CHAPTER (III)

THE SUBLIME ATTITUDES

FOR A BETTER HUMAN SOCIETY

Introduction

The quality of a society inevitably rests on the qualities of minds and lives of people who have created that society. If the society has become corrupt, rife with immorality, and destructive of the higher potentials of human nature, that is because people who comprise that society have allowed themselves to drift into corrupt and immoral states of minds and lives.

Social work for the welfare of human society may take many forms, but what is most essential is the spirit in which it is performed. The spirit should be marked by genuine love, sincere affection and real understanding. It means social work should be the perfect expression of genuine love, sincere affection and real understanding, washed clean of pride, even of the pride of doing good. It should be a sheer manifestation of the brotherhood of all human beings.

Our human society is a multi-national, multi-racial and multi-religious society. Everything is related in this world. Man cannot live alone. Therefore, provided that all human beings are at peace with themselves and at ease with others, our human society
will be peaceful. If not, a peaceful human society cannot be achieved.

The new expression “global village”, coined to describe today’s world, is useful because it conveys the idea that all nations are our close neighbours and our wellbeing increasingly depends on their activities as well as our own, and on how well we work together on matters of common interest.\(^\text{112}\)

Human society, where greed, hatred, enmity, jealousy, ill-will and selfishness are renounced and where love, compassion, consideration, contentment, good-will and selflessness are developed will indeed be a happier and safer place to live for all human beings.

According to Buddhism, to make a happy and peaceful human society, we need to cultivate Four Sublime States of Mind or Four Sublime Attitudes, which are the Buddha’s primary heart teachings, in our hearts. They are namely: loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), sympathetic joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekkhā). These four sublime attitudes are termed ‘Brahmavihāra’ in Pāli.\(^\text{113}\)

Here, in the phrase of words- ‘Brahmavihāra’, the word ‘Brahma’ means noble or sublime. The word ‘Vihāra’ means mode of conduct or state of living. Hence, the term ‘Brahmavihāra’ is interpreted as noble mode of conduct, or ethical state of living. It literally means living, having a noble and right mental disposition

on all living beings. (Seṭṭhaṭṭhena tāva niddosabhāvena cettha brahmavihārtā veditabbā. Sattesu sammāpaṭipattibhāvena hi seṭṭhā ete vihārā.) In other words, the term ‘Brahmavihāra’ is defined as divine abiding or dwelling. According to Buddhist beliefs, Brahmas are supreme gods who live in the higher heavens, dwelling in sublime and unlimited attitudes. It is called ‘Brahmavihār’ because it looks like Brahmas’ dwelling. (Yathā ca brahmāno niddosacittā viharanti, evaṁ etehi sampayuttā yogino brahmasamāva huvā viharantīti seṭṭhaṭṭhena niddosabhāvena ca brahmavihārāti vuccanti.)

These four virtues are also termed infinitudes (appamaññā) as they have no limits and measures; and they are extended towards all living beings. It literally means they embrace all living beings including animals, without exception.

All these practices are called aprimaanas (aparimāṇas), infinite. First, because they give happiness to countless living beings. Second, because they are non-exclusive and impartial, without selective preferences and prejudices. Those who practise these virtues will not harbor any national, racial, religious or class hatred. Each one of these virtues removes tension, serves as peacemaker in any conflict situation and helps build bridge, helping us build a harmonious society by arousing magnanimity in us. They help promote joy and hope.

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114 Abhidhamma Pītaka, Dhammasaṅgaṇī Aṭṭhakathā, p-240.
116 Ashok Vohra, Compassion Is The Central Teaching, p-14.
These four sublime attitudes are referred to as mind-liberators since they eliminate egoism and develop altruism. They remove the mental defilements and bring about the most exalted mental culture. They elevate the mental qualities of man and transform man into a superman. They convert the human world into a heavenly one and make human beings divine ones. If we cultivate these sublime attitudes, we can create a heaven just on the earth.

They are also referred to as the removers of barriers since they break the barriers of race and religion that block human relationship. They build human relationship bridges which are more solid than those constructed of stone and steel. They create solid foundations of peaceful humane society and promote true sister-and-brotherhood. If all human beings cultivate these four sublime attitudes, race and religion will not be barriers to human relationship and the barriers of race and religion between human beings will be swept away by the flood of human brotherhood or human fellowship.

Today, though we talk about peace, yet we create a state of confusion; though we long for happiness, yet we obtain unhappiness. Why? The reason is that we are dominated by lust, greed, anger, hatred, ill-will, selfishness, jealousy and attachment. Strife, violence, conflicts, and wars arise out of the lack of love, compassion, selflessness and good-will. They are broke out based on anger, non-consideration, jealousy, ill-will and selfishness. If we wish to obtain peace and happiness, we must eradicate these
evil mental states. To eradicate them, we must cultivate the four sublime states of mind.

**Loving-kindness (Mettā)**

One powerful vice which destroys still and calm situations of human society is anger or hatred (dosa).

Anger is a fire that burns self and others. It completely destroys our intellectual ability and human rational powers to discriminate between good and bad. When we are angry, we are overpowered by negative emotions and thus we are not able to think and act rationally. It leads us to destructive behaviours that cause great damages in our personal and social lives.

At the personal level, when giving rise to aggressive anger, it is obvious that one becomes miserable. Feeling of joy or happiness which previously pervades him immediately disappears. Mental irritation takes place which then changes his looks to become grim and distorted caused by unhappiness. He would become furious, and the more he becomes furious, the more he is irritated and embarrassed. He will surely have to undergo immense suffering and misery both physically and mentally.

Anger may incite him to utter obscene words, to misbehave or even to commit murder. After he is calm, if he makes a retrospection of his past misconducts and bad deeds, he will, in the least, feel sorry and humiliated by being conscious of his own guilt; or that, if he has committed a crime, he will definitely suffer
all at once in receiving due punishment for his crime. This is just a brief description of how anger will bring about dire consequences. Such incidents can be personally experienced and known by mere reflection.

At the social level, Anger causes quarrels and arguments in a society. People kill and attack each other because of feeling anger. In the least, even in man’s immediate family, the angry man makes other family members feel mental pain by scolding and suffer physical pain by beating, and consequently his family is not peaceful.

It is therefore evident that anger is a danger to our lives and human society and thus we should try to make our minds free from anger.

The Buddha exhorts us to cultivate loving-kindness (mettā) in order to subdue anger and bring about peace and harmony in our human society. He says: “Akkodhena jinam kodhaṁ- Overcome anger by love.”

Mettā, the first Sublime Attitude, is interpreted as goodwill, loving-kindness, universal love, a feeling of friendliness and heartfelt, the sincere and genuine wish for the welfare and happiness of all living beings without exception and concern for all living beings, human or non-human, in all situations all over the world. It subdues the vice of hatred in all its varied shades: anger, ill-will and aversion.

117Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Kodha Vagga, verse- 223.
Mettā is neither carnal desire nor passionate lust for they cause harm to oneself and others and grief springs from them. But, on the contrary, Mettā cause benefit to oneself and others and grief does not arise from it.

Mettā is not even personal affection or selfish affection (pema) for mettā is not personal and selfish but universal and unselfish. This delicate point should not be misunderstood. Parents surely have deep affection for their children and children for their parents; husbands for their wives and wives for their husband. Such affection is quite ordinary and natural. But mettā is not necessarily synonymous with personal affection or selfish affection.

The difference between personal or selfish affection (pema) and mettā is that the former produces grief and sorrow while the later generates happiness and peace for oneself and others.

The Pāli word Mettā means literally- ‘Friendliness’- also love without a desire to possess but with a desire to help, to sacrifice self-interest for the welfare and well-being of humanity. This love is without any selection or exclusion. If you select a few good friends and exclude unpleasant persons, then you have not got a good grasp of this Mettā.\(^{118}\)

Mettā is not also national brotherhood or racial brotherhood for they are confined only to those who are the same nation and the same race. But, Mettā has no limitation of nation and race. It transcends national and racial scope. It breaks barriers of nation and race. It makes no national or racial discrimination. It bestows

\(^{118}\) Sayadaw U Thittila, *Essential Themes of Buddhist Lectures*, p-146.
its sweet blessings equally on every living being and embraces all living beings including animals without any distinction.

Although human beings have certain wrong views and assumptions regarding race and nation, in fact, there is only one race in the world- that is human race; there is only one nation in the world- that is human nation.

