

CONCEPT OF **Maitri** (METTA) IN Buddhism

[An Anthology of Scholarly articles on Concept of Maitri (Metta) in Buddhism]

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Comparative study of Concept of

Maitri in Yoga and Buddhism

Rina Puradkar

Bhavana literally means "development" or "cultivating" or "producing" In the sense of "calling into existence." It is an important concept in Buddhist praxis (Patipatti). The word bhavana normally appears in conjunction with another word forming a compound phrase such as citta-bhavana (the development or cultivation of the heart/mind) or metta-bhavana (the development/cultivation of loving kindness). When used on its own bhavana signifies contemplation and 'spiritual cultivation' generally. Bhavana derives from the word Bhava meaning becoming or the subjective process of arousing mental states. The word bhavana is sometimes translated into English as 'meditation' so that, for example, metta-bhavana may be translated as 'the meditation on loving-kindness'. Bhavana is an intentional meditation technique used in yoga practice. In bhavana, the practitioner visualizes attaining a particular characteristic (like love, compassion or peace) or becoming the Divine (like pure Light, Energy or Consciousness).

Maitri is a Sanskrit word which can be translated as "friendship," "friendliness" or "benevolence." It can also be used to describe the mental union that takes place when two people are on the same wavelength. The Pali version of this word that is often used is metta. In this paper I am trying to

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study both the Yoga as orthodox and Buddhist as heterodox system to find out the concept of Metta or Maitri in it. For many people who meditate while practicing yoga, the cultivation of friendliness or benevolence is one of the main aims, especially in Buddhist culture. This process begins with the idea of being benevolent to oneself before extending this to eventually cover all sentient beings.

Morality follows the practice of mindfulness that starts with contemplation of body-within-body, being mindful of breathing and the five elements in body. It follows non-reactive awareness of feelings, mind and mental qualities. In short, mindfulness involves awareness of body, states of mind, intellect, and feelings — pleasant, painful or indifferent — as non-reactive and non-judgemental witness that relieves stress and reveals the truth.

Mindful meditation develops observing-awareness. Maitri bhavna cultivates empathetic awareness of all beings. Empathy is the ability to share others' emotions, thoughts or feelings by imaginatively stepping into that space. Maitri bhavna or cultivation of unconditional love and benevolence for all sentient beings ultimately culminates in identification with all beings. In doing so, we realize their concerns, fears, anger, hopes, and passions as our own, thereby changing our attitude and behaviour toward them. Just as a mother protects her child, so should one develop boundless love for all beings without expectation? Maitri bhavna has three different dimensions of experience. When we become aware of others' happiness we experience mudita or empathetic joy without jealousy. Awareness of suffering of others is transformed into karuna or compassion with a sense of empathy, not pity. Awareness of empathetic joy and suffering of others makes us probe deeper into the root cause lying in past actions or karma that develops upekkha or equanimity.

Ultimately Maitri is learning to develop greater freedom in your life. It's about taking back the keys of happiness once held by the outside world. By practicing acceptance, compassion, and enjoyed solitude, you'll find the spirit of Maitri enrich your life. According to the Sutras, negative thoughts are described as anything against the yamas or niyamas. Yogis can practice pratipaksha bhavana in order to actively change intrusive or destructive thoughts.

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The concept of pratipaksha bhavana attests that if one's thoughts are negative, violent and/or unkind, he/she can immediately begin to create thoughts of positivity, non-violence and kindness. This practice can be incorporated into meditation or yoga asana when intrusive, negative thoughts attempt to distract. Pratipaksha bhavana is a practical exercise that anyone can implement in order to retrain the mind to think more positively, and reduce suffering and untrue thoughts. This practice can be highly beneficial when applied to normal everyday occurrences. Loving-kindness (maitri), along with compassion and equanimity, are also found in the early Upanishads of Hinduism, while loving-kindness (metta) is found in early Sutras of Jainism along with compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. The ancient Indian Paccekabuddhas mentioned in the early Buddhist Suttas, those who lived before the Buddha, mention all "four immeasurables."

