



THE WASHINGTON BUDDHIST

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF INSIGHT, COMPASSION, AND CALM THROUGH
TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA



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TABLE



Of Contents

- 1** Editorial: In the Season of Stillness, Strengthening Our Bonds
- 2** Loving Wisely: Buddhist Wisdom for Relationships
- 3**  A Temple Visit That Changed a Family's Perspective: The Lessons from the Sigalovada Sutta
- 4** Compassionate Bonds: Living the Four Sublime States
- 5** Karuna: The Heart of Buddhist Compassion
- 6** A Harmonious Heart: The Interplay of the Four Sublime States
- 7** Everyday Blessings for Stronger Relationships: Inspired by Maha Mangala Sutta
- 8** Ajahn Sīlaratano: A Journey Rooted in Forest Dhamma
- 9** Dhamma Reflection - Dhammapada Verse 1
- 10** Vihara News and Updates



EDITORIAL: IN THE SEASON OF GIVING, STRENGTHENING OUR BONDS

AS THE YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE AND THE SEASON OF GIVING UNFOLDS, WE FIND OURSELVES SURROUNDED BY BOTH CELEBRATION AND COMPLEXITY. THE HOLIDAYS PROMISE JOY AND CONNECTION, YET THEY OFTEN TEST THE VERY RELATIONSHIPS WE HOLD DEAR. IN THIS ISSUE, WE TURN TO THE BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS TO ILLUMINATE A PATH THROUGH THIS TENSION—ONE THAT INVITES US TO OFFER MORE THAN GIFTS, AND TO RECEIVE MORE THAN PRAISE.

DRAWING FROM THE SIGALOVADA SUTTA, OFTEN CALLED THE "VINAYA OF THE LAITY," WE EXPLORE HOW EVERYDAY RELATIONSHIPS—BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN, SPOUSES, FRIENDS, TEACHERS, AND COLLEAGUES—CAN BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH MUTUAL RESPECT AND ETHICAL CARE. THESE TEACHINGS REMIND US THAT GENEROSITY IS NOT MERELY TRANSACTIONAL; IT IS RELATIONAL, RECIPROCAL, AND DEEPLY HUMAN.

COMPLEMENTING THIS IS THE CONTEMPLATIVE GRACE OF THE BRAHMA VIHARAS—METTA, KARUNA, MUDITA, AND UPEKKHA. THESE FOUR "DIVINE ABODES" OFFER THE INNER CONDITIONS FOR HARMONY: LOVING-KINDNESS, COMPASSION, JOY IN OTHERS' HAPPINESS, AND EQUANIMITY. TOGETHER, THEY FORM A SPIRITUAL ARCHITECTURE FOR THE SEASON, GUIDING US TO RESPOND WITH PRESENCE RATHER THAN PRESSURE.

THIS DECEMBER, MAY WE OFFER THE GIFT OF OURSELVES—OUR ATTENTION, OUR KINDNESS, AND OUR ETHICAL COMMITMENT TO ONE ANOTHER. MAY THESE TEACHINGS HELP TRANSFORM STRESS INTO SPACIOUSNESS, AND OBLIGATION INTO OPPORTUNITY. AND MAY OUR SHARED REFLECTIONS CONTINUE TO NOURISH THE LEGACY OF COMPASSION WE HOLD AS A COMMUNITY.

MAY THIS ISSUE OF WASHINGTON BUDDHIST BE A QUIET BELL, AWAKENING US TO THE SACRED POTENTIAL WITHIN EVERY RELATIONSHIP.

WARM WISHES FOR A COMPASSIONATE SEASON.

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LOVING WISELY: BUDDHIST WISDOM FOR RELATIONSHIPS



We all want meaningful relationships—ones that nurture, support, and bring joy. But life often throws curveballs, and even our closest connections can bring tension, confusion, or heartache. Thankfully, Buddhist teachings offer timeless guidance on how to bring clarity, compassion, and balance into our relationships without needing to retreat from the world or become a monastic.

What Does Non-Attachment Really Mean?

“Non-attachment” may sound like becoming distant or emotionally cold, but in Buddhist practice, it means something quite different. It’s not about avoiding love—it’s about loving wisely. Non-attachment encourages us to let go of rigid expectations and the false belief that others must act a certain way for us to be happy.

As the Buddha said in the Dhammapada (Verse 212), “From craving, grief arises; from craving, fear arises.” If your happiness depends entirely on your partner doing everything right or the relationship staying exactly the same, suffering is likely when things inevitably change. True connection thrives when it’s rooted in reality—not in clinging or control.

Think of non-attachment as commitment without emotional chains. It’s a spacious love that allows both people to grow.

