

Mettā Bhāvanā Sutta

The Discourse on the Cultivation of Lovingkindness

It 1.3.7/19-21

Theme: The benefits of lovingkindness

Translated by Piya Tan ©2008, rev 2010

1 Key terms

1.1 *OPADHIKA PUÑÑĀ, KIRIYA, VATTHU.*

1.1.1 The grounds for merit-making. The Puñña, kiriya, vatthu Sutta 2 (It 3.2.1) mentions the three trainings of

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| (1) the ground for merit-making through <u>giving</u> | (<i>dāna, mayam puñña, kiriya, vatthu</i>); |
| (2) the ground for merit-making through <u>moral virtue</u> | (<i>sīla, mayam puñña, kiriya, vatthu</i>); |
| (3) the ground for merit-making through <u>cultivation</u> | (<i>bhāvanā, mayam uñña, kiriya, vatthu</i>). |
- (It 3.2.1) = SD 22.17 Intro (2.1)

The Mettā Bhāvanā Sutta deals with the third training, that is, that of the ground for merit-making through cultivation” (*bhāvanā, mayam uñña, kiriya, vatthu*).¹

The Iti, vuttaka Commentary (ItA 23-26) gives a comprehensive definition of the term *puñña, -kiriya, vatthu*, thus:

- *puñña* (merit) is that which has a prolonging effect on our existence;
- *puñña, kiriya* (merit-making) refers to the act of creating or maintaining the conditions or support for merit; and
- *puñña, kiriya, vatthu* (ground for merit-making) are the benefit that arise from such a transaction. (ItA 2:23 f, 89)²

Sometimes, “merit” is used as a synonym for “wholesomeness” (*kusala*), but they have an important difference: merit, no matter how good, keeps us in samsara, the world of suffering, but the wholesome is what brings us out of suffering onto liberation.³ The opposite of “merit” (*puñña*) is “demerit” (*apuñña*) or “evil” (*pāpa*); only the arhats are beyond good and evil.⁴

Puñña, kiriya, vatthu, as such, translates literally as “the ground for the making of merit,” that is, a source of merit. The suffix *-maya* in each of the three qualities translates as “made of” (as in *mano, maya*, “mind-made,” Dh 1-2), or, as glossed by the Aṅguttara Commentary, as “by intention” (*cetanāsu*) (AA 1:126). As such, we can render the three kinds of *puñña, kiriya, vatthu* simply as:

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| (1) giving-based merit-making | (<i>dāna, maya puñña, kiriya, vatthu</i>); |
| (2) virtue-based merit-making | (<i>sīla, maya puñña, kiriya, vatthu</i>); and |
| (3) cultivation-based merit-making | (<i>bhāvanā, maya puñña, kiriya, vatthu</i>). |

¹ A better known set of three trainings is that of moral virtue (*sīla sikkhā*), of mental concentration (*samādhi sikkhā*) and of wisdom (*paññā sikkhā*): see (Ti) **Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235) = SD 24.10c.

² *Puñña, kiriya, vatthūni* ti puja, bhava, phalaṃ nibbattenti, attano santānaṃ punantī ti vā **puññāni**, puññāni ca tāni hetu, paccayehi kattaṃbho kiriyā cāti **puñña, kiriyā**. Tā eva ca tesam tesam ānisamsānaṃ vatthu, bhāvato **puñña, -kiriya, vatthūni**, “~ means that they bring forth the karmic fruit for an honourable existence. They are called ‘merit’ (*puñña*) because they prolong one’s continuity (*attano santānaṃ punanti*),” and ‘merit-making’ (*puñña, kiriyā*) are what should be done, what needs to be done, through the conditioning and support of these merit. And ‘the grounds for merit’ (*puñña, kiriya, vatthūni*) are just these various benefits (*ānisamsa*) arising from these grounds.” (ItA 2:23 f); see also Dh 18, 118, 122; KhpA 230.

