



# A Great Dāna!

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Part I ~ Pemasiri Thera on Mettā

David Young





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*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa  
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PART I

METTĀ



1. He sleeps in comfort. 2. He awakes in comfort. 3. He sees no evil dreams. 4. He is dear to human beings. 5. He is dear to non-human beings. 6. Devas protect him.
7. Fire, poison, and sword cannot touch him. 8. His mind can concentrate quickly.
9. His countenance is serene. 10. He dies without being confused in mind.
11. If he fails to attain arahantship here and now, he will be reborn in the brahma-world.

Mettā Sutta<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter 1 Fearing Saṃsāra

**Pemasiri Thera:** We'll talk now about fear. Fear normally arises together with anger or hate. When we hurt someone, we fear that person will retaliate. Fear is associated with anger and hate, but there is no nīvaraṇa or saṃyojana called fear.

**David:** *If my fear is neither a hindrance nor a fetter, then what is it?*

Don't let that question be a burden. It's enough to remember that fears are based in vyāpāda. Vyāpāda means anger, ill will and hatred. We find fear arising in various situations in our daily lives. Avyāpāda means practising mettā-bhāvanā sincerely, "May all beings be free from fear." With mettā established, you're no longer hurting anyone and there's no reason to fear retaliation. And when fear is no longer within, your mind is pliable and soft. Your life is free of conflicts. There are three kinds of mettā:

- Bodily actions
- Verbal actions
- Mental actions

It's not enough to focus exclusively on mental actions of mettā, "May everyone be well and happy." Without bodily and verbal actions, then mettā is incomplete and will never arise. Bodily and verbal actions of mettā in addition to mental actions must be included in your practice. What you do and say matters. The Buddha advised seeing others with acceptance and sympathy. Our mettā towards them should be the same in their presence and absence. Like milk mixing with milk, we must look at the similarities between others and ourselves. We don't differentiate between them and us.

We are certainly not mixing with others as milk mixes with milk. We are suspicious, "I don't know why that person is coming to see me. I wonder what he wants." There is often justification in being wary because the person approaching is not a mettā practitioner! He may in fact be coming to deceive us and have ulterior motives.

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<sup>1</sup> AN 11.16

Nonetheless, taking into consideration the realities of the world, to train in mettā is of course necessary.

Training in mettā has countless benefits. The Buddha said those monastics who practise mettā are not eating the alms food of the country in vain. They can accept piṇḍpāta food without debt. Jhāna comes about easily and not lost easily. Building mettā to this level comes about gradually; it's not necessary to go to the forest or do dhutaṅga practices.

The American monk Samita used to visit the old Kanduboda meditation centre and stayed in a small kuṭi that our gardener Rangī now uses. Venerable Samita liked that kuṭi because it was in a secluded unlit area and was complete with two rooms, toilet, veranda, and kitchen. When arriving at night, we told him, “Be careful because there are venomous snakes in that area and you might step on one. Be careful.” He never used a torch to walk to the kuṭi. I asked him why he didn't use a torch. Venerable Samita answered, “Because I have mettā, it will be fine. Snakes don't bite me.” Venerable Samita had this thought in his mind that animals don't harm him because he practises mettā.

There is truth in Venerable Samita's words as it is stated in the Mettā Sutta that there are eleven benefits<sup>2</sup> when mettā is practised maximally and Venerable Samita had certainly trained to a high level in mettā. He was indeed dear to non-human beings and wasn't being harmed by poisons. Venomous snakes did not hurt him. At the time yogis are practising mettā well, mosquitoes do not bite! They don't even land. They sometimes hover around. Mosquitoes perceive the body of a person practising mettā in a different way than the body of a person who isn't. Mettā changes the practitioner's rūpa-kalāpas. You wouldn't need insect repellent or a mosquito net.

### *I'm afraid of vipers.*

Watch out. Before stepping on a mat at night always shine your torch on it because snakes are sometimes under mats especially when it's cold. No need to be afraid. We are not shining the torch on mats because we are afraid of vipers. We simply have to be practical when living with animals. We shine the torch to avoid trampling the snake or other creatures.

I lived with leopards in forest hermitages. If I didn't look directly at them, they continued on their way. None of this has to do with fear. We don't avoid looking straight at leopards because we're afraid of them. We avoid staring at leopards because that is best way to act with them. Leopards get afraid and may attack when someone stares at them. We must always try to conduct ourselves in the forest in the most harmonious way; not out of fear but to protect the animals and ourselves. Don't alarm the animals.

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<sup>2</sup> AN 11.16 ; Mettā Sutta

People with coarse attitudes do not fear dangerous animals. They simply kill them. A different type of fear provokes their killing of animals.

Another monk at the old Kanduboda meditation centre was also greatly established in the practice of mettā. He fell sick on one occasion and was taken to hospital. When the doctor tried to give the monk an injection, the needle bent! It was impossible to puncture the monk's skin because he was practising mettā. The monk stopped the mettā practice for a few days in order to get the injection. Fire, poison, and sword, you can read in the Mettā Sutta, cannot touch those who live with thoughts of mettā. Coarse qualities of the mind are reduced when practising mettā and fears are reduced. Venerable Samita was fearless.

Another expression of fear is connected with delighting in life. Though abiding in the object of mettā, some yogis are still managing to find fear arising when there is a threat to their lives. It's possible their minds are shaken in grave situations. Anāgāmīs are free from fear of ghosts and spirits and the like. Nevertheless, even an anāgāmī has a regard for life and can experience a mental vibration that destroys the jhāna. Everyone except arahats has some form of delighting in life.

Fear can be pointless. Yogis are sometimes unable to comprehend what is happening in their meditation practices. There is no clarity. They don't understand their experiences and pointless fear arises. This type of fear comes out of upādāna. Yogis are clinging to objects arising in their practices. I also used to cling to objects of meditation.

As a young monk I was in the habit of drawing pictures. I don't do that anymore. On a piece of cloth I drew a picture of a bloated corpse.<sup>3</sup> I initially had no purpose in doing so. I had just drawn this picture and put it up on my kuṭi wall. I regularly looked at it and one day decided to contemplate swollen bloated corpses. I put various ideas into my head, "I will also die and my body will swell up." I started this daily practice early in the morning and continued with it the whole day until going to sleep at night. I thought a lot about dying and being a bloated corpse.

One Kanduboda monk went to bed wearing his under-robe and belt so that if he died in his sleep others wouldn't have to dress him up! I followed his example. I stopped locking my kuṭi door. I kept the kuṭi and myself neat and tidy. I did everything possible to make it easy for others if I died. I cultivated all kinds of mental problems! One night the picture of the bloated corpse came alive! Bodily fluids started oozing from its mouth and nose. Very strong fear arose. I knew this was a picture. I knew that I had drawn this picture. It didn't matter. I could not remain in my kuṭi and went outside. My whole body was shaking. Then I thought an evil spirit must have possessed the cloth on which I had drawn the picture. I went to a senior monk's kuṭi. I had never before gone to his kuṭi during the night. I'd never do that. He asked, "Why are you here tonight? What are you doing?" I had no good answer, "I came by for a

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<sup>3</sup> A bloated corpse is a standard meditation object

visit.” He said, “I know you will not merely drop in for a visit.” It was a problem, but I couldn’t tell him my fears. The senior monk at last said, “It is time for you to leave and get some sleep.”

There was no way I could return to my kuṭi and I also could not go to my teacher Sumathipāla Na Himi. I knew he would chase me away. I knew it was foolish to visit him. I went instead to the area behind Sumathipāla Na Himi’s kuṭi. He soon heard me moving about and came outside. I had earlier practised dhutaṅga. In those days of the past when practising dhutaṅga, I did not have a kuṭi. I sometimes slept outside under a tree. Sumathipāla Na Himi asked, “Have you started dhutaṅga practices again?” I said, “No.” And he asked, “Then why are you here?” I told him what had happened and he gave me a proper scolding. I got over my fear with his scolding. It all finished. I had experienced self-hypnosis.

It’s natural for yogis to have unusual experiences while meditating. When they fail to note these experiences with sati-sampajañña, yogis get scared. Their minds cannot accept the reality of tilakkhaṇa. Their minds react with fear. My foot swelled up one day when I was a young child and I got scared. Another day I broke my leg. I heard my leg snap and again fear arose. You David got scared when skeletons appeared in your practice and came to me for help. That was a good experience for you. It’s natural for phenomena like that to happen, but you were not able to receive and accept skeletons in a proper way.

You need to relate to experiences with sati-sampajañña and clearly see the tilakkhaṇa of those experiences. I once while meditating as a monk became a skeleton and the skeleton started walking about! I didn’t, as you did, get scared that day. I realized that this is mind and this is the way mind relates to skeletons. I accepted the reality of tilakkhaṇa.

***I’ve been scared of skeletons and enjoyed devas teaching me. Which is more dangerous?***

These two experiences are connected to aversion and sensual desire. I am not saying which is more dangerous. Being afraid of skeletons links to vyāpāda. Devas talking to you links to kāma-rāga. You are getting fooled.

I too was foolish when I first started meditating. Whatever I thought appeared to me as a vision. I wanted to see Mucalinda, the king of the Nāgas, that protected the Buddha from the elements after his enlightenment and I did see Mucalinda. I was very happy! Then I saw an image of the Buddha with Mucalinda wrapped around him. Beautiful colourful lights radiated from the Buddha’s body. The hood of this enormous cobra was three meters across and covered the Buddha’s head. Mucalinda had nice eyes. I was glad to be seeing a vision of this huge cobra. Then it flicked its tongue out at me and I thought, “Oh. It’s alive!”

I had completely lost my manasikāra and sati. Then Mucalinda smiled at me and I could see that its teeth were human. The cobra had human teeth! And those teeth were like the teeth of my grandmother who had recently died. Grandmother had beautiful teeth. Suddenly my sati returned. I came back to noting better and thought, “Snakes don’t have human teeth! So how can Mucalinda have human teeth?” And all this time I was sitting in meditation. Then fear arose, “If such things take place, then what more can possibly happen in meditation?” I was afraid. You can at times be very foolish, thinking that devas are visiting you. You are being deceived by saṅkhāras that are forming. The picture of the bloated corpse came alive for me. Pictures cannot come alive. It was all mind created. It was just the way my mind manifested aversion.

***How am I being deceived?***

Because of a failure to note with sati-sampajañña images that arise in your mind, you think about them and remain with them. You continue viewing them in the same way you watch a TV program. Images that arise are nothing more than the nature of the mind at that moment. Because of ignorance, you are deceived by the mind. When a thought arises, note that this is simply a saṅkhāra and be done with it. You can’t stop thoughts arising in the mind. And from all that arises in our minds, say one hundred different thoughts, ninety-nine of them are false and lies. Sometimes all one hundred are lies. It is only rarely that a true thought arises. Sati and sampajañña are necessary at all times to understand and know defilements. Arahats have no fear because their minds are completely pure.

Fear comes from lies about a sense of self; there is aversion and frequently for some crying and weeping. The rūpa-kalāpas of the person weeping undergo changes and he or she may start shaking. Anger and greed can also lead to shaking. Let me give you a simile about this delusion of a self.

A mother has three sons. Her eldest son is arrested for treason and sentenced to death by the state. A date and time is set for execution. The date arrives. The appointed hour comes and goes. The mother knows her eldest son has been executed. That same day she learns her second son has also been arrested for treason and will soon be executed. His death is pending. Then the news comes that the third son has in the same way been charged with treason and to be executed on an unspecified date in the future.

