

Living joyfully

Source: [\(Māra\) Rajja Sutta \(S 4.20, SD 61.17\)](#), Māra invites the Buddha to wield sovereignty © Piya Tan, 2017, 2024.

1.2.1.4 Then said the Teacher:

If there were a mountain of gold, entirely of solid gold,
double this¹ would not suffice for one: having known this, fare harmoniously. [S 486]
[33]

How could a person who has seen the source of suffering | bend to sensual pleasures?
Having known acquisition as a tie to the world, | surely a person would train for its
removal. [S 487]

With these verses, the Teacher caused Māra to be troubled with religious emotion (*samvejetvā*). Then he said:

“I will admonish you, evil one. I’ve nothing in common with you. Thus do I admonish you.”

So saying, he uttered these verses:

<i>atthamhi jātamhi sukhā sahāya</i>	When the need arises, companions are a joy.
<i>tuṭṭhī sukhā yā itarītarena²</i>	Joyful is contentment with this or that.
<i>puññaṃ sukhaṃ jīvita, saṅkhayamhi</i>	Merits are a joy at life’s end.
<i>sabbassa dukkhassa sukhaṃ pahānaṃ</i> Dh 331	Joyful ’tis to abandon all suffering.

<i>sukhā matteyyatā³ loke</i>	Joyful is respect for mother in this world,
<i>atho petteyyatā⁴ sukhā</i>	joyful, too, respect for father in this world.
<i>sukhā sāmāññatā loke</i>	Joyful is respect for the recluse ⁵ in this world,
<i>atho brahmaññatā sukhā</i> Dh 332	and joyful, too, respect for the brahmin. ⁶

¹ Ee dvittā pi; Be Se dvittā’va.

² *Itarītarena* recurs in **Tha 111** (Jenta), where Comy explains it as “according to what one receives by way of support” (*itarītarena, yathā, laddhena paccayena*, ThaA 1:234,27 f). Similarly, Comy on **Tha 230** (Dhaniya): “whatever one gets by way of support whether inferior or superior” (*itarītarena, yena kenaci hīnena vā pañītena vā yathā, laddhena paccayena*. ThaA 2:90,28-31). Comy on **Tha 922**: “in whatever one gets as support whether gross or fine” (*itarītarena ti yasmim tasmim hīne pañīte vā yathā, laddhe paccaye*, ThaA 3:76,5 f). For philological details, see Tha:N 147 n111.

³ *Matteyya-tā* or *metteyya-tā* (BHS *mātrjñā*, “mother-honouring,” Mvst 3:131,16). *Petteyya-tā* (BHS *pitṛjñā*, “father-honouring”). Comy: “*Matteyya* means right conduct to one’s mother; *petteyya* is right conduct to one’s father. It refers to the supporting of both parents” (*matteyyā ti mātari sammā, paṭipatti, petteyyā ti pitari sammā, paṭipatti, ubhayena pi mātā, pitunnaṃ upaṭṭhānam eva kathitaṃ*, DhA 4:34,12-15). Comy at D 3:145,27: *matteyyatā* means “duties to be done for one’s mother” (*matteyyatāya ti mātu, katabba, vatte*, DA 920,31 f). P *matteyya(tā) petteyya(tā) sāmāñña(tā) brāhmañña(tā)* (and their respective neg *a-* forms) are often found in the suttas (**D 26**,17-19/3:70-72; **S 56.66-69**/5:467 f; **A 3.36**/1:138,15); for their Skt forms *mātrjñā pitṛjñā śrāmaṇyatā brāhmaṇyatā* in Skt texts: BHS svv. For philological details, see Dh:N 142 n332. See also [1.2.1.5 (5+6)] below.

⁴ *Petteyya-tā* (BHS *pitṛjñā-tā*), see prec n.

⁵ Comy defines “respect for the recluse” (*sāmāññata*) as “for those with right practice in being renunciants” (*pabbajitesu sammā, paṭipatti*, DhA 4:35,3 f).

⁶ Here, “respect for a (true) brahmin’s state” (*brahmaññatā*) is “for those who have pushed away evil” (*bāhita, pāpesu*), “that is, those with right practice, such as the buddhas, pratyekas-buddhas and disciples” (*buddha, paccekabuddha, sāvakesu sammā, paṭipatti yeva*) (DhA 4:35,4 f). Hence, “brahmin” here refers to arhats, not those born priests of self-proclaimed high-caste status. See 3 prec nn.

