

The simile that is done for the metta is a mother caring for her own child with so much loving kindness. Would you ask a mother, why do you practice loving kindness with your children? It is something natural. But still, for us, sometimes just to know the why of things, then we can see the advantage and we can be more encouraged to practice these types of things.

Also I was talking with my friend about that. And he said that sometimes in Sri Lanka, there used to be talks and then you will have what is a two chair talk, and you will have two teachers and then they will give the talk, but they will share the same topic and then they will dialogue with each other.

Since my friend is not here, nevertheless I brought some of the reasons that he gives as to the why of metta. So I will read some of them, and also I will read my point of view. I wrote some notes about what will be the advantage of practicing metta, I will quote the texts. And also for yourself you can consider, why should we practice metta, and what is the advantage of practicing loving-kindness meditation.

Of course, if you are to love a mother that is really caring for her children, what is the effect of caring so much like that? And even the biologist or the sociologist they see the effect that it has on the body of someone who is caring. I think there is a kind of change in the metabolism and then the mother is developing a kind of chemical that is being created.

Some of you may know that even before the child is born, the mother is almost stoned because she has so much metta with the child that this is the only thing that she cares about, especially with the first child. After that it may change a little bit, when she has to face the challenges of raising her kid. But still there is a big effect of a mother that is raising her children, she gets a very good biological feedback.

1) So the first thing that is talked about is the feedback. Why is the samatha meditation feedback, other subjects seem neutral while being developed, but metta readily brings happily and generally sooner. It feels truly worthwhile for self and others. It has an ethical part, it is sila.

2) The other aspect that my friend is talking about is the aspect of Saddha, that means the trust, the confidence. So, the practice of metta brings faith, but trust seems a more practical translation. Faith is close to belief, but this ends on trust, it comes because of this feedback.

3) Balancing the faculties. Just as energy and concentration or collectedness must be balanced, so also faith and wisdom should be balanced. Westerners are usually practicing with too much wisdom and energy. They are too analytical sometimes, even too much for vipassana, when a little more wisdom than faith is appropriate. So balancing the faculty of faith and wisdom.

For samatha a little bit more saddha is appropriate. The saddha, the trust from metta, cools down the analysing, and this is an analytical age. So our age, we get so much of information and then we want to understand so much of everything that we are very analytical, but sometimes it's a little bit too much.

4) Because metta while wishing the best for all automatically fills the mind with healing energy it tends to speed the healing of old and new psychological scar tissue. It is a tangibly pure energy for healing.

5) Forgiveness and Gratitude. Since all beings are now your children, like a loving parent you forgive them everything. This melts old and new resentments and any imagined revenge scenarios and it melts judgementalism.

6) It ripens the parami. So there is one teacher Buddharakkhita who wrote a small book on metta in Sri Lanka and he said that the metta matures one spiritually, so people become more ripe.

So in reference to the gradual training it is helping to nourish and it is helping to grow these qualities that are all coming together.

7) Good health, strong immune system

8) Patience. Patience is the ascetic practice number one. Sometimes the Buddha says what is the best ascetic practice for someone engaged in a spiritual practice. So just to be very strict and ascetic. And he says, patience. Patience is the number one for developing good qualities. But just as an aspect of asceticism. It's not fasting, it's not sitting on benches with nails or having few cloths or things like this. Patience is the number one for ascetic practice. So metta, is bringing a lot of patience.

So, you probably know all of these things, but I will just read them. So here in the book, in the Anguttara, they give about the 11 advantages, or the benefits that can be expected:

one sleeps well  
one awakens happily  
one is pleasing to human beings  
one is pleasing to spirits  
deities protect one  
fire, poison and weapons do not injure one  
one becomes quickly concentrated  
ones facial complexion is serene  
one dies unconfused  
and is one does not penetrate further, one fares to the brahma world, to the world of the gods.

So, most probably all the benefits, or all the advantage that we could find for the why of the metta, could be taken from any one of them.

So, I like to make the comment about ones mind quickly becomes concentrated. So the comparison that I like, it's speaking about the mother. So you probably remember with your own mother, or seeing the mother with another child, and a nurse with a child, sometimes when the child is very small and he is just crawling and not walking so much, you reach a table and everything is so high you can't reach it yet. And so you are very curious, what is on top of that big thing, because we are so small. And we try, and we just grasp there with out knowing what is there.

So then sometimes the mother, she takes the child and she raises the child up to the level of the child, and then the child can see the whole table and can take whatever she likes.

So it's the same thing with the metta, when we start to practice metta, all these good qualities come to support the mind and the mind gets concentrated very easily. And then all the meditation subjects that we like to develop, then it becomes very easy.

