

METTA SUTTA

BACKGROUND STORY

On one occasion, some five hundred bhikkhus (monks), after obtaining an object of meditation from the Buddha went into the Himalayan forest to practise meditation. Initially, the devas residing in the trees tolerated their presence, but as they learnt that the bhikkhus would not leave so soon, the devas made fearful sights and sounds at night to frighten the bhikkhus so that they would go away. The bhikkhus were so disturbed that they got sick and could not make any progress in their meditation. They decided to leave the place and reported their experiences to the Buddha.

After surveying, the Buddha found no other suitable location for them to practise meditation than that very forest. Therefore the Buddha advised them to return to the forest and taught them the Metta Sutta as an object of meditation, as well as for their protection. Those bhikkhus returned to the forest, chanted the Metta Sutta, and practised Metta meditation. By doing so, the devas then had goodwill towards the bhikkhus and looked after them. At the end of the Rains Retreat (Vassa), all the five hundred bhikkhus attained Arahantship.

BENEFITS OF METTA

“If, O Bhikkhus, the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness is practised, developed, made much of, made one’s vehicle and foundation, firmly established, consolidated, and thoroughly undertaken, eleven benefits are to be expected.

What eleven?

1. One sleeps in comfort;
2. One wakes in comfort;
3. One has no bad dreams;
4. One is dear to human beings;
5. One is dear to non-human beings;
6. One is protected by deities;
7. One is not harmed by fire, poison and weapon;
8. One can concentrate easily;
9. One’s facial complexion is calm and serene;
10. One dies unconfused;
11. If one does not attain anything higher, one will be reborn in the Brahma world after death.”

~ *Agguttara Nikaya*
Book of the Elevens

METTA SUTTA

Karanīya mattha kusalena
Yantam santam padam abhisamecca
Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca
Suvaco cassa mudu anatimāni

Santussako ca subharo ca
Appakicco ca sallahukavutti
Santindriyo ca nipako ca
Apagabbho kulesu ananugiddho

Naca khuddham samācare kiñci
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyum
Sukhino vā khemino hontu
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā

Ye keci pāna bhūtatthi
Tasāvā thāvarā vā anavasesā
Dighā vā ye mahantā vā
Majjhimā-rassakānuka thūlā

Ditthā vā yeva aditthā
Ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā

Na paro param nikubbetha
Nāti-maññetha katthaci nam kañci
Byāro-sanā patigha-saññā
Nāñña-maññassa dukkha miccheyya

Mātā yathā niyam puttam
Āyusā ekaputta-manurakkhe
Evampi sabba bhūtesu
Mānasam-bhāvaye aparimānam

Mettañ ca sabba lōkasmim
Mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam
Uddham adho ca tiriyañ ca
Asambādham averam asapattam

Tittham caram nisinno vā
Sayāno vā yāvat'assa vigatamiddho
Etam satim adhittheyya
Brahma metam vihāram idha-māhu

Ditthiñ ca anupagamma sīlavā
Dassanena sampanno
Kāmesu vineyya gedham
Nahi jātu gabbhaseyyam punaretī ti

DISCOURSE ON LOVING-KINDNESS

He who is skilled in good, and wishes to
attain that state of Peace, should act thus:
he should be able, upright, perfectly upright,
amenable to corrections, gentle and humble.

He should be contented, easy to support,
unbusy, simple in livelihood,
with senses controlled, discreet,
not impudent, and not greedily attached to families.

He would not commit any slight misdeeds
that other wise men might find fault in him.
May all beings be well and safe,
may their hearts rejoice.

Whatever beings there are —
weak or strong, long or short,
big, medium-sized or small, subtle or gross,

Those visible or invisible,
residing near or far, those that have come to be
or have yet to come, (without exceptions)
may all beings be joyful.

Let one not deceive nor despise
another person, anywhere at all.
In anger and ill-will,
let him not wish any harm to another.

Just as a mother would protect her
only child with her own life,
even so, let him cultivate boundless thoughts
of loving kindness towards all beings.

Let him cultivate boundless thoughts
of loving kindness towards the whole world —
above, below and all around,
unobstructed, free from hatred and enmity.

Whether standing, walking, seated
or lying down, as long as he is awake,
he should develop this mindfulness.
This they say, is the divine abiding here.

Not erroneous with views,
endowed with virtues and insight,
with sensual desires abandoned,
he would come no more to be conceived in a womb.

