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## Love

A Buddhist perspective on friendship, humanity and life  
An essay by Piya Tan ©2011

To Dr Lorenz Deutschenbauer of Oberhaching, Germany  
*May every difficulty you face be a fire from which a phoenix rises.*

**KEY IDEAS GUIDE****Western concepts**

<i>eros</i>	1.2.1	physical love
<i>storge</i>	1.2.2	familial love
<i>xenia</i>	1.2.3	hospitality
<i>philia</i>	1.2.4	friendly love
<i>agape</i>	1.2.5	divine love

**Buddhist concepts**

<i>kāma</i>	3
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**1 Basic definitions****1.1 SOME POPULAR DEFINITIONS**

**1.1.1 Scope of study.** Love is at the very root and the apex of the Buddha's teaching, the very core of Dharma and its outermost perimeter of reaching out to others. The Buddha has uprooted the world's suffering to see that it is craving, the crudest form of love, and transforms it into compassion, its most unconditional form. With lovingkindness, the unconditional acceptance of all beings, human and non-human, we declare his teachings for their benefit, for *our* mutual benefit, that is, spiritual growth. In his teachings, he shows us how to differentiate the various levels and dimensions of love. This is what we will briefly explore in this essay.

Let us begin with the more familiar ideas of love. **The Oxford English Dictionary** (OED, digital edition) has some 20 entries under the verb "love," and over twice that under the noun. Writers and poets have written in countless imaginative and figurative ways about love. Let us look at a few representative ones.

**1.1.2 Some examples of love and loving.** The Scots poet **Robert Burns** (1759-1796), for example, sings of a love that is fresh and lasting, crystallized in this immortal line: "O, my luv'e's like a red, red rose" (1794)—a classic example of the attractive power of love. **Shakespeare** echoed love's mystery, one that transcends reason, in *Cymbeline*, where Arviragus says to Belarius: "I know not why I love this youth [Innogen], | and I have heard you [Belarius] say, | Love's reason's without reason." (*Cymbeline*, 4.2.20-22).<sup>1</sup> Then there is the clever traditional saw: "Love is blind; friendship closes its eyes."

In contrast, the OED objectively defines love as: "That disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person which (arising from recognition of attractive qualities, from instincts of natural relationships, or from sympathy) manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his or her presence and desire for his or her approval; warm affection, attachment." (OED). The essence of this lexicaese is captured by the Jewish German-American humanist philosopher-psychologist, **Erich**

<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* [orig c1609-10], in G B Evans (ed), *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1974: (vol 2). First published in "First Folio" of J Heminge & H Condell (eds), 1623. *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies*, London: Isaac Iaggard & Ed Blount, printers. Innogen (more accepted spelling for Imogen: see *Oxford Edition*, 1986) is actually Arviragus' separated sister.

**Fromm** (1900-1980), in *The Sane Society*: “Love is union with somebody, or something, outside oneself, under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one’s own self.” (1955).

## 1.2 LEVELS OF LOVE

**1.2.0 Terms.** In a westernized context, as such, love refers to a wide range of feelings, states and attitudes, ranging, on one plane, from pleasure (“I love the countryside”) to interpersonal attraction (“I love you”), or on another level, from infatuation to sexual desire, or on a higher dimension, from joyful faith to an overwhelming sense of selfless union with one’s object of faith.<sup>2</sup>

As such, we can begin by saying that we do not really love the whole person, but only *aspects* of a person, certain qualities that we find virtuous, pleasant or pleasurable. As the 17<sup>th</sup>-century French scientist and Catholic philosopher, Blaise Pascal, reflects, “We never, then, love a person, but only qualities.” (*Pensées*, 323, 1670). Such a love can, of course, be wanting in some way, but this is a good place to start. Let us now examine these qualities.

Ancient Greek philosophy gives us a helpful hierarchy of love, distinguishing various senses of love, the best known of which are *eros*, *philia* and *agape*. However, ancient Greek conception of love is more complex than that, and it is more useful for us to initially examine love on five basic levels, that is: *eros*, *storge*, *philia*, *xenia*, and *agape*.

**1.2.1 Eros** (ἔρως *érōs*) (from the Greek deity, *Eros*, Latin, *Cupid*) is erotic or passionate love, that is, sensual desire and longing. In Greek philosophy, although *eros* is basically physical love, an attraction to the body of a person, on a deeper level, it is the basis for an appreciation of the person’s inner beauty, or even an appreciation of beauty itself.

*Eros*, in other words, moves us to recall knowledge of beauty, which in turn spurs us on towards an understanding of spiritual truth. Philosophers, artists, poets—the creative and those in love—are all inspired to seek beauty and truth through *eros*. In other words, it is the underlying spirit in the physical or literary expression of beauty and truth, at least, on the worldly level. The Buddhist counterpart of *eros* would be *kāma*, sensual pleasure. [3]

**1.2.2 Storge.** On a less physical but more selfless level, there is *storge* (στοργή *storgē*), which is natural affection, like that felt by parents for their offspring, especially a mother’s love for her child. This is a near-synonym for the Japanese emotion of *amae* (甘え), roughly translated as “indulgent dependence,” which is close to the Malay emotion of *manja*, which basically means “affectionate” (in the active sense) and “pampered” (in the passive sense).

*Manja*, however, as a rule, applies mostly to a child, when it would be generally described as ranging from affectionate to being spoilt. In adults, it is usually applied to women, whose conduct are childlike, even childish, and coquettish, usually to elicit sympathy or pampering by men. The English word “cloying” is a near-synonym.

On a more wholesome level, we have familial love, such as a child’s love for a parent or both parents, and a parent’s love for their child. It is a natural bond and trust, *viśvāsa*, between parent and child [4]. The Thera, gāthā Commentary records how Vaḍḍha, mātā, hearing the Dharma, becomes a nun. Later his son, Vaḍḍha, too, becomes a monk.

One day, Vaḍḍha, so very familiar with his mother, now a nun, visits her, entering the nuns’ quarters without his outer robe. His mother, wishing to point out the impropriety, admonishes him to be mindful, as result of which, he is liberated in due course. This is a rare case where a mother is instrumental in the awakening of her own son!<sup>3</sup>

**1.2.3 Xenia.** On a broader, more inclusive, level, we have *xenia* (ξενία *xenia*), “guest friendship,” “ritualized friendship” or hospitality,<sup>4</sup> which was a vital hallmark of ancient Greek culture, and of the ancient civilized world generally, and even today in Asia, wherever westernization or Christianity does not predominate.

<sup>2</sup> This section gives a basic foundation for those who are western-educated in the ethics of love. Those who find this section too “academic” could skip it and go on straight into the next section.

<sup>3</sup> Tha 335-339; Thī 204-212. See also **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142) @ SD 1.9 (5.3).

<sup>4</sup> Cf “respect for hospitality,” *paṭisanthāra, gāravatā*: see (**Upagantabba**) **Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (7).

It was a sort of ritualized friendship between a host and his guest, even on their first meeting. The host would feed and provide quarters for the guest, who was expected to show his gratitude. The importance of *xenia* recurs constantly in Greek mythology,<sup>5</sup> especially Homer's *Iliad*<sup>6</sup> and *Odyssey*.<sup>7</sup> The Buddhist counterpart to *xenia* would be *paṭisanthāra*. [5]

**1.2.4 *Philia*** or *filia* (φιλία *philia*) is a less passionate, more virtuous, love, such as found in friendship, brotherhood, or generally non-sexual affection, including loyalty to friends, family, and community. It entails virtue, equality, reciprocity and familiarity that is of mutual, even universal, benefit. In an important way, especially amongst the learned, this is an attraction of minds, of the love of learning, or of sharing the same or similar vision of life. The Buddhist counterpart of *philia* is *pema*, worldly love [6], not amounting to *kāma*. [3.1]

This friendly love is often found amongst the early monastics, especially before their renunciation. The best known of such a friendship is clearly that between Sāriputta and Moggallāna, which continues even into their lives as monks.<sup>8</sup> Then, there is the famous statement by Anuruddha about his friendship with his brother monks, that he is “of one mind” with them [4.3].<sup>9</sup>

**1.2.5 *Agape***. During the time of Plato (424/423-348/347 BCE) and other ancient western writers, the term *agape* (ἀγάπη, *agapē*) has been used in various forms to denote the love for a spouse or family, or affection for a particular activity, in contrast to *philia* (an affection denoting friendship, brotherhood or generally non-sexual affection) and *eros*, sexual attraction.

In Christianity,<sup>10</sup> it usually refers to God's fatherly love for man, and man's reciprocal love for God, which is also extended to one's fellow men<sup>11</sup> (but not to all beings, as in Buddhism). The multidisciplinary Christian theologian, Thomas Jay Oord, defines *agape* as “an intentional response to promote well-being when responding to that which has generated ill-being.”<sup>12</sup> *Agape*, as such, is close to the Buddhist *mettā*, which, as unconditional lovingkindness, embracing all things, but is spiritually much more inclusive than *agape*. [4.3]

<sup>5</sup> In the Ovid's fable of the aged couple, **Philemon and Baucis**, Zeus Xenios (“of the travellers”) and Hermes (Roman: Jupiter and Mercury), disguised as peasants, were turned away by everyone else in the town, except the aged couple, who feasted the duo. Zeus then instructed them to retreat to a hill-top while he flooded and drowned the whole town (*Metamorphoses* 8.611-724): [http://www.mythology.us/ovid\\_metamorphoses\\_book\\_8.htm](http://www.mythology.us/ovid_metamorphoses_book_8.htm)

<sup>6</sup> The Trojan War described in Homer's *Iliad* resulted from a violation of *xenia*. Paris, from the house of Priam of Troy, is a guest of Menelaus, king of Mycenaean Sparta, but seriously transgresses the bounds of *xenia* (as such, an insult to Zeus' authority) by abducting his host's wife, Helen. The Achaeans (Menelaus' lineage) are, as such, required to avenge Zeus. Elsewhere, Diomedes and Glaucus meet in battle and before attacking, the former asks the latter's lineage. Glaucus tells his lineage, upon which Diomedes realizes their guest-friendship. They trade armor.

<sup>7</sup> Every household in the *Odyssey* is viewed in the light of *xenia*. Odysseus' house is inhabited by suitors with demands beyond the bounds of *xenia*. Menelaus and Nestor's houses are highlighted by Telemachus' visits. The houses of Circe, Calypso and the Phaeacians, too, are noted for their *xenia*. The Phaeacians, and especially Nausicaa, are famed for their faultless *xenia*, as the princess and her maids offer to bathe Odysseus and then lead him to the palace to be fed and entertained. Polyphemus, however, lacks *xenia* by refusing to honor the traveller's requests, and eating some of Odysseus' men.

<sup>8</sup> On Sāriputta and Moggallāna, see DhA 1.8/84-114; J 1:2-85; V 1:23 f, 39-43; cf KhpA 202-206; PvA 19-23. See also Piya Tan, *The Buddha and his disciples*, 2004 ch 5.10-36.

<sup>9</sup> For other examples, see **Spiritual friendship** = SD 8.1.

<sup>10</sup> Christian usage of *agape*, however, is different from those of the Greek philosophers. In fact, *agape* is rarely used in ancient western manuscripts to mean love or affection. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (sv Love), however, the word is believed to have been coined by the Bible authors from the verb *agapao*. It is also a term for Christian rituals, such as a form of the Lord's Supper, but the full sense of which is not universally agreed: see <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/662884/agape>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/662884/agape>.

<sup>12</sup> “The love racket: Defining love and agape for the love-and-science research program,” *Zygon* 40,4 Dec 2005: 919-938, <http://www.calvin.edu/~jks4/city/Oord~Defining%20Love.pdf>.

**1.3 CHINESE CONCEPTIONS OF LOVE.** In Chinese culture, there are two philosophical views of love, one based on Confucianism,<sup>13</sup> which emphasizes actions and duty, the other based on Mohism,<sup>14</sup> which champions universal love. A core concept in **Confucianism** is *ren* (benevolent love, 仁), which focuses on duty, action and attitude in a relationship, rather than love itself. Such a love is shown by actions such as filial piety from children, kindness from parent, loyalty to the king, and so on. It is a sort of *structural* love, that ultimately moves upwards through the social hierarchy and finally to the emperor or the most powerful in the land.

In reaction to Confucius's hierarchical love, Mozi proposed the concept of "universal love" (兼愛 *jiān'ài*), in an attempt to replace what he considered to be the Chinese over-attachment to class, clan and family structures. He pointedly argued against the Confucians who believed that it was natural and correct for people to care about different people in different degrees. Mozi, by contrast, believed people in principle should care for all people equally.

Mohism stressed that rather than adopting different attitudes towards different people, love should be unconditional and offered to everyone without regard for reciprocation, not just to friends, family or any other Confucian relationship. Later, in Chinese Buddhism, the term *ai* (愛) was adopted to refer to a deep caring love, regarded as a fundamental desire. In Chinese Buddhism, *ai* is seen as capable of being either selfish or selfless, the latter being a key element towards enlightenment.

**1.4 RANGE OF MEANINGS.** The English word "love" refers to a wide range of emotions and feelings seen in humans as well as some animals. First of all, *biologically*, love is a survival instinct, that is, nature's way, as it were, to ensure that the species not only survives, but proliferates. *Psychologically*, love can be said to be an emotion, an expression of affection and attachment of various degrees. *Philosophically*, especially in ethical terms, love is a virtue encompassing various levels of human kindness, ranging from a simple attraction through affection to compassion. *Aesthetically*, especially in terms of beauty and truth, love is common theme for the fine arts and literature. On a *religious* level, love is always attributed to the religion's or faith's supreme being as well as to its founder.

Indeed, every religion or faith would piously claim that its whole system consists in love, that is, love of a spiritual level. Every religion or faith tries to champion that it teaches love for all humans (and of course, the divine), but omits non-humans, and in a few cases, this missing dimension was added as a later development, an afterthought, as it were.<sup>15</sup> Unconditional love is impossible in a God-centred system; indeed, it is an oxymoron to speak of "a God-believer's unconditional love," simply because one has to believe in God or some supreme deity before one is regarded as being "saved" or admissible to heaven.

For this reason, too, the Buddha rejects the brahminical view of the High God, Brahma, and its self-imposed monopoly of being the only way to companionship with Brahma (*brahma, saḥavyatā*).<sup>16</sup> Against such ideas, the Buddha declares that *Godliness* or *godliness* "abides" within us, and only needs to be personally cultivated as the "divine abodes" (*brahma, vihāra*).<sup>17</sup> However, the teachings on love and fraterni-

<sup>13</sup> On Confucius (551-479 BCE), see <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/confucius/#ConPol/>.

<sup>14</sup> **Mohism** or **Moism** (墨家 *mòjiā*, "school of Mo") was a Chinese philosophy developed by the followers of Mozi (Master Mo, latinized as Mencius, 470–c391 BCE). It grew at about the same time as Confucianism, Daoism and Legalism, and was one of the four main philosophy schools during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-480 BCE) and the Warring States Period (479-221 BCE). See <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/>.

<sup>15</sup> Christianity, for example, does not include animals in its view of salvation. It was through the work of Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226) that animals were compassionately included in its religious consciousness, but again is not included in its idea of salvation. As such a love is not attested in the Bible, we could say that Francis' great compassion was possibly an influence by Buddhism (known in the west during his time). Christian existentialist theologian, Paul Tillich writes: "... the attitudes towards nature in Christianity and Buddhism are not totally exclusive. In the long history of Christian nature-mysticism the principle of participation can reach a degree in which it is often difficult to distinguish it from the principle of identity, as, for example, in Francis, of Assisi." (*Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, 1963: <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1557&C=1391>)

<sup>16</sup> See eg **Te, vijja S** (D 13/2:235-252 passim) = SD 1.8.

<sup>17</sup> See **Brahma, vihāra** = SD 38.5.

ty from the various religions are worth our respectful study, as they have much beneficial advice and guidance for us in the fostering of a more universal human community and respect for life.

Love seeketh not itself to please,  
But for another gives its ease,

Nor for itself hath any care,  
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

William Blake, *Songs of Experience* (1794)

## 2 A Buddhist perspective of love

**2.1 BUDDHIST LOVE TRAINING.** Early Buddhism turns on love, as it were, and it does so on three wholesome levels or dimensions, that is, in terms of **the three trainings** (*ti, sikkhā*).<sup>18</sup> Buddhist training begins with love and respect for *others*, practised and expressed through moral virtue, that is, keeping to the five precepts by the laity and to monastic discipline by renunciants. This basic level of loving respect is expressed through the body and speech.

We communicate with each other through speech and body language. When both of these means of social communication are well regulated and tempered with love and respect, it becomes the lifeblood of a wholesome community and society. In other words, we restrain and refine our bodily actions and speech for the benefit of others, and so that a healthy society is possible. There is a higher benefit from such an environment, that is, as a vital foundation for *mental cultivation*, the nurturing of the heart.

On a social level, this makes it possible for us to be in touch with the depths of our creativity so that we can express beauty and truth in various ways. Buddhist aesthetics, in other words, is rooted in the calm and clarity of our hearts, and find expression through our *six senses*: the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. We create works that are visually beautiful, uplifting music and harmonious sounds, refreshing aromas, healthy foods, healing touches, and thoughts that inspire and awaken us.

On a spiritual level, a calm and clear heart is the basis for personal development. A calm heart rises above and beyond the walls of words, the prison of language, to directly feel what our heart/mind really is. We rise above the personal grammar of duality to feel the all-embracing, boundless space of ineffable bliss. When all the existential dust has settled, our mind's eye sees with greater clarity the true nature of our being.

Having emerged from such thought-free spaciousness, we must simply spill over with a zest for conveying its bliss and clarity in words and ways that awaken the slumbering world into the true light. The beauty and truth that we variously convey in our actions and speech would surely somehow inspire others to realize that they, too, are capable of such a blissful and liberating awakening. This is the spirit of Buddhist mental training.

Ultimately, the disciplined self and the liberated heart open the door to wisdom training. All that beauty and truth that we have tasted for ourselves begin to be expressed in communicable ways through our speech and actions. It is a penetrating wisdom that sees how the love for bodies and persons can only be ephemeral and unsatisfactory. We begin to understand that love is not taking but *giving*; not seeking attention, but giving it; more than the dead past or the absent future, it is *the eternal present*. We realize that true love is our presence in every sense of the word.<sup>19</sup>

**2.2 ASPECTS OF BUDDHIST LOVE.** In this reflective study, we shall examine love from five different perspectives:

- (1) as a personal or physical emotion, that is, the love of sensual pleasure [3];
- (2) as a relationship between two persons (or amongst more), especially in familial love [4];
- (3) as a social emotion, such as neighbourliness and hospitality [5];
- (4) as a developmental relationship, especially in a true-hearted friendship [6]; and
- (5) as spiritual love, that is, the unconditional acceptance of all beings [7].

Through such a reflective exploration, we hope to better understand *the nature and range* of love, relating to the individual and human behaviour, in personal relationships (including friendship, partnership and marriage), and the *absence* of love, that are the roots of emotional and psychological problems

<sup>18</sup> On the 3 trainings, see *Sīla samādhi paññā* = SD 21.6. See also *Kāma-c, chanda* = SD 32.2 (3.2).

<sup>19</sup> See further *Bhāvanā* = SD 15.1 (2).

(such as addictions, anxiety and depression), interpersonal issues (such as loss and loneliness), and spiritual needs. Although these issues are not discussed at length (due to constraints of this essay), we will basically delve into their roots for some useful understanding.

**2.3 OVERVIEW: THREE KINDS OF LOVE.** In simpler terms, what is “love”? We can categorize it into *three kinds*: animal love, human love and divine love. Animal love is merely the desire for things, such as the physical body. But the body changes and decays, and our desire soon turns into glut, then boredom, even disgust. Animal love, then, is grasping and collecting with almost no giving. As it sees others as objects to be consumed or collected, it can be exploitative (asura-like), even addictive (preta-like);<sup>20</sup> hence, it is unhealthy.

Human love, on a simple level, is friendly love, a desire and willingness to communicate and learn with others in a positive manner. Human love inspires us to give to others and to share what we have. By patiently listening to others, we allow them to see themselves more fully and joyfully: this is *the gift of time*. By comforting others we remove their fears: this is *the gift of fearlessness*.<sup>21</sup> These are examples of “non-material giving” (*\*nirāmisā dāna*)<sup>22</sup> or “the gift of truth” (*dhamma, cāga* or *dhamma, dāna*).<sup>23</sup>

A generous person is likely to be popular, as evident from these sayings from **the Sīha Senā, pati Sutta** (A 5.34) and **the Dān’ānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 5.35):

“A giver, Sīha, a master giver, is dear and pleasing to the masses.” (A 5.34)<sup>24</sup>

“Dear is a giver; many are devoted to him. He gains fame, his reputation grows,” (A 5.34)<sup>25</sup>

“One who gives is beloved. He keeps to what is good and true. | The peaceful and restrained brahmacharis are always devoted to him.” (A 5.35)<sup>26</sup>

Divine love is an ability and willingness to see goodness in others, and bring about mutual and active joy. Divine love is more than merely giving what we *have*: we give others of what we *are*. Being happy, we wish others well and happy, too. It begins with a single thought of lovingkindness.<sup>27</sup> We reach out in compassion to the less fortunate. We show kindness and understanding to others even when they do not deserve it. Being appreciative, we joyfully celebrate the fortunes and goodness of others. We remain wisely and patiently poised however the fruits of our love turn out, as we have done our best, and we are not alone and are different in many ways.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>20</sup> On the 6 realms as mental states, see **Myth in Buddhism** = SD 36.1 (1.3.3): “Momentary beings.”

