

Curbing Anger Spreading Love

Bhikkhu Visuddhācāra



Curbing Anger

Spreading Love

by
Bhikkhu Visuddhācāra

with illustrations by
Hor Tuck Loon

About The Author

Visu Teoh has been practising Buddhist meditation and following the Buddha's Teachings since 1982. He was born on the island of Penang in Malaysia, in 1953. He was a journalist for 12 years and a Buddhist monk (Visuddhācāra) for 17 years before he returned to the lay life in 2003. He trained as a monk with several meditation masters, notably Sayadaw U Pandita, Sayadaw U Lakkhana, Sayadaw U Jatila and Ven Sujiva.

He is married to Barbara Grey who is German and for some years now they have been dividing their time between Penang and Europe. Visu leads *mettā* and *vipassanā* retreats wherever he is invited. He is the author of several books including "Curbing Anger Spreading Love," "Drinking Tea Living Life: Applying Mindfulness in Everyday Life and Critical Times", "Loving and Dying" and "Hello with Love and Other Meditations" and "*Mettā* Meditation and Positive Attitudes."

Visu's emphasis in his teaching is on the integration of the Dhamma in everyday life while on our journey towards Enlightenment. Visu stresses the importance of living lightly, happily, peacefully, and joyfully in the present moment while striving towards the final goal of *Nibbāna* – the end of greed, hatred, and delusion.

He can be contacted at visu@mind-at-peace.net and his teachings are available at www.visuteoh.net.

For Free Distribution
Sabbadānam dhammadānam jināti.
The gift of Dhamma surpasses all gifts.

PDF Edition – 2016 (revised)
Illustrations by Hor Tuck Loon
Retyped and layout by H.L. Lee
Coloring by H.L. Lam, H.L. Lee, Oliver Lee
with kind permission from
Mr Visu Teoh
Revision 10

First Published in 1992 by
Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre
Illustrations by Hor Tuck Loon
Original book layout and design by Santivara

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language, please contact us at share@satimetta.net.
Feedback and comments are welcome too.

Foreword to this PDF edition.

I am delighted that my book, *Curbing Anger Spreading Love*, first published in 1992, is now made freely available in PDF format on the Internet. I thank all those who have made this electronic publication available, painstakingly typing it out in PDF format, incorporating all the illustrations and uploading it on the net so anyone can freely download it.

I wrote the book in 1992 when I was a Buddhist monk with the name Visuddhācāra. After 17 years in the robes, I returned to lay life in 2003. I am grateful that I am able to continue all these years to lead *mettā* (loving-kindness) and *vipassanā* (insight) meditation retreats.

Definitely, the world can do with more loving-kindness and less hatred and anger. These days we see so much suffering caused by terrorism, crimes and acts of rage and violence. If more people would practise *mettā*, the world would surely be a much better place to live in. Unfortunately though, those who are most in need of *mettā* practice, often do not realise this need. May they recognise this and purify their minds and hearts from hatred and anger with the medicine of loving-kindness.

Hatred and anger are a root cause of suffering in the world. If we can weaken these unwholesome qualities and cultivate their antidote which is loving-kindness, we would reap many blessings and much happiness in life. The Buddha said *mettā* is good for both oneself and others. We ourselves will be happy and we will also make others happy.

May this little book contribute to the welfare and happiness of all beings in the world.

Visu Teoh

22 August, 2016

www.visuteoh.net

To my *upajjhāya*,
the Venerable Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa,
and all my teachers who taught me
the theory and practice
of the Dhamma

To all my Dhamma friends and benefactors,
known and unknown,
without whose compassion and support,
I would not have been a monk
nor would I have been able to remain one today.

May the merits accruing from the *Dhamma-dāna*
be to the weal and happiness
of all my teachers and benefactors
and all sentient beings.

May all beings be well and happy.

Acknowledgements

A picture, as they say, is worth a thousand words. I am grateful to Hor Tuck Loon for drawing all the illustrations in this book. I have no doubt they will be much appreciated by readers. In fact, without this delightfully perceptive sketches, this book would have been all the poorer.

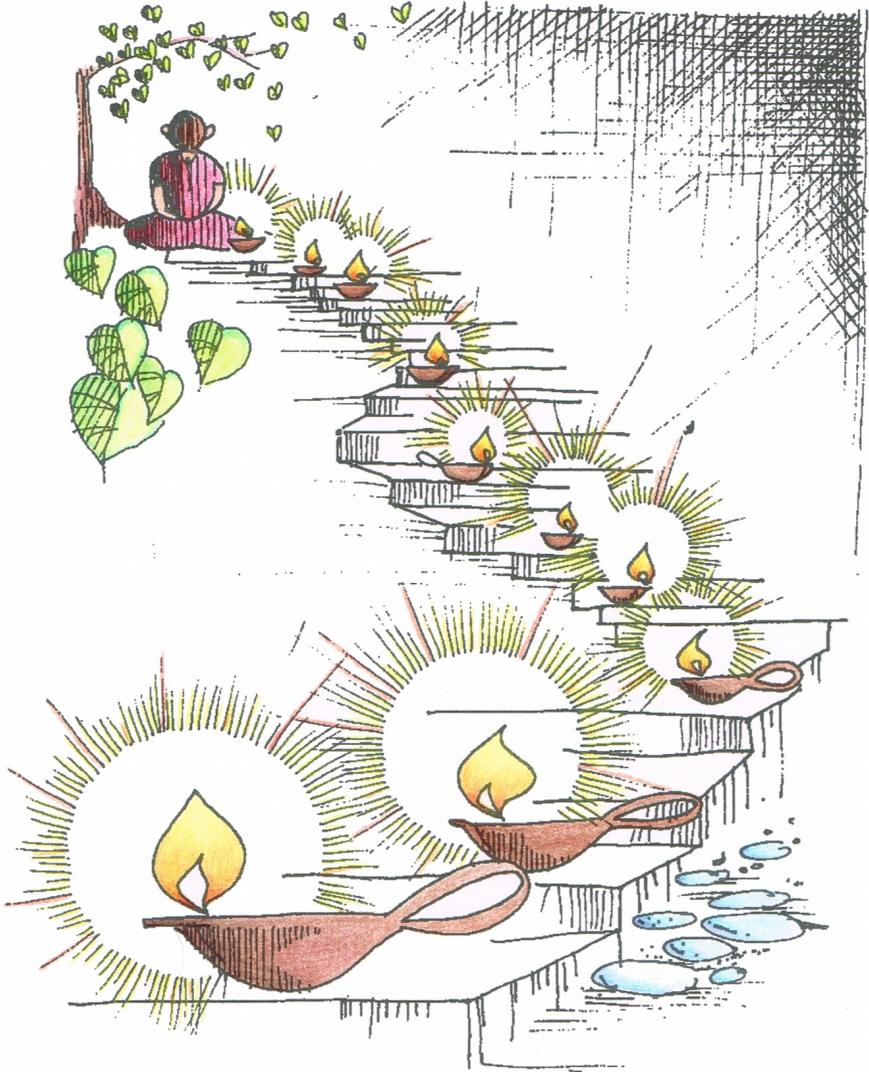
My thanks to *Venerable Suceta* for his painstaking proof-reading and all his many helpful suggestions.

I am indebted to Dr and Mrs Lim Huat Bee for their support and encouragement; and all donors without whose generous contributions this publication would not have been possible. To them all I say a big SĀDHU!

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*Like a little but steadily
glowing lamp, we can ignite
many other little lamps...*

Prologue – Spew It Out!

Spew out the venom of hatred from your heart – that hatred which is poisoning and choking all that is good and beautiful in you. Why would you want to have anything to do with this hideous monster? Spew it out, throw it all out, every bit of it. Throwing it out will be good for you.

Then fill the heart with the soothing balm of loving-kindness. Let it permeate every pore of your being. Soaked like a sponge with tenderness, reach out with a mind of pure love. Let every being who comes within the ambit of your presence feel the magic aura of your goodness, such that when they take their leave, they depart fortified with more confidence and courage to face this often hard and cruel world.

Hark! Listen, my friends. Like a little but steadily glowing lamp, we can ignite many other little lamps and lo, perhaps we may yet drive out the black night of despair, dispel the murk of delusion, and bring back the pure light of wisdom and love!

(A state that) starts with madness,
and ends with regret.

- *Abraham Hasdai*

1 Anger – A Destructive Emotion

Do you get angry? Of course, all of us, undeniably do. Now and then we may get irritated, annoyed, peeved. We get angry or exasperated with this person or that person for one reason or other. There are many things and conditions which can cause us to be vexed and annoyed. Usually we get frustrated and angry when we do not get our way. We want things done in a certain way and when it is not done in that way, we get upset and angry. Then there are people who provoke or offend us. They have a knack of getting on our nerves.

In fact there is no shortage of conditions that can spark off our anger. If we were to observe our reactions and responses in the course of a normal day, we would find many occasions when we lost our cool or were on the verge of losing it. Anger shows in the way we speak and gesticulate, the changes in our facial expressions, the irritation in our voice, the way we snap and raise our voice. And when we lose further control, we might start to shout, yell, kick, slam a door, bang the table, slam down the phone or even physically strike or assault somebody. In extreme cases, people have been known to kill out of anger, or while in the grip of rage, drop dead from a heart-attack!

Our anger may vary in intensity. Some people are hot-tempered: they blow up easily. Others are said to have a mild disposition; they appear to be always cool and calm. Some would nurse grudges long after their anger had passed while others may be more forgiving. Whatever it is, the fact remains that all of us do get angry, the difference being only in the intensity and frequency of the emotion. For even the most mild of persons can show signs of vexation and irritation when his patience is over-taxed, or when he is under too much pressure.

Should we get angry? Is there such a thing as righteous anger? Is it all right to get angry and yell at people, to lose our cool and blow our top?

Has anger become a way of life among people in the world? Have we taken it for granted and come to accept it as something natural and unavoidable? When we read today's newspapers, we would find no shortage of anger and hatred in our planet. Reading about all the fighting and continuous warfare in various parts of the world, do we pause to wonder why human beings can't live together peacefully as brothers and sisters? Why are we so unforgiving, so brutal, so merciless? Why do some kill innocent people to get what they want? Why do countries compete to make nuclear weapons that can destroy everybody in the world? Why is there so much fear and distrust?

Anger starts from our heart, just as love does. It is our firm belief that anger is an evil which should be banned completely from our hearts and minds. It is a destructive emotion that has caused much misery in the world and in our lives. It begins from the mind and it is at the source, the mind, that it must be checked and eliminated. In the preamble to the Unesco Constitution too, it is stated: "Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be built." Santideva in the *Bodhicaryavatara* (The entrance to the Life of Enlightenment), wrote: "How many evil men could I kill? Their number is boundless as the sky. But if the thought of anger is killed all enemies are killed."

Anger makes our life miserable. If we continue to accept anger and make no great effort to curb it, we will continue to live turbulent lives. Every time we become vexed, annoyed, angry, we begin to burn, mentally. This burning feeling increases with the intensity of the anger. The stronger the anger the stronger we burn. It is a very painful sensation. You can observe it for yourself. The next time you get vexed or angry, look at the state of your mind and heart, and see for yourself the pain and suffering you are undergoing while being in that state of anger or disturbance.

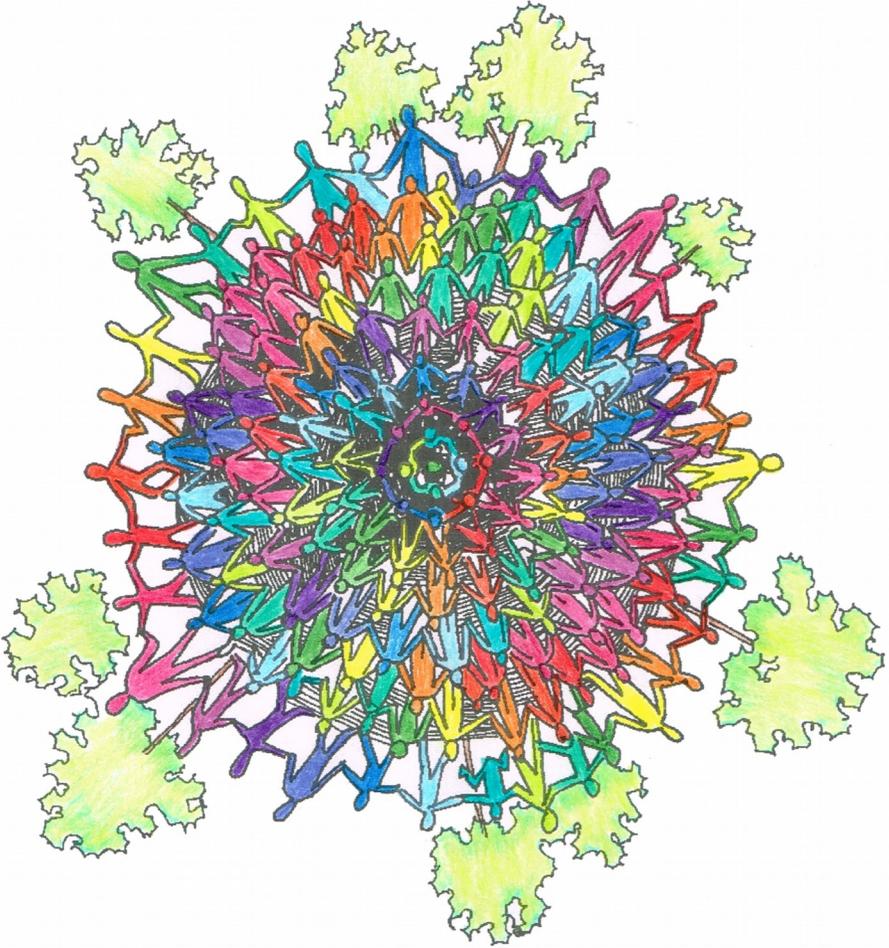
Anger is an unwholesome state of mind. The Buddha had never allowed for anger of any kind. In Buddhism there is no such thing as

righteous anger. All anger, even of the slightest level or duration, is bad. It is like a poison to the mind. Thus the Buddha has exhorted that we should return love for anger. “Hatred can never be overcome by hatred. Only by love alone can it be appeased. This is an eternal law,” he said. On another occasion he exhorted: “Conquer the angry man by love.”

In giving a simile to emphasise the point, the Buddha said that even if a robber were to use a saw to cut off our legs and hands, we should not give vent to even the slightest bit of anger. If we were to become even a little angry or annoyed, we would not be following his teaching. Instead the Buddha exhorted us to radiate love towards the tormentor. “For thus you ought to train yourself,” he said. “Undisturbed shall our mind remain, no evil words shall escape our lips, friendly and full of sympathy shall we remain, with a heart full of love, free from any hidden malice. And those persons (the robbers cutting off our limbs) shall we penetrate with loving thoughts, wide, deep, boundless, free from anger and hatred.”

Such was the Buddha’s perfection in love. Even as a *bodhisatta* (a Buddha-to-be), he had in countless previous lives, undergone torture and death without harbouring an iota of hate or anger towards his torturers. And in his last life as the Buddha he had always been cool and serene. Never had he lost his tranquillity and equanimity. When the mad elephant, Nalagiri, charged at him, the Buddha was able to subdue the animal by radiating loving-kindness towards it. The Buddha’s missionary work of 45 years, with little rest, was an exemplification of compassion and love.

