

*KARAṆĪYA*

*METTA-SUTTA*

***The Message of Peace  
and  
Universal Friendliness***



With an Introduction, Translation,  
and  
Explanations Based on Pāḷi Sources



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*With an Introduction, Translation,  
and  
Explanations Based on Pāḷi Sources*

*by*

*Bhikkhu Ñāṇadassana*



## THIS IS A GIFT OF DHAMMA

‘*Sabbadānaṃ Dhammadānaṃ jināti*’  
(The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts)  
THE BUDDHA

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March, 2010





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# *INTRODUCTION*





**K**araṇīya *Metta-sutta* lies at the heart of the Buddha's beautiful ideal of peace, friendliness, amity, and goodwill and guides us towards leading a serene life. When practised diligently – whether one stands, walks, sits, or lies down – its intrinsic power enriches and empowers oneself so as to overcome day-to-day problems in life.

It is a popular discourse, in the form of a poem, and one of the best known and most cited and recited in Theravāda Buddhist countries. It is found in the Pāli Canon's *Khuddakapāṭha* and *Sutta Nipāta* with the title *Metta-sutta* (The Discourse on Friendliness). However, in order to distinguish it from other 'Metta-suttas' in the Pāli Canon, this particular *Metta-sutta* is traditionally known as *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* because its first verse commences with the Pāli word *Karaṇīya* (one should act thus).

The objective of this Sutta is to give the message and guidance of how one can attain and live in peace. Hence, it opens with the statement:

1. He who is skillful in his welfare, and wishes to attain that **state of Peace** should act thus:

*Karaṇīyam'atthakusale-  
na, yaṇ taṇ santañ pa-  
daṇ abhisamecca:*

The state of peace referred to here is the inner peace which, if one develops it within, one can live at peace with oneself and consequently with others. Hence, inner peace leads to outer peace. And when properly practised and cultivated, it gives freedom from oppressive thoughts, emotions, anxiety, stress, tension, conflict, hostility and discord or strife. Thus it creates tranquility, serenity, calm, contentment, amity and harmony, and gradually culminates in that perfect peace, *nibbāna*: the complete freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion – the root causes of disharmony or suffering (*dukkha*).

### Gradual Way of Practice

**P**ace is not a commodity. Peace is something that can be acquired only with skill and hard work, and endures when it is rightly practised.

Ten verses in length, the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* advocates the gradual way of practice (how one should act – *karaṇīya*) for the attainment of that state of Peace. The practice comprises three trainings:

- ❖ Virtue (*sīla*) – as the preliminary practice (*pubbabhāga-paṭipadā*), is the training in the noble qualities and ethics beginning with being capable of practice (*sakko*), upright (*ujū*), etc. specified in verses 1 to 3.

- ❖ Concentration (*samādhi*) – as serenity meditation (*samatha-bhāvanā*), is the training in the development of friendliness (*mettā*) to the apex of universal or unlimited friendliness, specified in verses 3 to 9.
- ❖ Wisdom (*paññā*) – as insight meditation (*vipassanā*), is the training in the development of insight beginning with not holding to wrong view, etc. specified in verse 10.

**Virtue** (*sīla*) is skilful conduct which, when well practised, leads progressively to a blameless life-style, to non-remorse, to gladdening, to joy, to tranquility, to happiness, to concentration, to peace, and is conducive to enlightenment – nibbāna.<sup>1</sup>

Conversely, unskilful conduct by body, speech, or thought, is what usually makes oneself unhappy. One then has no mental peace. Such conduct is similar to a mental illness and is graver than physical illness.<sup>2</sup> It is not conducive to a sane and peaceful co-existence or inter-personal communication. Hence, one should at all times endeavour to abstain from it.

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<sup>1</sup> See Paṭisambhidāmagga, *Mahāvagga*, *Sīlamayañña-nid-deso*, Ps i. 46; and also Aṅguttara-nikāya, *Dasaka-nipāta*, *1<sup>st</sup> Sutta*, A v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Aṅguttara-nikāya, *Catukka-nipāta*, *Indriya-vagga*, *Roga-sutta*, A ii. 142.



**Concentration** (*samādhi*) refers here to the development of friendliness (*mettā*) – the escape and mental freedom from animosity, hostility, ill-feeling, antagonism, enmity, malice, resentment, bitterness, antipathy, anger, or ill-will (*vyāpāda*) towards others. It is a meditation that does away with negativity and pacifies the mind. Hence it is said:

“For this is the escape from ill-will (*vyāpāda*), that is to say, the freedom of mind by friendliness (*mettā cetovimutti*).”<sup>3</sup>

The Pāli word *mettā* is variously rendered into English as “kindness”, “loving-kindness”, “benevolence”, “goodwill”, “amity” etc. It comes from *mitta* (Skt. *mitra*) “friend”, and actually means “the disposition of a friend” (*mittassa bhāvo*)<sup>4</sup>, that is, “friendliness”. It is characterized by kind interest, friendly goodwill, and wish for the welfare and happiness (*hita-ajjhāsaya*) of all, as the second half of verse 3 states:

3. May all beings be well and safe. May they be happy.	<i>Sukhino’va khemino hontu, sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā.</i>
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*Mettā* is thus essentially an altruistic attitude and forms the central theme in *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta*.

<sup>3</sup> See Dīgha-nikāya, *Saṅgīti-sutta*, D iii. 248.

<sup>4</sup> See *Khuddakapāṭha* Commentary: *Metta-sutta*.

According to *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification), “The characteristic of *mettā* is the notion of welfare (*hit’ākāra*) towards others. Its function is to promote welfare. Its manifestation is the disappearance of annoyance (*āghāta*). Its proximate cause is seeing the pleasant or positive aspect in beings (*manāpa-bhāva*). It succeeds when it makes ill-will subside, and it fails when it produces selfish affection.”<sup>5</sup>

*Mettā* signifies also less obvious qualities such as showing patience, tolerance, inoffensiveness, concord, and non-violence. It also denotes receptivity, appreciation, broadmindedness, open-mindedness, and charity.

**Wisdom** (*paññā*) refers here to the development of insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-paññā*) or right vision (*dassana*) which is the decisive liberating practice in the culmination of that supramundane and perfect peace, *nibbāna*. Its aim is the com-

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<sup>5</sup> See *Visuddhimagga*, *Brahmavihāra-niddeso*, *Pakiṇṇakathā*, or ‘The Path of Purification’, p. 344.

