

# Brahma Vihara

OR

THE SUBLIME STATES



VARADA



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MAN is a mysterious being with inconceivable potentialities. Latent in him are both saintly characteristics and criminal tendencies. They may rise to the surface at unexpected moments in disconcerting strength. How they originated we know not. We only know that they are dormant in man in varying degree.

Within the powerful mind in this complex machinery of man are also found a storehouse of virtue and a rubbish heap of evil. With the development of these respective characteristics man may become either a blessing or a curse to humanity.

Those who wish to be great, noble, and serviceable, who wish to sublimate themselves and serve humanity both by example and by precept, and who wish to avail themselves of this golden opportunity as human beings, endeavour their best to remove the latent vices and to cultivate the dormant virtues.

To dig up precious gems embedded in the earth men spend enormous sums of money and make laborious efforts, and sometimes even sacrifice their lives. But to dig up the valuable treasures latent in man, only persistent effort and enduring patience are necessary. Even the poorest man or woman can accomplish this task, for wealth is not an

essential prerequisite to the accumulation of transcendental treasures.

It is strange that the vices latent in man seem to be almost natural and spontaneous. It is equally strange that every vice possesses its opposite sterling virtue, which does not however appear to be so normal and automatic, though still within the range of all.

One powerful destructive vice in man is anger (*dosa*). The sweet virtue that subdues this evil force and sublimates man is loving-kindness (*mettā*).

Cruelty (*himsā*) is another vice that is responsible for many errors and atrocities prevalent in the world. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is its antidote.

Jealousy (*issā*) is another vice that poisons one's system and leads to unhealthy rivalries and dangerous competitions. The most effective remedy for this poisonous drug is appreciative joy (*mudītā*).

There are two other universal characteristics that upset the mental equipoise of man. They are attachment to the pleasurable and aversion to the non-pleasurable. These two opposite subtle forces can be eliminated by developing equanimity (*upekkhā*).

These four sterling virtues are collectively termed in Pāli *Brahmavihāra* which may be rendered Modes of Sublime Conduct, Sublime States, or Divine Abodes.

These virtues tend to elevate man. They make one divine in this life itself. They can transform man into a superman. If all try to cultivate them irrespective of creed, colour, race or sex, the earth can be transformed into a paradise where all can live in perfect peace and harmony, ideal citizens of one world.

The four Sublime virtues are also termed Illimitables (*appamaññā*). They are so called because they find no barrier or limit and should be extended towards all beings without exception. They embrace all living beings including animals.

Irrespective of religious beliefs, one can cultivate these sweet virtues and be a blessing to oneself and all others.

## **Metta**

• The first Sublime State is *Mettā* (Sanskrit—*Maitrī*). It means that which softens one's heart or the state of a true friend. It is defined as the sincere wish for the welfare and genuine happiness of all living beings without exception. It is also explained as the friendly disposition, for a genuine friend sincerely wishes for the welfare of his friend.

"Just as a mother protects her only child even at the risk of her life, even so one should cultivate boundless loving-kindness towards all living beings" is the advice of the Buddha.

It is not the passionate love of the mother towards her child that is stressed here but her sincere wish for the genuine welfare of her child.

*Mettā* is neither carnal love nor personal affection, for grief inevitably arises from both.

*Mettā* is not mere neighbourliness, for it makes no distinction between neighbours and others.

*Mettā* is not mere universal brotherhood, for it encompasses all living beings including animals, our lesser brethren and sisters that need greater compassion as they are helpless.

*Mettā* is not political brotherhood or racial brotherhood, or national brotherhood, or even religious brotherhood.

Political brotherhood is confined only to those who share similar political views, such as the



partial brotherhood of Democrats, Socialists, Communists, and so forth.

Racial brotherhood and national brotherhood are restricted only to those of the same race and nation. Some nationalists love their race so much that sometimes they ruthlessly kill innocent men, women and children because they unfortunately are not blessed with blond hair and blue eyes. The white races have a particular love for the white skin, the black for the black, the yellow for the yellow, the brown for the brown, the pale for the pale, the red for the red. Others of a different complexion are at times viewed with suspicion and fear. Very often to assert their racial superiority they resort to brutal warfare, killing millions by mercilessly raining bombs from the sky above. The pathetic incidents of the Second World War are striking examples which can never be forgotten by mankind.

