

BRAHMAVIHĀRA DHAMMA

by
The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw
of
Burma

Translated by
U Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu)



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Editor's Foreword

As with my other editions of the translated works of the late Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, I have removed many of the Pāli words for the benefit of those who are not familiar with the technical terms. Where Pāli passages are included they are explained word by word, using the **Nissaya**: method. In this book, a Pāli word or phrase is highlighted in blue, followed by its translation in English. The entire passage is then summarised after the word-by-word translation.

The original translation was published in Rangoon in July 1985, about six years after the Sayādaw gave the Dhamma talks, which spanned a period of many weeks. To transcribe and translate many hours of tape-recordings is a huge task, but one productive of great merit as it enables a much wider audience to benefit from the late Sayādaw's profound talks.

This edition aims to extend the audience further still by publishing the book on the Internet. Since my target audience may be less familiar with Buddhism than most Burmese Buddhists, and many may know little about the late Mahāsi Sayādaw, I have added a few footnotes by way of explanation.

References are to the Pāli text Roman Script editions of the Pali Text Society — in their translations, these page numbers are given in the headers or in square brackets in the body of the text. This practice is also followed by modern translations, like that below:

302 Mahāgovinda Sutta: Sutta 19 i.224

Thus a reference to D.i.224 would be found on page 224 of volume one in the Pāli edition, but on page 302 of Maurice Walshe's translation. It would be on a different page in T.W. Rhys David's translation, but since the Pāli page reference is given, it can still be found. In the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana edition of the Pāli texts on CD, the references to the pages of the PTS Roman Script edition are shown at the bottom of the screen, and can be located by searching.

I have attempted to standardise the translation of Pāli terms to match that in other works by the Sayādaw, but it is impossible to be totally consistent as the various translations and editions are from many different sources. In the index you can find the Pāli terms in brackets after the translations, thus the index also serves as a glossary.

Bhikkhu Pesala
November 2013

Translator's Preface

This "Brahmavihāra Dhamma" expounded by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, Aggamahāpaṇḍita reveals the systematic method of developing loving-kindness, etc., towards all beings and the way to lead a Life of Holiness. The style of presentation and the informative material contained therein stand witness to the depth and wealth of mature spiritual and scriptural knowledge of the eminent Author. The warmth and sympathetic understanding of the human nature with which the author is moved, reflects the noble qualities of a true disciple of the Buddha who was committed to the weal of all living beings, and who had throughout his lifetime from the time of His Supreme Enlightenment, devoted his Compassionate skill to the aid of others for their emancipation from the woes, worries and sufferings.

A careful reading of this Dhamma followed by an unflinching practice of meditation that has been clearly explained in this discourse will, I believe, amount to inheriting a fortune in the shape of happiness in the present lifetime as also the spiritual attainment.

As a world religion, Buddhism has been a guiding force to human civilization and to all mankind who are in misery. Life is full of suffering, and what seems pleasurable is, in reality, miserable. It was only after the appearance of Buddhism, which inculcates moral discipline and loving-kindness, that the people find a happier and more peaceful world. The way to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion (*karuṇā*) has been vividly shown in this Brahmavihāra Dhamma, apart from other fine qualities that one should possess and practise for one's own benefit and that of others. Full instructions are given in this teaching to develop noble practices — particularly the four Brahmavihāra: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity according to what was taught by the Buddha in a subtle and profound way with Great Compassion flowing freely towards all living beings. The Buddha could see how all beings are suffering and bearing the burden of their aggregates as long as they are drifting in the current of saṃsāra. The Dhamma teaches us to have compassion for all others in distress, from minute insects to enormous mammals. The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw has elucidated this to remove the dust from our eyes to discern the truth.

This teaching is enriched with a number of anecdotes that lucidly illustrate the value of developing loving-kindness, compassion and sympathetic-joy, and also how to control anger, avoid envy, practise

patience and self-reliance and other virtues. It has been emphasized that human life is vulnerable to pain and suffering. Life is a process of change from the simple to the complex, birth to death, from beginning to end. Nothing ever remains the same in a person, which is composed of mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*), which are arising and vanishing at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. The appearance and disappearance of vibrating manifestations are the becoming and cessation process of mind and matter, which are transient by nature. This fact of impermanence brings in its wake discomfort, pain, illness, and unhappiness, because what is erroneously considered as joy and pleasure are, in fact, pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*). The Buddha taught that a person who is undisciplined in morality will lack wisdom, and in consequence, even a trivial evil committed will lead to a state of misery. The Buddha taught us the way to our own salvation, *i.e.*, to practise nobly and diligently to get rid of all suffering. The Buddha could only teach us the way to happiness. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another," said the Buddha. This brings us to the law of kamma. We are the heirs of our own kamma, good and bad actions that we did in the past, and that we are doing now. In the matter of developing compassion towards a being who is suffering, and in extreme misery beyond succour, one will have to nurture a feeling of indifference (*upekkhā*). In essence, it is to view the kamma of that being as his own personal property (*kammassakā*). Good kamma produces good, and bad kamma produces evil. For example, generosity yields wealth, morality leads to rebirth in noble families and in states of happiness, anger causes ugliness, and so on. These have been shown citing relevant stories, which are authentic as taught by the Buddha.

Rare indeed is this Dhamma which has been so elaborately expounded by the author, the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw that our heartfelt gratitude goes to the Sayādaw, and also to U Thein Han, a retired judge and Executive Member of this Buddha Sāsānānuggaha Organization, for his pains in tape recording this noble Dhamma taught by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw for sixteen times to cover the subject fully. These recordings were transcribed, and the manuscript was given to the Sayādaw for scrutiny, rewriting, and approval before the final draft went to the Press.

Life has been described as a continuous becoming (*bhava*) like a wheel moving on and on in the wilderness of *saṃsāra*. One is born, one grows up and suffers, and eventually dies to be reborn and continue the endless journey in existence. The Buddha pointed out that insight can be gained only by attaining morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) through cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path. Wisdom constitutes a great accomplishment for one who aspires to know the three characteristics by contemplation and noting, which will finally lead to complete liberation from suffering after attain the knowledge of the Path and its Fruition. The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw has given us guidelines to achieve that wisdom by the practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā*) even while developing loving-kindness, compassion, *etc.* The impermanence of all things is evident, but when we are young, we were only vaguely aware of this. Due to lack of wisdom, health and vigour act conceal the burdens of life. As we grow older, with grey hairs and other signs of decay, we come to see what is actually happening to us in its true perspective, and the significance of the ceaseless change occurring in and around us. The Buddha's teaching is as vital and relevant today as it was when he lived centuries ago.

I have translated this wonderful Dhamma with as much scholarly accuracy as I could, and with my humble spiritual perceptiveness that is within my practical knowledge of the Dhamma that I have been able to acquire under the guidance of my spiritual teachers. May this humble work contribute towards a wider knowledge of the Dhamma and a deeper appreciation of the morality of Buddhism, which is highly pragmatic. May the constant practice of the Dhamma along the lines indicated in this Dhamma teaching prevent unwholesome deeds and ultimately destroy all the fetters that keep us away from our final goal of *nibbāna*.

Min Swe (Min Kyaw Thu)

Secretary

Buddha Sāsanaṅgaha Organization.

February 5, 1983

Brahmavihāra Dhamma

Part One

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

The Meaning of Brahmavihāra

Today is the full-moon day of July, 1327 BE.¹ Beginning from today, I will talk on the Brahmavihāra Dhamma. In the compound “*Brahmavihāra*,” the word “*Brahma*” means “Noble.” This word, if properly pronounced in Pāli should be pronounced “*Birahma*.” In Burmese, it is spoken with a vocal sound as “*Brahma*.” This can be easily understood. The word “*vihāra*” conveys the meaning of “dwelling,” “abiding,” or “living.” Hence “*Brahmavihāra*” conveys the meaning of “Noble Living,” or “Living in the exercise of good-will.”

When analysed, the expression “*Brahmavihāra*” includes loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic-joy (*muditā*), or rejoicing in their happiness or prosperity of others, and equanimity (*upekkhā*), or indifference to pain and pleasure. These are the four kinds of Brahmavihāra. In the Mahāgovinda Sutta² it is referred to as “*Brahmacariya*.” Therefore, Brahmavihāra Dhamma is commonly called “*Brahmacāra Dhamma*.” *Brahmacariya* means chastity or living the holy life. Therefore this can also be called *Brahmacāra Dhamma* from now onwards.

In the Abhidhamma, the Brahmavihāra Dhamma is referred to as illimitable (*appamaññā*), a term derived from the meaning “infinite” or “boundless.” It is called “illimitable” because, when developing loving-kindness, it should be practised with unlimited friendliness towards all living beings.

Analysis of the Meaning

Among the four kinds of Brahmavihāra Dhamma, *mettā* means loving-kindness, *karuṇā* means compassion, *muditā* means sympathetic-joy, and *upekkhā* means equanimity. Of these four meanings when translated into Burmese, only the meaning of the word “compassion” is clear and precise without mingling with any other sense. The term “love” may convey the sense of clinging attachment with passion (*rāga*),

¹ Wāso, the month at the start of the four-month rainy season. 1327 Burmese Era, 1965 Common Era, 2510 Buddha Sāsana Era (Editor’s note)

² D.ii.219.

or sexual desire. Joy also concerns rejoicing for fulfilment of one's own desires, besides those connected with Dhamma. "Indifference" covers various mental attitudes. As such, if the meanings of the terms: "*mettā*," "*muditā*," and "*upekkhā*" are rendered in Burmese as "love," "joy" and "indifference," it might convey different shades of meaning. It would be more obvious if they are expressed in Pāli usage, as *mettā bhāvanā*, *karuṇā bhāvanā*, and *upekkhā bhāvanā*. I will use Pāli, which is clearer for the purposes of this Dhamma talk.¹

Meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā bhāvanā*) just means developing thoughts of loving-kindness towards others. Even if a thought occurs wishing prosperity to others, it is just a virtuous thought. What is meant by meditation on compassion (*karuṇā bhāvanā*) is developing compassionate feelings towards other beings. Ordinarily, if one feels compassion for others, wishing them to escape from suffering, it is a virtuous thought of compassion. Sympathetic-joy (*muditā*) means joy or rejoicing with others in their continued happiness and prosperity. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is a feeling of indifference with no concern or anxiety regarding other's happiness or sorrow, having a neutral feeling thinking that things inevitably happen according to the law of kamma, as the consequence of wholesome or unwholesome deeds. Of these four kinds of Brahmavihāra, first I will deal with the development of loving-kindness.

Making Preparations for Meditation

In the Visuddhimagga, before explaining how contemplation should be done on the earth device (*pathavī kasiṇa*), the subject of preliminary arrangements (*parikamma*) is elaborated exhaustively. In brief, priority should be given to the proper observance of morality, and then to settle anything that may give rise to obstructions (*palibodha*), leading to anxiety regarding one's residence. The next point is to accept with confidence the instructions given relating to the method of developing meditation on loving-kindness, which one intends to take up from a well-qualified meditation teacher (*kammaṭṭhānācariya*). This is the method I am now going to prescribe and teach. It is necessary to stay in an appropriate monastery, or better, a retreat centre, and settle all minor matters such as shaving

¹ I will translate these terms as loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity for the benefit of readers not as familiar with Pāli as the Sayādaw's audience. The discourse later clarifies the meaning of these terms. (Editor's note)

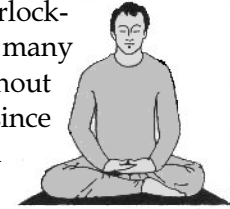
the head or cutting the finger nails. Take a brief rest after meals to avoid sluggishness or inertia. Then after finishing any chores, choose a quiet, solitary place, and take up a sitting posture that is comfortable.

Crossed-legged Sitting Posture

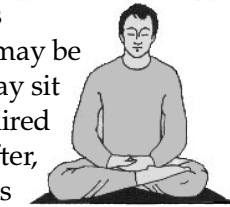
Sitting comfortably means to find a way of sitting that one can maintain for a long time without interrupting one's meditation. To begin training, the best way is to sit erect and cross-legged. There are three sitting postures. 1) That seen in most Buddha statues. This is not easy for most people.



2) The way that nuns used to sit, without interlocking the legs. This position is most comfortable for many people. It keeps the legs parallel while sitting without pressing one against the other. It may be easiest since this posture does not block the flow of blood through the veins.



3) Sitting with half the length of the legs crossed. Any one of these three sitting postures may be chosen, whichever suits you the best. Women may sit as they please. The sitting posture as stated is required only at the initial stage of meditation. Thereafter, sitting postures with knees up or with legs stretched may be taken up according to circumstances.



Meditate in All Four Postures

Meditation can be done while walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, which are the four usual postures. It is clear that meditation exercises can be done by adopting any of the four postures as stated in the Metta Sutta: "*Tiṭṭham caraṃ nisinno vā, sayāno yāvatāssa vitamiddho, etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya.*" The meaning of this phrase is:

Tiṭṭham: either in the act of standing, **ciraṃ:** or in the act of walking, **nisinno vā:** or while sitting, **sayāno:** or while lying down, **yāvatā:** for the duration of that period, **vitamiddho:** the mind will be free from sloth or sleepiness, **assa:** and it will so happen, **yāvatā:** for that particular length of time, **etaṃ satim:** this practice of mindfulness that arises with loving-kindness, **adhiṭṭheyya:** should be developed by fixing the mind upon it and letting oneself remain in this state of mind.

It has been clearly instructed to contemplate and note by way of assuming the four usual postures not only in respect of meditation on loving-kindness, but also in regard to practicing mindfulness for insight (*satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā*) relating to which it has been taught as “when walking, he knows that he is walking (*gacchanto vā gacchāmīti pajānāti*),” and so forth. Hence, although instructions have been given to take up a cross-legged sitting posture at the initial stage of meditation, all four postures can be adopted as appropriate in developing meditation on loving-kindness. The essential point is to develop loving-kindness on all occasions, continuously, leaving aside about four to six hours at night for sleep. When going to bed at about 9:00 or 10:00 p.m., while lying in bed and before falling asleep, it should also be developed.

Reflect on the Faults of Anger

After taking up the cross-legged posture, the faults of anger or malice and the advantages of patience should be imagined and reflected on. If these have been already reflected upon earlier, it would be sufficient. This was taught because benefits will accrue from such reflection, but it is not essential. If practised with firm faith and enthusiasm, beneficial results will be obtained. Nonetheless, if one is going to undertake any kind of work, there may be things that should first be reflected upon or considered. Rejection can be done only if one sees the fault. For example, in the case of a person sweeping and cleaning a room with a broom, he or she would pick up and throw away scraps of paper, cloth, or broken pieces of wood if they are considered to be worthless trash. If such trash is kept or put aside in a corner, the room will not be free from rubbish. In the same way, if the fault of anger is not perceived, one is likely to accept that anger without rejecting it. There is every possibility that such a state of affairs would prevail.

For instance, people who bear a grudge against someone or have a grievance against others for something done to their detriment, may be said to be harbouring anger or malice as a close friend. An aggrieved person may feel sore or bitter even if others try to appease his anger by consoling him with kind words. If entertaining such brooding resentment, he might even become infuriated at these attempts to reconcile him. Moreover, it is likely that he would blame

them for interfering. This resembles a person who keeps a venomous viper in his pocket, by keeping the anger through not realising the dangers of it. To reject the anger, one should reflect upon the faulty nature of anger and malice. The reflection to be done according to the texts is as follows:

At one time, on being asked by a wandering ascetic by the name of Channa,¹ “For what kind of danger inherent in passion (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), has it been taught to reject them?” Venerable Ānanda replied:

Āvuso: Friend Channa, **duṭṭho:** a vicious person who is bearing ill-will or becoming angry, **dosena abhibhūto:** being overwhelmed with anger, overpowered by anger or resentment, **pariyādinacitto:** which has used up or erased all noble or virtuous thoughts, without goodwill because of anger, **attābyāpādhayā pi ceteti:** plots to cause his own misery and, **parabyāpādhayā pi:** plots to cause misery to others and, **ubbhayabyāpādhāya pi ceteti:** plots to cause misery to both. ... **Kāyena:** physically, **duccaritaṃ:** evil deeds, such as killing, **carati:** are committed, **vācāya:** verbally, **duccaritaṃ:** evil deeds, such as uttering abusive words, **mānasa:** and mentally, **duccaritaṃ:** evil deeds such as wishing others’ ruin or destruction of life, property, and so on.

In essence, the method is to reflect and exercise restraint based upon this teaching. By allowing aggression to arise, it is obvious that one becomes miserable. Any feelings of joy or happiness that he previously had immediately disappear. Mental distress occurs, which changes his demeanour to become grim due to his unhappiness. He becomes agitated, and the more furious he becomes, the more he is distressed and embarrassed both physically and mentally. Anger may incite him to commit murder or utter obscene words. If he reflects on such evil deeds, he will at least feel remorseful and humiliated by being conscious of his own fault. If he has committed a crime, he will definitely suffer at once by receiving due punishment for his crime. Furthermore, in his next existence he can descend to the lower realms (*apāya*) where he will have to undergo immense suffering and misery. This is just a brief description of how anger will bring dire consequences. Such incidents can be personally experienced and known merely by retrospection.

¹ Channa Sutta, A.i.215.

Misery caused to others by anger is more obvious. Making others unhappy by word of mouth is common. A person who is railed at may be very upset and suffer mental anguish. An angry mood may deteriorate to the extent of killing others or causing them severe mental suffering. Even if there is no terrible consequence in the present life, an angry person will be reborn in the lower realms in his future existences. If he is reborn in the world of human beings by virtue of his wholesome kamma, he will suffer from a short life, many diseases, and ugliness. Anger cuts both ways endangering both the person who is angry and the victim. I do not need to say any more about reflection on the faults of anger — I should use the remaining time to explain how loving-kindness can be developed.

Benefits of Patience

Next, in the matter of reflecting on the merits or fruits of patience (*khantī*) it is a mental quality opposed to anger. In other words it is the absence of anger (*adosa*). It is similar in essence to loving-kindness. Particularly, patience endures any kind of provocation and remains calm without anger or evil deeds. Loving-kindness is more extensive in meaning than patience. It embodies the quality of goodwill, rejoicing with others' happiness. The advantages of patience have been described in the *Visuddhimagga*¹ as: "*Khantī paramaṇi tapo titikkhā*," which means "Patience is the highest austerity." It is the noblest and pious practice of virtue. "*Khantibalaṃ balānīkaṃ*" means that since patience has its own strength, it should be understood as taught by the Buddha that the beneficial fruits of patience by symbolising the attributes of a noble person — a Brahmaṇa — have the force or strength that is patience. What is meant by this is that the strength or vigour of patience that is capable of preventing anger resembles an army, which is capable of defending against an enemy. The Buddha has, therefore, taught that a person who is equipped with the strength of patience is a Brahmaṇa, a Noble One.

The gist of the Pāli phrase, "*Sadatthaparamā atthā, khantiyā bhiiyyo na vijjati*"² is one's own benefit is the noblest, and the best is the beneficial results of forbearance or patient endurance. The advantages of patience should be realised as stated by Sakka, cited above.

¹ In the *mettābhāvanākathā*, where it quotes *Dhammapada v 184* (ed.)

² *Vepacitti Sutta*, S.i.222.

As stated in the foregoing passages, patience is the noblest and best practice. It is noble and admirable because one who has patience will be able to tolerate criticism or irritating remarks, which would ordinarily incite a retort or refutation, and by virtue of this noble attribute, one will earn the respect and approval of others. He will receive help and assistance when occasion arises and can bring about greater intimacy between oneself and others. Nobody would hate a patient person. These benefits are quite conspicuous. If retaliation is made against any verbal attacks, hot controversy will ensue between the two parties and quarrels will break out. Feelings of hatred and animosity will creep in and the parties may become antagonistic to one another with malice and become enemies for life. If tolerance or patience is not practised, one will be inclined to cause harm to another, maybe, throughout one's lifetime. If, however, patience is cherished and nurtured, it would bring many benefits. This can be known clearly by retrospection. Hence, the Blessed One prescribed in the Ovāda Pāṭimokkha:¹ *“Khantī paramaṃ tapo titikkhā nibbānaṃ paramaṃ vadanti Buddhā,”* as mentioned earlier.

Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ: the noblest and highest goal of nibbāna. This was taught by the Buddha because all practices for the cultivation of merit can be carried out successfully only if there is patience. When donation is offered on a magnificent scale with great generosity, it needs great patience. To observe morality a person needs to practise patience, and in practising meditation, patience is also vital. All kinds of physical discomfort and pain will have to be tolerated, so only by contemplating and noting with patience, can concentration and insight-knowledge be gained. If one change one's posture frequently due to discomforts such as stiffness, heat, and pain, it will be difficult to gain concentration. This makes it unlikely that insight-knowledge would arise. Only if one contemplates and notes with patient endurance can concentration develop, then special knowledge of the Dhamma leading to knowledge of the Path and its Fruition (*magga-phala-nāṇa*), can be realised. Thus, it is said that patience is the noblest and highest practice.

The saying, “Patience leads to nibbāna,” is most appropriate. In practising for the fulfilment of the ten perfections (*pāramī*), it can be fully achieved if patience is applied. Among these perfections, determination, exertion, and wisdom are proximate causes for the

¹ Before the monastic rules of discipline (Pāṭimokkha) were laid down, when the monks on the Uposatha days, the Buddha would recite this Ovāda Pāṭimokkha, as an admonition to the monks (Editor's Note).

attainment of nibbāna. Only if relentless and persistent effort is made as originally intended to reach nibbāna with a firm determination. Insight-knowledge and path knowledge will be fully accomplished. If diligently practised with patience, Arahantship will be attained. An Arahant is said to be a noble Brahmaṇa who is fully endowed with the strength of patience. That is what the Buddha has said.

Patience is a noble practice that can lead to nibbāna. When developing loving-kindness, practice of patience is essentially fundamental. Only in the absence of 'anger', and by practising patience, mindfulness on loving-kindness will become developed. This is the reason why it has been instructed to reflect upon the advantages of patience prior to developing loving-kindness .

How to Develop Loving-kindness

When developing loving-kindness meditation, keep the mind on all human beings or all living beings, who may be seen, heard, or visualised. The way of developing with feelings of benevolence as stated in the Pāli texts and Commentaries, which say, "May they be happy (*sukhitā hontu*)," or "May all beings be blessed with happiness (*sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā*)."

Whether one is in one's own room, or whether one is moving about or working, if a person or any living being is seen or heard, loving-kindness should be developed with a sincere and sympathetic feeling as: "May he be happy! May he be blessed with happiness!" Similarly, on entering a large gathering, keep the spirit of loving-kindness in your heart, wishing, "May all beings be happy." This is an easy and excellent practice since everyone wants to be happy. This method of developing loving-kindness is the mental kamma of loving-kindness (*mettā mano kamma*). At the moment when monks and laity are paying homage to the Buddha, they may develop loving-kindness by saying, "May all beings be free from enmity (*sabbe sattā averā hontu*)."

It is the vocal kamma of loving-kindness (*mettā vacī kamma*)," as the feeling of loving-kindness is expressed verbally.

Besides developing loving-kindness mentally and verbally, special care should be taken to render physical assistance to others whenever possible, to make them feel happy. It would be meaningless to cultivate loving-kindness, if one caused misery to others physically, verbally, or mentally. It is therefore essential to do good to others, and by doing

so, the act of developing mindfulness on loving-kindness may be said to be effective. For instance, while loving-kindness is radiated from his heart to a person who is coming face to face with him in a narrow lane wishing him happiness, it would also be necessary to give way to him, if he is worthy of respect. Such behaviour would then amount to honouring him with a virtuous thought and would be in tune with one's inner feeling of loving-kindness. One who develops loving-kindness while travelling, would make room for fellow-travellers who may be looking for accommodation in the same carriage, provided of course, that there is space. He should assist others as far as possible if he happens to find them burdened with a heavy load. In connection with business affairs, it amounts to exercising loving-kindness by instructing another person in matters with which he is not acquainted, speaking gently and kindly, offering a warm reception with a graceful gesture and a smiling face. One should help a person to the best of one's ability. These are genuine manifestations of loving-kindness. To speak kindly is the vocal kamma of loving-kindness; giving physical help to others is the physical kamma of loving-kindness.

Radiation of Loving-kindness

When it is stated in the Paṭisambhidāmagga that 528 kinds of loving-kindness are developed, it refers to the way of developing loving-kindness by those who have achieved absorption. Nowadays, the traditional practice is for monks to develop loving-kindness by recitation for the achievement of merits and perfections. The Pāli formula usually recited is the same as that learnt by heart by the majority of lay people. I will first recite that formula in Pāli for the purpose of categorisation and explanation.

Sabbe sattā, sabbe paṇā, sabbe bhūtā, sabbe puggalā, sabbe attabhāvapariyāpannā.

These five phrases denote all sentient beings without distinction and limitation. Herein, the expressions: **sabbe sattā**: all beings, **sabbe paṇā**: all who breathe, **sabbe bhūtā**: all who are born, **sabbe puggalā**: all individuals, and **sabbe attabhāvapariyāpannā**: all those who have aggregates, convey the same meaning. Each expression refers to all beings.

“**Sabbā itthiyo**: all women,¹ **sabbe purisā**: all men,² **sabbe ariyā**: all noble ones, **sabbe anariyā**: all ordinary individuals, **sabbe devā**: all celestial beings, **sabbe manussā**: all human beings, **sabbe vinipātikā**: all beings in the lower realms (*apāya*). These expressions denote the seven different types of beings: the male and female genders, noble ones (*ariya*), and ordinary individuals (*puthujjana*), and three classes of beings: celestial beings, human beings, and beings in the lower realms.

Loving-kindness that is developed radiating towards the seven species separately and individually, identifying them in their respective types is known as specified loving-kindness (*odhisa mettā*). The first five phrases earlier stated, having no limitations with reference to all beings, is called universal loving-kindness (*anodhisa mettā*), which means loving-kindness without any distinction or limit.

In developing loving-kindness, these two groups forming twelve verses should be recited verbally or mentally in combination with the four phrases: “May they be free from enmity (*averā hontu*),” “May they be free from mental distress or suffering (*avyāpajjhā hontu*),” “May they be free from bodily suffering or injury (*anighā hontu*),” “May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily (*sukhi attānaṃ pariharantu*).” The last phrase conveying goodwill, “May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily,” is very significant and meaningful. All beings are prone to external dangers of all sorts. There are also internal dangers of diseases and painful feelings in the body. Moreover, for the sake of one’s own good health and proper livelihood, everything possible should be done and achieved without fail. Only when free from these dangers, and when life’s necessities are sufficient, then happiness could be gained both physically and mentally. If the burden can be carried easily, it can be said to be satisfactory from the point of worldly affairs. That is why development of loving-kindness should be seriously made with a benevolent frame of mind by uttering the words, “May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily.”

If loving-kindness is developed saying, “May all beings be free from enmity,” etc., which comprises five phrases of universal loving-kindness combined with the above four phrases for developing loving-kindness, there are twenty ways of developing universal loving-kindness.

¹ Includes female deities, animals, hungry ghosts, jealous gods, and beings in hell.

² Includes male deities, animals, hungry ghosts, jealous gods, and beings in hell.

Further, if development of loving-kindness is practised saying, “All women,” etc., comprising seven phrases of specified loving-kindness combined with the above four phrases, “May they be free from enmity,” there are twenty-eight ways of developing specified loving-kindness. Adding these to the twenty ways of developing universal loving-kindness, the total is forty-eight. Developing loving-kindness meditation without specifying the direction is called loving-kindness with unspecified direction (*disa anodhisā mettā*).

Similarly, developing loving-kindness towards all beings living in the East¹ (*puratthimāya disāya*), as “May all beings in the East be free from enmity,” would total forty-eight. Likewise, the remaining cardinal compass points: the West, the North, the South, the South-east, the Northwest, the North-east, the South-west, the Nadir (*hetthimāya disāya*) and Zenith (*uparimāya disāya*): when multiplied by the ten directions will total 480. This way of developing directional loving-kindness, is known as specified directional loving-kindness (*disā odhisa mettā*). If this 480 is added to the 48 of loving-kindness with unspecified direction, the total will be 528 kinds of loving-kindness.

To summarise: the five hundred and twenty-eight kinds of loving-kindness: let us develop loving-kindness by reciting as follows:

¹ A question may arise as to who are the Noble Ones, deities and humans in the nadir, and similarly, as to who are the beings of the lower realms (*apāya*) in the zenith. This may be answered as follows: if a person residing in the upper-storey of a house is radiating loving-kindness, there can be Noble Ones, deities and humans in the lower storeys or in other similar places. While developing loving-kindness from the top of a mountain, there can be Noble Ones, deities and humans in places at the foot of the mountain. If a person who develops loving-kindness stays on the surface of the earth, there can be humans, deities and Noble Ones living on the surface of the ocean. In the deep ocean, there can be deities, and Noble Ones who are deities.

In this connection, recollection may be made of the belief entertained by some that Venerable Upagutta resides in a palace floating on the ocean. In much the same way, if loving-kindness is developed while remaining on the surface of the earth, there can be human beings on the higher level of the earth, on the elevated planes, on the hills or mountains, or on the upper-storeys of the house or monastery. Moreover, animals such as, insects, birds, etc., may be present in those places higher up or in the sky.

In the Vinītavatthu of the fourth Pārājika of the Vinaya Piṭaka and in the Lakkhaṇa Saṃyutta of the Nidāna Vagga, it has been stated that there are hungry ghosts (*petā*) running about in the sky bitterly crying in great pain. This bears testimony to the presence of beings from the lower realms in the zenith. Insects, birds and other winged creatures can be seen by anyone. (Translator’s note)

1. "May all beings be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

2. "May all those who breathe be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds).

After the recitation of the words, "May they be free from danger" in the course of developing loving-kindness, the mind that concentrates and the voice of utterance immediately cease. This cessation of mind and matter must also be contemplated. If such contemplation is done, tranquillity and insight are developed in pairs. The continuous contemplation of tranquillity and insight in pairs is called *'yuganaddha vipassanā'*. Let's recite and develop loving-kindness by applying this method of *'yuganaddha.'*

3. "May all those who are born be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

4. "May all individuals be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

5. "May all those who have aggregates be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds, total = 20).

1. "May all women be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

2. "May all men be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

3. "May all Noble Ones be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily

suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds).

4. "May all ordinary individuals be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

5. "May all celestial beings be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

6. "May all human beings be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds)

7. "May all beings in the lower realms be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily." (4 kinds: total = 28 kinds).

These are the twenty-eight kinds of specified loving-kindness. If these are added to twenty kinds of universal loving-kindness mentioned previously, it would total 48 kinds of loving-kindness. Thereafter, let us recite and develop mindfulness on loving-kindness in the following way beginning with the East, each directional phase having 48 kinds. This way of developing loving-kindness is acceptable to every Buddhist. It is easy to do, and even those who have little knowledge can understand. Let's begin reciting.

1. "May all beings in the East be free from enmity," "May they be free from mental distress or suffering," "May they be free from bodily suffering or injury," "May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily."

"May all those who breathe in the East be free from danger ...

"May all who are born in the East be free from danger ...

"May all individuals in the East be free from danger ...

"May all who have aggregates in the East ...

"May all women in the East be free from danger ...

"May all men in the East be free from danger ...

"May all Noble Ones in the East be free from danger ...

"May all ordinary individuals in the East be free from danger ...

“May all celestial beings in the East be free from danger ...

“May all human beings in the East be free from danger ...

“May all beings of the lower realms in the East be free from enmity,”
 “May they be free from mental distress or suffering,” “May they be
 free from bodily suffering or injury,” “May they keep themselves
 happy and carry the burden easily.”

Likewise, loving-kindness should be recited and developed in respect of the remaining nine directions. For now, it would be sufficient to recite and develop the first and the last phrase. Let’s do the recitation.

2. May all beings in the West be free from enmity,” “May they be free from mental distress or suffering,” “May they be free from bodily suffering or injury,” “May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily.”

“May all beings of the lower realms in the West be free from enmity,”
 “May they be free from mental distress or suffering,” “May they be free from bodily suffering or injury,” “May they keep themselves happy and carry the burden easily.”

3. “May all beings in the North ...

4. “May all beings in the South ...

5. May all beings in the South-east ...

6. May all beings in the North-west ...

7. May all beings in the North-east ...

8. May all beings in the South-west ...

9. May all beings in the Nadir ...

10. May all beings in the Zenith ...

What has now been recited is a brief, but comprehensive, account of the 528 kinds of loving-kindness. This how those who are accomplished in meditation on loving-kindness immerse themselves in absorption. Those who have not yet achieved absorption, could also radiate loving-kindness in the same way. Those who have special perfections may attain absorption. Even if they fail to attain absorption, benefits will undoubtedly accrue as mentioned below.

‘Monks! A monk, by practising loving-kindness (for the sake of another’s happiness), even for a moment,¹ (and if borne in mind attentively), the monk who has thus developed loving-kindness is called ‘One not devoid of concentration.’ He conforms to the Teacher’s instruction,

¹ A.i.10.

and does not eat the country's almsfood in vain. What, then, could be said regarding those monks who have frequently practised and developed the thought of loving-kindness? This is the teaching of the Buddha, so there is no doubt that developing loving-kindness is highly beneficial.

According to this teaching, even if the thought of loving-kindness is fostered for a split-second, he who exercises this goodwill or benevolent feeling towards others may be said to be a person who is not devoid of concentration. He should be regarded as a person who practises in accordance with the instruction of the Blessed One. If he is a monk, he is worthy of enjoying the meals offered by his supporters. He may be regarded as having appreciated the meals offered, enabling the donor to gain merits and benefits. If the meals are taken by the monks without reflection, it would amount to accepting meals by way of borrowing. The reason being that if a monk, not being accomplished with morality, eats the meals that should be consumed only by a monk fully endowed with all four kinds of moral purity,¹ it is like taking meals on credit, saying that he would only later repay it by fulfilling the required morality. Also full benefits will only be derived by the alms-giver if he offers anything in charity to a monk who is fully accomplished with fourfold moral purity. The Commentaries say that partaking of the four requisites — almsfood, robes, medicines, and dwelling — without due reflection, amounts to using things on credit, which he will have to account for later.

A monk who develops loving-kindness towards others even for a moment shall be deemed to have accepted the gifts as a true owner. He is like one who inherits property. That is why it may be construed as partaking of things offered without futility. The Commentary goes on to say "Offerings given to the Saṅgha (*saṅghe dinnā dānaṃ*) have great reward (*mahāthiyaṃ hoti mahapphalaṃ*)."¹ For being beneficial it may be said to be consumed without futility.

Loving-kindness Practised by the Elder Subhūti

The exercise of mindfulness on loving-kindness can bring about great benefit for the donors. Since this is so, the elder Subhūti, an Arahant, used to enter into the absorption on loving-kindness while stopping for a while in front of every house when going round for

¹ Purity of Pāṭimokkha restraint, purity of livelihood, purity of sense-faculty restraint, and purity of reflection while using requisites (Editor's note).

alms. Only after arising from this absorption on loving-kindness, did he accept the offering of food. He did this to bestow beneficial results on the donors. The elder Subhūti later received the highest praise from the Buddha, being declared pre-eminent among all of his disciples as a recipient of alms. Nowadays, when religious functions are held in connection with the offerings of charity, the Metta Paritta is recited by the monks for the benefit of the donors. Hence, whenever chanting the Mettā Paritta as a blessing on such occasions, it should be reverentially recited while practising loving-kindness.

It is important to note that developing loving-kindness while listening to a talk is really advantageous. Loving-kindness needs to be developed as and when an opportunity occurs, wherever you may be. At least it should be developed immediately after worshipping the Buddha, as time permits. If circumstances are favourable, absorption can be achieved quickly when loving-kindness meditation is developed, as in the case of Dhanañjāni, a Brahmin.

Loving-kindness Practised by Dhanañjāni Brahmin

When Dhanañjāni, the Brahmin, was on the threshold of death in his sick-bed, a request was made at his behest to invite the elder Sāriputta. The elder responded to the invitation and came to see Dhanañjāni. The elder asked him how he was getting on, whether he was feeling better or not, and then, taught as follows:

When asked, "Of the two, rebirth in hell or rebirth as an animal, which is better?" Dhanañjāni answered, "Animal rebirth is better." On being questioned further, regarding animal rebirth or as a hungry ghost, as a hungry ghost or a human, human rebirth or rebirth among the deities of the Four Great Kings (*Cātumahārājikā devā*), and thus up to the highest heaven of the deities who delight in the creation of others (*Paranimmitavasavattī devā*), Dhanañjāni replied each time that the latter was best. Then the elder asked which was better, the life of a deva or that in the Brahma realm. On hearing 'Brahma realm,' Dhanañjāni became encouraged and asked with an exultant feeling, "Did you, my dear Venerable Sāriputta, really mean to say 'Brahma realm'?" This question made the elder realise that Dhanañjāni was mentally inclined towards rebirth in the Brahma realm, so he said that he would explain the practice leading to the Brahma realm. Then he started teaching as follows:

“Idha, Dhanañjāni, bhikkhu mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ, tathā tatiyaṃ, tathā catutthaṃ; iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamānena averena abyābajjhena pharitvā viharati. Ayaṃ kho, dhanañjāni, brahmānaṃ saḥabyatāya maggo.”¹

Dhanañjāni: Dhanañjāni Brahmin, **Idha bhikkhu:** a monk in this noble dispensation, **mettāsahagatena cetasā:** with a mind of loving-kindness wishing others to be happy, **ekaṃ disaṃ:** towards all beings living in one region or direction, **pharitvā viharati:** abides radiating loving-kindness, **tathā dutiyaṃ:** likewise he remains radiating loving-kindness to a second direction, **tathā tatiyaṃ ... tathā catutthaṃ:** and in the same way he radiates loving-kindness to the third and fourth directions; **iti:** thus, **uddham:** to all beings in the higher realms, **adho:** to all beings in the lower realms, **tiriyaṃ:** to all beings in the four directions, **sabbadhi:** everywhere, **sabbattatāya:** regarding all beings equally with loving-thoughts, **sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ:** to all other beings in the entire universe, **mettā saḥagatena cetasā:** develops the mind wishing happiness to others, **vipulena:** and spreading the mind to cover all areas. **Mahaggatena:** with a lofty mind, **appamānena:** which is boundless, **averena:** free from hatred, **abyābajjhena:** free from thoughts of oppression, **pharitvā viharati:** radiates loving-kindness, **Dhanañjāni:** Dhanañjāni Brahmin, **ayaṃ:** the practice of diffusing or radiating loving-kindness, **brahmanam saḥabyatāya:** is for the purpose of staying in the company of Brahmas, **maggo:** it is the path leading one to become a Brahma.

The gist of it is that radiating loving-kindness to all beings in the ten directions is the path of practice to ascend to the Brahma realm. The way of radiating compassion (*karuṇā*), rejoicing in others' happiness (*muditā*), and abiding in equanimity (*upekkhā*), has been taught in the same way. After benevolently teaching thus, the Venerable Sāriputta returned to the Jetavana monastery. There, he respectfully related to the Buddha the teachings he had given to Dhanañjāni. Thereupon, the Blessed One reprimanded Venerable Sāriputta thus: “Why did you instruct Dhanañjāni on the path to the Brahma realm, which is inferior when compared to nibbāna, and then get up from your seat and leave?”

¹ Dhanañjāni Sutta, M.ii.195.

The Buddha went on to say that Dhanañjāni had passed away, and had been reborn in the Brahma realm. The Commentary adds that having received this admonition from the Buddha, Venerable Sāriputta visited the Brahma realm and delivered a sermon on the Four Noble Truths to Dhanañjāni Brahmā, and, from that time onwards, whenever any teaching was given relating even to a single verse of four lines, it was always done without omitting the Four Noble Truths.

In this connection what is really intended to be known is that Dhanañjāni, the Brahmin, had been asked to develop loving-kindness, etc., and had thereby attained absorption within a short time of about half an hour before his death. By virtue of this absorption, he reached the Brahma realm. It should therefore be remembered that in the absence of any other special merits on which one can rely at the verge of death, the development of loving-kindness will prove to be a dependable asset. The best thing, of course, is to contemplate, note, and become aware of all phenomena like those who practise and benefit from the method of mindfulness meditation.

Furthermore, the highly beneficial effect of developing loving-kindness was taught by the Buddha in the Okkhā Sutta¹ of the Nidāna Saṃyutta as described below:

Developing your mind with loving-kindness for a brief period of time involved in milking a cow once in the morning, once in daytime and once at night time, or smelling a fragrance for once only, is far more advantageous than the offering of meals by cooking a hundred big pots of rice, once in the morning, once in the daytime and once at night time, which would, of course, be tantamount to feeding about (3,000) people in all.

It is therefore evident that developing loving-kindness even for a moment is really precious, and one benefits without incurring expenses, spending time, and exerting great labour. Moreover, the advantages of meditation on loving-kindness were taught in the Metta Sutta of the Graduated Discourses, in the Book of Elevens, as follows:

“Mettāya, bhikkhave, cetovimuttiyā āsevitāya bhāvitāya bahulikatāya yānikatāya vatthukatāya anuṭṭhitāya paricitāya susamāradhāya ekādasānisamsā pāṭikaṅkhā. Katame ekādasa? Sukhaṃ supati, sukhaṃ paṭibujjhati, na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati, manussānaṃ piyo hoti, amanussānaṃ piyo hoti, devatā rakkhanti,

¹ S.iii.284.

nāssa aggi vā viṣaṃ vā sattaṃ vā kamati, tuvaṭaṃ cittaṃ samādhīyati, mukhavaṇṇo vipassīdati, asammūlho kālaṃ karoti, uttari appaṭivijjhanto brahmalokūpago hoti. Mettāya, bhikkhave, cetovimuttiyā āsevītāya bhāvītāya bahulikatāya yānikatāya vatthukatāya anuṭṭhitāya paricitāya susamāraddhāya ime ekādasānisamaṃsā pāṭikaṅkhā”ti.

Eleven Advantages of Loving-kindness

In brief, the eleven advantages of loving-kindness, which are worthy of note and bearing in mind, are the mental states that have been developed, practised, and frequently relied upon, like vehicles that have been maintained properly and kept ready for use. They are those mental states that have been properly practised and firmly established. The thoughts of loving-kindness should be free from hindrances such as ill-will. Ordinarily, loving-kindness is regarded as merely the mind of good-will. However, when speaking of serenity emancipated from human passions (*cetovimutti*), it should be regarded as *mettā-jhāna*. It has been explained as such in the Commentary.

The eleven advantages of loving-kindness are:

Sukhaṃ supati: he sleeps happily. (1) Those who lack practice in meditation are restless before falling asleep; they may perhaps snore. On the other hand, a person accustomed to meditation on loving-kindness has a peaceful sleep with an undisturbed mind. Once fallen asleep, he or she sleeps happily just like a person in absorption. This is the first advantage.

Sukhaṃ patibujjhati: he awakes happily. (2) When waking up from sleep some get up with a grumble. Some have to stretch their arms and legs, roll over, or make other movements before getting up from bed. Those who go to sleep after developing loving-kindness will not suffer such discomfort. They awake from sleep happily and as fresh as flowers in full bloom. According to the Dhammapada verses: “Those who recollect the noble attributes of the Buddha, sleep soundly and wake happily.”¹ It should be noted that special emphasis has purposely been made on the peculiar characteristics of meditation on loving-kindness because of its qualities in deriving such benefits.²

Na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati: he dreams no evil dreams. (3) Some have nightmares such as falling down from a high altitude,

¹ Dhp v 296.

² Dhp v 300.

being mistreated by others, or being bitten by a snake. A person who develops loving-kindness will not have such frightening dreams, but will have pleasant dreams, as if worshipping the Buddha, flying through the air with psychic powers, listening to sermons, and such things that give delight.

Manussānaṃ piyo hoti: he is pleasing to human beings. (4) Others will adore the meditator because of his or her noble attributes. The meditator radiates loving-kindness to others and will never harm anyone. Relatives and friends will not find fault, and since a meditator is tolerant, having serenity and compassion for others, he or she is loved and respected by all. Sincere loving-kindness is a noble attribute that invokes the affection and respect of others.

Amanussānaṃ piyo hoti: he is also loved by non-human beings. (5) The fourth and the fifth advantages show that he is loved by all human and celestial beings. An instance is related in the Visuddhi-magga to show how love and respect are bestowed by celestial beings.

The Story of Visākha

At one time, a rich man by the name of Visākha lived in the city of Pāṭaliputta. While residing in Pāṭaliputta, he heard travellers tales regarding the existence of Buddhist shrines and pagodas in the island of Sri Lanka so numerous that they resembled a necklace of flowers. The entire place was said to be glowing with the bright colour of yellow robes worn by the Saṅgha. Every place was safe and secure and one could reside peacefully, spending the night anywhere without fear. The weather was moderate and conducive to good health. The serenity of the monasteries was matched by the refined and gentle behaviour of the people, both in thought and deed, creating a congenial atmosphere for listening to the Dhamma talks with peace of mind and devotion.

These idyllic impressions aroused in him the wish to go to Sri Lanka and enter the Saṅgha. With this intent, he transferred all of his property and business assets to his wife and children, and having done so, left home with only one rupee in his pocket. He had to wait for a month at a seaport before he could set off by an ocean-going vessel. In those days, ocean-going vessels were not steamships, but large sailing boats. Since he had a natural gift for doing business, he started trading, buying and selling goods here and there while

waiting for the boat to arrive. Within a month, he had earned a thousand rupees by honest trading. Trading in an honest way means buying goods for their true value and selling them on at a fair profit. In ancient times, a profit margin of only two two percent was usually taken. Trading goods by fair means with the correct price means legal and honest trading (*vammika vaṇijjā*). Trading in a legitimate way for one's livelihood is right-livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). However, it seems that Visākha's intention was not to trade for a profit motive, but was just his natural inclination.

This is evident from the fact that he had later discarded all his money derived from his business venture. Visākha left the port and reached Sri Lanka, where at the Mahāvihāra, he requested to be ordained as a monk. On his way to the ordination hall (*sīma*), one thousand rupees that he carried in a pouch tucked up at his waist, slipped out accidentally. When the senior monk who was escorting him to the ordination hall asked him what this money was for, he replied, "Venerable sir, this is my own money." On being told by the senior monks, "Lay disciple, according to the monastic rules, from the time of your ordination, you cannot handle or make use of money. You should dispense with this money right away." Visākha replied, "I do not wish to see those who favour me with their presence at my ordination return home empty-handed." So saying, he threw away the thousand rupees, letting them fall among the crowd of devotees outside the precincts of the ordination hall. Having done so, he received ordination.

The rich man was named as Venerable Visākha. For five years, he studied hard, and undertook training in the disciplinary rules and precepts called "*Dvemātikā*." After the completion of five rainy seasons, he took up meditation practice for four months at each of four different monasteries. While practising thus, he once made his way to a forest retreat, and there made a joyous utterance, reflecting on his noble attributes, as follows:

*"Yāvatā upasampanno, yāvatā idha āgato.
Ethantare khalitaṃ natthi, aho lābhā te mārīsa."*¹

Yāvatā upasampanno: from the time of my ordination, **yāvatā idha āgato:** until I arrived at this forest retreat, **ethantare:** during this period, **khalitaṃ:** failure in the observance of moral precepts,

¹ Vism.i.313.

natthi: had never happened, **mārisa**: O, Venerable Visākha, **te**: your, **lābhā**: gains and benefits relating to morality, **aho**: are wonderful!

Later, Venerable Visākha proceeded to a monastery on Cittala mountain situated at the extreme end of the southern range. On his way, he reached a junction in the road where he stopped for a while, undecided as to which route he should take. At this point, a guardian angel of the mountain appeared and directed him towards the right path saying, “This is the route that you should take.” After four months had elapsed since his arrival at Cittala monastery, on one day at dawn he was lying down, planning to leave the monastery for another place. While he was thus reflecting, the guardian deity of a mañila tree, which stood at the head of the walking path, sat on the stairs, crying. The elder Visākha asked, “Who are you and why are you weeping?” The guardian deity replied, “I am the guardian deity of that mañila tree.”

When asked why he was weeping, the deity replied that he felt sad and dejected due to the imminent departure of the elder. Visākha then asked again, “What advantages have you derived from my stay here?” The guardian deity replied, “Venerable sir, your presence here has brought about a loving-kindness among the deities; and if you leave this place, quarrels will break out among the deities who will utter harsh speech hurting one another’s feelings.” Visākha then said, “If my stay here will bring happiness to you all, I will have to stay on.” He continued to reside at the monastery for another four months.¹ Similar incidents happened again at the end of every four months, and the elder Visākha therefore had to remain at the Cittala monastery until the time of his parinibbāna. This anecdote in the Visuddhimagga is a clear example showing how a person who develops loving-kindness is loved and respected by celestial beings.

Devatā rakkhanti: the deities protect him. (6) The manner of giving protection is said to be similar to the kind of protection given by parents to their only son through love. If the deities are going to render help and protection, one will definitely be free from dangers, and will gain happiness.

Nāssa aggi vā visam vā sattham vā kamati: neither fire, nor poison, nor swords can harm him. (7) When a person is developing

¹ The Asian year is divided into three seasons of four months each: the rains (*vassa*), the cold season (*hemanta*), and the hot season (*gimha*) — approximately July-October, November-February, and March-June. (Editor’s note)

loving-kindness, neither fire, nor poison, nor swords (or any other dangerous weapon) can cause physical harm. In other words, no weapon can injure an individual who is developing loving-kindness. Firearms, bombs, missiles and such other modern weaponry that can inflict harm on a person may be regarded as included in the list of lethal weapons.

Therefore, when any kind of danger is imminent, it is advisable to seriously develop meditation on loving-kindness. The Visuddhi-magga cites a number of instances, such as that of the female devotee Uttarā who escaped scalds from boiling oil, or that of Cūḷasiva Thera, a famous scholar of the Saṃyuttanikāya who was immune from poison, or the case of Saṃkicca Sāmaṇera who had escaped from the deadly effects of sharp weapons. A story of a cow that was invulnerable to the blows of a spear was also cited. At one time, a cow was feeding an infant calf. A hunter tried to hit this cow several times with his spear. However, every time the sharp-pointed spear-head struck the body of the cow, the pointed edge of the spear twisted or coiled up like a palm leaf instead of penetrating through the skin. This happened not because of access concentration or absorption, but because of her pure and intense love for her young calf. The influence of loving-kindness is indeed that powerful. Among these stories, the one relating to Uttarā found in the Dhammapada Commentary is outstanding. This is a brief account:

The Story of Uttarā

Uttarā's father was a poor man named Puṇṇa, an employee of Sumana, a millionaire in the city of Rājagaha. One day, he donated a thin stick of a vine, a kind of tooth-brush used by monks for cleaning the teeth, and clean water for washing the face, to the elder Sāriputta who had just arisen from the attainment of cessation. On the same day, his wife, on her way to the place where he was ploughing the field bringing a packet of rice for him, met the elder. With overwhelming joy at the sight of the elder, she offered the rice to the Arahant and shared her merits with her husband. By virtue of these meritorious deeds, it is said that the entire plot of land ploughed by Puṇṇa suddenly transformed into a field of pure gold. At the present day, this kind of incident may be considered ludicrous — a mere fairy tale. However, in those ancient times, special and extraordinary benefits were derived

due to the outstanding moral virtues of certain recipients or donors who possessed special noble attributes. There is reason to believe these stories, considering the remarkable inventions of electronic and mechanical devices such as computers, missiles, and satellites which would ordinarily be considered unbelievable. Peculiar and astonishing events might, therefore, have occurred in those days.

