

# Reflections on the Karaniya mettā sutta discourse 4

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



## The fourth discourse

[ ...*Santussako ca subharo ca, ~ appakicco ca sallahukavutti ...* ]

### [ **Santussako** ]

"*Santussako*" means contentment with whatever received. It's a great inheritance to a yogi - contentment with whatever is available. Because he gets quickly an understanding of *tilakkhana*, if he is a contented one. Lord Buddha very much appreciated this contentment. If one is easy to content with whatever is available, then he can live anywhere. The person, who is not content with what he receives, is controlled by three *petas* - hungry ghosts. There is no use of pouring water into the sea. No use of putting firewood into the fire. And one who is not content, for him there is no use of offering, giving him things. He is not possible to make content. So a discontented person and a fire and the sea – are same - not possible to satisfy. Sometimes parents are tired of children. Sometimes teachers are tired of pupils. Once in the Anuraddhapura era a mother had one child, the mother was tired of this child. When there is whatever sweet things prepared by the mother, this child eats all these sweet things without leaving anything for others. Later on this child becomes a monk. So after long time the mother thought: 'Now my child is maybe not that way as earlier, because now he is a bhikkhu.' So the mother one day prepared, cooked this sweet, this particular sweet and she went to see this monk with this sweet. So the mother cooked lot of ... a big amount of sweets even for other monks and this child - bhikkhu - without giving to any other bhikkhu, he ate all these things. So that day the mother got fed up with this child. Normally mothers are not fed up with children, but that day even this mother became fed up with this discontented child. The person who is discontented - nobody else likes him. As yogis we have to adjust our lives, it should be a contented life. Once a mother gave her child to his brother to ordain. This brother was also a monk. So this elder monk is the brother of this monk [to be] and she gave her child to this brother monk to ordain. Now this child is sixteen years old. So the mother said to his brother monk: "I like to see my child." So then this brother [the older one] said: "OK, I'll send him." After some time this monk - elder monk - forgot it. Two times he forgot to send this child to the

mother. So the mother complained to this brother monk: "Why don't you send my child, why don't you tell me where he is? So you have to send me my child." The Mother was suspecting that the child might have died. So the elder monk - this brother monk - said: "OK, I'll bring him." The mother and the father built a *kuti* for their child, their son. And they invited this child - this monk [the younger one] - to stay in that *kuti* for next *vassa* - next rain period. Then the elder monk brought the child, brought this monk and arranged for him to stay in that *kuti*. He brought the child to the parents and introduced him: "This is your son." That day the parents came to see the son and to talk with him and to offer things to him and then went back home. This child - now a matured man, was not like when he was renouncing household life. Now he was a big matured man, so the parents had a doubt whether he was their child or another one. They thought: "If he is our child he should call us 'mother' and 'father'. But he didn't call us that way. And he didn't tell anything what he needs." And afterwards the parents went to the old monk - the brother monk - and asked whether he was really their son. Then he said: "Yes, yes, he is your son." Anyway the parents treated him well in this three rain months. But during this three months period the child monk never talked to the mother, didn't tell anything to them, he just meditated. And after *vassa* he left the place. And the mother and the father offered a robe also, some cloth for a robe for the child. And some medicinal oil also. And this child monk offered these things to the elder monk and left the place. So the mother and the father came to the elder monk and blamed him: "We can't identify our child. We don't know whether he is really our child or another one." So they again asked. "We need our child, we need our monk." They wanted to see him. But this old monk said: "He is your child." But parents - they didn't accept that. So this elder monk went to the place where this son monk had gone to and brought him back. And asked this monk to explain the story. So then the child monk explained everything to the parents. So he explained about his contentment. He explained to the parents that if he had acted like their son they would have gotten merits only because of treating their child. But now, as he had acted as a normal monk, then the parents got merits the same as for treating the *Sangha* or a bhikkhu. "Because I wanted to give them more merits, I acted as a normal monk, not like their son." This monk started to explain the value of contentment. So after listening to the discourse of their son the mother and the father got great happiness. They said that Lord Buddha preached this *Ariyavamsa sutta* ( AN IV.28, The Discourse on the Traditions of the Noble Ones ), one sutta; *Tuvataka sutta* ( Sn IV.14, 'Quickly'), *Nālaka sutta* ( Sn III.11, 'To Nālaka' ) - these things Lord Buddha preached for this kind of bhikkhus. So saying this thing the mother and the father became very happy and later on they got path knowledge's also. Anyway this story explains the value of contentment. Whatever we get, we have to be contented with that.

