



anudisāya, heṭṭhimāya disāya, uparimāya disāya: in the east, the south, the west, the north, the south-east, the south-west, the north-west, the north-east, below, and above.

- *Sabbe sattā, sabbe pāṇā, sabbe bhūtā, sabbe puggalā, sabbe atta-bhāva-pariyāpannā, sabbā itthiyo, sabbe purisā, sabbe ariyā, sabbe anariyā, sabbe devā, sabbe manussā, sabbe viniṭṭhikā, averā hontu*: may all sentient things, all breathing things, all beings, all persons, all individuals, all women, all men, all noble ones, all ordinary persons, all deities, all human beings, all those destined for the states of loss, be free from anger.
- *Abyāpajjā hontu*: May they be free from enmity.
- *Aniḅhā hontu*: May they be free from affliction.
- *Sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu*: May they be happy.
- *Dukkhā muccantu*: May they be free from suffering.
- *Yathā-laddha-sampattito mā vigacchantu*: May they not be parted from their good fortune.
- *Kammassakā*: All beings are the owners of their kamma and will inherit its results.

Loving-kindness is very beneficial to calm and concentrate the mind. When coupled with bare awareness, it will quickly give rise to insight and liberation from defilements, which means freedom from suffering.

An Exposition of the Metta Sutta

The *Metta Sutta* — often referred to as the *Karaṇīya Metta Sutta* — was taught by the Buddha to a group of forest monks who were disturbed by tree spirits. He urged them to practise loving-kindness towards all beings. Then those spirits tolerated their presence happily.

The Pāli Text Suttanipāta, vv 143-152

1. “*Karaṇīyamattakusalena,
yantaṃ santaṃ paḍaṃ abhisamecca;
Sakko ujū ca suhujū ca,
sīvaco cassa mudu anatimānī.*
2. *Santussako ca subharo ca,
appakicco ca sallahukavutti;
Santindriyo ca nīpako ca,
appagabbho kulesvananugiddho.*
3. *Na ca khuddamācare kiñci,
yena viññū pare upavadeyyum;
Sukhino va khemīno hontu,
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittatā.*
4. *Ye keci pāṇabhūtatti,
tasā vā thāvarā vanavasesā;
Dīghā vā ye va mahantā,
majjhīmā rassakā aṇukathulā.*

1

great value of unremitting mindfulness in daily activities, my meditation teacher told me about one meditator who gained the stage of equanimity (*saṅkhārupekkha-nāṇa*) within fourteen days of intensive practice. He was a Rhodes scholar, i.e. he won a scholarship in the USA to attend Oxford University. Let all Buddhists therefore beware of those who say that *nibbāna* is easy to attain.

Nor despise any person whatsoever in any place (*nātimaññetha katthaci na kañci*): Earlier it was said that one should be free from rudeness (*appagabbho*). To despise another person for any reason is mental rudeness. If someone has many faults and few virtues, one should not despise them. Such a person deserves compassion for they are very like to be reborn in the lower realms after death, and even in this life they have no genuine happiness. One should despise only immorality and ignorance, whether they are in others or in oneself.

Let him not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill-will (*byārosanā paṭighasaññā, nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya*): May one not cause physical harm (*byārosana*) nor verbally abuse others. Let one not have any perception (*saññā*) of ill-will or aversion (*paṭigha*), to another (*aññamaññassa*), let one not (*na*) wish (*iccheyya*) that suffering (*dukkhaṃ*) should happen to anyone.

When someone hurts us in any way, we may wish them to meet some accident, even to die, or we may want to kill them personally. Such angry and hateful thoughts are quite

find mental peace and to realise *nibbāna*. Every good person wishes to attain *nibbāna*, which means the end of craving and suffering. Those who do not wish to attain it, do not know what it is. Perhaps they think that it is some kind of self-denial or annihilation. Therefore it is vital to understand that *nibbāna* is the supreme bliss.