Amongst some narrow-minded peoples, within the wider circle of their ancient nations, there exist minor circles of caste and class where the so-called brotherhood of the powerful oppressors is so limited that the oppressed are not even permitted to enjoy bare human rights merely because of the accidents of birth or class. These oppressors are to be pitied because they are confined to their water-tight compartments.

Mettā is not religious brotherhood either. Owing to the sad limitations of so-called religious brotherhood human heads have been severed without the least compunction, sincere outspoken men and women have been roasted and burnt alive, many atrocities have been perpetrated which baffle description, cruel wars have been waged which mar the pages of world history. Even in this supposedly enlightened twentieth century the followers of one religion hate or ruthlessly persecute and even kill those of other faiths merely because they cannot force them



to think as they do or because they have a different label.

If, on account of religious views, people of different faiths cannot meet on a common platform like brothers and sisters, then surely the missions of compassionate world teachers have pitifully failed.

Sweet Metta transcends all these kinds of narrow brotherhood. It is limitless in scope and range. Barriers it has none. Discrimination it makes not. Metta enables one to regard the whole world as one's motherland and all as fellow-beings.

Just as the sun sheds its rays on all without any distinction, even so sublime Mettā bestows its sweet blessings equally on the pleasant and the unpleasant, on the rich and the poor, on the high and the low, on the vicious and the virtuous, on man and woman, and on human and animal.

Such was the boundless Mettā of the Buddha who worked for the welfare and happiness of those who loved Him as well as of those who hated Him and even attempted to harm and kill Him.

The Buddha exercised Mettā equally towards His own son Rāhula, His adversary Devadatta, His attendant Ananda, His admirers and His opponents.

This loving-kindness should be extended in equal measure towards oneself as towards friend, foe and neutral alike. Suppose a bandit were to approach a person travelling through a forest with an intimate friend, a neutral person and an enemy, and suppose he were to demand that one of them be offered as a victim. If the traveller were to say that he himself should be taken then he would have no Mettā towards himself. If he were to say that anyone of the other three persons should be taken, then he would have no Mettā towards them.

Such is the characteristic of real Mettā. In exercising this boundless loving-kindness oneself should not be ignored. This subtle point should not be misunderstood, for self-sacrifice is another sweet virtue and egolessness is yet another higher virtue. The culmination of this Mettā is the identification of oneself with all beings (*sabbattata*), making no difference between oneself and others. The so-called "I" is lost in the whole. Separatism evaporates. Oneness is realised.

There is no proper English equivalent for this graceful Pāli term Mettā. Goodwill, loving-kindness, benevolence and universal love are suggested as the best renderings.

The antithesis of Mettā is anger, illwill, hatred, or aversion. Mettā cannot co-exist with anger or vengeful conduct.

The Buddha states—

"Hatreds do not cease by hatreds: by love  
they cease."

Mettā not only tends to conquer anger but also does not tolerate hateful thoughts towards others. He who has Mettā never thinks of harming others, nor does he disparage or condemn others. Such a person is neither afraid of others nor does he instil fear into any.

A subtle indirect enemy assails Mettā in the guise of a friend. It is selfish affection (*pema*), for unguarded Mettā may sometimes be assailed by lust. This indirect enemy resembles a person who lurks afar in the jungles or hills to cause harm to another. Grief springs from affection but not from Mettā.

This delicate point should not be misunderstood. Parents surely cannot avoid having affection towards their children and children towards their parents: husbands towards their wives and wives towards

their husbands. Such affection is quite natural. The world cannot exist without mutual affection. The point to be clarified here is that unselfish Mettā is not synonymous with ordinary affection.

A benevolent attitude is the chief characteristic of Mettā. He who practises Mettā is constantly interested in promoting the welfare of others. He seeks the good and beautiful in all but not the ugliness in others.

## **Attendant blessings of mettā •**

1. He who practises Metta sleeps happily. As he goes to sleep with a light heart free from hatred he naturally falls asleep at once. This fact is clearly demonstrated by those who are full of loving-kindness. They are fast asleep immediately on closing their eyes.

2. As he goes to sleep with a loving heart he awakes with an equally loving heart. Benevolent and compassionate persons often rise from bed with smiling faces.

3. Even in sleep loving persons are not perturbed by bad dreams. As they are full of love during their waking hours, they are peaceful in their sleeping hours too. Either they fall into deep sleep or have pleasant dreams.