The Four Immeasurable Qualities: Heart Practices for Connection

Buddhism encourages cultivating four transformative mindsets—known as the Brahmaviharas—that help relationships flourish:

- Metta (Loving-kindness): Wishing for others to be happy, simply because we care. The Metta Sutta reminds us to cherish others “even as a mother protects her child.” This love has no strings attached.
 - Karuna (Compassion): Feeling another’s pain and wishing to ease it. Being present for loved ones during struggles strengthens trust and intimacy.
 - Mudita (Sympathetic Joy): Rejoicing in the happiness of others, without jealousy. Celebrating a partner’s success deepens connection.
 - Upeksha (Equanimity): Maintaining balance through life’s ups and downs. When practiced in relationships, equanimity helps us meet challenges calmly and see both sides with fairness.
- These qualities aren’t just poetic—they’re trainable through reflection, meditation, and action.

Practical Tools from the Noble Eightfold Path

The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path offers a roadmap for mindful living—and every element applies directly to relationships:

- Right Speech: Speak with honesty and kindness. Think before you speak to avoid causing harm (MN 61).
- Right Action: Act ethically. Respect boundaries and never exploit others.
- Right Livelihood: Share responsibilities fairly and manage resources with integrity.
- Right Mindfulness: Be present. Tune into your thoughts, emotions, and your partner's state of mind (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta).
- Right Effort: Reduce resentment, cultivate patience.
- Right View & Right Intention: Understand life's impermanence and approach relationships with goodwill, not self-centered motives.

These principles turn everyday interactions into opportunities for spiritual growth.

Unconditional Love and Acceptance

While the term "unconditional love" isn't a direct Buddhist term, the essence of Metta (loving-kindness) is precisely that: a love radiated without limitation or condition, as described in the Metta Sutta (Sn 1.8). It's about accepting your partner as they are, rather than fixating on an ideal "perfect" person. True love, from a Buddhist perspective, isn't about control; it's about allowing freedom.



**Metta is about
nonjudgmental,
unconditional love,
not about control.**

Interdependence: We Rise Together





One of Buddhism's deepest insights is that we're all interconnected. The concept of Dependent Origination teaches that everything arises based on conditions. Relationships, too, are co-created—we lean on each other, just like two bundles of reeds standing upright together (SN 12.67).

Realizing this can inspire humility, empathy, and shared responsibility. When your partner suffers, you suffer. When they thrive, you thrive.

Starting with Yourself

Lasting relationships begin with inner cultivation. The Buddha said in the Dhammapada (Verse 160), “One is one's own protector, one's own refuge.” When we develop mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom within ourselves, we show up more fully and skillfully for those we love.

✿ Suggested Related Articles

- **1. Modern Layperson's Ethics**
-  [Sitting with Sigala: A Modern Layperson's Buddhist Ethics](#)
- **2. Comprehensive Overview**
-  [Sigalovada Sutta - Maithri.com](#)
- **3. Canonical Translation**
<https://accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html>
-  [Sigalovada Sutta: The Discourse to Sigala – Access to Insight](#)
- **4. Buddhist Teachings on Love and Relationships**
-  [The Buddha's Teachings on Love – Insight Meditation Center](#)



Circle of relationships

A TEMPLE VISIT THAT CHANGED A FAMILY'S PERSPECTIVE

By Maharagama Dhammasiri Nayaka Thera

Lessons from the Sigalovada Sutta

About a couple of full moons ago, a family of four—two parents burdened by the pressures of running a small business and maintaining a household, and two teenagers overwhelmed by academic demands and digital distractions—visited a local Buddhist temple seeking peace and clarity. Each member of the family was navigating the delicate tension between fulfilling interpersonal responsibilities and honoring their individual need for rest, serenity, and emotional balance.

They were warmly welcomed by a senior monk, who—grounded in both the Dhamma and everyday life—offered them guidance drawn from an ancient Buddhist text: The Sigalovada Sutta. His message: spiritual practice isn't separate from worldly life—it's about how we treat one another, starting at home. The Sigalovada Sutta, a teaching from the Buddha offers timeless advice on cultivating peaceful and respectful relationships.

By Sigalovada Sutta: A Layperson's Guide to Relationships

The Buddha originally delivered this sutta to a young man named Sigala, who was worshipping the six directions—East, South, West, North, Below, and Above—as a ritual. Instead of dismissing the practice, the Buddha reinterpreted each direction as symbolic of a vital human relationship:

The real act of “worship” lies in nurturing these relationships with responsibility, respect, and compassion.

📍 Direction	❤️ Relationship
East	Parents
South	Teachers
West	Spouses & Family
North	Friends
Below (Nadir)	Employees & Workers
Above (Zenith)	Spiritual Mentors



👐 Embedded Wisdom: Mutual Duties and Ethical Living

At the heart of the Sigalovada Sutta is reciprocity—not one-sided duty, but shared commitment.

