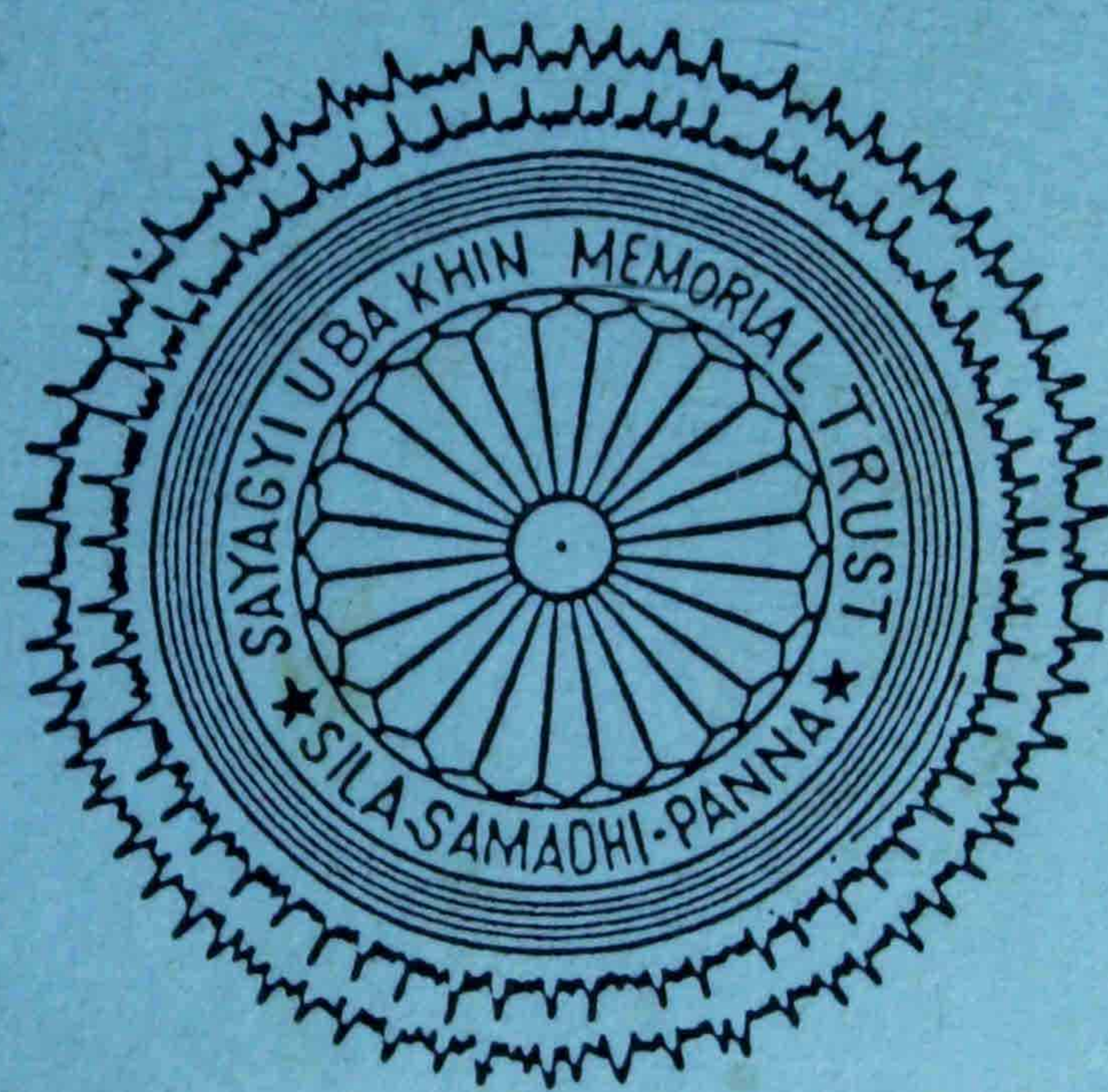


# THE PERFECTION OF LOVING KINDNESS

## THE PERFECTION OF EQUANIMITY



Translated by  
Saya U Chit Tin, WKH

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**The Perfection of Loving Kindness**

**The Perfection of Equanimity**



Dedicated to our much revered teacher  
the late Sayagyi U Ba Khin (Thray Sithu)

**The Perfection of Loving Kindness  
(Mettā-pāramī)**

**The Perfection of Equanimity  
(Upekkhā-pāramī)**

**Translated by  
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## INTRODUCTION

Loving kindness (Mettā) and equanimity (Upekkhā) are well known as two of the Divine Abidings (Brahma-vihāra), the other two being compassion (Karunā) and sympathetic joy (Muditā). If developed to a sufficiently high degree, they will lead to rebirth in the Brahmā worlds. Ashin Buddhaghosa points out in **The Path of Purification** (Chapter VII, ¶ 18) that if a person is motivated by the desire to enjoy the delights of the Brahmā worlds, he is clinging to sense desires. The Divine Abidings may be developed, however, with a far greater goal in view, and so Ashin Buddhaghosa devotes an entire chapter of **The Path of Purification** (Chapter IX) to them as part of the path to Nibbāna. At the end of this chapter (¶ 124), he points out how the four Divine Abidings can help a person who is attached to Awakening (a Bodhisatta) to develop all of the ten perfections:

The Great Beings' minds retain their balance by giving preference to beings' welfare, by dislike of beings' suffering, by desire for the various successes achieved by beings to last, and by impartiality towards all beings. And to all beings they give **gifts**, which are a source of pleasure, without discriminating thus: "It must be given to this one; it must not be given to this one." And in order to avoid doing harm to beings they undertake the precepts of **virtue**. They practise **renunciation** for the purpose of perfecting their virtue. They cleanse their **understanding** for

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli, Buddhist Publication Soc., 3rd ed., 1975.



the purpose of non-confusion about what is good and bad for beings. They constantly arouse **energy**, having beings' welfare and happiness at heart. When they have acquired heroic fortitude through supreme energy, they become **patient** with beings' many kinds of faults. They **do not deceive** when promising "We shall give you this; we shall do this for you." They are unshakably **resolute** upon beings' welfare and happiness. Through unshakable **loving kindness** they place them first [before themselves]. Through **equanimity** they expect no reward.

The ten perfections are to be developed in order to attain the goal of Nibbāna in a future life. The length of time required to develop the perfections depends on one's goal. The commentary to the Theragāthā mentions three types of Bodhisattas: those who aspire to become (1) disciples (Sāvaka-bodhisattas), (2) Pacceka Buddhas (Pacceka-bodhisattas), and (3) teaching Buddhas (Mahā-bodhisattas). Those who aspire to become one of the eighty Great Disciples (Mahā-sāvakas) or the mother or father or son or personal attendant of a teaching Buddha must work for one hundred thousand aeons (Kappas). To be a Chief Disciple (Agga-sāvaka) takes an incalculable age (Asaṅkheyya) plus one hundred thousand aeons. To be a Pacceka Buddha requires two incalculable

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<sup>1</sup>Paramattha-dipani, pp. 8-11.

<sup>2</sup>In other texts in the canon and commentaries, "Bodhisatta" refers to a future teaching Buddha. He is also called the Great Being (Mahā-satta) in the commentaries, as in the quote from **The Path of Purification** above.



ages and one hundred thousand aeons. Some Pacceka-bodhisattas work for more than two incalculable ages, but not as long as three. As for teaching Buddhas, there are three types: (1) one in whom wisdom is predominant must work for four incalculable ages and a hundred thousand aeons; (2) if faith is predominant, eight incalculable ages and a hundred thousand aeons is required; (3) if energy is predominant, it takes sixteen incalculables and one hundred thousand aeons.

People today who are practising the Teachings of the Buddha do not need to distinguish between developing the perfections for attaining Awakening in a future life rather than their present life. If they have accumulated the necessary preparation in past lives, they will be able to realize their goal in their present life. If not, their efforts will enable them to attain the goal in a future life.