Verse 1

*Karanīya mattha kusalena
Yantam santam padam abhisamecca
Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca
Suvaco cassa mudu anatimāni*

He who is skilled in good, and wishes to
attain that state of Peace, should act thus:
he should be able, upright, perfectly upright,
amenable to corrections, gentle and humble.

| | <u>Meaning</u> |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>Karanīyam</i> | Should be done |
| <i>attha</i> | (in) good |
| <i>kusalena</i> | with skill, skilful |
| <i>Yam tam</i> | that which |
| <i>santam</i> | peace, peaceful |
| <i>padam</i> | state |
| <i>abhisamecca</i> | (wish) to attain |
| <i>Sakko</i> | able, capable |
| <i>ujū</i> | morally upright |
| <i>ca</i> | and |
| <i>sūjū</i> | perfectly upright, honest, sincere |
| <i>Suvaco</i> | easy to advice, amenable to corrections |
| <i>cassa</i> | and (he) would be |
| <i>mudu</i> | gentle, mild, malleable |
| <i>anatimāni</i> | not proud, humble |

Verse 2

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Santussako ca subharo ca</i> | He should be contented, easy to support, |
| <i>Appakicco ca sallahukavutti</i> | unbusy, simple in livelihood, |
| <i>Santindriyo ca nipako ca</i> | with senses controlled, discreet, |
| <i>Apagabbho kulesu ananugiddho</i> | not impudent, and not greedily attached to families. |

Meaning

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>Santussako</i> | Contented |
| <i>subharo</i> | easy to support, not burdensome to others |
| <i>Appakicco</i> | having few duties, unbusy, unburdened by too much work |
| <i>sallahukavutti</i> | frugal, simple in livelihood |
| <i>Santindriyo</i> | senses are controlled and serene |
| <i>nipako</i> | discreet, prudent |
| <i>Apagabbho</i> | modest, not impudent |
| <i>kulesu</i> | (with/to) families, devotees |
| <i>ananugiddho</i> | not greedily attached |

Verse 3

*Naca khuddham samācare kiñci
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyum
Sukhino vā khemino hontu
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā*

He would not commit any slight misdeeds
that other wise men might find fault in him.
May all beings be well and safe,
may their hearts rejoice.

Meaning

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Naca</i> | He would not |
| <i>khuddham</i> | slight (misdeeds/misconducts) |
| <i>samācare</i> | do, commit |
| <i>kiñci</i> | at all |
| <i>Yena</i> | that which |
| <i>viññū</i> | wise men |
| <i>pare</i> | other |
| <i>upavadeyyum</i> | (might) reproach, deplore, criticize |
| <i>Sukhino vā</i> | comfort |
| <i>khemino</i> | safe |
| <i>hontu</i> | become |
| <i>Sabbe</i> | all |
| <i>sattā</i> | beings |
| <i>bhavantu</i> | become |
| <i>sukhi-tattā</i> | joyful, happy |

Verse 4

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Ye keci pāna bhūtatthi</i> | Whatever beings there are — |
| <i>Tasāvā thāvarā vā anavasesā</i> | weak or strong, |
| <i>Dighā vā ye mahantā vā</i> | long or short, big, |
| <i>Majjhimā-rassakānuka thūlā</i> | medium-sized or small, subtle or gross, |

Meaning

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Ye keci</i> | Whatever |
| <i>pāna</i> | breathing (things) |
| <i>bhūta</i> | beings |
| <i>atthi</i> | there are |
| <i>Tasā [vā]</i> | frail, weak [or] |
| <i>thāvarā</i> | firm, strong |
| <i>anavasesā</i> | without exception {included in Verse 5} |
| <i>Dighā</i> | long (bodies) |
| <i>mahantā</i> | big |
| <i>Majjhimā</i> | medium-sized |
| <i>rassakā</i> | short |
| <i>anuka</i> | small, subtle |
| <i>thūlā</i> | thick, gross |

Verse 5

*Ditthā vā yeva aditthā
Ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā*

Those visible or invisible,
residing near or far,
those that have come to be or have yet to come,
(without exceptions) may all beings be joyful.

Meaning

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Ditthā</i> | (Beings that are) seen; visible |
| <i>yeva</i> | or (else) |
| <i>aditthā</i> | unseen, invisible |
| <i>[Ye ca] dūre</i> | [whether] far, distant |
| <i>vasanti</i> | residing |
| <i>avidūre</i> | near, adjacent |
| <i>Bhūtā [vā]</i> | (beings that are) born [or] |
| <i>sambhavesī</i> | yet to be born |
| <i>Sabbe</i> | all |
| <i>sattā</i> | beings |
| <i>bhavantu</i> | become |
| <i>sukhi-tattā</i> | joyful, happy |

Verse 6

*Na paro param nikubbetha
Nāti-maññetha katthaci nam kañci
Byāro-sanā patigha-saññā
Nāñña-maññassa dukkha miccheyya*

