

The Little Book of Mettā
Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw

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Foreword

According to the Buddha, there is no place where one has not been, and no place where one has not died. The journey in *samsāra* is extremely long: a beginning cannot be found, and there is no end to *samsāra*.

In this present life, however, I had never been to C. P. Chong's meditation centre in Kundasang, at the foot of Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, East Malaysia. But I had often heard that it is situated in a quiet, cool surroundings, and has nice buildings and suitable food. The volunteers of the centre are endowed with strong faith and genuine *mettā*. Each retreat is attended by many yogis even though the discipline is quite strict.

I arrived at C. P. Chong's meditation centre on the 4th of December 2008, accompanied by Venerable Ariya Ñani (Switzerland, translator), Mimmi (Myanmar, translator), and Marjo Oosterhoff (Ireland). When I had a look around the centre, I found it was even better than I had heard. I was pleased and honored to be there, and believe that meditators, if they practice diligently, can easily and happily realize the Dhamma in this centre.

The opening ceremony of the ten-day retreat, with about 60 participants was held on the 5th of December 2008 at 8 pm. At the opening ceremony, I talked about the practice of *mettā* meditation.

This booklet, *A Little Book of Mettā*, is a *mettā*-gift to all the meditators attending this retreat, and for all who are interested in the practice of loving-kindness. It offers simple but precise instructions that will enable meditators to develop *mettā* without difficulty.

Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw
Kundasang, 11th December, 2008.

Introduction

Mettā is the wish for the welfare and happiness of all living beings. *Mettā* is the wish for freedom from danger. *Mettā* is the wish that everyone become wealthy, educated, and that all aspects of their lives be well accomplished. Genuine and pure *mettā* is without expectation and is free from clinging. The taste of *mettā* is cool. *Mettā* benefits all living beings.

According to the scriptures, *mettā* is like refreshing cool and clean water. Just as when one becomes refreshed by drinking such water, we can all experience peacefulness by developing *mettā*. I often compare *mettā* to the modern example of air-conditioning. Air-conditioning produces coolness; *mettā* also produces coolness. Nowadays we turn on air-conditioning when we feel hot in our body, in our room, or in our house. Once the air-conditioning has been turned on, the heat will disappear; and the body, the room, and the building will feel refreshed and cool. When the air-conditioning is first turned on, this coolness may not be immediately apparent. However, when it has been on for some time, one begins to feel increasingly cooler and more comfortable. The longer the period of time the air-conditioning has been on, the greater will be its cooling effect. So when the air-conditioning has been going about one or two hours, even more heat will have vanished, and the body and room will feel even more refreshed and cool.

In the same way, when the mind feels *kilesā* (defilements) such as worry, anxiety, grief, sorrow, the heat of *lobha* (greed), or the heat of *dosā* (aversion), we need to turn on the *mettā* air-conditioning to relieve this fervent burning of the mind. So when we feel stress, it is particularly important that we develop *mettā*. If we do this, the mind becomes calm and peaceful, and all the burning of the defilements will vanish.

At the beginning of *mettā* practice, this wonderful *mettā* taste is not so obvious. However, after developing *mettā* for longer periods, one experiences ever greater calm and peace. Through the practice of *mettā*, one not only experiences happiness within oneself, but others will also feel happy and peaceful on account of the *mettā* that we are developing.

As an example of this, I would like to tell you about Suvannasāma (Jataka No. 540). Suvannasāma was always developing *mettā*; whoever saw him loved him. As a result, he experienced happiness, and other beings living nearby also felt happy.

One time long ago, the Bodhisatta was born as Suvannasāma. He lived on the bank of Migasammata River, taking care of his blind parents--his

father Dukūlaka, and his mother Pārikā. Suvannasāma and his family were always living with *mettā*; they had been developing this *mettā* for a long time, so it had become very strong. Because of this powerful *mettā*, they were always peaceful. The whole environment in that part of the Migasammata River had become peaceful, as had all the living beings there. Everyone cared for each other, and no-one ever harmed anyone else. The Bodhisatta was often carrying water and gathering food for his parents in the forest where deer and Kenira [long-lived bird-like beings, a kind of deva; ed.] were living, and they all helped him by carrying his water pot or by searching for fruits. This is a power of *mettā*.