The Buddha is, of course, not the only teacher who preaches love and compassion. All great teachers do so. Jesus Christ said: “Love thy neighbour as thyself.” “If somebody strikes you on the right cheek you should turn and offer him the other cheek.” Mahatma Gandhi, the great advocate of non-violence, said: “If blood be shed, let it be our blood. Cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing. For a man



*People make up the world.
If we change ourselves
we change the world.*

lives by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him.” This brings to mind the story of a monk who was threatened by a fearsome general. “Don’t you know,” roared the general, “I am the kind of person who could kill you without even batting an eye.” The monk replied: “And I, sir, am the kind of person who could be killed without batting an eye.” Faced by such a stout heart, the general walked off without harming the monk.

Besides being poison to our mind, anger and hatred are also a danger to our physical health. Medical science has confirmed that anger and other unhealthy emotions can contribute to bodily diseases. When we are angry our body discharges certain chemicals that can upset our physical well-being. If such behaviour is habitual, it can in the long run lead to various ailments, such as stomach ulcers, indigestion, constipation, high blood pressure, heart trouble and even cancer.

On the other hand, a calm and peaceful state of mind is conducive to both mental and physical well-being. We will be healthier, happier and live more fulfilling lives. Some of the chronic ailments, such as indigestion, that may be troubling us, may clear up. Other illnesses may also be averted. The serenity and radiance of a tranquil mind will be reflected in our physical features and complexion. Wherever we go we will be liked and loved by all. Nobody likes to associate with an angry person or with one who gets angry easily. To give an example, a boss who is always frowning or shouting at his employees, is shunned and disliked. His workers will not think twice of leaving when an opportunity arises. But the boss who is always smiling, kind and helpful, who never or rarely loses his temper, is loved and cherished. For such a boss, some employees would not leave even for a better salary elsewhere.

Furthermore, your virtues will have an influence on all who come into contact with you. You will be an example for others to follow. What better and sincere way can we change the world than by this way of setting an example? Yes, by changing ourselves and setting an

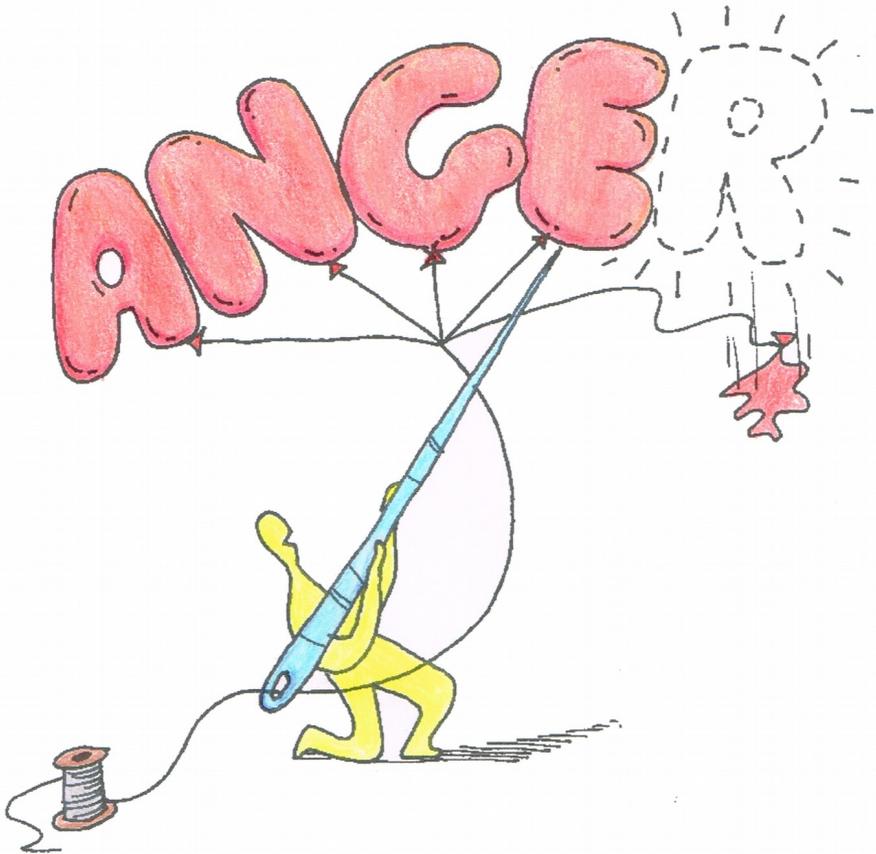
example, we are actually contributing positively to a better world. For just consider: the world is made up of people. People make up the world. If you change the people you are changing the world. And you start with yourself. After all, are you also not one of the people in the world? Thus, when you change yourself, you have changed the world in the sense that there is one anger-prone person less in the world. If more people change themselves, then the world will be changed to the extent of the number of people who have been changed. With more peace-loving people around, the strife and turmoil in the world will decrease.

Recognising the level of anger and the harm it can do to ourselves and others, let us dispel anger and radiate loving-kindness. Let us be tender and patient, gentle and helpful. Let us not be harsh. Let us not confuse, bewilder and perplex others. Look around and see: there is enough sorrow in the world already. Let us not add to it. Let us instead be a source of comfort and peace; let us be like a light unto the world so that all, who come within the circle of our influence, can walk more safely and happily.

Making the determination to curb anger and spread love is a first step. The next question is how do we go about doing it. It is not easy to control our anger when it arises. It takes quite a lot of effort and skill to keep anger under rein. Therefore, in the following pages we will discuss ways and techniques of curbing anger. It mainly involves mindfulness (*sati*) and wise reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*). By being mindful we can nip the anger in the bud, even as it is about to arise. And applying wise reflection on the many reasons why we shouldn't get angry will remind and convince us of the desirability to evict the anger promptly from our mind, to drop it, so to speak, like a piece of hot brick. In the third section, we will present the Meditation on Loving-Kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*), which is one of the best "antidotes" for anger. We believe that if the reader were to consider the many reasons why we shouldn't get angry, he would not want to get angry at all, and the next time anger should arise, he would want to

drop it straightway. And together with the cultivation of mindfulness (*sati*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*), he should be able to put the demon of anger to rest.

May all beings be happy. May they root out anger and hatred from their hearts and become the embodiment of great love, wisdom and compassion.



Put away anger, abandon pride,
overcome every attachment,
cling not to Mind and Body
and thus be free from sorrow.

- *Dhammapada* 221

2 Antidotes For Anger

2.1 First Rule: Mindfulness

First rule: Mindfulness (*sati*) is the first and best guard against anger and all unwholesome states of mind. What is mindfulness? It is presence of mind, awareness, knowing clearly what is happening right at the very moment of occurrence. Thus, the moment anger arises, one must apply mindfulness. One must quickly take cognizance of the arising of anger in one. One must note, acknowledge or say mentally to oneself “Ah! There is anger in me. Anger is arising in me.” Or, one can just note tersely as “anger, anger.” Or if one does not wish to label, one can just be aware of the presence of anger without labelling it.

Noting thus, the anger is spotted and its presence acknowledged. Just this mere act of knowing is helpful in checking the anger. Why? Because whenever anger arises, it usually overwhelms us even before we know it! It clouds our mind and impairs our better judgement. In other words, the anger takes over control of our mind. At that time, we are actually not much aware, if at all, of the mental state of anger in us. Instead, we are already consumed by it, responding and reacting to it. Our facial expression changes and we start to snap, gesticulate or even yell at somebody. Mindfulness checks all this. It prevents the anger from overwhelming us. It institutes a much needed presence of mind. Just the act of knowing helps to cool down the boiling feeling. Instead of reacting to the anger, we watch it. And in that watching, in that observation, the anger can subside. First it will weaken and then it may vanish.

Furthermore, when we are observing the anger, we are not paying anymore attention to the person, object or condition that is causing us

the anger. Instead, we are looking inward at our own state of mind, at the presence of the feeling or emotion of anger. Logically, when our focus of attention shifts from the object (i.e. the cause) of our anger to the pure awareness of anger itself, as an emotion, the anger will weaken. For if we had continued to focus on the object (such as the person) we are angry with, we will naturally be likely to get more angry. But under the glare of mindfulness, anger cannot develop further. It is checked, and with continued noting, it weakens further and finally subsides.

And the wonderful thing too is that the subsidence of the anger comes about without any suppression or force. You need not grit your teeth, clench your fist or use sheer mental force to overcome the anger. Instead, as you note, the anger just weakens and dissolves. This is the miracle of mindfulness. It can be especially clear in an intensive meditation retreat when the meditator's mindfulness is particularly sharp and can, so to speak, knock out the anger or any unwholesome state of mind by the mere act of noting.

Another benefit of mindfulness is that it allows us to pause and make the right decision or response. When we note and take cognizance of the anger, we will not be carried away by the emotion. It gives us time to reflect and decide on a wise course of action. In that pause, we have an opportunity to exercise what the Buddha often emphasised as *yoniso manasikāra*, which is wise reflection or proper consideration. So if the anger did not subside completely from our initial noting, then we can exercise *yoniso manasikāra* by reflecting in various ways on the evil and disadvantages of anger. In the course of reflection, our anger will naturally weaken, and as we become more and more convinced of the undesirability of anger, the anger will subside. A desire not to be angry or to continue being angry will arise. And consequently, the anger will dissolve.

Thus, the first rule is to exercise mindfulness. If you make it a habit to be mindful of significant changes in your mental states, your mind will

become so sharp that you can “catch” the anger the moment it arises. You can feel and know that your anger is developing, and because of that knowledge, you can nip it in the bud, eliminate it well before it can show on your face or in your actions. That’s the magic of mindfulness – it can promptly knock out an unwholesome state of mind.

The next question is how can we reflect in various ways to eliminate anger should we be unable to completely evict it through mindfulness. There is no shortage of ways by which one can reflect. Here we will examine a variety of them. And we believe that if you would read on, you would by the time you reach the last page, be fully convinced of the undesirability and futility of anger. You would not want ever to get angry again. This conviction alone will stand you in good stead in that you are already mentally predisposed towards amity, towards not getting angry, towards keeping calm and cool. With this wholesome desire and determination, it would now be less likely for you to give in to anger as you may have done previously. Furthermore, should anger arise from time to time, as it still inevitably would, it wouldn’t be so strong and you would also be able to recollect and apply all the various “antidotes” that we will be discussing here.

One thing to take note of is that in the application of mindfulness and wise reflection, no suppression is being involved in the checking of the anger. Rather the anger subsides naturally in the course of the mindfulness or reflection. In the West, it is sometimes thought that if we suppress our anger, it can be unhealthy. So according to this school of thought, it might be a good thing to express our anger in order to release tension. On the other hand, there are also studies in the West which showed that expressing anger overtly (i.e. openly) would also be harmful. In any case, allowing oneself to “explode” as a release of tension would not be compatible at all with the Buddhist approach. The Buddha had never made such a proposition or allowance but had, on the contrary, asked us to return anger with love. In giving free rein to our anger, we are opening our mind to stronger defilement and

creating more bad *kamma* while at the same time we are very liable to harm or hurt another. In extreme cases, people have killed simply out of anger and victims are sometimes innocent members of the public.

The Buddhist techniques we are discussing here do not, anyway, involve the suppression of anger. Mindfulness as has already been pointed out, involves no suppression but is mere acknowledgement of the mental state as it occurs in us. Acknowledging and observing the anger cools it down in a natural way. And applying wise reflection also checks the anger without forceful suppression.



*Mindfulness
is the first rule.*

2.2 Firm Resolution In Maintaining Calmness

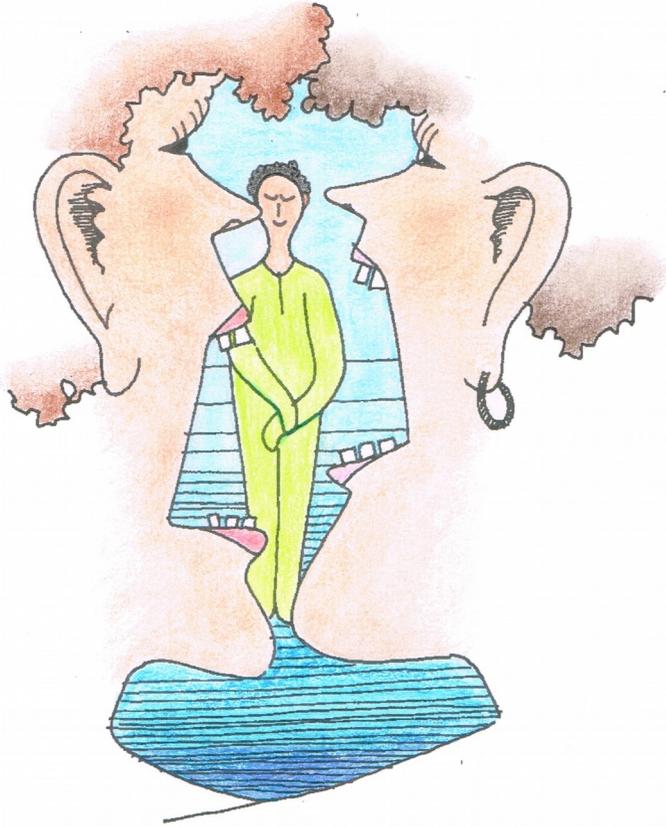
The art of keeping calm and tranquil is something quite lost in this modern world of ours. The hectic pace of life, impatience, the emphasis on material acquisition, indiscriminate production and consumption, the all pervasive influence of the advertising media, and many other aspects of modern living, have contributed to an erosion of moral integrity and spiritual values. They have also caused the mind to be more easily susceptible to restlessness, agitation, anxiety, fear and anger.

It is truly high time that we institute a balance of spiritual development, simplicity, calmness and tranquillity. To develop this calmness, the discipline of meditation is invaluable. Taking up mindfulness (*satipatthāna vipassanā*) meditation is a solution. It is, however, not within the scope of this work to go into details of mindfulness meditation. That can be gleaned from other books on the subject. The meditation of loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) is also an excellent practice, which is especially effective against all forms of anger, hatred and ill-will. It is ideal for those of an angry or hateful temperament. Thus, we will explain the method of loving-kindness meditation in the later part of this book.

In the meanwhile, what is important is that we strive to cultivate and maintain an attitude of calmness and equanimity at all times. If we make a consistent and purposeful effort to do so, it is less likely that we will be carried away by turbulent emotions such as anger. Thus, we should from now on try to maintain calmness and steadiness in all that we do. We should try to speak calmly and mindfully, not excitedly. We should apply mindfulness to check agitation and excitement whenever they arise. We should keep our bodily composure serene and calm. If we go about our daily activities calmly,

mindfully and purposefully, we will come to experience a certain delightful kind of peace and tranquillity. In that calm and stillness, you will find a lot of power and energy to accomplish your tasks and goals.

Thus, the second “antidote” is to cultivate and maintain calmness and stability. St Abba Dorotheus put it rather well when he said: “Over whatever you have to do, even if it be very urgent and demands great care, I would not have you argue or be agitated. For rest assured, everything you do, be it great or small, is but one-eighth of the problem, whereas to keep one’s state undisturbed even if thereby one should fail to accomplish the task, is the other seven-eighths. So if you are busy at some task and wish to do it perfectly, try to accomplish it – which, as I said would be one-eighth of the problem, and at the same time to preserve your state unharmed – which constitutes seven-eighths. If, however, in order to accomplish your task you would inevitably be carried away and harm yourself or another by arguing with him, you should not lose seven for the sake of preserving one-eighth.



