

## 2 Introduction

### 1 The volume theme

The theme of SD volume is “Wealth and lovingkindness (*mettā*).” The theme of wealth opens the volume with two related suttas and a short write-up, they are,

- (1) Ādiya Sutta (A 5.41), and
- (2) Anaṇa Sutta (A 4.62).

Lay Buddhist should accumulate wealth for their personal sustenance (food, clothing, shelter and health). Beyond this is surplus that should be used for savings, investments and personal enjoyment, which includes sharing our blessings with the family, relatives, friends, and others. About 5% should be contributed for Dharma work.

The following seven suttas deal with lovingkindness (*mettā*):

- (10) (Karaja,kāya) Brahma, vihāra Sutta (A 10.208),
- (11a) (Puñña) Mettā Sutta (A 7.58a),
- (11b) Mā Puñña Bhāyī Sutta (It 22),
- (12) Tikaṇḍaki Sutta (A 5.144),
- (13) Cūl’accharā Sutta (A 1.6.3-5),
- (14) Okkhā Sutta (S 20.4), and
- (15) (Ekā,dasa) Mettānisamsā Sutta (A 11.16).

Lovingkindness is an unconditional acceptance of self and of others. Such an unconditionality helps us to let go of the painful past and deal with the present as it arises, so that the mind becomes focussed and can go on to deeper meditation. Lovingkindness has also a wide range of personal benefits (good sleep, etc) and interpersonal benefits (popularity with others, safety wherever we go, etc).

Yet, we are only truly happy with wealth when we have right priorities in life and moral virtue:

- (4) (Abhabba) Tayo,dhamma Sutta (A 10.76),
- (5) Moral shame and Moral Fear,
- (5a) Kaṇha Sutta (A 2.1.7),
- (5b) Sukka Sutta (A 2.1.8),
- (5c) Hiri Ottappa Sutta or Cariya Sutta (A 2.1.9), and
- (8) (Agāra) Āditta Sutta (S 1.41).

Our surplus wealth should be shared with others so that we have good friends and a happy ambience.

There are proper ways of giving:

- (3) Dāna Maha-p,phala Sutta (A 7.49), and
- (9) Kimdada Sutta (S 1.42).

An understanding of lovingkindness serves as the basis for the study on merit and the departed, centering around the key discourses on the departed (*peta*) and merit (*puñña*), they are,

- (6a) (Saddha) Jānussoni Sutta (A 10.177) and
- (7) Tiro,kudda Sutta (Kh 7).

These two suttas give us a good basic understanding of the early Buddhist teachings dealing with the dead. Anyone (not just relatives) can dedicate merits to the deceased, but only the pretas or ghosts can benefit or need such dedications.

Nothing permanent or eternal is transferred during death, which may *occur immediately, or the dying may go through an intermediate state*, depending whether we are a saint, or we are still attached to the world:

- (16) Is there a soul?
- (17) Is rebirth immediate?

As such, we should not be unduly concerned with the dead, especially when they have been reborn in *various realms*:

- (20) (Pañca) Gati Sutta (A 9.68) and
- (25) Pātāla Sutta (S 36.4).

The nature of a sutta teaching must be properly understood, that is, *whether it is implicit or explicit*:

- (6b) Neyy’attha Nīt’attha Sutta (A 2.3.5-6).

With such an understanding, we would not have any fear of death:

- (21) (Saṅgha) Bala Sutta (A 9.5),
- (22) Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta (M 129), and
- (23) Deva,dūta Sutta (M 130).

Such teachings are based on the Buddha’s deep and clear realization of the true nature of existence, but his purpose is not so much to explain the origin of things, as it is on spiritual liberation:

- (24) Mahā Sīha,nāda Sutta (M 12 excerpts), and
- (19) Aggañña Sutta (D 27).

Above all, our spiritual learning and training should mould us into Dharma heirs of the Buddha:

- (18) Dhamma Dāyāda Sutta (M 3).

## 2 Study as practice

Sutta study is not merely reading and understanding the discourses—then it is only a comprehension lesson. This approach may work with the more narrative and historical discourses (such as the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta, D 16), but the “teaching” suttas are valuable as tools for reflection. Another vital feature of the suttas that conduces to Sutta reflection is the stock passages (*peyyāla*). We should keep the repetitions as they are, especially where they refer to some important doctrines.

Such repetitive passages are meant to be *heard*, rather than read. The Sutta study class can read such passages in unison for group reflection, or they could be recorded and then listened to whenever needed. We should first simply read the whole sutta once to have an idea of its structure and general teaching. Then select a section that appeals to us the most and read it reflectively as a daily or periodic practice. Once we have some insight into it, we should go on to another section that we like and read it reflectively. Go back and forth in this manner as we feel comfortable.

Ideally, each day (otherwise, periodically), in **a quiet moment**, we should review our daily life in connection with the sutta passage we have reflected on, and examine how it bears on our personal experience. It is all right if we are not sure about what is going on: simply reflect: “I need to be more aware of what is going on here.”

This can be done before or after our meditation. This kind of meditation is known as the recollection on the Dharma (*dharmânussati*). Close with cultivating lovingkindness within ourselves (“May I be well and happy...”) and then radiate it to all beings. One effective method is to recollect a very happy moment during the day or in our lives and smile at it with joy and build our lovingkindness from there.

## 3 The mere Buddhist vision

This whole sutta translation project is inspired by a mere Buddhist vision, and reflects this spirit in its authenticity and comprehensiveness. Our mission is to present the Buddha’s teachings in a manner relevant to our present way of life and beneficial to society, and to inspire us to keep to the practice of the Buddha Dharma as found in the early texts, so that we may be awakened in this life itself.