He should be able (*sakko*): means that one should have confidence and energy to practise morality, concentration, and wisdom. Pious hopes and wishful prayers are useless. Though pious thoughts are productive of merit, they do not reach the goal, nor even approach it. The King of Tāvātimsa, Sakka, got that high position by his great diligence and ability. He is able, therefore he is Sakka. Some people, who profess to be Buddhists, rarely practise morality, concentration, and wisdom. They are really opposed to the Dhamma and strongly addicted to sensual pleasures, just like Māra! Since they do not practise morality properly, they are hopeless of attaining concentration. Without concentration, insight is far away, and the realisation of *nibbāna* is even more remote.

Upright, perfectly upright (*ujū ca, suhujū ca*): Why is it emphasised as *perfectly* upright? The meaning of upright is that one should be completely honest and upright in one's actions and speech. *Perfectly* upright means that one should be honest even in thought — that is one should expel lust, ill-will, delusion and wrong views whenever they arise.

5. *Diṭṭhā vā ye va aditṭhā,
ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre.
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā,
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittatā.*
6. *Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha,
nātimaññetha katthaci naṃ kañci.
Byārosanā paṭighasaññā,
nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.*
7. *Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttam
āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe;
Evampi sabbabhūtesu,
mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam.*
8. *Mettañca sabbalokasmi,
mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam;
Uddham adho ca tiriyañca,
asambādham averamasapattam.*
9. *Tiṭṭham caraṃ nisinno va,
sayāno yāvatāssa vitamiddho.
Etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya,
brahmametaṃ vihāramidhamāhu.*
10. *Diṭṭhiñca anupaggamma,
sīlavā dassanena sampanno;
Kāmesu vineyya gedham,
na hi jātuggabbhaseyyaṃ punareti”ti.*

- *Yathā-laddha-sampattito mā vigacchantu*: may they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained.
- *Kammasakā*: they are owners of their kamma and will inherit its results.
Then one should extend loving-kindness to all kinds of living beings:
- *Sabbe sattā, sabbe pāṇā, sabbe bhūtā, sabbe puggalā, sabbe atta-bhāva-pariyāpannā, sabbā itthiyo, sabbe purisā, sabbe ariyā, sabbe anariyā, sabbe devā, sabbe manussā, sabbe vinipātikā averā hontu*: may all sentient things, all breathing things, all beings, all persons, all individuals, all women, all men, all noble ones, all ordinary persons, all deities, all human beings, all those destined for the states of loss, be free from anger.
- *Abyāpajjā hontu*: may they be free from enmity.
- *Aniḅhā hontu*: may they be free from affliction.
- *Sukhī attānaṃ pariharantu*: may they be happy.
- *Dukkhā muccantu*: may they be free from suffering.
- *Yathā-laddha-sampattito mā vigacchantu*: may they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained.
- *Kammasakā*: all beings are the owners of their kamma and must inherit its results.

Finally, extend loving-kindness in all directions:

- *Purattimāya disāya, dakkhiṇāya disāya, pacchimāya disāya, uttarāya disāya, purattimāya anudisāya, dakkhiṇāya anudisāya, pacchimāya anudisāya, uttarāya*

Obedient (*suvaco*): In many translations this is given as “pleasant or gentle speech.” However, the commentary says it means that one receives admonishment meekly, and invites one’s critic open-heartedly: “It is good, venerable sir. Thank you for telling me. It is difficult to see one’s own fault. Please tell me if you see any such fault in me again, out of compassion for me.”

If one responds like that when criticised or admonished, one would also qualify as ‘*suvaco*’ in the sense of having gentle speech. Venerable Rāhula, when he was a novice in training, piled up a heap of sand, and made an earnest wish, “May I be admonished as many times as there are grains of sand in this heap.” Such a person is capable of rapid spiritual progress.

Gentle (*mudu*): The commentary makes it clear that this does not mean that a bhikkhu should run errands for lay supporters or give them presents, to ingratiate himself with them, but he should win their respect by his polite and gentle manners. He should be calm and unobtrusive.

