

The Concept of *Mettā* in Buddhist Ethics

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Abstract

The word "*Mettā*" is *Pāli* word which means pure loving-kindness embraces all beings. In Buddhism, *Mettā* is the first of the four sublime states and one of the ten *Pārami*. This paper intends to solve the problem that "Is *Mettā* a necessary conditions for the peace and safety of man and society? The solution can be said that *Mettā* is the strongest force to face, to practice in social relation and, to apply in solving the world affairs. This paper will contribute to understand the concept of *Mettā* which is affective and humanitarian ways for the peace and stability of man and community.

Key words: (1) *Mettā* (2) Loving-kindness

Introduction

The Noble Eightfold Path indicates the Buddhist ethics. This Eightfold Path is called *Majjhima Patipadā* (Middle Path). It is divided into three groups: Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom. Of these three groups, morality is the most fundamental. Without morality, the two others cannot be achieved. Concentration is the practice of Buddhist meditation. Meditation, *Bhāvanā*, is of two kinds: *Vipassanā* meditation and *Samatha* meditation. *Vipassanā* meditation is the practice to attain insight. *Mettā* is one of the practices of *Vipassanā* meditation. In this paper, Buddhist concept of *Mettā*, its distinctive meaning, nature, kind and benefits will be shown.

Mettā and Love

There are different ideas in the interpretation of the word "love" which means many other things. Love is differently defined and used in different sense. Love is defined as warm attachment, enthusiasm or devotion etc. All of these love refers to sentimental, worldly love alone.

Mettā means loving-kindness which is very noble one. It is not the ordinary, sensual, emotional, sentimental kind of love in ordinary person's love. *Mettā* is generally translated into English as generous mindedness, loving-kindness, sending out thoughts of love toward others.

The Nature of Buddhist *Mettā*

The nature of *Mettā* would be necessary to view *Mettā* as three separate parts.

1. *MettāManokam* (*Mettā* expressed mentally)
2. *MettāVacikam* (*Mettā* expressed by word of mouth)
3. *MettāKayakam* (*Mettā* expressed in deeds)

If a person who focus his thoughts on the individuals or groups of a person or all living beings to extend his love and kindness waves to them, it is called *MettāManokam*.

When monks and laity worship and pay homage to the Lord Buddha, they develop loving-kindness by reciding "Sabbe sattā averā hontu", etc, i.e, "All beings may be free from all dangers. This kind of *Mettā* is expressed by word of mouth. Thus, it is called *Mettā Vacikam*.

MettāKayakam is very important to render physical assistance to others. It is essential to try and do well to other, whenever possible, so as to make them happy. Only to do so, the act of developing mindfulness on loving-kindness will be genuinely effective.

Three Kinds of *Mettā*

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According to Buddhist thought, there are three kinds of *Mettā* in the *Loka* (World).

- (1) *Mettā* between lovers
- (2) Family *Mettā*
- (3) *PāramīMettā*

Mettā between lovers called “*tanhā pema*”. When one is directed at the loved one, it is ready to give protection and to give life exclusive for the loved one. Sometimes there might be a conflict between the loved one and the others, thus it cannot be produce happiness and peace in the world.

The *Mettā* of the members of a family on another is called family *Mettā*. This kind of *Mettā* is called “*gahassita pema*” which means love depending of family. It is based upon *loba* (greed) which is *akusala* (demeritorious), *Mettā* based upon *akusala* is not the key to happiness and peace of the *Loka* (world).

PāramīMettā means the love of the noble ones on the *Loka* (world). If one can love with *PāramīMettā* for the *Loka* (world), he can be said to be a human being living the life of a *Brahma*. *PāramīMettā* is limitless in nature and it embraces all being without any exception.

The Conditioned Nature of *Mettā*

The Fifteen Principles of Conduct which one must accomplished before developing *Mettā*, so that his *Mettā* may be powerful. They are

- (1) He should be capable materially and spiritually welfare to others.
- (2) He must be straightforward.
- (3) He must be extremely honest.
- (4) He should be meek and complaisance.
- (5) He should be gentle.
- (6) He should not slight the others with self-pride thinking very highly of oneself.
- (7) He should be easily contented.
- (8) One must be a person who can be easily to support by others benefactors.
- (9) A person who should have few duties and free from care.
- (10) One should be frugal.
- (11) One should have the moral qualities of serenity.
- (12) One should have mature reflective knowledge.
- (13) One should be polite and modest free from impudence.
- (14) One should be free passionate attachment to male and female benefactors.
- (15) One should avoid any kind of vice, no matter how trivial it may be, which wise men would find it blame worthy.