The mother is crying. Her eldest son has been executed. He is already dead. The mother knows her second son’s death is looming, and that the third son is to die sometime later. For which of her three sons is she crying at that specific moment? Is she crying for the first, second or third son? How can you separate the crying? Which part of her crying is for the first son? Which amount is for the second, and what about her crying for the third?

***I don’t know.***

Can her crying for one son be singled out?

***She wouldn't make a distinction between sons.***

The mother cries for all three sons. Sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair – the mother has all of these. She is suffering in that moment because she brought a past experience into her present experience. She is likewise suffering from her present situation. And her fears about the future, if there is anything in the future for her, is also giving rise to suffering.

The old saṅkhāras changed and passed away. The saṅkhāras arising in the present will also change. They are changing now. And whatever saṅkhāras that arise in the future will as well break up and pass away. All saṅkhāras break up and pass away. The yogi who understands that this is the nature of saṃsāra is like a wise mother who doesn't cry for the deaths of her sons, and the yogi who doesn't accept these processes is similar to a mother who cries. A yogi with wisdom accepts the truth of birth, decay and death.

Saṅkhāras regarding past, present and future are causes that can give rise to fearing saṃsāra. The yogi realizes that all saṅkhāras are aniccā; all saṅkhāras are dukkha; and all saṅkhāras are anattā. He or she gets tired of so much dukkha and seeks a way out. This is the way of purification. There would be peace and comfort in a state where saṅkhāras are no longer active.

***Should I contemplate saṃsāra while meditating?***

You have thoughts connected with a sense of self: “I understand what Pemasiri is saying,” “I feel this is a useful discussion,” “I like this.” Your continuation with this approach in your mind guarantees that saṅkhāras keep arising. It's impossible to contemplate saṃsāra and meditate at the same time.

There's a simile about two sisters. Each sister has a young male child. The older sister shaves the head of her son one night. She then gives him a nice meal, a lovely perfumed bath, and dresses him in freshly cleaned bedclothes. She puts him in a comfortable bed and says goodnight. This child falls into a deep sleep. The younger sister doesn't shave the head of her son. She gives him a plain meal, not such good food, and a normal unperfumed bath. She puts him in a very ordinary and uncomfortable bed. The sisters wait till the second child is also sound asleep. They shave his head and move him from the uncomfortable bed to the comfortable bed and move the first child from the comfortable bed to the uncomfortable bed. Neither child wakes up while being moved. The second child gets up in the morning, touches his head and discovers he has no hair. The second child remembers having hair and going to sleep in a different bed. Uncertainty and confusion arise, “Who am I? Who is my mother?” It was a problem for him.

We create a sense of self around objects of experience. Without familiar objects, the second child lost his sense of self and confusion arose. Only when he sees the first child does the second child realize, “If he is here, then I also must be here!” The first



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child was also confused. As long as we allow this deception, we never put to rest doubts such as these children faced; fears as well as remorse will incessantly surface for us. We must strive to understand the nature of saṃsāra and overcome this lie of a self at least for a short time, say an hour.

People come around to understanding saṃsāra in their own unique ways. When I was a child walking to school along the Kandy Road, I often saw old people. Their hair was grey and backs bent, and a lot of them hobbled down the road with canes. My whole day at school was ruined when I saw these old people. I couldn't focus on the lessons. I was instead thinking, "Why does this happen? What is the cause?" It didn't feel right to ask my teachers, "How do backs become bent?" And, "Why does hair turn grey and skin wrinkle?"

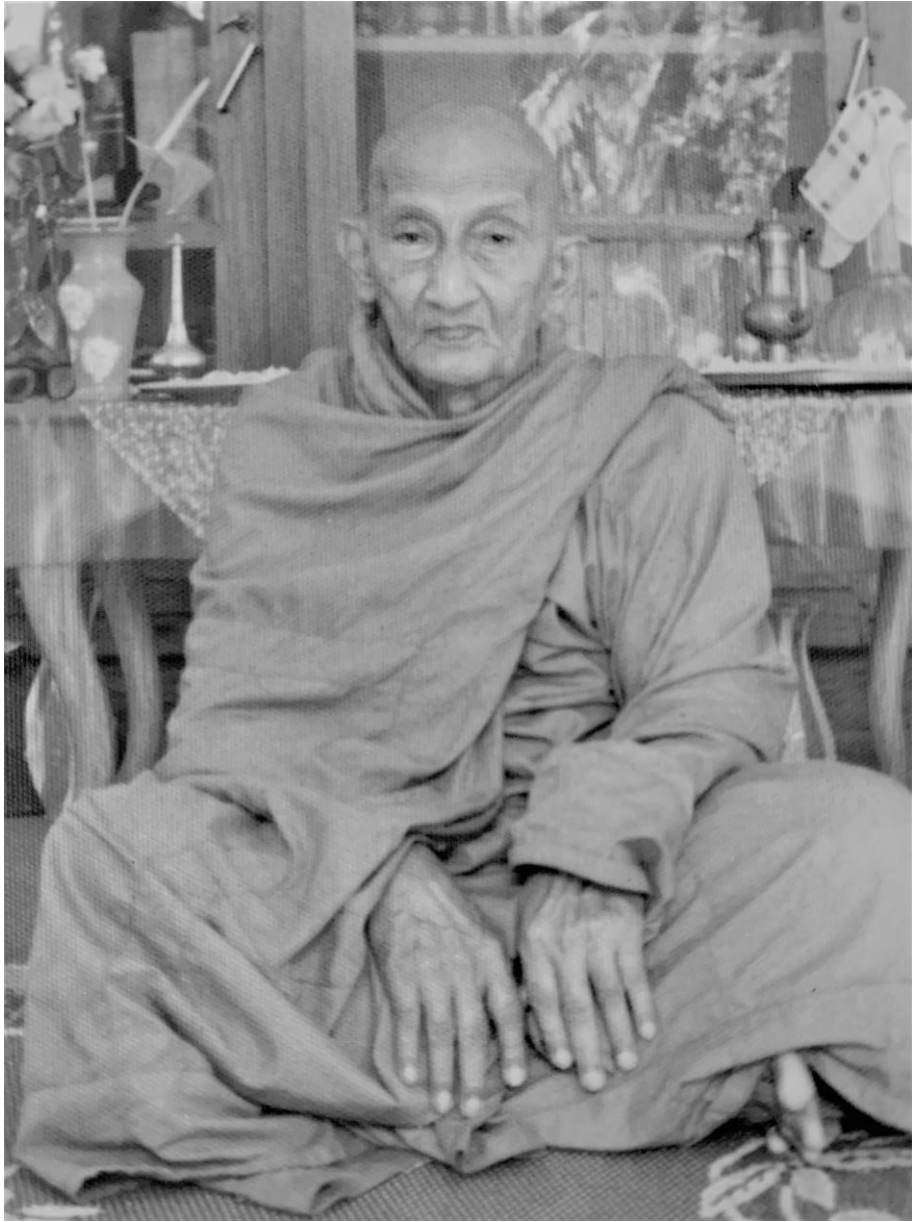
I also quickly learned not to ask anyone at home about old people because family members got angry. One of my sisters would hit me seven or eight times, "What madness is this?" Or, "What a trouble you are!" One grandmother died when I was a child. It was my first time seeing a corpse. I asked why grandmother died and I was beaten. Family members were more displeased with my asking why grandmother died than her death. My questions always put them in a bad mood and I never got any answers. Aiyo. These ideas about old people often arise at an early age. Children generally do not like to be with old people. They might enjoy being with their grandparents; otherwise children do not like to associate with the old. They have an aversion towards them. Schoolchildren typically dislike old teachers. They like their teachers to be young and happy. That's the nature of saṃsāra and the way we are tied to it.

I don't like going to cancer wards of hospitals or to places for sick children. I recall visiting the Victoria Home in the Colombo suburb of Borella where many handicapped children live. The children said, "Please send us radios." I sent ten radios to the children. The matron of the home found out, "Don't be bringing radios for these children again because when radios break we are asked to repair them and that's a bother for us." I like to help the children but I don't enjoy seeing them. The sight of a child with a limb missing used to work away in my mind and I couldn't sleep. My mind did not accept the reality of that situation. Things are better now, though I still don't like seeing these sights. Dislike might be arising in my mind because I don't want a similar situation for myself. I also don't like viewing autopsies at the morgue, as you did numerous times. I only went to the morgue once with two Americans.

These are the thoughts presenting themselves to my mind. There are things that will happen when we are born as humans and there are other things that may happen. That's enough on saṃsāra.

May you be protected by the Triple Gem.

August 24th – 2007     Sumathipāla Na Himi Senasun Aranya



Sumathipāla Na Himi

*Coming down from my dwelling place, I entered the city for alms, stood courteously next to a leper eating his meal. He, with his rotting hand, tossed me a morsel of food, and as the morsel was dropping, a finger fell off right there. Sitting next to a wall, I ate that morsel of food, and neither while eating it, nor having eaten, did I feel any disgust.*

Mahā Kassapa<sup>4</sup>

## Chapter 2 A Great Dāna!

**David:** *Am I lacking in mettā?*

**Pemasiri Thera:** However much I try it's hard to get you to practise mettā-bhāvanā. Either you are not relating to it well or don't understand what it means to practise mettā. There always seems to be some reason why it's difficult to get you to practise properly. It's not enough to keep repeating, "May all beings be well and happy." The practice is something quite different.

Widen your practice by contemplating the lives of spiritually advanced people. None of us are able to fully appreciate the Buddha's mettā. What we can do is read in the suttas about his daily routine, the many high qualities of his person, and recognize that his actions always had the background of mettā. It's obvious that his day-to-day life was based in mettā and that is something we are definitely able to contemplate. It's not beyond us. Looking at those many occasions where the Buddha's mettā is really seen we get used to developing our own mettā and it's easier for us to practise mettā.

Entering the attainment of Great Compassion, a jhāna based on karuṇā, was one of the Buddha's daily activities. After emerging from this state, he surveyed the world for beings whose positive spiritual qualities had come to some stability, fruition, and would benefit from instruction. Conditions were ripe for these beings to develop spiritually in the Dhamma, take refuge in the Triple Gem, attain a path knowledge, or gain arahatship. And every day the Buddha saw a number of beings that had the potential to progress. He visited those beings and taught them.

Some recipients of the Buddha's teachings lived hundreds of kilometers away from him. Aṅgulimāla lived far away and yet came within the Buddha's gaze one morning. Conditions were right for Aṅgulimāla. The Buddha travelled to Aṅgulimāla and taught him. Let's imagine that the Buddha and I are today residing at Jetavana ārāma and you are in Canada. It's possible you fall within the sphere of the Buddha's gaze because conditions for progress are suitable for you on this day. And it could be that I, even though living close to the Buddha, do not fall within his gaze because conditions are not quite right for me today.

Many of the people who lived near the Buddha were never seen as recipients. Cunda was a butcher of pigs and lived just behind the wall of Jetavana ārāma. He was a

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<sup>4</sup> Theragatha 18

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neighbour to the Buddha. And yet, when the Buddha surveyed the world, he not once perceived Cunda as someone who had the potential to benefit from teachings. When we contemplate the life of the Buddha, we clearly see his mettā as well as karuṇā. We look at his actions and examine our lives. When we train alongside a lifestyle of mettā, it then works out.

