

Love and Hatred - SAKKA'S QUESTION (SAKKAPAÑHA SUTTA) BY MAHASAY I ADAW

In Buddhist literature, Sakka is the name given to the king of the gods (*devas*) and *pañha* means question. So the *Sakkapañha Sutta* is the discourse on the welfare of living beings that the Buddha gave to the king of the gods in response to his questions.

Sakka asked the Buddha as follows,

"Lord, there are *devas*, human beings, *asuras*, *nâgas*, *gandhabbas* and many other living beings. These beings wish to be free from quarrels, armed conflicts, animosity and unhappiness. Yet they are not free from these evils of life. What is the fetter (*samyojana*) that makes them unable to fulfil their wishes?"

The gods, humans and other beings of the sensual world have their hearts in the right place. They want to be free from hatred, not wishing to bear grudges nor to ill-treat others, nor to be ill-treated or robbed themselves. They do not want to become the enemies of other people. In short, all living beings long for security, peace, freedom and happiness. Yet they are all beset with danger, misery and suffering. What is the fetter that causes this situation? Today we hear the universal clamour for world peace and for the welfare of humanity, but these hopes for a happy world are still far from being realised. This naturally raises the question about the cause of our frustration.

The Buddha answered, "O King of *devas*! All living beings long for happiness, security, peace and freedom. Yet they are not free from hatred, conflicts, danger and suffering. This unhappy condition is due to the fetters of envy (*issâ*) and meanness (*macchhariya*)."

Envy (*issâ*)

The characteristic of envy is aversion to the prosperity and welfare of others, which makes one malicious and destructive. These evil desires occasion suffering right now and also in the future for the person who harbours them, leading also to suffering for those who are envied. All over the world much suffering is caused by envy. The envious person hates to see happy or prosperous people. So the characteristic of envy is resentment of other people's welfare, its function is to make the envious person miserable, and its manifestation is to shut one's eyes to another person's prosperity.

One who is dominated by envy does not want to see another person prosperous, successful, good-looking, educated or promoted to a high official position. Envy is an evil that does not benefit in any way the person who harbours it. It provides fertile soil for bad kamma and makes one miserable. A powerful man will seek to ruin the person whom he envies, and by so doing, he turns the other into his enemy who may pay him back in kind. Even if there is no danger of retaliation, he will surely suffer in an after life.

The *Cûlakammavibhanga Sutta* sums up the kammic consequences of envy as powerlessness and a lack of influence. Some men and women do not want to hear anything about the good fortunes of another person—his wealth, intelligence, good health, eloquence and popularity, and so they say or do things that are detrimental to the other person's interest. Propaganda in modern times is motivated by envy. The envy-ridden person suffers in hell for many years and after his release from there, if he is reborn in the human world, he becomes a low-class man with little influence and an insignificant reputation.

On the other hand, a man of goodwill rejoices at the good fortune of others. He is happy when he sees or hears of another's prosperity and helps to promote others' welfare as much as possible, thus cultivating much good kamma. He attains the *deva* world after death where he enjoys a happy life, and on return to the human world he is powerful and has many followers. So those who wish to prosper in this life and in the hereafter should overcome envy and cultivate sympathetic joy (mu
ditâ).

In other words, they should rejoice at the welfare of other people.

Meanness (macchhariya)

Macchhariya is meanness to the point of keeping one's possessions secret. Its manifestation is not wanting others to share the object of one's attachment, and it is characterised by extreme possessiveness. It is of five kinds as it relates to: 1) dwellings, 2) friends and associates, 3) material things, 4) commendable attributes, and 5) learning.

The first kind of meanness is to be found among some monks who do not want to see other monks of good moral character dwelling in their monastery. A monk may not want his lay followers to give alms to other monks. Such envious monks, because of their ill-will, have to undergo many kinds of suffering after death.

Vanna-macchhariya is the desire to possess exclusively a special quality, such as physical beauty, while resenting the same quality in others, and it may lead to ugliness.