The identification of oneself with others, the realization of a sense of oneness with others and the experience of the loss of the thought of the so-called ‘I’ are the ultimate ideals of mettā.

One who practices mettā becomes identified himself with others, making no distinction between oneself and others. He merges himself with others and is one with all human beings in the whole world. He is not separate from others. He is not confined to case, class or colour and influenced by national, racial, or religious prejudices. He is not dominated by egoistic feelings and selfish thoughts. He regards all human beings as his brothers and sisters and works for the welfare of all human beings without distinction- the pleasant and the unpleasant, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the high and the low, and the vicious and the virtuous.

Mettā tends to not only subdue anger but also conquer intolerance, aggressiveness and spite. Indeed, it softens one’s mind and heart. One who possesses mettā does not entertain intolerant, aggressive and spiteful thoughts in his heart. He practices the virtue of patience or tolerance (khanti) which is the lofty ethical standard and feels a fondness for others.
The Buddha praises the practice of patience or tolerance (khanti) in the manner stated below:

“Khantī paramaṁ tapo titikkhā.” It means “Patience is the highest or the best virtue.”

“Khantibalaṁ balānīkaṁ, tamahāṁ brūmi brāhmaṁ.” It denotes “Since the strength of patience capable of preventing anger resembles a force of army which is able to defeat the enemy, a person who is equipped with this strength of patience is a Brahmin, a Noble one.”

“Khantā bhiyyo na vijjati.” It means “Among the benefits, nothing excels the benefit of patience or tolerance.”

Patience or tolerance (khanti) is the quality of good-will which is totally absent from anger. It is similar to the essence of loving-kindness. In particular, it is conducive to the endurance of any kind of provocation and to remain calm without feeling angry and retaliating.

If no patience or tolerance is practised, feeling of hatred will creep in, and one will be inclined to retaliate against another. If retaliation is made, animosity will ensue between one and another, and they may become antagonistic to one another, nursing the feeling of malice and bearing a grudge. In this way, they may become enemies for life.

If, however, patience or tolerance is cherished, feeling of hatred will not bring about and one will tolerate all criticisms and

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irritating remarks. By this noble attribute of patience, he will become admirable and earn respect and approbation from others. He will bring about closer intimacy between himself and others. Nobody will hate him.

Furthermore, one who practises patience or tolerance does not retaliate, assail, disparage and even thinks of harming others. Besides, he always finds the good and beauty in others, instead of seeing the evil and ugliness, practicing patience or tolerance.

None, except Lord Buddha, is hundred percent good and nobody is hundred percent bad either. We should not see only the evil and ignore the good in others for there is evil in the best of us and there is good in the worst of us. We should recognize beauty in others for everyone has a particular beauty. It would be a source of happiness and peace to us if only we could see the good and beauty, and ignore the evil and ugliness in all of us.

If one looks at a mirror with a smiling face, a smiling face will greet him. If, on the contrary, he looks at it with a wry face, a wry face will greet him. Similarly, the outside world reacts to one in the same way that one acts towards it. If he acts towards it with positive way, it will react to him with positive way. If, on the contrary, he acts towards it negative way, it will react to him with negative way. One’ actions reflect on one. This is natural.

Mettā breaks all the barriers of caste, colour and creed which separate one from another. To him who practices mettā, there is no high or low, no white or black, no Buddhist or non-Buddhist, no Christian or non-Christian, no Hindu or non-Hindu, no Muslim or
non-Muslim, since universal love, realized through understanding, has established the brotherhood of all human beings. He regards himself as a citizen of the world.

Mettā possesses a magnetic power. He who exercises mettā has a good influence on others even at a distance and can attract others to him. Since he is saturated in loving-kindness, those who come in contact with him experience the bliss.

When the Buddha visited His birthplace, Kapilavatthu, for the first time, His son Rāhulā who was then only seven years old, approached Him and as he is electrified with the magnetic power of His love, spontaneously remarked: “Sukhā te, samaṇa, chāyā.- O ascetic, even your shadow is pleasing to me.” Such is the magnetic power of mettā.

Mettā also has the healthy force, and it is like goodness that nourishes our hearts, like medicine that blunts blood pressure, and like tonic that raises mental strength.

Anger which is unhealthy emotion engenders a sense of discomfort in the mind and causes physical suffering and pain. On the other hand, loving-kindness creates mental feelings of ease, and allowing these feelings to saturate the whole body, physical strength arises. Hateful thoughts produce toxic effects which can contribute to bodily diseases such as high blood pressure and heart problems while loving thoughts produce healthy effects in the system penetrating into the heart.

Vinaya Pitaka, Mahāvagga Pāli, p-115.
The chief characteristic of mettā is a benevolent and altruistic attitude to do good in order to bring about happiness and peace for others: a keen desire to promote the welfare and well-being of others. He who practices mettā is always willing to promote the welfare and well-being of others. For him, the private good is subordinate to the public good. He gives the blessings to others.

Love is not merely brotherly feeling but a principle for us to practise. It is not merely benevolent thought but performing charitable deeds, active ministry for the good of one and all.121

Just as the sun sheds its rays on all things without any distinction, even so one should equally extend his loving-kindness towards all living beings, irrespective of creed, race, colour, or sex, including dumb animals, making no distinction whatever. Just as he wishes for the peace and happiness of his near and dear ones, even so he sincerely should wishes for the peace and happiness of those who are far and neutral to him; and at least, of those who are inimical to him.

The Buddha states: “Mātā yathā niyaṁ puttamāyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe, evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānasāṁ bhāvaye aparimāṇāṁ.- Just as a mother protects and looks after her only beloved child even at the sacrifice of her own life; even so one should cultivate boundless loving-kindness towards all living beings, wishing them to gain happiness.”122

121 Sayadaw U Thittila, Essential Themes of Buddhist Lectures, p-146.
122 Khuddaka Nikāya, Khuddakapāṭha Pāli, Metta Sutta, p-11.
The Buddha is the epitome of loving-kindness. His loving-kindness towards all living beings is equally balanced without distinction. He works for the welfare and happiness of those who love Him as well as of those who hate Him and even attempt to kill Him. He exercises loving-kindness equally towards His own son, Rāhulā, who was born to Him while He was a prince, and His adversary, Devadatta who tried to kill Him. The degree of His loving-kindness bestowed upon them is on the same level.

In exercising mettā, oneself should not be ignored. It means one should first charge his mind with positive thoughts of love and make his mind peaceful and freed from negative thoughts of hatred. Just as one cannot give what he does not possess to others, even so, if he does not love himself, it is not possible to love others. When he is full of love, it is easy for him to radiate loving-kindness towards others. Before he tries to make others happy, he should first be happy himself. In this way, he can inject happiness into others.

In practicing mettā, besides developing mettā mentally, one should help others as far as far possible and to the best of one’s own ability, so as to make them feel happy. One should speak gently and sweetly. On the other hand, it would be meaningless in fostering the attitude of loving-kindness if one causes misery to others either physically, or verbally, or mentally. It is therefore essential to do good to others, and by doing so, the act of developing loving-kindness, may be said to be genuinely affective.
and to be in consonance with one’ own inner feeling of loving-kindness.

These three kammas, the practical application of loving-kindness in thought, word and deed, are essential in building unity and promoting welfare among people.\textsuperscript{123}

The Buddha says that he who practices mettā can expect to receive surely eleven benefits. They are:

(1) Sukhaṁ supati.- He sleeps pleasantly. As he goes to sleep with a light heart free from hatred he is naturally fast asleep and falls into a deep and good sleep.

(2) Sukhaṁ paṭibujjhāti.- He awakes pleasantly. As he goes to sleep with a loving heart he wakes up with smiling faces and fresh mind.

(3) Na pāpakaṁ supināṁ passati.- He does not see nightmares in a sleep. As he is full of loving-kindness during his waking hours, he is peaceful in his sleeping hours too, having pleasant dreams, without being perturbed by bad dreams.

(4) Manussānaṁ piyo hoti.- He becomes loveable to human beings. As he loves others, others love him too. Others adore him or have affection for him because of his noble attribute of loving-kindness. As he spreads his loving-kindness towards others and never causes harm to others, he is loved and respected by all who come into contact with him.

