

(KARANIYA) METTA SUTTA - The Discourse on Loving Kindness The Path to Make a Perfect Personality in Buddhism

(Suttanipata and Kuddakapatha)

The discourse of *Metta*, loving kindness, explains the path of peace and how to make a strong personality that none can hurt. In the beginning, the discourse describes primary qualities that a person should practice for peace of mind. Then the discourse illustrates tranquility and finally wisdom. The *Metta* discourse clearly specifies the gradual path of liberation. Everyone can practice these doctrines as much as he has effort and wisdom. This sutta can be described as a blessing discourse, a spiritual path and a personal guidance for moral conduct.

Once upon a time, the Buddha was in *Sravasti* monastery. Monks were given advice for meditation by the Blessed One, and they were meditating living in forests as they wished. Among them a group of monks having instructions from the Buddha went to the Himalaya for their spiritual development. When they were in the jungle practicing meditation, they were disturbed by some divine beings since those beings couldn't live in their residences because of the monks' higher virtuous qualities. Divine beings did a lot of things to bring fear to the monks such as showing fearful forms, sounds and smells. The monks tried to overcome the problem, but they failed. Finally they went back to the Buddha and explained everything that they faced. The Buddha taught them the *Metta Sutta* as a blessing protection and a meditation technique as well. Further the Buddha advised them to go back to the same place and meditate chanting, contemplating on and practicing the *Sutta*. According to the Buddha's instructions, when they were practicing this *Sutta*, they could achieve their spiritual goals. By the power of this discourse and monks' good behavior, divine beings were also happy and helped them to fulfill their enlightenment. Since then the Buddha's disciples have been practicing this discourse as a meditation technique as well as a blessing protection. This sutta is like the Buddhist Anthem that can be practiced by anyone to gain peace of mind and a perfect personality.

1. *Karanīya mattha kusalena*

He who is skilled in doing good

Yantam santam padam abhi-samecca

And who wishes to attain that state of calm (*Nibbana*) should act thus

Sakko uju ca suju ca

He should be skillful, upright, perfectly upright

Suvaco cassa mudu anantimāni!

gently spoken, gentle and humble.

2. *Santussako ca subharo ca*

Contented (satisfied), easily supportable (not a burden to others)

Appa-kicco ca sallahuka-vutti

With few duties, simple in livelihood

Santindriyo ca nipako ca

Controlled in senses, discreet (wise)

Appa-gabbho kulesu ananu giddho!

Not stubborn, not greedily attached to families

3. *Na ca khuddham samacare kiñci*
 He should not commit any slight wrong
Yena viññu pare upavadeyyum
 So that other wise men might criticize
Sukhino vā khemino hontu
 May all beings be happy and secure
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhi-tattā !
 May all beings become happy in their heart of hearts!

4. *Ye keci pāna bhutatthi*
 Whatsoever living beings that exist
Tasā vā thāvarā vā anava sesā
 Weak, or strong, without exception
Dighā vā ye mahantā vā
 Long or stout
Majjhimārassa khanuka thulā !
 Medium, short, small or large

5. *Ditthā-vā ye va additthā*
 Those seen (visible) or unseen (invisible)
ye ca dure vasanti avidure
 And those dwelling far or near
bhutā va sambhavesi vā
 Those who are born and those who are to be born
sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā !
 May all beings, without exception, become happy in their heart of hearts!

6. *Na paro param nikubbetha –*
 Let no one deceive another
nātimaññetha katthaci nam kañci,
 Nor despise anyone anywhere for any reason
byārosanā patighasaññā –
 In anger or ill will
nāññamaññassa dukkham iccheyya !
 Let them not wish each other harm

7. *Mātā yatha niyam puttam –*
 Just as a mother would guard her only child
āyusa ekaputtam anurakkhe
 At the risk of her own life
evam pi sabbabhutesu –
 Even so towards all beings
mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam !
 Let him cultivate boundless heart for all beings.

8. *Mettañ ca sabbalokasmim*

Let thoughts of boundless love pervade the entire universe

mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam,

Above, below and across

uddham adho ca tiriyañ ca

Without any obstruction

asambādham averam asapattam !

Without any hatred, without any enmity

9. *Tittham caram nisinno vā sayāno vā –*

Whether he stands, walks, sits

yāvatassa vigatamiddho,

Or lies down, as long as he is a wake

etam satim adhittheyya -

He should develop this mindfulness

brahmam etam viharam idhamāhu !

This they say is the highest conduct as like living in heaven right here and now!

10. *Ditthiñca anupagamma –*

Not falling into (wrong) views

sīlavā dassanena sampanno,

Virtuous and endowed with vision (insight)

kamesu vineyya gedham

He discards attachment to sensuous desires

Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyam punaretī !

Truly, he does not come again, to be conceived in a womb.