Again, *dhamma-macchhariya* means to begrudge a person his learning or to keep back any knowledge from him. This *macchhariya* may make its victim a moron or an idiot in after lives. Thus meanness over the good fortune of other people makes a man unhappy, poor, friendless and subject to great suffering after death.

Âvâsa-macchhariya largely concerns the bhikkhus. It is the tendency to regard a communal monastery as one's private residence. For lay people it is the tendency to have a similar attitude regarding public religious buildings such as temples, meditation centres and so forth.

Kula-macchhariya dominates those monks who do not want their lay followers to have close relations with other monks. Some monks forbid their disciples to see other monks or to hear their discourses. As for lay people, it is *macchhariya* to insist on the undivided and exclusive loyalty of one's relatives.

Lâbha-macchhariya is the desire in some monks to have a monopoly of alms and to deny them to other good monks. As an example of the samsâric suffering rooted in this evil, there is the story of Losakatissa.

In the lifetime of Kassapa Buddha there lived a certain monk who was dependent on a lay disciple for the necessities of life. One day another monk came and stayed at his monastery. Fearing that his disciple's reverence for the new arrival might become a threat to his security, the resident monk tried to get rid of his guest. When the disciple invited both of them to take meals at his house, he went there alone. On his return he dumped by the wayside the food offered for the visiting monk. On his death he suffered for aeons in hell and from there he

passed on to the animal world where he suffered extreme hunger for many lifetimes.

In his last existence he was reborn in a fisherman's village in the country of Kosala. From the time of his conception, misfortunes befell the villagers and his parents. At last, the pangs of hunger made his mother so desperate that she abandoned the child while he was out begging. Venerable Sâriputta saw the starving child. Moved with pity, the elder took him to his monastery where, some years later, he became a bhikkhu. He was called Venerable Losakatissa because he was so unlucky that he never got a substantial meal even at a great feast. All he got was barely enough to sustain life.

This kammic evil dogged him even when he attained Arahantship. Shortly before his death, Venerable Sâriputta took him into Sâvatthi to see to it that he had a proper meal on the last day of his life. It is said that there was no one to offer food to the elder so he sent his companion to a rest-house. Only then did the disciples offer the food, some of which he sent to Venerable Losakatissa, but the men who were supposed to take it to him ate it on the way there. So he had to bring more food himself and hold the bowl while Venerable Losakatissa ate the food. In this way Venerable Losakatissa had his last meal and passed away on that very day.

This story leaves no doubt about the frightful kammic consequences of meanness. Many kinds of meanness afflict lay people, as for example, *lâbha-macchhariya* in those who seek to monopolize a lucrative business;

vanna-macchhariya

in those who do not recognise the good attributes of others; and

dhamma-macchhariya

in those who do not wish to share their knowledge with anyone else.

The Buddha's statement attributing mankind's unhappiness to envy and meanness was directly relevant to Sakka. For, in view of his approaching end, he was unhappy at the prospect of his wives falling into the hands of his successor, and at the thought of the latter outshining him. So from experience he realised the truth of the Buddha's answer and asked another question.

Sakka continued to ask,

"Lord, what is the cause of envy and meanness? What must we remove to be free from them?"

The Buddha answered, "O King of *devas*! Envy and meanness are caused by the objects of love and hatred. If there were no such objects there would be no envy and meanness."

As the Buddha pointed out, the way to end suffering is to remove its cause, and the cause of mankind's unhappiness is love and hatred. It is like the treatment of a disease by a competent physician who seeks its cause and eliminates it.

The objects of love are the living and non-living things that please us, such as men, women, sights, sounds, etc., and the objects of hatred are those things that displease us. We envy someone we dislike who owns valuable objects. Ill-will plagues us when we do not want others to have the objects to which we are attached. So envy and meanness have their roots in hated and cherished persons and objects. It is usually someone we hate who is the object of our envy. However, if the person who excels us happens to be our loved one, it is a cause not for envy but for joy. A boy who outshines his parents does not arouse envy in them—on the contrary they will pride themselves on his superior qualities.

