your own heart, then you can understand the pure quality of it. When you understand the pure quality of it, then you may share it with others. For example; if you want to give chocolates to someone and you are not sure of the quality, is there any harm in trying them for yourself first? Is that selfishness, wanting to give quality to another? Don't you deserve quality too? Having

tried the chocolates and found them to be of superior quality, rather than greedily keeping them for yourself, you selflessly share them with another... aahh... satisfaction!

Another point is that we can't rely on metta from an external source, from another being. However, if you develop loving-kindness for yourself, then you can depend upon that, you can rely upon that. Your own loving-kindness is the only certain or sure and dependable loving-kindness in the universe. In order for us to develop loving-kindness today, we are going to practise loving-kindness for ourselves. Because you deserve it, you need it, you want it, then we are going to recite in our minds the four phrases that have been given to you. We will recite the first line, even if you only recite the first line, that is enough. Loving-kindness development is samatha (concentration/tranquility) meditation, which means that concentration is important. You just repeat over and over again, and concentrate on the sentence and the meaning of the words. You just need to make sure that you remember what these four phrases are.

The first one is;

“May I be safe from inner and outer harm”.

Can you repeat that to me, somewhat slowly? Please... “May I... be safe... from inner... and outer harm”. If you want to do it in English, that's really fine by me too, as long as you understand the meaning. But for now, can you please say it back to me in the Thai version?

(Khor hai kha-pha-chao, chong plotphai, thang phai chak phai nai, lae phai chak phai nok)

Okay. All together, everybody... Once... Maybe twice more... Slow down... And again... Now say it backwards... I'm serious, if you can say it backwards, you will remember it very well. But you don't have to do it now. Once more please... with your heart.

You should recite this over and over and over and over, a hundred times, a thousand times, a hundred thousand times, until you start to feel that, "this really means something to me". You should believe it. You feel in your heart - "YES! I want this for myself!" If you feel that you don't want it or there is some obstruction that comes up in your mind, don't pay any attention to that obstruction, recite and repeat that line continuously. This is samatha meditation. You just recite and keep going, don't let your mind stop.

Here's one suggestion. You can do just the first line repeatedly for a minute, an hour, a day, a week, a month, or for however long it takes for you to REALLY FEEEEEEEL IT. The same for the other lines, once you have got the first line in your heart, let the second one sink in, no matter how long it takes, then the third and fourth lines consecutively, not moving on to the next line until the previous line is really deep in your heart. This is more of a long term practice but it is very thorough. You might feel bored, it doesn't matter, just keep going! You might feel that you don't deserve this loving-kindness, it doesn't matter, Just keep going! I can assure you that you do deserve it, you and suffering, aren't you? You want to be loved, don't you?...

JUST DO IT!

You may also use the other lines,

“May I be happy and peaceful”.

Can you say that to me in Thai?

(Kkor hai kha pha-ckao chong mi kwam suk lae sa-ngop.)

Again... Again... Do you believe it?... Do you want that?...

Are you sure ... If you are not sure, then you have to say it more often.

Then, the next line is,

“May I be healthy and strong”.

Please...

(Khor hai kha-pha-chao chong sombun kaeng-raeng.)

Again... Once more...

And the last one,

“May I be able to take care of myself, joyfully”.

(Khor hai kha-pha-chao chong samat raksa ton dai yank mi kwam suk.)

Again... Go slowly... Again... Twice more... Last time...

So, the first line is the most important. You should pay more attention to that today. But so as to give your mind a rest and to explore other aspects of metta, you should recite the other three lines at different times. Now it's time to go and eat our meal. Then before you eat, you can also say:

*“May all beings that suffered to bring this food,
be free from their suffering.*

May they be filled with loving-kindness.”

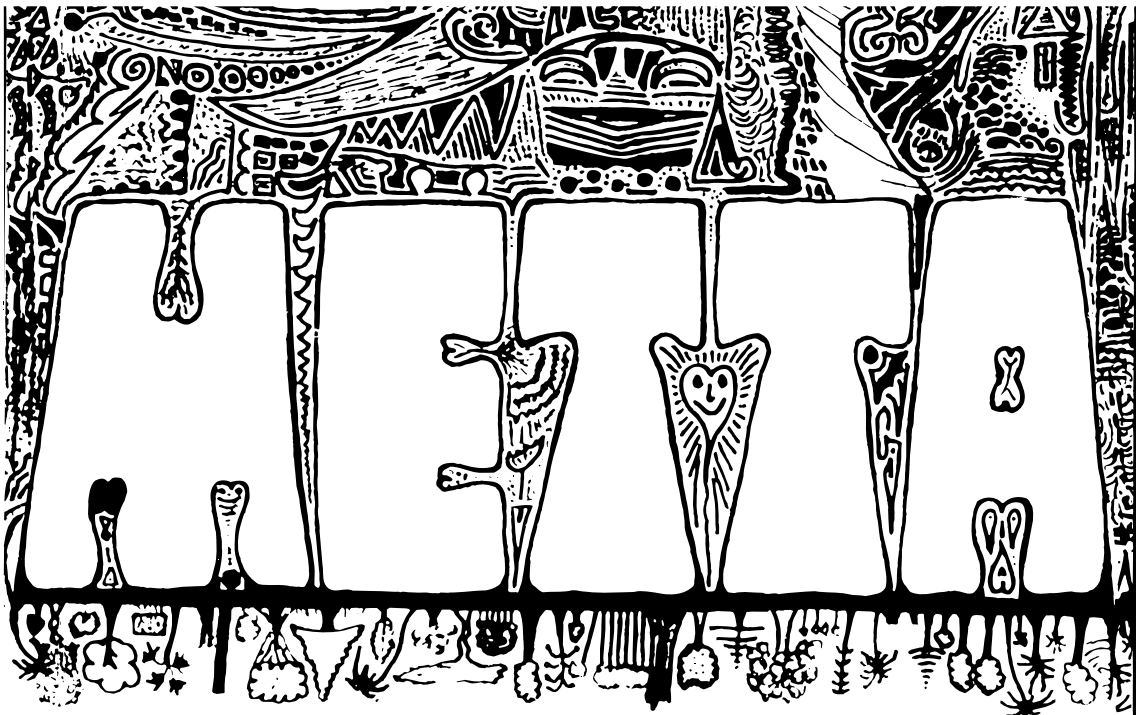
If you meet any other beings as you go throughout the day, briefly you can give them some of your loving-kindness. The same metta that you are giving for yourself, you can just say it for that being — it might be an ant or a fly or a bird or a snake or a fish or a human being.

*“May you be safe from inner and outer harm.
May we all be filled with loving-kindness.
May all beings live in peace and harmony”.*

“Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!”

(Excellent! Excellent! Excellent!)

*“Your own Loving-kindness is the only
guaranteed Metta.”*



FRIDAY EVENING

This morning I simply asked you to recite just the first line over and over. On other occasions you may recite the other lines, one at a time, over and over. Then you can recite all four if you want, but the most important is the first one. You could just take this first line like a mantra which is to be repeated over and over and over again. This practice of metta bhavana is samatha meditation. This means that we have one object of meditation and we try to concentrate on that one object. The one object could be just the first line or one of the other lines or all four of those lines one after the other. In any way, you are concentrating your mind by remembering the words and repeating them over and over again.

We don't only do this in the sitting posture, we can do it when we are walking, standing or lying down. We can do it as we are walking between buildings, when we are eating, when we are going to the bathroom or doing any other activity.

No matter what you do, you can occupy your mind with these thoughts of loving-kindness. For those of you who have learned vipassana (mindfulness/insight) meditation, it might be somewhat difficult to do. This because you will find that your mind keeps coming back to a reality or a present moment process. This is not bad but if you want to develop loving-kindness, it is good to have some continuity of your concentration on these lines. If your concentration is broken by something you see or hear or think about, then you just bring your mind back to the lines again.

In vipassana meditation, if any defilements or hindrances arise in the mind, we take them as the object of meditation. But in samatha, you just ignore them and keep going with one object. In this case, we just bring the mind back to the recitation or reciting the words of loving-kindness.

When we are developing loving-kindness, we should not have painful sensations in the body. When we are sitting for meditation, it is okay to change your posture because when we have pain in the body, negativity can arise in the mind. You should sit comfortably. Also, now when you are listening to the Dhamma (natural law/Buddha's teachings), you should relax and sit comfortably. If you get any other hindrances arising in the sitting meditation, then you should ignore or disregard them and just bring your mind back to the reciting of the words. In the case of sleepiness, you may even open your eyes in order to avoid the sleepiness. Loving-kindness meditation is quite a free-style development because we can be in any posture, so if you are feeling discomfort in your sitting meditation, you can change or you can get up and do some walking. On the other hand, don't make yourself so comfortable that you may fall asleep. Sit up straight and keep your body alert. Keep your mind fresh.