Another story is about King Vessantara (Jatika No. 547). Once, the Bodhisatta was born as a King named Vessantara. Because he had given away the kingdom's very precious royal white elephant, many people living in the kingdom were dissatisfied; as a result they chased him out of the country. So he went to live in exile at Mount Vankagiri with his wife, Queen Maddī, and his children, Jali and Kanhajinā. As soon as they reached Mount Vankagiri, King Vessantara started to cultivate *mettā*. Because of this, both his body and mind became cool and he felt serene. He continuously radiated *mettā* and it eventually became strong and powerful, so his family also became peaceful both in body and mind. The power of his *mettā* radiated for thirty-six miles in every direction, to the east, west, north, and south. Thus, all the areas surrounding Mount Vankagiri became tranquil. This was all because of King Vessantara's *mettā*.

The Practice of *Mettā* (*Mettā Bhāvanā*)

Mettā Bhāvanā means the repeated cultivation of *mettā* in our hearts and minds, making the *mettā* firm and strong. Here, I want to tell you how the process of developing *mettā* increases the *mettā* feeling.

As an example, when you are radiating *mettā* towards your teacher (saying “May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful”), if you recite the phrase once, you receive the feeling of *mettā* at that time. Then the second time you say the phrase (“May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful...” & etcetera), you experience the feeling of *mettā* again. Those who are radiating *mettā* over and over in this way will experience the feeling of *mettā* more and more. This is the general understanding of how *mettā* is developed.

The Buddha said that in the snap of finger (one second) over ten trillion mind moments appear. So when you radiate *mettā* even once (by saying “May you be well, happy and peaceful”), you have developed ten trillion

moments of the *mettā* feeling. As you radiate *mettā* in this way, it will increase more and more.

Two Ways to Practice *Mettā* Meditation

There are two ways to practice *mettā* meditation: developing the *mettā* feeling only, and developing *mettā* for the attainment of the *jhānas* (states of absorption).

*Developing the *Mettā* Feeling*

When developing *mettā* in a general way, you don't need to take special care to avoid certain categories of people, nor is there any need to choose a particular person. You can develop *mettā* to whomever you want. It doesn't matter who you begin to radiate *mettā* towards, and there is no limit to the length of time you practice; it can be for a short period or for longer. Just use as much time as you have available and radiate *mettā* to whomever you want.

*Mettā for the Attainment of *Jhānas**

There are many things to avoid and to be careful about when you are developing *mettā* for the attainment of the *jhānās*.

Before starting your *mettā* meditation, you should bathe, and dress in comfortable clothing which is perfectly clean, without any unpleasant odors.

Your mind must be relaxed, and free of anxiety or worry. At the beginning, commit yourself to either the five or eight precepts. You can take the precepts in front of a Buddha statue, or from a monk, nun, or virtuous person. If none of these things are possible, you may say in your mind, "I take refuge the five precepts," or "I take refuge in the eight precepts".

Then find a quiet place. Sit in an erect position with your head in line with your spine, and with your back upright. You can sit either cross-legged or with your legs placed to the side. Both hands should rest in your lap or on your knees, with the palms facing up. Close your eyes. Sit comfortably, and adjust your body so that your muscles are relaxed.

After sitting down, fully entrust yourself to the Buddha and to your teacher. Why should this be done? Because by doing so, you will be free from any danger and thus be able to safely develop *mettā*. In addition, when you completely entrust yourself to a teacher, he or she will be able to personally instruct and admonish you. Please bear in mind that when

you practice under the guidance of a teacher that it is important to simply follow the instructions given to you. If there is no teacher available, just entrust yourself to the Buddha and practice according to the *mettā* instructions.

Then incline your mind to the person who to be the object of *mettā*, and develop *mettā* for that person by reciting silently in your mind “May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful, may my teacher be well, happy and peaceful”. The breath should be natural, and this wish should be continuously developed by repeating the *mettā* phrase again and again.

The Categories of *Mettā*

Mettā is developed towards seven categories of beings. So when you practice *mettābhāvana*, it is done in a graduated way as follows:

- First of all, you need to develop *mettā* for yourself,
- then to the respected person,
- then to a dear friend,
- then to a neutral person or acquaintance,
- then to someone you dislike,
- then to an enemy,
- and finally towards all living beings.

The Method of Practice

When you are practicing *mettā* meditation, it is best to say the phrases in a language that you understand. Why is this so? Because if you understand the language you are using to develop *mettā*, you will become much more interested in doing it. And if you are interested in developing *mettā*, it will be easy for you to quickly develop *samādhi* (concentration). If you don't understand the language you are using to develop *mettā*, you may not be interested in doing the practice. And if you don't have an interest, concentration will take a long time to arise.

For this reason, it is important that from the very beginning of practice you clearly understand the meaning of the words you are using. If you understand in Pāḷi, you may develop *mettā* in Pāḷi. If you understand in English, you may develop *mettā* in English.