Here, selfish affection (*sineha*) or lust (*rāga*) is regarded as the near enemy of *mettā* since it is able to corrupt owing to its similarity, like a enemy masquerading as a friend. In order not to fail, *mettā* should be well protected from it. On the other hand, ill-will which is dissimilar to the similar selfish affection, is the far enemy of *mettā*. So *mettā* must be practised without fear of that. For it is not possible to practise *mettā* and feel ill-will or anger simultaneously. – See ‘The Path of Purification’, p. 345.

plete freedom firstly from wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*), as the last verse states:

10. And not holding to [wrong] view, being virtuous, endowed with right vision ( <i>dassana</i> ).	10. <i>Diṭṭhiñca anupagamma, sīlavā, dassanena sampanno.</i>
--	--

Wrong view refers here specifically to the mistaken view of an ego or personality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is the wrong view which everywhere and at all times has mostly deluded, misled and divided mankind. Complete freedom from it ensures a life full of peace – free from inner and outer conflict.

### Self-improvement

Thus, if rightly put into practice, the powerful guidance in virtue (*sīla*), friendliness (*mettā*), and wisdom (*paññā*) contained in the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* will enable one to:

- ❖ Eliminate bad habits
- ❖ Improve one's character
- ❖ Be peaceful, calm and relaxed, and
- ❖ Understand oneself and those around oneself.

## The Background Story

**T**he Buddha expounded the *Karaṇīya Mettasutta* originally for the appeasement of dangers coming from deities (*devas*), but also

- ❖ for a peaceful co-existence with one's fellow men,
- ❖ for radiating goodwill towards all beings,
- ❖ for cultivating friendliness (*mettā*) as a meditation subject, and
- ❖ for using it as a basis for insight meditation (*vipassanā*).

The background story of the *Sutta* is, in brief, as follows:<sup>6</sup>

Five hundred monks living in Sāvatti (India) received meditation instructions from the Buddha. While searching for a suitable place to meditate they arrived at the foothills of the Himalayas

where they found an idyllic forest grove. Because the people in that area were very pious, they invited the monks to spend the three-months rain's retreat in that grove and they even built five hundred meditation huts for them.

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<sup>6</sup> The full story is found in *Khuddakapāṭha* and *Sutta Nipāta Commentaries* under the heading *Metta-sutta*, with some more details in *Dhammapada Commentary*, *Cittavagga*.

Thinking that there is no danger, the monks plunged into meditation with great effort. However, due to the excellence of the monks' virtue, the tree-deities who lived on tree-mansions felt their own excellence diminished. So, out of reverence for the meditating monks below, did not like to reside above them. Hence, they took their children, descended from their tree-mansions and began to roam aimlessly.

Nevertheless, roaming in this manner everyday was not convenient to the deities. Therefore, in order to make the monks leave, they created terrifying forms of demons and produced dreadful noises at night when the monks were meditating.<sup>7</sup>

Being harassed thus, the monks were unable to concentrate. Then their seniormost Elder told them, 'Friends, there are two kinds of rains' retreat laid down by the Buddha – the early and the late. Because it is not easy for us to stay here, let us go back to the Buddha.'

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<sup>7</sup> Rather than resorting to such devious and cruel methods, it would have been more appropriate for the deities to discuss the matter with the monks who, in the first instance, were unaware of their presence. This would have been the correct and upright manner of solving their problem. The monks would then certainly have granted permission for them to carry on their life comfortably in their tree-mansions. However, uprightness, it seems, was an ethical quality wanting in these deities.

All the monks then went back to the Buddha and related their frightful experience. The Buddha saw, through his supernormal power, that there is no better place for them and told them: ‘Monks, there is no other suitable residence for you. It is only by residing at the same place that you will attain the eradication of the mental taints (*āsavas*). Go back to the same grove and reside there! If you want to be free from the harassment caused by the deities, learn this protective Sutta (*paritta*) of Friendliness (*mettā*). This will be for your protection as well as for your meditation practice. Cultivate this meditation on friendliness repeatedly and those deities will not terrify you. They will definitely show you kindness.’

Then the Buddha recited the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta*, which the monks learned by heart and went back to the same grove and practised accordingly. The deities realizing that the monks were wishing for their well-being were charged with joy and warm feelings. Thus, they did not only serve and attend to them but also arranged full protection for them.

Enjoying peace, the monks used *mettā* meditation as a basis for insight meditation (*vipassanā*). Then, within the three-months rains’ retreat, they all attained the pinnacle of spiritual perfection, namely, Arahantship, by eradicating all mental taints.

## The Intrinsic Power of Mettā

**I** ndeed, such is the intrinsic power of *mettā* recommended in the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta*. If deities with miraculous powers cannot harass humans who recite and practice this *sutta*, how then can an ordinary human being devoid of such powers harass other humans who recite and practice it?

Even by merely reciting this *sutta*, people have experienced the peaceful effect it has on their mind, that is why it is so dear and popular.

Hence, whoever with firm faith will recite and practice this *sutta*, will not only arouse peace and safeguard himself in every possible way but will also prevent all those around him from doing harmful deeds, and will make spiritual progress that can be actually verified. No harm can ever befall a person who follows the path of *mettā* and peace.

Moreover, such a person will be able to experience these eleven blessings:

1. Sleep happily,
2. Wake happily,
3. Not see bad dreams,
4. Be dear to human beings,
5. Be dear to non-human beings,
6. Deities protect him,
7. No fire, poison or weapon can harm him,

8. His mind gets quickly concentrated,
9. The expression of his face is serene,
10. He dies unconfused; and
11. Even if he fails to attain higher states  
(*nibbāna*), he will at least be born in the  
Brahma world.

(Aṅguttara Nikāya, *Mettānisaṃsa-sutta*)



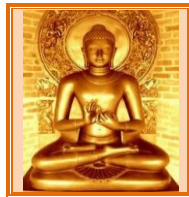




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**1. Karaṇīyam'atthakusalena  
Yaṇ taṇ santaṇ padaṇ abhisamecca:**

**Sakko ujū ca sūjū ca,  
Suvaco cassa mudu anatimānī.**

1. He who is skilful in his welfare,  
And wishes to attain that state of Peace  
Should act thus:

He should be capable [of practice],  
Upright and very upright,  
Easy to instruct, gentle, and not arrogant.

**2. Santussako ca subharo ca,  
Appakicco ca sallahukavutti,  
Santindriyo ca nipako ca,  
Appagabbho kulesu ananugiddho.**

2. Content and easy to support,  
With few duties, of simple lifestyle,  
With senses calmed, and prudent,  
Courteous, and not overly attached to families.

**3. Na ca khuddaṇ samācare kiñci,  
Yena viññū pare upavadeyyuṇ.**

**Sukhino'va khemino hontu,  
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā.**

3. And should not commit the slightest wrong  
For which wise men may rebuke him.

(And should meditate thus :)  
'May all beings be well and safe.  
May they be happy.'

