



METTA

("Diplomatical" benevolence)

These suttas have parallels either in the Chinese, Tibetan, or Sanskrit texts.

"One whose mind all day and night
Takes delight in harmlessness,
Who has benevolence for all beings;
For him there is enmity with none."

*Yassa sabbamahorattaṃ,
ahiṃsāya rato mano;
Mettaṃso sabbabhūtesu,
veraṃ tassa na kenacī"ti.*

SN 10.4

"Just as it is difficult for burglars to assail those families that have few women and many men, so too it is difficult for nonhuman beings to assail a bhikkhu who has developed and cultivated the liberation of mind by benevolence.

Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, yāni kānici kulāni appitthikāni bahupurisāni tāni duppadhaṃsiyāni honti corehi kumbhatthenakehi, evameva kho, bhikkhave, yassa kassaci bhikkhuno mettācetovimutti bhāvitā bahulīkatā so duppadhaṃsiyo hoti amanussehi.

"Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves thus: 'We will develop and cultivate the liberation of mind by benevolence, make it our vehicle, make it our basis, stabilize it, exercise ourselves in it, and fully perfect it.' Thus should you train yourselves."

tasmātiha, bhikkhave, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ — 'mettā no cetovimutti bhāvitā bhavissati bahulīkatā yānīkatā vatthukatā anuṭṭhitā paricitā susamāraddhā'ti. evañhi vo, bhikkhave, sikkhitabban"ti. tatiyaṃ.

SN 20.3

"Bhikkhus, if someone were to give away a hundred pots of food as charity in the morning, a hundred pots of food as charity at noon, and a hundred pots of food as charity in the evening, and if someone else were to develop a mind of benevolence even for the time it takes to pull a cow's udder, either in the morning, at noon, or in the evening, this would be more fruitful than the former.

"yo, bhikkhave, pubbaṇhasamayam okkhāsatam dānam dadeyya, yo majjhanhikasamayam

okkhāsatam dānam dadeyya, yo sāyanhasamayaṃ okkhāsatam dānam dadeyya, yo vā pubbaṇhasamayaṃ antamaso gadduhanamattampi mettacittam bhāveyya, yo vā majjhanhikasamayaṃ antamaso gadduhanamattampi mettacittam bhāveyya, yo vā sāyanhasamayaṃ antamaso gadduhanamattampi mettacittam bhāveyya, idaṃ tato mahapphalataram.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train ... (as in SN 20.3)

tasmātiha, bhikkhave, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ ...

SN 20.4

When a bhikkhu has developed and cultivated the liberation of mind by benevolence, made it a vehicle, made it a basis, stabilized it, exercised himself in it, and fully perfected it, if a nonhuman being thinks he can overthrow his mind, that nonhuman being would only experience fatigue and vexation.

Yassa kassaci bhikkhuno mettācetovimutti bhāvitā bahulīkatā yānīkatā vatthukatā anuṭṭhitā paricitā susamāraddhā, tassa ce amanusso cittam khipitabbaṃ maññeyya; atha kho sveva amanusso kilamathassa vighātassa bhāgī assa.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, you should train yourselves...

tasmātiha, bhikkhave, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ...

SN 20.5

And what, venerable sir, is the method by which these things are different in meaning and also different in phrasing? Here a bhikkhu dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with benevolence, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind diffused with benevolence, vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility, without ill will. He dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion ... with a mind imbued with altruistic joy ... with a mind imbued with equanimity, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with equanimity, vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility, without ill will. This is called the measureless liberation of mind.

Katamo ca, bhante, pariyāyo yaṃ pariyāyaṃ āgamma ime dhammā nānatthā ceva nānābyañjanā ca? Idha, bhante, bhikkhu mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ. Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantam lokam mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati. Karuṇāsahagatena cetasā ... pe ... muditāsahagatena cetasā ... pe ... upekkhāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ. Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantam lokam upekkhāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena

averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati, bhante, appamāṇā cetovimutti.

SN 41.7 ([see here](#))

“Then, headman, that noble disciple—who is thus devoid of covetousness, devoid of ill will, unconfused, clearly comprehending, ever mindful—dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with benevolence, likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with benevolence, vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility, without ill will. Just as a strong conch blower can easily send his signal to the four quarters, so too, when the liberation of mind by benevolence is developed and cultivated in this way, any limited kamma that was done does not remain there, does not persist there.

Sa kho so, gāmaṇi, ariyasāvako evaṃ vigatābhijjho vigatabyāpādo asammūḷho sampajāno paṭissato mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ. Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantam lokam mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharitvā viharati. Seyyathāpi, gāmaṇi, balavā saṅkhadhamo appakasireneva catuddisā viññāpeyya; evameva kho, gāmaṇi, evaṃ bhāvitāya mettāya cetovimuttiyā evaṃ bahulīkatāya yaṃ pamāṇakatam kammaṃ, na taṃ tatrāvasissati, na taṃ tatrāvatitṭhati.