So, when we practice metta and then we go back to another subject of meditation, concentration is there. And then also meditation subjects, they are a bit like toys. Sometimes we need to play with the small train, and sometimes with the doll, and sometimes with the boat. So, just for our good mood. So the samatha types of meditation, they are there, just to feed us, somehow with what we need. So sometimes we can change, alternate meditation just according to what we need.

So if we have metta as a basis, then it is very easy to see now, with what can we alternate our practice.

So, of course metta is harmonising ourself. So we get so much harmonised. Like psychosomatic, we are talking about health, so this is a psychosomatic effect. When we have metta for ourselves and also for other people, then we become much more healthy. So that type of health is good for oneself physically and also mentally and also it's good for other people, and then it is also harmonising our relationship that we have with other people.

So yesterday I spoke about metta as the intention that eventually comes to be combined with sila. So the ethics, the rules, all the set-up that is classified by way of virtue, eventually comes to be combined with the intention. So not only will we refrain from killing, and then from lying and then from sexual misconduct and all these things, but the motivation will be metta. So when we care

for other people, when we care for ourselves, we will naturally not be doing these things that would be harmful.

So the practice of metta also provides adequate needs for one and others. So when we have metta for ourselves we see what we actually need. So sometimes we need some things but we don't care so much. We are very tough sometimes to ourselves. So if we have metta for ourself, then our needs start to be seen properly and then we care. And then the same thing for other people. We all have needs in our life, we have to care for that.

So with the practice of metta, just as a mother, just as a good parent will care for the needs of the child, so the same thing, metta will provide us with what is really necessary.

Also, the text they say that the human and the non-human beings protects oneself. So that idea of protection is interesting because when we start to generate caring feeling for other people and then also for ourselves, there is a kind of feedback. We see that there is a interrelationship and that then when we feed other people then also we are getting the same effect getting back to us. So the protection that we give to other people, actually we are giving it to ourselves. Because what is harming ourselves, if not our own mind?

So when we practice metta that greed will be reduced, hatred will not be there, and then delusion also starts to fade away. So when these unwholesome states of mind are not there in ourselves, everything is much more clear and then we are protecting ourselves..

Sometimes also it may happen that we feel bad about something, so when we practice metta we allow things to be, just as a parent will allow all the difficulties that a child will encounter. So that allowance gives the possibility to understand a little bit and also to adapt. So when we have difficulty, when other people have difficulty, then that allowance, that type of space that is given to ourself and then to other people, then that gives us the feeling of a safe environment. So we feel in a safe environment.

Like when you are in your family, if you have a good family relationship, when you are with friends who are really caring for you, then you feel safe. Whatever you say, or whatever you are, there is a kind of acceptance there. So it is very important for us to feel safe in our life.

So when there is that type of allowance, then there is no judgement. Oh I am not a good person. Or I am not a good this, or that. I am not a good that. It's just we don't care, we like you the way you are, with all your faults also.

So, for example, I just wanted to give that story. One of my brothers, he has a friend, and that lady she got married and she went to South America and she really fell in love with the country, and then also there in some places you have a lot of poverty, and also a lot of orphans and also a lot of children in trouble. And so she decided to adopt some of the children. So she started with one. Like she goes to visit there and to live sometimes there. And then she started by adopting one child, and then she brought him back to Canada and then she stayed with him. Then later on she adopted another child. And then she did the same thing. And then eventually she came to adopt 5 children. And she didn't have any children of her own.

So we can imagine the difference of culture from South America to North America, the difference in culture is very distinct. But also the difference of background, some places are so poor, and the standard of living is a little bit different. But also the family background, the cultural background.

So these children, were coming from different types of background. So just as a mother, and just as a caring person, she will have no judgement. Whatever type of behavior, or whatever thinking that the child will have she will just be loving. And then that acceptance will give space to the child will grow. So in that way it's very including, it's not so much judgemental.

So, etc. etc.

And then the conclusion, is the logical outcome, is that when one really does it, when we really practice the metta and then we adapt it, then the different levels of happiness sprout out of it.

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So, this is what I wrote: Can we give ourselves too much metta? Where is the limit? Is it possible to give ourselves too much metta. So we see that metta can be practiced all the time with the seven enlightenment factors or also with the eightfold noble path. And then in that case if metta can be practiced all the time with these factors, it needs to be combined with the different modes of mindfulness.

So we see that with these different modes of mindfulness, sati as an enlightenment factor, as a bojjhanga is the number one. So this first one deals with protecting, with guarding and then governing our faculties.

So then we see that if we do that, like governing the faculties, and then mindfulness and clear comprehension and then also the sila, then there is a type of happiness that is coming together with that. So already the happiness is coming into the picture.

And then, from there, the overflow breaks the boundaries of self and other. So when we start, we need to feel ourselves a little bit with this type of fuel, and then when we get in the mood, then we see that eventually there is no difference with oneself and others. Of course in our meditation, but this is how it comes to.