<sup>21</sup> *Abhaya, dāna*, one of **3 kinds of giving** (*tividha dāna*): *āmisā, dāna, abhaya, dāna, dhamma, dāna* (CA 303).

<sup>22</sup> The asterisk (\*) means that this is a neologism. Although it is not found in the Canon, it reflects a reality, ie, the kind of giving that falls between material giving and the gift of the Dharma. “The gift of fearlessness” (*abhaya, dāna*) is listed (CA 303): see prec n.

<sup>23</sup> “Material charity” and “dharma charity” (*āmisā, cāga* and *dhamma, cāga*): A 2.13.3/1:90; “material giving” and “dharma giving” (*āmisā, dāna* and *dhamma, dāna*): A 2.13.1/1:91; It 3.5.9/98, 4.4.1/101 f; AA 2:159; KhpA 140; ItA 2:131; SnA 1:300. “The foremost gift is the gift of the Dharma” (*etad aggaṃ dānānaṃ yad idaṃ dhamma, dānaṃ*, A 9.5.6/4:364; “The gift of the Dharma excels all gifts” (*sabba, dānaṃ dhamma, dānaṃ jināti*, Dh 354a); cf Miln 167. The Comys define *dhamma, dāna* as teaching Dharma leading to liberation (usu arhathood or nirvana): MA 5:102; AA 1:39; KhpA 141 = SnA 1:200; CA 305 f; cf VA 5:1058; BA 239 (“experiencing the goal, *attha, paṭisaṃvedeti*, and so on,” qu A 3:21); DhA 4:74 f; ItA 2:131 f. *Dhamma, dāna* is also def as “teaching out of desire for the welfare of others” (*paesaṃ hita, kāmātāya desanā dhamma, dānaṃ*, KhpA 140 f). See KhpA:Ñ 152 f.

<sup>24</sup> *Dāyako sīha dāna, pati bahuno janassa piyo hoti manāpo* (A 5.34/3:39,6).

<sup>25</sup> *Dadaṃ piyo hoti bhajanti naṃ bahū, kittiṃ ca pappoti yaso ca vaḍḍhati* (A 5.34/3:40,13). The brahmacharis are the celibate renunciants or Buddhist monastics, but may include any Buddhist keeping to the celibacy rule for spiritual training.

<sup>26</sup> *Dadamāno hoti satam dhammam anukkamaṃ | santo naṃ sadā bhajanti saññato brahmacārayo* (A 5.35/3:41,-8).

<sup>27</sup> See **Cūl’accharā S** (A 1.6.3-5/1:10 f) = SD 2.13.

<sup>28</sup> This para is the essence of **the 4 divine abodes**: see **Brahma, vihāra** = SD 38.5.

### 3 Love of sensual pleasure

#### 3.1 WHAT WE LOVE

**3.1.1 Sensitive love.** We can provisionally begin here by taking love as referring to *an attention of some intensity* towards our bodies or our minds, an attention that is, to some degree, *appropriative*. For, that is what we are: body and mind. Here, however, we will focus on the *palpable* side of our being, that is, **the body**, which comprises the five physical faculties of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, and the body. In simple terms, *the eye* here refers to visual images of colours and shapes; *the ear*, to sounds and vibrations; *the tongue*, to tastes and temperature; and *the body* to physical comfort and space.

Each of these physical faculties is a source of knowledge for *the mind*, the sixth and most significant faculty.<sup>29</sup> The mind, through its consciousness (*viññāṇa*), that is, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and its own mental faculty, constructs an inner world, a private and limited virtual reality, in which we live, continually fed by such consciousnesses.

While such a consciousness *cognizes* or makes sense of our contacts (*phassa*), that is, sense-impressions, our minds, by way of perception (*saññā*) *recognizes* such contacts when they recur, perceiving them in terms of past sensings, so that we are drawn to them, taking them to be familiar and pleasurable. If we allow ourselves to go further—spurred on by greed, hate or delusion—then karmic formations (*sañkhāra*) arise in us, reinforcing them into habits of body, speech and mind.<sup>30</sup>

**The Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta** (A 6.63) is an instructive discourse on how we should view the world and our desires. The world out there is not what we think it is: our mind, far from experiencing it directly, projects itself onto that world, as it were, and sees it with its own tinted lenses. As such, the world is not to be blamed (as being evil, etc). As we mature in wisdom (*paññā*), we better understand the difference between the real world out there, and our production and dramatization of it on the stage of our senses. Hence, the Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta intuitively declares:

There are these **five cords of sensual pleasures** (*kāma,guṇa*):

forms cognizable by the eye,

desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful;<sup>31</sup>

sounds cognizable by the ear,

desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful;

smells cognizable by the nose,

desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful;

tastes cognizable by the tongue,

desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful;

touches cognizable by the body,

desirable, attractive, pleasant, endearing, associated with sensuality, delightful.

Bhikshus, these are not sensual objects (*kāma*), but in the noble discipline, they are called “cords of sensual desire” (*kāma,guṇa*).

<sup>29</sup> See **Sabba S** (S 35.23/4:15) = SD 7.1.

<sup>30</sup> This para gives is the essence of the 5 aggregates (*pañca-k,khandha*): see SD 17. The “habits” here refers to the latent tendencies (*anusaya*): see 3.2.1 below & **Anusaya** = SD 31.3.

<sup>31</sup> *Cakkhu,viññeyyā rūpā iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piya,rūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanīyā*. The usual tr we see have the disjunctive “that are” before “desirable” throughout, implying that only “desirable, etc” sense-objects are meant. However, the adjs *iṭṭhā* etc follow the noun rather than precede it in all the 6 sentences, they function as a nexus (connector), ie, they qualify the respective nouns, and emphasizing them: see A K Warder, *Introduction to Pali*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1974:61. This tr also refutes the wrong view that in dhyana (said to be “detached from sensual pleasures,” *vivicc’eva kāmehi*, D 22.21/2:313 f, M 141.31/3:252), “neutral feelings” still remain. This view is curious because it is clear that in the 1st dhyana, there are “zest and joy” (*pīti-sukha*), which make it impossible for any neutral feeling to be felt at that time: see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15), which says that only one feeling (pleasant, painful, or neutral) is experienced at a time (D 15.28/2:66) = SD 5.17. (I thank Lam Cheng Poh of Singapore for drawing my attention to this interesting point.)

The thought of passion is a person's sensuality:  
 There is no sensuality in what are beautiful in the world.  
The thought of passion is a person's sensuality:  
 what are beautiful in the world remain just as they are.  
 So here the wise remove desire.

(A 6.63.3/3:411) = SD 6.11

If we allow this to happen, we are then merely creatures of the past, drawn to past pleasures, pushing away hints of past hurt, and ignoring the unfamiliar, what have not been captured by our sense-fields or noted by our minds. So we move on collecting perceived pleasures, rejecting imagined pains, and hoarding ignorance of the unfamiliar. We are drawn to familiar pleasures, repulsed by the unfamiliar and when an experience (person, thing, etc) fails to resonate with either of this duality, we ignore it. We tend to live in an echo chamber of the past. Here lie the very roots of our idea of love, a wish to reconnect, remerge, with the familiar, a proverbial pea looking for its own, as it were.

**3.1.2 Love and its objects.** Sense-based love (*kāma*)<sup>32</sup> is the most *alienated* of relationships, because it is based on a duality. It is a partial love, meaning that it is both *biased* on account of its relentlessly looking for itself in others, and *incomplete* in that it is sense-based. We are attracted to or entranced by physical form, or voice, or smell, or taste, or touch.<sup>33</sup> Or, as the suttas warn us, a monastic might be overwhelmed by his memories of lay ease and pleasures, or he becomes intoxicated with them, as a result of which, he gives up the training.<sup>34</sup>

From **the Nibbedhika (Pariyāya) Sutta** (A 6.63), we see a differentiation between the five sense-objects (*kāma,guṇa*) and the five related kinds of sensual lust (*kāma,rāga*) [3.1.1]. In **the Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta** (M 145 ≈ S 35.88), we see this relationship extended to all the six senses, that is, the six external sense-objects and the six kinds of sensual lust:

Puṇṇa, there are

- (1) forms cognizable by *the eye* that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust;
- (2) sounds cognizable by *the ear* that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust;
- (3) smells cognizable by *the nose* that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust;
- (4) tastes cognizable by *the tongue* that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust;
- (5) touches cognizable by *the body* that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust;
- (6) mind-objects cognizable by *the mind* that are wished for, desirable, agreeable, likeable, connected with sensuality, arousing lust;

If a monk delights in them, welcomes them, and remains holding on to them, delight arises in him.

Puṇṇa, with the arising of delight there is the arising of suffering, I say!<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See *Kāma-c, chanda* = SD 32.2 (1.2).

<sup>33</sup> A 1.1-5/1:1 f = SD 66.1: see **Sexuality** = SD 31.7 (1.3). See also **Methuna S** (A 7.47/4:54-56) = SD 21.9.

<sup>34</sup> **Kul'upaka S 2** (A 5.226) says that when a monk often sees women, it leads to companionship, which leads to intimacy, which leads to infatuation, which results in dissatisfaction with monastic life, indulging in sex and falling from the holy life (A 5.226/3:259) = SD 66.8. **Mada S** (A 3.39) says that monks, seeing such worldliness, are intoxicated with youth, with health and with life, "give up the training and return to the low life," but these intoxications lead one to be reborn in suffering states (A 3.39/1:146 f = SD 42.13).

<sup>35</sup> This is the Sutta's key statement. MA says that this is a brief exposition of the 4 noble truths. Delight (*nandī*) here refers to craving: with the arising of delight in sense-object arising in the sense-faculty, there arises the suffering of the 4 aggregates. Thus in this first part of the teaching (§3) the Buddha expounds the first 2 truths: suffering and its arising, as they occur through the six senses. In the second part (§4), the Buddha expounds the ending of the

(M 145.3/1:267 ≈ S 35.88/4:60 f) = SD 20.15, abridged

In the Commentaries, such as **the Sammoha,vinodanī** (Vibhaṅga Commentary), we see the technical terms “sensual object” (*vatthu,kāma*) and “sensual defilement” (*kilesa,kāma*) referring to the same two things, thus:

There are two kinds of sensuality [sense-desire], namely,

(1) sensuality as the basis (*vatthu,kāma*) and (2) sensuality as defilement (*kilesa,kāma*).

Here, sensuality as defilement is *the element (dhātu)* which is associated with sensuality that is the sensuality element—this is the name for the thought of sensuality (*kāma,vitakka*).

As for sensuality as basis, *sensuality* itself [ie the object desired], as an element, is the sensuality element—this is the name for dharmas [mental states] of the sense-sphere. (VbhA 74)

The Vibhaṅga Commentary correlates sensual thought with sensuality as a defilement (*kilesa,kāma*) and sense-sphere phenomena with sensuality as sense-objects (*vatthu,kāma*). In other words, “sensual pleasure” (*kāma*) refers to the sensual objects (*vatthu,kāma*) or sense-experiences, and “sensual desires” refers to “sensuality as mental defilement” (*kilesa,kāma*), the subjective aspect of the sense-process.<sup>36</sup>

Such passages are psychologically instructive here as they show us how, at the most physical level of our sensual being, we tend to “fall in love” with things (*vatthu*), and in an appropriative way, seeing them as desirable objects. Due to this compulsive, almost automatic reactivity, of being inexorably drawn to what we perceive as desirable, they become “defiled” states (*kilesa*) in our being. This is a level where even people are treated as objects and measurable in terms of desirability. It is a fetishist love.

### 3.2 WHY WE LOVE

**3.2.1 Latent tendencies.** Each time we entertain or pursue a *pleasurable* sense-object, we reinforce it as a latent tendency (*anusaya*) of lust. Each time we reject what we see as *unpleasant*, we feed the latent tendency of aversion. Each time we ignore a sense-experience that is *neither pleasant nor painful*, we add to our latent tendency of ignorance. These latent tendencies grip us in their unrelenting tentacles ever tighter, making us senseless to everything else.<sup>37</sup>

In the **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the nun Dhamma,dinnā summarizes the nature of the latent tendencies to the layman Visākha as follows:

Avuso Visākha,

the latent tendency of	lust	lies latent in	a pleasant feeling;
the latent tendency of	aversion	lies latent in	a painful feeling;
the latent tendency of	ignorance	lies latent in	a neutral feeling.

(M 44.25/1:303) = SD 40a.9

We are our latent tendency,<sup>38</sup> creatures of habits, a loop of repetitive actions and reactions learned and reinforced since birth, going far back into the remote past of our existences in this universe. We are so used to these habitual cycles, that we take them for granted, oblivious of the true nature of things. It is as if we have handed over our remote control to our latent tendencies. So we inexorably run after what we see as pleasant or filling a lack in our lives. We just *love* doing this.

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round of existence by way of the latter two truths: the ending and the path, as shown through the abandoning of delight in the six senses and their objects. (MA 5:84)

<sup>36</sup> See de Silva 1992:96-98: Silva’s sutta refs however are not accurately translated.

<sup>37</sup> On latent tendency, see *Anusaya* = SD 31.3, esp (2). See also **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.3) = SD 5.5 Intro. On removing the latent tendencies, see **Anusaya S 1+2** (S 35.58+59/4:32).

<sup>38</sup> See **Aññatara Bhikkhu S 1** (S 22.35): “Bhikkhu, one is reckoned by whatever lies latent in one. | One is not reckoned by what does not lie latent in one.” (*Yaṃ kho, bhikkhu, anuseti, tena saṅkhaṃ gacchati; | yaṃ nānuseti, na tena saṅkhaṃ gacchati ti*, S 22.35/3:35) = SD 31.4

**3.2.2 Biological self-love.** This is the level of emotions at their most hungry, that is, self-love, a biological narcissism. It is a love that cares only for itself, looking only for itself, relentlessly feeding on itself. This is the basest form of love, that is, outright sensual pleasure (*kāma*). We thus become but predictable animals, finding pleasure in biting our own tails, blissfully and ignorantly delighting in consuming ourselves, a uroboros.<sup>39</sup>

How does such a self-love arise? The answer is quite simple: we are best known and familiar to ourselves. At least, we think so. During our formative years between infancy and adolescence—that is, our childhood—we tend to look for persons and things we can identify with. We like people who are like us: we feel safe with them and our self-esteem grows, so that we are happy. When we are happy we are likely to enjoy people and things more.

With the dawn of adolescence, we are generally more curious of physical differences though we still dislike and, as such, avoid, emotional differences. So we are likely to be attracted to one of the opposite sex. Then, as we become more aware of our bodily and sexual differences, we feel a need to absorb or merge with the other. Even in same-sex attraction, we would see that one partner has somehow to play a subservient role, as the “other” half, a “female” role, as it were.<sup>40</sup> Adolescence is especially a difficult transition, when we are emerging from the safe and sure cocoon of childhood into some kind of independent selfhood. It is also a time when we mature sexually.

Indeed, the most selfish love is that which has only one desire—that of propagating and proliferating itself—that is, sexuality.<sup>41</sup> Sexuality is the most selfish form of love because it is about self as a species; hence, it is tribal and political. It is the way that a species dominates its environment, even the world. It is how a tribe consolidates itself (such as through endogamy, patriarchy and monotheism). It is a common strategy of kings and emperors, spreading and strengthening their domains by broadcasting their seeds and spreading their lineages. [3.3]

Buddhist monasticism, in rejecting *sexuality*, renounces world power of any kind, including economic power (that is, wealth and the use of money).<sup>42</sup> Sexuality is the source and sustenance for biological families, which a renunciant forsakes for the sake of a broader spiritual family. In a spiritual family, the elderly become as their parents, those of about the same age are as siblings, and those younger are like children to them.<sup>43</sup> Their common ground is *the love for the Dharma*, for wholesome growth and spiritual cultivation.

### **3.2.3 Romantic love**

3.2.3.1 POST-PARENTAL LOVE. Love, as a person’s feeling and falling for another, is clearly excitable, even tumultuous, yet can also be both appropriative and submissive at the same time. In romantic love, a person is thus said to “fall in love” with another, initially experiencing a heightened sense of well-being, and feeling so whenever one directs one’s attention to the desirable person.

In an important way, romantic love begins with some kind of *infatuation*, an extravagant, often unrealistic, passion, a falling for another. It is often seen in an adolescent who is beginning to move away from parental love, perhaps feeling well assured of it, and now seeking to express this same nurturing, all-embracing, love for another, or simply to impress others and win their approval. Although the passion may be great here, the sexual element is just nascent. Such a romantic lover’s feeling is usually that of simply a desire for being close, perhaps a gentle touching (maybe polite kissing in due course), but mostly overwhelmed by a desire for a mystical union of sorts with the beloved.<sup>44</sup>

As we shed our romantic innocence, we begin to be more aware of the differences between our own bodily features and personal behaviour, and those of our beloved. Such a knowledge then deepens our

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<sup>39</sup> A uroboros is a serpent or dragon biting its own tail, symbolizing samsara. The myth of Sisyphus reflects this tendency, too: see Yodh’ajīva S (S 42.3) = SD 23.3 Intro.

<sup>40</sup> On homosexuality, see Sexuality = SD 31.7 (7).

<sup>41</sup> See Sexuality = SD 31.7.

<sup>42</sup> See Money and monastics = SD 4.19-23.

<sup>43</sup> See Piṇḍola Bhāra,dvāja S (S 35.127.3-5/4:110 f) = SD 27.6a (2.4).

<sup>44</sup> See Hruschka 2010:105-120 (ch 4).

desire to “know” the beloved better, to appropriate, or at least, be familiar with those differences.<sup>45</sup> It is a powerful feeling of wanting to “have” someone, that is, to *have* someone to protect and nurture, just as we have been protected and nurtured before as a child by our parent or parents. But the sexual element is beginning to tint and tow our love. In fact, the feeling is now that of lust, a desire to *have*, beginning with a mild sense of connection, to a wild wish for totally merging with the beloved. The beloved then is an *object* of love which must be *subject*.

3.2.3.2 “MYSTICAL MARRIAGE.” If such a love is required, then we, the lover, would feel special before the beloved, understood, as it were, as never before, with a keener sense of our sexual identity as a man or a woman. We may be preoccupied by frequent thoughts for the beloved, or moved to act in unusual ways for the sake of the beloved. Our feelings of love are weighed down by strong elements of longing (*apekḥā*)<sup>46</sup> and fantasy (*kappa*).<sup>47</sup>

What is often sought is a sense of being made *whole* through closeness or union with another. This goal is also a theme of religious devotion—that divine love that makes a flawed human whole—worthy of being loved by another being (human or spiritual), and capable of giving love to others. In some cases, such an emotion, when directed to a supreme father-figure or God is actually celebrated as a rapturous expression of love for the divine, most famously depicted in the “Ecstasy of Saint Teresa,”<sup>48</sup> in the tradition of a “mystical marriage” with Christ.

3.2.3.3 DRAWBACKS. In western society, romantic love began in the twelfth-century songs of European troubadours, celebrating the courtly love of chivalrous knights who saved helpless and innocent maidens. The reality, however, is that more often such ventures were to impress and woo married noblewomen, in a sort of “the best man wins” scenario. This kind of romantic love was almost a social ritual, a frivolous caper, to show off one’s knightly class, as it were. For, this love does not apply to the majority of the populace, especially the hardy and hard-working peasants, who had neither the means nor the time for it.

The intensity and frivolity of romantic love understandably has serious drawbacks. It may be a cloudy love, where the love-object is swept off her feet, leaving no ground to stand on. Women, in other words, were their *sex*, female, weak, and meant to submit to the *male*. Hence, neither are never able to rise above their sexuality.<sup>49</sup> When such a love is obsessive, which means it is unrequited [3.2.5]—the greater the unrequiting, the greater the obsession—there is a propensity for negative behaviours, such as manipulative game-playing, revenge-seeking, violence, murder, duels, suicide, even battles. Furthermore, like any feeling, romantic love is likely to fluctuate, and more so than any other kind of love. This, too, is the stuff that drama and movies are made of, which is rarely, if ever, seen amongst the wiser and more mature individuals.

**3.2.4 Puppy love.** On a more worldly and realistic level, love can be understood as a process of development. According to Erik Erikson’s eight stages of human development (Erikson, 1963),<sup>50</sup> adolescence

<sup>45</sup> A 7.48/4:57-59 = SD 8.7.

<sup>46</sup> On the dangers of longing (*apekḥā*), see **Nakula S** (A 6.16/3:295-298) & SD 5.2 (2.2).