👨👩 Parents & Children

Parents: Protect, educate, and nurture

Children: Honor, support, and carry forward the legacy

🎓 Teachers & Students

Teachers: Instruct, safeguard, and mentor

Students: Respect, learn attentively, and serve

Spouses

Both: Communicate kindly, stay faithful, share responsibilities

Friends

Both: Offer support, protect secrets, help in need, and celebrate joys together

Employers & Employees

Employers: Provide fair wages, humane conditions, and recognition

Employees: Work honestly, be loyal, and uphold the employer's good name





Spiritual Guides & Followers

Guides: Lead by example, teach compassionately

Followers: Listen, support, and practice the teachings diligently

Why This Teaching Still Resonates

In today's fractured world of digital overload and hurried lives, the **Sigalovada Sutta** is a breath of clarity:

-  *In homes*: Cultivates respect and communication
-  *In education*: Encourages humility and commitment
-  *At work*: Promotes ethical leadership and fair treatment
-  *In spiritual life*: Connects daily action with inner growth

It's a guidebook for living ethically—without needing to abandon worldly life.

Takeaway: Mindfulness in Action

The monk's message helped the visiting family see their struggles not as burdens, but as opportunities to grow closer and live with purpose. Through the lens of the Sigalovada Sutta, everyday interactions—at home, school, work, and in the community—can become acts of spiritual practice.

Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Compassion

That's the heart of the Buddha's advice—and it starts with how we treat each other, moment by moment.

COMPASSIONATE BONDS: LIVING THE FOUR SUBLIME STATES

The Buddha's teachings offer a profound framework for navigating the complexities of human relationships, not through rigid rules, but through the cultivation of inner states that transform our interactions. Among the most potent of these are the Brahma Viharas, or the Four Sublime States of Mind: Metta (loving-kindness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (sympathetic joy), and Upekkha (equanimity). When diligently practiced, these boundless qualities serve as an indispensable guide, allowing us to foster deeper connection, navigate conflict with grace, and ultimately enrich every relationship we encounter.

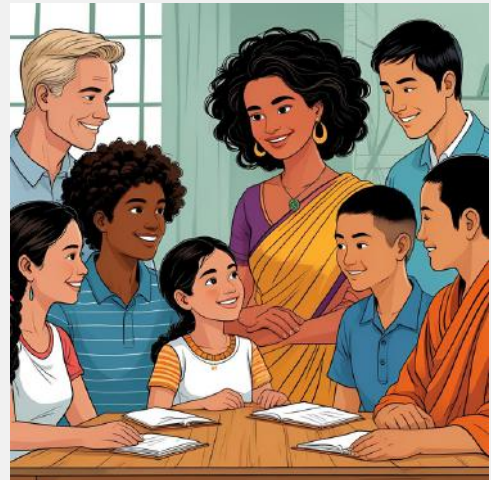
Metta, loving-kindness, forms the foundational bedrock upon which all wholesome relationships are built. It is an active benevolence, a wish for the well-being and happiness of others, free from attachment or expectation. In our intimate relationships, metta manifests as genuine affection, warmth, and a desire for our partner's flourishing. It allows us to see beyond their flaws and appreciate their inherent goodness, fostering a space of acceptance and affirmation. For friends and family, metta translates into unwavering support and an open heart. Even with those we find challenging, the cultivation of metta helps to soften our judgments, allowing us to respond with patience rather than irritation. By radiating metta, we create an atmosphere of safety and trust, inviting others to reciprocate with openness and kindness.

Flowing naturally from metta is Karuna, compassion, which is the profound resonance with the suffering of others, coupled with a genuine desire to alleviate it. In relationships, karuna allows us to step into another's shoes, to feel their pain, their struggles, and their disappointments. When a loved one is facing hardship, karuna moves us to offer solace, practical help, or simply a listening ear without judgment. It prevents us from dismissing their concerns or becoming hardened by their difficulties.

Practicing karuna means recognizing that everyone experiences suffering, and this shared humanity can bridge divides and deepen empathy, transforming moments of vulnerability into opportunities for profound connection. It encourages us to respond to conflict not with aggression, but with an understanding of the underlying pain that often fuels anger or hurt.



While metta and karuna address well-being and suffering, Mudita, sympathetic joy, celebrates the happiness and success of others without reservation. This often overlooked Brahma Vihara is particularly vital in relationships, as it directly counters the pervasive human tendency towards envy or comparison.



When a friend achieves a goal, a partner receives good news, or a child excels, mudita allows us to genuinely rejoice in their good fortune as if it were our own.

This unselfish delight strengthens bonds, eradicates resentment, and fosters a spirit of shared accomplishment. Instead of feeling diminished by another's success, mudita enables us to expand our own sense of joy, creating a virtuous cycle where positive experiences are amplified and celebrated collectively.