As explained this morning, we need to develop the loving-kindness strongly within our own mind first. This is to allow us to really experience true loving-kindness within our own hearts. The only place that you can experience loving-kindness is within your own heart. If you can learn how to develop loving-kindness within your own heart, you won't be depending upon or relying upon others for your loving-kindness. This builds strength of character.

Most people in the world are trying to find a partner, someone who will give them love. The reason that we do this is that there is something we feel is missing inside our own heart, some emptiness. We may feel that we are missing love in our heart. We have the desire to feel love in our own heart. This is natural, everybody wants to be loved, we want to feel complete, we want to be accepted and needed/loved by others.

In the ordinary way of life, we are not taught about metta. Many of you have been taught about metta because you have been brought up as Buddhists. But even so, there is a tendency to misunderstand metta as love. The basic difference is that love has some attachments, some self-interest, some selfishness, even just a little bit. In this life, we do things for ourselves, in fact nearly everything you do has your own self interest attached to it. The way you wear your hair. You do your hair to make yourself feel good. The way you dress is to make yourself feel and look attractive. You eat food to make yourself healthy or you might eat food because of your greediness. Both ways you are trying to fulfil your own desire. This desire is not bad, it's natural self-interest.

So as we go through life, we are always trying to fulfil our own desires, our own dreams. Sometimes we do selfless acts like helping our family or working for other people, but usually we do things to get something for ourselves. In some people this is very strong, in some people it is barely noticeable. So these four wishes naturally arise for ourselves. This is a natural way for living beings.

Loving-kindness meditation is not so much a path that leads to Nibbana (enlightenment). It is more a path and prac-

tice that leads to devaloka (heaven) or a happy human rebirth. Because metta is a heavenly or divine quality, it is likely that if you develop it properly, when you die, you will be reborn in a divine realm. When we practise vipassana meditation, we are on the path to Nibbana. Sometimes when we practise vipassana, we see things objectively, just as they are: vipassana can be very realistic. Sometimes reality, the truth, can be a little bit hard or cold, impersonal, not very emotional. Practising metta can assist us in our vipassana practice. It brings a little bit of softness back to our realization of the truth. Sometimes when you are practising vipassana you can see a lot of mental and physical dukkha (suffering). The Buddha taught that this is a natural part of a human nature, human existence. To give a little bit of loving-kindness towards yourselves whilst you are doing vipassana, either in a retreat or daily life, is very good for you.

We need to know that the practice of metta alone is not the only or single way that leads to the peace of Nibbana. However, it is still a part of the Noble Eightfold Path. For example, thinking about the welfare of yourself or any living being is right thought. If we speak about metta, then it is right speech. If our action is harmless, we can say it is right action. While you live here in a meditation retreat, your livelihood is also right livelihood according to your metta practice. Also, if you can learn the way of loving-kindness in a retreat, hopefully you can take it home and use it in your daily life. Then your livelihood, your occupation, will be one that has metta in it. Metta here means harmlessness, consideration for other beings, so maybe your livelihood, your occupation will be harmless. To

have loving-kindness as we go through our daily lives, when we are dealing with people, is very important.

We are putting effort into developing loving-kindness, so we are also developing right effort. We have right mindfulness because we are remembering the lines of metta. Mindfulness can mean to remember, we remember to be harmless, to develop metta. As you are concentrating on the words of loving-kindness, you have right concentration. Some realization can arise out of your mindfulness and concentration, that means right understanding. With right understanding you have right thought. With right thought your sila (morality) is purified. When your sila is purified, you can develop samadhi (concentration). Samadhi leads to panna (wisdom).

So practising loving-kindness meditation is also part of the development towards enlightenment. It is not the only direct path, it just helps along the way.

Sometimes I like to say that mindfulness is our work or our responsibility or our duty and metta is our hobby. Even the keeping of our precepts can be considered as an act of metta. When we are keeping precepts, we are harming no other beings, nor are we harming ourselves. In this way we are also developing or practising metta.

It is important for you to understand or experience these four wishes for yourselves. These four wishes should become an experience for you. If you are experiencing some mental or physical suffering, then you should wish for yourself:

“May I be free from mental and physical suffering”,

that is:

“May I be safe from inner and outer harm”.

If you don't feel happy or peaceful, you should say:

“May I be happy and peaceful”.

Repeat it many times. Or if you feel sick or weak, you should recite many times for yourself:

“May I be healthy and strong”.

If things are not going well for you in life, you should recite:

“May I be able to take care of myself joyfully”.

Even if you do feel that you are free from mental and physical suffering just now, you can still say to yourself:

“May I be safe from inner and outer harm”.

And then you really feel it. If you repeat over and over:

*“May I be safe from inner and outer harm,
May I be safe from inner and outer harm,
May I be safe from inner and outer harm”,*

If you keep saying it, you will actually experience the feeling of being safe from inner and outer harm. So you keep repeating these lines. When you repeat these lines, the mind becomes concentrated, then it will be calm and still.

If you feel happy and peaceful, and you say:

*“May I be happy and peaceful,
May I be happy and peaceful,
May I be happy and peaceful”,*

and continue to repeat that, it increases the happiness and peace that you feel inside your heart. So you *really* feel happy and peaceful. Again, at the time you recite it over and over again, there is no suffering in the mind, your concentration on these words and phrases is keeping away the hindrances, the defilements of the mind. In that way you naturally become happy and peaceful. It is the same for the other lines.

At any time when you are reciting these four lines and you think about the meaning, you can check, 'Now, am I safe from inner and outer harm? Am I happy and peaceful? Am I healthy and strong? Right now, in the present moment, is everything working out okay?' If you are practising metta correctly, then the answers to these four questions should all be positive. In this way, these four wishes become a present moment experience for you. 'I am peaceful in my mind. I am healthy and strong now. Everything is okay just now.' With this good feeling you have, you continue with the development of loving-kindness, that peace and tranquility can increase. This is the reason for practising loving-kindness meditation; to develop this peace of heart, peace of mind. When we feel it within ourselves then we can share it with others.

This evening, we'll explore a wider field of metta, we'll share our metta with others. There are five different categories of people to whom we can systematically develop metta in order to make it strong. The categories are;

First — to oneself

Second — to a respected person

Third — to a dear friend

Fourth — to a neutral person

Fifth — to a hostile person

Today you have been practising saying the phrases for yourself, when this becomes strong, both in concentration and in feeling, we are ready to share it with another. The person of the second category is someone like a teacher, respected elder, aunty, uncle, grandparent or even a guardian; someone who's been kind to you, especially someone wise who has guided you well. Your Dhamma teacher is a good "target" for metta. Not because the Dhamma teacher is greedy to receive loving-kindness, but when you truly see the Dhamma, when you really understand or experience the true Dhamma, it is the greatest thing that you experience in your life. They say that the Dhamma is the greatest gift. It excels or is better than all other gifts. If someone gives you the Dhamma, then you want to repay them. Also, a Dhamma teacher is a teacher of life. Wherever you go or whatever you do, often the words of the teacher come back to you. In this way, they can be very close to your heart.

There are two points that we must remember when developing or sending loving-kindness to others. We don't develop loving-kindness towards people we are physically or sexually attracted to because some dreams or fantasies or such things will arise in our minds. This also applies to your Dhamma teacher, so to the best of our ability, we should choose someone like Chanmyay Sayadaw or maybe you have got a Dhamma teacher who had taught you in your life. The other people that you shouldn't do loving-kindness towards are those who are already dead. We don't develop loving-kindness towards them because we don't know where they are now. We don't know what existence they have been reborn in. Your loving-kindness

is somewhat dispersed or scattered; we only do it towards living people. We may share merits with the departed ones but that's another story, not for now.

This second person that you send loving-kindness to may be an aunty or an uncle or just somebody who has guided you, or helped you well in your life; someone to whom you look up to, whom you admire. Someone whose words often come to your mind, you remember them very often. In fact, your loving-kindness flows very easily to these persons, you have a natural desire to share your loving-kindness with them. When you develop and repeat these four phrases towards this person, you feel very close to them. You feel like your loving-kindness becomes their loving-kindness, that there is no barrier between your heart and their heart. So it becomes a very natural flow of loving-kindness towards that person, no hindrances arise in that sending of loving-kindness.

You may develop loving-kindness for your parents in this category. However, sometimes developing metta towards parents can be a little bit tricky. In our lives, our parents have done great things for us, they have taught us and shown us many things. However, as part of their duties, they have also had to scold us, punish us. Also, we may be very attached to our parents. Our relationship with our parents is very complicated, we can say. A lot of emotional feelings are involved. Whereas, if we take a teacher, respected elder or even a guardian, someone who has looked after us in life, then our feelings towards them are very simple and straightforward. Often, when we are young, our relationship with our parents can be unstable, but then, as we get older, our relationship with our parents,

particularly when we ourselves become parents, becomes a bit more stable. So, if your relationship with your parents is very stable now and you are happy with your relationship with them, then they can be a good subject for metta development. You may choose one or the other, one parent at a time. One this time, the other one next time.

