

## CHAPTER - VI

### CONCLUSION :

The Brahmavihāras tend to elevate human life. They make one divine in this life itself. They can transform a man into a superman. If all try to cultivate them, irrespective of creed, colour, race or sex, the earth can be transformed into a paradise where all can live in perfect peace and harmony as ideal citizens of one world.

In the last five chapters of this thesis we have discussed that the Brahmavihāra is the cultivation of the four divine sentiments, namely **Mettā**, **Karuṇā**, **Muditā** and **Upekkhā** (in Sanskrit : **Maitrī**, **Karuṇā**, **Muditā** and **Upekṣā**). These occupy a central position in Buddhist life and form an essential preliminary in the field on mental training in Buddhism.<sup>107</sup> **Mettā** (skt. **Matrī**) is the supreme condition of Brahmavihāra. It is the Loving-kindness for the welfare and happiness of all beings (viz. **Manussa**, **Deva**, **Asura**, **Nāga**, **Yakkha**, **Peta**,

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<sup>107</sup> Dīgha, I pp. 250f; II p. 223f; Majjhima, I pp. 38, 297, 344.

Tiracchāna, and the like). Mettā softens one's heart. It is not personal love but universal affection.

Psychologically Mettā is the positive expression of the negative state "Avyāpāda" i.e the absence of ill-will or hatred. Personal love is sorrowful which creates an attachment to the loved one, but Mettā makes no distinction between one thing to other. Mettā is defined in the Suttanipāta (vide Mettā sutta or Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta) of the Pāli Khuddakanikāya as follows :

**"Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttāṃ āyusā ekaputtāṃ anrakkhe,  
evaṃ pi sabbabhūtesu mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ."** --

"Just as a mother protects her only child even at the risk of her life, even so one should cultivate boundless living - kindness towards all living beings." But Mettā should not be considered as universal brotherhood, for it embraces all living beings including animals, our lesser brethren and sisters that need greater compassion as they are helpless. Mettā is not political brotherhood or racial brotherhood or national brotherhood, or even religious brotherhood or racial brotherhood or national brotherhood, or even religious brotherhood. Political brotherhood is confined only to those who share similar political

views, such as the partial brotherhood of Democrats, Socialists, Communists, and so forth.

Racial brotherhood and national brotherhood are restricted only to those of the same race and nation. Some nationalists love their race so much that sometimes they ruthlessly kill innocent, men, women and children, because they are unfortunately blessed with golden hair and blue eyes. The white races have a particular love for the white skin the black for the black, the yellow for the yellow, the brown for the brown, the pale for the pale, the red for the red. Others of a different complexion are at times viewed with suspicion and fear. Very often to assert their racial superiority they resort to brutal warfare, killing millions of innocent people by mercilessly raining bombs from the sky above. The pathetic incidents of the Second World War are examples which can never be forgotten by mankind. Who can forget the merciless disaster of Hiroshima and Nagasaki of Japan during the Second World war. Who will forget the inhuman killing of human killing of human beings in Gas Chamber by Hitler? ... .. (So on and so forth).

Mettā is not religious brotherhood either. Owing to the sad limitations of so-called religious brotherhood human heads have been severed without the least remorse.; sincere cut spoken men

and women have been roasted and burnt alive; many atrocities have been perpetrated which baffle description; cruel wars have been waged which mar the pages of world history. Even in this supposedly enlightened twentieth century, the followers of one religion hate or ruthlessly persecute and even kill those of other faiths merely because they cannot force them to think as they do, or because they have a different label.

If, on account of religious views, people of different faiths cannot meet on a common platform like brothers and sisters, then surely the missions of compassionate world teachers have pitifully failed.

Sweet Mettā transcends all these kinds of narrow brotherhood. It is limitless in scope and range. Barriers it has none. Discrimination it makes not. Mettā enables one to regard the whole as one's motherland and all as fellow-beings.

Just as the sun sheds its rays on all without any distinction, even so sublime Mettā bestows its sweet blessings equally on the pleasant and the unpleasant, on the rich and the poor, on the high and the low, on the vicious and the virtuous, on man and woman, and on human and animal.

Such was the boundless Mettā of the Buddha who worked for the welfare and happiness of those who loved him, as well as of those who hated him and attempted to harm and kill him.

The Buddha exercised his Mettā equally towards his own son Rāhula, his adversary Devadatta, his attendant Ānanda, his admireres and his opponents.