<sup>47</sup> Comys gives it as twofold: fantasy due to craving (*taṇhā,kappa*) and due to views (*ditṭhi,kappa*) (SnA 426,23; Nm 112,16-17 = 97,1-2 = 251,14 = 327,20; qu at DA 103,19 f = CA 11,3; MA 4:16,3). Cf Sn:N 521 (p65), “figments.” Synonyms: *parikappa* (assumption), *vikappa* (consideration), *saṅkappa* (thought, intention). See *Vyāpāda* = SD 32.5.

<sup>48</sup> This famous status of Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) is the central sculptural group in white marble set in an elevated aedicule (small shrine) in the Cornaro Chapel, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. It was designed and completed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680), the leading sculptor of his day, and generally regarded as one of the sculptural masterpieces of the High Roman Baroque. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecstasy\\_of\\_Saint\\_Teresa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecstasy_of_Saint_Teresa) esp under “Interpretations.”

<sup>49</sup> See **Saññoga S** (A 7.48/4:47-59) = SD 8.7 & **Methuna S** (A 7.47/4:54-56) = SD 21.9.

<sup>50</sup> Erikson’s 8 stages of human development are: (1) Hopes: trust vs mistrust (birth - 12-18 mths); (2) Will: autonomy vs shame and doubt (18 mths – 3 yrs); (3) Purpose: initiative vs guilt (preschool, 3-6 yrs); (4) Competence: industry vs inferiority (childhood, 6-12 yrs); (5) Identity vs role confusion (adolescence, 12-19 yrs); (6) Love: intimacy vs isolation (young adults, 20-40 yrs); (7) Care: generativity vs stagnation (mid-adulthood, 40-65); (8) Wis-

is the stage for developing an identity (finding oneself). It is a period of experimentation after we outgrow the childhood self. If, however, this identity is not adequately developed before entering the next stage—that of intimacy with a partner in young adulthood—then, the lover would lack a “self” to share, and the relationship will suffer.

As such, loving needs to be learned, such as through emulating others. “Puppy love,” despite being pure infatuation, is developmentally an age-appropriate expression of love: it is the extent of love to which an immature young person is capable of, that is, by imitating adults. Such a love is not adequate mainly because a puppy lover is still psychologically unprepared even if the beloved returns such a love.

**3.2.5 Unrequited love.** Then, there is the problem of unrequited love. When the admirer is unable to express this love or, when expressed, the beloved does not return it, the admirer, feeling unfulfilled, may feel sadness, low self-esteem, anxiety, or rapid mood swings between depression and euphoria.

Firstly, however, we need to accept that unrequited love is universal and very common. *Love is not found: it is made*, just as friendship is not found, it is made [7.3]. The beloved may or may not be aware of the admirer’s affections; hence, patience and persistence may help here.

Then there is a feeling of shyness or embarrassment. As the saying goes, a faint heart never won a fair lady; so we need a strong and loving heart for the one we love. If we feel embarrassed by our perceived failure, then we need to question whether we are really in love, or are we merely looking for a trophy to show off to others.

For Buddhists who love others, cultivating lovingkindness towards the beloved in a proper way is vital [7.4]. If we are brimming over with unconditional love, it is difficult for other, especially the intended person, to miss it. The idea is to work at creating the right and best conditions for our love to be felt and accepted in a mutually wholesome manner.

In love, as in looking for a suitable job, there is a need for unrelenting effort. The more we work to find our true love, the more likely we are to find it. But finding love is only seeing sweet grapes on the vine. We need to work at reaching it. But people are not grapes: they might reach down to us, too.

For, we have loved before, numerous times, this life and in past lives, and if we have loved someone really well before, we are likely to meet that beloved again. A heart-warming Dhammapada embedded verse reminds us:

Through being together in the past,      or through present friendliness,  
even so, this love is born                      like a blue lotus in the water.      (DhA 2.1/1:181)<sup>51</sup>

When the love remains unreturned despite all our efforts, then it is time to move on. Surely, it is better this way than to end up marrying a mismatched partner and suffer at leisure. The grapes out of our reach might *really* be sour, so it’s all right to walk away. Perhaps it is time for some refreshing and healing travel, or getting involved in more positive social work or activity. In this case, becoming a monk or nun is simply not advisable, as the sangha should not be treated as a safe-house for unrequited lovers.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3 SELF-LOVE

**3.3.1 Self is dearest.** At this primordial level of love, its most animal, even beastly, level, defined and driven by our senses, it is best understood as *self-love*. Early Buddhism fully recognizes the foundation of all love as being rooted in the self. **The (Piyā) Mallikā Sutta** (S 3.8 = U 5.1) recounts how the rajah Pasenadi, like an Indian King Lear,<sup>53</sup> asks her queen Mallikā, “Is there someone you love more than yourself?”<sup>54</sup> Mallikā, however, tactfully and wisely answers:

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dom: ego integrity vs despair (seniors, 65 onwards). See eg Erikson 1963. For other refs, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson's\\_stages\\_of\\_psychosocial\\_development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erikson's_stages_of_psychosocial_development).

<sup>51</sup> *Pubb’eva sannivāsena, paccuppanna, hitena vā | evaṃ taṃ jāyate pemaṃ, uppalam’va yath’odake’ti*. Also at **Sāketā J** (J 237/2:235); DhA 3:30, 319; SnA 2:533. Cf DhA 378.

<sup>52</sup> We could of course resolve our negative emotions with a good counsellor or teacher, or even through proper meditation, and then reconsider the situation. The problem of turning to the cloth out of frustrated love is that we are likely to channel this unresolved energies into illicit liaisons with devotees leading to scandals and very bad karma.

<sup>53</sup> Shakespeare, *King Lear* 1.1.90-95.

There is no one, maharajah, dearer to me than myself. Is there, maharajah, anyone more dear to you than yourself?<sup>55</sup> (S 3.8/1:75 = U 5.1/47) = SD 38.7

The rajah of course has to concede that there is none! When the rajah consults the Buddha in due course, the Buddha confirms this for a fact:

Having traversed all the quarters with the mind,  
one finds that each one of us holds the self as dear.  
Therefore, one should not harm another,  
For each of us love the self the most. (S 3.8/1:75 = U 5.1/47) = SD 38.7

All the major world religions, in some way, address self-love in a positive way, although this is sometimes lost on some of their followers.<sup>56</sup> Although love is rooted in the self, it should not remain there. A wholesome selfhood nourishes the person into a truly healthy loving being.

**3.3.2 Love is rooted in the self.** As philosophers like **Erich Fromm** have pointed out, loving oneself is different from being arrogant, conceited or self-centred. Loving oneself, he says, means caring about oneself, taking responsibility for our actions, respecting oneself, and knowing oneself (such as being realistic and honest about our strengths and weaknesses). He further states that, in order to be able to truly love another person, we must first truly love oneself.<sup>57</sup>

Understandably, when Fromm encountered Buddhism, he was like fish into water, and his whole style of writing was significantly enriched by his understanding of Buddhism.<sup>58</sup> He also found a healthy alternative to Sigmund Freud's sexually deterministic view of human behaviour, that man is basically propelled by innate destructive forces of the libido. Fromm once wrote that in our modern society, people mostly repress their true thoughts and feelings rather than sexual urges.<sup>59</sup>

Personal growth truly begins and progresses with positive self-love, that is, a strong sense of respect, concern and confidence for oneself. These elements are encompassed in the Buddhist teaching of moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*). Traditionally, *moral shame* is sometimes known as self-regarding moral conduct (motivated by the *shame* that a deed entails), and *moral fear* as other-regarding moral conduct (motivated by a healthy *fear* of karmic repercussions).<sup>60</sup> Hence, they are said to be the twin "world-protectors" (*loka.pāla*). For, on account of them, there is healthy mutual respect for the individual and the family so that society is possible.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *Atthi nu kho te, mallike, ko c'añño attanā piya,taro'ti?* There is a royal hint here that the answer would be that Mallikā would declare that she loves the rajah more than herself!

<sup>55</sup> *Kho me, mahā,rāja, ko c'añño attanā piya,taro. Tuyham pana, mahā,rāja, atth'añño koci attanā piya,taro'ti?*

<sup>56</sup> **Erich Fromm** (1900-1980), in 1956, writes that the Christian theologian and existential philosopher, **Paul Tillich** (1886-1965), in a review of Fromm's *The Sane Society* (1955), in his *Pastoral Psychology* (Sep 1955), "suggested that it would be better to drop the ambiguous term 'self-love' and to replace it with 'natural self-affirmation' or 'paradoxical self-acceptance.' Much as I can see the merits of this suggestion. I cannot agree with him on this point. In the term 'self-love' the paradoxical element in self-love is contained more clearly. The fact is expressed that love is an attitude which is the same toward all objects, including myself. It must also not be forgotten that the term 'self-love,' in the sense in which it is used here, has a history. The Bible speaks of self-love when it commands to 'love thy neighbour as thyself,' and Meister Eckhart speaks of self-love in the very same sense." (1956:53 n13).

<sup>57</sup> Fromm 1956:53-56.

<sup>58</sup> On Fromm's view of Buddhism, see eg "Buddhism and the mode of having vs being" (1975): <http://erich-fromm.de/biophil/en/images/stories/pdf-Dateien/2009a-1975-e.pdf>. See further <http://buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=6,9950,0,0,1,0>.

<sup>59</sup> See eg 1962:126. Cf Daniel Burston, *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*, Harvard: Harvard Univ Press, 1991:22.

<sup>60</sup> *Vism* 14.142/464 f.

<sup>61</sup> See **Moral shame and moral fear** = SD 2.5.

However, on a deeper personal level, both these qualities—moral shame and moral fear—are rooted in self-love. Out of self-respect, we would not commit a transgression: we would lose our “face,” as some traditional societies see it. Out of self-concern, we would do the right thing, lest we might reap the bad karmic fruits of our deeds; hence, we become morally accountable. When moral shame and moral fear are naturally strong in us, we feel a sense of personal confidence, a faith in ourselves that we are capable of not only good (for ourselves), but of *greater* good, of benefitting others.

Just as we outgrow our clothes and shoes in time, and go on to change into bigger clothes and more comfortable shoes, even so, we outgrow self-love to be more embracing and inclusive of others. When this capacity for love becomes unconditional, it is called lovingkindness (*mettā*) [4.3]. For this reason, too, we see that lovingkindness instructions in the suttas begin with directing lovingkindness to ourselves and closes in the same way, too.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.3.3 Narcissism**

3.3.3.1 DESTRUCTIVE SELF-LOVE. The most harmful love is a destructive self-love, that is, narcissism. It is both self-defeating and deleterious as it stunts personal growth and harms others. The term narcissism comes from Narcissus,<sup>63</sup> who, in Greek mythology, is a handsome young hunter who is exceptionally arrogant, haughtily spurning all advances. As a divine punishment (by Venus or by Nemesis), he is made to fall in love with his own image, at which he longingly gazes in a forest pool, and eventually turns into a narcissus plant (commonly called daffodil in English).

Here “**narcissism**” is used for *a self-lusting personality*, not a healthy personality trait, but not always easy to notice. For, in a leader, it is often seen as personal strength and a powerful drive that is attractive. It is “an enduring pattern of personal adjustment characterized by grandiosity, need for attention and admiration, and a lack of empathy. Individuals with this disorder believe that they are special, are exploitative in their approach to others, and are excessively envious of others, while being preoccupied with fantasies of their own achievement and power.”<sup>64</sup>

Conceit is especially marked in such a personality. Those they deem as being “better” than them, they try to exploit and manipulate for their own ends, often using them, but taking all the credit. This is characteristic of the narcissist or asura personality because of their need for attention and recognition from others.<sup>65</sup>

Those they see as “equals” (such as having similar affluence, academic qualifications, or social status), they are likely to amicably go along with. Those they perceive as “inferior” (less affluent, or of a lower professional or social status), they see as their minions and followers. If they see such servility as profitable, they might employ them or pay for their services. But it is, as a rule, a one-way process, as they are unable to tolerate dissent. The narcissistic person sees the whole world as revolving around himself.

3.3.3.2 NARCISSISTIC ACTIVITY.<sup>66</sup> Narcissism is very difficult to detect, not something as easy to notice as, say a pimple on our nose. No mirror is likely to reflect such a state in us, except of course, for the Dharma. A narcissistic personality, from what has been described [3.3.3.1], might even be perceived as a good leader, someone who is a dynamic engine behind the machinery of a Buddhist group or organization.

Asian Buddhists are generally patient and tolerant with their leaders, even when they show eccentricities in their ways, such as persisting in having their own way of work or key activities of the organization. When there are others who have differing personal ideas of Buddhist work, there would be personality clashes. Such deviant individuals, unable to get along with the established leader, especially when they themselves have some charisma or means, would go on to start their own groups.

<sup>62</sup> See eg D 13.76/1:250 = 1.8; also *Brahma, vihāra* = SD 38.5 (2.1.3.2); also (3.4): Overcoming self-hate.

<sup>63</sup> Gk *Narkissos*, possibly from *narke*, “sleep, numbness.”

<sup>64</sup> David Matsumoto (ed), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 2009: sv Narcissistic personality disorder.

<sup>65</sup> For details, see **Me: The nature of conceit** = SD 19.2a.

<sup>66</sup> A more critical version and addendum to this section is available in the author’s personal archives.

Such cell-splittings often (not always) occur amicably, so that each group functions happily by itself. On the other hand, if more such capable individuals are able to work together, say, to start a local Buddhist seminary, college or university specializing in early Buddhism and meditation, the public benefits would be immense. More importantly, the local Buddhists would have a unified voice in public issues that need to be addressed, and not be misplaced and misrepresented by certain religious interest groups who do not speak for all thinking and concerned Buddhists, or even for most of them.

3.3.3.3 SELF-EXAMINATION. Personally, we each need to ask ourselves *what really happens to us when we join a religious group*. Are we becoming merely good donors and pious worshippers, fearful and distant from the preachers and teachers? Do we now know ourselves better and feel better about ourselves as a result of our religious commitments? Are the preachers and speakers speaking off the cuff, almost untouched the Dharma? Are they trivializing the Dharma and suttas? Or, worse, are they simply aping and echoing other religions on account of being unrooted in the Dharma?

If we are truly Buddhist, we should respect the Dharma. To respect the Dharma is to speak well of it, as if our life and reputation depend on it. Before giving a Dharma talk, we need to spend some time searching the suttas and cultivating lovingkindness, so that we can touch our audience and move them closer to the Dharma.

It should be clearly noted here that such an analysis of the Buddhist situation is not so much a listing of faults, as it is an attempt to *define* a problem situation, their *symptoms* identified, so that *solutions* can be worked out, and then actually *executed*. This is applying the four-noble-truth healing model to the Buddhist situations in Singapore and Malaysia, and perhaps elsewhere.

One positive sign is evident in some local Buddhist centres, that is, where they made special efforts for continuity in leadership and activities, so that they continued purposively, and benefitted the public in some way. Even then, such groups had to heavily rely on a foreign talent pool of forest monastics or meditation teachers. This kind of Buddhism was largely a spectator religion of performances by those who love an audience's attention.

Furthermore, it is helpful to understand the nature of *ethnic*<sup>67</sup> and *foreign*<sup>68</sup> Buddhisms as they really are. We also need to see the healthy need for a local Buddhism, where means "local" mastering sutta-based Dharma and applying them meaningfully and purposefully to the local situation. One vital step is that local teachers and speakers should ensure that their talks and teachings are Dharma-inspired and sutta-based, to begin with. There must truly be a love for the Dharma as handed down in the suttas. All this must be done with a lot of lovingkindness, so that we all veritably dwell in the divine abodes.

3.3.3.4 HOW SELF-LOVE CAN BE HEALTHY. **Erich Fromm**, in his instructive essay, "Selfishness and self-love" (1939), writes that we often mistake self-love for selfishness.<sup>69</sup> His essay opens with these words:

Modern culture is pervaded by a taboo on selfishness. It teaches that to be selfish is sinful and that to love others is virtuous. To be sure, this doctrine is not only in flagrant contradiction to the practices of modern society but it also is in opposition to another set of doctrines which assumes that the most powerful and legitimate drive in man is selfishness and that each individual by following this imperative drive also does the most for the common good. (1997:163)

Selfishness, as is commonly used in such ideologies, is more or less synonymous with self-love. Hence, says Fromm, the alternatives are either to love others, which is a virtue, or to love oneself, which is a sin. Fromm further notes,

This principle has found its classic expression in Calvin's theology.<sup>70</sup> Man is essentially bad and powerless. He can do nothing—absolutely nothing—good on the basis of his own strength or

<sup>67</sup> On the issue of ethnic Buddhism, see **Buddha as a myth** = SD 36.2 (7.3.4.5-6).

<sup>68</sup> On the problem of "foreign" Buddhism, see **Me: The nature of conceit** = SD 19.2a (2.3).

<sup>69</sup> In Fromm, 1997:163-195 (ch 10).

merit. “We are not our own,” says Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [1536] (Calvin 1928, Book 3, 619), “therefore neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberation and actions.... On the contrary, we are God’s; to him, therefore, let us live and die. For, as it is the most devastating pestilence which ruins people if they obey themselves, it is the only haven of salvation not to know or to want anything by oneself but to be guided by God who walks before us.”

...This doctrine is rooted in contempt and hatred for oneself. Calvin makes this point very clear; he speaks of “self-love” as of a “pest” (ibid, 622). (Fromm 1997:163 f)

In early Buddhism, the “self” (*attā*) that is rejected is the *notion* of some enduring entity that is either identical with our body, or separate from it, or which survives death. This is rejected simply because it does not exist. What seems to be persisting, or rather what keeps us “going,” is simply our *consciousness*, which changes every moment, feeding us with vital data of sense-experiences, with which we create our own worlds.<sup>71</sup>

Buddhism teaches self-accountability and self-empowerment, teachings not based on pious faith but through the Buddha’s own awakening, so that he sees the true nature of reality. Such positive teachings of self-effort are, for example, famously stated in these verses:

By one alone is evil done, by oneself is evil not done, Purity and impurity are within oneself.	by the self is one defiled; by the self is one purified. No one may purify another.	(Dh 165)
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The self is the master of the self; With a self well-tamed,	for, who else could the master be? indeed, one gains a master that is hard to find.	(Dh 160; cf 380) <sup>72</sup>
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Self-love makes us human, and keeps us human. It is our self-love that gives us our humanity. It is through self-love that our parents instinctively love us just as they love themselves, sometimes even more so. If not for this special bond, we would not have won our human state.

But this love does not stop there. It is capable of growing beyond itself. It is a reflexive eye, the heart’s mirror: we are *aware* that we love ourselves [3.3.1]. Yet, we are not alone: as we mature as individuals, we realize that others, too, are like us. They too love themselves. It behooves us then to treat each other with that same human love. This is called the golden rule, the key that opens the door to our humanity.<sup>73</sup>

3.3.3.5 HEALTHY SELF-LOVE. Healthy self-love, then, can be both self-accepting as well as embracing others, and also have a sense of detachment whenever necessary. This personal dynamic occurs when we see the periodic and constant shifts in our own self-perception, and we see ourselves as extensions of others, even of all there is around and beyond us. We realize that we are not alone, that we need to communicate and live with others and with nature herself.

As we progress along such a path, we begin to understand that the “I” that we are is intimately linked with “others,” and does not exist in itself: *there is really no “I” without others*. The “I” is only a perspective of our momentary and evolving consciousnesses. On an even deeper level, we know that we are much more than even our names, or titles, or status, or all our possessions—we are more than what we *have*, yet we *are not* the sum of what we have.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> John Calvin (1509-1564), influential French theologian and pastor during the Protestant Reformation (regarded by some as its most prominent figure), well known for his controversial polemics and apologetics, known as Calvinism.

<sup>71</sup> See **Is there a soul?** = SD 2.16 & **Consciousness** = SD 17.8a.

<sup>72</sup> See **Ādhipateyya S** (A 3.40) = SD 27.3 (3.1); also **Spiritual friendship**= SD 34.1(5.2).

<sup>73</sup> On the golden rule, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7.5/5:353) & SD 1.5 (2). See also **Brahma,vihāra** = SD 38.5.

<sup>74</sup> On *being* and *having*, see 2.3 & 8.