There are lots of ways to go about training in mettā. Mental actions are not enough; we must also engage in bodily and verbal actions of mettā. A few days ago you washed your clothes and hung them out to dry. Harry stays in the kuṭi next to yours. You and Harry don't get along all that well. Harry, however, is training in mettā. When it started to rain, Harry took your clothes off the line and placed them out of harm's way on a chair on your veranda. Taking your washing off the line is a bodily action of mettā. When Harry acts in this caring way, his enmity towards you is reduced.

### *It's hard to help those that I don't get along with.*

Very few people are willing to help anyone that they dislike. Some of your neighbours probably ignored your clothes, "I'll let David's clothes get wet. Whatever happens to them is none of my business."

Though Harry often disturbs you by talking with friends in his kuṭi, you best not tell Harry that his conversations are disruptive. If you talk to Harry in an effort to rectify the situation, get him to be quieter, then something could go wrong and your mettā will be undermined. Your verbal actions of mettā at those times require remaining silent and not expressing displeasure.

Train your senses in the way of mettā. Is anger arising in the use of them? If so, when and how does it arise? I am not talking about hate. Anger includes dislike. Be aware of any irritation. Train your eye in mettā. Get used to seeing others such as Harry with friendly eyes and not angry eyes. Train your ears in kindness. Listen carefully to what people say, including adversaries, without generating any aversion. And when you practise for long enough, before speaking and acting, you will automatically examine what you are about to say and do. And you'll have the same mettā towards others regardless of whether you're with them or not.

Sitting in the meditation hall is not enough. A tightness and rigidity develop if you exclusively practise manasikāra, and there is a hidden dislike in the tightness. Look at yourself honestly when you go to the dining hall for your meals and you'll see this tightness going along with annoyance. There is a correlation between the number of people having their meals in the dining hall and the number of times you get irritated. When the number of people in the hall increases, the number of times you get irritated increases. You have to train yourself not to accept this negative state of mind. Instead train your mind to be luminous in the experience of relating to people. An open mind for everyone puts an end to dislike, annoyance, and irritation.

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Each person has a different way of behaving in the dining hall. Some sit in large groups and serve themselves. Some sit in rows and are served food by others. Some make noises while eating. Others are quiet. Some may tell a noisy person to be quiet while eating. Every person has his and her own particular habits of eating. No one's ways of eating are the same. The people who eat quietly may knock a cup or utensil against their plates. When habits of people are displayed in the hall, notice any little conflicts in your mind.

I was sharing a meal one day with Sumathipāla Na Himi and an elderly monk. The elderly monk had no restraint when eating. Though he was quite old, he was junior to me in rains and I told him bluntly to eat more discreetly. Sumathipāla Na Himi said, "Don't speak to him in that way. Don't even think in that way." I then realized it was me who was wrong. I should have talked to the elderly monk later in private and not while we were eating with others. Another monk told me, "You have a duty, as soon as you see a fault, at that moment, to point out the fault to your fellow monk." However, it's possible that the mettā and karuṇā may not arise at the time of pointing out a fault.

Sumathipāla Na Himi taught me a great deal about mettā, but I fell short in learning all he could teach on mettā. I may have succeeded in learning fifty percent of what he had to teach or it could be only twenty-five percent. For example, when I accused a man of stealing money, Sumathipāla Na Himi took the thief's side. He always took the wrongdoer's side. I had to hear from my teacher how it was me who was in the wrong with my behaviour. It's not that the man did not steal the money. Sumathipāla Na Himi somehow knew that the man had stolen money and later talked with the man about it.

Whether the man was a thief or not wasn't the issue. The issue was that I reacted to the man's actions with anger. Since I related to the thief in a negative way, then mettā could not and did not arise. My thinking was wrong. My thoughts over the years have oftentimes been lacking in mettā and thus my interactions with many people all too often lacked in mettā. We must always base our bodily and verbal actions on a mind state of mettā; otherwise the mettā may not arise during challenging incidents. It's difficult for us to be like that at all times. Even now I find it difficult to develop such a state.

When I first ordained as a novice, I naively assumed that all monks living in hermitages were virtuous and pure. I quickly discovered that is not the case. I have seen a good deal as a monk. A fully ordained monk, only one month after my ordination, took me along on outings to collect medicinal plants for him because fully ordained monks are not allowed to cut plants and novice monks are allowed to do so. On these outings he spoke on rubbish that was inappropriate for monks. He took me far away from the hermitage in order to encourage me in private to do things that I shouldn't actually do. I got to know what it is to tell tall tales and lie. I had never

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experienced anyone lying at home. I wasn't used to associating with such coarse people.

I told Sumathipāla Na Himi about my experience. I told him, "The monk's life is not for me. I shouldn't be in robes with people like this. I get pains in my stomach when I see him even from afar. I better go home." My teacher said, "You need to start mettā-bhāvanā." Every day I practised mettā-bhāvanā but it seemed impossible. It wasn't working out well. I simply couldn't get into mettā. After one very tough and unpleasant month of practising mettā, I told Sumathipāla Na Himi that I wanted to quit the practice. He said, "You must continue with the mettā practice." Even hearing the word mettā gave me a headache and made me nauseous. I wanted to vomit. My teacher instructed, "You have to stop every other practice and only do this mettā practice."

After six months a hint of mettā started to develop and from then on the practice went more smoothly. My negative reactions towards the coarse monk who tried to lead me astray did not arise anymore. The pains in my stomach passed away. Conflicting types of contact were no longer there in the heart. The aversion was really absent. One day when I was sitting in meditation, he sat down beside me and there was absolutely no reaction in my mind. I realized what is mettā on that day.

*I also have negative opinions of others and pains in my stomach when I meet them.*

The practice of mettā is difficult. Mettā is very difficult and takes considerable time to develop properly. I trained hard with Sumathipāla Na Himi for six months to get going on the practice. Mettā cannot be developed easily or quickly. We gradually, little by little, train ourselves in mettā and improve.

The mental factor of sati comes along with mettā and that means no reacting with domanassa or abhijjā. There is no differentiating between people when sati is present. You currently dislike this person and like that person. He is my adversary and she is my intimate. These differences diminish as the practice develops. Eventually all differences between people disappear, altogether stop, and the mind arrives at equanimity. If sati is not arising together with mettā, the practice isn't working out effectively.

Note, I'm not talking about the liberation of mind based on mettā, mettā-ceto-vimutti. The liberation of mind based on mettā, though similar, is a different process.

With each individual person we meet, different mental factors arise in our minds. We all have various negative and positive ideas about the many people we know. Whenever we meet these people, the perceptions formed in the past influence how we relate to them in the present. For example, my perceptions of you arise when we meet. Since we have had disagreements about my teachings, the perception of you as argumentative immediately arises along with my seeing of you. Many people told me that you are kind to them. The perception of you as someone who is kind may arise

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when we meet. Straightaway upon seeing you, I relate to you in these same ways. My state of mind is together with those mental factors of dosa and lobha. Whether my perceptions of you are negative or positive, I relate to you along with these same negative or positive perceptions.

In contrast, if I am training successfully in mettā, I am looking differently at you when we meet; my perceptions of you based on our past experiences are no longer arising. Perceptions of you as argumentative or kind are absent. All negative and positive views stop when mettā is practised well. Let's say, and this is only an example, Harry has a very negative perception of you and tells me some terrible things about you. Without mettā I relate to Harry along with his negative perceptions of you. This process of differentiating ceases with mettā. Harry's negative perception of you doesn't arise for me when I am with Harry, nor does his negative perception of you arise when I am with you. All this differentiating between people ceases at high levels of mettā.

### *Please explain.*

We train in mettā along with meeting people. In the following example, I dislike you, am impartial to Kithsiri and like Harry. This is only an example. I am practising mettā as it should be practised when you and I meet. That means no other external objects impede or come into my mind while I'm focusing on you. I'm not thinking of Harry who is sitting near us. No other people enter my mind. Kithsiri is also close by. For a moment, I forgot Kithsiri's name. It's in that way that no one else enters the mind of someone who is practising mettā. No thoughts of others are in the mind. Of the sixty people who are at the centre today, there is only be the object called David in the mind when we meet. The mind does not go towards any external object. I have a direct mettā mind towards you.

I decide to change the object of my mind from you to Kithsiri. I have an impartial attitude towards Kithsiri. I neither dislike nor like Kithsiri. He is a neutral person. I finish with David as the object of the mind and take Kithsiri as the object. And from that moment, I have a direct mettā mind towards Kithsiri. It's only him who remains in the mind as an object. My attention is established on Kithsiri. No thoughts of David enter the mind at all. It's as if you were never in my mind.

Next, I want to do the practice of mettā towards Harry who is a liked person. I decide to change the object of my mind from Kithsiri to Harry. At this point in time only Harry is in the mind and no one else. I was first thinking of you and then Kithsiri and now Harry. David and Kithsiri do not now exist at all. This switching from one person to the next happens instantaneously.

And for the mind, all three people are equal. There is no differentiating between a disliked, neutral or liked person. All bear equal weight in the mind. I then take another person as the object of my mind and the three people that were previously in the mind are completely forgotten. Only that new person is there in the mind. Meditators that

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no longer distinguish between people in this way have attained a very high state of samādhi. For those with a path knowledge, it is called liberation of mind based on mettā, mettā-ceto-vimutti.

What do you have to say?

***I'm far from seeing everyone as equal. How to reduce my conflicts with people?***

Don't take conflicts inside. Whatever it is that goes wrong, we generally project towards the outside, "They are at fault. Not me." We think what is going wrong sits with other people. We blame others for problems. What's going wrong is not outside with other people. Conflicts are inside us. Train your mind away from the habit of looking outwards. Don't accept projecting, as best you can.

In order for there to be conflicts, there always has to be another person. You help care for the beautiful roses here at our centre. Visitors quite often damage the rose bushes when they carelessly help themselves to some roses and this is a big problem for you. You're relating to people and objects incorrectly, holding onto them. Strong winds recently destroyed many rose bushes and you had no issue with that. A rose bush is gone. That is all we thought when it was the wind that wrecked them. We know that what we have grown are roses and roses are susceptible to damage. The potential is there for breakage. Against natural forces, there can't be any conflicts arising in our minds.

You own a mobile phone. Because you relate to it as stable, permanent and yours, there is disappointment when it is damaged. I also use a mobile phone. But I do not hold onto it. I'm not thinking of it as stable nor as mine. So if this phone happens to break, I have no suffering. Only you suffer when your phone breaks. When we relate to anything, any person or object at all, with the sign of me and mine in it and without mettā, there will always be problems.

***I'll try to do better.***

Monks develop strong mettā by going on piṇḍpāta in the poorest districts. If you like, I can relate some stories.

***Absolutely. Thank you.***

There's a lot of poverty in tea estates. They have their own caste and are seen by some as inferior members of the social order. A monk must have a firm sense of mind and a degree of mettā already established to go on piṇḍpāta to the homes of tea estate workers. Otherwise, it's not possible to go there. And before starting out, the monk must make a clear determination that he will accept whatever is offered in these poor areas.

Children defecate in the drainage ditches on tea estates because water flowing in drains carries away their feces. If the children saw me approaching while emptying



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their bowels, they immediately ran away to get some food. They didn't stop to wash their hands before handling the food and placing it in my bowl. I'm on piṇḍpāta and have to eat this food. It takes a long time to get used to this. The food offered by tea estate families is often spoiled and smells bad. They sometimes mix together leftovers from other households. Their rotis can be eaten; this other mixed food seems impossible to eat. It's all stuck together. It is always sticky because it is partially decomposed. It's very difficult for the first few days of piṇḍpāta to eat tea estate food. On some days I washed the rice and kept it for a bit before eating. I eventually got used to eating this kind of food.