³ See Virtue Ethics = SD 18.11.

⁴ Sn 520, 547, 636, 790: see Beyond Good and Evil = SD 18.7.

Giving is a good start for spiritual training because it easily creates goodwill amongst beings. In fact, there is a related practice, that is, the recollection of charity (*cāgānussati*), which when cultivated after the practice inspires great joy. Similarly, there is also the recollection of virtue (*sīlānussati*), which galvanizes joy through reflecting that we have kept to the precepts and it attending happiness. Such joy is conducive to samadhi in meditation, which is the third ground for merit, and which when properly cultivated leads on to insight wisdom.

1.1.2 *Opadhika*. The Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD), in its definition of *opadhika* (under “Remarks”), notes that Buddhaghosa and the grammarians interpret the term differently. According to them, it means “relating to or aiming at *upadhi*,” which was understood as *khandha* (the aggregates) the basis of a new existence (eg ItA 90). This interpretation, CPD notes, is clearly contradicted by the canonical usage.

In rendering *opadhika puñña, kiriya, vatthu* as “mundane grounds for merit-making” [S2], I happily agree with Bhikkhu Bodhi in making it a free but meaningful translation.⁵ Here is the mentioned verse which I have translated as follows, and which is related to this Sutta, too.

*Yajamānānaṃ manussānaṃ
puñña, pekkhāna pāṇinaṃ
karotaṃ opadhikaṃ puññaṃ
saṅghe dinnāṃ maha-p, phalan ti.*

For humans who are sacrificers [alms-givers],
living beings looking for merit,
making merit of the mundane kind—
a gift to the Sangha⁶ bears great fruit.
(S 917/11.16/1:233*) = SD 22.7

The *opadhika puñña, kiriya, vatthu* is practically synonymous with the phrase, *puñña, bhāgiyā upadhi, vepakka* (“partaking of merit, ripening in the birth-basis [acquisition of aggregates]”) which appears in **the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117) in the Buddha’s definition of right view (*sammā, diṭṭhi*):

And what, bhikshus, is right view?

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right view, I say.

Bhikshus, there is the right view with mental cankers,⁷ partaking of merit,⁸ ripening in the birth-basis⁹ [acquisition of aggregates].¹⁰

Bhikshus, there is the right view that is noble, without mental cankers, supramundane, a path factor.¹¹ (M 117.6/3:72) = SD 6.10

In the phrase “ripening in birth-basis” (*upadhi, vepakka*) here, “birth-basis” is *upadhi*, which literally means “that on which something is laid or rests, basis, foundation, substratum.” Here, as defined in Cone’s Dictionary of Pali (DP), the term means both “worldly possessions or belongings” as well as “attachment to such possessions (forming a basis for rebirth).”¹²

1.1.3 A ground for streamwinning. Essentially, this *puñña, kiriya, vatthu* is basic training for a lay practitioner, but which could of course also work for a novice monastic. There is, however, an important difference. When practised as “a basis for merit-making” (*puñña, kiriya, vatthu*), it is more for our mundane happiness here and now, and better rebirths. When practised as a “wholesome course of action”

⁵ See his tr of **Yajamāna S** (S 917/11.16/1:233* = SD 22.7) at S:B 333 & 497 n646.

⁶ Giving to the Sangha: see Intro (2).

⁷ “With mental cankers,” *s’āsava = sa + āsava*. See M 117 = SD 6.10 Intro (4) n.

⁸ “Partaking of merit,” *puñña, bhāgiya*, lit “having a share of merit,” or “concerned with merit” (RM Gethin, *The Path to Awakening*, 2001:216).

⁹ “Birth-basis,” *upadhi*, lit “that on which something is laid or rests, basis, foundation, substratum.” See SD 6.10 Intro (4) n & SD 28.11 Intro (3.2)..

¹⁰ “With mental cankers,...in the form of birth-basis [acquisition of aggregates],” *s’āsava puñña, bhāgiyā upadhi, vepakka*. See M 117 = SD 6.10 Intro (4) n.