Finally, Upekkha, equanimity, provides the steadying balance that allows relationships to weather the inevitable storms of life. It is not indifference, but rather a profound wisdom that understands the impermanence of all things – including moods, circumstances, and even relationships themselves. Upekkha allows us to remain calm and centered amidst fluctuating emotions, both our own and those of others. When a relationship faces conflict or change, equanimity enables us to respond with a clear mind, free from clinging or aversion. It helps us to accept others as they are, with their strengths and weaknesses, without demanding they conform to our expectations. By cultivating upekkha, we develop resilience, recognizing that relationships, like all phenomena, are subject to change, and that true connection lies not in control, but in a spacious and accepting heart.

In essence, the Four Sublime States of Mind offer a comprehensive pathway to cultivating healthy, compassionate, and enduring relationships. They are not merely passive states, but active practices that require ongoing effort and mindfulness. By intentionally nurturing metta, karuna, mudita, and upekkha in our interactions, we transform not only our relationships with others but also our own inner landscape, moving towards a life rich in wisdom, compassion, and authentic connection.



KARUNA: THE HEART OF BUDDHIST COMPASSION

Introduction: What Is Karuna?

In Buddhism, Karuna is the Pali term for compassion—a profound, active wish to alleviate the suffering of others. More than mere sympathy, Karuna is a dynamic force that arises from deep awareness of suffering and a sincere desire to relieve it. It is one of the Four Sublime States (Brahmaviharas), alongside loving-kindness (Metta), empathetic joy (Mudita), and equanimity (Upekkha), forming the ethical and emotional foundation of Buddhist practice.

Karuna in the Buddha's Teachings

The Buddha emphasized that wisdom and compassion are inseparable—like two wings of a bird or two eyes that see clearly together. Karuna is not just a virtue but a path to enlightenment. In the Metta Sutta, the Buddha encourages practitioners to radiate compassion in all directions, cultivating a mind “abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility and ill will”.

Key teachings include:

Compassion as ethical action: Practicing Karuna means refraining from harm and actively helping others.

Compassion as insight: True Karuna arises from understanding the interconnectedness of all beings.

Compassion as liberation: It dissolves the illusion of separateness and leads to spiritual awakening.

Karuna in Modern Society

In today's world—marked by conflict, inequality, and ecological crisis—Karuna offers a timeless remedy. It encourages:

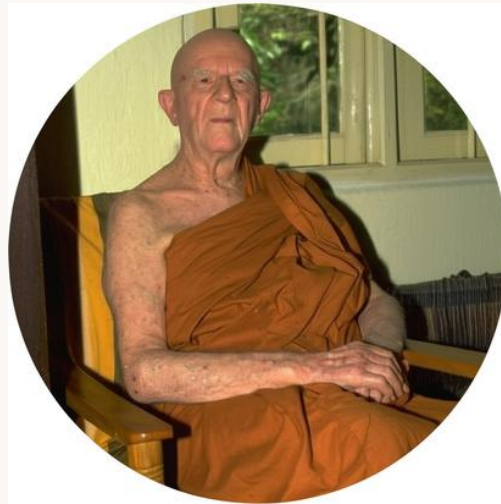
- Social responsibility: Compassionate action in healthcare, education, and justice systems.
- Environmental stewardship: Recognizing the suffering of all sentient beings, including animals and ecosystems.
- Mental health and well-being: Cultivating Karuna through mindfulness and meditation fosters resilience, empathy, and emotional balance.

Modern movements like Engaged Buddhism draw directly from Karuna to address societal issues, showing that compassion is not passive but a call to action.



A HARMONIOUS HEART: THE INTERPLAY OF THE FOUR SUBLIME STATES

Nyanaponika Thera



In Buddhist practice, the cultivation of the Four Sublime States—Loving-Kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha)—invites us into a life of depth, clarity, and open-heartedness. These qualities are not meant to stand alone. They weave together into a fabric of spiritual resilience, each supporting and refining the others in a dynamic interplay.

♥ **Loving-Kindness: Unbounded and Inclusive**

Loving-kindness is the starting point—a warm, unconditional goodwill directed to all beings. Yet even this pure intention can falter if not supported. It is compassion that prevents love from becoming selective, reminding us to include even those we might overlook. Equanimity lends love its steadfastness, ensuring our care remains firm and impartial. Together, they transform kindness into a powerful, selfless force.

❤️ **Compassion: The Gentle Urgency of Care**

Compassion awakens us to suffering. It urges love and joy to broaden their reach, to remember that joy in one place often coexists with sorrow in another. Compassion nudges us out of complacency and into action—it asks us not only to feel but to respond. When partnered with equanimity, it resists burnout and melancholy. When accompanied by joy, it becomes the spark of hopeful service.