When you are reciting the phrases, you should not use too many words, or very long sentences; try as much as possible to use short phrases. If the phrases are flowery and elaborate, with a lot of words, you may not be able to acquire concentration quickly or easily. But if you are reciting

phrases that are as concise as possible, the concentration can arise quickly. For example, the phrase “May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful” is long enough.

While you are developing *mettā* it is important to understand the specific meaning of the phrases you are using, for example:

“Well, happy and peaceful”

“Well” means that one is free from 96 kinds of physical sickness.

“Happy and peaceful” mean that one is free from any kind of mental suffering, such as worry, grief, anger, depression, anxiety, longing, conceit, or jealousy. You should understand these meanings as you repeat the phrases continuously over and over again.

“May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful.”

You should not cultivate *mettā* superficially; it must be developed in a precise and careful way. If you develop *mettā* superficially, then you may not be able to develop concentration quickly. Nor will you be able to develop strong concentration. Only if you develop *mettā* precisely, attentively, and carefully will you quickly gain strong and powerful concentration.

When you are practicing *mettā*, simply focus on the clear desire for the specific person’s good health and peace of mind. What is most important is the development of a genuine and strong wish for the person’s well-being. Merely reciting the phrases is not sufficient: if you only pay attention on the phrases, the feeling of *mettā* may never arise.

Also, be aware that you don’t need to make a mental image of the person. Just incline your mind to the development of a genuine and strong wish for the person to be healthy and peaceful by repeating the phrases over and over again. While you are doing this, sometimes the image of the person who is the object of your *mettā* practice may suddenly appear. If this happens, just let it be there, and continue to develop *mettā*. You don’t need to create an image of the person, or to be concerned about whether or not the image of the person appears. In fact, if you intentionally create an image of the person, the strength of *mettā* may weaken or even disappear altogether. And if you pay attention to the appearance of the image, the feeling of *mettā* is also likely to disappear. That’s why it is important to cultivate the *mettā* feeling uninterruptedly until it becomes strong and powerful.

“Developing *mettā*” means the repeated cultivation of *mettā* in your heart and mind. If you are merely creating a very detailed mental image of the person you are developing *mettā* for, you are not really cultivating *mettā*. You must be careful about this.

If many thoughts arise while you are developing *mettā*, do not pay attention to them; you should just patiently cultivate *mettā* in a continuous way. If you feel unpleasant sensations (such as numbness, stiffness, or aching) or pleasant sensations (such as happiness), you should let all these kinds of experiences be, and continuously develop *mettā*. When you see or hear something, simply continue to cultivate *mettā* in an equanimous way.

Inappropriate Categories of People

At the start of practice

The commentary to the Visudhimagga says that a *mettā* practitioner who wants to develop *mettā* for the attainment of the *jhānas* should not begin their *mettā* practice by trying to develop *mettā* towards a person they dislike, a very dear person, a neutral person (people they neither love nor hate), or an enemy (people for whom they feel hatred).

Why is it so? If you begin to develop *mettā* for a person you hate, you may be overcome with feelings of *dosa* (aversion). And if you start practicing *mettā* meditation towards a very dear person, you may happen to recall some suffering that person is going through, and so feel unhappiness. So it will be very difficult to develop *mettā* for that person. If you start practicing *mettā* meditation towards a neutral person, you will find it difficult and tiring to develop *mettā*. And if you start practicing *mettā* meditation towards an enemy, you will just get angry.

The *mettā* practitioner who wants to develop *mettā* meditation to reach the *jhānas* should not begin the practice by developing *mettā* for:

- A disliked person
- A very dear person
- A neutral person (somebody they neither love nor hate)
- An enemy (somebody who has caused harm, and who is hated).

Categories of inappropriate people for specific mettā practice

The *mettā* practitioner who wants to reach the *jhānas* using specific *mettā* meditation should develop *mettā* only towards people of the same gender. Do not develop specific *mettā* for a person of a different gender (except in the context of radiating *mettā* for all beings). So a man should not make a

woman the object of his *mettā*, and a woman should not develop *mettā* for a man. If you do so, you may not develop pure *mettā*, but lust (*tañhā*) instead. This instruction is found in the Visuddhimagga commentary.

People for whom you should never practice mettā meditation

In addition, a *mettā* practitioner who wants to attain the *jhānas* should only develop *mettā* towards a person who is still alive. You should never practice *mettā* meditation towards a dead person. This is because it is not possible to develop any concentration at all using such a person. This instruction is also from the Visuddhimagga commentary.