Under normal circumstances, without any pathological absence of love, we are likely to enjoy a healthy self-esteem. Such self-esteem or self-love, however, is likely to diminish or even be lacking should the self-doubts and limiting views of our parents, pastors and teachers infect us. Then, we are likely ourselves to fall into cycles of self-rejection or self-hate, which in turn are projected onto those close to us, simply hurting them.<sup>75</sup>

Self-love, as such, *can* be taught, *needs* to be taught, to our children, those under our care and guidance, and those who have turned to us for succour. Such a healing process must be tempered with honesty, wisdom and unconditional love. Those close to us are likely to mirror us. We should work to be at least warmly human, so that we do not fall into any subhuman states.<sup>76</sup> [7.2]

## 4 Familial love

**4.1 WHAT IS A FAMILY?** The family is a vital social structure and environment that moulds us as humans, and keep us human. For our purposes here—which is a practical understanding of love in terms of Buddhist practice—we will define **family** as a basic social unit, comprising two or more adults living together in the same household and cooperating in various economic, social and protective activities, and caring their own or adopted children.<sup>77</sup> When the children mature, they may marry and move out to set up their own families. They would, however, be part of a **kinship** network.<sup>78</sup>

The early Buddhist texts often speak of “relations and blood relatives” (*ñāti, sālohita*),<sup>79</sup> a compound which the Commentaries define as those of the same blood, connected by the same womb, such as sons and daughters, and other such connections.<sup>80</sup> More specifically, *nāti* refers to those “on the side of mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law,”<sup>81</sup> and *sā, lohita* are those “related by the same blood, such as by father, grandfather, etc.”<sup>82</sup> “of the same blood, such as brother, sister, uncle, etc.”<sup>83</sup> “of the same blood, such as brothers, sisters, etc.”<sup>84</sup> In other words, *ñāti* is a broader term encompassing everyone who is consanguine (related by blood) as well as by marriage or adoption, while *sā, lohita* more specifically refers only to blood relatives.

The Buddha, as evident from his teachings, encourages a broader concept of the family, that is, to include all who live in the same household (*geha, kuṭumba*). In various suttas, the Buddha reminds us to treat those living under the same roof with love, compassion, joy and equanimity.<sup>85</sup> **The Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31) lays out the six directions, not as tutelary deities to be worshipped, but as reciprocal social duties for a wholesome family and community life.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>75</sup> See *Brahma, vihāra* = SD 38.5 (3.4): Overcoming self-hate.

<sup>76</sup> See **Myth in Buddhism** = SD 36.1 (4.3): The myth of other realms.

<sup>77</sup> A family, however, can also be more broadly def, as does OED: “The group of persons consisting of the parents and their children, whether actually living together or not; in wider sense, the unity formed by those who are nearly connected by blood or affinity.” See Ency Brit 15<sup>th</sup> ed, 1983 Micropaedia: sv family and marriage.

<sup>78</sup> See A Barnard & J Spencer (eds), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, London & NY: Routledge, 2010 sv family.

<sup>79</sup> “Blood relatives” (*ñāti, sālohita*): Comy defines the cpd as those of the same blood, connected by the same womb, such as sons and daughters, and other such connections (*samāna, lohite eka, yoni, sambadhe putta, dhītādayo avasesa, bandhave ca*, SnA 2:447,7); or *nāti* as “on the side of mother-in-laws and father-in-laws” (*sassu, sasura, -pakkhikā*) (MA 1159; SA 3:286; AA 2:333, 5:51) and *sā, lohita* as “related by the same blood, such as by father, grandfather, etc” (*eka, lohita, sambaddhā pīti, pitāmahādayo*) (MA 1:159; AA 5:51), “of the same blood, such as brother, sister, uncle, etc” (*samāna, lohita bhāti, bhagini, mātulādayo*) (SA 3:286), “of the same blood, such as brothers, sisters, etc” (*samāna, lohita bhāti, bhagini, ādayo*) (AA 2:333).

<sup>80</sup> *Samāna, lohite eka, yoni, sambadhe putta, dhītādayo avasesa, bandhave ca* (SnA 2:447,7).

<sup>81</sup> *Sassu, sasura, pakkhikā* (MA 1:159; SA 3:286; AA 2:333, 5:51).

<sup>82</sup> *Eka, lohita, sambaddhā pīti, pitāmahādayo* (MA 1:159; AA 5:51).

<sup>83</sup> *Samāna, lohita bhāti, bhagini, mātulādayo* (SA 3:286).

<sup>84</sup> *Samāna, lohita bhāti, bhagini, ādayo* (AA 2:333).

<sup>85</sup> These are of course the 4 divine abodes: see *Brahma, vihāra* = SD 38.5.

<sup>86</sup> D 31.27-35/3:188-193 = SD 4.1.

We are to minister to our friends and companions in five ways, that is, with generosity, with courtesy, looking after their welfare, impartially, and by keeping to our word. And we, as those friends and companions, in our turn, should protect such a friend when he is heedless, guard his property when he is off guard, be a refuge to him in times of trouble, and respect his family members.

Furthermore, we should treat our household workers and dependents by allocating them with proper food and wages (financial support), taking care of their health needs, sharing occasional perks (fringe benefits) with them, and giving them timely respite. Clearly, the idea here is to take them as an integral and happy members of the same extended family.

**4.2 TRUST (VISSĀSA).** The early texts often relate how an insightful individual, seeing the biological family as being “crowded, stifling, narrow, full of hindrances,” so that he wishes to renounce the world for “the open air” of a renunciant’s life.<sup>87</sup> Yet, for those who choose to stay on as lay practitioners, the family can be conducive to spiritual development, that is, if its members are filled with “trust” (*vissāsa*) for one another: “The trustworthy are the best relatives” (*vissāsa, paramā ñātī*, Dh 204c).<sup>88</sup>

The English word “family” first appeared probably around 1400, and was derived from the Latin *familia*, meaning “household,” including relatives and servants (similar to the early Buddhist notion of family [4.1]). The modern sense of “those connected by blood” was first attested only in 1667. In fact, the word’s roots probably went back even earlier to Latin, *familiaris*, from which we get the word “familiar” (c1340), which in Chaucer’s time, meant “of or pertaining to one’s family or household.”

A trusted friend or true relative is defined in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31) as *a friend through thick and thin*, as follows:

The one constant in joy and in sorrow (*samāna, sukha, dukkha*) [a friend through thick and thin] should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He tells you his secrets.
- (b) He keeps your secrets.
- (c) He does not abandon you in your troubles.<sup>89</sup>
- (d) He would even give up his life for you.<sup>90</sup>

The one who is constant in joy and sorrow, young householder, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons. (D 31.23/3:187) = SD 4.1

We will examine this on a deeper level below [7.3].

**4.3 LOVING CONDUCT.** In a vital way, love is not love till we show it. When love is mutually shown and appreciated, we have an ideal friendship. Although we are of different bodies, as it were, we are of one heart (or mind). In fact, this is exactly what the elder Anuruddha reports to the Buddha, in **the (Upak-kilesa) Anuruddha Sutta** (M 128), of the ambience of the small group (with Nandiya and Kimbila) he is practising with:

“Bhante, here I think thus: ‘It is a gain for me! It is a great gain for me, that I am dwelling with such companions in the holy life.’”

<sup>91</sup>Bhante, I keep up acts of lovingkindness through deed both openly and in private towards these venerables.

<sup>87</sup> See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.41/1:63) = SD 8.10.

<sup>88</sup> See **Spiritual friendship** = SD 34.1 (2.2).

<sup>89</sup> This is also the reciprocal quality that your “friends and companions” should show you [§31i].

<sup>90</sup> For examples, see **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31.23(d)/3:187) n @ SD 4.3.

<sup>91</sup> The foll 3 verses contain the first 3 of the 6 “principles of cordiality” (*cha dhammā sārāṇīyā*) given in **Kosambiya S** (M 48). The remaining 3 are: (4) sharing of gains with virtuous companions in the holy life; (5) compatible high moral virtues; (6) compatible right view and practice (M 48.6/1:322 f, 2:250; D 3:245; A 3:288 f, 5:89; DhSA 294; J 5:382. Cf *sārāṇīyam dhamma, katham suṇāti*, DhA 4:168 & BHS *samraṇṇīyam dharmam samādāya*, Divy 404).

Bhante, I keep up acts of lovingkindness through speech both openly and in private towards these venerables.

Bhante, I keep up acts of lovingkindness through thought both openly and in private towards these venerables.

Bhante, here I think thus: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and instead do what these venerables wish to do?’ Then, bhante, I set aside what I wish to do and instead do what these venerables wish to do.

It seems, bhante, that we are of different bodies but of one mind!<sup>92</sup>

(M 128.12a/3:156) = SD 5.18

Following this precious example, lay followers, too, should privately (that is, internally) and openly show lovingkindness, through the three doors of action, to others, especially to friends and companions. For the laity, love and appreciation can be expressed appropriately in many ways, such as hugging and touching, complimenting, offering help, paying attention to what the person is saying or feeling, sacrificing our time or money for their sake, being on time and being presentable when seeing them, being patient with their imperfections, and being willing to apologize for our lapses—just to mention a few.

Such outward behaviour is often a social or psychological indicator of our intentions or feelings. For others to really appreciate our intentions and feelings, they have to be appropriately expressed, that is, acted out or spoken. It should also be remembered that we are held responsible by others for how we act and speak, but not for what we only think or feel.

Our conduct, however, as long as it is under our control, can be used to change our feelings or attitudes. Even something as simple as meeting someone we do not like, will help us see him in better light. In short, we can learn to behave and feel more loving, when this is reinforced by thoughts, especially when tempered with lovingkindness, as exemplified above by Anuruddha.

*Na so mitto yo sadā appamatto  
bheda,saṅkī randham evānupassī  
yasmim ca seti urasīva putto  
sa ve mitto yo parehi abhejjo*

He is no friend, who relentlessly  
suspects discord, always looking for faults.  
But like a son in the bosom  
is truly a friend inseparable by others. (Sn 255)

#### 4.4 OUR HUMANIZATION PROCESS<sup>92</sup>

**4.4.1 We are not born human.** We are born with only a human body; we are not born human. The humanizing begins with our human parents. Parents who nourish their children with both solid food and the food of love, especially for the first seven years of our lives, provide us with the best conditions of a human state. These are the most formative years for us as a species; for, it gives us our basic humanity.

Our mothers are the key agents in our *first seven years*. Through their unconditional love and compassion, we, mirroring them, become humans. “A mother is a friend in our own house” (*mātā mittam sake ghare*, S 1:27). During our *second seven years*, when we become more aware of our bodies and of others as individuals, our fathers work to *socialize* us, so that we would healthily fit in with others and society at large. This is, of course, an ideal typology; for, such nurturing is often done in subtle and loving ways, and not always easy to separate the vital interrelated roles of the two parents.

Nevertheless, this is a key reason why we should be grateful to our parents. For, conversely, this is what defines *parents*: they are not merely the biological conditions for our birth, but also our humanizing agents. Indeed, those who have raised us to be humans, and good humans, too, have truly parented us. *They are our true creator-God, and our first teachers.*<sup>93</sup> Parents, through their godliness of unconditional love, compassion, gladness, and equanimity, have raised the humanity in us, so that we have the capability to attain the divine ourselves.

<sup>92</sup> This whole section is a revision of “Revisioning Buddhism” reflection (RB 44), 30 Nov 2011.

<sup>93</sup> *Brahmā’ti mātā,pitaro, pubb’ācariyā’ti vuccare* (A 1:132, 2:70 f; It 110; J 5:330 f).

**4.4.2 Feral children.** There are accounts of feral children who were raised by wolves or monkeys since they were infants. Apparently, those rescued early (while still infants or prepubescent) could be humanized, but attempts, even by scientists and experts, at socializing those who were older proved to be impossible or never completely successful.<sup>94</sup>

**The Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129) (the discourse on the wise and the foolish) says that those who are attached to the faculty of taste (without cultivating the higher faculties, especially the mind) are reborn as plant-feeding animals. Those who make a living from religious rituals, like the sacrificial brahmins or the commercialized priests of our own times, would be reborn as dirt-feeding animals (like chickens, pigs and dogs).<sup>95</sup>

Others who fail to sustain their lives as true humans, often falling into subhuman behaviour, habitually have the minds of those lower beings. They may have human bodies, but they are aggressive in reaping profits and success, exploiting others and measuring them in terms of selfish gains and money. They are virtual titans or asuras, violent exploitative demons.

Those who simply live cyclic lives of merely looking for food and fun, with predictable emotions, and a lack of the desire for learning, are virtual animals (who are born, feed, play, reproduce, and die). They live in the dark, or in water, or in filth. They eat each other and prey on the weak. Because of the lack of spiritual life, no doing of what is wholesome, in such states, it is very difficult for such animals to gain the human state (Dh 182).<sup>96</sup>

Those who are addicted to substances (such as drugs and glue), or never really enjoying anything they keep collecting, no matter how much they may have, are virtual shades or pretas. Those who are regularly violent and intolerant, caught up in killing one another, mass bombing others and being bombed themselves, are in a virtual hell state.

**4.4.3 Remaining human.** This is the myth of the five destinies—the devas, the humans, the animals, the pretas, and the hell-beings,<sup>97</sup> and the myth of the six realms, including the asuras. These mythical beings lurk in the shadows of our minds, ever ready to transmogrify themselves into our consciousness, dehumanizing and deluding us, even destroying others. We are rarely aware of these states when we fall into them. Only in keeping to *the basic rules of humanity*—the five precepts<sup>98</sup>—are we safe from sinking into these subhuman shadows.

**The five precepts** are the minimum standards of being human. They are the “quality control” for our human lives. When we keep our precepts well, we will never fall into such subhuman states, or worse, be reborn into them, spending unimaginably long periods in those unhappy states.

The five precepts are the bases for our moral training, so that we cultivate moral virtue that keeps us truly human. The first precept is to value life (the first and foremost universal value). The second is to respect the happiness of others, which behoove us not to take away by theft and fraud what rightly belongs to others. The third precept, against sexual misconduct, is really about respect for personal freedom, the right of a person to say “no.”

The fourth precept, that of refraining from false speech, is about wholesome communication. Basically, what we communicate should be truthful, should promote good friendship and social harmony, should be pleasant and proper, and should in some way be beneficial, if not, instructive.

While the first three precepts are about right action of our *body*, the fourth is about our *speech*. Along with the mind, the body and speech constitute the three “doors” of karma or morally efficacious action.

<sup>94</sup> Many accounts of feral children were, however, false or invented for dubious purposes. For refs, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feral\\_child](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feral_child).

<sup>95</sup> **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129.18-19/3:167 f) = SD 2.22. This is called coprophagy, “the consumption of faeces.” Animals such as rabbits and hamsters do this because their alimentary system does not fully digest their food, so they need to ingest the partly digested food in their droppings, and from which they obtain some nutrients. Young elephants, hippos, pandas and koalas eat the faeces of their parents or other animals to obtain the bacteria necessary to digest the vegetation they feed on. See further: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coprophagia>.

<sup>96</sup> See also “Becoming human: it’s easier than you think,” in Piya Tan, *Revisiting Buddhism*, 2011: ch 2.

<sup>97</sup> **Pañca,gati S** (A 9.68/4:459) = SD 2.20.

<sup>98</sup> See **Veju,dvāreyya S** (S 55.75/5:352-356) = SD 1.5.

They are actions, conscious or unconscious, which bear similar consequences upon us, after committing them.

The fifth precept, that of refraining from intoxicants and addictive substances, is to keep the mind free, serving as a basis for inner calm and clarity. Indeed, if we are intoxicated or unmindful, we are more likely to break any or all of the other humanizing precepts.<sup>99</sup>

**4.4.4 Transcending the human.** When our moral virtue is strong, we are free from fear and guilt of things done or undone, so that our hearts easily enjoy a deep level of inner peace. This is our “divinizing” process, as it were. We are naturally able to feel and show unconditional love, even without religion. We are easily compassionate to others, being kind to them even when they do not deserve it. We simply feel happy at the happiness of others. And when things do not go right, our hearts are clearly calm so that we, untroubled by negative emotions, simply do what needs to be done next.<sup>100</sup>

Through keeping the precepts, our good works become truly effective. We are not merely *showing* that we are *doing* good: we *are* really good. Through our moral virtue, we enjoy heaven here and now. More importantly, we should work to become streamwinners, those who have boarded the safe and sure boat down the stream to nirvana in this life itself.

## 5 Hospitality

**5.1 THE 6 KINDS OF RESPECT.**<sup>101</sup> We have noted that *hospitality* was (and is) an important value and custom in the western classical world and Asia as a whole [1.2.3]. **The (Upagantabba) Kula Sutta** (A 9.17), in its list of the six conditions for non-decline (*aparihāniya dhamma*) or the six respects (*gāravatā*), closes with “the respect for hospitality,” thus:

- |                              |                                |                                   |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) respect for the Teacher  | <i>satthu, gāravatā,</i>       |                                   |
| (2) respect for the Dharma   | <i>dhamma, gāravatā,</i>       |                                   |
| (3) respect for the Sangha   | <i>saṅgha, gāravatā,</i>       |                                   |
| (4) respect for the training | <i>sikkhā, gāravatā,</i>       |                                   |
| (5) respect for heedfulness  | <i>appamāda, gāravatā,</i>     |                                   |
| (6) respect for hospitality  | <i>paṭisanthāra, gāravatā.</i> | (A 9.17/4:387 f) & SD 37.11 (1-7) |

In a learning situation and amongst *friends*, **respect** is a vital expression of non-judgemental, even unconditional, acceptance of others. Here, it is said to be “vital” because it gives *life* to the learning process and the friendship: they become alive, lively, life-affirming and liberating. Respect, in other words, is the spirit or catalyst for learning and friendship. Just as a teacher begins by accepting a student just as he is and creates the conditions for his personal, intellectual and spiritual growth, even so, true friends accept one another and deepen their fellowship and love as they understand and learn from one another.

The first three respects are to the three jewels, that is, the Buddha as the ideal of awakening,<sup>102</sup> the Dharma as the path to awakening,<sup>103</sup> and the Sangha as those who have attained to the different levels of awakening and nirvana.<sup>104</sup> To effect this, we need to keep to the training, or more specifically the three trainings (*ti, sikkhā*), that is, in moral virtue, in mental cultivation, and in wisdom.<sup>105</sup>

The fifth respect, that of heedfulness, refers to being constantly mindful, and more specifically the practice of meditation. In the case of the laity, this would refer especially to the practice of the perception

<sup>99</sup> See **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.75/5:352-356) = SD 1.5.

<sup>100</sup> See **Alabbhāniya Ṭhāna S** (A 5.48/3:54-56) = SD 42.1.

<sup>101</sup> This is only briefly discussed here. For details, see **(Upagantabba) Kula S** (A 9.17/4:387 f) & SD 37.11 (1-7).

<sup>102</sup> See **(Upagantabba) Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (2).

<sup>103</sup> See **(Upagantabba) Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (3).

<sup>104</sup> See **(Upagantabba) Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (4).

<sup>105</sup> See **(Upagantabba) Kula S** (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (5).

of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*), as a commitment to attaining streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>106</sup> In an important way, this is closely related to respect for the Dharma.

“Respect for hospitality” (*paṭisanthāra,gāravatā*) is significantly listed last in the six conditions for non-decline of monastics, but which also applies to all who love the Dharma.<sup>107</sup> The Abhidhamma and Commentaries speak of two kinds of “hospitality,” that is, worldly hospitality (*āmisapaṭisanthāra*) and spiritual hospitality (*dhammapaṭisanthāra*).<sup>108</sup>

“Worldly hospitality” simply means family duties, public service, common courtesy, civil or proper conduct in society, including keeping society crime-free (DA 3:981). “Spiritual hospitality” includes being favourably disposed towards worthy renunciants. This is clearly defined in practical terms in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31).<sup>109</sup>

## 5.2 GUESTS

**5.2.1 Types of guests.** A key notion behind “the respect for hospitality” (*paṭisanthāra,gāravatā*) is the proper treatment of guests. Who are guests? We have at least three words for “guest” in the texts and Commentaries, that is, *atithi*, *āgantuka* and *abbhāgata*. A global search, using a wildcard (that is, *atith\**, *āgantuk\** and *abbhāgat\**) yielded<sup>110</sup> as follows: *atithi* (47 hits),<sup>111</sup> *āgantuka* (197 hits)<sup>112</sup> and *abbhāgata* (4 hits).<sup>113</sup> This shows that the most common Pali word for “guest” in the canon is *āgantuka*, but the majority of it is found in the Vinaya, relating to visiting monks.<sup>114</sup>

*Atithi* (literally, “one who does not remain”) is most commonly found in the Jātaka gathas.<sup>115</sup> The CPD (Critical Pali Dictionary), under *atithi*, gives the following synonyms: *āgantuka*, *pāhuna* and *āvesika*. *Āgantuka* is rare, appearing apparently only in the canonical Jātaka gathas.<sup>116</sup> *Pāhuna*,<sup>117</sup> on the other hand, is very common in the canon, especially as *pāhuneyyo* (“worthy of hospitality, deserving to be a guest”)<sup>118</sup> [5.2.2]. *Āvesika* is a late invention, found in the Abhidhāna-p, padīpikā, a 12<sup>th</sup>-century Pali dictionary (Abhp 424).

Now, *atithīpāhunā* or *atithīpāhunakā*, both meaning “guests worthy of hospitality” are found in the suttas but more so in the Commentaries. In fact, the phrase *atithīpāhunā* appears twice in **the Ussūra**

<sup>106</sup> See (Upagantabba) Kula S (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (6). On streamwinning, see **Entering the stream** = SD 3.3.

<sup>107</sup> See (Upagantabba) Kula S (A 9.17) @ SD 37.11 (7).