SN 42.8

“And what, bhikkhus, is the denourishment that prevents unarisen ill will from arising and arisen ill will from increasing and expanding? There is, bhikkhus, the liberation of mind through benevolence: frequently giving careful attention to it is the denourishment that prevents unarisen ill will from arising and arisen ill will from increasing and expanding.

Ko ca, bhikkhave, anāhāro anuppannassa vā byāpādassa uppādāya, uppannassa vā byāpādassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya? Atthi, bhikkhave, mettācetovimutti. Tattha yonisomanasikārabahulīkāro—ayamanāhāro anuppannassa vā byāpādassa uppādāya, uppannassa vā byāpādassa bhiyyobhāvāya vepullāya.

SN 46.51

“And how, bhikkhus, is the liberation of the mind by benevolence developed? What does it have as its destination, its culmination, its fruit, its final goal?

Kathaṃ bhāvitā ca, bhikkhave, mettācetovimutti, kiṅgatikā hoti, kiṃparamā, kiṃphalā, kiṃpariyosānā?

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu develops the enlightenment factor of mindfulness accompanied by benevolence ... the enlightenment factor of equanimity accompanied by benevolence, based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release. If he wishes: ‘May I dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive,’ he dwells perceiving the repulsive therein. If he wishes: ‘May I dwell perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive,’ he dwells perceiving the

unrepulsive therein. If he wishes: 'May I dwell perceiving the repulsive in the unrepulsive and in the repulsive,' he dwells perceiving the repulsive therein. If he wishes: 'May I dwell perceiving the unrepulsive in the repulsive and in the unrepulsive,' he dwells perceiving the unrepulsive therein. If he wishes: 'Avoiding both the unrepulsive and the repulsive, may I dwell equanimously, mindful and clearly comprehending,' then he dwells therein equanimously, mindful and clearly comprehending. Or else he enters and dwells in the deliverance of the beautiful (righteousness). Bhikkhus, the liberation of mind by benevolence has the righteous (beautifying oneself) as its culmination, I say, for a wise bhikkhu here who has not penetrated to a superior liberation.

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu mettāsaḥagataṃ satisambojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti ... pe ... mettāsaḥagataṃ upekkhāsaḥbojjhaṅgaṃ bhāveti vivekaṇissitaṃ virāgaṇissitaṃ nirodhaṇissitaṃ vossaggapariṇāmiṃ. So sace ākaṇkhati 'appaṭikūle paṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan'ti, paṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṇkhati 'paṭikūle appaṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan'ti, appaṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṇkhati 'appaṭikūle ca paṭikūle ca paṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan'ti, paṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṇkhati 'paṭikūle ca appaṭikūle ca appaṭikūlasaṇṇī vihareyyan'ti, appaṭikūlasaṇṇī tattha viharati. Sace ākaṇkhati 'appaṭikūlaṇca paṭikūlaṇca tadubhayaṃ abhinivajjetvā upekkhako vihareyyaṃ sato sampajāno'ti, upekkhako ca tattha viharati sato sampajāno, subhaṃ vā kho pana vimokkhaṃ upasampajja viharati. Subhapaṃamāhaṃ, bhikkhave, mettācetovimuttiṃ vadāmi, idhapaṇṇassa bhikkhuno uttarivimuttiṃ appaṭivijjhato.

Subha:

शुभ subha

- good (in moral sense) , righteous , virtuous , honest (ŚvetUp.)

शुभ subha [agt. subh]

√ शुभ् subh

- to beautify , embellish , adorn , beautify one's self. (RV.)

- to prepare , make fit or ready , prepare one's self. (RV. AV.)

SN 46.54

And how is it, bhikkhus, that by protecting others one protects oneself? By patience, harmlessness, benevolence, and sharing in sympathy. It is in such a way that by protecting others one protects oneself.

Kathaṇca, bhikkhave, paraṃ rakkhanto attānaṃ rakkhati? Khantiyā, avihiṃsāya, mettacittatāya, anudayatāya—evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, paraṃ rakkhanto attānaṃ rakkhati.

Anudayatā [anu+dayati]

- to divide , share.

- to have pity, to sympathize , to be kind .

Sanskrit dayate {pr. md. sg. } √ दय् day

√ दय् day

- to divide , impart , allot (RV)

- to take part in , sympathize with , have pity on (AV. ŚBr.)

SN 47.19

I will speak with a mind of benevolence, not while harboring hatred.

mettacitto vakkhāmi, no dosantaro.

“Friends, a person who is reproved should be established in two things: in truth and non-anger. If others should reprove me—whether at a proper time or at an improper time; whether about what is true or about what is false; whether gently or harshly; whether in a beneficial way or in a harmful way; whether with a mind of benevolence or while harboring hatred—I should still be established in two things: in truth and non-anger.