I have lived thirty years in Kanduboda. During this thirty years period I have never asked anything from the committee or from the Nāyaka Hāmuduru, I have not asked anything from them. Even a stamp I have not asked. Even medicine I have not asked. Even bhikkhu a coupon, for a bus-coupon I did not ask. I went home and asked from my parents. I asked from my mother or my elder sister. I explained them: 'I need stamps, I need bhikkhu coupons, I need medicine.' That's all. I didn't ask anything from the *dāyakas*. That is the way I behaved those days. I was afraid of leeches those days. Even now I am afraid of leeches. Once I went to the famous cave Batapotalena near Kuruvita. That was in nineteen eighty. At that day there was a heavy rain there. And I lost a path also. And lots of leeches hang on me. I was afraid and I didn't like to touch the leech by my hand. And I shook my leg in order to throw the leech away. But

none of the leeches dropped off. So I allowed them to take the blood. But after some time some people came and they applied some soap or something, they removed the leeches. Because I'm shaking the leg, the knee problem came. The knee dislocated. When I came back to the meditation center, the knee was swollen. So people here brought me to the doctor at Gampaha. Then that doctor treated me. And for the car ( to bring me from here to the doctor ) fifteen rupees was the cost. Other than that I have not taken anything from the meditation center. That is my principle. Whatever I receive, I give to the center. Even the *Tipitaka* from my father I offered to the center. That was a mistake. Those days I had a name - I was called Vessantara [see the very last Jtk 547 ]. So those days I liked to travel whenever I need so I don't gather any goods or anything. To have a simple life I kept only robes and very few things with me. This is something one should practice in his life. Those days I had no permanent place to sleep. 1987 I left that place, up to that day I didn't have permanent place to sleep or stay. Some days I had slept in the *dāna sālāva* also. Sometimes I had to go too far places for Dhamma preaching. When I came back the gate had been closed. So I had to sleep in the *dāna sālāva* – the dining hall. So such days wherever I got to, I slept. Sometimes behind the Nāyaka Hāmuduru's kuti, I slept there also. So the Nāyaka Hāmuduru asked on such days: 'Why are you sleeping here?' 'Because it's easy for me.' I lived in Blue Mountains without heaters. Then I had to suffer kind of sickness ??...? problem, so I left Australia and came back to Sri Lanka. Those days there was about one foot thick snow cover on the roof. And the roof also became very very cold. These roofs had been built with kind of grass. The walls, wooden walls. So it was very difficult to live in such a place. Some days I sat on normal ground. The towel I used to sleep on, still I'm using for my bed here, the same towel I am using.

David: "Blanket ?"

LH: "It's not really a blanket, it's, kind of, a big towel. When one is used to doing these things then it becomes very easy. I learned these things from two monks. One monk was the German Ñānavimala bhante, the next one Dhammadasi bhante. This Ñānavimala bhante also used very few things. Dhammadasi Hāmuduru / bhante also used very few items.

So these things are things which are possible to practice in the life. Everybody should try to practice these things even up to a certain extent. Contentment. My teacher at the beginning lived in a very small takaran hut - tent, small tent. Sometimes I was surprised how he is living in this small hut. And the roof of the hut was also not very good. When rain came, water came into the kuti. And afterwards other people few times invited him to come to a more comfortable place. That *kuti* was situated at the same place where now the *sīmā* is. Loku Hāmuduru has a picture of this *kuti* also. This *kuti* also - when rain came, water came inside. So rainy days he brought spittoons and kept it them where water dropped, fell. Few spittoons he kept inside the *kuti* to collect the water. One day, one *dāyaka* - his name was Polgasovita *mahatthaya* - he saw all these things and he built this new building, new *kuti*. Because this *kuti*, this newly built *kuti* was always used by other lay people also, they also always came inside. So this Polgasovita *mahatthaya* wanted to offer this as a *Sāṅghika dāna*. But because lay people also used this thing, he offered only the roof to *Sangha*, now - normal way. So because this is *Sāṅghika* roof, nobody else can do any adjustment or whatever without consent, without permission from the *Sangha*. ...So this... also our Nāyaka Hāmuduru for sixty five years lived with contentment. He did not accept food brought to him. He also always used to go on an