<sup>108</sup> A 1:93; Vbh 360; Dhs 230; DA 3:981; AA 2:161; DhA 4:111; DhsA 397.

<sup>109</sup> D 31.33/3:191 = SD 4.1.

<sup>110</sup> This search is only approximate, as some sandhi forms, for example, might be missed out. Excluded are occurrences in V Parivāra, colophons (*uddāna*) & titles.

<sup>111</sup> *Athiti*: D 1:117×4, 133×4; M 2:167×4, 186×2, 187×3, 190×6; S 1:162×3; A 2:68, 3:45, 260×2; Khp 7; Ap 2:331, 375; J 286/2:420, 444/4:31, 470/4:184×4, 535/5:388×4, 541/6:117, 547/6:542.

<sup>112</sup> *Āgantuka*: V 1:33×2, 59, 107, 118×2, 132×20, 133×18, 134×5, 158, 167×44, 196×2, 212, 253, 292×4, 294×2, 312×3, 313×6, 314×9, 2:11, 16, 32×2, 35×2, 93×3, 94×2, 95×3, 110, 157×3, 170×3, 207×6, 208, 210×3, 211, 304, 3:65×2, 88, 181, 230, 4:24; M 1:456×2, 457; S 4:219, 5:51; A 1:10×4, 3:41, 366×7, 367×10; U 24×2, 25, 26×3, 27×3, 59.

<sup>113</sup> *Abbhāgata*: A 3:37, 4:265, 268; Vv 1, 2.

<sup>114</sup> This search could be expanded, yielding more hits, if we prefix the headwords with an asterisk, too, thus: *\*tith\**, *\*āgantuk\** and *\*abbhāgat\** though we need to select only related words.

<sup>115</sup> D 1:117,4 = 133,14 = M 2:167,28, D 1:117,7+8 = 133,17+18 = M 2:167,31; A 3:260,4, 307,5; Khp 8.7; J 4:31,29\*, 5:388,7\*, 6:274,23, 542,2\*.

<sup>116</sup> J 3:402,5\*, 6:529,2\*+16; ThaA 16.

<sup>117</sup> From *pa + āhuna* (*ā + √HU > juhati*, “sacrifice, offer; give, dedicate”) (Skt *āhavana*), “sacrificial gift, offering; honouring” (V 1:359,22\*; DA 994,34 = AA 4:28,22; ItA 2:159,17 ≠ Vism 219,27).

<sup>118</sup> *Pāhuna*: D 1:97×2, 98×2; M 1:154×4; S 1:114; A 3:260; J 483/4:274 (*pāhunaka*), 538/6:24, 547/6:516; C 100; Ap 1:136, 331. As *pāhuneyyā*: M 3:80; A 2:183, 40, 11, 13, 14, 146×2, 4:292, 373, 5:23; Kvu 556; *pāhuneyyo*: D 2:94, 3:5, 227; M 1:37, 446, 447, 3:137, 220; S 2:704:272, 279, 304, 5:343 A 1:208, 222, 244, 245, 246, 2:34, 56, 171, 3:36, 134×3, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 212, 248×2, 279×2, 282, 286, 387, 390, 4:13, 14, 117, 146, 290, 407, 5:67×2, 183, 198, 201, 330; It 88; Kvu 549×2, 551, 553.

**Bhatta Sutta** (A 5.228), in reference to “worthy guests.”<sup>119</sup> Conversely, it is understood that there are those who are *not* worthy as guests, or, for good reasons, are not worthy of being welcomed as guests. [5.2.2; 5.6.4]

**5.2.2 Being hospitable to guests.** While parents are said to be our true creators, hence, our true Gods [4.4.1], guests as regarded as gods, anegls or devas [1.2.3], as suggested by the expression, “offerings to guests” (*ātithi, balī*), found in **the Patta,kamma Sutta** (A 4.61) and **the Ādiya Sutta** (A 5.41), where it is stated to be one of the fivefold offerings.<sup>120</sup> Such a sentiment clearly suggests that we should properly treat our guests.

**The Kāla Dana Sutta** (A 5.36) lists the first “timely giving” (*kāla, dāna*) as those given to guests (*āgantukassa dānaṃ deti*),<sup>121</sup> that is, the offering of proper refreshments, food and hospitality. Not only is such a practice proper, that is, *a social propriety*, but it is also regarded as *a wholesome act of merit*, a morally virtuous act, if this is done with a mind of lovingkindness. **The Nidhi,kaṇḍa Sutta** (Khp 8) adds that, in this way, our wealth is securely “saved” or “stored” in the guests, or in anyone to whom we are generous or virtuous.<sup>122</sup>

**The Ussūra Bhatta Sutta** (A 5.228) therefore clearly states that “Guests worthy of hospitality should be honoured in a timely way.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, they should not be kept waiting or wanting. This teaching is given in the context of *rising early and having meals before daybreak*,<sup>124</sup> so that all our religious and household duties are properly executed, and we are in the best of health. This provisional teaching is given in the context of a mainly agricultural society. In our own urbanized society today, this would mean rising early or in time, planning our work properly, executing them properly, having enough time for personal cultivation, and having enough rest.

**The Vasala Sutta** (Sn 1.7) is even more unequivocal about being hospitable to guests and the unrequiting guest:

Who having gone to another family and tasted good food,  
returns not the honour—know him as an outcaste. (Sn 128)

Who, when it is meal-time, annoys with talk,  
and gives not—know him as an outcaste. (Sn 130)

### 5.3 MUTUAL GREETING

#### 5.3.1 Public encounters

5.3.1.1 COURTESY DURING PUBLIC GATHERINGS. Neighbourliness and respect for the guest are traditional qualities for Buddhists, exemplified in the suttas and commentarial stories of the Buddha and the early saints themselves. Of course, these are not uniquely Buddhist sentiments, but are universal ancient Indian social norms that are recorded in the early suttas. **The Kesa,puttiya Sutta** (A 3.65) opening records a typical scenario at the start of a public teaching session by the Buddha:

Then the Kālāmas of Kesa,putta approached the Blessed One.

<sup>119</sup> **Ussūra Bhatta S** (A 5.228/3:260) = SD 76.4; also see DA 1:288 = MA 3:423 (*atithī* glossed as *pāhunakā*); CA 246 (*pāhuna* glossed as *atithi*); J 4:274.

<sup>120</sup> The fivefold offerings (*pañca, balī*) are to relatives (*ñāti, balī*), to guests (*atithi, balī*), to the departed (*pubba-  
peta, balī*), to the king (taxes, fines, etc) (*rāja, balī*), and to the devas (*devatā, balī*) (A 4.64.12/2:68) = SD 37.12 & (A 5.41.5/3:45) = SD 2.1.

<sup>121</sup> A 5.36/3:41 = SD 22.15.

<sup>122</sup> Khp 8.7/7.

<sup>123</sup> *Ye te atithī pāhunā, te kālena paṭipūjenti*, A 5.288.4/3:260 = SD 76.4.

<sup>124</sup> This is of course only in ref to the laity, for monastics and those keeping to the 8 precepts, ie the rule to keep to having meals *only* in the proper times (**Pāc 37** = V 4:85 f); see M 65.2/1:437 = SD 56.2 & M 70 @ SD 11.1 (2).

Some greeted him with lotus-palms; some exchanged greetings and cordial talk with him; some announced their name and clan before the Blessed One—and then sat down at one side. Some kept silent and sat down at one side.<sup>125</sup> (A 3.65.1e/1:188) = SD 35.4a

This is an example of a general respect for teachers in ancient India, where such cordiality are a social norm, reflecting an open tolerance for religious teachings. It was a time when probably the whole community (they were usually small agrarian villages) would come to listen to teachers like the Buddha. It was almost a festive event, considering a time before public entertainment and communications as we know them. Understandably, there were also those who either simply felt compelled to follow the flow, as suggested by the last sentence: “Some kept silent and sat down at one side.”

5.3.1.2 ASKING AFTER OTHERS. The suttas and Commentaries often present the Buddha as being a remarkably friendly person. **The Buddha,vaṃsa Commentary** (Madhur’attha,vilāsīnī), for example, says that the Buddha is “hospitable to visiting monks.”<sup>126</sup> The Buddha would ask about their journey,<sup>127</sup> or ask after their health, with words like: “I hope you find it bearable. I hope you can keep going, I hope you have no trouble with almsfood,”<sup>128</sup> or asking after those who have just emerged from a rains-retreat,<sup>129</sup> or asking after someone ill (usually dying),<sup>130</sup> or simply asking after another.<sup>131</sup> [5.3.2].

5.3.1.3 THE FIRST TO GREET OTHERS. In **the Kūṭa,danta Sutta** (D 5), the brahmin Kūṭa,danta, in his generous praises of the Buddha, states one of the Buddha’s virtues as follows:

Indeed the recluse master Gotama is one who bids all welcome, congenial, courteous, never frowning, approachable, *the first to greet others* [the first to speak]. (D 5.7a(18)/1:132)<sup>132</sup>

**The Soṇa,daṇḍa Sutta** (D 4) also records the kiasu brahmin Soṇa,daṇḍa as complimenting the Buddha in the same way.<sup>133</sup>

It is interesting that this quality is nowhere mentioned: it is stated by only these two brahmins. Naturally, the Buddha would not attribute himself with such a compliment. As for the Buddha’s disciples themselves, they see this quality so often in the Buddha, and they themselves naturally show it, that it goes without saying for them.

<sup>125</sup> *Appekacce bhagavantam abhivādetvā ekam-antaṃ nisīdīmsu, appekacce bhagavatā saddhiṃ sammodīmsu, sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ sāraṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekam-antaṃ nisīdīmsu, appekacce yena bhagavā ten’añjaliṃ paṇāmetvā ekam-antaṃ nisīdīmsu, appekacce nāma,gottamā sāvetvā ekam-antaṃ nisīdīmsu, appekacce tuṅhī,bhūtā ekam-antaṃ nisīdīmsu: V 1:36; D 1:118, 134, 2:319, 3:194, 206×2; M 1:229, 285, 291, 401, 2:55, 141, 3:291; S 5:353; A 1:181, 188.*

<sup>126</sup> *Āgantukehi bhikkhūhi paṭisanthāra,karaṇam* (BA 298). Also at V 1:59, 212, 253, 3:87.

<sup>127</sup> Asking about a journey: *Kacci, bhikkhu, khamanīyaṃ, kacci yāpanīyaṃ kaccisi appa,kilamathena addhānaṃ āgato: V 1:59, 313, 314, 2:11, 3:148, 181, 182.*

<sup>128</sup> *Kacci vo...khamanīyaṃ, kacci yāpanīyaṃ, kacci piṇḍakena na kilamathā ti: B 1:206, 3:156×2; V 1:350, 351.*

<sup>129</sup> After a rains-retreat: *Kacci vo...khamanīyaṃ, kacci yāpanīyaṃ, kacci samaggā sammodamānā avivadamānā phāsukam vassam vasittha, na ca piṇḍakena kilamithā ti: V 1:158, 1:253, 3:88* (Buddha to Vaggumudā monks), 4:24 (do).

<sup>130</sup> Asking after a sick monastic and layman: *Kacci vo...khamanīyaṃ, kacci yāpanīyaṃ: M 2:192* (Sāriputta asking Dhanañjāni, 3:258 (Sāriputta asking Anātha,piṇḍika), 3:263 (Sāriputta asking Channa); S 3:120 (Buddha asking Vakkali), 3:125 (Buddha asking Assaji), 3:127 (elder monks & Dāsaka asking after Khemaka), 4:46 (Buddha asking a monk), 4:47 (Buddha asking another monk), 4:56 (Sāriputta asking Channa), 5:79 (Buddha asking Mahā Kassapa), 5:80 (Buddha asking Moggallāna), 5:177 (Ānanda asking layman Sirivaḍḍha), 5:436 (Buddha asking layman Dīgh’āvu), 5:381 (Sāriputta asking Anātha,piṇḍika), 5:385 (Ānanda asking Anātha,piṇḍika); A 3:379 (Buddha asking Phagguna); V 4:56 (elder nuns asking Mahā Pajāpatī).

<sup>131</sup> Asking after another: *Kacci vo...khamanīyaṃ, kacci yāpanīyaṃ: U 172* (Sāriputta asking a boy: see U:M 36 n67), 40 (Moggallāna asking Sāriputta), 59 (Buddha asking Soṇa).

<sup>132</sup> *Samaṇo khalu bho gotamo ehi,sāgata,vādī sakhilo sammodako abbhā,kuṭiko uttāna,mukho pubba,bhāsī.* See SD 22.8 (2.1). Cf CA 287, 304.

<sup>133</sup> D 4.6(18)/1:116 = SD 30.5.

**5.3.2 Dialogues.** Many suttas record dialogues between the Buddha and a protagonist or protagonists. The cordiality between the two parties, for example, the Buddha and the brahmin youths, Vāsetṭha and Bhāra,dvāja, is typical:

Then the brahmin youths, Vāsetṭha and Bhāra,dvāja approached the Blessed One and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, they sat down at one side. (The dialogue then begins.) (M 98.6/2:196 = Sn 3.9.6/116) = SD 37.1

This is clearly a social formality since it is only a stock passage without any details of the actual exchange. However, when the Buddha visits another monk or other monks, the cordiality is more specific, sometimes with some details, as in this excerpt from **the (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128), where the Buddha visits Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila in the Eastern Bamboo Deer Park,

Then the venerable Anuruddha, the venerable Nandiya and the venerable Kimbila went out to meet the Blessed One. One took the Blessed One’s bowl and robe, one prepared a seat, one set up water for washing the feet.

The Blessed One sat down on the prepared seat. Having sat down, he washed his feet. Then the three venerables saluted the Blessed One and sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to the venerable Anuruddha:

“I hope you (three) find it bearable, Anuruddhā.<sup>134</sup> I hope you can keep going, I hope you have no trouble with almsfood.”

“It is bearable, Blessed One. We can keep going, Blessed One. We have no trouble with almsfood, bhante.” (M 128.10/3:156) = SD 5.18

Here the monks properly welcome the Buddha by going out to receive him as he approaches their residence, lightening his burden, and preparing water so that he washes his feet clean and makes himself comfortable after a journey over dusty ground. A special seat is customarily set aside in the most prominent spot of the residence (where we would today usually place our family Buddha shrine): this is the Buddha-seat in our midst.

**5.4 THE (PARIBHĀSAKA) DHAMMIKA SUTTA (A 6.54).** So far, we have spoken of hospitality in a positive way, as warm mutual greetings and exchanges, and other courtesies. The contrary of this would, of course, be that of not welcoming the guests, especially by insulting or scolding them. This is, in fact, the opening theme of **the (Paribhāsaka) Dhammika Sutta** (A 6.54), which relates the story of the monk Dhammika of Sāvattṭhī who habitually insults and scolds visiting monks at his residence (*āvāsa*). When the local villagers are unable to find a chapter of monks to give offerings to, they decide to drive Dhammika away. This happens to Dhammika seven times, so that in the end, he only has the option of seeing the Buddha.

The Buddha compassionately counsels him, with gentle humour, reminding him of the parable of the land-sighting bird.<sup>135</sup> Then the Buddha relates an untraced Jātaka, **the (Dhammika) Rukkha,dhamma Jātaka**, reflecting on the recluse’s nature or duties of a recluse (*samaṇa,dhamma*). Briefly, it is about how a tree-spirit, in anger, prevents the banyan tree it inhabits from fruiting, so that people could not enjoy its fruits.<sup>136</sup> Shakra uproots the tree and the terrified tree-spirit repents, promising to keep to “tree-nature” (*rukkha,dhamma*), that is, not to interfere in the natural processes of a tree.

<sup>134</sup> *Anuruddhā*, 3 voc pl, lit “Anuruddhas” (as in M:H), ie Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila. This is Pali idiom for addressing a group by its leader. I have used the original Pali. Also at **Nalaka,pāna S** (M 68.4a/1:463) = SD 37.4.

<sup>135</sup> A 6.54.5/3:368 = SD 84.3; also **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11.85/1:222 f) = SD 1.7.

<sup>136</sup> This is unlikely to be usual banyan tree, ie, the Indian banyan (*Ficus benghalensis*), whose fruits are not very large, but prob the *Ficus caria*, the common edible fig, which however does not spread itself out like the former. On the other hand, it could be a fabulous banyan tree of myth. On myth, see **Myth in Buddhism** = SD 36a.1.

The Buddha then tells Dhammika of seven of his (the Buddha's) past lives as great teachers who taught their students meditation through which they were reborn in the brahma world. Even to disrespect such teachers would create unwholesome karma, what more with reviling virtuous recluses and awakened saints.<sup>137</sup> The Thera,gāthā Commentary notes that as a result of this teaching, Dhammika becomes an arhat (ThaA 2:129).

**5.5 HOSTS AND GUESTS.** So highly regarded is the respect for hospitality that it is often mentioned in the suttas [5.3] and legislated in the Vinaya. A section in the Culla,vagga of the Khandhaka<sup>138</sup> called **the Vatta Khandhaka** (or Vatta-k,khandhaka), the section of duties, opens with two chapters on the duties of visitors (Āgantuka Vatta) and the duties of residents (Āvāsika Vatta).

**The Āgantuka Vatta** (duties of a visiting monk)<sup>139</sup> deals with the duties of incoming monks. In other words, what is briefly stated above [5.3.2] is elaborated in the Vinaya. When a monk is visiting another monastery, he should, for instance, remove his sandals, close his umbrella, and rearrange his robes leaving his left shoulder uncovered before entering the premises. He should look for the resident monks and approach them, and sit there at a proper place. He should then find out the place for water for washing his feet and for drinking, and then proceed there to wash and drink. He should then go up to the elders and respectfully salute them. After being allocated his cell, he should tidy it up. He should observe all such courtesies as observed there. (Cv 8.1.2-5 @ V 2:207-210)

Here are excerpts from **the Āvāsika Vatta** (duties of a resident monk), regarding how a resident monk should treat an incoming monk:

Bhikshus, when a resident monk sees an incoming monk who is senior, he should prepare a seat. He should prepare water for washing the feet, a footstool, a footstand. Having gone to meet him, he should to receive his bowl and robe. He should offer him drinking water, and if he is able, he should wipe his sandals. When he is wiping the sandals, he should first wipe them with a dry piece of cloth, later with a damp one. Having washed the pieces of cloth for wiping the sandals, he should spread them out at one side.

A visitor should be greeted and a lodging appointed for him, with the words, “This lodging is for you.” He should be told whether it is occupied or unoccupied.

The alms-resorts should be pointed out. What is not the alms-resort should be pointed out.

The families who are “learners by convention”<sup>140</sup> should be pointed out.

The toilet should be pointed out. The urinal should be pointed out.

The water for drinking should be pointed. The water for washing should be pointed out.

The walking-stick (*kattara,danḍa*) should be pointed out.

The order's standing rules (*katikā,saṅḥāna*)<sup>141</sup> should be pointed out, thus: “This is the time for entering (the town for alms). This is the time for departing.” (Cv 8.2.2 @ V 2:210)

<sup>137</sup> A 6.54/3:366-373) = SD 84.3.

<sup>138</sup> The early Vinaya is made up of 2 main parts: Sutta Vibhaṅga (analysis of the Pāṭimokkha rules: V 3-4) and **Khandhaka** (V 1-2), itself divided into Mahā,vagga and Culla,vagga, dealing mostly with sangha history, communal formalities, and fellowship, reflecting a well-organized well-spread monastic community. A late appendix, the Parivāra (V 5), was added in Sri Lanka. See Hinuber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, 1996:8-23 (II.1)

<sup>139</sup> **Āgantuka Vatta** (Cv 8.1 @ V 2:207-210), which is discussed at VA 1226 f; See also V 5:201,18+20; Vism 188,8; VA 1:305,24 (*ācariy'upajjhāya,āgantuk'ādīnaṃ vattaṃ*, “duties towards teachers, preceptors and incoming monks); J 3:483,11 (opp *gamika,vatta*, “duties for outgoing monks”).

<sup>140</sup> *Sek(k)ha,sammata* refers to a family, “increasing in faith, but decreasing in wealth” (*saddhāya vaḍḍhati bhogena hāyati*). To prevent such a family from falling into further difficulties, the sangha will perform a “formal act involving a declaration” (*ñatti,dutiya,kamma*) that the family is “learners by convention” (*sekha,sammata*). **Pāṭidesaniya 3** states that a monk who seeks almsfood from such a family commits a “censurable offence” (*gārayha dhamma*) that entails a confession (V 4:180,22-27). The family however may, on its own initiative, offer almsfood to the monks. Here the term *sekha* is a euphemism, not necessarily referring to sainthood, short of arhathood.