\textsuperscript{123} Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw, \textit{To Nibbāna Via The Noble Eightfold Path}, p-70.
(5) Amanussānaṁ piyo hoti.- He becomes loveable to non-humans as well. He is dear to gods, deities, giants and ghosts as he radiates his loving-kindness towards them. Animals, even wild beasts are also attracted to him.

(6) Devatā rakkhanti.- Gods and deities protect him from dangers and harms because they love him.

(7) Nāssa aggi vā visaṁ vā satthaṁ vā kamati.- Fire, poison, weapons and other life-threatening forces do not affect him. Owing to the power of his loving-kindness, he is freed of fatal accidents and injuries unless he is subject to death due to some inexorable actions (Kamma).

(8) Tuvaṭṭam cittaṁ samādhiyati.- His mind concentrates very quickly. As his mind is not annoyed by anger, hostility and aversion he can gain one-pointedness of mind and mental concentration with ease. Consequently, he feels ease of mind he lives in peace.

(9) Mukhavaṇṇo vippasīdati.- His face becomes absolutely clear. The face as a rule reflects the state of the mind. The thoughts of anger make one’s facial expression ugly. When one becomes very heated, the heart pumps blood twice or three times faster than the normal rate and over-blood heat rushes up to the face, then the face turns red or black and presents a repulsive appearance. The thoughts of loving-kindness, on the contrary, beautify one facial
expression. When one is imbued with loving-kindness, his heart is so pacified and his blood is so clarified. His face then becomes pellucid and presents a pleasant appearance.

(10) Asammūḷho kālaṁ karoti.- He dies unconfused and peaceful as he does not harbours any thoughts of hatred towards anyone. His serene face after death reflects his peaceful death.

(11) Uttari appatīvijjhanto brahma-lokūpago hoti.- Unless he does not realize the final emancipation (arahattaphala) he will be born in a Brahma realm. As a result of his powerful loving-kindness, he will be born in a blissful state.\textsuperscript{124}

Furthermore, the Buddha describes the highly beneficial effect of developing loving-kindness (mettā), saying thus: “Yo, Bhikkhave, pubbaṇhasamayam okkhāsataṁ dānaṁ dadeyya, yo majjhāhikasaṁamayam okkhāsataṁ dānaṁ dadeyya, yo sāyaṇahhasamayam okkhāsataṁ dānaṁ dadeyya, yo vā pabbaṇhasamayam antamaso gaddhuṇamattampi mettačitaṁ bhāveyya, yo vā majjhāhikasaṁamayam antamaso gaddhuṇamattampi mettačitaṁ bhāveyya, yo vā sāyaṇahhasamayam antamaso gaddhuṇamattampi mettačitaṁ bhāveyya, idāṁ tato mahapphalataram.- Monks, developing the thought of loving-kindness for at least a very short time in the morning, or developing the thought of loving-kindness for at least a very short time at mid day, or developing the thought of loving-

kindness for at least a very short time at night fall is more fruitful than offering a hundred pots of rice in the morning, or offering a hundred pots of rice at mid day, or offering a hundred pots of rice at night fall.”125

One, who cultivates loving-kindness towards all beings, can live safely and peacefully as he has no enmity with someone. The Buddha states thus: “Yo na hanta na ghāteti, na jināti na jāpaye, mettaṁso sabbabhūtānam, veraṁ tassa na kenaci.- One, who does not kill or subdue someone himself; or does not cause others to kill or subdue someone, cultivating loving-kindness towards all living-beings, has no enmity with someone.”126

With the practice of mettā, one cuts off all hostile attitudes and returns love for anger, shielded by loving-kindness. He becomes ever tolerant and tries his best not to give occasion for anger to anyone. He is not irritated by others’ insult and abuse. A sense of gentleness accompanies the process of his thought, speech and general movements of the body.

The Buddha praises such tolerant and gentle person saying thus: “Dantam nayanti samitiṁ, dantam rājābhirūhati, danto seṭṭho manussesu, yotivākyāṁ titikkhati. - A tamed elephant is led into a crowd and the king mounts a tamed elephant. Best among men is the subdued one who endures abuse.”127

125 Saṁyutta Nikāya, Nidānavagga Saṁyutta, Okkhā Sutta, p-455.
126 Aṅguttara Nikāya, Aṭṭhakanipāta, p-2.
Our human society of today in where attacking, fighting and killing one another prevails, is sorely in need of the universal loving-kindness so that all human beings can live in perfect peace and harmony like brothers and sisters. The universal loving-kindness is the indispensable and essential foundation for mental purification and culture of the individual as for the construction of peaceful human society. Cultivation of the sweet virtue of loving-kindness enables one to regard the whole world as his motherland and all living beings as his fellow-beings.

The origins of violence at the personal level and of wars at the national level are anger, hatred and hostility. Just as water cannot make things dry and fire cannot make things wet, even so hostile attitudes can never bring about peace and happiness in our human society.

Loving-kindness is the only powerful weapon in the universe to counteract anger, hatred and hostility, and is the only medicine to cure a bad relationship between human beings. It dissolves warlike thoughts and develops pacific intentions in the minds of human beings. Only through the replacement of loving-kindness for anger, hatred and hostility, we will be able to prevent violence and wars, and we will be able to bring about peace in our human society.

Many countries in this world try to possess nuclear weapons with the wrong view that if they have nuclear weapons they can prevent war. But practically, war cannot be prevented through the possession of nuclear weapons. In fact, it can be prevented only
through the possession of loving-kindness weapon. Instead of wasting their time and energy in producing nuclear weapons, only if all nations spend their times and energy in cultivating loving-kindness our human society would be peaceful.

Ultimately, quarrels and arguments occur and does not cease owing to the lack of realization of death. If all human beings realize death, quarrels and arguments never occur and will cease in a short time.

The Buddha states thus: “Pare ca na vijānanti, mayamettha yamāmase, ye ca tattha vijānanti, tato sammanti medhagā.- Foolish men do not realize that one day we all must die and thus, they do not reach the settlement of their quarrels and arguments. But wise men realize that one day we all must die and thus, they reach the settlement of their quarrels and arguments.”\textsuperscript{128}

In fact, life is short and we will all die one day. The Buddha states that no one, who is born, goes beyond decay and death, and even wealthy warriors, wealthy Brahmins, wealthy rich men and Noble ones (Arahantas) must decay and die.\textsuperscript{129} If that so, why should we fight and attack each other? Instead, should we try to live with others peacefully and happily when we lives?

To establish a happy and peaceful human society we should restrain anger; root out the hatred; get rid of bitterness and resentment; and practise loving-kindness.

\textsuperscript{128} Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Yamaka Vagga, verse-6.
\textsuperscript{129} Saṁyutta Nikāya, Sagāthāvagga Saṁyutta, Kosala Saṁyutta, Jarāmaraṇa Sutta, pp-70/71.
Compassion (Karuṇā)

Today, our human society is pleasure-seeking (kāmagavesī) - money-centered, power-centered, designation-centered and self-centered. Men at the present days make their efforts to get richer and richer, to be more and more high-ranking and to be more and more powerful in every possible ways. Seeking wealth, designation and power with their insatiable desires and strong greed, men become dominated by selfishness and mercilessness, and as a result, they see only their own interests and benefits, and they do not consider the feelings of others.

The world suffers. But most men have their eyes and ears closed. They do not see the unbroken stream of tears flowing through life; they do not hear the cry of distress continually pervading the world. Their own little grief or joy bars their sight, deafens their ears. Bound by selfishness, their hearts turn stiff and narrow.¹³⁰

Selfishness and mercilessness destroy our human society, causing horrors and terrors which are prevalent in the world today. The quarrels and arguments between the mighty and the weak, the rich and the poor, a powerful nation and a powerless nation, occur because of having no consideration in the heart of men and being selfish. As long as selfishness and cruelty dominate man, our human society will not be peaceful at all.

A selfish person, whether he is rich or poor, is dominated by the thoughts of greed, and he is self-centered and self-interested. He lives only for himself and always puts self first. He is never content with what he got and never satisfied with what he has. If the selfish person is rich, he always thinks of how to make more money, more wealth and never thinks of sharing his objects with others. He only seeks his own interests and advantage and never considers the feelings and interests of others. He argues and quarrels over even small matters. He suspects others of being his rivals. If the selfish person is poor, on the other hand, he suffers from not having enough and is always longing for wealth and property. When he is unable to obtain wealth and property through honest means and hard-work, he resorts to dishonest and criminal means to meet his desires. In the end, the selfish person becomes a danger to human society.

