

Karaṇīya Metta Sutta

Mele Lokomaika'i

with translations into Hawaiian and English, and notes
by Puakea Nogelmeier and Jake H. Davis

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| 1 | Karaṇīyamattakusalena,
Yanta santaṃ padaṃ abhisamecca;
Sakko ujū ca suhujū ca,
Sūvacō cassa mudu anātimānī, | <i>Eia nā 'ano e pono ai ke hana
Ka mea i hialoa i ka 'ike 'i'o
Ma muli o ka 'ike lihi i ke kūlana maluhia
Me ia ka hiki, ka pono, a ke kūpono,
Ke akahai, ka waipahē, a me ka ho'okano 'ole.</i> | Here is what is worth doing
By one skilled in what is [truly] meaningful:
Having glimpsed the place of peace,
[They] should be capable, honest, and very upright,
Easy to speak to, gentle, and not thinking themselves above
[others], |
| 2. | Santussako ca subhāro ca,
Appakicco ca sallahukavutti;
Santindriyo ca nipako ca,
Appagabbho kulesvananugiddho. | <i>'Olu'olu nō i ka mea loa'a,
Pili pono i ka hana a ma'alāhi ka nohona.
Mālie ka 'ike me ka lono, mahao'o nō,
Me ka maha'oi 'ole a mākilo paha.</i> | Contented, and easy to support,
Not too busy, and living lightly,
Tranquil in seeing and sensing, and wise,
Not too forward, nor greedy for patrons. |
| 3. | Na ca khuddamācare kiñci,
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ;
Sukhino va khemino hontu,
Sabbasattā bhavantu sukhitattā. | <i>'A'ole e hana i kahi mea iki
A ka na'auao e ho'ohalahala ai.
E 'olu a palekana mai 'ō a 'ō
A 'olu ka nohona o nā mea a pau.</i> | And one should not do the slightest thing
With which other wise ones might find fault.
[Wishing] may all have ease and safety,
May all beings be in a state of ease. |
| 4. | Ye keci pāṇabhūtatti,
Tasā vā thāvarā vanavasesā;
Dīghā vā ye va mahantā,
Majjhimā rassakā aṇukathulā. | <i>E 'olu nā mea ola
Koe koena 'ole
Ha'alulu a 'onipa'a paha,
Lō'ihī, nunui, a waena ho'i,
Pōkole, 'u'uku, a kūāhewa nō...</i> | Whatever living creatures there are
– without exception –
trembling or steady,
Long, huge, or middle-sized,
Short, tiny, or massive, |
| 5. | Diṭṭhā vā ye va adiṭṭhā,
Ye va dūre vasanti avidūre;
Bhūtā va sambhavesī va,
Sabbasattā bhavantu sukhitattā. | <i>E 'olu ka honona o nā mea a pau
Inā 'ike 'ia a kīhēhē paha
'O ko 'ō lā, a ko 'one'i ho'i,
Nā mea e ola nei, a e 'ō'ili mai ana.</i> | Whether seen or unseen,
And whether living far or near,
Whether in existence or coming into being,
May all beings be in a state of ease. |

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| 6. | Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha,
Nātimaññetha katthaci na kañci;
Byārosanā paṭighasañña,
Nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya. | <i>Mai ho‘opunipuni kekahi i kekahi
A ho‘okano aku i kekahi wahi mea
Mai mana‘o hō‘ino aku iā ha‘i
No ka ukiuki me ke kuapu‘e o loko.</i> | Let no one deceive another,
Or think themselves above anyone anywhere;
Let no one wish suffering for any other,
out of resentment or hateful thoughts. |
| 7. | Mātā yathā niyaṃputta,
Māyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe;
Evampi sabbabhūtesu,
Mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam. | <i>Kohu makuahine e ho‘opalekana loa ana
I kāna keiki hānau kahi-me ka mōliaola
Pēlā ke ‘ano e mālama mau ai
I nā mea ola a pau loa, a palena ‘ole.</i> | Just as a mother would protect her own child - her only child -
with her life,
One should cultivate such a state of mind
toward all beings without limit. |
| 8. | Mettañca sabbalokasmi,
Mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam;
Uddham adho ca tiriyañca,
Asambādham averamasapattam. | <i>E mālama i ka lokomaika‘i palena ‘ole,
No ke ao holo‘oko‘a ē;
A i luna, i lalo, i ‘ō, i ‘ane‘i,
Me ka inaina a ho‘okae ‘ole
E kōi ma‘ema‘e wale aku ai.</i> | And toward all the universe,
One should cultivate a state of mind of goodwill without limit,
- above, below, and all around - unobstructed, purified from
enmity and hatred. |
| 9. | Tiṭṭham caraṃ nisinno va,
Sayāno yāvatāssa vitamiddho;
Etaṃ satiṃ adhiṭṭheyya,
Brahmametaṃ vihāramidhamāhu. | <i>Inā kū, a hele, a noho, a moe iho paha,
‘Oiai ala maila ka no‘ono‘o
E kūpa‘a mau kēia kau ‘ana o nā maka
Kapa ‘ia he ‘ano lani ihola, ‘ānō nei ē.</i> | Whether standing, moving, sitting or lying,
For as long as one is yet to fall to sleep,
One should be steadfast in this attentiveness,
This is said to be divine abiding here and now. |
| 10. | Diṭṭhiñca anupaggamma,
Sīlavā dassanena sampanno;
Kāmesu vinaya gedham,
Na hi jātuggabbhaseyya punaretīti. | <i>Pa‘a ‘ole i ka ‘ikena, kū i ka pono
Me ke akāka le‘a e kō pono ai
A a‘o ‘ia iho ka make‘e ‘ole i ka le‘a
Kū ihola ke ko‘u me ka hānau hou.</i> | Not fixed on a view, with virtuous conduct,
Perfected through clarity of vision,
Training away the greed for pleasures,
One goes no more towards being conceived and born. |

