

## (Puñña) Mettā Sutta<sup>1</sup>

The Discourse on Lovingkindness (as Merit) | A 7.58a/4:88-91

Theme: The spiritual benefit of lovingkindness

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003; rev 2010

In the PTS edition, this Sutta is placed immediately after **the (Moggallāna) Pacalā Sutta**,<sup>2</sup> as if it is a part of that Sutta. This short inspiring Sutta appears, with some minor textual variations, in the first half of **Mā Puñña Bhāyī Sutta** (It 1.3.2/14-16), and is referred to once in **the Khuddaka Commentary** (KhA 230) and twice in the Jātaka (**the Araka Jātaka**, J 169; **the Dhamma-d, dhaja Jātaka**, J 220). In the Araka Jātaka (J 169), similar words are ascribed to the Bodhisattva when he was the teacher Araka.<sup>3</sup>

### READING:

(1) Harvey B Aronson, *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism*, 1980;

(2) R Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 1998:186 f.

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## The Discourse on Lovingkindness (as Merit)

A 7.58a/4:88-91

**1** Bhikshus, be not afraid of merit.<sup>4</sup> This “merit,” [89] is another name for happiness. For, I know very well, I have for a long time experienced the desirable, pleasant and agreeable fruits of meritorious deed often performed.

**2** For seven years I cultivated thoughts of lovingkindness. Having cultivated a heart full of lovingkindness for seven years, I did not return to this world<sup>5</sup> for seven aeons<sup>6</sup> of world-contraction and world-expansion.<sup>7</sup> Whenever a world was destroyed, I was reborn among the devas of streaming radiance (*Ābhassarā*).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Due to editorial oversight in the PTS Pali ed, this sutta is treated as part of **Moggallāna or Pacalā S** (A 7.58), and DPPN does not note this error. For Moggallāna S or Pacalā S, see SD 4.11.

<sup>2</sup> A 7.58/4:85-88 = SD 4.11.

<sup>3</sup> Tr Nyanaponika & Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* (1999 §147). See **Araka S** (S 7.70) = SD 16.17(2).

<sup>4</sup> “Merit,” *puñña*, given in the plural in Pali, but in modern English, “merit” is an uncountable noun. In the pl sense, it refers to “acts of merit.”

<sup>5</sup> AA: He had attained to the absorptions with lovingkindness and thus did not return to this world, that is, the sense sphere (*kāma, loka*).

<sup>6</sup> “Aeon,” *kappa*, is divided into 4 phases of cosmic expansion, stable state, cosmic contraction, stable state (A 4.156, 7.62). **The Pabbata S** says that an aeon would last longer than it would take a man (assuming he is long-lived) to wear down a mountain a league (7 mi=11.25 km) high, a league wide, a league round by stroking it once a century with a fine muslin (S 15.5).

<sup>7</sup> Buddhist cosmology speaks of a “pulsating” universe, that is, in modern terms, a cycle “big bang,” steady state, “big crunch,” steady state, ad infinitum. See **Brahmajāla S** (D 2.39-40/1:17) = SD 25.2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ābhassarā*, the highest of the 3 Brahma worlds, all part of the 2nd dhyana plane. When the universe is devolves through “fire,” all lower worlds are destroyed, while the beings are mostly reborn in Ābhassara (or in another parallel universe): see **Aggañña S** (D 27.10/3:84 f) = SD 2.19 esp n on “mostly” at D 27.10a; Vism 13.41-44/416 f. See ItA 1:76.

3 When the world unfolded [evolved] again,<sup>9</sup> I was reborn in an empty Brahma-vimāna [Brahma-palace].<sup>10</sup> And there I was Mahā Brahmā, the unconquered conqueror, almighty. And thirty-six times I was Sakra, leader of the devas,<sup>11</sup> and many hundred times I was a universal monarch, a just and righteous king.<sup>12</sup>

There were, bhikshus, these seven jewels (*satta ratana*) of mine, that is to say, the wheel jewel, the elephant jewel, the horse jewel, the gem jewel, the woman jewel, the householder jewel, and the advisor jewel as the seventh.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, bhikshus, another thousand were my sons, brave, heroic in limb and form, the crusher of the armies of others. Victorious over this earth, surrounded by the ocean, I ruled with neither rod nor sword [with neither fear nor violence], but justly.