Since his plot of cultivable land had turned into solid gold, the poor man Puṇṇa became fabulously rich. Therefore, the wealthy Sumana proposed that Puṇṇa give his daughter Uttarā in marriage to his own son. Puṇṇa, his wife, and Uttarā became Stream-winners after listening to a sermon delivered by the Buddha at the time of the opening ceremony of their new mansion held soon after Puṇṇa had acquired his immense fortune. However, Sumana's family were of a different religion, and none of the members of their household were Buddhists. For this reason, the proposal made by Sumana was not accepted by Puṇṇa, the millionaire. He told Sumana directly that Sumana's son had faith in heretical teachers whereas his daughter, being a devout Buddhist, could not help but take refuge in the Triple Gem so the proposed marriage would be incompatible. For this reason he was unable to give his consent to the proposal made by Sumana. However, on being advised by many of his friends not to quarrel with Sumana, he finally acquiesced, and Uttarā was eventually given in marriage to Sumana's son.

On the full-moon day of July, Uttarā had to accompany her husband to Sumana's house. Since the day of her arrival at her husband's house, she had had no opportunity to take refuge, and pay homage to the monks or nuns. Nor did she get any chance to do any act of charity, or listen to the Dhamma. After two and a half months, Uttarā sent a message to her father about her plight. What she had conveyed in her message was: "Why should I be locked up and kept under detention? It would be better to declare me outright that I am their slave. It is unjustifiable to let me be tied down and married to a heretic. Since my arrival here, I have been deprived of the opportunity to see or pay homage to the Saṅgha or perform any meritorious deeds."

Hearing this news, her father felt very sad, and thought, "My daughter is undoubtedly suffering greatly." He therefore sent fifteen thousand rupees to his daughter. At that time, a well known prostitute by the name of Sirimā lived in Rājagaha. She earned one

thousand rupees a night. Uttarā hired the services of Sirimā for fifteen thousand rupees to look after her husband for fifteen days, using the money sent by her father, to enable her to perform merits during that period. Uttarā's husband readily gave his permission for Uttarā to devote herself to performing merits for fifteen days, being delighted by Sirimā's beauty and charm.

Beginning from that day, Uttarā invited the Saṅgha headed by the Buddha daily, and offered alms at her residence. She listened to his talks on the Dhamma, and personally managed the preparation of meals and so forth for the Saṅgha. On the fourteenth waxing day of the full-moon, when looking down at the kitchen from the window of his mansion, her husband saw Uttarā personally managing and supervising the work of cooking food and preparing meals for the Saṅgha. She was perspiring and looking dirty with soot on her face. Seeing her, he mused, "What a fool! She cannot find enjoyment in the luxury of this mansion. How extraordinary that she could only find satisfaction in serving these bald-headed monks!" He then retreated from the window smiling. When Sirimā saw him smile, her curiosity was piqued. Wishing to know the reason for his delight, she went to the window and saw Uttarā in the kitchen. Jealousy rose up in her and she thought, "This millionaire's son still seems to have affection for this serving woman." How remarkable, that she considered herself as the lady and owner of the big mansion after only fifteen days. She was oblivious of the fact that she was living there on hire. Thus she became envious and resentful towards Uttarā.

Wishing to hurt Uttarā, she went down the stairs, made her way to the kitchen, took a ladle full of boiling ghee and approached Uttarā to do her harm. Seeing Sirimā, Uttarā immediately reflected and began developing a feeling of loving-kindness, thinking, "My friend Sirimā has been of great benefit to me. The universe is narrow compared to the immeasurable benefits bestowed upon me by Sirimā. The benefits are immense, and it is due to her care and attention given to my husband that I have been able to perform charitable deeds and listen to the Dhamma. If I harbour any feeling of resentment or anger, may this scolding hot ghee that Sirimā is carrying cause me harm. If I have no animosity towards her, may no harm or injury befall me." Thus she solemnly took an oath regarding her noble-mindedness, and radiated loving-kindness to Sirimā. The hot ghee that Sirimā cruelly poured upon

her felt just like cold water. Sirimā then reflected. "This ghee appears to have become cold." She fetched another ladle of boiling hot ghee from the frying pan. Seeing her doing this evil deed, the maids helping Uttarā became indignant and shouted, "Begone, you ungrateful wretch. Don't pour burning ghee on our mistress." They abused her, gave her a good beating, and kicked her, so that she fell to the ground, and Uttarā was unable to stop them. Then Uttarā asked Sirimā, "What made you commit such an evil deed." So saying, she bathed her with warm water and anointed her bruises with soft cream to relieve her pain.

Only then, Sirimā realised that she was rendering her services on hire. She begged Uttarā to forgive her. Uttarā told Sirimā to ask for forgiveness from her spiritual father, the Buddha. As arranged by Uttarā, Sirimā went to the Buddha, paid homage, offered alms, and asked for forgiveness. Buddha then gave an exhortation, teaching the Dhamma in the form of a verse which, in essence, conveys the meaning, "Conquer anger by patience without spite or retaliation." After hearing this teaching, Sirimā and five hundred other women attained Stream-winning. The significant point in the story is that Uttarā, the female devotee, escaped from the scalding heat of the boiling ghee poured over her by virtue of developing loving-kindness.

Regarding the story of the elder Cūlasiva who became invulnerable to poison, no elaborate account was found in the Commentaries or Subcommentaries. The events concerning the novice Saṃkicca, have already been mentioned in my Discourse on the Tuvāṭaka Sutta, where reference is made only to the fact that he had immersed himself in absorption. It was not obvious as to what kind of absorption he had developed. However, according to what is stated in Visuddhimagga, it is to be regarded as developing absorption on loving-kindness. This would mean that immunity was gained from the dangers of fire, poison, and other lethal weapons, such as a sword or a machete.

Tuvaṭaṃ cittaṃ samādhiyati: means that the mind quickly becomes stabilized and calm. (8) To develop mindfulness wishing others to be happy is appropriate and easy in as much as everybody wishes to be happy, so the mind is likely to become tranquil within a short time.

Mukhavaṇṇo vipasīdati: his face is serene. (9) Again, it should be developed as it is appropriate and easy. This will undoubtedly bring a clear complexion to the face.

10) **Asammūḥo kālaṃ karoti**: he dies unconfused. That is death takes place without bewilderment or perplexity. This is really important. When one is approaching death, one is likely to die without being able to gain proper concentration or mindfulness due to very severe pain or dullness that one has to endure. One is likely to pass away with thoughts of greed, anger, or delusion imagining all kinds of erroneous thoughts. This is how death usually comes upon a person with the mind perplexed and burdened with all kinds of attachments. When death occurs in this way, it is almost certain that one is destined for one of the four lower realms. However, when one is in a semi-consciousness state, if the mind can latch on to thoughts relating to meritorious deeds, or onto signs regarding fortunate destinies such as the abode of celestial beings or the human world, a person can hope to reach an existence where happy conditions prevail.

11) **Uttari appaṭivijjhanto brahmalokūpago hoti**: if he attains nothing higher he is reborn in the Brahma realm. This is the eleventh advantage, which says that if Arahantship is not realised, which is superior to absorption on loving kindness, he will be reborn in the Brahma realm. An ordinary worldling can reach the Brahma realm if he or she has achieved absorption on loving-kindness. Stream-winners and Once-returners may also be reborn in the Brahma realm. Of course, a Non-returner is likely to be reborn in the Pure Abodes (Suddhāvāsa) in the Brahma realms. If absorption is not attained and if only access concentration is achieved, one can reach the world of human beings and celestial realms, which are fortunate realms of existence. Brahmin Dhanañjāni, whose story was related earlier, reached the Brahma realm by developing loving-kindness, within about half-an-hour prior to his death. This is particularly noteworthy, and worthy of emulation.

Having given fairly comprehensive teachings relating to the Sublime Abidings, I will now say something about insight meditation.

Developing Loving-kindness With Insight

After achieving absorption by developing meditation on loving-kindness a person can reach Arahantship if he or she continues to develop insight with that absorption as a basis. Even if falling short of Arahantship, he or she can become a Non-returner. The way to contemplate is to first enter into absorption on loving-kindness, and

when this absorption ceases, to contemplate that absorption. This method of plunging into absorption, then contemplating it by alternately developing tranquillity and insight in pairs is called “*yuganaddha*.” The method of developing insight is the same as the method of noting and contemplating used by the meditators here. It is to contemplate and note what has been seen, heard, touched, or imagined as “seeing,” “hearing,” “touching,” or “imagining,” as appropriate. Likewise, after leaving absorption, this absorption should be noted and contemplated. The only difference is that a person who has attained absorption, contemplates the absorption, whereas other meditators, not being endowed with absorption, should note and contemplate the mind or consciousness that is aware of what was seen, and so forth.

What should be done according to this method of contemplation in pairs is to develop loving-kindness by repeating: “May all beings be happy.” Then, contemplate with the thoughts of loving-kindness. Developing loving-kindness along with the contemplation of the thoughts in pairs is the “*yuganaddha*” method. If one contemplates like this, the mind that radiates loving-kindness to a particular person while reciting, the material element of the sound, the ear-consciousness that hears, and the mind-consciousness that dwells in the heart while reciting: “May all be happy,” will all be found to vanish instantaneously and repeatedly. Such realisation is genuine insight knowledge that knows the characteristic of impermanence. This is stated as having vanished instantly (*khayaṭṭhena aniccaṃ*), so it is impermanent. Let us bear it in mind and contemplate while reciting like this:

May all the monks, meditators, and individuals residing in this meditation centre be happy. (repeat)

May all beings in this meditation centre be happy. (repeat)

May all monks and individuals within this town be happy. (repeat)

May all beings in this town be happy. (repeat)

May all people living in this country be happy. (repeat)

May all beings be happy. (repeat)

Every time it is recited as: “May all be happy” with consciousness, the mind that is put into this consciousness, and the mind that intends to recite, the vocal action, and the sense object of the voice that utters, immediately vanish.

Part Two

On the full-moon day of July, I taught how to develop loving-kindness. Most of the teachings given then, referred to the cultivation of perfections and wholesome kamma by developing loving-kindness. From the method as explained in the Visuddhimagga, we have so far only covered the way of reflecting the faults of anger, and the benefits of patience. I will now continue to teach how to develop loving-kindness.

Way of Sitting Comfortably

I will add a little more according to the teachings of the Buddha relating to assuming a comfortable sitting posture. The Blessed One advised going into or residing in a forest (*araññagato vā*), or sitting at the foot of a tree (*rukhamūlagato vā*), or staying in an empty building (*suññāgāragato vā*), and that one should sit down (*nisīdati*). Obviously the Buddha gave priority to practising meditation in a forest. If one is unable to go to a forest, he advised meditating at the foot of a tree in a quiet place. If that is not convenient, then one should practise meditation in a monastery, house, or other empty building. It would be best to select a secluded place where there is solitude and tranquility. If any others are meditating in the same place, it would be best if they are of the same sex. Ideally, the best place would be a secluded spot in a remote area where there is no other person. The sitting posture to be adopted is stated as cross-legged (*pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā*). I have already explained about this in full. Furthermore, the instruction is given that the upper portion of the body above the waist should be kept erect (*ujuṃ kāyaṃ paṇidhāya*). If one sits bending the back or twisting the spine, one's effort will be weakened. That is why it is necessary to sit erect keeping the body above the waist perfectly upright. After taking a sitting posture as described, the practice to be followed is to establish attention only on the sense objects as they arise in the present moment (*parimukhaṃ satim upaṭṭhapetvā*) and to engage in active meditation without letting the mind wander. In the case of meditation on loving-kindness, the mind should be directed towards people for whom loving-kindness is to be developed. It is essential to know who are those to whom loving-kindness should not be radiated at first, and who are not suitable.

Unsuitable Persons

At the beginning of the practice, loving-kindness should not be developed towards: 1) those who are hostile, unfriendly, or disliked; 2) those who are dear to you, that is, those for whom you hold a deep affection; 3) those for whom you feel indifference; and 4) those who are enemies.

Not developing loving-kindness for such people when beginning meditation is justified because it would be difficult to send loving-kindness to one whom you hate. It is also unwise to send loving-kindness to your children, brothers, and sisters for whom you have a strong affection and attachment. Neither will it be easy to develop loving-kindness for people such as your own pupils or disciples, because if persons for whom you have deep love and affection are found to be unhappy or suffering trouble and misery, you would probably become anxious or dejected. Again, it may be difficult to put a complete stranger or a neutral person in the role of a beloved person. It is nearly impossible to radiate constant loving-kindness to a complete stranger, let alone to an enemy. The moment you remember an enemy, feelings of anger will arise when you recall his or her evil deeds or faults. These are the four kinds of people for whom one should not develop loving-kindness at the initial stage of meditation.

Furthermore, loving-kindness should not be developed at all towards:

1) Persons of the opposite sex. Loving-kindness should not be developed and radiated to persons of the opposite sex.

2) Loving-kindness should not be developed towards the dead.

If a person develops loving-kindness towards someone of the opposite sex, sexual desire (*rāga*) is likely to arise, that is why such a person is unsuitable. In the distant past, a son of a government minister asked his meditation teacher, "Venerable sir, towards whom should I radiate loving-kindness?" The elder replied that he should develop loving-kindness towards a person he loved and adored. The minister's son, being very fond of his wife, after observing the eight precepts sat on his bed at night time, and radiated loving-kindness to his dear wife with concentrated thoughts. While practising thus, he became strongly infatuated with passion. He therefore tried to go to his wife. Under the power of his sexual desires, he entirely forgot about the door and in losing control of himself, beat the wall

repeatedly. Becoming so enraged and blinded by his passion, he beat the wall repeatedly with his fist and kicked it. It seems that this had happened not just for a few minutes, but it is stated in the Visuddhimagga as: "Throughout the night (*sabbarattim*), he was fighting with the masonry wall (*bhitthiyuddhamakāsi*) and beat against it. The Visuddhimagga also mentioned the upsurge of passion as being an intrusion made by passion under the guise of loving-kindness. As passion tends to be vigorous, loving-kindness should not be developed towards a person of the opposite sex. However, radiation of loving-kindness for a few moments, for the purpose of gaining perfections and wholesome kamma does not appear to be a problem.

It is stated that if loving-kindness is developed towards a dead person, neither absorption nor access concentration can be achieved. At one time, a young monk was developing loving-kindness keeping his mind on his spiritual teacher. He was, however, unable to reach the stage of absorption, which he had once successfully practised and attained by indulging in ecstatic meditation. When he made enquiries about his failure to attain absorption as advised by an elder, he found out that his spiritual teacher had since passed away. Thence, he developed his loving-kindness towards another person with his usual concentration. Only then he attained absorption on loving-kindness. Therefore, loving-kindness should not be developed in respect of or towards a person who had already passed away.

Suitable Persons

In developing loving-kindness towards others, priority should be given to oneself. It is stated that first loving-kindness should be developed towards oneself, saying, "May I be happy and free from misery." Or, "May I be free from danger, mental distress, bodily suffering, and be able to shoulder the burden of the aggregates with ease." In developing loving-kindness for one's own well-being, the intention, of course, is not to acquire merits. Nor is it developed to gain concentration. It is meant to serve as an example by comparison that others also wish to be happy, just like oneself. One may develop loving-kindness, saying, "May I be happy," for a hundred years, but there is no possibility of achieving absorption. If one is developing loving-kindness for one's own well-being, saying, "May I be happy," it would serve as a witness to the fact that others also wish to be

happy, to live long, and be free from misery, just as one wishes for oneself. That is why instructions are given to develop loving-kindness towards oneself when beginning with the exercise. The Visuddhi-magga says so. The Blessed One gave this teaching in the verse quoted below, which indicates that a person loves himself or herself the most.

*“Sabbā disā anupariḡamma cetasā, nevajjhagā piyataramattanā kvaci.
Evaṃ piyo puthu attā pareysaṃ, tasmā na hiṃse paramattakāmo.”¹*

Sabbā disā: in all directions, **cetasā:** with thoughts, **anupari-gamma:** pervading, **piyataramattanā:** a person who deserves more love and affection than oneself, **kvaci:** in any place, **nevajjhagā:** cannot be found. **Evaṃ:** Similarly, **pareysaṃ:** other people too, **puthu attā:** their own self, **piyo:** are dear, **tasmā:** therefore, (in as much as every being loves himself the most), **attakāmo:** one who loves himself and who cares most for his own welfare, **param:** another person, **na hiṃse:** will not cause harm, or should practise loving-kindness without causing misery to others.

After developing loving-kindness towards oneself taking one of the outstanding examples cited above, loving-kindness should be developed towards either a teacher who is worthy of love and respect, or towards a grandfather, father, or uncle; or in the case of women, towards their grandmother, mother, or aunt. The manner of developing loving-kindness may be described as: “May the Sayādaw be happy and free from misery, or, “May my grandfather, father, and uncle be happy,” or, “May my grandmother, mother, and aunt be happy and free from suffering and misery.” In this way, loving-kindness should be developed about once every three seconds. Loving-kindness can also be developed towards any other person deserving of affection and respect, if not towards your teacher, grand-parents, mother, father, and so on.

The mind should be focused on the recipient of loving-kindness, whoever he or she may be, and then radiate this feeling of loving-kindness as “May he be happy” for a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a hundred thousand times, continuously. If one’s objective is to achieve absorption, loving-kindness should be developed throughout the day and night without a break, excluding time for sleep. While developing loving-kindness, the mind may wander here and there. These wandering thoughts are hindrances.

¹ S.i.75.

The moment you become mindful of such thoughts or imaginations, they should be rejected, and then you should continue to develop loving-kindness. When the power of concentration becomes strong, wandering thoughts will gradually reduce. If concentration is fully strengthened, the mind will cease to wander and remain fixed on the person to whom loving-kindness is radiated. This is the attainment of access concentration, which is free from the hindrances.

How Absorption is Achieved

When this access concentration becomes strong and sharp, the mind will dwell fixedly on the recipient of loving-kindness as if it is drifting and floating along the stream of sensation in a dream. However, the mind may stay on only for a moment in the first instance. When continuous development of mindfulness on loving-kindness is further carried on, it may stay fixed on the sense-object for a duration of one minute or more up to even one hour or so. When thus absorbed in mindfulness of loving-kindness despite the effects of nearby sense-objects, the mind does not make fly out to these sensations, but will remain firm, stable, and gets established on the person to whom one sends loving-kindness, wishing him happiness. Rapturous feelings will become conspicuous. Initial and sustained application of the mind, inclined towards the recipient of loving-kindness will become strong and predominant. The whole body will become buoyant, light, and comfortable. The established mind becomes tranquil without going astray. This one-pointedness of the mind (*ekaggatā*) with particularly obvious manifestations of initial application, sustained application, joy, and bliss are the noble attributes of the first absorption. This is why the Visuddhimagga says that a person can attain absorption while developing loving-kindness.

This first absorption, having the attributes of initial application, which reflects on the sensation, and of sustained application, which investigates the nature of sensation, is not as robust as it could be. While immersed in absorption, if harsh sounds and shrill voices strike the ear, the mind-consciousness may exit from absorption and arise on the sound. So loving-kindness should be developed further to create a deeper absorption without initial application and sustained application. When concentration gets stronger, intense rapture with mental tranquillity, which is far better, will occur without striving to

reflect on and investigate the sensation. This is the second absorption, wherein intense rapture is of the highest degree.

If this intense rapture is not wanted, continuous development and radiation of loving-kindness should be made towards the usual recipient. When concentration gets fully developed and strengthened, excellent mental happiness and tranquility of mind without rapture will become obvious. That is the third absorption. This is the highest absorption attained through loving-kindness.

Either after achieving the absorption just mentioned, or, before achievement of that absorption, if one wishes to develop loving-kindness equally towards all beings, it may be developed and radiated towards a dear person as “may they be happy, etc.” It would be much better to develop and radiate loving-kindness after, rather than before, the attainment of absorption. The purified form of loving-kindness can then occur easily. Hence, after absorption on loving-kindness has been achieved in respect of a dear person, development of loving-kindness may be directed towards, or in favour of a neutral person. After such an achievement of absorption for the sake of a neutral person, loving-kindness may be developed and bestowed upon a person who is an enemy, if there is any. In radiating loving-kindness towards different recipients one after another, different kinds of feeling or mental consciousness of loving-kindness should be developed only after firm and gentle mind has been brought about and cherished. This is what the Visuddhimagga says.

The statement that the mind has been made firm and gentle refers, in fact, to the attainment of access concentration, at least. The best method is to change the course of developing loving-kindness only after achieving absorption. Of all the various expressions, the statement: “Loving-kindness should be developed towards any enemy” is intended for the meditator who has an enemy. Therefore, from the very outset, I have stated as: “... a person who is an enemy, if there is any.” A meditator, if he has no enemy, should not bother about the enemy in developing loving-kindness after he has developed loving-kindness towards a neutral person.

Anger is likely to occur if one recollects the wrong done by a person who is an enemy while one is developing loving-kindness towards him. If this happens, one may recall and enter again repeatedly into the absorption on the loving-kindness that was previously achieved

in respect of any other person. Then, after emerging from that absorption, one should extinguish anger by developing loving-kindness towards one's enemy. Regarding these expressions, since the Visuddhimagga states: "*Mettaṃ samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhahitvā,*" it is clear that absorption on loving-kindness has been attained in respect of persons other than one's enemy. Hence I have stated that developing loving-kindness by shifting one's attention to an enemy, after attainment of absorption in respect of another person is best.

Method of Reflection to Subdue Anger

After repeatedly attaining absorption that has been realised in radiating loving-kindness to persons mentioned in the foregoing, and then, by developing loving-kindness towards an enemy after arising from that absorption, if the anger cannot yet be totally eradicated or dispelled, the advice is given to extinguish the anger by reflecting and bearing in mind the exhortation given by the Buddha in the Simile of the Saw, reflecting like this:

"Oh, my dear indignant meditator! Didn't the Blessed One exhort us, 'Monks! If, on having his limbs severed by robbers with a two-handled saw, one entertains hatred for those who have mistreated him, one is not practising my teaching.'"¹

Further, if one retaliates on provocation by an angry person, this anger is worse than theirs. This is because one who becomes angry has knowingly followed in the wrong footsteps of the first person. Didn't the the Buddha say, "One who can tolerate an angry man, without getting angry himself wins a victory in battle that is hard to win"?

The Buddha also taught that if a monk can remain serene without getting angry while fully aware that another is angry, he is a disciplined person for the benefit of himself as well as for the other.

Furthermore, in brief, of the seven kinds of behaviour that an enemy would be pleased to see, the first is (1) a change in the facial expression of an angry person whose looks suddenly becomes ugly. This is one which the enemy would find it agreeable. (2) A person who is inflamed with anger will not have a sound and peaceful sleep. This is also one of the likings of the enemy. (3) A person heated with anger is likely to lose his business deal which might be adversely effected. This is one which an enemy will find it amusing. (4) A

¹ M.i.129.

person who is dominated by anger may be lacking in riches, or rather, may not have enough of wealth and possessions. This, too, is one which an enemy likes to see. (5) A person who is of a fiery nature and is prone to vehement anger is likely to have a shortage in the number of personal attendants or retinue. An enemy is rejoined to find such a state of condition. (6) A person of anger will not have a wide circle of friends. This also brings delight to an enemy. (7) A person who is sensitive to anger and is furious cannot possibly be reborn in an existence where happy conditions prevail after his death.

The gist of this admonition is the advice given to nurture the spirit of patience by repelling the force of anger so that the wishes of the enemy may not be fulfilled. Next, is it not also true that it has been taught, "Just as the firewood that is used to dispose of corpses at the time of cremation is worthless for use in both the rural and urban areas, a monk who is avaricious and committing vices with anger and malice being deprived of both the benefits of enjoying sensual pleasures (*kāmaguṇa*), and the accomplishment of morality will not be worthy of respect and will serve no useful purpose in the role of a monk in towns and villages."

In view of the above facts, if you are angry, you will be regarded as a person who is disobedient to the noble instructions given by the Blessed One. You will be like a vanquished soldier who is incapable of victory, and will be more vicious than the person who initially becomes angry with iniquity. One should therefore reflect and think over seriously by teaching and reforming himself, and then, exercise over his anger.

If, by reflecting as such, anger cannot as yet be suppressed or extinguished, do not think of and ponder upon the bad behaviours of the enemy, and instead, let your anger subside by reflecting on the good points in his physical, mental and verbal behaviours. And still, if, by reflection as stated, feeling of anger cannot as yet be subdued, reflect upon what is going to be stated now, and put out this fiery anger which has arisen. The manner of reflection is only mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga* and is not to be found in other Pāḷi Commentaries. The relevant verses are exactly ten in number. I shall continue teaching relating to these verses very briefly.

The Way of Reflection According to the Ten Verses

In the case of an enemy wishing to cause misery and suffering, injury can only be inflicted by him on your physical body. No harm can be done against the mind. In spite of this why do you want to do things to the likings of the enemy and cause mental distress which the enemy himself is incapable of doing?

Why can't you discard or reject the anger which is likely to bring disastrous effects and no beneficial results, despite the fact that you have donned the yellow robes and have become a monk after abandoning all your friends capable of giving you a lot of advantages?

Why do you entertain and caress anger, which is capable of wiping out fear and shame, patience, loving-kindness, and compassion that are the fundamentals of the morality that you have observed? Where can such a fool as you be found?

You are angry with another for having done wrong to you. Is it not true, then, that having become angry, you are plotting to offend him in the same manner, in retaliation?

It is most likely that any disagreeable act done to you by another is to stir up your anger, or rather, to make you angry. Such being the case, is it not true that by yielding to your anger, it would amount to fulfilling your enemy's wish?

It is not sure whether you will make your enemy miserable. Yet, is it not true that right now you are ill-treating yourself by stirring up anger and making yourself miserable?

As the enemies are foolishly following the unprofitable path of vice, provoked by anger, will there be any justification for you to commit wrongful acts driven by anger, thus following in the footsteps of your enemies?

If any despicable and disagreeable deed is done to you by your enemy due to anger, you should overcome this anger. As a matter of fact, why do you unnecessarily cause strain to yourself with an angry feeling towards a human being who is not deserving of spite and hatred. It means that you have done something wrong only at the dictates of anger to which you have become a slave. Hence, this anger itself needs be rejected.

Mental and physical phenomena are transient by nature and occur only for a moment, followed by instantaneous dissolution. Such phenomena that you regard as having done you wrong have already

dissolved and vanished. These mental and physical phenomena are no longer there. They have disappeared altogether. Thus, at the present could you pinpoint those phenomena in the person of the enemy with whom you are angry? New phenomena that have subsequently occurred are not doing any wrongful harm to you. Those which are considered as having done harm to you have vanished. There is no point being angry with those mental and physical phenomena, as they no longer exist.

If one is causing misery to the other, both the doer himself and the one who suffers are the prime factors, which bring about or produce the effect of misery. In other words, both of them are responsible for the causation of misery. If that is so, since you yourself are not free from blame for the cause of misery, why are you angry with the doer only?

The above is the summary of the ten verses mentioned in the *Visuddhimagga*, translated into plain language. The way of reflection laid down therein is extremely profound. Reflection may, therefore, be done as stated to extinguish the fire of anger.

Subduing Anger by Reflecting on Ownership of Kamma

If, by reflection as indicated in the ten verses, anger cannot yet be subdued or extinguished, it should be reflected upon kamma, the resultant effects of all good and bad actions done by you, as your own property in possession on which reliance is to be made to eradicate the anger. The manner of reflection may be stated thus: "Oh meditator! you are developing the practice of meditation on loving-kindness. While being angry, what is your intention to do against the other? Is it not true that whatever action you have done based upon anger will in, consequence, bring about evil or bad effects to your detriment? Yes, indeed. Your kamma (the resultant effects of good and bad actions you have done) is nothing but the 'cause' of your own doing. Kamma is the only one which you really own or possess. You are sure to inherit this kamma which constitutes all kinds of wilful actions, whether mental, verbal or physical thoughts, words and deeds, either good or bad, done by you on your own volition. Kamma is your own relative and refuge. The kammic effect which occurs or takes place depending upon anger will not contribute to your achieving magga-phala. Neither will it do good to you to be

reborn in human or celestial realms where happy conditions prevail. It will only cause you to suffer misery in hell, etc. If you commit the evil kamma of anger, it will be like “a person who gets burnt first by picking up hot coals, or gets filthy by picking up excrement, with which he intends to throw at another.”

Just imagine a person whom you recognise as an enemy. What harm could possibly be done by him with his anger? Will not this anger that is generated in him be to his own disadvantage? He too has his own kamma as his true property. He is heir to the kamma done by himself by his own volition. An enemy who has done evil kamma due to anger will suffer its harmful effects “like a person who throws dust into the wind.” The Buddha exhorted:

“Whoever harms a harmless person, one pure and innocent, upon that very fool the evil recoils like fine dust thrown against the wind.” (Dhp v 125)

Suppress Anger by Reflecting on the Bodhisatta’s Virtues

If anger is not yet subdued by reflecting in the ways stated above, it should be suppressed by reflecting on the noble qualities of the Bodhisatta in his existences before attaining Buddhahood. The way to reflect is: “Noble meditator, disciple of the Buddha! The Bodhisatta, while relentlessly exercising the fulfilling the perfections (*pāramī*) for a period of four aeons (*asaṅkheyya*) and a hundred thousand world-cycles (*kappa*), had practised patience without polluting his mind with anger even against all sorts of murderers who were his enemies. The way of practising patience is illustrated in the Visuddhi-magga beginning from the story of Sīlavā as an example, but here I cite an example from the Khantivādi Jātaka. (Jā. No.313)

The Story of Khantivādi

Long ago, during the reign of King Kalābu in the city of Benares, the Bodhisatta, born of a high caste brahmin, was a multi-millionaire possessing eight hundred million. When his parents died leaving behind all their property, it occurred to him that his parents were unable to take their immense wealth with them on their demise. Reflecting that he would take the wholesome kamma with him on his death, he gave away all of his wealth in charity. Then he became a hermit on the forested slopes of the Himalayas, living only on wild

fruits from the forest. However, to get adequate nutrition he made his way into villages where there were people to offer salt and sour fruits. In the course of his wanderings, he reached the city of Benares. When going round for alms in the city, the commander-in-chief of the army, finding him worthy of reverence, respectfully invited him to his residence to accept almsfood. Then he requested him to reside in the king's pleasure gardens. Thus, he continued to stay in the royal gardens as his place of retreat.

While he was residing there, one day, King Kalābu visited the royal gardens with his queen and maids-of-honour with a large retinue to hold a festival. The festival comprised performances of music, dance, and so forth on a magnificent marble stage within the precincts of the royal gardens. The king enjoyed the festivities, watching the display of music, songs, and dances, lying down with his head resting in the lap of a maid-of-honour, whom he adored. The sweet melodies lulled the king to sleep. Finding the king fast asleep, the female singers and dancers stopped their performance, and roamed the garden for sight-seeing. They came across the hermit, the Bodhisatta, and approached him wishing to listen to any teaching that he might be inclined to give. At their request, the hermit delivered a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Then the maid-of-honour, in whose lap the king had laid his head, manoeuvred her limbs and the king woke up. Finding none of his retinue nearby, the king asked where they had gone. The maid-of-honour answered that they had gone to see the great hermit. On hearing this, the king became furious with jealousy. He picked up his sword and hurried to the hermit cursing with rage that he would give the hermit a good lesson.

Seeing the king raging with anger, one of the maids-of-honour close to him caught hold of his sword and tried to calm him down. However, the king's anger remained uncontrollable. He asked the hermit what was the doctrine that he taught. The great hermit replied that his taught the practice of patience (*khantī*), saying that tolerance exercised by one without feeling angry against those who provoked, railed, and raved is called "patience." Telling the hermit that he would test him to see if he really practised patience, the king ordered the executioner, "Tie down this villainous thief, the hermit, lay him on

the ground and whip him with two thousand lashes with a twisted cane fitted with sharp pins, on all four sides of his body.”

The executioner gave the hermit two thousand lashes as ordered by the king. Surely, an ordinary person would die from his injuries if he had to endure two thousand lashes. However, the great hermit was still alive! Perhaps because of his noble qualities of patience, or maybe due to slack force put in at the time of whipping. However, the hermit’s skin was lacerated all over his body. His flesh was also torn and blood flowed profusely. Just imagine how severe the pain and suffering would be that the hermit had to endure. In spite of this cruel treatment, the noble hermit harboured no anger, ill will, or resentment either against the king or the executioner.

This cruel punishment was wickedly imposed without any reason or justification. Ordinarily, such unjust treatment would induce anger and deep resentment. Such noble patience is worthy of emulation by meditators who are developing loving-kindness.

Finding the great hermit still alive, the king asked him again what doctrine he practised. The hermit replied, “I resolutely practise the doctrine of patience. O, King, do you think that this patience can be found in my skin? It is not merely skin deep. Patience resides in my heart and never wavers. Infuriated by this defiance, King Kalābu ordered the hermit’s hands and feet, ears and nose to be cut off. The executioner complied with the king’s orders and cruelly cut off the bodily limbs with a machete. Each time a limb was severed, the king asked the same question as to what doctrine he practised. The hermit replied as before that he had maintained the doctrine of patience which resided in his heart. Finally, the king, after uttering in contempt: “You cunning hermit. Better live on by invoking your doctrine of patience,” he kicked the hermit in the chest with his foot and departed. When he reached the gate of the royal garden, King Kalābu was swallowed by the earth. The Commentary says that this wicked king was dragged down to Avīci hell, enveloped in flames.

The army’s Commander-in-Chief came to the great hermit and begged him not to be angry or bear malice against the country. The hermit replied:

*“Yo me hatthe ca pāde ca, kaṇṇanāsañca chedayi;
Ciraṃ jīvatu so rājā, na hi kujjhanti mādisā.*

Senāpati: Oh, Commander-in-Chief! **Yo:** he who is King Kalābu, (has caused), **me:** my, **hatthe ca:** hands and **pāde ca:** feet, **kaṇṇa nāsaṅca:** ears and nose, **chedayi:** to be cut off. **So rājā:** This King Kalābu, **ciraṃ jīvātū:** may he live long. **Hi:** Indeed, **mādisā:** noble and virtuous persons like me, **na kujjhanti:** do not get angry, and are able to develop loving-kindness.

Thus, a meditator who is developing loving-kindness should reflect, “Dear meditator who is developing loving-kindness in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha! Your enemy who has done wrong to you is surely not nearly as cruel as King Kalābu. Then shouldn’t you be patient without getting angry like the great hermit Khantivādī who was able to endure, with patience and without malice, the agonies of the heinous crime committed by King Kalābu?”

The Story of Dhammapāla

At one time long ago King Mahāpatāpa was the king of Benares.¹ At that time the Bodhisatta entered the womb of the chief queen Candā Devī who gave birth to the Bodhisatta, who was given the name “Dhammapāla.” When this young prince Dhammapāla was seven months old, his mother the queen, after bathing her son and dressing him with fine clothes, was caressing and playing with the infant. Then, because the queen’s thoughts were riveted on her son, she failed to get up to show respect for the king when he came to where the queen was playing with her son, even though she saw the king.

On seeing the mother fondling her son, the king thought, “Even now, this woman has become so proud due to her son that she does not care for me. When the child grows up, she will surely neglect me. It would be better to get kill him once.”

Feeling utterly rejected and disappointed he left that place and went to his royal chamber. He sent for the executioner and gave orders that the infant be brought to him. Seeing the executioner’s facial expression, the queen knew at once that the king bore a grudge against her. Aware of this, the queen shed tears while holding the baby in her arms. While she was weeping, the executioner snatched Dhammapāla away from her. She followed behind the executioner with great trepidation. On their arrival the baby was put on a wooden

¹ Cūladhammapāla Jātaka Jā.358.

slab. The king ordered the executioner to chop off the hands of the unfortunate baby. Queen Candā Devī told the king that the child was innocent and that only she was at fault, and pleaded that her own hands be cut off instead of the hands of her innocent son, but her entreaties were to no avail. The executioner had to obey the orders of the king. The hands of the seven months' old infant Dhammapāla were cruelly chopped off with an axe. The two small tender hands were severed like bamboo sprouts. The Bodhisatta, however, did not cry, but remained calm with patience. The Commentary says:

So: He (Dhammapāla), **hatthesu chijjamānesu:** when his hands were chopped off, **neva rodi:** neither cried, **na parideyi:** nor lamented, **khantiñca:** exercising the spirit of patience and, **mettiñca:** wishing happiness to the other, **purecārikam katvā:** guided by the thoughts of loving-kindness, **adhivāsesi:** endured the pain and suffering by resigning himself to the situation.

Queen Candā Devī, after picking up the soft tiny hands that had been severed, folded them close to her bosom and was sobbing bitterly. Thereafter, the father Mahāpatāpa king again ordered the executioner to cut off the two feet and then, the head of the child. The queen went on entreating her husband to pardon the innocent child but to no purpose. The executioner then severed the child's head as ordered by the king and even tossed up the little delicate body of the child in the air and on falling down, caught it up with the sharp-pointed sword and played with it as if it were wreath of flowers. It is almost unbelievable that there was such a kind of foolish, wicked, and heartless father without a tinge of mercy in him. However, there is every possibility of finding such a merciless man from among the ordinary individuals when one become a slave to anger. Because of this possibility, the case of this wicked king Mahāpatāpa, the father of Dhammapāla, has been cited as an example. The queen died of a broken-heart on the spot while weeping and wailing. By a curious coincidence, king Mahāpatāpa also fell down from his throne and dropped on to the floor first, and eventually reached the level of the earth below where he was swallowed down to death. It was stated that he had gone down to Avīci hell.

As for the young child Dhammapāla, it was stated that he passed away peacefully while exercising patience without any anger which had not arisen till the time of his death. Considering this episode, it

might be possible for a meditator who is developing loving-kindness to endure pain and suffering without being angry just as the young child Dhammapāla had practised forbearance.

The Patience of an Elephant, a Monkey and a Dragon

Mention was made in the Visuddhimagga to reflect as to how patience was exercised by Chaddanta, the King of the Elephants, our Bodhisatta in one of his previous existences, without anger and ill-will when a hunter shot at him with a poisonous arrow. Mahākapi, a huge monkey once saved the life of a man who had accidentally fallen into a deep ravine. After having been rescued from the danger of death, this man cruelly struck the head of his Saviour with a big stone when the latter had fallen asleep through exhaustion. However, the noble-minded monkey bore no resentment and grudge against him and even rendered his assistance to this man by escorting him to reach the zone of safety where human beings lived. Then also, there are instances of two Bodhisatta dragons—one by the name of Bhūridatta, and the other, Campeyya, a nāga Chief, who were captured alive and ill-treated by a snake-charmer, while they were observing the noble precepts (*sīla*). The snake-charmer took these snake-dragons (*nāga*) to towns and villages where he displayed an exhibition of these two noble creatures making them dance to the tune of music played by him. These dragons possessed inherent supernatural powers and were so highly poisonous and potent that by just looking at the persons with spite and omitting fiery flames, people would be reduced to ashes or killed. However, the said two dragons endured the misery brought about by their enemy, the snake-charmer. The way in which they practised patience refraining themselves from anger, may be reflected, as explained in the Visuddhimagga.

The Patience of Venerable Puṇṇa

At one time, Venerable Puṇṇa, a native of Sunāparanta, entreated the Blessed One to deliver a sermon to him in a concise way. The Buddha, therefore, taught him as stated below:

“O, my son Puṇṇa! There are pleasurable and agreeable sense-objects that can be perceived and known by the eyes. These pleasurable sense-objects are concerned with desire. They are prone to sensual attachments. If the sense-objects that come into your view,

are accepted with pleasure and looked upon as being agreeable with admiration, or are embraced and grasped or retained in your possession, it would cause rejoicing in you. O, my son Puṇṇa! I say that misery will take place because of this delight and pleasure.” (Similarly, in respect of sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts.)

“O, my son Puṇṇa! The way to end misery is not to accept or entertain the different sensations arising from different sense-objects, which will generate feelings of delight and pleasure. If it is done so, there will be no opportunity for delight to occur. O, my son Puṇṇa! Because of the cessation of pleasurable conditions and feelings, misery and suffering will cease entirely.”

“O, my son Puṇṇa! Now that I have already given due admonition to you in brief, let me know where you plan to reside.”

To this query, Venerable Puṇṇa replied: “Lord, I will be residing in Sunāparanta, in the westernmost part of India (Jambudīpa).”

“O, my son Puṇṇa! The citizens of Sunāparanta are rude, rough and petulant. If they scold you and utter abusive words, how would you feel?”

“My Lord, if they abuse and rail at me, I would think: ‘These citizens of Sunāparanta are not at all bad. They only utter abusive words, but do not assault me’.”

The Buddha further interrogated him: “If they give you a beating and attack you physically, how would you feel? He then replied, “I would forbear it with a feeling of tolerance that the Sunāparanta citizens are only doing harm to me with their hands. Since they have not caused injury to me by throwing stones at me, they will be considered as having conducted themselves fairly well.”

Questions then followed as to how Venerable Puṇṇa would react if he were assaulted physically with stones, sticks, and knives, but not to the extent of causing death. The reply given to every question was that he would tolerate and consider them as not behaving badly.

Then the question arose as to how he would bear in mind and feel if he were killed by being stabbed with a knife. The response given was that having heard of an incident where some of the monks from among the disciples of the Buddha had even to find for a lethal weapon such as a knife to commit suicide for being disgusted with their own material body and life existence, he would reflect on the said incident

and consider himself lucky enough to be killed by another person without the need to look for a lethal weapon that can cause death.

The Venerable Puṇṇa later made his way to Sunāparanta and continued practising meditation. He was said to have become an Arahant even before the end of his first Rains Retreat. As such, there is every likelihood of a meditator to be able to extinguish his anger by reflecting on the mental attitude of Venerable Puṇṇa as cited in this Sutta.

If anger cannot yet be exterminated by reflecting on the noble attributes and moral conduct of the Bodhisatta, the Visuddhimagga has stated that the eleven advantages of loving-kindness should be reflected as has been enumerated earlier. O, meditator? If you who are developing loving-kindness cannot dispel this anger by so doing, you should destroy it by reflecting that you would otherwise lose all the advantages of loving-kindness.

Extinguishing Anger by Reflecting on the Elements

It is stated that if anger cannot be subdued by employing the method cited above, it should be reflected on after examining the elements analytically. The manner of reflection to be made is:

“O, meditator, You who are developing loving-kindness through meditation! With what are you angry in resenting another person? Are you getting angry with the head hairs, or against the urine? Putting it in another way, since the hairs are made up of the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, are you angry with the earth element, the water element, the fire element, or the wind element? In other words, who is your enemy in as much as he or she is dependent on the five aggregates, the twelve sense faculties (the six sense organs and the six sense objects) and the eighteen elements?

Are you angry with the matter from among the aggregates? Or are you angry with the feelings, perceptions, mental formations, or consciousness? Are you angry with the eye or the sight? Are you angry with the mind or the ideas? Are you angry with eye-consciousness or mind-consciousness?

If an analysis of the elements is made, it will be realised that anger has no abode in the human body, just as a tiny grain of mustard seed has no place to rest on the tip of a needle, or as there is no place in the sky for paint to rest.

Subdue Anger by Giving a Gift

If incapable of making an analysis of the elements, a gift should be made. One's own personal property or any other thing should be offered in donation to the person whom hates. Property may also be accepted in return from the hated person. However, if the person whom you hate has no propriety of conduct in making his livelihood, you should only offer your property. If such a policy is adopted, feelings of animosity or vengeance will surely be eradicated. Even resentment or hatred borne by an enemy in his past existence that has resurfaced in this present life existence, will, it is stated, be extinguished. An instance may be cited in this regard.

On a mountain known as Cittala where an alms-gathering elder resided, an elder who bore an inveterate hatred against the former made three attempts to oust him from his place of residence. In a Saṅghika monastery, i.e., a monastery that has been bestowed on the Saṅgha as a gift, the monk who is junior in status is supposed to make room for the senior monk to reside. Contrary to this rule of discipline, the attitude of the elder amounted to causing annoyance to the alms-gathering elder. With a view to expel the feeling of vengeance borne by the other, alms-gathering elder offered the other a bowl stating: "Friend, this begging bowl which my mother donated to me is worth eight *kahāpaṇas*.¹ Please accept it and make use of it so that my mother, will derive merits." Since the time of acceptance of the gift of the said bowl, feelings of animosity totally subsided in the elder. Hence, the Commentators have stated:

"Adantadamaṇaṃ dānaṃ, dānaṃ sabbatthasādhakaṃ.

Dānena piyavācāya, unnamani namanti ca."

Dānaṃ: charity or act of almsgiving, **adantadamaṇaṃ**: can make a rude person become civilized. **Dānaṃ**: The act of donating gifts, **sābbatthasādhakaṃ**: will carry with it full benefits. (In the *Sīlakkhandha Commentary*, it is stated as "*adānaṃ dantadūsakaṃ*" which, in fact, conveys the meaning that if a person worthy of receiving the offer of donation is not given a gift, it could bring about estrangement between him and a refined person who is friendly to him and has earned his respect.) It continues to say that by offering gifts with a feeling of generosity and by speaking sweetly in a gentle

¹ *Kahāpaṇa*: A coin of significant value (ed.)

manner, the person who makes offerings with a sweet tongue will be enhanced in his prestige. Also, the relationship between the receiver of gifts who hears the kind words and the giver who speaks will be cordial and in harmony.

Breaking down the Barriers

As stated above, if anger against a hostile person has subsided or has been suppressed, feelings of loving-kindness will also constantly occur in such a hostile person just as the feeling of loving-kindness occurs in respect of an affectionate person worthy of respect and love, a beloved person or a person on whom deep love is bestowed, a neutral person who is neither dear nor hostile. While developing loving-kindness repeatedly, this loving-kindness shall be transmitted to all four kinds of persons: oneself, one whom one loves, a neutral person, and a hostile person with the mind equally balanced on each of them, cultivating a spirit of goodwill, wishing them happiness. By so doing, it would amount to avoiding discrimination between different persons to whom goodwill is to be imparted, wishing them happiness. This is called “breaking down the barriers (*sīmāsambheda*).” In other words, any boundary discriminating between different individuals should be broken down and erased.

The way of nullifying the differentiation between individuals is like this. Let us say that a person who is developing loving-kindness together with the person who deserves love, *i.e.* one who is dear to him, a neutral person, and a hostile person, are all staying in the same place, and let us assume that while staying together, a number of villains came and give the person developing loving-kindness an ultimatum to hand over one of the four to enable them to offer a sacrifice to propitiate a god in the performance of a ritual. If given such an ultimatum, if a wavering thought arises considering which of the four persons should be offered, it will not yet amount to achievement of breaking down the barriers. This is because it would be denying the interests of the victim who is chosen to be taken away. Only if a feeling of loving-kindness occurs equally on all four persons, including oneself, wishing each to be happy, not wishing to hand over any one of the four, then it can be said to amount to breaking down the barriers. It means that no distinction is made between oneself and others. There will only be one sphere of activity that is

confined solely to bringing about happiness and this means that there is no such distinguishing boundary (*sīma*), which is removed.

How Absorption on Loving-kindness Is Achieved

Even if a feeling of loving-kindness occurs wishing others to gain happiness with the mind evenly balanced after breaking down the barriers, a meditator, while developing loving-kindness, sees the first sign of mental illumination (*nimitta*), and attains access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). Then if he or she continues developing this several times, attainment concentration (*appanā samādhi*) will soon be achieved. This is according to what is stated in the Visuddhimagga. This attainment concentration is the three kinds of absorption as mentioned earlier.

After the attainment of all these absorptions, 528 kinds of loving-kindness can be developed continuously in sequence through the mental faculty of absorption on loving-kindness.

Before concluding the second part of my lecture, we should develop loving-kindness to gain merits and perfections. We will, therefore, proceed to contemplate on the vanishing of the materiality of the voice in the course of reciting with a sincere and hearty feeling towards all beings for their welfare and happiness, repeating each phrase three times:

“May all monks, meditators and people in this meditation centre be happy.”

“May all deities in this meditation centre be happy.”

“May all beings in this meditation centre be happy.”

“May all monks and people in this township be happy.”

“May all deities in this township be happy.”

“May all beings in this township be happy.”

“May all citizens of Burma be happy.”

“May all deities in Burma be happy.”

“May all beings, wherever they are, be happy.”

May all those who are respectfully listening to this Dhamma on Brahmavihāra, by virtue of having heard these teachings, speedily attain nibbāna.

Part Three

I will now deliver teachings based on the Metta Sutta, which is quite familiar to a majority here. This Metta Sutta is of paramount importance for the Buddhists in Burma. It has become an indispensable sutta when reciting prayers and blessings for protection (*paritta*), which are usually recited at religious functions to ward off evil spirits and impart loving-kindness to all beings, thereby sending a message of goodwill or blessing.

It would also enhance the benefits of almsgiving if offerings were accepted while reciting this sutta. By developing loving-kindness at the same time, immense advantages can be derived by the benefactors. It is, therefore, necessary for the monks to seriously study it to grasp the meaning and significance of this sutta. Practice should be made to be able to recite this sutta correctly and precisely with a smooth flow and without making any error in punctuation. Then, while reciting this sutta, loving-kindness should also be developed. This manner of performance would bring benefits to both the person reciting and to the audience.

I will now give an exposition of this Metta Sutta commencing from the first stanza in the body of this Sutta.

Introductory Verses

*Yassā nubhāvato yakkhā, neva dassanti bhīsanam,
Yamhi cevānuyuñjanto, rattindiva matandito.*

*Sukham supati sutto ca, pāpaṃ kiñci na passati,
Evamādiguṇūpetam, parittam taṃ bhaṇāma he.*

He: O noble personages, **yassa:** in regard to this Metta Sutta, **ānubhāvato:** because of its great efficacy, **yakkhā:** the guardian deities of the trees, **bhīsanam:** dreadful appearances, (and) **neva dassanti:** will refrain from displaying, **ca:** and, **yamhi eva:** if this Metta Sutta (were recited), **rattindivam:** both day and night, **atandito:** without indolence, **anuyuñjanto:** one who is devoting himself to the recitation of this Sutta. **Sukham:** will have a happy, **supati:** sleep, **sutto ca:** and while sleeping, **kiñci pāpaṃ:** not a single evil dream, **passati:** will be seen. **Evamādiguṇūpetam:** accomplished with such advantages and noble attributes, **taṃ parittam:** this protection discourse will be recited, **mayam** by us, **bhaṇāma.**

These two preliminary verses were composed by the teachers of ancient times, and handed down to us by tradition. These are expressed in verses to be recited in the form of a universal blessing by those who will perform the recitation. The prologue to this sutta also eulogizes its noble attributes. This eulogy serves as an introduction to the sutta indicating that by virtue of the attributes of this noble discourse the guardian deities of the trees will not display horrible appearances that strike terror into the hearts of the people. How it once happened may be explained as follows:-

Tree Deities Terrify Five Hundred Monks

At one time, while the Buddha was residing at the Jetavana monastery in the city of Sāvatti, five hundred monks, after taking instructions on the meditation method, went in search of a suitable residence near a village where donors could be found. They reached a mountain where lakes were in abundance at the fringes of the Himalayas. The place was clean and refreshingly cool and peaceful.

They stayed for one night at this place. Early the next morning, they visited a village in the neighbourhood to seek for alms. It is said that this village was fairly large with a thousand dwellings. The villagers, being generous and hospitable, offered almsfood to all five hundred monks and requested them to spend the Rainy Season at their place. They donated a small residence to each of the monks to enable them to live in peace and meditate alone, and provided them with beds and chairs, water-pots, etc. On the following day, they proceeded to another village. The inhabitants of that village similarly requested the monks to reside at their place for the Rainy Season after offering meals. They agreed to stay as requested making a remark in passing that it would be better if the place were free from dangers. They practised meditation day and night at a forest grove close to the village. Due to the influence of the monks who were endowed with morality the guardian deities of the trees in the forest grove dared not reside in their abodes, from which they descended taking their children, and they had to move from place to place. The deities were, therefore, watching from a distance with embarrassment, wondering when the monks would be leaving.