Notes from the translators:

In offering this tri-lingual presentation of the Pāli text known as the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta (KN 1.9), we note with pleasure a number of areas where moving between Pāli and Hawaiian linguistic constructions allows us to bring across certain aspects of form and content with more fluency than is possible in English.

The respective stylistic and grammatical patterns of Hawaiian, English, and Pāli, sometimes allow - and sometimes require - us as translators to make explicit a thought that may have been only implicit or ambiguous in the original language. In the first verse, for instance, the grammar of English forces us to supply a subject “they” in translating “[they] should be capable...”. The Pāli does not require or supply a subject for the verb *assa*, “should”, here; instead, the way text is composed directs attention primarily toward the actions and qualities that are to be embodied, rather than towards who should do so (though see the note on *attha* below). In comparison with translation into English, the medium of the Hawaiian language allows us to bring across more of the ambiguity of meaning that is present in the Pāli here, since the term *ia* used in the Hawaiian translation can refer either to the actions and qualities to be embodied or to the person who does these actions or bears these qualities.

In translating the paired Pāli terms *ujū* and *suhujū*, also in the first verse, Hawaiian offers an opportunity for mirroring more of the structure of the original phrasing than English does. *Ujū* means both “honest” and also “morally upright” generally. Adding the prefix *su-* intensifies both of these connotations – the single term *suhujū* meaning both “very honest” and also “very upright”. Whereas it is difficult to find a pair of English terms that mirrors the structure of *ujū* and *suhujū*, the Hawaiian terms *pono* and *kūpono* serve more ably in this regard. The term *pono* has a broad range of reference to “goodness”, “morality”, “virtue”, etc.; the prefix *kū-* in the word *kūpono* adds to this both an emphasis and a pertinence to a particular setting.

At the end of the first verse, the term *atimānī* is often translated “conceited”, with inwardly focused connotations. Yet it shares its linguistic roots with the verb *atimaññeti*, found in the sixth verse, often rendered as “despising” others. While there are important differences between the two Pāli constructions, what the standard English renderings fail to highlight is the strong linguistic commonality between the two: both constructions append a prefix *ati-*, meaning “up to”, “beyond”, “excessively”, to derivatives from the root *-man*, meaning “thinking”, “cognizing”. We are able to use the Hawaiian *ho‘okano* in both places, mirroring this linguistic connection between the two Pāli terms, because *ho‘okano* can serve as a description of character, meaning “conceited”, “arrogant”, “haughty”, and also as an action or perspective toward others, meaning “to be rude”, “to look down upon”, “to condescend”. The ease of reflecting in Hawaiian this connection between the two Pāli terms, moreover, has pushed us to find a way to mirror this connection also in English. This has led us to render *anatimānī* in English as “not thinking themselves above [others]” and *na atimaññetha... kañci* as “should not think themselves above... anyone”.

The text juxtaposes these admonishments, not to *ho‘okano*, “think oneself above” – in either of these two ways – with a description of what it is like instead to cultivate and perfect an attitude of goodwill. On the one hand, perfected goodwill has no

limit (P: *aparimāṇaṃ* / H: *palena 'ole*); in this way it is unobstructed. Secondly, the heart filled with goodwill has no place for enmity and hatred. Here we translate in the eighth verse the Pāli *asambādhaṃ averam asapattaṃ* with the Hawaiian *e kōī ma'ema'e*, meaning “to flow unfettered and pure without the taint of enmity and hatred, which have been left behind”.

