

Metta in other Suttas

With all ten verses of the *Mettā Sutta* covered, we can turn our attention to other passages in the Pali literature that address the matter of loving kindness and its cultivation. The following passage occurs in several places in the suttas, and can be taken as one of the core classical descriptions of the practice of loving kindness.

so mettā-sahagatena cetasā ekam disam pharivā viharati, tathā dutiyam, tathā tatiyam, tathā catuttham. iti uddham adho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantam lokam mettā-sahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamānena averena avyāpajjhena pharivā viharati.

seyyathā pi balavā sankha-dhamo appakasiren' eva catuddisā viññāpeyya, evam bhāvitāya mettāya ceto-vimuttiyā yam pamāna-katam kammam na tam tatrā vasissati na tam tatrāvatitthati.

One abides suffusing the first direction with a mind accompanied by loving kindness; then the second, then the third, then the fourth; thus above, below and all around; everywhere, in every way. One abides suffusing everyone in the world with a mind accompanied by loving kindness—abundant, expansive, unlimited, without hatred, without ill-will.

Just as if a mighty trumpeter were with little difficulty to make a proclamation to the four directions, so by this liberation of the mind through the development of loving-kindness one sets an example, leaving nothing untouched there, nothing unaffected there.

(*Tevijja Sutta, Digha Nikāya 13*)

one abides...with a mind accompanied by loving kindness

Just like in the *Mettā Sutta*, this passage uses the spatial metaphor as a framework for practicing loving kindness. Sitting comfortably, one first of all establishes the presence of loving kindness in the mind or heart (the word *cetasā* can be translated both ways). It is not that one thinks about loving kindness, for this would be taking it as an object; rather one thinks of a person with the attitude or emotion of loving kindness. Loving kindness (*mettā*) is thus the quality of heart that has “gone along with” (*saha-gatena*) awareness of the person we call to mind. This wording emphasizes the fact that the loving kindness is the mental factor or emotional tone added to consciousness as the mind is directed to the various points of the compass.

suffusing the first direction

Next one suffuses one direction—all the world that lies in front of you—with this quality of loving kindness. It is an imaginative “sending forth” or broadcasting of loving kindness out and away from you, much as a trumpeter might sound a blast of her horn to reach the far corners of the world. One is not actually generating loving “vibrations” that are going to literally travel out and transform all they reach. As we saw before in the *Mettā Sutta*, it is much more a matter of intensifying the direct experience of loving kindness through its imaginative amplification, thus purifying one’s own mind stream, rather than trying to transform the other by one’s psychological projections.

**then the second, then the third, then the fourth; thus above, below and all around;
everywhere, in every way**

The same is done systematically toward the other three points of the compass, and then above to the zenith and below to the nadir. This has the effect of enveloping the practitioner in a bubble of loving kindness that extends evenly in every direction. This has the effect not only of further amplification, but also of opening up the feeling of kindness to all beings indiscriminately. By wishing all creatures in all directions profound well-being, one is erasing any lingering distinctions one might be tempted to make between friend and foe, liked and disliked, insider and outsider. If the opening of the heart is to be effective, it must be indiscriminate and extended to all beings without distinction. The thoroughness of the exercise is further emphasized by adding such words as “everywhere” (*sabbadhi*), “in every way” (*sabbattatāya*), and “to everyone in the world” (*sabbāvantam lokam*).

—abundant, expansive, unlimited, without hatred, without ill-will

Then a string of adjectives is added to this passage that helps further describe the quality of the mind of loving kindness. It is abundant (*vipulena*), in the sense of being full, inexhaustible and over-flowing its vessel; it is expansive (*mahaggatena*), or literally “gone to greatness” or “become large;” it is unlimited (*appamānena*) insofar as it is without measure and has no furthest extent where it leaves off; it is without hate (*averena*) and without ill-will (*avyāpajjhena*) because these unwholesome states are antithetical to loving kindness and cannot co-exist in any particular mind moment with loving kindness.

like a mighty trumpeter...

Finally, the image of a mighty trumpeter is used to reinforce the sense of broadcasting or sending the emotion of care and love in all directions. There is nothing untouched, nothing unaffected, nothing out of earshot, so to speak, of the trumpeter. Next time you practice formal loving kindness meditation, see if you can relate to this image of a trumpeter. Try visualizing yourself as the trumpeter, roaring your lion’s roar in all directions. See how it lends power to the exercise, for if you are going to be heard in the back row of the world, you have to breathe deeply and project your sound strongly and with conviction.