So the metta, the practice of metta removes grudges. They say that in the west, we often seem to keep an attitude of revenge in our heart. But then compare, like we were comparing with the people in Burma. The people there, it's a little bit opposite the way they see some situations. Like the time of the Colonial era, when the British and then the Portuguese, and then many Europeans came to Colonise, and then the Japanese also, they just came to invade, and they just took power of the country and you see how the history of humankind shows this kind of gross behaviour. How you can occupy a country, and then rule people and then say, 'ok, now, your goods are mine and then you are my slave.' So this is what happened in these countries.

But when, in Burma, when the coloniser, when these foreigners left, when there was conflicts and then there was a kind of war, and eventually the Japanese, and then the British also, when they left, then the Burmese people they were even helping them. They did not say, now you go out and don't come back. They were helping them and giving them all kinds of things and saying, yes yes yes, you be happy, take this and then you take that, and you please have something to eat. So the attitude was very different. And then later on, they never asked, for war damage compensation.

So now some countries say now 50 years ago there was some kind of problem with your country, and that was not correct, so you now give us some kind of compensation. So there it was not done. So it has to do with the right view and also the knowledge of Kamma.

Also the practice of metta gives us a lot of self-confidence and also a quality of generosity. Because then we don't have fear of other people and we have no constriction or blockage inside because it's a type of generosity.

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Like what you describe is just the aspect of fear that you may have sometimes, and then what we may all have in our life. Like we are frightened about the unknown. Somethings we don't know, or some things we are not sure and we are frightened about that. But if we know how to practice metta, then all the fears vanish, because everything comes to be accepted. There is a big difference. And then would we not like to live a life without fear, if yes, then we should consider to practice metta a little bit more.

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Yes, like what makes the difference between another person and myself, it's the instinct of protection. So we want to protect ourselves, we want to make ourselves secure, and the other person is a challenge, or a threat, so if we have metta then the threat starts to dissolve and then the attitude we have of fear also dissolves.

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Yes, it's a quality that is effecting our whole psychological set-up. So when we start to feed ourselves with that, then the whole thing changes, then our whole attitude is changing. So not only do we feel the advantage right now, very practically, but if we combine that with the meditation, then we feel the same thing. And there is a relaxation and then the happiness is coming also and then the concentration because of that is coming much more easily.

Like also, here there is a story where they say you are liked by non-humans. So in regard to the animals, it is true. So in the forest monasteries of Asia, in the jungles, there is a lot of snakes and they can be very dangerous. But, even the hunters they get bitten by snakes. But not the forest monks, because they chant the sutta, and also they develop that type of attitude and they develop that practice of metta, and then they don't get bitten.

Sometimes, also, I had the experience and many of my friends also it's the same case, and you walk in the forest, and somehow there is a voice somewhere that says, 'oh no, you be careful' and then you just look and then there is a snake in front of you, and you just avoid it.'

So, the world is just magic everywhere, and we don't need to put the magic out of our conception, but not be too offtrack.

So, the time is passing by, and then I will just explain briefly how we can practice metta, and also you have some texts about the metta, and the metta sutta which is just a traditional way of practicing. And then it says, what you should do if you want to cultivate a state of peace of mind and also how to practice loving kindness. So, you can learn the texts, but it's not necessary. Also you can recite some phrases, like may I be happy and may everybody be happy, but also eventually we can drop these phrases, and just stay with the feeling, with the emotion of metta.

Also, when to practice metta. So of course we can practice metta all the time. But someone was saying that in these metta retreats when you do only metta all the time, then the person finds it, and it's probably the case with you, sometimes we find it too artificial to say, ok, now I have to practice metta, and then I'm not in a good mood, and then 'may all beings be happy' like this. So I think the modes of mindfulness that are describing what internal state we need to develop before increasing the volume of some specific meditation subject.

So first we can just observe, and just be quiet by ourselves, and allow the natural flow of happiness to come inside ourselves and just to relax. And when we relax also, that's why we didn't start right away, now we are on the fourth day, and only now are we starting to introduce the practice of metta. Because at the beginning we are too tense, or we just need to take some space for ourselves. So it is very important that before we practice metta, just at least to be comfortable and then to be at peace and a kind of happiness will be there. So then we can practice and develop metta more efficiently and it will not be forced.

Also, like I said at the beginning, the practice of metta can be a meditation subject, so if you decide to develop it and then to use that as a base, as a specific anchor for your mind and then to develop that as your meditation, then it is possible. So sometimes you can do that all the day.

But, I would like to suggest that you can alternate. So sometimes you can be sitting. And then to say, ok now, during my sitting meditation I will practice metta. And then the alternation will be that while I am walking, or while I am doing something else, then I can practice mindfulness and clear comprehension. Or I will just guard the senses. So we can alternate and just try to be clear with the three modes of mindfulness and just choose one specific meditation subject, now we just have metta, but as the retreat goes on we will have more alternatives with different types of meditation.