It occurred to them: "These monks will no doubt be staying for the three months of the Rains. We cannot possibly remain outside of our

abodes for a long time with our children. It would, therefore, be advisable to create dreadful visions to frighten them away." The guardian deities, manifested in the guise of ogres during the night while the monks were meditating, and stood in their presence making themselves visible causing hideous noises. Having heard these weird sounds and seen horrible sights, the monks were stricken with fear. Their hearts throbbed and their complexion turned pale. Their minds were agitated with worry and fright. While the monks were thus miserable, foul odours were also omitted by the deities. This caused the monks great embarrassment and suffering. It was mentioned in the Commentary as "*Tesaṃ tena duggandhena nimmathiyamānamiva matthaluṅgaṃ ahosi.*" This expression comes very close to the view of the present day Western medical doctors. It may, therefore, be said that they had suffered severely from headache. Despite this pain and suffering, they remained silent with great patience without letting one another know what had happened.

One day, on being asked by the eldest of the monks, each of the monks disclosed their personal experience. The eldest of the monks then expressed his opinion, "If that is the case, this place may be regarded as unsuitable for us to stay and practise meditation. Let us, therefore, go to the Buddha and tell him of this problem, then we can change our place of residence to some other suitable spot for the rest of the Rains Retreat." They therefore went to the Blessed One from whom they sought a suitable place that would be more congenial for them to practise meditation.

Metta Sutta Delivered to Pacify the Deities

On reflecting on which place would be most appropriate for these monks, it is stated that the Buddha found no place in the whole of India more suitable than the place where they had resided. Therefore, the Buddha instructed them to return to the forest retreat from where they had come. The advice given by the Buddha was, "You should learn this Metta Sutta if you wish to escape from the dangers brought about by the deities. This Metta Sutta will serve as a deterrent to the perils caused by those deities. It would also help towards better realisation of the Dhamma in the practice of meditation." Furthermore, it has been elucidated in the Commentary as stated below:-

*"Imañca suttaṃ māsassa aṭṭhasu dhammassavanadivasesu gaṇḍiṃ
ākoṭevā ussāretha, dhammakathaṃ karotha, sākacchatha,*

anumodatha, idameva kammaṭṭhānaṃ āsevatha, bhāvetha, bahulīkarotha. Tepi vo amanussā taṃ bheravārammaṇaṃ na dassanti.”

Imañca suttaṃ: This sutta also, **māsassa:** during one month, **aṭṭhasu dhammasavanadivasesu:** for a period of eight days while occupied in teaching and listening to the sermon (it means the waxing and waning days of the fifth, eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth-altogether 8 days in a month), **gaṇḍim ākoṭetvā:** beat the wooden drum, **ussāretha:** recite it, **dhammakathaṃ karotha:** go on teaching, **sākacchatha:** make deliberations, **anumodatha:** and this Paritta be expressed with **anumodanā:** great rejoicing, **idameva kammaṭṭhānaṃ:** this meditation exercise, **āsevatha:** can be relied on, **bhāvetha:** developed, **bahulīkarotha:** (and) performed several times. **Tepi amanussā:** these non-human beings or deities also, **yo:** will make, **taṃ bheravārammaṇaṃ:** no such dreadful sights and sounds, **na dassanti:** (and) will not display. This advice was given by the Blessed One in passing.

After taking instructions from the Buddha, these monks returned to their former place in the forest where their monasteries stood. They stayed on in that place practising meditation and reciting the Metta Sutta according to the teachings of the Buddha. These deities having felt that “these Noble Ones are sympathetic and are really bent upon bestowing upon us many advantages by developing loving-kindness, were so pleased and happy that they assisted the monks in every way possible to fulfil their needs. Under these favourable circumstances, all these monks, after developing loving-kindness and practising insight meditation based on absorption in loving-kindness, were said to have attained Arahantship during that Rainy Season. As such, at the commencement of the verse eulogising the virtues of this Metta Sutta, it has been mentioned that in view of the powerful influence of the noble attributes of this Paritta, the Guardian deities of the trees refrained from creating horrible sights and sounds to frighten the monks.

Not Only Recitation but Also Practice

The third line in the first stanza contains the word “anuyuñjanto,” which denotes “practising.” This expression alone in itself does not convey the sense to simply do the recitation of the Metta Sutta. The

intention probably is to refer to practising meditation on loving-kindness, i.e. developing loving-kindness through practical meditation. It is because in the Metta Sutta, where eleven advantages of meditation on loving-kindness are enumerated, it has been elucidated that these are the advantages of liberating the mind through loving-kindness. The expression “*mettā cetovimutti*” could not possibly have reference to mere requirement of recitation only. Only attainment concentration (*appanā-jhāna*) is liberation of the heart through loving-kindness (*mettā cetovimutti*). This has been clearly explained in the Aṅguttara Commentary. Hence, if advantages such as the benefit of a sound sleep (*sukhaṃ supati*) are desirable, loving-kindness should also be developed in addition to recitation. Now one or two verses of Metta Sutta will be recited in Pāli and elucidated.

The Metta Sutta

*“Karaṇīyamatthakusalena, yanta santam padam abhisamecca;
Sakko ujū ca suhujū ca, sūvaco cassa mudu anatimānī.”*

Santam: blissful, **padam**: nibbāna, **abhisamecca**: if wanting to achieve, **atthakusalena**: a person who realises the advantages that are required, **yam**: this practice of morality, concentration, and wisdom, **karaṇīyam**: needs be performed. **Tam**: this practice (*kātuṃ*: for the purpose of doing it), **sakko ca**: is capable of, **assa**: achievement.

Must be Capable of Practising

The gist of it is if a person who fully understands the advantages that can be gained, if he or she wants to realise the blissful state of nibbāna, must without fail cultivate morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). He or she must be able to take up this practice. What is indicated by this expression is that if one wishes to be liberated from all miseries and tribulations, one should be able to practise morality, concentration, and wisdom without any regard for one’s body to the extent of sacrificing one’s own life. To amplify a bit more, it may be said to be like an ordinary person who, realising the advantages to be derived from wealth, is striving to acquire it by way of earning a livelihood as a farmer, trader, or a public servant. Just as gold, silver, and other kinds of property will be of benefit in the pursuit of business affairs, morality, concentration, and wisdom are the best benefits to be gained in the long journey through saṃsāra.

These are the essential things to be practised and acquired. At least, if one is accomplished in moral conduct, one will not descend to the lower realms, and instead is sure to reach the world of human beings or celestial realms, where pleasant and favourable conditions prevail. If one could attain absorption, one will be elevated to a happy life existence in the abode of Brahmās, where the life-span lasts for aeons. If one is accomplished with insight knowledge and has fully achieved the Path and Fruition of Stream-winning, one will forever be emancipated from rebirth in the four lower realms. One will later attain parinibbāna after the attainment of Arahantship, having been reborn in fortunate existences for no more than seven existences. If one accomplishes the Path and Fruition of Arahantship, one will totally escape from the woes and worries of existences, as there will be no more future existences. That is why morality, concentration, and wisdom are real benefits as far as saṃsāra is concerned. These attributes should be gained through the practice of meditation.

One who is thoroughly proficient in the practices of morality should practice insight meditation with complete understanding. It is a practice that should be performed without any misgiving that these higher disciplines are hard to practise. One should not feel apprehensive that gaining insight is beyond one's reach. Neither should one find fault with it, nor feel that it might be better and easier to avoid training in meditation exercises, or that the practice of tranquillity meditation is difficult or burdensome. One should not give it up through indolence and weakness. Follow the motto:-

“The genuine advantages of morality, concentration, and wisdom should be fully grasped with keen proficiency. Having understood this, one should be able to practise meditation leading to gaining those advantages.”

The above statement is in conformity with “*atthakusalena*.” One must, therefore, be competent to do this noble practice. To enable one to do so, one must have firm faith (*saddhā*) and exertion (*virīya*). Only if one has resolute faith with a firm belief that the advantages or benefits are sure to be derived, will one be inclined to take up the practice of insight meditation, which will eventually lead to the attainment of nibbāna after achieving the Path and its Fruition.

Those who have no faith in the Buddha's teaching will not be able to practise morality, concentration, and wisdom. Some who pretend to be Buddhists have said that these practices are unnecessary, and if practised, will only lead to suffering.

This sort of indiscreet remark is mere wishful thinking. They are people who have no faith in the teaching of the Buddha. Such people have no inclination to cultivate morality, concentration, and wisdom. If they fail to do so, since it has been taught as "this is what should be done (*karaṇīyaṃ*)," (and) "must be able (*sakko*)," they are deemed to hold heretical views contrary to the teachings of the Buddha. In fact, they are absolutely lacking in morality, concentration, and wisdom, like a pitiable homeless beggar is totally lacking in wealth. They are destined for the lower realms. Moreover, unremitting effort is essential. If lacking in diligence, it becomes difficult to fully maintain the attributes of morality. It will be all the more burdensome to cultivate concentration and wisdom. Some are reluctant to listen to sermons on the subject of insight meditation. To one who is diligent, nothing is too difficult or burdensome. He or she will make a relentless effort to achieve anything that needs be accomplished. Hence, "utmost endeavour should be made to practise for the achievement of morality. He must have the ability to practise and perform the exercise with vigour and enthusiasm." To be capable of doing so, faith and exertion are essential. It is vital to carry out the cultivation of morality, concentration, and wisdom diligently, after having established oneself with firm faith and exertion.

Must be Upright and Honest

Next, **ujū ca**: upright, **assa**: one must be, **suhujū ca**: perfectly upright and extremely honest. When first ordained as a monk, though he may be honest at the initial stage of practising meditation by the strength of his faith and conviction, at a later stage when the strength of faith (*saddhā*) and exertion (*virīya*) is at a low ebb, if he becomes slack and defective concerning morality, the quality of extreme honesty will deteriorate. Only by practising without defect throughout one's lifetime, will extreme honesty remain intact. To put it in another way, if free from hypocrisy (*sātheyya*), without pretending to possess attributes that he lacks he can be deemed to be upright (*ujū*). If free from pretence as stated, he may be regarded as extremely

honest. In other words, if not cunning and treacherous from the point of view of physical and verbal behaviour, one shall be regarded as being honest and upright (*ujū*). It is extremely honest if one is not cunning. The last method is that if he refrains from revealing the truth of attributes that he does not really possess, it would amount to being honest (*ujū*). If he does not accept offerings made by others through reverence under the false impression of the attributes that he does not really possess, he shall be deemed to be extremely honest and perfectly upright (*suhujū*).

In practising meditation, the qualities of honesty and uprightness are fundamental. If a false claim is made of possessing special knowledge without actually possessing those attributes, it is a clear case of dishonesty. Such a person who makes a false claim will not be capable of progressing in meditation practice. The spiritual teacher will also find it difficult to put him or her back on the right track. If one does not truly admit one's faults and does not know one's responsibility to tell the truth, one lacks extreme honesty. If the mind wanders or flits, one must openly admit it and say what actually occurred during meditation. Otherwise, one will not be regarded as being very honest. Only if one tells the truth about what has occurred, and reveals the failure to achieve the special knowledge truthfully, would it amount to the accomplishment of the attribute of honesty. Only when one is candid and honest, will the spiritual teacher be able to put him or her on the right track. If one sincerely and respectfully meditates as guided by the spiritual teacher, penetrating knowledge will soon be developed. If it is done so, any deceitfulness will be removed, and honesty will be re-established. In particular, when reaching the stage of knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-nāṇa*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), together with lightness (*lahutā*), pliancy (*mudutā*), adaptability (*kammaññatā*), proficiency (*pāguññatā*), and rectitude (*ujukatā*),¹ may become conspicuous.

It is stated that at one time, when a female meditator had reached that stage in progressive insight knowledge, she confessed to her meditation teacher: "I have done wrong to my husband in the past. From now onwards, I will never commit such faults or offend him."

¹These are beautiful mental states (*sobhaṇa cetasikā*). I have adopted the translations used in the Compendium of Philosophy translated by Nārada Mahāthera.

Note that pliancy (*mudutā*) is not to be confused with compassion (*muditā*), as it was in the original translation due to the similar spelling (Editor's Note).

It is essential that a person who is developing loving-kindness should be really frank and honest. Some, of course, with false pride, exaggerate how they are developing loving-kindness. This kind of behaviour, both mental and verbal, is clear evidence of a person's dishonesty and a reflection of their character. Hence, there is food for thought in regard to people giving a false impression of being lofty and noble in character by putting on airs with ornamented strings of beads.

Should be Meek and Compliant

Next, *sūvaco ca*: meek and compliant, *assa*: he should be. One who is not amenable to taking good advice or admonition is stubborn (*dubbaca*). Such a person is obstinate and unwilling to listen to the benevolent advice of others. He or she habitually speaks counter to whatever others say, with a tendency to hold a contrary opinion. He or she may think others are being bossy. When admonished, he or she behaves badly and refuses to admit any fault. Remaining silent when questioned, he or she causes annoyance to others.

Even though some may admit a fault at once, if they later continue to do mischief this also amounts to disobedience or non-compliance. The Commentary says that such a person is remote from achieving special knowledge.

A person, who is meek and mild (*sūvaca*) is ready to comply with instructions given, will accept any good advice or sincere warning with pleasure, and will also reform himself or herself. The Commentary says that such a person is close to the attainment of special knowledge. Meditators who comply with the instructions of their teachers make great strides towards progressive insight.

A person who is stubborn is likely to become angry, and is unable to develop loving-kindness, being dominated by resentment against others who offer good advice. It is essential for a meditator to be docile and obedient. If reflected on wisely, what others have said with the best of motives is beneficial. For instance, a person whose face is stained with soot will be laughed at if he goes to a public function. If another who has seen the dirt on his face informs him of this, he can wash his face. If he goes to the function after removing the dirt from his face, he will escape ridicule. If any shortcomings of a person are pointed out by others, one should be grateful to the well-wisher. Therefore, one should gladly rectify his own fault or

mistake if his attention is drawn to it by a friend or a relative. Venerable Rāhula, when he was seven years old, piled up a mound of sand and prayed earnestly that he might receive admonition as many times as there were grains of sand in the heap. It is imperative for a person who is practising meditation on loving-kindness or other kinds of meditation to be meek and obedient.

Must Be Gentle

Next, **mudu ca**: gentle and compliant, **assa**: he should be. However, it is not permissible for monks to do anything to ingratiate oneself with his benefactors and to earn their reverence. Nevertheless, in matters not contrary to the Vinaya rules, it would be proper for a monk to deal with his benefactors gently and amiably. More important, however, is to behave in an agreeable and conciliatory manner without being indolent in matters relating to the practice.

Should Not Be Haughty

Then comes, **anatiṃānī ca**: not conceited and arrogant, **assa**: he should be. A monk should not be proud and haughty relying on his lineage or his achievements in the field of learning (*pariyatti*) and practice (*paṭipatti*) or the nobility of his sect. He should not be rude, underestimating others due to his arrogance. If he slights others, taking pride in himself, or, assumes a nonchalant attitude, it will be difficult for him to develop genuine loving-kindness.

Some lack deference to others who are worthy of respect simply on the grounds that they belong to a different sect. It will be hard for him to nurture feelings of genuine loving-kindness. Looking at it from the viewpoint of mundane affairs, one may meet with trouble and danger by being discourteous to others who might appear to him as having no aptitude and initiative.

The disaster that came upon the royal family of Sakyan clan brought about by Viṭaṭubha was the consequence of arrogance and conceit. Hence, one should be gentle in mind without being arrogant and quarrelsome. The Commentary says, “One should be humble like the Venerable Sāriputta who cultivated the habit of humility like a beggar.” The mental disposition of the Venerable Sāriputta described in the Tuvaṭaka Sutta is as stated below:-

A beggar with an earthenware container in hand and with shabby clothes, when entering a village, practises humility. The Venerable Sāriputta respectfully told the Blessed One that he was humble like a beggar boy or girl begging for food. This is all the more remarkable considering the fact that Venerable Sāriputta was a high caste Brahmin. One should, therefore, emulate his exemplary behaviour.

Let us go on to the second stanza.

*“Santussako ca subhāro ca, appakicco ca sallahukavutti.
Santindriyo ca nipako ca, appagabbho kulesvananugiddho”*

Should be Easily Contented

Santussako ca: easily contented, **assa**: one should be. To be content means to be satisfied with whatever is available, to be satisfied with whatever can be obtained within one’s own ability, to be satisfied with whatever is suitable. These are the three kinds of contentment. If it is multiplied by the four kinds of requisites for a monk it will come to twelve. One should possess these twelve kinds of contentment.

With reference to the first mode of contentment, a monk should be content with the four requisites — almsfood, robes, dwelling place, and medicine — whatever may be currently available. As regards almsfood, the Buddha exhorted the monks from the time of their going-forth to maintain the observance of depending on lumps of food gathered on almsround.¹ The newly ordained monk should endeavour to live on this kind of food throughout his life. The key point is that he should go round for alms and lead a holy life befitting a monk without giving trouble to others. It would be a very heavy responsibility for a benefactor if he or she has to cook meals and serve the monks every day. Nobody will have any trouble if the monk can obtain food by going for alms to the houses from where he can receive whatever alms as are willingly and generously offered by the benefactors. It is for the monks to be content with whatever is available. It will be an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkata*) breaking the training rules (*sekhiyā*) if he asks for food from a person who is not a relative, without being invited, unless he is sick (*gilāna*). It will amount to committing an offence to be confessed (*pācittiya*) if, for example, a monk receives cash for food or asks for delicious buttered rice, etc. Even at the time of serving the meals, if a monk is not invited,

¹ *Piṇḍiyālopabhogaṇaṃ nissāya pabbajjā, tattha te yāvajjvaṇi ussāho karaṇīyo.*

he should not ask for it. Nowadays, one can come across some monks near a famous shrine, or a crowded place like a wharf or a jetty, asking for cash to be donated to them. These are a few instances where a breach of conduct for monks is involved. Some donors might offer cash. Every time a monk accepts the cash that is offered it will amount to an offence requiring confession with forfeiture (*nissaggiya pācittiya*). Such blameworthy conduct is harmful to the Buddhist religion. This misconduct transgressing the Vinaya rules and its degrading effect on the prestige of the noble teaching are due to discontent. It will be an advantage to a monk if he is contented. He will be free from fault and this will be in the best interests of the religion. All good and noble monks should be content with whatever is available for their daily consumption of food.

As regards robes, the Buddha instructed monks to be content with robes made of rags taken from a refuse heap (*paṃsukūla*). Permission was granted to wear the robes donated by donors of their own accord and out of generosity. However, a monk should remain content with any kind of robes that he may receive in accordance with the Vinaya rules. If he seeks for any other kind of robes contrary to the monks' conduct, he is deemed to have committed an offence.

In respect of lodging and furniture, the Buddha instructed the monks to stay at the foot of a tree, or reside in a monastery, or a hut offered as a gift. To remain content is essential. If a monk accepts cash and requests that a building be constructed with that money, or if he receives the gift of money in person and keeps it in his possession, or if he personally spends this money for the purpose of building a monastery, he is guilty of an offence. It is also against the Vinaya rules for any monk to dwell in such a building.

Next, regarding medicine, the Buddha laid down instructions for monks to use a medicine made from the urine of cattle (*pūtimutta*). I heard that some who suffer from neurotic pain have been cured by taking orally the cattle urine. Medicine that has been discarded as putrid is also called "*pūtimutta*." This definition calls for consideration whether it is the real intention of the Buddha, because present day pharmacologists advise avoiding medicines that have expired. If the putrid drugs are taken, it may not cure the disease. It may be hard to find discarded medicine. It is doubtful whether this interpretation of "*pūtimutta*" accords with the Buddha's intent.

In regard to medicine, a sick monk can ask for it from any person. However, it will be an offence requiring confession with forfeiture for a monk if he asks for a gift of money from others, buys medicine and makes use of it. Contentment is also necessary relating to the medicine that is available. If he remains contented with what is available, it is known as *“yathālābhasantosa.”*

Again, because of sickness or general debility, if a monk makes use of suitable food, robes, monastery, furniture, or medicines that he received in exchange for his own property, which are unsuitable, it is called *“yathābalasantosa.”* What is meant by this is to be content with what is available within one’s own means.

Consuming food or wearing robes, etc., that are pure in origin and which have been received in exchange for his own belongings that are considered too good and improper for him to make use of is called *“yathāsāruppasantosa.”* It means to be content with property appropriate for their purpose. In brief, one should be satisfied with the three kinds of contentment, and more broadly speaking, with the twelve kinds of contentment. Otherwise, one can be guilty as stated. In this mundane world, to have satisfaction with one’s own lot is important. If contentment cannot be found, one will be miserable. Due to eagerly wanting something that is not within one’s own means, if one does anything that ought not to be done, one is likely to commit a criminal offence. If one yearns for a thing that is unobtainable, extreme misery will result. If the head of a household is not satisfied with the meals cooked and served at his own home, he can be at logger-heads with his wife, or he may pick a quarrel that will cause misery. In the modern world, there are multi-millionaires who have become miserable due to not being content with what they own and possess. However, a person who is living from hand to mouth, if satisfied with his or her lot, can find happiness. That is why the Buddha taught: *“Santutṭhi paramaṃ dhanam — contentment is the greatest wealth.”* This noble dictum is very natural. Hence, a person who is practising meditation should have contentment in all matters.

Should be Frugal

The next word is: **subhara ca**: easily supported by male and female benefactors, **assa**: should be. Despite the fact that meals, robes, etc., offered as gifts by the benefactors may not be good enough to meet

one's needs or liking, these should be accepted and made use of without grumbling or grunting. It is not for a monk to pick and choose any kind of gift offered in donation. Otherwise, it will be a burden to the benefactors to support easily. It was stated that at one time during the British regime in Mawlamyaing, there was a monk who refused to take meals without a dish of chicken curry. Hence, his benefactors always had to worry about providing a dish of chicken curry. And then while travelling, if no chicken dish was available due to circumstances, the said monk totally abstained from taking meals for the whole day. It is not understood why he behaved in that odd way. Whether because he had made a vow emulating the example of a novice by the name of Paṇḍita who took his meals only when a dish of fish was included in the menu, as mentioned in the Dhammapada story (Dhp v 80), no one can say for certain. Such an attitude would amount to being difficult to support instead of frugal. Monks at this meditation centre should be satisfied with frugal meals as may be offered by the benefactors.

Some narrow-minded monks might become surly and make a wry face despite the fact that the offerings made by the benefactors are of good quality unless these are to their likings. Sometimes, in the presence of the donors, he might give vent to his anger and greed blaming the donors churlishly and then part with the offerings by giving them away to others. Such a monk is hard to please and not easily supported by benefactors. A monk who is frugal accepts what is offered whether good or bad, with satisfaction and delight, which will be reflected on his face. A monk who is avaricious and not frugal will find it difficult to develop a feeling of loving-kindness. It will also be difficult for him to achieve realisation of knowledge in the practice of other kinds of meditation. That is why Buddha has given instructions to become a frugal person to make it easier for the development and attainment of genuine bhāvanā, such as, meditation on loving-kindness, etc.

Should be Carefree

The next expression is **appakicco ca**: having few duties, or free from care, **assa**: as it should be. The best thing for one who is earnestly developing any kind of meditation is to be abstemious, or rather, to abstain oneself from performing other duties, or to keep himself free

from other duties except in matters that are unavoidable. It has, therefore, been instructed to have few duties (*appakicco*).

Of Light Livelihood

The next word is **sallahukavutti**: light or unwieldy, **assa**: one should be. In this regard, to be light and nimble means to be content with the eight requisites of a monk. Possessing a lot of personal belongings will be burdensome and one will be preoccupied with managing this property. If many things need to be carried when moving to another place, it would cause a lot of inconvenience. The eight requisites of a monk (*parikkhāra*) are the three robes, the almsbowl, a belt, a needle, a razor, and a water-strainer. These are not bulky to be kept and cared for at any place of residence, and can also be taken along personally without being burdensome. Hence, to live with these essential requisites is not an encumbrance. These eight requisites may be said to be light. Among those eight requisites of a Buddhist monk these days, the needle is not really essential for monks living in Burma. Robes are readily available and there is no need to sow robes by hand, and no robes worn by present-day monks are in need of patching. As they are in good condition, it will never enter one's head to take along a needle when travelling away from one's residence. When I went to Indonesia to promote the religion in May 1959 I forgot to take with me a needle and thread. All three robes that I took with me were brand new. However, at one time, it was found that in one of the robes, a line of stitching, which was originally defective, had got loose. Then I had to think of how it could be mended. On consultation being made with a Sri Lankan monk, Venerable Ariyavaṃsa, who was with us, he said he had a needle and thread and that he would do the stitching. I had to tell him that it would not be troublesome for me to stitch it up and requested him to lend me his needle and thread for the purpose. In view of this incident, it occurred to me that it would be advisable to take a needle and thread when travelling on a long journey. A needle and thread is not at all burdensome. It is quite easy and light.

Nowadays, to avoid inconvenience, some monks do not even take the almsbowl because food is readily obtainable at any place where one reaches. During the lifetime of the Buddha and of the Commentators, when monks went to attend the Saṅgha Conference, or when

going to attend a ceremony for the observance of the Uposatha they usually take the almsbowl and three robes. We have therefore instructed our disciples to take their bowls whenever they go to a far-flung place, or any other place for a visit, or for taking meals in response to an invitation. The next important requisite is the water-strainer. If one goes to a place that is about half a *yojana* (i.e. about four miles or so), a water-strainer should be carried, otherwise it would be a breach of the Vinaya rules and one would be guilty of an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkata*). Therefore, within the city limits of big cities like Rangoon or Mandalay, if monks have to visit a place in the city on some business, and if the distance is about 4 miles away from their monastery, a water-strainer must be taken with them. If there is no proper water-strainer, a handkerchief may be taken along bearing in mind that it will be used to substitute for a water-strainer if necessary. At least, it should be borne in mind that the robe that one wears can be made use of as a water-strainer if necessary.

A monk who is really intent on practising meditation will not find it troublesome to carry the eight requisites. It is not burdensome at all — they can easily be carried just like a bird whose wings are automatically borne when it flies. What is required will then be fulfilled with these eight requisites of a Buddhist monk. In this connection, I would like to recount my personal experience.

I Did No Find It Burdensome

When I had completed eight Rains (*vassa*), I went in search of a suitable meditation centre, accompanied by a companion monk from Mawlamyaing Taungwainggale monastery. I had no umbrella, slippers, etc. Only about eight requisites: a bowl, three robes, a belt, a razor, a water-strainer, and a needle. I had no cash for travelling expenses. A railway ticket for the train journey from Mawlamyaing to Paung, a small town, was provided by a lay devotee from Mawlamyaing. I took the train only up to that small town, which has a railway station along the route. The rest of the journey was mostly performed on foot. For some sectors of the journey, I was lucky to ride on a train as there was a chance donor who provided a railway ticket as a gift. I visited Kyaiktiyo Pagoda in Thaton District on foot and from there I came back eventually reaching Thaton Mingun Jetawun monastery, a meditation centre, where I took up

meditation practice under the guidance of the Venerable Mingun Jetawun Sayādaw. This is how I travelled to practise insight meditation. It was in accord with the instructions of light livelihood.

With the Sense-faculties Restrained

The next expression is **santindriyo ca**: calmness and sense-restraint, **assa**: one should have. It means the six sense-doors: the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. One can see only if there is an eye. When an object is seen, it can be perceived only as much as the eye with its strength of vision can see. Therefore, the eye is governable in so far as the faculty of seeing is concerned. Because it is so governable, the eye is called “*cakkhundriyaṃ.*” The ear in respect of its faculty of hearing, is also governable. That is why the ear is called “*sotindriyaṃ.*” All these sense-faculties should be restrained, with a tranquil mind. If pleasant sights or sounds are seen or heard, a person who is attracted to these sense objects will find them pleasurable and then he will become agitated. He or she becomes restless, smiling and laughing, when pleasant sensations arise from fragrant odours, delicious tastes, and soft touches. In the same way, when seeing an ugly sight, hearing a harsh sound, smelling a foul odour, etc., he or she becomes perturbed and restless if unable to tolerate such unpleasant sensations. He or she may even grumble.

Hence, it is necessary to exercise restraint and remain calm and unperturbed in connection with both pleasant and unpleasant sensations. One should keep the mind at peace and control oneself by reflection, contemplation, and noting. The best way is to keep control of one’s own mind by contemplating and noting at the moment of seeing, hearing, and so forth. It will not be easy for those who have no experience in mindful contemplation. Therefore, it will be sufficient to remain indifferent whether the sensations are pleasant or unpleasant. If painful sensations become extreme, one should try one’s utmost to control one’s reaction to them through reflection.

Protective Understanding Must Be Mature

The next word is: **Nipako ca**: prudent, **assa**: one should be. In respect of protective understanding, one must be mature. Young children lack maturity, but as they age they become more mature. Gradually, empathy and protective understanding become fully

developed. In the Visuddhimagga, protective understanding¹ (*pārihārikapaññam*) is elucidated by the expression prudent (*nipako*). This protective understanding is the wisdom that is able to complete any task. This understanding fully comprehends if what one is doing is suitable or not (*sappāya-sampajañña*). It is extremely useful in both mundane (*lokiya*) and supramundane (*lokuttara*) matters, and it should be cultivated. In the Commentary that serves as an introduction to this Metta Sutta, this understanding is distinguished as: the knowledge that protects morality, the knowledge that takes care of the robes, the knowledge that understands the seven kinds of suitability (*sappāya*). These are protective understanding.

Among these, the knowledge that knows how to manage things relating to robes, etc., does not seem to be urgently required in the matter of developing loving-kindness. However, this knowledge has probably been included as it might become essential when practising meditation (*bhāvanā*) for a considerable length of time.

Seven Kinds of Suitability

These are 1) suitable accommodation for one who is practising meditation, 2) suitable village where alms can be obtained. 3) suitable or appropriate speech, 4) a suitable teacher and companion-monks, 5) suitable food, 6) suitable weather, 7) suitable posture. A monk should have the knowledge that can reflect wisely and decide which monastery, alms resort, etc., are suitable.

One should consider whether it is best to reside in a wooden monastery, one made of bamboo, or masonry, and whether the place is peaceful and congenial. In connection with the village where alms can be obtained, it is to be considered whether offerings of food will be received, or whether there might be sights or sounds of different kinds whereby defilements would arise. We should consider what kind of talk can be harmful to the practice of meditation. If there is nothing in particular to say, the best thing would be to abstain from saying anything not related to the Dhamma. As regards companions, one should reflect whether there is progress or lack thereof by relying on a spiritual teacher or others he must interact with. With reference to food, one should consider what kind of food will be beneficial from the point of view of health and Dhamma practice. One should

¹ I have adopted the translation of *pārihāriya* used in the Path of Purification (ed.)

also reflect on what kind of posture will be best to make progress in meditation. This is how mature protective knowledge should consider whether it will be profitable or not, in connection with the selection of a suitable monastery, etc. The motto is:- “Reflection whether it is profitable and agreeable is *sāthaka-sampajānaṃ*.”

Although advantages may be derived, one needs to consider whether it would be proper or not. If there is a room in a monastery, it will be improper for a junior monk to occupy the place if it is meant for a senior monk, and vice versa. In regard to speech, it would be improper to teach these who are busy even if the teaching on Dhamma will be of benefit to them. One should consider whether it is proper to teach meditation on the repulsiveness of the body (*asubha kammaṭṭhāna*) on an auspicious occasion or blessing. This is consideration of appropriateness (*sappāya-sampajānaṃ*). The motto is:- “Reflecting whether it is proper or not is *sappāya-sampajānaṃ*.”

Should Be Free From Rudeness

The next expression is: **appagabbho ca**: free from impudence, **assa**: should be. Impudence means being impolite or rude. There are three kinds of rudeness: 1) rude physical behaviour, 2) rude verbal behaviour, and 3) rude mental behaviour.

1) Rudeness of physical behaviour manifests itself under eight situations. Of these eight, what is generally found at the present time needs elaboration. Whether in the midst of the Saṅgha, or in public, to take a sitting posture with knees up, or with the thighs widely extended, is a clear evidence of rude bodily behaviour, or rather, unrefined manners. Sometimes, posture may be taken with either one knee up, or both the knees up with the hands folded across the knees. Such sitting postures also indicate rudeness of physical behaviour. If sitting or standing, touching the body of elders, or sitting or standing in front of them, or on a higher seat, or sitting by pulling the longyi on the body from head to toe, or, talking to others in a standing posture, or gesticulating while talking, are clear instances of rude bodily behaviour. If one squeezes oneself into a congested place where young monks are sitting, or if occupies the seats meant for elders, or if one overtakes the senior monk while walking, etc., are obviously rude and uncultured. One should avoid all such impolite physical behaviour and mannerisms.

I heard that some elderly monks make a pretentious display of supernatural powers by caressing the heads of the ladies with their hands as if blessing them. Such indecent behaviour is prohibited by the Vinaya rules. It has been laid down that monks should not even touch their own daughters or mothers. A rule prohibits monks from handling even a female doll with lust. So fondling ladies to bless them is rude bodily behaviour.

While taking meals with others, emitting nasal secretion, or ejecting phlegm by coughing or spitting are regarded as unrefined manners as these are disgusting to others. Such behaviour should also be avoided.

2) Regarding rudeness of verbal behaviour, there are four conditions. In the midst of the Saṅgha, or in the presence of elders, if anything needs to be said, one should speak only after permission has been sought. Any utterance made without permission is rudeness of verbal behaviour. If an explanation is given relating to a problematic issue without seeking permission, it would also amount to verbal misbehaviour. It is discourteous, or rude verbal behaviour to speak in the midst of the Saṅgha, or in the presence of elders. Asking lay supporters whether there is something to eat, or whether there is any food ready to offer when visiting their homes. Monks should refrain from asking before being invited, which contravenes the Vinaya rules.

3) Rudeness of mental behaviour means: to be disrespectful by thoughts to those who deserve respect. To think of a person superior status as being one's equal, or to imagine a noble person endowed with morality, concentration, and wisdom, as being one's equal, or if a person who lacks knowledge regards an educated person to be an equal, or if one regards another as unknowledgeable compared to oneself, or if a non-meditator regards an accomplished meditator as an equal, these are examples of rude mental behaviour. One should be totally free from all physical, verbal, and mental misbehaviour.

Should Be Free of Attachment to Benefactors

The next word is **kulesu**: among relatives. Here, the meaning of "kula" is "relative" as ordinarily translated into Burmese. However, the word does not convey the sense of a relative. What it really means is a household or a family. Hence, in the context, the word "kulesu" should be interpreted as the members of a household.

Nevertheless, this interpretation also does not really make sense if considered in relation to monks. It would be more convincing to translate it as male and female benefactors of a household. **Kulesu:** male and female benefactors belonging to a family, **ananugiddho:** attachment is also got rid of, **assa:** should be. In essence, it means that there should be no attachment to male or female benefactors. When a monk is collecting alms, whether offerings of food or other things, from his benefactors, he should do so as a noble person worthy of offerings (*dakkiṇeyya*). The benefactors should also donate bearing in mind that the recipient is a noble person worthy of offerings to get greater benefits. Familiarity should be avoided by the monk, regarding a benefactor as his own relatives or a close acquaintance. If intimacy is created by a monk, it amounts to seizing the benefactors with attachment like an eclipse of a planet (*gāha*). It would be like assuming attachment to them as his own relatives. In that case, one is likely to become either elated or sad. If the benefactors prosper, the monk will feel happy. If the benefactors meet misfortune or disaster, the monk will become dejected. This is not the way that a noble person should feel or behave. Of course, the benefactors may feel glad if the monk shares their joy and sorrow. However, this is not what the Buddha wished to happen. The Buddha's wish is to see the monks fully accomplished with morality, and to teach the Dhamma to his benefactors to gain merits (*kusala kamma*).

The benefactors should regard their spiritual teacher as a field of merit to be cultivated to germinate the seeds of wholesome deeds, by making offerings and revering him. When cultivating a field, it is vital that the plot of land is fertile. Similarly, it is vital for a monk who is receiving the offerings to have good fertilizers, such as morality. No financial benefit can be derived from him being dejected, so there is no use in him lamenting. If he renders assistance, the most benefit he may expect may be only a few thousand. A monk with pure morality, who is not attached to his benefactors, should expect nothing. The benefactors who generously donate to a monk accomplished with the admirable attributes of a Noble One, are sure to derive merits worth millions if measured in monetary terms. A person by the name of Indaka, having offered a spoonful of almsfood to the Venerable Anuruddha, was reborn as a powerful deity in Tāvatiṃsa. Thus it is obvious that it is really noble and magnanimous

to donate with a wholesome mind reflecting on the golden attributes of the recipient monk. On the contrary, if the benefactors revere and make offerings of gifts to a monk treating him as a close associate expecting temporal advantages, such as wealth or prosperity, it would amount to seizing (*gāha*). It is something like taking hold of or influencing the monk as a personal secretary. The Commentary says that if there is a dishonest relationship between the monk and the benefactors, it would amount to the teacher and benefactor seizing each other (*gāhagāha*).

If the benefactors are dishonest despite the fact that a monk is dealing with the benefactors in the capacity of one worthy of offerings, it would mean that the benefactors make a seizure, but the monk is free (*muttagāha*). The effect would be the reverse if the monk is dishonest. This sort of thing is fairly common. If both parties deal with one another honestly both are said to be free (*mutta-mutta*). Such a relationship is essential. The explanation given relating to the second verse is now sufficiently comprehensive. I will go on to explain the third verse.

The Last Fundamental Rule of Conduct

*“Na ca khuddamācare kiñci, yena viññū pare upavadeyyum.
Sukhino va khemino hontu, sabbasattā bhavantu sukhittā.”*

Ca: moreover, **yena:** for that kind of vice, **viññū pare:** other wise men, **upavadeyyum:** will blame by pointing out faults. **Khuddam:** an insignificant and vile vice, **kiñci:** even anything that is a trifle, **na ācare:** should not be done. This is the last rule of conduct that ought to have been accomplished long before, out of the fundamental principles or rules of conduct in the practice of loving-kindness. To make it absolutely clear, these fifteen principles will be reiterated.

Sakko:⁽¹⁾ one should be able to practise, **ujū:**⁽²⁾ straightforward, **suhujū:**⁽³⁾ extremely honest, **suvaco:**⁽⁴⁾ meek and compliant, **modu:**⁽⁵⁾ gentle, mild, and obedient, **anati mānī:**⁽⁶⁾ not slighting others due to thinking too highly of oneself, **santussako:**⁽⁷⁾ easily contented, **subhāro:**⁽⁸⁾ easily supportable, **appakicco:**⁽⁹⁾ having few duties and carefree, **sallāhukavutti:**⁽¹⁰⁾ not burdensome, having few possessions, **santiṅṅriyo:**⁽¹¹⁾ serene and unaffected by sense perceptions, **nipako:**⁽¹²⁾ having mature protective knowledge, **appagabbho:**⁽¹³⁾ polite and not impudent, **ananugiddho:**⁽¹⁴⁾ free from attachment to benefactors,

na ca khuddamācare kiñci, yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ.⁽¹⁵⁾ and avoiding any kind of vice, no matter how trivial, for which the wise would find fault and blame one. It would, of course, be difficult to control the mind completely. Therefore, mental rudeness should be rejected as far as possible. As these fifteen moral principles have been accomplished from the very beginning, the ordinary way of developing loving-kindness is as follows.-

Ordinary Way of Developing Loving-kindness

Sabbasattā: May all kinds of beings, **sukhino va:**¹ be happy, and **Khemino vā:** may be free from danger, **hontu:** as they may wish to become. **Sukhitattā:** both physical and mental happiness, **bhavantu:** may take place. In this context, the word 'sukhino' should be interpreted in a grammatical sense. Hence, it is to develop loving-kindness either mentally or verbally by reciting: "May all beings be happy and free from danger." In the expression 'sukhitattā,' the word 'sukhita' means 'to have happiness' according to the rules of grammar. 'Atta' conveys the meaning of either 'mind,' or, 'body. If it is body, it can be taken to mean both mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*). Grammatically, it means: "To have both body and mind accomplished with happiness." It would therefore mean: "being happy both physically and mentally." So according to the said expression, loving-kindness can be developed by reciting, "May all beings be happy in both body and mind." Let us then develop loving-kindness by reciting:-

"May all beings be happy, may they be free from danger, and happy in both body and mind." (Repeat thrice)

When developing loving-kindness like this, every time recitation is made, the mind that is inclined to recite, occurs afresh repeatedly, and then dissolves. The thought that is borne in mind, "May they be happy," with a feeling of loving-kindness, also vanishes repeatedly. The voice that utters the words also occurs afresh repeatedly. The mind and matter that dissolve repeatedly and immediately after occurring should be contemplated each time recitation is made and at every moment thought arises (*vipassanā khayato vayo sammasitvā*). This way of contemplation can be followed up to the stage of Arahantship after observing and contemplating that the phenomena

¹ The word "ca" (and) instead of "vā" (or) would be more appropriate, hence it is construed as 'va' instead of "vā."

have ceased and disappeared. This is clearly stated in the Commentaries. Thus, immediately after reciting, both the thought that is conceived and the utterance that is made should be contemplated. Let us contemplate while reciting.

“May all beings be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

Thereafter, instructions have been given by teaching the two verses how loving-kindness should be developed by distinguishing beings into two or three categories.

Developing Specified Loving-kindness

“Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi, tasā vā thāvarā vanavasesā.

Dīghā vā ye va mahantā, majjhimā rassakā aṇukathūlā.

“Ditṭhā vā ye va aditṭhā, ye va dīre vasanti avidūre.

Bhūtā va sambhavesī va, sabbasatta bhavantu sukhittā.”

Tasā vā: an individual who is trembling with fear and still in training, **thāvarā va:** and a perfect Arahant who is serene, steadfast, and fearless, **ye keci pāṇabhūtā:** all living beings without distinction, **atthi:** that exist, **anavasesā:** without exception, **ime sattā:** all these living-beings, **sukhittā:** may they be happy in body and mind, **bhavantu:** may they be blessed and contented.

Trembling and shaking with fear may be caused by anger or human passions, lust and craving (*taṇhā*). Those who are prone to fear are living beings who are not yet free from anger — ordinary individuals, Stream-winners, and Once-returners. Those beings who are affected by passionate desires are ordinary individuals, and also those who are not yet Arahants. How they are seized with fear because of passionate desires (*taṇhā*) is similar to beings who are anxious due to not getting what they want. Those whose mind is tranquil, unperturbed, and steadfast without any fear are the Arahants who are absolutely free from human passions. Therefore, those beings who are prone to fear are beings who are not as yet liberated from passionate attachment. Beings who have absolutely no fear and are not apprehensive, with serenity and stability of mind, are the Arahants. The phrase, “*Tasā vā thāvarā vā,*” distinguishes two categories: individuals who are not free from craving, and who have entirely get rid of it. These two should be distinguished in developing loving-kindness by reciting according to

these two verses. It should also be combined with insight in practising contemplation. Please follow and join in the recitation.

“May all ordinary individuals and trainees who are likely to get frightened due to not being free from craving be happy in both body and mind.” (Repeat thrice)

“May all Arahants who are serene and steadfast without any fear due to being fully emancipated from the bondage of craving be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

“May all fearless Arahants as well as all fearful beings who easily get alarmed be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

Ye dīghā vā: those beings who have a long body, and **ye vā mahantā:** those who are large, **ye vā majjhimā:** and those who have medium-sized body, **ye vā rassakā:** those who are short, **ye vā aṇukā:** those who are small, **ye vā thūlā:** those who are bulky, **atthi:** do exist or are living, **anavasesā:** all without exception, **ime sattā:** these beings, **sukhisattā:** may they be happy in body and mind, **bhavantu:** may they be accomplished and contented.

With this verse the Buddha prescribed three methods by which loving-kindness should be developed after distinguishing the beings in three categories. The first method shown has reference to different kinds of beings according to the size of their body, whether it is long, short, or medium. Out of these three kinds, those beings who have long bodies are snakes, dragons, lizards, earth-worms, *etc.* Beings who have short bodies are chickens, birds, frogs, *etc.* Medium-sized beings are horses, cattle, buffaloes, pigs, *etc.* However, it is hard to give a definite decision on making a specific classification. Let’s develop loving-kindness towards these three different kinds of beings. Please follow the recitation below:-

“May those beings who have long bodies be happy.”

“May those beings who have short bodies be happy.”

“May those beings who have medium bodies, be happy.”

“May all those beings who are long, short, or medium, be happy.”
(Repeat thrice)

Furthermore, the second method explains how to develop loving-kindness by distinguishing beings according to their size. Of these three kinds, beings who have huge bodies are marine mammals,

such as whales or turtles, and those animal living on land, such as elephant, dragons, *etc.* They include ogres (*yakkha*) and also deities as well as Brahmas of immense bodily dimension from the world of deities. Small beings are tiny invertebrates like insects. Human beings, dogs, pigs, fowl, birds, *etc.*, may be regarded as belonging to the medium-sized category. It is difficult to give a definite decision as to which beings should be included in the three categories. Let us develop loving-kindness by distinguishing the beings according to the said three kinds. Please join the recitation.

“May all beings who have huge bodies, be happy.”

“May all beings who have small bodies, be happy.”

“May all medium-sized beings, be happy.”

“May all beings who are big, small, or medium-sized, be happy.”

The third method indicates how loving-kindness should be developed distinguishing the three different kinds of beings as rotund, big, and fat beings, tiny creatures and medium-sized beings. Of these three kinds, the big and fat beings are fish, turtles, molluscs, snails *etc.*, whose body structures are short and fat. Small (*aṇuka*) beings are those that can not be seen by the naked eye, such as very small insects, bacteria, and fleas. The medium-sized beings are those that are visible, but which are not big or fat. These three kinds of beings are difficult to classify. The Commentary has stated that in a way, among the same kind of beings, those that are relatively big, as well as medium-sized and tiny beings, may be said to come under the definition of small. According to this explanation, it is reasonable to include people of more than five and a half or six feet, who weigh over 100 pounds, in the category of those who are fat, and to regard those who are two or three feet in height and less than 100 lbs in weight, as short and small beings, and to consider the rest as medium-sized. This is also hard to decide definitely, so it would be best to develop loving-kindness by merely noting as big, medium, or small without distinguishing specific beings. Let us, therefore, develop loving-kindness according to the last-mentioned three different kinds. Let us recite as follows:-

“May all rotund and fat beings be happy.”

“May all small and thin beings be happy,”

“May all medium-sized beings be happy.”

“May all fat, thin, and medium-sized beings be happy.”

Developing Loving-kindness for the Seen and Unseen

“Diṭṭhā vā ye va adiṭṭhā, ye va dūre vasanti avidūre.

Bhūtā va sambhavesī va, sabbasattā bhavantu sukhittā.”

Ye diṭṭhā vā: those beings who have been seen before, and **ye vā adiṭṭhā:** those beings who have never been seen before, **atthi:** do exist. **Ye vā:** Some beings also, **dūre:** in a remote place, **vasanti:** are living there. **Ye vā:** Some beings also, **avidūre:** in the neighbourhood, **vasanti:** are residing here. **Ye bhūtā vā:** those beings who have come into being, **ye sambhavesī vā:** those beings who are in the course of becoming, **atthi:** do exist, **ime sabbasattā:** all these beings, **sukhittā:** may they be happy in both body and mind, (and) **bhavantu:** may they be accomplished and contented.

The first pair is the way in which loving-kindness is developed distinguishing between beings that have been seen before, and the beings that have never been seen before. This is quite clear and precise, and is easily understandable. Let us, therefore, develop loving-kindness relating to the first pair. Please follow the recitation.

“May those beings I have met and seen before be happy.”

“May those beings I have never met or seen before be happy.”

“May all those beings I have met and seen before or never met or seen before be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

The second pair also indicates the way in which loving-kindness is developed distinguishing between beings who live nearby and afar. In imparting the feeling of loving-kindness relating to the place whether it is near or remote, it may be distinguished according to one’s own wish. Let us develop loving-kindness with reference to the second pair. Please follow the recitation.

“May all those beings who are living near be happy.”

“May all those beings who are living far away be happy.”

“May all those beings who are living near and far be happy.”
(Repeat thrice)

In the third pair, according to the expression “become” what is meant are the Arahants who will not be reborn in another existence

due to having ceased to become. Beings who are about to become are those ordinary individuals and trainees (*sekkhā*) who will be reborn again in the next existence as they have not been free from defilements. According to the grammatical sense, it refers to beings who are seeking (*esi*) for a fresh existence to become again (*sambhava*). Those beings who are seeking for new existence are those who will have a continuum of existence. They are still about to become. Hence, to be more appropriate in the usage of the conjunctive word, and to be closely coherent, the expression: “Beings about to become” has been used. Therefore, let us develop according to this definition. Please do the recitation as follows:-

“May Arahants who have ceased to become be happy.”

“May ordinary individuals and trainees who will be reborn be happy.”

“May all who have become and who are about to become be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

In another sense, it means a being who has entered the womb of a mother at the time of conception, seeking a new existence (*sambhavesī*). After being born, he or she is deemed to be a being who has become a living being (*bhūtā*). Similarly, a being about to come forth from an egg is seeking existence. If the gestation period has passed and if it is hatched, it has become a being. Beings who have been reborn complete with a material body, and beings coming forth depending on a viscid liquid in plants at the moment rebirth consciousness takes place, are regarded as beings or creatures in the making, that is, about to become. All those who have become sentient beings caused by kamma without conceiving in a womb and without depending upon anything, with the sudden appearance of a material body or form, are said to be seeking a new existence (*sambhavesī*), but it has been explained in the Commentary as become (*bhūtā*). Let us develop loving-kindness towards them and recite as follows:-

“May those beings who are about to become and are conceived in a womb be happy.”

“May those beings who have come to be and have already been born be happy.”

“May all beings who are about to become and have already come into existence be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

What has now been stated, describes the way of developing loving-kindness with a view to bring about prosperity and well-being. Hereafter, it is instructed how to develop loving-kindness hoping to get liberated from misery in the following way.

Developing Loving-kindness to Be Free from Misery

*“Na paro paraṃ nikubbetha, nātimaññetha katthaci na kiñci.
Byārosanā paṭighasaññā, nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.”*

Paro: one person, **paraṃ:** against another, **na nikubbetha:** should not practise deception. In business affairs, deception may take place, and in religious affairs too, deception is practised. In making a business deal, criminal deception is done by deceiving the buyer using false weights or measures. This kind of deception, being fairly common, is well-known to the majority of the people. Another common kind of deception is in the sale of gold or silver jewellery or ingots, that are not genuine. A cheat may pose as an honest man. At one time during the anniversary celebration held in Sāsana Yeikthā, a cheat visited a group of Shan people and deceived them. It was disclosed that after the cheat had seen the bundle of currency notes in the hands of those Shan people, he persuaded them that if those currency notes were exchanged, they would get more money. Believing him, some who were rather greedy, entrusted the cheat with their currency notes. The cheat, after promising them that he would bring back more than the original value, absconded with the money. This is another kind of fraud.

Some deceive others into believing that they could turn an original weight of gold into a greater amount. Credulous persons who were greedy, wishing to receive more gold, entrusted the gold to the cheat. This cheat disappeared never to return again.

Again, some offered charms to be worn to bring good fortune to the wearer. Such claims should make one think whether it is possible. There many types of deceptive practices in connection with business dealings. What has been described are just a few.

In religious matters deceptive practices are plentiful. To teach false doctrines as truth would bring grave disadvantages to those who accept such heresy. During the life time of Buddha, one Puṇṇa who was practising like an ox, and another by the name of Seniya who was practising like a dog, called on the Buddha and asked what

advantages could be derived from such practices.¹ The Blessed One refused twice to answer this question, but on being asked for the third time, he gave the following reply:-

“A person who indulges in the practice like an ox to the full will become an ox after his demise. So too, a person who fully practises like a dog will be reborn a dog in the next existence. If the practices performed are not fully accomplished, it would amount to practising deception under a false pretence, and the person who thus practises for having accepted the heretical views would either descend to the lower realms or become an animal after his death.”

