

Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta

Abridged Seventh Discourse

George: Why is mettā out for plants and flowers?

Loku Hamuduruwo: The idea of life in plants is there in the *Pāli*. Even for a tree, you can have compassion. You don't thoughtlessly cut it down. However, the lives of plants are not going on in rounds of existences. There is no *samsāra* for trees and plants. I will answer your question step-by-step.

Four factors combine for a being:

- *Kamma*
- *Citta* - the mind
- *Utu* - climate or season
- *Āhāra* - nutriment

While four factors combine for beings, only two combine for plants:

- *Utu* - climate or season
- *Āhāra* - nutriment

Trees and plants respond to climate and nutriment. Not *kamma* or *citta*. We make that distinction between beings and plants.

U Jagara: Concerning this law of plants, Ledi Sayadaw explains it very well in *The Manual of Cosmic Order*.¹ It's worth reading for those who are interested.

I have one hundred percent confidence in the teachings of Ledi Sayadaw. As humans, we bring food to us. Plants go to the food. There are parallels between plants and humans when it comes to sexuality, and reproduction.

David: Some plants reproduce through sexual means, and some through asexual means. Many plants have both male and female parts.

Studying seaweed, Swedish scientists dated when male and female aspects first occurred in the evolution of seaweed. It was millions, if not billions, of years ago. The sexuality of plants will have to be another class.

The Buddha did not permit higher ordained *bhikkhus* to cut down trees. For them, it is the rule, as there are beings, guardians, living in trees. In the sutta describing Citta the householder's last hours, there is mention of beings living in trees and plants.²

I will read it. Are beings in possession of trees?

Not exactly. Their existence depends on trees, and that's why you avoid cutting down trees. Not because you'd go to hell, but because you'd be harming these beings. Understandably, they won't like it if you break their dwelling place.

¹ <https://mahajana.net/texts/manual04.html>

² <https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn41/sn41.010.than.html>

George: By saying dwelling place, do you mean birds and animals living in trees?

Beings live in the bark, as well as on the branches and leaves of trees. Apart from birds and squirrels, which are visible, there are invisible beings living in trees.

Two types of trees grow very fast. One is a species of bamboo that grows an amazing two feet per day. Another is a species of coconut palm. It is an ancient species of tree, one of the first trees to exist in this world. These ancient palms are found near the base of Siripāda in Sri Lanka. They are protected. It is forbidden to cut them down. If someone is caught cutting one down, they will be fined. This same palm also exists in the Australian Blue Mountains. It has a rare method of reproduction. In one generation, according to climate and soil conditions, its seed will be a certain size. In its subsequent generation, if conditions are right, the seed will be bigger. And similarly, in the next generation, the seed could be even bigger. With every successive generation, the size of its seed can grow bigger, and somehow the palm is different. We are talking about the effects of climate, *utu*, and nutriment, *āhāra*, on plants.

In any case, trees and other forms of plant life don't have *kamma* or *citta*. They are not beings. In spite of plants not having *kamma* or *citta*, that doesn't mean we have no compassion or *mettā* for them. We really should care for plants. We must have compassion and *mettā* for all forms of plant life. Here at the centre, people pluck roses, and sometimes cut down trees. They remove plants from our centre. I don't like people doing this to plants. If animals damage plants at this centre, say monkeys eat a few red roses, it doesn't matter. That is their nature. Humans, as well as monkeys and all other animals, have their *kamma*, and their *citta*. All beings also have *utu*, and *āhāra*. Plants have only *utu*, and *āhāra*. This is the main difference between *satta*, a being, and a plant.

Despite only this difference, trees have a kind of fear; it's like they are crying. At other times, they experience joy!

David: If plants have no *citta*, what is meant by moods of fear and joy?

When living close to trees and nature, you might understand or feel these moods, for lack of a better term. There is a difference between the way trees respond to people who have thoughts of compassion and *mettā* towards them, and the way trees respond to people who have no thoughts of compassion and *mettā* towards them. Some people take care of trees, and some do not.

When I was a young student, I noticed something unusual about grass. When the man who came to cut the grass approached, the grass became, in a way, fearful, and made sounds. The sounds made by the grass were similar to the sounds made by crickets. If these grass sounds were amplified, you too would hear them. They're subtle.