The third person that we develop loving-kindness towards is a dear friend. Again, this is not someone that you are physically attracted to. It is more someone that you could share your deepest, darkest secrets with and know that they would never tell anybody. In English we say, “kindred spirit” (but I wouldn’t expect you to translate that). If you don’t have someone so amazingly close to you, you can just choose someone who is a good friend. Again, the criteria here is someone to whom your loving-kindness flows very easily.

After you develop loving-kindness for yourself fully and then for your benefactor or respected elder, that person becomes like a natural extension of yourself. They are like a part of you, you often remember them. This dear friend is also like this. So when we develop loving-kindness towards these people, it is very easy, very natural and it flows nicely.

Then, we select a neutral person. A neutral person means somebody that you know is alive but you don’t know anything about their character. It could be someone who works at the bank that you go to. It could be your next door neighbor’s gardener. Or it could be the bus driver that you see going past every day. Someone completely neutral. Now, when you develop loving-kindness for this person, this is when some hindrances may arise. Such as, “I don’t know this person, why should I send

loving-kindness to them?” “They don’t mean anything to me. I don’t get anything out of giving loving-kindness to them.” This is the point where you might realize that we are mainly doing “love” as opposed to “loving-kindness”. In our lives, we are normally practising love but loving-kindness is different, it is unconditional. It is hard to send loving-kindness to somebody you don’t know. This is testing your loving-kindness. Do you really have unconditional, well-wishing for another person that you don’t know? If you can develop loving-kindness towards a neutral person and start to have the same feeling that you have for the first three people, then your loving-kindness is becoming strong. This is good.

Then, with this strong metta, you are able to share your loving-kindness with a hostile person or an enemy. This means someone who is hostile towards you or someone to whom you are hostile. Or someone with whom the loving-kindness between the two of you has been broken. Again, this tests your loving-kindness. When you think about this person, anger or frustration arises but remember this is samatha meditation, so we just ignore that negative mental state and we just recite the phrases. We just push on, reciting the phrases.

If, after some time, you still don’t seem to develop anything, any positive feeling towards that person, then you may go back to any of the first, second or third people. At that time you might feel angry, so you can do loving-kindness for yourself until your mind calms down. Or you can develop loving-kindness towards your teacher or your dear friend. Then you can go back to either the same neutral person or another neutral person and then you can go back to that hostile person

again. If you still don't get anywhere with developing loving-kindness towards that person, you can change to another hostile person. Even if you do not have a hostile person in your life now, you may use somebody from the past, as long as you know they are alive. So in this way, we are making our loving-kindness very strong.

One of the main points here is to try to feel strong loving-kindness first before you move on to the next person. If your loving-kindness is strong you can share it with anyone, any time. In this way I would like you to practise your loving-kindness development. Still mainly concentrating on yourself. Please don't expect any great feeling. Just try to repeat these phrases over and over. It is the practice that brings about the results. Expecting results is just a hindrance. If you forget to say the words of loving-kindness, it doesn't matter, just start again in the present. This teaches you patience. Just starting again and again.

Once you have done a session of specific loving-kindness, maybe a sitting or a walking session for half or one hour, then you can finish off with general loving-kindness towards all living beings. Just reciting the four phrases for all living beings.

Also, as I said earlier, just as you meet other beings as you go around, you meet another person or you meet any little creature, then you should develop loving-kindness towards them, just even briefly,

*“May you be happy and peaceful,
“May you be healthy and strong”,*

and then come back to your own loving-kindness. Especially

somebody who is doing something that annoys you. Firstly, you might like to say,

*“May I be happy and peaceful,
“May I be happy and peaceful”.*

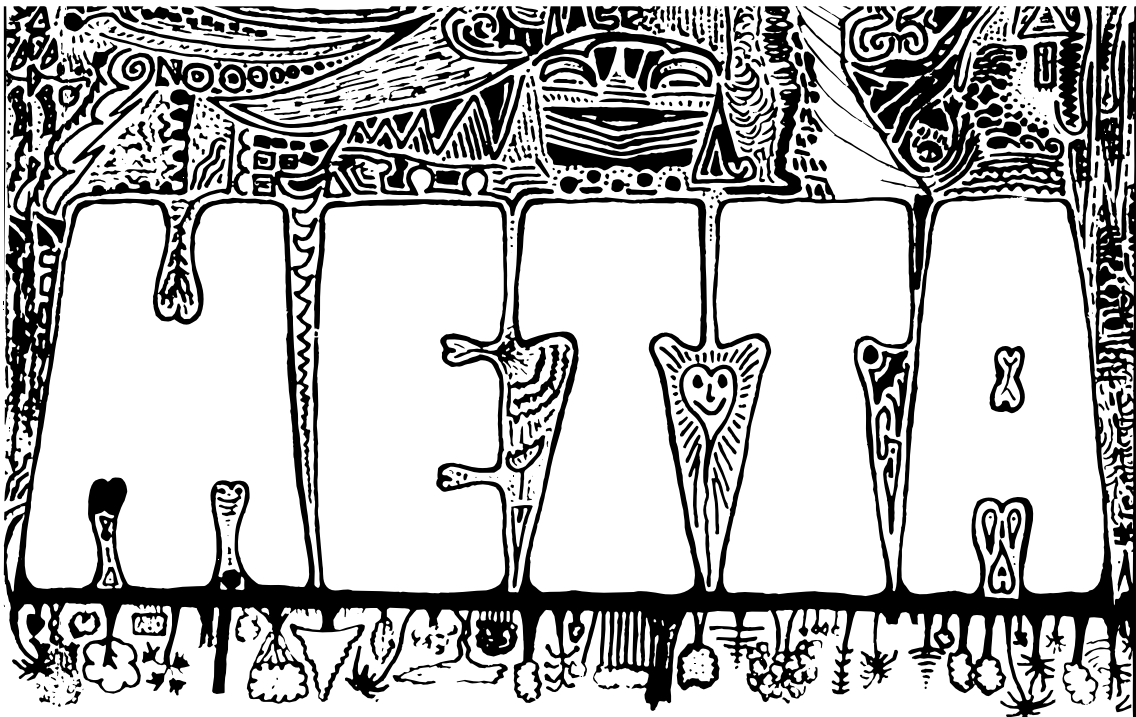
Then you can say it for them.

In this way we can continue to develop our loving-kindness. Tomorrow, I will explain how to extend our loving-kindness towards other beings. Even for tonight and tomorrow morning, if you don't share your loving-kindness with any other being, I think it is good to practise just to concentrate on yourself. You need loving-kindness and maybe nobody else is giving it to you, so you must develop it within yourself. When your own metta is strong, then you can share it with others. Please continue to develop your concentration with the practice of metta.

*“May we all be filled with loving-kindness.
May all beings live in peace and harmony.”*

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!”

*“You feel like your
loving-kindness
becomes their loving-kindness,
that there’s no barrier between
your heart and their heart.”*



MOTHERS DAY – SATURDAY MORNING

I would like to say, “Happy Birthday” to the Queen of Thailand. May she be happy and peaceful, healthy and strong. Also, “Happy Mothers Day” to the mothers that are here.

I think this is a good way to spend Mothers Day. Today, as you walked around and people met you or saw you and gave you some of their loving-kindness, you didn’t only develop your own loving-kindness, but you also received it from other people in this meditation retreat. I think you already know that your families also were thinking about you today, so you naturally got a lot of loving-kindness. Also, those of us who are not mothers, we can send some special loving-kindness to our mothers on this day... and every day.

“May all mothers be happy and healthy!”

Back to our personal practice. I think by now you might be realizing how even metta bhavana, loving-kindness development, can be quite difficult. It is difficult to concentrate, difficult to keep your mind in a consecutive procession or continuous recitation of the phrases. You might also be seeing in your mind which hindrances are stopping you from having this continuity of concentration of metta.

Because this is samatha practice, we are not really looking for or identifying the hindrances, but as you practise you may see which hindrances are in your mind. The first thing you realize is just how much you think. We are thinking so

much that we forget or we are not mindful of our metta development, but as soon as you are mindful of your metta practice, then you should immediately come back to the recitation of the phrases.

In this samatha practice, we are just ignoring the mental defilements and hindrances that come to the mind. I call it “steam rolling”. A steam roller is a big machine that they use when they lay down a new road, a huge machine, with a big wheel that flattens everything in its path. So in samatha and in this metta practice, we just steam roll any of the hindrances or defilements that come into the mind. Or another example might be a bulldozer, a big, powerful machine that pushes down trees and clears away things.