😊 **Sympathetic Joy: Rejoicing in Others' Well-being**

Sympathetic joy is the capacity to celebrate happiness that is not our own. It softens the edge of suffering by preventing compassion from becoming heavy or brooding. It also infuses equanimity with a lightness—like the Buddha's serene smile, which shines even in the face of life's troubles. Joy affirms that goodness exists and is worth recognizing, even amid impermanence.

🌿 **Equanimity: The Steady Beacon**

Equanimity is balance without apathy, rooted in deep understanding. It steadies the other three states, ensuring they do not collapse under emotional weight or run astray through unchecked sentiment. It gives patience to love, courage to compassion, and purpose to joy. In its perfection, equanimity becomes radiant—not lifeless, but luminous—like a crystal that gives without being diminished.

The Symphony of Wholeness

When cultivated together, these Four Sublime States form an ethical and emotional compass that brings harmony to our lives. Each state checks and uplifts the others. Equanimity, especially, anchors the trio, ensuring that our goodwill is not fragile but enduring. Through these qualities, the heart expands not just outward toward others, but inward toward stillness and strength.

“For one who clings, motion exists; but for one who clings not, there is no motion. Where no motion is, there is stillness. Where stillness is, there is no craving. Where no craving is, there is neither coming nor going. Where no coming nor going is, there is neither arising nor passing away. Where neither arising nor passing away is, there is neither this world nor a world beyond, nor a state between. This, verily, is the end of suffering.”

— Udana 8:3

This article was adapted from Nyanaponika Thera’s original work, “The Four Sublime States: Contemplations on Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity,” published by Access to Insight (BCBS Edition), 30 November 2013. The full text is available at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel006.html>.



EVERYDAY BLESSINGS FOR STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

Inspired by the Maha Mangala Sutta – A Buddhist Guide to Happiness and Harmony

The Maha Mangala Sutta is a beautiful teaching from the Buddha that shares 38 “great blessings”—practical ways to live a happy, meaningful life. Many of these blessings also help us connect better with others and build strong, respectful relationships. Here are some key takeaways:

1. Choose Your Company Wisely 🧑

Asevanā ca bālānam

Panditānañ ca sevanā

Who we spend time with matters. Being around kind, wise, and honest people lifts us up and helps us grow. On the flip side, negative influences can pull us toward conflict and harmful behavior.

Tip: Surround yourself with people who bring out your best—those who inspire kindness, honesty, and positive action.

2. Respect Those Who Deserve It 🙏

Pūjā ca pūjanīyānam

Honoring parents, teachers, elders, and those with good character builds trust and deepens our connections.

Tip: Show appreciation to those who’ve helped you grow. A kind word or gesture can go a long way.

3. Care for Family 🧡

Mātā pitu upatthānam
Puttadārassa sangaho

Supporting your loved ones—whether emotionally or practically—creates a strong foundation for your life.

Tip: Treat your home as a place of love, safety, and support. When things are good at home, it's easier to build good relationships elsewhere too.

4. Be Generous & Do What's Right 🎁

Dānañ ca dhammacariyā ca

Giving doesn't just mean money—it can be time, energy, kindness. And living ethically (avoiding harm, dishonesty, etc.) brings peace and stability to all relationships.

Tip: Small acts of kindness ripple outward. Be generous not just with things, but with compassion and honesty.

5. Speak Kindly 💬

Subhāsītā ca yā vācā

Our words carry weight. Speaking gently, truthfully, and respectfully helps avoid misunderstandings and builds trust.

Tip: Before speaking, ask: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful?

6. Practice Humility & Gratitude 🙏

Gāravo ca nivāto ca
Santutthī ca kataññutā

Being humble makes us easier to connect with. Feeling grateful makes others feel valued.

Tip: A simple “thank you” or a quiet act of humility can heal more than you realize.

7. Be Patient & Open to Advice 🌤️

Khanti ca sovacassatā

Relationships have ups and downs. Patience helps us handle challenges calmly. Listening to wise advice shows growth and strengthens trust.

Tip: When things get tough, take a breath. Patience and openness build lasting bonds.

💬 In short, the Maha Mangala Sutta gives us a timeless toolkit for living well with others. By choosing kindness, respect, and generosity, we create stronger, more peaceful relationships—in our homes, communities, and hearts.



Visual Meditation: Cultivating the Blessings of Connection

Imagine a tranquil morning garden.

Mist rises gently from the earth, and soft golden light filters through trees. Each leaf glistens, each breath feels alive with promise.

Notice the path winding through this space.

At each stepping stone lies a word: Respect. Patience. Gratitude. Giving. Truthful Speech.

Pause at each one. Let the meaning bloom in your heart like the unfolding petals of a lotus.

Hear birdsong—gentle, gracious, unhurried.

Let it remind you of the power of kind speech, carrying joy through the air like a breeze.