<i>sukhaṃ yāva jarā sīlaṃ</i>	A moral life unto old age is joyful.
<i>sukhā saddhā paṭiṭṭhitā</i>	Faith firmly founded is joyful.
<i>sukho paññāya paṭilābho</i>	The gaining of wisdom is joyful.
<i>pāpānaṃ akaraṇaṃ sukhaṃ ti Dh 333</i>	Joyful is the avoidance of evil.

1.2.1.5 DHAMMAPADA COMMENTARY ON THE VERSES⁷

(1) When the need arises (*atthamhi jātamhi*)

When there is a need—such as in the case of a renunciant, when it is robe-making or settling of disputes, and so forth; and in the case of a layperson, [34] when it is farming [“ploughing”], or when oppressed by those with the powerful, and so forth—then, friends such as those who can accomplish the task or settle the matter, are indeed **joyful** (*sukha*).

(2) Joyful is contentment with this or that (*tuṭṭhī sukhaṃ yā itarītarena*)

Since lay persons, not content with what they have, undertake such acts as burglary, and renunciants commit all kinds of impropriety, but still they find no satisfaction; therefore, this alone is joyful: namely, being content with what is one’s own, whatever it is, little or much.

(3) Merits are a joy at life’s end (*puññaṃ sukhaṃ jīvita, saṅkhayamhi*)

A wholesome act done close to life’s end,⁸ according to one’s nature and inclination, is indeed a joy. [This is because of its potential good effect on one’s future life.]

(4) (Joyful ’tis to abandon) all suffering (*sabbassa dukkhassa*)

And arhathood, which is the abandoning of all suffering of the cycle (of existence), is indeed *the* blessing in this world.⁹

(5) Respect for mother (*matteyyatā*); respect for father (*petteyyatā*)

Matteyyatā is proper conduct towards one’s mother.

Petteyyatā is proper conduct towards one’s father.

They both refer to attending upon one’s parents.

When parents come to know that their children would not look after them, parents either bury their wealth in the ground or they bestow it upon others. Furthermore, bad reputation accrues to those children, that is, they do not look after their parents. And also, upon dying they are reborn in the hell called *Gūtha* (“excrement”).

But those who look after their parents will inherit their wealth and also receive praise (for their dutiful conduct). And after their death, they are reborn in a state of happiness. Thus, it is said that these two (proper conduct towards mother and father) are said to be joyful.¹⁰

⁷ This comy is based mainly on that of J R Carter & M Palihawadana, *The Dhammapada*, Oxford, 1987:351-353.

⁸ “Close to life’s end,” *maraṇa, kāle*, lit, “at the time of death.”

⁹ “In this world,” *Be Ee Se imasmim loke*; *Ce* omits.

¹⁰ Comy here gives a traditionally “consequentialist” view of karma, which reflects the “old” pre-Buddhist social attitude. The sutta approach is based on *kusala* (wholesome) conduct by way of **virtue ethics**. It is right and good to assist parents not only out of gratitude to them, but as a training in *generosity, love, compassion, joy and peace of mind*. We could well treat anyone with such qualities, esp the seniors; why not give priority to our own parents while they live. See SD 60.1c (11.4.7); SD 61.5b (5.2).

(6) Respect for the recluse (*sāmaññaṭā*); respect for the brahmin (*brahmaññaṭā*)

Sāmaññaṭā is proper conduct towards renunciants.

Brahmaññaṭā is proper conduct towards the true brahmins.¹¹

The proper conduct is indeed towards those who have fully discarded the unwholesome, that is, buddhas, pratyeka-buddha, and disciples.

By “respect for” the recluse and the brahmin, is meant the conduct of providing them with the 4 supports.¹² This, too, is declared to be joyful in this world.

R900 Inspiration 543

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¹¹ On the def of the true brahmin, see under (1.2.1.4) Dh 332 n.

¹² The 4 supports (*paccaya*) are almsfood, robes, shelter and medical support. See **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2,13-16), SD 30.3.