In these texts on the ten perfections, we have emphasized the way in which they are practised by those who aspire to becoming disciples of a Buddha. A Great Bodhisatta who aspires to become a teaching Buddha not only develops the perfections for a much longer time than the disciple Bodhisattas and Pacceka Bodhisattas, they also base all their actions on working for the welfare of others. They have

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<sup>1</sup> These periods correspond to their abilities to recall past lives. See **The Path of Purif.**, Ch. XIII, ¶ 16. Ordinary disciples can remember one hundred to one thousand aeons, so this is taken as the period of preparation necessary for them. Teaching Buddhas have no limit to their ability to recall past lives.

<sup>2</sup> See "A Treatise on the Pāramīs" translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi in **The All-Embracing Net of Views** (Buddhist Publ. Soc., 1978), p. 325.

<sup>3</sup> For this discussion, see "A Treatise," pp. 266f., 303, 305.



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lucid faculties and lucid knowledge, and are able to create opportunities to help others. They are skilled in distinguishing what is possible from what is not possible. And their actions have compassion and skillful means as forerunners.

Even if a meditator of today is primarily motivated by attaining Nibbāna for himself or herself, the example of a Bodhisatta striving to become a teaching Buddha can serve as an example. Loving kindness can help them to work for the benefits of others and equanimity will enable them to avoid the pitfalls of becoming attached to others.

Saya U Chit Tin  
Heddington, January 19, 1986



Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

## THE PERFECTION OF LOVING KINDNESS

### METTĀ PĀRAMĪ

**1. Types of love.** There are three types of love (Pema):

- (1) Love connected with craving (Taṇhā-pema),
- (2) Love connected with the household life (Geha-sita-pema),
- (3) Love connected with loving kindness (Mettā-pema).

Love connected with craving means the erotic sentiment (Singāra), or sexual love. Love connected with the household life means affectionate love, or love for family and friends. Neither of these are associated with moral mental states. Craving involves lust and affectionate love involves greed.

Love connected with loving kindness means a desire for the well-being of others. This does not mean being attached to others, nor does it mean a desire to be with others. It means being pleased when hearing of the well-being of others no matter how far away they may be. Loving kindness is pure and noble and is one of the Divine Abidings (Brahma-vihāra), along with compassion (Karūṇa), sympathetic joy (Muditā) and equanimity (Upekkhā). They are also called the four boundless states



(Appamañña), for they can be developed with regards to innumerable beings.

**2. Loving kindness as a mental factor.** Like patience (Khanti), loving kindness can be present as a mental factor through freedom from anger (Adosa).<sup>1</sup> This will be true only when the object contemplated is a living being. Freedom from anger, however, can contemplate all sensations and is present in all wholesome or lofty consciousness. It will be present in all meritorious actions, such as generosity, and in all virtuous actions, such as keeping the precepts. Loving kindness will be included in freedom from hate only if one is contemplating living beings and thinking thoughts such as, "May they be free from enmity, distress and affliction. May they live happily."

**3. Loving kindness as the opposite of ill will (hatred or anger).** Loving kindness is shown in various texts to be the instrument for eliminating ill will or hatred (Dosa) and malevolence (Byāpāda).<sup>2</sup> It is said that it is impossible for loving kindness and ill will to be present in the mind together.<sup>3</sup> If one cultivates loving kindness, thoughts of ill will and harming others will be eliminated.<sup>4</sup> In this way, one

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<sup>1</sup>See *The Path of Purification*, Ch. XIV, ¶154, where loving kindness is given as coming under non-hate in the 89 kinds of consciousness (listed in ¶133).

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, *The Illustrator of the Ultimate Meaning (The Minor Readings)*, p. 265; *The Gradual Sayings*, IV, pp. 233 and 237. Against malevolence, *Middle Length Sayings*, II, p. 95.

<sup>3</sup>*Grad. Say.*, III, p. 209 and *Dialogues of the Buddha*, III, p. 233.

<sup>4</sup>*Grad. Say.*, III, p. 311 (¶¶iii-v).

can work to be temporarily free of one of the three unwholesome roots of suffering (greed, hate, delusion) and prepare for eventual liberation. One will not be completely free of hate, however, until one is able to maintain thoughts of loving kindness both day and night.<sup>1</sup>

**4. Loving kindness in combination with other qualities.** Loving kindness is generally known as one of the four Divine Abidings (Brahma-vihāra), to be discussed below. But it is also found in connection with other qualities. Together with renunciation and kindness, it is one of three kinds of good thinking, of good thoughts, of good purposes, of notions and of elements.<sup>2</sup> One finds unbounded fearlessness, loving kindness and good will through abandoning killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and the use of intoxicants (i.e., following the five precepts), and in this way one gives to innumerable beings without fear, hatred or ill will.<sup>3</sup>

Loving kindness is one of the comfortable abodes<sup>4</sup> and one of the ways of eliminating malice.<sup>5</sup> When teaching others, it is one of the five things to establish in oneself, together with speaking at the right time, speaking of what has (actually) happened, speaking with gentleness (or softly), and speaking about the goal.<sup>6</sup> Three of the six ways of being considerate include loving kindness: associated with

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<sup>1</sup>The Kindred Sayings, I, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup>Dialogues, III, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup>Grad. Say., IV, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup>Grad. Say., III, p. 102.

<sup>5</sup>Grad. Say., III, p. 137.

<sup>6</sup>Grad. Say., III, pp. 144f. and 178. See also Mid. Len. Say., I, pp. 163f.



deeds, words, and thoughts towards fellow disciples, both openly and in private.<sup>1</sup> In this way, disputes, quarrels, contention and hurtful speech can be avoided. Acts, thoughts and words associated with loving kindness will make for affection and respect and be conducive to concord, lack of contention, harmony and unity.

**5. Loving kindness as protection.** The Buddha taught the development of loving kindness apart from the other Divine Abidings as a means of self-protection. The Buddha said that if one worked for liberation of the mind through loving kindness, he would rarely be bothered by non-human beings.<sup>2</sup>

Mahā-Moggallāna when troubled by the Māra of the time of Buddha Gotama, told him how the development of loving kindness had been taught by a former Buddha, Buddha Kakusandha.<sup>3</sup> At that time, Mahā-Moggallāna was a Māra named Dūsin, and he had tried to keep the bhikkhus from attaining Enlightenment by telling the laymen to revile, abuse, vex and annoy them. But they overcame him through developing loving kindness.

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<sup>1</sup>Grad. Say., III, p. 208; Mid. Len. Say., I, pp. 258, 384; III, p. 201 (where Elder Anuruddha tells the Buddha that he and the bhikkhus with him live "together on friendly terms and harmoniously, as milk and water blend, regarding one another with the eye of affection." He says they are of "diverse bodies, but assuredly only one mind.").

<sup>2</sup>Kind. Say., II, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Mid. Len. Say., I, p. 399.

The commentary on "The Loving-kindness Discourse"<sup>1</sup> explains that the Buddha taught it to a group of bhikkhus who were frightened by earth-bound devas. The bhikkhus were living in the devas' forest and the devas had to leave their trees out of respect for the bhikkhus. But in order to get back their trees, they created terrifying forms of spirits, stood before the bhikkhus and made frightening noises. The bhikkhus were unable to meditate and went to the Buddha who taught them a discourse to serve both as a safeguard and as a meditation subject. He instructed them to recite the discourse on eight days of the month (associated with the Uposatha days), to give a discourse on the Teachings and to share merits. Through cultivating, maintaining and developing loving kindness, the bhikkhus would find that non-human beings would wish them well and seek their good.

Two of the eleven advantages of loving kindness are protections: devas guard the meditator and fire, poison and weapons do not affect him.<sup>2</sup> Venerable

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<sup>1</sup>**Illustrator**, pp. 266-270, 293f. The same discourse is found in the Sutta-nipāta (vv 143-152) (the most recent translation in the Pali Text Society series is in **The Group of Discourses**).