So we can alternate with what we are practicing specifically when we are sitting and then what we are practicing when we are walking, or when we are lying down, so we can see what is more conducive, what is bringing more balance to our practice. Because of course if we do the same thing again and again all the time then we can get fed up with it, or we can develop some kind of imbalance. So we can see, how can we alternate my practice as it goes on. So you will have the feeling for it. You will say, ok now, I feel like doing like this, or I feel like doing like that, or you will feel to do this type of practice this one sitting, or another type of practice when you are not sitting.

But the point is, try to be very clear about what you are doing. Try to be clear about these different types of mindfulness, these different modes of mindfulness.

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Yes, like the practice of metta, like if we look at the texts, of course the scholasticism and the systematisation of meditation came to be very much developed and then very much detailed. And so if we look at some texts then it is very much complicated. I mean you can go into very very specific details. But sometimes we just take the sutta, the text, and it is so much general, it seems so spontaneous, and now you just develop a heart of loving kindness towards all beings and that's all that is said.

So now I will suggest just a very simple methodology, now, and then later on, if you want to specialise or really to develop it more systematically then it will be up to you.

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So, we can just start by making ourselves comfortable, just relax, I mean I hope you are already relaxed, but still, make yourself at ease.

So we have to remember that metta itself, loving kindness, it's a feeling, it's something that we are feeling, it's related to affection. So it's not something theoretical that we are conditioning ourselves to repeat phrases and things like this. So for that purpose, you may remember someone who loved you very much, or sometimes you may remember a person that you are loving a lot, that you respect a lot, who has helped you a lot. A friend, relative, whoever it is. You remember the feeling, that trust that you have by being with that person.

Then you start with yourself, you feel so good about that, you feel confidence, you feel safe, you allow yourself just to be the way you are.

So loving kindness, the feeling of metta, is starting with ourself. So we can start with this body. Just by having the intention to relax and then to be well. It's a kind of metta that we are having towards ourself. To accept the difficulties or the bad moods we may be experiencing, whatever emotion is coming in our mind, then we accept it, we care for that. Maybe these emotions, these feelings, have to tell us something.

So as a mother will listen very carefully to her own child, we have to listen very carefully to ourself. What is our body, our position, our feelings, emotions, thoughts, are telling us about us. Do we listen to ourself? Do we allow ourself just to be?

So this allowance, this space that we are giving to ourselves is very important. So we start by practicing metta towards our own self.

You can feel your whole body with this feeling of well being. May I be happy. Feeling secure. And free from difficulties.

This is a feeling, this is also a phrase.

Then as you need it, then you can spend a little more time if you need to by yourself until the feeling has settled. Until you feel really well and really caring for yourself.

When you feel kind of satisfied and then full. Then you can extend that to the person that you care for the most, of one of the people that you really respect and love. So you can see the person's face. Or if you are not so visual you can just have the felt presence of that person.

So towards that person, you are also wishing the same. May she be happy. May she feel secure and without difficulties.

Then depending on the time that you are having with your practice, sometimes you can spend a long time on one person. It can be your children, or your friends, as long as emotions or attachments don't overpower your mind. Then you can just stay with that person, with that image, with that memory, then you develop it, you just keep it in your mind.

And then, at some point, you feel very very happy, the mind gets very concentrated. So you can change the objects, you can change the people, you can change the beings towards which you are sending your metta that you are caring for. So that same feeling that you have within yourself, then you open it to any other being.

You can just start right here, right now. The person in front of you, the person beside you, the person you are meeting, the person you will meet, the person you have met. All beings in general, but by alternating from one person to another person. This has to be adjusted, depending on how your practice evolves. But alternation can be good. You just change from one person to the other person and then like that you extend your field of awareness.

So for example you can take all the beings in front of you, and just as a general thing, you think may all the beings in front, may they be happy, may they feel secure and without difficulty.

Then in one direction you can extend that feeling of metta, far away in front of you, all the beings in that direction, may they feel happy and secure and without trouble.

Sometimes if you see that the mind gets very concentrated, just by one direction, then you can just stick to that direction. But also you can change directions, all the beings on my left, near or far, all the persons on my right, near or far, all the beings, all kinds of beings on my back, near or far. The beings on top, the beings down there, all beings in all the directions, may they feel happy, secure, and without trouble.

Once you have been able to extend this feeling of loving kindness to all beings in general, then what you can do also, is you extend your arms and embrace all these beings, with your arms you embrace all these beings, then bring your arms close to your heart. So all the beings in the universe, you bring them close to your heart, and from there you wish them happiness, security and freedom from all difficulties.