Though there is no mind, *citta*, in the grass, there is a response to grass cutting. Maybe the smell of cut grass, which is different to its own makeup, results in a response. When the man stopped cutting the grass, when he left, the grass resumed its normal way.

A chemical reaction?

It starts with climate. When the boys cut grass with machines here at our centre, the grass has the same response. I don't know whether or not this term fearful is right to use. The response from the grass is mixed up with climate. Climate and season.

We are getting away from the Karanīya Mettā Sutta.

George: Sorry. I am running ideas around and around, and getting into contradictions. When

practising boundless *mettā*, I have not been including plants, but you are saying plants do respond to *mettā*. In yesterday's example, even the drug addict in the street didn't respond to your *mettā*. What to say about plants responding to *mettā*?

Trees respond to your *mettā* because of the animals living in them. Even the drug addict, you should help in whatever way you can, regardless of how effective your help is to him or her. Whether your actions help the drug addict or don't help the drug addict, doesn't matter.

There are good reasons why the Buddha forbade *bhikkhus* from cutting trees. In the process of cutting down a tree, a *bhikkhu* injured the arm of child *deva* living in that tree. Her mother, also a *deva*, complained to the Buddha about the incident.³ And in a forest monastery where trees had been cut down, the Buddha explained the benefits of trees to the *bhikkhus*. He told them how trees help them in many ways.

Following the Buddha's advice, if you are responsible, then you protect, feed, nourish trees and other plants. All the trees you see at this centre look old and mature. They are not old. Then, why did they grow fast and well? Compassion and *mettā*. In their own way, trees respond to feelings in the hearts of those who go near them. If your thinking is crooked, they react negatively. If you think the trees are beautiful, they will like you!

Growers in traditional rural areas of Sri Lanka believe strongly in the relationship between the hearts of people, and harvests. You find this belief in vegetable plots, as well as citrus orchards, particularly in the orange, lime and lemon orchards. You'll also find these beliefs to be held strongly in coconut plantations.

In my family's garden, there were four coconut trees and they were all exceptionally productive. Lots of nuts produced. Each tree produced about hundred nuts, and that is a lot. The four trees together produced roughly four hundred nuts. One day, the man who plucked the nuts, said to mother, "You know this is wonderful. You should plant more coconut trees. And, if all goes the same way, you'll have a really big harvest." However, for the next harvest, the nuts from these four trees were useless, of inferior quality, and had to be discarded. All the nuts were poor, and were thrown away. Later on, since these coconut trees continued to be unproductive, they had to be cut down.

David: Was the plucker greedy? Was his heart crooked?

The hearts of many are greedy and crooked. To protect their betel nuts and areca trees, growers are careful in selecting the most suitable person to pluck their betel nuts. If an unsuitable person plucks the nuts, this is accepted as fact, the crop of nuts will be negatively impacted. The areca trees may die.

Countless Sri Lankan growers believe people are looking at their crops with feelings of envy, or worse, feelings of jealousy. We call this the evil eye. Growers are afraid the casting of an evil eye on their crops causes their crops to fail. Trees die, or harvests aren't as bountiful as expected.

Growers are therefore keenly protective of their crops. To counter the evil eye, to counter envy and jealousy, they hang heads of dead bulls or dead cows near the crops. And growers are cautious whom they allow to enter their lands, trying to keep people away who are envious or jealous in nature. It's common enough to hear growers fighting with neighboring growers. In a lemon orchard, one grower will accuse another, "You're looking at my orchard with envy. You've got the evil eye. Go away!"

Since I studied botany in school such a long, long time ago, I can't remember this subject well. Perhaps that's enough for now. It's good to know about plants, and we could go deeper into them.

Štěpán: In many wisdom teachings, the earth is a living being, and maintaining equilibrium.

³ <https://www.dhammatalks.org/vinaya/bmc/Section0017.html>

Many scientists studying climate change also look at the earth as a living and breathing being. Did the Buddha speak about this?

This idea of the earth as a living and breathing being is found in the Mahayana tradition and in Hinduism, and that's quite all right. However, in our Theravāda tradition, we don't find the Buddha speaking directly about the earth in this way.

If we go deeper into the nature of trees and plants, there is a great deal most people will not accept as true. There was a barren tree, not producing any fruit. A worker threatened the tree with a knife, "I'm going to cut you up!" He even stabbed it. Subsequently, the tree produced fruit. Reports such as this one are hard for people to accept. It is a truth.