Cuditena, āvuso, puggalena dvīsu dhammesu paṭiṭṭhātabbamaṃ - sacce ca, akuppe ca. Mañcepi, āvuso, pare codeyyumaṃ kālena vā akālena vā bhūtena vā abhūtena vā saṇhena vā pharusena vā atthasaṃhitena vā anattasaṃhitena vā mettacittā vā dosantarā vā, ahampi dvīsuyeva dhammesu paṭiṭṭhaheyyamaṃ—sacce ca, akuppe ca.

AN 5.167

Pre-and-post Buddhist references

Metta comes from the Sanskrit मैत्र maitra [vr. मित्र mitra (mith-ra)].

√ मिथ् mith: to unite (as friend or antagonist).

Mitra symbolizes the social contract, and is the god of alliances in Vedism.

Maitra/mitra seems to denote some benevolence (as in the extract below, from the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa). While in the earlier texts, it can denote some kind of covenant between parties - some sort of policy of not initiating hostilities, (with the help of a Lord of friendship). There is, in the latter, a general underlying meaning of finesse; as in being subtly skillful at handling situations, for the good of everyone [viz. all living creatures: gods, men, demons, animals, etc.].

This double meaning seems also to apply to the suttas.

We can see in SN 20.4, that the Buddha said that distributing food, is far less effective, than a metta whose intention would be to share wisely; so as to avoid hostilities. A metta devoid of ill will and hostility - accompanied by patience, harmlessness, and sharing in sympathy.

Note that in the ŚBr. (~700 BCE), both these notions of "friendliness" did exist. The inclination to do kind or charitable acts; and the social contract profitable to all.

Note also that, nowhere in the suttas, it is mentioned that this metta, as a social contract, should entail some particular requirement. Like belonging to a privately initiated brotherhood; or any prerogative like that. It is a contract between all beings; for the good of all beings.

mitra: friendship. (RV)

mitradhita(i): a covenant or contract of friendship. (RV.)

mitrapati: lord of friends, or of friendship (RV.)

mitrin: befriended, united by friendship (RV. AV.)

mitratva: friendship (TS.)

mitradheya (VS. - ŚBr.): a covenant or contract of friendship.

maitra: benevolence, friendship. (ŚBr.)

maitrī: friendship, friendliness, benevolence, good will (MBh.)

And when the flame of the waning (fire) gets lower and lower, and (burns) as it were sideways, then, indeed, that (fire) is Mitra.

And if any one desires to consume food here through the kindness (maitra, of others), as one of whom they say, 'Truly, this Brahman is everybody's friend, he harms not any one,' - let him offer (the Agnihotra) then: and, assuredly, he who, knowing this, offers then (when the fire gets low), obtains that food.

atha yatraitatpratitarāmiva | tiraścīvārciḥ saṁśāmyato bhavati tarhi haiṣa bhavati mitraḥ sa yaḥ kāmayeta maitreṇedamannamadyāmiti yamāhuḥ sarvasya vā ayam brāhmaṇo mitraṁna vā ayam kaṁ cana hinastīti tarhi ha sa juhuyātprāpnoti haivaitadannādyam ya evaṁ vidvāmstarhi juhoti

ŚBr. 2.3.2-12

The Four Quarters

Disā [Ved . diś] - also दिग् dig or दिक् dik

- direction, quarters

दिग् dig

दिक् dik iic. diś_2.

दिश् diś_2 [agt. diś_1]

√ दिश् diś_1

√ दिश् diś (_1)

pf. (apa, ā, ut, upa, ni, nis, pra, sam)

- to point out , show , exhibit, manifest RV.

- to show , point out , assign MBh.

- to assign , grant , bestow upon RV. AV. MBh.

- to order , command RV. ?

- to show or approve one's self. AV. VS.

दिश् diś_2 [agt. diś_1]

- quarter or region pointed at , direction , cardinal point RV. AV. ŚBr.

[prācī] , east

[dakṣiṇā] , south

[prācī] west

[udīcī] , north

Sometimes a 5th , [dhruvā] AV. ŚBr.

and a 6th , [ūrdhvā] , zenith AV. ŚBr.

and a 7th , [vy-adhvā] , l'ici AV. ŚBr.

but oftener 8 are given i.e. the 4 cardinal and the 4 intermediate quarters , S. E. , S. W. , N. W. , and N. E.

and even a 9th , and 10th , [tiryak] or [adhas] and [ūrdhvam] ŚBr. MBh.

[dik-pati] below = Soma RV. , or = Rudra VS.

In sām̐khyā, these directions are those that restrain and govern [niyantr] the hearing sense [śrotra].

.....

May the All-gods, belonging to all men, move thee forward.

In the sky make firm the gods, in the atmosphere the birds, on earth the creatures of earth.