Mettā should be extended in equal measures towards oneself as towards friend, foe and neutral alike. Suppose a bandit were to approach a person travelling through a forest with an intimate friend, a neutral person and an enemy, and suppose he were to demand that one of them be offered as a victim. If the traveler were to say that he himself should be taken, then he would have no Mettā towards himself. If he were to say that any one of the other three persons should be taken, then he would have no Mettā towards them.

Such is the characteristis of real Mettā. In exercising this boundless Mettā oneself should not be ignored. This subtle point should not be misunderstand stood, for self-sacrifice is another sweet virtues, and agelessness is yet another noble virtue. The culmination of this Mettā is the identification of oneself with all

beings, making no difference between oneself and others. The so-called "I" (**Ahaṃ**) is lost in the whole. Separation evaporates. Oneness is realized.

The antithesis of *Mettā* is anger, ill-will, hatred or aversion. *Mettā* cannot co-exist with anger, hatred or vengeful conduct.

The Buddha states :

**"Na hi vereṇa verāṇi sammantī'dha kudācanaṃ,  
Avereṇa sa sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano."<sup>108</sup>**

-- Hatreds do not cease through hatreds. Through love alone they cease. This is the eternal law.<sup>109</sup> *Mettā* not only tends to conquer anger but also does not tolerate hateful thoughts towards others. He who has *Mettā* never thinks of harming others, not does he disparage or condemn others. such a person is neither afraid of others nor does he instill fear into any.

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<sup>108</sup> Dhammapada, verse No.5

<sup>109</sup> Eng. trans, by S.Radhakrishnan, The Dhammapada, p.60

A subtle indirect enemy assails Mettā in the guise of a friend. It is selfish affection (**pema**), for unguarded Mettā may sometimes be assailed by lust. This indirect enemy resembles a person who lurks afar in the jungles or hills to cause harm to another. Grief springs from affection (**pema**) but not from Mettā.

This delicate point should not be misunderstood. Parents surely care cannot avoid having affection towards their children, and children towards their parents; husbands towards their wives and wives towards their husbands. Such affection is quite natural. The world cannot exist without mutual affection. The point to be clarified here is that unselfish Mettā is not synonymous with ordinary affection.

A benevolent attitude is the chief characteristic of Mettā. He who practices Mettā is constantly interested in promoting the welfare of others. He seeks the good and beautiful in all but not the ugliness in others.

...                      ...                      ...

A Bhikkhu is expected to practise Mettā to such an extent that he is forbidden to dig or cause to dig the ground, lest insects and other minute creatures die.

The high standard of Mettā is expected from a Bhikkhu can be understood by the following admonition of the Buddha :

"If bandits sever your limbs with a two-handed saw, and if you entertain hate in your heart, you will not be a follower of my teaching."<sup>110</sup>

Such enduring patience is extremely difficult, no doubt. But that is the lofty ethical standard that the Buddha expects from his followers.

The Buddha himself set the noble example. "As an elephant in the battlefield withstands arrows shot from a bow," says the Buddha, "even so will I endure abuse; verily most people are undisciplined."<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Kakacū pama Sutta, Majjhima, I, Sutta No.21

<sup>111</sup> "Ahaṃ nāgo'va sangāme cāpāto patitaṃ saraṃ,

ativākyaṃ titikkhissaṃ dussīlo hi bahujjanao" - Dhammapada, v.320

There are so many instances in the Jātakas where we find how Buddha in his previous Bodhisatta-lives practiced Mettā-Pāramī. One such concrete example is as follows :

The Buddha as a boy in a previous birth extended his boundless Mettā when his own father ordered him to be killed. Young though he was the Buddha thought to himself :

Here is a golden opportunity for me to practice my Mettā. My father stands before me, my good mother is weeping, the executioner is ready to chop off my hands and feet. I as a victim stand in the centre. I must love all the four in equal measure without any distinction. May my good father not incur any suffering because of the ruthless act. With the practice of Mettā of this kind may I become a Buddha in the future.<sup>112</sup>

... ..

Venerable Nārada Mahāthera is right when he says that this chaotic, war-weary, restless world of today, where the nations are arming themselves to the teeth, frightened of one another, where human life is endangered by nuclear weapons which may be released at any moment, is extremely in need of

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<sup>112</sup> Khantivāda Jātaka (Jātaka No.313)

this universal Mettā, so that all may live in one world in perfect peace and harmony, like brothers and sisters.<sup>113</sup>

But is it really possible to exercise Mettā when one is threatened with devastating bombs and other destructive weapons? Well what can powerless people do when bombs are rained from above? Can they avert such a catastrophe?