<sup>141</sup> Orig *katikā* seems to mean “consensus, agreement, pact” while *saṅḥāna* here means “adherence, keeping to” (see PED: *santiṭṭhati* 3, “to stick to, to be fixed or settled”; also *saṅḥapeti*): *pañca,vaggiyā bhikkhū sakāya katikāya*

If the visiting monk is newly ordained, then he (the resident monk), sitting down, should explain, “Put aside your bowl in this place. Put aside your robe in this place. Sit on this seat...(etc, as above). (Cv 8.2.3 @ V 2:211)

Interestingly, **the Cātumā Sutta** (M 67) reports a case where such hospitality seems over-done, as it were. Some five hundred monks led by Sāriputta and Moggallāna, arriving to meet the Buddha are reported thus: “The visiting monks are exchanging greetings with the resident monks, while lodgings were being prepared, and bowls and robes were being put away—that was the loud noise, the din.”

The Buddha sternly disapproves of this improper conduct and dismisses them. Later, however, they are admonished by the Buddha.<sup>142</sup> Here, the Buddha is not being inhospitable [5.3.1.2], but rather functioning as an observant teacher who seizes the moment to give his students a practical lesson in the proper decorum and duties of true monastics.

## 5.6 TENDING THE SICK

**5.6.1 Tissa of the festering body (DhA 3.7).** The Buddha does not merely teach the Dharma, but goes out of his way to personally tend to the sick, as related in **the Pūti,gatta Tissa Vatthu** (DhA 3.7). Not long after the young monk, Tissa, is ordained, his body breaks out in boils so that he is covered with open boils, and soon his bones begin to degenerate.

Due to his sickness, he is called “elder Tissa of the festering body” (*pūti,gatta tissa*), and is left untended. The Teacher, in his dawn meditation, notices that Tissa is ripe for arhathood, and goes on his rounds, visiting the monks’ quarters, ending up seeing Tissa. There, the Buddha himself prepares some hot water for nursing Tissa.

The monks, noticing the Teacher, at once approach and take over the task of nursing Tissa. The Teacher then instructs them on how to nurse Tissa. First, some warm water is sprinkled over Tissa to loosen up his soiled robes that have stuck to his festering body. The upper robe is then thoroughly washed and left to dry.

When the upper robe is dry, Tissa’s lower robe is removed, and his body carefully washed and dried. He is then dressed in the clean dry upper robe. The soiled lower robe is then washed and dried. When the lower robe is ready, he is fully dressed, his body refreshed and mind tranquil.

The Teacher, knowing that Tissa has not long to live, stands by his pillow and says to him: “Bhikshu, consciousness will depart from you, your body will become useless and, like a log, will lie on the ground.” So saying, he pronounces this stanza:

In no long time, this body will lie on the ground,  
despised, with consciousness departed, like a useless log. (Dh 41)

At the end of the lesson, the elder Pūti,gatta Tissa attains arhathood and passes away into nirvana. The Teacher, says the commentator, performs the last rites over his body, and taking the relics, causes a shrine to be erected. (DhA 3.7/1:319-322)<sup>143</sup>

## 5.6.2 Serve me, serve the sick (Mv 8.26)

5.6.2.1 A VINAYA STORY. Another well known story of the Buddha’s compassion forms the origin-story or occasion (*nidāna*) for introducing Vinaya rules regarding monks taking care of one another. This story is found in ch 26 of **Mahā Vagga 8** of the Vinaya.

*asaṅghahantā*, “the five monks, not keeping to their own pact” (V 1:9,6); *sāriputta,moggallāna...tehi katikā katā hoti*, “Sāriputta and Moggallāna made a pact between themselves” (V 1:39,1, qu AA 1:157,23 = DhA 1:91,5; further see CPD: katikā. Cf Thanissaro (*The Buddhist Monastic Code*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2007, online), where he tr it as “the Community’s agreed-on meeting place” (p101, “Resident Bhikkhus’ Protocol), which does not seem right. I thank Bh Aggacitta & Bh Kumaro (Malaysia), and Bh Sujato (Australia) for confirming my tr here: emails 20 Dec 2011.

<sup>142</sup> M 67/1:456-462 = SD 34.7.

<sup>143</sup> See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, Singapore, 2004 ch 5.1.

5.6.2.2 THE BUDDHA AND ĀNANDA MEET A SICK MONK. Once, it is said, a certain monk has a **stomach disorder** (*kucchi, vikār'ābādha*), probably dysentery. He lies in his own excrements. The Teacher, as he is touring the monastic lodgings (*sen'āsana*) with the venerable Ānanda as his attendant, approaches the monks' dwelling (*vihāra*). Then the Teacher, seeing him, approaches and speaks thus to him:

"What is your sickness, bhikshu?"

"I have a stomach disorder, bhante."

"But, bhikshu, don't you have an attendant (*uppaṭṭhāka*)?"

"No, bhante."

"Why don't the monks tend you?"

"I, bhante, am of no use to the monks, therefore the monks do not tend me."

5.5.2.3 THEY TEND TO THE MONK. Then the Blessed One addresses the venerable Ānanda:

"Go, Ānanda, bring some water. We will wash this monk."

"Yes, bhante," said the venerable Ānanda. When he has brought the water, the Teacher sprinkles the water over the monk's body, and then the venerable Ānanda washes him.

Then the Teacher takes him by the head, the venerable Ānanda his feet, and having raised him up, they lay him down on a couch.

5.6.2.4 THE BUDDHA QUESTIONS THE SANGHA. Then, the Teacher, having assembled the order, asks them:

"Is there, bhikshus, in such and such a dwelling-place a monk who is ill (*gilāna*)?"

"There is, bhante."

"What, bhikshus, is that monk's illness?"

"The monk has a stomach disorder, bhante."

"But, bhikshus, is there anyone who is tending that monk?"

"There is none, bhante."

"Why don't the monks tend to him?"

"Bhante, this monk is of no use to the monks. Therefore the monks do not tend to that monk."

5.6.2.5 THE BUDDHA'S ADMONITION. "Bhikshus, you have no mother, you have no father, who might tend to you. If you, bhikshus, do not tend to one another, then who is there who will tend to you?"

**Whoever, bhikshus, would tend me, he would tend the sick** (*yo bhikkhave maṃ upaṭṭhaheyya so gilānaṃ upaṭṭhaheyya*).

If he has a preceptor (*upajjhāya*), he should be tended for life by the preceptor, who should wait for his recovery.<sup>144</sup>

If he has a teacher (*ācariya*), he should be tended for life by the teacher, who should wait for his recovery.

If he has a co-resident (*saddhi, vihārika*), he should be tended for life by the co-resident, who should wait for his recovery.

If he has a pupil (*antevāsika*), he should be tended for life by the pupil, who should wait for his recovery.

If he has the same preceptor (*samān'upajjhāyaka*), he should be tended by those with the same preceptor (his colleagues), who should wait for his recovery.<sup>145</sup>

If he has the same teacher (*samān'ācariya*), he should be tended by those with the same teacher (his colleagues), who should wait for his recovery.

If he has neither preceptor, nor a teacher, nor a co-resident, nor a pupil, nor a fellow preceptor, nor a fellow teacher, then he should be tended by the order.

5.6.2.6 THE VINAYA RULE. If one (a monk) were not to tend him, then it is an offence of wrongdoing (*dukkata*).<sup>146</sup> (Mv 8.26.1-4 @ V 1:301 f)

<sup>144</sup> *Sace upajjhāyo hoti, upajjhāyena yāva, jīvaṃ upaṭṭhātabbo, vuṭṭhānam assa āgametabbam.*

<sup>145</sup> *Sace samān'upajjhāyako hoti, samān'upajjhāyakena yāva, jīvaṃ upaṭṭhātabbo, vuṭṭhānam assa āgametabbam.*

5.6.2.7 SIGNIFICANCE. This story is an example of how a rule of Buddhist canon law is promulgated. The basis for this rule is **compassion** and **hospitality**. First, the Buddha questions the monk himself regarding the personal reason for his indisposition (“What is your sickness?”), then regarding the social cause of his suffering (“Why don’t the monks tend you?”). Having established the reason, he then takes immediate measures to correct the situation—in this case, to tend the sick monk.

Once the immediate problem has been resolved, the Buddha assembles the order. He questions the order whether they are aware of the situation (“Is there, bhikkhus, in such and such a dwelling-place a monk who is ill?”) and asks them the reason for it (“He is of no use to the monks”).

Having established the case, the Buddha (in a gentle optative mood) goes on to admonish the order on the value of fellowship, using himself as the example (“Whoever, monks, would tend me, he would tend the sick”). This is the spirit of the law. Then, he promulgates the rule: the letter of the law (“an offence of wrong-doing”). This is the basic pattern for the introduction of the monastic rules.<sup>146</sup>

Such accounts are examples of spiritual love, of the Buddha’s compassion, which are for us to emulate. Hospitality is not merely about being a gracious host, but also being proactively aware of the people we are with, responding to them appropriately in times of their material and emotional need. One of the more difficult expression of hospitality as compassion is tending the sick and indisposed. It is not always that we know the right thing to do, but recalling the stories of the Buddha’s compassion will move us in right action, and we must also learn from our own experiences and those of others.

**5.6.4 Dealing with unwelcomed visitors.** Another important point to note here is that hospitality should not merely be shown to visitors, but also to those who are sharing the same space or roof with us. Hospitality is meant for all those with good intentions.

“Good intention” is mentioned here because there are occasions when we may get unwelcomed visitors, such as salesmen, comen and evangelists. Here we have a choice: we can firmly say *no* to them and save ourselves a lot of unhappiness or, if we are wise and patient enough to converse with them for their benefit, meaning that they would somehow respect the fact that we are practising Buddhists, or even to turn to the Dharma themselves.

## 5.7 THE BUDDHA AND THE HUNGRY MAN (DhA 15.5)

**5.7.1 Stages in teaching Dharma.** In Buddhist teaching, the individual, as a rule, comes first, that is to say, we must be mentally and physically prepared to receive the Dharma, so that we are moved by it, changing our lives for the better. We often hear of the Buddha and Dharma teachers preparing their audience for it.

Many suttas, for example, report how the Buddha or a Dharma teacher as “having instructed (*sandas-setvā*), inspired (*samādapetvā*), roused (*samuṭṭejetvā*) and gladdened (*sampahamsetvā*) [them]...with a Dharma talk.”<sup>147</sup> This stock phrase reflects the basic structure of the Buddha’s teaching method:

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| (1) the Dharma is shown;                       | <i>sandessatvā</i>   |
| (2) the listener/s are filled with enthusiasm; | <i>samādapetvā</i>   |
| (3) they are fired with commitment; and        | <i>samuṭṭejetvā</i>  |
| (4) filled with joy. <sup>148</sup>            | <i>sampahamsetvā</i> |

The bottom line is that the listener leaves happily filled with Dharma.

**5.7.2 The man loses his ox.** The Dhammapada Commentary on **Dh 203** has an inspiring story of how the Buddha prepares his audience for a special Dharma talk on a most basic level—that of first filling his audience’s belly with food! The story is set in Ālavī, a town in Kosala, located between Sāvattthī and Rājagaha.

One day, in his dawn meditation, the Buddha notices that a certain poor man (*duggata,manussa*) of Ālavī is ready for attaining streamwinning. He goes to Ālavī with some 500 monks and are offered alms-

<sup>146</sup> Also at Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, Singapore, 2004 ch 5.2.

<sup>147</sup> V 1:18; D 1:126, 149, 2:86, 98, 109, 110, 127, 3:27, 209; M 1:209, 354, 2:139, 3:155; S 2:215, 3:95, 4:183, 5:155; A 3:380, 4:67, 118, 307 (x2), 5:122, 125; U 39, 82, 87.

<sup>148</sup> See eg **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122) @ SD 11.4 (4.3).

food by the people there. The poor man, hearing of this, decides to hear the Teacher's teaching. But that same day, an ox of his strays away. Early at dawn, he sets out to look for his lost ox.

Meantime, the Teacher and the monks finish their meals. However, when it is time for the thanksgiving, the Teacher remains silent, waiting for the poor man. The man, having found his ox, leads it into the pen. Noticing that it is past noon, he thinks, "Even if I can do nothing else, I will at least show my respects to the Teacher." Even though oppressed by hunger, he does not return home, but goes straight to see the Teacher.

**5.7.3 The man receives two kinds of food.** Having approached the Teacher, he salutes him and sits down at one side. The Teacher then asks the alms attendant (*dāna,veyyāvaṭṭika*) if there is any food left that is untouched. (The Commentator notes that this is the only time that the Buddha ever asks such a question.) When he says yes, the Teachers then instructs him to serve the food for the hungry man.

Once the poor man is relieved of his hunger and his mind tranquil, the teacher teaches the Dharma in proper sequence, expounding the four noble truths one after another. At the end of the instruction, the poor man attains the fruit of streamwinning. The Teacher pronounces the thanksgiving, and then rises from his seat and departs. The multitude follows him a little way and then turns back.

**5.7.4 The Buddha explains.** Now, the monks who accompany the Teacher are indignant, saying: "See, avuso, what the Teacher has done. This has never happened before. The Teacher, seeing the man, inquired about the porridge and so on, and had them given away." The Teacher turned around, and standing right there, asks about what they have said. Having confirmed what the monks were talking about, he explains,

"So it is, bhikshus. I have come all this long and difficult journey of 30 leagues, solely for the sake of this lay disciple who has the necessary qualities for the fruit of streamwinning. Early at dawn, he had wandered in the forest the whole morning, looking for his ox, so that he was extremely hungry. So I thought, 'If I were to teach the Dharma to a man suffering from hunger, he would not be able to understand it.' For, there is no disease that is like hunger. So saying, he pronounces this stanza:

<i>jighacchā paramā rogā</i>	Hunger is the worst disease,	
<i>sankhārā paramā dukkhā</i>	formations are the greatest ill:	
<i>etaṃ ñātvā yathā, bhūtaṃ</i>	knowing so according to reality,	
<i>nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ</i>	nirvana is the highest bliss.	(Dh 203)

**5.7.5 Commentary.** The Commentator explains that in the case of other diseases, a person could heal himself or be rid of it by means of an antidote, but in the case of hunger, he has to relieve it all the time. Hence, it is the worst disease. "Formations" here refers to the five aggregates.<sup>149</sup> When we realize this fact just as it really is, then we gain the highest happiness. At the end of the teaching, many attain to the various stages of sainthood. (DhA 15.6/3:264-266; slightly paraphrased and abridged)

**5.8 PIṄḌOLA BHĀRA, DVĀJA** is one of the great early Buddhist saints, listed as number 58 in the traditional pantheon of 80 great elders.<sup>150</sup> In early Buddhism, he is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost amongst monks who are lion-roarers (A 1:23), that is, he challenges any doubting monastic to come to him so that he would explain the Dharma until it is joyfully clear to them.

What should interest us here is that, in the eyes of the Mahayana Buddhists, especially the Chinese, Piṅḍola is *a saint of hospitality*. Chinese hagiography gives great prominence to the cult of Piṅḍola, testifying to his unfailing and mysterious visitations to assemblies of the faithful. The cult is essentially *a rite of hospitality*, and consists of inviting Piṅḍola to the monastic assembly and offering him two things or

<sup>149</sup> See (Dve) **Khandhā S** (S 22.48/3:47 f) = SD 17.1a.

<sup>150</sup> ThaA 3:205: see **Aṭṭha, puggala S** (A 8.59) = SD 15.10a (7). In Myanmar, Piṅḍola (known as Peindola there), is one of the 4 most worshipped "living" saints, ie, Shin Upagok (Upagupta), Shin Thiwali (Sīvalī), Shin Aṅgulimāla, and Shin Peindola. See **Piṅḍola Bhāra, dvāja** = SD 27.6a (1.1).

either of them: food and a bath.<sup>151</sup> Piṇḍola, of course, might or might not accept the invitation: it depends on the purity of the heart with which it is extended.

If he does accept the invitation, it is said, he comes either in disguise as an old man, as a wandering stranger, or perhaps in some other mysterious manner. His presence, as such, is not always easy to detect. The Chinese monk Huijiān, in his “Method of Inviting Piṇḍola,” relates how a wealthy faithful thrice held a feast, each time fervently inviting Piṇḍola, but he still did not appear.

Later, he invited over a hundred elders to find out what went wrong. One of them, an old monk in rags, reported that he *had* accepted the invitations, but each time he came to the door, the door-keeper turned him away on account of his shabby looks! The lesson for the Chinese Buddhists was clear: treat your guest well, for it could well be Piṇḍola himself.<sup>152</sup>

**5.9 THE GUEST IS SACRED.** The lesson from this section is that the guest is “sacred” for various reasons. Firstly, they have come with good will. Secondly, if they have travelled some distance, they are tired, and perhaps thirsty and hungry, too, and should be rested and nourished. Thirdly, when we have such guests, it is a good opportunity for fellowship and consolidating the teaching and the community. Fourthly, it is showing gladness in the goodness of others for practising the Dharma and for remembering us.

“Sacred” here means worthy of respect, and that respect is a source of great merit. When this is done with lovingkindness, the benefits are even greater. No wonder, even the Vinaya does not allow monastics to practise medicine, it however permits that *a monastery guest, even if he is layman*, may, if there is a need, be medically treated by a monk.<sup>153</sup>

## 6 Friendly love

### 6.1 THE QUALITIES OF FRIENDSHIP

**6.1.0 Friends and companions.** Beyond our own family, there are other families, and we have vital links with others outside of our family: we have friends, companions and acquaintances, which may or may not deepen into friendship. **Friendship** is a form of interpersonal relationship, generally considered to be closer than association (that is, acquaintance). In both cases, however, there is a range of intimacy, so that they both often overlap. In early Buddhism, these words are used to denote friends and associates (or companions), thus:

- companion            *sakha* or *sakhi*; *sahāya*;
- friend                 *mitta*; *suhada* (“true-hearted friend”); *hita* (“good friend”) [6.3].

While “companion” refers to someone we only *associate* with, or are acquainted with (such as neighbours, co-workers, students), “friend” denotes someone we are closer to. However, very often, the words are used synonymously, or at least overlap in meaning. More importantly, we must ask, what defines a “friend,” especially a good or true friend (*mitta suhada*).<sup>154</sup>

While the duties of friendship are fully and carefully listed in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31), where the expression, “true-hearted friend,” appears the most [6.2], we will examine the basic qualities that define true friendship, which are found in **the (Saṅgha) Bala Sutta** (A 9.5). This gives us the bases of conciliation (*saṅgha, vatthu*),<sup>155</sup> the factors conducive to social solidarity and community welfare, com-

<sup>151</sup> Besides Huijiān’s 請賓頭盧法 *Qǐng Bīntóulú fǎ* (“Method of Inviting Piṇḍola”), there is record of a 請聖僧浴文 *Qǐng shèngsēng yùwén* (“Prayer inviting the saintly monk [Piṇḍola] for a bath”) (listed at T49.2034.91a16 & T55.2151.362a26), tr by Saṅghavarman in 434, but is no longer extant. See Lévi & Chavannes 1916: 215.

<sup>152</sup> **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja** = SD 27.6b (3.3).

<sup>153</sup> Others that a skilled monk can treat medically are his parents, people who care for his parents, his other relatives; his preceptor and teacher’s parents or other blood relatives; applicants for ordination; his own steward; travelers who arrive ill at his monastery; and people who fall ill while in the monastery. (VA 2:471 f)

<sup>154</sup> D 3:186, 187×12; SnA 1:73×4; ApA 159×4; NcA 114×4.

<sup>155</sup> These are the 4 conditions (*dāna, peyya, vajja, attha, cariya, samān’attatā*) for the integration of a group or of society, or consolidating friendship, partnership and unity (D 3:152, 232; A 2:32, 248, 4:218, 363). Hatthaka of Āḷa-

prising generosity [giving], pleasant speech, beneficent conduct, and impartiality [freedom from bias], which can be related to what I call **the 4 C's of friendship**, thus:

(a) generosity	<i>dāna</i>	charity;
(b) pleasant speech	<i>piya,vācā</i>	communication;
(c) beneficent conduct	<i>attha,cariyā</i>	compassion;
(d) impartiality [freedom from bias]	<i>samān'attatā</i>	unconditionality. [6.4]

**6.1.1 Charity.** The basis of friendship is generosity in all good senses of the term, which include giving, mutual sharing, openness and compassion. On a simple level, “generosity” (*dāna*) is a one-way giving, usually involving a transfer of something palpable, a material gift (including money and food). Often such a giving is grounded in compassion, that is, we respond to a lack or need in another. This may well apply to a friend: we would unflinchingly respond to a friend’s lack or loss by extending more than mere material giving, but also with fervency so that he would be uplifted from that difficulty. This is called charity (*cāga*).

Such nurturing exchanges go both ways. In due course, the other party, once he is back on his feet, would positively reciprocate the kindness previously shown to him. It is difficult to measure in material terms the amount or value of exchange that occurs, and this is not even the point. The exchanges are merely an expression of a mutual appreciation of one another, a celebration of friendship, of friendly love. **The Ariya Dhana Sutta 2** (A 7.6) defines the charity of a practitioner, as follows:

Here, bhikshus, a noble disciple dwells at home with a heart free from the stains of stinginess, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, devoted to alms-giving, delighting to have a share in giving.  
(A 7.6.7/4:5) = SD 37.6<sup>156</sup>

### **6.1.2 Communication**

6.1.2.1 THE 33 FRIENDS. Charity between and amongst friends, especially if they are Buddhists, is the continuing communication that bridges them. It is a mutual appreciation of one another that is more than mere speech, an appreciation of *being*, of rejoicing in the mutual presence of another. In a sense, this is living joyfully like gods or angels. Heaven, after all, is really a state of mind, the feel of the heart. We see this theme beautifully recounted in a classic story of true friendship, that of the 33 friends led by Magha (DhA 2.7).