There are good stories from the Buddha's time. Mahā Kassapa once met a leper while he was on piṇḍpāta.<sup>5</sup> The leper put food into Mahā Kassapa's bowl and one of the leper's fingers also fell into the bowl. Mahā Kasapa simply removed the finger and ate the food. Imagine the level of mettā that had to be there in order to eat the leper's food.

I also met children in the tea estates who were on their way to school. They wanted to give some of their lunch to me. What to do? I was on piṇḍpāta and accepted what these poor children gave. Wherever I was, I received whatever anyone offered. Some of my wealthy supporters opposed going on piṇḍpāta in tea estates, "It's an insult to us that you go for dāna to these disgraceful places." When practising mettā and karuṇā at a level more than what is normally found in society, we meet opposition. That's the way it is.

Pabba means a section or part. Pabbajjā means a part has been won over; a partial victory. After going on piṇḍpāta for some time, a monk realizes he is able to accept and eat food from anybody. He recognizes that his pattern of life has changed and that he is no longer living the life he led at home. This different pattern consumes his mind. Someone who can accept food, whether it is offered by a king, a tea estate worker or whomever, is a true homeless person and has genuinely entered the ordained life. He embodies the qualities of the Saṅgha ~ Suppaṭipanno, Ujuppaṭipanno, Ñāyappaṭipanno, Sāmīcipaṭipanno. It takes more than a robe and a shaved head to win this victory. I am these days living more like a householder than a monk. Many, many people care for me. I'm back at home now. The homeless life is over. My pabbajjā is finished.

Please don't misunderstand the following story. When I was in charge of the old Kanduboda meditation centre, some foreign and local Sri Lankan monks approached me with their need of a place to live. I knew of a northerly aranya with roughly eighty caves where monks had lived since ancient times. Some twenty of the caves were livable and occupied by a small number of local monks. Most of the caves were unlivable and in need of repairs. I organized with lay supporters from Colombo to renovate several caves. The monks who were in search of a place to live, including a

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<sup>5</sup> Theragatha 18

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Tamil man, moved into these renovated caves and were well supported. They went on piṇḍpāta together. The original monks in residence started wishing for the same generous support given to the newly arrived monks. A bit of unpleasantness arose between the two groups. I asked the group of newly arrived monks to leave that place because of this tension.

Athdalagala is a remote forest monastery. To the extremely poor people living around there, I said, “If you don’t mind us being here and supporting us, we will move to this location.” The local villagers were all too happy to consent. They built temporary shelters out of branches and coconut fronds and other types of leaves. They covered the ground with fronds for seating. These villagers had no experience whatsoever with monastic activities or making offerings. At one dāna, villagers carried glasses of king coconut water with their fingers in the water. The coconut water offered to me was special; it had some of the coconut kernel. That was only given to me and not given to the other monks at this dāna.

I drank the water and realized that what I had thought to be kernel was snot from somebody’s nose. At the time of drinking the water with snot, no vyāpāda or any negative feeling arose. And no aversion has ever arisen, even up till today, in my mind regarding what I drank that day. My mind has not been affected in that way. There never has been any repulsion and that is the result of having gone on piṇḍpāta in poverty-stricken areas. If I had not trained myself earlier, it would have been difficult to handle that situation.

There are opportunities every day for us to bring out our mettā and karuṇā. In the period when I was meditating with Sumathipāla Na Himi at the old Kanduboda centre, a worker served meditators a cup of gruel and a piece of sweet jaggery in the mornings. One morning I noticed a small lizard in my mouth while drinking the gruel. It must have fallen into the gruel and drowned. I didn’t, however, tell the meditator sitting next to me not to drink the gruel. No one is deliberately putting a lizard in the gruel.

Green leaf sambol was sometimes served with dānas at the old centre. At one dāna, a bright red leech was crawling about in the sambol served to me. This large leech looked like a chili had come alive! There were many leeches on this land at that time. I picked the leech up with a piece of paper and tucked it under my cushion and continued with eating the dāna. Venerable Ñāṇānārama asked repeatedly during the dāna, “What did you hide under your cushion?” All the senior monks were present at the dāna ~ Sumathipāla Na Himi, Venerable Sīvalī and others. I couldn’t say there was a live leech in the food. Still, even after the meal, Venerable Ñāṇānārama was asking over and over, “What did you hide?” These are minor issues.

When training in these incidents, other positive qualities, such as patience and forbearance, develop at the same time. Just as trees grow together with their bark, branches, leaves and roots, good things come along with the training in mettā and

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karuṇā. Separate from mettā and karuṇā, associated wholesome qualities do not grow. You, of course, would have loudly announced to everyone, “Look! There’s a big leech in the food!”

Manike gave a fine dāna for our centre today. I have been invited to dānas in India, England, Czech Republic, Austria, and Australia. When I lived at Lanka Vipassanā in Colombo I used to go to extravagant dānas. They’d send a luxury vehicle to take me to their immense residences and provided all kinds of food. I was called for dānas by the president as well as the prime minister. And yet, of all the dānas I attended as a monk one dāna was on a much higher level than dānas given by anyone else. This special dāna makes me the happiest when I remember it and a form of samādhi arises.

### *When was this?*

This was in the early 1960s when I lived at the Aran Kale hermitage. A poor grandmother came to the hermitage one day and invited monks for a dāna. The people offering dānas usually want a number of monks to attend. Only very few monks at Aran Kale actually wanted to attend dānas at the homes of poor people, which was a problem for the abbot of Aran Kale. He had no one to send to the grandmother’s home. I said, “I will attend this dāna.” As soon as word got round that I would attend, two other monks also offered to attend.

The grandmother had by some means managed to arrange a vehicle. The driver picked us up at Aran Kale at 9:30 am. I was almost ashamed that this poor elderly woman got a vehicle for us because getting a vehicle in the 1960s was no easy task. I told the driver, “Don’t take any money from the elderly woman. I will arrange for a supporter from Aran Kale to pay for your services.” The driver said, “No need for money. I will drive you there free of charge.”

The three of us took our bowls and set out for the dāna. It was raining heavily and the roads were muddy. We came to a small creek that had flooded its banks. The driver could not cross the creek. We had to get out of the vehicle and walk. The water in the creek was up to our knees. It continued to rain and rain. Our robes got soaked and muddy as we made our way to the grandmother’s home. And because the driver could not take us all the way and it was quite a distance to walk, we arrived at her home around 2:30 in the afternoon.

The grandmother lived in a small wattle and daub mud hut that was in the middle of a muddy field. When these two monks saw how lowly she lived, they scolded me for getting them involved in this dāna. The front door was only one metre in height. We had to stoop down to enter her home. The floor of compressed clay was wet and covered with freshly applied cow dung. The dung had not properly dried. The grandmother had set out coconut fronds for our seats. I sat in the middle because one monk was a little bit senior to me in ordination and the other was two years my junior.

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My fellow monks reminded me that it was against the rules of the vinaya to eat in the afternoon. They said it was way too late to eat. For the merits of the grandmother, I did not think about abstaining from eating in the afternoon and accepted the food she had prepared. Most families use metal pots and pans for cooking and metal bowls for serving. Buffalo curd is sold in terracotta pots. The grandmother had cooked a few curries in buffalo curd pots and served the curries from these same pots. I ate her meal and gave her anumodanā.

After finishing the dāna, we set off for the hermitage. These two monks complained all the way back to Aran Kale. They complained about the difficulty of the trip. They criticized the grandmother who gave the dāna. They scolded me, “Don’t accept dānas like this in the future. Or if you do, then don’t call us to join you.” These two monks would still be complaining, I think, if they were alive today. They are both dead.

The second factor of the eightfold path is sammā-saṅkappa and that means nekkhamma, avyāpāda, and avihimsā. It means mettā and karuṇā. My fellow monks were annoyed with the grandmother, the dāna and me. They found the whole experience upsetting. Where was their nekkhamma? True nekkhamma is to be found in situations like this grandmother’s dāna. We need to go to such places where we can help, and examine the nature of our actions. Are they based in sammā-saṅkappa? On these occasions, that’s what we need to examine and not be thinking about our own comfort and ease.

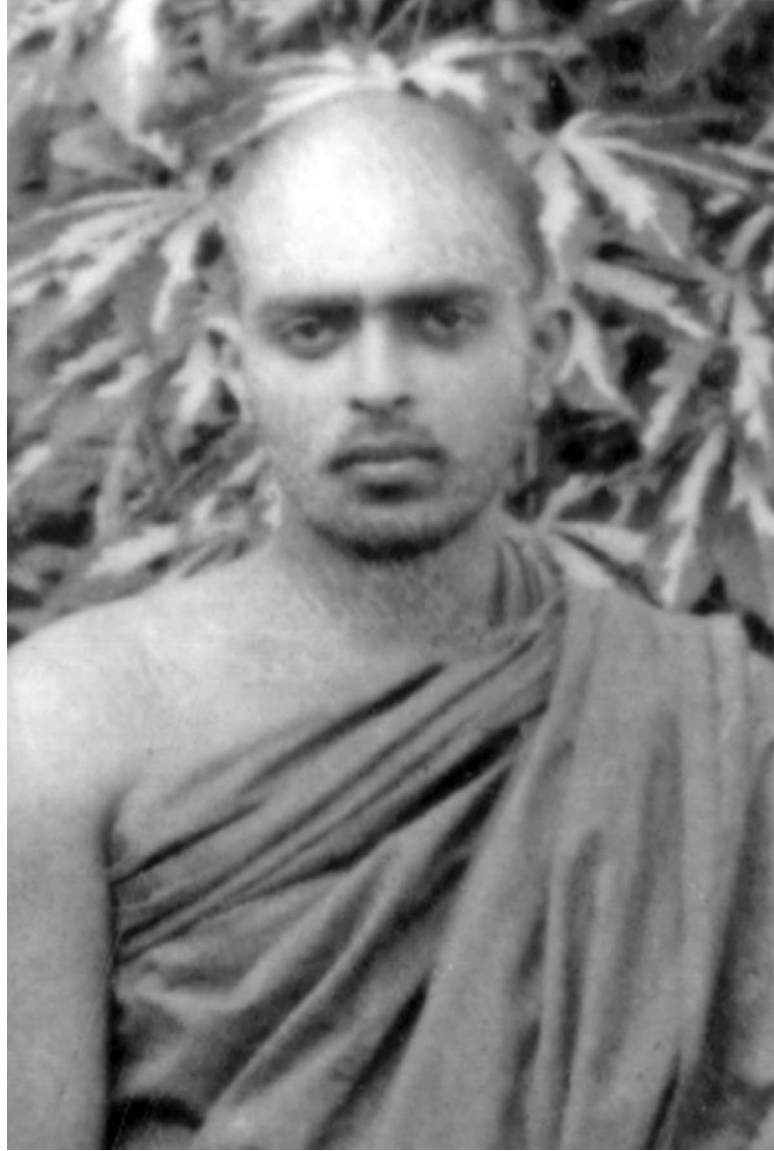
The story of the grandmother’s dāna shows an opportunity to practise mettā and karuṇā. I’m glad that I ate the grandmother’s meal and gave her merit. I feel happy, even now, when I remember this dāna and imagine what it took for her to offer it to us. A dāna like the one at this grandmother’s home is good enough for me. And not only good enough, that is truly a great dāna!