After that, there are persons towards whom ***Mettā* should be developed first and foremost.**

- (1) The first person towards whom *Mettā* should be developed is his own self.
- (2) The second person is a teacher who is worthy of love and respect, or the grandparents or parents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and one's friends.
- (3) The person towards whom *Mettā* should be developed is who are grateful and person in authority.
- (4) The person towards whom *Mettā* should be developed is the extension of *Mettā* from one's house to the country and the whole world, all being lived.

On the other hand there are four persons whom ***Mettā* should not be developed at the first initial stage.** They are

- (1) Persons who are hostile and unfriendly or who deserves hatred.
- (2) Persons who are dearest to you or your beloved one.
- (3) Person who are neither lover nor hatred, i.e., neutral person.
- (4) Persons who are enemies.

Besides the two persons upon whom, **Mettā should not be developed.**

(1) Persons of opposite sex.

(2) *Mettā* should not be developed towards dead persons.

The first and foremost *Mettā* should be developed towards his own uttering "May I be free from enmity (*Averohomi*).

May I be free from mental suffering (*Abayāpajjhohomi*).

May I be free from physical suffering (*Anighohomi*).

May I take care of myself happily (*Sukhiattānamparihārāmi*).

There are **two kinds of beings** to develop *Mettā*, namely

(1) *Anodisa- Mettā*

(2) *Odhisa - Mettā*

Anodhisa-Mettā is generally radiated towards all beings without intends one's *Mettā* for any particular being. There are **five kinds** of being towards whom *Anodhisa-Mettā* is radiated.

(1) May all beings be free from danger, from mental distress (misery), from bodily suffering, and be capable of shouldering the burden of one's own *Khandā* with both physical and mental happiness.

(2) May all beings who have life and breath, be free from danger, from mental distress, from bodily suffering and be able to shouldering the burden of one's own *Khandā* or material body with both physical and mental happiness.

(3) May all those conspicuous being, be free from danger, from mental distress, from bodily suffering and be able to shouldering the burden of one's own *Khandā* or material body with both physical and mental happiness.

(4) May all those individuals be free from danger, from mental distress, from bodily suffering and be able to shouldering the burden of one's own *Khandā* or material body with both physical and mental happiness.

(5) May all those who have the material *Khandā*, the bodily self, be free from danger, from mental distress, from bodily suffering and be able to shouldering the burden of one's own *Khandā* or material body with both physical and mental happiness.

There are **seven kinds** of beings towards whom *odhisa-Mettā* is to be radiated.

(1) All females it includes female *Devas* or divine, maidens, females animals, may all those females be free from danger, from mental distress, from bodily suffering and be capable of shouldering the burden of their own representative *Khandā* with physical and mental happiness.

(2) All males it includes all male *Devas* and male animals, may all the males be free from dangers, from mental distress, etc:

(3) May all *Ariyas*, Noble one, be free from danger, etc.

(4) May all *putthu janas*, common worlding, be free from danger, etc:

(5) May all *Devas*, celestial beings, be free from danger, etc.

(6) May all human beings be free from danger, etc.

(7) May all *apaya* beings (being in hell) be free from danger, from mental distress, from bodily suffering, and be able to shouldering the burden of one's own *Khandā* with both physical and mental happiness.

The Eleven Advantages of *Mettā*

There are eleven advantages of *Mettā*. They are prescribed in the *MettaSutta*.

(1) It gives a sound sleep or rather, an uninterrupted slumber.

(2) Rouse from sleep happily.

(3) Evil or bad dreams will not interfere with sleep.

(4) Others will love or have affection for him because of his accomplishment of the noble attributes.

- (5) He is loved by *Devas*.
- (6) He is protected by *Devas* against any possible danger.
- (7) Fire, or poison, or sword, or any other dangerous weapon that can cause physical harm cannot be fall.
- (8) The mind becomes stabilized and calm quickly.
- (9) He will have a clear complexion of face.
- (10) Without gloom and anxiety on the verge of death.
- (11) Verily destined to become a *Brahmā*.
- (12)

***Mettā* and the Ten Perfections**

There are ten transcendental virtues. In *Pāli*, which are termed *Pāramī* and this means "deeds of the noble ones". The men who pay no attention to their own well being but who do for the good of others and for their liberation from the *samsarā*(the round of rebirths). They sacrifice their lives for the *Loka* (world).

1. Perfection of Generosity (*DānaPāramī*)
2. Perfection of Morality (*SīlaPāramī*)
3. Perfection of Renunciation (*NekkhamaPāramī*)
4. Perfection of Wisdom (*PaññāPāramī*)
5. Perfection of Energy (*VīriyaPāramī*)
6. Perfection of Forbearance (*KhantiPāramī*)
7. Perfection of Truthfulness (*SaccāPāramī*)
8. Perfection of Resolution (*AdhittānaPāramī*)
9. Perfection of Loving Kindness (*MettāPāramī*)
10. Perfection of Equanimity (*UpekkhāPāramī*)

The most important of all *pāramī* is *Mettāpāramī*. This kind of love is different from the love with attachment such as the love between men and women (*Tanhāpema*). Loving-kindness has the nature of pure and noble good will (*adosa*).