Selfishness is brought about by the failure to perceive the realities of life. In fact, one day, we will all die. Once, the Buddha said to King Kosala as follows:

“Sabbe sattā maraṇadhammā maraṇapariyosānā maraṇaṁ anatītā. Seyyathāpi, Mahārāja, yāni kānici kumbhakārabhājanāni āmakāni ceva pattāni ca sabbāni tāni bhedanadhammāni bhedanapariyosānāni bhedanaṁ anatītāni; evameva kho, Mahārāja, sabbe sattā maraṇadhammā maraṇapariyosānā maraṇaṁ anatītā.- All beings are subject to death, having death as their end, and cannot go beyond death. Great King, just as whatever vessels made by the potter, whether baked or not baked, are subject to breaking
When we die, we will leave everyone we love and everything we possess. If that so, why should we be selfish? We should extend any possible help or assistance that we can within our means and ability to someone less fortunate than us. It does not matter if others are not grateful to us for what we have done for them as gratitude is a rare virtue today. We should not expect to be appreciated for what we did. If we expect, we are bound to face disappointments and frustrations.

Buddhism believes in the betterment of human society by the rational realization of human interests; in other words, Buddhism advocates the realization of social peace by recourse to selflessness.

Abandoning cruelty and selfishness, feeling pity and caring for sorrow-stricken living beings, considering and helping others’ interests, are essential for a peaceful human society. According to Buddhism, we should cultivate Compassion (karuṇā), the second sublime attitude, to remove cruelty and give up selfishness.

Karuṇā is the word conveyed by such terms as compassion, sympathy, pity, and mercy. Its chief characteristic is the wish to remove the woes of all living beings, who are feeling physical and mental sufferings, including animals. It embraces all sorrow-stricken beings.

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131 Saṁyutta Nikāya, Sagāthāvagga Saṁyutta, Kosala Saṁyutta, Ayyikā Sutta, p-98.
When we begin to see that black mud and white snow are neither ugly nor beautiful, when we can see them without discrimination or duality, then we begin to grasp Great Compassion. In the eyes of Great Compassion, there is neither left nor right, friend nor enemy, close nor far. Don’t think that Great Compassion is lifeless. The energy of Great Compassion is radiant and wondrous. In the eyes of Great Compassion, there is no separation between subject and object, no separate self. Nothing that can disturb Great Compassion.¹³²

Karuna is said to have the basic quality of preventing one’s own happiness from occurring, or rather, deterring one’s self-realization of happiness. A person who is compassionate will lose his opportunity to some extent to make himself happy since he has to be rendering help another so as to let the other escape from trouble or misery. If one is found to be suffering in his close proximity or under his own eyes, he is ready to offer his aid. During this interregnum, he will not have an opportunity to seek for his own happiness.¹³³

Karuṇā makes one’s hearts full of pity and arouses a desire to relieve or remove the woes, pains and sufferings of others. It discards selfishness and prompts one to serve others selflessly, expecting nothing, not even gratitude, in return. It is the opposite of callousness and indifference to others’ woes. It is the direct antidote to cruelty, the vice common in the world today.

¹³²Thich Nhat Hanh, True Nature of Great Compassion, p-16.
¹³³Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, Brahmavihāra Dhamma, p-273.
The exemplar of compassion is likened to the compassion of mother that she have on her own child who is suffering. One should extend compassion towards all living beings who suffer mentally and physically, including dumb animals, without limit and measure.

The heart of truly compassionate person is softer than the petals of a flower. He is not apt to overlook and neglect sufferings of others. He lives not for himself but for others. He seeks opportunities to serve with altruistic intentions. He cannot rest satisfied until he relieves the sufferings of others. At times he even goes to the extent of sacrificing his life so as to alleviate the sufferings of others.

At the present time, it is common to find people who are deserving of compassion. The poor, the sick, and the destitute are some that demand compassion of kind-hearted and noble-minded one. It is therefore required to develop compassion towards such persons and to give any possible assistance to them to the best of one’s ability.

Today, in our human society, there are some who are materially rich, but spiritually poor. On the other hand, there are some who are materially poor, but spiritually rich.

Materially rich ones should bring succour to materially poor ones, who unfortunately lack most of the necessaries of life, to whatever religion or to whatever race they belong. Ten rupee is nothing to the rich. But it means a lot to the poor who has nothing to eat or drink and can be very useful for his survival. The rich who
has food, drinks and clothes in abundance should give his surplus things and objects to the poor.

On many parts of the world, people suffer for not having enough food and children die of hunger and starvation. Philanthropic Bodies, Charitable Organizations and Foundations should be formed and established in all countries to give any possible assistance to the poor in every possible way.

The enjoyment of wealth and possessions lies not only in using them for our own welfare, but it lies also in sharing them with others for human welfare. We will be pleased by the good deeds which we have done with our wealth and possessions, and we will feel happier, being affected by the love of others. Sharing is one of the best sources for peaceful human society.

Many people in this world are badly in need of spiritual food rather than material food since poor mental qualities are found amongst the materially rich and the materially poor. It means the spiritually poor far exceed the materially poor numerically.

The angry and the greedy, the selfish and the self-centred, the ignoble and the undisciplined also deserve compassion since they are spiritually poor and empty inside though they may be materially rich and full of material assets outside.

As the materially rich persons should have compassion on the materially poor persons and promote their lives, the spiritually rich persons, too, should have compassion on the spiritually poor persons and elevate their minds.
We should understand that wealth alone cannot give genuine happiness and peace of mind. They can be gained not by material treasures but by spiritual treasures. We should try to be spiritually rich though we may be materially poor.

Nowadays, in our human society, some are physically fit, but mentally sick. On the contrary, some are physically sick, but mentally fit.

We should attend the physically sick and provide effective medicine for him to cure disease. The Buddha set a noble example by attending a sick monk Himself and exhorting His disciples with significant words: “Yo, Bhikkhave, maṁ upaṭṭhaheyya, to gilānaṁ upaṭṭhaheyya.- Monks, he, who ministers unto the sick, ministers unto me.”\(^\text{134}\)

In our human society, public hospitals, free dispensaries and medical facilities, are essential needs especially for poor patients. Selfless doctors who render free medical treatment services to the poor patients and tender nurses who expend their whole time and energy in ministering to poor patients are also needed.

The vicious and ignorant persons who are mentally sick also demand compassion. They should not be condemned and despised. Instead, they should be sympathized with for their failings and defects. We do not need to like, admire or respect someone to feel compassion for him. All we need to do is to wish for him to be free from suffering, both mentally and physically.

\(^{134}\) Vinaya Pitaka, Mahāvagga Pāli, p-417.
The Buddha’s advice on shunning the company of the vicious does not mean that we must not associate with them so as to reform them. If we avoid those who suffer from contagious diseases and do not attend them so as to cure their diseases, they might die. In the same way, the vicious and the ignorant may die spiritually if we neglect them and do not reform their characters and do not make their personalities developed well.

We should make our compassion universal as all humans are worthy of our compassion. We should not think that only those, who are innocent of any wrongdoing, deserve our compassion. We have to remember that no human being is totally pure in mind and heart. Therefore, we cannot make a person’s purity the basis for our compassion.

At the same time, we must understand that the greatness is latent in all humans though they may be vicious and ignorant and thus, we must try to reform their characters and to make their personalities developed well.

The Buddha had great compassion on Aṅgulimāla, the murderer, who tried to kill even his mother, and reformed his characters.

The Emperor Asoka perpetrated many crimes, so much so that he was stigmatized as Caṇḍāsoka, the Vicious Asoka. Later, hearing righteous words from a young novice, Nigrodha, his outlook was changed and his characters were reformed. He became kind and gentle, so much so that his name was changed as Dhammāsoka, the Righteous Asoka.
The lonely and the destitute also deserve compassion and should be given help and assistance. They should not be neglected. Homes for the Aged and Orphanages and Charitable institutions are needed to help those who are in extreme distress and great trouble for being lonely and destitute.

To deny human rights on account of caste, colour, or sex, is inhuman. It is injustice to differentiate between people according to their caste, colour, or sex. It is not caste, colour or sex or that makes one high or low, noble or ignoble, but it is his characters and actions that make one high or low, noble or ignoble.