Having heard the Buddha’s reply, Puṇṇa and Seniya wept bitterly. They wept because due to realising they had been the victims of fraud, they had gone through such arduous and futile practices for a considerable time, believing their teacher’s deceitful words that by practising either as an ox or a dog, they would reach a happy existence after death.

Another example is that of Tālapuṭa,² an instructor in the art of dancing, reverentially asked the Buddha, “My Lord! I have heard what other teachers in succession have said that a dancer, being capable of giving delight and pleasure to the public, will, in his next existence, become a jovial deity (*pahāsa deva*) in the next existence. What is your teaching in regard to this?” The Buddha twice refused to answer this question; but when asked for the third time, the Blessed One gave a categorical reply as: “From the very outset, the dancer for having entertained with his performances to the delight of the audience who are as yet unliberated from the evils of greed, anger, and delusion has caused the ills of greed, anger, and delusion to increase. Hence, in the next existence, it is very likely that he would be relegated to the hell of laughter. By firmly holding a false and bigoted view that by performing dances, he would become a laughing deity in his future existence, he will definitely be reborn either in hell or as an animal.” Hearing this statement, Tālapuṭa began to cry because he had been deceived by his teachers for a long time.

Nowadays too, there are similar instances of this kind of deception. Some teachings that run counter to the noble wish of the Blessed One, are based on erroneous assumptions. Although the Buddha taught without any ambiguity that all unwholesome deeds should be

¹ Kukkuravatika Sutta, M.i.387ff.

² Tālapuṭa Sutta, S.iv.306ff.

avoided, all wholesome deeds should be performed, practical exercises should be done to achieve morality, concentration, and wisdom, tranquillity and insight meditation should be practised without fail, and the eight factors of the Noble Path should be developed, teachings contrary to the Buddha's teachings are being given. Such false teachings are like this:

“Since unwholesome defilements are impermanent (*anicca*), no rejection is required.” “To strive to kill others is more difficult than to refrain from killing.” “According to the teaching that says all formations are suffering (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā ti*) it is suffering if meritorious deeds are performed or if morality, concentration, and wisdom are developed, or if meditation is practised.”

Teachings are also given that it would amount to practising self-mortification and that all forms of strenuous exercises that cause physical hardship are suffering. They teach further that simply by remaining in seclusion at peace without making any effort in the practice of meditation, happiness is gained.

Nonsensical talks like these are obviously contrary to the Buddha's teaching. It is certain that those who have accepted such wrong views, with false belief in perverse teachings that are diametrically opposite to the noble teachings of the Buddha, will develop unwholesome kamma, without gaining any merits. Eventually, without anything to rely on, these people are likely to become unhappy through their own personal experience when confronted with suffering, at one time or the other, since unwholesome kamma will predominate over wholesome kamma, which has ceased to function, due to being deceived by fraudulent teachings.

As stated before, a person who has been deceived will suffer badly either from the point of view of business dealings or in religious matters. However, it will be more disastrous if one is defrauded in religious matters. Therefore, the Buddha instructed to develop loving-kindness as: “May they be free from deception” either in dealing with business or religious affairs. Let us recite according to that instruction.

“May one refrain from cheating others and not become a victim of fraud.” (Repeat thrice)

The next phrase is: **katthaci**: anywhere, whether in a town, a village, or in a public place, **kiñci**: any one person, **nam**: as against another person, **na atimaññetha**: may not disregard, being discourteous to or ignoring another. If the other person is slighted or ignored by one due to egoism, it would be unwholesome kamma for a person who slights others or ignores them. This kind of attitude will have an adverse effect at one time or the other. A person who is slighted may feel unhappy or depressed. Some senior officers may ignore or slight an outsider or a junior officer if that person calls on him on duty. Some elders may neglect or ignore junior monks. Those who are thus slighted or neglected may feel extremely unhappy. There is hardly any doubt that a person who slights others has no loving-kindness, having failed to empathise with others. That is probably why the Buddha said to develop loving-kindness to prevent misery. If cordial relationships are established by not slighting one another, the whole world will be a very congenial place. Please follow the recitation in developing loving-kindness:-

“May no one be discourteous to any other person.”

“May one be free from thoughts of disrespect, and be friendly towards others.” (Repeat thrice)

The next expression is: **byārosanā**: by causing bodily harm, and by threatening another verbally or ill-treating, **paṭighasaññā**: with feelings of anger, **aññamaññassa**: towards each other, **dukkham**: suffering, **na iccheyya**: not wishing for.

If a person physically assaults another, abuses, incites others to cause injury, or plots to ill-treat another, he or she will have committed a vice. In future, when circumstances are unfavourable, he or she will meet various kinds of suffering due to that unwholesome deed. The person who is subjected to ill-treatment, of course, suffers in the present. It has, therefore, been taught to develop loving-kindness towards others to be free from such miseries by avoiding those misdeeds. To develop loving-kindness according to that instruction, let us recite as follows:-

“May I be free from ill-will, not wishing to cause misery to others by making a physical assault.”

“May I be free from ill-will, not wishing to cause misery to others by word of mouth.”

“May I be free from ill-will, not wishing to cause misery to others by evil thoughts.”

“May I be free from ill-will, not wishing to cause misery to others by action, speech, or thoughts.”

When developing loving-kindness in this way, it is not enough to recite perfunctorily. One must be sincere and have profound loving-kindness towards others wishing them happiness at the same time. This has been illustrated in the following example.

How Genuine Loving-kindness Should Be Developed

*“Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttamāyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe.
Evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam.”*

Mātā: the mother, **niyaṃ puttam**: in respect of her own flesh and blood, **ekaputtam**: the only beloved son, **āyusā**: at the sacrifice of her own life, **anurakkhe yathā**: will always guard and protect him. **Evampi**: In the same way, **sabbabhūtesu**: in regard to all living-beings, **aparimāṇam**: boundless, **mānasam**: mind of loving-kindness, wishing them happiness, **bhāvaye**: should be developed.

In this verse, the relationship between a mother and her son has been cited as an example. Generally, a mother’s affection and care for sons and daughters surpasses that of the father; that why the mother has been cited as an example. Loving-care and affection may not be bestowed upon adopted children by the parents as much as they would confer on their own children. Hence, an example of “the only beloved son” is cited. However, if there are many sons, the degree or strength of affection and loving-care may not be great despite the fact that they are their own flesh and blood. Usually, boundless love is bestowed upon the only son in a family. That is why comparison has been made to the only son. The degree of love for the only son is well-known to mothers who have sons of their own. This needs no elaboration.

The mother will sacrifice her own life for her only son, if the occasion demands it. Similarly, in developing loving-kindness, it has been taught that one should have utmost loving-kindness and compassion towards all beings regardless of one’s own self. The example that has been illustrated is really deep and profound.

In the second part of this teaching I mentioned how breaking down the barriers takes place as explained in the Visuddhimagga. In this

connection what has been stated is that while a person who is developing loving-kindness is living together with the person who is dear to him, a person who is neutral, and a hostile person, he should not accede to the wish of the villains who demand one of them to be handed over for the purpose of sacrificing him as a gift to propitiate a god by performing a ritual. Even if he surrendered himself as a victim, it will not yet amount to breaking down the barriers. On the other hand, according to this Metta Sutta, it would convey the sense that one who is developing loving-kindness should radiate his loving-kindness wishing the other to gain happiness just as a mother would do with immense love for her only son which soars to the extent of her willingness to sacrifice her own life. If reference were made to what is stated in the Commentary comparing with the Pāli text, it will be found that the illustration is made with emphasis upon the deep feeling of loving-kindness which one should have towards beings just as a mother is lovingly taking care of her own son. It should be interpreted to mean that one must have a feeling of loving-kindness towards other beings to the extent as he would have for his own welfare. The instructions given in many Pāli texts indicate the need to develop loving-kindness towards all other beings equally as one would have for oneself. There are no instructions to the effect that one should have love for others more than one has for oneself.

Furthermore, loving-kindness means that one should not leave out any living beings, that is, it should be without exception and without limit if one is capable of doing so.

How to Develop Loving-kindness Without Limit

“Mettañca sabbalokasmi, mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ.

Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañca, asambādhaṃ averamasapattaṃ.”

To elaborate on how to develop loving-kindness without limit, **uddhaṃ**: above in higher regions, **adho**: below in lower regions, **tiriyaṃ**: in the eight cardinal directions,¹ **sabbalokasamiṃ**: in the

¹ It is the meaning rendered in conformity with the expressions in the Pāli Text as “Ekaṃ disaṃ pharivā itī uddhamadho tiriyaṃ,” and in accordance with the exposition made in the Commentaries; and with the expression of the three words, the direction of the ten regions across the entire universe, are pointed out. In the introductory portion of the Commentary of this Metta Sutta, the word “uddhaṃ” indicates the formless realms (*arūpabhava*); the word “adho” indicates the sensual realm (*kāma*); and the word “tiriyaṃ” indicates the realms of form (*rūpabhava*).

entire universe, **aparimāṇaṃ**: unlimited, **mettaṃ mānaṣaṃ**: feelings of loving-kindness, **bhāvaye**: may be developed.

The gist of it is to develop unlimited loving-kindness towards all beings in all ten regions as mentioned earlier, wishing happiness to them all. In radiating loving-kindness, there is no limit regarding the place or the kinds of beings present there. It covers a very wide range. Next, there is no anger against any living beings, one is free from internal dangers, and having no animosity for any kind of beings as one's enemy, one is also free from external dangers. Let us again develop loving-kindness according to the teaching. Please be mindful while reciting, and contemplate the mental and physical phenomena:–

“May all beings in the higher regions be happy.”

“May all beings in the lower regions be happy.”

“May all beings in the eight cardinal directions be happy.”

(Repeat thrice)

The following verse for the practice of loving-kindness seems to have been composed based on the phrase: “*Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyaṇca,*” from the Metta Sutta:–

“Uddhaṃ yāva bhavaggā ca, adho yāva avīcīto,

Samantā cakkavālesu, ye sattā pathavīcarā.

Avyāpajjhā niverā ca, niddhukkā ca nupaddavā.”

The meaning is: **Uddhaṃ**: in the regions above, **yāva bhavaggā ca**: up to the abode of **nevasaññānāsaññayatana**,¹ **adho**: in the lower region, **yāva avīcīto**: down to Avīci Hell,² (Since scientists have shown that the Earth is round and rotates about its axis, the highest and lowest points would coincide with the position of the poles, when loving-kindness is being developed).

Samantā cakkavālesu ca: in the surrounding universes including heavenly abodes, **pathavīcarā**: those who live and wander on the surface of the earth,³ **ye sattā**: such beings, **santi**: do exist. **Te sattā**: these beings, **avyāpajjhā**: having a tendency to give trouble, be free from mental suffering called grief, **niverā ca**: be free from danger,

¹ The abode where there is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness called “*bhavagga*,” the highest of the formless realms.

² The terms highest and the lowest are probably used on the assumption that the earth is a flat surface.

³ In a second verse, **udakecarā**: those who live in water; and in a third verse, **ākāsecarā**: those who live and travel through space or the sky.

nidukkhā ca: be free from bodily suffering, **anupaddavā ca**: be free from accident or misfortune, which can bring about injury, **hontu**: may all be got rid of these sufferings and dangers.

In the said Pāli verse stated above and in its definition, the term: “*upaddavā*” means all kinds of accidents, misfortunes, and dangers that may happen unexpectedly. These are, of course, the unexpected dangers that may be caused by wicked persons, villains, and carnivorous animals, or by serious diseases.

Time and Posture for Developing Loving-kindness

The posture and time for developing loving-kindness has been prescribed as follows:-

*“Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nissinno vā, sayāno yāvatā’ssa vitamiddho.
Etaṃ satim adhiṭṭheyya, brahma mettaṃ vihāra’midha māhu.”*

Tiṭṭhaṃ: while standing, **caraṃ**: walking, **nissinno vā**: or while sitting, **sayāno vā**: or while lying down, **yāvatā**: as far as possible, **vitamiddho assa**: should be free from sloth and torpor. **Tāvatā**: for so long as one becomes sleepy and has not yet fallen asleep, **etaṃ satim**: this mindfulness, the precursor of loving-kindness, **adhiṭṭheyya**: should be developed by contemplation.

Loving-kindness should be developed not only while sitting, but it must be developed continuously while standing, walking to relax the limbs after prolonged sitting; and while lying in bed before falling asleep, as long as one is awake. The only interval should be when one is fast asleep. The moment that one becomes fully awake, one should resume developing loving-kindness. In this regard, mindfulness along with loving-kindness should be contemplated and incessantly developed. If one has achieved absorption on loving-kindness mindfulness should be always maintained. This enables one to enter the absorption on loving-kindness. Developing loving-kindness as stated, is to abide in a noble and perfect state. All of the Buddhas extolled this loving-kindness as the practice which, if developed, amounts to abiding in this religion in a holy state.

The Four Sublime Abidings

The Pāli Commentaries distinguish four different abidings (*vihāra*): bodily postures (*iriyāpatha vihāra*), celestial abidings

(*dibbavihāra*), noble abidings (*ariya vihāra*), and sublime abidings (*brahmavihāra*). The first refers to walking, standing, sitting, and lying down in turn as may appropriate. Deportment is adopted by every monk, individual, or living-being, and is not unusual. The celestial abidings refers to the lofty absorptions by which one may be reborn as an outstanding celestial being after one's demise. Entering deep absorptions is productive of the highest spiritual benefits is called celestial abiding (*dibbavihāra*). To be mentally absorbed in the four Fruitions, which are the results of the four Paths by the Noble Ones (*ariya*) is the noble abidings (*ariyavihāra*). The sublime abidings (*brahmavihāra*) means the four absorptions on loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity. In particular, by virtue of being faultless, and due to its noble qualities, it is said to be abiding in a perfect and holy state. That is why in this verse the Buddha used the expression "*Brahmavihāra*" for the word "*mettā*."

Illimitable States and Sublime Abidings

In the Abhidhamma,¹ these four kinds of Brahmavihāra are called the illimitable states (*appamaññā*). In the Suttanta,² refers to the Sublime Abidings (*brahmacariya*). It means the practice of the holy life, the perfect exercise of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity. The term "*Brahmacāra Dhamma*" as commonly spoken in Burmese is derived from the Pāli word "*Brahmacariya*." When loving-kindness is developed, it must be developed keeping one's mind on the concept of an individual (*puggala*) or being (*sattavā*). Hence there is every likelihood of having a false belief in a self (*atta-ditthi*) with attachment to the idea that an individual or being really exists. So the Blessed One taught the last verse quoted below, to dispel the self-view that is likely to occur, and to enable mankind to attain the Noble Path and its Fruition.

Escaping Rebirth by Rejecting Wrong-view

"Ditthiñca anupaggamma, sīlavā dassanena sampanno.

Kāmesu vinaya gedhaṃ, na hi jātuggabbhaseyya punaretīti."

Ditthiñca: the view that clings to the idea that there really is an individual, a self, or a being, which is a false belief, **anupaggamma:** not wishing to grasp with attachment. What is being stressed by the

¹ Vbh.284.

² Dīghanikāya, Mahāgovinda Sutta.

use of this expression is that although one may be developing loving-kindness as: "May he or she be happy," or, "May all beings be happy," the terms 'individual' and 'being' are mere concepts. In fact, there is no such thing as an individual, a being, or a self. The main point is to realise by direct knowledge that the so-called self, is nothing but an aggregate of the four primary elements, which arise and pass away incessantly. False views regarding these phenomena should be rejected.

The method of rejection may be explained in this way. This false conception should be rejected with one's acquired knowledge that has been heard and read (*sutamayā-ñāṇa*) before meditation is practised. If one is able to attain absorption on loving-kindness, one should first enter that absorption, and on exiting from it, rejection should be done by practising contemplation of the absorption and the material body on which it relies. A person who has not yet achieved absorption, should reject it through intuitive knowledge by contemplating with mindfulness the materiality that is relied upon, and through recitation which is the sense object, at each moment of developing loving-kindness as "May he be happy," or, "May all beings be happy." It should also be rejected by relying fundamentally on absorption on loving-kindness, and by realising the truth through contemplation of the respective mental and physical phenomena.

No special mention need be made with regard to the way of rejection by knowledge acquired by hearing or reading. The phenomenal nature of mind and matter should be rejected by practical meditation exercises, noting and reflecting after listening to teachings, as far as possible. The way of rejection by contemplation and awareness of the absorption is to contemplate the *jhānic*-mind after the absorption on loving-kindness has ceased. It is just like those with no achievement of absorption who realise by contemplating and noting the mind that imagines and knows at every moment of arising consciousness. It is necessary to contemplate and become aware several times in succession by absorbing into *jhāna* and contemplating the *jhānic*-mind. It will then become obvious during the course of contemplation that the *jhānic*-mind wishing others to be happy, and the materiality on which reliance is made, as well as the mind that contemplates and knows them, are quite different from one another. At that moment, the material object that is depended

on, and which does not know and feel the sensation, will be found to be distinct from the *jhānic*-mind that has just occurred wishing others to be happy. The mind that contemplates and knows will also be distinguished. It will then be known by one's own insight that there is no living entity, being, or self, and that this material body is comprised of two different things: mind, which knows the sensation, and materiality, which does not know the sensation. When realised as such self-view (*atta-ditṭhi*) will be got rid of. This is the way in which false view is completely dispelled with analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*), after practising absorption on loving-kindness and insight meditation alternately.

From this stage, if effort is continuously made in the meditation exercise by absorbing into *jhāna* and then contemplating that *jhāna*, realisation will come through personal insight knowledge that there is only cause and effect. This knowledge will lead to rejection of wrong view. Thereafter, the *jhānic*-mind, the contemplative mind, and the materiality on which reliance is made, will be found to be continually arising and dissolving. Rejection will then be made knowing the characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self. Eventually, self-view will be totally eradicated with the path knowledge of Stream-winning. This is how wrong-view is rejected and rooted out by developing *jhāna* and insight, alternately.

The way of rejection that has now been stated is similar to the method of rejecting wrong-view after developing loving-kindness, saying "May happiness be gained" and after contemplating the materiality with awareness of the mind that is pervaded with loving-kindness. The only difference is between absorption on loving-kindness and ordinary loving-kindness. The method of contemplation is, however, the same. Let us now contemplate after developing loving-kindness according to this method. Please contemplate and note while reciting.

"May all monks, novices, meditators and lay persons in this meditation centre be happy."

"May all monks, novices, lay persons and deities in this township be happy."

"May all citizens of the Union of Burma be happy."

"May all beings be happy." (Repeat thrice)

How to Reject Self-view

The way of rejecting self-view by contemplating consciousness whenever it arises as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking, after meditating on loving-kindness, is similar to what the meditators here usually practice. The only difference is that it may be with or without the basic *jhāna*. The method of contemplation is, however, the same.

If contemplation and awareness becomes slack while contemplating based on *jhāna* on the phenomena, as and when they arise on their own, respectively, absorption on loving-kindness should again be developed and revived. When calmness of body and mind has been re-established, contemplation of phenomena wherever they manifest should be resumed.

The meditators here initially contemplate the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, which is regarded as fundamental. In the course of contemplating and noting as described, the thoughts that may occur should be contemplated and noted. Thereafter, contemplating and noting should revert to the rising and falling of the abdominal movements. If bodily sensations of pain, stiffness, or heat are felt, then these sensations should be contemplated and noted, whenever they occur. Afterwards, one should resume contemplation of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. Any bending or stretching of the hands and feet should likewise be noted. While contemplation is being done, the object being contemplated and the knowing mind will be distinguished. Cause and effect are also distinctly realised. The characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self will be apprehended with personal knowledge in the process of contemplating and noting psycho-physical phenomena. When the knowledge of dissolution (*bhavaṅga-ñāṇa*) gets strengthened with constant awareness as stated, contemplating and noting should be spread wider beginning from every sensation of touch in the body. If weariness occurs while meditating and if contemplation loses its momentum, the noting mind should be redirected to the usual rising and falling of the abdomen. Only when the body and mind becomes tranquil, further contemplation of all physical phenomena should be resumed.

When contemplation gains strength, insight will progress to awareness of fearfulness (*bhayatupaṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*), knowledge of misery

(*ādīnava-ñāṇa*), knowledge of disgust (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*), knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of re-observation (*paṭisankhā-ñāṇa*), and thereafter, the knowledge of equanimity about formations (*sankhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) will be reached. At that stage all objects of contemplation will be perceived automatically without making exertion. Penetrating insight will also occur spontaneously. Then one will be unable to follow and note the arising of a number of sensations occurring over the whole body — awareness of only a few usual sensations will occur automatically. This knowledge is very delicate, and awareness is very clear. There are times when continuous contemplation on about three phenomena such as the rising of the abdomen, the falling of the abdomen, and stiffness felt in the sitting posture — awareness of the entire body having vanished altogether. Sometimes, the meditator may be aware of only the rising and falling of the abdomen, oblivious of the fact that he or she is sitting.

Occasionally, consciousness may fail to grasp the rising and falling of the abdomen, and if it so happens, one may fix attention only on the knowing mind, contemplating and noting it as “knowing,” “knowing.” While being conscious of what is happening, awareness becomes greatly accelerated, and the sudden cessation of the object contemplated and the contemplating mind will be perceived. The knowledge and perception of the cessation of all mental and physical phenomena is path knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*).

In fact, rejection of self-view latent in objects (*ārammaṇanusaya*) has been completed even before attaining path knowledge by the faculty of insight-knowledge, which is aware of the existence of only mind and matter, in the course of contemplating and noting.

The Noble Path, which realises the cessation of all mental and physical formations, totally eradicates the self-view of inherited tendencies (*santānānusaya*). From them onwards, the false view of the existence of an individual, a being, a self, or a living entity has been completely eradicated. This explains in brief how to practise meditation to reject self-view, while developing loving-kindness toward living beings, and it is in conformity with the instructions given by the Buddha as: not wishing to grasp with attachment to the view that there is an individual, a self, or a living being (*ditṭhiñca anupagamma*).

If self-view is rejected by methodical contemplation and noting through earnest meditation, wrong-view (*micchā-ditṭhi*) or misconception will be totally eradicated. Then, after rejecting wrong-view one should also be accomplished with morality (*sīla*). Pure morality will, of course, remain intact in the case of lay persons if they strictly and respectfully observe the five, eight, or ten precepts — the basic requirement for meditation practice. As regards the precepts prescribed for monks, this can be fully accomplished if the monastic training (*Pāṭimokkha sīla*) is respectfully observed. The precepts for laymen and monks should be fully perfected before practising meditation. It has been already instructed to fulfil this perfection in moral practices with the phrase, **karaṇīyamattha kusalena**: this is what should be done by one who skilled in goodness, found in the first verse of this Metta Sutta.

It refers to the accomplishment of morality of the Noble Path. This too, being embraced in the attributes of the Noble Path, which has uprooted wrong-view, it is already included in the expression, “Not wishing to cling to self-view, which means, “having rejected self-view.” Nevertheless, to make it more convincing that morality of the Noble Path has also been accomplished, it was repeated with the word **sīlavā**: — one should be accomplished with morality.

Furthermore, **sampanno**: being endowed with, **dassanena**: the insight knowledge of the path of Stream-winning, which realises and perceives nibbāna, the cessation of all suffering, one would not wish to cling to self-view, but would reject it. It conveys the same sense as the expression “Accomplishing the Noble Path.” This repetition is to make the meaning all the more obvious.

How to Be Liberated from Entering a Womb

Then, **kāmesu**: sensual desires (*kāmaḡuṇa*), **gedham**: clinging attachment (*kāmatanḡhā*), **vinaya**: having been rejected by the path knowledge of Non-returning. After becoming a Stream-winner, one will attain the stage of a Non-returner if contemplation is practised continuously. If contemplation is carried on after becoming a Once-returner, one will attain the Path of Non-returning, which will totally eradicate sensual craving (*kāmatanḡhā*). One will then achieve the Fruition of Non-returning.

A Non-returner will be reborn in the Pure Abodes (Suddhāvāsa) of the Brahma realms. He or she becomes an inhabitant of Avihā, the lowest of the five Pure Abodes. Some attain *parinibbāna* there after achieving Arahantship. If one does not become an Arahant in that abode, one will be reborn in Atappā after a life-span of one thousand world-cycles. Some, after achieving Arahantship living in the abode of Atappā, attain *parinibbāna*. If Arahantship is not yet attained in that abode, after a life-span of two thousand world-cycles, one will be reborn in Sudassā. Some die at the end of their life-span there after becoming Arahants. Those who fail to attain Arahantship in that abode, after a life-span of four thousand world-cycles, will reach the abode of Sudassī. There too, some might attain *parinibbāna* after achieving Arahantship. Some, after a life-span of eight world-cycles, are reborn in the abode of Akaniṭṭha, the highest abode of Suddhāvāsa, where the life-span is sixteen thousand world-cycles. During this extraordinarily long life-span, one will definitely become an Arahant and finally attain *parinibbāna*, which means the complete cessation of all mental and physical aggregates on the demise of an Arahant. This is the last existence in the cycle of existences (*saṃsāra*). All human passions and attachments, which bind mankind to existence, and all that leads to rebirth will be wholly extinct. This is the end of all suffering, a blissful state, the lamp of life having burnt out. On death, one will be released from becoming forever, thereby escaping from all the suffering of old age, disease, and death, which are the effects of existence. It is the absolute extinction of a being whereby eternal bliss is gained.

After reaching the Pure Abodes as stated, one comes to a cul-de-sac, culminating in *parinibbāna*. Human existence is no more and there is no possibility of entering a mother's womb again. This has been elucidated in the following manner:- **So**: a person who has achieved absorption on loving-kindness, **ditṭhiṅca anupaggamma**: not wishing to cling to self-view, having rejected it by insight-knowledge, **sīlavā**: is accomplished with morality, **kāmesu**: sensual desires, **gedham**: to which passions cling, **vinaya**: being rejected by the path knowledge of Non-returning, **gabbhaseyyam**: any new existence that requires conception in a mother's womb, **puna**: again, **na hi jāti eti**: will definitely not take place. In other words, he or she will attain *parinibbāna* without being conceived in a mother's womb again.

The gist of it is that absorption will be achieved by developing loving-kindness through meditation. If insight contemplation is made based on this absorption, one will reach the stage of Non-returning, and no further rebirth will take place in a mother's womb. One will reach the Brahma realms of the Pure Abodes, and will become an Arahant, attaining *parinibbāna*. The meaning of it is unambiguous up to that extent only. However, the Buddha wishes to see people reach the stage of Arahantship even in the present life and attain the final goal of *parinibbāna* on their demise. Therefore, based on the matter of pregnancy, which would require conceiving in a mother's womb, some assume that all new rebirths have been rejected. It may be said that this assumption appears appropriate since it falls in line with the wish of the Buddha. However, it is difficult to make an interpretation to arrive at this meaning. In accordance with the expression-*"kāmesu,"* it may be possible to accept the interpretation as "the desirable existences of the form and formless realms," without assuming the sense of the term *"kāmaguṇa."* Hence, the meaning of the last two phrases may be furnished as follows:-

Kāmesu: in respect of all sense desires, **gedham:** craving (*taṇhā*), **vinaya:** after rejecting by the four Noble Paths, and since rejection has been made, **gabbaseyyam:** coming into a new existence (*paṭisandhi*) by conception in a womb **puna:** again, **na hi jāti eti:** will not happen, *i.e.* one will attain *parinibbāna* in this present existence without any further rebirth.

This explanation is in accord with the wish of the Buddha though it is not in agreement with the usual translation from the viewpoint of grammar. It also conforms to the statement that the five hundred monks after listening to this Metta Sutta became Arahants during that Rains Retreat (*vassa*) by meditating and agrees with the teachings, that one can reach Arahantship by insight contemplation based on *jhāna*. It is rational and natural and conventional too. This explanation, therefore, is considered the most appropriate.

Part Four

I have so far delivered my teachings on loving-kindness, one of the four Brahmavihāra Dhamma. I would like to add a bit more about the method of developing loving-kindness, and about the method of practising insight contemplation, and also some stories relevant to the advantages of loving-kindness as taught by the Buddha. First, I will explain the Buddha's teachings from the Aṅguttaranikāya, the Book of Fours, the second Mettā Sutta.¹

The Second Mettā Sutta

“Idha, bhikkhave, ekacco puggalo mettāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharivā viharati, tathā dutiyaṃ tathā tatiyaṃ tathā catutthaṃ. Iti uddhamadho tiriyaṃ sabbadhi sabbattatāya sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā vipulena mahaggatena appamāṇena averena abyāpajjena pharivā viharati. So yadeva tattha hoti rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ saṅkhāragataṃ viññāgataṃ te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati. So kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā suddhāvāsānaṃ devānaṃ saḥabyataṃ upapajjati. Ayaṃ, bhikkhave, upapatti asādhāraṇā puthujjanehi.”

Bhikkhave: O monks! **Idha:** in this teaching, **ekacco puggalo:** a certain person, **mettāsahagatenacetasā:** with thoughts of loving-kindness, **ekaṃ disaṃ:** towards all beings living in one region or direction, **pharivā:** by radiating thoughts wishing happiness to others, **vihāriti:** abides, fixing their attention in this way. A similar explanation of this Pāli has been given in Part One. This Pāli as taught by the Buddha is almost the same as stated by the Venerable Sāriputta except that the former does not include how insight should be contemplated. The Pāli expression “*ekaṃ disaṃ*” could be interpreted to mean, “One of the four regions of the East, West, South and North.” However, according to the usual way of radiating loving-kindness, it must be construed as the region in the East. Let us, therefore, recite developing loving-kindness as below:-

“May all beings in the East be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

In the same way, loving-kindness is radiated towards the west, the south, and the north. This is the way of radiating loving-kindness

¹ A.ii.129, Dutiyamettā Sutta.

with a feeling of good-will towards the four directions. Let us develop loving-kindness, reciting according to these three phrases:-

“May all beings in the Western region be happy.”

“May all beings in the Northern region be happy.”

“May all beings in the South be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

Iti: thus, **uddham**: to all beings in the higher realms, **adho**: to all beings in the lower realms, **tiriyam**: to all beings in the four directions, **sabbadhi**: everywhere, **sabbattatāya**: regarding all beings equally with loving-thoughts, **sabbāvantaṃ lokam**: to all other beings in the entire universe, **mettā sahagatena cetasā**: develops the mind wishing happiness to others, **vipulena**: and spreading the mind to cover all areas. **Mahaggatena**: with a lofty mind, **appamāṇena**: which is boundless, **averena**: free from hatred, **abyābajjhena**: free from thoughts of oppression, **pharitvā viharati**: radiates loving-kindness.

With these words, it has been instructed how loving-kindness should be radiated towards the higher regions, lower regions, and regions in all points of compass. It is directional according to the teaching. Therefore, let us recite by developing loving-kindness according to the sequence in the Paṭisambhidāmagga:-

“May all beings in the South-east be happy ...”

“May all beings in the North-west be happy ...”

“May all beings in the North-east be happy ...”

“May all beings in the South-west be happy ...”

“May all beings in the Lower regions be happy ...”

“May all beings in the Higher regions be happy ...”

It is to radiate loving-kindness towards all the ten regions, with the *jhānic*-mind (*mahaggatena cetasā*) by developing loving-kindness only after attaining absorption on loving-kindness. However, there is no fault in developing loving-kindness as such, without the attainment of absorption. It can accrue advantages as appropriate. What then are the advantages? It may be stated as below:-

The advantages derived from the wholesome deed of loving-kindness by virtue of which, one can sleep well, wake up happily, have no horrible dreams, gain love and respect from both celestial and human beings, and be free from dangers that might otherwise befall one in connection with all ten directions. If he is a monk, he will be a worthy recipient of alms, thereby helping the donor to

achieve greater merits. In making use of the four requisites, he is released from debt, which he would otherwise be under obligation to repay. If death occurs while developing loving-kindness with mindfulness, he will be liberated from the lower realms, and be reborn in the fortunate celestial or human realms. I have been repeatedly instructing you to develop loving-kindness so that you may reap the fruits of these benefits. Let us recite a verse that will indicate how benefits can be derived.

“Happy in sleeping and in waking,
 Delightful dreams come in a vision
 Humans and deities showering love and affection
 Celestial beings constantly guarding.

Fire, poison and knives cause no bodily harm.
 The mind quickly becomes serene and calm.
 Facial complexion with joy is sparkling;
 Without gloom and anxiety on the verge of death.

Surely destined to become a Brahma.
 Constituting eleven in number,
 Are the benefits accrued from developing loving-kindness.”

Of these eleven advantages, three — sleeps happily, wakes happily, and has no horrible dreams — are clear enough, and need no elaboration. In connection with the fourth — loved and respected by human beings — the story of Roja the Malla prince from the *Vinaya Mahāvagga* is appropriate to cite.

The Story of Roja the Malla

At one time, the Buddha made his way to Kusināgara accompanied by one thousand, two hundred and fifty disciples from a place called Āpaṇa. At that time, the ruling princes of Mallā on hearing the news of the Buddha’s proposed visit to Kusināgara, issued a proclamation that anyone who failed to turn up and welcome the Buddha and his disciples would be punished with a fine of five hundred. On the Buddha’s arrival at Kusināgara, Roja was one among the crowd who were present to welcome the Buddha. He was an intimate friend of the Venerable Ānanda. When Ānanda expressed his best wishes, being delighted to see his friend Roja, saying that he was pleased to see him come to welcome the Buddha, Roja replied:

“I came to meet the Buddha not because I have great respect and reverence for Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, but because I feared I would have to pay a fine of five hundred, which will be imposed upon me should I fail to be present on that occasion of according reception to the Buddha and his disciples.”

Having heard this reply, Venerable Ānanda felt sad and wondered what had made Roja speak in that way. Venerable Ānanda reflected, “Roja is very impolite. He is ignorant of the great value of advantages that will be derived by paying homage to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. He will lose all the benefits that he should have gained.” After reflecting thus, Venerable Ānanda told the Buddha of his thoughts.

Thereupon, the Buddha exhorted Venerable Ānanda to develop meditation on loving-kindness with his concentration fixed firmly on Roja only. Usually the Buddha developed and radiated loving-kindness and compassion equally to all beings. However, on this particular occasion, the Buddha thought thus: “This man Roja would fail to gain the merits that he should if he does not take the opportunity of paying homage despite meeting with the Blessed One personally.” He, therefore, developed and radiated loving-kindness, concentrating on Roja only. It is something like a beam of a search-light. If the rays of a search-light are diffused, it will lose its brightness, however, if the light is focused on only a single object, it would be dazzling, like the light of the midday sun. The heat of the midday sun is also intense. Similarly, when the Buddha radiated his loving-kindness concentrating on Roja alone instead of spreading loving-kindness towards all beings, it would be extremely powerful.

The immediate effect was that a feeling of immense reverence arose in Roja’s mind. It is stated that his mind resembled that of a newborn calf, which has a deep and firm attachment to its mother, with intense love and devotion. Hence, Roja immediately searched from one monk’s residence to another, in search of the Blessed One. Eventually, as directed by the Saṅgha, he reached the perfumed Chamber where the Buddha was residing. He took his seat in the presence of the Buddha worshipping and devotedly paying homage. The Buddha then gave a due admonition and delivered a graduated discourse relating to the virtues of generosity, morality, *etc.* After hearing the discourse, Roja became a Stream-winner. He even

entreated the Buddha to let the Saṅgha recognise him as a benefactor, and accept his offer of the four requisites, and not to accept offerings from others. Relying on this incident, it is to be understood that if loving-kindness is developed and radiated towards others with concentrated attention, it would have a telepathic effect, and the recipients of loving-kindness would tend to feel love and respect in return. Not only human beings, but also animals, are likely to reciprocate love. Some time ago, a home for the elderly published a magazine in which a peculiar incident was mentioned.

U Ba Htu's Loving-kindness

A man by the name of U Ba Htu was a lover of animals and had a deep compassion for them. He had particular sympathy for dogs. He used to look after dogs and feed them well. On certain days, he visited the dogs in the precincts of Kyaikkasan Pagoda, having cooked meals, and fed them. Whenever he came to that place, the dogs greeted him warmly. This is not strange at all.

At one time, U Ba Htu and his companions went on a pilgrimage to worship Kaylāsa and Myathabeik Pagodas, situated near a place called Taungzun in Kyaiktho township. I have also been to these places and spent about three nights there. I went around for alms in the villages at the foot of the famous Kaylātha Hill. Dogs in these villages were notorious for their ferocity. They used to attack and bite strangers in a group. If a person is going to visit a shrine on the hill, he has to pass through a village at the foot of the hill. When the party of pilgrims led by U Ba Htu passed through the village, a group of dogs came running towards U Ba Htu. The villagers who were anxiously watching them took it for granted that the dogs would attack U Ba Htu. To their astonishment, the dogs approached U Ba Htu and greeted him with love and affection as if U Ba Htu was their beloved master. I suppose that this happened because of the love and compassion that U Ba Htu felt for the dogs.

The fifth benefit is that deities also give their love and affection, and the sixth is that deities give their protection, which I have already spoken about.

Relating to the seventh benefit of invulnerability from fire, poison, and harp weapons, the miraculous escape from injury that could have been brought about by the burning oil has already been

mentioned in the story of Uttarā. Immunity from poison as described in the story of Cūlasiva Thera has only been mentioned in brief. Invulnerability against sharp weapons in the case of Saṃkicca Sāmaṇera has been cited in passing and a brief story of a cow unharmed by the stroke of a spear has been stated as shown in the Commentaries. I would, therefore, like to add here other stories such as that of Sāmāvati as illustrated in other Commentaries.

The Story of Sāmāvati

During the life time of the Buddha, King Utena was the ruler of the city state of Kosambī. He had three queens; one of them being Vāsuladattā. She was the daughter of King Caṇḍapajjota, the ruler of Ujjenī. The other queen's name was Sāmāvati. She was the daughter of the millionaire Bhaddavatiya of Bhaddavati. Some time after the death of her parents, having been adopted by the millionaire Ghosaka she was generally recognised as the daughter of Ghosaka. The third queen was Māgaṇḍiyā. She was the daughter of a Brahmin by the name of Māgaṇḍiya from the country of Kuru, Māgaṇḍiyā, the Brahmin's daughter, had a very fair complexion and was said to be extremely beautiful. A number of millionaires made proposals asking for her hand in marriage for their sons. However, these proposals were turned down by her father on the grounds that they were unworthy for his beautiful daughter. One day this Brahmin Māgaṇḍiya came across the Blessed One. Having noticed the majestic features and lineaments of the Buddha, he considered the Buddha as being a worthy suitor for his daughter, and not knowing who he was asked him: "O, revered monk! I have a beautiful daughter. I have been searching for a man worthy to marry her, but to no avail. You have the manly qualities really worthy of my daughter. I wish to offer my daughter to you. Please wait here for a while." He then hurried off and soon returned bringing his wife and daughter.

The Buddha, after leaving his footprint, went to another place not far away, and waited there. On returning to where they had first met, the Brahmin could only find the Buddha's footprint. When he told his wife that this was the footprint of the monk he had met, she remarked that the owner of this footprint was a person who had discarded desire for sensual pleasures (*kāmaguṇa*), using her knowledge of astrology. The Brahmin, after telling his wife to keep her

mouth shut, followed the direction of the footprints, and found the Blessed One. He then addressed him, “Revered monk! I offer you my daughter to be your wife and looked after by you.”

Before replying whether he would accept the offer, the Buddha recounted his life story beginning from his renunciation up to the time he sat down at the foot of the Ajapālanigrodha tree after his Enlightenment, and related his encounter with Māra, who had been shadowing him. When Māra knew about the Buddha’s total emancipation from lust and sensuality, he was full of anxiety. Māra’s three daughters, with a view to helping their father, disguised themselves as beautiful divine maidens and tried to allure and entice the Buddha. This was related to Māgaṇḍiya by the Buddha, and he went on to explain how he had withstood and eliminated lust, and was not tempted, even though these very charming and fascinating daughters of Māra tried to invoke his passion:-¹

*“Disvāna taṇhaṃ aratiṃ ragañca,
nāhosi chando api methunasamaṃ.
Kimevidaṃ mutta karīsapuññaṃ,
pādāpi naṃ samphusitum na icche.”*

(O Māgaṇḍiya) **taṇhaṃ aratiṃ ragañca**: the three daughters of Māra by the name of craving (*taṇhā*), discontent (*arati*), and lust (*rāga*), **disvāna api**: even though I saw, **methunasamaṃ**: in the matter of sexual intercourse **chando**: passionate desire, **me**: in me, **ahosi**: did not occur. **Mutta karīsapuññaṃ**: Being full of urine and excrement, **idaṃ**: this, **disvā**: though I had seen, **chando na hoti**: passionate desire did not arise, **kimeva**: there is no need to mention, **naṃ**: in regard to this girl Māgaṇḍiyā, **pādāpi**: even with my foot, **samphusitum**: to touch, **na icche**: I do not wish.

In brief, it means: “No sensual desire arose in me even at the sight of the three daughters of Māra. There is nothing to say in the case of your so-called beautiful daughter Māgaṇḍiyā, with a worthless body full of loathsome filth such as faeces and urine. I do not even wish to touch her with my foot.” Having heard this teaching, the parents of Māgaṇḍiyā, becoming mindful of the true Dhamma, became Non-returners. However, Māgaṇḍiyā was so indignant that she bore a grudge against the Blessed One from that time onwards. Feeling

¹ Sn.v841, Māgaṇḍiya Sutta.

that she had been purposely insulted, she vowed to take vengeance later when she got married to a person of her own choice.

Regarding this incident, it is reasonable to ask, “Didn’t the Buddha know that Māgaṇḍiyā would bear a grudge?” Yes, indeed, the Buddha was well aware of it. It has been explained in the Dhammapada Commentary that the Blessed One uttered these true words knowing that only by teaching in that way, could her parents attain Non-returning. That speech was delivered only after due consideration of the benefits that would be derived balanced against the vengeance that was sure to be hatched against him by Māgaṇḍiyā.

Having been liberated from sensual lust after becoming Non-returners, Māgaṇḍiyā’s parents gave their daughter under the guardianship of her uncle and entered the Saṅgha. After continuous meditation they both became Arahants. Later, Māgaṇḍiyā’s uncle offered his niece’s hand in marriage to King Utena, who made her his chief queen.

At that time, Ghosaka the millionaire had donated Ghositārāma — a monastery in Kosambī — to the Buddha and the Saṅgha. Kukkuṭa the millionaire also erected a monastery and donated it to the Blessed One, while another millionaire Pāvārika offered a monastery called Pāvārikārāma. The Buddha, in response to the invitation of these three millionaires, proceeded to Kosambī and resided in each of the three monasteries in turn. The Buddha also accepted meals generously given by these three donors and honoured them with his presence at their respective homes.

One day, Sumana, a flower-seller, offered meals to the Saṅgha led by the Buddha after he had obtained permission from the three millionaires. On that very day, a maid servant of the Queen Sāmāvati by the name of Khujjuttarā went out to buy flowers as usual. Sumana the flower seller told Khujjuttarā, “Today I’ve invited the Blessed One and the Saṅgha to take their meal at my residence. I invite you to join me to listen to the Buddha’s discourse after the meal. You may buy the flowers and take them away only after listening to the Buddha’s discourse.” Khujjuttarā accepted the invitation and listened to the thanksgiving discourse (*anumodana*) attentively along with Sumana. In the course of the discourse, through contemplation and noting what she had heard, Khujjuttarā became a Stream-winner.

Usually Khujjuttarā bought only four *kahāpaṇa*¹ worth of flowers out of eight *kahāpaṇa* given to her from the King's coffers, keeping four for her own personal use. On that particular day since she had become a Stream-winner, she had absolutely no desire to steal other's property. She therefore bought eight *kahāpaṇa* worth of flowers. Seeing that the flowers were much more than usual, Sāmāvati inquired, "Sister! Did the king give you double the amount to purchase flowers today?" Khujjuttarā replied, "No, Madam." "Why then are there twice as many flowers as usual?" Khujjuttarā admitted, "On previous occasions, I kept four *kahāpaṇa*, and only bought four *kahāpaṇa* worth of flowers. Today, I bought flowers to the full value of eight *kahāpaṇa*." This was a candid reply, abstaining from falsehood. This reply deserves careful consideration because in those times a Queen had power to the extent of imposing a capital punishment on any person whom she considered guilty. The Queen could easily have given the order to execute Khujjuttarā for stealing the money paid to buy flowers. However, Khujjuttarā spoke the whole truth in spite of knowing the possible consequences. This courageous and honest attitude in speaking the truth is the noble attribute of all Stream-winners. The queen inquired further why Khujjuttarā did not deduct half the amount of money given to her on that day. Khujjuttarā replied that it was because she had gained special insight knowledge after listening to the discourse delivered by the Buddha.

Sāmāvati wisely reflected that to become so pure in mind that any intention to steal was eradicated, was very wonderful. She reasoned that this Dhamma must be something really noble. Such a thought could only occur in the mind of a virtuous person. If she was vicious and wicked, only anger would have arisen, when it was discovered that Khujjuttarā had, for some time, been stealing the money given for buying flowers. Sāmāvati, however, being a virtuous person with previous perfections, was elated to find that her maid had been cleansed of vice, and was now equipped with special insight

¹ A coin of significant value. Stealing something worth five *māsaka* is an offence of defeat for a monk. That is 1/24th of a Troy Ounce of gold, or about £37 at current rates. From the descending price of Sirimā's corpse, which was offered for sale after her death (*Sahassaṃ... dasa kahāpaṇe, pañca kahāpaṇe, ekaṃ kahāpaṇaṃ aḍḍhaṃ, pādaṃ, māsaṃ, kākaṇikaṃ datvā sirimaṃ gaṇhantū* "ti = a thousand ... ten, five, one, a half, a quarter of a *kahāpaṇa*, a *māsaka*, a farthing) one *kahāpaṇa* seems to be at least 8 *māsaka*. At that rate, eight *kahāpaṇas* would be about £475, which would buy a cartload of flowers! However, perhaps not too many to decorate a king's palace (ed.)

knowledge. A keen desire to learn this Dhamma pervaded Sāmāvati, who then entreated Khujjuttarā, “Dear sister! We also wish to hear and share in this special insight knowledge that you have achieved. Please explain it to us.” In reply Khujjuttarā requested to take a bath before teaching the spotless Dhamma. Khujjuttarā was permitted to bathe with scented water and to wear garments of very fine cloths. Khujjuttarā put on one garment around her waist and wrapped another on her torso, draping one side of the cloth over one shoulder while leaving the other shoulder bare (*ekamsaṃ pārupitvā*). She then sat on the allotted place. Holding a glittering fan (*citraḍḍijani*) in her hands, she beckoned the five hundred maids-of-honour and taught them the Dhamma. While listening to Khujjuttarā with unwavering concentration they contemplated and noted with diligence. Having developed insight, they all attained Stream-winning. Sāmāvati and all the maids-of-honour became Stream-winners. After paying homage to Khujjuttarā they requested, “Dear Sister! From today please relinquish the lowly duties of a maid and assume the role of our mother and teacher. Please be kind enough to visit the Buddha daily and listen to his discourses. Then, please impart to us the teaching that you have heard.”

Khujjuttarā went to pay homage to the Buddha every day and listened to his teachings. On her return, she recounted the Dhamma with wonderful precision. Having special perfections (*pāramī*), she remembered all that had been taught by the Buddha and could impart the teachings in exactly the same way as the Blessed One both in modulation of the voice, accent, and tone. Nowadays, some can imitate the preaching style of teachers in demeanour, mode of delivery, pitch, and rhythm. This seems to be possible because of their perfections. Khujjuttarā had prayed to attain this special attribute in the past hundred thousand world-cycles. That is why she became an outstanding disciple, well-versed and fully accomplished in the three collections of the Buddha’s teachings (*Tipiṭakadhara*). Some time later, the Buddha conferred on her the pre-eminent title of foremost among the learned nuns (*bhikkhuni*) unrivalled in the knowledge of the scriptures and the ability to expound them.

The five-hundred maids-of-honour and Sāmāvati then requested Khujjuttarā to find ways and means to enable them to worship the Buddha and the Saṅgha. It was difficult for those residing in the

King's harem to meet outsiders. Khujjattarā advised them to make small holes in the wall of the upper storey of the palace to look through when the Buddha and the Saṅgha came along the road on their way to the mansions of the millionaires living in the city for alms. This enabled the Queen and her maids to look through the holes when the Buddha and his company of disciples passed by.

One day, when Māgaṇḍiyā noticed the holes in the wall of the palace, she asked why the wall had been perforated. Sāmāvātī and her maids, not knowing that Māgaṇḍiyā held a grudge against the Buddha, told her that the Blessed One was residing in the city, and that these holes enabled them to revere the Buddha as he passed by along the road below. When she heard this, it occurred to Māgaṇḍiyā, "The monk Gotama has come over to stay in this city. I will know what should be done. These women revere the monk Gotama. I will also have to deal with them as appropriate." Thinking thus, she told the king that Sāmāvātī and her followers were trying to win the love of outsiders, intending to coax them and would, sooner or later conspire to assassinate the king. The king did not believe her malicious gossip though she had repeated three times.

She, therefore, told the king, "If you don't believe what I say, please visit the top storey of the palace and see for yourself what is happening." So the king went there, found the holes in the wall, and on asking why they were made, learnt that they were to revere the Buddha, so he was unperturbed. The king had these holes replaced with new windows. Since they were much bigger than the holes, Sāmāvātī and her retinue were delighted.

Having failed in her attempt to discredit Sāmāvātī and her maids-of-honour, when it was time for the king to make his rounds to where Sāmāvātī resided, Māgaṇḍiyā put a cobra — its fangs having been extracted — inside the king's lute and covered up the opening with a wreath of flowers. After carrying out her plan, Māgaṇḍiyā confided in the king saying that it was inadvisable for him to visit Sāmāvātī as she had seen an ill-omen in her dreams. Nevertheless, King Utena visited Sāmāvātī as planned. On that occasion, Māgaṇḍiyā accompanied the king feigning concern about his safety. The king had his meal served by Sāmāvātī and her maids, and placing his lute at the top of the golden couch, he lay down to take a rest. Meanwhile, Māgaṇḍiyā loitered about the couch and surreptitiously

removed the wreath of flowers that served to cover the opening in the lute. Then the cobra slid out from the lute and remained on the couch raising its venomous hood. Seeing the snake, Māgaṇḍiyā raised the alarm screaming, “My god! A snake!” Then cursed the king and Sāmāvati, saying, “This unlucky, blind, and foolish king refused to believe me. These maids are ungrateful wretches. Is there anything that has so far been denied to you all by the king? I had an evil dream last night. Despite my warnings not to visit Sāmāvati, your majesty refused to listen to my sincere advice.”