Humble (*anatimānī*): ‘*Atimānī*’ means ‘excessively conceited.’ One should not be puffed up with pride on account of one’s lineage, learning, or other virtues. It is said that Venerable Sāriputta was humble like a beggar with shabby clothes entering a village with an earthenware pot. Though he was praised by the Buddha as the wisest of his disciples, Venerable Sāriputta was also the meekest and humblest person one could imagine.

Verse Six: Don’t Deceive or Harm Others

Let none deceive another (*na paro paraṃ nikubbetha*): One who deceives others does not have loving-kindness for them. They are absolutely devoid of compassion and good-will for others. One who claims to be a monk should follow the life-style and discipline of a monk. He is deceiving others if he has no aspiration to realise *nibbāna*, but is just trying to make a living.

I heard that a certain lady claims to be stream-winner, and says that merely by listening to her sermons people can attain *nibbāna*. Though some people with special perfections can and did gain realisation of the Dhamma while listening to sermons, the vast majority of people will have to strive very hard to purify their morality, deepen their concentration, and mature their insight. Even when the Buddha himself preached the Dhammacakka Sutta, only one of the five ascetics gained realisation on the spot. The other four had to practise mindfulness for several days before gaining realisation.

Those who make extravagant claims about their Dhamma talks are practising the worst kind of deception. A genuine stream-winner would make no such claims, as they would know that realisation comes about only through strenuous efforts and scrupulous moral conduct.

Very gifted and intelligent individuals may attain special knowledge quickly and easily. To illustrate the

- *Dukkhā muccāmi*: may I be free from suffering.
- *Yathā-laddha-sampattito mā vigacchāmi*: may I not be parted from the good fortune I have attained.
- *Kammassako*: I am the owner of my kamma and must inherit its results.

Then one should extend loving-kindness to the guardian deities of one's house or monastery:

- *Imasmiṃ gehe (ārāme) āraḁkhadevatā averā hontu*: may the guardian deities in this house be free from anger.
- *Abyāpajjā hontu*: may they be free from enmity.
- *Aniḁhā hontu*: may they be free from affliction.
- *Sukhī attānaṃ pariḁharantu*: may they be happy.
- *Dukkhā muccantu*: may they be free from suffering.
- *Yathā-laddha-sampattito mā vigacchantu*: may they not be parted from the good fortune they have attained.
- *Kammassakā*: They are owners of their kamma and will inherit its results.

Next one should extend loving-kindness to one's parents, teachers, relatives, and associates:

- *Amhākaṃ mātaḁitu ācariya-nāti-mitta-sammuhā averā hontu*: may my mother and father, teacher, relatives, and associates be free from anger.
- *Abyāpajjā hontu*: may they be free from enmity.
- *Aniḁhā hontu*: may they be free from affliction.
- *Sukhī attānaṃ pariḁharantu*: may they be happy.
- *Dukkhā muccantu*: may they be free from suffering.

getting on?" How long does it take to think of a family member living in the same house? How long does it take to think of them if they are living in a distant country? The answer is, "Exactly the same." or "It depends on how my mind is disposed towards them: if I know them very well, I can think of them at once; otherwise it takes a few seconds to visualise them." There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of people thinking of a close relative at the exact instant they have had some kind of accident while staying in a distant place.

Those who are born or those who are to be born (*bhūtā va sambhavesī va*): Life begins at conception, not just at birth. Beings in the womb, larvae, or fertile eggs, have life already, so a Buddhist should not destroy them. Every mother should extend loving-kindness towards the baby in her womb by giving up smoking, drinking, and other harmful things during pregnancy. Everyone should treat a pregnant woman with special care and kindness, as they would if she was carrying a baby in her arms.

In another sense this means those who are Arahants who have been born (*bhūtā*), but will not be born again, and those non-Arahants who will be born again (*sambhavesī*) or who are seeking (*esi*) rebirth.

May all beings be happy (*sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā*): May all beings be happy in body and mind; may they keep themselves happy. While visualising living beings, one diffuses loving-kindness towards them.