Truly loving the *Loka* (world) is the essence of *MettāPāramī*. The *Buddha* had fulfilled Ten *Pāramīs* for four *asankheyyas* and a hundred thousand worlds in order to enable himself to eradicate *Lobha* and to teach the *venaras* (all beings) how to eradicate *lobha*. The ability to eradicate *lobha* is the attainment of a very great benefit.

According to *Buddha's Dhamma*, the ability to eradicate, *Lobha* enables one to attain *santisukkhā* (tranquility and peace). *Santisukkhā* is the highest happiness in tranquillity and peacefulness.

So, the *LokaMettā* enables one to kill off *Lobha* and *Dosa* ultimately to realize *Nibbāna* when with the help of *Vippassanā*.

***Mettā* and the Four Ideals Attitudes (*Brahmavihāra*)**

Mettā is one of Four *Brahmavihāras*. *Brahma* has been translated as divine or noble. *Vihāra* means abiding and living. *Brahmavihāras* are said to be abiding or living in the divine or noble ways. The Four *Brahmavihāras* are

- (1) *Mettā* : Loving-Kindness
- (2) *Karunā* : Compassion
- (3) *Muditā* : Sympathetic joy
- (4) *Upekkhā* : equanimity

These Four are attitudes towards other beings and also favourable relationship. They can be extended towards on immeasurable scope of beings.

One powerful destructive vice in man is anger (*dosa*). The direct enemy of *Mettā* is anger. For the way of removing anger is loving-kindness (*Mettā*). It means that which softens

one's heart, or the state of a true friend. It is sincere wish for the welfare and genuine happiness of all living beings without exception.

Brahmavihāra, the Four Abiding are all good attitudes. One of them may be more basically one, which is *Mettā*. If we practice with *Mettā* and the other *Brahmavihāras* definitely it brings much happiness and peace for the world.

The Benefits of *Mettā*

There is no fire more intense and consuming than the fire of hatred born of unrestrained passion. Besides there is no thirst more difficult to satisfy than the greed born of attachment. Conquest by force never brings true peace to the conqueror because the vanquished will try to take revenge sooner or later. Consequently, the fire of greed, anger and ignorance will be continuing in human being.

Today the treat of global nuclear destruction is a real possibility. Should there be a global nuclear war, there can be no sanctuary anywhere under the sun for men to escape. All wars were fought with the utmost cruelty and barbarity in complete disregard of humanity, love and compassion for living beings. Destruction and desolation spread and untold miseries followed in the weak of wars. Terrible weapons as the atomic bombs were used and every possible advantage was taken to commit wholesale slaughter and bloodshed. Peace was not to be obtained at the end of these wars. The victors and the vanquished were losers in many respects.

Everyone in the world wants to live in a peaceful life during his life. He tries to achieve this aim in his own way. There are two kinds of ways, one which aims at living peacefully forever and another one which aims at living in temporary peace. In these two ways, the first way which is to have *Mettā* on one another. The second way is short-cut way and is only temporary peace.

Since the practice for temporary peace and happiness, today we face with the basic problem moral degeneration and misplaced intelligence. Because of science and technology advanced the world is far from being safe and peaceful.

As men are dominated by ignorance, selfishness, injustice, vengeance and other kindred evil destructive forces, human species will not be safe. Human beings have become the most violent beings in the world.

So, in the search for peace and harmony, world leaders have attempted to formulate international treaties and agreements to prevent or settle disputes among nations. Peace is gained by letting go of our selfishness and helping the world with acts of love. Peace with the love in the heart conquers all opposing forces.

Conclusion

Good and bad are two opposite sides in the world. "Good is awaiting those who develop *Mettā*. "Bad" is awaiting those who radiate evil thoughts towards others. Buddhist *Mettā* posses a mystic power which can easily influence beings far and near and beneficent force is capable of transforming wild beasts into tame ones, murderers into saints.

Mettā in Buddhism is a state of mind. Its object is the lovable being. It is the state of wishing to promote the welfare of the lovable being. The cultivation of this state of mind is called *Bhavanā* or meditation. When we cultivate it, mind becomes strong, powerful and useful. It brings us abundant, deep and intense peace and happiness for all.

Mettā has a wider significance. It is greater than love, harmlessness, sympathy. It is also much deeper than good will. Although harmlessness is very good principle but it is only negative aspect. *Mettā* has two aspects. One is positive that to do what is good. Other aspect is negative meaning absence of hatred and hostility. Buddhist *Mettā* applied to social, political and economical problems of the day is a great contribution to the ethics of humanity.

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