Buddha's Mettā is the only answer to such deadly bombs when one is faced with inexorable death.

If all war-like nations could be prevailed upon to substitute this spiritual Mettā for the destructive weapons of materialism, and rule world not with might and force, but with love and sympathy, then only would there be genuine peace and happiness in this world.

Leaving the almost unpractical major issues aside, it is advisable to be concerned with oneself and the rest of mankind in cultivating this sweet virtue of Mettā to the best of one's ability.

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<sup>113</sup> The Buddha and His Teachings, p.370.

The second virtue that sublimates man is Karuṇā (compassion). It is Karuṇā that compels one to serve others with altruistic motives. A truly compassionate person lives not for himself but for others. He seeks opportunities to serve others expecting nothing in return, not even gratitude.

Many amidst us deserve our compassion. The poor and the needy, the sick and the helpless, the lonely and the destitute, the ignorant and the vicious, the impure and the undisciplined are some that demand the Karuṇā of kind-hearted, noble-minded men and women, to whatever religion or to whatever race they belong.

Like Mettā, Karuṇā should also be extended without limit towards all suffering and helpless beings, including dumb animals. To deny the rights and privileges of mankind on account of caste, creed, colour or race is inhuman and cruel. To feast on the flesh of animals by killing or causing to kill them is not human compassion. To rain bombs from above and ruthlessly destroy millions of men, women and children is the worst form of cruelty that deluded man has ever perpetrated. Today this pitiless, vengeful world has sacrificed the most precious thing on earth i.e. life at the altar of brute force.

The world, therefore, needs today compassionate men and women to banish violence and cruelty from the face of the earth.

The difference between *Mettā* and *Karuṇā* lies in the fact that *Karuṇā* embraces all sorrow-stricken beings, while *Mettā* embraces all living beings, happy or unhappy.

The third sublime virtue what the present restless and unhappy world needs is *Muditā* (sympathetic or appreciative joy). *Muditā* tends to destroy jealousy, its direct enemy.

One devastating force that endangers our whole constitution is jealousy. Very often some cannot bear to see or hear the successful achievements of others. They rejoice over their failures but cannot tolerate their successes. Instead of praising and congratulating the successful, they try to ruin, condemn and vilify them. In one way *Muditā* is concerned more with oneself than with others, as it tends to eradicate jealousy which ruins oneself. On the other hand it aids others as well, since one who practices *Muditā* will not try to hinder the progress and welfare of others.

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. Yes, the majority not only find it difficult but also do not and cannot rejoice. They seek delight in creating every possible obstacle so as to ruin their adversaries. They even go to the extent of poisoning, crucifying, and assassinating the good and the virtuous. Are these not historical facts that Socrates was poisoned, Jesus Christ was crucified, Mahatma Gandhi was shot dead? Such is the nature of the wicked and deluded world.

One religion is jealous of another religion, one part of the globe is jealous of another part of the globe, one institution is jealous of another institution, one business firm is jealous of another business firm, one family is jealous of another family, unsuccessful pupils are jealous of successful pupils, sometimes even one brother or sister is jealous of another brother or sister. This is the reason why individuals and groups should practise appreciative joy, if they wish to sublime themselves and be internally happy.

The fourth sublime state is Upekkhā which is the most difficult and the most essential. Upekkhā is equanimity.

Slights and insults are the common lot of mankind. The world is so constituted that the good and the virtuous are often subject to unjust criticism and attack. It is heroic to maintain a balanced mind in such circumstances.

Loss and gain, fame and infamy, praise and blame, pain and happiness are eight worldly conditions that affect all humanity. Most people are perturbed when affected by such favorable or unfavorable states. One is elated when one is praised, and depressed when blamed and reviled. He is wise, says the Buddha, who, amidst such vicissitudes of life, stands unmoved like unto a firm rock, exercising perfect equanimity.

Upekkhā discards clinging and aversion. An impartial attitude is its chief characteristic. He who practises equanimity is neither attracted by desirable objects nor is averse to undesirable objects. His attitude towards the sinner and the saint will be the same, for he makes no distinction.

To sum up : Of the four Brahmavihāras, Mettā embraces all beings, Karuṇā embraces sufferers, Muditā embraces the prosperous and Upekkhā embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

He who wishes to be divine in this life itself may daily cultivate these four Brahmavihāras (sublime virtues) which are dormant in all.

He who wishes to perfect himself and compassionately work for the welfare of all beings in the course of his countless births in Samsāra, may strenuously develop the ten perfections (**dasa pāramī**), cultivate the Four Brahmavihāras and ultimately become a Supremely Enlightened One.