So, in samatha we are just pushing ahead with the practice. Whenever you see any hindrance or blockage in the mind, anything that has taken your mind away from your practice, you just come back to the practice and repeat the lines of metta. Like, you might be concentrating for a while on the phrases and then some thought comes to your mind and you lose your concentration. At that time, if you are aware that you have just lost your concentration, you may become disappointed. Don't worry about losing your concentration because it is too late, it is already gone. Now you are mindful again, just start again.

It is like a little baby or a child, trying to walk or trying to get somewhere. If they fall over, then you have got to pick them up and get them going again. Just keep going. Unfortunately, you are only here for two and a half days and that is just the time when you will start to get some momentum. You

will just be getting into the practice and then it'll be time to go home. Never mind, it is good practice.

These weekend meditation retreats of any kind, vipasana or samatha, are just about getting a little bit of information and some opportunity to practise. We should not expect too much from just a couple of days' practice. Especially if you come from a busy life, it takes two days to settle down! There are lots of thoughts and things coming to the mind.

Also, sleepiness. It is naturally difficult in the beginning but at least you get some new information and an opportunity to practise.

This practice in the beginning is only reciting words. We are just saying words, over and over and over. Some people think that they have to develop the feeling straight away but that only comes later on with the practice. The instruction is to recite the words over and over again. The more you recite them, the more you get some continuity of the recitation, then the meaning, the feeling, starts to come to you. For those of you who are only just beginning to practise, don't worry too much about the meaning. Just try to concentrate on the words.

Also, you shouldn't expect to experience anything special from the practice. That expectation itself is a hindrance, an obstruction. So you should steam roll the expectation by reciting the phrases over and over again. You can recite the phrases very quickly, like:

*“MayIbesafefrominnerandouterharm!
MayIbesafefrominnerandouterharm!”*

Or very slowly, like:

“May I... be safe... from inner... and... outer harm...”

“May I... be happy... may I... be peaceful...”

Or play with it, like up and down, high and low;

“May I be safe from inner and outer harm.”

May I... be happy... may I... be peaceful...!”

When reciting very slowly, word by word, we may try to understand or analyse carefully each word that is recited. This will help the meaning to sink into the mind and develop some feeling. Please remember that the first line is the most important to recite over and over. We may change to recite the other lines individually or recite all four of them one after another, such as: 1,2,3,4 / 1,2,3,4 / 1,2,3,4.

Something that you could try to do when you say, “May I be happy and peaceful” is to say it with a smile. Please, everybody just close your eyes now and I want you to say, in Thai, “May I be happy”. I want you to be able to smile as you say the word, “happy”. Now, *everybody* should have their eyes closed so you know that nobody is looking at you. You might like to think of the fact that you are sitting in a room full of smiling people. Please close your eyes and relax your body, R—E—L—A—X. Just relax your body, relax your breathing

and begin with the metta. Please, now I'd like you all to say, nice and slowly:

“May I be happy and peaceful”.

When you say “happy”, I want you to smile.

I just arrived in Bangkok yesterday and I saw a big sign saying, “Thailand, the Land of Smiles”.

So, I'd like to see those smiles...!

Come on, I only see twenty percent of the people smiling. Do you think it is difficult? Let's try again. I won't look this time. I'll smile, too.

“May I be happy and peaceful.”

Again... Again... Just imagine everybody in the room is smiling.... Now, that's better! I have like, eighty percent of the people smiling!

I once heard of “smiling meditation”. Let's try it.... First you practise smiling until you really feel yourself smiling — until you really feel happy about smiling. Then you imagine that your eyes are smiling, too. Just close your eyes and imagine that your eyes are like these little curly smiles. Then you can pretend that your nose is smiling!(?) Then imagine that your ears are smiling!(?) Smiling ears?! Now your hair is smiling! And your head has become one big smile! Now your fingers are smiling! And your arms are smiling! And so you can go through the other parts of the body, imagining that the other parts of your body are happy and smiling too. That is just one style of “meditation” that I heard of. It is a little bit of fun, so please relax.

As I told you last night, there are five kinds of people that we direct our loving-kindness towards. We start with the people that we are closest to or the people that are the most meaningful to us. Whether you know it or not, you are closer to yourself than any other being. Then you have some teacher, respected elder or someone who has guided you in life. And then there is a dear friend, someone who is very close to you. But then we move away from the close people and move to a neutral person, someone who we don't even know. And then we move to a hostile person or an enemy.

One problem in life is that we often try to give loving-kindness to our enemies or to hostile people first. It is a nice idea but it rarely works. I'm not saying that you shouldn't do it, but what I am saying is that it is very difficult to do it with pure metta. Often, in that situation, your metta is mixed with a lot of emotional feelings or even some defilements, such as anger or resentment. If somebody has upset you, it is better to do loving-kindness towards yourself first, calm your own mind down, relax your own mind. When we develop loving-kindness, it should have a calming effect on us. You may not get that in the initial stages of loving-kindness but as we develop the loving-kindness, it will naturally start to calm you down each time you use it. In the beginning of practice, you may not get these calm feelings right away. You may just be reciting words but that also can calm you down. Concentrating on the words can remove the mental defilement.

Often, we want to know how to deal with anger or conflicting situations in our daily life. First of all, I'm a vipassana practitioner. Sometimes, people ask me to share what I know

about mindfulness development, but then I'm also asked to share what I know about metta, loving-kindness. When we are upset by people, I think it is better for us to tune into our emotional feelings in the present moment with mindfulness. When you see clearly the negative feelings that arise in your mind, then your mind is likely to calm down. This is the natural effect of mindfulness. You may even "label" it, saying in your mind, "angry, angry, angry" or "sad, sad" or "frustrated, frustrated". In this way, the negative feeling may pass away and we may get some insight into its true nature. Thus, next time it won't be so strong and it will dissolve quicker. When I share vipassana, I also give people a question to ask themselves, which is:

"How do I feel now?"

This is a question that is useful for general mindfulness. Anywhere you go, and whatever you do, at any time, you can bear this question in mind. How do I feel now?" This is just your emotional feeling. If your emotional feeling is negative or unpleasant, then you may label it and observe it in the style of vipassana, or you can do metta, such as:

*"May I be free from enmity.
May I be free from suffering.
May I be happy and peaceful".*

This is very useful for your daily life.

In the retreat now, we are practising specific metta. That is, from moment to moment we are trying to be mindful of metta, to concentrate on metta. If you lose your concentra-

tion, it doesn't matter, just start again. When you go home or do anything else outside the retreat, you should be practising general metta. For example, when you are driving or travelling in a car, you can say:

*“May all beings along this journey
be happy and peaceful, healthy and strong”.*

When you are on any journey, even if you are walking, you may say:

*“May all beings along this journey
be free from mental and physical suffering.”*

This means all beings along this journey, not only the people and yourself but ALL the living beings along the way. You can do this travelling in an aeroplane or on a train, boat or ship.

You can practise metta generally when you go to any place. Something general like:

“May all beings here be filled with loving-kindness”.

“Here”, or “this place” – it could be anywhere. You might be on a beach or in a shopping centre, you might be staying in a little kuti (meditation hut) up in the mountains somewhere, by yourself. Wherever you go, you are surrounded by beings. Even in your house, there are these little creatures living all around. In the cupboard, in the carpet, in the roof. Beings we can see or can't see.

Even if you only do loving-kindness towards yourself, other beings may realize that you are harmless. If you feel

afraid, you can do loving-kindness for yourself, according to the four phrases, or you might say:

“May I be free from fear”.

You can do loving-kindness for all beings in that place. Maybe you feel afraid of some ghosts or some wild animals. Then you can say:

*“May all beings here be happy and peaceful,
May all beings here be healthy and strong,
May all beings here be free from suffering,
May all beings here be filled with Loving-kindness”.*

You also are one of the beings in that place, you are wishing it for yourself and other beings. Remember other beings, even ghosts and wild animals, are afraid of us, we are scary things too, you know. I think humans are the most scary beings of them all!

When you are dealing with people, even though you may not be able to recite the phrases, you should try to have a feeling of loving-kindness in your heart. When you are talking with people, you can't recite the phrases because then you don't listen carefully, but you can still have the feeling of loving-kindness in your heart. If they are angry, they are suffering, you can think:

*“May you be free from your suffering,
may you be happy and peaceful”.*

Ultimately, it is the feeling of loving-kindness that is important, not the words.

Just a reminder that you can do loving-kindness at work. At work, we often have to deal with people whom we don't like or people who don't like us. Even the people who are higher than you:

*“All people that are senior to me, may they be happy and peaceful.
All people that are junior to me, may they be happy and peaceful.
May all beings in this building be happy, peaceful,
healthy and strong, may they be successful”.*

Today, I would like you all to still continue with the loving-kindness towards yourselves. But if you want to, you can try to do it towards the other four people that I mentioned.