*We should cultivate
an attitude of calmness
at all times.*

2.3 Consider the Buddha's Fine Example

As Buddhists, we should consider the Buddha's advice and example. The Buddha had many a time exhibited great patience in the face of extreme provocation. He never got angry but instead radiated love (*mettā*) even towards his oppressors. He never got angry when Devadatta tried to kill him, when Cinca falsely accused him of causing her pregnancy, or when he was again falsely charged with killing a female wanderer from another sect.

Not only in his last life but also in his previous lives as a bodhisatta (i.e. a Buddha-to-be), the Buddha had shown great patience and endurance. The *Khantivādijātaka* (Birth Story of the Profession of Forbearance) demonstrates the Bodhisatta's remarkable patience. In that story, the evil king Kalabu of Kasi confronted the Bodhisatta, who was then an ascetic, and asked: "What do you, recluse, teach?" The Bodhisatta replied: "I teach forbearance, Sir."

"What is this forbearance?"

"It is being without anger when people curse or strike or revile you."

The king, saying: "Now I will see the reality of your forbearance," summoned and ordered his executioner to flog the Bodhisatta. The executioner flogged the Bodhisatta until his skin was split and the blood flowed forth. Again the king asked the Bodhisatta: "What do you, monk, teach?"

The Bodhisatta replied: "I teach forbearance, Sir, but you think my forbearance is only skin-deep. My forbearance is not skin-deep, but it could not be seen by you, for my forbearance, Sir, is firmly rooted within my heart."

The king, who was then angry with the Bodhisatta because of jealousy over attention paid to the latter by some palace women, ordered the executioner to chop off the Bodhisatta's hands and feet. The executioner did so and the Bodhisatta bled profusely.

Again the king taunted the Bodhisatta: "What do you teach?"

"I teach forbearance, Sir. But you think forbearance is in my hands and feet. Forbearance is not there; it is firmly rooted in a deep place within me."

The king ordered: "Cut off his ears and nose." The executioner complied. The Bodhisatta's whole body was covered with blood. When questioned again by the king, the Bodhisatta replied: "I teach forbearance, Sir. But don't think forbearance resides in my ears and nose. Forbearance is firmly rooted in the deeps within my heart."

The king saying, "You can sit down and extol your forbearance," kicked the Bodhisatta over the heart and walked off.

The Commander-in-Chief of the army, who was at the scene at that time, wiped the blood from the Bodhisatta's body, bandaged the ends of his hands and feet, ears and nose, and begged for forgiveness. "O ascetic, if you would be angry, be angry with the king and not with the kingdom."

The Bodhisatta replied that he bore no anger towards anyone, not even towards the king who had mutilated him. Nay, he even wished: "Long live the king, ones like me do not get angry." The Bodhisatta died that day, while the king, it was said, was swallowed by the earth for his heinous deed and was reborn in *avīci*, the Great Hell.



*Unperturbed shall
our mind be, amidst
the angry and abusive.*

Such an account of the Bodhisatta's patience and non-resort to anger is an inspiration and a lesson to us all. If we would aspire, as Buddhists, to be true disciples of the Buddha, then we should strive to heed his admonishment. For even in his last life, in the simile of the Saw, the Buddha said that even if robbers were to saw or cut off our limbs, we should not only not get angry with them, but should also radiate loving-kindness, wishing that "May these robbers and all beings be well and happy." No doubt, it is a most difficult admonishment to heed, but it does drive home the point: There is no place for anger in the Buddha's teaching. And we would do well to fill our heart with love and rout out all anger. Considering thus, we may be better poised next time to check our anger when it should arise.

2.4 Consider that We All Must Die One Day

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

- *Shakespeare, Macbeth*

The others do not know that we in this world all must die.
Those who know have their quarrels calmed thereby.

- *Buddha, Dhammapada*

In the verse about, Shakespeare reminds us of our vulnerability, mortality and the foolish ways we sometimes live our life. And the saying by the Buddha is also a timely reminder to us on the ever pervasive presence of death that is dogging our every step. Yes, isn't it true that we, while in the heat of the moment, tend to forget that we all must die one day? But when we reflect on death, we can tell

ourselves: “Ah! What is the use of getting angry? Life is short. Soon we will all be dead. Getting angry or agitated will get me nowhere but just upset me all the more. Therefore, let me do what I can without



“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.
The path of glory leads but to the grave.”

-Thomas Gray

getting upset. I shall live at peace with myself and the world. After all, I seek to quarrel with nobody” and so on. Thinking in such a way, one can cool down and decide against getting angry.

In fact, it is good to reflect on death at least once a day. The Buddha taught us *maranasati* (Contemplation on Death) so that we could develop a sense of urgency in meditating and in cultivating wisdom. Reflecting on death will also stir us to make effort to live a meaningful and fulfilling life, and not fritter our time away in unprofitable pursuits. As the *Vipassanā* teacher Joseph Goldstein puts it: “If we take death as our advisor, we will live each moment with the power and fullness we would give to our last endeavour on earth.”

So it is good to remember: “Life is uncertain but death is certain.” Or “Short alas, is the life of man, limited and fleeting, full of pain and torment. One should wisely understand this, do good deeds and lead a holy life, for no mortal ever escapes death.”

2.5 Consider the Harmful Effects of Anger on Oneself

Do you want to harm yourself? Of course, no-one would want to harm himself (or herself). But whenever we are angry, we are actually harming ourselves. In the meditation manual, *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification), it is stated: “By being angry with another, you may or may not make him suffer, but you are certainly suffering now.” And “By getting angry you’re like a man who wants to hit another and picks up a burning ember or excrement and had so first burned yourself or made yourself stink. O, is there a person more foolish than you!” Yes, we may or may not harm the other by our anger but we are certainly harming ourselves. How? Firstly, we are already poisoning our mind by becoming angry, for anger (*dosa*) is an unwholesome state of mind, and by being angry, we are hurting and polluting our mind. As

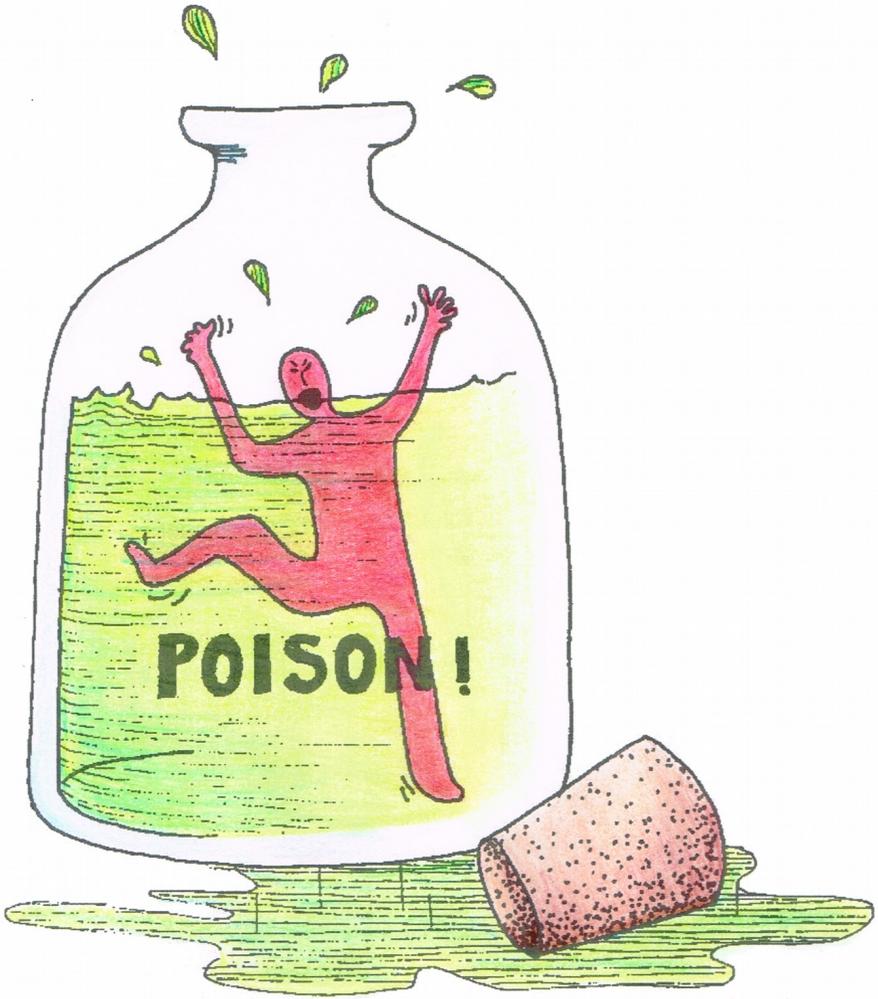
Buddhists, we should know that any unwholesome state of mind (*akusala citta*) must lead to unwholesome effects (*akusala vipāka*). So if we do not wish to reap bad *kamma-vipāka* (karmmic effects), then we would be wise to steer away from anger and all unwholesome states of mind.

As we have mentioned earlier, our mental states too have a bearing on our physical health. “Each thought and feeling is accompanied by a shower of brain chemicals that affects and is affected by billions of cells,” says Paul Pearsall, an American doctor and researcher. Emphasising that our health can improve with mastery over our emotions, Dr Pearsall, in his book, *Super-immunity*, wrote: “Invisible things such as thoughts and feelings can cause illness and wellness... Germs hover constantly about us, but they do not set in and take root unless the terrain is ripe. This terrain is cultivated by our thoughts, cognitive style, feelings, and perceptions.”

Another doctor, U Aung Thein, in an article on Buddhist Meditation and Bioscience, explained that unwholesome emotions can upset the biochemical balance of the body. Chemicals produced by the body as a result of these emotions can adversely affect various organs such as the thyroid, adrenal cortex, digestive tracts and reproductive organs.

Anger, for instance, causes the production of the chemical, *epinephrine*, which in turn causes a rise in the blood pressure, heart beat and oxygen consumption. Prolonged or frequent occurrence of unwholesome mental states could lead to various ailments such as peptic ulcers, indigestion, heart problems and even cancer.

Considering the dangerous effects of anger and other unwholesome mental states on both our mind and body, we should be more determined than ever not to give in to these negative emotions. We would strive to expel them promptly from our mind whenever they should arise. We should be more determined to respond with equanimity and calmness in all situations.



*Anger is like a poison.
Would you want to drown in it?*



Mirror, mirror on the wall...

2.6 Look Into A Mirror

An angry man or woman is a very ugly person. If you were to see your contorted face in the mirror when you are angry you can be assured that you wouldn't like yourself. Perhaps all of us should carry a small mirror in our pocket so that every time we get angry, we can quickly produce the mirror and have a good look at ourselves. That might be an instant antidote in quelling the demon in us.

Even the prettiest girl can appear ugly after some time if she were to be in a habit of getting angry. Wrinkles may show before their time. She would appear to be always frowning. Or there would be a sort of taint in her good looks, a sort of unpleasantness that will keep people away. On the other hand, the person who is always smiling and good-natured, who very rarely gets angry, is a truly lovely person. He or she is well-liked and welcomed wherever he or she goes.

It is said that people who are ugly now were probably hot-tempered in their previous life. The law of *kamma* dictates that people who are of a hateful or angry temperament will, if reborn as a human being, be ugly or even hideous. Since we, as Buddhists, believe in the law of *kamma*, which is a natural law of cause and effect, we should refrain from getting angry. If you should get angry, think of the bad kammic effects that may befall you, and you may quickly calm down.

2.7 Consider That We Are Owners Of Our Deeds

We are owners of our deeds. Whatever we do we will get in return. In explaining the law of *kamma*, the Buddha said: "Monks, beings are owners of their deeds. They are heirs of their deeds. Their deeds are

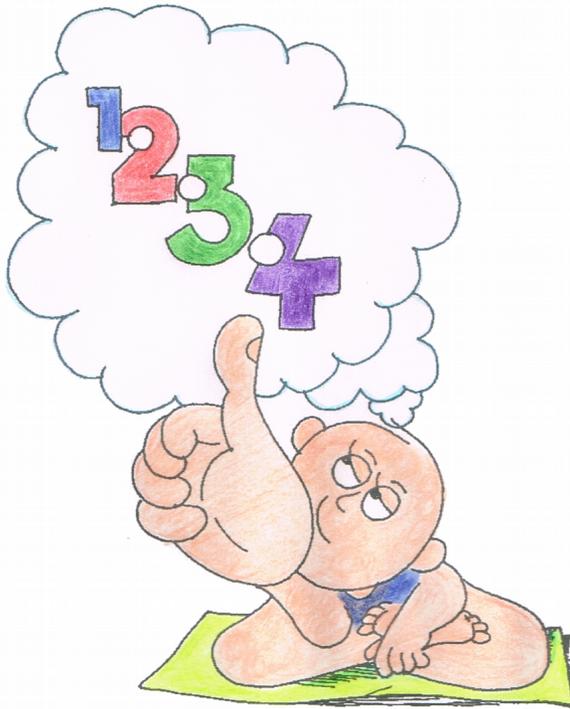
the womb from which they spring. They are related to their deeds. Their deeds are their refuge. Whatever they do, whether good or bad, of that they will be the heir.”

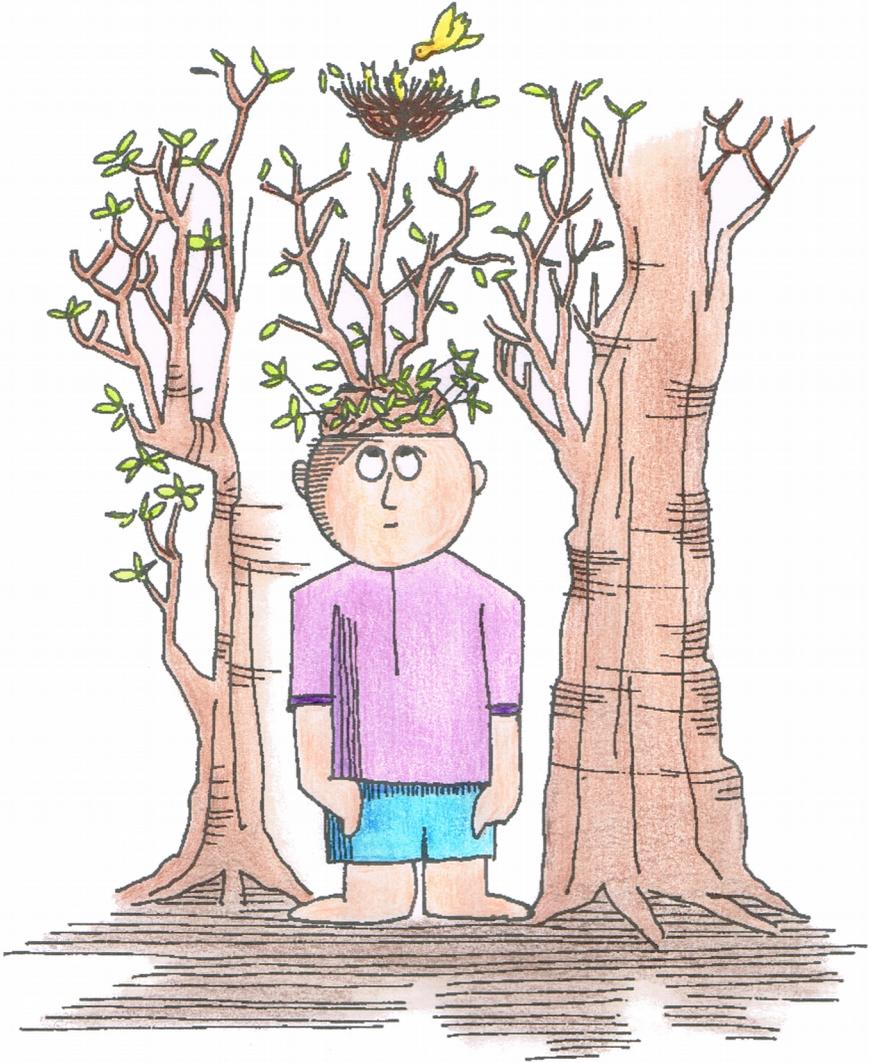
Considering thus, we can feel sorry for the person who is nasty or of a hateful temperament. Why? Because by being angry or nasty, he is heaping up much bad *kamma* which would bear unpleasant results one day. If he does not change his behaviour, he might even end up in hell! And if we were to respond with anger and spite, we would be not much better than him. We might even end up like him in hell!