alms-round. So all these things we can count as contentment. Because of these qualities all other qualities which are helpful to develop meditation, these qualities develop. Craving and aversion quickly reduce. Subside even while you watch. That's why Lord Buddha explained all these good qualities in the *Karanīya mettā sutta* (Sn 1.8 & Khp 9). Even for lay yogis, if they have very few items, they use very few things, it is very helpful to develop their meditation. Less number of clothes but very clean. And these clothes also must be simple and easy to use. Sometimes today the things yogis bring here are bigger than themselves. So then the yogi has to pay a lot of attention to protect and keep these things. This is not easy to change - because I say others can't change their styles at once. Sometimes ... when we come to meditation center, we think to bring whatever is in the house - all the things here also. So the *kuti* is also not enough for him. It's a weakness in a yogi. If he is a good yogi, he has to have a very minimum number of things with him. But of course one has to have things he needs for day-to-day life. Some yogis here, they bring makeup's, things to do makeup's they also bring. Yes. All sort of such things some yogis have. Some yogis even bring hair dye.

### [ Subhara ]

"*Subhara*", the next good quality is *subhara*. *Subhara* means easy to sustain. If one is a *subhara* one or easy to sustain one, then for the *dāyakas* it is very easy to help him. Or for a mother and a father it is very easy to help such a child. The opposite side of *subhara* is - we call '*pragalba*'. *Subhara* means very easy to sustain him. That means kind of weightlessness. Such kind of people, even a hundred or two hundreds are not difficult to sustain. Only if such a one becomes sick, then only one has to look after him, otherwise there is no need to look after him. Such a person who is *subhara*, who is weightless, he can live even with very poor people. Or in a village where there are very poor people, he can live even in such a village very happily.

Once there was a person from ... he was a Christian, he was this kind of a father [that is a priest] or somebody like that. One of them came and got ordination from Nāyaka Hāmuduru. He was, kind of, a church organizer or church manager. He was doing all sort of administrative things in Church. Anyway he became a bhikkhu. He lived in a forest called Badagiriya galle. Badagiriya - that is the area. His name was Dhammapāla, Katuniriya Dhammapāla. He was a person very easy to sustain by others, he lived in a very poor village. He used *pamsukūla* robes, that means clothes people had thrown away, he collected these clothes and he prepared robes out of these clothes. When he brought these clothes to me, I helped him to prepare robes. Even the animals in the forest became friendly with him. Also the people in the village - it was very easy for them to help this monk. And sometimes he lived with an elephant together. The elephant also used to sleep very close to him, when he [the monk] also slept ... So his toilet was little far away from his cave, sometimes he asked the elephant: "Go aside for me to go to the toilet. Give me a little room to go." Because the elephant blocked the path. That much this elephant was friendly with him. Also a group of monkeys there was friendly with him. Then group of deer also. When he went to bring - fetch water, a big monkey also came with him. When he brought the water bucket, this monkey also helped him to bring the water bucket. After he became a very old monk, eighty years old monk, he came back to the meditation center here. When he became very old, his relatives came and brought him back to his village. When I was in Colombo, I took some Loku Hāmuduru's pupils and Loku Hāmuduru showed them this monk. He used to sleep in a coffin. ...*Dhammapāla*... Some of the

Dhamma-books, he could cite... he remembered whole books, in his mind - everything was there. And he converted some of his children to Buddhism. So he used to go very far, he used to go for alms sometimes eight miles away from his place. He went to distant villages and ate there and preached Dhamma to the people there and in the evening he came back to his *kuti*.