The Pāli text switches somewhat abruptly, in the third verse, from admonishing us not to do the slightest wrong to describing how one wishes well in a limitless way. For clarity and flow in English we have supplemented here “[Wishing] May all have ease and safety”. Similarly, we give the Hawaiian *e 'olu*, “may it be”, as a direct translation of Pāli *hontu* in the third verse, but not only there. In the fourth and fifth verses, which elucidate in further detail how one wishes well in a limitless way, for the sake of flow in Hawaiian we repeat *e 'olu* at the beginning of each of these verses also, the repetition calling our attention back repeatedly to the wish of goodwill (P: *mettā*).

Cultivating and perfecting this beautiful quality of mind (P: *mānasa*) in fact requires just such repeated calling of attention back to the thought of goodwill. As in the ninth verse, the noun *sati* in Pāli refers to this repeated calling of attention back to an object. Just as one might say ‘mind your livestock’ or ‘mind your head’, the term *sati* can be used with many different kinds of objects of attention: in certain kinds of meditation one repeatedly calls attention back to present experience; in other types of meditation one repeatedly calls attention back to the thought of good will. The term *adhitttheyya* adds the meaning that one should have a steadfast commitment to keeping the thought of goodwill in mind. Here we have translated *E kūpa'a mau kēia kau 'ana o nā maka*, literally “this placement of the eyes” (*kēia kau 'ana o nā maka*) - meaning physical and mental focus - “should be always steadfast” (*e kūpa'a mau*).

Both the minding of an object, and also specifically the mind of goodwill, are considered mental states, in the Pāli thought-world. In certain places we have translated this notion of mental state using the Hawaiian ‘*ano*, “nature”, “character”, “manner”, “style”. The seventh verse, for instance, exhorts us to cultivate, towards all beings, a mind (P: *mānasa*) like that of a mother towards her child. Here we have used ‘*ano e mālama mau ai* to mean ‘always cultivate a mind-state’, specifically a mind-state like that of a mother towards her child, one disposed towards care and protection. Yet ‘*ano* has also proven useful in contexts other than describing mental states. The first verse sets out by announcing “This is what should be done” (*karaṇīyam*), or “what is worthy of being done” (*karaṇa-araha* – as the Pāli commentary explains *karaṇīyam*). We have rendered this in Hawaiian *Eia nā 'ano e pono ai ke hana*, meaning “Here is the manner or nature that makes action worthy or necessary” (*e pono ai*), and also “the manner or nature by which things should be done” (*e pono ai ke hana*). We might translate in a more colloquial English idiom “Here is what is worth doing”, and also “Here are worthy ways of acting”. Elsewhere, in the ninth verse, we have also employed ‘*ano lani* to render *brahma vihāra*, a divine or heavenly (H: *lani*, P: *brahma*) way of abiding, in the here and now.

The fifth verse draws a contrast between beings that are seen (*diṭṭhā*) and also those that are unseen, (*adiṭṭhā*). While the Pāli *adiṭṭhā* means very literally “un-seen”, nonetheless in the context of the thought world that these Pāli texts inhabit, one of the primary categories this refers to is spirits (*devas*) and divine beings (*brahmas*) that are not visible to the eye. We have chosen to

render this *kīhēhē*, which means “to be deified”, “to pass into the air and be present there”. On the other hand, the Hawaiian *‘ike* *‘ia* “visible”, “seen” is a relatively straightforward rendering of *diṭṭhā*.

The term *‘ike*, with its connotations of sight and more generally of sensing and/or knowing, features in a number of important places in our Hawaiian rendering of the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta. The first verse opens by presenting what is to follow as a list of qualities that should be embodied by one skilled in *attha*. While many English translations of that first verse render *attha* as “the good”, the Pāli term (and Sanskrit *artha*) are derived from a root meaning of “what is gone toward”. This is why *attha* is used to refer both to the dictionary meaning of a word – the meaning that the term aims at – and also to the goals of life – notably to wealth, a worldly goal, but also to what makes a life truly meaningful, spiritual goodness. While the term *parama-attha* is used in the sense of “the ultimate aim” in early Pāli texts, in the later tradition *paramattha* comes also to mean “what is ultimately real”. We have rendered the Pāli term *attha-kusala* in English as “one skilled in what is [truly] meaningful”, and in Hawaiian as *hialoa i ka ‘ike ‘i’o* “an expert in what is real”, where *‘ike* means both “seeing” and “knowing”, and *‘ike ‘i’o* means “truly seeing”, and “seeing what is true”.