The man who is mean wants to deny others the kind of wealth that he has, the use of his possessions and the opportunity to associate with his friends. So jealous men and women frown on their spouses when they have close relationships with members of the opposite sex or even engage in friendly conversation. In short, *macchhariya* is the inclination to be excessively possessive, and to oppose any close contact between other people and the things one cherishes, and so it is rooted in love and hatred.

Cause of Love and Hatred

Sakka continued to ask,

"But what, dear sir, is the cause of love and hatred, what is their origination, what gives them birth, what is their source? When what exists do they come into being? When what doesn't exist do they not?"

The Buddha answered, "Love and hatred have desire as their cause, have desire as their origination, have desire as what gives them birth, have desire as their source. When desire exists, they come into being. When desire is not, they don't."

Sakka then asked the Buddha about the cause of love and hatred. The Buddha said that desire was the cause of love and hatred. Here, the desire the Buddha referred to is not wholesome desire but the desire associated with pleasure and craving (*tanhâ chanda*).

Desire is of five kinds:

1. The insatiable desire to seek sensual objects. This desire is the driving force behind men's ceaseless activities until the moment of death in each existence.
2. The insatiable desire to get sensual objects. When one desire is fulfilled, another arises and so in this way the acquisitive drive never ends. No wonder that even millionaires crave for more wealth and money instead of being content with what they have.
3. The insatiable desire to consume various sensual objects and material goods. People who like shows, songs, etc., never tire of enjoying them.
4. The insatiable desire to store gold, silver, etc., or to hoard money in any form to be used in case of an emergency.
5. The desire that some people have to give money to their followers, employees, etc.

These five kinds of desire lead to love and hatred. Those objects and living beings that help to fulfil our desires cause love to arise, while those that obstruct our desires cause hatred.

"But what, dear sir, is the cause of desire, what is its origination, what gives it birth, what is its source? When what exists does it come into being? When what doesn't exist does it not?"

The Buddha answered, "Desire has discursive thinking as its cause, has discursive thinking as its origination, has discursive thinking as what gives it birth, has discursive thinking as its source. When discursive thinking exists, desire comes into being. When discursive thinking is not, it doesn't."

Sakka then asked the Buddha about the origin of desire. The Buddha answered that desire is caused by discursive thinking (*vitakka*). According to the commentary, *vitakka* means thinking and deciding. This

vitakka

is of two kinds: one is based on desire while the other has its origin in views. In other words, you think and decide when you regard a sense-object, or a person or another living being as pleasant and desirable. Thus, if you are not mindful at the moment of seeing, hearing, etc., you think and decide. This mental action leads to craving and attachment.

"But what, dear sir, is the cause of thinking, what is its origination, what gives it birth, what is its source? When what exists does it come into being? When what doesn't exist does it not?"

The Buddha answered, "Discursive thinking has perceptions & tendency of the mind to proliferate issues from the sense of self as its cause, as its origination, as what gives it birth, as its source. When perceptions & tendency of the mind to proliferate issues from the sense of self exists, discursive thinking comes into being. When the perceptions & categories of complication are not, it doesn't."

Then Sakka asked the Buddha about the cause of discursive thinking. The Buddha replied that discursive thinking is due to perception, which tends to expand or diffuse (*papañca-sañña*). There are three such kinds of perception: craving

(*tanhâ*),

conceit

(*mâna*)

and wrong-view

(*ditthi*).

Like a small photograph that can be enlarged, every mental image or thought lends itself to expansion. An unmindful person usually falls prey to one of these agents of expansion. He expands every sense-object that he perceives and remembers because of his attachment, conceit or wrong-view.

At the moment of seeing one sees only visible form, but then reflection brings into play craving, conceit and wrong-view. Craving makes the form appear pleasant and amplifies it. The same happens with conceit and wrong-view. So later, every recollection of the moment of seeing leads to thinking and decision, which in turn causes desire. Again, desire leads to love and hatred that make a man prey to envy and ill-will. These cause the frustration and suffering of

humanity.