<sup>2</sup>See **Grad. Say.**, V, p. 219. They are given in **Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶37 and commented on in ¶¶60-76. See also Ch. III, ¶58, where the result of developing loving kindness as a general meditation subject results in being protected by devas and the bhikkhu's having his requisites protected by the important laymen in the village that supports him. For the mention of Elder Cūḷa-Sīva and the novice Saṅkicca, see Ch. IX, ¶71. Saṅkicca's story is found in the Dhammapada Commentary (**Budd. Leg.**, II, pp. 238-246). For the story of the cow, see ¶72.



Buddhaghosa says that the first one means the devas will protect him as a mother and father guard their child. He gives two stories of how women were protected through loving kindness developed in association with a Jhāna state.<sup>1</sup> A laywoman disciple, Uttarā, escaped being burnt by hot oil poured over her and Queen Sāmāvatī was saved from being shot with an arrow by King Udena when she and her retinue pervaded him with loving kindness with the result that he stood trembling, unable to release the arrow or put it down.

Other examples of escaping harm include the Elder Cūḷa-Sīva, who was unaffected by poison, and the novice Saṅkicca, who entered a Jhāna state when the leader of a band of thieves tried to kill him with his sword, thereby escaping injury. Ven. Buddhaghosa points out that it is not necessarily obligatory that access concentration and absorption be attained. He cites the example of a cow giving her calf milk when a hunter threw a spear at her. Due to her consciousness of love for the calf, the spear bounced off.

The Buddha also taught a discourse on loving kindness as a protection against snakes and other animals.<sup>2</sup>

In the commentary to the Dhammapada (v 30), the story is given of how Sakka, in a previous life,

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<sup>1</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. XII, ¶¶34f. Uttarā's story is in the Dhammapada commentary (*Buddhist Legends*, II, pp. 103-107), as is Sāmāvatī's (I, pp. 277-291, for the story here see pp. 286f. In this version, the king shoots the arrow, but it turns back.). Uttarā's protection from the burning oil is through the power of the Jhāna state developed through loving kindness.

<sup>2</sup>Grad. Say., II, pp. 81f. Also found in Jātaka n° 203 and *The Book of the Discipline*, V, pp. 148f.

admonished his thirty-two companions to develop loving kindness towards the king, the village headman who hated them, and the elephant sent to trample them. In this way, the elephant turned back twice and their lives were saved. This was part of the merit that enabled them to be reborn in the deva realm named for them: Tāvatiṃsa ("the thirty-three").<sup>1</sup>

**6. Difficulty in developing loving kindness.** When Sakka asked the Buddha a series of questions, the first one was: why do Devas, men, Asuras, Nāgas, Gandhabbas and other elevated classes of beings live in enmity, ill will, injuring each other, hostile and malign, even though they wish to live without ill will, injury, enmity or malevolence and prefer living in loving kindness?<sup>2</sup> The Buddha answered that no beings which still felt envious and selfish could live in loving kindness.

Venerable Buddhaghosa describes loving kindness as having an enemy which is near (or similar) to it, and one which is far from (or opposite to) it.<sup>3</sup> Greed, which is like loving kindness, sees others' virtues, so it is like an enemy disguised as a friend. Ill will, its opposite, is like an enemy that has dug into a stronghold.

**7. The various aspects of loving kindness.** The characteristic of loving kindness is active goodness, promoting welfare. Its function is to bring about what is good. Its effect is to eliminate hatred or annoyance. The proximate cause is the qualities to

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<sup>1</sup>Buddhist Legends, I, pp. 315-324.

<sup>2</sup>Dialogues, II, p. 310.

<sup>3</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶98. These are also given in The Expositor, p. 260.



be loved in beings. Its consummation is the quieting of ill will, and its failure is the production of lust or (selfish) affection.<sup>1</sup> Developing loving kindness is a meditation subject which is generally useful because it is needed generally and is to be desired due to its great helpfulness.<sup>2</sup> As one of the Divine Abidings, loving kindness is also included in the forty special meditation subjects, one of which should be developed depending on a person's temperament; loving kindness being appropriate for a person of a hating temperament. Special meditation subjects should always be with one; they are the proximate cause for each higher stage of development.<sup>3</sup>

**8. Developing loving kindness as a generally useful meditation subject.** Venerable Buddhaghosa gives instructions on how a bhikkhu should practise loving kindness in general.<sup>4</sup> He should first develop loving kindness towards the bhikkhus in his own community, thinking, "May they be happy and free from affliction." Then he should develop it in the following order: to all devas within the area of the monastery, towards all the principal people in the village that supports him, towards all human beings there and to all beings dependent on the human beings.

**9. Developing loving kindness as one of the Divine Abidings.** Loving kindness as one of the four Divine Abidings is described many times in the Pāli canon and commentaries. The four can be seen as a means of attaining a future life in the Brahmā realms or as

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<sup>1</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶93 and *Expositor*, pp. 258f.

<sup>2</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. III, ¶¶57, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. III, ¶¶60, 104.

<sup>4</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. III, ¶58.

being part of the effort for release from suffering in the present life. They can only be developed to a high enough degree to go to the Brahmā realms by those who leave the household life and attain one of the Jhāna states. If practised in preparation for attaining Nibbāna in the present life, loving kindness would no longer come under the category of a perfection. The way to establish it, however, is the same in both cases.

In one instance, the Buddha told the bhikkhus that in a past life he had practised loving kindness (without mention of the other Divine Abidings) for seven years and that as a result he was reborn as Brahmā, the deva king Sakka thirty-three times and as a World Monarch many times seven.<sup>1</sup> So we can see that it can lead to the deva worlds and to rebirth in a high station on the human plane as well as to rebirth in the Brahmā realms.

The Buddha taught the Divine Abidings both for attaining life in the Brahmā realms and for attaining Nibbāna. As he was able to know an individual's potential, he could suit his teachings to the disciple. Venerable Sāriputta, although second only to the Buddha in his understanding of the Teachings, did not have this ability, and in one case taught the Divine Abidings to a dying Brahman who would have been able to attain Nibbāna if he had taught him to do so.<sup>2</sup>

The Buddha was requested by the Brahman Vāsetṭha to show him the way to union with Brahmā.<sup>3</sup> In his answer, the Buddha gives the gradual

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<sup>1</sup>Grad. Say., IV, pp. 54f.

<sup>2</sup>Mid. Len. Say., II, p. 378.

<sup>3</sup>Dialogues, I, pp. 315-320. Cf. Grad. Say., III, p. 163.



training up to and including the Divine Abidings. This includes becoming a bhikkhu (or ascetic), training in the discipline, guarding the senses, attaining happiness through being mindful and self-possessed, being contented with little and adopting a life of simplicity, and conquering the five hindrances *Nīvaraṇa* of sensuous desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry and sceptical doubt.<sup>1</sup> After this preparation, the bhikkhu is prepared to send thoughts of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity to all living beings in all four quarters of the world, above, below and around. This is the way to the *Brahmā* realms, the Buddha points out, because it makes one resemble *Brahmā*: living apart from the opposite sex and without luxurious material possessions--that is, without household cares, free from anger and malice, with a pure mind and with self-mastery.

In his discourse to the ascetic Nigrodha, the Buddha makes it clear that the person who is perfect in his practice of this much of the Path is not yet released from suffering.<sup>2</sup> As the Buddha describes each step of the training, Nigrodha exclaims that this sort of austerity is pure and attains the highest, the core or heartwood (*Sāra*). He had a strong belief in the sort of austerities that only add to one's physical discomfort and the Buddha is pointing out to him austerities that are far superior to those. No, the Buddha tells him, the Divine Abidings do not attain the highest, the heartwood. In fact, they only pierce the bark.

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<sup>1</sup>Full details on the training in the discipline are found in *Dialogues*, I, pp. 2-26; on guarding the senses, etc., pp. 79-85 (¶¶63-75).

<sup>2</sup>*Dialogues*, III, pp. 44f.