The first verse also speaks of one having understood (*abhisamecca*) the place or state of peace (*santaṃ padaṃ*), which is taken in this tradition as meaning that one has either glimpsed experientially the final spiritual goal of *nibbāna* or, some say, understood intellectually what that is fully enough to be inspired to work toward it. The traditional commentary offers both of these readings as possibilities. The Hawaiian *‘ike lihi* brings across both of these possible meanings of the Pāli here with remarkable facility, meaning either “an experiential glimpse”, “to see or know the edges and fringes”, or “a touch of knowledge” - as in knowing that something exists even when one has yet to see it for oneself.

The Pāli compound *santindriyo* brings the same term for peace as above, *santa*, together with the term *indriya*, which refers to the faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and also thinking. To say that one is *santindriyo* means that they are not constantly and greedily seeking out new sights and sounds and so on, rather their movements and manner are peaceful because they are contented with their experience as it is. It is very difficult to capture this idea in a single English term; the standard translation of “tranquil in their sense faculties” may prove more confusing than illuminating to many readers. We have chosen to translate in Hawaiian *ka ‘ike me ka lono*, which uses the two terms *‘ike* and *lono* to fill out a richer range of connotations “seeing”, “sensing”, “knowing”, “hearing”, and “receiving”, and to echo the flow of the Hawaiian structure with the English rendering of “seeing and sensing”.

The Hawaiian term *‘ike* also features in the translations of two related Pāli terms in the final verse. The first is *diṭṭhi*, “a view” or “views”, which the practitioner is described as not grasping on to (*anupaggaṃ*). We have used the Hawaiian term *‘ikena*, meaning either “a physical view” or “a mental mindset”, to translate *diṭṭhi*, in the phrase *pa‘a ‘ole i ka ‘ikena*. The Pāli term *upaggaṃ* would seem to mean most literally the act of holding fast; nonetheless the Pāli thought-world emphasizes how

views can have a strong sway over us. The Hawaiian *pa‘a* can refer to both this act of holding fast, and also the passive state of being held by. In English, we have chosen to reflect this in rendering “not fixed on a view”.

This negative injunction not to fix on views is immediately followed by the positive injunction to embody skilful or righteous conduct - *kū i ka pono* in Hawaiian. According to the flow of the Hawaiian language, this sort of juxtaposition of negative and positive implies a contrast between the two, giving the meaning that instead of fixing on views one should be righteous. While this meaning is not necessarily implied by the phrasing of the Pāli here, it is nonetheless consistent with the general view being expressed.

The next Pāli phrase, *dassanena sampanno*, means a clear and thorough seeing, in the sense of accomplished wise vision. Here, the Hawaiian *akāka*, “clear”, is qualified by *le‘a*, “completely clear and unobstructed”, together these mean “fully seen” or “fully grasped”. In this phrase *‘ike*, “seeing” and “knowing”, translates Pāli *dassana*.

The final lines of the text describe what is envisioned at the end of the path laid out above: by training away the greed for pleasure one takes birth no more. In the final line, *iho* qualifies *kū*, “stop”, “come to a halt”, and adds the sense of being both immediate and internal, so the process of closure is both temporal and personal. In the line just above that, the Hawaiian *‘a‘o ‘ia iho* means to internalize (*iho*) the training (*‘a‘o*). The use of *iho* here allows a reflexive sense of training down inside one’s self. If there were no external influences and the process of learning or training was accomplished entirely by one’s self, the *‘ia* in this line would be extraneous. The textual stories of the Buddha’s lifetime two thousand five hundred years ago, for instance, detail how he was able to reach the final end of the path of awakening without anyone to guide him. Nonetheless, these same texts also note that his initial impetus to set out on this path came through seeing examples of sickness, aging, death, and renunciation in others. Thus, even in the case of the Buddha – and all the more so for the rest of us – the motivation and ability to persevere on this path are vulnerable to, and supported by, myriad external conditions.

Most of us do depend for our development on receiving at least some pithy teachings – such as is contained in this text – and often much, much more in the way of guidance, support, and mentoring over the course of many years. In Hawaiian, to *noho lae‘ula* is to learn from a mentor in this way. In giving voice to this Pāli text in Hawaiian and in English, we have attempted to draw on and to echo some of the cadence, the tone, and the wisdom of our own mentors.

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