

# Reflections on the Karaniya mettā sutta discourse 1

(Transcribed from the translated talks given by ven. Kidagammulle Pemasiri Mahā Thera)



## The first discourse

Lord Buddha preached this sutta to a group of bhikkhus who lived in a forest. They lived for three months (*vassa*) in this forest. When they were meditating for some time in this forest, it became a very difficult situation. This is an important point for meditators... Those bhikkhus, they didn't have enough mettā with them, because of that the *devas* dwelling above the trees didn't like these bhikkhus. But virtue of those bhikkhus was good, so the devas couldn't live on the tree tops while the bhikkhus were living under the boughs. So they had to come down from the tops. So these devas thought: "Now we have to chase these bhikkhus away from this forest." And they started to show various fearful objects like bodies without heads etc. ....distorted headless bodies they showed to those bhikkhus. So the bhikkhus started to be afraid and became thin, frail, and sick. Then they went to the Buddha and said: "Lord, we can't stay in that forest.", and Lord Buddha said: "No, no, that is a suitable place for you.", and taught them this mettā meditation, sutta. All the yogis who are meditating they need mettā. But for us here we need not be afraid of ghosts and other things, here we don't have such problems. These things, you should not imagine that you might see these things/face such situations (outside meditation). None should imagine that way. And in meditation all yogis experience such situations, various forms or headless forms yogis can see. It is not this situation, so we should not mix up these two. One who lives in a forest, he must have great wisdom. We can understand this particular wisdom of one who lives in a forest through these suttas like *Vanapattha* (MN 17), *Bhaya-bherava* (MN 4) suttas. The latter explains the example of the bodhisattva - even the bodhisattva was sometimes scared, had to face such situations. At night sometimes various sounds came because of animals, because of a deer or a peacock various strange sounds came up, and then he examined them and came to realize that there is no need to fear here... this is because of these... these... species. In the forest some animals sleep in the day time and walk at night. So we needn't be afraid of such animals. These animals, because they are afraid of us, they run away, but we think we saw a ghost. The incident explained in the commentary to the KMS (that is the *Karaniya mettā sutta* (Sn 1.8 & Khp 9) and experiences we get in our meditation are two different things. In the KMS those bhikkhus didn't have enough mettā.

Once I (*Loku Hāmuduru*) was in a *kuti* in a forest. Nobody liked to go to that *kuti*, because after ten o'clock at night somebody tapped at the door. In this *kuti* the door had two parts, lower and upper part- so when we wanted we could close the lower part and the upper part could be opened. So one day I was waiting for this ghost who did the tapping and I closed the upper part of the door and didn't close the lower part. Then I found this ghost. Very close to this door there was a tree with small fruit/nuts because of the nice smell of this fruit bees/hornets were coming. So, usually nothing special happened, but on full moon days much more bees were coming. And these bees came and settled on the door. There were very big geckos in the jungle. They came and ate these bees and tapped at the door with their tails. So always time to time this thing was happening, moreover bats and rats came to catch these geckos. They time to time made these tapping sounds. So Loku Hāmuduru became very happy. These other monks understood. Yes, these kind of frightening objects are there in the jungle, but when we examine them, there is not anything to be afraid of.

Because of this situation meditation also can come to low level, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* disappear. Fear means aversion... They are interdependent... Because of fear aversion comes, because of aversion fear comes. Anger has other various subdivisions: fear, irritation and so on... all these are subsections of the ... When one lives in forest and feels fear that means he has anger. Yes, this fear is a defilement of meditation – *upakkilesa*. ... It is a kind of sub defilement. If we practice *mettā*, we can subside this fear, subdue it. In order to subdue fear lord Buddha preached this *Karanīya mettā sutta*. If one has good *mettā*, he can live with any ghosts ... any person, any creature ..., can live with animals, whatever. If one has ... Some animals come closer to human beings - they think that humans will help them. Even small elephants or bear cubs can come close to a human. They think a human will help them, so there is no need to be afraid of them. So this *mettā* meditation is very helpful to the yogi in two aspects: one is deficiencies coming from within oneself and the other is problems coming from outside. To face both these situations *mettā* meditation is very helpful to the yogi.