Say something kind to yourself.

Feel warmth behind your heart—memories of friends, mentors, family.

Send them loving wishes. Wish them safety, joy, and peace. Then, extend those same wishes to someone you find difficult. Hold them gently in compassion, as you would a fragile leaf.


See your reflection in a still pond.

There's no judgment—only awareness.

What do you want to grow today: humility? patience? generosity?

Breathe in the blessings of this space.

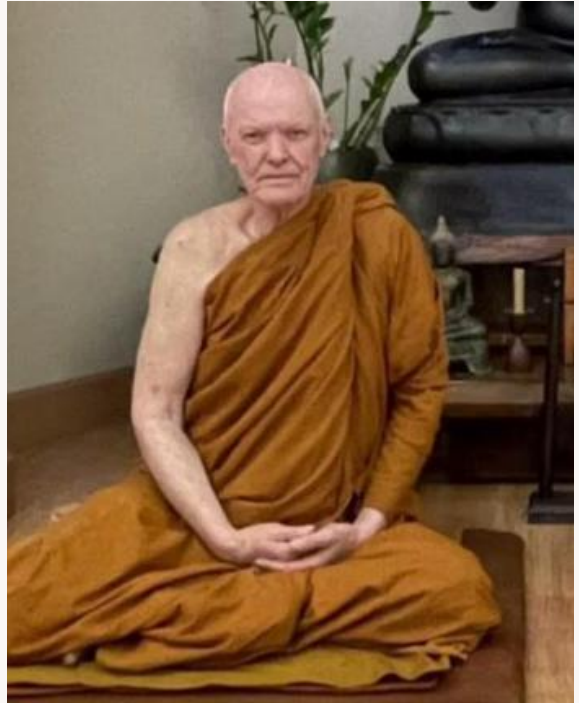
With each breath, plant a seed of goodness. With each exhale, let go of harshness and hurry.

 **Sit quietly, knowing that by practicing these blessings, you are already building deeper, more harmonious relationships—one gentle breath at a time.**

AJAHN SĪLARATANO: A JOURNEY ROOTED IN FOREST DHAMMA

📍 From Winchester to Wandering

Born in Winchester, Virginia in 1948, Ajahn Dick Sīlaratano—formerly Richard E. Byrd Jr.—graduated from the University of Texas in 1970. Disillusioned with the academic path he had pursued, he abandoned plans for graduate school and set off on an extended spiritual journey. His travels in search of meaning led him to India and Sri Lanka in 1975, where a chance encounter with *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by Ven. Ñāṇaponika Thera sparked a deep interest in the Dhamma.



Moved by the clarity of that text, he spent time at the Forest Hermitage outside Kandy with Ven. Ñāṇaponika. Returning to India later that year, he received permission to stay at the Mahā Bodhi Society in Bangalore, where he trained under Ven. Buddharakkhita Thera and ordained as a novice monk—Sāmanera Sangharatana—on Visākha Pūja Day, 1975, marking his official “Going Forth.”

🧘 Training in Sri Lanka

Sāmanera Sangharatana moved to Sri Lanka later that year, initially staying at Vajirarāma Monastery near Colombo with Ven. Nārada Thera. There he met Ven. Ñāṇavimala Thera, a renowned German-born ascetic monk. Under Ñāṇavimala’s guidance, he focused on deepening his understanding of the Pāli Canon and the Vinaya discipline, moving to Sri Vajirañāna Dharmāyatanaya in Maharagama.

In June 1976, he took bhikkhu ordination (upasampadā) under Madihe Paññāsiha Mahā Nāyaka, completing his first rains retreat shortly after. A return visit to Kandy brought him into contact with Bhikkhu Bodhi, who gifted him Forest Dhamma, a collection of Dhamma talks by Ajaan Mahā Boowa Ñānasampanno—a work that would change the trajectory of his practice.

Thai Forest Tradition and Seventeen Years of Training

Inspired by these teachings, Bhikkhu Sangharatana left Sri Lanka in early 1977 for Thailand. He re-ordained into the Dhammayut Nikāya at Wat Bovornives Vihāra in Bangkok under Somdet Phra Ñānasamvara, adopting the ordination name Sīlaratano.

His path led him to Baan Taad Forest Monastery in Udon Thani province, where he trained under Ajaan Mahā Boowa for seventeen years—not just as a practitioner, but as his attendant monk. This immersive apprenticeship embedded him deeply within the Thai Forest Tradition, emphasizing solitude, discipline, and meditative insight.

Eventually, Ajahn Dick retreated into the mountains and forests to continue practicing in isolation.

Establishing Forest Dhamma Monastery in the U.S.

