Importance of Mettā

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 24:38

When we practice *vipassanā*, we put ourselves into this very objective place, the objective observer, feeler, and so on. And to get there, we have to develop that equanimity, non-involvement. Just as, say, a bird watcher might watch birds, they don't mess around with the bird, they just watch. And in watching, they begin to understand and see and write a bestseller. This is how you can start writing your autobiography. And it was a bestseller.

However, the danger is that this equanimity corrupts into indifference. And to stop that, we do *metta*. *Mett a* re-engages with the psychophysical organism and from there into daily life. *Metta* is all the qualities you would expect of yourself as a good friend or of a good friend. And it's the basis of our relationship to each other, to all beings really, a sense of care.

And when we've got that established, the other two illimitables, as they're called. Illimitable because they can be developed indefinitely, a bit like number. No matter how big your number you can conceive, you can always have one. So when we have that attitude of goodwill towards somebody, and if they fall into misfortune, compassion, a desire to help, rises naturally. And if they enjoy good fortune, we're happy for them.

Equanimity, which is the other illimitable, of course, sits underneath these three, stops them corrupting into their near enemy. Love corrupting into attachment, whereby we confuse liking somebody with love. Compassion into grief. And joy into excitement. This is self-indulgence, really. So *metta* in the Buddha's teaching is really part and parcel of the whole practice. And he asks us to maintain that goodwill throughout the day with awareness. So to live consciously with a good heart.

Now the one thing we mustn't do is to confuse goodwill, this *metta*, with an emotion. It's an attitude, it's a way of relating. So that you can have goodwill and act in a friendly way, even though you don't feel like it. You might not like the person. They might not like you. This is what's meant by loving your enemies. You don't have to like them.

That's one of the gifts of a spiritual companion. You don't have to like them. But they're there as support. And as we practice that of course the heart does begin to respond and you can experience delightful feelings. Then the danger is that we begin to practice *metta* just to feel good. So it becomes a selfish practice.

The traditional blessings are may you be safe. So everybody wants to be safe from danger, danger outside, danger from within ourselves. From financial crises. Everybody wants to be well. Everybody wants to be

free of mental distress. Everybody wants to be happy, fulfilled. And to have a certain ease with life. Not to be always in conflict with it. To live contented.

Contentment is the mark of the fully liberated person. This is the way it is. It's not a resignation. This is the way it is, what can we do? Contentment. And that contentment leads to a certain harmony working with the situation. Even when it's not particularly pleasant. Contented and in harmony with the world.

So those are our blessings. May you be safe, well and happy. Live contented, in harmony with the world. We begin with the particular, especially those who've helped us. So with gratitude, goodwill arises naturally. And then to near and dear, friends, neutral people, the people we see every day, maybe when we travel, our neighbours, but we don't know them. Even people we're familiar with on television, radio, but we don't actually know them. We can even offer goodwill to a politician.

Then there's ourselves, of course. We mustn't forget ourselves. So we offer those same blessings to ourselves. And then when the heart is softened, we can bring in somebody we find difficult. Not that they are difficult, we just find them difficult.

Then we begin to spread it outwards, first of all, to each other, here, now. And to our neighbours, so you can relocate to where you live, all the people in our country, all the peoples of Europe, and finally all people on earth. Then after all people on earth, to all beings, all beings in all directions. And we'll do the six directions, before, behind, left, right, below and above. And we end with a chant, which means may all beings be happy.

So if you wish to continue standing, you can do this standing. But if you'd like to sit, then we can take a posture. So remember that you're not trying to feel good. That makes the practice very nice. You're just trying to develop an attitude and you do that by little internal acts of will. That's why at the end of a sitting we can make these little resolutions and eventually they'll make their way through.

So let's bring to mind somebody who has helped us in our lives. As we picture them before us there. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented in harmony with the world. Just gently repeat that towards. Now some people feel a warmth in their heart. Why not? Some people have a colour. Doesn't matter. Whatever helps to develop that attitude is fine.

Bringing to mind those who are near and dear to us. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented, in harmony with the world. We can bring to mind friends, people at work, whomever we wish. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented, in harmony with the world.

And to neutral people, people we see but don't know, offering them the same quality of goodwill. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented, in harmony with the world.

Turning now that stream of goodwill towards ourselves. May I be safe, well and happy. May I live contentedly in harmony with the world. When we do this practice, especially towards ourselves, it can feel

inauthentic because we don't feel it. But that's the confusion. Whether we feel it or not, we make these intentions. And it's the intentions which are authentic. Put your identity into the intentions. May I be safe, well and happy. May I live contented, in harmony with the world.

And into the heart of goodwill someone we find difficult. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented, in harmony with the world.

And we can begin now to radiate it outwards to each other. May we be safe, well and happy. May we live contented, in harmony with the world. And we can begin to radiate it outward to our neighbours, so here we can relocate to where we live. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented, in harmony with the world.

Radiating outward to all the people in our country. And you'll notice here that unlike in *vipassanā* where we want to shut down the imagining thinking mind, now we're using it skillfully to develop attitude. Radiating outward to all the peoples of Europe. And from there to all people on earth. And as you hover over places where there's war, destitution caused by natural disasters, poverty, all sorts of suffering, just hover above those places and offer your goodwill.

Now we can begin to radiate it outwards in the six directions. First of all, to all beings before us. May you be safe, well and happy. May you live contented in harmony with the world. All beings behind us. All beings to our left. All beings to our right. All beings below us. All beings above us. And to all beings in all directions.

And I'd like to offer you another format which you may find useful. Turning that stream of goodwill towards ourselves. May I be free of greed and selfishness. May I be free of hatred and ill will. May I be free of fear and anxiety. May I be free of ignorance and delusion. May I be kind and gentle sympathetic and benevolent. May I be forgiving and compassionate. May I be joyful and rejoice in the success of others. May I be peace loving and calm. May I be liberated of all my suffering. May I experience the peace and bliss of *Nibbāna*.

And radiating that out to all beings in all directions. May all beings be free of greed and selfishness. May all beings be free of hatred and ill will. May all beings be free of fear and anxiety. May all beings be free of ignorance and delusion. May all beings be kind and gentle sympathetic and benevolent. May all beings be forgiving and compassionate. May all beings be joyful and rejoice in the success of others. May all beings be peace loving and kind. May all beings be liberated of all their sufferings. May all beings experience the peace and bliss of *Nibbāna*.

Sabbe sattā sukhitā hontu. Sabbe sattā sukhitā hontu. Sabbe sattā sukhitā hontu. Sādhu sādhu sādhu

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