We’ll stop for today.

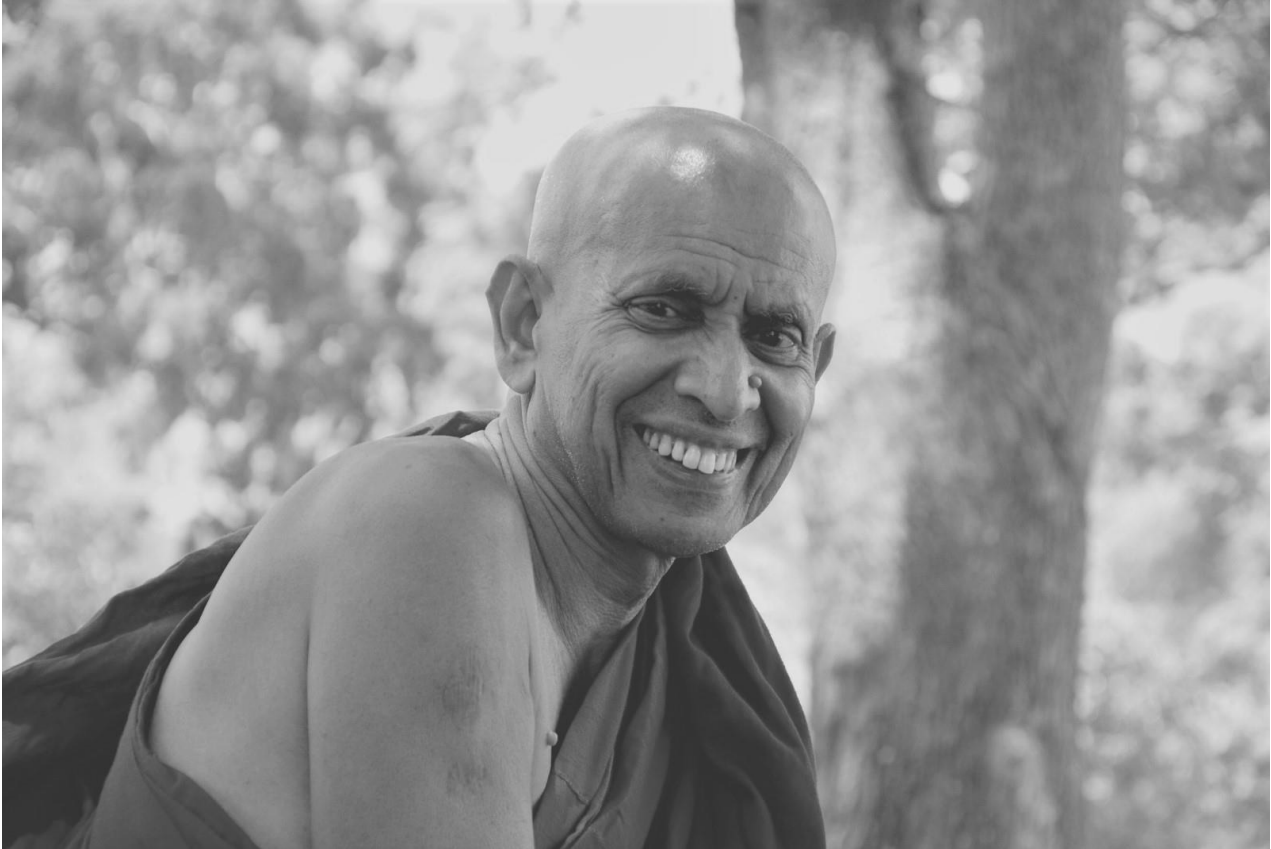
May you be protected by the Triple Gem.

March 1st and April 22nd 2020

Sumathipāla Na Himi Senasun Aranya



Venerable Sivali



Pemasiri Thera

*Monks, even if bandits were to carve you up savagely, limb by limb, with a two-handled saw, he among you who let his heart get angered even at that would not be doing my bidding. Even then you should train yourselves: 'Our minds will be unaffected and we will say no evil words. We will remain sympathetic, with a mind of good will, and with no inner hate. We will keep pervading these people with an awareness imbued with good will and, beginning with them, we will keep pervading the all-encompassing world with an awareness imbued with good will — abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will.' That's how you should train yourselves.*

Kakacūpama Sutta<sup>6</sup>

## Chapter 3 Insanity

**David:** *The Buddha advised practising mettā for others, even if the other person is cutting us to pieces with a saw. Is this at all possible? Is this attitude even practical?*

**Pemasiri Thera:** I can only tell you that I'm incapable of practising mettā to that degree. I scolded a worker yesterday. The Buddha was encouraging monks to practise forbearance, endurance, and patience, which come along automatically with mettā. Somehow we must try having this attitude of mettā for others as much as possible.

*It would be remarkable if I could have mettā for a person who is cutting me to pieces.*

Rarely do we find anyone who is practising to that degree. Those who are differ from most in society. They have many good qualities and are exceptionally virtuous.

*If I see two people fighting, is it okay to try to stop them?*

If you can stop a fight, then okay. Go ahead and stop it. However, expect to get a few blows, scolded or beaten up. You might start by training in ways of conflict resolution and then apply these skills when a situation calls for it. At least expect the unexpected from adversaries.

Getting angry is a form of insanity, but most everyone thinks in the opposite way. They judge those who are free of anger to be the crazy ones. People can only follow the way they know. Because we live in societies that are crazy, we ourselves have some level of craziness. I have met so very few people who are free of anger. There was one local man who was free of anger. He had trained himself to the level of mettā found in the Kakacūpama Sutta. Leading a life counter to the norms of society, the epitome of forbearance and mettā, he was seen as a lunatic by many people. He was a rarity.

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<sup>6</sup> MN 21

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I first met him when I was a teenager and still in school; though even then I was regularly visiting the original Kanduboda Meditation Centre to meditate. The front gate to the centre was on the main road. One day there was a monk standing near the gate when I arrived at the centre. I thought, “This is good. He probably wants to go somewhere and I can provide him with a bus ticket.” In those days going from Kanduboda to Colombo cost seventy-five cents, and cost twenty-five cents to go to Gampaha. I was ready to provide the bus fare for the monk. I asked, “Where are you going Venerable?” He answered, “Forward.”

*Ha!*

So I was thinking “How can I buy his ticket if I only know he’s going forward?” That was not a suitable answer and I gave up on the idea of buying the ticket. The monk did not get on a bus. I later saw him meditating at the centre. Both of us were meditating. There is a general rule, if someone is meditating, you avoid talking with them. Since the rule was not to talk, I didn’t try to speak with the monk that I had seen at the front gate.

After six days of my own practice, I went home and this was mainly because it was kite flying season. I went home to fly my kite. Sumathipāla Na Himi happened to be passing through my village and saw me beside the road flying a kite. He stopped and asked, “Is this why you went home? It is for this reason that you left our centre in such a hurry? To fly a kite? Aren’t you someone who is meditating?” I then gave up kite flying and returned to Kanduboda to meditate.

This monk was still at Kanduboda when I returned there, and he was talking with someone. Because he was talking and not meditating, I felt it alright to ask him a few questions, “What is your name Venerable?” He answered, “Dukkha-Satya. The truth of suffering.” I thought, “This monk is a bit off. Before he had only said he was going forward and now he doesn’t even tell me his proper name.”

A few days after that, an affluent looking group of people arrived in a luxury vehicle. They were his family and announced, “You have done what you wanted. You got your temporary ordination. This is enough now. According to the time, you need to disrobe and come home with us today.” His family persuaded him to leave. They physically helped him remove the robe and even gave him a hand getting into the car.

He returned to Kanduboda as often as possible and I had the opportunity to get to know him directly on these visits. He was an older man and I was a young boy. We became friends and he talked with me in a normal way, not like before, like a crazy person. Dukkha-Satya! Aiyō... When I asked him about something, he answered in an ordinary way. His lay name was Mr. Adikari and he owned a grocery store.

Mr. Adikari’s son, if memory serves, told me the following story. A water buffalo had been tied to a tree in front of Mr. Adikari’s grocery store. Mr. Adikari was concerned for the buffalo because it had no water to drink. He felt sorry for the animal.



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Mr. Adikari provided the buffalo with water. He also noticed that the buffalo was standing in the sun. It had no shade. Sympathizing that the heat of the sun was difficult for the animal, that it'd be better off in another spot, he untied the buffalo and started moving it towards a location where there was some shade.

Another man also had an interest in this water buffalo. He was angry that its owner neglected to provide water and shade. He was upset, and very drunk, and wanted to beat up the owner of the buffalo. He was waiting to punish the owner.

Mr. Adikari was not the owner of the buffalo but when Mr. Adikari untied the animal, and started moving it, out of the kindness of his heart, the other man assumed Mr. Adikari to be the owner and viciously attacked him. The attacker was not the owner of the water buffalo. He mistook Mr. Adikari for the owner. Mr Adikari's eyebrow was split. A black eye. His ear was cut and the eardrum likely ruptured. His head was swollen and bloody.

Mr. Adikari was badly injured and yet said little to anyone. He did not get mad at his attacker or even complain to him. Mr. Adikari hardly reacted to the beating in any way at all. The attacker recognized his blunder and asked for forgiveness. Mr. Adikari sympathized with the man, "Everyone makes mistakes. There is no need for you to think too much about this. It's over."

Mr. Adikari went home. His son was shocked to see his father in such a state, "What happened? Did you fall down?" Mr. Adikari didn't answer his son. He remained silent. He didn't say a word. The son was angry and called the police. The police officer asked, "Who beat you up? What's going on here?" Mr. Adikari again remained silent. Not answering. The police officer was insistent with his questioning.

At last Mr. Adikari broke his silence, "If a coconut falls on somebody's head, do you arrest the coconut and put it in jail?" The officer said, "We're not talking about coconuts. I am asking who beat you up." Mr. Adikari replied, "Now listen to me. If a bolt of lightning strikes down a man, are you going to charge the sky?" The officer was annoyed with this counter questioning. He said to Mr. Adikari's son, "Your father is a mental case and I'm not about to waste my time with him. There's no point in my talking with your father. You will have to sort this out for yourself. I am going back to my duties at the station."

I asked Mr. Adikari about this incident on one of his visits to Kanduboda. By that time, I had ordained. Mr. Adikari was a layman on that visit. He told me, "This man was waiting to get revenge on the owner of the water buffalo. He was angry and attacked me, simple as that." I asked Mr. Adikari if he also got angry. He said, "What would have been the use of my getting angry just because this other man got angry? Why should I act in the same way? I did not want to go down to his level. That attack happened. That's all I needed to consider. There was a beating and I didn't want to make any more of it. And if I had told others what actually happened that day, they

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would have got upset and there would have been no compassion or patience at work there.”

This is a good example of someone who was really training in mettā. Mr. Adikari was certainly practising mettā, and not only to people who were kind to him. He practised mettā to people who were quite nasty to him.

Mr. Adikari ordained three times over the years, the last time with me when I was abbot of Lanka Vipassanā in Colombo. I asked him when the ordination ceremony was complete, “Mr. Adikari, what monk name will we give you?” He answered, “Bhante, give me any name you like.” I said, “Okay. You will be known as Venerable Saddhāsāra.” Mr. Adikari said, “That’s a bit useless.” I asked, “Then what name do you have in mind? What’s your idea?” He said, “A good name is Dukkha-Satya. The truth of suffering is a good name.”