Another bhikkhu named Kondañña was also the same type of monk. He was as a layman a very rich person. He gave up all his wealth and got the ordination. Because of a challenge he became a monk. Those days I used to go alms-round and when I was going alms-round one day I met him. Those days he was a layman. And he wore a lot of gold things, jewelry. So he saw me going pindapāta and doing all this time kind of ascetics practices, he saw one day. So he said that one day: "It's very good, Podi Hāmuduru, can I also do this?" Then I said: "For you ... in this life you can't do this thing ever." Then he pointed out his finger and said: "You think that way about me?" Then I (LH) said: "Yes, yes, I think that way." and I also said: "Because of your heavy body, because of your lot of gold and lot of land and lot of wealth you can't do this kind of practice ever. So there is no use in talking about ... you can't ever give up all these things." So after that incident I also forgot all those things. Whenever he visited Anuraddhapura, he also asked me to come. I associated with him afterwards also but he didn't say anything about getting ordination. But suddenly unknowingly he became a bhikkhu. He got ordination from Hinakiyana Dhammaloka Thera monk those days. Because this monk was a relative of his. After he got his ordination he quickly came to meet me. He told me: "You said I can't give up all these things but I could give up all these things and became a monk." So I said: "Oh good, I am very happy." Then I said: "Yes, it is very good you became a monk but you can't go alms-round and you can't live in a forest." After several days I came to know he started to going on alms-round. Yes, he goes alms-round and with that food he does various kinds of offerings – *Buddha-pūjas* also. So one day he told me: "Two things, you said I can't do, now I am doing!" I said: "Very good! Anyhow you can't live in a forest." I said: "You are always with ... monks, all your relatives, you can't live in forest like us!" So suddenly he disappeared. Everybody started to search for him, where he is. His children searching, relatives searching for him, he suddenly disappeared. Now this area is an LTTE area. Those days there was no LTTE problem. So he went to the forest in that area and lived in a cave there. A leopard also lived in the same cave. His children put out a newspaper advertisement: 'If anybody finds him, let us know!' Later on they found that he was living there. His children came to Nāyaka Hāmuduru and said: "Only Gampaha hāmuduru [that is LH] can bring him back here. If he doesn't come back, we all go to the Catholic religion. If he doesn't come back to Colombo here, we'll all change our religion." I thought it really could happen so I became frightened - all the wealth and everything they will transfer to the Christian religion if their father does not come back. So it's Polgasovita mahatthaya - Loku Hāmuduru's dāyaka - and with him Loku Hāmuduru went to see this monk. At once I met him, he asked: "You came because of my children asked you?" So he started to blame Loku Hāmuduru also. And afterwards he said: "You said I couldn't live in a forest, now I live in a forest." Also he said: "You go back, I don't come." So what Loku Hāmuduru did was, Loku Hāmuduru put all his things into the vehicle, other than bowl, and Loku Hāmuduru came back. So after few days he came back. Then he said: "Whatever you said I couldn't do I did. Now I am going to observe ascetics practices." Loku Hāmuduru said OK. And afterwards he started to live in Kudumbigalla. Kudumbigalla is situated in the eastern end of Sri Lanka, sea area. Yala, eastern end of Yala national park. Then he said: "You should not come to see me.