In Vāseṭṭha Sutta, the Buddha said to two young Brahmins named Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, who had a discussion on the issue of ‘What makes one a Brahmin’, that although in the case of plants, insects, quadrupeds, serpents, fishes and birds, there are many species and marks by which they could be distinguished, yet in the case of men, there are no such species and marks and that men are differentiated by their activities and actions. At the conclusion of His speech, the Buddha stated as follows:

“Na jaccā brāhmaṇo hoti, na jaccā hoti abrāhmaṇo, kammunā brāhmaṇo hoti, kammunā hoti abrāhmaṇo. - Birth makes no Brahmin, nor non-Brahmin. Only actions make Brahmin, or non-Brahmin.”

“Kassako kammunā hoti, sippiko hoti kammunā, vānijo kammunā hoti, pessako hoti kammunā. - By actions one becomes a farmer, or a craftsman, or a merchant, or a slave.”

135 Majjhima Nikāya, Majjhimapaṇṇāsa Pāli, Vāseṭṭha Sutta, p-406.
“Coropi kammunā hoti, yodhājīvopi kammunā, yājako kammunā hoti, rājāpi hoti kammunā.- By actions one becomes a robber, or a warrior, or a sacrificing priest, or a king.”

The Buddha vehemently condemned the degrading caste-system and advocated equality of mankind to the full. He not only asserted the absolute equality of all men, no matter how and where they had been born, but also gave equal opportunities for all human beings and raised, rather than lowered, the status of human race. He declared thus: “Na jaccā vasalo hoti, na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo, kammunā vasalo hoti, kammunā hoti brāhmaṇo.-By birth, one does not become an outcast or a Brahmin. Only by actions, one becomes an outcast or a Brahmin.”

In Buddhism, caste or colour does not preclude one from becoming a disciple of the Buddha or from entering the noble Order of Monks (Bhikkhusaṅgha) and the noble Order of Nuns (Bhikkhunīsaṅgha) where all are treated equally without any distinction. At the time of Buddha, barbers, scavengers, courtesans, slaves, together with royalty, warriors, rich men and Brahmins, were freely admitted into the Order and were also given positions of rank (Etadaggaṭṭhāna). For instances, Venerable Upāli, who was made chief disciple in matters pertaining to the Discipline (Vinaya), was the barber. Ambapālī, who entered the Order and attained Arahantaship, was the courtesan. Such instances could be found in Buddhist Pāli canons.

136 Majjhima Nikāya, Majjhimapaññāsa Pāḷi, Vāseṭṭha Sutta, p-412.
137 Khuddaka Nikāya, Suttanipāta Pāḷi, Uraga Vagga, Vasala Sutta, pp-299/300.
We should not keep ourselves aloof from others merely because of their family backgrounds, occupations and appearances. We must recognize their latent abilities and talents. Instead of lowering them due to their caste, colour or sex, we should raise their status and worth. We should understand that the gates of success and prosperity are open to all humans who are in every condition of life—high or low, white or black, man or woman and provide equal opportunities for all to make themselves progress in their lives.

Crimes and violence against women are arisen in the world today. Woman rights are prevented. In some countries, women have no right to pursue modern education and no chance to learn about politics and economics. It is unjust to limit women to a certain set of activities merely on account of sex.

Women should be allowed to enjoy rights equal to men. They should be respected and held in high esteem. They should be given sufficient freedom of actions, movements and choices. They should not be deprived of rights and opportunities to exhibit their innate capacities and abilities.

Though man and woman are different in physical plane, they are the same in the spiritual essence. It should not be dismissive of women. It should be acknowledged that they are capable of working as a constructive force in the society of today. It manes they should be allowed to play a part in political and social activities since they are responsible and rational creatures with intelligence and will.
They should be allowed a good deal of liberty. They should not be forced into matrimony. They should neither be hastened off to an early child-marriage, nor bound to accept the man of their parents’ selection.

As a wife, the life of a woman should not be spent in complete subservience to her husband and his parents, and in domestic drudgery. She should have considerable authority in the house. She should be ranked as her husband’s helpmate and companion in matters, both temporal and spiritual and regarded as his equal.

The Buddha also raised the status of downtrodden women in His times. He founded the first religious order for women with rules and regulations and gave women rights equal to men.

Just as Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggalāna were made the two chief male disciples in the Order of Monks, even so Arahantas Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā were made the two chief female disciples in the Order of Nuns.

In pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was, on the whole, low and without honour. A daughter was nothing but a source of anxiety to her parents, for it was a disgrace to them, and inauspicious as well if they could not marry her, yet, if they could, they were often nearly ruined by their lavish expenditure on the wedding festivities.138

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138 Ashin Thittila, Essential Themes of Buddhist Lectures, pp-194/195.
From Buddhist point of view, the birth of a girl child should not be met with despair for she may be worthy of respect, honoured and revered as a mother in the future. The position of a mother is powerful and unassailable in the world.

Sometimes the Pāli term used to denote women is “mātugāma” which means mother-fold or society of mothers. As a mother, woman holds an honourable place in Buddhism. Even the wife is regarded as the “the best friend” (paramā sakhatā) of the husband.¹³⁹

On one occasion, the Buddha said to King Kosala, who was displeased with the unwelcome news that his wife, Queen Mallikā had given birth to a daughter, in the manner stated below:

“Itthīpi hi ekacciya, seyyā posa janādhipa, medhāvinī sīlavatī, sassudevā patibbatā.- Bring her up, O Lord of men. Indeed, there are some excellent women who are wise and virtuous, who regard mother-in-law as a goddess, and who are chaste.”

“Tassā yo jāyati poso, sūro hoti disampati, tādisā subhagiyā putto, rajjampi anusāsati.- O Lord of realms, to such a noble wife may be born a valiant son, who can rule a kingdom.”¹⁴⁰

These great significant words that paid glowing tribute to women are extremely encouraging to womankind and show their importance to human society.

¹³⁹Narada Thera, Buddhism in a Nutshell, p-28.
¹⁴⁰Saṁyutta Nikāya, Sagāthāvagga Saṁyutta, Kosala Saṁyutta, Mallikā Sutta, p-86.
We should therefore cultivate understanding and compassion towards women and give the right and freedom to make their own choices.

Slavery also makes our human society ugly. Children and women are sold into slavery. Therefore, we should work to abolish slavery. Men might be engaged for service in the house and elsewhere, but they must be treated with as much consideration as the members of one’s own family and must be allowed to enjoy their personal rights.

The Buddha was the pioneer of the movement for the abolition of slavery. He condemns slavery in every shape and form and any form of trafficking in human beings.

Destroying animals’ lives to feast on their flesh for one’s living is inhuman and cruel. Putting an animal out of its misery is not human compassion. Killing animals for the sacrifice to observe superstitious rites and ceremonies is heartless.

Our kindness and compassion should be directed not only to human beings but also to the dumb animals as well. As life is precious to all, we should not destroy the life of another.

The Buddha admonished us to extend our loving-kindness and compassion to all living beings- even to the tiniest creature that crawls at one’s feet. He advised us to avoid taking life and to protect the lives of all sentient beings.
The Buddha said as follows:

“Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa, sabbe bhāyanti maccuno, attānam upamaṁ katvā, na haneyya na ghātaye.- All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill or cause another to kill.”

“In His order, a monk is expected to exercise loving-kindness and compassion to such an extent that he is forbidden by the Disciplines (vinaya) to dig or cause to dig the ground lest insects and other minute creatures die.”

The Buddha also condemned the sacrifice of poor beasts for one’s pleasure and happiness. What is pleasure to one is should not be pain to other living beings. In the Dhammapada Pāli, The Buddha said thus:

“In the Dhammapada Pāli, The Buddha said thus:

“Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni, yo daṇḍena vihiṁsati, attano sukhamesāno, pecca so na labhate sukham.- One who, while himself seeking happiness, oppresses with violence other beings, who also desire happiness, will not attain happiness hereafter.”

“In the Dhammapada Pāli, The Buddha said thus:

“Sukhakāmāni bhūtāni, yo daṇḍena na hiṁsati, attano sukhamesāno, pecca so labhate sukham.- One who, while himself

141 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Dāṇḍa Vagga verses-129/130.
142 “Yo pana bhikkhu pathaviṁ khaṇeyya vā khaṇāpeyya vā, pācittiyaṁ.” (Vinaya Piṭaka, Pācittiya Pāli, Musāvāda Vagga, Pathaviṇāṇa Sikkhāpada, p-49.)
seeking happiness, does not oppress with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will find happiness hereafter.”