If someone takes temporary ordination, their monastic name needn’t be registered anywhere. However, when someone gets ordained for life, registration with the government is required. Mr. Adikari was taking the robes for life and not temporarily. I told him, “A monastic name has to be registered, and cannot be an anecdotal name such as Dukkha-Satya. I can’t register you as Dukkha-Satya. It has to be a proper name.” He said, “You can register me with whatever name you like, but I have already registered with the Buddha’s dispensation.”

### *What did he mean?*

Mr. Adikari meant taking refuge in the Triple Gem and saw the government ID card and certificate to be superfluous. I registered him with the government as Venerable Saddhāsāra. He wasn’t much concerned with having any particular name and kept referring to himself as Dukkha-Satya. He identified with Dukkha-Satya, which was his experience in life. His practice centred on mettā and karuṇā. He already had saddhā.

I heard Venerable Saddhāsāra, Dukkha-Satya, made his way to Kandy and was later admitted to hospital. After that I did not get any definite news of him. I asked here and there because I truly wanted to know. Even his sons and daughters did not know what happened to him. I made numerous enquiries but didn’t get any firm answers. He may have died of cancer. It was impossible to find him. That is the story of Mr. Adikari. He was a person full of karuṇā. I never saw him angry. I never saw any anger.

### *Great story.*

It’s beneficial to practise mettā and karuṇā and it is possible to practise mettā and karuṇā. And even if you don’t manage to practise them one hundred percent, it’s nonetheless important to develop them as much as possible.

Many yogis denigrate mettā-bhāvanā. They frown on mettā as an inferior form of meditation, “Mettā is nothing! We are vipassanā meditators.” This is a pretentious

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display. They want to do vipassanā and only vipassanā. It's possible to practise at a beginner's level of meditation with this attitude. It's impossible to get into vipassanā properly with this approach. Although saying they are true vipassanā meditators, they are often getting into conflicts with objects, ārammanas. They're easily disturbed by undesirable sights and sounds and lose their balance of mind. It is difficult to associate with yogis who dismiss mettā. The yogis who practise vipassanā deeply recognize the value of mettā and have no trouble with sights and sounds.

We live in the sensual world, kāma-loka, and interact with a great variety of sense objects. That is the nature of the sensual world. Objects of our senses, including sounds, are in abundance here. There are two kinds of sounds ~ those that humans produce and those occurring naturally, not produced by humans. Nonetheless, both are sounds. People are talking. The words they speak are sounds and we experience those sounds. This is what happens in this world of ours. It is not our task to get upset and fight with sounds. None of the objects of the sensual world are there for conflicts. They are just there.

*I find it easy being alone in the forest. It's so peaceful.*

It's impossible to avoid people. Making an effort to listen carefully to what others say will help you endure them. If there is friction in your mind, that is definitely not good. You should at least practise mettā as a countermeasure and then you might be able to bear up. And when meditating in the hall, just let sounds be and don't react to them. If you're trying to find a place without sounds, you would have to attain to the arūpa-loka. Over there, you can't apprehend objects too much. I think even in the Brahma-loka there are in a way sounds.

You lived for awhile at Lanka Vipassanā in Colombo and must remember that behind its walls there was a metalwork shop and also nearby there was a school for children and a nightclub. During the day, we heard banging of metal from the shop and singing and beating of drums from the school. At night, it was the loud music and so forth coming from the nightclub. It was usually students and rich kids, the sons and daughters of politicians, who were partying at the club. They were very loud and getting into arguments. We heard the clinking of mugs and glasses. The kids sometimes threw bottles over the wall into the Lanka Vipassanā grounds.

One evening, some of the partyers at the club got into a big fight and I called the local Bambalapitiya police station. It was a wild night at the club. The police arrived. A member of parliament was involved in this fight. Nothing changed. The disturbances from the nightclub continued. So basically, day and night, Lanka Vipassanā was always a noisy place.

Bhante Vimalo from England used earplugs! He offered earplugs to me. I said, "I don't need them." Sounds need not be a problem. Even at Lanka Vipassanā, some people became quite good at meditating; they were practising mettā and karuṇā properly. When staying there, you weren't too bothered by these sounds and practised

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well enough. Mettā needs to be practised and there is a wide range of benefits in practising. Little by little, everything gets solved.

### *Can mettā really solve so many problems?*

Consider what Buddha says in the Mettā Sutta.<sup>7</sup> If a practitioner of mettā doesn't manage to attain arahatship, he or she, after passing away, will manage the lower result of birth in the Brahma-loka.

### *I don't know. This is more or less acceptable.*

Training in mettā softens coarse and crude habits, especially coarseness of mind. It is our job to resolve our bad habits. During my term as a teacher at the old Kanduboda meditation centre, I worked with a gentleman with an extremely high level of anger. He went once a year to Kanduboda for meditation. One year he arrived without his baby finger and I asked why. He told me that he was troubled by his wife's nagging and that one day he almost hit her. Because he didn't want to harm her and couldn't find another way to deal with his anger, instead of hitting her, he cut off part of his baby finger. His anger stopped, but he was missing a finger. His wife was fed up, finding it difficult to live with him, "Your anger is impossible. It's too much."

I did not turn him towards vipassanā. I gave instructions on the practice of mettā and told him to practise diligently. He applied himself very well to mettā-bhāvanā and changed quite a lot for the better. I joked, "The next time you lose your temper will you chop off another finger?" He said, "No! No!" He went home and was able to live calmly with his wife. They got along without any trouble, all as a result of applying himself to the practice of mettā. He still did occasionally get angry with his wife but he reduced and removed his anger through what he knew about mettā. They talked through their differences. Mettā must become part of our lives.

I had an angry temperament from the day of my birth and its level when I was a teenager was similar to this gentleman's level. Though I didn't cut off my finger, I was close to cutting somebody's throat. My anger was extreme. It was off the charts and out of control. Anger! Anger! ANGER! I was the topmost guy in anger. If by chance you had witnessed a show of my anger in my youth, you would have fainted out of fear.

Drunkards, mafia types, butchers ~ rough guys of all types avoided showing their faces when I was around because they were afraid of me. Even some murderers, who had been on death row and then pardoned and released from jail, when they heard my name, were uneasy. Most everyone tried to stay away because they feared what I might do. I was the Aṅgulimāla of my village. I had a reputation for violent outbursts and fighting.

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<sup>7</sup> AN 11.16

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My mother sometimes wept when I got into fights and I think she first started talking to me about these things when I was fourteen or fifteen. I was a difficult teenager. She took me aside and in private offered advice. And maybe around the age of sixteen I started to appreciate what she was talking about. While listening to her, someday or another, I got the message that I was doing something wrong.

I realized aggression and being mean to others was bad for me. For the first time in my life, I was understanding anger and began turning towards changing. Fortunately around this time I met Sumathipāla Na Himi and started meditating with him at Kanduboda. By putting forth a lot of effort, with a lot of difficulty, we succeeded in curtailing my anger and removing a good deal of it.

To give my anger a number, if it was one hundred percent before meditating, Sumathipāla Na Himi helped bring it down by ninety-eight percent. I was left with two percent of my former anger. Because of my experience with Sumathipāla Na Himi, I know anyone can reduce their anger, but they really need to apply themselves in the training. Mother was relieved.

I eventually ordained with Sumathipāla Na Himi and associated closely with him for decades. He taught me how to practise properly and how to teach meditation. Webu Sayadaw and Mahasi Sayadaw visited Kanduboda during that period. I primarily practised the Mahasi method of meditation. My practice and teaching skills strengthened under Sumathipāla Na Himi's guidance and in due course he allowed me to go on my own as a meditation teacher. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1969, Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw bestowed a diploma with photo stating I was a qualified teacher in the Mahasi tradition.

I was doing my own practice of meditation as conscientiously as possible. Whatever time available after helping with the yogis, I dedicated to my own practice. If someone was shouting or arguing nearby, it did not affect me at all. Arguments were similar to the wind blowing. We don't care about the wind blowing. It was the same for me. I had radically changed from being a hostile young man.

There were in those days frequent events for monks living at the Kanduboda centre. They went for almsgivings in the homes of laypeople and recited protective chants. I wasn't participating in any of those activities. I didn't attend any type of social gathering and didn't even go to the funerals of my own relations. My mother had told family, "Don't inform him of deaths because he will be expected to come for the funerals. Don't bother him." Like that, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and friends died without my knowledge.

I was so calm, peaceful and full of mettā and good at instructing yogis. And many monks and lay people got the idea into their heads that I must be an anāgāmī, a very high station. Though I didn't consider myself to be an anāgāmī, others talked about me as an anāgāmī simply because of the way I was conducting myself. From what I

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came to learn, when someone claims to be an anāgāmī or arahat, I now find it difficult to accept that claim.

One fine day, there was a pinkamma at Kanduboda to celebrate Sumathipāla Na Himi's birthday. I have told you this story before.<sup>8</sup> It's a cautionary tale that is useful for all meditators. Thousands of people attended that special celebration. I was aloof, stayed in my kuṭi, and carried on with the meditation in my usual way. I had no intention of participating in the festivities.

Dozens of people were wandering all throughout the grounds of the meditation centre. I overheard someone near my kuṭi talking about me, "Why isn't Bhante Pemasiri attending the ceremony? He should be attending the pinkamma." Then two senior monks dropped by, "Sumathipāla Na Himi's students lit oil lamps for him. We think you should light a lamp." And so, I thought it best to attend the celebration and light a lamp. Sumathipāla Na Himi did not visit me, or say anything directly to me.

I lit a few lamps for my teacher and went for a walk. A young man from the village had set up a cart near the gate of the centre and was selling chick peas and other snacks to the people who were coming for this pinkamma. I happened to be in that area when an older man, who was one of the main supporters of the centre and an organizer of the pinkamma, told the vendor, "You can't have your cart here. Go away!"

A big argument ensued. The vendor and the older man yelled at each other. They were both really angry. The vendor jabbed a fork into the man's face, just above the eyebrow. He almost hit one of the man's eyes. Two groups of local punks, seven or eight young men, were hanging around. They were interested in how this was playing out and looking for an excuse to get into a fight. A punk from one group also told the vendor to stop selling snacks and get lost. These two groups took opposing sides in the dispute between the vendor and the older man and soon everything escalated. The fight got much bigger.

I didn't have any issues with anyone. It was similar to seeing small kids in a shouting match. You don't get upset or drawn into their arguments because it's childish and foolish. The lay people who were in the area, however, wanted this clash brought to an end. Somebody thought of me, "Venerable Pemasiri. You know the villagers and this man. You can intervene and stop the fight. Please stop the fight."

In an ever so peaceful way I said to these men, "This almsgiving is a meritorious event in honour of Sumathipāla Na Himi. We are celebrating his life. It's not proper to be fighting in a meditation centre. This is not on the agenda." I repeatedly appealed to them for calm and silence. I was on the level of giving a Dhamma talk, but this Dhamma talk was not working out. It wasn't having any effect on anyone. No one was listening and they continued fighting.