The Buddha pointed out to his attendant, Venerable Ānanda, that as a Bodhisatta, when he was King Makhādeva, he had given up lay life and practised the Divine Abidings for 84,000 years and that a long succession of kings after him, down to King Nimi, had done likewise.<sup>1</sup> They had all gone to the Brahmā realms as a result. But that practice did not conduce to turning away, nor to dispassion, stopping, tranquillity, higher knowledge, self-awakening or Nibbāna.

Similarly, the Buddha told Ānanda of when as a Bodhisatta he had been a World Monarch, King Sudassana, and had gone into retreat in his own palace to practise the Divine Abidings for 84,000 years.<sup>2</sup> As a result, he was reborn in the Brahmā realms. There is also a report of a deva telling the Buddha the story of one of his past lives as a Bodhisatta, as told to a company of devas by the Brahmā Sanamkumāra. In that life he was named Jotipāla and was called Mahā-govinda (the Great Steward) because he ran the affairs of the kingdom so well. In that life, Brahmā taught him the way to be reborn in the Brahmā realms.<sup>3</sup> He retired from the household life to practise and was joined by seven kings and a large group of others. He taught all of them the Divine Abidings and after their deaths they were reborn in the Brahmā realms or in one of the lower deva realms, depending on how much of the teaching they had understood.<sup>4</sup> After he tells his story, the Buddha confirms all that the deva has repeated and emphasizes that such practice only

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<sup>1</sup>Mid. Len. Say., II, pp. 269-272.

<sup>2</sup>Dialogues, II, pp. 219f. On the number of years, p. 229.

<sup>3</sup>Dialogues, II, pp. 272-274.

<sup>4</sup>Dialogues, II, pp. 279f.



leads as high as the Brahmā realms and not as far as Nibbāna. As the Buddha, he taught his disciples to work for Nibbāna, and the degrees of achievement included the four stages of Awakening.

On another occasion, a group of bhikkhus reported that other ascetics claimed to teach the Divine Abidings, just like the Buddha. The Buddha points out that there is a difference, that only a Buddha, one of his disciples, or someone who has learned from either of these, can know how to cultivate the release of the mind through the Divine Abidings and know what the results will be.<sup>1</sup> In this instance, the Buddha shows how the Divine Abidings are used together with awareness of the repulsive in what is not repulsive, awareness of the unrepulsive in the repulsive and combinations of both.<sup>2</sup>

Venerable Buddhaghosa points out that it is because of clinging (Upādāna) that development of the Divine Abidings does not suffice for attaining Nibbāna.<sup>3</sup> He says that a person who thinks to himself, "I shall enjoy the delights of the Brahmā realms," and who develops the Divine Abidings with sense-desire clinging as the condition will be reborn in those realms. At the end of an aeon, beings must work to attain the Brahmā realms as all the realms of existence below them are destroyed.<sup>4</sup> As it is necessary

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<sup>1</sup>Kind. Say., V, pp. 98-102.

<sup>2</sup>Also given in *Path of Purif.*, Ch. XII, ¶¶36-38 and in *The Path of Discrimination*, p. 383 (¶27 [3]).

<sup>3</sup>*Path of Purif.*, Ch. VII, ¶18.

<sup>4</sup>*Path of Purif.*, Ch. XIII, ¶¶30-35.

to practise the Jhāna states of concentration in order to attain the Brahmā realms, some beings must be first reborn in the deva realms as they are too afflicted with hunger in the lower planes to attain them there.

**10. The practice of loving kindness.** A brief description of developing loving kindness has already been given as a general meditation subject and as taught by the Buddha to Vāseṭṭha. More detailed instructions are included in the discourse on loving kindness and its commentary,<sup>1</sup> **The Path of Discrimination**,<sup>2</sup> and in connection with the other Divine Abidings in **The Path of Purification**.<sup>3</sup> These will serve as the basis for the following discussion.

**A. Preparation.** The **Illustrator** says that one must first undertake the three higher trainings in virtue, concentration and wisdom. One should not fail with regards to virtue, right view, conduct, livelihood, etc. Then it explains the fifteen qualities, given in the verses, that a person should possess before cultivating loving kindness.<sup>4</sup> These apply specifically to forest-dwelling bhikkhus, but they can serve as a general indication for laymen as well.

One should be:

- (1) able (with good health and digestion; energetic in abandoning the unprofitable and

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<sup>1</sup>See **Illustrator**, pp. 271ff.

<sup>2</sup>Pages 317-322.

<sup>3</sup>Ch. IX, ¶¶1-76. **The Expositor** (p. 261) gives a very brief description based on the **Path of Purif.**

<sup>4</sup>**Illustrator**, pp. 271-281.



- undertaking the profitable; clever, not idle, capable in concentration, undertaking duties, etc.),
- (2) right (honest and sincere; repeatedly promoting non-laxity as long as he lives; non-fraudulent),
  - (3) upright (non-deceitful; not satisfied as long as there is more to be achieved),
  - (4) meek (easy to speak to; accepting others' advice and acting on it),
  - (5) gentle (literally, "malleable"; being gentle does not mean that one breaks the moral training [for example, a bhikkhu would not carry messages for laymen], but means the way in which the good life is led; being without grimaces, open-countenanced, easy to talk with and as welcoming as a good ford with an easy approach),
  - (6) not proud (not proud because of one's birth, race, etc.; being even-minded towards others, whether they be an outcaste or a prince, like Elder Sāriputta),
  - (7) contented (content with what is his, with what is given--no matter what quality it is or how it is given; content with what there is; not having excessive wishes; equally content with all by abandoning approval and resistance with respect to the desired and undesired),
  - (8) easy to support (with cheerfulness and a confident face, he makes do with what he gets),
  - (9) unbusy (not busy with love of working, love of talking, love of company, etc.; not busy needlessly with externals--for example, a bhikkhu with building a monastery--but engaged in attaining the True Teachings).

- (10) frugal (with little equipment; one "goes . . . as does a bird with its own wings"<sup>1</sup>),
- (11) serene in faculties (with the faculties of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind unagitated by lust for desirable objects),
- (12) prudent (knowledgeable, intelligent, possessed of understanding about guarding virtue, etc.),
- (13) modest (not impudent; not acting unbecomingly with his body, with unbecoming speech nor with unbecoming thinking--that is, sensual desire, ill will, cruelty, etc.),
- (14) one who does not fawn on families (either out of craving for material goods or due to unseemly associations with laymen; in other words, he is not one who is sorrowful when they are, or who relishes what they do, or is pleased when they are, or suffers when they do; he does not put himself forward in any business or work that comes up--this being specifically for bhikkhus, but all that is here could be applied to the layman's attitude to his friends),
- (15) one who does not do the slightest thing that other wise men might deplore (for the wise, "after inquiry and investigation, speak in dispraise of what deserves dispraise and in praise of what deserves praise").

In the **Path of Purification**, the meditator who is a beginner should first sever the impediments and

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<sup>1</sup>Dialogues, I, p. 81.



learn the meditation subject. The ten impediments are: being concerned with one's living quarters, with family (relatives or supporters), with gain, with study, with new building work, travel, kin (teacher, co-disciples or relatives), illness, the texts, or the supernormal powers (which are hard for ordinary persons to maintain).<sup>1</sup> Next, he should do the work connected with the meal and get rid of any dizziness due to it. Then he should seat himself comfortably on a well-prepared seat in a secluded place. He should begin by reviewing the danger in hate (for example, as leading to immorality) and the advantages of patience.<sup>2</sup>

**B. Thoughts of loving kindness. The Path of Discrimination** gives the following as the thought of loving kindness to send out: "May all beings be free from enmity, distress and affliction (ill will), and may they live happily."<sup>3</sup> It also gives the following: "Let all beings be free from enmity and not inimical, have pleasure and not pain, have bliss in their hearts and not pain in their hearts." This accompanies the aspects in which loving kindness treats all beings kindly, through rejecting their oppression, injury, disappointment, deprivation and harassment in favour of the opposites of these.