When we reflect on the law of *kamma* we can calm down. For the law of *kamma* is one which enjoins on us self-responsibility. Each of us must be responsible for our own deeds. If a person does an evil act, he will have to suffer when the effect of that *kamma* ripens. On our part, we should steer clear of anger and all unwholesome attitudes.

2.8 Consider His Good Points

Everybody has some good qualities. If we consider the other person's good points, we may not get so angry with him. He may have helped us in some way or other before. When we recall his good qualities and the things he may have done for us before, we would soften up and cool down. Also, we should remember that nobody is perfect and that we have our faults too. The Buddha said it is better to look at our own faults and correct them than looking at others' faults. It is said that it is better to see one fault in oneself than a thousand faults in another.





*When anger arises,
We should freeze and be like
a block of wood.*

2.9 Freeze!

Whenever we are angry, we should not act or say anything. For in that frame of mind, what we do or say is likely to be unskilful. We might do or say something hurtful for which we will regret later. Then even when we say “sorry” later on, it will be too late, for the harm had already been done. The person who is hurt might not be able to help change his attitude or feelings towards us.

Thus, whenever anger arises, we should freeze and be like a block of wood. Only after we have quelled the anger, should we say or do anything. So we fall back on the principle of acting only from a cool and calm mind. In that way, what we do will be done well, and there will be no cause for remorse or regret later.

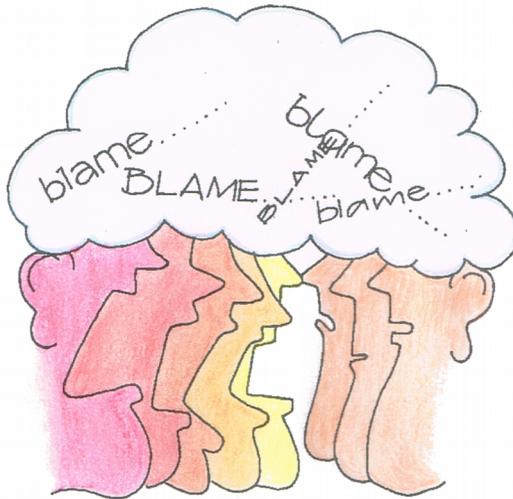
2.10 Nobody Is Free From Blame

The Buddha once told a monk, Atula: “This is a thing of old, Atula, not only of today; they blame him who remains silent, they blame him who talks much, they blame him who speaks in moderation; none in the world is left unblamed.” If we were to observe for ourselves we can see that it is quite true: Nobody in this world can be free from blame. No matter what we do, someone somewhere might still find fault with us. Understanding the nature of existence thus, we should not get upset or angry when we are blamed.

What we can do, however, is to examine the grounds for the blame. If it is true that we are wrong, then we can calmly take steps to rectify the mistake. But if we have been unjustly blamed, we need not be mentally perturbed. We can explain the reasons behind our action and why the blame is unjustified. After doing all that we possibly can, we should not be concerned about undue blame. We should exercise

equanimity, and reflect on the fact that even the Buddha was not spared from blame. For example, during his time, the Buddha was criticised for eating meat, falsely accused of having an affair with Cinca, and of murdering a woman wanderer.

What is important is that we have done the right thing, or we have done all that we could. When we have done thus, we will be blameless in that no wise person, or those who understand our position and the reasons behind our action, will ever blame us. Only those who are foolish or those who may not understand the reasons and conditions behind our action, might blame us. That is all right. That is something unavoidable in life; for no matter what we do, we might still be blamed or criticised. What we can do is to try to do whatever we have to do skilfully to minimise the incidence of blame. After that, if we are still blamed, there is little we can do or need to do about it.



*None in the world is
free from blame.*

2.11 Why Are We Angry?

If we were to look into the question of why we get angry, we would realise that it is because we still have an ego, and a possibly big one at that. We still identify with an *atta*, an “I,” an ego. That is why we feel slighted and get angry. If we do not identify with an “I,” and have understood well the Buddha’s teaching of *anattā* (non-self), we wouldn’t get upset or angry no matter how we are provoked. During his time, the Buddha was provoked and challenged on many occasions, yet he never got angry; he never lost his cool. Not once in the scriptures could we find an incident of the Buddha becoming angry. On the contrary, it was emphasised that the Buddha is one who has rooted out all anger and is incapable of getting angry. Thus, even when the Buddha should have occasion to firmly reproach an errant monk or a disciple, he would do it calmly, without any anger.

Similarly, the *arahants* who have attained enlightenment, are also incapable of getting angry. The Buddha’s chief disciple, Sariputta, for example, was renowned for his great patience and humility. Once a group of people was praising Sariputta’s qualities, saying: “Such great patience has our noble Elder that even when people abuse and strike him, he feels no trace of anger.” A disbelieving Brahmin retorted: “Who is this that never gets angry?” and set out to provoke the elder. He approached Sariputta from behind one day and struck the Elder a hard blow on the back. Ven. Sariputta remarking, “What was that?” continued on his almsround without even looking back. The Brahmin at once felt remorse and falling at the feet of the Elder, he asked for forgiveness. “For what?” asked the Elder mildly. “To test your patience, I struck you,” the penitent Brahmin replied. “Very well, I pardon you.”

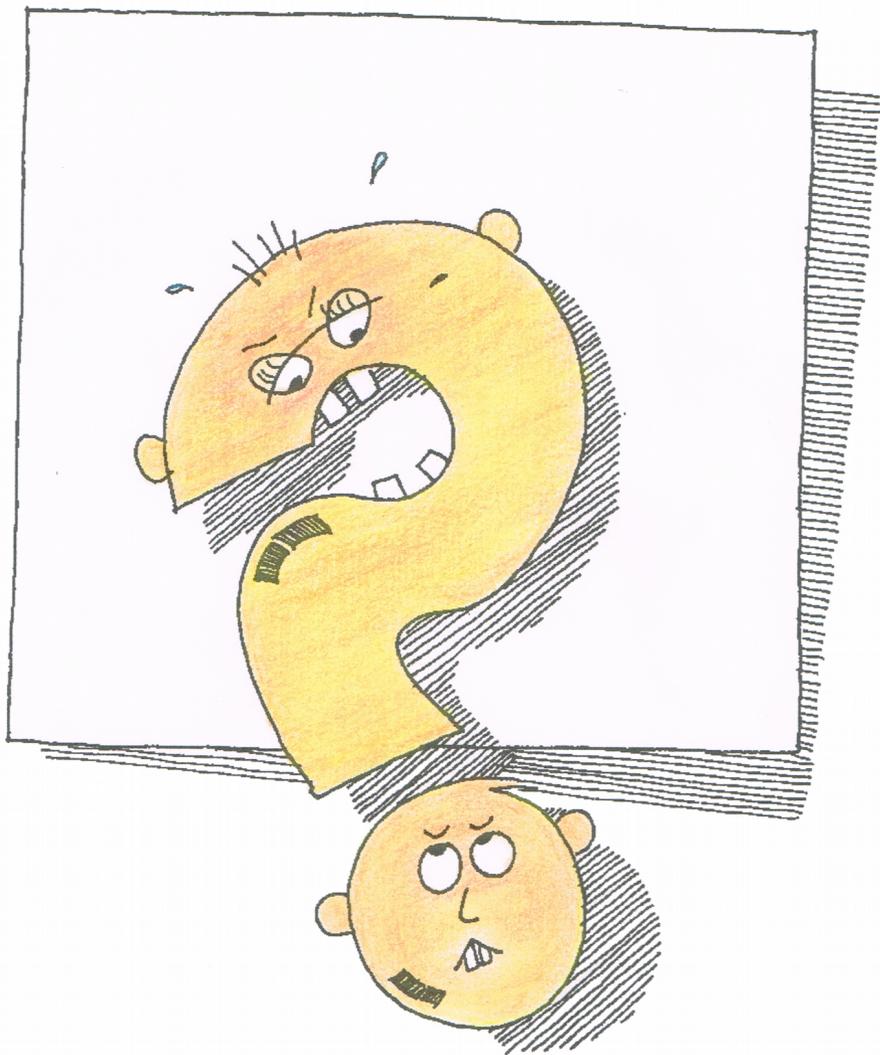
The Brahmin then invited Sariputta to have lunch at his house. But those who saw the assault was enraged and wanted to beat up the Brahmin. Sariputta stopped them by asking: “Was it you, or me, he

struck?” “It was you Reverend Sir” “Well, if it was me he struck, he has begged my pardon. Go your way.” And in that way the magnanimous Sariputta dismissed the mob.

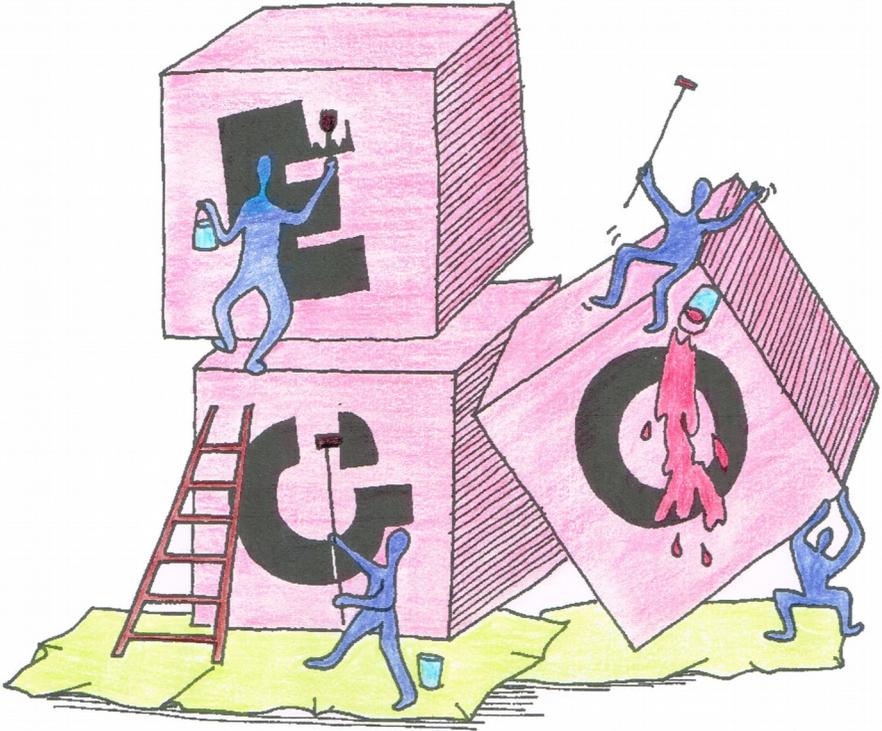
Sariputta’s humility was great as his patience. On another occasion, the Elder was reproached by a seven-year old novice for not wearing his robe properly. It seemed that, through a momentary negligence, a corner of the Elder’s robe was hanging down. When this was pointed out to him, Sariputta instead of being annoyed for being reproached by a mere seven-year old novice, at once stepped aside and rearranged his robe properly. Then he stood before the novice with folded hands, saying: “Now it is correct, teacher.”

Such accounts of the conduct of an *arahant* are an inspiration and a lesson to us. Why are they incapable of getting angry? Because they have rooted out all attachment to the concept of a self or ego. Having no self or ego concept, they do not feel that “It is I who was slighted.” Or “How dare this mere novice of seven correct me, Sariputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha.” Such thoughts never occurred to Sariputta because he, having penetrated well the *anattā* (non-self) teaching of the Buddha, had rooted out all anger and pride.

So the next time we get angry, we should understand that it is because we still identify with an “I” or ego. If we can then contemplate on the truth of *anattā*, that there is ultimately no “I” here, that “I” is merely a conventional term and concept, we might be able to cool down and not get angry. Furthermore, we can consider how Sariputta, despite his position as the Buddha’s chief disciple, never lost his cool even when strongly insulted and provoked. Reflecting thus, we might be able to restrain ourselves from anger.



Why are we angry?



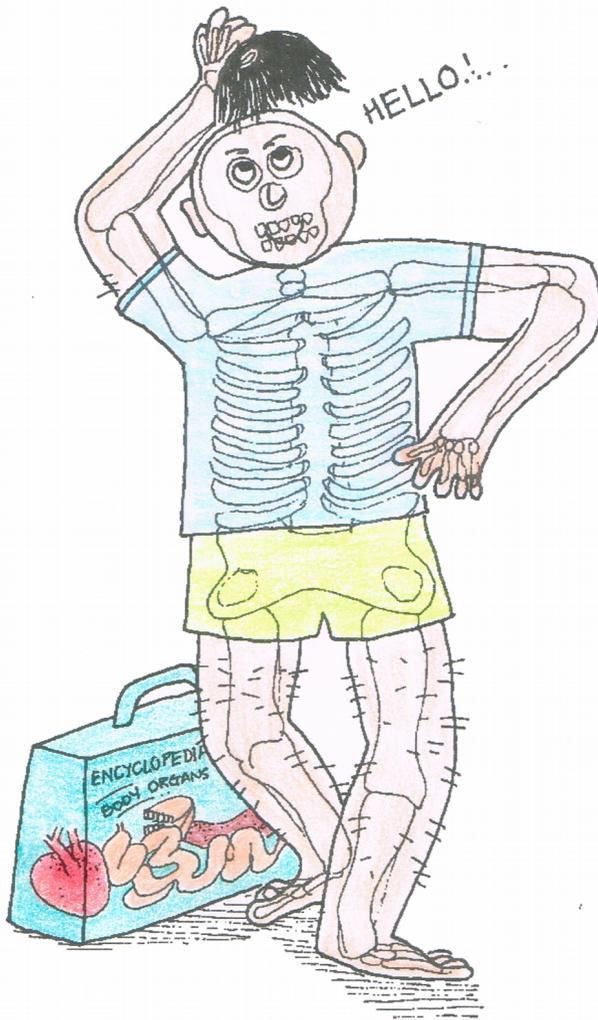
*Is it because our EGO
has taken a tumble?*

2.12 Who Is Angry?

The next question to consider is “Who is angry?” “What is getting angry?” Atta? I? Remember, in the ultimate sense, neither you nor the person you are angry with exists. After all what are we but only mind and matter, elements and processes.