When to Develop *Mettā*

The *Mettā Sutta* says that you can develop *mettā* while you are sitting, standing, walking or lying down. So you should continuously develop *mettā* in each of these four postures. You should also develop *mettā* while you are performing general activities such as eating, drinking, washing your face, and taking a bath. No matter what you are doing, always develop *mettā*.

How to Develop *Mettā*

The First Category (Yourself)

When you start to develop *mettā* for yourself, focus the attention on yourself, mentally repeating the phrases, e.g.: “May I be well, happy and peaceful. May I be well, happy and peaceful.” Breathe normally, and just cultivate *mettā*. Make the effort to develop *mettā* continuously by reciting the phrases over and over.

Developing *mettā* for yourself is to wish for your own happiness and well-being. At first, you won't experience the feeling of genuine *mettā*. You can't know the taste of *mettā* by only beginning to recite the phrases. However, over a longer period of time, you may experience the refreshing taste of *mettā*. So you should repeat the phrases in a unbroken way, developing *mettā* continuously.

Developing *mettā* for yourself is not a suitable practice for the attainment of *appanā jhāna* (full concentration). The *Vibhaṅga Commentary* says that *appanā jhāna* is impossible to attain by practicing *mettā* for oneself. The point of developing *mettā* for yourself is to develop the ability to feel the same way for other people as you do for yourself. You learn to want others to be healthy in the same way as you want to be healthy, and for others to be well and peaceful in the same way as you want to be well and peaceful. This kind of attitude is the dawn of pure and clear *mettā*.

The Second category (The Respected Person)

After radiating *mettā* to yourself for five or ten minutes, you can switch to a second category of person, the virtuous or respected person (such as a teacher). Before you do this, reflect on the virtues of this person, and on how they have helped you. As discussed above, a male yogi should develop *mettā* to a male teacher and a female yogi should develop *mettā* for a female teacher. Why is it so? Because in this way (for the reasons already mentioned) you can cultivate pure and clean *mettā*, free from lust and attachment.

After that, incline your mind towards the teacher and uninterruptedly repeat the phrase you have chosen (such as “May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful”).

While you are practicing sitting meditation, repeat the phrase over and over again in your mind, developing *mettā* towards your teacher. Try to develop pure *mettā*, without any fear or expectation. While you are standing, just develop *mettā* to your teacher with the phrase (“May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful, & etc.), repeating it over and over again. While you are practicing walking meditation, develop *mettā* towards your teacher saying “May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful” in the mind, repeating it over and over again. While you are lying down say “May my teacher be well, happy and peaceful,” repeating it over and over again. While you are eating, drinking, or while doing any other general activities, just cultivate *mettā* to your teacher in this way. During all your waking hours, develop *mettā* towards the teacher. Do your best to keep going until the feeling of *mettā* arises in your mind. You may have to develop *mettā* continuously for many days before *ekaggatā* (one-pointedness), *pīti* (rapture or bliss), and *sukha* (happiness) arise.

The Third Category (A Dear Friend)

When you have been developing *mettā* towards the teacher, and your mind becomes calm, tranquil, and happy, then you can begin to develop *mettā* for a very dear person. Again, a male yogi should develop *mettā* for a man and a female yogi should develop *mettā* to a woman.

Incline your mind towards the very dear person and develop the *mettā* phrases “May this dear person be well, happy and peaceful. May this dear person be well, happy and peaceful”. Repeatedly cultivate *mettā* all your waking hours, until the feeling of *mettā* becomes strong and powerful. Once again, as with the other categories, develop this until your mind becomes calm, blissful and happy.

The Fourth Category (The Neutral Person)

When you radiate *mettā* for the dear person and the *mettā* feeling becomes strong and powerful, you can start developing *mettā* for the fourth category of person, the neutral person (someone who is the same gender as you are and who is neither loved nor hated). “May this neutral person be well, happy and peaceful. May this neutral person be well, happy and peaceful;” once again repeatedly cultivate *mettā* during all your waking hours.

The Fifth Category (The Disliked Person)

Once your feeling of *mettā* is strong and powerful by practicing for the neutral person, you must begin to develop *mettā* towards the fifth category of person, someone you dislike; once again, this person should be the same gender as you. Repeat the phrase “May this person I dislike be well, happy and peaceful,” cultivating *mettā* over and over again during all your waking hours.