The Discourse on Loving-kindness

1. He who is skilled in welfare, who wishes to attain that calm state (*nibbāna*), should act thus: he should be able, upright, perfectly upright, obedient, gentle, and humble.
2. Contented, easily supported, with few duties, of light livelihood, with senses calmed, prudent, not impudent, not greedily attached to families.
3. He should not do the slightest thing for which other wise men might censure him. May all beings be happy and secure, may they keep themselves happy!
- 4-5. Whatever living beings there may be: feeble or strong, long or big, medium or short, tiny or huge, without exception; seen or unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born or those who are to be born, may all beings be happy!
6. Let none deceive another, nor despise any person whatsoever in any place. Let him not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill-will.

Verse Two: Content, Wise, Serene, and Impartial

Contented (*santussako*): One should be contented with whatever is available, whatever is within one's means, or whatever is suitable considering one's status. At his ordination a bhikkhu is reminded to be content with lumps of rice collected on almsround. If he is invited for luxurious meals in the houses of wealthy supporters he can accept, but he should not *expect*. If he longs for special food it would amount to discontent, then he would not be able to gain concentration. A householder, and his wife and children, should be content with whatever the household's income is able to provide. If not, they will quarrel, and get into debt. The Buddha said, "Contentment is the greatest treasure."

Easily supported (*subhāro*): means that one should be frugal and able to make do with little. If a bhikkhu is avaricious and difficult to satisfy, he will not be able to develop loving-kindness.

With few duties (*appakicco*): One who wishes to practise meditation should not burden himself with any unnecessary responsibilities. Bhikkhus have certain duties to maintain their dwelling-place and robes, or to look after sick monks, but they should spend most of their time for meditation and study. If a bhikkhu has no time to practise meditation, he should go elsewhere, otherwise the purpose of his going forth will be lost.

7. 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.
8. Let one cultivate thoughts of boundless love for the whole world: above, below, and across without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.
9. Whether he stands, walks, sits, or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop this mindfulness. This they say is the noblest living here.
10. Not falling into wrong views, being virtuous and endowed with insight, by discarding attachment to sense desires, never again is he reborn.

Explanation of the Discourse

Verse One: Able, Honest, and Humble

One who is skilled in welfare: One who is skilled in welfare (*attha*) knows what should be done (*karaṇīyaṃ*), and what should not be done (*akaraṇīyaṃ*). The commentary explains that, in brief, what should be done means that one should follow the bhikkhu's training. What should not be done means that one should avoid

A certain elder was always sweeping the monastery. One day he saw the elder Revata who was meditating as usual, and thought, "Why does this elder not sweep at least one room?" The elder Revata knew what he was thinking, and admonished him to sweep only in the morning and evening, not the whole time, but to spend the day in meditation. The sweeping elder soon attained Arahantship, and stopped doing so much sweeping. Rubbish started piling up, and the other bhikkhus thought he was negligent. The elder replied that though he was heedless before, now he was not. The bhikkhus reported this to the Buddha, and the Buddha said that the elder had spoken the truth:

"Whoever was heedless before, but afterwards is not, illumines the world like the moon freed from clouds." (Dhp v.172)

Of light livelihood (*sallahukavutti*): A bhikkhu should have eight essential requisites — an almsbowl, three robes, a waist-band, a razor, a water-strainer, and a needle. If he travels anywhere he should carry these eight things with him. It would be very easy. Certainly, he will not have to pay excess baggage on any airline. He could easily carry it all himself. Nowadays, we need a van to carry all our stuff when we move residence. When I travelled to Burma, I took just an overnight bag and a shoulder bag, but even that was rather burdensome.

continue with the practice until absorption (*jhāna*) is attained, expelling all mental hindrances. When there is no lust or anger at all in the mind, one will be dwelling (*vihāraṃ*) like a Brahmā.

Not falling into wrong views, being virtuous and endowed with insight (*diṭṭhiñca anuṭṭhānaṃ, sīlavā dāssanena sampanno*): Having developed *jhāna* or some degree of concentration on *metta*, one should contemplate thoughts of *metta* with bare attention. Then one will dispel the illusion of a self (*attadiṭṭhi*), and will not grasp (*anuṭṭhānaṃ*) wrong views (*diṭṭhiṃ*). When this insight matures one will attain Stream-winning, whereby one is endowed with (*sampanno*) supramundane virtue (*sīlavā*) through insight (*dāssanena*).