4. He becomes dear to human beings. As he loves others, so do others love him.

When a person looks at a mirror with a smiling face, a similar face will greet him. If, on the contrary, he looks with a wry face, he will see a similar reflection. The outside world reacts on one in the same way that one acts towards the world. One full of faults himself is apt to see the evil in others. The good he ignores. An English poet has put it beautifully:



"I looked at my brother with the Microscope of Criticism"

And I said, "How coarse my brother is!"

I looked at him through the Telescope of Scorn

And I said, "How small my brother is!"

Then I looked in the Mirror of Truth

And I said, "How like me my brother is!"

Why should we see the ugliness in others when there is evil in the best of us and good in the worst of us? It would be a source of pleasure to all if we could see the good and beautiful in all.

5. He who practises Metta is dear to non-humans as well. Animals are also attracted to him. Radiating their loving kindness, ascetics live in wild forests amidst ferocious beasts without being harmed by them.

"Dwelling on the mountain slopes", says the Buddha, "I drew to me lions and tigers by the power of loving-kindness. Surrounded by lions and tigers, by panthers and buffaloes, by antelopes, stags and boars, I dwelt in the forest. No creature was terrified of me, neither was I afraid of any creature. The power of loving-kindness was my support. I thus dwelt upon the mountain-side."

6. Owing to his power of Metta he becomes immune from poison and so forth unless he is subject to some inexorable Kamma.

As Metta is a constructive healthy force it has the power to counteract hostile influences. Just as hateful thoughts can produce toxic effects in the system, even so loving thoughts can produce healthy physical effects. The scriptures state that a very generous and devout woman named Suppiya, who had a wound in her thigh, was healed on seeing the Buddha. The peaceful thought vibrations of the Buddha and the woman combined to produce this salutary effect.

When the Buddha visited His birthplace for the first time His son Rahula, who was only seven years



of age, approached Him and spontaneously remarked, "O ascetic, even your shadow is pleasing to me." The child was so much dominated by the Buddha's Metta that he deeply felt its magnetic power.

7. Invisible deities protect him because of the power of his Metta.

8. Metta leads to quick mental concentration. As the mind is not perturbed by hostile vibration one-pointedness can be gained with ease. With mind at peace he will live in a heaven of his own creation. Even those who come in contact with him will also experience that bliss.

9. Metta tends to beautify one's facial expression. The face as a rule reflects the state of the mind. When one gets angry the heart pumps blood twice or three times faster than the normal rate. Heated blood rushes up to the face, which then turns red or black. At times the face becomes repulsive to sight. Loving thoughts, on the contrary, gladden the heart and clarify the blood. The face then presents a lovable appearance.

It is stated that when the Buddha, after enlightenment reflected on the Causal Relations (Paṭṭhana) His heart was so pacified and His blood so clarified that rays of different hue such as blue, yellow, red, white, orange, and a mixture of these emanated from His body.

10. A person imbued with Metta dies peacefully as he harbours no thoughts of hatred towards any. Even after death his serene face reflects his peaceful death.

11. Since a person with Metta dies happily, he will subsequently be born in a blissful state. If he has gained the Jhanas or ecstasies he will be born in a Brahma realm.

Besides these inevitable worldly blessings Metta possesses a magnetic power. It can produce a good

influence on others even at a distance and can attract others to oneself.

Once when the Buddha visited a certain city many distinguished nobles came to welcome Him, amongst whom was a nobleman named Roja, who was a friend of Ananda. Seeing him, Ananda said: "It is very kind of you, Roja, to have come to welcome the Buddha."

"No, Venerable Sir, it is not out of any reverence towards the Buddha that I have come to greet Him. We agreed amongst ourselves that whoever would not go to greet the Buddha would be fined 500 gold coins. It is through fear of the fine that I have come here to welcome the Buddha", replied Roja. •

Ananda was slightly displeased. He approached the Buddha and implored Him to preach the Dhamma to Roja.

The Buddha instantly radiated Metta towards Roja and retired to His chamber.

Roja's body was saturated with the Metta of the Buddha. He was electrified, so to say, with the magnetic power of Buddha's irresistible love. Just as a calf would run after his mother he ran from cell to cell in the monastery inquiring where the Buddha was. The monks directed him to the Buddha's chamber. He knocked at the door. The Buddha opened it. In he went, saluted the Buddha, heard the doctrine, and became a convert.

Such is the magnetic power of Metta which everyone can exercise according to his ability.