*4. Ye keci pāṇabhūtatthi,  
Tasā vā thāvarā vā anavasesā,  
Dīghā vā ye mahantā vā,  
Majjhimā rassak'āṇukathulā.*

4. Whatever living beings there may be  
weak or strong – without exception –  
Long, large, or middle-sized,  
Short, small, or bulky;

*5. Diṭṭhā vā yeva adiṭṭhā,  
Ye ca dūre vasanti avidūre,  
Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā,  
Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā.*

5. Those seen or those unseen,  
Those dwelling far or near,  
Those born as well as those seeking rebirth –  
May all beings be happy.

*6. Na paro paraṇ nikubbetha,  
Nātimaññetha katthaci naṇ kañci.  
Byārosanā, paṭighasaññā,  
Nāññamaññassa dukkhamiccheyya.*

6. May no one deceive another,  
Nor despise anyone anywhere.  
In anger or ill-will  
May they not wish each other harm.

*7. Mātā yathā niyaṇ puttāṇ  
Āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe,  
Evampi sabbabhūtesu,  
Mānasaṇ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṇ.*

7. Just as a mother would protect  
Her only child with her life,  
Even so let one cultivate  
A boundless mind towards all beings.

*8. Mettañca sabbalokaṣmiṇ,  
Mānasaṇ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṇ;  
Uddhaṇ adho ca tiriyañca,  
Asambādhaṇ, averaṇ, asaṇattaṇ.*

8. Let one cultivate a boundless mind  
Of friendliness (*mettā*) for the entire world  
– above, below, and across–  
Unhindered, without hatred, without enmity.

*9. Tīṭṭhaṇ, caraṇ, nisinno vā,  
Sayāno vā, yāvatassa vigatamiddho,  
Etaṇ satīṇ adhiṭṭheyya,  
Brahmametaṇ vihāraṇ idhamāhu.*

9. Whether one stands, walks, sits  
Or lies down, as long as one is awake,  
One should sustain this mindfulness [of *mettā*].  
This is called here [in the Buddha's Teaching]  
The 'Divine Living'.

***10. Diṭṭhiñca anupaggamma, sīlavā,  
Dassanena sampanno,  
Kāmesu vineyya gedhaṇ,  
Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṇ punareṭi'ti.***

10. And not holding to [wrong] view,  
Being virtuous, endowed with right vision,  
And discarding desire for sensual pleasures,  
One surely never again will be reborn  
in a womb.



# *EXPLANATIONS*





**M**ost people acquainted with *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* like to recite it, sometimes without having access to the meaning of crucial words in it. Hence, the explanations given here are for those desirous of knowing the meaning, but also for those desirous of refreshing their knowledge.

These explanations are based on the *Khuddaka-pāṭha* and *Sutta-nipāta Commentaries* with further elaboration by the author including quotations and examples from other *Suttas*.

As mentioned in the Introduction, *Karaṇīya Metta-Sutta* gives the message and guidance of how one can attain and live in peace and opens with the verse:

1. He who is skilful in his welfare,  
And wishes to attain that state of Peace  
Should act thus:

The meaning of crucial words in this verse and the following ones is thus:

### **Skilful in his welfare (*attha-kusala*)**

Skilful in his welfare is the person who is diligent in doing meritorious and wholesome actions, such as observing virtue (*sīla*), in order to lead a blameless life. He further practises meditation in

order to remove his passions and mental defilements.

Conversely, he who is unskilful in his welfare and indulges in demeritorious, mischievous, and unwholesome actions defiles his mind. He is liable not only to accumulate conflict within himself, but also gets into conflict with others.

### *State of Peace (santaṇ padāṇ)*

The meaning of the ‘state of peace’ has been given in the Introduction, p. 9.

## CULTIVATION OF VIRTUE (SĪLA)

### *Preliminary Practice (Pubbabhāga-paṭipadā)*

**K** araṇīya Metta-sutta gives now the noble virtues to be cultivated as a preliminary practice to attain that state of Peace. These are extolled in verses 1-3 as:

- |              |                                |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Verse</i> | 1. To be capable [of practice] |
| 1            | 2. Upright                     |
|              | 3. Very upright                |
|              | 4. Easy to instruct            |
|              | 5. Gentle                      |
|              | 6. Not arrogant                |



7. Content
  8. Easy to support
  9. With few duties
  10. Of simple lifestyle
  11. With senses calmed
  12. Prudent
  13. Courteous
  14. Not overly attached to families
  15. And should not commit the slightest wrong for which wise men may rebuke him.
- Verse*  
2
- Verse*  
3

### 1. Capable [of practice] (*sakko*)

A capable person is one who, in order to attain that state of Peace, should be physically and mentally equipped and thus able to fulfill one's responsibilities, duties, and practices. Hence,

- ❖ keeping oneself healthy, fit, and free from sickness and affliction, makes one capable of bearing the strain of practice. Likewise,
- ❖ being energetic and not lazy in abandoning unwholesome actions (*akusala*) and in undertaking wholesome actions (*kusala*), makes one capable of cultivating and sustaining wholesome actions conducive to peace and well-being.

Good health and energy are generally two crucial factors for any achievement – secular or spiritual. He who has them is capable of executing many tasks, including that of striving for peace. In the *Bodhirāja-kumāra-Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*, they are enumerated as the two of the ‘five factors of striving’ (*padhāniy’āṅga*) – the other three being: faith in wholesomeness, honesty, and wisdom.

## 2. Upright (*ūjū*)

Even if one is capable of practice, by being healthy and energetic, one still should be upright, honest, truthful, sincere, not deceitful, not fraudulent, or hypocritical. One should show oneself to his fellow-men as one actually is, by giving up bodily, verbal, and mental cunningness or crookedness, and by not exhibiting qualities and virtues one does not actually possess.

Hence, by being upright in action, character and utterance, one becomes more considerate of others, does not cause them inconvenience, has a guiltless heart, free from dishonest deeds, and can thus lead a blameless, decent, and a peaceful life free of conflict, disapproval or reproach.

Such an upright person can be compared to a wheel with its rim, spokes and hub not crooked and faulty but flawless, and which, when set rolling, goes as far as its momentum carries it and

then stands upright and firm as if fixed on an axle.

Similarly, an upright and not crooked person can stand firm in his resolve to attain that state of Peace by abandoning crookedness, faults and flaws of his bodily, verbal and mental actions.

Conversely, a crooked, dishonest or devious person who twists and distorts facts, and is not transparent, may, in the short run, derive some satisfaction in doing so. In the long run, however, he is the loser.