By discarding attachment to sense desires, never again is he reborn (*kāmesu vineyya gedhaṃ, na hi jātuggabbhaseyyaṃ punareti*): As one develops insight to the higher stages of the path, desire (*gedhaṃ*) for sensual pleasures (*kāmesu*) is conquered (*vineyya*), and one becomes a Non-returner. So one is not born (*jāti*) into a womb (*gabbhaseyyaṃ*) again (*punaṃ*).

How to Practise Loving-kindness

- *Ahaṃ avero homi*: may I be free from ill-will.
- *Abyāpajjo homi*: may I be free from enmity.
- *Aniḅho homi*: may I be free from affliction.
- *Sukhī attānaṃ pariharāmi*: may I be happy.

whatever their size or nature. Some people may have difficulty extending loving-kindness towards mosquitoes, snakes, or scorpions, or they may think that larvae or fleas are insignificant, but they also have life, and a Buddhist should not kill any living thing. One of the bhikkhus' essential requisites is a water-strainer, and he should not travel more than a few miles from the monastery without one. If water, sand, or wood is left outside even for a few days, it may contain living beings. One should check for signs of life before throwing away water, burning wood, or digging sand. If one destroys life unintentionally no evil kamma is made, but one should take due care when clearing rubbish, at least by turning things over and knocking them on the ground before burning them. If one keeps pets, one should brush them regularly (outside) to keep them free from fleas and lice, then one won't have to face the dilemma of killing fleas.

Verse Five: Seen or Unseen

Seen or unseen (*diṭṭhā vā ye va adiṭṭhā*): Some beings may be invisible due to their small size, or living under the ground, inside plants, or in non-human realms. Whether one can see them or not, one should be aware of them, and extend loving-kindness towards them.

Those dwelling far or near (*ye va dūre vasanti avidūre*): Loving-kindness can be effective at any distance, just like a telephone call to say, "How are you

Verse Eight: Send Love In All Directions

Let one cultivate thoughts of boundless love for the whole world (*mettañca sabbalokasmi mānasam bhāvaye aṇṇimāṇam*): Let one cultivate (*bhāvaye*) a boundless (*aṇṇimāṇam*) heart (*mānasam*) of loving-kindness (*mettañca*) for the whole world (*sabbalokasmi*).

Above, below, and across without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity (*uddham adho ca tiriyañca, asambādham averamasapattam*): One should extend loving-kindness above (*uddham*), below (*adho*), and across (*tiriyaṃ*) not oppressing (*asambādham*), free from enmity (*avera*), and void of hostility (*asapattam*).

Verse Nine: Meditate Constantly

Whether he stands, walks, sits, or lies down, as long as he is awake (*tiṭṭham caraṃ nisinno va, sayāno yāvatāssa vitamiddho*). One should develop loving-kindness at all times and in all postures, not to have any lapse in concentration. Meditation must be continuous to be effective, otherwise the mind wanders, defilements enter the mind, and concentration and energy decline.

Verse Ten: Free from Wrong View and Rebirth

He should develop this mindfulness. This they say is the noblest living here (*etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya, brahmametaṃ vihāramidhamāhu*): Loving-kindness must be firmly established (*adhiṭṭheyya*). One should

Right Speech, and Right Livelihood, we can begin to develop concentration on loving-kindness.

May all being be happy and secure, may they keep themselves happy! (*Sukhino va khemino hontu, sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittatā*): While reciting the words slowly, one should cultivate sincere thoughts of loving-kindness: “May all beings keep themselves (*atta*) happy (*sukhita*), may they feel secure (*khemino*).” Everyone wishes to be happy and free from anxiety and fear. Comparing others to oneself, let one wish for their happiness.