¹¹ “Of the noble ones,...a path factor,” *ariyā anāsava lokuttarā magg’añgā*.

¹² See **Yajamāna S** (S 11.16) = SD 22.7 Intro (3). See also SD 28.11 Intro (3.2).

(*kusala kamma, patha*), it leads to clearing the mind of wrong mental actions, that is, thoughts of covetousness, of ill will and of wrong view.¹³

To attain streamwinning¹⁴ or once-return,¹⁵ there is no need for deep meditation, that is, the attaining of dhyana.¹⁶ However, mindfulness is vital for any spiritual development. Those who are intent to attaining streamwinning, but have difficulty attaining dhyana, should make use of such simple meditations as the recollections (*anussati*).¹⁷

When we have attained to some level of peace or focus, simply enjoy that stillness. If we are still aware of our thought-process at such a time, or on emerging from focussed state, we should reflect on the impermanence of our mental state or mental object. Streamwinning is expedited with the sustained perception of impermanence.¹⁸

1.2 *METTĀ*.

1.2.1 Lovingkindness and the divine abodes.

1.2.1.1 LOVINGKINDNESS IN THE SUTTAS. Lovingkindness (*mettā*) is unconditional acceptance of oneself and others, with a positive self-regard, we regard other as we would regard oneself. It is to love (*mijjati*)¹⁹ oneself, and to love others as we do oneself.²⁰ The cultivation of lovingkindness (and the other divine abodes) are often mentioned in the Buddha's teachings:²¹

Udumbarika Siha, nāda Sutta	they weaken the mental hindrances	(D 25.17a/3:49.50)
Cakka, vatti Siha, nāda Sutta	defined as "wealth" for a monk	(D 26.28a(4)/3:77)
Vatthūpama Sutta	as better practice than baptism	(M 7.13-16/1:38)
Mahā Vedalla Sutta	as immeasurable deliverance of mind	(M 43.31/1:297)
Aṭṭhaka, nagara Sutta	they lead to non-return	(M 52.8-11/1:351 f) ²²
Anuruddha Sutta	as the immeasurable liberation of mind	(M 127.4-8/3:146 f)
Go, datta Sutta	as the immeasurable liberation of mind	(S 41.7/4:296)
Metta, saḥagata Sutta ²³	liberation of mind by the divine abodes	(S 46.54.12-15/5:119-121)
(Aṭṭha) Mettānisaṃsa Sutta	the 8 benefits of lovingkindness	(A 8.1/4:150 f)
(Karaja, kāya) Brahmavihāra S	they lead to non-return	(A 5:208.2/5:300)
Dasama Gaha, pati S	they lead to non-return	(A 11.17/5:344) ²⁴
(Ekā, dasa) Mettānisaṃsa Sutta	the 11 benefits of lovingkindness	(A 11.16/5:342) ²⁵

While it is these discourses show that the practice of the divine abodes can be the basis for attaining sainthood, especially non-return, as practised by other sectarians at best bring them only communion with Brahmā (*brahmā, saḥavyatā*), as evident from such discourses as those listed below. In fact, whenever the

¹³ See **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206/5:292-297) = SD 3.9.

¹⁴ See **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3.

¹⁵ See **(Agata, phala) Mahānāma S** (A 6.10) = SD 15.3 Intro (3).

¹⁶ On dhyana, see **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1.

¹⁷ The "recollections" are those on (1) the Buddha (**Buddhānussati** = SD 15.7), (2) the Dharma (**Dhammānussati** = SD 15.9), (3) the Sangha (**Aṭṭha, puggala S** (A 8.59/4:292) = SD 15.10a), (4) moral virtue (**Sīlānussati**) = SD 15.11, (5) on charity (**Cāgānussati**) = SD 15.12, and (6) the gods (**Devatā'nussati**) = SD 15.13; and of course cultivation of lovingkindness: see **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7/19-22) = SD 30.7 & **(Karaja, kāya) Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:299-301) = SD 2.10.

