

Boundless Benevolence:

A Buddhist Perspective on Metta in Modern Society

Submitted by

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Abstract

Today, the world can be connected easily via advanced technology, but people are again divided world, and face big challenges between material progress and inner peace. Modern technology and economic growth are improving so fast for living conditions so fast; however, people are confronted the social conflicts, emotional stress, and online hostility have also increased. These problems break down the community unity and individual mental health. Buddha's teachings offer a timeless solution through *Metta* (loving-kindness), as an unlimited and unconditional goodwill toward all beings, and free from attachment or harm. In the *Khuddaka Nikaya* of the *Sutta Pitaka*, the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* teaches that *Metta* is not only for a meditation practice but also a moral guideline that helps people overcome fear, sorrow, reduce hatred, and create harmony. In the present day, psychology also shows that loving-kindness meditation (*Metta Bhavana*) controls emotions, cultivates empathy, provides kindness toward others, and resilience to stress. This paper focuses on *Tipitaka* Pāli Canon sources and modern writings to connect ancient Buddhist wisdom with today's needs. It shows that *Metta* is more than a personal practice; it is a powerful way to build mental well-being, harmony in communities, and support peaceful living for everyone.

Keywords

Buddhism, loving-kindness, mental well-being, Mettā, social harmony

Introduction

In the present day, Science, technology, and business have all come a long way in the twenty-first century, but these successes have happened at the society is falling apart, people are fighting, misunderstanding, blaming each other, and people are going through a lot of personal turmoil. Generally, people around the world are living better; however, increasing the stress, worry, and mistrust that come with living in cities, competitive economies, and digital contact have gotten worse for people and communities we can see easily today. By quickly sharing and spreading information, social media has brought people around the world closer together. However, most of the news was becoming false information, and the cultural divide was getting worse.

The Buddha's teachings of *Metta* ("loving-kindness" or "boundless benevolence") give us a moral basis and peace for a lifetime. It means consciously choosing to be kind to all living things, no matter what race, gender, or country they are from. In the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta* (Sn 1.8),¹ the Buddha delivered how to spread loving-kindness as a mother who protects her one and only child. This proves how protective and kind it is to everyone.

From a historical, language, psychological, and sociocultural point of view, this study looks at *Metta*. It talks about its philosophical roots in early Buddhism, how it was used as a moral code and a way to meditate, and how it can still help us deal with problems like online violence, community breakdown, and global unrest. This paper uses both old and new scholarly writing to show that *Metta* is more than just a spiritual practice to do by yourself. It is also a powerful way to promote peace and live together in unity.

Metta in the Pāli Canon: Historical and Doctrinal Background

In the *Tipitaka*, *Metta* is mentioned as one of the four Brahmavihāras (sublime states), together with *Karunā* (compassion), *Muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *Upekkhā* (equanimity) (*Dīgha Nikāya*, DN 13). The *Metta Sutta* (Sn 1.8) provides practical instructions for developing loving-kindness, removing hatred, and becoming a peaceful state. It starts with moral advice, as someone who practices loving-kindness should be honest, not arrogant, and work on being happy.

The Buddha taught *Metta* here as a conscious, unlimited, and fair mental glow that reaches out to everyone, including friends, strangers, family, and even people who seem like adversaries. In the Pali Canon, it says that *Metta* is a good way to work out your thoughts right away. In the *Karaṇīya Metta Sutta*, the Buddha says that a thought that is full of loving-kindness "cannot be taken over by ill-will" and "rests free from enmity" (AN 4.125). In the *Itivuttaka* (Iti 27),² the Buddha says that having a heart of *Metta* leads to a peaceful return in the Brahma worlds. This is a metaphor for how it cleans up your mind.

Metta as Meditation Practice and Psychological Perspectives

The *Visuddhimagga*³ and which was written by Ven. Buddhaghosa explains how to create *Metta*, or loving-kindness, step by step. First, be kind to yourself. Then, be kind to someone you care about, someone who is neutral, someone who is difficult, and finally, be kind to all living things. This steady growth helps take down walls of dislike, bias, and anger.

¹ The *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (*Sutta Nipāta* 1.8) is a discourse on loving-kindness (*metta*) spoken by the Buddha. It outlines the qualities of someone who practices *metta* and how to cultivate it, emphasizing universal love and compassion for all beings.