Verse Four: Send Love to All Beings

Whatever living beings there may be (*ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi*): ‘*Pāṇa*’ means breathing things, ‘*bhūta*’ means those have come into existence. ‘*Ye keci*’ means all beings without exception — whatever beings there may be existing anywhere in the universe.

Feeble or strong (*tasa vā thāvarā vā*): Those beings who have many defilements are feeble (in mind), those who have few or no defilements are strong.

Without exception (*anavasesa*): this is stressed to show the nature of genuine loving-kindness, which does not discriminate at all.

Long or big (*dīghā vā ye va mahantā*): medium, short, tiny, or huge (*majjhimā rassakā aṇṇukathūlā*): From what it says here, it is clear that loving-kindness must be practised towards all manner of living beings,

failure in morality (*sīlavipatti*), failure in view (*ditṭhivipatti*), failure in conduct (*ācāravipatti*), and failure in right livelihood (*ājīvavipatti*). One who has gone forth in this dispensation of the Buddha should abstain from the twenty-one kinds of wrong livelihood,¹ and fulfil the fourfold morality:

1. Fundamental restraint by the Pāṭimokkha rules, which is fulfilled by faith or confidence.
2. Sense-faculty restraint, which is fulfilled by mindfulness.
3. Right livelihood, which is fulfilled by energy.
4. Reflection on the proper use of requisites, which is fulfilled by wisdom.

One who fulfils this fourfold morality, is said to be skilled in welfare (*atthakusalena*).

¹ Twenty-one kinds of wrong livelihood for bhikkhus: 1) medical practice, 2) conveying messages, 3) doing things at the behest of laymen, 4) lancing boils, 5-17) giving: medicinal oil, emetics, purgatives, oil for nose-treatment, medicinal oil, bamboos, leaves, flowers, fruits, soap-clay, tooth-sticks, water for washing the face, or talcum-powder, 18) flattery, 19) half-truths, 20) fondling children, and 21) running errands. **Wrong livelihood by deception:** 1) inducing people to make offerings by: a) pretending that one does not want to receive alms, but accepting out of compassion; b) insinuating that one has attained *jhāna*, *magga*, and *phala*; c) feigning deportment to make people think that one is a Noble One; 2) talking to please donors to acquiring gain, honour, and fame; 3) inviting offerings by giving hints; 4) harassing to induce offerings; 5) giving something to getting something more. See *Visuddhimagga* pp 23ff for further details.

With senses calmed (*santindriyo*): A meditator must control the six-senses. On seeing a sight with the eye, one should not take notice of any details, but should merely be aware that one sees it. If one can stop the mind at the point of seeing, there will not be any chance for mental defilements to arise and develop. It was said earlier that morality of sense-faculty restraint is fulfilled by mindfulness. If one is not mindful, one will not be able to restrain the senses. A short story from the *Visuddhimagga* will illustrate the point:

A certain elder lived in a cave for thirty years practising meditation. Some monks came to visit the elder and commented on the beautiful flowering tree outside the cave, and the beautiful paintings on the ceiling of the cave. The elder commented, “Only now friends have I learnt about the paintings on the ceiling, though I knew the tree was in blossom when I saw the flowers on the ground.” This was a sharp reminder to the young monks to practise sense-faculty restraint. Though they had only just arrived, they had already allowed their eyes to wander in pursuit of sensual pleasures. The elder, who was an Arahant, was always mindful, so he did not want to look around here and there.

A bhikkhu should be serene and composed. Since he has eyes and ears, he must see and hear, but he should keep a watchful guard over his mind to protect himself from defilements that might invade his mind. When

This is for bhikkhus, but how should lay people practise to be skilled in welfare? They should observe the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth.

Unlike the eight precepts observed on *Uposatha* days, this morality can be observed by a lay person throughout life. To observe it one can simply determine as follows (or make a formal undertaking in the presence of a bhikkhu), “From today onwards throughout my life ...