On another occasion an intoxicated elephant was driven towards the Buddha in an effort to kill Him. The Buddha calmly radiated His love towards the elephant and subdued it.

A beautiful story may be cited to show how the Bodhisatta as a boy extended his boundless

Metta when his own father ordered him to be killed. Young though he was, the Bodhisatta thought to himself:—

“Here is a golden opportunity for me to practise my Metta. My father stands before me, my good mother is weeping, the executioner is ready to chop off my hands and feet. I, the victim, am in the centre. Love I must all the four in equal measure without any distinction. May my good father not incur any suffering because of this ruthless act! May I become a Buddha in the future!”

In one of his previous births the Bodhisatta was once practising the virtue of patience in a royal park. The King, a drunkard, meaning to test his patience ordered the executioner to beat him and cut off his hands and feet. Still he practised his patience. The impatient King kicked him on the chest. Lying in a pool of blood, almost on the verge of death, the Bodhisatta blessed the King and wished him long life saying that men like himself never get angry.

A Bhikkhu is expected to practise Metta to such an extent that he is forbidden to dig or cause to dig the ground lest insects and other minute creatures may die.

The high standard of Metta expected from a Bhikkhu can be understood by the following admonition of the Buddha:—

“If bandits brutally sever your limb from limb with a two-handled saw, and if you entertain hate in your heart, you will not be a follower of my teaching.”

Such enduring patience is extremely difficult. But, that is the lofty ethical standard the Buddha expects from His followers.

The Buddha Himself has set the noble example: “As an elephant in the battlefield, withstands



arrows shot from a bow", says the Buddha, "even so shall I endure abuse, for most people are ill-disciplined."

This chaotic, war-weary, restless world of today where the nations are arming themselves to their teeth, frightened of one another, where human life is endangered by nuclear weapons which may be released at any moment, is sorely in need of this universal loving-kindness so that all may live in one world in perfect peace and harmony like brothers and sisters.

Is it practically possible to exercise Metta when one is threatened with devastating bombs and other destructive weapons?

Well, what can powerless people do when bombs rain from above? Can they avert such a catastrophe?

Buddhist metta is the only answer to such deadly bombs when one is faced with inexorable death.

If all warlike nations could be prevailed upon to substitute this spiritual metta for the destructive weapons of materialism and rule the world not with might and force but with right and love, then only would there be genuine peace and happiness in this world.

Leaving the almost unpractical major issues aside, it is advisable to be concerned with oneself and the rest of mankind in cultivating this sweet virtue, Metta, to the best of one's ability.

## **How to practise Metta**

A few practical hints are given below to practise this meditation on loving-kindness.

Metta should be practised first towards oneself. In doing so a person should charge his mind and body with positive thoughts of peace and happiness.



He should think how he could be peaceful, happy, free from suffering, disease, worry and anger. He then becomes the embodiment of loving-kindness. Shielded by Loving-kindness he cuts off all hostile vibrations and negative thoughts. He returns good for evil, love for anger. He becomes ever tolerant and tries his best not to give occasion for anger to any. Himself beaming with happiness, he injects happiness into others not only inwardly but also outwardly by putting his Metta into practice in the course of his daily life.

When he is full of peace and is free from thoughts of hatred it is easy for him to radiate loving-kindness towards others. What he does not possess he cannot give to others. Before he tries to make others happy he should first be happy himself. He should know the ways and means to make himself happy.

He now radiates his loving-kindness towards all his near and dear ones individually and collectively, wishing them peace and happiness and freedom from suffering, disease, worry and anger.

Diffusing his thoughts of loving-kindness towards his relatives and friends, he radiates them also towards neutrals. Just as he wishes for the peace and happiness of himself and of his near and dear ones even so he sincerely wishes for the peace and happiness of those who are neutral to him, wishing them freedom from suffering, disease, worry and anger. Finally though this is somewhat difficult he should radiate his Metta in the same way towards those (if any) who are inimical to him. If by practising Metta he could adopt a friendly attitude towards those thought to be inimical towards him, his achievement would be more heroic and commendable. As the Buddha advises—"Amidst those who hate let him live free from hatred."

Starting from himself he should gradually extend his Metta towards all beings, irrespective of creed,

race, colour or sex, including dumb animals, until he had identified himself with all, making no distinction whatever. He merges himself in the whole universe and is one with all. He is no more dominated by egoistic feelings. He transcends all forms of separatism. No longer confining himself to water-tight compartments, no longer influenced by caste, class, national, racial, or religious prejudices, he can regard the whole world as his motherland and all as fellow-beings in the ocean of life.