He can be compared to a wheel with its rim, spokes and hub crooked, faulty and with flaws, which, when set rolling, goes for a short distance and then, twirling round and round, deviates from the road and falls to the ground.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, a crooked person will ultimately fall from that state of Peace by not abandoning crookedness, faults and flaws of his bodily, verbal and mental actions.

Hence, one should train himself: ‘I will abandon crookedness, faults and flaws in bodily, verbal and mental actions, and be upright.’

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<sup>8</sup> For the simile of the wheel, see *Āṅguttara Nikāya, Tikā-nipāta, Rathakāra (Sacetana) Sutta* – A iii. 15.

### 3. Very Upright (*sūjū*)

Since to be upright (*ūjū*) is a very important virtue, it is stressed upon in the *Karaṇīya Mettasutta* as ‘very upright’ (*sūjū*). The meaning is that one should not be satisfied by being upright occasionally, but should put repeated effort to be continuously so.

In order to be very upright or straightforward, one should:

- ❖ be always honest,
- ❖ abandon crookedness completely, and
- ❖ not accept gain and honour obtained through qualities one does not actually possess.

### 4. Easy to Instruct (*suvaṇṇa*)

Easy to instruct is one who accepts good advice and admonition of others with respect and puts it into practice in order to improve himself, enhance his good qualities and make progress so that he can reach a higher, better, or advanced stage in his character and life.

Good advice consists of a gentle, friendly and thoughtful counsel that enables one to avoid faults, flaws, oversights, or risks. Hence, it is beneficial to be willing to carry out the good advice and instruction of parents, teachers, relatives,

friends, elderly or virtuous people, or to follow the righteous laws and customs of a community or country. In this way, one can live in harmony, peace and friendliness with others and benefit oneself by learning things one could not have learnt if he were to be wilful, obstinate, stubborn, or headstrong.

To be wilful, etc. is called ‘difficult to instruct’ (*dubbaco*). Such a person has the habit of negatively reacting, taking up a hostile attitude and showing disrespect to the good advice of others, unwilling to change, being inflexible and perversely adhering to his own opinion in spite of reason. He can hardly be expected to make positive progress, but only create conflict within oneself and thus be far from that state of Peace.

Hence, the practice of being ‘easy to instruct’ (*suvaco*) is recommended in the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta*. It is even praised in the *Maṅgala Sutta* (the Discourse on Blessings), where *suvaccasatā* (the quality of being easy to instruct) is one of the highest blessings (*maṅgalam’uttama*), due to the fact that it causes faults, flaws and blemishes in one’s character to be abandoned and brings about a blessing to oneself and others.

### 5. Gentle (*mudu*)

A person who is gentle uses amicable speech. He abstains from harsh speech and speaks such

words that do not hurt others, are humane, pleasing to the ear, lovable, go to the heart, are polite, pleasant and agreeable to many. Hence, even according to the *Maṅgala Sutta*, ‘well spoken or good words’ (*subhāsītā vācā*) is one of the highest blessings (*maṅgalam’uttama*).

A gentle person is also friendly in his manner, which is not rough, rigid, or fierce, but free from harshness or sternness, and shows a clear and joyful face.

Therefore, being gentle helps to create a non-hostile and peaceful environment – for oneself and for others.

## 6. Not Arrogant (*an’atimānī*)

An arrogant person (*ati-mānī*) typically feels self-important and thus despises, disregards or discriminates others by arousing pride and conceit based on his:

- ❖ descent, race, or nationality (*jāti*)
- ❖ clan or ancestry (*gotta*)
- ❖ family or social status (*kolaputtiya*)
- ❖ beauty or colour (*vaṇṇa-pokkharatā*)
- ❖ youth (*yobbana*)
- ❖ wealth, gain, or economic status (*dhana*)
- ❖ education (*ajjhena*)
- ❖ work (*kammāyatana*)
- ❖ craft or talent (*sippa*)

- ❖ science (*vijja*)
- ❖ learning or erudition (*suta*)
- ❖ intelligence or intellect (*paṭibhāna*)
- ❖ religion (*āgamma*)
- ❖ virtue (*sīla*)
- ❖ honour (*sakkāra*), or
- ❖ popularity (*yasa*), etc.<sup>9</sup>

This kind of pride, haughtiness, self-assertiveness, desire for prominence, self-glorification, snob-bishness, exaggerated sense of being better than others, or feeling superior is what makes a person to be arrogant.

Arrogance can be harmful and unhealthy to oneself and others because it causes division, a tendency to discredit others, discrimination and strife. It even brings about aggressiveness and forcefulness aimed at dominating those considered weaker or less important. Such an attitude cannot produce unity, harmony, or a friendly and peaceful environment.

Abstaining from arrogance based on one's descent, race, clan, and so on, is the healthy attitude needed for the cultivation of unity, harmony, peace and friendliness.

Being not arrogant, that is, being humble, is therefore a noble virtue. That noble humbleness

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<sup>9</sup> See Vibhaṅga-pāli, *Khuddaka-vatthu*, *Ekaka-niddesa*.

marked by modesty, kindness, or deference towards others is not only a sign of maturity, but also of knowing the actual value or shortcomings of oneself and of not underestimating others.

Hence to be humble (*nivāta*) is, according to the *Maṅgala Sutta*, one of the highest blessings (*maṅgalam'uttama*).

### 7. Content (*santussako*)

A contented person is one who is satisfied with and appreciates his situation, possessions, or status. He counts his blessings and good things in his life, instead of always feeling bad about what he does not have.

More precisely:

- ❖ He is satisfied with whatever he gets – pleasant or unpleasant things; nicely or not nicely given – and does not show agitation while receiving or using them, thus avoiding conflict and strife.
- ❖ He is satisfied with his possessions, does not wish for more, and easily gives up excess desire, longing, or insatiability.
- ❖ He is satisfied with everything equally – be it high or low quality – by giving up delight or aversion, likes or dislikes towards desirable or undesirable things, and thus keeping an evenly balanced mind.



Conversely, he who is discontent

- is anxious to get more or something better,
- feels unhappy with his possessions, and
- shows anger towards undesirable things.

This kind of person is far from attaining inner richness and mental peace. He can be compared to a poor or impoverished man who feels that he is deprived of this or that. Others who associate with him can be easily affected.

Hence, in the *Dhammapada*, verse 204, contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) is clearly described as the greatest wealth (*paramaṇ dhanāṇ*), because a contented person feels an inner richness by being satisfied with what he gets or possesses. He does not feel that he lacks or is deprived of anything. Thus, contentment is that inner wealth or richness that excels any other wealth.

In the *Maṅgala Sutta* too, contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) is praised as one of the highest blessings (*maṅgalam'uttama*).