Venerable Vineetha: It happened in our garden.

George: That's why I am surprised. They respond faster than human beings.

U Jagara: Trees respond to radical dangers, such as forest fires. When they are thus threatened, they flower and produce seeds. Apparently, some varieties of bamboo grow for decades before producing any flowers and seeds. Once the flowers and seeds are produced, these bamboo plants die. So, botany has a point here.

The main difference between humans and plants, what I said earlier, is that humans bring the food to them, and plants go to the food.

The Buddha had a distinct name for very large forest trees. Vanaspati. King of the Forest, or Forest Ruler. Some people venerate these King of the Forest trees, and make aspirations, and wishes. In the center next door, we planted one of these King trees. It's of African origin. In some African countries, there's a traditional belief that, by venerating this tree, they can get meat. It's the tree in front of the abbot's kuṭi. The red flowers that bloom on that tree are big, twice the size of the palm of your hand. I think there are only four of these African trees in Sri Lanka. I still have the same craziness, the love and affection for trees which I had when I was a small child. And I still search for and study trees and plants. That's one of my interests.

One should know the types of insects that can be found on trees, and that not all types of insects form on all types of trees. Different insects form on different types of trees. For instance, one specific type of caterpillar and its butterfly is only found on one specific type of tree. Not found on other trees. And when those trees die for whatever reason, those caterpillars, and their butterflies, also die. And if that type of tree is reintroduced, then those caterpillars and butterflies will naturally form on those trees again. This *utu* aspect, the climatic conditions, has the potential to create insect life in the trees. George, I can tell you later more about trees, plants and insects, if you want.

Yes, please do.

We will now continue where we left off yesterday. What were we were talking about in our last class?

David: *Bhava*. Meritorious formations and de-meritorious formations.

Wholesome *saṅkhāras* give the result of *puññābhi saṅkhāras*. Since you are attached to *kusala* results, you create the causes that lead to those *kusala* results. You can attach to *kusala saṅkhāras*. Some are expecting *jhāna* or a heavenly rebirth. But when practising *vipassanā* properly, you will not be expecting results. There's no expectation of results. Doesn't matter whether you expect results or don't expect results, there will be results that come. Not getting the expected results is one scenario.

Edith: In *vipassanā* practice, we try to practise without expectations and then we would get the results. At the moment we have expectations of results, of attaining *nibbāna*, we don't get those results.

Beth: On the way, even if you don't expect, you will have certain results.

Mother Maniyo: If you have expectations, you will not get it. OK? *Nibbāna*. But if you don't have expectations, if you just practise, you will get it. OK? That's a difference between the *kusalābhi saṅkhāra* of the person who is doing *vipassanā* and the person who is not doing *vipassanā*.

David: Are we talking about creating *bhavas*?

We are doing this practice to overcome *bhava*. And in order to overcome *bhava*, if you start from the standpoint of there is a *bhava*, then you are not going to achieve that result of no *bhava*, no becoming. We have to realize, even right now, there is no *bhava*. There is only a process of cause and effect. Right now. Without getting uptight, too serious, I repeat ~ what is happening in this moment is *bhava*. There is a process of cause and effect. It's a process, an event. Event. Becoming. So, if you cling to the idea of a *bhava* in this moment, then you can't get rid of *bhava* in the future, or ever hope to overcome it in the future. Right here and now, you have to see phenomenon as process and nothing but process. There's not a *bhava* even in the present. From the Not Yours Sutta in Saṃyutta Nikāya.⁴

This body is not yours, nor does it belong to others. It is old karma, to be seen as formed, fashioned by volition, something to be felt. Therefore, an instructed noble person attends carefully and closely to interdependent origination thus: When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases.

Nāyaṃ kāyo tumhākaṃ nāpi aññesaṃ. purāṇamidaṃ kammaṃ abhisaṅkhattaṃ abhisañcetayitaṃ vedaniyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ. tatra kho sutavā ariyasāvako paṭiccasamuppādaññeva sādhuṃ yoniso manasi karoti – iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati; imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati.

This statement ~ *iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati; imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati* ~ is found many times in the suttas, and means, If it is here now, it will be in the future. And if it's not here now, it won't be in the future.

Continuing this discussion will confuse people with conventional views of the world.

