

SN 46.54

Mahāvagga Saṃyutta

(Connected Discourses On the Great Section)

Magga Saṃyutta

(Connected Discourses On the Path)

Sākaccha Vagga

(The Section on Discussing the Dhamma)

Mettāsahagata Sutta

“Radiating Universally Benevolent Loving Kindness”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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Once, The Blessed One was living among the Koliyans, in a town called Haliddavasana. Then one morning, a number of Bhikkhus, having put on their robes and while carrying with them their outer robe and alms bowl, entered the town of Haliddavasana to collect their daily alms. Then it occurred to them: ‘It is still too early to go for alms in Haliddavasana at this time. Let us go and spend the time at the gathering place of those wanderers from other sects.’

So, those Bhikkhus went instead to the gathering place of the wanderers from other sects. Once there, they exchanged friendly greetings with those wanderers and sat down, once they had concluded their cordial talk.

Those wanderers then began saying to those Bhikkhus:

“Friends, the Recluse Gautama, your Teacher, teaches the Dhamma to his disciples in this way:

*1. ‘Come, Bhikkhus, abandon the five hindrances, the corruptions that defile the heart, weakening wisdom, and instead dwell with a heart that is permeating with **universally benevolent loving kindness**, then radiate it while pervading one direction of space, as you experience the feeling of **universal benevolent loving kindness** permeating within you. Similarly, also with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction. And in the same way, continue spreading it as it permeates in the direction above you, below you, spreading it all around you, and finally much like a sphere, radiating it in all directions at once, encompassing all beings everywhere with **universally benevolent loving kindness**, as if to yourself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with it, radiating as it increasingly grows to become vastly wide, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.’*

2. *‘Similarly, dwell with a heart that is permeating with **compassion**, then radiate it while pervading one direction of space, as you experience the feeling of **compassion** permeating within you. Similarly, also with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction. And in the same way, continue spreading it as it permeates in the direction above you, below you, spreading it all around you, and finally much like a sphere, radiating it in all directions at once, encompassing all beings everywhere with **compassion**, as if to yourself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with it, radiating as it increasingly grows to become vastly wide, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.’*

3. *‘Similarly, dwell with a heart that is permeating with **altruistic joy**, then radiate it while pervading one direction of space, as you experience the feeling of **altruistic joy** permeating within you. Similarly, also with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction. And in the same way, continue spreading it as it permeates in the direction above you, below you, spreading it all around you, and finally much like a sphere, radiating it in all directions at once, encompassing all beings everywhere with **altruistic joy**, as if to yourself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with it, radiating as it increasingly grows to become vastly wide, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.’*

4. *‘Similarly, dwell with a heart that is permeating with **equanimity**, then radiate it while pervading one direction of space, as you experience the feeling of **equanimity** permeating within you. Similarly, also with the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction. And in the same way, continue spreading it as it permeates in the direction above you, below you, spreading it all around you, and finally much like a sphere, radiating it in all directions at once, encompassing all beings everywhere with **equanimity**, as if to yourself, while continuing to live with a heart that is suffused with it, radiating as it increasingly grows to become vastly wide, exalted, beyond all measure, beyond any danger, without any hostility or fear.’*

“But you see, friends, we too teach the Dhamma to our disciples exactly and in just the same manner!

“So, friends, what is the distinction here, what is the uniqueness, or the difference between the Dhamma that your Teacher, the Recluse Gautama teaches, and ours?”

Then, those Bhikkhus having listened to the question, neither agreed with what was stated nor rejected the statement of those wandering ascetics of other sects. Instead, they arose from their seats and left while reflecting:

‘We shall go and find out from The Blessed One Himself, the answer to that question, and learn the meaning of this statement, from The Teacher’s own lips.’

Then, when those Bhikkhus had gone to the town of Haliddavasana for their alms food, and having returned to the monastery, after their meal was over, they approached The Blessed One. Once having paid homage to The Blessed One, they sat to one side and reported to Him the entire conversation that had taken place earlier that day between themselves and those wandering ascetics of other sects.

In His reply, The Blessed One said:

“Bhikkhus, when wandering ascetics of other sects speak to you in this manner, then you should respond to them by asking this clarifying question instead:

*‘And how exactly, friends, does the heart become liberated through the practice of **universal benevolent loving kindness**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?’*

*‘Similarly, how exactly does the heart become liberated through the practice of **compassion**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?’*

*‘Similarly, how exactly does the heart become liberated through the practice of **altruistic joy**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?’*

*‘Similarly, how exactly does the heart become liberated through the practice of **upekkha**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?’*

“Now, Bhikkhus, once having been asked in this manner, those wandering ascetics of other sects would be unable to give you a proper response. Further, they would become rather perplexed and even upset. And why is that?

“Because those questions would simply reveal their ignorance and lack of understanding due to their inability in answering you, for these are beyond their scope of practice or knowledge.

“Know this, Bhikkhus! I do not see in this world system, with all its Devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its recluses and all its religious practitioners, whether among Devas or humans, anyone who could give an appropriate and satisfying response to those questions, except the Tathagata or a Disciple of the Tathagata, or someone who has learned it from them.

A. “Now, Bhikkhus, how does the heart become liberated through the practice of **universal benevolent loving kindness**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?’