In **The Path of Purification**, the meditator begins with himself (discussed below), with either the thought, "May I be happy and free from suffering," or, "May I keep myself free from enmity, affliction and anxiety and live happily." Anxiety is explained as

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<sup>1</sup>The impediments are explained in Ch. III, ¶¶28-56.

<sup>2</sup>Ch. IX, ¶¶1-3.

<sup>3</sup>Page 317.

meaning being free from suffering. The desire for other beings' welfare and happiness arises through the realization, "I am happy. Just as I want to be happy and dread pain, as I want to live and not to die, so do other beings, too."<sup>1</sup>

The **Illustrator** gives a slightly expanded version of very similar thoughts of loving kindness together with a detailed commentary.<sup>2</sup>

Sukhino vā khemino hontu, sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittatā.

"Let all creatures indeed be happy (and) secure; let them be happy-minded."

v 3 (second half)

Na paro paramāṃ nikubbetha, nātimaññetha  
katthaci naṃ kañci,  
Vyārosanā paṭighasaññā nāññamaññassa  
dukkham iccheyya.

"One man should not humiliate another; one should not despise anyone anywhere. One should not wish another misery because of anger or from the notion of repugnance."

v 6

Happy (literally: having pleasure) means possessing pleasure. Secure means fearless, untroubled. Creatures

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<sup>1</sup>Ch. IX, ¶¶8, 10, 56.

<sup>2</sup>For the Pāli of these verses with translation and commentary by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, see pp. 282f, 287-289. We have followed here Mr K.R. Norman's translation in **The Group of Discourses** (vv 145 [second half], 148).



means breathing things. Let them be happy-minded (literally: have a pleased self) means with a pleased mind. Bodily pleasure is included in being happy. Mental pleasure is included in being happy-minded. And both are included in being secure, the disappearance of all fears and plagues.

"One man should not humiliate another" means "one should not betray." "Despise" means "nor let him by surmounting show conceit." Anywhere means in the open, in a village, in a field, in the midst of relatives, or in the midst of a guild, and so on. Anyone at all is included, whether a Warrior-Noble, a Brahman or householder or one gone forth, whether well off or ill off, and so on. Anger means through alteration in body or speech. The notion of repugnance means through alteration in mind. Not wishing misery shows that in addition to wishing others happiness--the positive side--one should also wish for the absence of the negative, with thoughts such as, "Oh, that no person at all might undo any person at all with such undoing as betrayal, etc., or might slight any other person at all in any place on the grounds of conceit in birth, property, etc., and that each might not wish another misery because of anger or from the notion of repugnance."

In addition to the types of thought to accompany loving kindness, the loving kindness discourse also speaks of the attitude for the meditator to have.<sup>1</sup> One looks on other beings as a mother looks on her only child, whom she would guard with her life. His thoughts of love are unchecked (Asambādhām) and without malice (Averam) or foe (Asapattam). Un-

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<sup>1</sup>Pages 288-291.

checked since they find oportunities everywhere, have no malice since his own annoyance with others has been removed, and have no foe since other's annoyance with himself has been removed. Finally, he practices loving kindness in all postures (standing, going, seated, lying down).

**The Path of Purification** also uses the metaphor of the mother--but as an illustration of the differences in mental attitude according to each of the Divine Abidings.<sup>1</sup> Loving kindness is like a mother who desires growth for a baby. Compassion is like a mother who wishes for a son who is sick to get rid of his illness. Sympathetic joy is like her attitude towards an adolescent son for whom she wishes that good fortune continue. Equanimity is like a mother not being anxious for a son who manages his own affairs.

**C. Beings towards whom one sends loving kindness.** In the discourse on loving kindness, loving kindness is shown as being sent to all beings globally, to groups of beings by pairs and to groups of beings by groups of three. The following gives these divisions with remarks from the commentary.<sup>2</sup>

(1) All-inclusive groups:

- (a) all creatures (including all the groups which follow),
- (b) all living creatures (the world of creatures).

(2) Pairs:

- (a) moving or still (They move because

<sup>1</sup>Ch. IX, ¶108. Also in **Expositor**, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup>**Illustrator**, pp. 283-287, 289f. The translations of some of the terms follow **Group of Disc.**, vv 145-147.



they thirst; this means those with craving and those who fear. The still stand still, meaning Arahats who have abandoned craving and fear.),

(b) seen or unseen (to come before the eye or to be beyond sight, as beyond the sea, a mountain, this world-system, etc.),

(c) dwelling far or near (from oneself; includes footless and bipeds; creatures in one's own body are near; those outside are far; those in the same district are near; those outside the district are far; near and far can likewise be applied in this relative fashion to one's abode, village, country, continent, world-system as near and other abodes, etc., as far),

(d) beings that already exist or are going to be ([i] Those who have been born, generated, means "They are (but) they will not be again." This means Arahats. Those who are going to be are those who seek future existence and applies to the Noble Ones below the Arahats and ordinary beings. [ii] This can also be taken to mean: beings that are still in the egg or womb, or moisture-born beings and beings of spontaneous appearance in the first moment of cognizance are those who are going to be. Beings that have broken out of the egg or the foetal membrane, or moisture-born beings and beings of spontaneous appearance beginning with the second moment of cognizance are beings that already exist. [iii] It can also mean: up to the moment

of birth applies to beings who are going to be and after birth means beings who already exist.),

- (3) Groups of three (with "middle-sized" implicit in all three; "small" implicit in two):
- (a) long, middle-sized, short (long: Nāgas, fish, lizards, etc.; middle-sized: horses, oxen, buffaloes, pigs, etc.; short: dwarfs, etc.),
  - (b) big, middle-sized, small (big: turtles, etc. in water; elephants, Nāgas, etc. on land; Dānava Asuras, etc. as non-human beings; middle-sized, see (a); small: creatures that cannot be seen by the physical eye, but are seen by divine sight and are generated in water, etc.; or, the small are lice, etc.; or, all beings smaller than the big or thick are small),
  - (c) thick, middle-sized, small (thick: creatures that are round, like some fish, tortoises, oysters, clams, etc.; for middle-sized see (a); for small see (b)).

In **The Path of Purification**, continuing the instructions of the beginner, the beings to whom one sends loving kindness are described according to the order that should be followed if one is to avoid falling into the traps of desire or hatred. The list given above assumes that one has already overcome such obstacles. The discussion in **The Path of Purification** especially concentrates on the hostile person, giving many ways to overcome one's own feelings of hostility. The following is a summary of



the instructions given.<sup>1</sup>

(1) **Loving kindness towards oneself.** He uses himself as an example ("I am happy. Just as I want to be happy and dread pain, as I want to live and not to die, so do other beings, too.") **To be avoided at the beginning:** at this stage, one cannot attain a Jhāna state. It is fatiguing to put an antipathetic person in a dear one's place, to put a very dearly loved friend in a neutral person's place, or to put a neutral person in the place of one who is respected or dear. One feels like weeping when a friend has the slightest misfortune. Anger arises when one thinks of a hostile person. Developing loving kindness specifically towards the opposite sex will evoke lust. Developing it towards a dead person will not lead to access concentration or absorption.

(2) **Loving kindness towards a teacher** or preceptor or their equivalent. Through recollecting such gifts, kind words, etc. as inspire love and endearment and such virtue, learning, etc. as inspire respect and reverence and which are met with in a teacher, etc. Thinking, "May this good man be happy and free from suffering." Here, absorption is possible.

(3) **Loving kindness towards a very dearly loved friend.** For (3)-(5), one makes his mind malleable and wieldy before proceeding to the next step.

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<sup>1</sup>Ch. IX, ¶¶ 4-43.

(4) Loving kindness towards a neutral person as a dearly loved friend.

(5) Loving kindness towards a hostile person as neutral. In case he has no enemy, i.e., if he does not perceive anyone as his enemy, even if another does him harm, he ignores (5). If resentment arises as he applies his mind to a hostile person because he remembers wrongs done by that person, he should use the following methods to get rid of it:

(a) enter repeatedly into loving kindness (Jhāna) towards those in (2)-(4) and after emerging each time, direct loving kindness to the hostile person.