¹⁸ See eg **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.2/3:225) = SD 16.7.

¹⁹ KhpA 248 = SnA 1:193; ThA 2:273 (*mijjati sīniyhati etāyāti mettā avyapādo*); ItA 75; ApA 370; vl *mejjati* (PmA 1:88).

²⁰ See also ItA 74 f = ItA:M 190-192.

²¹ See also Upali Karunaratne, "Brahmavihāra," in *Ency Bsm* 3:333-336, & S Karunaratne, "Mettā," *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* 6:668-673,

²² Identical with **Dasama Gaha, pati S** (A 11.17/5:344).

²³ Also called **Halidda, vasana S**.

²⁴ Identical with **Aṭṭhaka, nagara S** (M 83.5/2:76).

²⁵ Explained at *Vism* 9.59-76/311-314.

divine abodes are mentioned in connection with other sectarians, the term “liberation of mind” (*ceto, vimutti*) is never used.²⁶ These same discourses also show that the divine abodes are pre-Buddhist in origin is evident from such discourses as these, where it is said to have been practised even before the Buddha’s time:

Tevijja Sutta	they are the way to “union of Brahmā”	(D 13.77-79/1:251) ²⁷
Mahā Sudassana Sutta	they bring rebirth in the Brahma world	(D 17.2.3-4/2:186)
Makha,deva Sutta	they bring rebirth in the Brahma world	(M 83.5/2:76)
Dhānañjāni Sutta	as the path to communion with Brahmā	(M 97.33-35/2:195)
Subha Sutta	as the path to communion with Brahmā	(M 99.25-27/2:207 f)

1.2.1.2 PRIMACY OF LOVINGKINDNESS. Why is lovingkindness alone spoken of so distinctly, ask the Commentary? Because it is the foundation of all the other four divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*), that is, compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*);²⁸ and also on account of its fulfilling all of the wholesome states beginning with giving (Vism 9.124/325).²⁹ The divine abodes are said to be “perfect, divine” (*brahma*) because of they are the best of emotions and because of their faultless nature. They are the best ways to relate to others. As the High Gods (*brahmā*) are fearless, even so these emotions infuse such godliness in us. There are called “immeasurable” (*appamāṇā, appamaññā*) because they can reach out to immeasurable beings. (DhsA 192-197; Vism 263-270)

Lovingkindness is the foundation for the divine abode in the sense that we must start with cultivating lovingkindness successfully before proceeding on to the other levels of positive emotions. Lovingkindness is the unconditional acceptance of all being, no matter what their condition.

We begin with accepting ourself unconditionally, so that we are free of all negative thoughts. Then, we direct our mind to a loving person, one who has been unconditionally kind to us; followed by showing lovingkindness to neutral people (such as those with us in the same room, whether we know them or not).³⁰ The last stage is the most important, that is, when we “break all barriers” to include all beings in our lovingkindness,³¹ which is basically a perception of not-self.

When joy has been sufficiently arisen in us and stabilized, we can go on to focus on this joy. When we feel sufficiently suffused with the joy, and having emerged from it, we go on to cultivate compassion. We direct our mind to the *perception of the suffering or misfortune* around us, in a particular person, or in the world. Our mental intention then should be centered around the idea, “May this person’s misfortune or suffering be no more!” The last stage is the most important, that is, when we “break all barriers” to include all beings in our compassion, which is basically a perception of not-self.

When we notice a sense of deeper stillness, then we return to cultivating the joy so that it is more subtle, yet stronger. Then, emerging from it, we go on to cultivate appreciative joy. We direct our joy to others whom we perceive as being better than we are, rejoicing in their goodness and good fortune. We take the joy of such beings as our own *perception of joy*. The last stage is the most important, that is, when we “break all barriers” to include all beings in our appreciative joy, which is basically a perception of not-self.