Compassionate feeling springs up naturally on practical consideration of others’ feelings. Each one should think that everyone else is in pursuit of happiness. Then one can cultivate compassion towards others.

The Buddha proclaimed that animal sacrifices are cruel and useless as a means of pleasing or placating any gods that require lives and blood of poor animals as tributes to their power or to win their favour, and that man should purify and elevate himself by his own good deeds.

All shedding of blood, taking of life, as a part of religion, is the very antithesis of Buddhist religious meaning. From Buddhist religious meaning, all living creatures of every kind, high or low, big or small, should be looked on as sharers of life, with equal rights to live their lives to the full.

The world needs today compassion to stop destroying millions of precious lives on earth and to banish violence and conflict from the face of the earth.

This compassion is highly noble and ought to be developed and practised by everyone to dispel fears and to live in peace and harmony with others in our human society.

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143 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Danda Vagga, verses-131/132.
Sympathetic Joy (Muditā)

Another destructive force that endangers our human society is jealousy (issā). Jealousy shows man’s mean, weak and low mental constitution.

Once, the king of deities asked the Buddha: “Why, Sir, do living beings in the world has to live lives connected with enmity, violence, hostility and misery, though they want to live lives not connected with enmity, violence, hostility and misery?” The Buddha answered: “The king of deities, living beings in the world has to live lives connected with enmity, violence, hostility and misery, though they want to live lives not connected with enmity, violence, hostility and misery. That is because of jealousy and envy.”

The majority of people at the present day are generally apt to be jealous of others who are better than them in the respective fields of life, and inclined to conspire with ill-will to cause misery to them and to bring about their ruin.

A person who is overwhelmed by the feeling of envy or jealousy does not wish to see or hear others becoming prosperous or successful. Nor is he inclined to see others being endowed with intelligence, good looks and popularity; nor does he wish to see others reaching a higher status in life and having a large number of friends and fellows.

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144 Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāvagga Pāli, p-220.
A jealous man cannot bear to see or hear the success of others, especially his enemies. He cannot tolerate others’ success but rejoices over their failures. Instead of praising and congratulating others for their success, he condemns and vilifies them. He tries to ruin or hinder the progress and welfare of others. He even goes to the extent of killing them.

It is quite easy to rejoice over the success of one’s near and dear ones, but rather difficult to do so over the success of one’s adversaries. In this deluded world, many famous and successful leaders were poisoned and assassinated by their jealous adversaries.

Therefore, it is evident to us that jealousy gives trouble to our human society. If we want our human society to be happy and peaceful, we need to eradicate the thoughts of jealousy.

To eradicate the thoughts of jealousy, we need to cultivate Muditā, the third sublime attitude. The interpretation of Muditā is sympathetic or appreciative joy over others’ success and prosperity. It is the nature of noble-mindedness with extreme moral purification and can bring the feeling of joy into one’s mind rejoicing in others’ success and prosperity.

Muditā is the medicine for the poisons of jealousy, envy and resentment. It is an appreciative attitude, rejoicing in the happiness and success of others. This attitude is the complement of karuṇā. Karuṇā shares the sorrow of others and muditā shares their joy. The former wants the suffering of others to stop while the later wants the happiness of others to continue.
The chief characteristic of muditā is satisfaction at others’ prosperity and success (anumodanā). It embraces all prosperous and successful beings and it is a noble attitude of a person.

The norm of muditā is likened to the happiness of mother when her child begins to express its own creative nature.

In our human society of today, one person is jealous of another person. One family is jealous of another family. One business firm is jealous of another business firm. One political party is jealous of another political. One religious sect is jealous of another religious sect. Even one brother or sister is jealous of another brother or sister.

Due to this jealousy, individuals fight with individuals; groups fight with groups; families fight with families; business firms fight with business firms; political parties fight with political parties; religious sects fight with religious sects; and brothers or sisters fight with brothers or sisters.

This is the very reason why we should cultivate muditā, appreciative joy if we wish to sublime ourselves and to make our human society peaceful.

One, who is envy at the good fortune of others, bitterly resents those who achieve position, prestige, honour, power, wealth and success. But one, who is overflowed with muditā, will not only be happy with wealth and well-being of others, but also will try to promote their progress and welfare. He is pleased and rejoiced in seeing or hearing others prosperous or successful. He can live in
concord with others in neighbouring states. Hence, this noble attitude is of vital importance for achieving social development and growth.

We should develop a habit of rejoicing in others’ successes and prosperities. We should develop a habit of praising others’ good qualities and encouraging their good deeds. We should guard ourselves against jealousy, thinking thus: ‘There is nothing to lose for me when others make progress in wealth, success, etc. Jealousy will only lead to my own suffering and misery, both mentally and physically. By feeling jealous of others, they will not be affected, but I will only hurt myself.’

The Buddha says thus: “Pūjā ca pūjaneyyānaṁ, etaṁ maṅgamuttamaṁ- To honour those who are worthy of honour is the supreme auspice.”

Nowadays, life is full of competitions. In this competitive world, it is necessary for us to be a good winner when we win and to be a good loser when we lose.

If someone in our surroundings becomes successful or prosperous, we should develop sympathetic joy and offer him a speech of congratulation for his success and prosperity with a smile face. In doing so, we will be able to create good relationship between us and make our human society peaceful.

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145 Khuddaka Nikāya, Suttanipāta Pāli, verse-262.
Equanimity (Upekkhā)

Human beings have to live in the ill-balanced world admits fluctuating circumstances. According to the Buddha, there are eight worldly conditions (aṭṭha-lokadhamma) that affect humanity. They are gain (lābha) and loss (alābha), fame (yasa) and defame (ayasa), praise (pasāṁsā) and blame (nindā), pleasure (sukha) and pain (dukkha). These eight worldly conditions roll the world, and the world rolls on these eight worldly conditions.¹⁴⁶

Like the pendulum that perpetually turns to the right and left, these four desirable conditions and four undesirable conditions befall by turn in the course of one’s lifetime.

Most people are perturbed when affected by such favorable or unfavorable states. They cannot uphold their mental equipoise. For example, one student is elated when he is praised by teachers or others and he even goes to the extent of feeling haughtiness and contempt for other students when he cannot bear himself with the success. It means that he looks down on others and he has a very high opinion of himself. On the other hand, when he is blamed and reviled, he is depressed and even goes to the extent of feeling intolerance, being angry and fighting with other student.

It is therefore required, in the circumstances of life, whether good or bad, to maintain a balanced mind. Otherwise, we will feel

¹⁴⁶“Аṭṭhime, Bhikkhave, lokadhammā lokaṁ anuparivattanti; loko ca aṭṭha lokadhamme anuparivattati. Katame aṭṭha? Lābhā ca, alābhā ca, yaso ca, ayaso ca, nindā ca, pasāṁsā ca, sukhāca dukkhaṁca. Ime kho, Bhikkhave, aṭṭha, lokadharmā lokaṁ anuparivattanti; loko ca ime aṭṭha lokadhamme anuparivattati.” (Aṅguttara Nikāya, Aṭṭhakanipāta, p-7.)
sorrow and pain and as a result, our human society will not be at peace and harmony.

According to Buddhism, to maintain a balanced mind, we need to cultivate Upekkhā, the fourth sublime attitude. Cultivation of equanimity enables one to remain indifference to desirable and undesirable conditions in one’s life.

The term Upekkhā is defined as cheerful equanimity. The serene attitude is its chief characteristic. It discards satisfaction and aversion. It establishes an even or balanced mind in an unbalanced world with fluctuating fortunes and circumstances. It embraces the good and the bad, the agreeable and the disagreeable, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

One, who practices upekkhā, looks upon all beings impartially, as heirs to the results of their own actions, without satisfaction or aversion. His attitude towards the good and the bad, the agreeable and the disagreeable, and the pleasant and the unpleasant is the same.

He views everything rightly and justly, without liking or disliking, without favour or disfavour. He neither feels pain for disfavourable conditions and circumstances, nor feels pleasure for favourable conditions and circumstances, having a neutral feeling, thinking thus: ‘These things have inevitably happened according to Kamma, the consequential effects of good or bad deeds. It is Kamma, the planner that implements both evil and good, making one suffer pain and gain pleasure.’ He is not attached to desirable objects and averse to undesirable objects.
Relating to Kamma, the fundamental point stressed is that pain and pleasure, misery and happiness cannot be repaired, created or brought about by anyone. These have happened according to one’s own Kamma.