Then, according to the notes that you have been given, you may do loving-kindness by developing in concentric circles or ever increasing circles. This can be an extremely powerful practice. It is based on the loving-kindness towards yourself, so if your loving-kindness at the beginning of this is not strong, then the feeling that you get as you expand your loving-kindness also may not be very strong. To complete the metta, going right out in these circles, right out to all beings everywhere, it could take up to three hours to complete such a session.

One of the important points for developing loving-kindness seriously is not to move on to the next subject/being/direction or the next place until you really feel the loving-kindness in yourself. The way to get the strong feeling of metta is just to recite the words over and over and over again. Go fast, go slow and try to listen to the words that you are telling yourself. Also, if you are away from everybody else and no one else can hear you, you can even say the words out loud.

For concentric circles metta, we fill ourselves with loving-kindness first, almost as if you are filling yourself up with water. You may use a little bit of imagination or visualization if it comes naturally but it is not necessary. When you are full of loving-kindness, then it overflows into the room or the place where you are. It works better when you are in a small room. Then you fill that room with loving-kindness. Almost like it is filling up with water. Being mindful of all the living beings in that room, large or small, seen or unseen. Yes, this includes sending your loving-kindness to mosquitoes, ants, spiders, spirits... ALL living beings! Then, when that room fills with loving-kindness, it overflows and you can fill up all of the other rooms. Then the whole building becomes full of loving-kindness.

*“May all beings in this building be safe from inner and outer harm.
May all beings in this building be happy and peaceful.
May all beings in this building be healthy and strong.
May all beings in this building be able to take care of themselves,
joyfully”.*

When you are satisfied that all of the living beings in the building have been touched by your loving-kindness, through the constant repetition of the four phrases, then you may spread your loving-kindness to the surrounding buildings, for example,

“May all beings in this compound/on this property be safe from inner and outer harm...”

After that, you can infuse or flood the neighborhood with metta.

“May all beings in this neighborhood be safe from inner and outer harm....”

You can fill the whole neighborhood, all the buildings, the trees, the backyards, everything, with loving-kindness. Then, naturally, your loving-kindness overflows from the neighborhood into the suburbs, area or the district. Then the city. Once your metta has spread throughout the whole region, you can fill the province or state and let it overflow to the entire country. Keep going outwards to the neighboring countries and the whole continent, then across the world. All the beings that live in the water, on the land and in the air.

“May all beings in this world be safe from inner and outer harm....”

And then, from the whole world you can go to the entire universe. Then, from the universe to all beings everywhere...

“May all beings everywhere be safe from inner and outer harm....”

If you can get to that point, where you feel that you have sent your loving-kindness to all beings in all directions everywhere, then just stop and rest, feel the peace.

Then, when you feel comfortable and ready, you slowly come back in decreasing circles, just saying the four phrases, (1,2,3,4) once only for each place, briefly stopping with the universe, the world, the continent, etc. Just briefly stopping at each place until you finally come back to the room and back to yourself. You may feel very different after your “journey” to the

ends of the universe and back, but I think you will feel satisfied. Remember, this is based on strong loving-kindness for yourself from the beginning. So for this morning's practice, I want you to practise loving-kindness for yourselves. Recite the four phrases for yourself. Either one at a time or all of them.

Here's another experiment, and that is: whenever you see someone or whenever you meet someone in the doorway or wherever you go, you could change your loving-kindness briefly and just give it to that person. For example; if you are saying to yourself now:

“May I be happy and peaceful”

and you meet or see someone, just quickly say in your mind:

*“May you be happy and peaceful.
May you be happy and peaceful”.*

When they have gone, just come back to your own practice. So, just briefly, share your loving-kindness with someone you meet.

Even sitting at the dinner table, next to someone or opposite someone, just briefly give them a little bit of loving-kindness. Forget about your opinion of the person, just give them a little bit of loving-kindness – whatever you wish for yourself, wish it for them, too.

Especially, if you meet any of the people who are helping on the retreat as well, please give them a little bit of loving-kindness. In this case, it doesn't matter so much if it is male or female. It is not the strong development, just briefly:

“May you be happy and peaceful”.

You can even share it with a dog, a bird or a fish, if you want to.

In this way, you are immediately sharing any of the loving-kindness that you are developing for yourself. This also makes you feel good.

“May we all develop pure loving-kindness.

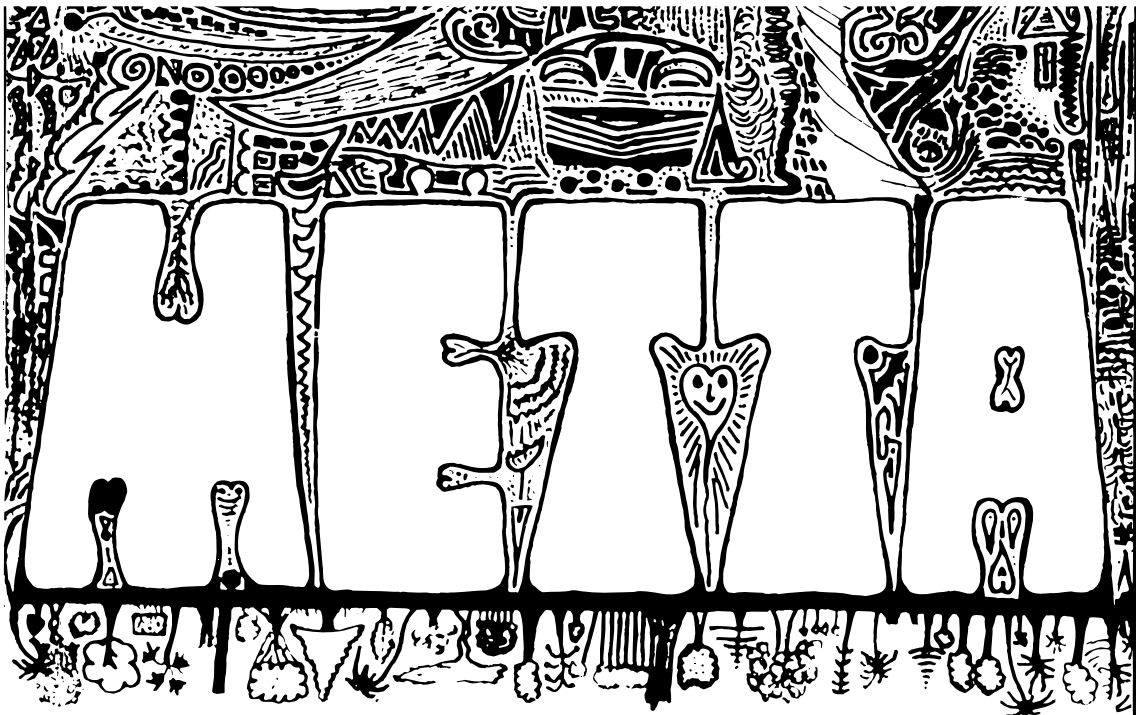
“May all beings be filled with loving-kindness.”

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!”

*“I like to think that...
Vipassana/ mindfulness
is my work
And Metta is my hobby!”*

*“Work is a holiday
and life is an adventure!”*

*“The words are like the key to the
door of your Metta.”*



SATURDAY EVENING

An interesting question that we need to ask ourselves is, “Why do I want to practise metta?” “What is my reason, what is my motivation for wanting to practise metta?” “Do I want concentration? Do I want metta? Do I want to learn more about myself?” Wanting metta also means wanting the effects of metta, such as a “warm” heart, peace and happiness. When you can answer these questions for yourself, the practice is more straightforward, it will help you to have a clearer understanding of what you are doing in your meditation. Also, a better understanding of yourself.

If you want concentration from this practice, you should continue to recite these phrases one after the other. Continuously, without interruption. Even better to take just one line and repeat one line continuously, in this way you will develop some more concentration. If no-one is around, you may recite the lines out loud and concentrate on the vibration of the sound of your own voice, either by hearing it or by feeling it in the throat, that’s interesting.

If you want the effects of the metta, then you also need to be able to understand the meaning of the words. If you can understand the meaning of the words, then it will help you to tune into your natural metta. So the words are like the key to the door of your metta. Sometimes we can feel the metta without having to use the words but the words can help us to access our heart. When you understand the words, then you can feel the result of the metta. You may feel that you are safe from inner and outer harm in the present moment, you may

feel happy and peaceful, healthy and strong and you may feel that everything in your life is going fine now, at least in the present moment. When you feel this, it is the effect of the metta.