The king, faced with the imminent danger of death that could have been brought about by a venomous snake, believed what Māgaṇḍiyā had said about Sāmāvati, and vehement anger arose in him. He immediately ordered Sāmāvati and her five hundred maids to be shot with poisonous arrows and killed on the spot. Sāmāvati and her followers were directed to sit in a row to be executed. Sāmāvati advised her maids, “Sisters! At this critical moment we have nothing to rely upon except loving-kindness. Shower feelings of loving-kindness upon the king and Māgaṇḍiyā wholeheartedly, spreading your loving-kindness evenly balanced on them. Prevent anger from arising.” So saying, Sāmāvati sat in the forefront of all her maids-of-honour, all of them radiating loving-kindness to the best of their ability. King Utena personally picked up the bow and arrow and shot directly at Sāmāvati. It was stated that the arrow shot from the bow instead of going straight to the target rebounded towards King Utena as if it were about to pierce through his breast and then dropped on the ground in front of him. When it so happened, repentance immediately came upon him, “The arrow that I had shot could have pierced even a thick marble slab, yet it recoiled as if it were about to hit me. Even a lifeless thing like an arrow knows the gratitude and noble attributes of Sāmāvati. How regretful it is that a human being like me failed to appreciate her noble qualities.” He threw away his bow, knelt before Sāmāvati and respectfully begged her forgiveness, saying:

*“Sammuyhāmi pamuyhāmi, sabbā muyhanti me disā.
Sāmāvati maṃ tāyassu, tvañca me saraṇaṃ bhavā”ti.”*

Sāmāvati: My beloved Sāmāvati, **aham**: I am, **sammuyhāmi**: very bewildered, **pamuyhāmi**: extremely perplexed, **me**: to me, **sabba**

disā: in all directions, **muyhanti**: my thoughts are all in confusion not knowing which way to turn, **tvam**: you, **maṃ**: to me, **tāyassu**: lend your help, **tvam**: you are, **me**: my, **saraṇaṇca**: only refuge, bhava: may become.

Sāmāvatī replied in the following words:

“Mā maṃ tvam saraṇaṇ gaccha, yamaṇ saraṇaṇ gatā.

Esa buddho mahārāja, esa buddho anuttaro.

Saraṇaṇ gaccha taṃ buddhaṇ, tvaṇca me saraṇaṇ bhavā”ti.

Mahārāja: My beloved great king, **tvam**: you, **maṃ mā saraṇaṇ gaccha**: should not revere me as your refuge, **ahaṃ**: I do, **yaṃ**: regard the Buddha, **saraṇaṇ gatā**: (and) revere (the Buddha) as my refuge. **Esa**: This Buddha, **buddho**: is fully Enlightened and Omniscient. **Esa buddho**: This Buddha, **anuttaro**: is incomparable. **Buddhaṇ**: That Buddha, **saraṇaṇ gaccha**: may be sought as refuge and revered, **tvaṇca**: may you also, **me**: my, **saraṇaṇ bhava**: be my refuge.

On hearing this reply, King Utena admitted, “Very well, my beloved! I pay my homage and deep respects to you and also have great reverence for the Buddha. I offer you anything you may wish to have.” Afterwards, the king made his way to the Blessed One and took refuge in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha. He invited the Saṅgha led by the Buddha to his palace, and for seven consecutive days, gave alms on a grand scale. He asked Sāmāvatī to mention her wish to enable him to fulfil her desire according to the promise already given. Thereupon, Sāmāvatī asked the king to permit her to offer alms to the Buddha and Saṅgha every day. King Utena then personally went to the Blessed One and invited the Blessed One as desired by his chief queen. The Buddha, in response to the king’s invitation, sent the Venerable Ānanda together with five hundred monks. From that time onwards, Sāmāvatī and her five hundred maids-of-honour, had the opportunity to offer meals, pay homage to the monks, and listen to discourses daily.

In this story of Sāmāvatī, the recoil of the arrow that King Utena shot through anger, was the beneficial result of meditation on loving-kindness. This is the seventh benefit — invulnerability from fire, poison, and weapons. In the event of any untoward incident taking place loving-kindness should be developed with deep concentration. If it is so developed, no danger can befall a person.

Even if there is no chance of escape from the danger, special merits can be gained, and it is certain that benefits will be derived.

The Story of Sīhabāhu

Sri Lankan history¹ refers to a story of a man by the name of Sīhabāhu, born of a princess from her conjugal relationship with a Lion. On reaching the age of sixteen, this young man asked his mother, "Why is it that you are different in race from my father?" The mother recounted what had happened as: "I'm the daughter of the king of Vaṅga. At one time, on my way to the State of Māgadha together with other travellers, we all came upon this great lion. The whole crowd of travellers except me fled in fear. I was, however, unable to lift my foot and run away for my life exactly as was once formerly predicted by an astrologer that I would have my conjugal relationship with a lion. The prophecy was confirmed by a miraculous event in this way. While I remained at a standstill, with fright, of course, this great lion carried me on his back and took me away into a cave where he lived." Sīhabāhu then inquired why she continued to remain in the cave without returning to the palace where her own relatives were residing. She told her son that she was unable to leave, since the entrance to the cave was blocked by a huge boulder. Thereupon, Sīhabāhu removed the boulder and left the place carrying his mother and sister on his shoulders.

On return to his den, the great lion, not seeing his wife and children, felt dejected and went out in search of them. He attacked all people living in the outskirts of the villages where he had set foot. On receipt of complaints from the people concerned about the ravages done by the lion, the king of Vaṅga issued a royal proclamation that any person who could kill the lion, would be offered a reward of three thousand. Sīhabāhu came forward to undertake the task of killing the lion. His mother twice prevented his son from harming the lion, his own father. On the third occasion, without the knowledge of his mother, Sīhabāhu accepted the award. On his arrival before the king, the latter promised that he would surrender his kingdom to Sīhabāhu, if Sīhabāhu could quell the danger brought about by this great lion. He therefore left the palace and went to where the lion could be traced. The great lion, on seeing his son, being greatly

¹ This myth is referred to at Dpv.ix.2-6; Mhv.vi.11f, 24-38; viii.2, 6. (ed.)

touched with instinctive paternal love, was developing his loving-kindness. The arrows shot at the lion by Sīhabāhu had no effect on the lion, and these arrows were said to have rebounded and dropped before him near his foot by virtue of the loving-kindness that he radiated towards his son. Three attempts were made to kill the lion, but all the arrows bounded back to Sīhabāhu and dropped on the earth before him. Because of repeated attacked by his son, a feeling of anger and bitterness arose in the great lion. The fourth arrow hit the lion and pierced its body. Judging from this incident, it is to be borne in mind that the arrows failed to hit the lion because of the father's love towards his son and not just merely because of ordinary loving-kindness.

The Story of Suvannaṣāma

Relating to the advantages of loving-kindness stated in the foregoing, explanation given to the query put forward will be found in the Milindapañha. The question asked by King Milinda was:

“The eleven advantages of loving-kindness say that a person who is developing loving-kindness is invulnerable to dangers of fire, poison, *etc.* However, in the Suvannaṣāma Jātaka, it is said that though Suvannaṣāma always developed loving-kindness, he was badly wounded and rendered unconsciousness by a poisonous arrow shot by King Piḷiyakkha, who, while hunting deer, noticed that the deer were unafraid of Suvannaṣāma so took him to be a divine being. The statement that Suvannaṣāma had been hit by the arrow must be wrong if the statement that no harm or injury could be inflicted by a weapon on a person who was developing loving-kindness. On the other hand, if the statement that Suvannaṣāma was hit by an arrow, then, the statement that a person who is developing loving-kindness becomes invulnerable must be wrong.” These two statements contradicted one another, so King Milinda asked Venerable Nāgasena to say which of the opposing statements was true.

To this dilemma, Venerable Nāgasena replied as follows:-

“Great King! It is true that no weapon can harm a person who is developing loving-kindness. It is also true that Suvannaṣāma was hit by an arrow. Though both statements are correct, the advantage of invulnerability is derived not from the inherent virtue of the person, but from the attributes of loving-kindness. Although it is said that

Suvāṇṇasāma always practised loving-kindness, when he was struck by the arrow, he was filling the water-pot, and during that brief moment there was a lapse in his development of loving-kindness. That is why he was struck by an arrow.

“In ancient times, soldiers used an armoured suit made of steel. When such armour was worn, no arrow or spear could pierce it, so it served as a protection against sharp weapons. The invulnerability from injury caused by sharp weapons is because of the attributes of the armoured suit, it is not attributable to the inherent power of the man. If this suit of armour is not worn by a person, any kind of weapon could cause an injury. Similarly, immunity from weapons should be attributed to the power of loving-kindness and not to an individual. Hence, when his loving-kindness lapsed for a moment, Suvāṇṇasāma was struck by the arrow.

“The second example is that a person living in a sound masonry building will not get wet by rain. This is not due to his own abilities, but the inherent virtues of the building itself. If he lacks shelter and stays outside the building, he will be soaked to the skin. Similarly, if a person is lacking in loving-kindness, any kind of weapon could harm him at the moment of his lapse in the development of loving-kindness, just as a man who will get soaked if he were outside the building when it is raining.

“Another example may be cited. There is what is called a medicinal tree of a deva. It is said that a person holding its branch or any part of its wood will become invisible to the naked eye. It has the power to make a man invisible. (People nowadays may find it difficult to believe such a miracle. However, I mention it according to what is found in the Milindapañha). Invisibility is the power of this medicinal tree of a deva, and not of the man.”

The main point that I want to stress is to develop loving-kindness constantly, if you want to protect yourself from any kind of danger.

Relating to the seventh of the eleven advantages that can be accrued from loving-kindness in connection with the invulnerability from fire, poison, and weapons, nothing more needs to be said.

The eighth benefit is that the mind quickly becomes serene, the ninth is that the complexion is bright and sparkling with joy, and the tenth is that one is free from anxiety on the verge of death. It does not seem necessary to repeat the explanation of these.

What remains to be said is regarding the eleventh benefit — surely destined to become a Brahma. This advantage is clearly mentioned in the Pāli texts. Under the heading of Second Metta Sutta in the beginning of Part Four, the method of insight contemplation to be jointly practised has been shown. This will again be clarified now.

How to Contemplate for Insight

So: A person who has attained absorption on loving-kindness **tattha:** while being absorbed in loving-kindness **yadeva rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ saṅkhāragataṃ viññāgataṃ:** only materiality, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are present. (It means that there is no sense of self at that moment). **Te dhamme:** that materiality, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are regarded, **aniccato:** as impermanent, **dukkhato:** as suffering, **rogato:** as a disease, **gaṇḍato:** as a tumour, **sallato:** as a barb, **aghatto:** as not free from misery, **ābādhato:** as oppressive, **parato:** as alien, **palokato:** as easily destructible, **suññato:** and devoid of any entity, and **anattato:** not constituting a living being, but merely a natural phenomenon, **samanupassati:** and are contemplated and perceived as such.

The above describes the way of cultivating insight after exiting from absorption. What is contemplated is materiality, feelings, *etc.*, as and when they occur at the moment of absorption. It is similar to how the meditators here contemplate and note, “seeing,” “hearing,” or, “imagining” after consciousness of what is seen, heard, or imagined. At the moment when *jhānic*-mind occurs, materiality on which the *jhānic*-mind depends, is present. It is extremely pure, refined and good. As these good sensations pervade the entire body, one would feel very comfortable. It is similar to the characteristics of the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabayañāṇa*). This materiality on which reliance is made and material elements or sense-objects that have taken place by virtue of absorption are “*yadeva rūpagataṃ.*” Feelings, *etc.*, that occur simultaneously in association with the *jhānic*-mind are “*vedanāgataṃ,*” “*saññāgataṃ,*” and “*saṅkhāragataṃ.*” The *jhānic*-mind is “*viññāgataṃ.*” This is how one who has attained absorption contemplates the *jhānic*-mind, *etc.* This resembles the way of contemplating and noting the arising consciousness as “imagining,” when it occurs, by the meditators here.

How awareness and perception is gained by insight-knowledge through contemplation as has been stated is shown as “*aniccato,*” etc., eleven characteristics in all. One endowed with deep knowledge can grasp all eleven characteristics. A person who is lacking in knowledge may know only a few. The most significant point, however, is to know the true characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and not-self. Hence, the Buddha laid emphasis on these three characteristics. If these three are truly perceived and known, the remaining eight can also be understood. For instance, **paloka**: easily destructible, carries the same sense as impermanence. The five characteristics that are similar to illness are all suffering: **rogato**: a disease, **gaṇḍato**: a tumour, **sallato**: a barb, **aghato**: not free from misery, **ābhādato**: oppressive. **Parato**: alien, and **suññato**: devoid of any entity, convey the same meaning as not-self. That is why I explained that the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self can be realised.

Impermanence and Contemplation of Impermanence

It states in the Commentary: **aniccam veditabbam**: impermanence must be understood, **aniccatā veditabbā**: the characteristic of impermanence must be understood, **aniccānupassanā veditabbā**: insight knowledge that contemplates and knows impermanence should be understood. Let us recite:

“Impermanence must be understood. The characteristic of impermanence must be understood. Insight that contemplates impermanence must be understood.”

The Commentary explains further: **Aniccanti khandhāpañcakam**: what is impermanent means the five aggregates. Please recite the following motto:-

“The five aggregates are impermanent.”

These five aggregates, which are transient by nature, are the mind and matter that existed at the moment the *jhānic*-mind occurred. These are referred to in the Pāli text as “*rūpagataṃ, vedanāgataṃ, etc.*” These are the phenomena that should be correctly and vividly known as impermanent when contemplating after exiting from absorption. It is similar to what is clearly known by the meditators with personal insight knowledge of the mental and physical phenomena at the moment of seeing, hearing, or imagining, in the course of their

contemplation with awareness. The characteristic of impermanence, realised through contemplation and noting, may be explained thus:-

Hutvā: what did not exist before occurred, **abhāvākāro**: then suddenly disappeared and vanished, **aniccalakkhaṇam**: this transient nature is to be noted and understood as the characteristic of impermanence. It can be expressed in the form of a motto as stated below, which may be recited:-

“Vanishing after occurring is the characteristic of impermanence.”

All things are impermanent if they arise instantly followed by dissolution. For example, a house is constructed in an open field. Is it not a house that has sprung up anew where it did not exist before? Yes, it is. Is it not subjected to decay for the simple reason that one day or another, with the passage of time, it will meet with destruction? Should we say that it is everlasting or impermanent? If a thing appears and then disappears, it is undoubtedly impermanent and transitory. In the same way, one is born into this world, which is called existence. One has come into being afresh, but will one day pass away. As a living being, one is no doubt impermanent and not everlasting. It is like a flash of lightning that appears and vanishes suddenly. These are examples of the transience or the characteristic of impermanence.

A meditator who is contemplating and noting will perceive the manifestations of the sensations of touch, of thoughts and imagination, sights and sounds constantly arising and vanishing, and then appearing again followed by dissolution at every moment of noting when concentration becomes strong. This will be realised by personal insight knowledge. The meditator will become elated that everything that occurs passes away instantaneously. This is the characteristic of impermanence. When awareness occurs while contemplating that things have arisen and disappeared at once, one will come to realise that these are all impermanent. This knowledge or awareness is knowledge of contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*). This is knowledge through contemplation and noting and not the knowledge of reflective thought or learning.

When a meditator gains absorption on loving-kindness, he or she is developing mindfulness wishing, “May all be happy.” While thus immersed, the *jhānic*-mind occurs wishing others to be happy. This

jhānic-mind may last for a second or a few minutes. When it ceases, then normal thoughts will arise. This is called exiting from absorption. It is something like waking up from a deep sleep. If a meditator plunges into absorption with the predetermination to continue insight contemplation after exiting from absorption, the moment the *jhānic*-mind ceases, the contemplative mind of insight consciousness will occur. He or she distinguishes the arising consciousness of insight and the cessation of the *jhānic*-mind. It is not that the *jhānic*-mind only is known. The simultaneous arising and dissolution of the other four aggregates are also known and realised. The meditator clearly perceives and understands that everything is arising and dissolving incessantly, so it is impermanent.

Applying this method to develop insight knowledge we will develop loving-kindness. Let's recite, radiating loving-kindness, and at the same time, contemplate the characteristic of impermanence of the sense-object-the sound of our chanting:-

"May all beings be happy" (Repeat thrice)

Suffering and Contemplation of Suffering

Since it has been taught: "Whatever is transient is suffering (*yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ*)," the five aggregates being transient are suffering. Among these five aggregates, only painful feeling, which is one constituent of the aggregate of feelings, is suffering for being painful. The remaining four aggregates and pleasant feelings are not miserable conditions that cause distress. However, since they are transitory, they are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*). Also because they are likely to cause trouble and pain, they are unsatisfactory. Let's recite a motto as below:-

"The five aggregates are, in reality, suffering."

These five aggregates, being incessantly arising and dissolving, are always causing pain and suffering. These aggregates by causing stiffness, heat, *etc.*, are often oppressive. That is why they are miserable. This nature of constant suffering and misery is to be understood as the characteristic or mark of suffering (*dukkha*). Let's recite a motto as follows:-

"Constant oppression caused by the arising and dissolution of the aggregates is the characteristic of suffering."

A meditator who constantly contemplates the arising and passing away of mind and matter, perceives the formation of new aggregates instantaneously followed by the dissolution of the old ones. He or she realises the cause of unbearable pain and suffering, and becomes disgusted finding them to be miserable and frightful through personal insight-knowledge. This is the genuine knowledge of the contemplation of suffering (*dukkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*). I have coined a motto, which may be recited as follows:-

“Awareness of suffering and misery, having seen the transient nature of arising and dissolution at the moment of contemplation and noting, is knowledge of the contemplation of suffering.”

Let us now recite by developing loving-kindness as: “May all be happy” while contemplating the oppression caused by the arising and dissolution of phenomena, while developing the contemplation of suffering. Please follow the recitation:-

“May all beings be happy” (Repeat thrice)

Not-self and Contemplation of Not-self

What is not-self? Since it has been taught: “Whatever is suffering is not-self (*yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā*) the five aggregates, which are suffering are not a self or a living entity. They are unmanageable and cannot be coaxed to become happy in as much as their inherent nature is suffering. Since they are unmanageable, they cannot be regarded as one’s own self, so that which is not-self (*anatta*) is ungovernable. Let’s recite a motto that embraces the said meaning.

“The five aggregates, being ungovernable, are not-self.”

If they are one’s own self, they should respond as one wishes. The five aggregates refuse to behave as one wishes, and comply with one’s demands. They occur according to circumstances, and under unforeseen circumstances, they occur against one’s will. Something good and pleasurable may occur, but it will not continue as one may wish. It immediately vanishes. Since the five aggregates occur contrary to one’s own wish, and are ungovernable, they should be noted and realised as not-self. Hence, it has been stated that the characteristic of not-self is unmanageable, *i.e.* which does not occur according to one’s own wish (*avasavuttana kāro anattalakhaṇaṃ*). Let’s recite the motto as below:-

“Not occurring according to one’s own wish is the characteristic of not-self.”

A meditator who is continuously contemplating mind and matter will find that they incessantly appear and disappear according to the relevant circumstances against one’s will. Therefore, he or she realises with insight-knowledge that they are not-self, which is ungovernable. This is the genuine knowledge of contemplation of not-self (*anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*). Let us recite this motto, which has been composed in the light of the above:–

“Finding it to be ungovernable and unresponsive to one’s own wish while contemplating and noting, and realising it as not-self is the knowledge of contemplation of not-self.”

Though one may wish to develop loving-kindness throughout the day and night, when radiating loving-kindness mentally or verbally as “May all beings be happy,” it will not be possible to do so if perseverance and energetic effort are lacking. It would only be possible if there is full accomplishment of strong will, diligence, and resolution. Hence, it is something that does not occur according to one’s wish. In order to follow up with an action to contemplate the nature of not-self, let us develop loving-kindness. Please follow the recitation:—

“May all beings be happy...” (Repeat thrice)

It would amount to wholesome kamma of the sensual realm (*kāmāvacara kusala*) if sincere contemplation of loving-kindness is done to realise the characteristics of impermanence, *etc.*, by sincerely reciting: “May all beings be happy.” The contemplation of the *jhānic*-mind by one who has achieved absorption is contemplating a state of mind that is highly meritorious (*mahaggata-kusala*). The only difference is between the nature of *kāmāvacara* and *mahaggata kusala*. However, the way of contemplating loving-kindness is identical. Hence, while contemplating the virtuous thought of loving-kindness, *etc.*, when insight-knowledge becomes mature, the complete cessation of mind and matter (*nibbāna*) will be realised through the knowledge of the Noble Path. Following this path knowledge, the knowledge of fruition will be attained. If such an attainment is accomplished, one will become a Stream-winner. A

person who has achieved absorption on loving-kindness who continues to contemplate and note, will attain nibbāna through the achieve the path and fruition of Once-returning and Non-returning. In most cases, Non-returning is attained. If one becomes a Non-returner one is entirely free from passionate desire (*kāmarāga*), and so will no longer be reborn in the sensual realms. Rebirth will take place only in the realms of form and the formless realms. It is very likely that one will be reborn in the Pure Abodes (Suddhāvāsa).

Continuation of the Second Metta Sutta

So: A person who becomes a Non-returner by contemplating the absorption on loving-kindness as impermanent, **kāyassa bheda**: on the break-up of the material body, **maraṇā**: at death, **param**: after (becomes), **suddhāvāsānaṃ devānaṃ**: a Brahma in the Pure Abodes, **sahabyataṃ**: having the same status as a Brahma, **upapajjati**: will take rebirth. The Buddha continued: “O, monks! **Ayaṃ upapatti**: are reborn in these Pure Abodes, **puthujjanehi**: unlike the majority of ordinary individuals, **asādhāraṇā**: is an unrivalled attainment.”

Since it has been stated as reaching the Pure Abodes, it is also necessary to attain the fourth absorption. By developing meditation on loving-kindness, only the third absorption can be attained, so one might wonder how one could reach the Pure Abodes. It may be answered that after becoming a Non-returner by contemplating the absorption on loving-kindness, the fourth absorption is achieved through meditation on equanimity (*upekkhā*). To achieve this is not difficult for a Non-returner — it is quite easy. Even a person who has become a Non-returner through insight contemplation without the attainment of any absorption can easily achieve the fourth absorption and reach the Pure Abodes. Hence, it should be understood that the Pure Abodes are reached after attainment of the fourth absorption through the practice of meditation on equanimity.

In so far as an ordinary worldling is concerned, although he or she has attained absorption on loving-kindness and equanimity, he or she cannot reach the Pure Abodes. Rebirth in the Pure Abodes is beyond the reach of ordinary individuals. Is it not true that Stream-winners and Once-returners also cannot be reborn in the Pure Abodes? Then why it is not mentioned that it does not concern them too? It is true that Stream-winners and Once-returners cannot be

reborn in the Pure Abodes, however, they can easily achieve Non-returning and then, reach the Pure Abodes. So it may be understood that it has only been mentioned as not connected with ordinary individuals who have no chance of rebirth in the Pure Abodes. What has now been taught relates to the Second Mettā Sutta.

In the First Mettā Sutta¹ it says that if death takes place as an ordinary worldling after attaining absorption on loving-kindness, one will, by virtue of the attainment of *jhāna*, be reborn in the abodes of the first, second, or third *jhāna* abodes, or the fourth *jhāna* abode of Very Fruitful Gods (Vehapphalā), which is the tenth highest abode of the Brahma realms. Then, on expiry of the life span in these abodes, one revert to the fortunate destinies of the sensual realms (*kāma sugati*); from where there is every possibility of descending to the lower realms after death. However, a person who has become a Noble One will become an Arahant in that Brahma realm and will attain *parinibbāna*. For you to revere it all the more, further elucidation will be made by expounding the meaning of the Pāḷi word-by-word according to the Nissaya method.

The First Mettā Sutta

Bhikkhave: O, monks! **Idha:** in this world, **ekacco puggalo:** a certain person, **mettāsaḥagatena cetosā:** with the thought that arises with loving-kindness, **ekaṃ disaṃ:** towards one direction, **pharitvā viharati:** dwells radiating, **tathā dutiyaṃ:** similarly towards a second direction, **tathā tatiyaṃ:** similarly towards a third direction, **tathā catutthaṃ:** similarly towards a fourth direction, **iti:** thus, **uddhaṃ:** towards the higher regions above, **adho:** towards the lower regions below, **tiriyaṃ:** across, **sabbadhi:** in all directions, **sabbattatāya:** regarding all beings the same as oneself, **sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ:** towards the entire universe where beings live, **mettāsaḥagatena cetosā:** with a benevolent mind and good-will towards all, **vipulena:** spreading the mind to cover all areas, **mahaggaṭena:** with a lofty mind, **appamañena:** with a boundless mind, **averena:** free from hatred, **abyāpajjhena:** free from thoughts of oppression, **pharitvā viharati:** dwells radiating loving-kindness.

The Buddha's teaching up to this stage is identical to the Second Mettā Sutta. It describes how loving-kindness is radiated after

¹ A.ii.128.

absorption has been achieved and how one plunges into absorption. Thereafter, the special characteristic of embracing absorption without contemplating for insight is explained as follows:-

So: such a person, **taṃ:** in that absorption on loving-kindness, **assādeti:** has found delight, **taṃ:** to that absorption, **nikāmeti:** he becomes attached with affection, **tena:** with that absorption, **vittim ca āpajjati:** he has gained happiness with pleasure, **tattha t̥hito:** and remains in that absorption, **tadadhimutto:** becoming attached to that absorption with consciousness, **tabbahula vihāri:** then, after repeating his absorption many times, **aparihīno:** without being deprived of the faculty of this absorption, **kālaṃ kurumāno:** when death occurs, **brahmakāyikānaṃ devānaṃ:** in the abode of the first *jhāna* Brahmas, **sahabyataṃ:** he goes into companionship with the Brahma and on the same level as a Brahma **upapajjati:** and is reborn as a Brahma. This relates to one who has achieved the first absorption on loving-kindness.

So: One who attains the second absorption on loving-kindness, **taṃ:** in that absorption, **assādeti:** finds delight. As in the case of one who has attained the first absorption on loving-kindness, he or she finds delight in that second absorption, and if not deprived of the faculty of that absorption, becomes an *Ābhassarā* Brahmā. This explains how it happens to a person who has achieved the second absorption on loving-kindness. Of course, in this regard, emphasis is laid on the highest Brahma realm of the three abodes of the second absorption — *Parittābhā*, *Appamāṇābhā*, and *Ābhassarā*.

When death occurs after attaining the third absorption on loving-kindness, the significant point stressed is how one reaches the highest among the three abodes of the third absorption — *Parittasubhā*, *Appamāṇasubhā* and *Subhakiṇhā*. Thenceforth, it is mentioned that after attaining the fourth absorption through meditation on equanimity one becomes elated and reaches the *Vehapphalā* Abode after death. This is the highest among the realms of form that ordinary individuals can hope to reach. The life-span there is 500 world-cycles. After reaching these abodes, when the life-span expires, one will be relegated to the existence of the human world or the sensual realm of deities. After that, it is stated that one is likely to descend to the four lower realms in the following way:-

Tattha: In that Brahmaloaka, **putthujjano:** the ordinary worldling, **yāvatāyukam:** throughout the life-time, **thatvā:** will live, **yāvatakam tesam devānam āyuppamāṇam taṃ sabbam:** for the entire life-span of the Brahmas, **khepetvā:** after that life-span has expired, **nirayampi gacchati:** he is likely to descend to hell, **tiracchānayanimpi gacchati:** or may enter the womb of an animal, **pettivisayampi gacchati:** or become a hungry ghost.

These three expressions indicate the possibility of descending to hell, or to the realms of animals or hungry ghosts, due to not yet being free from kamma and defilements. One cannot, of course, reach the lower realms immediately after demise from the Brahma realms. It is because of the meritorious result or kamma of access concentration (*upacāra-samāhi*) that one had developed and by virtue of which one had achieved absorption to be elevated to the Brahma realm. With this achievement, one will usually be reborn in the human or celestial realms. A noble disciple of the Buddha who has achieved the Noble Path through absorption on loving-kindness will, after death, reach the Brahma realm if not yet liberated from the bonds of defilements. He will attain *parinibbāna* in the Brahma realm after attaining Arahantship. This distinguishing feature has been elucidated as follows:—

Bhagavato: the Buddha's, **sāvako pana:** but the noble disciple **tattha:** in that Brahmaloaka **yāvatāyukam:** throughout the life-time, **thatvā:** will live, **yāvatakam tesam devānam āyuppamāṇam, taṃ sabbam:** for the entire life-span of the Brahmas, **khepetvā:** after that life-span has expired, **tasamiṃyeva bhava:** in that very existence, **parinibbāyati:** will attain *parinibbāna*, **Bhikkhave:** Monks! **Ayam:** the ordinary worldling who has attained absorption after becoming a Brahma and when his life-span expires, will revert to the fortunate sensual realms, and then may be reborn in the realms of animals or hungry ghosts; but a noble disciple who has achieved absorption on loving-kindness, will first become a Brahma, and in that very Brahma realm will attain Arahantship and attain *parinibbāna*. These are the two kinds, **viseso:** which have the distinctive features.

What should be known from the First Mettā Sutta is that if one is content with the mere achievement of the absorption on loving-kindness, one will reach the Abode of Brahmas after one's demise. However, since one has not yet achieved the Noble Path due to failing

to contemplate for insight, one will surely revert to the world of human beings or deities when the life-span in the Brahma realm expires. Then, if one has committed evil deeds that can bring one down to the lower realms, one will again descend to the four lower realms. Hence, despite that fact that one has reached the Brahma realm by virtue of absorption, one will be in the same boat as other ordinary individuals who are still liable to fall down to the lower realms. However, if at least the stage of Stream-winning is achieved, after attaining absorption on loving-kindness through insight contemplation, one will reach the Brahma realm after death, and will not be reborn in the sensual realms again, and will eventually become an Arahant in that Brahma realm whereby all miseries will come to an end. Although such a person is not a Non-returner, he will not be reborn in the sensual realms since sensual passion has been dispelled with the faculty of absorption. He is called a *jhāna-anāgāmi*. Similarly, a Once-returner who has achieved absorption will never be reborn in the sensual realms. He too is known as a *jhāna-anāgāmi*.

If, however, a person becomes an Non-returner after attaining absorption, there is an opportunity to attain *parinibbāna* as an Arahant in the lowest Brahma Abode of Avihā, one of the five abodes of Suddhāvāsa, where he will be reborn, as mentioned in the Second Mettā Sutta. If he fails to gain Arahantship after the expiry of a life-span of two-thousand world-cycles in that abode, he will take rebirth in the third abode called Sudassā among the Abodes of Suddhāvāsa. There are cases in which *parinibbāna* takes place after becoming an Arahant in that abode. If Arahantship is not achieved yet, he will be reborn in the fourth abode called Sudassī on expiry of the life-span of four thousand world-cycles. In that abode too, there are instances of persons attaining *parinibbāna* after achieving Arahantship. If Arahantship is not achieved, rebirth will take place in the highest Akaniṭṭhā Abode after the life-span of eight thousand world-cycles has expired. However, Arahantship will definitely be attained in that abode and when the life-span of sixteen thousand world-cycles comes to an end, *parinibbāna*) is assured.

Now the eleventh advantage referred to in the Book of Elevens is complete. The Pāli text says: “*uttari appaṭivijjhanto brahmalokūpago hoti* — if he attains nothing higher he is reborn in the Brahma realm.” The Commentary on this Mettā Sutta explains **uttari appaṭivijjhanto**

as: **Mettāsamāpattito**: the attainment of absorption on loving-kindness, **uttari**: beyond that, **arahattaṃ adhigantum**: to achieve Arahantship, **asakkonto**: if unable to, **ito cavitvā**: on expiry of this human existence, **suttappabuddho viya**: like a person who has risen from sleep, **brahmalokaṃ upapajjati**: reaches the Brahma realm.

In this regard, the expression, “If Arahantship cannot be reached after the attainment of absorption on loving-kindness,” embraces all that has been stated as: “if there is achievement of absorption on loving-kindness only, one can reach the Brahma realm,” and “the Brahma realm can be reached by attaining one, two, or all three of the lower stages of fruition based on the absorption on loving-kindness.” Hence, in the motto that described the benefits of loving-kindness, it is stated as, “He sleeps and wakes happily ... surely destined to become a Brahmā; in all constituting eleven benefits accrued from developing loving-kindness.”

Developing Insight While Practising Loving-kindness

To gain these benefits let us develop loving-kindness as a foundation. When developing loving-kindness by recitation, mind and matter should be contemplated. Contemplation and noting should be done while reciting as follows:-

“May all monks, meditators, and laity in this meditation centre be happy.”

“May all deities in this meditation centre be happy.”

“May all individuals in this Township be happy.”

“May all individuals in the Union of Burma be happy.”

“May all beings be happy.” (Repeat thrice)

By virtue of listening to this sermon on Brahmavihāra Dhamma, and reciting and developing loving-kindness through tranquillity and insight meditation, may you be able to practise loving-kindness as far as possible and develop the contemplation of mind and matter towards the attainment of the knowledge of the Path and its Fruition, in due course realising nibbāna, the total cessation of all suffering, in the shortest possible time.

Part Five

What is Compassion?

Compassion (*karuṇā*) means “*Thanergyin*” in plain Burmese. This Burmese expression means “pity” or “compassion” in English. It is not mingled with any other sense, and is quite precise. The word for loving-kindness in Burmese (*mettā*) should be translated as love. The meaning of this term in Burmese is mixed up with a passionate feeling of attachment (*rāga*). In Pāli, loving-kindness (*mettā*) means wishing others to be blessed with happiness. On the other hand, compassion is not mixed with any other meaning. It is precise and definite. It conveys the sense of wishing a person who is in trouble, to be free from suffering. That is why the intrinsic quality of compassion (*karuṇā*) is explained in the Visuddhimagga as having the characteristic of removing suffering (*dukkhapanayanākārapavattilakkhaṇa*).

If many people or even one person is seen to be miserable, a noble-minded person wants to remove their suffering. This is nothing but compassion or goodwill. Hence, **paradukkho sati**: if any other person is seen or heard to be in distress, **sādhānaṃ**: good people, **hadayakampanaṃ**: the heart trembles, **karotīti**: moves the hearts of the virtuous, (and therefore) **karuṇā**: is called compassion, **vacanāttha**: expressed authoritatively.

To put it in another way, **paradukkhāṃ**: regarding another’s suffering, **kinātihiṃ sati vināsetīti**: being eager to remove, is known as, **karuṇā**: compassion. Since it is stated as being “eager to remove” another’s suffering, a question may arise as to whether it could really remove the suffering. A person who feels pity, having sincere sympathy for another in trouble, may save the other by exercising compassion. There are clear instances where suffering is removed as also where no assistance to rescue can be rendered. Though suffering cannot be subdued, a person who has the compassionate feeling will still feel like removing the suffering. In any case, one would feel sorry for another’s plight, or feel like dispelling the distress or misery suffered by another. When a person stricken with disease is found, feelings of compassion or pity will arise automatically wishing the other to get immediate relief, or if possible, to get cured. Much as one may wish, If one is not competent to give medical treatment, one cannot effectively assist another. Yet, one sincerely wishes to see the other recover from illness or relieved of suffering.

This instinctive nature of wishing to remove another's suffering should be regarded as compassion.

In other words, **kaṃ sukhaṃ**: one's own happiness, **ruddhatīti**: is likely to be prevented or hindered, and hence, it is known as, **karuṇā**: compassion! Compassion is said to have the nature of obstructing one's own happiness. On who is compassionate will miss the opportunity to be happy since he or she has to render help to another to enable the other to escape from trouble or misery. If someone nearby is seen to be suffering, one is ready to offer aid. During this interval, one will not have an opportunity to seek one's own happiness. One may even lose sleep at night due to having to render assistance and look after another person. One may have to forego sleep and sacrifice one's own happiness. If a sick person is found, one has to nurse him or her as far as possible, and by doing so, one may get fatigued, or fall sick. A medical doctor was said to have suffered from gastric ulcers due to being fully preoccupied with tending the sick, which caused him to miss his regular meals. He died of that disease while still young. Hence, compassion can prevent one's own happiness. This is indeed true.

The Compassion of the Bodhisatta

Our own Gotama Buddha in a previous existences as the hermit Sumedha, more than four aeons (*asaṅkheyya*) and a hundred thousand world-cycles (*kappa*) ago, offered his own body to serve as a bridge on a path that he had undertaken to repair, to be trodden on by the Buddha Dīpaṅkara who came along that path. At that time, if he had practised the Dhamma after becoming a monk, he would have become an Arahant and attained *parinibbāna* in that very life. He also realised this because he was then an extraordinary person accomplished with supernormal knowledge (*abhiññā*). A person who has attained *jhāna* can become an Arahant even while listening to a discourse taught by the Buddha.

However, Sumedha (the future Gotama Buddha) pondered thus:- "Rare indeed is a person like me who is fully endowed with the strength of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. The majority lack these perfections. Such individuals cannot realise on their own intuition the Dhamma that can lead them to the liberation from the sufferings of old age, sickness and death. Nor are

they able to practise that kind of Dhamma. Despite the fact that I am accomplished with the necessary strength, it will not be very beneficial by merely endeavouring for my own individual salvation. I should emulate the example of Dīpaṅkara Buddha by performing moral practices and accumulating the necessary perfections (*pāramī*) to become a Buddha, and then save all beings who are weak and mentally deficient. This has been mentioned in the Buddhavaṃsa (Chronicles of the Buddha), as stated below:-

*“Icchamāno ahaṃ ajja, kilese jhāpaye mama.¹
Kim me ekena tiṇṇena, purisena thāmadassinā.
Sabbaññutaṃ pāpuṇitva, santāressaṃ sadevakaṃ.”*

Ahaṃ: I can, **icchamāno:** if I wish, **ajja:** even today, **kilese:** in respect of all defilements (*kilesā*), **jhāpaye:** burnt up, **mama:** by me, **thāmadassinā:** though endowed with the strength to achieve Buddhahood, **purisena hontena:** being a man, **ekena tiṇṇena:** by crossing the deep ocean of *saṃsāra* towards nibbāna alone seeking one’s own salvation, **me:** to me, **kiṃ:** how could it bring benefits? **Ahaṃ:** I will, **sabbaññutaṃ:** of Omniscience, **pāpuṇitvā:** after attainment, **sadevakaṃ:** deities and human beings, **santāressaṃ:** enable them to reach the opposite shore.

After reflecting thus, Sumedha received the prediction of the Buddha for his future attainment of Buddhahood. He had fulfilled the perfections throughout a period of four aeons and a hundred thousand world-cycles, which could lead to becoming a Buddha by practising virtues in the most perfect way. During these countless existences, he had undergone the severest sufferings and privations and had come across old age, disease, and death repeatedly. In one of his last ten existences as King Vessantara, he was banished to a forest as the people of his country were discontented with the way he practised charity in giving away the white elephant, which was in those days regarded as one of the most sacred treasures of the state. While remaining in the forest in exile, a Brahmin by the name of Jūjaka appeared and asked him to give away his young son and daughter in charity for the purpose of employing them as servants. It was really heart-rending and yet, he nobly offered his innocent little son Jāli and daughter Kaṇhājina despite his mental distress to the extent of shedding tears in sorrow to gain his vowed perfections.

¹ The text at Buddhavaṃsa v.54 has *jhāpaye mama not ghātayāmaṃ* (ed.)

Just imagine how he would suffer mentally. To achieve those difficult perfections he had gone through great misery and sorrow.

Next, though a Bodhisatta, as he was not yet free from defilements, which could drag him down to the lower realms, he still had his unwholesome kamma, the result of demeritorious acts committed through greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). For such demerits, he was reborn in many existences as an animal, and thereby suffered pain and misery. Moreover, mention was made in the Temiya Jātaka that he had even gone through hell for ill-treating a person in one of his existences as a king, in which capacity he had passed a judgment imposing a cruel penalty.

All of these untold miseries that he had faced during a period of four aeons and a hundred thousand world-cycles, were the effects of his resolve to become a Buddha with unbounded love and compassion for all beings. Hence, it is evident that compassion defers one's own happiness.

The Buddha's Great Compassion

After attaining full Enlightenment he could have lived comfortably if he refrained from teaching. However, for the entire period of forty-five Rains (*vassa*), as he had to impart his noble teachings day and night without rest, he had to undergo a lot of physical hardship and strain. This benevolent performance with relentless effort was done because of his Universal Love and Great Compassion for all beings who are drifting endlessly in the miserable whirlpool of *saṃsāra*.

All beings, no matter what existence they may have, wish to escape from the sufferings of old age, disease, and death, which are inevitable. Nevertheless, against their wish, they must endure the miserable conditions of existence continuously by getting old, becoming sick, and eventually meeting with death. That is why the Buddha taught his Dhamma with Great Compassion without regard to his discomforts and weariness, fully knowing that there was no one other than himself who could save living beings. This also bears witness to the extent that he had to undergo miseries, while forgoing happiness due to his boundless compassion.

This compassion is extremely noble and gentle. It is usual for a virtuous man to have pity and sympathy for a person who is in

trouble. On the other hand, he who has no sympathy for others in dire distress who are not virtuous. That is why compassion should be developed and depended upon by everyone who is noble. Ordinarily, even without practising meditation, one should have a feeling of sympathy towards any pitiable person who one comes across. Every time pity arises, it would amount to developing merits. If desirous of developing through meditation, the method to be applied is similar to that of developing loving-kindness. It should not be developed beginning from these who are near and dear at the initial stage. Neither should it be developed starting from the most beloved person. Nor should it be developed beginning from a neutral person or from a person who is hostile. One who is dear to you will remain as a dear person, and hence, no pity is called for. Similarly, the most beloved person, *etc.*, will continue to remain as the most beloved and so on. In fact, no feeling of pity needs be invoked. In the case of a person of the opposite sex, since lust is likely to occur, one should avoid developing compassion towards him or her at the initial stage. Also in respect of a person who is dead, no compassion should be developed as it is uncalled for. So the question arises, "Towards whom should compassion first be developed?"

Towards Whom Should Compassion First Be Developed?

In the Abhidhamma Vibhaṅga it says:—

"Kathaṅca bhikkhu karuṇāsahagatena cetasā ekaṃ disaṃ pharitvā viharati? Seyyathāpi nāma ekaṃ puggalaṃ duggataṃ durūpetam disvā karuṇāyeyya, evameva sabbe satte karuṇāya pharati."

Bhikkhu: A monk, **karuṇāsahagatena cetasā:** with a compassionate mind, **ekaṃ disaṃ:** towards one direction, towards all beings living in one direction, **pharitvā:** radiates compassion. **Kathaṅca viharati:** How does he abide? **Seyyāthāpi nāma:** is in this way, for example, **duggataṃ:** where distressing situation is faced, **durūpetam:** and where worse condition prevails, **ekaṃ puggalaṃ:** relating to a certain person, **disvā:** having seen, **karuṇāyeyya:** would have sympathy. **Evameva:** In the same way, **sabbe satte:** towards all beings, **karuṇāya:** with compassion, **pharati:** he radiates compassion.

According to this passage, the Commentary explains that compassion should be radiated first towards a very pitiable person who is

in great distress. Compassion should be developed initially towards individuals who are in extreme distress, such as a person who is in great trouble, a homeless person with no friends or relatives to rely on, a sick person who is in agony due to not receiving medical aid or medicine, or a person afflicted with leprosy so loathsome that nobody would like to touch him. Feelings of pity will easily arise if such a person in distress is seen. For that reason, instruction is given to start developing compassion beginning with a pitiable person.

If such a person who deserves pity is not found or seen, compassion should be developed towards a happy-go-lucky person who is committing evil deeds by comparing him to a condemned man on death-row. The method of comparison is as follows:-

In ancient times, a man on whom death sentence had been passed was bound with ropes and exhibited to the public by making him walk through the city streets to the place of execution. At every cross-roads, the condemned criminal was made to stop and cruelly whipped more than a hundred times. The man in custody with death hanging over his head was generally offered delicious food and drinks by kind-hearted people. Taking any opportunity that came his way, the condemned man enjoyed the offerings. The spectators, however, did not regard him as happy. They took pity on him, knowing that every step brought him closer to death. In much the same way, a person who is developing compassion, can develop compassion towards a wicked person who seems to be happy.

It has been stated that one should imagine that the scoundrel may be happy now, but that misery will befall him in the near future as he is going to descend to the lower realms for his demerits, after his demise. It is not uncommon to find people who are deserving of pity, such as those in distress due to being cruelly ill-treated by others, or those afflicted with serious diseases, or those leading a miserable life in financial straits. In fact, such cases are rampant. It is, therefore, required to develop compassion towards such pitiable persons.

There is only one mode of developing compassion, unlike developing loving-kindness which involves many kinds. It is stated as: "May they be free from misery (*dukkha muccantu*)."¹ This is how to develop compassion to all beings. However, if compassion is developed towards a particular individual, their name should be uttered and compassion should be radiated as: "May (so and so) be

free from misery.” This misery, from which he or she should be liberated, is occurring in the body and mind of that individual at this very moment. Compassion should be developed continuously, earnestly, and sincerely wishing that that person be free from misery.

The way of development just described can be adopted in the case of developing compassion towards a person who is suffering due to illness, extreme weather, mistreatment, or discontent. Even if no misery prevails at the present, that person will have the inevitable suffering of existence. The development of compassion can be resorted to wishing him or her to be free from such misery. While feelings of compassion occur, visualising the person in distress, an unloved person from may appear in one’s mind’s eye. If one still holds a grievance against another person, animosity may occur. This is said to be the near enemy. Thoughts may arise to seek vengeance against a person who has ill-treated you. It is like seeing a dog attacking another dog, one feels like beating the stronger dog through pity for the dog that is being attacked.

Another instance may be cited thus. If a snake catches a frog the frog screams in fright and pain. One who hears the sound has sympathy for the frog wishing the poor creature to escape from being swallowed. This feeling is compassion. Thereafter, a thought may arise wishing to hit the snake in favour of the pitiable frog. This is cruelty (*vihimsā*), which occurs after compassion, wishing to hurt the snake. It is called the remote enemy. It is necessary to remove both near and remote enemies of compassion to develop pure compassion.

Next, it is essential for one who is developing compassion to render assistance to the person in distress both physically and verbally to the best of one’s ability. This is for the sake of the person in distress to get relief. If physical assistance is offered, it amounts to compassionate bodily action. If help is given verbally, it is compassionate verbal action. If both physical and verbal assistance cannot be rendered, compassion will have to be developed merely by way of radiating compassionate mental action. An instance may be cited. No matter how much one may pity cattle, goats, pigs, chickens, and ducks that are about to be slaughtered, one cannot save them. One who has witnessed this plight can only have pity, and nothing else could be done. It is purely mental action. If thoughts of compassion, “May they be free from suffering,” are radiated, it

brings merit. If one has sufficient perfections, absorption can be achieved while developing compassion.

To develop compassion is not as easy as developing loving-kindness, because loving-kindness can be developed with one's innermost feeling of loving-kindness and imparted to any other person as "May he or she be happy." As regards compassion, it will be plausible to radiate one's feeling of compassion only to a person who deserves pity. It is not easy to develop mindfulness on compassion for a person who is happy. Nor is it easy to inculcate the spirit of compassion in favour of a person in a practical way effectively. In any case, we will now develop compassion towards all beings as laid down in the Pāli texts. Among these beings, there are many who are in distress and really pitiable.

How to Develop Compassion

"May all beings be free from misery and suffering" (Repeat thrice)

Beings in hell are suffering torment, hungry ghosts too, as beings condemned to suffering, are in misery. Animals, such as cattle, goats, pigs, fowl, and so on, are also in a state of suffering. Among human beings, some are subjected to persistent ill-treatment by others. Some are afflicted with various kinds of diseases, while others have to endure poverty and are destitute. Some are physically and mentally distressed due to being at logger-heads with others, while others are depressed due to old-age, sickness, and fear of imminent death. Some are grieving due to the death of their beloved relatives, friends, or pets. Some are debt due to losses in business deals, or destruction of their property. Some are grief-stricken due to being separated from loved ones. Among deities too, some are in misery because of their insatiable desires. On the eve of their death when ill-omens of their next existence appear, they become extremely dejected. We should bring such beings to mind and develop compassion, wishing them to escape from various kinds of misery, which they are undergoing. Please follow the recitation and develop compassion in 132 ways:—

"May all beings be free from misery."

"May all who breathe be free from misery."

"May all who are born be free from misery."

“May all individuals be free from misery.”

“May all those who have aggregates be free from misery.”

The above are the five ways of developing compassion towards all beings without limitation or distinction. We shall now go on developing the seven kinds of specified compassion (*odhisa karuṇā*).

“May all females be free from misery.”

“May all males be free from misery.”

“May all Noble Ones be free from misery.”

“May all ordinary individuals be free from misery.”

“May all celestial beings be free from misery.”

“May all human beings be free from misery.”

“May all beings in the lower realms be free from misery.”

This is the way of developing the seven kinds of specified compassion. If these seven are added to the five kinds of unspecified compassion (*anodhisa karuṇā*), it will come to twelve. These twelve do not distinguish regarding direction. If developed by distinguishing the direction, there will be twelve for each direction. As there are ten directions, the total will be 120. Let us now develop by reciting briefly as follows:-

“May all beings in the East be free from misery.”

“May all who breathe in the East be free from misery.”

“May all who are born in the East be free from misery.”

“May all individuals in the East be free from misery.”

“May all those who have aggregates in the East be free from misery.”

“May all females in the East be free from misery.”

“May all males in the East be free from misery.”

“May all Noble Ones in the East be free from misery.”

“May all ordinary individuals in the East be free from misery.”

“May all celestial beings in the East be free from misery.”

“May all human beings in the East be free from misery.”

“May all beings in lower realms in the East be free from misery.”

The above indicates the way of developing twelve kinds of compassion covering the East. Similarly, there are twelve kinds in the West and so on. We shall only briefly recite them.

- “May all beings in the West be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the North be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the South be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the South-east be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the North-west be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the North-east be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the South-west be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the Nadir be free from misery.”
 “May all beings in the Zenith be free from misery.”

What has now been recited are 120 kinds of compassion specified regarding direction (*disa odhisa karuṇā*). If it is added to 12 kinds not specified regarding direction (*disa anodhisa*), it will come to a total of 132 kinds of compassion. The way of developing compassion has now been fully described. However, it is important to inculcate a spirit of genuine compassion. Compassion will only be effective if there is genuine pity by visualising the miserable conditions under which beings are suffering. In this regard, if one imagines the way that the Buddha radiated his great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), it will become more obvious how pitiable living beings are. I will therefore illustrate with relevant extracts from the Paṭisambhidāmagga how his great compassion occurred. These are worthy of reverence, and will give you a clear vision of the pitiable state of all beings. Only a few extracts will be explained for want of time.

How the Attainment of Great Compassion Occurs

“*Katamaṃ Tathāgatassa mahākaruṇāsamāpattiyā ñāṇaṃ.*”

Tathāgatassa: The Buddha’s, **mahākaruṇāsamāpattiyā ñāṇaṃ:** knowledge that falls within the scope of the attainment of great compassion, **katamaṃ:** what?

The higher knowledge of a Fully Enlightened Buddha, which cannot be achieved by his disciples, comprises six kinds.

1. Knowledge of the maturity of the spiritual faculties of living beings (*indriyaparopariyatta ñāṇa*).
2. Knowledge of the latent tendencies of living beings (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*).
3. The power to create a twin miracle (*yamakapātihāriya-ñāṇa*).
4. Knowledge of great compassion (*mahākaruṇāsamāpatti-ñāṇa*).

5. Omniscience (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*).

6. The faculty that dispels all hindrances in the way of such knowledge (*anāvараṇa-ñāṇa*).

These six knowledges, being beyond the reach of his disciples, are called unrivalled knowledge (*asādhāraṇa-ñāṇa*). The question raised was: "What is the knowledge of Great Compassion? The answer given in continuation was as mentioned below:

"Bahukehi ākārehi passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati."

The above Pāli phrase conveys the meaning that great compassion for living beings arises in the hearts of the Enlightened Buddhas who see various conditions under different circumstances to which beings are subject, seeing numerous kinds of sufferings prevailing among all beings. Most living beings do not perceive other beings' miserable conditions. They perceive only that living beings who are in great distress are suffering. When happy persons see others in a similar situation, they imagine to be happy, as they are. Relating to people who are found to be more fortunate than themselves, they might regard them as living in bliss without any misery at all, and so do not consider them as deserving of pity. This indicates death of compassionate feeling for not actually knowing the state of misery. The Buddhas, however, clearly perceive the various circumstances under which beings suffer. Seeing sentient beings in such miserable conditions, great compassion enters the hearts of the Buddhas. How compassion occurs will be clarified as follows:

Constant Anxiety is Pitiabale

"Uyyutto lokasannivāsoti passantānaṃ Buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati."