Conquest of Craving

Sakka continued to ask,

"And how has he practiced, dear sir: the monk who has practiced the practice leading to the right cessation of the perceptions & tendency of the mind to proliferate issues from the sense of self?"

In response to Sakka's request, the Buddha explained the practice for overcoming craving, conceit and wrong-view. According to him, there are two kinds of pleasant feeling and two kinds of unpleasant feeling: the pleasant or unpleasant feeling that we should harbour and the pleasant or unpleasant feeling that we should avoid. Then there is neutral feeling that we have when we are neither happy nor unhappy. This is also of two kinds.

Pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling is to be harboured if it leads to wholesome states of consciousness; it should be avoided if it leads to unwholesome states of consciousness. The commentary describes this teaching as insight practice on the noble path.

The Pâli text of the Buddha's teaching may be translated as follows:

"Sakka, I teach two kinds of pleasant feeling: the pleasant feeling that is to be harboured and the pleasant feeling that is to be avoided. If you know that a pleasant feeling helps to develop unwholesome states of consciousness and to hamper wholesome ones, you should not harbour such a feeling. If you know that a pleasant feeling helps to develop wholesome states of consciousness and to hamper unwholesome ones, you should harbour such a feeling. The pleasant feeling is of two kinds: one, which is bound up with thinking and reflection and the other, which is unconnected with these mental activities. Of these two the pleasant feeling that

has nothing to do with thinking and reflection is far superior."

Wholesome and Unwholesome Pleasant Feeling and Unwholesome Thoughts

Pleasant feelings that lead to unwholesome thoughts are rooted in sensual things. Most people are preoccupied with such things as sex and food. If they get what they want, they rejoice. However, their joy leads to more desire, and so for many people their so-called happiness is founded on desire. If this desire is not fulfilled they are frustrated and unhappy. This means the emergence of unwholesome thoughts, which bring the agents of expansion, namely craving, conceit and wrong-view, into play. The pleasant feelings that we should avoid are mentioned in the *Sâlâyatanaṅgaha Sutta* of the *Majjhimanikâya*. The discourse likens sense-objects to human dwellings because they keep people in confinement. People derive pleasure from contact with them or from memories of that contact. There are six kinds of pleasant feelings rooted in the six sense-objects and their respective sense-organs.

The way to avoid pleasant, but unwholesome, feelings is to be mindful at the moment of seeing, etc. If sensual thoughts cause pleasure, the meditator must note and reject them. However, one who is a beginner cannot follow and note all the mental processes, so he starts with the object of contact and becomes aware of one of the primary elements: solidity, cohesion, temperature and motion (*pathavî, âpo, tejo, vâyo*).

In the *Satipatthâna Sutta* the Buddha says, "When walking he [the meditator] knows, 'I am walking' (*Gacchanto vâ gacchâmi 'ti pajânâti*)." This saying refers to clear awareness of rigidity and motion (*vâyo*), but as he notes walking, the meditator is also aware of the hardness and softness (*pathavî*), the warmth and coldness (*tejo*) and the heaviness and dampness (*âpo*) in the feet and the body. Though the element of *âpo* is intangible it can be known through contact with the other elements that are bound up with it.

Meditators at our meditation centre in Rangoon begin with contact and motion in the abdomen,

which are the easiest and most obvious to note while sitting. The tenseness and motion in the abdomen are the marks of the *vâyo* element. They practise noting (in their own language) the rising and falling of the abdomen. This practice has helped many meditators to attain insights and make significant progress on the holy path.

In the beginning, the meditator constantly watches the abdominal rising and falling. He notes any mental event that occurs while engaged in such concentration. A feeling of joy may arise but it disappears when it is noted and usually does not intrude if the meditator keeps on watching the rising and falling. When the Buddha speaks of unwholesome joy, this means that we should focus on mind and matter in order to head off sensual joy, and that if such joy arises we should note it and reject it at once.

Wholesome Joy

Then there is wholesome joy, which the Buddha describes in the same discourse as follows. Having realised the impermanence and dissolution of matter, the meditator knows that all matter that he has seen before and is seeing now is subject to impermanence (*anicca*) and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*).

