

The Buddhist Concept of Mettā: Its Effective Applications in Real Life Situations

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This paper attempts to deal with the definitions of *mettā* in a variety of contexts and the relationship between its linguistic and ultimate dimensions in relation to select theoretical and practical contexts. For this purpose the paper includes four sections: 1. Definition of Metta Based on Texts, 2. Metta in the paritta Contexts as a Saccakiriya, 3. Applications of Metta in Real Life Situations: Case Studies by the Author and a Few Selected Modern Buddhist Practitioners, and 4. Conclusion.

The more that man is bothered by vices the more that he or she is in search of virtues. Hence prince Siddhatta Gotama was in search of virtues (*kim kusalagavesi*) and succeeded in finding out the philosophy of the middle way which comprises virtues, lovely from beginning to end, that any individual could apply and be in harmony with him or herself as well as with others.

The concept of *metta*, an abstract from *mitra* (Skt), *mitta* (Pali), derived from *ymid* to love is generally understood as loving-kindness, universal love, true friendship, compassionate love etc. One who practises this virtue pervades not only all beings with it boundlessly but also oneself, which nourishes one's character traits boundlessly. Hence one eventually becomes a good friend of oneself, too. In its true sense one cannot help others without helping oneself and vice versa.

The scope of canonical references to *metta* carries relatively a broad meaning. For instance, reflecting on *metta* in broad dimension of its applications. Venerable Ananda expressed his understanding of it as consisting of a half of the holy life, but the Buddha corrected him saying that the practice of *mettā* involves not only a half but the whole of the holy life (S V 2-3). The terms used in this context to refer to *mettā* are *kalyanamittata* (good friendship), *kalyanasahayata* (good companionship) *kalyana-sampavankata* (good comradeship). The sutta further explains that one will follow the noble eightfold path as a result of this friendship. In other contexts *metta* is again categorized as one of the four boundless (*appananna*), sublime qualities (*brahamavihara-s*), the rest of which being *karuna* (compassion), *muditā* (appreciative joy) and *upekkha* (equanimity).

Selected discourses have been chanted as a blessing and protection along the Buddhist traditions. The term used in this context to refer to discourse is *paritta*, which means protection all around. For this purpose twenty-four discourses are specifically used for overnight chanting in Sri Lanka. We find with reference to these discourses canonical and commentarial accounts on incidents where the Buddha and his disciples chanted one or some of these discourses to cure diseases, prevent people from the disturbances caused by evil spirits and other nonhuman elements and so on. What is generally used as *saccakiriya* (*lit.* truthful act) is an act based on the concentration of one's own sublime qualities developed from his or her genuine altruistic practice and by means of which one gives blessings. Act of this kind seem to involve ritualistic dimensions, which, however, consist of therapeutic significance. Nevertheless, they pave the way to personality development based on loving-kindness and other sublime qualities.