Thus, in the *Visuddhimagga*, we are taught to reflect by dissecting the body into parts: “Now, what is it you are angry with? Is it the head hair you are angry with? Or body hair? Or nails... or is it urine you are angry with? Or alternatively, is it the earth element in the head hair, etc, you are angry with? Or with the water element? Or the fire element? Or is it the air element you are angry with? Is it the material aggregate (*khandha*) that you are angry with, or the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the formations aggregate, the consciousness aggregate you are angry with? Or is it the eye base...” When we reflect in this way, our anger will find no foothold and will subside.

Or we can consider that we are all made of mind and matter. And these mind and matter are constantly changing. The mind especially changes very fast, one consciousness arising and passing away very quickly. It is said that in a flash of a lightning or a wink of an eye, millions of thought moments arise and pass away. So what are you angry with? With whom are you angry? The mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*) that you are angry with have already passed. Many sets of mind and matter have since taken their place. Considering in this way too, the anger can subside.



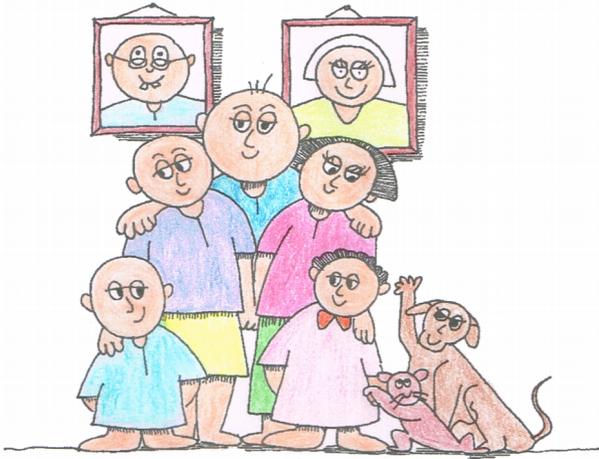
*Now what is it you are angry with?
Is it the head hair? body hair?
nails? teeth? skin?...*

2.13 Consider That We Are All Related

Beginningless, says the Buddha, is the round of rebirths. We have been traversing *saṃsāra*, this wandering and faring on, for so long that at one time or another we have been related to each other in one way or another. Hence, the Buddha said: “Bhikkhus, it is not easy to find a being who has not formerly been your mother... your father... your brother... your sister... your son... your daughter.” So it would be unbecoming of us to harbour any hate against the person who had been related to us in our past lives. Thinking in this way too, we can make our anger subside.

(The family is) the we of me.

- Carson McCull



*Hi! Don't you know we
are all one big family?*

2.14 Forgiveness

One of the reasons for our anger is our inability to forgive and forget. So we flare up easily, and in the aftermath we tend to nurse bitterness, resentment or animosity for some grievance (real or imagined) done to us. Although we may think that we have forgiven, deep down in our heart we may not have totally forgiven. Consciously or unconsciously, we may still be harbouring some bitterness or resentment. If we can learn to let go, to forgive spontaneously and completely, we would live more lightly and happily – without having to carry around the weight of our resentment and anger.

Forgiveness has been rightly called “the most tender part of love” and “the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.” “It ought to be like a cancelled note, torn in two and burned up, so that it can never be shown against the man.” IF we truly love, if we have strong loving-kindness (*mettā*), we should be able to forgive fully, wholeheartedly, without any condition or reservations.

What do we forgive? We forgive whatever wrongs others might have done us, just as we would like others to forgive us for the wrongs we have done them. We seek no revenge. We refrain from getting angry, and saying or doing things to hurt or spite the one who may have wronged us. We forgive, harbouring no grudges or ill-will, understanding that all of us still have our faults and weaknesses.

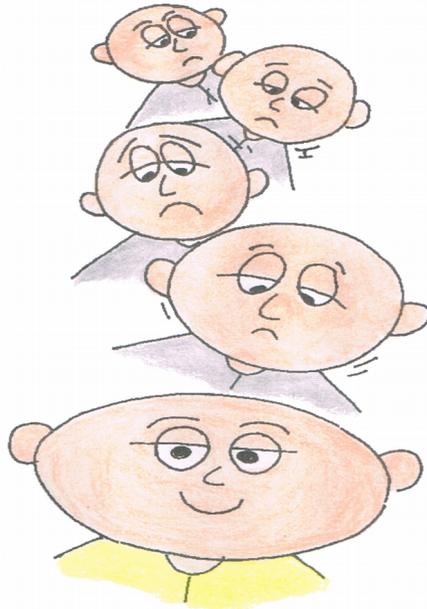
Just as we forgive others, we should forgive ourselves too, for sometimes we might have done something wrong in the past and we now find it difficult to forgive ourselves. We suffer from regret and remorse. Such kind of remorse which causes us mental upset and agony is also unwholesome. The Buddha stated that what we should do is not to mope over something we have done, but resolve not to repeat our mistake, and where possible make amends. We should put

the unhappy episode behind us, and not recollect and suffer pangs of remorse every now and then. If recollection should arise, we should note it (i.e. exercise mindfulness) and not agonise over the matter. We should firmly put aside the thought, understanding that there is nothing more we can do apart from making amends and being determined not to repeat the error. Sometimes we impose great demands and expectations on ourselves. But we should accept our human failings too and that we all cannot become saints overnight. We can't push it, but if we were to work at it consistently, patiently, we would eventually reach our goal, our destination. What we need is patience, determination and perseverance.

C'mon, cheer up!

Forgive

Everyone...



Even ourselves!

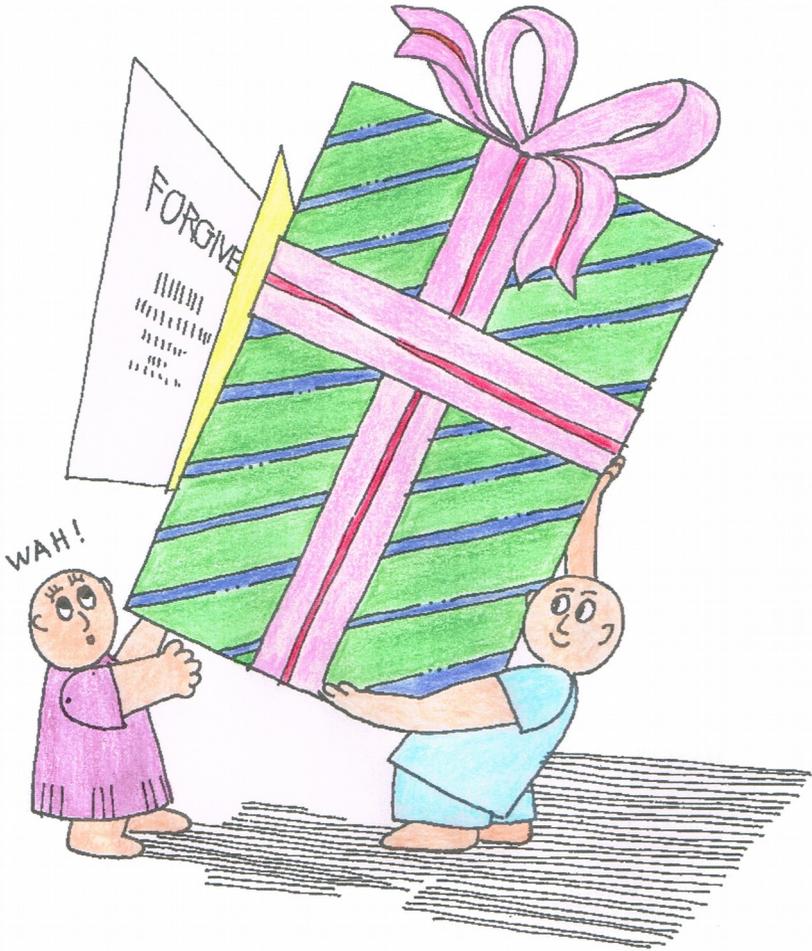
2.15 Review The Benefits of Loving-Kindness

When we consider the benefits of cultivating loving-kindness, we will be disinclined to get angry. The Buddha has stated that the practitioner of loving-kindness meditation can expect 11 benefits: He or she sleeps easily; wakes up fresh; dreams no bad dreams; is dear to human beings; is dear to non-human being; devas (deities) protect him; fire, poison and weapons do not harm him; he gains concentration easily; his features are serene; he dies unconfused, peacefully like falling into a sleep; if he has not attained arahatship he will be reborn after death in the sublime brahma realm. More discussion on these benefits will be taken up in the section on the practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*) meditation. But even when put in a nutshell, these benefits are highly desirable and would be “tempting” enough for us to quell our anger and keep our cool. On the other hand, if we were just to give in to anger we might be denied these advantages. Contemplating thus would also act as a deterrent to us from succumbing to anger.

2.16 Give A Gift

In some cases, we can give a gift. For example, there may be a person who seems to have taken a dislike to us and who is always saying bad things about us. It would be easy in such cases to respond with anger and frustration, and to hit back. But that is not the way for a disciple of the Buddha, whose motto is never to return hate with hate but to respond with love instead. So we can rise up to the challenge and do a most difficult thing by buying the person a gift! It would be a sign of our magnanimity and big-heartedness, that despite the bad intent of the other, we harbour no ill-will. We could then be cool and steady, knowing that we have declined to be drawn into any conflict or to be seething with anger or ill-will. And the other party too might well be

touched by our noble gesture. He might soften in his stance against us. He might even become friendly? So giving a gift might do wonders and is something we could consider doing in certain situations.



A gift to melt the heart!

Conclusion

We have come to the end of this section. In the foregoing we have discussed quite a number of attitudes we can adopt in curbing anger and keeping calm. We hope that the reader, having read this far, will be more resolved than ever to give up anger and cultivate love. In the next section, we shall discuss the practice of *mettā-bhāvanā* – loving-kindness meditation.



Summary of Antidotes

1. First rule: Mindfulness.
2. Firm resolution in maintaining calmness.
3. Consider the Buddha's fine example.
4. Consider that we all must die one day.
5. Consider the harmful effects of anger on oneself.
6. Look into a mirror.
7. Consider that we are owners of our deeds.
8. Consider his good points.
9. Freeze!
10. Nobody is free from blame.
11. Why are we angry?
12. Who is angry?
13. Consider that we are all related.
14. Forgiveness.
15. Review the benefits of loving-kindness.
16. Give a gift.



(Love is) the joy of the good,
the wonder of the wise,
the amazement of the gods.

- *Plato*

3 Love

What is love? What is its quality? How many kinds of love are there? Is love as taught by the Buddha different from our general understanding of love? What in the first place is our understanding of love? These are questions we can ask even before we start to talk or write about love.

Love is a very much used and popular word, part and parcel of our daily vocabulary. We write about it, speak about it, read about it. Many of us consider it the very essence of life. We have sayings like “Love is a many splendoured thing,” “Love means never having to say sorry,” “Love makes the world go round.” We throw about slogans such as “Make love not war.”

Yet can we really answer the question: “What is love?” The dictionary defines love variously as a warm, kind feeling; a deep and tender feeling of affection for, or attachment or devotion to, a person or persons; a feeling of brotherhood and goodwill toward all people; a strong, usually passionate affection of one person for another, based in part on sexual attraction; and sexual intercourse. Too often when we think and talk about love, we fuse these different senses of the word into one vague, ambiguous cloud.

It is apt to start by defining the kind of love we are going to discuss here. It is that warm kind feeling for others, wishing for their welfare; it is soft, caring and tender; it is unselfish, not expecting anything in return; it is lofty, transcending all barriers of creed, sex, race, and nationality. It extends to all living beings in the universe, including insects, fishes, animals and spirits.

It is not petty or passionate attachment to a person; it has no sexual connotation; it is not sensual or sexual gratification. True, we

acknowledge that there is love between lovers, and between husbands and wives. There may be care and tenderness in their relationship. But their love is not unconditional. It is mixed with a strong sensual or sexual attraction. It is liable to change if one party does not reciprocate or cannot satisfy the needs or desires of the other. So since such love is conditional, limiting and subjective, it is radically different from the lofty, totally selfless and transcendental kind we are discussing here.

While on the subject of love, it is pertinent too to discuss the question of lust. What is lust? Again the dictionary defines it as a desire to gratify the senses, bodily appetite; sexual desire; excessive sexual desire especially as seeking unrestrained gratification; overmastering desire. Thus, we can see that in the love between two partners, a certain degree of lust is involved. Sexual desire itself involves a desire to gratify the senses, and that, as we know, can be very strong and overpowering, blinding, passionate, even obsessive. It can give rise to strong fits of jealousy, anger and depression when the loved one has eyes for another, or when the love is not reciprocated.

So again this is not the kind of love we are discussing here, as it is conditional and subordinate to wants and desires. Nevertheless, there are undeniably feelings of tenderness, care and affection between lovers, and between husbands and wives, even though these feelings may be conditional and based on sexual attraction. Perhaps, starting from a less lofty kind of love, lovers and husbands and wives too can work at expanding their understanding of love. Perhaps they can eventually appreciate and develop the loftier kind of love that transcends all barriers, limitations and conditions.

So the kind of love we are concerned with is the love that seeks and delights in the welfare of others. It is lofty and selfless, expecting nothing in return, not even appreciation or gratitude. It gives just for the sake of giving. It finds delight in seeing joy and happiness light up in another's eyes or face. That is sufficient reward, making all the

effort and “labour of love” worthwhile. Such love wishes for others only what is good, that they be happy and be far from all pain and suffering.

Thus, in the traditional Buddhist “love formula,” we wish:

May all beings be well and happy.
May they be free from harm and danger.
May they be free from mental suffering.
May they be free from physical suffering.
May they take care of themselves happily.

The Buddha’s life itself is an exemplification of love and compassion. It was because of his *mettā* (love) and *karunā* (compassion) that he renounced the luxurious worldly life he was living to seek the way to the ending of all suffering. Having found it, he then shared it with all beings, wanting them to experience the happiness of liberation, the happiness of *Nibbāna*, that can be attained in this very life through the purification of the mind.

And the Buddha exhorted his disciples to go far and wide to spread his teachings to as many people as possible so that they too may taste the nectar of liberation. The Great Teacher himself set the lead by travelling throughout India teaching tirelessly to all strata of society for 45 years after his Enlightenment until his death at the ripe age of 80.

The Buddha urged his monks and disciples to radiate loving-kindness frequently. He asked them to suffuse all quarters of the world with a mind of love that is “far-reaching, widespread and immeasurable.” In whatever posture they may be, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, he urged them to frequently radiate thoughts of love to all beings. In the teachings of the Buddha, there is no room for even an iota of enmity or ill-will. Such love is the highest and noblest. It is not easy to love fully, wholeheartedly, without expecting anything in

return. Certainly, it would be extremely difficult for us to develop this love to the degree of purity achieved by the Buddha – a love that envelopes all beings, that is not burning or searing but is cooling and even, having been tempered by wisdom and equanimity.