By this time, we should be able to cultivate an even more subtle level of joy, so that there is a profound stillness in us. When we feel ready, we emerge from this stillness and perceive both the suffering

²⁶ **Metta, saḥagata S = Halidda, vasana S** (S 46.54/5:115-121) = SD 10.11.

²⁷ See also **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.2(17)/3:247).

²⁸ The four are listed in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223 f).

²⁹ For a description of the immeasurable or divine abodes with similes, see **Tevijja S** (D 13.76-79/1:251) = sd 1.8. On the divine abodes with the elements, see **Vuṭṭha Vass’āvāsa S** (A 9.11.4/4:375 f) = SD 28.21. On how the divine abodes limit karma, see **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.206/5:299) = SD 2.10.

³⁰ Traditionally (eg Vism 9.4/296), the fourth stage is to direct lovingkindness to enemies or those we are having difficulties with. However, this should be done only when our lovingkindness is strong enough; otherwise, negative thoughts would arise.

³¹ Vism 9.40-43/307.

and the joy in beings, regarding them in equal terms, that is, with equanimity. We reflect how beings fare according to their karma, and on the uncertainty of phenomena. The last stage is the most important, that is, when we “break all barriers” to regard all beings with equanimity, which is basically a perception of not-self.

This practice can be done to access concentration, that is, a deep concentration, but not amounting to dhyana. This kind of practice is useful for those who are unable to attain dhyana or to sustain dhyanic experience. Such a practice, however, when habitually done with the perception of impermanence leads to the attainment of streamwinning or once-return.

Buddhaghosa, in a famous simile, compares the four divine abodes to a mother with four sons, namely, a infant, an invalid, a budding youth, and one busy with his own affairs. She would wish the infant to grow up, the invalid to recover, the youth to enjoy himself, and unbothered with the busy young man. (Vism 9.108/321)

1.2.2 Liberation of mind by lovingkindness. The “divine abodes” (*brahma, vihāra*) are so called because these are the qualities of the higher divine beings or brahmas. They are called “immeasurables” (*appamāṇā, appamaññā*) is another term for the divine abodes because the practice is only complete when we break down the barrier or duality of self and other.

These qualities are lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity.³² When they are practised to dhyanic levels, they are known as “liberation of mind” (*ceto, vimutti*), or more fully, the liberation of mind by the immeasurable (or the immeasurable liberation of mind) (*appamāṇā ceto, vimutti*). This is evident in the following discourses:

Saṅgīti Sutta	(D 33.2.2(17)/3:248)
Mahā Vedalla Sutta	(M 43.31/1:297)
Anuruddha Sutta	(M 127.4-8/3:146 f)
Go,datta Sutta	(S 41.7/4:296)
Metta,sahagata Sutta ³³	(S 46.54.12-15/5:119-121)
(Karaja,kāya) Brahmavihāra Sutta	(A 5:208/5:299)

The first three divine abodes—that is, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness, by compassion and by appreciative joy—can attain only up to the level of the third dhyana. Only the liberation of mind by equanimity can reach the fourth dhyana.³⁴

From the Metta,sahagata Sutta (S 46.54), a few interesting details are worth nothing.³⁵ The liberation of mind by lovingkindness (*mettā ceto, vimutti*) has “beauty” (*subha*) as its highest limit. “Beauty” here refers to any of the form dhyana (*rūpa jhāna*), while the term “beauty element, or beautiful element” (*subha, dhātu*), refers to both the dhyana and its object, namely, a dhyana arisen on the basis of loving-kindness (Pm 2:39).