All beings always have to exert themselves and are constantly anxious. Seeing living beings in such a miserable state, fiercely struggling for their own survival, the Buddhas have great compassion for them. What should be realised is that mankind are constantly striving and worrying for their own livelihood. Ordinary individuals may not think that it is pitiable. They may consider this state of affairs as normal. They generally imagine that as a man, one will have to strive or sweat for his own living and that it is quite natural. Some

may argue that there is no need to complain. However, from the point of view of the Blessed One, these beings are perceived as toiling, struggling, and constantly worrying about their own burden of the five aggregates, and are therefore in great distress. In any kind of existence, wherever they are born, they have to worry without any break, carrying this heavy burden of the aggregates throughout their life. In a human existence as a small child, one has to depend upon parents and others. One cannot even stand up unaided. From the age of about four onwards, one has to attend school to get an education. From the age of eighteen or so, one has to perform various kinds of work and bear the stress of one's circumstances for one's own subsistence to satisfy one's needs. Unless one is exceptionally fortunate, one will face difficulties just to make ends meet. Sickness or injury will bring loss of income and even greater misery.

Sometimes, one may come across pitfalls and dangers, and fear for one's security. Throughout life, one is not entirely free from anxiety, and has to struggle continuously. While thus enmeshed in trials and tribulations, the time will come when one grows old, suffers sickness, and eventually one meets with death. Some die while working with their full health and strength. It implies that growth, change, and decay are the normal course of human existence, in which one suffers constant misery. In the life of animals, from the time of their birth, the majority have to find food for their survival. Animals living in places where food and water are scarce have to undergo great hardships to find food and shelter. Animals in the forests have no protection at all. They have to maintain their lives in constant fear of danger and death. Some animals search for food only at night, being afraid of going out in the day time. In hell and in the world of hungry ghosts the beings have to endure constant misery and suffering.

These beings cannot be seen by the ordinary human eye. Among these normally invisible beings, there are demons or ogres (*yakkha*) who are in a state of misery nearly as bad as hungry ghosts, having a very hard life to the point of near starvation. They too are in great misery. The celestial beings in the higher abodes are, of course, in a state of happiness. However, when their life-span expires, those whose wholesome kamma is deficient become miserable. So, all beings are striving with endless anxiety to maintain their happy existence, and to get a new set of aggregates to enjoy happiness again

in the future. Though people may be said to be enjoying favourable circumstances and happiness, they always have to worry to maintain their lives in good order and to achieve benefits in future existences. They want to enjoy a happy life in future existences too, so in the present life time they strive to accumulate merits. Of course, to achieve happiness in future existences, one has to struggle with constant anxiety according to one's own conviction in the religious teachings, which one has accepted. Whether it is proper or not, one is trying hard for one's future welfare, relying on one's own faith and conviction. Those who do not believe in the doctrine of rebirth, *i.e.*, who hold the view of complete annihilation at the end of this existence, nevertheless strive their utmost to enjoy pleasures in this present existence.

The Buddha's compassion for all beings was great, having himself seen that they were always suffering in their persistent efforts to gain happiness in every existence, while burdened with their aggregates. The Buddha realised that there was no one except him who could lead them to nibbāna at which stage all aggregates would cease. Realising this, with great compassion and good-will, the Buddha travelled far and wide during his life time to impart his noble teachings. He resolved all the questions put to him by human and celestial beings. He had hardly any rest except a brief respite of three or four hours. He delivered teachings for about twenty hours every day to celestial and human beings. This supports the statement made earlier that his great compassion prevented his happiness. So great was his unbounded compassion that the benevolent Buddha went to the extent of imparting the Dhamma to Subhadda, a wandering ascetic (*paribbājaka*), while lying on his death-bed a few hours before his *parinibbāna*. To that extent, he bestowed his unstinting love with self-sacrifice on all beings seeing their miserable plight.

The foregoing account makes it clear that the Buddha had great compassion for all living beings who are struggling with anxiety in every existence. This will perhaps enable you to grasp the fact that one can develop compassion towards pitiable beings who are going through a lot of difficulties and misery throughout their life-span. This will also place you in a nobler state of mind, which would invoke a feeling of reverence for the Blessed One who painstakingly taught the Dhamma for over forty years with unfailing patience, sympathy,

and good-will for the welfare of mankind. To develop compassion in the light of what has been stated, please follow the recitation:-

“May all beings who are always anxiously striving to gain happiness be free from misery.” (Repeat thrice)

Full liberation from misery will be achieved only when nibbāna is attained whereby all mental and physical aggregates will cease to occur. This means, “May all beings be emancipated after attaining nibbāna.” So let us repeat developing compassion:-

“May all beings who are always anxiously striving to gain happiness realise nibbāna.” (Repeat thrice)

Being Swept Away by Aging, Disease, and Death is Pitiable

“Upanīyati loko addhuvoti passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati”

Loko: The world of beings, **upanīyati**: are being conveyed to inevitable old age, disease, and death, **Addhuvo**: alas, it is impermanent! **Iti passantānaṃ**: seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ**: the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu**: towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā**: great compassion, **okkamati**: arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

In every existence, all living beings are swept along towards old age from the time of their birth, and from old age to sickness and death. The Buddha, perceiving with his insight the nature of impermanence, has great pity on all beings. Of course, if beings reflect wisely, they will have an inkling of the impermanent nature of their own aggregates. However, they may still think that they will live for a long time, apparently assuming that their youthful appearance and health will never deteriorate. While believing thus, unexpectedly sickness may prevail on them due to unfavourable circumstances. Some die while young. If death does not occur early, they gradually grow older day by day, month by month, and year by year. Yet they do not think of themselves as getting old with the passage of time. Only when their hair turns grey and their teeth decay, *etc.*, they would come to realise that they have become old and decrepit. What is carrying them away to inevitable old age, disease, and death? It is the mental and physical aggregates that are conveying them, as stated before. From the time of conception, new mental and physical

phenomena are incessantly arising and dissolving, then appearing afresh to be dissolved again, undergoing a process of continual change. A person slowly and imperceptibly grows older every second. By the age of about forty, their appearance becomes obviously changed, showing signs of decay such as the appearance of grey hairs, wrinkles, *etc.* As vitality fades with age, one can easily become afflicted with a disease at one time or other, and after serious damage to one's health, one ultimately passes away. Thus it is obvious that as time passes, one is carried closer to old age, disease, and death.

Compassion Arose When I Was a Novice

I will give an example from my own youth. Cattle-slaughterers were leading away an ox to be killed. Every step taken by that ox brought him nearer to the threshold of death. It seemed that the ox knew of the impending disaster of imminent death, and was struggling to escape. The cattle-slaughterers were, however, dragging the unfortunate animal by force. The ox had no option, but to submit to this ill-treatment. It was a pitiable sight. As I witnessed this heart-breaking spectacle, I felt pain in my heart with pity, and ever since then, I abstained from taking beef. This incident occurred when I was still a novice, before I received my higher ordination as a bhikkhu. Just like that ox that was being led away to the slaughterhouse, human beings are being led away by their mental and physical phenomena without a break, not even for a second, towards suffering from old age, disease, and death. Having seen all beings drifting towards disaster, great compassion arose in the Buddha.

What the Buddha perceived was that one is fast approaching old age, disease, and death at every moment of an arising thought, which occurs incessantly with great acceleration much faster than a flash of lightning. This perception brought forth a feeling of boundless compassion in the Buddha. Even the meditators who are now practising insight meditation can fully appreciate that they are gradually approaching towards old age, disease, and death at every moment, if they perceived the mind that constantly changes. Those meditators who are contemplating and noting as instructed by us, on reaching the knowledge of dissolution (*bhāṅga-ñāṇa*), will find it very obvious that the sense-object that is noted and the knowing mind dissolve incessantly. It is like each bead threaded with others

on a string falling down one after the other at great speed. Every time dissolution takes place, it carries one nearer to old age, disease, and death. Meditators who have achieved the knowledge of dissolution can realise with their insight knowledge that it is happening.

Ordinary persons can imagine this state of affairs within a second, a minute, an hour, a day, a month, or a year. Roughly speaking, one will clearly perceive oneself as coming a bit closer to old age, disease, and death if one could reflect year to year. Signs of withering in age followed by sickness and death can be visualized. Generally most people die when they reach the age of seventy or eighty. Both the rich and the poor, as well as dictators, powerful rulers and heroes came to a dead-end in the path of life by the age of 80 or so. The mental and physical aggregates carry us away to old age, disease, and death. Let us recite a motto composed in this regard:-

“Alas! Human beings are impermanent, being driven to old age, disease, and death.”

If this motto is reflected upon, the nature of impermanence becomes obvious. Mindfulness contemplation on the nature of death (*marañānussati*) will be developed. In every existence, all beings inevitably have to endure old age, sickness and death. It is a rugged and dangerous road that they are walking on. How pitiable they are. One can very well imagine this awful state. It is not surprising that great compassion arose in the Buddha towards beings. Let's develop compassion as the Buddha did. Please follow the recitation:-

“Alas! All beings are subject to old age, disease, and death to which they are being conveyed. That's really impermanent!”

“May all beings be free from this misery.” (Repeat thrice)

The way of developing compassion as stated above, is of a very high standard. It is similar to the great compassion bestowed on mankind by the Buddha. Among people in general, a great many of them are in misery due to having suffered loss in their business ventures, destruction of their property, or being separated from loved ones. Compassion can be developed towards such people in misery. Please recite as follows:-

“May all beings who are suffering misery in one way or another be free from such misery.”

Having Nothing to Depend On is Pitiable

“Atāṇo loko anabhissaroti passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

Loko: All beings, **atāṇo:** have no one to look after them, **anabhissaro:** and nothing to depend upon. **Iti passantānaṃ:** seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ:** the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu:** towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā:** great compassion, **okkamati:** arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

It means that all living beings have no one to protect or look after them and no one to rely on. The Korabya king, not being able to grasp the meaning of this statement, once asked Venerable Raṭṭhapāla: “Venerable sir! We have many armed forces to defend and protect us. They are to be relied upon. What is then the meaning conveyed in the statement, ‘Having no one to protect and rely on’?”

Then, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla asked in return, “Great king! Don’t you ever have any affliction? If that disease oppresses you severely, how would you feel?” To this query, the Korabya king replied, “When this disease becomes very serious and oppresses me severely, I will suffer gravely to the point of death. There had been occasions when my relatives in close proximity to my sick-bed, wept bitterly even shedding tears thinking that I was about to die.”

Having heard this reply, for the purpose of verification, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla put another question, “Great king! When this disease caused you terrible pain and suffering, could you share it with your relatives and friends? Were you able to mitigate the suffering by asking them to give you some relief?” To this, the Korabya king replied, “Venerable sir, it is impossible to share this suffering. Neither can they mitigate it by sharing it. I alone have to suffer severely and endure the pain with all the will-power at my command.” Venerable Raṭṭhapāla then explained saying, “That is how it is, great king. The Buddha has, therefore, taught that just as there is no one who can give protection on whom one can rely in times of distress, living beings have no one to protect them in whom refuge can be sought.”

Despite the presence of relatives who render the utmost assistance and giving full protection, they cannot possibly prevent their dear ones from getting old, becoming sick, and dying. No one is capable

of keeping another always young and vigorous. As time passes, one is sure to get old. Aging cannot be shared. If it could be shared by distributing some of it to others, one could always be youthful and sprightly. If that could be done, how wonderful would it be? Although preventive measures can be taken by using appropriate medicines, total prevention of disease is impossible. If a really serious or malignant disease is contracted, there is no satisfactory cure. The suffering of disease cannot be shared. If it were possible to share the suffering, how nice would it be. Aging, sickness, and death cannot be prevented by anyone. Neither can anyone prevent a person from descending to the lower realms after death. Realising this fate of all living beings, the Buddha bestowed his great compassion on them. Let us recite a motto in the light of what has just been stated:—

“Without a protector and without anything to rely on, how feeble and weary we are.”

In the entire universe, no one will be found who can save a person to get liberated from the suffering of old age, disease, and death, or to escape from descending to the lower realms, or to get emancipated from the miseries of saṃsāra. According to the doctrine of theistic religions, God is said to be able to save mankind. Nevertheless, adherents to this doctrine will also become old, sick, and meet with death, just like anyone else. On the other hand, the way in which the Buddha saved mankind was by teaching a practical method to get free from suffering. It is like prescribing and administering medicines to a patient by a physician. Just as the patient who complies with the advice and instructions given by the doctor recovers from sickness, a person who complies with the instruction of the Buddha and practises according to his teachings will be liberated from the miseries of the lower realms and cycle of existence. The meaning of this statement as taught by the Buddha is as explained below.

The Buddhas Only Show the Way

“Tumhehi kiccamātappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā.

Paṭipannā pamokkhamti, Jhāyino mārabandhanā.” (Dhp v 276)

Tumhehi: You, who are my disciples, **ātappaṃ:** striving with diligence and right exertion to develop morality, concentration, and wisdom, **kiccam:** duty to be done by yourselves. **Tathāgatā:** The

Buddhas, **akkhātāro**: can only teach the right method of practice. **Jhāyino**: By contemplating for concentration and insight, **paṭipannā**: he who practises according to my teachings, **mārabandhanā**: from the bonds of Māra (mental defilements), **mokkhanti**: will be liberated.

This means that those who work out their own salvation with right exertion and diligence as taught by the Buddha will be free from the fetter of defilements such as craving, which are the miseries of *saṃsāra*. If no practice is done according to his teachings there can be no escape. The right method can be known and heard only when a Buddha appears in this universe. Outside the realm of Buddha's dispensation, there can be no emancipation from suffering since the right method is not known and it is not understood how it is to be practised. In the absence of the right method, in as much as there is no one on whom one can rely, living beings are whirling around in the endless cycle of existence, floating and drifting here and there, and therefore, suffering in misery. This pitiable state of affairs being perceived by the Buddha, the flame of great compassion for all beings awakened in him. Just as the Buddha had compassion, we should visualise all beings who have no one to rely upon as a protector, and then develop compassion. Please follow the recitation:—

“May all beings who are suffering misery in the endless cycle of existences without anyone to protect them from aging, sickness, and death, be free from misery.” (Repeat thrice)

Abandoning Everything is Pitiable

“Assako loko sabbam pahāya gamanīyantī passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

Loko: All beings, **assako**: have no personal property of their own: **sabbam**: everything, **pahāya**: abandoning, **gamanīyam**: one will have to pass away and leave it for ever. **Iti passantānaṃ**: seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ**: the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu**: towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā**: great compassion, **okkamati**: arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

This is to say that beings have no personal belongings or property of their own. It is universally believed that everyone has his or her own personal property. The only difference being the quantity and

value of the property, which may be abundant or scanty. At least, everyone owns something commensurate with their status. For as long as destruction or loss has not yet been incurred the property will remain in their hands. However, all accomplishments (of properties, *etc.*) meet with destruction in the end. All accomplishment in connection with worldly matters, such as property and wealth will eventually meet with destruction. This is true. Sickness will finally overcome good health. Youthfulness ends in old age, a strong and vigorous body becomes frail at the end. Though a person may be fully endowed with wealth, honour, and fame, nothing can be taken along after death. Even a large retinue in whose company one once lived and enjoyed will eventually be lost. To live is to die in the end. Moreover, one will inevitably be deprived of everything that is good and pleasurable from the mundane point of view. This can be clearly known from the life history of Emperor Asoka.

The Story of Emperor Asoka

About 218 years after the *parinibbāna* of the Buddha (about 270 B.C.), there came to the throne of India, a famous king by the name of Asoka. It was stated that his fame and glory had spread over the entire continent of India (Jambudīpa), which was founded by him as an Empire. According to what is inscribed on the rocks and stone pillars as directed by this great monarch, the country then called Jambudīpa is to be understood as the Indian subcontinent as it is known today. In these inscriptions, mention has been made of the places at the periphery of his vast Empire where his royal power was felt. In those days, it was considered to be a vast domain. He was one of the greatest of India's kings. According to the Commentaries, Asoka was said to be a powerful sovereign of a large empire, its area stretching even up to one league into the sky. Although he was a benevolent dictator and an Emperor with absolute powers possessing immense treasures, at the time of impending death, only a remnant of his vast dominion remained under his sway and it is said to have been reduced to an area equal to about half of the size of a white plum fruit. So says the Visuddhimagga:

*“Sakalaṃ mediniṃ bhutvā, datvā koṭisataṃ sukhī.
Aḍḍhāmalakamattassa, ante issarataṃ gato.”*

Sukhī: Extremely rich and well-endowed with prosperity and immense wealth, **Asoko**: a king by the name of Asoka, **sakalam mediniṃ**: the entire earth surface of India, **bhutvā**: having ruled and owned, **koṭisatam datvā**: and after giving away in charity property worth billions, **ante**: at last, **aḍḍāmalakamattassa**: only about half the size of a plum, **issaratam**: remained in his dominion, **gato**: and had lost his eminent position to that extent.

The gist of it is that fabulously rich and powerful Emperor Asoka who had dominated the whole subcontinent of India, after offering all his properties and wealth in his possession, was eventually reduced to the status of a sovereign with dominion over only a patch of territory about the size of the diameter of a plum. In the earlier part of his life, he was extolled as an extremely powerful monarch with sovereignty over the entire length and breadth of India. He had accumulated riches and properties to such an extent that he offered in donation nine hundred and sixty million in a single day. Eventually however, in the last days before his death, his health had deteriorated. It seemed that his ministers, generals, and other officers treated him with scant respect. These facts are disclosed in the *Divyāvadāna* — a fairly comprehensive account of which is described in the Burmese version of the *Visuddhimagga*. Here I will give only a brief account.

At the time when the great Emperor Asoka was on his sickbed, he was served with food in a tray made of pure gold as usual. After taking his meals, the king donated the gold trays, plates, and cups to the Kukkuṭārāma monastery. Later, he was served with silver plates. The silverware was also sent to the Kukkuṭārāma monastery to be given away in charity. These offerings of gifts were said to have been made to fulfil his objective to reach the value of one billion as the total value was then short by forty million. Thereafter, his ministers were said to have served the food and meals for their king with only earthenware pots. Thereupon, the king was dismayed since only half of a plum had reached his hands. He therefore ordered that a meeting of ministers and courtiers be convened. At the meeting, Emperor Asoka asked, “who is ruling this country?” The prime minister replied, your majesty is the sovereign who governs this country.” Then, Emperor Asoka remarked, “What the prime minister has said falls short of the truth. Presently, I own and govern only half of this white plum,” and proceeded to tell his prime minister, “All

kinds of accomplishments only end in utter destruction,” as taught by the Buddha is perfectly true.¹ Hence, the statement that “beings have no personal property of their own, and when death occurs, everything will have to be abandoned,” is really true and accurate. All that have been considered as one’s own possessions with great attachment had to be abandoned or left behind at the time when death seizes. Even the corporeal body with all clothes, etc., which are dressed up, will invariably have to be forsaken.

Having seen all beings in this pitiable plight, feeling of compassion had arisen in the Buddha. Let us devote our mind to such beings, and develop karuṇā. Beings, seeking after worldly possessions as their own and keeping all these in their personal custody though not actually belonged to them, are in misery both in body and mind, and are therefore pitiable. Hence, all beings may be liberated from such misery. The Motto is couched referring to this state of condition, as:- “There is no personal private property. Oh, all things have got to be abandoned eventually!”

Being a Slave to Craving Is Pitiable

“Ūno loko atitto taṇhādāsoti passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavan-tānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

The gist of this Pāli phrase is that beings are not fully provided with everything. There is no satisfaction with what they possess. This is also perfectly true and correct. One may try to possess things that one lacks, imagining that one will be content with whatever is sufficient for one’s needs. However, when things are obtained as envisaged, one may still crave for more. One who is earning one thousand a month will hope to get two thousand, and one who gets two thousand, will want to receive three thousand, and so on. One’s thirst for getting more cannot be quenched. That is why multimillionaires make efforts to get even richer. While thus seeking after wealth with insatiable greed, they have to die without contentment. For example, any amount of rain water from rivers may flow into the vast expanse of the ocean, and yet the mighty ocean never overflows. Another instance may be cited. Any amount of fuel may be heaped into a burning fire, yet it will be consumed in no time. Every time

¹ If you wish to know more please refer to page 217ff in Volume II of the Burmese translation of the Visuddhimagga.

fuel is added, the fire rages all the more. Similarly, beings are never satiated. This greed and discontent is caused by the influence of craving. Impelled by craving, beings continue striving to earn their living. Accordingly, they have become slaves to craving. The Buddhas, seeing these beings who are toiling for their livelihood driven by craving, have great pity on them. It is like a servant sweating through fear when ordered by his master to perform a task. It is a pitiable sight to anyone who has sympathy for fellow human beings. The motto composed for the purpose may now be recited:—

“Unfulfilled desires are insatiable, all are slaves to craving.”

Beings who are not yet free from craving have become slaves, and have to be doing things as dictated by craving. Ordinary individuals who are compelled to kill are ordered to do so by craving. Those who think they will prosper by resorting to killing are committing this serious crime prompted by craving. King Ajātasattu of Māgadha assassinated his father King Bimbisāra because he was driven by craving, which longed for regal pleasures. All those ordinary individuals who are not yet liberated from craving due to having committed the five heinous evil deeds (*pañcānantariya kamma*) that bring immediate retribution, are now suffering great misery in hell. However, a Stream-winner is free from craving that can drag him or her down to the lower realms. Hence, he or she will abstain from committing vices such as killing and stealing, which can cause one to be reborn in the lower realms. Nevertheless, due to not being free from sensual craving (*kāmatanḥā*), he or she still faces trouble due to seeking for sensual pleasures, urged on by craving. A Once-returned also still does things provoked by the subtle forms of sensual craving. Even a Non-returned, though free from sensual craving, has to do things as urged by craving for the realms of form and formless realms. However, he or she has no physical or mental misery due to that kind of craving. He or she only has the suffering of mental formations (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*). As for an Arahant, having totally eradicated all kinds of craving, he or she is fully emancipated from the bondage of craving. Therefore, the compassion that arose in the Buddha was because he realised that ordinary individuals and trainees, due to not being free from craving, undergo misery as slaves of craving. Among them the most pitiable are ordinary individuals. Taking our

cue from the way in which the Buddha nurtured compassion, let us develop compassion. Please follow the recitation:—

“May all beings who are unable to fulfil their desires, thereby being slaves to craving, be free from the slavish condition caused by craving, and may they be free from misery.”

All beings in the entire universe, as well as all beings in the Union of Burma, undergo all kinds of misery, as already stated. They are, in reality, physically and mentally distressed. They are in misery and are weary through constant toil in pursuit of their desires. Therefore, due to demeritorious actions, there is always a danger of descending to the lower realms. Miseries are lying in wait for the inevitable aging, sickness, and death that will take hold of them. Hence, we should develop compassion with noble intentions wishing them to escape from all kinds of misery. You should contemplate and note every time you recite with mindfulness. Now, please follow the recitation:—

“May all citizens of Burma be free from misery...”

“May all beings in the entire world be free from misery...”

“May all beings in the universe be free from misery...”

*“Dukkappattā ca niddukkhā, bhayappattā ca nibbhayā.
Sokappattā ca nissokā, hontu sabbepi pāṇino.”*

The above verse indicates the way of developing compassion contained in the Great Verses of Protection (Mahāparitta). The meaning of is:— **Dukkappattā**: All in suffering, **sabbepi**: and everybody, **pāṇino ca**: and also all breathing beings, **niddhukkhā**: be free from misery, **hontu**: be so accomplished, **bhayappattā**: All those involved in danger, **sabbepi**: and everybody, **pāṇino ca**: and also all beings, **nibbhayā**: be free from all dangers, **hontu**: be so accomplished. **Sokappattā**: those who are in anxiety, **sabbepi**: and everybody, **pāṇino ca**: and also all beings, **nissokā**: may be free from anxiety and have peace of mind, **hontu**: be so accomplished.

The meaning of this Pāli verse by itself is quite clear in indicating the way of developing compassion. Compassion can be developed with mindfulness as: “May all individuals who are suffering be free from misery. May all those who are meeting with dangers be free from all dangers. May those individuals who are in anxiety, be free from anxiety,” Let us develop compassion, as proposed:—

“May all those in distress be free from misery.”

“May all those in danger be free from danger.”

“May all those who are anxious be free from anxiety.”

Finally, I wish to mention something about the way of developing compassion in connection with the occurrence of the knowledge of great compassion, which is appreciated after being known and realised. By virtue of having respectfully learned and borne in mind this meditation on compassion with the wholesome kamma of listening to the Dhamma, may the audience be able to practise and develop meditation on compassion to the best of their ability, and further to develop and practise insight through contemplation and noting the arising mental and physical phenomena, and finally attain the eternal bliss of nibbāna, the cessation of all misery, with their much coveted path and fruition knowledge, as speedily as possible.

Part Six

I have in mind to teach in accordance with four objectives: to gain more knowledgeable experience, to enhance the treasures of faith and reverence, to make it obvious how to develop compassion, and to explain the way of contemplating for insight. Now that I have taught the way that great compassion arises, I will proceed to describe how sympathetic-joy (*muditā*) is developed.

Having already taught the way that great compassion arises concerning four kinds of exposition of the Dhamma, I will teach the Dhamma relating to how sentient beings are pierced by arrows, how they are enmeshed in nets, how they are swept along by currents, and how they are burnt by fire. First I will teach how living beings are pierced by arrows.

Beings Are Pierced by Arrows

“Sasallo lokasannivāso, viddho puthusallehi; tassa natthañño koci sallānaṃ uddhatā, aññatra mayāti, passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

Lokasannivāso: All beings, **sasallo:** are pierced by arrows, **puthusallehi:** with many arrows, **viddho:** they are struck and pierced, **aññatara mayā:** except for me, the Buddha, **sallānaṃ uddhatā:** capable of removing the arrow that has pierced them, **añño koci:** any other person, **natthi:** is not yet born. **Iti passantānaṃ:** seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ:** the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu:** towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā:** great compassion, **okkamati:** arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

“Sallā” in this context refers to a stake or an arrow. It would be acceptable if it were mentioned as a stake, *i.e.* a pointed stout piece of wood projected from the ground. However, in the Commentary it has been stated as arrow. Hence, one may imagine as having had sympathy for all beings who are pierced by arrows. Just as people who are injured or wounded by bullets while fighting in a war in the present era, the people in ancient times who were struck by arrows during skirmishes received injuries. Sentient beings are suffering like those who suffer pain caused by piercing arrows. The arrows that have pierced them are the arrows of demerits, such as lust (*rāga*), ill-will (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), pride (*māna*), wrong-view

(*micchā-ditṭhi*), which are vices. If pierced through the body from the breast to the back-bone, it would be very distressing and painful. In the same way, beings are really pitiable for having been struck and pierced by the seven arrows of lust, ill-will, *etc.* Yet, as ordinary individuals, they are pleased to be pierced by these arrows.

Sentient beings in the sensual realms enjoying all the strands of sensual pleasures (*kāmaḡuṇa*), have acquired a taste for sensual passion. That is why they nurture and encourage passion and are in hot pursuit of pleasurable sensations. From the point of view of the Buddhas and Arahants, they perceive the arising sensations of passion as unbearable, just as if pierced by arrows. Desire that has pleasurable attachment to the realms of form and formless realms has the same nature that can barely be endured. The way in which the arrow of anger pierces is more conspicuous. From a state of happiness, which reflects on personal appearances, the complexion of the face immediately turns dark, ugly, and gloomy when anger flares up. The mind also becomes morbid, restless, and intolerant. However, the angry man thinks of the arising anger as pleasurable. For this reason, if any other person with good-will intervenes to bring about a compromise and advises him to refrain from anger, an angry person is likely to resent it. He may even think of that mediator as unfairly taking sides.

Delusion (*moha*) means a mistaken or false view, not knowing what is right or true. What is impermanent or transitory is thought to be permanent and ever-lasting. All things, which are incessantly arising and dissolving, are considered as pleasurable. The nature of mind and matter, which is not a self or a living entity, is regarded as a living entity, a being, or a self. If passion and ill-will occur, delusion follows suit. Sentient beings pierced by the arrow of delusion are in misery. Under delusion, a person commits anything that is improper, by action, speech, or thought. Having done so, only demerits are derived thereby causing misery. Also, because of the arrow or stake of pride (*māna*), one meets with misery due to unworthy pride or vanity, and because of the arrow of wrong-view that has pierced the mental aggregates, men cling to false beliefs. They cannot discard them. Falsely hoping to gain benefits, what ought not to be done, is done physically, verbally, and mentally. Because of these vices, they all suffer misery. During the lifetime of the Buddha, Purāṇa Kassapa and five other teachers of heretical sects together with their adherents

unfortunately accumulated a great deal of demerits by committing evil deeds. They went to the extent of doing harm to the Buddha, and for these vicious thoughts and evil actions they derived demerits. Due to these demerits, they were committed to hell and suffered intense suffering as a result.

There are many people who suffer misery due to being pierced by the arrow of false belief. There are other sufferings for being pierced by the remaining defilements, such as sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). This means doubt as to whether the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha are genuine. Uncertainty regarding the benefits of practising morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), attaining absorption (*jhāna*), achieving insight-knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*), or the realisation of nibbāna are also sceptical doubt. Again, if doubt arises whether rebirths will really take place in fortunate existences by virtue of wholesome kamma, or that one has to suffer in the lower realms due to the effects of unwholesome kamma it is also sceptical doubt. Having been pierced by this arrow of sceptical doubt, no practical meditation exercise can be done in accordance with the correct method, so there will scarcely be any chance to escape from the miseries of the cycle of existence, which are inevitable.

Next, the piercing arrow of evil deeds (*duccarita*) is conjoined with 'the arrows of defilements such as lust and ill-will. When lust is raging, evil deeds such as killing, stealing, cheating, *etc.*, are sure to be committed. Due to such unwholesome-kamma one would descend to the four lower realms and suffer misery. Undoubtedly, there are a number of people who will go down to the lower realms, and who will thereby suffer miserable conditions. Compassion, therefore, had arisen in the heart of the Buddha, for having seen those beings who were pierced by arrows such as lust. Being moved to pity, which had sprung from the heart, the Buddha delivered his teachings under various circumstances for the entire period of 45 years, day and night, without rest. Individuals who have diligently practised in accordance with his teachings are therefore able to get rid of the piercing arrows of lust, *etc.* If one arrow that has pierced can be removed, one feels better to the extent of a single arrow that would have caused pain. Accordingly, one who assiduously practises the Dhamma gradually gets rid of the arrows of defilements one after another until he or she is entirely relieved from all sufferings.

How to Remove the Arrow's Barb

At present those meditators who are continuously contemplating and noting the mental and physical phenomena arising at the six-sense-doors, contemplating what is occurring on in the body and mind in accordance with the teachings on mindfulness meditation (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) are free from five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) to the progress of meditation. When their mind becomes tranquil and stabilised, this is purity of mind (*citta visuddhi*). With the mind becoming tranquil and cleansed of the hindrances at every moment of contemplating and noting, it occurs to the meditator with awareness that what is contemplated and known is quite different from the mind that contemplates and knows, *i.e.*, these two are distinguished. When the rising movement of the abdomen is contemplated and known, the rising abdomen and the mind that knows it are distinguished. Similar knowledge will be realised in contemplating the falling of the abdomen and the acts of walking, stepping, dropping, bending and so on, Every time it is so contemplated and noted, what is to be known (*rūpa*) and the knowing mind (*nāma*) are well appreciated as the only two attributes of an individual representing material and mental elements, which form the aggregates of a sentient being. This knowledge dispels the arrow of wrong-view to a certain extent, which is known as purity of view (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*).

Thereafter, if contemplating and noting is continued, cause and effect will be distinguished. The meditator will come to know that because of the mental inclination to bend, bending take place. So too, because of the intention to walk, the act of walking occurs, and because of the sense-object that is known, the knowing mind occurs, *etc.* At that moment, the piercing arrow of doubt (*kaṅkhā*) has been removed to a reasonable extent. From then onwards, at every moment of contemplating and noting, the beginning of the phenomenal occurrence and the final dissolution of what has occurred will be clearly perceived and realised. The nature of such arising and dissolution in respect of the other phenomenal occurrences in the body and mind, such as stiffness and the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, and bending, stretching, lifting, stepping, and so on while walking, will be distinctly known part by part when contemplation is in full swing. When realisation comes, it will be fully appreciated with awareness that these are mere characteristic of impermanence and of

misery constituting the nature of not-self. When such realisation comes of the existence of only mind and matter, it will be found that what the Buddha taught about impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self, is absolutely true and correct. This awareness and understanding will enhance one's faith in the Buddha as truly Omniscient. Faith in the Dhamma as taught by the Buddha will get strengthened. Faith in the Saṅgha who are diligently practising according to the teachings of the Buddha will become stronger too. Depending upon the degree of faith and confidence, doubts will be dispelled, which is purity by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa visuddhi*).

Thenceforth, when contemplating and noting is further carried on, progress will be made leading one to achievement of insight knowledge, in ten successive stages towards nibbāna, where mind and matter and all suffering will come to cessation through the attainment of knowledge of the Noble Path. Then the awareness occurs that there is no such thing as a being or self, and that the entire so-called person is composed of only two things — mind and matter. As such, all wrong-views (*micchā-ditṭhi*) beginning with self-view (*attaditṭhi*) and personality-view (*sakkāyaditṭhi*), will be completely eradicated. This explains how the arrow of wrong view has been fully eradicated. A motto relevant to the foregoing explanation has been composed as follows: Let us recite:—

“There is nothing is to be regarded as “I,” as an individual, or self except an aggregate of mind and matter.”

This illustrates how a Stream-winner is free from personality-view, a false view of self. While contemplating and noting, the knowledge is clear that “There is only an aggregate of mind and matter, which is arising and dissolving incessantly, and there is no such thing as a being, “I,” or self.” Then, there is no doubt about the efficacy and noble moral qualities of morality, concentration, and wisdom. Firm conviction and faith without a tinge of doubt arises that “Only by practising to accomplish the qualities of morality, concentration, and wisdom, could nibbāna be reached. In particular, only by the true realisation of the characteristics of impermanence, *etc.*, through continuous contemplation of the arising mental and physical phenomena, could nibbāna can be attained.” Relating to this, a motto has been coined. Please follow the recitation as follows:—

“Have nothing to doubt about the practice and the Triple Gem.”

This is how to get rid of doubt, in connection with the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as well as the noble practices involving morality. It also indicates how a Stream-winner is freed of sceptical doubts. This is how one can be fully liberated from the piercing arrows of doubt according to teaching on the attainment of great compassion. If personality-view and sceptical doubt are dispelled, other defilements such as lust, ill-will, delusion, and pride, which can drag down a person down to the lower realms, will also be eradicated. All unwholesome kamma, and the evil deeds that cause rebirth in the lower realms will also be eradicated. Hence, if one becomes a Stream-winner through the practice of insight meditation, one will escape from the harm inflicted by the arrows, which can cause misery by pulling one down to the four lower realms. The Buddha therefore taught his noble Dhamma with great compassion towards all living beings. I am following in the footsteps of the Buddha by imparting his teachings to enable beings to escape from such harmful arrows.

To summarise, if one continues to contemplate and note after attaining Stream-winning one will become a Once-returner, and then a Non-returner. Then one will be freed from the arrows of sensual desire and ill-will. If contemplating and noting is carried on further, one will attain Arahantship. On becoming an Arahant, the stinging arrows of desire for realms of form and formless realms, pride, and ignorance will be totally eradicated. It means that all the arrows of unwholesome kamma smeared with defilements will be completely expunged. That is why the Noble Arahants will be totally emancipated from all kinds of suffering attached to the mental and physical formations after *parinibbāna*, having been freed from all kinds of arrows. This will bring them to everlasting peace and happiness. Before reaching the state of a worthy Arahant, even a Non-returner, being pierced by the arrows of desire for realms of form and formless realms, pride, and ignorance, would still be subject to the suffering of conditioned existence (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*) after reaching the abodes of form and formless Brahmas. As for Stream-winners and Once-returners, since the arrows of sensual desires, *etc.*, are still piercing them, they will take rebirth as human or celestial beings whereby they have to go endure the miserable conditions of aging, disease,

death, etc. Finding beings struck with those arrows, the Buddha's heart was filled with deep compassion, He taught the Dhamma despite the fact that he had to undergo a lot of hardships merely for the sake of the emancipation of all beings.

In particular, having observed and found the ordinary individuals suffering in misery due to being struck with arrows piercing through their material aggregates, the Buddha reflected and realised that there was no one except him who could remove those sharp-pointed arrows. The compassionate Buddha therefore went on teaching the Dhamma as stated in the Paṭisambhidāmagga:—

Aññatara mayā: except for me, the Buddha, **sallānaṃ uddhatā:** capable of removing the arrow that has pierced them, **añño koci:** any other person, **natthi:** is not yet born. **Iti passantānaṃ:** seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ:** the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu:** towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā:** great compassion, **okkamati:** arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

The Buddha's compassion towards all beings is impartial without distinction irrespective of whether a person is intimate or unfamiliar. The degree of compassion bestowed upon Rāhula, his own son born while he was a prince, was on the same level as he conferred on Venerable Devadatta, who had done grievous wrong to him with animosity. At one time, Venerable Devadatta, in collusion with King Ajātasattu, conspired to assassinate the Buddha. They incited the royal elephant Nālāgiri to attack the Buddha while he was walking for alms. This elephant had a ferocious propensity and trampled to death all persons whom he met on his way. As instructed by Venerable Devadatta, the mahouts fed this great elephant with liquor and released the huge beast along the road where the Buddha would come to seek alms. On that occasion, a large number of the Saṅgha accompanied the Blessed One. The huge elephant, being intoxicated, rushed forward to the Buddha to attack him. Even human beings under the influence of liquor do and say what ought not to be done or said. Being an animal, nothing needs to be said of the elephant, which came rushing towards the Buddha to bore him to death with its tusks. Seeing this danger, the monks, in great anxiety, requested the Buddha to retreat to avoid the charge. The Buddha, however, taught his disciples as follows:—

*“Āgacchatha, bhikkhave, mā bhāyittha. Aṭṭhānametaṃ, bhikkhave, anavakāso, yaṃ parūpakkamena Tathāgataṃ jīvītā voropeyya. Anupakkamena, bhikkhave, Tathāgatā parinibbāyanti”*¹

Āgacchatha bhikkhave: Come monks! Do not retreat, **mābhayittha:** Do not be afraid. **Aṭṭhānametaṃ bhikkhave anavakāso, yaṃ parūpakkamena Tathāgataṃ jīvītā voropeyya:** O, monks! No other person will be able to deprive the Tathāgata of life. **Anupakkamena bhikkhave Tathāgatā parinibbāyanti:** It is usual for the Buddhas to attain *parinibbāna* without being subject to harmful death by anyone through conspiracy or attempt.

His disciples repeated their plea three times. However, the Buddha remained adamant and replied as before a second and third time. Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda becoming anxious of the impending disaster, took his stance in front of the Buddha with the intention of sacrificing his own life in place of the Blessed One. The Buddha asked him three times to make way. However, since Venerable Ānanda failed to comply, the Buddha had to make him move from the place he had taken up by the exercise of his supernormal powers.

Having removed the Venerable Ānanda, the Buddha radiated his loving-kindness toward Nāḷāgiri. This reveals the primary importance of the quality of loving-kindness. Feeling of pity that had arisen can also be regarded as developing as a supplement just as radiating with great compassion, as has been earlier stated. As a result, the great beast, which had been showered with loving-kindness and compassion by the Buddha, suddenly sobered up, and became mild and gentle. Faith and reverence for the Buddha arose in him. The huge beast respectfully approached the Buddha dropping down its trunk from its raised position, and bowed at the feet of the Blessed One. Thereupon, after caressing the elephant Nāḷāgiri on the forehead with his right hand the Buddha admonished him as follows:-

“Oh, Nāḷāgiri! You should abstain from committing wrong to a Buddha such as me. If evil act were committed, serious suffering will come upon you. Don’t get intoxicated. Neither should you be heedless. If you are heedless and fail to give thought to your own welfare, you cannot reach a fortunate existence. To reach a noble abode of existence you should cultivate noble practices, and do things on your own in a virtuous way.

¹ Vin.ii.194f, Vinaya Cūlavagga.

From that time onwards, Nālāgiri was transformed into a well-tamed creature fully endowed with the five precepts. In the past, he used to trample people to death. Thenceforth, he abstained from killing others. Nor did he get drunk. This is the way in which the Buddha admonished the big unruly elephant, which had attempted to kill him, by inculcating a benevolent spirit of loving-kindness and great compassion as he bestowed on his own son Rāhula.

Enmeshed and Swept Away by the Current of Craving

“Taṇhājālena otthaṭo lokasannivāsoti ... Taṇhāsotena vuyhati lokasannivāsoti passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

Lokasannivāso: All beings, **taṇhā jālena otthaṭo:** are enmeshed in the net of craving. **Taṇhā sotena vuyhati:** are swept away by the current of craving. **Iti passantānaṃ:** seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ:** the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu:** towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā:** great compassion, **okkamati:** arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

The term craving (*taṇhā*) conveys the meaning of thirst or lust. Being desirous of seeing and enjoying the pleasures of sight, and enjoying them with attachment, without being satiated, to all that have been seen and enjoyed, is merely thirst for beautiful sights. No matter that one may have seen limitless pleasant sights before, the thirst for them remains unquenched and unsatiated. In the same way, dissatisfied with what is heard in respect of any good and pleasant sound, as desired, is but a thirsty taṇhā. So also is thirsty taṇhā in respect of good smell and fragrance, good taste with great appetite, of good touch or contact, and of imagination. Taṇhā, in fact, occurs unceasingly in everything that is seen, heard and so on. It is arising all the time everywhere. The moment one gets up from sleep, what is desirable is invariably thought of or imagined. One has found pleasure in his own-self. He also finds pleasure in others as well as in all properties or goods, or commodities for his own consumption. Because of this pleasurable attachment with the thirst of taṇhā, one has his continuous rebirths in one existence after another. In every form of existence, one has to go through the process of old age or decay, disease and death.

Having had to seek for what is desired, suffering and misery occur. Then, due to having to look after all that have been obtained, one has to undergo further misery. All these miseries are due to craving, which grows like a creeper. One is unable to overcome this craving from which one cannot escape. Hence, this craving is like a net that has spread over all beings. Animals that are caught in a net cannot escape. Death is hanging over their heads. In much the same way, living beings who are trapped in the net of craving cannot escape from it. In every existence, suffering occurs by getting old, getting sick, and meeting with death. Having perceived such miserable conditions in which living beings are wallowing, the Buddha was moved to pity and great compassion arose in him.

Moreover, a person who is drifting in a mid-stream will be swept away by the current. It is likely that he or she will soon drown. Likewise, living beings are compelled to follow their craving. They are therefore reborn in the four lower realms due to having done immoral deeds, impelled by craving. Sometimes, due to having done wholesome kamma, they reach the fortunate realms of human or celestial beings. Even in these fortunate existences, they have to suffer the miseries of old age, disease, and death. The Buddha therefore had great compassion for beings who have been suffering and swept away by the current of craving.

Enmeshed and Swept Away by the Current of Wrong Views

“Diṭṭhijālena otthaṭo lokasannivāsoti ... Diṭṭhisotena vuyhati lokasannivāsoti passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

Lokasannivāso: All beings, **diṭṭhijālena otthaṭo:** are caught in the net of wrong-views. **Diṭṭhisotena vuyhati:** They are swept away by the current of wrong-views. **Iti passantānaṃ:** seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ:** the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu:** towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā:** great compassion, **okkamati:** arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

“Diṭṭhi” means heretical views, false beliefs, and misconceptions. To think with loving attachment considering oneself as a living being, an individual, or a self, in spite of the fact that there exists only a continual process of mental and physical phenomena, is self-view

(*atta-ditṭhi*), also called personality-view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*). “*Sakkāya*” means an aggregate of mind and matter, which obviously exists in a person. To regard these phenomena as “I,” a living being, or a self, is a wrong-view. It is known as personality-view because of an erroneous conception regarding these mental and material aggregates. An instance may be cited, for example, at the moment when seeing takes place, the physical eye obviously exists. The sight that is seen is also matter. The knowing mind that sees is mentality (*nāma*). Only these two — mind and matter — are actually present. However, ordinary individuals are under the impression that what is seen and known is a self. The matter of one’s own body, which is seen by the eye, is also misconceived as “I.” If it is thought of as a reality, it is personality-view. In respect of what is obviously seen and known at the moment of hearing, *etc.*, if it is imagined or thought of as “I” or a self, it amounts to holding personality-view. It becomes eternalism (*sassata-ditṭhi*), if it is misconceived that a being or self is perpetually existing based on the false notion of personality-view, and also that, after death it transmigrates to reside in another body. On the other hand, it is annihilationism (*uccheda-ditṭhi*), if one believes in complete annihilation after death, and that there therefore can be no results of wholesome or unwholesome kamma.

Again, if it is thought that there are no good or bad effects of kamma, that is the evil deed of wrong-view (*duccarita micchāditṭhi*). One who holds a false view of annihilationism is likely to entertain unwholesome thoughts. This evil deed of wrong-view is extremely blameworthy and culpable. If this false view is entertained, vices and demeritorious acts will not be avoided. Nor will meritorious deeds be performed. In other words, those who have this false view will not hesitate to do all kinds of evil deeds. Hence, a person who has accepted this false view will definitely be reborn in hell after death. Furthermore, to believe in and revere a false Buddha, or a person impersonating as Buddha is a false belief.

Believing in false practices as genuine is another type of wrong-view. For example, to firmly believe that the performance of rites involving the sacrifice of living beings could eliminate demerits, or that merits could be gained, is believing in false practices and seeing things wrongly without understanding them as they truly are. Prior to the appearance of a Buddha, or those who have not heard the

Dhamma and those who misunderstand the teachings would readily accept and adhere to any false doctrine as mentioned above. All over the world, the majority have accepted and believe in such false doctrines. All those who fail to fully appreciate the Buddha's Dhamma have self-view, a false view to which they cling blindly, firmly believing that mental and physical phenomena are a being, a self, or "I." Hence, the statement, "All beings are enmeshed in wrong-view and are swept away in the current of wrong-view," is correct. All beings who have accepted false doctrines such as annihilationism or entertain wrong views are likely to be reborn in the lower realms. However, in the case of those who adhere to the belief of eternalism, there is a likelihood of them gaining wholesome kamma by lending help to other beings, and by getting rid of at least some demerits, in as much as they believe in what ought to be done or should not be done, expecting to gain benefits in the hereafter. For such wholesome actions, there is still hope for them to reach fortunate existences after death. Nevertheless, some immoral actions may be included in what they believe as things that ought to be done. Such erroneous actions are expounded in the Commentaries. These are actions, such as those relating to killing other beings in performing rituals, or boiling snails and oysters alive, *etc.*, to save them from the misery of continued existence. Though such acts might be considered as good deeds from their own point of view, killing of sentient beings cannot possibly be regarded virtuous acts from which merits can be derived because of the fact that the victims will surely not consent.

There is every likelihood of these heretics going down to the four lower realms where they would suffer misery for their immoral actions, which they might regard as good. Again, one who rigidly adheres to eternalism and the doctrines of self, will not believe in the truth of the Buddha's teaching which says: "There is no such thing as a self, but only a continuing psychophysical process according to natural laws. There are only the causes and effects of mind and matter, and if the cause is eradicated by practising meditation to remove defilements, which is the cause, the effect of suffering totally ceases and becomes extinct." Since they don't believe these teachings, they will pass through successive births in the cycle of existence and continually suffer the miseries of old age, disease, and death. This effect clearly reveals their failure to reach freedom from miseries due

to being enmeshed in the net of wrong-view. Due to being swept away in the current of wrong-view, they suffer the miseries of existence without any break. The current of craving, as stated before, is generally flowing down to four lower realms. Therefore, all those beings who are not yet liberated from the bonds of craving and wrong-view are suffer immensely after descending to the lower realms. Having clearly perceived this miserable condition of existence, the Buddha was moved to pity towards all living beings. Emulating the example as shown by the Buddha, may our male and female benefactors who wish to follow his exemplary conduct also try to develop compassion.

Consumed by Eleven Fires

“Āditto lokasannivāso rāgagginā dosagginā mohagginā jātiyā jarāya maraṇena sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upāyāsehi, tassa natthañño koci nibbāpetā aññatra mayāti passantānaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ sattesu mahākaruṇā okkamati.”

Lokasannivāso: All beings, **rāgagginā**: the fire of lust, **āditto**: are burning them furiously, **dosagginā**: the fire of anger, **mohagginā**: the fire of delusion, **jātiyā**: of birth, **jarāya**: of aging, **marañena**: of death, **sokehi**: of grief, **paridevehi**: of lamentation, **dukkhehi**: the of pain, **domanassahi**: of sorrow, **upāyāsehi**: of despair, **āditto**: are burning them furiously. **Iti passantānaṃ**: seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ**: the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu**: towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā**: great compassion, **okkamati**: arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

The above statement reveals that all beings are burnt and consumed by eleven fires — lust, anger, delusion, birth, aging, death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair. Among these, the fires of lust are those that are prone to passionate desire. Craving and greed are also passionate desire. How they are being burnt is: “Passionate attachment to the eye, the object that is seen, and the knowing mind, may be said to be the fires of lust that are raging. From the stage of seeing, one becomes attached to one’s own eyes. The pleasant object is also found to be desirable. Particularly, passionate attachment to what is seen occurs. It is not only the beautiful sight that is seen and appreciated, but also the entire body

of a woman or a man. Thus the sensation arises from sight or what is seen and found pleasurable, which in turn invokes desirable attachment to it. This feeling that occurs is nothing but the fire of lust. If the object that is desired is not yet available, one will yearn to get it. One will scheme to get it by any means. Sometimes, passionate desire may result in losing the appetite to eat or sleep. One may also plan to keep things that have been acquired. The arising of this passionate desire is the fire of lust.

Ordinary people regard this burning sensation of lust as good. Therefore, they are eagerly striving to enjoy such sensual pleasures with attachment. Whether in the matter of family affairs, business affairs, or human relations, they have to worry without any interval. They probably think it enjoyable to be worrying like this. As a matter of fact, they are consumed by the fires of lust. If lust were expelled, it will become obvious that all these imaginations that are invoked and anxieties that crop up will be seen as similar to the miseries suffered by a person suffering from burns. Hence, the flaming red-hot lust was perceived by the Buddha as burning ferociously.

In the same way, when hearing takes place, the ear, the sound that is heard, and the knowing mind are found to be pleasurable. This is lust that is burning. In matters relating to the odour, the nose, the knowing mind that occurs, and when eating, the tongue, the taste, and consciousness that arises, and also when touching or imagining, similar process occur, which may be regarded as being burnt. In brief, passionate attachment to all sensations that arise at every moment of seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing are nothing but the fires of lust, which are burning ferociously. The flames of lust are raging furiously depending upon sensations that have arisen from the six sense-doors. It is just like inflammable material, such as firewood and kerosene, which burn easily. The more combustible the material is, the more vehement the fire becomes. In the same way, the more pleasurable the sense objects are considered to be, the more the fires of lust rage. Similarly, the fires of anger are burning. It is more obvious when the mind becomes miserable with burning sensations as one gets angry. The angry person, however, may welcome the anger that has arisen.