If the resentment does not die out, then:

(b) recollect the Buddha's teaching that "even if thieves carve one limb from limb with a double-handed saw" one should not feel hatred,<sup>1</sup> and similar teachings that he who feels hatred does not carry out the Buddha's teaching. "By repaying an angry man in kind you will be worse than the angry man . . ."<sup>2</sup>

If the resentment does not subside:

(c) remove irritation by remembering some controlled, purified state attained by that person (a state inspiring confidence). For example, if a person is only controlled in his physical actions, then ignore his uncontrolled verbal

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<sup>1</sup>Mid. Len. Say., I, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶15. Other references to the canon are given there.

and mental behaviour. If his vocal behaviour is good (welcoming with kindness, easy to talk with, congenial, open-countenanced, deferential in speech, expounding the Teachings with a sweet voice, explaining it with well-rounded phrases and details), then recollect that and not the other two. If only his mental behaviour is controlled (for example, a control that will be evident by his control when worshipping at shrines, etc., because he does it carefully and deliberately) recollect that and ignore the other two.

(c-1) There may be a person without control over mind, speech or physical actions. Compassion should be aroused for such a person; he is in the human world now but will go to one of the hells in the future. For irritation subsides through compassion too.

(c-2) There may be a person with controlled mind, speech and physical actions. Any of the three may be recollected, for developing loving kindness towards such a person is easy.

If irritation still arises:

(d) the meditator should admonish himself:  
 Leave anger with the enemy, do not copy his act. . . . A state lasts for only a moment; the aggregates that did the act you resent have ceased.  
 What are you angry with?

If resentment does not abate:



(e) the meditator should review the fact that he himself and the other person are the owners (or inheritors) of their own volitional acts (Kamma). For example, "If I become angry, I will suffer for that. . . . Such deeds do not lead to Enlightenment or even to a happy existence. . . . Such deeds lead to falling from the Dispensation, to the status of an eater of scraps and to the hells. . . ." Similarly, he recollects that a person who is angry with him will suffer the results of his own action.

If resentment still does not subside:

(f) the meditator should review the example the Buddha set as a Bodhisatta and remember that it is highly improper and unbecoming to arouse thoughts of resentment as one is emulating the Buddha.<sup>1</sup>

If resentment does not subside because the slavery of defilement is so deep rooted:

(g) he should review discourses on the beginninglessness of continued rebirth, for example, "It is not easy to find a being who has not formerly been your mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter."<sup>2</sup> And he should re-

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<sup>1</sup>Several Jātaka stories are mentioned in brief in **Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶¶26-34, all emphasizing the avoiding of feeling hate when provoked which was mentioned with the perfection of patience. In ¶35, the Buddha is mentioned as having no equal when it comes to patience. As mentioned above, patience is necessary in developing loving kindness (Ch. IX, ¶¶1-3).

<sup>2</sup>**Kind. Say.**, II, p. 128.

member all they will have done for him formerly.

If he still is unable to quench the resentment:

(h) he should review the advantages of loving kindness (remembering the eleven advantages, given below).

If he is still unable to stop resentment:

(i) he should resolve into elements so that his anger will find no foothold. For example: What are you angry with? Is it the hair of the head? The body hair? the nails?, etc. Or, Is it the earth element in the hair of the head?, etc. Or, Is it the material aggregate?, etc. Or, Is it the eye base?, etc. Or, Is it the eye element?, etc.<sup>1</sup>

If he cannot effect the resolution into elements:

(j) he should try giving a gift.

When his resentment towards the hostile person is allayed, he should practise loving kindness until he reaches mental impartiality. He breaks the barriers, obtains the sign and access, and reaches absorption. Through loving kindness, one can attain the first three Jhānas (when they are divided into four types) or the first four (divided into five types). It is when

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<sup>1</sup>This means the 32 parts of the body (**Path of Purif.**, Ch. VIII, ¶¶83-138), or the four elements (earth-, air-, heat-, water-elements) in the 32 parts of the body, or the five aggregates (Khandha: materiality, feeling, perception, mental-formations, consciousness), or the 12 bases (see Nyanatiloka, **Buddhist Dictionary**, "Āyatana"), or the 18 elements (**Budd. Dict.**, "Dhātu").

he is able to attain one of these Jhānas that he is able to send loving kindness everywhere, equally, free from enmity and free from affliction.<sup>1</sup> Equally means to all, whether inferior, medium, superior, friendly, hostile, neutral, etc., without making any difference between oneself and others. Or, it can mean: with all one's mind, without holding back anything. If the meditator makes any discrimination between himself, a friend, a neutral person and a hostile person, then he is not skilled or able to have loving kindness at will; he is only "Kindly towards beings."

Once a Jhāna state can be reached, one can develop loving kindness in regards to others, either as members of five unspecified groups or as members of seven specified groups:<sup>2</sup>

- (1) General groups
  - (a) all beings
  - (b) all creatures
  - (c) all living creatures
  - (d) all persons
  - (e) all who have a personality
- (2) specific groups
  - by sex:
    - (a) all women
    - (b) all men
  - by being Noble or ordinary:
    - (c) all Noble Ones

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<sup>1</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶¶44, 47, quoting *Dialogues*, I, pp. 317f.

<sup>2</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶¶50-51, 53-56, quoting from *Path of Discr.*, pp. 317f.



- (d) all who are not Noble Ones
- by kinds of rebirth:
- (e) all devas
- (f) all human beings
- (g) all in the states of deprivation.

**D. Directions to send loving kindness.** The directions mentioned in the discourse on loving kindness are very general ones: above, below, all around. The commentary<sup>1</sup> defines these as follows: above means upward, to those in a realm of formless being (i.e., up to the realm of neither perception nor non-perception). Below means downward, to sensual-desire realms of existence; down to the lowest hell (Avīci). All around means in the middle and refers to the realm of formed existence. Ven. Buddhaghosa quotes the directions given in the Buddha's discourse to Vāseṭṭha: "the four quarters, above, below, around; everywhere and equally he dwells, pervading the entire world . . ." Everywhere means in all places. The entire world means the world of beings, possessing or associated with all beings. This is possible for those who can attain a Jhāna state.<sup>2</sup>

The Path of Purification gives ten directions to be pervaded with loving kindness, quoting The Path of Discrimination:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) the eastern direction
- (2) the western direction

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<sup>1</sup>Illustrator, pp. 289f.

<sup>2</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶¶44-49, quoting Dialogues, I, pp. 317f.

<sup>3</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶52. Path of Discr., p. 318.

- (3) the northern direction
- (4) the southern direction
- (5) the eastern intermediate direction
- (6) the western intermediate direction
- (7) the northern intermediate direction
- (8) the southern intermediate direction
- (9) the lower direction
- (10) the upper direction.

Ven. Buddhaghosa also gives a method for gradually widening the object of loving kindness when one has reached either access concentration or absorption.<sup>1</sup> Just as a man marks off an area and then ploughs it, the meditator delimits one dwelling place and develops loving kindness for all beings in it. When his mind has become malleable and wieldy, he can then delimit two dwellings, and so on, up to ten, then a whole street, half the village, the whole village, the district, the kingdom, one direction, etc., up to a world-system, and even beyond that.

### **E. Combining thoughts, beings and directions.**

It is possible to cultivate loving kindness in 528 ways.<sup>2</sup> The four thoughts (wishing others freedom from enmity, affliction, anxiety and wishing that they live happily) can be combined with the five general groups of beings (20 ways) or with the seven specific groups of beings (28 ways). If the ten directions are included with these groups and thoughts, 200 ways and 280 ways are obtained. All these ways added together come to 528 ways. The advantage in having so many kinds is that the meditator can develop the one that is clear to him.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶103; quoted in *The Expositor*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶57.

<sup>3</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶56.