This story is told of the origins of Shakra and his Heaven of the Thirty-three (*tāvātimsa*). In his previous life, it is said, Shakra was a brahmin youth (*māṇava*) of Magadha named Magha. One day, noticing how the common people were drawn to comfort and convenience, he decided to dedicate himself to creating public resting places and proper roads. Soon, other youths, inspired by his efforts in building “a path leading to heaven” (*sagga,gāmina magga*), as he called it, joined him, so that the group totalled 33.

Together, the 33 friends worked their public good even more efficiently. A village chief (*gāma,bhojaka*), seeing their youth, thought that they should be enjoying life instead. The youths, being morally virtuous, turned down the village chief’s offer. Insulted by this rebuff, he falsely reported to the rajah that they were a band of thieves. They were summarily condemned to death by being trampled on by an intoxicated elephant. Magha then admonished his friends, thus:

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vī is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost amongst the laity who has a following through the 4 bases of conciliation (*saṅgha,vatthu*) (A 1:26). See **Ālavaka S** (A 3.34/1:136-138) = SD 4.8.

<sup>156</sup> This is stock: **Thapatayo S** (S 55.6/5:351); **Puññābhisanda S 2** (S 55.32/5:392); **Mahānāma S** (S 55.37/5:-395); **Kāḷi, godha S** (S 55.39/5:397); **Abhisanda S 2** (S 55.42/5:400); **Ti,ṭhāna S** (A 3.42/1:150); **Gandha,jāta S** (A 3.79/1:226 ×3); **Saṁvāsa S 1** (A 4.53/2:58 ×4); **Saṁvāsa S 2** (A 4.54/2:60 ×4); **Patta Kamma S** (A 4.61/2:65); **Idha Lokika S 1** (Chaṭṭha Paṇṇāsaka 3:272); **Idha Lokika S 2** (id 3:273); **Pañca Dhana S** (A 5.47.4/3:53); **Vit-thata Dhana S** (A 7.6/4:5); **Anuruddha S** (A 8.46/4:266); **Visākhā S 2** (A 8.47/4:267); **Nakula,mārā S** (A 8.48/-4:268 f); **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.14/4:284, def as “accomplishment,” *cāga sampadā*); **Ujjaya S** (A 8.12/4:289); **Sam-padā S 2** (A 8.55.14/4:289). Cf **Vata,pada S** (S 11.11/1:228). Commented upon at Vism 7.107-114/223 f: see **Sap-purisa Dāna S** (A 5.148) @ SD 22.15 Intro 2 & **Cāgānussati** = SD 15.12.

Friends, we have no refuge but lovingkindness. Therefore, let your hearts be at peace. Show no anger towards anyone. Fill your hearts with lovingkindness for the rajah, the chief and the intoxicated elephant, all with the same heart [unconditionally]<sup>157</sup> (DhA 1:267)

The elephant, sensing the lovingkindness, refused to trample them, even after they were covered with heavy matting. The rajah then realized his error and questioned the youths, so that the truth was out. The youths, rightly freed, continued with their work, including building a great rest-house, surrounded by a beautiful garden of colourful flowers and shady fruit trees, and a bathing-pool. When they died, they were reborn as the 33 devas in the heaven of the same name.<sup>158</sup>

6.1.2.2 THE VIRTUES OF A FRIEND. In Buddhist mythology, Shakra is sometimes called **Purindada**, “the one who was a giver in the past” or “the one who gives in the cities.”<sup>159</sup> Even as a human being, as we have seen [6.1.2.1], he was virtuous, and was reborn as Shakra on account of his seven vows, namely:

As long as I live, may I support my parents.

As long as I live, may I respect my family elders.

As long as I live, may I speak gently.

As long as I live, may I not speak divisively.

As long as I live, may I dwell at home with a heart free from the stain of miserliness, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in giving, devoted to alms-giving, delighting to have a share in giving.

As long as I live, may I speak the truth.

As long as I live, may I be free from anger, and if anger should arise in me, may I dispel it quickly. (**Vata,pada Sutta**, S 11.11/1:228 = SD 54.12; cf S 11.12/1:229 on his names)

All these are excellent virtues of a *family-centred life*. Yet, a healthy family is one with an inclusive heart [4.2]. Clearly, these qualities apply to other family-members as well. When such qualities are commonly found amongst friends, we have a strong community, which goes on to build a healthier society.

6.1.2.3 THE JOY OF FRIENDSHIP. Of all the Buddhist social virtues, **friendship** (*mittatā*) is the most basic and pervasive. When we are with true friends, we simply feel that we can be ourselves, that we can freely express ourselves without fear. We know that we will not be unfairly or suspiciously judged for having ulterior motives or dishonesty. Indeed, if we were otherwise, having to measure our words and strain our actions, then it is unlikely that we are really amongst friends. The friendship amongst the early Buddhist monastics is a classic example: it is often described as

living in concord, with mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, seeing each other with kindly eyes....smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful, plainly delighting, their faculties clear, living at ease, unruffled, subsisting on what others give, abiding with a mind (as aloof) as a wild deer’s.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>157</sup> *Sammā thapetvā mettāṃ añño amhākaṃ avassayo n’atthi, tumhe katthaci kopāṃ akatvā raññe ca gāma, bhojake ca maddana, hatthimhi ca attani ca metta, cittena sama, cittāva hothāti.*

<sup>158</sup> **Magha Vatthu** (DhA 2.7/1:263-281): above is a summary of DhA 2.7b/1:265-273 (story of the past, excerpts).

<sup>159</sup> *Pure dānaṃ dadātī ti purindado ti vuccati.* D 2:260; S 1:230; Vv 37.4, 62.2; DhA 1:264; VvA 171; PvA 247. See **Sakka Nāma S** (S 11.12/1:229) on his names. The early Buddhists apparently converted Shakra from his war-like ways, as he is depicted in Vedic mythology, as Indra, with the epithet, Purandara, “the destroyer of strongholds.” This epithet is also used with Agni, the god of fire. See *Devatā’nussati* = SD 15.13 (2). See also S:B 496 n637.

<sup>160</sup> The same remark is made by rajah Pasenadi in **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89.11/2:120 f) = SD 64.10. This is stock: M 1:206, 398, 3:156; A 1:70, 3:67, 104; S 4:225. **Anuruddha Upakkilesa S** (M 128) & **Parisā S** (A 3.93) use the rain simile to show how spiritual friendship builds up positive qualities in one (M 128.11/1:156) = SD 5.18 & (A 3.93.5/1:243) = SD 6.12 (3).

This is the healthiest of interpersonal relationships. Such a warm friendship should also be cultivated between spouses, amongst family members, and at work. Indeed, one of the vital characteristics of right livelihood is this healthy friendship.<sup>161</sup> Work is best when co-workers work happily together as friends. If the work is a service, then it should be joyfully executed. If the work is an artistic creation, such as painting or music, then it is an almost permanent monument and celebration of such a friendship.

Being joyful, even for no apparent reason other than our nature, is a powerful magnet to attract new friends and to inspire others to the Dharma. It is easier to learn and teach the Dharma amongst happy friends. Such friendships only deepens with Dharma understanding, and we would be privileged to see how they emotionally and spiritually mature, and continue the Buddha's love-empowered work.

### **6.1.3 Loving responses**

6.1.3.1 COMPASSION. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is the capacity for *feeling what others are feeling* (empathy) and *responding to the suffering of others* (sympathy). The Pali word, *karuṇā* (a feminine noun), is derived from the root √KR, "to make, do," suggesting an active emotion. Although it can arise by itself, it is as a rule a quality of love itself, reflecting our personal virtue. When expressed more freely, it is a hallmark of humanity and social integrity.

Compassion is a foundation of the highest principles in personhood, leadership, care-giving, philosophy, and society, reflecting the "golden rule," as taught in **the Veḷu, dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7).<sup>162</sup> Stated positively, this entails that we should do to others that which we wish others to do to us, or simply put, we should treat others (in a wholesome way) as we would treat ourselves.

6.1.3.2 GRATITUDE. Compassion and gratitude are, in a sense, both responses of love as an appreciation of another's being. However, while *gratitude* is kindness shown in return to a kindness done to us, a reciprocal kindness, *compassion* is shown even to those who do not deserve it. Gratitude, on the other hand, could merely be a neutral feeling (without love), of obligation, like a debt we owe someone, and so we need to repay that person.

Hence, it is because of our love that we feel *grateful* to our parents or care-givers for having loved and raised us in humanity [4.4], and we show them *compassion*, knowing that they are now aged and infirm. Even when our parents might not have loved us or raised us without sufficient love, it behooves us to show them compassion for being the avenue for our human birth.

According to Buddhism, it is actually *we* ourselves who have chosen to settle in our mothers' wombs for birth. Somehow, we are propelled to her, perhaps due to some past association. In showing compassion even to parents who have abused us, we have outgrown our hurt and victim role. Like a fallen hero, we rise again to show them that we are strong enough to forgive them. In doing so, we are breaking the vicious cycle of hurt and abuse, so that it is forever dispelled.

6.1.3.3 EMPATHY. The most personal form of compassion is **empathy**, the appreciating of another's feelings by mirroring it, even if we do not express it openly. It means we have not shut our minds to the person. Empathy helps us to listen more fully and more deeply to a person, especially in a counselling process, or when a situation merits such listening, which is most of the time when we are in a conversation. Empathy, in other words, is the basis for an interactive presence, even in the absence of speech.

In counselling, we are advised to *empathize* the feelings of the counselee or client, that is, to try to feel for ourselves how he is feeling. This helps us better understand what the person is trying to express, or not able or not willing to express. By empathizing with another, we are reassuring him that we accept him unconditionally, not even making any moral judgement, so that he would be able to open up to the real issues, and work towards a full healing.

Even outside of a counselling situation, empathy helps us hear a person more fully. If we are perceptive and wise enough, we might even fathom the person's mental state and health, so that we can, at the right time and in the right way, respond to him.

6.1.3.4 SYMPATHY. When empathy moves us into appropriate action, with a desire to alleviate another's suffering (especially grief), then is sympathy (*anukampa*, literally, "trembling after"). If *pity* is

<sup>161</sup> See **Right livelihood** = SD 37.8 (6.3.3).

<sup>162</sup> S 55.7.5/5:353 = SD 1.5 (1).

merely a feeling for the unfortunate circumstance of another, *sympathy* is this pity moved into *action* in an effort to see that person uplifted. Sympathy derives from the Greek *συμπάθεια* (*sympatheia*), from *σύν* (*syn*), “together,” and *πάθος* (*pathos*), “passion,” here with the sense of “suffering” (from *πάσχω*, *pascho*, “to be affected by, to suffer”).

Sympathy can also refer to our being aware of another’s positive emotions. For example, we could feel a connection with another who shares a love for the suttas, or for the same type of music, or the same hobby, or a love for animals. Such sympathies or similarities are important cementing factors in a relationship or marriage.

We could also sympathize with another’s intellectual or social bias. In a broader sense, this can refer to the sharing of religious, political or ideological sentiments, such as in the phrase, “a reform sympathizer.” However, in the Buddhist usage, it always has a positive sense. If *muditā* is “gladness,” being happy at another’s happiness, goodness or success, then *karuṇā* is a “mirroring concern,” reflecting another’s condition, and giving him succour.

Sympathy is like a penguin regurgitating her food to feed her chick. Male emperor penguins have a feature unique amongst penguins. If the chick hatches before the female returns with food, the male, despite his fasting, is able to produce a curd-like substance from his oesophagus to feed the chick, allowing for its survival and growth for up to two weeks. It is a nourishing, mother-like, response. However, unlike penguins which only feed their own young, humans are capable of showing compassion to anyone or any being.

**6.2 FRIENDSHIP: TRUE-HEARTED AND SPIRITUAL.** Beyond worldly love, there are two kinds of spiritual love in Buddhism. The first is called “true-hearted friendship” (*\*suhada, mittatā*) and the second is “spiritual friendship” (*kalyāṇa, mittatā*). True-hearted friendship, or the nature of a true friend, fully explained in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31),<sup>163</sup> is a broad term for all the positive love that we have covered here. This is a Dharma-based friendship on a social level.

Spiritual friendship, on the other hand, technically, refers to a mentor-mentee relationship in terms of meditation. Strictly speaking, *the teacher* is the spiritual friend who benefits his student by teaching him well so as to be liberated in this life itself. The Buddha, as such, is the spiritual friend par excellence.

Generally speaking, however, friendship goes both ways. It is natural that both the meditation teacher and his pupil are regarded as spiritual friends. Finally, the term spiritual friend is also used generally to refer to any kind of close association formed through Dharma study or meditation training, that is, between spiritual peers. All this has been discussed in detail elsewhere.<sup>164</sup>

**6.3 FRIENDLY LOVE LIMITS KARMA.** Another word for “friend” here is *hita*, which in itself means “good, benefit; good, beneficial,” both as a noun as well as an adjective, which it means in most contexts. In some places, however, it clearly has the sense of “friend” or “friendly,” such as in this verse from **the Araka Jātaka** (J 169):

<p><i>Appamāṇaṃ hitaṃ cittaṃ paripuṇṇaṃ subhāvitāṃ yaṃ pamāṇa, kataṃ kammaṃ na taṃ tatrāvasissatī ti</i></p>	<p>For a heart that is boundlessly friendly [good], cultivated to fulfillment, whatever limited karma that is done, nothing is left over here.<sup>165</sup> (J 169/2:61)</p>
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The significance of this verse’s teaching—that through lovingkindness, the negative effects of our karma does not go beyond this life—is far-reaching.<sup>166</sup> It gives great weight to friendly love as an expression of lovingkindness. If we habitually accept others as they are, forgiving them, even succouring them

<sup>163</sup> D 31.21-26/3:187 f = SD 4.1.

<sup>164</sup> See **Spiritual friendship** = SD 34.1 (2.3).

<sup>165</sup> The last 2 lines are found in all the 4 Nikāyas, all in the same context, relating to the divine abodes, as limiting the fruits of one’s karma: D 1:251×2 = S 4:322×2; M 2:207×2, 208×2 ≠ A 5:299,27-301,1 ≠ J 2:61,28\* (62,14’-21’).

<sup>166</sup> This well known teaching is given in **TeVijja S** (D 13.77/1:251) = SD 1.8, **Saṅkha, dhama S** (S 42.8.17/4:322) = SD 57.9, (**Karaja, kāya**) **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.208/5:300) & SD 2.10 (2); see also **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7/-19-21) @ SD 30.7 (1.2.3).

as necessary, we prevent any bad karma from accumulating. This makes very good social and spiritual sense.

**6.4 FRIENDSHIP OF THE SAINTS.** While *the duties of true friendship* are carefully listed in **the Sigāl’-ovāda Sutta** (D 31), where the term *suhada,mitta* often appears [6.2], we will here examine the main qualities that define true friendship as found in **the (Saṅgha) Bala Sutta** (A 9.5). This is the four bases of conciliation (*saṅgha,vatthu*),<sup>167</sup> the factors conducive to social solidarity and community welfare, comprising the following:

- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) generosity                       | <i>dāna,</i>                 |
| (b) pleasant speech                  | <i>piya,vācā,</i>            |
| (c) beneficent conduct               | <i>attha,cariyā,</i>         |
| (d) impartiality [freedom from bias] | <i>samān’attatā.</i> [6.1.0] |

The Sutta then define each of these four bases of conciliation, as follows:

- (a) **GENEROSITY.** The foremost of gifts (*dāna*), bhikshus, is *the gift of the Dharma*.<sup>168</sup>
- (b) **PLEASANT SPEECH.** The foremost pleasant speech (*piya,vācā*), bhikshus, is *teaching the Dharma* again and again to those who are desirous of it and listen attentively.<sup>169</sup>
- (c) **BENEFICIENT CONDUCT.** The foremost beneficent conduct (*attha,cariyā*), bhikshus, is<sup>170</sup>
- |                              |              |                   |                            |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| to rouse, instill, establish | faith        | ( <i>saddhā</i> ) | in the faithless;          |
| to rouse, instill, establish | moral virtue | ( <i>sīla</i> )   | in the immoral;            |
| to rouse, instill, establish | charity      | ( <i>cāga</i> )   | in the miserly;            |
| to rouse, instill, establish | wisdom       | ( <i>paññā</i> )  | in the foolish [ignorant]; |
- (d) **IMPARTIALITY.** The foremost impartiality (*samān’attatā*),<sup>171</sup> bhikshus, is
- |                                |         |                          |
|--------------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| a streamwiner’s impartiality   | towards | a streamwinner,          |
| a once-returner’s impartiality | towards | a once-returner,         |
| a non-returner’s impartiality  | towards | a non-returner,          |
| an arhat’s impartiality        | towards | an arhat. <sup>172</sup> |

<sup>167</sup> These are the 4 conditions (*dāna, peyya,vajja, attha,cariya, samān’attatā*) for the integration of a group or of society, or consolidating friendship, partnership and unity (D 3:152, 232; A 2:32, 248, 4:218, 363). Hatthaka of Āḷavī is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost amongst the laity who has a following through the 4 bases of conciliation (*saṅgha,vatthu*) (A 1:26). See **Āḷavaka S** (A 3.34/1:136-138) = SD 4.8.

<sup>168</sup> This sentence is clearly the root of Dh 354a.

<sup>169</sup> *Etad-aggam, bhikkhave, peyya,vajjānam yad-idam atthikassa ohita,sotassa punappunam dhammam deseti.*

<sup>170</sup> The four qualities—faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom—are, in fact, *the conditions for spiritual welfare*: see **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54.10-15/4:284 f) = SD 5.10. They are also an abridgement of **the 7 noble treasures** (*ariya,dhana*): faith, moral virtue, moral shame (*hiri*), moral fear (*ottappa*), great learning (*bāhu,sacca*), charity, wisdom (D 3:163, 267; A 4:5), so called because they are *spiritual treasures* that, unlike material wealth, cannot be lost. Moral shame and moral fear are what motivate us to cultivate moral virtue: as such, they can be included in moral virtue. Great learning leads to and support wisdom. Charity can be subsumed under any of the other three qualities (faith, moral virtue, wisdom) or all of them. These noble treasures are also called “**the virtues of great assistance**” (*bahu,kāra dhamma*) (D 3:282) since they provide one with the tools for personal development and for people-helping. In **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54) lists spiritual friendship as one of the 4 accomplishments (*sampadā*), the conditions for happiness here and now (ie diligence, watchfulness, spiritual friendship and balanced livelihood); and these 4 qualities: faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom are the characteristics of a *kalyāṇa,mitta* (§6), and which are also the 4 accomplishments, the conditions for future happiness (§10-15) (A 8.54/4:284 f) = SD 5.10. See also **Spiritual friendship** = SD 34.1 (4.1).

<sup>171</sup> Here, impartiality (freedom from biases), refers to the lack of the 4 biases (*āgati*), ie, greed, hate, delusion and fear (V 1:339; Vism 22.55/683). They are called “motives” (*thāna*) in **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31.5-6/3:182) = SD 4.1.

<sup>172</sup> A good example of this impartiality amongst the saints is that of Anuruddha and his companions Nandiya and Kimbila as recorded in **Upakkilesa S** (M 128) where Anuruddha, after saying that he shows lovingkindness in deed, speech and thought to them, declares to the Buddha: “Bhante, here I think thus: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and instead do what these venerables wish to do. It seems, bhante, that we are of different bodies but of one mind!’” (M 128.12a/3:156) = SD 5.18 §12a.

This. bhikshus. is called the power of conciliation.

(A 9.5.6/4:364) = SD 2.21

This passage is clearly the locus classicus for the definition of an ideal Dharma-moved friendship, based on the four bases of conciliation, that is, generosity, pleasant speech, beneficent conduct, and impartiality. *Teaching the Dharma* is given the highest priority here. Even the second base, *pleasant speech*, is a corollary to this, that is, a full commitment to Dharma teaching.