However, contentment does not mean to be content with one's own situation in life and not endeavour to improve it. It means to be content with what one has but, at the same time, realizing that one should improve one's life in what is wholesome (*kusala*) and, paradoxically, not be content with wholesomeness. That is why the Buddha

spoke about the ‘noncontentment with wholesome states’ (*asantuṭṭhitā kusalesu dhammesu*)<sup>10</sup>. This healthy noncontentment is the precursor of progress.

### 8. Easy to support (*subhara*)

A person who shows approval of the little things he gets is easily supported and does not become a burden to others.

Conversely, he who requires for his support, maintenance, and nourishment a lot of wealth, vehicles, houses, servants, food, drinks, clothes, adornments, and so on, and thereby others have to undergo much hardship for his upkeep, is not easily supported and becomes a burden, worry, inconvenience and a nuisance to others.

Similarly, he who is capricious, demanding, or whimsical, and shows displeasure or even disparages others by saying, ‘What’s this poor thing you have given me?’ simply makes others shun him from afar.

Being difficult to support is a vice which causes disharmony, unfriendliness and strife, and which one should strive to eradicate in order to attain that state of Peace.

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<sup>10</sup> See Aṅguttara Nikāya, *Duka-nipāta*, *Upāññāta-sutta*.

## 9. With Few Duties (*apakicco*)

A person with few duties is one who is not overly busy by delighting in superfluous and unbeneficial tasks, and works, or talks, chats, and socializing, etc.

Conversely, a person who is overactive and over-involved becomes overburdened with multiple tasks, and may thus easily experience confusion, worry, excitement, nervous tension, irritability, stress and even depression. With the hectic pace in his life, he may often feel that he does not have enough time to get everything done. His stress will make him easily impatient, frustrated and unhappy. It can even affect his health. Thus, he is far from attaining mental peace.

Moreover, being anxious to do work other than that assigned to oneself, and thus neglecting one's own work, would easily undermine one's own welfare and mental peace.

In order to avoid such unpleasant situations, one should focus on few duties, tasks and activities and work them out methodically and systematically.

## 10. Of Simple Lifestyle (*sallahukavutti*)

A person of simple lifestyle is one who does not keep or carry unnecessary possessions that distract and confuse his mind.

Hence, in order to attain that state of Peace, one should not be like him who has so many possessions that he has to employ people to carry them on their heads, hips and backs, etc. One should be like him who moves about lightly with few necessities.

It is usually burdensome and thus worrisome to have more than what is necessary around oneself and be overly busy storing, safeguarding, carrying, fixing, or repairing them. Such a burden can lead one to a troubled lifestyle.

Therefore, the wise policy is to keep only the necessary things and go about simply and lightly – physically and mentally.

## 11. With Senses Calmed (*santindriyo*)

A person with calm senses is one who does not get easily affected by lust towards desirable objects, or by anger towards undesirable objects.

Lust or attachment can easily arise towards pleasant objects, and anger or aversion towards unpleasant ones when the five senses come into

contact with their respective sense objects. The five senses and sense objects are:

<i>5 Senses</i>	<i>5 Sense Objects</i>
<b>eye</b>	<b>visual object</b>
<b>ear</b>	<b>sound</b>
<b>nose</b>	<b>smell</b>
<b>tongue</b>	<b>taste</b>
<b>body</b>	<b>touch</b>

He who lusts or is angry towards a sense object – be it inanimate or animate (a man, woman, child, etc.) – can easily be agitated and restless. If he allows his mind to be indiscriminately affected by any kind of sense object, he will be unable to calm down and pacify his senses.

Stimulating oneself with every object seen, heard, smelt, tasted, or touched, can waste one's wealth, health, and time, and pollute one's mind.

Conversely, he who exercises restraint and control over his senses, can subdue lust, anger, and other passions, and thus acquire a calm, serene, stress-free, and peaceful mind and senses.

## **12. Prudent (*nipako*)**

A person is deemed prudent if he is able to discipline himself by the use of reason. Consequently, he deals with practical and day-to-day matters

with good sense. He also displays good judgment in deciding between virtuous and vicious actions, suitable and unsuitable things, danger and safety, by carefully considering the consequences.

Thus, he has a good understanding of how to observe virtue (*sīla*) and abstain from vicious actions, to organize, manage, and handle his possessions and affairs, to use a suitable residence, resort, food, climate, speech, etc. and to associate with suitable people.

Hence, prudence is a highly needed virtue in order to overcome thoughtlessness and recklessness, and thus maintain mental peace.

### 13. Polite (*appagabho*)

One should not be only prudent but also polite, because prudent and intelligent people tend sometimes to be self-important and be thus impolite and inconsiderate towards others.<sup>11</sup>

A polite person is one who shows consideration towards others, has good manners, propriety, etiquette and a sense of decorum. He observes what is socially acceptable and appropriate in conduct and/or speech. Being unobtrusive, he is discreet

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<sup>11</sup> How prudent people can be arrogant due to their intelligence, see p. 33-4: 'Not Arrogant (*an'atimānī*)'.

and tactful to avoid offending, upsetting, or embarrassing others.

He has conscience and shame; his manners inspire confidence whether walking forwards or backwards, looking ahead or aside; is a careful practitioner of good behaviour and thus creates a non-hostile and peaceful environment – for oneself and for others.

Conversely, an impolite person is ill-mannered, lacks modesty, exhibits rashness and disregard for others, is obtrusive, indiscreet, and highly noticeable. Commonly, he shows impropriety by body or speech in a manner that offends others, as for example:

#### Impropriety by Body

He acts disrespectfully before a community of people; obstructs them; stands or sits jostling elderly people; stands or sits in front of them; sits higher than them; does not give them a seat; talks standing up; talks waving his arms; prevents younger people from getting a seat; enters houses or private rooms without knocking at the door; enters inner rooms abruptly where women and girls sit, and so forth.

#### Impropriety by Speech

He talks disrespectfully before a community of people; is noisy; interrupts them; talks without

asking permission from elderly people; answers questions without being asked; sings, talks standing up, talks waving his arms; having entered a house as a guest speaks to a woman or girl thus: ‘What’s there for me to eat? Rice? Good curry? What shall we drink? What will you give me?’ and so forth.

Being impolite is also a vice which causes disharmony, disunity and strife, and which one should strive to eradicate in order to attain that state of Peace.

#### 14. Not overly attached to families (*kulesu ananugiddho*)

A person not overly attached to families is one who is not attached to them with craving for material gain, and affection, or with improper association, as these can easily arouse mental distress.

He who, for instance, is exceedingly attached to his family members or relatives would find it hard to live apart from them, as when he has to stay afar for work, business, or study – something that can cause him distress and thus hinder his progress.