(maitri karuna mudita upekshanam sukha dukha punya apunya vishayanam bhavanatah chitta prasadanam) (1:33, Yoga Sutra)

In relationships, the mind becomes purified by cultivating feelings of friendliness towards those who are happy, compassion for those who are suffering, goodwill towards those who are virtuous, and indifference or neutrality towards those we perceive as wicked or evil. These four fold attitudes of Yoga help in achieving the peace of mind and increasing minds power for concentration. From the Yoga and Buddhist perspective, we can say that the four attitudes are as follows:

1. Maitri (Loving-Kindness or friendliness)

Maitri comes from the Sanskrit word friendship. It is a virtue, an attitude which consist in developing friendliness with as many as possible. It implies trust, love, non-animosity towards fellow human beings with all equal and right minded friendliness should be developed, it enhances personal power. Friendly attitude is beneficial in building meaningful relationship with other human beings. Where there is friendliness there is no jealousy, no evil, bad thoughts and anger. As a result of it one learns to treat others as friend. The root of love for ourselves and others is friendship, one must learn to befriend oneself before even thinking of loving other people. If you are constantly at war with yourself, how do you think you can live peacefully with another? If you cannot love

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yourself, you cannot love anyone else. Thus this attitude helps the person to be friendly with others.

2. Karuna (Compassion)

Compassion is the strong inner feeling or desire to relieve the suffering of others. It arises out of attitude of kindness towards others. One must develop sympathy, understanding and benevolence to help others. The notion of the word karuna is that having related to our own suffering we know how scary the darkest parts of our mind can be. We then see others grappling with similar afflictions and our heart goes out to them quite naturally. We have empathy for them. And, thankfully, because we have learned to befriend ourselves, we know how to skillfully help others do the same thing. When we realize that we can help others because suffering is the universal affliction, we can all be there for each other and relieve the pain and sufferings. It is a positive healthy attitude which implies the strong feeling of care and concern for others.

3. Mudita (Sympathetic Joy or Sananda)

It means becoming happy seeing others happy. Happiness is for the good of others. The flip side of understanding someone else's suffering and wanting to relieve it by sharing in his or her joy. The term mudita is sometimes translated as sympathetic joy or even altruistic joy. When you see others happy you rejoice. Here you develop an attitude of respecting and admiring others. It's the delight you have in appreciating your own experience, whatever that experience may be, and sharing that with another. You are there with them when they suffer and when they are happy. It's of course rooted in the fact that you are already comfortable with the times when you suffer and when you are happy. One accepts joyfully the success of others.

4. Upeksha (Equanimity or Indifference)

It means indifference, a feeling of equanimity towards the vicious. Sometimes people think equanimity is a feeling of being completely at peace. Here one discovers that it actually means the ability to remain calm in the face of complete uncertainty. The behavior of the wicked man does not disturb the yogi or Buddhist monk and that is the reason why one is supposed to develop this attitude. Evil doers should not be

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hated rather simply ignored. So, one should remain uninvolved and indifferent when one comes across such a person. These four attitudes or bhavas as discussed in the yoga and Buddhism helps in purifying the mental thoughts and help to replace the negative or bad thoughts by positive or opposite attitude.

In the Pāli Canon, the term metta appears in many texts such as the Kakacupama Sutta and Karaniya Metta Sutta. Other canonical materials, such as in the Patisambhidamagga, elaborate on it as a practice. And yet other canonical sources, such as the Abhidhamma, underline the key role of benevolence in the development of wholesome karma for better rebirths.

This basic statement of intention and verse can also be found in several other canonical discourses.

Karaniya-Metta Sutta (Sn 1.8)

May all beings be happy and secure, may they be happy-minded.

Whatever living beings there are - feeble or strong, long, stout or medium,

short, small or large, seen or unseen (ghosts, gods and hell-beings)

those dwelling far or near, those who are born or those who await rebirth

may all beings, without exception be happy-minded.

Let none deceive another nor despise any person whatever in any place,

in anger or ill-will let them not wish any suffering to each other.

Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life,

even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.

Let his thoughts of boundless loving-kindness pervade the whole world:

above, below and across, without obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.

This they say is divine abiding here.

He will surely not come again to any womb (rebirth in the sense-desire realm).

— Metta Sutta, Khp 8-9. Translated by Peter Harvey

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Metta or lovingkindness here, states Harvey, is a heartfelt aspiration for the happiness of all beings. It is different than "lack of ill-will", and more an antidote to it, fear and hatred. It is the precept to conquer anger by kindness, conquer the liar by truth, conquer stingy by giving, and conquer evil by good.


Conclusion:

Metta or Maitri also develops the power of the sense and helps to tackle the modern stress, disorders and anxiety. It frees the person from the defilement of greed, hatred, jealousy and delusion and set oneself into tranquility by cultivating these attitudes which is the path of purification of mind which will help to have lovable and compassionate people who will care for others and there by society, so we can become one family without hatred and jealousy and that will be a real developed and progressive society. As Buddha stated that Love is what we born are with and fear is what we learn. So we need to read the lovely heart of others which will help to stop the suffering of the world. Thus I feel that both Yoga and Buddhism are complementary to each other to solve the basic problem of miseries and sufferings of the world.

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