The fire of delusion is more difficult to understand. If a thought arises that everything emanating from what is seen and heard is

permanent, everlasting, good, and pleasurable, and that every such thing is a self, it is simply delusion. In short, whatever is wrongly conceived is delusion. Erroneous understanding or misperception veils the truth of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self in respect of all phenomena arising from the six sense-doors, so should be regarded as the fire of delusion. The way in which the fire of delusion burns is hard to understand for ordinary individuals. Only when the true characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self are clearly known, the way that delusion burns can be realised. Not knowing what is true, being under delusion, one does things that should not be done, makes plans that should not to be made, or says what should not be said. Due to such improper conduct, disadvantages are bound to be met with in the present life. Also, throughout the cycle of existence, sufferings such as the misery of the lower realms will be encountered. These are the sufferings caused by the fire of delusion.

The three fires of lust, anger, and delusion are the fires of defilements. Then comes the fires of birth, *etc.*, which are the fires of existence. There are eight of these. Of these eight, birth, aging, and death are the most conspicuous. However, there is food for thought relating to the fire of birth as to how fresh existence suffers the burning heat. To put it briefly, in every existence the miseries that one encounters throughout one's lifetime are caused by birth. Miseries in hell are suffered because of rebirth in hell. Likewise, the miserable conditions of the animal realm and hungry ghosts are encountered because of rebirths as dogs, pigs, birds, *etc.*, or, hungry ghosts, as the case may be. Those who are born of poor parents will probably be stricken with poverty throughout their life from infancy. Those who become deities or Brahmas are also suffering misery in their respective existences merely because they have been reborn in those existences.

One may ask from where this burning fire of misery has come. It may be explained as follows:- It has so happened because of the effect of defilements and kamma, which lead to becoming (*bhava*). These defilements and kamma originate from one's dependence on the effect of visual consciousness, which obviously arises in the eye at the time of seeing, and the consciousness of sound which arises in the ear at the moment of hearing, *etc.* That is why all consciousness

of the sense-objects occurring through the eye and the ear at every moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, is stated as the fire of birth, which brings forth new existences. To be quite candid, the new existence of the fire of birth occurs from the upsurge of defilements and the effect of kamma based on the act of seeing and so on. This fire of birth, having had the opportunity to occur at every moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, may be said to be the fire of birth. The fires of aging and death occur and burn in the same way. The only difference is that aging and death are clearly noticeable as suffering.

According to what has been stated, the way that the fires of birth, *etc.*, burn is as described in the Āditta Sutta: “The eye is burning, sights are burning, eye-consciousness is burning,” *etc.* In the prologue of this chapter on the attainment of great compassion, since it has been stated ordinarily as: “*lokasanniṅṅāsa*” which conveys the meaning of “Burning living beings,” it can be interpreted to mean that the fires of birth, *etc.*, are burning in every existence where a being may be born. As such, all miseries that are endured throughout life, due to having come into being are the burns caused by the fire of birth. In every existence, aging gradually with the obvious signs of grey hairs, short-sightedness, and becoming deaf, is the burning of aging. Eventually, death takes place, which is the burning of death. In every kind of existence, these fires of aging and death that are burning, are quite conspicuous.

Next, anxiety, grief, sorrow, and lamentation due to the loss and death of relatives, property, or wealth, are the burning of grief (*soka*) and lamentation (*parideva*). In almost every existence, various kinds of physical sufferings have to be faced. There are also heart-breaking moments with extreme anxiety. These are the fires of sorrow (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyāsa*), which one inevitably has to undergo. Having observed that beings undergo severe misery and suffering in the eleven kinds of raging fire the Buddha was moved to great compassion as shown below:–

Aññatara mayā: Except for me, the Buddha, **tassa nibbāpetā:** capable of extinguishing all these burning fires, **añño koci:** any other single person, **natthi:** does not exist. **Iti passantānaṃ:** seeing thus, **buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ:** the Buddhas, the Blessed Ones, **sattesu:** towards all living beings, **mahākaruṇā:** great compassion,

okkamati: arises in their hearts. In other words, great compassion for mortals arises in the Buddhas.

All living beings are subjected to the eleven kinds of fires, such as, lust and so forth. Therefore, the Buddha had great compassion for those living beings realising that there was no one apart from him to come to their aid. These beings are indeed really pitiable. Not only one, but eleven fires are constantly burning them, the miseries they have to undergo are truly awful. There is no one who could instruct these pitiable beings how to escape from the burning flames except for the compassionate, Fully Enlightened Buddha. Knowing fully well the fate of all living beings, pity arose in the heart of the Buddha, and this feeling of deep compassion impelled him to deliver his teachings for the entire period of 45 years, revealing the way to happiness, and guiding them to follow the practice of the noble Eightfold Path — morality, concentration, and wisdom. We are now explaining his noble teachings and giving instructions to you all. Having already covered a wide range relating to the occurrence of great compassion in the mind of the Buddha, let us now develop the compassion after reflecting upon the miserable conditions of living beings who are suffering from the eleven kinds of fire:—

“Living beings are pierced by the arrows of lust, *etc.* They are enmeshed in the net of craving and wrong-view. They are swept away by the current of craving and wrong-view, and are burnt by the fires of lust, *etc.* May all of those pitiable living beings be free from misery.”

The method of developing compassion, as has just been stated, is for the sake of gaining perfections and merits. However, a person with special perfections could achieve absorption while developing compassion in the way stated. If wishing to develop absorption, compassion should not be developed starting from a beloved person, *etc.*, as is done in the case of developing loving-kindness. It should also not be developed for a person of the opposite sex, nor for a dead person. Compassion must be bestowed first upon a pitiable person who is in dire distress, by developing pity and reciting as: “May they be free from misery.” Only when absorption has been achieved by developing as stated, should one proceed to develop compassion towards a dear person. Thereafter, a neutral person should be

radiated with compassion, and lastly a hostile person. While developing compassion for an enemy, if anger arises, this feeling of anger should be suppressed as in the case of developing loving-kindness, and only then, compassion should be developed towards a beloved person, a neutral person, an enemy, and oneself, equally balanced on all four to break down the barriers. After that, according to the fourth method, one should practice diligently to achieve the three stages of absorption. The way of developing compassion has now been described fairly comprehensively. Let us proceed to teach relating to the way of developing sympathetic-joy.

How to Develop Sympathetic-joy

Sympathetic-joy (*muditā*) means rejoicing and being pleased. It is rejoicing in the happiness and prosperity of others. Some people do not wish to see others prosperous, happy, and successful in their life or career. This reflects the nature of envy (*issā*). Sympathetic-joy is diametrically opposite to envy. A person who is overwhelmed with envy will not wish to see another person becoming prosperous and happy. Nor is an envious person pleased to see others having a large following, attractive physical appearance, a good education, enjoying a high status, or getting promotion. On the other hand, a person with sympathetic-joy rejoices in seeing others successful in their business or career. He or she can easily bring to mind feelings of joy and pleasure, saying: "May they be prosperous." This mental inclination of good-will is sympathetic-joy. It is mental state of noble-mindedness with extreme moral purification.

Feelings of sympathetic-joy should be radiated first to an intimate friend who greets us with a smile. Or when a beloved one has become prosperous, smartly dressed, and enjoying life, is seen or heard about, feeling of joy should be invoked uttering: "Oh! How happy he is. How good, how excellent!"¹ Also in the Vibhaṅga, it has been taught:-

Bhikkhu: A monk, **muditāsahagatena cetasā:** with a mind of sympathetic-joy, **kathaṅca:** and how, **ekaṃ disaṃ pharivā:** radiating towards one direction, **viharati:** abide? **Seyathāpi nāma:** To cite an example, **piyaṃ manāpaṃ:** deserving of love and adoration, **ekaṃ puggalaṃ:** an individual, **disvā:** having seen, **mudito:** becoming

¹This is the translation of the statement in the Visuddhimagga — "Modati vatāyaṃ satto, aho sādhu aho sutthū'ti.

pleased, **assa**: it so happens. **Evameva**: similarly, **sabbasatte**: to all living beings, **muditāya pharati**: he radiates sympathetic-joy.

In the statement given in Visuddhimagga as earlier stated, in regard to developing sympathetic-joy, it is shown how happiness occurred as: “Oh, how good, how excellent!” It has not been stated in the way usually recited nowadays as: “May they not be deprived of their prosperity (*Yathaladdha sampattito mā vigicchantu*).” However, in explaining the decision it has been stated: “Living beings have their own kamma, which ripens as advantageous results. Since each is the master of his or her own destiny and is reaping the fruits of the seeds sown in the past, how can they be deprived of wealth by the will or influence of others?”¹ This is in conformity with the statement as: “*Mā vigicchantu*: may they not be deprived of.” Hence, in developing sympathetic-joy, what is usually recited by the majority of people will be explained. If a person endowed with wealth and happiness is seen or heard about, sympathetic-joy should be developed by bringing him or her into one’s mind as: “May this person not suffer loss. May they be able to retain their wealth and luxurious living, and be able to enjoy happiness as before.” Towards a large number of people, sympathetic-joy is to be developed likewise as “May the prosperity that they have acquired not be diminished or lost; and may they retain their wealth in full, and be as happy as before.” In this regard, the statement: “May they be able to retain their wealth and luxurious living,” may be construed as not being fabulously rich, but as being fairly well-off. Sympathetic-joy can be developed visualising with a sincere feeling of joy towards a person who is fairly wealthy. Such being the case, there is hardly anything to be said in particular in the matter of radiating sympathetic-joy towards a person of great affluence for whom sympathetic-joy can be developed with much more heartfelt rejoicing. Let us therefore recite the motto which is relevant to the said two types of persons.

“May all those who are endowed with wealth and prosperity retain the wealth that has been acquired, and continue to live in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all those beings who are wealthy be happy and prosperous as before.”

¹ *Kammassakā sattā, te kassa ruciyā ... pattasampattito vā na parihāyissantīti evaṃ pavattakammassakatā-dassanapadaṭṭhānā.*

Nevertheless, those living beings who are said to be in misery are likely to enjoy happiness in their own way according to circumstances under which they live. Even those beings who were continuously suffering pain and misery in the burning fires of hell were said to get relief at the time when the Supreme Buddha and noble Arahants visited hell and taught the Dhamma. Therefore, sympathetic-joy can be very well developed with a benevolent feeling towards all beings. The manner of developing sympathetic-joy is the same as in the case of developing compassion. Let us develop by recitation:-

“May all beings be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

This method of developing sympathetic-joy is in conformity with the instructions contained in the Pāḷi text as: “*Sabbe sattā yathāladhasampattito mā vigacchantu.*” We shall proceed by reciting in accordance with what has been stated as all beings, etc.

“May beings who breathe be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all those who are born be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all ordinary individuals be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all those who have aggregates be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

These five phrases constitute the five kinds of unspecified sympathetic-joy (*anodhisa muditā*), which indicate the way of developing sympathetic-joy with goodwill towards all living beings without any distinction or limit. We shall now continue to recite and develop the seven kinds of specified sympathetic-joy (*odhisa muditā*).

“May all females be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all males be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all Noble Ones be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all ordinary individuals be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all deities be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all human beings be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the lower realms be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

The above is the way of developing the seven kinds of specified sympathetic-joy. If these seven are added to the five unspecified kinds stated earlier, it will come to twelve. There are twelve kinds of sympathetic-joy without distinguishing direction and without limitation. When developing by distinguishing the directions, there will be twelve for each direction. As there are ten directions, it will total 120. Let us also recite and develop these one-hundred and twenty in brief. Please follow the recitation.

“May all beings in the East be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings who breathe in the East ...”

“May all who are born in the East ...”

“May all individuals in the East ...”

“May all who have aggregates in the East ...”

“May all females in the East ...”

“May all those males in the East ...”

“May all the Noble Ones in the East ...”

“May all the ordinary individuals in the East ...”

“May all the deities in the East ...”

“May all human beings in the East be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

This is the way of developing twelve kinds of sympathetic-joy to those beings in the East. In regard to those in the West and so on, it should be developed in the same way.

“May all beings in the West be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the North be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the South be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the South-east be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the North-west be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the North-east be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the South-west be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the Nadir be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

“May all beings in the Zenith be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

What we have now been recited in brief are the 120 kinds of directionally specified sympathetic-joy. If these are added to the twelve kinds mentioned earlier, it will come to a total of 132 kinds of sympathetic-joy. Now that the manner of developing sympathetic-joy is quite complete.

If time and circumstances permit, these 132 kinds of sympathetic-joy may be developed. In the event of not being able to develop in the way stated, if sympathetic-joy with a feeling of rejoicing can be developed towards affluent persons every time they are found, seen or heard about, mentally or verbally reciting: “be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before,” advantages will be accrued not only in the present life, but also in future existences.

The majority of the people are likely to be jealous of others getting the better of them. At present, people are generally apt to become envious and are inclined to conspire with ill-feeling to cause misery to others and to bring about their financial run on flimsy grounds. This is envy, which brings demerits. Those who are jealous or envious will generally have no good friends who could render assistance. In future existences, they may suffer from a lack of attendants. Relating to this, it says in the Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta.

“Idha, māṇava, ekacco ithī vā puriso vā issāmanako hotii; paralābha sakkāra garukāramānanavandanapūjanāsu issati upadussati issaṃ bandhati. So tena kammena evaṃ samattena evaṃ samādinna kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati. No ce kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati, sace manussattaṃ āgacchati yaththa

yattha paccājayati appesakkho hoti. Appesakkhasaṃvattanikā esā, māṇava, paṭipadā yadidaṃ — issāmanako hoti; paralābha sakkāra garukāramānanavandanapūjanāsu issati upadussati issaṃ bandhati.”

Māṇava: Young man! **Idha:** herein, **ekacco itthī vā puriso vā:** a certain woman or man, **issāmanako:** feelings of envy, **hoti:** have arisen in them, **paralābhasakkāramānanavandanapūjāsu:** against others for having acquired wealth and property, for giving away charity with due regards, for paying reverence, for worshipping, and for being bent upon giving deep respect with veneration, **issati:** some have become envious, **upadussati:** and have thus at fault for their churlishness, **issaṃ bandhati:** they are firmly attached to envy as if tied with a rope. **So:** Such an envious person, **tena kamma evaṃ samattena samādinna:** because of evil kamma for having built up and succeeded in establishing that envious feeling as stated, **kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā:** after the disintegration of the body on death, **apāyaṃ duggatiṃ:** in the lower realms, **vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ:** in perdition, in hell, **upapajjati:** will be reborn. **Sace manussataṃ āgacchati:** or if he happens to reach a human existence (by virtue of other wholesome-kamma), **yattha yattha paccājayati:** in whatever existence he may be, **appesakkho hoti:** he will have few attendants. **Māṇava:** Young man! **Esāpaṭipadā:** this habitual conduct, **appesakkha saṃvattanikā:** is likely to lead to having few attendants.

Briefly stated, a person who is envious towards others' success in acquiring wealth and prosperity and enhancement of reputation or prestige is likely to go down to the four lower realms for this immoral action of envy, and reach hell. After his release from hell, if he is reborn a human being by virtue of some merits, he will lack companions and attendants. It is clearly illustrated and expounded in the Commentary as resembling one who is without hands, when becoming thirsty, will have no helper even to offer him water to drink for the purpose of quenching his thirst.

On the other hand, a person who rejoices with others in their well-being and happiness will be elevated to the fortunate realms as a deva for his wholesome kamma in developing sympathetic-joy. If he happens to be reborn in the world of human beings, or in any existence wherever he may be, he will have the positive result of being equipped with a large number of attendants and the attributes of power and fame.

Māṇava: Young man, **esā paṭipadā:** this habitual conduct in being pleased, rejoicing without envy, **mahesakkhasamvattanikā:** tends to contribute towards becoming powerful with a large following. It has been taught in a concise way. I have composed a relevant motto, as stated below, which may now be recited.

“Envy repels attendants and helpers. Goodwill brings forth retinue in great numbers.”

In short, how nice it is to develop sympathetic-joy, and by so developing, merits will be accrued without any expense.

Also, in the matter of developing sympathetic-joy, as stated in the foregoing, it has been instructed in Visuddhimagga to practise until the barriers are broken down, as in the case of developing compassion. According to the fourth method, it has been explained in the same way in developing to reach the third absorption. Now that a full explanation has been given relating to the way of developing sympathetic-joy I will now wind up the teachings delivered today with a recitation. While reciting, what is recited should be brought into one’s mind, and also by developing insight through contemplation and noting at the same time.

“May all beings be free from danger, from bodily suffering, from mental distress, and be able to shoulder the burden of the aggregates with ease.”

“May all beings be liberated from the miseries that they are presently suffering.”

“May all beings be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired without diminution, and continue to remain in luxury with happiness as before.”

May all those noble persons who are present in this congregation, by virtue of merits derived from hearing and noting the teachings on loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy as appropriate, gain the eleven advantages as might be deserved, and then, to develop insight through contemplation and noting with the endeavour to attain nibbāna as soon as possible after the achievement of the coveted path and fruition knowledge.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

Part Seven

I will now commence teaching how to practice meditation on equanimity (*upekkhā*) from today onwards.

What is Equanimity?

According to the principles of grammar, equanimity means: **Upapattito yutthito**: as may be appropriate, **ikkhatīti**: for being able to see and observe things, **upekkhā**: it is known as equanimity, *i.e.*, to note and observe things keeping the heart equanimous, and the mind equally balanced without discrimination. However, in the practice of Brahmavihāra, the term “*upekkhā*” conveys the sense of indifference without being concerned by rejecting all anxiety, such as wishing others to be happy by radiating loving-kindness, wishing others to be free from misery with compassion, and wishing them to be to retain the same prosperity as before without diminution, by developing sympathetic-joy.

In developing meditation on loving-kindness, it shall be borne in mind as “*Sabbe sattā averā hontu* — may all beings be free from danger,” *etc.*, in order to enable them to gain happiness. Also in developing compassion, one should borne in mind as “*Sabbe sattā dukkhā muccantu* — may all beings be free from misery” to escape from suffering. Likewise, in developing sympathetic-joy, one should bring to mind, “*Sabbe sattā yathāladhasampattito mā vigacchantu* — may all beings not be deprived of their wealth and prosperity, which they have acquired. In the practice of equanimity all these mental states that occur with concern about other’s welfare should be dispelled. Hence, one should take an indifferent attitude with equanimity as: “*Sabbe sattā kammaṣṣakā* — all beings are the owners of their kamma, either wholesome or unwholesome, that depends on their own actions done in the past lives as well as present life, which bring happiness or misery, as appropriate; and these actions bear fruits as effects that they inherit according to the law of kamma. “As the Buddha said, “According to the seed that’s sown, so is the fruit reaped therefrom; the doer of good reaps good; the doer of evil reaps evil.”

Is It Not Bad to Be Indifferent to Others’ Welfare?

Therefore, one who wishes to develop equanimity should nurture the spirit of indifference to the pain and pleasure of others, looking upon them as subject to their own kamma, and the inevitable effects

of their own actions. If that is so, it would appear that equanimity is bad due to failing to work for the welfare of others. However, it is not. On the contrary, it is not bad at all. One should render assistance as far as possible in the interests of others by way of developing loving-kindness and compassion. Only if circumstances do not allow one to help others or work for their welfare by any means, one should remain indifferent by the exercise of equanimity. To remain indifferent is best. Take the case of an accused person who has committed a criminal offence. In such a case, one should develop loving-kindness and compassion to the best of one's ability in the interests of that accused person so that he or she may escape punishment. However, if the court passed imposes a sentence of imprisonment or even death, having found him guilty of the offence, no occasion should arise to be concerned about their inevitable fate. In spite of this, if one gets worried over this matter, it would amount to bringing upon oneself both physical and mental distress. Only if one can take an indifferent attitude without being concerned, would it bring mental peace. Likewise, it would be quite natural to bear in mind that the incident has occurred as a result of kamma and that it is only its effect, whether good or evil, which has unavoidably come upon that person.

Next, according to the fourth method, the fourth absorption of the realm of form cannot be achieved by developing the meditations on loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy. It is attainable only by meditation on equanimity. Therefore, if a person who has achieved the third absorption wishes to attain the fourth absorption, equanimity must be developed. There is no alternative.

Reflecting on the Pros and Cons

As such, a person who has achieved the third absorption through the development of loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy must practise this absorption to become proficient in it. After arising from the trance of that third absorption, he should ponder upon the defects of absorption on loving-kindness and so on. One should reflect: "These absorptions, being closely connected and conjoined with feelings of attachment to beings, wishing them happiness, it is linked with love or hate. As it is combined with joy and exultant feeling, the fault of it must be reflected upon and understood as coarse and vulgar. The noble faculty and attributes of

equanimity should be reflected upon and realised, contemplating that the absorption on equanimity, which views things with indifference, is indeed gentle and subtle. It is stated that only after reflecting thus, equanimity should be developed with indifference towards a neutral person for whom there is neither love nor hate. The way of developing equanimity is what is generally known by heart as: “*Sabbe sattā kammaṣṣakā*,” i.e., this person has his kamma as his own property and that it is his own fate to which he has become a victim. After one has achieved the fourth absorption by contemplating thus, one should proceed to develop equanimity towards a person who is dear and then towards persons who are hostile. When radiating equanimity towards an enemy, if anger arises, it must be subdued in the way prescribed in the case of developing loving-kindness. After suppressing the anger, one should be able to contemplate with indifference, establishing the mind equally balanced on all four types of persons including oneself, thereby breaking down the barriers. After that, the fourth absorption will occur. This is according to what has been stated in *Visuddhimagga*.

Proximity of Equanimity

In describing the close proximity of equanimity, **sattā**: beings, **kammaṣṣakā**: have only kamma as their sole property. **Te**: These beings having their individual kamma, **kassa**: by whose, **ruciya**: expressed wish or desire, **sukhitā vā**: will happiness, **bhaviṣṣanti**: be derived?¹ **Dukkhatō vā**: How could he escape from misery and suffering?² **Pattasampattito vā**: How could his wealth that has been acquired, **na parihāriṣṣanti**: remain undiminished?³ **Iti**: For these reasons, **pavattakammaṣṣa katā dāṣṣanā**: the result of kamma that is seen as actually his own property is the cause of close proximity, as expounded in the *Visuddhimagga*.

¹ Although loving-kindness may be developed and radiated towards a person as “May they be happy” there is unlikely that another person will become happy as desired by the person who radiates loving-kindness. It means that one’s fate is inevitable according to one’s own kamma.

² It is unlikely that suffering will be removed as desired by a person who develops compassion. That is to say things will happen according to his own kamma.

³ It is unlikely that the wealth that has been derived could remain intact without being diminished. This means that kamma is one’s own property and one will invariably be subject to one’s own kamma.

This statement in brief conveys the meaning that knowledge which realises with satisfaction that only kamma is one's own property or possessions is the nearest or proximate cause for the development of equanimity. In this regards, there is one thing which calls for consideration. This is, in developing loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy, is it not true that one has to develop with a feeling of loving-kindness to cause happiness to others, or, with a feeling of compassion to cause one to be liberated from misery, or with a feeling of sympathetic-joy to cause one to retain his wealth which have come into his possession, without being diminished? However, in describing the way of realising and knowing by the expression: "The owner of one's actions (*kammassakatā*)," it is stated that things will not happen according to the wish of a person who is developing loving-kindness, *etc.*, and that it happens according to a person's own kamma. If so, there is scope to question whether it would amount to saying that there is no beneficial result from developing loving-kindness, *etc.*

This is the answer. If there is no really serious immoral action with its effects, benefits can be derived commensurate with the strength of loving-kindness, *etc.*, which is developed and radiated. In any case, however much one may want to accomplishment one's wishes, it cannot be fulfilled completely. An example may be cited. Parents who wish their children to be well and happy, always look after them and instil in their young minds both spiritual values and moral virtues, providing them with everything that they need. Despite their efforts to protect their safety, health, and comfort, some children, who are inclined to do what is improper, will not grow up in the way that their parents wish them to, since they are subject to their own kamma, which will take its own course. As things could happen under unavoidable circumstances, it will be unwise to say that there is no need for the parents to bring up their children as they consider proper. Be that as it may, parental care and attention must be given to children who are still immature. Generally speaking, it would bring beneficial results.

In achieving advantages by developing loving-kindness, though beneficial results which may be derived, fall short of the advantages received by the children from their parents, it would be advisable to develop meditation on loving-kindness. Persons who received loving-kindness showered upon them might not have benefited as

much as the person developing loving-kindness would have expected. However, merits will be gained in any case, for having developed loving-kindness through meditation, On the other hand, in causing to develop equanimity, only when feeling of indifference or equanimity can be born as: “Only kamma is one’s own property in possession and things have happened and would happen according to one’s own individual kamma which automatically produces an effect,” the quality of equanimity would be accomplished. Such being the case, it is vital to make use of the knowledge of ownership of kamma in the close proximity of equanimity, as a basic factor.

Because of this significance, it has been mentioned to bear in mind that “Nothing happens according to the wish of the meditator, and that beings are subject to their own kamma.” For your understanding of this, the Cūlakammavibhaṅga Sutta, The Shorter Exposition of Kamma,¹ will be explained.

The Shorter Exposition of Kamma

A youth by the name of Subha lived in Sāvatti during the time of the Buddha. The name conveys the meaning of “Dignity” in Burmese, so he might be addressed as “Maung Tint Te” — “Mr. Dignity.” His father was Todeyya the Brahmin. He was the Royal Astrologer of King Kosala, then the ruling monarch. A man of great wealth, Todeyya owned eighty-hundred and seventy million. However, he was a miser. Believing that if charity were given his wealth would decline to the point of total exhaustion, throughout his life he abstained from almsgiving. Instructions were also given by him to his son and other friends are stated below:-

*“Añjanānaṃ khayam disvā, vammikānañca sañcayam.
Madhūnañca samāhāram, paṇḍito gharamāvase.”*

Añjanānaṃ: Collyrium stones that produce pigment to darken eye-lashes, **khayam**: if ground repeatedly will wear out, **disvā ca**: having seen this; **vammikānaṃ**: that an ant-hill, **sañcayam**: consists of a heap of sand brought by white-ants carrying single grains, **disvā ca**: and having seen, **madūnaṃ**: and of honey, **samāhāram**: which is made by bees carrying grains of pollen, **disvā ca**: and having seen; **paṇḍito**: the wise man, **gharam**: the house, **āvase**: where he lives should likewise manage and control.

¹ A.ii.202, The Shorter Exposition of Action in Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation (ed.)

This is the advice or instruction given to his son and others by Todeyya, the Brahmin.

Collyrium is not widely used in Burma, but it is popular in India. It is not an eye-lotion, but a colouring matter applied to the eye-lids and lashes to beautify them. A rule of discipline has been laid down prohibiting monks from using it. If collyrium is used repeatedly, say a hundred or a thousand times, the stone gradually gets worn down. In the same way, if donations are made even in small amounts, as time goes by, one's wealth will gradually diminish until it becomes exhausted. Thinking thus, no offering of gifts, not even a small quantity, should be made. This is the meaning.

An ant-hill becomes a big mound when gradually built up with grains of sand deposited by termites. Taking a cue from the way in which constant efforts are made by the termites in accumulating sand grains to build an ant-hill, wealth should be gradually accumulated. Even a penny should be saved, then in the course of time, great wealth can be amassed. Hence, it is stated that everything that comes into one's hands should be stored up without spending it.

A few tiny grains of pollen brought by each bee is not much. However, as these are fetched many times, a large amount of honey is made in due course. Taking a lesson from this illustration, though it may be only a penny, one should save it to get rich.

What is meant by it is that the head of the household should abstain from giving away even a small amount causing wastage, but should carefully guard the store of wealth to amass a fortune. At that time, the Buddha was still living and was delivering his teaching in the City of Sāvatti. The Buddha's disciples always accompanied the Blessed One. Those who had faith in the Dhamma took refuge in the Triple Gem and became followers of Buddhist religion. They observed either the five or eight precepts and were accomplished with morality. They gave alms to their utmost capacity by making offerings to the Saṅgha. They listened earnestly to the discourses delivered by the Buddha daily, and they practised meditation. Some of them became Stream-winners, Once-returners, or Non-returners, while some ordained, and then, by developing insight meditation, eventually attaining Arahantship. It was an opportune time, affording a very rare opportunity to achieve higher awakening up to the highest stage. This golden opportunity is very hard to come by.

Yet, Todeyya the Brahmin had no faith in and reverence for the Buddha. He had embraced the doctrines and pretensions of the Brahmins. Hence, he had absolutely no faith in the Buddha and he underestimated the noble qualities of the Blessed One. Being a Brahmin holding a different religious belief, which was of course a false view, he did not even care to listen to the Buddha's discourses. Neither did he offer anything in charity, not even a spoonful of boiled rice. Not only that, he used to address the Buddha disrespectfully as: "*Bho*," an informal term used for inferiors or equals. This term is usually translated as "hi." Nowadays, this expression is not in vogue. It is usual to address a person by name such as, "Maung Sein," or "Maung Mya," as the case may be. Therefore it would be as if he addressed the Buddha as "Maung Gotama." For having disrespectfully spoken to the Blessed One, and also for having passionate attachment to his property, when he died, he was conceived in the womb of a bitch in his own house, that gave birth to a puppy after one and a half or two months. The young man Subha was very fond of this puppy, which was Todeyya the Brahmin in the previous existence. Subha lavishly fed his pet with delicious food, which he himself enjoyed and let it sleep in a comfortable bed. He did not know that the puppy was his former father. However, those who live together in former existences are generally affectionate to one another. This fact has been taught in the form of a verse:-

*"Pubbeva sannivāsenā, paccuppannahitena vā.
Evaṃ taṃ jāyate pemaṃ, uppalamva yathodake."*

Pubbe: In the previous existence, **sannivāsenā vā:** for having lived together, **paccuppannahitena vā:** and in the ensuing existence for having caused to bring benefit, **evaṃ:** this kind of, **taṃ pemaṃ:** special affection or love, **jāyate:** is likely to spring up. **Kimiva:** How it happens is that, **yathodake:** as much as there is water, **uppalam:** the lotus, **jāyate iva:** will continue to grow and develop with vigour and freshness. It resembles a lotus that sprouts with strength and vigour if there is water. Also love is likely to spring up for having lived in association in the former existence. If the duration of living together is long, affection will become deeper. The longer the period of close association (living together), the greater the love. As such, there is nothing more to be said if meritorious deed have been

performed together. In the present existence too, a person may become more affectionate to another who has rendered assistance. This is clearly evident through personal experience. In the case of Todeyya who had become a dog in his next existence, as he and his son were father and son living together in his former existence, it is no wonder that Subha had a strong attachment to the dog.

One day, the Buddha spread surveyed the entire universe with his Omniscience, which followed his daily routine of absorption in great compassion. On reflecting on who could benefit from his teaching, who could attain higher knowledge, and who would be able to gain faith in the Triple Gem, he saw the youth Subha. Therefore in the morning on the same day, in making his almsround, the Buddha purposely dropped in at the house of Todeyya. On entering the compound, the puppy rushed towards the Buddha barking sharply. The Blessed One admonished the animal, "Hey, Todeyya! You have now become a dog for having spoken to me and addressed me disrespectfully as: "Bho Gotama" in your former existence. If you now bark at me with anger, you will be relegate to the Avīci hell."

When the dog heard these words of Buddha's admonition, it knew: "This monk Gotama knows what has happened to me." Hence, feeling afraid for its plight, the dog ran to the back of the house and lay down to sleep in the ashes on the floor of the fire-place. The servants tried to carry him to the fine couch he used to sleep, but in vain.

On returning home, the youth Subha asked, "Who has moved the dog from its usual bed?" The servants told him that no one had driven the dog from its bed, and related all that had happened. Being appraised of the incident that had taken place, Subha thought to himself, "Todeyya is my father, if the monk Gotama has called the dog "Todeyya," it amounts to saying that my father has been reborn as a dog. In fact, my father has reached the Abode of Brahmas. What Venerable Gotama had said is false." He felt insulted. Greatly outraged, he immediately went out to see the Buddha with intending to accuse the Buddha of telling lies.

In this connection, the belief that the young man Subha had about his father having reached the Brahma realms was on the strength of his traditional belief according to the doctrine of the Brahmins. They believed that by practising in conformity with the doctrines of their

own religion, they would reach the Brahma realm on their demise. At one time, a Commander-in-Chief of the army, by the name of General Mahādatta who had a firm belief in the Brahminical doctrines had performed a ritual involving an act of sacrificing the life of a victim to propitiate a god, called “*Brāhmaṇa-bhatta*” spending a colossal amount of money in the performance of rites. It was stated that a vision of hell as an evil omen or sign (*nimitta*) had appeared to that man Mahādatta on the eve of his death. On being asked by his Brāhmaṇa teachers what he had seen or visualized, he replied having seen a bright lamp of brilliant red colour (*lohitaghara*). His Brāhmaṇa teachers said it was Brahmaloaka. He then asked where Brahmaloaka was situated, whether it was above or below. His teachers thereupon answered that it was above. He then said that what he had seen was below. The teachers insisted, saying that though it might appear to be below, it was in fact above. As he passed away while concentrating on this sign (*nimitta*), he went down to hell.¹ If a false religious belief is accepted, it is very dangerous. In the present era, I have heard of people who hold a firm belief that by slaughtering animals to propitiate the gods, one could reach a fortunate abode and that they remind a person on his or her death-bed to recall acts of charity in slaughtering living beings. This is a terrible belief.

When the youth Subha met the Buddha, he asked the Blessed One what was said to the dog, on the occasion of the Blessed One’s visit to his house. Were the reports he had heard true, or not. The Buddha replied that what Subha had heard was true and correct. Then, to convince him, he asked, “Young man! Is there any property that your father failed to tell you where they are kept?” Subha replied, Yes, there are — a gold necklace, a pair of gold slippers, and a gold vase worth 100,000 each, and also 100,000 in cash — 400,000 in all. These are listed in the properties bequeathed to me, but they cannot be traced.” Then the Buddha said, “Then go home, feed the dog with milk rice and other delicious food, then ask him where these missing properties are. This dog will reveal everything.”

On hearing the Buddha, the youth Subha reflected, “If what Venerable Gotama has said is true, the missing properties will be recovered. If his words are found to be false, I will be able to accuse him of speaking falsehood.” So he returned home, did as directed

¹ Majjhimapaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā, page 303.

by the Buddha. By the time the dog was dozing, Subha asked the animal as "O, father, where are these properties in the list? Venerable Gotama told me that you know where they are kept. Please show me where they are." The dog thinking; "They know about me so I could not possibly hide the matter," howled, and then showed where the properties were hidden by scratching the earth beneath which the properties were concealed. When they excavated the earth, all four items of missing property were discovered.

As a result of this discovery, faith in the Buddha arose in the heart of Subha. He realised that his father had undoubtedly become a dog after death. The dog having revealed everything as stated by the Buddha, it occurred to him that the Buddha really possessed the faculty of knowing the previous, future, and present existences. One would naturally have faith in what was stated if the statement so made is personally found to be true.

Those who have embraced various religious doctrines do not generally believe in what has been testified by other different religious beliefs contrary to their own. This is, of course, quite natural. Some religions hold a view that death of a human being is the annihilation of existence. What it means is that there is only one existence, which terminates at death. This concept, however, is not the product of one's own personal knowledge. It is mere speculation arising from one's own belief. In other religions, it is stated that after passing away from the human existence, a person will either go to hell forever, or be raised up to the heavenly abode. According to what they say, these are the only two destinies. There is probably no one who can vouch for it through his own personal knowledge or realisation. This is a belief which is traditionally handed down by their ancestors. Some religions say that after death, if favourable circumstances prevails, one may be reborn as a human being, or as a deva, and if not, as an animal, *etc.*

In this connection there are some extraordinary individuals who are said to have been endowed with the faculty of knowing all that occurs in the entire universe, *i.e.* persons possessing supernormal vision, hearing, and so on. According to the Buddha's teaching, as long as passionate desire is still clinging, and not yet eradicated, the process of mind and matter will continue from one existence to another due to kamma. In common parlance, it may be stated that a

human becomes a deva, or a deva becomes a human, or, a human is reborn as an animal, or an animal, is reborn as a human being, and so on. In reality, it is merely the natural occurrence of the continuous process of mind and matter. If passionate attachment is totally eliminated through the achievement of Arahantship by developing insight, the process of mind and matter will cease to occur after the arising of decess-consciousness, which is called attaining *parinibbāna*. It is commonly known as attaining final cessation, after which there is no more future existence. It is stated by the Buddha's teaching. This statement has been fully vouched for by the Buddha himself through his own perfect Enlightenment acquired through personal knowledge. Meditators who are presently practising will surely stand witness to the truth of this statement to the extent of their own achievement of insight knowledge.

The way that future existences occur is fully supported by the story of Todeyya, who became a dog. In the teachings of the Buddha, there are numerous examples like this, which serve as evidence. In the present day too, there are a number of such stories. One would undoubtedly believe the story of Todeyya now narrated if one personally comes across such incidents as Subha did, provided that there were no prejudice. If one is prejudiced, it may invoke blind criticisms due to holding a bigoted view. Some might dismiss it as absurd saying that it was a deception practised by Māra. If a person refuses to believe what the other has said through personal knowledge and experience, it becomes obvious that he or she is prejudiced by preconceived ideas.

Subha had no such prejudice. He could make a definite decision the moment that he had personally seen an incident that was credible. Therefore, he called on the Buddha for the second time to learn more, and respectfully asked the Blessed One as below.

The Questions Raised by Subha

“Friend¹ Gotama! People are born in this existence as humans beings. Though all of them are equally human, why should there be inequalities, for example, one is inferior while another is superior. Why are they born into high and low states? What are the reasons for these inequalities?

¹ Subha still uses the familiar term, “Bho Gotama.” (ed.)

Why are some short-lived, whereas some long-lived? Why are some sickly, whereas others are healthy? Why are some ugly, whereas others are handsome? Why do some have few attendants, whereas others have many? Why are some poor, whereas others are wealthy? Why are some born in a low class family, whereas others are born in a noble family? Why are some unwise, whereas others are wise?

These questions were put to know the reason of inequalities that exist in the world. All of these points deserve consideration. Some are siblings born of the same parents, even twins. From the astrological point of view, they may be born at almost same time. However, there is a disparity in the benefits derived by individuals. There may be a huge difference between them in terms of health, longevity, in friends, wealth, and wisdom. If they are the creations of an Almighty Creator, there should be no inequalities among human beings. If there is any imbalance in the creation of mankind, it needs serious reflection as to why they are so different. So the questions raised by the Subha are proper, reasonable, and sensible. To these questions, the Buddha gave the following answer in brief.

The Buddha's Answer to Subha

“Kammassakā, māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayonī kammabandhū kammappaṭisaraṇā. Kammaṃ satte vibhajati yadidaṃ — hīnappaṇītātāyā”ti.

Māṇava: Young man, **sattā:** in regard to beings (the question asked by Subha referred to human beings; but the Buddha replied referring to all beings), **kammassakā:** are the owners of their kamma.

As regards living beings, it has been stated that the kamma that they themselves have done are the sole property that they really own. Any kind of property such as gold or silver in one's possession may be regarded as one's personal property, however if it reaches the hands of others in some way, it will no longer be one's own. Though some property may be in one's possession throughout one's lifetime, on death, one will have to leave them behind, so they are no longer one's own. However, all the actions that one has done, whether these are business dealings relating to worldly affairs, or meritorious deeds such as generosity and morality, or demeritorious deeds, such as killing, these do not concern others. One is responsible for these actions, which are relevant to oneself only. Efforts made in business

affairs will bring benefits commensurate with the endeavour one has made. Merits will also bring appropriate benefits throughout one's future existences. Demerits will bring appropriate disadvantages. Those living in luxury or poverty are the inheritors of their own wholesome or unwholesome kamma. The results are not due to blind chance, but due to past moral or immoral actions. Hence, it is only kamma that is one's own property, which one truly possesses. This statement is most relevant to meditation on equanimity.

Furthermore, **sattā**: living beings, **kammadāyadā**: are the heirs of the kamma that they have done. It resembles how children inherit the property of their parents. If a person performs work that can bring wealth, he or she will derive the due benefits. In the same way, if one commits a crime, one will receive due punishment. Those who indulge in drinking and gambling will get the disastrous effects of their own immoral actions. At the very least, it will adversely affect their health, their reputation, and cause other suffering, such as disharmony among friends. These are instances of the disadvantages inherited by them. Similarly, acts of merit in the form of charity and morality will bring good results even in this present lifetime in the form of good health, long life, *etc.* Throughout the rounds of existences too, they will gain happiness in fortunate existences as human beings or deities. Eventually, they can gain the bliss of nibbāna where all suffering ceases. If acts of demerit, such as killing and stealing are committed, the evil effects will oppress them even in the present existence. Moreover, throughout the cycle of existences they will suffer the misery of the lower realms, *etc.* Good and bad inheritance will be derived accordingly. This explanation has been amplified in the discourse on things to recollect constantly¹ as follows.

Kalyāṇam vā: virtuous, **pāpakaṃ** vā: or evil, **yaṃ kammaṃ**: volitional actions, **karissanti**: will be done, **tassa**: and the results of good and bad actions, **dāyadā**: inheritance, **bhavissanti**: will occur. The words "kammadāyadā" and "kammassakā" have same meaning and effect. It includes the exposition of the word "kammassakā."

Again, **sattā**: beings, **kammayonī**: are subject only to kamma that has been committed by them of their own volition, which will bring the effects to all beings for their actions to make them either happy or miserable. It means that good actions will bring them good, and

¹ Abhiñhapaccavekkhitabāṭhāna Sutta, Book of Fives.

evil actions will bring them evil in as much as every action produces an effect. This is also an exposition of the meaning of the word "kammassakā."

Kammabandhū: This means only kamma constitutes one's own relatives and friends to be relied upon. If there are good relatives and friends, advantages can be derived by depending upon them. If lacking in good relatives and friends, no one can be relied upon. In much the same way, advantages can be derived depending upon good actions or kamma. If good kamma is lacking, there is nothing else to be relied upon. However, if there is bad kamma, the waves of bad effects will come rushing in upon them like enemies in the disguise of friends. This statement also serves as a clarification of the word "kammassakā."

Kammappatisaraṇā: This means, only kamma can be relied upon. All actions relating to business from the worldly point of view can be relied upon to bring prosperity. Likewise, one will have to rely on meritorious deeds to gain merits. However, in the case of demerits avoidance should be relied upon. The more that demerits can be removed, the more that misery can be reduced. Hence, the practice of wholesome kamma to dispel the results of unwholesome kamma are really dependable. This phrase also offers an explanation relating to the words "kammassakā."

Kammam: good and bad actions, **satte:** make the beings, **yadidaṃ hīnappaṇitātāya:** become inferior or superior, **vibhajjati:** distinguishes between one individual and another. These actions bring about the two different classes of beings as inferior and superior. Unwholesome kamma makes a person ignoble whereas wholesome kamma causes one to become a noble person. This is to say that beings can be classified by their respective kamma as inferior or superior individuals. If translated briefly in Burmese, "Beings have only kamma as their own property which they actually possess. They have to accept and receive the inheritance from kamma. Kamma is the cause that produces the effect. Only kamma can be relied upon as relatives and friends. Kamma serves as a support for beings to lean on. It is kamma that distinguishes beings as inferior or superior. Please follow the recitation:-

"Beings have only kamma as their own property that they actually possess. They have to accept and receive the inherit-

ance from kamma. Kamma is the cause that produces its effect. Only kamma can be relied upon as relatives and friends. Kamma serves as a support for beings to lean on. It is kamma that distinguishes beings making them inferior or superior.”

It is the Buddha’s teaching that conditions of misery and low birth as inferior beings, are created by one’s own immoral actions. Their own kamma also make beings happy and noble in life, and brings fame and honour. In other words, man is responsible for his own happiness and misery, which are the consequences of his own actions. It is his own destiny to be born noble or ignoble. It is not that living beings experience suffering and happiness as a result of others’ creation or of Almighty God’s will. The Buddha’s teaching pins it down to one’s own kamma and so no one needs be blamed. Let us recite the following motto:-

“Doer of evil reap evil; doers of good reap good.”

If the seeds of mangos, jack fruits, *etc.*, are sown, sweet fruits will be gathered. If the seeds of lemon or lime are sown, they will yield sour fruits, and one will taste the fruits that one reaps. We may recite the second motto in the light of the above.

“It is kamma, the planner, that implements both evil and good, making one suffer pain and enjoy pleasure.”

The brief answer given by the Buddha, not being fully understood, Subha requested further elaboration, which was given by the Blessed One, as follows:-

The Cause of Short and Long Life

Māṇava: Young man! **idha:** in this world, **itthī vā:** a woman, **puriso vā:** or a man, **ekacco:** a certain, **pāṇātipātī:** a killer of living beings, **hoti:** is. (Taking the life of another indicates cruelty without any sympathy). **So:** A person who kills, **tena kammena:** due to that act of killing, **param maraṇā:** after death, **apāyaṃ:** in the lower realms, **duggatiṃ:** an unfortunate destination, **vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ:** in hell, **upajjati:** would take rebirth. **Manussattaṃ:** human existence, **sace āgacchati:** if he is reborn, **yattha yattha paccājāyaṭi:** wherever he may be reborn, **appāyuko:** short-lived, **hoti:** is.¹

¹ Not all words in the Pāli text are explained (ed.)

In brief, it means that due to the unwholesome kamma of killing living beings, one is likely to descend to the lower realms after death. If born as a human being again, one will be short-lived.

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayaṃ:** a certain person, **pāṇātipātī hoti:** kills the living beings. **Tassa:** His or her, **esā paṭipadā:** habitual tendency, **appāyukasaṃvattanikā:** will lead to becoming short-lived. The motto composed in this regard is, “Killing others is likely to cause life to be shorter.”

Then, it had been taught relating to why there is longevity. It will be explained in brief.

Ekacco itthī vā puriso vā: A certain woman or man, **pāṇātipātā paṭivirato hoti:** abstains from killing. **So:** that person, **tena kammaena:** by virtue of abstaining from killing, **paraṃ maraṇā:** after death, **sugatiṃ:** in a fortunate destination, **saggaṃ lokaṃ:** in heaven, **upapajjati:** will be reborn. **Sace manussattaṃ āgaccanti:** If he or she reaches human existence, **dīghāyuco hoti:** will be long-lived. **Māṇava:** Young man, **yadidaṃ pāṇātipātā paṭivirato hoti:** one who abstains from killing a living being, **esā paṭipadā:** this habitual tendency (of abstaining from killing living beings), **dīghāyukā samvattanikā:** will lead to becoming long-lived.

In short, one who avoids killing is likely to reach celestial realms after death, by virtue of meritorious deeds. If reborn as a human being, he or she will live long. It means to say that the moral discipline or good conduct in refraining from killing living beings has the effect of long life. The motto to be recited is:

“Killing others causes short life;
Abstinence from killing brings long life.”

This is the answer to the first question. “Killing others” means the destruction of the life of any living being including all kinds of animals, which would embrace even tiny creatures such as lice, ants, and the ova and cysts of such creatures. Some even die while being conceived in a mother’s womb. Some are still-born. Some die within a month or two of birth, or at a young age of ten, twenty, or thirty, etc. Death occurring before the expiry of the normal life span without any unusual circumstances, which living beings suffer in the earlier part of their lives, can be attributed to the effects of unwholesome kamma for having killed others in a past existence.

Hence, a dilemma may arise as to why infants die immediately after birth? It can only be answered satisfactorily according to the Buddha's teaching. Sayādaw U Nārada of Sri Lanka mentioned in his teachings that the doctrine of Creation cannot deal satisfactorily with such a question. The way of his teaching may be stated thus: "In every race or among any living things and religionists, the incidence of death of an infant immediately following the birth has occurred can be found. Such an incident is likely to take place also among families who have by tradition adhered to the belief in Creation by an Almighty God. It is difficult to solve a question as to why a person has been created to die so early in infancy. This infant will not have committed any fault against his Creator. As such, there can hardly be any reason why the infant who is still innocent should be committed to hell forever. Also, not having anything that can be done by an infant according to the wish of the Creator, there is no good reason why he should be saved to reach the heavenly abode. Such being the case, the Doctrine of Creation of Beings in so far as it concerns the death of young infants immediately after birth is obviously unsatisfactory." Moreover, teaching has been done that misery which befalls the parents for the untimely death of their child who is short-lived is due to their participation and enjoyment in the act of killing the living beings committed by others in their past existence.

Undertaking the training rule to abstain from killing living beings (*pāṇātipātā verāmaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*) will bring merits of morality while this precept is still being observed without any lapse. Abstinence from killing even when occasion arises to commit an act of killing is the wholesome deed of abstention (*virati kusala*). If one refrains from killing even though the training rule has not been formally observed, it is known as successful abstinence (*sampatta virati*). If one abstains from killing as has been undertaken to observe the training rule, then it is known as abstinence by undertaking (*samādāna-virati*). The abstinence that is involved during the brief moment of achieving Stream-winning is called abstinence by cutting off (*samuccheda-virati*). Of these three kinds, abstinence by cutting off totally extirpates all evil physical and verbal actions. It will also guarantee freedom from rebirth in the four lower realms. On the other hand, successful abstinence, abstinence by undertaking, and

wholesome consciousness of undertaking the precepts will enable one to reach the fortunate abodes and tend to longevity.

“Abstinence from killing brings about long life” is a motto that indicates the attributes and faculty of abstinence by undertaking and the wholesome consciousness of undertaking the precepts. The answer to the first query having been elucidated for better understanding, let us proceed to explain the answer to the second question.

The Cause of Sickness and Health

Māṇava: Young man! **idha:** in this world, **itthī vā:** a woman, **puriso vā:** or a man, **ekacco:** a certain, **sattānaṃ:** living beings, **vihetḥakajātiko:** ill-treats with hands, stones, sticks, or other weapons, **hoti:** is. **So:** a person who ill-treats, **tena kammaṇa:** due to that act of ill-treatment, **paraṃ maraṇā:** after death, **apāyaṃ:** in the lower realms, **duggatiṃ:** an unfortunate destination, **vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ:** in hell, **upajjati:** would take rebirth.

Manussattaṃ: human existence, **sace āgacchati:** if he is reborn, **yattha yattha paccājāyaṭi:** wherever he may be reborn, **bahābādho:** sickly, **hoti:** is.

Māṇava: Young man, **eṣā paṭipadā:** habitual tendency (of ill-treating living beings), **bahābādhasamvattanikā:** will lead to being stricken with many kinds of diseases. By ill-treating living beings to cause injury or pain with hands, stones, sticks, or other weapons, one is likely to go down to lower realms, to hell, for that evil action. If reborn in a human existence, one is likely to be sickly. It means that the misconduct of ill-treating others will bring many diseases. To make it more evident, the story of Pūtigattatissa Thera will be cited.

The Story of Pūtigattatissa

In the lifetime of the Buddha, there lived a monk by the name of Pūtigattatissa Thera. He was from the city of Sāvatti. After entering the monkhood in the Buddha’s religion, he was addressed as Tissa Thera. Later, tumorous pimples about the size of a mustard seed appeared on his body. These tumorous pimples gradually became bigger and bigger. From about the size of a mustard seed, they grew to the size of beans, eventually swelled to the size of a grapefruit, and then burst. As a result, his whole body was covered with sores. Hence, he was dubbed “Pūtigatta,” which means “Stinking body.”

He was given the name of Pūtigattatissa Thera. Later, the morbid growth of this tumorous disease aggravated until his bones were fractured. There was no one to nurse him. All of his robes were stained with pus and putrid blood. Even his own disciples had abandoned him. Becoming helpless, he had to lie down all the time on his bed. At that time, the Buddha reflected with his divine eye, surveying the universe to see who could attain special knowledge. In his vision, the Buddha saw Pūtigattatissa Thera who would readily attain Arahantship. Realising that there was no one else on whom the Thera could rely, the Buddha made his way to him as if making a round of inspection of the monks' quarters. On reaching the place where Pūtigattatissa Thera was residing, the Buddha personally lifted up a big empty rice pot, washed it, and then, after putting water into it, placed the pot on a hearth to boil the water. When the water was about to boil, the Buddha intending to remove the cot where Pūtigattatissa Thera was lying, put his hands on the cot. It is extremely wonderful and worthy of reference if we imagine Buddha's Great Compassion and pity showered upon the Thera.