We begin to cultivate such a kind of love when we practise loving-kindness and *Vipassanā* Insight meditation. *Mettā* or loving-kindness meditation is a particularly effective weapon against hatred and anger. And through the practice of *Vipassanā* meditation, love and compassion will also blossom when we realise that all of us are fellow-sufferers in *samsāra*. In the following pages, we will confine our discussion to the development of *mettā*. The practice of *Vipassanā* had been covered by us in another booklet entitled “Invitation to *Vipassanā*.”

... brief is life but love is long.

- *Tennyson*

4 **Mettā Bhāvanā – The Cultivation of Loving-Kindness**

Mettā or loving-kindness meditation is particularly suitable for one who has an angry temperament, i.e., a person who gets angry easily, who nurses grudges and finds difficulty in forgetting and forgiving, who harbours animosity and hatred. Hot-tempered persons and those troubled by anger have found, happily, their temper has gone after regular practice. And even for those who are not ill-tempered, much benefit can be gained from this practice, for all of us do get annoyed or irritated from time to time and the practice then helps us to keep more cool. Besides, there are also many other kinds of benefits which will be discussed later. Though one may talk about benefits now, the practice of *mettā* is ultimately self-fulfilling. By constant practice of *mettā*, one will eventually develop the kind of love that loves just for the sake of loving, for relieving the suffering of others and promoting goodwill, good cheer and happiness. The benefits we speak about here then become secondary or insignificant. But in the beginning they can be looked upon as incentives for taking up the practice.

One of the objectives of meditation is to gain concentration or one-pointedness of mind. When the mind is fixed on one object, it settles and becomes calm and tranquil. At that time the tendency of the mind to wander has been stopped, at least while the mind is fixed or absorbed in its object of meditation. It is a very cooling and soothing experience when we reach this kind of calmness, the calmness of no-thought, the calmness of a one-pointed mind focused undistractedly on its object. The mind becomes dead-still like a candle flame that, in the absence of any breeze, glows steadily without even a flicker.

4.1 The Formula

The principle then is to make the mind one-pointed, fixed on its object of meditation. In the case of loving-kindness meditation, the object is the concept of love, the wishing of well-being for all beings. There are various formulas one can use in radiating *mettā* and obtaining this one-pointedness of mind. Here we will discuss one of the methods that can be successfully practised.

First the formula is expressed in four lines:

May all beings be free from harm and danger.

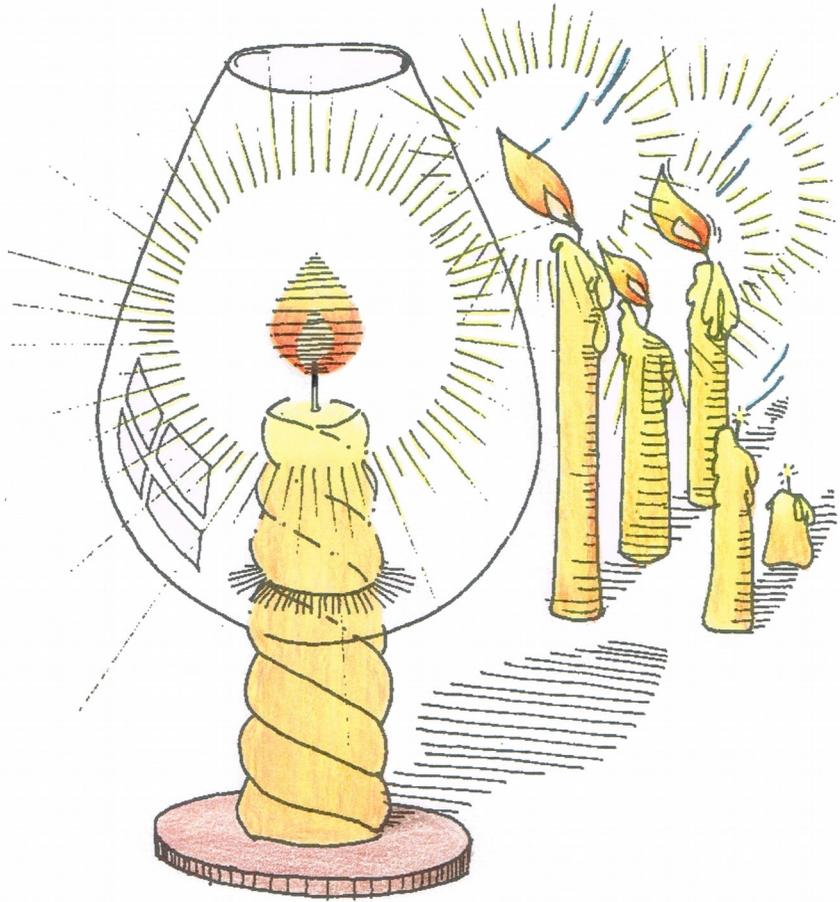
May they be free from mental suffering.

May they be free from physical suffering.

May they take care of themselves happily.

These four lines can be easily memorised. The meditator needs to recite these lines over and over again in his mind. Only mental recitation is required, not verbal recitation. If the mind is likened to a computer, the idea is to program it with thoughts of wishing well for others until it overflows with these thoughts, overflows with love. As one recites mentally the mind will start to concentrate on its object of love, wishing well for others. Extraneous thoughts are kept away and eventually can gain no entry at all. At that time the mind becomes concentrated, one-pointed and one experiences that special stillness and tranquillity.

Before we go further we need to explain the meaning of the four lines we are to recite. Once their import is understood, we will naturally know what is meant or implied as we radiate thoughts of love.



The mind becomes dead-still like a candle flame that, in the absence of any breeze, glows steadily without even a flicker.

1. May all beings be free from harm and danger: There are two kinds of harm and danger – internal and external. *Internal* refers to our defilements (*kilesa*) such as greed, hatred, delusion, worry, anxiety, etc, which cause us mental suffering. *External* refers to dangers such as accidents, natural calamities (fire, floods, landslides, earthquakes, etc.), and from people who might want to harm us. Nobody wants these dangers whether internal or external though the internal dangers, i.e., the defilements, are considered even worse than the external ones. We are our own greatest enemies. If we can overcome the internal defilements we can face external obstacles without fear or anxiety.

2. May they be free from mental suffering: Mental suffering ranges from the subtle to the gross. It includes such states as worry, anxiety, fear, hatred, anger, depression, sorrow, despair or any unwholesome state of mind that can bring about mental turmoil, distress or agony. Nobody wants mental suffering of any kind. We want to be calm, peaceful and happy always.

3. May they be free from physical suffering: Physical suffering extends from minor bodily discomforts, aches and illness, such as colds and headaches, to serious ailments such as cancer and heart disease. Nobody wants to suffer any kind of physical discomfort.

4. May they take care of themselves happily: Here we wish that beings live from day to day smoothly and happily. All of us need to go about discharging our various chores and responsibilities. Students need to study while adults have to earn a living. We need to get along with the people we come into contact with, such as our colleagues, friends, relatives, family members and loved ones. Unless we relate well with others, life can be difficult. So we want to be on good terms with everybody, free from conflicts, with lots of goodwill and

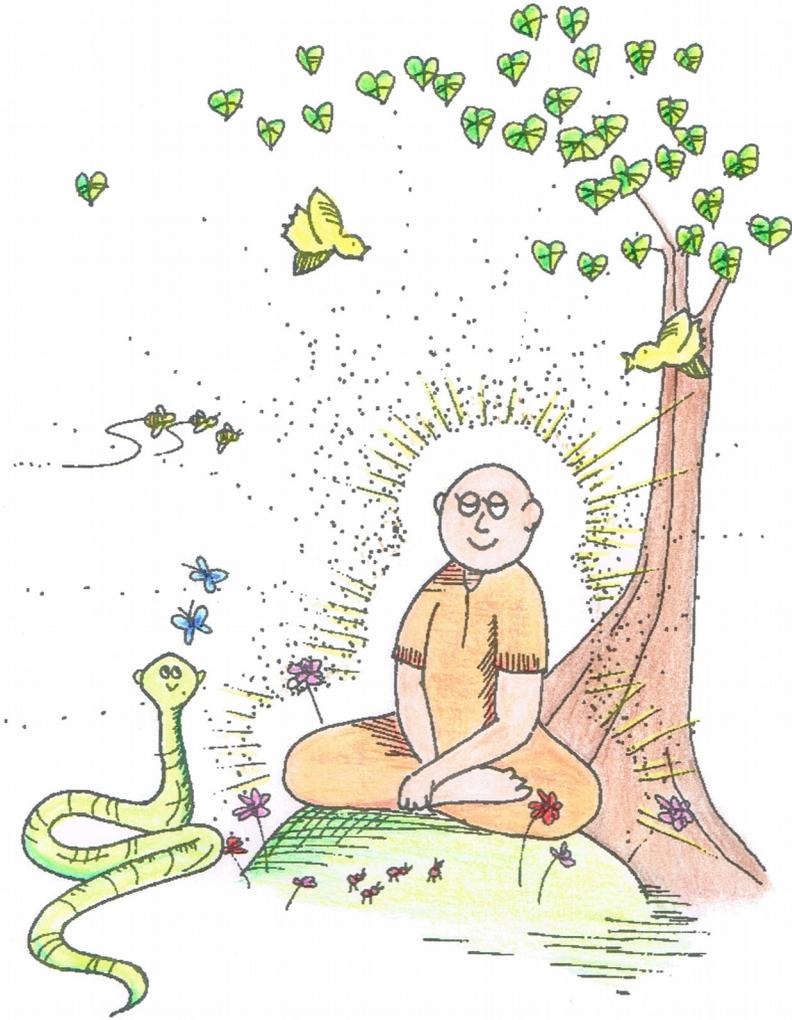
sympathetic understanding. Then we also need to be able to discharge our duties well. We need to do our work efficiently, otherwise we will have a lot of problems.

Furthermore we need to take care of this body and mind daily. As for the body, we need to feed it, clothe it, give it medicine when necessary, answer the calls of nature, etc. These too are our daily chores and we need to go about them smoothly, cheerfully. We must also take care of the mind. We need to clean it too by doing meditation, exercising restraint, cultivating the right attitudes and reflecting wisely.

So when we say “*May they (all beings) take care of themselves happily,*” it is a comprehensive statement covering all these various aspects of daily living. Thus one can appreciate that the four lines beginning “*May all beings be free from harm and danger,*” are all-comprehensive, covering what everybody would or could wish for. When we understand the full import of the four lines, the radiation of our *mettā* would be more meaningful.

4.2 Practice Proper

One sits in the usual meditation posture, cross-legged on the floor with the back straight (or on a chair for those who are unable to sit on the floor). One closes the eyes, keeps the body relaxed and recites the four lines mentally (i.e., not aloud or verbally but only mentally).



*May all beings be free from harm and danger.
May they be free from mental suffering.
May they be free from physical suffering.
May they take care of themselves happily.*

One recites the four lines again and again for ten minutes, thirty minutes, up to an hour. One recites continuously a hundred times, a thousand times, a hundred thousand times, a million times. It does not matter how long or how many times one recites. One just keeps on reciting and reciting and reciting. It is a method of programming the mind - programming the mind with thoughts of loving-kindness and goodwill for all beings. As we recite we need not ponder the meaning of the words as we already know their import. Gradually and naturally, as we recite, the feeling of loving-kindness and goodwill for all beings will awaken in us. We will be filled with a feeling of harmlessness; we will not want to harm or hurt anybody, or to harbour any anger or ill-will against anybody.

As we keep on reciting or radiating *mettā* in this way, the mind will become one-pointed and settle down on its own accord. It will grow calm, tranquil and peaceful. The words may flow smoothly by themselves like a tape-recorder that has been turned on. Sometimes as the mind settles down we may forget to recite. Or we may jumble up the lines. It's all right. Once we are aware we just have to recite again as usual. In this way the concentration will develop naturally. One need not have to yearn for or anticipate good concentration; it will come on its own accord as one does the work of mental recitation.

4.3 How Concentration Comes About

As we mentally recite the lines we are radiating *mettā*. As the recitation flows, the mind becomes focused or concentrated on one object – i.e., loving-kindness, or the radiation of that loving-kindness. At that time the mind stops wandering and flows along with the *mettā* radiation. When wandering stops, when thinking, worrying, reflecting, planning, etc., stops, the mind attains concentration, one-pointedness.

In that concentration, tranquillity and peace of mind will arise naturally. One will feel happy, light and comfortable. It is a very pleasant and welcome experience – a great relief from the mind's wearisome preoccupation with the restless rounds of thoughts, worries and reflections. This calmness of concentration is very soothing, and non-sensual. It is a superior, non-sensual kind of happiness which “spiritual” persons indulge in. This is the kind of happiness which the Buddha praises – not the sensual worldly happiness derived from pleasant sights, pleasant sounds, tastes, touch, etc. Sensual happiness is described by the Buddha as low and vulgar, bringing suffering as it defiles the mind. The happiness or pleasure of concentration, however, has to be experienced to be appreciated. Once the meditator has a taste of it, his attraction to sense pleasures will loosen; he will no longer be a slave to the sensual lure. Having tasted the superior spiritual happiness, he will be better able to check his sensual desires, preferring the superior spiritual happiness of meditation.

Technically, when the mind is concentrated, five hindrances (*nīvaranas*) are overcome. They are:

1. sensual desire;
2. aversion, ill-will or anger;
3. sloth and torpor, i.e., drowsiness, sleepiness, lethargy;
4. restlessness and distraction, worry and anxiety, and
5. doubts (about the practice, about one's ability to concentrate, etc.).

Thus when one gains concentration the mind becomes steady and the five hindrances, which are unwholesome mental states, will naturally fall away. When the hindrances fall away, the mind becomes still more deeply concentrated. It does not crave for sensual pleasures; it does not boil with anger or ill-will; it is not sleepy or sluggish; restless or worried; or doubtful. Consequently it grows calm, content and peaceful. In this calmness the five *jhanic* (absorption) factors become prominent. They are:

1. *Vitakka* which is usually translated as initial application of mind. This means that the mind is hitting the target, is being well-directed to the object of meditation; it does not wander off elsewhere.

2. *Vicāra* or sustained application of mind. This means the mind sticks with the object, stays with it, rubs into the object, impinges on it. *Vitakka* directs the mind to the object while *vicāra* causes it to impinge on the object and stay there.

3. As a consequence, *pīti* (rapture) arises. The yogi feels joyful and light. He enjoys pleasant sensations, vibrant waves of delight moving through his body. Sometimes he may experience uplifting *pīti*, i.e., his hands and legs may suddenly rise, lift or jerk up, or he may feel as if his body is floating in the air.

4. *Sukha*, happiness also develops. This *sukha* is akin to *pīti* except that it is more refined. So when *sukha* is prominent, the gross kind of *pīti* will subside and the yogi feels very light and at ease. As stated in the scriptures it is a “comfortable abiding here and now.” The yogi is content and comfortable. In this state he does not yearn for sensual pleasures, which appear coarse, burning and agitating, rather than calming and soothing like the happiness of wholesome concentration.

5. *Ekaggatā* – one-pointedness of mind becomes prominent. The mind grows steady and still, becomes one-pointed like an unflickering lamp-flame in a windless place, or like a firmly fixed pillar that cannot be shaken. The yogi who experiences this *ekaggatā* can distinctly feel his mind becoming unwavering, like an unshakable post or rock.