² *Itivuttaka* (Iti 27), also known as the *Mettācetovimutti Sutta*, is a discourse within the *Itivuttaka* collection of the Pali Canon, specifically in the "Group of Ones".

³ The *Visuddhimagga*, meaning "Path of Purification," is a foundational text in Theravada Buddhism, written by the scholar-monk Buddhaghosa in the 5th century CE.

"Hatred is never calmed by hatred in this world; non-hatred is the only thing that calms hatred" (Dhp 5).⁴ This "non-hatred" called *Metta Bhāvanā* turns anger into love and helps people understand each other. Research from today backs up these effects. Fredrickson et al. say that loving-kindness meditation makes people feel better, stronger, and more linked to others (1057). As Hofmann et al. found, it makes people happy with their lives and less anxious, depressed, and stressed (1128). Neuroscience also shows that practicing *Metta* makes parts of the brain stronger that help with understanding and mood regulation (Lutz et al., 2018).

Metta as a Social and Ethical Force

Metta has a lot of proof that it helps people meditate. It also has a big effect on society.⁵ During the period of early Buddhist times, Metta practice was both a personal practice and a public good thing to do.

Buddha taught us about the six important social connections that the *Sigalovāda Sutta* (DN 31)⁶ mentioned as: parents and children, teachers and students, spouses and spouses, friends and friends, employers and workers, and religious leaders and lay followers. These duties are based on the idea of Metta, which means respecting others, not taking advantage of them, and taking care of your responsibilities.

Metta can help us get along with others, talk to people of different religions, and settle disagreements in the modern world. People can see past labels and differences, which helps them care about and understand people with different political views, ideas, or cultures.

Relevance of Metta in Modern Society

Countering Online Hostility

Hate speech quickly spreads in this age of the Information Technology era. Metta is the way that can radiate as sharing from online, to the people who were angry, and one can become polite. When you get angry, it might help to be kind and caring before you respond to rude messages.

Healing Community Divisions

Presently, we can see the two types of divisions as economic and political aspects as which make inequality in our society. We can base Metta practice and activities in our community. Being better to other people makes them trust you, which makes it easier to work together and solve problems.

⁴ It emphasizes the futility of responding to hatred with more hatred. It suggests that true resolution and peace can only be achieved through compassion and non-retaliation.

⁵ <https://www.ramana-maharshi.org/the-vibrant-spectrum-of-hindu-pop-music/>

⁶ The *Sigalovada Sutta*, also known as the Discourse to Sigala (DN 31), is a Buddhist scripture outlining the duties and responsibilities of laypeople in their relationships with family, friends, and society.

Peacebuilding and Global Harmony

Metta practice can benefit not only the individual but also international relations. Buddha's teachings accordance with the diplomacy based on empathy, non-violence (*Ahimsa*), and mutual benefit in the past 2600 years.

Integration into Education and Governance

How Metta practice can be integrated into educational systems from an early age for the students. Syllabi and curricula were matched with loving-kindness (*Metta*) practice for the benefits of emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution. Same as in the workplaces, we can use the practice of Metta, especially *Mettā bhavana* (loving-kindness meditation), to reduce stress and improve team dynamics.

On the other hand, Governments and policymakers can draw on *Metta* practice to promote human dignity, environmental care, and peaceful coexistence over short-term gains, as a moral compass and prioritizing policies.

Conclusion

Although the practice of Metta is an ancient Buddhist monasticism, but a living, adaptable practice with profound relevance for contemporary life. Metta teaching is based on the *Pāli Tipitaka*, which has been affirmed by centuries of Theravada and Mahayana, both Buddhist traditions, and validated by modern psychology. It filled up a gap between personal well-being and collective harmony because, in the present era, while technological advancement outpaces moral development, many people face stresses and conflicts in society, at the workplace even in their families.

The practice of Metta meditation and the sharing of Metta offer an essential corrective, a personal virtue and collective imperative capable of guiding humanity toward sustainable peace, which can bring up global peace. As the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* and related discourses stated, boundless benevolence can remove hatred, fear, and worries, dismantle hatred, and cultivate a shared sense of humanity.

Whosoever, embracing *Metta* not only as an individual meditation or *Metta bhavana* but as a social ethic, compassion, empathy, and modern society can reorient itself toward compassion, understanding, and enduring harmony.

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