The Attha,sālinī, the Commentary on the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī, however, takes “the beautiful” here as referring to dhyana attainment through a colour device (*kaṣiṇa*) that is fully purified (DhsA 191).³⁶ As Analayo notes, this gloss goes against the teachings of the Paṭisambhidā,magga (2009: 146 f).³⁷

The liberation of mind by compassion (*karuṇā ceto, vimutti*) has the base of boundless space (*ākāśānañc āyatana*) is its highest limit. That is to say, dhyana attained by the liberation of mind through the

³² **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.30/1:297) = SD 35.1; **Subha S** (M 99.24-27/2:207 f) = SD 38.6; **Anuruddha S** (M 127.6+7/3:146) = SD 54.10; **Go,datta S** (S 41.7.5/4:296) = SD 60.4; (**Nānā,karaja**) **Mettā S 1+2** (A 4.125+126/-2:128-130) = SD 33.9+10.

³³ Also called **Halidda,vasana S**.

³⁴ Dhs 53-55. See **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.2.2(17)/3:248 f); also Vbh 272-284.

³⁵ = Halidda,vasana S (S 46.54.12-15/5:119-121) = SD 10.11.

³⁶ See **Satta Dhātu S** (S 14.11/2:150 f). There are 10 kasinas, viz earth, water, fire, wind, blue, yellow, red, white, light and space: see **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1(9.2) & (Diag 8.1).

³⁷ See **Metta,sahagata S** (S 46.54.12/5:119) = SD 10.11. See **Aṭṭha Vimokkha** = SD 62.5.

cultivation of compassion can be used to attain to the first formless base or formless attainment (*arūpa samāpatti*).

The liberation of mind by appreciative joy (*muditā ceto, vimutti*) has the base of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇ'āñc'āyatana*) as its highest point, that is, it can be the springboard to attain the second formless attainment.

The liberation of mind by equanimity (*upekkhā ceto, vimutti*) has the base of nothingness (*akiñcaññāyatana*) as its highest base, that is, it can be a basis for focus leading up to the third formless attainment.

With such an attainment at its best, the practitioner will be able to attain non-return, but not arhat-hood, because he has yet to abandon all his remaining defilements.³⁸ An important aspect of this practice is to remind ourselves that all such states are mind-made, and as such are impermanent and liable to ceasing.³⁹

1.2.3 Lovingkindness can limit karmic effects. **The Saṅkha(dhama) Sutta** (S 42.17) makes a remarkable statement. After stating how we should pervade lovingkindness in all directions (the four quarters, above, below, across and everywhere, as well as to ourself), we should dwell cultivating the mental liberation of mind by lovingkindness, then “any limited karma⁴⁰ that was done does not remain here, does not persist here” (*yam pamāṇam kataṃ kammaṃ na taṃ tatr'avāsissati na taṃ tatrāvatiṭṭhati*).⁴¹

The Commentary on Saṅkha(dhama) Sutta (ad S 42.8.17)⁴² explains that “When (simple) loving-kindness is meant, this can be interpreted either as access concentration⁴³ or dhyana, but when it is qualified as ‘liberation of mind’ (*ceto, vimutti*), it definitely means dhyana (*jhāna*)” (SA 3:105; ItA 89). The point is that if a person masters the “liberation of mind by lovingkindness,” that is, bringing it to the level of dhyana, the karmic potential of this attainment will take precedence over sense-sphere karma and will generate rebirth into the form realm.⁴⁴

The key passage of **the (Karaja,kāya) Brahma,vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208), that says:

Indeed, bhikshus, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness should be developed by a woman or a man. Whether you are a woman or a man, you cannot take this body along when you depart (from this world). Bhikshus, this mortal life is but an intermediate state of mind.

(A 10.208.3c/5:300) & SD 2.10 Intro (2)

should be understood in this slight. That is to say, when lovingkindness is cultivated to the level of dhyana, it has a positive effect in limiting karmic fruition.

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³⁸ **(Karaja,kāya) Brahma,vihāra S** (A 10.208.2-4/5:300 f) = SD 2.10.

³⁹ **Dasama Gaha,pati S** (A 11.17/5:344) = **Aṭṭhaka,nagara S** (M 52/1:349-353) = SD 32.9.