In 2011, just before Ajaan Mahā Boowa's passing, Ajahn Dick envisioned a new home for Forest Dhamma in America. With support from monastics and lay practitioners, he founded the Forest Dhamma Monastery in the Allegheny Mountains of southwestern Virginia—now a sanctioned member of the Dhammayut Order of the United States, where he serves as Abbot.

Literary Contributions and Translation Work

Ajahn Dick has devoted much of his monastic life not only to the disciplined practice of Dhamma Vinaya but also to the translation and authorship of texts that bring to light the wisdom of the Thai Forest masters. His efforts have helped make these teachings more accessible to both laypeople and monastics around the world. His translated works include:

- Ācariya Mun Bhūridatta Thera – A spiritual biography of the revered founder of the Thai Forest Tradition.
- Arahattamagga Arahattaphala: The Path to Arahantship – A compilation of Dhamma talks by Achariya Maha Boowa, translated by Ajahn Seelaratano.
- Mae Chee Kaew – A touching biography of a female Thai renunciant.
- Samana: Reflections on Renunciation and Monastic Life – Talks by Achariya Maha Boowa, translated by Ajahn Seelaratano.
- Uncommon Wisdom – Teachings of Ajaan Paññāvaḍḍho.
- Gold Wrapped in Rags – Teachings that reveal profound wisdom within humble surroundings, translated by Ajahn Seelaratano.

These works offer more than historical value—they provide living guidance for those committed to meditation, ethical conduct, and spiritual awakening.

Sources: <https://forestdhamma.org>
<https://www.fourthmessenger.org/authors/ajahn-dick-silaratano/>

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Dhamma Reflection

Dhammapada Verse 1

Pāli Text:

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā,
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā,
Tato namī dukkham-anveti cakkamī va vahato padamī.*

English Translation:

*Mind precedes all phenomena, mind is their chief, they are mind-made.
If one speaks or acts with a corrupted mind,
Suffering follows like the wheel follows the foot of the ox.*

The Mind as Forerunner: A Reflection on Dhammapada Verse 1

Introduction

The opening verse of the *Dhammapada*—*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā*—stands as a timeless declaration of the primacy of the mind in shaping human experience. Rooted in the Buddha’s profound insight into the nature of suffering and liberation, this verse offers not only a metaphysical framework but also a practical guide for navigating the complexities of thought, emotion, and behavior. In a world increasingly shaped by psychological stress, digital distraction, and moral ambiguity, its message remains strikingly relevant.

The Meaning and Essence

Everything begins in the mind. Our thoughts shape our words and actions—they’re the starting point of everything we do. The verse says: “Mind comes first, it leads the way, and everything is made by it.”

It goes on to warn: “If someone speaks or acts with a troubled mind, suffering will follow—just like a cart’s wheel follows the ox pulling it.”

This isn't just about right and wrong. It's about how life works. The mind is like both the seed and the soil—what grows from it depends on what's planted.

If our thoughts are filled with greed, anger, or confusion, pain naturally follows. Not because we're being punished, but because that's the result of what we've set in motion.

This verse points us inward. Instead of blaming outside forces for what we experience, it asks us to look at the state of our own mind. That shift—from the outer world to inner awareness—is powerful. It suggests that real change begins within. When we pay attention to our thoughts and intentions, we start living more mindfully. Our choices become guided not by impulse or habit, but by clarity and care.

But the mind doesn't operate in isolation. It's constantly shaped by what we take in through our senses—what we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. These encounters with the external world spark thoughts, emotions, and reactions. A harsh word, a beautiful sunset, the scent of incense—all these impressions ripple through the mind, influencing how we feel and respond. In this way, the mind is both deeply internal and intimately connected to the world around us.

So the verse isn't just an invitation to look within—it's a reminder to be mindful of what we expose ourselves to. Because what touches the senses, touches the mind. And what touches the mind, shapes our path.

Key Concepts Embedded

1. Mano (Mind) as Precursor

The term *manopubbaṅgamā* suggests that mind leads all phenomena. In Buddhist psychology, this includes not just thoughts, but perceptions, volitions, and consciousness itself. The mind is the architect of reality.

Modern neuroscience increasingly validates the Buddha's insight: thoughts shape neural pathways, and habitual mental states influence emotional well-being. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), for instance, rests on the premise that distorted thinking leads to emotional distress—a notion echoed in this verse.

2. Dhammā (Phenomena)

Here, dhammā refers to mental and experiential phenomena. It encompasses everything from sensory impressions to moral actions. The verse implies that these are not fixed entities but fluid expressions of mental conditioning.

3. Paduṭṭha (Corrupted Mind)

A mind clouded by unwholesome states—anger, envy, ignorance—creates suffering. This concept aligns with the kleshas (mental afflictions) in broader Buddhist thought.