Moreover, being thus attached, grief and sadness suffered by them would result in oneself also experiencing dejection.



That does not mean, however, that one should stop supporting them. Supporting them is the noble virtue of friendliness (*mettā*), but not of attachment. What is more, supporting one's relations (*ñātakānaṃ saṅgaho*) is, according to the *Maṅgala Sutta*, one of the highest blessings (*maṅgalam'uttama*).

It would also not be beneficial to have attachments and associations with several families so that one's peace can be disturbed; or seek fleeting friendships, with quantity more significant than quality, and eventually be left desolate since many of these are bound to break down.

15. And should not commit the slightest wrong  
for which wise men may rebuke him  
(*na ca khuddaṃ samācare kiñci yena viññū  
pare upavadeyyuṃ*)

After mentioning the things one should do (*ka-raṇīya-dhamma*) for the attainment of that state of Peace, such as being capable, upright, very upright, etc., the Buddha next mentions the things one should not do (*akaraṇīya-dhamma*) for the attainment of the same state, such as not committing the slightest wrong.

Here, the slightest wrong (*khuddaṃ*) refers to the least – let alone gross – misconduct (*duccarita*) by body, speech, or mind, namely:

## MISCONDUCT

By Body –	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Killing living beings (<i>pāṇātīpata</i>)</li> <li>2. Stealing (<i>adinnādāna</i>)</li> <li>3. Unlawful sexual intercourse (<i>kāmesu micchācāra</i>)</li> </ol>
By Speech–	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Lying (<i>musāvāda</i>)</li> <li>5. Slandering (<i>pisuṇavācā</i>)</li> <li>6. Harsh speech (<i>pharusavācā</i>)</li> <li>7. Vain talk (<i>samphappalāpa</i>)</li> </ol>
By Mind– <sup>12</sup>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Covetousness (<i>abhiḥhā</i>)</li> <li>9. Hatred (<i>vyāpāda</i>), and</li> <li>10. Wrong view (<i>micchādīṭṭhi</i>).<sup>13</sup></li> </ol>

<sup>12</sup> Misconduct by mind comprises only intense forms of defiled thought that can trigger multiple mental activities and thus be a cause for resultant misconduct by body or speech.

<sup>13</sup> Here ‘wrong view’ comprises the three wrong views that constitute the so-called ‘evil or pernicious views with fixed bad rebirth’ (*niyatamicchā-dīṭṭhi*), for anyone adhering to them, namely:

1. Denying the **result** of good and bad *kamma* (nihilistic view – *natthika-dīṭṭhi*),
2. Denying both the **cause** and the **result** of good and bad *kamma* (fatalistic view of uncausality – *ahetuka-dīṭṭhi*), and
3. Denying good and bad *kamma* **completely** (view of the inefficacy of action – *akiriya-dīṭṭhi*).

It also comprises the twenty kinds of ‘personality view’ (*sakkāya-dīṭṭhi*) mentioned in MajjhimaNikāya, *Cūḷavedalla-sutta*, or the sixty-two kinds of speculative view about the world and the self, as explained in DīghaNikāya, *Brahmajāla-sutta*.

Therefore in this context, the word *khuddaṇ* has the meaning of morally low, inferior, or bad (*lāmaka*) action by body, speech, or mind.

The phrase ‘for which wise men may rebuke him’ indicates the disadvantages in committing the slightest misconduct in this present life when one might be blamed by the wise.

Here, ‘the wise men’ means that the foolish or unwise are excluded, since they tend to portray actions that are faultless as faulty or a minor fault as a major one. Therefore, the wise are they who are referred to here, since they are the ones who, after having examined and scrutinized the matter, ascertain actions that are faulty as faulty or a minor fault as a minor one, and thus blame the blameworthy and praise the praiseworthy.



### MEDITATION ON FRIENDLINESS (*METTĀ*)

**A**fter mentioning the 15 noble virtues which one should cultivate, and the misconduct one should avoid as a preliminary practice (*pubba-bhāga-paṭipadā*) in order to attain that state of Peace, the Buddha proceeds next to mention in

verses 3 to 9 the practice of meditation on universal friendliness as a more effective and lasting way towards a higher level of mental or inner peace. Hence, verses 3 to 9 commence with the friendly wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings thus:

3. May all beings be well and safe.  
May they be happy.

Here, instead of assuming that friendliness (*mettā*) should be developed only towards a single being or several beings, in one area or several areas, this verse categorically denotes the universal pervasion of “all beings” with *mettā*.

Thus, “beings” is the object of *mettā* meditation, and its scope is measureless beings, as indicated in verses 7 and 8:

7- 8. Let one cultivate a boundless mind  
Of friendliness (*mettā*) towards all beings ...  
For the entire world.

This *impersonal* mode of meditating on *mettā* makes the mind truly extensive and all-embracing, and thus frees it from its prison walls of egocentricity, ill-will, anger, hate, aversion, hatred, enmity, animosity, hostility, jealousy and meanness. For as long as the mind is imprisoned within these walls, it remains insular, narrow, limited, hindered, and fettered. By breaking these walls, *mettā* frees the mind, which then easily grows

boundless. This is what other *suttas* refer to as ‘the freedom of the mind by friendliness’ (*mettā cetovimutti*).

## The Method of *Mettā* Meditation

The method of *mettā* meditation in *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* is somehow different from that explained in *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification). There it is said that one should develop *mettā* first to oneself, then to a person one cherishes and respects, such as a teacher or a dear friend, then to a neutral person, and then to an enemy, and so forth, progressively developing *mettā* to all beings.<sup>14</sup>

*Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* begins, however, with the friendly and universal wish, ‘May all beings be well, safe, and happy’. It then proceeds, in verses 4 and 5, to specifically outline what these beings are by classifying them into 14 categories, namely:

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<sup>14</sup> This method has its merits as well and is useful in certain circumstances. A practical example would be when, for some reason, one gets angry with another. In order to remove that anger one should direct one’s attention to oneself and wish: ‘May I be without anger or hate.’ One can then gradually visualize oneself whilst sitting and wish the same. When the anger subsides, one can visualize the other person and wish: ‘May this person be without anger or hate.’

- |              |                            |
|--------------|----------------------------|
|              | 1. Weak                    |
|              | 2. Strong                  |
|              | 3. Long/Tall               |
|              | 4. Large                   |
| <i>Verse</i> | 5. Middle-sized            |
| 4            | 6. Short                   |
|              | 7. Small                   |
|              | 8. Bulky                   |
|              | 9. Seen                    |
|              | 10. Unseen                 |
| <i>Verse</i> | 11. Dwelling far           |
| 5            | 12. Dwelling near          |
|              | 13. Those born, or         |
|              | 14. Those seeking rebirth. |

It also emphasizes the fact that one should not discriminate them on account of their weakness, strength, physical appearance, and so on, but wish them all, without exception (*anavasesa*), to be well and happy.