You should not come to bring me back." So I (LH) said: "No, no, I won't come." But I went one day. Not to bring him back. Just to see. Just to talk with him. For the midday meal that day I was offered only milk and *viragedi* – a very small fruit. Like ...?... small kind of fruit. So after eating these things I became intoxicated. But he was doing his walking meditation very well. So I said: "OK, very good," and after two days I came back. And afterwards because of JVP struggles - fights - he came back. Then his children built a *kuti* for him in their garden. Then he was living here in the center and later on he went to that *kuti* built by his children. Those days he observed all the ascetics practices. But he was eighty years old. Before he passed away, just before he passed away, he has said only Loku Hāmuduru should come for his funeral and after doing this funeral performance his dead body should be given to the medical faculty. When this happened those days I was living in Melbourne, suddenly a thought came to my mind to come to Sri Lanka. So after coming from Australia I lived in Colombo and suddenly a thought came to my mind to go and see this bhikkhu. So I went to this Sunil. When I went there, children and the relatives - they handed over the body to Medical Faculty and they were coming back, when I was going there. Then I did the seventh day *Dhamma*-preaching, so I couldn't do his funeral performance as he wished, instead of that I did the seventh day *Dhamma*-preaching. He was a really developed person. Even because of his conceit he practiced good path. He did all these things because of the challenge with Loku Hāmuduru. Even because of challenge he practiced good things. Yes. If Loku Hāmuduru had said: "You can't do these things ever in this life," then because Loku Hāmuduru had said so, he would have accepted this challenge. So he maybe practiced up to the path knowledge. When I was in Colombo he time-to-time came to visit me. And when he came I had to stop all my work and I had to talk with him. So when I came to know he passed away I also felt a kind of sorrow. This person, this monk was really *subhara* – a simple monk. Very easy to sustain. The only things others should do for him - others should prepare him beetle nuts. And when he was a layman, he spent lot of money to teach meditation teachers, to create meditation teachers, train meditation teachers, he spent lot of money. Because of his help, this university called Buddhasavaka Dhammapitiya in Anuraddhapura - this could have been established because of his support. He got support of the politician called Iriyagolla those days and he could open this university only for bhikkhus. So he wanted to train meditation teachers also. He was ready to pay some money and provide all the food and other requisites also. This is the only thing he couldn't succeed, he couldn't do - that is meditation teachers' programme. In this Polgasovita meditation center, still there are some buildings which were built for this training programme - meditation teachers training programme. This programme did not succeed. Because not everybody lives a simple life.

We have to do all these things, all these activities, duties - at the same time we have to have, kind of, renunciation. Because whatever we use today was not brought by ourselves. Because all these things we got after we were born in this life and one day we will have to give up all these things and have to go. When we were born from our mothers' wombs, we didn't have even a thread belonging to us. After our birth we acquired all these things. If one starts to think that way he doesn't start to gather things. When one starts to gather things, his good qualities start to diminish. But one who doesn't gather things, such people are easy to sustain. They are contented with whatever they receive.

**[ Appakicco ]**

Next is "*appakicco*" - this means he has less number of jobs. Very less number of things he has to do. Few duties. Only preaching *Dhamma*. When the meditation center becomes bigger and bigger this quality is lost, vanishes, it is not possible to practice in such big centers. The next-door one – the other center, after passing away of Nāyaka Hāmuduru ... when Nāyaka Hāmuduru was living, he had few duties to do. His duty was looking after the yogis, instructing yogis. And for Sānghika *dāna* he preached a half-hour Dhamma discourse. Nothing else. All other jobs were given to other people. It is not dedicated, it just happened that way. Everybody was doing his own duties. So Nāyaka Hāmuduru had to do only preaching a half-hour *Dhamma*-talk and instruct the yogis. After passing away of Nāyaka Hāmuduru all the duties came onto my head. So five years I had to live - lead a very difficult life. Lot of work, no end. Even no time to sleep those days. So I thought: "When I was living in lay life, it was very simple relaxed life. Now it is completely different – a heavy life. I have to give up this life." Simple life finished and heavy life started. Like the chairman of the company, very difficult. At once I gave up everything.

Question: "So how could venerable Sumathipāla have few duties and Loku Hāmuduru ends up with lot of duties at the same position?"

Same day the second chief also passed away. So there were not enough people to do the things, not enough monks to look after the center. So I have to look after the foreign yogis and local yogis at the center - everything. Because the people, monks who were there when Nāyaka Hāmuduru was living, they left the place afterwards and also many bhikkhus left the place. While Nāyaka Hāmuduru was living he had sent some bhikkhus to other branches. So after that I gave up everything and I went to Myanmar. So I went to Myanmar and lived with venerable Pandita Sayado those days – in Mahāsi center.