4. Dukkha (Suffering)

Suffering is not arbitrary; it is the result of mental misalignment. The simile of the wheel following the ox's foot illustrates inevitability—once the mind sets the course, consequences follow. Application to Mental Processes.

Mindfulness practices, now widely adopted in clinical and corporate settings, are direct applications of this teaching. By observing the mind without judgment, one can interrupt cycles of reactivity and cultivate clarity. The verse encourages this inner vigilance, reminding us that transformation begins not with changing the world, but with changing the mind that perceives it.

Relevance to Modern Life

In today's hyperconnected world, where attention is fragmented and emotions are often outsourced to screens, the verse offers a grounding truth: our experience is self-generated. Social media may provoke envy, news cycles may incite fear, but it is the mind's interpretation that determines whether suffering arises.

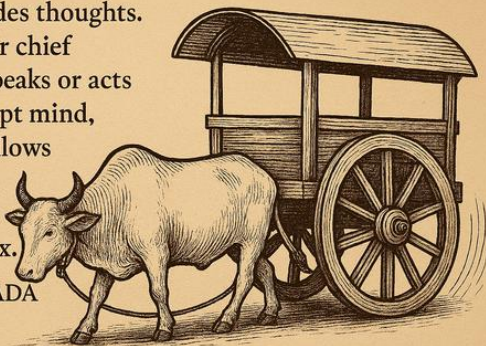
Moreover, in an age of moral relativism, the verse provides ethical clarity. It suggests that intention matters—that actions born from a corrupted mind will inevitably lead to harm, regardless of external justification. This has profound implications for leadership, relationships, and personal growth.

Conclusion

Dhammapada Verse 1 is more than a doctrinal statement; it is a mirror held up to the human condition. It invites us to take radical responsibility for our mental life, to recognize the mind as both the source of suffering and the path to liberation. In doing so, it offers a blueprint for living with awareness, compassion, and integrity—qualities sorely needed in the modern world.

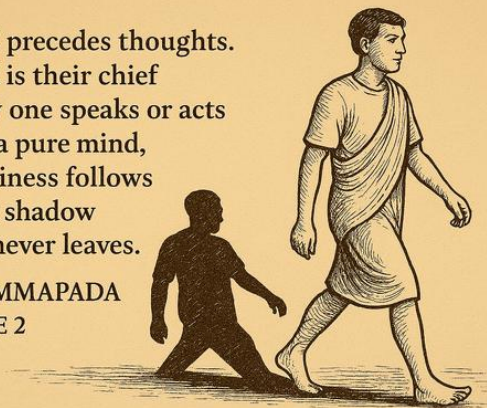
Mind precedes thoughts.
Mind is their chief
If any one speaks or acts
with a corrupt mind,
Suffering follows
as the wheel
follows the
foot of the ox.

DHAMMAPADA
VERSE 1



Mind precedes thoughts.
Mind is their chief
If any one speaks or acts
with a pure mind,
Happiness follows
like a shadow
that never leaves.

DHAMMAPADA
VERSE 2



KATHINA CELEBRATION

The annual Kathina ceremony of the Washington Buddhist Vihara was successfully held on October 19th at the Pannasiha Meditation Center in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

The auspicious ceremony, a tradition observed by Buddhists globally at the end of the three-month Rains Retreat (Vassa), was chaired by Venerable Maharagama Dhammasiri Nayaka Thera. Venerable monks from the Vihara and other local Buddhist temples were in attendance to receive the Kathina robe.

The event saw a large and diverse gathering of Buddhist devotees, reflecting the area's rich multicultural community. Attendees included faithful from Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Burma, Bangladesh, and Thailand, uniting the different traditions in this significant act of merit. The Kathina ceremony is a cornerstone event in the Buddhist calendar, marking a time for collective offerings and deep reverence for the monastic community.









KATHINA VIDEO

Washington Buddhist Vihara: Origin and Services

The Washington Buddhist Vihara, founded in 1965 and incorporated in 1966, holds the distinction of being the first Theravāda Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It was established under the patronage of Most Venerable Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thera, a renowned Sri Lankan Buddhist leader who was inspired to build a temple in Washington, D.C. after celebrating Vesak with members of the Sri Lankan community in Washington, DC.

Mission and Philosophy

- The Vihara was created to disseminate the teachings of the Buddha (Dhamma) in a way that transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries.
- All regular services are conducted in English, making it accessible to a diverse audience and helping introduce Buddhism to Americans.

Services Offered

- Meditation instruction and informal courses on Buddhist philosophy.
- Lectures and workshops at universities, schools, churches, and community groups.
- A library and book service for self-study and exploration of Buddhist teachings.
- Resident monks (bhikkhus) are available for discussion and guidance on Buddhist practice.

The Vihara continues to serve as both a spiritual sanctuary and an educational hub, fostering inner development and cross-cultural understanding in the heart of Washington, D.C.