What all beings have, actually, in common is the desire for happiness and aversion to pain.<sup>15</sup> Hence, one's concern should be to wish them to be happy and free of pain, suffering, or harm (*dukkha*), as verse 6 points out:

6. In anger or ill-will,  
May they not wish each other harm (*dukkha*).

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<sup>15</sup> See *Dhammapada*, verse 130-2.

## The Practice of Mettā Meditation

### Beings that are Seen

An easy way to practice meditation according to the method advocated in *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* is to begin with that category of human beings one has **seen**, met, spent time with, remember or came to know either socially or professionally, such as, parents, friends, neighbours, teachers, or colleagues.

‘Seeing’ plays a crucial role for cognition because without seeing one cannot directly perceive or know whether others are weak, strong, tall, short, and so on. Thus, the most important category of beings in the above classification are those beings seen (*diṭṭhā*). And the notion of *mettā* should be as that described in the ‘The Book of Analysis’ (*Vibhaṅga*):

‘Just as one would see a dearly and pleasant person and feel friendliness (*mettā*), so does one pervade all beings with friendliness (*mettā*).’ (Vbh. 272)

### The Posture

Typically, one begins meditation by sitting in a comfortable seat and position. Later, when one acquires enough mindfulness and concentration one can meditate in any posture as indicated in verse 9:

9. Whether one stands, walks, sits  
Or lies down, as long as one is awake,  
One should sustain this mindfulness [of *mettā*].

Therefore, in the beginning, after getting rid of any drowsiness due to the meal, and so on, one should:

- ❖ select a specific time for sitting.
- ❖ sit for more than 5 minutes in a secluded and peaceful place that provides privacy and silence.
- ❖ sit comfortably cross-legged or half cross-legged on the floor, on a well-prepared mat, on a cushion, or on a bed. If difficult, one can sit on a low chair, bench, or bed by placing the lower legs beneath it.
- ❖ keep the spine and neck straight, shoulders down and relaxed, without leaning on a wall or a chair.
- ❖ rest the hands against the lap.
- ❖ rest the tongue lightly on the roof of the mouth, and
- ❖ close the eyes.

### **Mettā Meditation**

Since the object of *mettā* meditation is “beings”, one should now begin thinking about other beings or people. One should then keep a vivid positive image of them in one’s mind in order to attain



deep concentration.<sup>16</sup> An easy way to do so is as follows:

1. One should, at the start, recall pleasant people one has **seen**, met, spent time with, and easily remember, and who are still alive. Such people coming in the mind may, initially, be just one or two. That is fine.
2. After being able to visualize them, one should wish them mentally:

*‘May this person/persons be happy.’*

By maintaining their image in the mind, one should repeat many times not too slow, not too fast: ‘ ... be happy, ... be happy, ... be happy, ....’

Here, it is good to use the simple wish ‘ ... be happy, ...’, because many words and phrases may hinder deep concentration. Moreover, ‘ ... be happy ...’ implies also ‘be well, be safe; be free from affliction, anxiety, suffering’, and so on. For he who is happy is, generally, understood to be well, safe, and the like.

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<sup>16</sup> It should be understood that ‘meditation’ is not a mere ‘recitation’ (loud or silent repetition of words). In order to succeed, meditation needs an object or image (*nimitta*), and, in the case of *mettā* meditation, it needs the mental image of beings.

Besides, by wishing others to be happy one feels, in return, oneself happy. It is like one who casts a tennis ball onto a wall and, in return, receives the ball back to him.

3. After a few days of practice, one should recall more people seen, and mentally wish them many times: ‘ May they be happy’.
4. After a few days of practice, one should recall people seen as a small group indoors or outdoors, and mentally wish them many times: ‘ May they be happy’.
5. After a few days of practice, one should recall people seen as a large group indoors (in a hall) or outdoors (on the road, bus stand, beach, and so on), and mentally wish them many times: ‘ May they be happy’.
6. After a few days of practice, and after one has established the perception of “beings”, one should by inference pervade *mettā* to people one has not seen (*adiṭṭhā*) which, however, one knows that they surely live in the neighborhood. One should then mentally wish them many times: ‘ May they be happy’.
7. After a few days of practice, one should do the same beyond the neighborhood, and gradually expand and pervade *mettā* to the whole community, town, city, country and

beyond. Then to the continent/s, solar system/s, and galaxy/galaxies, and next to the entire world or universe.

Thus, everywhere and equally, one should pervade the entire world with one's mind imbued with *mettā* and sustain his mindfulness:

*'May all beings be happy.'*

This kind of mind or consciousness is abundant, exalted, boundless, and free from hatred and enmity.

### The Divine Living

In order to describe now the sublime experience of pervading the entire world with *mettā*, the Buddha calls it the 'Divine Living' (*brahmavihāra*). That is why verses 8 and 9 state:

8. Let one cultivate a boundless mind  
Of friendliness (*mettā*) for the entire world...

9. And sustain this mindfulness.  
This is called here [in the Buddha's Teaching] The 'Divine Living'.

Here, the 'Divine Living' refers to the absorption in *mettā jhānas*. At the initial stage, one attains the first *mettā jhāna*. Then, by cultivating, developing, and repeatedly practising the same mind-

fulness of ‘may all beings be happy’, one can successfully reach the second and third *mettā jhāna*.

The *mettā jhāna* attainments are called the ‘Divine Living’ (*brahma-vihāra*) because they are the best in having the right and friendly attitude towards beings. And just as *Brahmā* Gods live with immaculate minds free from the blemish of ill-will, so does one who reaches these attainments live on an equal footing with *Brahmā* Gods.<sup>17</sup>



## FROM METTĀ JHĀNA TO NIBBĀNA

**T**hus far the Buddha has shown the practice of *mettā* meditation which can reach up to the attainment of the third *mettā jhāna*. Being called the ‘Divine Living’, this attainment is still a mundane level of peace.

He now proceeds to mention in the last verse the practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā*) by stating:

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<sup>17</sup> See ‘The Path of Purification’ (*Visuddhimagga*), IX, 109.

10. And not holding to [wrong] view,  
Being virtuous, endowed with right vision,  
And discarding desire for sensual pleasures,  
One surely never again will be reborn in a womb.