At this juncture, other monks appeared on the scene and after respectfully entreating the Buddha, "Lord, please make way. We will carry the cot wherever you wish." They carried the cot to the kitchen where the water was boiling. The Buddha, wishing to give the Thera a hot bath, took the warm water with a cup and then slowly sprinkled it on the body of the Thera. The monks took off the robe worn by the Thera, washed it with hot water, and placed it in the sun to dry. The Buddha directed that Pūtigattatissa's body be properly washed and cleansed with warm water. The monks, after complying with the directions given by the Buddha, gave the dry robes to the Thera to be wrapped up round his waist in place of the lower-robe, which was then taken off and washed. When it got dried, it was again given to be replaced around the waist of the Thera. The outer garment was then wrapped around his upper-body. In those days, there was scarcity of robes. There were no spare robes to be worn.

How adorable was the Buddha? For the eventual attainment of Arahantship by Pūtigattatissa Thera, the Buddha acted as a male-nurse. This is amazing, noble, and adorable. Having been properly attended to and nursed by the Buddha himself, Pūtigattatissa Thera got great relief. Then the compassionate Buddha taught as follows:-

*“Aciraṃ vatayaṃ kāyo, pathaviṃ adhisessati.
Chuddho apetaviññāṇo, niratthaṃva kaliṅgaramṃ.”*

Ayam kāyo: this body, **aciraṃ**: before long, **vata**: truly, **pathaviṃ adhisessati**: will lie on the ground (will be a corpse); **apetaviññāṇo**: devoid of consciousness, **chuddho**: abandoned as worthless waste, **niratthaṃ**: it is useless, **kaliṅgaramṃ eva**: like a worthless log.

The gist is: just as rotten and decayed logs remain on the ground, having been discarded, the lifeless body will soon be abandoned and in the graveyard. In those old days, corpses were abandoned at the graveyard without burying them.

Having heard the teachings of the Buddha delivered in the form of a verse, Pūtigattatissa Thera became an Arahant, and soon attained *parinibbāna*. Thera Pūtigattatissa was a bird-hunter during the lifetime of Kassapa Buddha. He collected the birds that he had caught, breaking their feet and wings. The next day, he would sell some, and cook some for his own consumption. Due to this evil kamma, in his final existence, his body became putrid with tumorous boils over the entire body. In that same former existence, on coming across an Arahant on his almsround, he made offerings of a bird curry and cooked-rice, and prayed to attain Arahantship. Due to that wholesome kamma, he became an Arahant under Gotama Buddha. This story of Pūtigattatissa should convince us that ill-treating others would cause sickness. The motto now coined for the purpose is “He who ill-treats others becomes sickly.” If ill-treating is avoided, it will bring good health. The meaning of this has been taught in brief in the following words:-

*“Appābādhasaṃvattanikā esā, māṇava, paṭipadā yadidaṃ sattānaṃ
aviheṭhakajātiko hoti.”*

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayam**: a certain person, **sattānaṃ**: to all beings, **aviheṭhakajātiko**: has no intention of causing ill-treating, **hoti**: is. **Tassa**: That person, **esā paṭipadā**: for his good conduct of refraining from ill-treating or harming the beings, **appābādhasaṃvattanikā**: is likely to bring about good health. In this connection, the motto will hereafter be composed as: “Compassion brings good health.” This expression conveys the sense that if one refrains from ill-treating others, it is likely to bring good health.

If one has compassion for others, one will not be inclined to ill-treat them. The motto is, therefore, composed as follows:-

“He who ill-treats is sickly,
whereas compassion brings good health.”

Hence, a person who ill-treats others will be afflicted with many kinds of diseases. It should, therefore be noted that those who have ill-treated others in a cruel way will be sickly. One who has sympathy or compassion and so refrains from ill-treating others will have fewer diseases and will be in robust health. This fact should also be borne in mind. Let us now proceed to tackle the third question, the answer to which will be rendered quoting a short phrase in Pāli.

The Cause of Ugliness and Beauty

A person who speaks harshly and behaves badly through an outburst of anger is likely to descend to the lower realms or to hell. If one happens to be reborn in the world of human beings, one will probably have ugly looks or complexion. This statement has been rendered in brief as follows:-

“*Dubbaṇṇasaṃvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ kodhano hoti.*”

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayam:** a certain person, **kadhano:** is wrathful, **hoti:** is. **Tassa:** His, **esā paṭipadā:** habitual tendency to be wrathful, **dubbaṇṇasaṃvattanikā:** will lead to ugliness. If anger arises, one’s facial expression and demeanour will immediately change for the worse and one’s appearance will be ugly. It has been stated that as a result of being wrathful, one will probably be ugly throughout the rounds of existences on becoming a human being. The motto is: “Wrath causes ugliness.” If patience can be exercised without yielding to anger in the face of harsh language or hostile verbal attacks, one is likely to reach celestial realms in one’s next existence. If one reaches the human existence, it is likely that one will have a very fair complexion, handsome looks, and a good personality. This has been taught concisely as follows:-

“*Pāsādikaṃvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ akkodhano hoti.*”

Māṇavo: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayam:** a certain person, **akkodhano:** is not wrathful, **hoti:** is. **Tassa:** His, **esā paṭipadā:** habitual tendency is not wrathful, **pāsādikaṃvattanikā:** leads to

beauty. The gist of it is expressed in the form of a motto which follows. Let us recite in conjunction with what has been stated herein before.

“Wrath causes ugliness; patience brings beauty.”

If one wishes to be handsome or beautiful, it is essential to develop and inculcate the spirit of patience.

Now we have come to the fourth question. The answer was given in Part Six. Hence, is enough here if we just recite the motto.

The Cause of Few or Many Attendants

“Envy repels attendants and helpers;
Goodwill brings forth retinue in large numbers.”

If one becomes envious of the welfare and prosperity of others, one is likely to go down to the lower realms or to hell. If reborn in the human realm, one will have few attendants and companions. If a person rejoices in others’ happiness or welfare with sympathetic-joy, one will probably be reborn in the celestial realms. In the event of rebirth in a human existence, one will have a large number of attendants. I will now give the answer to the fifth question.

The Cause of Poverty and Wealth

If no offer of charity, such as rice, milk, robes, transport, flowers, incense, perfumes, bedding, buildings, lights, *etc.*, are made, or if the acts of charity done by others are deterred or interfered with, such actions will probably cause one to be reborn in the lower realms or in hell. If one happens to be reborn in the world of human beings, one will probably be poverty-stricken. The gist is cited in the teaching quoted below.

“*Appabhogasaṃvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ na dātā hoti.*”

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayaṃ:** a certain person, **na dātā:** is not used to making charity, or rather, is miserly and stingy, **hoti:** is. **Tassa:** His, **esā paṭipadā:** habit of stinginess, not wishing to perform charity, **appabhogasaṃvattanikā:** leads to being poverty-stricken. The essence of this statement is composed partly in a motto as “Refraining from performing charity will cause extreme poverty.” By performing charity with generosity, one will probably reach the

celestial realms. If relegated from there to human existence, one is likely to become wealthy. This has been taught briefly as:-

“Mahābhogaṣaṃvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ dātā hoti.”

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayaṃ:** a certain person, **dātā:** charitable, **hoti:** is. **Tassa:** that person's, **paṭipadā esā:** habitual practice of making donations, **mahābhogaṣaṃvattanikā:** leads to being wealthy. This is couched in a motto to be recited in combination with the relevant portion of the expression described before.

“Failing to practise charity leads to poverty. Charity brings wealth and prosperity.”

This teaching on the benefits of charity (*dānakathā*) is often given in thanksgiving (*anumodana*) discourses so it is very well-known. However, the story of Ānanda the millionaire is relevant to the expression: “Refraining from making charity causes extreme poverty.”

The Story of Ānanda the Millionaire

During the lifetime of the Buddha, there lived a rich person by the name of Ānanda in the city of Sāvatti. His riches amounted to four hundred million. He was full of envy, and a miser too. Every fortnight, he asked his relatives to hold a meeting, and at every such meeting, he admonished his son Mūlasirī in this way. “Don't think that the four hundred million that we have is a colossal amount. Riches should be acquired and accumulated. If a single coin is offered repeatedly, the entire wealth will gradually be exhausted.

“Añjanānaṃ khayaṃ disvā, upacikānañca ācayaṃ.

Madhūnañca samāhāraṃ, paṇḍito gharamāvase.”

This verse is the same as the admonition (*ovādagāthā*) given by Todeyya. The only discrepancy between the two is the use of the expression “*upacikānaṃ*” *i.e.*, the white ants, and the word “*vammikānaṃ*” *i.e.*, the ant-hill. In this regard, it is to be interpreted as “*upacikānaṃ*” by the white ants, “*sañcayaṃ*” the accumulation of grains of sand that have been carried. Sometime later, after giving this exhortation, Ānanda the millionaire passed away. He died without telling his son where five earthenware pots containing gold and silver were buried in the ground. After his death, he was conceived in the womb of a female beggar in a village of beggars.

This village comprised a thousand dwellings. It was stated that from the time of Ānanda's conception in his mother's womb in his new existence, the inhabitants of that village faced great hardship in their way of their living. **Neva bhatim labhati**: They did not receive alms as usual and were not able to maintain themselves. **Na yapanamattato param bhattapiṇḍampi**: They received just enough food to support their own survival. The villagers wondered why their circumstances had changed in such a way. They thought there must be an unlucky person (*kālakaṇṇī*) in their village. So they separated the village into two parts. Then, villagers residing in one part of the village where Ānanda had been reborn remained in poverty as before. They divided this portion of the village into two, and it was repeatedly done in the same way until the mother of the child that was the former millionaire, Ānanda, was left alone in poverty. The mother, however, withstood misery with great patience. After giving birth to a child, she continued to sustain herself for her own livelihood and for the maintenance of the child. Ultimately, when the child grew up to an age capable of making his own rounds begging for food, the mother, no longer being able to endure the hardship, was compelled to abandon her son to whom a receptacle was given to seek for food on his own for subsistence. While going around begging for food in the village from house to house, he came upon the dwelling where he had lived in his former existence. Possessing the knowledge of his former lives (*jātissara-ñāna*), he entered the house through the front door. On seeing him, the sons of Mūlasirī cried through fear. They were frightened at the sight of him simply because of his extreme ugliness, due to the horrible deformity of his hands, feet, ears, and nose. The disfigurement of his body and ugly appearance made him look like a ghost.

The children who were crying, being the sons of Mūlasirī, were no other than this unfortunate young boy's former grandchildren. When the nanny looked at him, saw a very ugly sight in the person of this young boy. They assaulted him with sticks saying, "Go away, you devil!" They then throw him on a heap of garbage. In fact, they regarded him as garbage. At that time, the Buddha accompanied by the Venerable Ānanda in the course of their round for alms, arrived at the scene. Then on being asked by the Venerable Ānanda about the incident, the Buddha told Venerable Ānanda the state of affairs

in detail. Thereupon, the Venerable Ānanda requested the people nearby to bring Mūlasirī to him. The people in the neighbourhood, who had come over to this place, formed a big crowd of spectators. The Buddha then asked Mūlasirī: “Do you know this child?” The reply given was in the negative. The Buddha told Mūlasirī that this child was his father Ānanda, the millionaire. Mūlasirī exclaimed, “I cannot believe it, Venerable sir.” The Buddha therefore ordered the child, “Hey, Ānanda! Tell your son where the five big earthenware pots containing gold and silver are buried.” The place where the pots were concealed was shown by the boy, and on digging, the treasures were found intact. Only then, faith and reverence occurred in Mūlasirī. He became a convert and took the Three Refuges. On that occasion, the Buddha taught the following verse:-

*“Puttā matthi dhanammatthi, iti bālo vihaññati.
Attā hi attano natthi, kuto puttā kuto danam.”*

Me: I have, **puttā atthi:** sons and daughters, **me:** I have, **dhanam-atthi:** wealth, **iti:** having made this kind of assumption, **bālo:** a fool who has no foresight about future existences, **vihaññati:** becomes vexed and distressed about his children and wealth.

People have great anxiety about their children’s welfare and wealth under a false notion that they are their own and always dependable. In the event of the destruction of their children or wealth, they become greatly depressed. They worry what will happen to their property and relatives. There is no need to mention the physical and mental suffering that they undergo when destruction of their wealth and relatives occurs. They also become vexed due to having to perform their work with utmost endeavour to gain wealth that has not yet been acquired. It means that they have to be constantly toiling and striving with worry and misery to raise their children.

Attā hi: Even one’s own self, **attano:** one’s own, **natthi:** is not. It means that on the verge of death, one cannot rely upon his own self. After death, one cannot avoid descending to the lower realms or falling into of miserable conditions. Hence, **puttā:** sons and daughters, **kuto:** what can be said to be really dependable? **kuto danam:** How could one say that wealth can be depended upon?

Ānanda, the millionaire, whose story has just been narrated, had to undergo misery immediately after his death. He met with such

sufferings for having relied upon his son and riches instead of on the meritorious deeds of charity. There are many stories about people who became wealthy due to performing charity and offering gifts with great generosity. A person by the name of Indaka from the city of Rājagaha became a powerful deva for having offered a mere spoonful of food with great generosity to the Venerable Anuruddha Thera. This anecdote has been often mentioned. Hence, the motto: “Refraining from making charity causes extreme poverty; charity brings wealth and prosperity,” should always be borne in mind and well understood. After appreciating this, it is vital to practise charity. In any case, Burmese Buddhists are not lacking in generosity or in the matter of offering donations. They are generally well accomplished with the virtue of generosity.

The Cause of Low and High Birth

Failure to pay reverence to those who deserve it, thinking highly of oneself through conceit, will probably lead to the lower realms or to hell. Even in the event of rebirth in a human existence, one will be born into a low class family. The meaning of this statement has been elucidated briefly as follows:-

“Nīcakulīnasamvattanikā eṣā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ thaddho hoti atimānī abhivādetabbaṃ na abhivādeti, etc.”

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayam:** a certain person, **thaddho:** is stubborn and proud to the extent of being disrespectful and disobedient to others, due to his conceit, **atimānī:** is exceedingly vain and looks down upon others, **hoti:** is, **abhivādetabbaṃ:** to a person deserving worship or respect, **na abhivādeti:** fails to pay due homage and respect, **tassa:** that person’s, **eṣā paṭipadā:** habit of stubbornness and conceit to the extent of refusing to pay respect and reverence, **nīcakulīnasamvattanikā:** leads to being reborn in a low class family.

Those who are worthy of worship and respect are parents, elders, and those who are accomplished with the attributes of morality, learning, etc., such as monks, and teachers. Parents and grandparents are worthy of reverence. Even if no reverence is made, respect should at least be given. Monks and Sayādaws who are endowed with morality deserved to be worshipped. Genuine Buddhas and the

Saṅgha are worthy of deep reverence. If no proper respect or homage is given to these noble persons due to conceit (*māna*), one is liable to go down to hell. If rebirth takes place as a human being, one will have a humble birth in a low class family and will become ignoble. In this regard, the motto is: “Rudeness causes low-birth.”

If reverence and respect is paid to those who are worthy of reverence and respect without conceit, one will probably reach the celestial realms. If one is reborn as a human being, one will belong to a noble family. This has been taught in a concise way.

“Uccākulī na saṁvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ atthaddho hoti anati mānī abhivādetobbaṃ abhivādeti.”

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayaṃ:** a certain person, **atthaddho:** is gentle and meek, **anati mānī:** without vanity, **hoti:** is, **abhivādetabbaṃ abhivādeti:** pays homage or respect to one who is worthy of reverence, **tassa:** that person’s, **esā paṭipadā:** habitual conduct of paying respect and reverence without conceit, **uccakulīnasamvattanikā:** is the cause of rebirth in a noble family.

This has been composed as the last motto: “Respect brings high birth.” This may be uttered in combination with the first part of the motto stated earlier.

“Rudeness causes low-birth. Respect brings high birth.”

The effects of one’s own kamma, six in all, and different from one another, are very obvious in respect of the miserable or happy conditions that prevail in one’s life. It is sheer misery if one is short-lived, sickly, ugly, lacking in attendants, poor, and low-born. There is happiness if one has long life, good health, beauty, many attendants, wealth, and noble birth. That is why in developing loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy when reciting: “May all beings be happy,” “May they be free from misery,” and “May they be able to retain their wealth and prosperity without diminution,” are more pertinent to these six kinds. Similarly, in developing equanimity, “One is the owner of one’s own kamma,” is also more relevant to these six categories. How it becomes relevant is that by radiating loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy, the advantages of a long life and freedom from disease, that may be derived by living beings cannot be considered as adequate. Only when endowed with long life and good health, full accomplishment can be achieved as desired.

As such, the said six kinds are more relevant to equanimity, which should be borne in mind as: “Only kamma is one’s own property.” Hence, let us now first develop loving-kindness, *etc.*, and then equanimity by reciting.

“May all beings be happy.”

“May all beings be liberated from misery.”

“May all beings be able to retain the wealth and prosperity that they have acquired, without diminution, and be happy as before.” (Repeat thrice)

Developing 132 Kinds of Equanimity

All living beings have only kamma as their own property. They come into being, moulded, and influenced by their own actions according to circumstances.

“Evil actions bring evil results. Good actions produce good results.”

“It is kamma, the planner, that implements both evil and good, making one suffer pain and enjoy pleasure.”

“All those who breathe have only kamma as their own property.”

“All those who are born have only kamma as their own property.”

“All ordinary individuals have only kamma as their own property.”

“All those with aggregates have only kamma as their own property.”

These five phrases that have been recited are the five kinds of unspecified equanimity that view with indifference all beings with no limitation or distinction. We will now proceed to recite and develop the seven kinds of specified equanimity.

“All females have only kamma as their own property.”

“All males have only kamma as their own property.”

“All Noble Ones have only kamma as their own property.”

“All ordinary individuals have only kamma as their own property.”

“All deities have only kamma as their own property.”

“All human beings have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the lower realms have only kamma as their own property.”

The above indicate the way of developing the seven kinds of specified equanimity. If these seven kinds are added to the five unspecified kinds stated earlier, it will come to twelve. These are the twelve kinds of specified and unspecified equanimity without distinguishing direction and without limitation. If equanimity is developed after limitation is done by distinguishing the directions, there will be twelve kinds for every direction. As there are ten directions, it will come to a total of 120. Let us recite and develop these 120 kinds in brief. Please follow the recitation:—

“All beings in the East have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the West have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the North have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the South have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the South-east have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the North-west have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the North-east have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the South-west have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the Nadir have only kamma as their own property.”

“All beings in the Zenith have only kamma as their own property.”

We now have recited the 120 kinds of directional equanimity in brief. If these are added to the 12 kinds recited before, it will come to 132 kinds of equanimity. The way of developing equanimity has now been described in full. However, what now remains is the last of the seven answers to the questions raised by Subha. I will now teach the remaining one.

The Cause of Foolishness and Wisdom

“Idha, māṇava, ekacco itthī vā puriso vā samaṇaṃ vā brāhmaṇaṃ vā upasaṅkamtivā na paripucchitā hoti: Kiṃ, bhante, kusalaṃ, kiṃ akusalaṃ; kiṃ sāvajjaṃ, kiṃ anavajjaṃ; kiṃ sevitaḅbaṃ, kiṃ na sevitaḅbaṃ; kiṃ me karīyamānaṃ dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya hoti, kiṃ vā pana me karīyamānaṃ dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya hotī’ti.”

Māṇava: Young man, **idha:** here, **ekacco itthivā puriso vā:** a certain woman or a man, **samaṇaṃ vā brahmāṇaṃ vā upasaṅkamtivā:** having approached a recluse or priest, **na paripucchitā hoti:** does not know how to ask a question. **Bhante:** Venerable sir, **kiṃ kusalaṃ kiṃ akusalaṃ:** What is wholesome? What is unwholesome? **Kiṃ sāvajjaṃ kiṃ anavijjaṃ:** What is blameworthy? What is blameless? **Kiṃ sevitaḅbaṃ, kiṃ na sevitaḅbaṃ:** What is dependable? What is not dependable? **Kiṃ karīyamānaṃ:** What, if done, **me:** will lead me, **dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya hoti:** for a very long time to harm and misery; **vā pana:** apart from this, **Kiṃ karīyamānaṃ:** What should be done, **dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya hoti:** for a very long time to bring benefits and happiness? **Iti:** Do not know how to ask questions in that way, and remain without asking any question.

Some do not know how to approach a knowledgeable and experienced person, to ask for information or advice in matters that they are unable to understand. In accordance with a Burmese proverb: “Ask what is not known and cleanse what is dirty,” one should find out and ask what one does not know. However, some are complacent, failing to investigate and thus become knowledgeable. Failure to investigate what is not known is negligence of one’s duty. In matters relating to business affairs, one should ask about things with which one is unacquainted. If it needs practical training, one should undergo training and study things properly. Only then, one can be successful in one’s career. In the same way, relating to religious affairs, one should ask and seek for knowledge that one lacks. It is therefore essential to ask what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, and so on. However, a person who has no interest in the pursuit of knowledge remain carefree and nonchalant, If one fails to seek knowledge and information, one becomes unknowledgeable and

uninformed, and is likely to do things that should not have been done. Due to having done wrong, such an unknowledgeable person lacking in the practice of Dhamma is likely to be reborn in the lower realms or in hell after death. If rebirth takes place in the human world due to having failed to gain the required knowledge and practical experience in Dhamma, one is likely to become a person of immoral character. This fact has also been taught briefly as follows:-

“Duppāññasaṃvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ samaṇaṃ vā brahmāṇaṃ vā upasaṅkamtivā na paripucchitā hoti.”

If what is not understood is investigated, studied, and observed, the relevant knowledge will be acquired. Being knowledgeable, what is improper will not be done. As a prudent and well-informed person, one will only do things that are appropriate. Being endowed with the right knowledge that will enable one to avoid doing evil, one will be reborn in the celestial realms. If one becomes a human being, one will become a highly intellectual person with great intelligence. It has thus been taught in brief, as follows:-

“Mahāpaññasaṃvattanikā esā māṇava paṭipadā yadidaṃ samaṇaṃ vā brahmāṇaṃ vā upasaṅkamtivā pari-pucchitā hoti.”

Māṇava: Young man, **yadidaṃ yo ayaṃ:** a certain person, **samaṇaṃ vā brahmāṇaṃ vā upasaṅkamtivā:** having approached a recluse or a priest, **paripucchitā hoti:** knows how to ask a question, **esā paṭipadā:** this habitual tendency, **mahāpaññasaṃvattanikā:** leads to great wisdom. This motto may be uttered by incorporating it with the previous motto, as follows:-

“Non-investigation causes blind ignorance. Investigation brings great wisdom.”

It means that if a proper investigation is made, one becomes highly intelligent and wise. The way of making an inquiry is by asking, “What is wholesome and what is wholesome?” *etc.* Wholesomeness is a virtuous Dhamma. It is also blameless. Since it is dependable, it should be done, and if such a wholesome thing is done, it would bring advantages and happiness, both in the present existence and throughout all future existences. Unwholesomeness is an evil Dhamma, such as immoral actions rooted in greed, anger, and delusion. It will bring evil effects, and is a Dhamma not worthy of

relying on. If such immoral actions are performed, they will dragging one down to the lower realms, or to hell. Furthermore, it is a blameworthy thing that produces evil results of misery in the current lifetime, in the next life, and in successive births throughout the cycle of existence. Hence, it is vital to know the distinguishing features of wholesome and unwholesome things. Those listening to the discourse now have a good general knowledge of this Dhamma. However, the difference between wholesome and unwholesome Dhamma will have to be explained at least in brief.

Unreliable Unwholesome Things to Avoid

Unwholesomeness, means in brief the ten kinds of misconduct. These are: killing (*pāṇātipātā*), taking property that has not been given by the owner, *i.e.* stealing (*adinnādānā*), sexual misconduct (*kāmesumicchācāra*), *i.e.* unlawful indulgence in sensual pleasures (*kāmaguṇa*). These are the three kinds of physical misconduct (*kāyakammaṃ*).

Telling lies or speaking falsehood is the offence of lying (*musāvāda*), Backbiting or slander (*pisuṇavācā*), abusive, obscene, or harsh speech (*pharusavācā*), frivolous talk (*samphappalāpa*). These are the four verbal acts of misconduct (*vacīkammaṃ*).

Covetousness (*abhijjhā*), is scheming with avarice to get other's property unlawfully. The offence of ill-will (*byāpāda*), *i.e.* plotting other's death or destruction with the intention of doing harm. Wrong-view (*micchā-dittṭhi*), such as having a misconception that there is no law of kamma by which benefits will be accrued. These three are mental misconduct (*manokammaṃ*).

These ten immoral actions are not dependable, and should be avoided. More details relating to these ten may be found in "[A Discourse on the Sallekha Sutta](#)." In brief, all actions relating to thought, word, deeds that cause misery to others are unwholesome deeds that should be avoided as they are unreliable.

Wholesome Things to Rely On

In brief, wholesomeness means the ten kinds of skilful conduct (*sucarita*). Avoidance of the three kinds of bodily misconduct will result in three kinds of skilful conduct. In the same way, abstinence from the four kinds of verbal misconduct, and the three three kinds

of mental misconduct, should be regarded as the four kinds of skilful verbal conduct (*vacī-sucarita*) and three kinds of skilful mental conduct (*mano-sucarita*), respectively. This teaching can be found in A Discourse on the Sallekha Sutta. To put it in another way, wholesomeness refers to generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), and meditation (*bhāvanā*). Since the meaning of generosity is well-known, no explanation is called for. Morality is the avoidance of immoral acts including verbal and physical misconduct. It means avoiding the three kinds of bodily and four kinds of verbal misconduct. Meditation is of two kinds and refers to the practice of tranquillity meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*), and insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) for the realisation of the four Noble Truths.

An explanation of tranquillity meditation is given in the Visuddhi-magga, distinguishing forty meditation objects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). The four sublime abidings (*brahmavihāra*)—loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity— are included among these. The others are ten contemplation devices (*kaṣiṇa*), ten impurities (*asubha*), ten recollections (*anussati*), four immaterial absorptions (*arūpa*), one contemplation on the loathsomeness of food (*āhāre paṭikūlassaññā*), and one analysis of the four elements (*catudhātuvaṭṭhāna*). One should ask about any one, two, three, or four of these forty meditation exercises to clearly understand how to practise them. However, by listening attentively to this discourse as you are now doing, or by reading the texts with keen interest, it would serve the same purpose. This is the cause of becoming intelligent and wise.

The most important thing is to understand fully about the wholesome deed of insight meditation. One must approach a person who is competent to give instructions on how to practise insight meditation. If you are paying attention to the present teachings, it would also be adequate for the purpose. This will bring wisdom and useful knowledge. The Buddhist texts that contain instructions how to contemplate for insight in the right way will also serve the purpose of acquiring the essential knowledge. If one could arduously practise insight meditation under instruction from a spiritual teacher before and during the course of training, it would be ideal. Although I have often taught in the past about the method of contemplating for insight, since the opportune moment has arisen now to repeat my teachings, I will give a brief account here.

Practising Meditation to Gain Insight

People are generally driven by unwholesome states such as greed, anger, *etc.*, based on the sensations arising from the six senses at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing. This is due to not realising the true characteristics of impermanence, *etc.*, of the natural phenomena that manifest at the moment of seeing, *etc.* Hence, the purpose of contemplating for insight is to prevent any opportunity for the occurrence of greed, and so on. If the true characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self are truly known, the Dhamma that has been realised will deter mental defilements from arising. This deterrent effect that subdues defilements is the faculty of merits derived from insight meditation. The realities of mental and physical phenomena are conspicuous for only a very brief moment, as and when they occur. This is why contemplation should be made while they are in the process of arising and becoming. Only when contemplation is carried on at the moment of their arising, can the true nature of their characteristics be known and realised. I have composed a motto in this regard: "Real awareness of the phenomena can take place only when contemplation is made at the moment of their arising."

To cite an example: A flash of lightning is seen only at the moment that it occurs. Therefore, if one wishes to seeing a lightning flash, one observe it while it flashes. The brilliant light is not visible and cannot be noticed after the flash has occurred. Nor could it be seen by mere imagination before the electrical discharge produces a flash of lightning. The ultimate realities (*paramattha*) of mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) are apparent only while in the process of arising. They vanish immediately after arising, and no longer exists. Before arising they are not yet in existence. So if they are contemplated before arising or after dissolution, the truth cannot be known. Only phenomena are contemplated while they are occurring, can their true nature be realised. Only after knowing the nature of phenomena, is there awareness of how it occurs and dissolves instantaneously. This is composed in a motto, which may be recited:–

"Only when it's true nature is known, the initial arising (*udaya*) and final dissolution (*vaya*) can be perceived."

“*Udaya*” means “arising” or “appearance.” “*Vaya*” means “dissolution” or “disappearance.” It is usually stated as “arising and dissolution.” When awareness becomes sharp and active while contemplating the nature of mind and matter at every moment of their arising and dissolution, the ultimate realities of mental and physical phenomena will be clearly perceived with insight knowledge into how they begin to arise and end in dissolution. This cannot be perceived and known by merely uttering “arising and disappearing.” Only when the truth is known, personal knowledge and realisation is achieved that these phenomena are truly impermanent since they vanish immediately after arising. This phenomenal occurrence is described in the form of a brief motto, which is to be recited:-

“Awareness of the nature of impermanence occurs only when arising and dissolution is perceived directly.”

When impermanence is seen and realised, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self are also known. Contemplation of the nature of mind and matter with its three characteristics is genuine insight meditation. It is essential to contemplate and note continuously the arising phenomena at every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing to bring about the development of genuine insight-knowledge. Contemplating and noting in this way can be regarded as practising insight meditation.

How Consciousness Arises at the Moment of Seeing

How to contemplate may be explained as follows:

Contemplate and note as “seeing, seeing” when a sense-object is seen, similar to the way taught as: **Gacchanto vā**: while walking, **gacchāmi’ti**: as walking, **pajānāti**: it is known. That is, while walking, one should note as “walking.” When contemplating and noting in this way, awareness of the true nature of the mental and physical phenomena that manifest at the moment of seeing will occur. According to the teaching, the manifestations of phenomena at the moment of seeing may be stated as:-

“Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ tinnaṃ saṅghati phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā.”

Cakkhuñca: Upon the eye also, **paṭicca**: depending, **rūpe ca**: upon the visual object also, **paṭicca**: depending, **cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ**:

eye-consciousness, **uppajjati**: arises, **tiṇṇaṃ saṅghati**: the three factors — the eye, the visual object, and the knowing mind or eye-consciousness — having occurred together, **phasso**: contact, **phassa paccayā**: because of this contact, **vedanā**: feeling arises.

Depending upon the physical eye and the visual object, eye-consciousness arises. Of course, seeing takes place because of the presence of the eye-base and the sense-object of a sight. As such, at the brief moment of seeing, the eye-base is obviously present as also are the sense-object, and eye-consciousness. An ordinary person without knowledge of insight meditation imagines that the thing that is seen or perceived is “I.” When good things are seen, joy and happiness occur. It is thought of as being good. Similarly, the eye and the whole body are considered as permanent and pleasurable, and taken to be one’s own self or a living being. The object of sight is also thought of as being permanent, good, and a living entity — a self. This is how pleasurable attachment takes place at the time of seeing a sense-object that has life. On the other hand, when a lifeless sense-object is seen, an ordinary person will regard it as a material object that is known by its name (*paññatti*).

One who is meditating continuously, contemplating and noting every time he or she sees or hears, when concentration becomes strong, will notice distinctly that the eye-base and the visual object are quite different from the perception and consciousness of the mind that knows them. Then, the eye, the eye-consciousness, the visual object, and the awareness that has occurred, all vanish instantaneously after seeing has occurred. Seeing will, therefore, be realised as impermanent. Due to not being permanent, it is known as unsatisfactory, something that cannot be relied upon and which should be considered as suffering. It is also realised as merely a phenomenon, not as a self or living entity. Those who have a keen intellect will, in the same way, know that what is seen and considered to be an unpleasant or pleasant sight are simply impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This is real insight knowledge, which realises and sees the truth through the three characteristics, on and after contemplating and noting at every moment of seeing. Hence, the expression “*vipassanā*” has been explained in the Commentaries as “*aniccādivasena*” according to the intention conveyed by the use of the words “*anicca, etc.,*” **vividhena ākārena**: and according to various characteristics,

passatīti: for being able to contemplate and realise things, it is known as “*vipassanā*.” The manner of such a realisation in brief is expressed in the following words. Please follow the recitation:–

“At the moment of seeing, the eye and the sight, which do not know, are matter. Seeing and knowing the sight are mind. Consciousness that arises through contemplation is also mind.”

Due to having vanished and ceased altogether immediately after seeing and knowing and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.

How Consciousness Arises at the Moment of Hearing

In the case of ordinary individuals, at every moment of hearing, all that is heard, the ear-base, and the sound are thought of as being permanent, pleasurable, and good, and as a self or being. This is ignorance (*avijjā*), which does not know the truth or what is right. Based on this ignorance, suffering such as mental formations (*saṅkhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*), have occurred. A meditator, while contemplating and noting as “hearing, hearing” every time he or she hears, will, when concentration becomes strengthened, know distinctly that the ear-base and the sound are matter and that they are distinct from ear-consciousness and the knowing mind that occurs through contemplation, and further that these are mind. The ear, the audible sound, ear-consciousness, and the knowing mind vanish and cease immediately after becoming aware of what occurred. He or she then knows that all are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This is the genuine insight knowledge, which has revealed and realised the truth about the three characteristics. Recitation may now be made as follows:–

“At the moment of hearing, the ear and the sound, which do not know, are matter. Hearing and knowing the sound are mind. Consciousness that arises through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of the sound and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

How Consciousness Arises at the Moment of Smelling

In the case of ordinary individuals, every time an odour is smelt, the smelling, the nose-base, and the odour are wrongly thought of as permanent, pleasurable, and good and as a self or being. This is due to ignorance not knowing what they truly are. Based on ignorance, suffering such as mental formations and consciousness have occurred. A meditator who is contemplating and noting “smelling, smelling” every time an odour is smelt, when concentration becomes highly developed, the meditator will come to know distinctly that the nose and the odour are distinct from the smell, and that the consciousness of smelling is another. They are known as being different from one another. The nose, smelling, the odour, and awareness through contemplation, are found to have vanished and ceased altogether after becoming aware of what has occurred. Hence, the realisation comes that these are by nature impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This is the genuine insight that knows the truth by the three characteristics. How such awareness occurs may be recited as follows:-

“At the moment of smelling, the nose and the odour, which do not know, are matter. Smelling and knowing the odour are mind. Consciousness that arises through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of the smell, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

How Consciousness Arises at the Moment of Tasting

What is meant by the expression: “At the moment of tasting” is “While knowing the taste.” Looking at and seeing the food are relevant to the moment of seeing. Handling the food, putting the food into the mouth, and chewing the food are only concerned with touching. While chewing and tasting, the tongue that knows the flavour is conscious of tasting the food. At every moment of knowing the taste while eating, ordinary individuals are under the false impression that awareness of the taste, the tongue-base, and the taste are permanent, pleasurable, good, and a self or being. This is ignorance. Depending on this ignorance, suffering such as mental formations

and consciousness, have occurred. A meditator, while contemplating and noting the taste as “tasting, tasting,” every time he or she knows the taste, will, when concentration becomes strong, distinctly know that the tongue and the taste are quite distinct from the consciousness of the taste, and the awareness that occurs through contemplation. The tongue, the consciousness of the taste, the taste itself, and the awareness that occurs have all vanished and ceased to exist immediately after becoming aware of them. Hence, the realisation occurs that these are by their nature impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This realisation is genuine insight knowledge, which knows the truth of the three characteristics.

“At the moment of tasting and knowing, the tongue and the taste, which are incapable of knowing, are matter. Tasting and knowing are mind. Consciousness through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of tasting and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

How Consciousness Arises at the Moment of Touching

The expression: “At the moment of touching,” covers a very wide scope. What is seen can be hidden just by closing the eyes. Hearing can be prevented by going to a quiet place. Consciousness that arises in smelling and tasting occur only occasionally. However, in regard to the sense of touch, by focusing on the whole physical body, it becomes apparent that whenever contact is made with any part of the body, that touching pervades the entire body. Without any conscious effort, one automatically becomes aware of touch. While sitting, the feeling of touch in the lower portion of the body is conspicuous. The contact of the body or any part thereof with clothes is also clearly perceived by the senses. One feels and knows clearly the contact that occurs between the teeth and the tongue. Flesh and blood, are also found to be always in contact with each other. When walking or changing postures, the sense of touch in the limbs is obvious. Every time breathing is done, the movements of the air element, the propelling force of the movements, and sensations of touch are obvious in the nose and abdomen. Also obvious are the sensations caused by heat

and cold. In connection with all such contacts, ordinary individuals wrongly conceive that consciousness of touch has been occurring always. When pleasant sensations are felt, they regard these as delightful and good. These are erroneous concepts viewing impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self as being permanent, pleasant, and self. As such, these indicate ignorance of the truth. Depending on this ignorance, suffering such as mental formations and consciousness, have occurred. A meditator should contemplate and note such occurrences as “touching, touching.” In particular, when walking, it must be continually contemplated and noted as: “walking, walking,” or “left, right,” or “lifting, stepping, dropping,” and so on. This is the way of contemplating with mindfulness in accordance with the teachings given in the Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta: **Gacchanto vā:** while walking, **gacchāmi’ti pajānāti:** one knows I am walking. In this regard, the way in which consciousness arises by contemplating as “I am walking” needs special attention. It should be known and understood as matter. No instructions have been given to contemplate and become aware of it as the air element (*vāyo-dhātu*), conveying the sense of absolute reality (*paramattha*).

Nevertheless, while contemplating and noting as “walking,” *etc.*, as expressed earlier, a meditator will become aware of the stiffness and pressure, which signify the nature of movement or the changing posture. Also when standing and so on, while contemplating and noting as “standing,” “sitting,” “lying down,” “bending,” “stretching,” “shaking,” “changing,” *etc.*, the true nature of the element of motion or air element (*vāyo-dhātu*), will be truly known and realised.

Next, when contemplating and noting as “rising” and “falling,” in line with the instructions, at every moment of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, the true characteristics of the air element, which propels and causes stiffness and motivation, will be vividly known. There is one peculiar feature while contemplating the abdominal movements. This is, at the end of the rising movement, falling begins to occur. In the same way, when falling comes to an end, the abdomen begins to rise again. There is no interval in this process of rising and falling as in the case of sitting or touching. Contemplating and noting should be carried on as “falling,” the moment that the rising has ended, and vice versa. If contemplating and noting is done continuously, the mindfulness that occurs before

the continuous process, and that which occurs after it, being consecutive, concentration is gained and insight knowledge will arise. This is the special feature of contemplating the natural phenomena of the abdominal movements. However, it is not that only "rising and falling" should be contemplated and noted. While contemplation and noting are being carried on, any imagination that occurs should also be noted as "imagining." Similarly, stiffness, heat, or pain should also be contemplated and noted as and when they occur. Any change in posture, if done, should not escape the attention of contemplation. Any hearing and seeing that occur must also be contemplated and noted. In the absence of anything in particular to be contemplated and noted, one should revert to contemplating and noting the abdominal movements.

Pressure, stiffness and other physical movements that occur while contemplating and noting are the manifestation of the air element. Consciousness of the touch that occurs is bodily consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*). Where the sense of touch resides is the body-base (*kāya-pasāda*). At every moment of contemplating and noting "rising, falling, stiffness, distention, contraction, propelling, motivation, touching," etc., the sensations inherent in the body are clearly perceived. When concentration becomes strong and stable, the rising, the falling, and the consciousness that knows them are distinctly known. Hence, at the moment of the arising of contact, it is distinctly known that what is touching the body is matter, whereas touching and knowing through contemplation are mind. Similarly, at the moment of taking a step, the bodily movement is matter, and the awareness of contact, and the consciousness that arises by contemplation is mind. These are also known distinctly. While bending or stretching, the material body, the stiffness, and its movement are matter. Consciousness that arises by contemplation is mind. These are also distinctly known. In a brief moment of noting rising and falling, the body itself, stiffness, and the movement that occurs are matter. Consciousness of what is taking place is mind. That is also distinctly known. When concentration becomes well developed, the meditator will come to know distinctly that what is known and the knowing mind have ceased and vanished altogether immediately after the occurrence. Hence these are truly known as inherently impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This is genuine insight

knowledge, which realises the truth of the three characteristics. The following may be recited:—

“At the moment of touching and knowing, the body and the tactile object, which are incapable of knowing, are matter. Touching and knowing are mind. Consciousness through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of contact, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

“At the moment of walking, the movement of the body, which is incapable knowing, is matter. Touching and knowing are mind. Consciousness through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of contact, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

“At the moment of rising and falling, the bodily movement, which is incapable of knowing, is matter. Touching and knowing are mind. Consciousness through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of contact, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

How Consciousness Arises at the Moment of Knowing

Attachment to the thought or idea that arises thinking highly of oneself as a living entity is the greatest. The imagination and the knowing mind are regarded as lasting throughout life. Imagination runs riot, and the work of planning and imagining according to one’s wish is regarded as good and pleasurable. This is mere ignorance with a false conception that all such things are permanent, pleasurable, and a self. Depending on this ignorance, suffering such as mental formations and consciousness, have occurred. To be able to dispel this ignorance, contemplating and noting should be done every time imagination occurs. While contemplating and noting as “rising,

falling," etc., if imagination creeps in, it must be contemplated as "imagining," or "planning." This amounts to saying that the arising consciousness of imagination should be contemplated and noted. Every time such consciousness arises, it will be known and realised that the body is one thing, and that imagining is another, and that consciousness is distinct from both. These are distinctly known as such. The object of imagination and its awareness have the element of matter as well as mind with its concomitants. It therefore has concepts (*paññatti*), such as name and form. Hence, this sense object, which is known cannot be said with certainty as matter. Moreover, the body, the imagination that knows, and awareness or consciousness gained through contemplation have all vanished and ceased instantaneously after being apprehended. When concentration becomes well developed, the meditator will come to know distinctly that what is known and the knowing mind have ceased and vanished altogether immediately after the occurrence. Hence these are truly known as inherently impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This is genuine insight knowledge, which realises the truth of the three characteristics.

"At the moment of imagining and knowing, the base on which imagination and the knowing mind rest is matter. The act of imagining and knowing, and consciousness through contemplation are mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of contact, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self."

It is insight knowledge that contemplates and knows the obvious phenomenal conditions occurring at the moment of imagining and knowing, every time loving-kindness is developed by reciting as, "May all beings be happy," while listening to the discourse.

"When contemplating as such, what is brought to the mind and willingness to recite is mind. The recitation made and the sound is matter. Consciousness through contemplation is also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of contact, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these

phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self. This realisation is the genuine insight knowledge which truly knows the three characteristics.”

“Wishing to recite as: ‘May all beings be happy,’ is mind. The recitation made and the sound produced are matter. Contemplating and noting these phenomena are also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of contact, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

What we have now recited indicate the way of developing loving-kindness and contemplating for insight, and how they are perceived and known. The way of developing compassion and contemplating for insight and how perception and realisation take place may again be recited.

“May all beings be liberated from misery.”

“Wishing to let them escape from misery and willing to recite are mind. The recitation and the sound are matter. Contemplating and noting them are mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of knowing, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

I will now continue to recite how realisation takes place, how sympathetic-joy is developed, and also how contemplate for insight.

“May all beings be able to retain their wealth and prosperity without diminution.”

“May they be able to accomplish their wealth and prosperity, and be happy, as before.”

“The feelings of goodwill and rejoicing, and willingness to recite are mind. The recitation and the sound are matter. Contemplating and noting them are also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of knowing, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is

evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

Wholesome Things to Investigate

What have just been stated are those wholesome things which need to be investigated. Included among these wholesome deeds are tranquillity and insight meditation, loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic-joy, with an explanation as to how these are derived. Immense merits have been derived by you all by listening to the discourse relating to the said wholesome things. You have also personally understood these things and gained the requisite knowledge of Dhamma. This knowledge will be enhanced and the fruits thereof will ripen in future. The advantages that can be accrued have been explained by the Buddha in the following way:-

Māṇava: Young man, **esā paṭipadā:** this habitual tendency (of asking, “What is unwholesome? What is wholesome? The answers having been heard, and retaining them in memory), **mahāpaññasamvattanikā:** will lead to intelligence and wisdom.

To avoid repetition, the seven questions raised by Subha are omitted here, since these have been mentioned earlier.

These seven questions, if expanded fully are fourteen as the bad and good effects due to immoral and moral actions done by living beings. The good or bad effects are not the creation of anybody. These are the effects of kamma done in former existences, or may also be explained in terms of kamma of the present existence.

Explanation in the Light of Present Kamma

If one does not care for one’s own health, failing to take regular physical exercise and wholesome food for nourishment, one will become sickly. Engaging in sport and living on a balanced diet, and avoiding unhealthy food are conducive to good health. This is possible as long as one has no serious unwholesome kamma.

Practising charity or almsgiving, gentleness in speech, rendering assistance to others for their welfare, treating others as equals. These four kinds of noble conduct will bring many attendants and helpers in the present lifetime. These are the teachings of the Blessed One. If these four conditions of harmony (*saṅgha-dhamma*) are practised and fully accomplished, one is likely to have a large number of

attendants and numerous friends. If it is done to the contrary, one will have few attendants and friends.

Practice that will lead to becoming wealthy has been explained in four kinds of accomplishments (*sampadā*). These are (i) strength and perseverance (*uṭṭhāna-sampadā*), *i.e.*, performing the duties relating to one's occupation with knowledge and experience, (ii) protecting one's wealth from loss by guarding (*ārakkhasampadā*), (iii) having good friends and acquaintances (*kalyāṇamittatā*), (iv) living within one's means (*samajivitā*), *i.e.*, not being extravagant. Living by these four principles of conduct, one can become wealthy. If not fabulously rich, one can become moderately well-off. Contravention of these four principles will surely make one poor.

In regard to lacking wisdom and intelligence, mention has already been made earlier. The cause of short and long life in the present lifetime has been included to some extent in the explanation given relating to the cause for sickness and good health. As regards the causes of ugliness and beauty in the present life, there is nothing much to be said. In regard to low or high birth in the present life, there is hardly anything to be mentioned, however, according to the current circumstances, if efforts are made with the strength of wealth, companions, intelligence and wisdom, to earning respect, nobility can be realised to some extent.

As stated in the foregoing, all beings are conditioned by their own actions of the past and the present according to circumstances and the pain and happiness of bad and good effects will be brought by their own immoral or moral kamma. Good kamma will produce good effects, and bad kamma will produce evil effects. That is the law of kamma to which all beings are subject. It is nobody's doing, and cannot be repaired or avoided. Man himself is responsible for his own misery or happiness. No one can create the conditions of the life of a being. It is his own doing.

Kamma and its Effects

Sabbe sattā: All beings, **kammassakā:** have their own individual kamma, good and bad actions, as their own personal property. Such kamma may be mental, verbal, or physical, *i.e.* thoughts, words, and deeds, done by themselves. This has been taught by the Buddha. The motto recited earlier, may now be repeated:—

“Doer of evil will gather evil, Doer of good will reap good.”

“It’s kamma, the planner, that implements both evil and good, making one suffer pain and enjoy pleasure.”

Having heard this teaching, Subha took refuge in the Triple Gem, and became a follower of the Buddha. Relating to the practice of meditation on equanimity, the fundamental point to stress is that misery, happiness, bad and good effects, cannot be repaired, created or brought about by anyone. These occur according to one’s own individual kamma. It is, therefore, necessary for a noble person to remain indifferent to the pain and pleasure that beings may come across. No worry or spirit of goodwill need be borne regarding any other person, wishing them to be wealthy, healthy, free from misery, and happy. If one is worried, one will become weary for nothing. “Only kamma is one’s own property,” means to nurse a feeling of indifference to all beings who are either suffering from misery or enjoying happiness, according to their own circumstances. Let us now recite as follows in developing equanimity with mindfulness, which will also include the way of realisation through contemplating and noting.

“All beings have only kamma as their own property. Things occur according to varying circumstances. This indifferent attitude and willingness to recite are mind. The recitation and the sound are matter. Contemplating and noting them are also mind. Due to having vanished and ceased at once after awareness of knowing, and becoming conscious through contemplation of what is occurring, it is evident that these phenomena have the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.”

Wealth and happiness are due to kamma. Suffering and misery are also due to kamma. Only kamma is one’s own property. One has one’s own kamma, which produces its effects. Developing equanimity with indifference towards others, could bring mental relief and happiness when misfortune, misery or suffering occur. Bringing into one’s own mind that everything that happens is based on kamma is not only blameless, but also gives relief from mental distress even in the present lifetime. Due to having avoided unwholesomeness and having developed wholesome kamma to the best of one’s own ability

to gain reliance in future existences, one could expect to gain happiness and prosperity in existences to come. If it is not practised in the said manner, anger may arise because of misery, which will thereby cause unwholesomeness in finding fault with others when miserable conditions occur. Hence, the best course of action is to make the doctrine of kamma a part of our lives and to view things as events beyond our control according to our own kamma. This attitude will bring mental relief. It is pure and true, and the best.

The explanation relating to the development of equanimity is now complete. I will conclude this teaching by reciting the mottos relevant to the teachings regarding: "Only kamma is one's own property."

"Killing others causes short life,
Abstinence from killing brings long life."

"He who ill-treats is sickly, whereas,
Compassion brings good health."

"Wrath causes ugliness,
Patience brings beauty."

"Envy repels attendants and helpers,
Goodwill brings retinue in large numbers."

"Refraining from giving charity cause extreme poverty.
Charity brings wealth and prosperity."

"Rudeness causes low birth,
Respect brings high birth."

"Not investigating causes blind ignorance,
Investigation brings intelligence and wisdom."

"Doer of evil will gather evil,
Doer of good will reap good."

"It is kamma, the planner, that implements both evil and good,
making one suffer pain and enjoy pleasure."

"All beings have only kamma as their own property."

"Misery and happiness occur according to one's own kamma."

By developing equanimity one who has already achieved the third absorption can attain the fourth absorption connected with equanimity. This has been already stated. Ordinary individuals who have not

achieved any absorption, when personally faced with distress and misery, or when acquaintances are in misery, should reflect upon the teaching that says: "All beings are owners of their kamma" and imagine that all beings have only kamma, good and bad actions done by themselves, as their own property, and that kamma being the architect of their own fate. people are afflicted with diseases, misery, poverty, and so forth. Then one will be mentally relieved.

The teachings on the four kinds of Brahmavihāra have been covered quite comprehensively. I will conclude the discourse by making recitation relating to how these four kinds of Brahmavihāra Dhamma are developed:-

"May all beings be free from danger, from mental distress, from physical distress, and be able to shoulder their own burden of aggregates, with ease."

"May all beings be free from misery, which they are presently suffering."

"May all beings be able to retain their wealth and prosperity which they have acquired, without diminution, and may they continue to be prosperous and happy, as before."

"All beings have only kamma, good and bad actions, intentionally done by them, as their own personal property."

Conclusion and Blessing

May all those persons of virtue who have assembled here, by dint of having respectfully listened to this Brahmavihāra Dhamma with attentiveness, be always free from all dangers, and be able to contemplate and note with faith and devotion the true nature of the mind and matter occurring in their own aggregates, and may they speedily attain nibbāna through the much coveted knowledge of the Path and its Fruition (*magga-phala-ñāṇa*).

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

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