1. “Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Mindfulness Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

2. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Investigation of States Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

3. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Persevering Effort Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

4. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Spiritual Joy Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

5. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Tranquility of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

6. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Collectedness of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

7. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Equanimity Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **universal benevolent loving kindness**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

And if, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu thinks to himself: *‘May I see the repulsive in what is attractive,’* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the attractive in what is repulsive,’* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the attractive in what is both repulsive and attractive,’* he is able to perceive them as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the repulsive in what is both attractive and repulsive,’* he is able to perceive them as such.

And if he thinks to himself: *‘By avoiding them both, may I overcome what is repulsive and attractive,’* he is able to rest in equanimity, while continuously exercising mindful and clear awareness of all things and whatever he comes in contact with, as he lives in peaceful emancipation, which he attains.

“And Bhikkhus, I declare that even if the wise Bhikkhu who has somehow not yet penetrated into the Supreme Liberation, but with the heart becoming liberated itself through the practice of **universal benevolent loving kindness**, it would *still* be the *most* beautiful thing, the apex of his spiritual practice!

B. “Now, Bhikkhus, how does the heart become liberated through the practice of **compassion**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?”

1. “Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Mindfulness Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

2. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Investigation of States Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

3. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Persevering Effort Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

4. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Spiritual Joy Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

5. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Tranquility of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

6. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Collectedness of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

7. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Equanimity Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **compassion**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

And if, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu thinks to himself: *‘May I see the repulsive in what is attractive,’* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the attractive in what is repulsive,’* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the attractive in what is both repulsive and attractive,’* he is able to perceive them as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the repulsive in what is both attractive and repulsive,’* he is able to perceive them as such.

And if he thinks to himself: *‘By avoiding them both, may I overcome what is repulsive and attractive,’* he is able to rest in equanimity, while continuously exercising mindful and clear awareness of all things and whatever he comes in contact with, staying equanimous throughout.

“And, by having completely transcended and gone beyond the confines of thinking in terms of the physical world and of tangibility, along with the disappearance of perceptions dealing with sensory reflexive contact, and by no longer paying any attention to the multiplicity of unending perceptions, and instead, while remaining fully aware of space being infinitely boundless, the Bhikkhu enters the realm of ‘Infinity of Space.’

“And Bhikkhus, I declare that even if the wise Bhikkhu who has somehow not yet penetrated into the Supreme Liberation, but with the heart becoming liberated itself through the practice of **compassion**, he would nevertheless experience the realm of infinity of space, as the apex of his spiritual practice!

C. “Now, Bhikkhus, how does the heart become liberated through the practice of **altruistic joy**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?”

1. “Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Mindfulness Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

2. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Investigation of States Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

3. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Persevering Effort Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

4. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Spiritual Joy Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

5. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Tranquility of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

6. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Collectedness of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

7. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Equanimity Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **altruistic joy**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

“And if, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu thinks to himself: *‘May I see the repulsive in what is attractive,’* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the attractive in what is repulsive,’* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the attractive in what is both repulsive and attractive,’* he is able to perceive them as such.

If he thinks to himself: *‘May I see the repulsive in what is both attractive and repulsive,’* he is able to perceive them as such.

“And if he thinks to himself: *‘By avoiding them both, may I overcome what is repulsive and attractive,’* he is able to rest in equanimity, while continuously exercising mindful and clear awareness of all things and whatever he comes in contact with, staying equanimous throughout.

“And, by having completely transcended the state of space being infinitely boundless, and by experiencing how consciousness is infinite, while remaining fully aware of consciousness being infinite, the Bhikkhu enters the realm of ‘Infinity of Consciousness.’

“And Bhikkhus, I declare that even if the wise Bhikkhu who has somehow not yet penetrated into the Supreme Liberation, but with the heart becoming liberated itself through the practice of **altruistic joy**, he would nevertheless experience the realm of infinity of consciousness, as the apex of his spiritual practice!

D. “And how, Bhikkhus, does the heart become liberated through the practice of **equanimity**? What is its true objective? What is its peak? What is its fruition? What is its final goal?”

1. “Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Mindfulness Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.
2. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Investigation of States Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.
3. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Persevering Effort Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.
4. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Spiritual Joy Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.
5. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Tranquility of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.
6. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Collectedness of Mind Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.
7. “Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu develops the Equanimity Awakening Factor as he floods his heart and permeates it with **equanimity**, meanwhile supporting himself through seclusion, dispassion, cessation, through constantly giving up, which culminate into Full Liberation.

And if, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu thinks to himself: *'May I see the repulsive in what is attractive,'* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *'May I see the attractive in what is repulsive,'* he is able to perceive it as such.

If he thinks to himself: *'May I see the attractive in what is both repulsive and attractive,'* he is able to perceive them as such.

If he thinks to himself: *'May I see the repulsive in what is both attractive and repulsive,'* he is able to perceive them as such.

And if he thinks to himself: *'By avoiding them both, may I overcome what is repulsive and attractive,'* he is able to rest in equanimity, while continuously exercising mindful and clear awareness of all things and whatever he comes in contact with, staying equanimous throughout.

“And, by having completely transcended the state of consciousness being infinitely boundless, and by experiencing the fact that there is nothing at all, while remaining fully aware that there is nothing at all, the Bhikkhu enters the realm of ‘Nothingness.’

“And Bhikkhus, I declare that even if the wise Bhikkhu who has somehow not yet penetrated into the Supreme Liberation, but with the heart becoming liberated itself through the practice of **equanimity**, he would nevertheless experience the realm of nothingness, as the apex of his spiritual practice!

Sādhu

Sādhu

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