The aim of insight meditation is firstly the not holding to or the complete freedom from wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*). It is the decisive liberating practice for the removal of wrong view and the culmination of that perfect peace, *nibbāna*. The resulting attainment is called the ‘Noble Living’ (*ariya-vihāra*), and is the supramundane level of peace. It comprises the four supramundane ‘fruition attainments’ (*phala-samāpatti*), namely, the fruition of Stream-entry (*sotāpatti-phala*), Once-return (*sakadāgāmi-*), Non-return (*anāgāmi-*) and Arahantship (*arahatta-phala*).<sup>18</sup>

‘Wrong view’ refers here specifically to the mistaken view that there is a “being”, entity, substance, ego, personality, self, spirit, or soul in one’s own or others’ mental and physical continuum. This view is, more expressly, called the wrong view of a personality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) or of a self (*atta-diṭṭhi*). It is the basis for all wrong views and has in every situation and at all times mostly deluded, misled and divided mankind.

Since *mettā* meditation has the concept of “beings” as object, it is close to the ego-illusion

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<sup>18</sup> See *Majjhima-nikāya-ṭīkā*, *Mūlapariyāyasuttavaṇṇanā*.

or the wrong view of a personality. Hence, in order to prevent the entanglement in this and other wrong views, and in order to reach the ‘fruition attainments’ of the ‘Noble Living’ through insight meditation, the Buddha commences the last verse with the statement: ‘And not holding to wrong view’.

### Insight Meditation (*vipassanā*)

Insight meditation, which frees the mind from wrong views, begins with the observation and analysis of mind and matter. It then exposes the ultimate reality of the impermanent, suffering and impersonal (not-self or non-ego) nature of all mental and material phenomena of existence.

Therefore, after having attained a *mettā jhāna*, one should emerge from it. One should, then, recall the experience of that *jhāna* and discern:

1. The mental phenomena associated with that *jhāna*, such as applied thought (*vitakka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), bliss (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) related to the object of that *jhāna*; and also the four aggregates of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness connected with them.
2. The material phenomena, such as the heart base (*hadaya-vatthu*), the breath, and the four

primary and derivative elements (*dhātu*) that support those mental phenomena, and

3. The constant **rise** and **fall** of both the mental and material phenomena.

### The First Supramundane Path

When, by repeated practice, the discernment becomes powerful, one realises that there isn't a "being", entity, substance, ego, personality, or self in all mental and physical continua, but just a cluster of mental and material phenomena that continually arise and fall dependent on conditions (*suddha-saṅkhāra-puñja*). One then realises that the wrong view of a personality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) occurs due to the mistaken perception of compactness (*ghana-sañña*) and continuity (*santati-sañña*) of mental and material phenomena, and therefore does not hold to any wrong view.

At this stage, one attains the first supramundane path, namely, the path of stream-entry (*sotāpattimagga*), which eradicates completely the wrong view of a personality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This is also the time when one establishes oneself in the supramundane virtue (*lokuttara-sīla*) that eradicates unwholesome ways of action.

Thus, by eradicating wrong views and unwholesome ways of action, one becomes endowed with the supramundane right vision (*dassana*) – a vi-

sion free of confusion that directly sees and realises the four ultimate realities of:

1. mind (*citta*),
2. mental factors (*cetasikas*),
3. matter (*rūpa*), and
4. *nibbāna*.

This is what the first two lines refer to as:

10. And not holding to [wrong] view,  
Being virtuous, endowed with right vision.

### The Second Supramundane Path

By repeatedly meditating on the rise and fall of mental and material phenomena, one penetrates in-depth the perception of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*) of the five aggregates: matter, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

In doing so, one attains the second supramundane path, namely, the path of once-returner (*sakadāgāmi-magga*). This path reduces the desire for sensual pleasures more than in the first supramundane path.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> It reduces other mental defilements and fetters as well, such as ill-will, conceit and ignorance, but since desire for sensual pleasures is the gross hindrance for the attainment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> supramundane path, the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* emphasizes that desire by stating: ‘And discarding desire for sensual pleasures.’



## The Third Supramundane Path

By continuing to meditate in the same manner as above, one penetrates in-depth at a higher level the perception of impermanence, suffering and not-self, and attains the third supramundane path, namely, the path of non-returner (*anāgāmi-magga*), which discards, without remainder, the desire for sensual pleasures.

Having become a non-returner (*anāgāmi*), and after passing away from the human world, one is reborn among the *Brahmā* Gods of the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*). As a result, one never again returns from that world into any sensual world, including the human world. Hence, as a non-returner, one will never again be reborn in a womb, as the two closing lines of the last verse state:

And discarding desire for sensual pleasures,  
One surely never again will be reborn in a womb.

While in the Pure Abodes one eradicates all mental taints (*āsavas*) and attains the pinnacle of spiritual perfection, namely Arahantship, and passes away there itself by attaining Parinibbāna (final passing away) or final Peace.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, one who wishes for his welfare should practice what the Buddha, as a true altruist, has instructed. In doing so, he can gradually cultivate the noble qualities of virtue (*sīla*), friendliness (*mettā*), and wisdom (*paññā*) as advocated in the *Karaṇīya Metta-sutta* to consequently attain that supreme peace of the heart, namely, *nibbāna*.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 1959, Ioannis Tselios, later to be ordained as Bhikkhu Ñānadassana, was born in Greece to Orthodox Christian parents. He studied sociology at the University of Frankfurt in Germany and in 1981, at the age of 22 years, a trip to India resulted in the turning point of his life. The young Greek, whilst glancing through a tourist pamphlet, was deeply intrigued when he came across these memorable lines by the Buddha:

“This is my last birth. I have crossed the ocean of existence.”

Having now decided to find out more about the Buddha and his Teachings, he visited Kusinara, the place where the Buddha attained Parinibbāna, or final passing away. Here, under a senior Indian Buddhist monk, Tselios not only practised meditation but also read about Buddhism. His interest having now being whetted, he decided to search for the Buddha’s original teachings and arrived in Sri Lanka. In 1982, at the age of 23 years, he entered monkhood for full-time study and practice. For four years he practised under the guidance of the late Most Venerable Mātara Ñāṇārāma Mahāthera, the renown meditation master of Nissaraṇa Vanaya, Meetirigala. In 1986, he took the higher ordination with the late Most Venerable Rājakīya Paṇḍita Kaḍavedduve Shrī Jinavaṃsa Mahāthera as his preceptor. He then studied the Tipiṭaka with its Commentaries and Subcommentaries under three learned Mahātheras at Gnānārāma Dharmāyatanaya, Meetirigala, where he spent 16 years. Later he practised meditation in Burma for four and half years and in 2008 returned to Sri Lanka.

He is the author and translator of about ten Buddhist books in English, German, Sinhala, and Pāli and is adept at preaching the Dhamma in English and Sinhala.

*The Sponsors*, March, 2010