He who wishes to eradicate his passions and put an end to suffering by realizing Nibbāna at the earliest possible opportunity, may diligently follow the unique Noble Eightfold Path which still exists in its pristine purity.

...                      ...                      ...

The four Brahmavihāras are connected with real **appamāna-cetovimutti** i.e. freedom of mind through infinitude. Each of the four Brahmavihāras or **Appamañña** is severally connected with cetovimutti, i.e. **Mettā-cetovimutti** (freedom of mind through boundless love; **Karunā-cetovimutti** (freedom of mind through boundless compassion; **Muditā - cetovimutti** (freedom of mind through boundless sympathetic joy) and

**Upekkhā-cetovimutti** (freedom of mind through boundless equanimity).<sup>114</sup>

Eleven advantages (ānisaṃsa) are given as resulting from development of the freedom of mind (cetovimutti) of the four Brahmavihāras through any one of the mental absorptions. He who practices them:

- a. Sleeps in comfort (**sukhaṃ supati**)
- b. Wakes up in comfort (**sukhaṃ paṭivujjhati**)
- c. dreams no evil dreams ( **na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati**)
- d. Is dear to human beings (**manussānaṃ piyo hoti**)
- e. Is dear to non-human beings (**amanussānaṃ piyo hoti**)
- f. Deities guard him (**devatā rakkhanti**)
- g. Fire, weapons and poison do not affect him(**N'assa aggi vā visaṃ vā satthaṃ va kamati**)
- h. His mind is easily concentrated (**tuvaṭṭaṃ cittaṃ samādhīyati**)
- i. His face always remains serene (**mukhavaṇṇaṃ vipasīdati**)
- j. He dies unconfused (**asammulho kālaṃ karoti**)

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<sup>114</sup> Dīgha, III, 248; Majjhima, I 297-298; Samyutta, IV, 296

k. If he penetrates no higher stage, he reappears in the Erahna world after death (**uttariṃ appativijjhanto Brahmalo-kūpago hoti**)<sup>115</sup>

## **CONCEPT OF THE BRAHMAVIHĀRAS IN BUDDHIST SANSKRIT LITERATURE :**

The Brahma-vihāras seem to have been borrowed by the Buddhists from another school of philosophers. In the Makhādeva-sutta of the Pāli Majjhima-nikāya (Majjhima, II, 82), it is hinted that they did not constitute Buddha's original contribution to Indian religious thought.

Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids is of the opinion that they were taught by an important preacher, whom she calls "the unknown co-founder of Buddhism".<sup>116</sup>

They are also found in the same order in the Yoga-sūtras (I.33, p. 38). The first three are also mentioned in Vyāsa's commentary on Yoga-Sūtras (III, 23, p. 148). This shows that

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<sup>115</sup> Aṅguttara, V, 342; Visuddhi, p.258ff.

<sup>116</sup> Gotama the Man, p. 180

they belonged to the common tradition of the Indian religious world. In Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, they are mentioned and described in many passages of the Mahāvyutpatti, Dharmasaṅgraha, Mahāyāna-sūtralankāra, Dasabhūmika-sūtra, Satasāhasrikā Prajñāparamitā, Mahāvastu and Lalitavistara.

It is possible to indicate the growth of this fourfold formula in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature. In many passages only maitrī (Pāli Mettā) is mentioned. At other places, only maitrī and karuṇā are mentioned together. These two form a natural pair, and are spoken of as such as Dasabhūmika-sūtra etc. But it is more puzzling to find only maitrī, karuṇā and muditā mentioned in several passages. Vyāsa, in his commentary on Yoga-sūtra, refuses to recognize Upeksā as a bhāvanā (practice for realization). It differs also in its aim and spirit from the other three meditations.

In course of time, these social virtues were appreciated in an increasing degree. The Mahāyānist writers even reckon Mahākaruṇā among a perfect Buddha's attributes. It is considered as important as the balas, the vaisāradyas(Pāli vesārajjas), and the āveṇika-dharmas.

The Mahāvastu exalts the Brahma-vihāras to such an extent that it promises Nirvāṇa and the summum bonum to the person who minutely practices them. This was a daring innovation, as the old Pāli writers regarded them only as the means of securing rebirth in heaven of Brahma. All the Brahma-vihāras were thus emphasized and inculcated with greater zeal, and karuṇā was chosen as the most important among them. The honorific title mahā was also prefixed to all, especially to maitrī and karuṇā.