**11. The benefits of developing loving kindness.** All the possibilities given above for loving kindness as a protection can be considered benefits. In **The Gradual Sayings** we find lists of eight and eleven advantages.<sup>1</sup> The first seven and last advantages in the list of eleven are the same as the eight. The eleven advantages are:

- (1) one sleeps in comfort,
- (2) one wakes in comfort,
- (3) one does not have bad dreams,
- (4) one is dear to human beings,
- (5) one is dear to non-human beings,
- (6) devas guard one,
- (7) fire, poison and weapons do not affect one,
- (8) the mind is easily concentrated,
- (9) the expression on one's face is serene,
- (10) one dies unconfused,
- (11) if one does not attain any higher (than loving kindness), one will be reborn in the Brahmā realms.

Ven. Buddhaghosa quotes these advantages as a list to be remembered when feeling hostility.<sup>2</sup> If one does not stop resentment, then all these advantages will be lost. He expands on the meaning of the advantages and gives several examples.<sup>3</sup> Elder Visā-kha, who ordained in Ceylon, is given as a person who was dear to non-human beings. When he started to leave the Cittalapabbata Monastery after a four-month stay, a tree deva there began to cry. When

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<sup>1</sup>For eight, **Grad. Say.**, IV, p. 103; for eleven, **Grad. Say.**, V, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>**Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶37.

<sup>3</sup>**Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶¶60-76.



asked why, the deva explained that while the Elder was in residence the non-human beings there treated each other kindly. If he left, they would start quarrels and loose talk. So Elder Visākha stayed on. The examples of how one is not affected by fire, poison and weapons are given above with the discussion of loving kindness as a protection.

Another list of benefits of loving kindness are given by Ven. Buddhaghosa in connection with developing loving kindness as a general meditation subject.<sup>1</sup> The meditator produces kindliness in those he lives with, kindly devas in the monastery protect him, well-disposed important laymen in the village that supports him will protect his requisites, human beings will trust him and not dislike him, and with loving kindness to all beings he can wander everywhere unhindered.

**12. The relative value of loving kindness.** In a discourse in the **Gradual Sayings**,<sup>2</sup> the Buddha speaks of purifying the naturally luminous mind that has become defiled through developing the mind. This can be done through indulging a thought of loving kindness, or by cultivating or giving attention to a thought of loving kindness, if only for as long as a snap of the fingers. A bhikkhu who does this does not meditate in vain, follows the Buddha's instructions, is one who takes good advice and does not eat the country's alms-food in vain. It is far better if loving kindness is developed for even longer periods. The same point is made in another discourse in the same collection, but this time, loving kindness is

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<sup>1</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. III, ¶58.

<sup>2</sup>Grad. Say., I, pp. 8f.

seen to be one of a long list of meditation subjects and may be combined with others. This, of course, would carry one beyond loving kindness as a perfection and use it to develop insight and attain Ni-bbāna.

In a discourse to the layman Anāthapiṇḍika, the Buddha gave a list of actions which bring benefits in order of importance.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha says that in a former life he had given great quantities of gifts, but as it had been at a time when no Buddha's Teachings were available, the results were much less than what is to be gained by feeding one person of right view (i.e., a Sotāpanna). Greater results would be gained by feeding (in rising order of value): a hundred persons of right view, one or a hundred Once-returners, one or a hundred Non-returners, one or a hundred Arahats, one or a hundred Pacceka Buddhas, a teaching Buddha, a teaching Buddha and the Saṅgha. It would be still greater to build a monastery for the Saṅgha, to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha, and to keep the precepts. At this point, the Buddha says it is of greater benefit to develop a "mere passing fragrance" of loving kindness. But greatest of all in the list is developing the thought of impermanence for just a finger-snap.

The reason loving kindness has such a high position is that through it one can develop concentration and gain the temporary purity of the Jhānas. If it is not combined with another meditation subject, such as impermanence, the highest results that can be gained, however, will be rebirth in the fine-

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<sup>1</sup>Grad. Say., IV, pp. 262-265.

material Brahmā realms.<sup>1</sup>

**13. Loving kindness in the Jātakas.** The development of loving kindness by the Buddha as a Bodhisatta is shown in several Jātaka stories. As the ascetic teacher Araka (n° 169) he practised loving kindness and the other Divine Abidings for seven years and as a result was reborn in the Brahmā realms for seven aeons. In referring to his life as Suvanna-Sāma (Jātaka n° 534) in **The Basket of Conduct**,<sup>2</sup> the Buddha tells Ven. Sāriputta that he lived as an ascetic in the forest, surrounded by lions, tigers, leopards, bears, buffaloes, spotted deer and wild boar, but no one was afraid of him and he feared no one, sustained by the power of loving kindness.

In the Seyya Jātaka (n° 282), King Kamsa allowed his country to be taken by the king of Kosala, not wishing to cause anyone harm through resisting. He was put into prison in chains. There, he attained the loving-kindness Jhāna and the king of Kosala felt great torment, burning throughout his body as if from a double flame. Learning the cause of his suffering, he released King Kamsa and restored his kingdom. In a similar incident, the Bodhisatta was King Ekarāja (Jātaka n° 303). When he was taken prisoner by King

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<sup>1</sup>**Kind. Say.**, V, p. 100; **Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶¶119-120. It does not seem to be mentioned in the commentaries, but this may be why loving kindness is often mentioned alone, whereas compassion and sympathetic joy are not. These others lead to rebirth in the immaterial realms. If reborn in these, one could miss encountering a Buddha's dispensation. Equanimity could give similar results, but as an essential element of developing insight, it is far more important than any of the other Divine Abidings.

<sup>2</sup>Page 46. The commentary says the verses in this collection were spoken to Ven. Sāriputta.



Dabbasena of Kosala, he was bound with a cord and hung upsidedown from the lintel of the door. Referring to this life in **The Basket of Conduct**,<sup>1</sup> the Buddha says that no one then was his equal in loving kindness. He was able to attain a Jhāna state, break the                      and sit cross-legged in the air. King Dabbasena, who was also attacked by burning pains in his body, released King Ekarāja and restored his kingdom.

In two Jātakas the Bodhisatta was aided by another person's loving kindness. In both the Culla-Haṃsa Jātaka (n° 533) and the Mahā-Haṃsa Jātaka (n° 534) the Bodhisatta was the king of the golden geese. When caught by a fowler, he injured his foot in trying to get away. In both cases, the fowler healed the injury through the power of his loving kindness.

**14. The loving kindness of the Buddha.** Two stories in particular illustrate the power of the Buddha's loving kindness: the story of Roja the Malla<sup>2</sup> and the story of the elephant Nālāgiri sent by Devadatta to kill the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

At one time when the Buddha went to Kusinārā, the Mallas made a pact that anyone who did not greet the Buddha would be fined. When Ven. Ānanda, who was a friend of Roja's, complimented him on the fact that he had come to meet the Buddha, Roja confessed that he only did so because of the pact. Ven. Ānanda told the Buddha that it would be well

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<sup>1</sup>Page 46.

<sup>2</sup>**The Book of Discipline**, IV, pp. 340-344.

<sup>3</sup>**Bk of Dis.**, V, pp. 272-274. See also the introduction to Jātaka n° 533.

if he could do something to inspire faith in Roja the Malla. The Buddha then suffused Roja with loving kindness, and as a result, Roja followed him around, longing to see him. Shown the way to where the Buddha was dwelling, he approached and listened to a progressive talk and a discourse on the Dhamma and was established in the first stage of Awakening (Sotāpatti).

In the second example, Devadatta, after failing by other means to kill the Buddha, sent the drunk elephant Nālāgiri against him. But through cultivating loving kindness, the Buddha won the elephant over. Seeing this, the citizens of Rājagaha remarked, "They can be tamed by sticks and goads and whips, but the great Sage has tamed this elephant without a weapon or a stick."

Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa

## THE PERFECTION OF EQUANIMITY

### UPEKKHA PARAMI

**1. Equanimity as one of the perfections.** "Upekkhā" (equanimity) is used in several ways in connection with the wind, and in some cases the meaning is closer to "indifference" than to "equanimity." As one of the ten perfections, Upekkhā means maintaining a balanced mind when faced with wrong actions or good actions coming from others. One is fully conscious of the true nature of reality in such circumstances. In particular, there is the knowledge that all beings are responsible for their own volitional actions and will inherit the results of their acts.