### **Karuna - or - compassion.**

The second virtue that sublimates man is compassion (*karuṇā*). It is defined as that which makes the hearts of the good quiver when others are subject to suffering or that which dissipates the sufferings of others. Its chief characteristic is the wish to remove the woes of others.

The hearts of compassionate persons are even softer than flowers. They do not and cannot rest satisfied until they relieve the sufferings of others. At times they even go to the extent of sacrificing their lives so as to alleviate the sufferings of others. The story of the Vyaghri Jataka where the Bodhisatta sacrificed his life to save a starving tigress and her cubs may be cited as an example.

It is compassion that compels one to serve others with altruistic motives. A truly compassionate person lives not for himself but for others. He seeks opportunities to serve others expecting nothing in return, not even gratitude.

Who do deserve our compassion? The poor and the needy, the sick and the helpless, the lonely and the destitute, the ignorant and the vicious, the impure and the undisciplined, are some that demand the compassion of kind-hearted, noble-minded men and women, to whatever religion or to whatever race they belong.

It is an admitted fact that there is greater poverty in Asia and Africa, than in Europe, Australia and America. Some countries are materially rich but spiritually poor, while some others are spiritually rich but materially poor. Both these pathetic conditions have to be taken into consideration by the materially rich and the spiritually rich.

It is the paramount duty of the wealthy to come to the succour of the poor, who unfortunately lack most of the necessities of life. Surely those who have in abundance can give to the poor and the needy their surplus without inconveniencing themselves.

Once a young student removed the door curtain in his house and gave it to a poor person telling his good mother that the door does not feel the cold but the poor certainly do. Such a kind-hearted attitude in young men and women is highly commendable.

It is gratifying to note that some wealthy countries have formed themselves in to various philanthropic bodies to help under-developed countries, especially in Asia, in every possible way. Charitable organizations have also been established in all countries by men, women and students to give every possible assistance to the poor and the needy. Religious bodies also perform their respective duties in this connection in their own humble way. Homes for the aged, orphanages and other similar charitable institutions are needed in under-developed countries.

The beggar problem has still to be solved in some Asian countries where begging has become a profession. Beggars, at one time, were a great nuisance in China, but the new Republic has solved the problem. There do not seem to be beggars in Japan. Out of compassion for the unfortunate beggars this problem has to be solved satisfactorily by



the respective Governments as the existence of beggars is an insult to any self-respecting nation.

As the materially rich should have compassion on the materially poor and try to elevate them, it is the duty of the spiritually rich too to have compassion on the spiritually poor and sublime them though they may be materially rich. Wealth alone cannot give genuine happiness. Peace of mind can be gained not by material treasures but by spiritual treasures. It is regrettable that in a certain country which has reached almost the zenith of material progress about 10% of the population suffer from mental diseases. Many in this world are badly in need of substantial spiritual food which is not easily obtained as the spiritually advanced are comparatively few. It is not an exaggeration to say that the spiritually poor far exceed the materially poor numerically as they are found both amongst the rich and the poor.

Even more than poverty sickness prevails throughout the world. Many are physically sick, some are mentally sick. Science provides effective medicine for the former but not for the latter, who very often languish in mental hospitals.

There are causes for these two kinds of sickness. Compassionate men and women must try to remove the causes if they wish to produce an effective cure.

Effective measures have been employed by various nations to prevent and cure diseases not only of mankind but also of animals.

The Buddha set a noble example by attending on the sick Himself and exhorting His disciples with the memorable words:—

"He who ministers unto the sick ministers unto me."



• Some selfless doctors render free services towards the alleviation of suffering. Some expend their whole time and energy in ministering to the poor lepers in Africa even at the risk of their lives. Albert Schweitzer is a noteworthy example.

Hospitals and free dispensaries have become a blessing to humanity but more are needed so that the poor may benefit by them. In under-developed countries the poor suffer through lack of medical facilities. The sick have to be carried for miles with great inconvenience to the nearest hospital or dispensary for medical treatment. Sometimes they die on the way. Pregnant mothers suffer most. Hospitals, dispensaries, maternity homes, etc., are an essential need in backward village areas.