### **[Karanīyam attha kusalena]**

There are prior requisites to start *mettā* meditation. *Karanīya mettā sutta* – the first part explains these requirements: '*Karanīyam attha kusalena*', so *karanīya* means “what should be done”. And then one should understand “what should not be done” also... Both *karanīya* and *akaranīya* ... “....*attha kusalena*” means *attha kusala* ... That is ... “one who wants to develop oneself”. He should know what he should do and what he should not do. There are aspects we have to learn: *attha kusala* & *anatta kusala* and *karanīya* & *akaranīya*. There are to persons in this world, one wants to do things for his or her benefit and the second one doesn't want to. Like... we just sit and think: “Now I am meditating.” But it doesn't happen like that. There are certain duties or responsibilities that one should put in first. These are not for this institute but for oneself. ... They benefit our practice. ... They look like sort of “you are doing something for this place or meditation center” but actually it is a part of our own spiritual development.

### **[Karanīya]**

We'll talk about "what should be done" - *karanīya* and the *akaranīya* - "what should not be done". There are three things to be done. This *adhisīla adhicitta adhipaññā*. Before one starts with mettā, he or she should adjust the life in a way that within this life these develop. That is: *Adhisīla* means higher training or virtue, *adhicitta* higher mental culture, *adhipaññā* means higher wisdom; beyond normal level. [Adhisīla] *Adhisīla* here ... we normally take this *adhisīla* as *upasampadā sīla* – *pātimokkha sīla*. But Loku Hāmuduru says "Here it is not so". It is also *adhisīla* ... that is *upasampadā sīla* is also *adhisīla*, but now Loku Hāmuduru is going to explain the practical aspects of a yogi's *adhisīla*. So this particular *adhisīla* is not something outside or an artificial thing that is within that *adhisīla* there is something digested to one's life. It's within, one doesn't have to think: "Now I am protecting this precept, that precept; I am doing this ... or that ..." There is no need to think about this. All these things are within one's life. And this state comes after subduing hindrances. Because of this *sīla* there is not any harm to his meditation... "kukus" [restlessness]. This is a level understood as *sīla visuddhi*. He earlier also said, that this person, who is practicing in a proper way would have his or her mind inclining, the *sīla* part of it, would naturally incline towards *vipassanā*. As it assumes a certain standard of *samatha* (tranquility) there is a potential or it, sort of, can incline towards insight knowledge's. ... The knowledge's haven't arisen yet, but it [the *sīla*] is helping them, it is kind of laying the groundwork for those to arise. The hindrances have been suppressed. It is not that they are uprooted completely, but they are not a problem for the yogi. There is no sort of restlessness regarding the *sīla*, you know "my *sīla* might be broken" and then there is no trouble, for him having been well established in that *sīla*. There is no likelihood of breaking it; there is no clinging to this *sīla* aspect either. Yes, now, our, that is, bhikkhus' *adhisīla* - high ordination *sīla*, from time to time breaks and we again and again repair it. But this particular *adhisīla* [the one LH speaks of] is not possible to break. [Adhicitta] Then *adhicitta* means higher state of mind, higher mental purity. When these hindrances have been suppressed for a long time, or this is, in other words at *jhāna* level or beyond *jhāna* (state of mind). Sometimes it is misused or misunderstood, this *adhicitta* - a sort of higher mental state; and people perform certain sort of rituals with the idea of, you know, winning the world cup and so on... And we can see how it didn't work. ... And that thing has nothing to do with *adhicitta*. And then sometimes healing powers. Healing has nothing to do with true higher mental state; sometimes also performing feats or magic are contributed to higher mental states. I (that is Loku Hāmuduru) have also studied, investigated into these matters; in my youth. If I wanted I could make a sort of sound come from under the ground, and make a little bird fly out of a cauldron of oil. With all his money he can then manifest more money than he had before, {venerable *Dhammarakkhita* said "that would be very useful" and the audience laughed}. That was my interest when I was in the age of twelve to fifteen. Another one was this ... like you light a lamp and see serpents all over the house ... all these things are mixed with unwholesomeness. For example for some you need to kill a small kind of snake in a very painful way, then you preserve it in a certain way for some time and then get some oil from it and so on. This might be thought of as *adhicitta*. But it has nothing to do with it. It can only come from *samatha* or *vipassanā*. *Adhicitta* means a very high level of *samatha*. This *adhicitta* then turns to *adhipaññā*. *Adhicitta* is always at *sankhāra upekkhā ñāna* level that means the *jhāna* mind that comes with *sankhārā upekkhā* we understand as *adhicitta*. For a normal kind of person this kind of miracles is not that much harmful, but if a high ordained monk is doing such things it's very very harmful – showing miracles, showing magic's. Yes, for David or George it's not that much harmful to show miracles to others and