These five *jhanic* factors are also present in access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), the concentration that occurs in the neighbourhood of *jhāna*, the concentration that heralds the arrival of *jhāna*. But in the access state they are still not firm and the hindrances can still intrude and disrupt the concentration. However, when the mind attains *jhāna* the factors become firm and the hindrances are kept at a distance.

Thus there is less likelihood of the *jhāna* being interrupted and the yogi can now meditate for five, ten, twenty, thirty minutes, an hour or more at a stretch without any disruption by the hindrances. How long he can stay in this state will depend on his skill in practice and the strength of his concentration (*samādhi*). Even when interruption occurs he should be able to easily regain his concentration by continuing to radiate *mettā*. It is stated in the Commentaries that should a skilled meditator lose his *jhāna* for some trivial reason, he can reinstate it without difficulty.

Mettā-bhāvanā is one of the four *brahma-vihāras* (divine abidings) meditations which consist of *mettā* (love), *karunā* (compassion), *muditā* (altruistic joy) and *upekkhā* (equanimity). According to the *Visuddhimagga*, one can attain up to three *jhānas* in *mettā*, *karunā* and *muditā* while the fourth *jhāna* can be reached in *upekkhā*. For the cultivation of *jhāna*, exercises are prescribed in the *Visuddhimagga*, but space does not permit us to elaborate on them here. Nevertheless, a yogi who radiates according to the four-line formula we have discussed can attain a good level of concentration. If he practises diligently and consistently, he might even attain a *jhanic* state of consciousness, or his practice might serve as a foundation for later development of *jhāna*. For as we have discussed earlier, the principle in developing concentration is that the five hindrances must be kept at bay and the five *jhanic* factors must become strong and prominent.

4.4 How Long Should One Radiate?

One should radiate for as long as possible. In intensive practice one radiates day and night, all the time, alternating sitting with walking, and during daily activities such as eating, bathing, washing, etc. One could practise for days, weeks and months intensively in this manner.

But people who are unable to practise intensively should practise as much as they can. After getting up in the morning, you can radiate from ten minutes to an hour. Even a five-minute radiation of *mettā* is still better than no radiation at all. In the course of the day as you go about your daily chores, you can radiate anytime, anywhere. You can radiate while you are walking here and there, while you are in the office, in the work-place, while eating, bathing, etc. Radiating by reciting mentally according to the four lines is simple and will eventually come very easily and smoothly. After work too, in the evening or night, you can radiate while sitting in the meditating posture. When going to bed you can also radiate until you fall asleep.

As one practises consistently one will feel radiantly happy and eventually one cannot help but be full of goodwill for all people. One will harbour no hate or enmity, nor will one have any desire to become involved in conflicts and quarrels. One also will not get angry or irritated easily. One will become more patient and tolerant. It is a great and effective practice. All of us should make it a habit to radiate *mettā*. The Buddha himself radiated *mettā* daily and exhorted the disciples to do the same.

Radiating *mettā* is a good way to keeping the mind wholesome. Too often our mind wanders at random, reacting to all stimuli with greed, anger, delusion, worry, anxiety, etc. But when we radiate *mettā* we replace unwholesome thoughts with wholesome thoughts. Consequently our mind collects itself and becomes easily concentrated in whatever we do. Distractions are curbed and this leads to less worry and more efficiency in our daily tasks.

4.5 Radiating To Oneself

Initially, when you begin to practise *mettā* you can radiate briefly to yourself:

May I be free from harm and danger.
May I be free from mental suffering.
May I be free from physical suffering.
May I take care of myself happily.

However, you need not radiate long in this manner as this phase is only a preparation for the main practice. Perhaps you can repeat the lines about ten times or for just a few minutes when you begin sitting. After that you can switch over to radiating *mettā* to others, thinking that just as you wish these good things for yourself, you would wish the same for all beings. Subsequently you can drop radiating to yourself altogether and begin at once by radiating *mettā* to others. It is already understood that when you radiate to others, you would also wish the same for yourself.

The *Visuddhimagga* says that one can never gain absorption (*jhāna*) by radiating to oneself. So radiating to oneself serves the sole purpose of making oneself as an example, by thinking that just as one wishes well for oneself one wishes the same for others. It is to help arouse the goodwill and desire for the welfare and happiness of others.

4.6 Alternative Modes Of Radiation

In addition to radiating collectively to all beings, one can also radiate specifically to a certain person or a group of persons. One can radiate to a friend, a colleague, a superior, a teacher, a spouse, a loved one,

relatives, parents, children, etc. Wherever one may be one can radiate, contemplating: "May all the beings who are around me here be free from harm and danger..." One can radiate to specific groups such as to all females (i.e., all females including the animals, insects and spirits), all males, all *ariyas* (i.e., Noble Ones who have attained sainthood), all *anariyas* (i.e. ordinary beings who have not attained sainthood), all humans, all *devas* (deities) and all *apāya* beings (i.e., those suffering in the four woeful states of hell, the animal world, ghost and *asura* [demon] worlds).

One can radiate in all directions - that is, to all beings in the north, south, east, west, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west, below and above. One can also radiate according to locality: first to all beings in the home, then extending out to the neighbourhood, district, town, country, the world and the universe.

Thus as we can see we can exercise a lot of versatility in doing *mettā*. It is really an interesting practice. In the *Visuddhimagga*, the practice for the cultivation of *jhāna* begins with the radiation to an individual: first a loved one, then a dearly loved one, followed by a neutral person and an enemy (i.e., a person who is hostile to us). In that procedure, since one is just beginning and starting with a specific individual as an object, it will surely not be advisable to radiate to a member of the opposite sex, as there is the danger of sensual desire or lust arising and "contaminating" the purity of one's *mettā*. But when one is radiating towards all beings, the scope of one's meditation is universal and obviously includes both males and females. For the initial cultivation of *jhāna*, when one selects a specific individual, one should not pick a member of the opposite sex. But eventually when one has become conversant with the practice there is no reason why one cannot - for the purpose of radiating *mettā* and not for the cultivation of *jhāna* - radiate to a member of the opposite sex. For *mettā* is love, and it would not make sense if we cannot even radiate this love to our mother or father, grandparent, or to our spouse and children just because they are of the opposite sex. So we may understand that the practice prescribed

in the *Visuddhimagga* is only with regard to the cultivation of *jhanic* concentration when it would be prudent not to pick an individual member of the opposite sex. Later on, however, one should be able to radiate to anybody, for *mettā* would not be *mettā* if it is not all-encompassing and all-embracing, transcending all barriers with regard to race, creed, sex, etc. But whenever one radiates to one of the opposite sex member on an individual basis, one should always guard against the intrusion of lust or sensual desire.

The *Visuddhimagga* also states that one should not radiate to a dead person as one will not be able to gain concentration by doing so. When a person is dead, he had passed on to a new rebirth and it would seem that a deceased person would not be a suitable subject for the cultivation of *jhāna* in *mettā* meditation. If, however, we are not practising for the purpose of attaining *jhāna* or deep concentration, but simply for the sake of radiating *mettā*, we can contemplate in this manner: “*May so and so, in whatever rebirth he has now taken, be free from harm and danger.*” In my opinion it would be harmless to do so as the mind that wishes well for others will always be wholesome.

5 Practising Mindfulness and Mettā

The unified practice of *mettā* and mindfulness can be a powerful combination. For example, in daily life instead of letting our mind flit here and there we can try to be mindful of our daily activities and mental states. Then from time to time we can alternate this mindfulness with radiation of *mettā*. In that way, our mind will be kept wholesome most of the time – with *mettā* or mindfulness practice. We will gain better concentration in our daily tasks. We will worry less and live more lightly and cheerfully.

As for formal sitting meditation, a yogi should find a balance between *mettā* and *vipassanā* (insight or mindfulness) meditation practice. *Vipassanā* gives us wisdom and understanding of impermanence while *mettā* is a *samatha* object and can thus only bring about tranquillity. So one should never neglect *vipassanā*. Initially, while one is learning *mettā*, one may, of course, need to spend more time on practising it intensively. But after one has gained some skill and progress in the practice, one should balance it with *vipassanā*. It is for the yogi to find his or her own balance. For example, one could do a few minutes of *mettā* and then switch to *vipassanā*. Or if one has done a sitting of *mettā* in the morning, one could do *vipassanā* in the evening. Ultimately, it is for the yogi to find a balance suitable for his or her temperament.

Love is swift, sincere, pious,
pleasant, generous, strong, patient,
faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly,
and never seeking her own; for
wheresoever a man seeketh his own,
there he falleth from love.

- *Thomas A Kempis*

6 Benefits Of Mettā

A person who practises *mettā* consistently can expect eleven benefits.

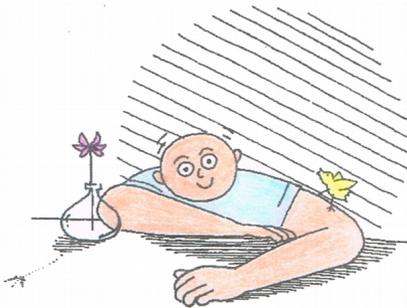
6.1 He Sleeps Easily

He sleeps easily: *Mettā* meditation is a good cure for insomnia. One need not resort to sleeping pills and tranquillisers, which may have dangerous side-effects. So those with insomnia should take up *mettā* practice. One can even radiate until one falls asleep. In the *Visuddhimagga*, it is stated that the *mettā*-meditator falls asleep as if entering upon a meditative attainment. He sleeps comfortably and peacefully.

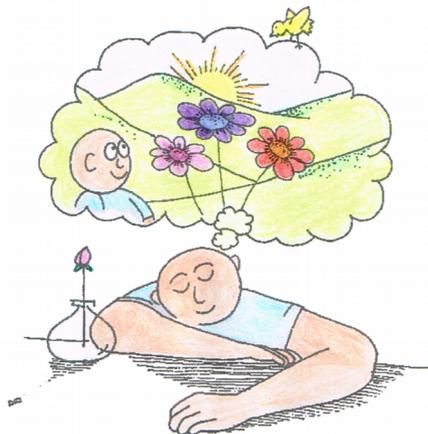


6.2 He Wakes Up Fresh Like A Flower Opening

Instead of groaning or yawning or turning over as others do, he wakes comfortably without contortions. He is ready to take on a new day with optimism and cheerfulness.



6.3 He Has No Bad Dreams



He does not dream of himself being chased by bandits, wanting to run and being unable to run, falling over a cliff or into a hole, or being haunted by ghosts, etc. Instead, if he dreams he dreams pleasant or auspicious dreams, such as flying through the air seeing beautiful sights, or listening to the Dhamma and making offerings, etc. Or he might sleep soundly without any dreams.

6.4 He Is Dear To Human Beings

He is dear to human beings: This means he will have no enemies. People like him because of his *mettā*-nature or habit of radiating love. He will make friends easily and get along well with others. People may feel his positive mental energy, the vibrations of loving-kindness which he is always radiating.

These are valuable benefits, for having no enemies means not having to worry about people wanting to harm us. Having friends also makes life happier. Furthermore, we will find people helpful and cooperative wherever we go.

6.5 He Is Dear To Non-Human Beings

Non-human beings such as spirits and animals will also relate well towards him. And that is nice too. We needn't worry about ghosts haunting us or harming us, or dogs barking and snapping at us, or snakes biting us.

Here it is apt to relate an incident that occurred during the Buddha's time. Once, a group of monks meditating in the forest was disturbed by some spirits. The spirits took fearsome forms and made dreadful noises to frighten the monks. The monks then fled to the Buddha who advised them to go back to the forest and radiate *mettā*. The monks did so and the spirits not only stopped haunting them but also protected them. The Commentaries state that the spirits even swept the monk's resting places and prepared warm water for them. By the end of their three-month stay in the forest all the monks attained arahatship.

In another account mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*, a monk named Visakha was preparing to depart from a forest monastery in the Island of Tambapanni (Sri Lanka) when a tree spirit appeared to him, crying.

The monk asked: "What are you weeping for?" The spirit replied: "Because you are going away." The monk asked: "What good does my living here do you?"

"Venerable Sir, as long as you live here, non-human beings treat each other kindly. Now when you are gone, they will start quarrelling and engage in loose talk."

The monk said: "If my living here makes you live at peace, that is good," and he stayed on there, and it was there that he eventually attained *Nibbāna*.

As for some modern-day examples, an old monk in Myanmar, well-known for his *mettā*-practice, once recounted how a swarm of angry bees had attacked everyone around but him. The beehive had been disturbed and the bees flew out stinging everybody in sight. The monk said the people ran all over the place to flee from the bees but the bees did not sting him. In fact, he even walked right up to the beehive to find out what was the cause of their displeasure. A great number of angry bees flew out from the hive but still none stung the monk. The monk recounted the incident at a Dhamma talk as an encouragement to people to practise *mettā*.

On one occasion too when I was in Myanmar, I saw a sparrow fly towards a monk and land on his shoulder. There the bird rested a while before flying away. The monk at that time was doing intensive *mettā* meditation. He was standing and radiating *mettā* while waiting with other monks for the lunch gong to strike when the bird suddenly flew towards him.

Considering all these accounts one can appreciate the efficacy of *mettā*. It is not a practice to be thought lightly of.



He is dear to all beings.



Devas protect him.

6.6 Devas (spirits) Guard Him

When one is dear to the devas it follows that they will protect one. An example is the earlier-mentioned case of the monks who were initially disturbed by devas while meditating in the forest. After winning over the devas by radiating *mettā*, the monks were further protected by the devas so that they all spent a safe and fruitful three months in the forest.

Nowadays, if devas should deign to protect us, we may perhaps uncannily escape dangers from time to time. Of course, our best protection and refuge is in truth and goodness. If we have done good we have actually nothing to fear, for good will inevitably beget good. There is the saying, too, that the Dhamma upholds those who uphold the Dhamma. Thus, if we live according to the Dhamma, we can be confident that the Dhamma will protect us. This is, in fact, the best protection.

So the practitioner of *mettā* and Dhamma is well protected. This is the true protection one should seek rather than charms and talismans whose efficacy is questionable. The Buddha thought poorly of such practices as resorting to charms and talismans and strongly discouraged any involvement with them.

6.7 Fire, Poison And Weapons Do Not Harm Him

The *Visuddhimagga* mentions two incidents that occurred during the Buddha's time. One was the case of the laywoman devotee, Uttara. A woman who was jealous of Uttara had poured hot oil over her but she

was not scalded in any way. To her, it was as if the hot oil was cold water. The other incident is that of a seven-year old novice monk, Sankicca, who could not be injured by knives. Some robbers wanted to kill him to offer as a sacrifice to their gods. But when they struck him with their swords, the weapons just bounced off. The blades could not cut him at all. Amazed and awed, the robbers fell at the feet of Sankicca, asked for forgiveness, and were converted to the Dhamma. There is also the story of a cow that was giving milk to her calf when a hunter threw a spear at her. The spear bounced off the cow simply because of the strength of her love for her calf. So mightily powerful is loving-kindness!

As for poison, my 70-year-old teacher once recounted several of his own personal experiences. He had been practising *mettā* from youth and as a young monk he was once pierced by the poisonous fin of a fish. He was trying to save fish from a pond that was drying up when he was accidentally injured by a struggling fish. His hand bled but he felt no pain nor did he feel any effect of the poison.