The lowly and the destitute deserve the compassion of wealthy men and women. Sometimes servants and workers are not well paid, well fed, well clothed and more often than not they are ill-treated. Justice is not meted out to them. They are neglected and are powerless as there is nobody to plead for them. Glaring cases of inhuman cruelty receive publicity in some exceptional cases. Many such cases are not known. These unfortunate ones have no other alternative but to suffer meekly even as Mother Earth suffers everything in silence. When the grief is unbearable they commit suicide in utter desperation.

The vicious, the wicked, and the ignorant deserve compassion even more than those who suffer physically as they are mentally and spiritually sick. They should not be condemned and despised but sympathised with for their failings and defects. Though a mother has equal compassion towards all her children still she may have more compassion towards a sick child. Even so greater compassion should be exercised towards the spiritually sick as their sickness ruins their character.

The Buddha, for instance, had great compassion towards the courtesan Ambapali, and towards Angulimāla the murderer both of whom later became His converts and underwent a complete reformation in character.

We must understand that greatness is latent in all however wicked they may be. Perhaps one appropriate word at the right moment may change the whole outlook of a person.

• The Emperor Asoka perpetrated many crimes, so much so that he was stigmatized Asoka the wicked. Later the words from a young novice—"Diligence is the path to the deathless"—produced such a great change in him that he became Asoka the Righteous.

The Buddha's advice is to shun the company of the foolish. That does not mean that the good should not associate with them so as to reform them. People avoid those who suffer from contagious diseases. But compassionate physicians attend on them so as to heal them. Otherwise they might die. In the same way the wicked may die spiritually if the good are not tolerant and compassionate towards them.

As a rule the Buddha went in search of the poor, the ignorant and the vicious, but the good and the virtuous came in search of the Buddha.

Like Metta (loving-kindness) Karuna (compassion) should also be extended without limit towards all suffering and helpless beings, including dumb animals born and unborn.

To deny the rights and privileges of mankind on account of caste, colour, or race is inhuman and cruel. To feast on the flesh of animals by killing or causing to kill them is not human compassion.

• To rain bombs from above and ruthlessly destroy

- millions of men, women and children is the worst form of cruelty that deluded man has ever perpetrated.

Today this pitiless, vengeful world has sacrificed the most precious thing on earth—life—at the altar of brute force. Whither has compassion fled?

The world needs today compassionate men and women to banish violence and cruelty from the face of the earth.

Buddhist compassion, it should be noted, does not consist in mere shedding of tears and the like for the indirect enemy of compassion is passionate grief (*domanassa*).

Compassion embraces all sorrow-stricken beings, while loving-kindness embraces all living beings, happy or sorrowful.

## Mudita

The third sublime virtue is *Muditā*. It is not mere sympathy but sympathetic or appreciative joy which tends to destroy jealousy, its direct enemy

One devastating force that endangers our whole constitution is jealousy. Very often some cannot bear to see or hear the successful achievements of others. They ~~rejoice~~ over their failures but cannot tolerate their successes. Instead of praising and congratulating the successful, they try to ruin, condemn and vilify them. In one way *Mudita* is concerned more with oneself than with others as it tends to eradicate jealousy which ruins oneself. On the other hand it aids others as well since one who practises *Mudita* will not try to hinder the progress and welfare of others.

As it is with loving-kindness it is easy to rejoice over the success of one's near and dear ones but



rather difficult to do so over the success of one's adversaries. Yes, the majority not only find it difficult but also do not and cannot rejoice. They seek delight in creating every possible obstacle so as to ruin their adversaries. They even go to the extent of poisoning, crucifying, and assassinating the good.

Socrates was poisoned, Christ was crucified, Gandhi was shot. Such is the nature of the wicked and deluded world.

The practice of Metta and Karuna is easier than the practice of Mudita, which demands great personal effort and strong will power.

Do the Western nations rejoice over the prosperity of the Eastern and the Eastern over the prosperity of the Western? Does one nation rejoice over the welfare of another nation? Is one race happy over the growing prosperity of another race? Does even one religious sect which stands for the cultivation of morals, rejoice over the spiritual influence of another sect?

One religion is jealous of another religion, one part of the globe is jealous of another part of the globe, one institution is jealous of another institution one business firm is jealous of another business firm, one family is jealous of another 'Aṅgura' unsuccessful pupils are jealous of successful 'Joddu' sometimes even one brother or sister is jealous of another brother or sister.

This is the very reason why individuals and groups should practise sympathetic joy if they wish to sublime themselves and be internally happy.