According to Buddhism, the gradual path is explained here including three disciplines those are virtue, concentration and wisdom. First three verses describe fifteen qualities that we practice at the beginning on the path of liberation. They are;

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| 1. Proficiency/ skillfulness | (<i>Sakko</i>) |
| 2. Honesty | (<i>Uju ca</i>) |
| 3. Perfectly upright | (<i>Suju ca</i>) |
| 4. Gently spoken | (<i>Suvaco</i>) |
| 5. Gentle | (<i>Mudu</i>) |
| 6. Humble / not conceited | (<i>Anatimāni</i>) |
| 7. Being contented / Being satisfied | (<i>Santussako</i>) |
| 8. Easy to support | (<i>Subharo</i>) |
| 9. Being less busy | (<i>Appakicco</i>) |
| 10. Being simple | (<i>Sallahukavutti</i>) |
| 11. Controlling (Discipline) in senses | (<i>Santindriyo</i>) |
| 12. Discretion / wisdom | (<i>Nipako</i>) |
| 13. Not impudence/ not stubborn | (<i>Appagabbho</i>) |
| 14. Less attachment to families | (<i>kulesu ananugiddho</i>) |
| 15. Having moral fear and Shame for even slightest wrong conduct | (<i>Na ca khuddam samacare kiñci - yena viññuu pare upavadeyyum</i>) |

These qualities are included in the first discipline, virtue within the three disciplines of enlightenment in Buddhism. After describing primary qualities that should be practiced on the path of peace, practicing loving kindness is described in other six verses in the Sutta. With these qualities a person who wishes to attain peace of mind has to practice loving kindness. Practicing loving kindness is one of the main qualities on the path of liberation. People mostly suffer because of anger. To reduce anger, being kind to everyone is an essential need. It also helps us to concentrate our mind. Last verse describes the way to develop wisdom. Having virtue and concentration, the Buddha's disciple should develop wisdom seeing impermanence. When the Buddha's disciple sees the arising of his experience that he receives through senses, he doesn't go to the extreme of annihilation. Also when he sees the ceasing of experience, he doesn't go to the extreme of externalism. Without going to 'is' or 'isn't' he sees the world reality that is impermanence with the knowledge of the dependence origination. This is the highest knowledge and realization of wisdom that leads to attain enlightenment.

Buddhism has pointed out both paths those are heavenly path (*Sagga Magga*) and deliverance path (*Mokha Magga*). According to the heavenly path, three meritorious deeds (generosity, morality and meditation) should be practiced with the understanding of the Karmic law. By practicing three meritorious deeds, we are able to increase desire and anger, but not completely. As the result of practicing heavenly path, we can be reborn in a blissful life. According to the deliverance path, we have to practice three disciplines those are virtue, concentration and wisdom. At the beginning of the deliverance path, we should have a very clear knowledge about the dependent origination. Here understanding of five aggregates is very important.

Five aggregates are;

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| i. The group of forms | - (<i>Rupa</i>) |
| ii. The group of feelings | - (<i>Vedanā</i>) |
| iii. The group of perception | - (<i>Saññā</i>) |
| iv. The group of mental formations | - (<i>Sankhāra</i>) |
| v. The group of consciousness | - (<i>Viññāna</i>) |

If we have any kind of experience through our six senses such as eye, ear etc, five aggregates arise at the moment. Not only arise, they cease immediately at the same moment. If someone can understand that these five things arise at the moment when conditions are present and they cease instantly when conditions separate, he doesn't go to the extremes as 'there is' or 'there isn't'. When someone sees the arising of the five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of 'there isn't'. And also when someone sees ceasing of the five aggregates, he doesn't go the extreme of 'there is'. If someone is skillful to see this reality, he is clever to understand impermanence. The understanding of impermanence leads to overcome suffering and unsatisfactoriness. Further, he realizes all his experiences arise and cease at the moment. The nature of this experience is arising at the moment and instantly ceases at once. **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not go to (the future) occurrence. (*ahutvā sambutam hutvā na bhavissati*).** It means if we experience something now, that experience didn't come from the past in the same way like now. Also present experience doesn't go to the future from the present in the same way. If somebody can understand this reality, he is ready to give up extremes about the past and the future. Also he tries to live in the present moment seeing arising and ceasing wisely with full awareness. However,

we shouldn't forget our past or future. We only do not live in the past or future. By practicing mindfulness and wisdom our memory increases and we train our mind to live in the present moment reflecting on arising and ceasing of our all our experiences.

We have to practice above qualities which come in the Metta Sutta with the knowledge of the impermanence of the five aggregates. Then we can go forward on the path of peace of mind. Among all the qualities of the Metta Sutta, three things are very important. They are;

Honesty
Gently spoken (active listening)
Wisdom

As wise people, we may try to go forward on the spiritual path day by day searching for the real happiness. As the result of practicing above four things, other five Spiritual Faculties increase in our life. They are named as the five Spiritual Faculties (*pañca indriya*). They are faith (*Saddhā*), energy (*Viriya*), mindfulness (*Sati*), concentration (*Samādhi*), wisdom (*Paññā*). Meanwhile the Buddha has explained us that, we have to practice only two doctrines, they are mindfulness and wisdom. Ultimately, we have to practice only one that is wisdom. When wisdom is developed correctly as the Buddha said, all other qualities gradually increase. As the result of practicing the path of deliverance, we are able to reduce desire, anger and delusion completely. Also, we can overcome suffering and achieve peace of mind, happiness, satisfactoriness and the bliss of Nibbana.

We can find ourselves whether we are on the path by finding out whether these three qualities (loving kindness, honesty and wisdom) gradually increase. The final result of practicing all above qualities is to make an unshaken mind that none can disturb. That is the real refuge that we can make in our life as the Buddha said.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

When you dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge, the basis itself should be investigated thus: 'From what are sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair born? How are they produced?' (Attadeepa Sutta).

Then we are able to live without defilements among the ordinary people like a lotus flower which doesn't touch mud.

Let's live happily without anger among the people those who are angry.

Let's live happily without mental illnesses among the people those who are mentally ill.

Let's live happily without longing sensual pleasure among those who are seeking sensual pleasures.

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

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