As disputes arose in the early monastic Sangha the Buddha provided a variety of teachings on how to deal with them. Sometimes he encouraged the monastics to regard each other with loving-kindness. Other times he described procedures for how to resolve these disputes. In the first discourse this week, MN 48, the Buddha does the former. In the third assigned reading, MN 104, he does the latter.

MN 48 concerns a time of intense and hostile conflict between monastics living in Kosambi. It is possible this refers to an incident described in the Vinaya texts where a monk, living in Kosambi, was accused of violating the rules of discipline by leaving water in a dipper in the bathroom. Because this monk was well versed in the Vinaya he argued he was not guilty and so would not acknowledge his fault. This led to serious disagreement that eventually led to the banishment of the monk. But this resulted in more conflict in the monastic community, conflict the monks did not stop even when the Buddha advised both sides to let go of the disagreement.

In the Kosambiya Sutta the Buddha asks the quarrelling monks if they are able to "maintain acts of loving-kindness by body, speech, and mind” when they are “brawling and deep in disputes.” The question suggests the Buddha expected the monastics to maintain loving-kindness. In the Middle Length Discourses the Buddha repeatedly instructs the bhikkhus to cultivate loving-kindness. In the Cūḷāssapura Sutta, the meditation practice the Buddha says is appropriate for monastics to practice is loving-kindness plus compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity (MN 40.9-10). In MN 7.13 he describes how this meditation is practiced. A monastic should direct loving-kindness in all directions when supported by a particular village or town (MN 55.6). A monastic is also expected to maintain loving-kindness toward Sangha leaders (MN 33.27). In the Kakucūpama Sutta the Buddha instructs
the bhikkhus to have loving-kindness even if bandits saw off their limbs (MN 21.20).¹

When the quarreling Kosambi monks say they are not maintaining loving-kindness to each other, the Buddha then teaches them the six “principles of cordiality” (§6, literally, “the six dhammas of delight”). The six are described as creating love (piya) and respect, and leading to cohesion, non-dispute, concord, and unity; all qualities highly valued in the monastic community.

The six principles of cordiality are:

1. Maintaining bodily acts of loving-kindness both in public and in private towards fellow monastics
2. Maintaining verbal acts of loving-kindness both in public and in private towards fellow monastics
3. Maintaining mental acts of loving-kindness both in public and in private towards fellow monastics
4. Sharing things with other monastics without reservation, including sharing any gain that accords with the Dhamma and has been attained in a way that accords with the Dhamma.
5. Possessing those virtues, both in public and in private, that are unbroken, unblotched, lead to concentration and are liberating.
6. Possessing that view, both in public and in private, that is noble and emancipating, and leads one who practices in accordance with it to the complete destruction of suffering.

The first three practices of loving-kindness are mentioned three other times in the Middle Length Discourses (MN 31.7, 33.14, 128.12), suggesting that these were particularly important to the early monastic community. An example of this ideal is found in the following words of Ven. Anuruddha talking about living with his fellow bhikkhus:

I think thus: ‘It is a gain for me, it is a great gain for me, that I am living with such companions in the holy life.’ I maintain bodily acts of loving-kindness towards those venerable ones both openly and privately; I

¹ cf MN 50.14-15
maintain verbal acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately; I maintain mental acts of loving-kindness towards them both openly and privately. I consider: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do?’ Then I set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do. We are different in body, venerable sir, but one in mind.”

The last three principles of cordiality are noteworthy in how they are directly connected to Dharma practice. The fourth principle involves sharing acquisitions in a manner that is in accord with the Dharma. The fifth and sixth principle are personal qualities not necessarily involving interpersonal relationships. The fifth is possessing virtues that lead to concentration. The sixth are the views that lead to liberation from suffering. Because the fifth and sixth principles lead to love, respect, concord and unity, developing concentration and the path to liberation has an interpersonal dimension. That is, the practices of concentration and liberation are conducive to good social relationships. In fact, the Buddha goes on to say that it is the sixth principle – noble view – that is the highest, most cohesive, and most unifying (§7).

This means that while the Buddha emphasized the importance of loving-kindness, he sees the right view leading to liberation as the most important principles for living in harmony with others. Liberation has a social consequence – it creates love and respect.

In §8 the Buddha asks the rhetorical question of how right view leads to practicing in a way that leads to the destruction of suffering. From the answer he provides to his own question, it seems that right view mostly involves assessing or understanding oneself. First, one asks if there are any mental obsessions that can lead to quarrels, disputes and “stabbing others with verbal daggers.” These
obstructions are included in a list with sensual lust, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, doubt, and speculation about the world or other worlds.\(^2\)

Then, if in this personal review, the monastic knows he or she has seven particular knowledges about oneself, then he or she would know they have attained stream-entry, the first level of realization. The seven knowledges are:

1. Knowing the mind is free of obsessions and thus well-disposed for seeing things as they really are and awakening to the truths.
2. Knowing that with this view one’s mind attains serenity.
3. Knowing that one’s view is consistent with the Buddha’s dispensation, not that of other teachers.
4. Knowing oneself to have that character that would lead a person to immediately confess any violation of monastic rules and practice restraint in the future.
5. Knowing oneself to have that character that would remain dedicated to training in virtue, meditation and wisdom even if he or she is active in monastic affairs.
6. Knowing oneself to have the strength to give careful attention when listening to the Buddha teaching the Dharma and Discipline.
7. Knowing oneself to have the strength of someone who is inspired and gladdened in hearing the Buddha teaching the Dhamma and Discipline.

In this sutta, the Buddha gave these teachings on the seven knowledges to the quarreling monks at Kosambi. Most likely he was encouraging them to look into themselves to see that they were deficient in the training. Perhaps this teaching served to show the monks where to focus their practice. By recognizing that these teachings were given to a particular group of people in a particular circumstance can be a reminder that many of the Buddha’s teachings were tailored to particular audiences. To what degree these teachings can be taken to be more widely applicable probably depends on where and how they are applied.

\(^2\) The first five are known as the ‘five hindrances’. However, the first obsession is listed as kāmarāga (sensual lust); the better-known list of hindrances simply refers to the first as kāma.
“One abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness,
likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth;
so above, below, around, and everywhere, and extending to all,
one abides pervading the all-encompassing world
with a mind imbued with loving-kindness,
abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.”
(MN 7.6)