George: It's not confusing at all, because I am applying your answers to my questions. If I expect my questions to be answered, I probably won't get answers. If I don't expect my questions to be answered, I get answers.

Did you get any answers today?

George: Yes, yes. But I will not ask any more questions.

That is the nature of the mind, the *dharmatā*, to generate more questions. There are no answers to some questions. Nothing needs to be said. That's normal. With gratitude and veneration, I remember my caring parents and my skilled teachers. They didn't proclaim what truths they knew and they didn't encourage me to ask about profound truths. Yes, I once had aspirations to investigate the nature of reality. However, in this context, many of our questions, say on the realization of no *bhava*, can be discarded.

⁴ https://cambridgeinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/Wisdom-Workbook_CIMC.pdf

Now back to the Karanīya Mettā Sutta.

The Seventh Verse

*Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life,
even so, let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings.*⁵

*Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttāṃ, āyusā ekaputtam anurakkhe
Evam pi sabbabhūtesu, mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ*⁶

In this verse, a mother without concern or worry about herself spends her time and effort looking after her only child. We must have her kind of *mettā*. That is our goal. We should cultivate *mettā*, and carry on cultivating *mettā*. There is to be no discrimination when cultivating *mettā*. If we discriminate between people and beings, our *mettā* is incomplete and lacking.

For those who practise *mettā* and continue to practise, there eventually comes a time when they won't feel any *mettā*. They feel *mettā* has stopped. Though seemingly contradictory, *mettā* has worked properly when it disappears from their hearts. That's how the practice works. George once noticed unity with a mountain. He noted a sense of oneness with trees, the world, me, and others. It is rare for humans to develop *mettā* to this level. I suspect George thought he was going crazy. Typically, when meditators experience this unity and oneness, they stop meditating, as there is no sense of self.

And yet, for those who get to the point where they feel *mettā* stopped, their practices progressed properly. It worked as it should be in the sense that there is no perception of self. No individual. No me, my or mine. It's just a thought. Only a mind. For all who get to this level, where they are truly experiencing *mettā* with mountains, trees or snakes, even anthills, there is not a person. There is no self.

With clear comprehension, while *mettā* is at this level, they feel equal to mountains, and trees. Anthills. Similarly for plants and animals and other human beings, they all feel the same. This is where their minds turn to *vipassanā*.

George: Now I'm confused!

Did you hear something unexpected?

Yes.

Evam pi sabbabhūtesu ~ the meditator has a *bhūta* mindset. It's again this no discrimination. Yesterday, we discriminated between various types of *satta*, being. With *bhūta* mind, there is no discrimination between beings whatsoever. There is not all that. Even the four great elements are referred to here as *bhūta*. Everything is considered as *bhūta*.

David: Okay. *Bhuta* includes not only beings but also the manifestation of the great elements.

Jane: On Buddhnet, you'll find Mahasi Sayadaw's definitions of *bhuta*⁷ and *mettā*.⁸

⁵ <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.piya.html>

⁶ <https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1Qx7034JHizoZm31JZOnjo-QA2sFho2VmnOlw95SctqU&hl=en>

⁷ <http://www.buddhanet.net/brahmaviharas/bvd044.htm>

⁸ <http://www.buddhanet.net/brahmaviharas/index.htm>

David: Loku Hamuduruwo, much of what you're saying is beyond me.

That's alright. When everything is considered as *bhūta*, we would only see a process of constant change. Cause and effect is clearly seen.

Mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam ~ the mind is unlimited. It's infinite. Not bound by limits. It's spread everywhere. There is no perception of *puggala*, people, whatsoever. There is a perception of lightness.

The Eighth Verse

*Let him radiate boundless love towards the entire world — above, below, and across — unhindered, without ill will, without enmity.*⁹

*Mettañ ca sabbalokasmiṃ, mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam
Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañ ca, asambādhaṃ averaṃ asapattaṃ*¹⁰

Venerable Vineetha: *Mettañ ca sabbalokasmim*.

Precisely. You spread *mettā* indiscriminately to all.

All discrimination between all beings disappears. All discrimination between all non-beings also disappears. Whatever beings there are in the world, they are like one's own being, as in the ninth verse.

