

The Metta Sutta

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

The Buddha's Words on Kindness

This is what should be done
By one who is skilled in goodness,
And who knows the path of peace:
Let them be able and upright,
Straightforward and gentle in speech.
Humble and not conceited,
Contented and easily satisfied.
Unburdened with duties and frugal in their ways.
Peaceful and calm, and wise and skillful,
Not proud and demanding in nature.
Let them not do the slightest thing
That the wise would later reprove.
Wishing: In gladness and in safety,
May all beings be at ease.
Whatever living beings there may be;
Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
The seen and the unseen,
Those living near and far away,
Those born and to-be-born,
May all beings be at ease!

Let none deceive another,
Or despise any being in any state.
Let none through anger or ill-will
Wish harm upon another.
Even as a mother protects with her life
Her child, her only child,
So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings:
Radiating kindness over the entire world
Spreading upwards to the skies,
And downwards to the depths;
Outwards and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.
By not holding to fixed views,
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,
Being freed from all sense desires,
Is not born again into this world.

The Four Noble Truths

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two, truth of causes of suffering

the Buddha...

had observed that life is suffering. Before He could find a solution to the problem of suffering in life, He had first to look for the cause of suffering. The Buddha was just like a good doctor who first observes a patient's symptoms and identifies the cause of illness before prescribing a cure. The Buddha discovered that the direct causes of suffering are *desire or craving, and ignorance*. This is the truth of the cause of suffering, which is the Second Noble Truth.

craving

is the deep-seated desire that all living beings have for the pleasures of the senses, and for life itself. For instance, people always seek to enjoy good food, entertainment and pleasant company. Yet none of these can give them complete and lasting satisfaction. After the fine meal has been eaten, the beautiful music heard and the pleasant company shared, one is still not content. One would like to enjoy these pleasures again and again, and for as long as possible.

People who desire to own many things also can never be fully satisfied too. Like children in a toyshop, they crave all the attractive things they see around them. But like children, they soon become dissatisfied with what they already have and desire more. Sometimes, they can hardly eat or sleep until they get what they want. Yet when they succeed in getting what they want, they may still find their happiness short-lived. Many will be too worried for the safety and condition of their new possessions to enjoy it. Then when the object they possess eventually breaks into pieces and has to be thrown away, they will suffer its loss even more.

When we have obtained something we desire, we may want more and more of it, and so greed arises. Because of desire and greed, people will lie, cheat and steal to get what they want. Uncontrolled desires can also lead to addiction, for example, to smoking, drinking and overeating, all of which lead to suffering and cause mental and physical harm.

If another person prevents one from getting what is desired, one may feel anger towards that person. Desire, when obstructed, can lead to ill will and anger. This in turn can lead to harsh words, violent quarrels and even fights or killings. All this is suffering.

ignorance

Craving or desire is like a great tree having many branches. There are branches of greed, of ill will and of anger. The fruit of this tree is suffering, but how does the tree of craving arise? Where does it grow? The answer is that the tree of craving is rooted in ignorance. It grows out of ignorance.

Ignorance is the inability to see the truth about things, to see things as they really are. There are many truths about the world which people are ignorant of because of the limitations of their understanding.

Science has shown, for instance, that there are sounds that people are unable to hear and waves of light that they are unable to see. People would be totally unaware of radio waves, or ultra-violet light rays if special instruments had not been developed to enable them to observe these things. So long as people remain ignorant of things about the world in which they live, they suffer from all kinds of misunderstandings and delusions.

When people develop their minds and acquire wisdom through study, careful thought and meditation, they will see the Truth. They will see things as they really are. They will understand the suffering and impermanence of life, the Law of Cause and Effect and the Four Noble Truths. By overcoming craving and ignorance, they will attain happiness and Enlightenment just as the Buddha did about 2500 years ago.