1. I will abstain from taking life.
2. I will abstain from stealing.
3. I will abstain from indulging in sexual misconduct and taking intoxicants. (These three comprise Right Action).
4. I will abstain from telling lies.
5. I will abstain from setting one person against another.
6. I will abstain from using rude and rough words.
7. I will abstain from talking frivolously. (These four comprise Right Speech).
8. I will abstain from earning a living by taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, or selling animals, weapons, flesh, poisons, or intoxicants, which is Right Livelihood.

One who can undertake and observe these eight precepts is said to be “skilled in welfare.”

Who wishes to attain that calm state (*nibbāna*): The purpose of the Dhamma taught by the Buddha is to

common for ordinary individuals, but are absolutely opposed to the practise of loving-kindness. In the early stages of developing meditation on loving-kindness, therefore, one should dispel all such angry thoughts and resentment by reflecting well on the dangers and disadvantages of anger and hatred. If any anger or ill-will remains towards anyone, then one is not practising loving-kindness correctly. If a fire is still smoking, one has not extinguished it yet, even though there are no flames to be seen.

Verse Seven: As A Mother Loves Her Child

Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life (*mātā yathā niyaṃ puttā āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe*): Just as (*yathā*) a mother (*mātā*) would protect (*anurakkhe*) with her life (*āyusā*) her own flesh and blood (*niyaṃ puttā*), her only son (*ekaputtā*).

The meaning is that loving-kindness should be boundless, by comparing others with oneself.

Even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings (*evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānaṣaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ*): Even so (*evampi*) towards all beings (*sabbabhūtesu*), let one cultivate (*bhāvaye*) a boundless (*aparimāṇaṃ*) mind or heart (*mānaṣaṃ*). This verse emphasises the limitless and unrestricted nature of loving-kindness. Thoughts and feelings of good-will should occur in a continuous stream, then no trace of ill-will or anger can penetrate the mind.

eating his meals, since he has a tongue, he must taste the food as sweet, sour, bitter, salty, etc. If he takes delight in the taste, and further comments that the food is delicious, then he has no control over his tongue — neither in tasting, nor in speaking.

Prudent (*nīpako*): One should be prudent and discreet and know what is suitable to develop concentration. There are seven kinds of suitable things (*sappāya*) that one should know about — residence, alms-resort, speech, teachers and companions, food, weather, and posture. If even one of these is unsuitable, one may find it hard to develop concentration. “One man’s meat is another man’s poison” as the saying goes, so one should know what is good for one’s health and spiritual well-being. One should avoid unprofitable speech, and those who indulge in it. One should know when to take exercise, what to eat and how much, and not over-indulge in sleeping, though most meditators may need at least four or five hours.

Not impudent (*appagabbho*): means that one should be polite, not rude. There are three kinds of rudeness — physical, verbal, and mental. To some extent, this is a matter of cultural values, what is considered to be rude in one culture is not rude in another. In general, one’s posture and speech should be calm, unhurried, polite, unassertive, and unintrusive. One’s mental attitude should also be free from pride, arrogance, and contempt.

The best thing is to act and speak with awareness, then one will soon realise if one causes some offence.

Not greedily attached to families (*kulesvananugiddho*): A bhikkhu should be detached, unbiased, and unprejudiced. In dealing with lay-supporters he should not show any partiality or discrimination, which would amount to corruption. He should not grasp them as his own supporters. To cultivate genuine *metta* is not easy, as affection and attachment can easily corrupt one’s mind in the guise of kindness and loyalty. A bhikkhu who is attached to families cannot admonish lay supporters when it is his duty to restrain them from evil. Parents can spoil their children with too much affection.

Verse Three: Blameless and Kind

He should not do the slightest thing for which other wise men might censure him (*na ca khuddamā-care kiñci, yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ*): Finally, to summarise, one should be completely blameless.

Although the Metta Sutta seems short and simple, it is not at all superficial. Even before beginning the practise of loving-kindness meditation, we have to cultivate the above fifteen virtues to purify morality. Only then will we be pure-hearted enough to practise real *metta*.

As usual, the Buddha preaches a graduated discourse: first morality, then concentration, and finally wisdom. So having firmly established morality with Right Action,