The chief characteristic of Mudita is happy acquiescence in others' prosperity and success



(*anumodanā*). Laughter and the like are not the characteristics of Mudita as exhilaration (*pahasa*) is regarded as its indirect enemy.

Mudita embraces all prosperous beings and is the congratulatory attitude of a person. It tends to eliminate any dislike (*arati*) towards a successful person.

## Upekkha

The fourth sublime state is the most difficult and the most essential. It is Upekkha or equanimity. The Pali term *upa* means "justly," "impartially" or "rightly". The etymological meaning of the term Upekkha is "discerning rightly", "viewing justly", or looking "impartially", that is, without attachment or aversion, without favour or disfavour.

Here the term is not used in the sense of indifference or neutral feeling.

Equanimity is essential, especially for laymen who have to live in an ill-balanced world amidst fluctuating circumstances.

Slights and insults are the common lot of mankind. The world is so constituted that the good and the virtuous are very often subject to unjust criticism and attack. It is heroic to maintain a balanced mind in such circumstances.

Loss and gain, fame and infamy, praise and pain and happiness are eight worldly conditions that affect all humanity. Most people are perturbed when affected by such favourable or unfavourable states. One is elated when one is praised, and depressed when blamed and reviled. He is wise, says the Buddha, who, amidst such vicissitudes of life, stands unmoved like unto a firm rock, exercising perfect equanimity.

The Jataka states--

"Just as the earth, whate'er is thrown  
Upon her, whether sweet or foul,  
Indifferent is to all alike,  
Nor hatred shows, nor amity,  
So likewise he in good or ill  
Must even-balanced be."

The Buddha's exemplary life offers us worldlings an excellent example of equanimity.

There was no religious teacher in the world who was so severely criticised, attacked, insulted and reviled as the Buddha, and yet none so highly praised, honoured and revered as the Buddha.

Once when He went in quest of alms He was called an outcaste by an impertinent Brahmin. He calmly endured the insult and explained to him that it is not birth that makes one an outcaste but an ignoble character. The Brahmin was converted.

Inviting Him to a house for alms, a certain man entertained the Buddha with the filthiest language current in His time. He was called "swine", "brute", "ox", etc. But He was not offended. He did not retaliate. Calmly He questioned His host what he would do when guests visited his house. He replied that he would prepare a feast to entertain them.

"Well, what would you do if they did not partake of it?" questioned the Buddha.

"In that case we ourselves would partake of the feast."

"Well, good brother, you have invited me to your house for alms. You have entertained me with a torrent of abuse. I do not accept it. Please take it back", calmly replied the Buddha.

The offender's character was completely transformed.

"Retaliate not. Be silent as a cracked gong when you are abused by others. If you do so, I deem that you have already attained Nibbana although you have not realised Nibbana." Such is the advice of the Buddha.

These are golden words that should be given heed to in this undisciplined world of today.

Once a lady of the court induced some drunkards to revile the Buddha so much that Ananda, His attendant disciple, implored the Buddha to leave the city and go elsewhere. But the Buddha was unperturbed.

Another woman feigned pregnancy and publicly accused the Buddha of having placed her in that condition. A woman was killed by His rivals and the Buddha was accused of murder. His own cousin and disciple Devadatta made an unsuccessful attempt to crush Him to death by hurling a rock from a cliff. Some of His own disciples accused Him of jealousy, partiality favouritism, etc.

On the other hand many sang the praises of the Buddha. Kings prostrated themselves before His feet and paid the highest reverence.

Like the Mother Earth the Buddha suffered everything in silence with perfect equanimity.

Like a lion that does not tremble at every sound, one should not be perturbed by the poisoned darts of uncurbed tongues. Like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net, one should not be attached to the illusory pleasures of this changing world. Like the lotus that is unsoiled



by the mud from which it springs, one should live unaffected by worldly temptations, ever calm, serene and peaceful.

As with the first three virtues so also Upekkha has for its direct enemy attachment (Raga), and for its indirect enemy callousness or unintelligent indifference.

Upekkha discards clinging and aversion. • An impartial attitude is its chief characteristic. He who practises equanimity is neither attracted by desirable objects nor is averse to undesirable objects.

His attitude towards the sinner and the saint will be the same, for he makes no distinction.

Metta embraces all beings, Karuna embraces sufferers, Mudita embraces the prosperous, and Upekkha embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.





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