So we have to reduce our jobs, our work. Now I am ... garden and everything, but these things are not heavy things. These things are simple things. Day-to-day simple affairs not that much heavy duties. *Appakicca* - this word *appakicca* means few things to do. No responsibilities. Weightless lifestyle.

### [ Sallahukavutti ]

Next one: "*sallahukavutti*", the next good quality. The meaning of this word is - he uses very few items. This is a good quality. The opposite side is *bahubandika*. *Bahubandika* means - he uses lot of goods. At Lord Buddha's time one bhikkhu lived such a life. So one day he spread lot of robes everywhere. So Lord Buddha asked: "What is this? This is like a laundry!" Others said: "These are one bhikkhu's robes, things." So then Lord Buddha asked him to come. Then Lord Buddha explained simple ... value of simple life. Then Lord Buddha advised him to use few things. So he got very angry, he threw his robe out, without any robe he stood in front of Lord Buddha and said: "This is the way you asked me to live." Then at that time Lord Buddha preached this *jātaka*, *Mahimsāsa jātaka* [Jtk #6]. This is a long story.

That birth, he [the naked bhikkhu] was a devil - a *yakkha*. The God Vessavana [one of the "Four Great kings"] gave him a kind of permission to eat people who don't know '*deva-dhamma*'. '*Deva-dhamma*' means *lajja*, *bhaya* - that means shame and fear. Shame of sin and fear of sin. People who don't know this thing, this devil can eat. People who knew, he couldn't eat. So three princes came to his jungle and this devil captured them. So out of these three princes the youngest one was captured by this

devil. He asked what is the '*deva-dhamma*'. He said '*deva-dhamma*' means beds and chairs. So the devil said: "Oh, you don't know what is '*deva-dhamma*'!" And took him for his meal. Not to eat him but to keep him aside for eating. So the next brother was going to find out about the younger one. So this devil captured this one also. He asked him also what is '*deva-dhamma*'. And he said sun and moon. So the devil said: "You also don't know what is '*deva-dhamma*'!" And kept him also as food. So next, the third one, the eldest one came, his name is Mahimsāsa, he is the *Bodhisatta*. So from him also the devil asked what is '*deva-dhamma*'. So the *Bodhisatta* understood that this devil has captured his two younger brothers. So this *Bodhisatta* said: "Now I am very tired because of searching for my two brothers, so if you bathe me, if you feed me and treat me well, prepare good seat for me, then only I can preach you the '*deva-dhamma*'. So the devil did the same way the *Bodhisatta* said and then said: "OK, now you teach me '*deva-dhamma*'." So the devil worshiped him and started to listen to '*deva-dhamma*' from the *Bodhisatta*. So the *Bodhisatta* started to explain *hiri, ottappa* - that means shame of sin and fear of sin. When the *Bodhisatta* was explaining this *Dhamma*, the devil became very happy. Then the devil said: "OK, you ask whatever you like, I'll give you." Then the *Bodhisatta* said: "OK, give me the younger son, younger brother." Then *yakkha*, this devil said: "You don't have the '*deva-dhamma*' within you! Because you ask younger brother. Because you should ask the elder brother." There is a long story behind this... These three sons were sons of the king. The king had two wives. After the first wife passed away, he married another queen. The youngest brother is the son of this later queen. So this queen wanted to give the throne to her son, not to the two elder sons. So she asked kingdom for her son. Then the king said to the two elder brothers: "You have to go to the forest, because the queen may harm you." So they had left the kingdom. While they were leaving the kingdom, the younger brother also came with them." "When I will not take the younger brother now, the queen will think I killed her son. That's why I asked the younger brother." So the devil gave him both the brothers.

Then Lord Buddha said: "This one, who is now standing in front of me without any clothes, he was the devil those days, which searched for the '*deva-dhamma*'. Now he doesn't have any '*deva-dhamma*'. Those days he had '*deva-dhamma*' even as a devil. Now he is a bhikkhu, he doesn't have '*deva-dhamma*'. So then Lord Buddha formed rules, *Vinaya* rules.

*Transcribed and edited by: David Young*