This insight knowledge causes joy, and such joy may be described as the pleasant feeling that is rooted in liberation from sensual desire.

This is part of the teaching in the discourse. The commentary adds that the meditator is joyful because he attains insight into impermanence, etc., as a result of his mindfulness of the six sense-objects. Such joy is wholesome and desirable.

The commentary describes four kinds of wholesome joy:

1. the joy due to renunciation of worldly affairs,
2. the joy associated with insight practice,
3. the joy based on contemplation of the Buddha, etc., and
4. the joy resulting from absorption in the first jhâna, etc.

Some people are joyful when they think of their renunciation of worldly affairs, their ordination as bhikkhus and the practice of the monastic discipline, concentration and so forth. Feelings of joy also arise when they hear a discourse on the Dhamma or when they go to a meditation centre

for the practice of insight meditation. This joy is wholesome since it is dissociated from secular life.

The joy dependent on insight may be the joy that arises while one is being mindful. In particular the highest joy is the joy associated with the emergence of insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena (*udayabbayañâna*).

The joy that we have when we contemplate the Buddha, etc., is obvious. The commentaries say that concentration on the joy derived from the six contemplations on the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, on one's morality, on one's generosity, and on heavenly beings, can bring about knowledge and fruition of the path. Even Arahantship may be attained if the meditator notes and reflects on the dissolution and cessation of joy (*pîti*) that is born of these six contemplations. *Pîti* means joy and obviously the joy derived from the six contemplations is wholesome. So, too, is the joy based on the three jhânas or their access concentration (*upacâra samâdhi*).

Of the four kinds of renunciation, joining the Sangha means freedom from marital responsibilities. One who practices insight meditation (*vipassanâ*) is also aloof from attachment and all sensual objects. So the commentary on the *Itivuttaka* describes ordination, the first jhâna, nibbâna, *vipassanâ* and all wholesome *dhammas* as renunciation (*nekkhamma*).

The joy that is marked by thinking and reflection is of two kinds: happiness (*sukha*) that is associated with access-concentration (*upacâra samâdhi*) and happiness associated with the first jhâna. Then, as mentioned before, there are various types of mundane joy: joy over one's ordination, joy that results from insight practice, the joy of contemplating the Buddha, etc. Again, we have four kinds of supramundane joy associated with the four paths of the first jhâna.

Superior to these types of joy are those that have nothing to do with thinking and reflection (*vita*

kka-vicâra).

This is the attribute of the second jhâna; which is marked by joy

(pîti),

bliss

(sukha)

and one-pointedness of mind

(ekaggatâ);

and the attribute of the third jhâna, which is also marked by joy and one-pointedness. Such jhânic joy is mundane joy. The joy derived from the four supramundane paths and from the second and third jhânas is free from thinking and reflection and is therefore wholesome. These second and third jhânic joys are far superior to the first jhânic joy or the joy associated with wholesome thoughts in the sensual sphere; and so too is the joy of insight resulting from attentiveness to the second and third jhânic joy.

A discussion of these joys that are with or without thinking and reflection, is beyond the comprehension of those who have little knowledge of the scriptures. It can be understood thoroughly only by those who have attained jhâna.

According to the commentary, when Sakka asked the Buddha how to overcome desire, conceit and wrong-view (*tanhâ, mâna, ditthi*) , he was asking the Buddha about the practice of insight on the noble path. The Buddha stressed wholesome pleasure, wholesome displeasure and wholesome indifference as the remedy. It may be hard for unenlightened people to understand this but the Buddha's answer is relevant to the question.

For the *devas*, mind is more obvious than matter, and among the elements of mind, feeling is more obvious than the others. So the Buddha told Sakka to contemplate his feelings (*vedanâ*).

In many of the Buddha's teachings on insight meditation, contemplating matter takes precedence over contemplating consciousness. This is also true of the

Sakkapañha Sutta

but here no mention is made of matter since it is implicit in the contemplation of feeling.