saying: “Aah, it’s *adhicitta* – the higher level of mind.”, but if a high ordained monk is doing this it’s very harmful because if a bhikkhu does something many people are misguided, because of his action, such people we can identify as “*bālo*”, or fools, who close the path to *nibbāna*. Some monks took up this astrology and foretell future. ... And they think they have some kind of special power that enables them to tell the future... Sometime ago, somebody told Loku Hāmuduru that people with *adhicitta* abilities are going to the parliament, and Loku Hāmuduru says, that certainly anybody with *adhicitta* would not end up in a parliament. [*Adhipaññā*] *Adhicitta* – if it’s real *adhicitta* – he realizes the *tilakkhana* - *anicca, dukkha, anattā* – properly and he is very close to *nibbāna*, if one has real *adhicitta*. Yes, if one has real *adhicitta*, he always grasps (comprehends) objects with *tilakkhana*. Such high level we identify as *adhicitta*, at that stage the hindrances are completely suppressed; at once *adhipaññā* comes. Then for such a person who suppressed *nīvaranas* to such extent, he gets *adhipaññā*. At once *adhipaññā* comes and his *nīvaranas* completely break or are eradicated.

In *Anguttara Nikāya* there are many short suttas, (and also in *Samyutta Nikāya*) explaining about *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā*. So we have to study these. Yogi normally comes to this stage *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā* – level – if yogi comes to the *anuloma ñāna* level that means he dwells in *adhipaññā* stage/level. These things yogi should practice. First thing is we should suppress hindrances, then only we can break them. The same applies also to *samyojanas* that is after suppressing all ten fetters, then only one, two or three could be broken. This *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā* is to beat or weaken the fetters, we have ten fetters. To break them we need *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā*. Also those bhikkhus in the sutta went to the forest in order to develop these and to break the fetters. Because of the incident with the *devas* frightening the bhikkhus, then they couldn’t develop *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā* then they couldn’t break the ten fetters. Nowadays many people want to break only three *samyojanas* and to become *sotāpannas*. With any other thing it is no problem to think and say whatever, but this is something not good to think and not good to say. Because all those ten fetters should be suppressed equally or all five hindrances should be suppressed equally. Nowadays people say: “Oh, if I can suppress only this doubt and become a *sotāpanna*! That’s enough”. So Loku Hāmuduru says when he hears statements like this a lot of thoughts connected with anger are arising in his mind, just by hearing this kind of comment. “Suppress one hindrance and break three fetters” – It’s like a bargain. “Shall I talk to these?... They are like cows!”... It’s definitely a bad... I mean connected with aversion or anger.... Sometimes you cannot tell those, because they know so much. To break doubt or to break *samyojanas*, these *adhicitta, adhisīla, adhipaññā* should work equally. There are some people who have *sotāpanna* level in formal ways, so it’s very very difficult to convince such people to take this thing back. That is we should suppress all fetters and develop completely *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā*. These things now, as an example – a man is beating a big boulder with a sledge hammer. When he is continuously hitting the stone according to his course this huge rock will break. The same way sati and *sampajañña* beat all these ten fetters. So according to the way the person beats the rock, it breaks, likewise that person’s mindfulness and clear comprehension – it is according to them that his ten fetters break. These things we should know, because the world is going the opposite way – different direction. “*Karanīyam attha kusalena*” ... Yes, this is to be cultivated by oneself ... it is *adhisīla, adhicitta, adhipaññā* ... also I shouldn’t do anything to harm my *adhisīla, adhicitta,*

