

One of the key principles of integrated study and practice is that a large amount of investigation can be inspired by and applied to a small amount of Dhamma. Those of you participating in the ISP Mettā Sutta Group are invited to reflect upon just one stanza of the Mettā Sutta each month, thereby covering the sutta's ten stanzas in ten months.

Each stanza contains very few words, yet holds a vast store of wisdom and is of immense practical value. Taking time allows each word and phrase to sink in, to grow in meaning, and to blossom with significance. You might work with a single word all day, all week, or all month. Or, you might explore the ways several words or phrases amplify and clarify one another. Or, perhaps it works better for you to take the stanza as a whole, turning it over in your experience again and again in every new situation encountered in your daily life and in your meditation practice.

There is no prescribed formula or set of specific instructions. Each of you is familiar with your own ways of learning and growing in understanding. Working with a small amount of material over a long period of time allows for a lot of experimentation, adaptation, and creativity. You might want to memorize each verse early in each month in order to have the phrasing at hand at any time during the day. Here are just a few suggestions of ways to investigate the meaning of the words you will be studying:

- **Meditation practice.** If you sit regularly, or when you go on retreat, you might inquire from time to time upon the meaning of a word or phrase when your mind is more relaxed and focused than everyday life allows.
- **Daily life.** There may be opportunities to see the meaning of the stanzas, or the insights they point to, in the behavior of others, in the way you relate to your family, your friends, your professional colleagues, or with strangers.
- **Public media.** Aspects of each stanza's teaching may resonate in a movie you see, a book you read, a story you hear or tell. Observe the wider culture around you to see how the Dhamma teachings apply.
- **Unconscious expression.** As you bear in mind the teachings of each stanza, you may find the themes presented emerging in your creative writing, artistic creations, or in your dream images. All this is natural to a process of gradual integration.
- **Conversation.** You may know others who are embarked on the same integrated investigation, or you may invite others you know to do so, such that formal or impromptu discussions of the material can take place in various fruitful ways. Sitting groups in particular might want to use this material to enhance their collective practice.

Again, there is no prescribed way of learning from the investigation of lived experience under the guidance of the Buddha's teachings. This material is offered as a free gift, and each of you has the freedom to use it in any way it may be most beneficial.

May your diligent practice contribute to the well-being of all the world.