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<sup>8</sup> Beautiful Flame: Seven Classes with Pemasiri Thera; chapter one

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My anāgāmīship went by the wayside. It was completely destroyed. In my youth while living as a lay person at home, I learned different martial arts. I removed my upper robe, set it aside, and took on both groups of punks. I jumped at these men, and hit them with martial arts moves. It didn't take long at all. They were all lying on the ground in a few minutes and that was the end of the fight. Everything happened so quickly they didn't know what had taken place. Just a few well-placed hits here and there and the punks were in a heap. There was no argument. No shouting. Everyone was silent. The villagers left for home and the lay people returned inside the meditation centre. Since I had ended the fight, some witnesses thanked and praised me, "A good job!"

I was only doing vipassanā at that time. Sumathipāla Na Himi heard about the fight, "Your vipassanā is of no use. You're going nowhere with it. And this so-called anāgāmīship is also of no use. Let go of vipassanā, start again with mettā-bhāvanā and from now on do nothing else besides mettā. You needn't concern yourself with Dhamma talks or work for the centre. You don't need to do anything else whatsoever. Just continuously practise mettā-bhāvanā for at least one to two years."

### *Is this why you're sceptical when somebody says they're an anāgāmī?*

Strong meditators can suppress anger and other defilements for years and years. They appear to be advanced. But if not overcome, anger flares up when suitable conditions are encountered.<sup>9</sup>

I began. I started practising mettā. After a few months I really thought this was enough of mettā and that I wasn't making any more progress. Sumathipāla Na Himi said, "This is not enough mettā-bhāvanā. Don't start any other practice." I regularly asked my teacher about doing other practices and he'd always say the same. Eventually, after a little bit over a year, I got to the point where he recognized that I was succeeding in my practice.

Sumathipāla Na Himi never ever told me to stop mettā and start a different practice. From then on I practised only mettā with him and nothing else. I listened to my teacher and that helped a lot. Somehow mettā has been for the most part working out. Sumathipāla Na Himi and I managed to reduce my anger by ninety-eight percent of what it once was. And yet, that clearly leaves two percent. I still endure anger but it is short-lived and sharp.

### *What triggers your anger?*

Wrong views and serious offenders every so often trigger anger. For example, only yesterday there was an incident while I was returning from a trip up north with driver Nishantha. We were passing through a town and stopped at a pedestrian crosswalk to allow three young men, boys really, to walk across a road. Two of them simply walked across the road. They crossed at a normal pace.

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<sup>9</sup> For more on this topic, refer to Mango Tree Wisdom; chapter 1

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The third boy took his time. Slowly. Slowly. Oh so very leisurely, putting on a big show, he was making his way across the road. He was even dragging his feet. Nishantha is stopped at the pedestrian crosswalk. He's patiently waiting for the third boy to cross the road. Nishantha light-heartedly taps his horn to encourage the third boy to speed up, to go a little bit faster. And as a result, this boy stops directly in front of our vehicle and challenges Nishantha, "Hey, what are you going to do?"

This boy's behaviour activated my anger. The old angry guy surfaced and I jumped out of our vehicle. I wasn't one hundred percent angry. I got out of our vehicle and spoke firmly to him, "Son, what happened to you? What is this gangster style? What is wrong with you?" I confronted him. The boy got scared and ran off. This boy's behaviour is a sickness and needs to be addressed. If his ways are not corrected, he will continue to trouble others.

Of course the interaction between drivers and pedestrians is a double edged sword. The conduct of drivers is one edge. The conduct of pedestrians is the other edge. Drivers need to observe the rules of the road and that includes respecting crosswalks. They must stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and wait for them to cross the roads. And pedestrians must also observe the rules of the road. They need to be taught the proper use of crosswalks and persuaded to use them.

A pedestrian needs to remember, "I should always be aware of vehicles on the road and cross roads whenever possible at crosswalks. These crosswalks are only for crossing roads safely and are not places for playing games." The pedestrians who cross roads wherever or fool around at crosswalks create a lot of problems for drivers and other pedestrians. In these situations, such as this one with Nishantha and the immature boy, I don't display the tender face that you might expect. I had to show tough love.

Many Buddhists have a wrong understanding of mettā, that they should at all costs be soft-spoken and good-natured and never confront anyone. And yet, you can find in the suttas many accounts of the Buddha being blunt and direct with people. For example, he routinely used quite strong language to get through to Brahmans who chose to debate him. When strength and toughness were needed, the Buddha was strong and tough. This idea of the Buddha always being lenient and gentle is incorrect and not the Buddha we find in the suttas. He had great mettā and karuṇā but not in the way we generally understand mettā and karuṇā.

The demon Ālavaka tried to bully the Buddha.<sup>10</sup> He challenged the Buddha, "Get out!" And the Buddha went out. Then said, "Come in!" And the Buddha went in. The Buddha at first went along with the demon's commands. Three times Ālavaka told the Buddha to get out and then come in, and three times the Buddha went out and re-entered. When Ālavaka demanded the Buddha get out a fourth time, the Buddha said firmly, "This is enough! Do whatever you like but this is enough."

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<sup>10</sup> Sutta Nipata 1:10



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Ālavaka said, “I will ask you a question. If you can’t answer, I am going to split your heart and throw your body across the Ganges.” The Buddha said, “Okay. Ask your question. However, I don’t see anyone who can do the things you say you can do.” The Buddha answered Ālavaka’s questions and of course the demon became a devoted disciple of the Buddha. My point is that the Buddha was strong, tough and direct with the demon. He confronted the demon, “This is enough!”

You’ll find in the Dhammapada<sup>11</sup> the Buddha scolding a negligent monk, “You are fattening up like a bull for slaughter and aren’t developing one iota of wisdom.” The monk was lazy and useless and avoided practising bhāvanā. Although his body was growing, his understanding was not. Ranchers fatten up their cattle as much possible and then people enjoy eating these cattle! If I spoke to you in the way the Buddha spoke to people, you would surely run away. Others would argue with me or might even physically strike back. You need to realize that good yogis don’t run away when their teachers speak bluntly to them.

A man recently came to our centre and I immediately perceived that he had an extremely coarse mind. I could see he was carrying a lot of emotional baggage and wasn’t good yogi material at that time. Such things happen. I asked him to speak with Vinīta Hamuduru. In contrast, the people who are good yogi material are receptive to softening their minds through training in mettā and patience, as the Buddha advised in the Kakacūpama Sutta. They work at reducing and removing their coarseness. And those that become really good yogis successfully free their minds of all coarseness. So, if you want to become a good yogi, look at yourself honestly when confronted by people who behave badly. Because they are coarse, you can see your own coarseness and appreciate that you have a bit more to remove.

*I certainly do.*

This should be enough for today. May you be protected by the Triple Gem.

December 22nd 2019

Sumathipāla Na Himi Senasun Aranya

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<sup>11</sup> Verse 152



Pemasiri Thera, Vinīta Hamuduru and David

*In five ways, young householder, a child should minister to his parents as the East:  
(i) Having supported me I shall support them, (ii) I shall do their duties, (iii) I shall  
keep the family tradition, (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance, (v)  
furthermore I shall offer alms in honor of my departed relatives.*

Sigalovada Sutta<sup>12</sup>

## Chapter 4 On Sharing Merits

**David:** *Why is it okay to share merits with my deceased relatives but not okay to send mettā to them? Why shouldn't I include them in my mettā practice?*

This is a misunderstanding. Your question stems from reading too many books by too many different authors.

**Randhir:** *I'm also interested in this topic.*

David, you shouldn't be thinking that you don't have mettā for your deceased relatives because your sharing of merits with them is an act of mettā.

We perform wholesome actions. We speak wholesome words. We think wholesome thoughts. In these ways we are being kind to ourselves and kind to others, and we can share this. All this is meritorious, generates merit, and in the scheme of things, we are supposed to share these merits with other people and other beings. In fact, we share whether the beings are known or unknown, beloved or not, hostile or neutral and so on. The sharing of merits is up to us and one of the wholesome activities we do and are encouraged to do, if we are following the path of Dhamma. After performing good deeds in body, speech and mind, our sharing of the merits of these activities is an act of mettā. Vinīta Hamuduru recently transferred merits to his dead grandmother and this was an act of mettā. You also have shared merits with departed members of your family in this way.

In the beginning, early stages of a formal mettā practice, teachers tell yogis to use stock phrases, such as, "May this type of being in such and such place and in this situation be well and happy." The reason teachers don't include deceased relatives in this formula is because most yogis don't know what happened to their relatives who died. Did the relative take birth again in the human realm? Or birth as some deva? Maybe he or she ended up in the brahma realm or even a lower realm. Since yogis are unaware of where these beings found themselves, yogis cannot focus properly on these beings. And that's why yogis aren't to include the deceased in formal mettā practice.

David, do you know where your mother took birth after her death in this human realm. Where is she now?

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<sup>12</sup> DN 31

## On Sharing Merits

**David:** *I don't know.*

We often don't know where our relatives have taken rebirth. But supposing after meditating, you have some knowledge of where your mother took rebirth, that new bhava. Well then, you could go there mentally, direct your thoughts in that direction, and focus on this being who used to be your mother. Then it would be okay for you to be wishing that this being be well and happy. No problem there.

**David:** *Yes, I agree!*

Say you are able to go where the being, who was your mother, is living and truly help her, by explaining what you know about practising meditation and the Dhamma and so on. And this being, the former mother, benefits from what you express. Are you going to tell this being that you were motivated by mettā? Or by what?

**David:** *By mettā.*

Once again, the motivation to help is mettā. And why shouldn't you extend this form of mettā to departed relatives?

The Buddha himself had mettā for deceased relatives. For example, his birth mother, Queen Mahāmāyā, died seven days after his birth and she took rebirth as the heavenly being of great power Māyādevaputta. During the seventh rains retreat after his attainment of enlightenment, the Buddha visited Māyādevaputta in a heavenly realm to teach liberating Dhamma. Obviously the Buddha's giving of teachings to the deva who used to be his mother was motivated by mettā. Seeing that the Buddha had mettā for his deceased mother, this story about not doing mettā for our deceased relatives must be a misinterpretation of Dhamma.

My idea, I feel strongly that there is something called bana, an official and formal Dhamma talk, and that all of us need to recognize the differences between these formal teachings and the practicalities of life, as it were, and make good connections between these two. Formal teachings on Dhamma are also found in countless books. The practicalities of life are separate and unique for each person. To connect formal teachings to what's practical in our lives, we must make concessions when interpreting and implementing the teachings. When Dhamma is interpreted too narrowly, people find that it has no connection to their lives, are turned off and might get out of the Dhamma altogether.

For example, Randhir, you relinquished your good works in order to look after your mother and provide her with the best possible care. You always looked after your mother, very lovingly and devotedly, throughout her life and particularly in the last few years before she passed away. Randhir, do you love your mother even though she has passed away? Do you still love your mother?

**Randhir:** *Yes.*

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Even though she's dead, you don't say, "Oh, I don't love my mother. I stopped loving her because she is dead." So, we can make the case that Randhir's feelings for his mother remain unchanged even though she is no longer physically with him in this human realm. He continues to send mettā towards her and that is okay. We have to train in having that same kind of mind.

Randhir and David, and this applies to both of you, train your minds by recalling the great many things your mothers taught you as children and then later on as teenagers, and how your mothers helped you all throughout your lives. You can surely remember episodes when your mothers admonished you, "Don't do this. Don't do that." What your mothers said to you when you were small youngsters was different from what she said when you were adolescents, and different again as adults. Your mothers must have repeatedly offered some suggestions on what you could or should do in this or that circumstance. You learnt a lot from your mothers and were influenced significantly by them. And remember that what they taught you in the past is still useful to you today. It was the basis of the good qualities that you are maintaining and developing.