You may want to practise metta in order to understand yourself better. Those of you who already practise vipassana will naturally have some experience at seeing your own mental states and emotional feelings. When we practise metta, certainly some mental states or emotional feelings arise in the mind. The strict practice of metta is just to override those mental states or emotional feelings by reciting the words. But when you have been trained in vipassana, you naturally observe your feelings, you naturally become aware of them rather than just pressing on with the metta. So, here you need to decide whether you want to explore the experiences or if you just want to continue with the metta.

What I'm saying is, sometimes when we are practising metta, natural mindfulness arises during our metta practice. Sometimes, when we are practising vipassana, natural metta arises. When you are practising metta, you should concentrate on the metta. However, occasionally you may be aware of some feelings, you may pay attention to them briefly but then continue with the metta. It is okay if some natural mindfulness arises. The same if you are practising vipassana, it is okay if some natural metta arises, you may be aware of that briefly, but then continue with your vipassana practice.

Some people have mentioned in interviews that they don't want to use the word, "I" when they are doing loving-kindness. They want to use the terms, *nama* (mind) and *rupa* (matter). It

is true that, ultimately speaking, we are just mental and physical processes. We may understand the teaching of the Buddha, that there is anatta (no I, no self). However, most of us still believe that we are a self. Conventionally speaking, we are a self. At least we are a living/human being and we are suffering, so it is okay to use the word “I”. You can say, “May this nama and rupa be safe from inner and outer harm” if you want to; technically speaking that is correct, but generally speaking we also consider ourselves to be a self, it is okay to use the word “I”.

When we develop metta, it should always be done with pure intention. This means not expecting anything in return. Another way we say that is, “unconditionally” or without conditions. Just pure, unconditional well-wishing. A question that arises is: if you send your metta to another being, then will they receive your metta? It is not sure, we can't be certain. The only thing that can be certain is that you are developing metta within yourself. And, when you send the metta to another being, then what is sure is, 1) you are sending the metta to them, and 2) the feelings that you get by sending the metta.

Also, there is no way to measure the metta that might be sent to another being. Sometimes we expect metta from other people. Often we ask Buddhist monks to send us metta. When people ask me for metta, I like to teach them how to develop their own metta. Because when they develop metta in their own hearts, then it is sure, it is certain, it is guaranteed that they will have metta. But if I send metta, I can't be sure that it is going to reach them or help them in anyway, even though my intention may be pure.

However, whenever we do send metta, we should send it with the pure intention that they will receive it. It doesn't really matter whether they receive it or not. It is more the fact that your intention is pure. If your intention is pure, it is more likely that they'll receive the metta. But if you think that, "Oh, my metta is so strong. I'll just send metta to you and you will instantly be happy and healthy." Then this is mixed with pride, ego. Or you send metta thinking: "They won't get this, it won't make any difference." Then that defeats the purpose. Send metta with a positive attitude.

Another quality of metta is that the metta that we all have is boundless, limitless. Our metta is like an ocean. It doesn't matter how much you take out of the ocean. If you take out a cupful, it doesn't make any difference. If you take a bucketful, it doesn't make a difference. Even you fix a pump in there and pump the water out, it doesn't make any difference to the vast ocean. We all have this ocean of loving-kindness in our heart. The trouble is, we spend our lives living on the surface of the ocean. You never go deep under the surface of this ocean. When we only see the surface of the mind, we don't know how deep our heart our mind, really is. Boldly explore the depths of your mind; you won't only meet with boundless loving-kindness but also with the ultimate truth.

When you come to meditate, particularly in the first day or two, there is so much thinking, sleepiness, boredom and things in the mind that it is difficult to tune into the depth of the mind. But when we practise more and more, we start to penetrate through the superficial level of the mind and then we may discover this deep, blue ocean of metta. When you really

discover this, your whole being is completely full of metta and you can give loving-kindness to other beings as much as you like. Your loving-kindness won't run out, it won't become empty or weak. Unlimited loving-kindness. You already have this in your heart, you just need to look under the surface.

One of the best ways to do this is to repeat the phrases over and over. As you do that, you start to believe in the words that you say. The defilements and hindrances start to move aside and disappear. As we get better at the practice, we can change to a more "freestyle" practice. I also mean to be spontaneous or in the moment, whatever arises, we use that as an opportunity to practise metta. So, you might be feeling aversion in your mind at that moment, then you might be able to say to yourself:

"May I be free from aversion. May I be happy and peaceful".

Someone might display aversion towards you, then, instantly in your mind, you may have metta towards them:

"May you be free from aversion".

Perhaps you feel some pain or suffering in yourself, then you may naturally say to yourself:

*"May I be free from physical suffering,
May I be free from mental suffering"*.

Or you may see that someone else is in pain or is suffering, then you may wish them to be free from their pain and suffering.

Whatever arises in the present may become the object of metta.

Happiness might arise in your mind, you might just share that happiness with the other beings around you:

“Just as I am happy now, may all beings here also share in my happiness.

Just as I am happy now, may all beings here be as happy as me”.

In this way, you are not being selfish about your own metta. So if you get the nice experience or good feelings from metta, then you can share it instantly.

In fact, when I was here last year, I had a funny experience. It was one of the first meals I ate and I was over at the teacher’s kuti, next to the water. I was given some fried tofu, the one that is put in the soup, so it had some liquid inside. It was a big piece so I couldn’t eat it all in one go, I had to somehow break it or cut it in half. I decided to use the spoon to try to cut the piece of tofu in half. When I pressed the spoon into the tofu, a spurt of watery soup came out and went right up across my eye and forehead. I thought that was pretty funny. But then I quickly looked to see if anybody saw what happened and nobody saw it so that was even funnier. It was like I’m having this private joke to myself. When this joy arose in me, I instantly said:

“May the fish in this pond share in my happiness!”

I thought that was also a really strange but good thing to think about, so that also made me even happier. So I was sitting there bursting with happiness and joy and nobody knew about it. Except, maybe the fish, but again, I don’t know whether they felt my happiness or not – but I hope they got it. The fish

in this pond should be very happy fish, I think. Not because of me, but because of all of you. They are a lot safer than all the other fish in these fish farms around here. These fish will just die of old age. All the others around here get murdered.

Here is another opportunity for metta:

“May all fish in this neighborhood be free from their suffering”.

I used to do this in our monastery in South Africa, but it wasn't for fish, it was for chickens. From our little monastery, I could see at least seven chicken farms across the hills. Chicken farms are horrible places. Huge, long buildings, thousands and thousands of chickens, all stuffed in little cages. They are fed artificial food with hormones and steroids and vitamins and things. They live a very short life and they get fat very quickly (because of the steroids), so that the farmers can go and cut their heads off and sell them. Really horrible lives for those chickens, I used to call them “chicken prisons” or “chicken hell”. So, I used to send loving-kindness from our monastery off to those chicken hells.

“May all chickens in this district be free from their suffering.”

Occasionally, I used to send it to the chicken farmers. In fact, now that I think about it, I didn't do that often enough. The chicken farmers, although they might be enjoying a good life in this life, their next life is going to really be hell. These fish farmers around here may also not have a very pleasant rebirth. Maybe, I don't know, but killing animals for your living is

not right livelihood. Chinese Buddhists have a lot of teaching about this. That is why you will find Chinese Buddhists are all vegetarians.

So you can use freestyle metta – spontaneous, whatever happens now – you can use it as an object or a way, an opportunity to practise metta. Those of you who are used to practising vipassana also will be more aware of your feelings when they arise. When you are aware of some happiness, then you can share that happiness. If you feel some negative mental state, then you can wish:

“May I be free of this negative mental state”.

At that moment it is not just wishing but your negativity has instantly changed to positivity... instant results! Also, if boredom arises, you may wish:

“May I be free from boredom”.

Another way to overcome boredom is to be more creative with your reciting of the phrases. You can be a little bit playful, play a little bit with the phrases and the words. You can make it rhyme, like a poem or a song, if you like. As I said, you can make it faster or slower. By changing the speed, it helps you to concentrate better. If boredom arises, you can just steam roll it, just keep saying those phrases.

Then, just to finish off, we should do metta with a pure intention. Really, honestly, wanting either yourself or another being or other beings to genuinely experience the true quality of metta.

*“May you all be filled with loving-kindness.
May you share your loving-kindness with all living beings.
May all living beings live in peace and harmony.”*

“Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!”

“Our Metta is like an ocean.”