*adhipaññā*. What has to be done has to be done, that is if I have to scold somebody I do it but without aversion and the same applies for praise.

### [Akaranīya]

As for *akaranīya*...there are four *vipattis* ... courses of harmfulness, harmful things that one should not do. There are four such things: *sīla vipatti*, *ditthi vipatti*, *ācāra vipatti*, *ājīva vipatti*. If one has these four things he can't achieve the things we discussed earlier, that is *adhisīla*, *adhicitta*, *adhipaññā* one can't get them if he has *sīla vipatti*. It means loss or distraction of *sīla* (morality, virtue), *ditthi vipatti* which means loss or distraction of view, *ācāra vipatti* which means loss or destruction of kind of conduct or life, *ājīva vipatti* which means loss or distraction of livelihood. We can very correctly divide them if we are high ordained. According to *pātimokkha* we can understand seventeen rules (*pārājikā* and *sanghā disesā*) as *sīla vipatti*, 203 precepts as *ācāra vipatti* and the 21 things a bhikkhu should not do (as means of living) these we understand as *ājīva vipatti* and *ditthi vipatti* is all other – wrong views. For bhikkhus it is quite easy to divide, but for lay people it is not so easy to discriminate. So high ordained monk means he is very close to attaining *nibbāna* if he practices properly. If we give a simile: a lay person is somebody, who has to cross over a desert to reach *nibbāna*, but a high ordained bhikkhu has already crossed the desert. He has to do very few things to attain *nibbāna*. So in lay life also there are things that apply to harm or destruction but it doesn't correspond directly with the four things that apply to *upasampadā bhikkhus* loss ... It is especially for lay or family life: loss of one's wealth which can cause a lot of problems; and loss of *ñāti* or relatives; also the associations' loss that can cause problems. And there is also a loss of virtue which can be a problem. Those three in the case of recluses or ordained (because they have renounced wealth and relatives etc.) - loss of those doesn't really have the same impact or effect on their lives as for a lay person – householder, for whom the wealth and relatives are very important. In case of the monks if their virtue – *sīla* is broken or disturbed in any way they can go to another monk and admit that and make amends for it. Sometimes it can happen in their life that people are wrongly accused of offenses and so they might even be forced to pay the penalty for it by order of the government or the law, according to the law. But they haven't actually committed these crimes, they are accused of; it is possible that even though there wasn't any breakage of *sīla*, yet they have to still suffer the consequences of it [that is the false accusation]. I used to visit prisons when I was about 20 or 22, I used to meet very good people there imprisoned and some of them actually had not committed any crime, yet they were condemned for life in imprisonment. So they haven't even killed an animal in their life, and yet they have been framed, accused of killing a human being. He (LH) reckons it might have had something to do with the nature of kamma – to be wrongly accused. In the case of monks this *ājīva* or livelihood they are not supposed to work, for example as teachers or public servants employed by the government, like these parliamentarian monks. They come also under this misdemeanor. They might be convinced that this dispensation might not survive were it not for their efforts but actually it's going against it.... So this is actually this is ... for example somebody comes and sees all the nice plants and flowers and asks for a plant, flower or even a piece of wood, but actually he cannot be given any of these without breaking the rules. ... [After this the talk on *Sāṅghika* property went on for about ten min. until the end].

*Transcribed and edited by: David Young*