*Beneficent conduct* is defined as faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom. These are called “the four accomplishments” (*sampadā*) in **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54). They are at the roots of “the seven noble treasures” (*ariya,dhana*), which are listed in **the Ariya Dhana Suttas 1 and 2** (A 7.5+6),<sup>173</sup> **the Lakkhaṇa Sutta** (D 30) and **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), as follows (with the four accomplishments, underscored):

(1) the treasure of	<u>faith</u>	<i>saddhā,dhana,</i>	
(2) the treasure of	<u>moral virtue</u>	<i>sīla,dhana,</i>	
(3) the treasure of	moral shame	<i>hiri,dhana,</i>	
(4) the treasure of	moral fear	<i>ottappa,dhana,</i>	
(5) the treasure of	learning	<i>suta,dhana,</i>	
(6) the treasure of	<u>charity</u>	<i>cāga,dhana,</i> and	
(7) the treasure of	<u>wisdom</u>	<i>paññā,dhana.</i>	(A 7.5, 7.6; D 30.22. 33.2.3) <sup>174</sup>

The definition of *impartiality* is most interesting, as it is actually a rare description of the friendship amongst the saints. While unawakened good friends are said to be “partial” to one another—having a special preference for one another’s company—the saints are said to be *impartial* to one another. This is another way of saying that they basically think alike in a wholesome way because they have attained to the same level of awakening. Great men think alike.

## 7 Unconditional love

### 7.1 PRIMACY OF LOVINGKINDNESS

**7.1.1 *Mettā*** comes from √MID, “to love, to be fat” but, as “unconditional love,” it is the most positive of worldly feelings. Its root meaning “to be fat” is interesting, as it suggests a good nature and a connection with food, as orientals often enjoy sharing their food, as it is a basic need of life. Only after our bellies are filled can we really share our mutual joys of friendship [5.2.2].

*Mettā* is also an abstract noun from *mitta* (Vedic *mitra*; “friend”). The Subcommentaries define it as: *mejjati siniyhatīti mitto*, “a friend is one who ‘fattens,’ who feels loves.”<sup>175</sup> There is a play on *siniyhati*, whose causative form, *sineheti* (or *sneheti*, *snehayati*), means “to lubricate, make oily or tender (through purgatives, etc (V 1:279); to make pliable, soften (the mind) (Miln 139).” The play on the word relating to good will and food are obvious here.

Notice that these definitions reflect the early Buddhist teachings of not-self, that is, there is really no “object” of love, but only a *feeling* and *act* of loving. As such, “love” is not a good translation for *mettā*, as its senses are too broad and mundane. The widely accepted English translation for *mettā* is “loving-kindness.”<sup>176</sup>

Lovingkindness is a wholesome awareness that we need to cultivate and direct to those whom we regard as “friends” in the broadest sense of the word. Hence, parents and children need to *befriend* one another; so too spouses; and we need to befriend our relatives, friends, co-workers, and even strangers,

<sup>173</sup> See Soma Thera, “Treasure of the Noble,” *Bodhi Leaves* B27. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1965.

<sup>174</sup> These 7 treasures are listed in **Ariya Dhana S 1** (A 7.5/4:4 f), **Ariya Dhana S 2** (A 7.6/4:5 f); **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30.2.1(2.2)/3:163), **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.23(i)/3:251); UA 285; cf Thī 342. See **Ariya Dhana S 2** (A 7.6) @ SD 37.6 (1.1.2).

<sup>175</sup> DAT 2:400 = MAT:Be 1:374 = SAT:Be 2:441; DhsA 192 :: DhsA:PR 258.

<sup>176</sup> OED has “loving-kindness” (with the hyphen), and its earliest recorded usage as 1535, by the Bible translator, Miles Coverdale. In Buddhist usage, the word is usually combined.

that is, those who are yet to be our friends. Lovingkindness, in other words, is an openness or opportunity for embracing more people and beings into our lives, and to extend our love beyond ourselves, to others, humans, non-humans and nature herself.<sup>177</sup>

**7.1.2 Unconditionality.** In modern English usage, lovingkindness is invariably understood to be “unconditional.” This understanding is based on the sutta descriptions of *mettā* as being shown, not merely to humans, but to “all beings” (*sabbe sattā*),<sup>178</sup> and “without measure, unrestricted” (*appamāṇa*).<sup>179</sup> This all-embracing sentiment is also expressed as a love for animals<sup>180</sup> and for nature,<sup>181</sup> as exemplified in the verses of the early elders.

“Unconditional” also means “with neither judgement nor prejudgement, without any bias,” especially in our dealings with others. This means giving some space, or margin of error, even the benefit of the doubt, to others, so that we do not see others only as their weaknesses or the mistakes they have committed. We try not to see them as their past, but as having the potential of being a new and better person. At least, in the present moment, we appropriately respond to the person according to the circumstance, so that he has a chance of bettering himself, if there is a need to do so.

Being unconditional to ourselves may not be so simple if we lack self-love, or when we have never been really loved, or worse, we have been abused and hurt in painful ways. The basic rule is that, in both cases, we need to have a “beginner’s mind” towards ourselves as well as to others. In simple terms, though not so easy in practice, *to be unconditional* means to be able to let go of the past, and even let the present as it arises. For everyone and every situation are changing all the time. We live but a moment; we can only love the present: the past is gone, the future never comes.

**7.2 LOVINGKINDNESS AS POSITIVE SELF-LOVE.** We have earlier noted that the crudest form of love is self-love, which basically functions as a pleasure principle or for personal survival [3.2.2]. Yet, self-love can also be positive [3.3]. A sutta stock passage says *that lovingkindness should begin with ourselves and end in the same way*, that is, we should never forget to immerse ourselves in lovingkindness, too.<sup>182</sup>

One of the rewards of lovingkindness meditation is to see even beginners exulting with tearful joy after merely subverbalizing<sup>183</sup> words like “I accept myself just as I am,” or “I forgive myself in every way,” which break down the prison and chains of self-hate thrown upon us by some unloving parent or some past pain. We could say that *with great suffering comes great bliss*—when we are truly touched by lovingkindness. Truly understanding why we suffer is the arising of faith in us.<sup>184</sup>

Another problem may be that some of us simply cannot begin lovingkindness meditation with directing it to ourselves: we simply cannot love ourselves. Perhaps our religion has indoctrinated us with the view that it is bad to love ourselves [3.3.3.4], or someone has harmed us with the idea that we are no good at all, or we are simply not used to the idea of self-love for some unknown reason. In that case, we could go on to cultivate lovingkindness in other ways or in the rest of the stages, that is, visualizing happy moments [7.4.1], sending lovingkindness to a dear friend, and so on. Or, we could switch to the breath meditation for some stillness. When we feel sufficiently focussed in blissful peace, we go on to direct the lovingkindness to ourselves, usually at the end of the sitting.

A helpful on-going practice is to visualize a beautiful white lotus (or a favourite flower), as being radiant like the sun, located in the centre of our hearts, brightening up our whole being with lovingkind-

<sup>177</sup> Further see **Brahma, vihāra** = SD 38.5 (2.1.2).

<sup>178</sup> *Sabbe sattā*: D 1:53; M 1:407-409, 517; A 2:73; Khp 9.3/8 = Sn 145.

<sup>179</sup> *Appamāṇa*: D 2:144,17; M 2:14,32 = A 5:46,5 (qu Vism 176,29); M 2:262,13; Sn 507; J 2:61,26\*, 5:191,20\*; A 4:150,20\* = It 21,5\*; Tha 549, 647. For more refs, see CPD: <sup>1</sup>a-ppamāṇa.

<sup>180</sup> Love for animals: Tha 22 (Cittaka), 49 (Rāmaṇeyyaka), 211 (Cūḷaka), 377 f (Vāraṇa), 309 (Sappaka); 1064-1070 (Mahā Kassapa).

<sup>181</sup> Love of nature: **Tha** 13 (Vana,vacha), 41 (Sirivaḍḍha), 50 (Vimala), 310 (Sappaka), 524 (Bhūta), 527 f (Kālī'-udayi), , 544 (Eka,vihāriya), 601 f (Saṅkicca), 1062-1070 (Mahā Kassapa); **Thī** 370-373 (Subhā Jīvak'amba,vanikā).

<sup>182</sup> D 13.76/1:250 = SD 1.8. See **Brahma, vihāra** = SD 38.5 (3.2.1).

<sup>183</sup> On subverbalizing, see **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1 (8.1.2).

<sup>184</sup> See **Upanisā S** (S 12.23/3:29-32) = SD 6.12.

ness, and shining outwards wherever we go. In moments of difficulty and danger, we would naturally feel this lovingkindness, so that it acts as a sort of a safe space or secure force-field around us and even our immediate surrounding.

**7.3 LOVINGKINDNESS AS A SOCIAL EMOTION.** We have already basically discussed love as a social emotion, that is, in terms of neighbourliness and hospitality [6]. Here, we will briefly touch on a higher level, on a more mental or meditative level, as to how to cultivate such a positive attitude towards others. Broadly, when our attitude towards others are expressed as lovingkindness, then we might enjoy the following benefits:

- mutual understanding and compassion: we can turn to each other for emotional support;
- mutual trust: we can speak freely and in confidence with another;
- mutual acceptance: we can express our feelings or make mistakes without fear of judgement;
- mutual honesty, such as pointing out another's perceived faults and a positive response by the other.

Lovingkindness as a social emotion is not only accepting another as he is, or dealing with the person on his own wavelength. It also empowers us with a positive response when he is in need of support or succour: we are able to show him *compassion*. We should rejoice in his goodness as it arises, or even recalling them, so that we reinforce our *gladness* in him. And lastly, we must accept things as they are, even when the situation is not exactly as we would wish it to be. If we accept this *equanimity*, then we are likely to be able to learn from personal differences, lapses and difficulties. Above all, we are able to laugh at them in due course. Then, we are said to be friends who are “constant in joy and in sorrow,” through thick and thin [4.2].

Friends are not found: they are made. It is helpful to remind ourselves *how we make friends*, how we reinforce our social relationships with lovingkindness. In **the (Upakkilesa) Anuruddha Sutta** (M 128), the elder Anuruddha declares that he keeps up acts of lovingkindness through deed, speech and thought, even setting aside what he wishes to do, and doing what his colleagues wish to do. It is as if, he declares, “we are of different bodies but of one mind!” [4.3]. In other words, we need to *act* in lovingkindness towards those whom we treasure as friends; we need to *speak* with lovingkindness to them; and we need to direct a *heart* of lovingkindness to them. We will now examine this last act a bit deeper.

#### **7.4 LOVINGKINDNESS AS A MEDITATION**

**7.4.1 Simply minding.** Although we might know of people who “by nature” seem to be full of good will and lovingkindness, they (both the person and his qualities) cannot be taken for granted. We need to *be* lovingkind, at least at that moment, to be able to naturally show it. The point is that lovingkindness, as a higher form of love, can and need to be cultivated. This is because love is not something we “have,” but what we really *are* [2.3; 8]. To *be* truly lovingkind, we need to cultivate lovingkindness: we need to meditate.

Here, meditation means to go right down into the root of emotions: the mind itself. Why do we need to do this? In our waking life, we fully depend on our five physical senses feeding sense-data to our sixth sense, the mind. These sense-data simply flood our minds, and we have to decide which data to process, and which sense-faculty to focus on. Under the best conditions, we are usually good at this, especially when we enjoy what we are doing, such as reading a book, or flowing with our favourite sport or past-time, or chatting with someone we really like. However, such activities do tire us after a while. This tiredness however is partly because our minds get bored after a while and desire a change, and our bodies tire, too, from sitting, running, or speaking too long. Sooner or later, we need a shift of posture.

Or, we could do something less physical, like watching the sun set or the clear cloudless moonless night sky with its myriad stars, or lying down peacefully on a pleasant remote mountain embraced by nature. We especially enjoy such moments, and might even forget our bodies. We feel one with everything around us, fully at peace, blissfully single-minded. With proper meditation, we can enjoy this even better. Meditation initiates and enhances such blissful states because we are free momentarily from the caprices of the fickle senses. As we meditate, we are fully mind, all heart.

**7.4.1 Living and minding lovingkindness.** Lovingkindness meditation is *essentially living the moment as the happiest of our lives*, and to spread this feeling around and beyond us, to anyone we wish, to

everyone, even to the whole universe. It becomes easier, and more natural, with practice. To begin, it is very helpful that we recall some really happy moments of our lives. Apparently, we tend to easily recall painful events, as if we need to arm and fend ourselves against them. Yet, such bad memories are simply the past, dead, buried and gone, and are best left that way.

Happy memories, on the other hand, have a sweet power of livening us up. It empowers us to smile at ourselves, even laugh at our frailties and lapses. If we really care to spend some quiet moments, we will reacquaint ourselves with such precious reruns of sweet memories that we have left neglected in the far corners of our hearts.

Throw away that “revenge book” that has been collecting our pains. Start a new “happy book” to pen our happy moments, filling it with fresh possibilities when our recall should lapse. The first time we climbed high up on a tree... The time we received a coveted prize before an appreciative audience... When we were giving birth to a beautiful child, our first... The open valley in the mountains spreading to the horizon under the canopy of a clear blue sky...

If we need a boost to start off our lovingkindness practice, we could read one of these happy-book episodes. Visualize it as if it is happening right now, and *feel* the bliss all over again. When the bliss fills our being, simply let go of the visuals, stay with the bliss, smiling at it gently, spontaneously, or whispering gently, “peaceful” or “happy,” a couple of times if we notice some thought trying to intrude and shatter the bliss.

The people we love and those who have been unconditionally kind to us are especially rich sources of happy energies for cultivating lovingkindness. There are always some people in our lives who seem to be ever smiling and happy with us, or we remember those moments when we share a joyful moment with them. We could start off by recalling such people and their goodness. When we feel blissfully centred, we can then gently let go of the props (the words, thoughts and images).

The idea is to stay with the blissful peace as long as we can, refining the strategies on how to do this. This is the fine art of minding lovingkindness, and we can only be better with practice, and its benefits are boundless. We will find ourselves naturally happy, infectiously smiling with others, especially when we recall their goodness or our shared happiness with them. This is truly living like gods, loving like angels. This is, after all, a divine abode.<sup>185</sup>

**7.5 LOVINGKINDNESS AS A BASIS FOR LIBERATION.** Although, technically, the cultivation of the divine abodes are said at best to only result in rebirth in the brahma-world,<sup>186</sup> a number of suttas instruct us on how they can actually *liberate* us. The closing section of **the Mettā Saha,gata Sutta** (S 46.54),<sup>187</sup> for example, shows how, when a meditator cultivates the awakening-factors (*sambojjhaṅga*)<sup>188</sup> “accompanied by” (*saha,gata*) one of the divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion, gladness or equanimity,<sup>189</sup> liberation can be attained.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>185</sup> For some idea of a proper lovingkindness cultivation, see *Brahma,vihāra* = SD 38.5 (3).

<sup>186</sup> See eg M 2:82, 207 f; A 2:128 f.

<sup>187</sup> S 46.54.12-15/4:119-121 = SD 10.11.

<sup>188</sup> On the 7 awakening-factors, see (**Bojjhaṅga**) *Sīla S* (S 46.3/5:67-70) = SD 10.15.

<sup>189</sup> For stock def see: **Cakka,vatti Sīha.nāda S** (D 26.28a(4)/3:48) = SD 36.10 (said to be “in the wealth for a monk (*bhikkhuno bhogasmim*),” **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223); **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.31/1:297) = SD 35.1, **Aṭṭhaka,nāgara S** (M 52.8-11/1:351 f) = SD 41.2 (leading to either arhathood or non-return), **Jīvaka S** (M 55.6/1:-369) = SD 43.4, **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97.32-33/2:195) = SD 4.9, **Subha S** (M 99.24-27/2:207 f) = SD 38.6, **Anuruddha S** (M 127.7/3:146) = SD 54.10; **Go,datta S** (S 41.7/4:296); (**Saṅgha**) **Uposatha S** (A 4.190.4/2:184) = SD 15.10b, **Dasama Gaha,pati S** (A 11.17.5-6/5:344) = SD 41.2; **Pm** 2:39; **Vbh** 13.1-2/272, 699/282, see 272-284 for comy.

<sup>190</sup> S 46.54/5:115-121 = SD 10.11. The Sutta explains how this is done by way of the 5 perceptions (*saññā*): see SD 10.11 (2). These perception basically employ what might be called “insight” methods, such as reflecting the blissful states gained through the divine abodes as being “impermanent,” and so on: se SD 10.11 (2). For diagram, see SD 2 (Table 4).

To achieve this, we must first attain dhyana, that is, freeing the mind into full concentration.<sup>191</sup> We need to very familiar with attaining such a dhyana. When we are comfortable with the ins-and-outs of it, then we emerge from it,<sup>192</sup> and reflect on it as being “mind-made” and, as such, it is impermanent and unsatisfactory.<sup>193</sup> We go on to direct our calm and clear minds to examine the impermanence of our bodies and our minds and of everything around us, as we feel inclined to, so that wisdom arises in due course.

## 8 Conclusion

**8.1 WE ARE NOT WHAT WE HAVE.** Renowned social psychologist and humanist philosopher, **Erich Fromm** (1900-1980), writes in his book, *To Have or To Be*, “If I am what I have, and if I lose what I have, then what am I?” *Nobody*, Fromm answers, *but a defeated, deflated, pathetic testimony to a wrong way of living* (1976:89).

“To have” almost always is related to something external to us. We might say: I have a family, friends, books, money, a car, and so on. We can also “have” beauty, fame, power, greed, hate, delusion, or other intangibles or qualities. In this latter case, there is a sense that these qualities are not really “us,” even though we can say “I *am* beautiful, famous, powerful, greedy, hateful, deluded...” There is a pervading sense of impermanence about them. This impermanence is harder to notice in the case of *having*.

When we say we “have” something, at least two important implications immediately arise. First and foremost, it is not really a part of us. We might “have” them but they *are not* really “us.” We might try to identify with them, but we would be at odds with them sooner or later. Secondly, we are capable of losing what we have, as it is not really an integral part of our being (like “I *am* truly happy”). Most importantly, we can only *enjoy* what we have—it brings us true happiness—when we *use* it in a wholesome way. In this sense, we can only “own” what we enjoy. The point, therefore, is that we can only really “be” or “use” something: we need to understand this if we desire quality and goodness in our lives.

We came with nothing into this world; we take nothing with us when we leave. That is as far as “things” go. In other words, we do not really have any true power over what we have. Buddhism teaches us to look deeper into what it means to “have” and to “be.” Let us now free these words from the pages and feel them with our hearts for our greater happiness.

**8.2 GIVE WHAT WE CANNOT KEEP: WHAT WE GIVE GOES ON LIVING.** The Buddha teaches us to *give away what we cannot keep* so that *we become what we really are*.<sup>194</sup> This may sound like a wordplay, but let us take these letters and words to be musical notes and phrases, and simply feel them. Early Buddhism is a teaching about wholesome feelings: being happy is a feeling; so is love.

What is it that we cannot keep? What is that we do not have until we give it away? It is love. We can only be loved when we love others. Love is not love until we give it away. To love another is to unconditionally accept that person or being. Friendship begins when we unconditionally accept this other person or being, but we do not stop there.

Love is not love unless we show it. We may first feel a certain stirring in our hearts: we have good feelings about someone or something. Then, we wholesomely say or show this love to another at the proper time. We cannot keep this love because it is *for* someone. Give what we cannot keep; what we give goes on living. Love, when given, goes on living in those who receive it. As Seneca (the Younger)<sup>195</sup> says, “If you want to be loved, then love” (*si vis amari, ama*).<sup>196</sup>

We live with lovingkindness, compassion, and gladness, but there are still those whose hearts remain untouched and unmoved. For the moment, let us accept things as they are, as we have done our best. So

<sup>191</sup> See *Nimitta* = SD 19.7 (5): *Mettā nimitta*, & *Dhyana* = SD 8.4.

<sup>192</sup> On mastering the dhyanas, see **Pabbateyya Gāvi S** (A 9.35/4:418-422) = SD 24.3.

<sup>193</sup> On applying insight to dhyana, see **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.1 (10.3).

<sup>194</sup> “Not yours” (*na tumhakaṃ*): see **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.40-41/1:140 f) & SD 3.13 (4.2); **(Kāya) Na Tumha S** (S 12.37/2:64 f); **(Khandha) Na Tumha Ss 1+2** (S 22.33+34/3:33 f); **(Dhātu) Na Tumha Ss 1+2** (S 35.101+102/4:81 f).

<sup>195</sup> He was a Roman Stoic philosopher, dramatist and statesman, c4 BCE-65 CE.

<sup>196</sup> Of course, there is the problem of unrequited love. See [3.2.5] above.

we calmly await new opportunities for showing love. Being equanimous, we see *success* and *failure* as the sides of the same coin: so too *praise* and *blame*; *fame* and *obscurity*. We see *joy* and *sorrow* as defining one another.

**8.3 KEEP WHAT WE CANNOT LOSE: AS WE GIVE SO WE ARE.** Just as we are touched and moved by the kindness and love of others, they too would sooner or later be similarly moved. Plant the seeds of love and water them with virtue and patience. Love is something we can neither have nor own because it is an active appreciation of self and other. In time, we begin to see others as being no different from us, and the self-other wall is broken down.

When we show love, we are giving what we are. If we want to be loved, we must first show that love. When we feel love in this way, we have something we cannot lose. We will never lose the memory and power of such a joy. Those we love are impermanent and subject to change; they might even leave us forever one day. But our happiness about them remains forever with us.

Give what we cannot keep; get what we cannot lose. This is the beginning of Buddhist living and practice.

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