⁴⁰ “Limited karma” (*pamāṇa,kata kamma*), ie karma done in the sense-world. Karma of the form world is said to be “unlimited” or “immeasurable” (*appamāṇa,kata*); for, it is cultivated transcending the limit, cultivated by way of specified, unspecified, and directional pervasion (Vism 9.49-58/309-311).

⁴¹ S 42.8.17/4:322 = SD 57.9.

⁴² S 42.8.17/4:322 = SD 57.9.

⁴³ In commentarial terms, there are 3 levels of mental images (*nimitta*): (1) the preparatory image (*parikamma nimitta*) or the meditation object perceived at the start of one’s meditation. (2) When this image has reached some degree of focus, albeit still unsteady and unclear, it is called the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*). (3) On greater mental focus, an entirely clear and immovable image arises, and becomes the counter-image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). As soon as this image arises, the meditator has attained access (or neighbourhood) concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). It is also by means of the counter-image that one gains full concentration (*appanā samādhi*). See *Nimitta* = SD 19.7 (3), & Dhyana = SD 8.4 (7) (What happens what one reaches dhyana).

⁴⁴ See Vism 9.49-58/309-311; also S:B 1149 n346; A:B 315 n73.

The Discourse on the Cultivation of Lovingkindness

It 1.3.7/19-22

1 This was indeed spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arhat [worthy one], thus have I heard.⁴⁵

2 THE LIBERATION OF MIND BY LOVINGKINDNESS. “Bhikshus, whatever mundane grounds for merit-making⁴⁶ there are, all these are not worth a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness.⁴⁷ For, bhikshus, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness⁴⁸ indeed shines, and blazes, and radiates, surpassing them.⁴⁹

3 THE STARLIGHT PARABLE. Bhikshus, just as whatever lights of the stars⁵⁰ there are, [20] all of them are not worth a sixteenth part of the radiance that is the moon. For, bhikshus, the radiance that is the moon indeed shines, and blazes, and radiates, surpassing them.

4 Even so, bhikshus, whatever mundane grounds for merit-making there are, all these are not worth a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. For, bhikshus, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness indeed shines, and blazes, and radiates, surpassing them.

5 THE SUN PARABLE. Bhikshus, just as in the last month of the rains, in the season of autumn, when the sky [heaven] is clear, free of thunder-clouds, the sun as it climbs into the heavens dispels all the darkness that filled the sky.⁵¹ For, bhikshus, the radiance that is the sun indeed shines, and blazes, and radiates, surpassing them.

6 Even so, bhikshus, whatever mundane grounds for merit-making there are, all these are not worth a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. For, bhikshus, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness indeed shines, and blazes, and radiates, surpassing them.

7 THE MEDICINE STAR PARABLE. Bhikshus, just as when night is dawning, the Medicine Star [Venus] shines, and blazes, and radiates,

8 even so, bhikshus, whatever mundane grounds for merit-making there are, all these are not worth a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. [21] For, bhikshus, the liberation of mind by lovingkindness indeed shines, and blazes, and radiates, surpassing them.

9 This is the meaning that the Buddha spoke. There he spoke thus.⁵²

The lovingkindness verses⁵³

1 *Yo ca mettāṃ bhāvayati,
appamāṇam patissato
tanū samyojanā honti,
passato upadhi-k, khayāṃ*

Who cultivates lovingkindness
immeasurably, ever mindful,
his mental fetters are
destroyed, because he sees.

⁴⁵ *Vuttam h'etaṃ bhagavatā. Vuttam arahatā' ti me sutam.* This is said to be spoken by the laywoman Khujj'uttarā: see SD 16.14 Intro (1).

⁴⁶ “Mundane grounds for merit-making” (*opadhikāni puñña, kiriya, vatthūni*): see Intro (1.1).