- 4 *Passa puññānaṃ vipākāṃ kusalānaṃ sukhesino  
mettaṃ cittaṃ vibhāvetvā satta,vassāni bhikkhave  
satta,samvaṭṭa,vivaṭṭa,kappe na-y-imaṃ lokāṃ punāgamāṃ [90]*

See the wholesome fruit of the happiness-seeker's merit!  
Having cultivated a lovingkind mind for seven years, bhikshus,  
After seven world-cycles of shrinking and expanding, I return not to this world.

- 5 *Samvaṭṭamāne lokambhi homi ābhassarūpago  
vivaṭṭamāne lokambhi suññaṃ brahmūpago ahum*

When the world rolled back, I arrived in the Ābhassara world,  
when the world rolled open, I arrived in an empty Brahma world.

- 6 *Satta-k,khattum mahā,brahmā vasa,vatti tadā ahum  
cha-t,timsa-k,khattum dev'indo deva,rajjam akārayim*

For seven times Mahā Brahmā, almighty, such was I,  
Thirty-times I ruled as Sakra, lord of the devas.

- 7 *Cakka,vatti ahum rājā jambu,dīpassa issaro  
muddhāvasitto khattiyo manussādhīpatī ahum*

A world monarch was I, the lord of Jambu,dvīpa [the Rose-apple Continent],  
a head-anointed kshatriya, the overlord of men was I.

- 8 *Adaṇḍena asatthena vijeyya paṭhaviṃ imaṃ  
asāhasena dhammena samena anusāsīyam*

This world I conquered without rod or sword,  
without violence, admonishing justly and harmoniously [impartially].

- 9 *Dhammena rajjam kāretvā asmim paṭhavi,maṇḍale  
maha-d,dhane mahā,bhoge addhe ajāyisaṃ kule*

I ruled justly in this circle of the earth;  
families grew wealthy, great in wealth, great in enjoyment.

- 10 *Sabba,kāmehi sampanno ratanehi ca sattahi  
Buddhā saṅgāhakā loka tehi etaṃ sudesitaṃ*

<sup>9</sup> Presumably for the 8th time: Comy is silent.

<sup>10</sup> "Brahmā-palace," *brahmā,vimāna*. Alt tr "heavenly mansion," that is, the divine realm or "celestial realm" of a particular deva.

<sup>11</sup> The lifespan of devas in Tāvātimsa is equivalent to 36M human years (A 3.70.19/1:213).

<sup>12</sup> See It:M 22 n82.

<sup>13</sup> For details, see **Mahā Sudassana S** (D 17/2:169-199) = SD 36.12.

All sense-pleasures were fulfilled through the seven jewels—  
this the Buddhas has thoroughly taught to the world.

- 11 *Esa hetu,mahantassa pathavyo yena vuccati*  
*Pahūta,vittūpakaraṇo rājā homi patāpavā*

This, it is said, is the cause for becoming a great earth-ruler,  
abundant in wealth and means, a glorious king was I.

- 12 *Iddhimā yasavā homi jambu,saṇḍassa issaro*  
*Ko sutvā na-p,pasīdeyya api kaṇhābhijātiyo* [91]

Accomplished and famous was I as lord of Jambu,dvīpa:  
Who, hearing this, would not have faith [not be inspired], even the swarthy low-born?

- 13 *Tasmā hi attha,kāmena mahattam abhikaṇkhatā*  
*Saddhammo garu,kātabbo saraṁ buddhāna sāsanaṁ*

Therefore, for those wishing for wellbeing, those yearning for greatness,  
should revere the True Teaching, recollect the Buddha's Teaching.

— evaṁ —

## Bibliography

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