The Ninth Verse

*Standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is 'Noble Living' here.*¹¹

*Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṇṃ nisinno vā, sayāno vā yāvat' assa vigatamiddho
Etaṃ satiṃ adhiṭṭheyya, brahman etaṃ vihāraṃ idha-m-ahu*¹²

As long as the meditator is awake, he or she is continuously abiding in *mettā*. In all activities, in all four postures ~ whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down ~ the meditator is almost continuously in *mettā*.

Brahman etaṃ vihāraṃ idha-m-ahu ~ noble living. *Brahmavihāra* means the way of life for a *brahma*. Through *mettā*, meditators can reach this peak of right view, *sammā-diṭṭhi*, and right thought, *sammā-saṅkappa*. They live like a brahma. Their *mettā* has a brahma quality to it.

Brahmavihāras:

- *Mettā*
- *Karuṇā*
- *Muditā*
- *Upekkhā*

Beth: And *vipassanā*?

⁹ <https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.piya.html>

¹⁰ <https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1Qx7034JHizoZm31JZOnjo-QA2sFho2VmnOlw95SctqU&hl=en>

¹¹ <https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.piya.html>

¹² <https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1Qx7034JHizoZm31JZOnjo-QA2sFho2VmnOlw95SctqU&hl=en>

After practising *mettā*, that mind is turned to *vipassanā*. And because the mind has turned to *vipassanā*, even while sleeping, there's wakefulness. This type of sleep is not what is generally understood as sleep. There's a mindful resting of the body, and the practice continues.

The Tenth Verse

*Not falling into wrong views — being virtuous, endowed with insight, lust in the senses discarded — verily never again will he return to conceive in a womb.*¹³

*Diṭṭhiṃ ca anupagamma, sīlavā dassanena sampanno
Kāmesu vineyya gedhaṃ, na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punar eṭṭi ti*¹⁴

Diṭṭhiṃ ca anupagamma sīlavā dassanena sampanno ~ meditators in this state are considering everything as *bhūta*, that's without discrimination. Their *mettā* is boundless and going everywhere. They are not falling into wrong views. They abstain from wrong views. For example, views of a Creator. This abstaining from wrong views goes together with abstaining from wrong speech, wrong livelihood and wrong actions. Separated from sense pleasures, such meditators attain to *anāgāmī*. Non-returner. They will not take birth again in a mother's womb. Will never come to lie in a mother's womb again, nor be born out of a mother's womb.

We don't experience a lot of *mettā*. And we don't develop it. Not only are we getting angry with others, we are often getting angry with ourselves, and that is the worst part. If I am angry with myself, how can I have good thoughts about others? What to speak about others? The meditator has to get out of that situation. That habit. The more that meditators practise *mettā* properly, the more their faces should be free from twists and distortions. If their faces are twisted and distorted, look as if they are in pain and injured, they are practising *mettā* improperly.

David: Do westerners hate themselves more than easterners?

No. Westerners do not hate themselves more than easterners. There is no distinction like that. It is the same with everybody in the world. There are differences between bodily characteristics. Some people are quite angry, but don't show anger in their facial expressions or body. The opposite is also true. Some people are not angry at all, but show what appears to be anger in their facial expressions. These are bodily characteristics of people. It is the nature of *kamma*. So no, you can't discriminate between westerners, easterners, northerners, southerners. Anger is the nature of the mind of the person who is generating angry thoughts. You know people who are treacherous. While talking with others in a pleasant manner, they are thinking of ways to harm them.

David: Webu Sayadaw looks tough in some photos.

Webu Sayadaw was exerting great energy, great mental effort. If you had met my father, you might have thought that he too looks tough. I believe that is the effect of *kamma*. Most people in our town thought father was an angry person. Father was the opposite. He was kind and compassionate. Most people dislike crows. My father was peculiar in his fondness for crows. In countenance and personality similar to father, the *bhikkhu* Kondañña always looked angry, and yet was extremely compassionate.

All types of dangerous animals were friendly with father and came close to him. In Attanagalla District, an angry adult bull elephant had pressed its mahout against a wall. Of course, the mahout was crushed to death. Nobody wanted to go near this working elephant that had killed its mahout. Father was able to approach this elephant, talked to it, and stroked it. Father even brought this elephant home! And this wasn't any problem

¹³ <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.piya.html>

¹⁴ <https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1Qx7034JHizoZm31JZOnjo-QA2sFho2VmnOlw95SctqU&hl=en>

for us either. Father was also friendly with wild adult elephants, and they too were friendly with him. One of these wild adult bulls had killed people. Father talked with this angry elephant, and it became like a timid little child. Not only angry elephants, even vicious dogs showed submissive behavior towards father.