In the Buddha’s teachings, there is no question of a person’s deserving or not deserving pleasure and happiness, or deserving or not deserving pain and misery. Pleasure and pain, happiness and misery are due to Kamma.

The Buddha simply says that there are actions (Kamma) leading to pleasure and actions leading to pain. Kamma is not a respecter of persons, and it is simply an issue of actions and results. Good people may have done some bad actions in their past. People who seem horrible may have done some wonderful things. We never know. So, there is no question of a person’s deserving or not deserving pleasure or pain. There is simply the principle that actions have results and that your present experience of pleasure or pain is the combined result of past and present actions. We may have some very unskillful actions in our past, but if we learn to think skillfully when those actions bear fruit in the present, we do not have to suffer.

We should know how to handle our emotions and feelings. When we encounter unpleasant situations, we need to cultivate equanimity to avoid feeling additional suffering and to use our energies for the development of discernment. And also, when we encounter pleasant situations, too, we need to cultivate equanimity.
to avoid creating undesirable problems and to make our abilities more affective.

Gain and loss is a pair of worldly conditions that confront us in the course of our daily lives. We are subject to both gain and loss. Ordinarily, we are delighted at obtaining gain. Gain produces happiness which we seek for and gladdens our hearts. But, we feel depressed in obtaining loss. Loss causes mental suffering and saddens us.

In fact, loss is a kind of worldly condition that we must inevitably face in the course of our lives. When we meet with loss, instead of being upset and depressed, we should be able to bear it cheerfully and smilingly with equanimity.

Even Lord Buddha met with losses. On another occasion, the Buddha and His disciples observed vassa (rainy period) in the city of Verañjā at the invitation of a Brahmin named Verañja. At that time, the city of Verañjā was struck by the outbreak of starvation. Throughout a period of three months of vassa, the Buddha had to be contented with the fodder of horses offered by a horse-dealer.\footnote{Vinaya Piṭaka, Pārājikakaṇḍa Pāli, p-7.}

We should maintain a balance mind when we face gain and loss. We all certainly have ups and downs while battling with life. We should always be prepared for loss since it can come after gain.

Fame and defame are another pair of worldly conditions that we must inevitably in our lives. True indeed, fame gladdens our hearts and minds. We like fame. We desire to become famous. We
are greatly pleased when our names and activities are given publicity and when our fame is spread far and wide. We feel happy when we get honour and glory. On the contrary, defame undoubtedly disheartens us. We dislike defame. We do not desire to become infamous. We are extremely displeased when we meet with defamation and dishonor, whether real or false.

We may try to live the perfect life. But we will not be exempt from vilification. We may work with the best of motives to serve and help others to the best of our ability. But the deluded outside world very often backbite us. The more we work and the greater we become, the more we are subject to vilification.

Even the Buddha, the Perfected One, was maligned. Once, His adversaries and antagonists, intended to ruin His good name, spread a false rumour amongst the populace that the Buddha, assisted by His disciples, murdered a female ascetic (paribbājikā), named Sundarī.\textsuperscript{148}

In a public assembly, a vile woman named Ciñcamāṇavikā, feigning pregnancy, maligned the Buddha that He got her pregnant.\textsuperscript{149}

The fault-finding world exhibits our short-comings and misdoings but hides our great virtues and good deeds. When we are misrepresented, we do not need to correct the false reports, wasting our time and energy, unless circumstances compel us to make a clarification. It is not possible to put a stop to false accusation,

\textsuperscript{148} Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, Vol-II, Sundarīparibbājikā vatthu, p-296.
\textsuperscript{149} Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā, Vol-II, Ciñcamāṇavikā vatthu, p-116.
reports and rumours. Instead of trying to stop them, which is impossible, it is advisable to make indifference to them. Then, they will fall on deaf ears.

In this deluded world, we may hear adverse reports, false accusations, degrading remarks of uncurbed tongues. On hearing the unjust and false defamatory words, we should behave like a deaf person.

Neglecting the poisonous darts of uncurbed tongues that are finding faults with us and speaking ill of us, we should do good deeds to serve humanity with the best of intentions and to the best of our ability, without longing for fame or name.

We should be indifferent to fame or defame. We should not be conceited when we are honoured and gloried; and upset when we are slandered and vilified.

Praise and blame are two more worldly conditions that we must meet in our lifetime. It is quite natural to be delighted when we are praised and to be depressed when we are blamed. Praise is pleasing to our ears while blame is displeasing to our ears. But they have no effect if they do not reach our ears. It means if we are indifferent to them, we are not affected by them.

During the moments of success, we should be humble. We should not be conceited. During the moments of failure, we should not be downhearted and upset. We should not give up easily as success came after many failures. We should also be patient with censure and blame.
The Buddha says: “Selo yathā ekaghano, vātena na samīrati, evaṁ nindāpasariṇāsu, na samiñjanti paṇḍitā.- Just as a solid rock is not shaken by the storm, even so the wise not affected by praise or blame.”

Praise, compliment and commendation are what people want to receive. Everyone wants to hear felicitations and complimentary remark. But we must realize that praise, compliment and commendation are nothing, though pleasing to our ears. They vanish in the air.

Furthermore, the majority of people in this deluded world are prone to seek only the bad and ugliness in others, but not the good and beauty. Therefore, we should not just enjoy receiving praise, compliment and commendation. We should also prepare to be proof against blame, criticism, abuse and insults.

Blame, criticism, abuse and insults seem to be traditional and universal legacy to mankind. They are the common lot of humanity in this ill-disciplined world of today. We are often blamed, criticized, abused and insulted. It is important to calmly endure blame, criticism, censure, abuse and insults, and to maintain a balanced mind in such circumstances.

The Buddha says: “Porāṇametaṁ atula, netaṁ ajjatanāmiva; nindanti tuṭhimāśīnaṁ, nindanti bahubhāṇināṁ; mitabhāṇimpi nindanti, natthi loke anindito.- Indeed, blame is an ancient practice, not one only of today. Those who remain silent are blamed. Those

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150 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Paṇḍita Vagga, verse- 81.
who speak much are blamed. Those who speak in moderation also are blamed. In this world there is none who is not blamed.”

Because of the quantum of negativity that humans are heirs to, and of the quantum of negativity that is part and parcel of unenlightened humanity, people can easily blame and criticize, but hardly praise and honour, and can easily see faults and weaknesses of others, but hardly perceive their virtues and strength. If we realize this, it will be easy for us to cultivate equanimity.

Even Lord Buddha was so severely criticized, reviled, abused, and insulted by undisciplined and impertinent men while He was so highly praised, honoured and revered by wise and courteous men.

When many distinguished young good men sought ordination under the Buddha and led the life of holiness under His direction, undisciplined people criticized and reviled Him, saying that He caused parents to have no their sons; He caused wives to be separated from their husbands; and He caused mankind to become extinct. But, The Buddha was not perturbed and offended by criticism and said: “Na, Bhikkhave, so saddo ciraṁ bhavissati, sattāhameva bhavissati, sattāhassa accayena antaradhāyissati. - This vice of criticism, Monks, will not last long; it will last only seven days; after seven days it will be over.”

Once, a lady of the harem, named Māgaṇḍiyā, hired drunkards to abuse the Buddha in public so much that the

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151 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Kodha Vagga, verse-227.
152 Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga Pāli, pp-54/55.
Venerable Ānanda appealed to the Buddha to leave the city and go elsewhere. The Buddha endured abuse with perfect equanimity, and said to Venerable Ānanda thus: “Ānanda, Tathāgatā nāma atṭhahi lokadhammehi na kampanti. Ayampi saddo sattāhaṁ nātikkamissati. Akkosakānarīyeva upari patissati. Tvaṁ mā vitakkayittha.- Ānanda, the Enlighten Ones are never perturbed by the eight worldly conditions. This abuse will automatically cease within a week, and will fall only on those who abuse. Do not reflect on it, thou!” 153

The Buddha suffered criticism, abuse and insults in silence with perfect equanimity, saying: “Ahaṁ nāgova saṅgāme, cāpa patitam saraṁ, ativākyam titikkhasaṁ, dussīlo hi bahujjano.- Just as an elephant in the battlefield withstands arrows shot from bows all around, even so I shall endure abuse. Indeed, most people are lacking in virtue.” 154

Following the exemplary practice of equanimity, one, who endures criticism, abuse and insults, is regarded as having attained Nibbāna, even though he is not yet having attained it.