**2. Equanimity as a mental factor.** Equanimity is included in one of the nineteen profitable mental factors: specific neutrality (Tatra-majjhataṭṭā).<sup>1</sup> This mental factor will be equanimity when there is the realization that others are the owners of their volitional actions, and when there is absence of resentment and approval.<sup>2</sup>

**3. Ten types of equanimity.** The Path of Purification (Ch. IV, ¶¶156-171) and The Expositor (pp. 230-234)

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<sup>1</sup>See *Path of Purification*, p. 880. This term is translated in *The Pali-English Dictionary* (PTS) as : "(complete) equanimity (keeping balance here and there)."

<sup>2</sup>*Path of Purif.*, Ch. IX, ¶96.



give ten kinds of equanimity:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) Sixfold equanimity (Challaṅgupekkhā) is the equanimity of those who have destroyed the intoxicants (i.e., Arahats) with regards to the six kinds of desirable or undesirable objects when they come into contact with the six sense doors.
- (2) Equanimity as a Divine Abiding (Brahma-vihāruppekkhā) means the neutrality towards beings when one is intent on one quarter of the world, etc. with a heart full of equanimity.
- (3) Equanimity as an enlightenment factor (Bojjhaṅguppekkhā) is the neutrality towards co-existing mental states.
- (4) Equanimity of energy (Viriyupekkhā) means being neither too strenuous nor too lax in arousing energy.
- (5) Equanimity about formations (Saṅkhārupekkhā) is neutrality towards the hindrances, etc.
- (6) Equanimity as a feeling (Vedanupekkhā) is the sensation perceived as neither-pain-nor-pleasure.
- (7) Equanimity about insight (Vipassanupekkhā) is neutrality during investigating (when realizing conditioned phenomena are impermanent, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Harvey B. Aronson, **Love and Sympathy in Theravada Buddhism** (Delhi: Motilal Banarstdass, 1980), pp. 81ff. Six of these types are discussed by Aronson.

(8) Equanimity as specific neutrality (Tatra-majjhattupekkhā) is the equal efficiency (or impartiality) concerning co-existent states.

(9) Equanimity of Jhāna (Jhānupekkhā) means producing impartiality even towards the highest bliss (in the Third Jhāna).

(10) Purifying equanimity (Parisuddhupekkhā) is equanimity purified of all opposition (as in the Fourth Jhāna).

Six of these have the same base: numbers 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, all being taken as specific neutrality (Tatra-majjhattā). But they are present on different occasions, just as the same being will be called by different names, such as: boy, youth, adult, general, king, etc. When one of the six is present, none of the others will be present at the same time.

The perfection of equanimity (Upekkhā Pāramī) is the second of these, Equanimity as a Divine Abiding.<sup>1</sup> This means developing equanimity in regards to others. The distinction between the various aspects and types of equanimity can be seen in the five things that lead to equanimity as an enlightenment factor:<sup>2</sup> (1) maintenance of neutrality towards living beings, (2) maintenance of neutrality towards formations (inanimate things), (3) avoidance of persons who

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<sup>1</sup> In her introduction to **The Basket of Conduct**, Miss Horner speaks of equanimity as a Pāramī and as a Divine Abiding, one being different from the other. She does not refer to a Pāli text in connection with this, so there seems to be no reason to question the Burmese commentary here.

<sup>2</sup> **Path of Purif.**, Ch. IV, ¶ 62.

show favouritism towards beings and formations, (4) cultivation of persons who maintain neutrality towards beings and formations, (5) resoluteness upon that (equanimity).

**4. Various aspects of equanimity as a Divine Abiding.** Its characteristic is promoting neutrality towards beings. Its function is to see equality in beings. Its manifestation is quieting resentment and approval. The proximate cause is seeing that beings are owners of their own deeds. Each individual must choose to act in such a way that they will be happy, or freed from suffering, or maintain their success. Equanimity is successful when resentment and approval subside. It fails when it produces a profane, unintelligent indifference.<sup>1</sup> The near enemy of equanimity is this profane, unintelligent indifference, for this ignores faults and virtues, just as true equanimity does. The far enemies are greed and resentment.<sup>2</sup> Equanimity and passion cannot be present in the mind together. Through it, one becomes delivered from lust, doubts, queries and debating.<sup>3</sup> Along with loving kindness and compassion, it is one of the five ways to suppress malice (Āghāta).<sup>4</sup>

**5. Developing equanimity as a Divine Abiding.** Equanimity is more difficult to cultivate than the

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<sup>1</sup>**Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶96. Nāṇamoli translates the last term as "the equanimity of unknowing, which is that (worldly-minded indifference of ignorance) based on the house life." We have used the translation in **The Expositor**, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup>**Path of Purif.**, Ch. IX, ¶101.

<sup>3</sup>**Dialogues of the Buddha**, III, pp. 233f.

<sup>4</sup>**Gradual Sayings**, III, p. 137.



other three Divine Abidings (loving kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy). It is necessary if one is to attain the highest Jhāna states.<sup>1</sup> It is to be developed after the other three Divine Abidings, so all that has been given for the preparation to practise loving kindness in "The Perfection of Loving Kindness" applies here also. Then one should consider the dangers of the other three Divine Abidings--that is to say, resentment and approval are near due to the joy (Somanassa) associated with them. And one should see the advantage of equanimity, its peacefulness. The order for developing equanimity towards beings is: a neutral person, a dear person, a boon companion, a hostile person, and lastly, oneself. The versatility and advantages are the same as those for loving kindness.<sup>2</sup>

As with loving kindness, equanimity can be developed towards five general groups of beings or towards seven specific groups of beings. And these may be combined with each of the ten directions. This means there are 132 ways.<sup>3</sup> When combined with the seeing of all beings as owners of their own deeds, this thought can also be expanded: in addition to seeing all beings as owners of their own deeds can be added: they have deeds as their parents, as their kin, as their refuge; they will become the heir of whatever deeds they do.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The fourth Jhāna (if they are divided into four) or the fifth (if they are divided into five).

<sup>2</sup>Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶¶88-90.

<sup>3</sup>Five general groups in each of the ten directions, plus seven specific groups in each of the ten directions, plus twelve groups not combined with the directions.

<sup>4</sup>Grad. Say., III, p. 137 (quoted in Path of Purif., Ch. IX, ¶¶23f.).

**6. The Bodhisatta's development of equanimity.** In **The Basket of Conduct** (p. 48) the story of Mahā-Lomahamsa is given to illustrate how the Bodhisatta perfected himself in equanimity. During that life, the Bodhisatta was an ascetic who resided in a cemetery. Crowds of rustic children approached him and displayed a great deal of derisive behaviour. Others brought him offerings. But his attitude to both groups was the same. "Kindliness, anger did not exist." He was balanced towards happiness and anguish, honours and reproaches. "I was the same in all circumstances," the Buddha said.



The text which is translated and adapted here is from an appendix (or Anudīpanī, "Further commentary") to a Burmese work (**Mahābuddhavamsa**) based on the Buddhavamsa and its commentary. The text was written by Venerable Ngarkhon Sayadaw and was first published in 1935 by the Zambumeikswe Pitaka Press and Publishing House. For the 1960 edition, additional material was added by a layman, Aggamahā-pañḍita Sayagyi U Lin, M.A. Venerable Tipiṭakadhara Dhammabhaṇḍāgārika Sayadaw (Ashin Vicitthasarabhivamsa, Aggamahā-pañḍita) was responsible for polishing the text and using an up-to-date vocabulary in Burmese.

The Burmese translation has been adapted for Western readers. We have used English translations of the texts quoted from the Pāli canon and commentaries whenever available. At times we have felt it was necessary to give more details so the texts would be readily understood by people without previous knowledge of Buddhism. We are entirely responsible for the English version.