We don't know exactly why it was so, how the nature of *kamma* worked with father. He was a well-known marksman in town. He shot targets with great accuracy, and no one could do better. Really, no one ever outshot him. He had those skills. And father was knowledgeable about all religions while not subscribing to any one religion.

Beth: Was it *mettā*?

I am not able to say what father was thinking. Father had no religion, though he was widely read in Tipiṭaka, and respected a few *bhikkhus*. By the same token, he gladly participated in Christian church matters. If the local church needed assistance, he was there for them.

David: Your father looked angry but was kind and compassionate. There are people, you say, who are the opposite. They look kind and pleasant enough, but are angry. I'm of a third type. I look angry, and often am angry.

If you get angry, it's all right. As part of your practice, you should be able to see anger arising because of someone else. That is all right. Although you observe this anger, you should not prolong it. You should not perpetuate it. That is harmful. Anger becomes more serious as it escalates ~ starting with dislike and annoyance, through to hate, cruelty, and revenge. Different terms describe the increasing stages of anger, *kodha*.

David, reflect in this way, “These feelings of anger that I have towards myself and others are harmful to me. These feelings of anger are something that is going on in *samsāra*. They're bound up with my becoming. I don't want to harm myself by being angry.”

Very often when you're sick, you direct anger towards yourself. When sickness generates this self-loathing, you need to reflect, “I was born. Since I was born, I am bound to have sickness. It's not that I am free from sickness. If I am born, I am liable to get sick.”

And you can also include aging and death in your reflections, “Was I born with a guarantee that I wouldn't get old?” Ask yourself, “Was I born not to die?” Old age, sickness and death ~ contemplate these truths. You must think that these three ~ old age, sickness and death ~ are truly your inheritance. The Buddha advised every person, whether they were *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, laymen, or laywomen to reflect again and again on these three aspects of life. He advised everyone to frequently reflect on these *dharmas*. Our inheritance is old age, sickness and death.

All too often people meditate without ever reflecting on old age, sickness and death. They start meditating without an awareness that they are made up of five aggregates. They do not contemplate their experience of feeling. These people merely sit to meditate. Without any basic understanding, they can't expect to progress in meditation. They won't reach *jhānas* and so forth.

From twenty tons of black pitchblende, one or two grams of radium can be extracted. This is a huge quantity of pitchblende, and only a tiny bit of radium, about the size of a grain of rice. Similarly, our ignorance of aging, sickness and death is huge, while our understanding of these three is tiny. And so it is with whatever amount of comfort we experience, and our happiness in different activities, is there even a grain of understanding of what is truly happening? Our ignorance is the twenty tons of pitchblende.

Mother Maniyo: No matter how much you know, still you have that ignorance.

There is nothing in the world called your or my ignorance. There is weeping, weeping of impermanency.

Regardless of all our best intentions and efforts in meditation and learning and so forth, there is a reluctance to accept the fact that we are responsible for this state of affairs. That ignorance is inherent in us. You know, we tend to think other people are the cause of our unhappiness. We prefer searching for others to blame for our problems. Children put the blame on their parents. And parents place blame their children. Husbands blame wives. Wives blame husbands. Blame may be directed towards society, or the government. Whomever.

When we stop blaming others for our problems, take responsibility for our state of affairs, we manage our problems more smoothly. For example, I accept the potential for my leg to break. That possibility to break has been there from my birth. I take responsibility for my leg. Though today my leg is alright, and I do my best to live without breaking it, my leg can break at any time. And if it breaks, that can't be helped because in the first place, my leg is liable to break. So, without blaming others for our unhappiness, we see our inheritance. All of us have to think about the nature of things in this way. We all have to accept. And when we do accept the true nature of things, we reduce our suffering. All of us are better off when we see life as it really is, as opposed to what we want life to be. It's possible to reduce suffering.

David: I'm definitely happier when I don't blame others for my conflicts. Pain and suffering are inevitable.

Exactly.

Aren't some people simply angry?

That is true. The people who are prone to anger are quickly producing a sense of self in old age, sickness, and death. When this sense of self is confronted with the certainty of these three, they get angry. They aren't satisfied.