On another occasion he was trying to save a dog that had fallen into a well and was putting his hand in to pull out the animal when it bit him. Apparently, the frightened animal was trying to grab hold of anything it could hang onto, and so sank his teeth into the hand that was actually going to pull him out. Still my teacher pulled up the dog and again, he said, he suffered no pain nor felt the effect of any poison although scars were left on his hand. Thus, although sometimes one may inadvertently be bitten, one's *mettā* can still protect one from pain or the effect of the poison.



*Fire, poison and weapons
do not harm him.*

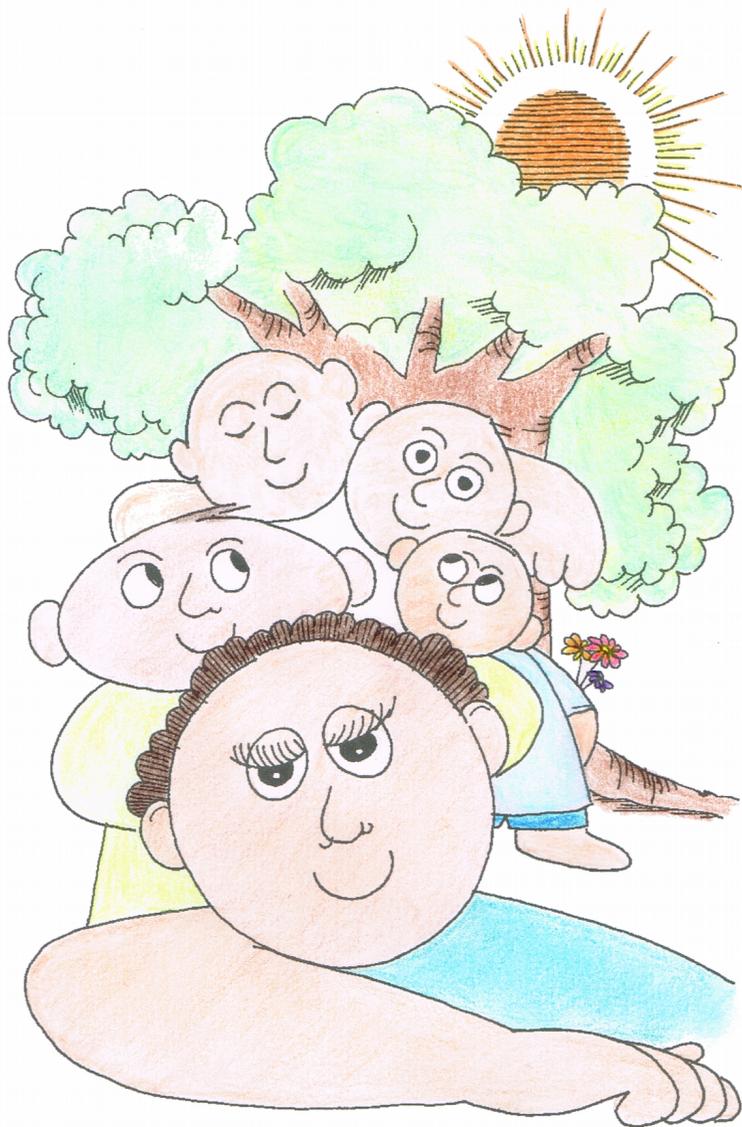
6.8 His Mind Is Easily Concentrated

The mind of one who abides in loving-kindness is quickly concentrated; there is no sluggishness about it. This is because meditation helps to collect the mind and purify it, making it one-pointed and wholesome. Consequently the habit of the mind to wander aimlessly and become distracted is curtailed. This results in better concentration in whatever one does. One should then be better able to do one's work well. Of course, with regard to meditation, concentration too will come more and more easily as one practises regularly.

6.9 The Expression Of His Face Is Serene

The meditator will have a serene countenance. This is a kind of beauty that comes from the heart. It is expressed in one's composure, serenity and radiance. A practitioner of *mettā* needs no cosmetics. The beauty of *mettā* is natural while that of cosmetics is artificial. Even if one is prettily made-up, one can still be ugly or repulsive if one has an unpleasant character or when anger flares up. That is why the Buddha stated that of all perfumes, such as sandalwood and jasmine, the perfume of virtue is by far the best. And furthermore, the fragrance of virtue, unlike ordinary perfumes, can blow against the wind.

Thus, if one can appreciate true beauty, the beauty that comes from the heart, one should cultivate loving-kindness and observe morality. Then, even if one may not possess fine physical features, one will have an intangible radiance and serenity that people will find attractive and lovable.



He is serene.



*The perfume of virtue
blows against the wind.*

6.10 He Dies Peacefully

All of us must die one day, though the way we live often shows that we are quite forgetful of this fact. Just as we must live well, we must die well. To live well means to live nobly, to uphold a high standard of integrity and morality. To die well means to die calmly, mindfully, peacefully – without fear or attachment, without tears or sorrow. A practitioner of *mettā* who lives with a heart full of love for living beings is one who lives well. He would live a moral life, having infused himself with this love and shown it in his words and deeds.

Consequently, when the time for death comes, he is ready. He is calm and peaceful. When he reflects on his life, he would have no regrets, having lived a life of love and morality. Thus the *Visuddhimagga* states that he passes away peacefully as if falling sleep.

In Buddhism, we are taught that it is important to die well because our next life is dependent on our last thought moment. If we die with a bad thought we will get a bad rebirth, if with a good thought a good rebirth. Dying with a mind trained in *mettā* means we are assured of a good destiny – one where we can continue our striving for *Nibbāna* – the end of all suffering.



He dies peacefully.

6.11 If He Has Not Attained Arahatsip He Will On Death Be Reborn In The Brahma World

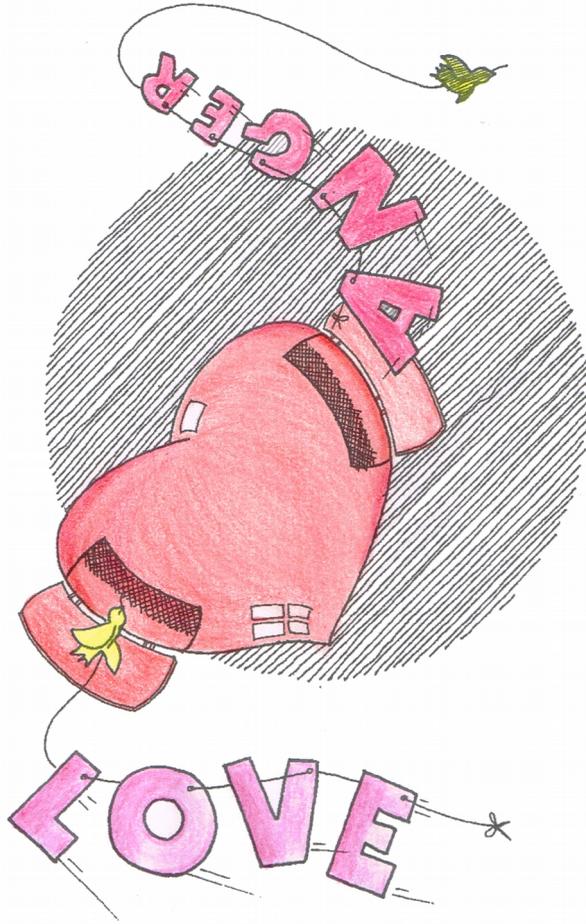
A *mettā*-practitioner, if he has practised consistently and has attained the mundane *jhānas*, is assured of a rebirth in the plane of the Brahma gods. This is a fine heavenly plane where beings live with a fine material form enjoying mental bliss. Of course, if one can attain arahatsip in this very life, it is best. Arahatsip means the attainment of final *Nibbāna*, i.e., the end of all rebirth, the end of the cycle of birth and death, the cycle of suffering. To attain arahatsip, however, one must practise *vipassanā* (insight) meditation. Thus we have emphasised earlier the need to balance *mettā* with *vipassanā* practice. Even with practice of *vipassanā*, it is not easy to attain arahatsip in just one life. It is likely to take many, many more lives. Still one must try one's best and with mature *pāramis* (perfections from previous lives) one might well attain the goal in this life. After all, the Buddha has assured us in the *Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta* (the Great Discourse on Mindfulness) that a person who practises mindfulness meditation can attain arahatsip between seven days and seven years, failing which, he or she can attain anagamiship and the other lower levels of sainthood. Nevertheless, if one does not attain any level of sainthood, one can still be confident that with the support of one's *mettā* practice, one can be assured of a good rebirth that will enable one to continue striving for arahatsip.



Summary of the Benefits of *Mettā*

1. He sleeps easily
2. He wakes up fresh like a flower.
3. He has no bad dreams.
4. He is dear to human beings.
5. He is dear to non-human beings.
6. Devas (spirits) guard him.
7. Fire, poison and weapons do not harm him.
8. His mind is easily concentrated.
9. The expression of his face is serene.
10. He dies peacefully.
11. If he has not attained arahatship he will on death be reborn in the Brahma world.





*Bird of Love! Fly in! Fly in!
Fly into my heart and Stay.*

*Bird of Anger! Fly away, Fly away
And never never come back again.*

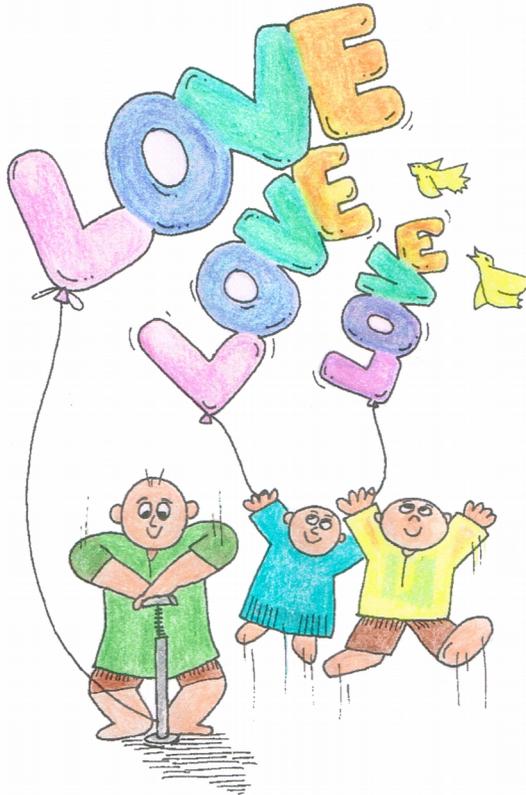
7 Curbing Anger Spreading Love

We have come to the end of our treatise “Curbing anger spreading love.” We have explained at length the demerits of anger and how to check it through mindfulness and wise reflection. We have presented *mettā-bhāvanā*, loving-kindness meditation, as a counter weapon to anger. We have elaborated on the many other benefits one can gain by practising *mettā*. We hope the reader, having come thus far, will put into practice the various suggestions and cultivate the radiation of loving-kindness. The approaches are all based on the Dhamma and we are confident that all those who try them will not be disappointed. To the contrary, when they see the improvement in their minds and the better control they will have over their lives, they will be positively delighted.

Ultimately, all of us need to live wisely with love and compassion. We need to do what we can for our fellow humans, guided by wisdom and compassion. And we start by creating the right temperament and attitudes that can lead us to that wisdom and compassion. When we become harmless, when we no longer flare up in anger but remain cool and self-composed, able to assess any situation calmly and respond with wisdom, we will be living well and happily. Finally, when all anger falls away and only wisdom and compassion guide our every action, we will have reached a happy abiding here and now, with no coming back hereafter. That will be the end of suffering, the end of this long wandering in *saṃsāra*, from one birth to another, from suffering to suffering. Yes, when we reach full maturity in wisdom and compassion, the cycle of birth and death comes to a halt. And *Nibbāna*, the Buddha assures, would then be ours. We may not know what exactly this *Nibbāna* is, but the Buddha has further assured us that in this state of *Nibbāna* all suffering ceases, and only peace, true peace, reigns. It is inviting, this message of hope, that *Nibbāna* can be attained in this life, the end of rebirth and suffering. All Buddhists

have *Nibbāna* as their ultimate goal, and for those who may consider themselves sceptics, we would suggest that they try walking the path of love and wisdom trodden by the Buddha and verify for themselves the Master's words. They certainly have nothing to lose and a priceless treasure to gain!

May all beings cultivate the path of love and wisdom culminating in the cessation of suffering and the realization of *Nibbāna*, the supreme happiness.





Epilogue – Magic Mountain

Whenever you are angry, freeze! Right there! Don't move! Don't do anything. Don't say anything – not even a word. Just stay absolutely still and quiet. Ignore completely the person or thing you are angry about or upset with. Then watch this mind and heart, watch the tension, the tightness, the pain, the choking feeling and sensation. Then watch some more and see as the poison, which is anger, cools down and fizzles away.

If that doesn't work, send your mind soaring away, flying through the clouds and alight on your favourite mountain retreat, amidst soothing greens, trees, shrubs and flowers – lovely pale blue hydrangeas, soft white roses or brilliant red or yellow, all your favourite colours. Breathe in the delightful fragrance and the pure mountain air, hear the melody of a mountain spring, step into the cool, refreshing waters, bathe under the wonderful showers of a gently cascading water fall, watch the little fishes swimming merrily in the pool, the butterflies flitting among the water lilies, listen to the frogs croaking and the birds chirping. All snug and cosy in the magic mountain resort of your mind, you'll feel as if you don't have a care in the world. (Truly, next to *Nibbāna*, this is bliss!)

Then look at the person you were angry with just a moment ago and smile – see how your anger has all melted away, as if into thin air! After bathing in the delightful cool waters on magic mountain, breathing in its superior air, basking in its many wondrous splendours, how could you be angry with him or her or anybody ever again?

Song of Love

May I be happy. May I preserve my happiness and live without enmity. May all beings be prosperous and happy. May they be of joyful mind, all beings that have life, be they feeble or strong, be they minute or vast, visible or invisible, near or afar, born or due to be born. May all beings be joyful.

Let no one deceive another, let none be harsh in speech, let none by anger or hatred wish ill to another. Even as a mother, at the risk of her life, watches over and protects her only child, so with a boundless heart of compassion I cherish all living beings, suffusing love over the entire world, above and all around without limit; thus I cultivate an infinite goodwill toward the whole world.

Standing or walking, sitting or lying down, during all my waking hours, I cherish the thought that this way of loving is the noblest in the world.

Thus shall I, by abandoning vain discussions and controversies, by walking righteously, be endowed with insight, subdue the longing for the pleasures of the senses, and never again know rebirth. May all sentient beings too, be fulfilled in the conditions leading to their attainment of *Nibbāna*. May all sentient beings escape the dangers of old age, disease and death. May all beings be liberated!

Blurb from the back cover of the printed edition:

“Love is not getting, but giving.

Anger causes unhappiness to ourselves and others. But if we could live with less anger and more love, we would spread much cheer and happiness and, of course, we ourselves will be much happier too.

This book then is all about curbing anger and spreading love. Read and see how we can evict the demon of anger completely from our minds and hearts, and be a friend, a source of love and comfort, to all those who come within the circle of our life.”

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