Here I want to remind you of one thing. When you develop *mettā* to a person who you hate, you may not experience any feeling of *mettā*. Perhaps you may think of how much you hate this person, and you become angry. When this happens, you need to stop cultivating *mettā* for the disliked person, and instead develop *mettā* to your teacher, since you have already been successful in developing strong *mettā* for him or her. After you have cultivated *mettā* for the teacher and it becomes strong and powerful again, switch back to the person you dislike. When you are capable of developing *mettā* to the disliked person, simply continue to develop *mettā* to that person in a continuous way. If you can't, develop *mettā* to the respected person or teacher for the second time. When your feeling of *mettā* becomes strong and powerful again, you switch back to the disliked person once more. In this way, you can use the teacher (for whom you have already successfully cultivated *mettā*) to build ‘*mettā*-momentum’. You can connect time and time again and again to your teacher until you are able to develop *mettā* successfully for the person you don't like. You need to develop *mettā* for this person until calmness (*ekaggatā*), gladness (*pīti*), and happiness (*sukha*) arise. And you must continue to develop *mettā* to the disliked person until your feeling of *mettā* becomes so strong and powerful that you actually *love* him or her.

The Sixth Category (An Enemy)

Once you can develop this kind of deep and strong *mettā* towards someone you don't like, you can develop *mettā* to the sixth category of person, someone who is your enemy. When you develop *mettā* to an enemy, you do so in the same way as you develop *mettā* to the disliked

person. If there isn't somebody you dislike, or if you have no enemies, develop *mettā* towards the seventh category, all living beings.)

The Seventh Category (All Living Beings)

When you are able to develop *mettā* to your enemy, and your feeling of *mettā* for them has become strong and powerful, then it is time to radiate *mettā* to all living beings, mentally saying “May all living beings be well, happy and peaceful. May all living beings be well, happy and peaceful”. As long as you are awake, repeatedly and uninterruptedly cultivate *mettā* for all beings until strong and powerful *mettā* feeling arises, and your mind is calm and tranquil, happy and blissful.

A successful *mettā* meditator doesn't make a distinction between the people in different categories. He or she doesn't say “This is my friend and this is my enemy.” Such a state of mind can be compared with milk and water mixed together. If you stir milk and water together, you can't tell which is which, saying “This part is the water, this part is the milk”. They thoroughly mixed together and so are indistinguishable. In the same way, a *mettā* meditator's feeling of *mettā* doesn't differentiate between persons in different one categories. When you experience this, it can be said that you have been successful your *mettā* meditation.

In the *Mettā Sutta*, the Buddha described a person who always lives with *mettā* as a “noble person”, or *brahmavihāri*. The Pāli word *brahmavihāri* refers to an *ariya*, a virtuous noble person who always lives with *mettā*; it can be said that such a person is an *ariyapuggala* (a noble person). When someone lives this way, we say that they “have become a Brahmin”. So, as much as you can, please develop *mettā* until you become a *mettā* mediator who has fulfilled his or her duty.

The Eleven Benefits of *Mettā* Meditation

A *mettā* mediator who day and night lives with strong and powerful *mettā* will experience every one of its benefits. So now I will briefly mention these, but not in very much detail. I have already explained these benefits elsewhere (in my book, “*Metta*”), so those who would like more information can find it there.

Everyone who practices *mettā* meditation can potentially gain all of these benefits.

The Benefits of Mettā:

- One will fall asleep happily.
- One will wake up happily.
- One will have good dreams.
- One will be loved by humans.
- One will be loved by *devas* (celestial beings).
- One will be protected by *devas*.
- One will be free from harm by weapons, poison, fire, and will be free from all dangers.
- One will be able to concentrate easily.
- One's facial expression will be clear and serene.
- At the time of death, one's mind will be peaceful and unconfused.
- After death, one will be reborn in the Brahma realm.

We live on a planet which is getting warmer and warmer. So let's all start making this world cooler and more peaceful by practicing *mettā* meditation day and night.

Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw is the abbot of the Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre (CMMC), in Yangon, Myanmar, established in 1997. As a novice and young monk, he studied the Buddhist scriptures under the guidance of the late Mahagandhayon Sayadaw in Amarapura, as well as with other famous teachers. After passing the Dhammacariya examinations, he taught the scriptures for several years. Later he practiced *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā* at the Mahasi Meditation Centre in Yangon under the guidance of the Venerable Chanmyay Sayadaw. Subsequently, he stayed at the Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre for many years, where he carried out the duties of pariyatti (studying and learning the scriptures), and patipatti (teaching and practicing meditation), as requested by Chanmyay Sayadaw.

In 2005, Sayadaw took up residence in Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre, where he now teaches *vipassanā* and *mettā* meditation to both local and foreign meditators. Sayadaw regularly travels to Malaysia and Singapore, where he departs his vast and deep Dhamma knowledge to all those interested in *vipassanā* and *mettā* meditation. Of the many Dhamma books that Sayadaw has written in Burmese, two (*Metta* and *The Bojjhangas*) have been translated into both English and German.

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