Should people who are usually angry reflect on old age, sickness and death more than people who are rarely angry?

Everyone should reflect on these truths. It is common practice for everyone. In the Abhinhamaccavekkhitabbam Sutta¹⁵ of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, you'll find these three, as well as two more, to reflect on constantly:

- I am subject to old age
- I am subject to sickness
- I am subject to death

As well as

- I will be separated from everyone and everything dear to me
- I am the owner of my *kamma*

We don't spend enough time reflecting on these truths. And without reflection, if we only sit warming our meditation cushions, it won't help. There will not be any reduction in defilements. To reduce defilements, we must fundamentally change the way we think about these and many topics.

Eva: I'd like to meditate under a mosquito net. There are no extra nets in the hall.

¹⁵ <https://suttacentral.net/an5.57/en/bodhi?reference=none&highlight=false>

There are twelve mosquito nets at this centre. Most are not kept in the hall because a few people aren't using them properly. When people buy items with their own hard earned money, they appreciate them. When people get items for free, they don't appreciate them, and are careless. These nets are here for you and others to use. I will find one for you. Mosquito nets, mats, benches and all facilities needed to meditate exist here. It is up to us to make good use of them, and use them properly. Even if people are not meditating, at least they can generate wholesome thoughts while staying here. The correct use of items and facilities by meditators and everyone ties in with *mettā*.

These items and facilities don't directly belong to any of us. They were given to the *Sāsana*. Therefore, all these many items and facilities belong to the *Sāsana*. They belong to this center and are used communally. *Sāsana* includes *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, laymen, and laywomen. Although there is no personal owner of what is given to the *Sāsana*, we protect what has been given to the *Sāsana*. This is *mettā*.

Ask yourself, "What is this *Sāsana*?" *Sāsana* is also *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*. There is no owner of *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*. And since there is no owner of *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, there is no owner of the Noble Eightfold Path. *Sīla* has been described in great detail. *Samādhi* has been described in detail. Similarly, *paññā*. We all have some understanding of *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*.

Meditation is founded on two types of *sīla*:

- *Vāritta*
- *Cāritta*

Vāritta-sīla is the five, eight, and ten precepts. We know these precepts. We know *vāritta-sīla*. What we don't seem to know is *cāritta-sīla*. *Cāritta-sīla* is the ways of eating, drinking, and using items and facilities. It includes sweeping and looking after a residence. All that is *cāritta-sīla*. Blameless manners. The Buddha laid down many *cāritta-sīla* rules. When people perform activities in accordance with *cāritta-sīla*, they do not inconvenience others. In good forest monasteries, residents observe *cāritta-sīla* meticulously. For example, a *bhikkhu* would think, "If my *kuṭi* is not clean, mosquitoes will breed, and they will disturb my neighbours. I must keep my *kuti* clean."

This is how it goes with *cāritta-sīla*. Being considerate to others is essential to the practice of meditation. There is a direct relationship between *cāritta-sīla* and *samādhi*. As the level of *cāritta-sīla* increases, the level of *samādhi* also increases, and vice versa. As *cāritta-sīla* decreases, *samādhi* decreases. We must always be careful what we do. And not only should our behavior never in any way inconvenience others, we should help others. That's right thought, *sammā-saṅkappa*, at work. Before teaching meditation, meditators oftentimes first need to learn the basics of *cāritta-sīla*. I always encourage this. I am constantly trying to bring people around to the practising of *cāritta-sīla*.

Cāritta-sīla is lacking at Sumathipala Na Himi Senasun Aranya. We are at times too relaxed. Recently, there was a man who thought he was meditating seriously, and properly. He stated, "I have only come for meditation. I best not involve myself in what's happening around me at the centre. It is not my concern." He believed he was developing *samādhi* and *paññā*. He thought he was doing *samatha* and *vipassanā*, and so forth. And yet, for the weeks of his stay, he left a basin of water unattended near his *kuti*. Since he didn't change the water, mosquito larvae formed in the basin. He also didn't sweep the leaves around his *kuṭi*, nor did he clean his toilet. After he left for home, the boys working here had to spend many hours cleaning that man's *kuti*. It should not be that way. With such people, *cāritta-sīla* has fallen to a low level. There is no right thought, *sammā-saṅkappa*, at work in their minds, and I tell them not to come again.