I often contemplate my mother's good advice and what she did for me. And I am still actually even following her advice, even though she passed away long ago. She had a big influence on so many aspects of my life. Both my parents had a major and positive impact on me. For instance, I learned practical Dhamma from them at home before, long before, I ordained. Mother and father always encouraged generosity, kindness, and giving and helping, performing good deeds and having a balanced state of mind, and on and on it goes. And not only did my parents encourage these wholesome qualities, they lived these qualities and I learned by following their example.

Now, within the Buddhist framework, parents and children are supposed to behave in certain ways. The Buddha in the Sigalovada Sutta<sup>13</sup> tells parents to lovingly look after their children, to teach them, and help them get on with their lives.<sup>14</sup> And he tells children to reciprocate by loving and supporting their parents.<sup>15</sup>

Buddhist parents generally have five expectations of their children, and the expectation that tops the list for most parents is that the wealth of the family will not be squandered. No parent likes it when their children throw away the family's wealth. They expect children to maintain and increase the wealth that has been accumulated. The second expectation is that children treat their maternal and paternal relatives well, as they themselves have done. Their third expectation is to continue good family traditions. For example, if the parents observe the five precepts, which they know are

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<sup>13</sup> DN 31

<sup>14</sup> DN 31; "In these five ways, the parents show their compassion to their children: (i) They restrain them from evil, (ii) they encourage them to do good, (iii) they train them for a profession, (iv) they arrange a suitable marriage, (v) at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

<sup>15</sup> DN 31; "In five ways, a child should minister to his parents: (i) Having supported me I shall support them, (ii) I shall do their duties, (iii) I shall keep the family tradition, (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance, (v) furthermore I shall offer alms in honor of my departed relatives.

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so valuable for everyone, they would like their children to continue observing the precepts. Parents want their children to keep good traditions alive because doing so is in their children's best interests. The children will benefit immensely.

The parents' fourth expectation is that children care for them when they are no longer able to care for themselves. When the children were small and unable to fend for themselves, the parents lavished their own love and affection and care and resources on them. Accordingly, in their old age and sickness, parents appreciate loving care from their children. The fifth expectation is that after their deaths, at least in the Buddha's Dispensation, the children will conduct the funeral rites appropriately and perform wholesome actions in their memory, such as almsgivings at appropriate times, and that the children share merits with them in their afterlives. So, these are five expectations that parents have of their children.

Of the five, the really important one is the looking after parents when they are unwell and frail, especially when old. And then there is the continuing of good family traditions, and organizing the almsgivings and performing funeral rites. You can see how nicely the Buddha explained these expectations.

David, somehow you've managed to get the wrong idea about the practice of mettā. This is mettā.

**David:** *I'm listening.*

My mother got seriously ill when I was in charge of the old Kanduboda meditation centre. The chief monk Sumathipāla Na Himi had passed away a year or two before, and around the same time the second most senior monk, Venerable Sīvalī, had also died. The monks who were disciples of Sumathipāla Na Himi and Venerable Sīvalī left Kanduboda when their teachers died and went to other monasteries, and this left even fewer people to help run the centre.

Sumathipāla Na Himi was a real chief monk and Venerable Sīvalī was in charge of the foreign monks and yogis. After they died, all of their responsibilities came to me. Everything that was hanging on their shoulders was put onto my shoulders. It was a busy centre. Local and foreign monks and yogis were constantly coming and going. I had to be a real chief monk.

**David:** *What is a real chief monk?*

A real chief monk has a heavy workload and a myriad of duties. In that period when I was chief monk at the old Kanduboda meditation centre, my workload was much heavier than my workload here at our new centre; my duties there were also much more difficult. Especially now during this period of COVID, our new centre is empty in comparison to the old centre at that time. Being the chief monk at the old centre was difficult. I had a lot of responsibilities and lots of work, an amazing amount of work.

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And yet, when my mother got sick, despite all my responsibilities, burdens, I visited her every day. I would leave the meditation centre in the evening, go to her home, speak with her, and then return to the centre at about 2 or 3 in the morning. That was the time that I could spend with her, talking with her, consoling her, showing loving care. Even as a monk, I did not neglect those duties towards my mother who had given my birth to me, had cared for me, nourished me. She always had my back, as it were.

Some monks say, “Now that I’m ordained, my mother should manage her own life. It’s no longer my duty.” I say once again, when my mother fell ill, even though I was an ordained monk with many responsibilities, I did not fail in my duties towards her.

**David:** *Is sharing merits with my deceased parents of any use?*

It’s perplexing that you ask this question because sharing of merits is one of the basic practices, a cornerstone practice, that we are supposed to do in our lives. It’s unfortunate that this error has crept into your views.

I have undertaken almsgivings for my deceased parents and shared the merits from those almsgivings with them. I had the idea in my mind that I was undertaking the almsgivings for their benefit. I thought of my parents while I did this. Oftentimes while performing a good deed, saying something wholesome, thinking skilful thoughts, whatever wholesome activity it is that I am doing, I am at the same time thinking of my parents and sharing the merits with them. Maybe just a few thoughts are briefly coming to mind, “May my mother and father also share in the merits of this kusala-kamma.”

I don’t have any issue with anyone acting in similar ways because the practice of sharing merits is good, really good, for everyone. If the beings that used to be our mothers and fathers can benefit, get anything out of the merits accumulated by performing good actions, then let those beings get it. And you know, those beings may indeed benefit, if they are in a suitable place and are able to connect with those thoughts and energy. They may benefit. So, this is all very good.

But even if it is otherwise, that the beings that used to be our parents don’t directly benefit from our sharing merits with them, we nonetheless benefit. Our parents cared for us in many ways. When sharing merits with them, we are recalling their compassion and goodness and are expressing our gratitude for everything they did for us. Our thoughts are elevated when remembering mothers and fathers and showing gratitude. It is for our benefit to think of them when we’re doing something wholesome. Don’t exclude them; don’t keep them out of it.

Similarly, we can bring to mind the good qualities of the numerous elders who helped in making us the kind of people we are today, and whom we see no more. They lovingly provided guidance and support throughout our lives. From time to time, I recall my excellent Dhamma teachers and my teachers in normal schools. You can

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think about your teachers of vipassanā. Many people taught us at different stages in our lives. We can remember their kindness and compassion, what we learned from them, and then share the merits of our wholesome kammās with them. I regularly think of my teachers, and not only Dhamma teachers, but also teachers in Sunday school and regular grade school.

Some of my grade school teachers were so devoted that they held afterschool classes for the children who were weak in their studies. These teachers spent extra time helping the children who had problems understanding. They tried to bring these kids up to the level required in the curriculum. There were no fees for these classes. There was no charge. These teachers were not paid. They were really teaching out of mettā and compassion, and teaching only because of their love for the children.

**David:** *You've done a lot for me.*

You have the need and want for a teaching.

Whenever my teachers happen to come to mind, I think of their dedication and high quality and might devote some of my good actions to them. There is nothing wrong in that. No one can find fault with contemplating the goodness of teachers, and if you choose to share merits with your teachers, that would also be very good.

And every so often I also remember lay supporters who have passed on. I think about their wholesome deeds and I'm uplifted by those thoughts. I am joyful when bringing to mind the good things we did together. And I will continue from time to time to think of these loving and compassionate lay supporters and I'll continue sharing merits with them. This is all motivated by mettā. When I recall all those who are no longer with me, whether they were my parents, teachers or lay supporters, I choose to share merits with them. You cannot say that this is wrong. No one can say so.

To once again address your original question, the sharing of merits with those who have departed is an act of loving-kindness. It's all mettā. And if you know exactly where these beings are because you have developed your mind, you can connect with those beings directly. And if not, that's alright. You recall the good qualities of the deceased and then transfer and share merits with them, unreservedly and unconditionally.

We need not go for complicated and formal Dhamma, that is too much available in Sinhala. This type of simple and practical Dhamma is good to learn.

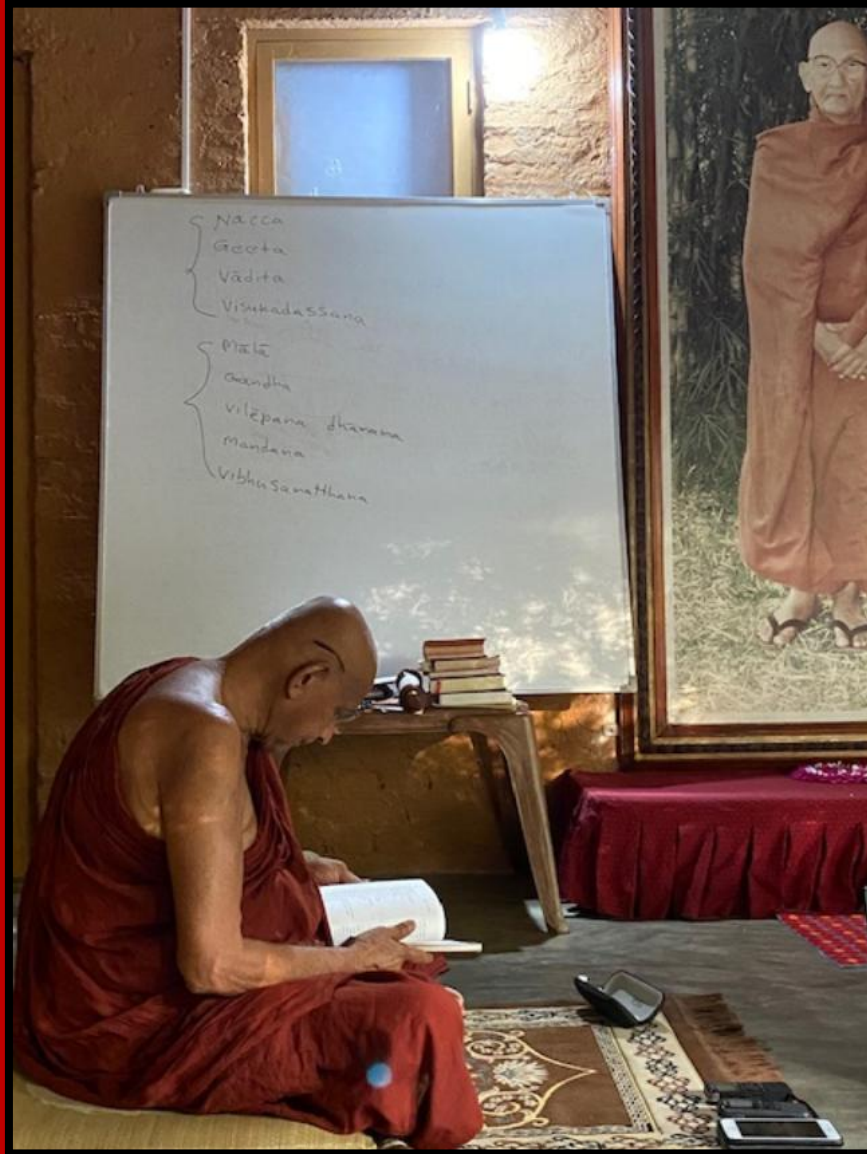
May you be protected by the Triple Gem.

May 9th 2022

Sumathipāla Na Himi Senasun Aranya







Pemasiri Thera