Let one not deceive
nor despise another person, anywhere at all.
In anger and ill-will,
let him not wish any harm to another.

| | <u>Meaning</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Na</i> | (Do) not |
| <i>paro</i> | one |
| <i>param</i> | another |
| <i>nikubbetha</i> | betray, deceive |
| <i>Nāti-maññetha</i> | slight, despise, show conceit |
| <i>katthaci</i> | anywhere |
| <i>nam</i> | him |
| <i>kañci</i> | to (anyone) at all |
| <i>Byāro-sanā</i> | (with) ill-will |
| <i>patigha-saññā</i> | (and with) thoughts of anger |
| <i>Nāñña-maññassa</i> | in his mind he does not another |
| <i>dukkham</i> | ill, suffering |
| <i>iccheyya</i> | wish for |

Verse 7

*Mātā yathā niyam puttam
 Āyusā ekaputta-manurakkhe
 Evampi sabba bhūtesu
 Mānasam-bhāvaye aparimānam*

Just as a mother would protect her
 only child with her own life,
 even so, let him cultivate boundless thoughts
 of loving kindness towards all beings.

| | <u>Meaning</u> |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Mātā</i> | (A) mother |
| <i>yathā</i> | just like |
| <i>niyam puttam</i> | her son |
| <i>Āyusā</i> | with her life |
| <i>ekaputtam</i> | only child |
| <i>anurakkhe</i> | guard, protect |
| <i>Evam'pi</i> | even so, thus |
| <i>sabba</i> | all |
| <i>bhūtesu</i> | beings |
| <i>Mānasam</i> | (his) thoughts (full of loving kindness) |
| <i>bhāvaye</i> | maintain, cultivate |
| <i>aparimānam</i> | unbounded |

Verse 8

*Mettañ ca sabba lōkasmim
Mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam
Uddham adho ca tiriyañ ca
Asambādham averam asapattam*

Let him cultivate boundless thoughts
of loving kindness towards the whole world —
above, below and all around,
unobstructed, free from hatred and enmity.

Meaning

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Mettañ ca</i> | (With) loving kindness (towards) |
| <i>sabba</i> | all (beings) |
| <i>lōkasmim</i> | in the world |
| <i>Mānasam</i> | thoughts |
| <i>bhāvaye</i> | maintain |
| <i>aparimānam</i> | unbounded |
| <i>Uddham</i> | above |
| <i>adho</i> | below |
| <i>tiriyañ [ca]</i> | [and] all around, in the middle |
| <i>Asambādham</i> | without barriers, unobstructed |
| <i>averam</i> | free from anger and malice |
| <i>asapattam</i> | free from enmity, without enemies |

Verse 9

*Tittham caram nisinno vā
Sayāno vā yāvat'assa vigatamiddho
Etam satim adhittheyya
Brahma metam vihāram idha-māhu*

Whether standing, walking, seated
or lying down, as long as he is awake,
he should develop this mindfulness.
This they say, is the divine abiding here.

Meaning

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Tittham</i> | (In whatever posture whether) standing |
| <i>caram</i> | walking |
| <i>nisinno [vā]</i> | seated [or] |
| <i>Sayāno</i> | lying down |
| <i>yāvat'āssa</i> | while he is |
| <i>vigatamiddho</i> | undrowsing, awake |
| <i>Etam</i> | this (loving kindness) |
| <i>satim</i> | mindfulness |
| <i>adhittheyya</i> | (he would) pursue |
| <i>Brahmam</i> | divine |
| <i>etam</i> | this |
| <i>vihāram</i> | abiding |
| <i>idham</i> | here (is) |
| <i>āhu</i> | they say |

Verse 10

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Ditthiñ ca anupagamma sīlavā</i> | Not erroneous with views, |
| <i>Dassanena sampanno</i> | endowed with virtues and insight, |
| <i>Kāmesu vineyya gedham</i> | with sensual desires abandoned, |
| <i>Nahi jātu gabbhaseyyam punaretī ti</i> | he would come no more to be conceived in a womb. |

Meaning

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| <i>Ditthiñ</i> | (With) views |
| <i>anupagamma</i> | not falling into error, not trafficking |
| <i>sīlavā</i> | virtues, morality |
| <i>Dassanena</i> | with insight |
| <i>sampanno</i> | endowed with |
| <i>Kāmesu</i> | sensual |
| <i>vineyya</i> | purged, abandoned |
| <i>gedham</i> | greed, desire |
| <i>Nahi</i> | he will not |
| <i>jātu</i> | be born |
| <i>gabbhaseyyam</i> | in a womb |
| <i>punaretī</i> | again |