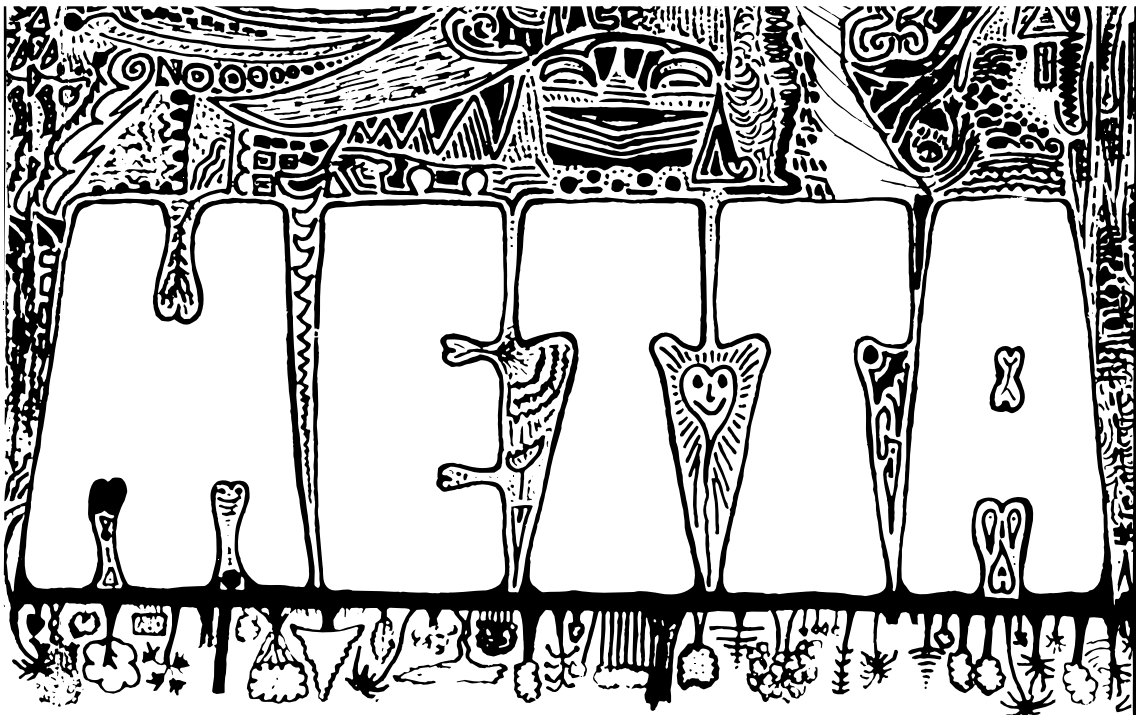
“The deep-blue ocean of Metta.”

“The vast-blue sky of Metta.”

“The endless sky of Metta.”

“Blue Sky Mind”

“Mettamind”



SUNDAY MORNING

I'd like to share with you a couple of phrases that I discovered through my own metta practice. Sometimes, when I do loving-kindness for myself, it feels very easy. Especially when I am living in a monastery and living this life as Buddhist monk. When I'm mindful, then I am safe from inner harm or mental suffering. Also, living in a monastery, living a quiet and simple lifestyle, then I am safe from outer harm or physical suffering. Living in a monastery is very peaceful. For me, happiness arises from living a simple life and also through mental development. Mental development, here, means samatha and vipassana. So when I say the phrase:

“May I be happy and peaceful”,

very quickly I feel happy and peaceful, I can move on to the next line. People, out of faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, offer good food to the monks. So I myself always feel healthy and strong. As for the last line:

“May I be able to take care of myself joyfully”;

then as long as I can live a monastic lifestyle and be mindful with metta too, then naturally my life is going to be good. So when I recite these four phrases, sometimes quite quickly, I feel very complete, very satisfied that I am experiencing these four wishes. Then I think, “Well, I am feeling quite content and satisfied, but other beings are not so content as me”.

“May all beings be as content as me.”

When I reflect on my life, then I realize that even for my happiness, other beings have had to suffer to make me happy. Other beings, such as my mother and father, my family, friends, relatives, teachers in the past or in the present, many people who help me to lead a good life, they are all still suffering. I, too, am suffering, but at least I'm aware of it, what causes it and the way to become free from it. So I share this thought with them:

“May all beings who have suffered to make me happy, be free from their suffering”.

When I thought about this, I realized that there are also people in my life who made me suffer, not everybody made me happy. Ah, so then I thought:

“May all beings who have suffered to make me suffer, be free from their suffering”.

All the time in our life we are surrounded by living beings, by our friends and family, at work by our colleagues and associates, beings both seen and unseen. Even when we are travelling, other beings are travelling, too. Today, you will be going home, so I want to remind you that it is good to be able to share some loving-kindness with other beings who are around you. When travelling, I usually say:

“May all beings along this journey be free from their suffering”.

Not only the beings who are going in the same direction as you, but all beings along the journey. Sometimes, I imagine or visualize the journey from the beginning until the end, from

the start to the destination, and I imagine all the beings that we may encounter along the way, millions of them, uncountable! I wish:

“May they all be free from their suffering”.

That means even if you are travelling along the road, all the other drivers and passengers, all the beings on the road, the insects that hit the windscreen, beings on the sides of the road as you travel along:

“May all beings travelling on this road arrive safely and happily at their destination”.

That includes yourself and your travelling companions. This is a great way to start any journey, even just going down to the local shops. Make it a little ritual, get the kids involved, say it out loud for the whole world to hear. Try playing some metta cassette tape or even a Dhamma or chanting tape.

When I was in South Africa, I began to use the Internet. I realized that when I was sitting at the computer logging onto the Internet, there were so many other people, maybe millions of other people across the world doing the same thing. So I would say,

“May everyone using the Internet now be happy and peaceful”.

Sometimes, when information is really slow to come up, maybe the electricity cuts out and you lose all your information or you feel stressed because you have to hurry to complete your work or something, so as you are using the computer, you get some mental suffering, some stress from that work. The thought

occurred to me, “If I am experiencing some stress, then maybe all the other millions of people who are using their computers right now might also be experiencing some stress.”

*“May all beings using their computers now be free from their stress,
May they be free from suffering,
May they be successful and prosperous.”*

It was also at that time in South Africa, that I realized that metta itself is like the Internet, or the Internet is like metta. Internet connects people to people right across the planet and I realize metta also connects beings to beings. You can't see the Internet, it is invisible but you can make use of it. It is very useful and it works. You can't see metta but you can use it and it works. I think having Internet is not important but having metta is extremely important because it means that wherever you are, you can be connected with other beings through the quality of your heart. If you can use your loving-kindness wherever you go, then other beings will always accept you. No need for fear or shame, just peace and contentment.

There is another important aspect of our spiritual progress or spiritual practice, and that is forgiveness. In fact, a meditation retreat should always start with forgiveness. On this short retreat I didn't bother with it but I do just want to mention it to you.

In life, we make mistakes, so do other people, everybody makes mistakes. We make mistakes because even when we are born, we have some degree of *lobha* (desire/greed), *dosa* (aversion/hatred) and *moha* (confusion/delusion). Especially,

when we have *moha*, confusion, or delusion, it is easy to make mistakes.

Also, we have *avijja* (ignorance), not understanding the right way in life. We have all got this to some extent, even our parents have it. Our friends and our family, in fact, our society is largely based on greed, hatred and delusion. That doesn't mean that there are not positive elements as well but fundamentally, we all have some degree of greed, hatred and delusion.

Forgiveness practice comes in an order of three "modes". Firstly for oneself, having harmed other beings, secondly for oneself, having harmed oneself, and thirdly for others, who have harmed us. In our life we have made mistakes, we have harmed other beings, either intentionally or unintentionally. Often, when we practise meditation we remember the times that we have caused harm and suffering to other people and other beings. At that time, remorse, regret and restlessness arise in the mind. These are great hindrances to mindfulness, concentration, insight and spiritual progress. When you recall how you have caused harm and suffering to other beings, you may do some forgiveness practice for yourself. We can say:

"In many ways, I have caused harm and suffering to other beings, I forgive myself. May they be free from their suffering".

It is like excusing yourself or acknowledging that you did something wrong. It doesn't mean that what you did was good. It means you have realized "At that time I was ignorant". "At that time I acted with greed, hatred and delusion. I didn't know *better* and now, I am sincerely sorry". Often, there is nothing

we can do about it now, so you can forgive yourself. Maybe later you can repair any damage or harm that you caused, but for now, we can relax and let the past go by asking for forgiveness and giving metta to *ourselves* and the others concerned. If this remorse is really an issue for you or really a problem, you can go to a Buddhist monk or your Dhamma teacher and you can tell them that you did something wrong, you can't help it now or you can't fix it now, but that you are really sorry. The monk or teacher accepts your *cetana* or intention; of course they can't solve the problem for you, but you may then be able to temporarily put it aside, relax and get on with developing your metta. This starts to free up our heart from some heavy emotions or guilt.

Then, we can move on to the next part;

“In many ways I’ve caused harm and suffering to myself, I forgive myself, may I be free from my suffering”.