The Buddha says: “Sace neresi attānaṁ, karīso upahato yathā, esa pattosi nibbānaṁ, sārambho te na vijjati.- If, like a cracked gong, you silence yourself, you have already attained Nibbāna. Vindictiveness is no longer in you.” 155

When we meet with praise or blame, we should not exhibit either elation or depression. We should remain unmoved by them.

152 Aṅguttara Nikāya, Ekakanipāta Aṭṭhakathā, p-336.
154 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Daṇḍa Vagga, verse-134.
There is none in this world who is totally blamed or absolutely praised.

The Buddha says: “Na cāhu na ca bhavissati, na cetarahi vijjati, ekantaṁ nindito poso, ekantaṁ vā pasaṁsito.- There never was, there never will be, there is not now, a person who is wholly blamed or wholly praised.”

Like a lion that does not tremble at every sound, one should not be perturbed by the poisoned darts of uncurbed tongues. Like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net, one should not be attached to the illusory pleasures of this changing world. Like the lotus that is unsoiled by the mud from which it springs, one should live unaffected by worldly temptations, ever calm, serene and peaceful.

Pleasure and pain is the last pair of worldly conditions that we must experience in our daily lives. They are the most common worldly conditions that affect humanity. What can be endured with ease is pleasure; what is difficult to bear is pain.

Normally, Wealth, health, youthfulness, longevity, dear ones, etc, produce pleasure, physically or mentally for ordinary men.

We feel joy in life when we are accomplished with wealth and possessions. On the other hand, we feel pain when we face the destruction of that wealth and possessions.

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156 Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Kodha Vagga, verse-228.
157 Narada Thera, The Buddha and His Teachings, p-640.
We try to acquire wealth and possessions so as to enjoy pleasure in life. Truly indeed, without pleasurable moments, life would not be worth living.

The Buddha does not advise us not to enjoy worldly pleasure. The pleasure derived from the possession of wealth acquired by righteous means and great diligence (atthi-sukha) and the pleasure derived from the enjoyment of that wealth (bhoga-sukha) are the two kinds of pleasure among the four kinds of pleasure that lay men, who lead an ordinary life, have to enjoy, according to the Buddha.¹⁵⁸

But, He reminds us not to forget the impermanence of worldly things, and not to be attached to them. What we eat, what we drink, what we wear, and what we use are only temporary.

We should realize that accomplishment meets with destruction in the end. All accomplishments in connection with worldly matters, such as property, wealth, etc., will eventually be reduced to nothing, or rather, terminate in entire destruction.

Furthermore, we have no personal belongings or properties of our own. Though we are fully accomplished with wealth, nothing can be taken along with us on our death. When death occurs, everything will have to be abandoned. All that has been considered as one’s possessions with great attachment had to be abandoned or left behind at the time when death seizes. There is no personal private property. All things have got to be abandoned eventually.

¹⁵⁸ Aṅguttara Nikāya, Catukkanipāta, pp-380/381.
Therefore, with equanimity, we should be able to bare the destruction of wealth.

We are pleased when we are comprehensive with health, youthfulness and longevity. But, we feel pain when we are subject to old age, disease and death.

We should realize that old age, disease and death are the natures of life. We cannot preserve our body. Youthfulness ends in old age. To live is to die in the end. Just as fruits become ripe and then fall from a tree, even so we will become old and then die. Old age, disease and death come to all without exception. Even the Buddha had to suffer pain caused by disease and could not evade the death. It is therefore necessary to maintain a balanced mind when we face them in life.

We feel happy when we live with our near and dear ones together while we feel unhappy when we are separated from them. We must realize that all association must end with separation and someday, we will be separated from our near and dear ones for some reasons. Therefore, when we are compelled to separate from them we should maintain a balanced mind and face such separation with equanimity.

In brief, when we face pleasure and pain in life, we should try to maintain balanced mind, parctising equanimity.

In this connection, to maintain balanced mind, the Buddha advises us to contemplate five things every day- firstly thus “I am subject to old-age; I have not gone beyond old-age.”; secondly thus
“I am subject to sickness; I have not gone beyond sickness.”; thirdly thus “I am subject to death; I have not gone beyond death.”; fourthly thus “I will have to leave all my beloved and pleasant things, or they will become separated from me one day.”; and fifthly thus “I am the owner of my actions and the heir to my actions; I have my own actions as my origins, as my relations and as my refuges; Whatever actions I shall do, good or bad, I shall be the heir to them.”\textsuperscript{159}

Practising equanimity, we will able to observe things with an equally balanced mind and an appropriate attitude, without being delighted or depressed. When we face pleasant or unpleasant circumstances and situations, we will be ever calm nurturing the spirit of indifference to pleasure and pain.

The Buddha says: “Sukhena phuṭṭhā atha vā dukhena, na uccāvacarī paṇḍitā dassayanti. - The wise show no elation or depression when touched by pleasure or pain.”\textsuperscript{160}

From the optimistic point of view, this world is absolutely rosy; on the contrary, from the pessimistic point of view, this world is totally thorny. But from the realist point of view, this world is neither absolutely rosy nor totally thorny. In fact, it abounds with beautiful roses and prickly thorns as well. What is rosy is rosy; what is thorny is thorny. Because of beautiful roses, one should not be delighted and because of prickly thorns, one should not be depressed. One should be ever calm and serene.

\textsuperscript{159} Aṅguttara Nikāya, Pañcakanipāta, p-63.
\textsuperscript{160} Khuddaka Nikāya, Dhammapada Pāli, Paṇḍita Vagga, verse-83.
The rose is soft, beautiful and fragrant. But the stem on which it grows is full of thorns. Because of the soft, beautiful and fragrant rose one should not meddle with the thorns and should not disparage the rose on account of the thorns. One should not be infatuated by the beauty of the rose but should view it as it is. Knowing well the nature of the thorns, one should view them as they are and take the precaution not to be wounded.

Life is not always easy. It is our duty to ourselves that we learn to accept the brickbats with the bouquets, that we learn to deal with difficulties just as we enjoy the benefits of life and living. There is no greater cowardice than enjoying your spot in the sun and quitting the stage the moment life gets a little rough.\footnote{Vinita Dawra Nangia, \textit{Nothing is worth ending your life for}, p-2.}

Amidst vicissitudes of life, we should try to be able to stand unmoved, exercising perfect equanimity.

If one does not take care for his own health without taking regular physical exercise and without taking wholesome food which will give him nourishment, he may be afflicted with health problems. Indulgence in sport activities and living on a balanced diet avoiding food which is not healthy are conducive to good health.

Likewise, when misfortune takes place, if one does not practise equanimity and is anxious for miserable situation which had occurred to him, he will be affected by mental stress and distress. The practice of equanimity, bearing in one’s mind that this situation had happened to me as a result of my own actions
Upekkhā or equanimity is the most essential for a peaceful human society. If we practice equanimity, we will not be affected by any worldly condition. Exercising perfect equanimity, like the earth, we can experience everything, good or bad, in silence or tolerance, and we can stand unmoved amidst ups and downs of life. Our mind will be ever calm and serene. Therefore, there is no cause to fight each other and we can live in peace and harmony. Maintaining a balanced mind and serene attitude is the most important for a peaceful and happy society.

**Conclusion**

Our human society needs today fond looks, compassionate hearts, appreciative smiles and positive attitudes to banish conflicts, clashes, violence and riots from the face of the earth. Irrespective of creed or nation, if all human beings cultivate these four sublime attitudes, the world can be transformed into a paradise, where all humans can live in perfect peace and harmony as only one citizen of the world, mankind.

The four sublime attitudes should be diligently cultivated by every human being. The constant cultivation of these four sublime attitudes in everyday life transforms the conception and outlook of the practitioner. They are the foundation of peace and harmony for
a better human society. They convey a universal message which transforms people into universal human beings.

One single individual may not be able to change the whole human society for the better. But if each one of us transforms the world of our own minds into better states, we will be able to build a better human society. If we wish to create a happy and peaceful human society, in modern words, if we want to make the world mentally peaceful ‘global village’, we need to cultivate these four sublime attitudes.