With the firm offering the firm

Soma, we transfer,

That the whole world may be for us

Free of sickness and of kindly intent;

That **Indra** may make

All the clans for us of one mind,

That all the quarters (diśo)

May be ours alone.

TS. 3.2.8.6 (Taittirīya-Saṁhitā)

While being high, that place should be even; and being even, it should be firm; and being firm, it should incline towards the east, since the east is the quarter of the gods; or else it should incline towards the north, since the north is the quarter of men. It should rise somewhat towards the south, that being the quarter of the Fathers. Were it to incline towards the south,

the sacrifice would quickly go to yonder world; but in this way the sacrificer lives long: let it therefore rise somewhat towards the south.

*tadvarṣma satsamaṃ syāt | samaṃ sadavibhramśi syādavibhramśi satprākpravaṇaṃ
syātprācī hi devānāṃ digatho udakpravaṇamudīcī hi manuṣyāṇāṃ digdakṣiṇataḥ
pratyucritamiva syādeṣā vai dik pitṛṇāṃ sa yaddakṣiṇāpravaṇaṃ syātkṣipre ha yajamāno
'muṃ lokamiyāttatho ha yajamāno jyogjīvati tasmāddakṣiṇataḥ pratyucritamiva syāt*

ŚBr. 3:1:1:2

On this (ground) they erect either a hall or a shed, with the top-beams running from west to east 2; for the east is the quarter of the gods, and from the east westwards the gods approach men: that is why one offers to them while standing with his face towards the east.

*tacālo vā vimitaṃ vā prācīnavamśam minvanti | prācī hi devānāṃ dik purastādvai
devāḥ pratyāñco manuṣyānupāvṛttāstasmāttebhyaḥ prāntiṣṭhañjuhoti*

ŚBr. 3:1:1:6

For this reason one must not sleep with his head towards the west, lest he should sleep stretching (his legs) towards the gods. The southern quarter belongs to the Fathers; and the western one to the snakes; and that faultless one is the one where the gods ascended (to heaven); and the northern quarter belongs to men. Hence in human (practice) a hall or shed is constructed with the top-beams running from south to north, because the north is the quarter of men. It is only for a consecrated, not for an unconsecrated person that it is (constructed) with the top-beams running from west to east.

*tasmādu ha na pratīcīnaśīrāḥ śayīta | neddevānabhiprasārya śayā iti yā dakṣiṇā dik sā
pitṛṇāṃ yā pratīcī sāsarpāṇāṃ yato devā uccakramuḥ saiśāhīnā yodīcī dik sā manuṣyāṇāṃ
tasmānmānuṣa udīcīnavamśāmeva śālāṃ vā vimitaṃ vā minvantiyudīcī hi manuṣyāṇāṃ
digdīkṣitasyaiva prācīnavamśā nādīkṣitasya*

ŚBr. 3:1:1:7

Through Pathyâ Svasti they recognised the northern (upper) region: wherefore speech sounds higher here among the Kuru-Pañkâlas; for she (Pathyâ Svasti) is in reality speech, and through her they recognised the northern region, and to her belongs the northern region.

3:2:3:15

Through Agni they recognised the eastern region: wherefore they take out Agni from behind towards the east, and render homage to him; for through him they recognised the eastern region, and to him belongs the eastern region.

3:2:3:16

Through Soma they recognised the southern region: hence, after the Soma has been bought, they drive it round on the south side; and hence they say that Soma is sacred to the Fathers; for through him they recognised the southern region, and to him belongs the southern region.

3:2:3:17

Through Savitri they recognised the western region, for Savitri is yonder burning (sun): wherefore he goes towards the west, for through him they recognised the western region, and

to him belongs the western region.

3:2:3:18

Through Aditi they recognised the upper region, for Aditi is this (earth): wherefore the plants and trees grow upwards on her; for through her they recognised the upper region, and to her belongs the upper region.

3:2:3:19

Of him the eastern direction is the eastern breaths, the southern direction is the southern breaths, the western direction is the western breaths, the northern direction is the northern breaths, the upper direction is the upper breaths, the lower direction is the lower breaths, all the quarters are all the breaths But the self is not this, not this

*tasya prācī dik prāñcaḥ prāṇāḥ | dakṣiṇā dig dakṣiṇe prāṇāḥ | pratīcī dik pratyāñcaḥ prāṇāḥ
| udīcī dig udañcaḥ prāṇāḥ | ūrdhvā dig ūrdhvāḥ prāṇāḥ | avācī dig avāñcaḥ prāṇāḥ | sarvā
dīśaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ | sa eṣa neti nety ātmā |*

BrArUp. 4.2.4

Although GopBr. 1.2.9 (somewhat late Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa), depicts an Ātharvaṇic sacrifice, Indra is again asked to protect the sacrifice in the four directions.