You don't realize it, but many of the negative things that have happened in your life have happened because of your own attitude. When you are greedy, you can cause suffering to yourself. A simple example is eating too much. You eat too much, you get a pain in your stomach. Being angry, having hatred, also causes suffering to yourself. You feel hot, tight and frustrated. Also, confusion is a form of suffering. Our suffering is not just caused by others but also caused by ourselves. If you realize and understand this, then maybe you can forgive yourself and then wish yourself to be free from suffering. Can you do that? Do you want to do that? I hope so.

Then, the third one is quite difficult.

“In many ways others have caused harm and suffering to me...”

This is very common in our life. Others may have caused us harm intentionally or unintentionally. But when we understand that they are acting on ignorance, on greed, hatred and delusion, just like us, then we may forgive them. Also, they are suffering. The ones who have caused you suffering in your life, they too are suffering. The sentence continues:

“...I forgive them, may we all be free from our suffering. They are suffering, I am suffering, may we all be free from our suffering”.

In this way we can start to free our mind from some heavy emotional feelings from the past. We do it in the order that I have given to you now. Usually, what we try to do in life is to forgive others first, but it is very difficult to do that because you have got anger or frustration in your mind. We might do it or we might say it, but it is just words. We think it is all over, forgotten, but often we really haven't forgiven them and you still feel the hurt inside your heart.

If you can, try to learn to forgive yourself first. Firstly, because you have harmed others and secondly, because you have harmed yourself. When you really know the quality of forgiveness, what it feels like to be forgiven, that feeling is very strong. It is also very freeing or liberating. When you feel that liberation, you would naturally like others to feel that too. By learning to forgive yourself, you know how to forgive others. When you can understand how nice it feels to be forgiven, then you want to forgive others. If you make a mistake and someone

forgives you, you feel happy about that. So you should also practise this on yourself and practise it with others.

Naturally it is the same with loving-kindness. Normally, we just try to send loving-kindness out to others, but we don't know what the feeling of loving-kindness is until we have developed it in our own heart. When you truly experience the quality, the warmth and blissful feelings of loving-kindness in your own heart, naturally you want to share it with others. Until you experience and really know that feeling for yourself, all you are doing is saying words.

Saying words is okay, it is training the mind. There are two aspects to this. The recitation of the words of metta in the mind and the actual verbalization of metta for someone. When we practise loving-kindness meditation, then we are using the words to develop the mind, also to develop the feeling of loving-kindness. So in normal life we might just say:

“I hope you are happy and peaceful”.

Generally, we might just say a few words:

“I hope you are healthy and strong”.

So we may say those words now and again, that is speaking with metta. But when we are doing metta meditation, we are reciting these words over and over and over in order to develop some concentration. Also, when we understand the meaning of the words, we start to get the feeling of the metta. That's when the words change into feelings. The important point is to feel metta in your own heart.

When we can know and understand metta in our own hearts, we can give out that metta, understanding the quality of it. When we understand metta in our own hearts, we send it out, we are happy with that quality.

Generally speaking, we can do loving-kindness anywhere, any time. We can do specific metta for ourselves, for others or towards individuals, that is the moment to moment concentration on loving-kindness. Or we can do general metta, sending it out to all beings, anywhere, any time. Whenever it naturally arises, you just do metta. Spontaneous metta!

What I would like to do now, just to finish off the retreat, is – I would like us all to circumambulate — walk around the big pond in the middle of the centre, doing loving-kindness. I'd like us to walk around three times. The first time, I'd like you to concentrate on loving-kindness towards yourself. The second time, I'd like you to share loving-kindness with all beings in this centre, and the last time, I'd like you to send your loving-kindness out to all living beings. You can walk fast or slow. Better to take your time, maybe use the umbrella. Just take your time and do loving-kindness gently and casually as you go around. I think that is good. Don't walk in pairs, don't walk with your friends, just go individually and do individual practice. Don't pay any attention to anybody else and just concentrate on the metta.

Whenever your mind wanders off and you forget what you are doing, just come back to the subject. First subject is yourself. Second subject is all beings in this centre. Third subject, all beings everywhere. In effect, that will be our closing ceremony, a closing gesture for this meditation retreat.

Just before we go, I'd like to say that usually I'm not a metta teacher, I usually teach vipassana. So if I've made any mistake or given some wrong directions or left anything out, any important things, please forgive me. Thank you.

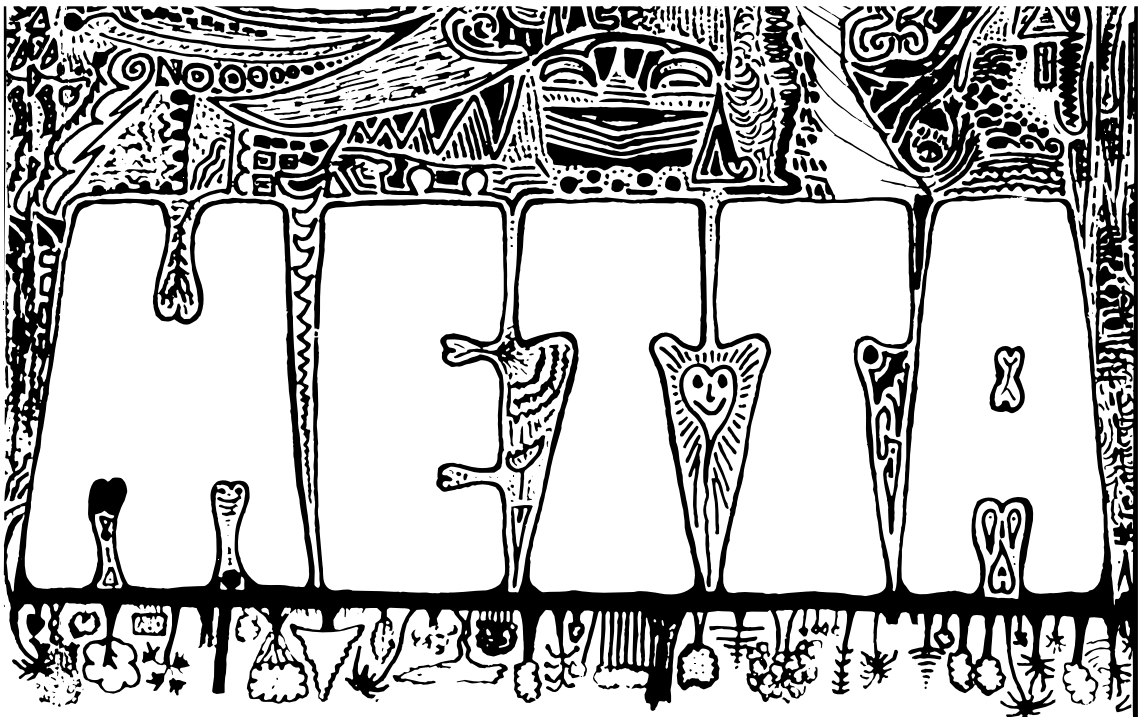
*“May we all live with metta in our hearts.
Everywhere we go, may we share loving-kindness.
May all beings live in peace and harmony.”*

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!”

*“Internet connects people to people;
Metta connects beings to beings.”*

“Sati or mindfulness is the most powerful thing in the universe. Metta is the second most powerful.”

“Another quality of Metta is, the Metta that we all have is boundless, limitless.”



My own simplified interpretation of the Buddha's words on metta:

Metta Sutta

Discourse on Loving-kindness

*Owing to the glorious power of this Metta Sutta,
spirits dare not appear in their frightful forms.
Anyone who chants this sutta, day and night,
sleeps peacefully, has no bad dreams and enjoys many benefits.
Come on, let's recite this Metta Sutta!*

*Those who are skillful in good practices
and wish to attain to that state of peace, should follow this;
One should be efficient, honest, perfectly straight,
obedient, gentle and humble; contented, easy to look after,
with few duties, simple in livelihood, controlled in senses,
discreet, modest and not greedily attached to people.*

*One should not do anything
that the wise may blame you for: Just think;*

*May all beings be happy and secure,
may their hearts be wholesome.*

*Whatever beings there are, weak or strong, without exception,
long stout or medium, short or tall, large or small,
seen or unseen, near or far, born or unborn,*

May all beings be happy!

*Let one not deceive another, nor despise anyone at all.
With anger or ill will, let one not wish harm to any other.
just as a mother would protect her only child,
even at the risk of her own life,
let us develop boundless Loving-Kindness towards All beings.
Let's send unlimited Loving-Kindness towards the whole world,
above, below and all around, freely and without hatred or
enmity.*

*Whether sitting standing, walking or lying down,
as long as we are awake, we should develop this mindfulness,
this they say, is the highest conduct.*

*Not following wrong views
but purely and wisely not being attached to
many pleasures, one is not to be reborn.*

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!"