⁴⁷ *Yāni kānici, bhikkhave, opadhikāni puñña, kiriya, vatthūni sabbāni tāni mettāya ceto, vimuttiyā kalam nāgghanti soḷasim.*

⁴⁸ “Liberation of mind by lovingkindness” (*mettāya ceto, vimutti*): see Intro (1.2.2).

⁴⁹ *Mettāy'eva tāni ceto, vimutti adhiggahetvā bhāsate ca tapate ca virocanti ca.*

⁵⁰ “Starlight,” *tāraka, rūpānam pabhā.*

⁵¹ *Seyyathā'pi, bhikkhave, vassānam pacchime māse sarada, samaye viddhe vigata, valāhake deve ādicco nabham abhussakkamāno sabbam ākāsa, gataṃ tama, gataṃ abhivihacca bhāsate*

⁵² *Etam attham bhagavā avoca. Tatth'etaṃ iti vuccati.*

⁵³ As in (Aṭṭha) *Mettānisaṃsa S* (A 8.1/4:150 f) = SD 30.6; cf (Pasenadi) *Yañña S* (S 3.9.6/1:76) = SD 22.11. They are apparently very ancient, as they are also found in the *Gandhārī Dharmapada* (Dh:G 194-198) (Dh:G (tr John Brough), 1962:149 f, 241 f).

- 2 *Ekam pi ce pāṇam aduṭṭha, citto
mettāyati kusala⁵⁵ tena hoti
sabbe'va pāṇe manasā' nukampī
pahūtam ariyo pakaroti puññaṃ* ⁵⁴If he has a hate-free mind for even a single living being,
he shows lovingkindness: he is thereby wholesome.
He has a mind of compassion towards all life,
the noble one creates abundant good [merit].
- 3 *Ye satta, saṇḍaṃ paṭhaviṃ jinitvā⁵⁶
rājīsayo yajamānānupariyagā⁵⁸
assa, medham purisa, medham
sammā, pāsam vāja, peyyam niraggaḷam* Having conquered the earth and its multitude of beings,⁵⁷
the royal seers go about sacrificing
the horse sacrifice, the human sacrifice,
the peg-throw, and the lavish soma fertility drink—
- 4 *mettassa cittassa subhāvitassa
kalam pi te nānubhavanti soḷasim
canda-p, pabhā tāra, gaṇā'va sabbe
yathā na agghanti kalam pi soḷasim* a well-cultivated mind of lovingkindness,
they attain not even a sixteenth part,⁵⁹ [22]
just as the starry constellations' light is not equal
to even a sixteenth part of the moon's light.
- 5 *Yo na hanti na ghātetī
na jināti na jāpaye
mettasō⁶⁰ sabba, bhūtānaṃ
veran tassa na kenacī ti* Who kills not, nor causes another to kill,
who conquers not, nor causes another to conquer,
he is one with lovingkindness to all beings:
there is no hate in him towards anyone.

This matter [meaning] too was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.⁶¹

— evaṃ —

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⁵⁴ On the occurrence of both *kusala* and *puñña* here, see SD 18.7 Intro (6.4).

⁵⁵ Ce PTS; Se *kusalam*.

⁵⁶ Ce Se; PTS *vijetvā*..

⁵⁷ "Multitude of beings," *satta, saṇḍa*, foll DPL: *saṇḍa*; PED (sv *saṇḍa*): "teeming with beings"; A:H 4:104: "the teeming earth"; but Brough (Dh:G 1962: 242 n192) disagrees.

⁵⁸ Ce Se; PTS *-pariyayā*.

⁵⁹ "A sixteenth part," *kalam pi...soḷasim* (ie, an iota). Comy, however, often gloss it as "a sixteenth of a sixteenth" (eg SA 1:59, 314; UA 172).

⁶⁰ Ce Se; PTS *mettasō*.

⁶¹ *Ayam pi attho vutto bhagavatā. Iti me sutan ti.*