It's dangerous for me to say these things, and dangerous for some to hear these things. What should I do? I cannot speak directly to them, and moreover I cannot *not* speak to them. What should any of us do? Maybe the fault lies in having created *bhava* in the first place.

Teruwan saranayi

Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Discourse on Loving-kindness¹⁶


translated from the Pali by

Piyadassi Thera

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Alternate translations: [Ñānamoli](#) | [Amaravati](#) | [Buddharakkhita](#) | [Thanissaro](#)

This sutta also appears at [Khp 9](#)

Alternate format: 

Translator's Introduction

While the Buddha was staying at Savatthi, a band of monks, having received subjects of meditation from the master, proceeded to a forest to spend the rainy season (*vassana*). The tree deities inhabiting this forest were worried by their arrival, as they had to descend from tree abodes and dwell on the ground. They hoped, however, the monks would leave soon; but finding that the monks would stay the vassana period of three months, harassed them in diverse ways, during the night with the intention of scaring them away.

Living under such conditions being impossible, the monks went to the Master and informed him of their difficulties. Thereon the Buddha instructed them in the Metta sutta and advised their return equipped with this sutta for their protection.

The monks went back to the forest, and practicing the instruction conveyed, permeated the whole atmosphere with their radiant thoughts of metta or loving-kindness. The deities so affected by this power of love, henceforth allowed them to meditate in peace.

The discourse gets divided into two parts. The first detailing the standard of moral conduct required by one who wishes to attain Purity and Peace, and the second the method of practice of metta.

1. "He who is skilled in (working out his own) well being, and who wishes to attain that state of Calm (Nibbana) should act thus: he should be dexterous, upright, exceedingly upright, obedient, gentle, and humble.
2. "Contented, easily supportable, with but few responsibilities, of simple livelihood, controlled in the senses, prudent, courteous, and not hanker after association with families.
3. "Let him not perform the slightest wrong for which wise men may rebuke him. (Let him think:) 'May all beings be happy and safe. May they have happy minds.'
- 4.& 5. "Whatever living beings there may be — feeble or strong (or the seekers and the attained) long, stout, or of medium size, short, small, large, those seen or those unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born as well as those yet to be born — may all beings have happy minds.
6. "Let him not deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere. In anger or ill will let him not wish another ill.
7. "Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings.
8. "Let him radiate boundless love towards the entire world — above, below, and across — unhindered, without ill will, without enmity.

¹⁶ <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.08.piya.html>


9. "Standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is 'Noble Living' here.

10. "Not falling into wrong views — being virtuous, endowed with insight, lust in the senses discarded — verily never again will he return to conceive in a womb."

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Karaniya Metta Sutta¹⁷

<https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1Qx7034JHizoZm31JZOnjo-QA2sFho2VmnOlw95SctqU&hl=en>

1) Karanīyam atthakusalena
yan taṃ santaṃ padaṃ abhisamecca:
Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca
suvaco c'assa mudu anatimānī,

2) Santussako ca subharo ca
appakicco ca sallahukavutti
Santidriyo ca nipako ca
appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho,

3) Na ca khuddaṃ samācare kiñci
yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṃ
Sukhino vā khemino hontu
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā:

4) Ye keci pāṇabhūt' atthi
tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā
Dīgha vā ye mahantā vā
majjhimā rassakā aṇukathulā

5) Diṭṭhā vā ye vā addiṭṭhā
ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā

6) Na paro paraṃ nikubBetha
nātimaññetha katthacinaṃ kañci
Vyārosanā paṭighasaññā
nāññamaññassa dukkham iccheyya

7) Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ
āyusā ekaputtaṃ anurakkhe
Evam pi sabbabhūtesu
mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ

8) Mettañ ca sabbalokasmiṃ
mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ
Uddhaṃ adho ca tiriyañ ca
asambādhaṃ averaṃ asapattaṃ

9) Tiṭṭhaṃ caraṃ nisinno vā
sayāno vā yāvat' assa vigatamiddho
Etaṃ satipaṃ adhiṭṭheyya
brahmam etaṃ vihāraṃ idha-m-ahu

10) Diṭṭiñ ca anupagamma
sīlavā dassanena sampanno
Kāmesu vineyya gedhaṃ
na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punar eti ti

¹⁷ <https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1Qx7034JHizoZm31JZOnjo-QA2sFho2VmnOlw95SctqU&hl=en>