

MN-48
The Kosambians
Kosambiya Sutta
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MN:

1. THUS HAVE I HEARD. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Kosambi in Ghosita's Park.

2. Now on that occasion the monks at Kosambi had taken to quarrelling and brawling and were deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers. They could neither convince each other nor be convinced by others; they could neither persuade each other nor be persuaded by others.

BV: What happened was – the Kosambi was a fairly big monastery and out on the edge of the monastery was a monastery that their specialty was the rules of the monks. And in the middle of the town, there was a monastery and their specialty was the suttas. Now, the head of this monastery went to the head of that monastery and they had conversation and that sort of thing. The sutta monk asked where the bathroom was, because he had to go to the toilet. And they showed him where the bathroom was and he used the bathroom, and they always have water to clean themselves with, and (he) left a little bit of water in the bowl. And the Vinaya monk, the one that studied the rules, followed him into the bathroom, to use the bathroom right after him, and he saw that there was water in the bowl. And that's a break in the Vinaya – monks are supposed to not leave water in the bowl. So, the Vinaya monk came out and he said: "Reverend Sir, do you realize that you just broke the Vinaya?" And the sutta monk said: "No, I didn't know that." – "Well, you left some water in the bowl and that way beings can come and they can start living in the bowl and the next person that uses it would wind up killing them, so we don't do that." And the Sutta monk said: "Well,

thank you very much, I didn't realize I did that, I will be more careful in the future."

And then the Sutta monk went back to his monastery, but the Vinaya monk started talking to his students saying: "How can this monk do that? How can he not understand that he broke the rules when he didn't put the water out of the bowl?" And they started complaining about him, and then the next morning they all went into town for almsround, and the Vinaya students started talking to the sutta students saying: "Well, how your teacher is not very good, how can he possibly do this?" and they got into quarrelling all the time. So, when we are talking about "getting stabbed with verbal daggers", this is the kind of thing that was occurring.

MN:

3. Then a certain monk went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and informed him of what was happening.

4. Then the Blessed One addressed a certain monk thus: "Come, monk, tell those monks in my name that the Teacher calls them."—"Yes, venerable sir," he replied, and he went to those monks and told them: "The Teacher calls the venerable ones."

"Yes, friend," they replied, and they went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, they sat down at one side. The Blessed One then asked them: "Monks, is it true that you have taken to quarrelling and brawling and are deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers; that you can neither convince each other nor be convinced by others, that you can neither persuade each other nor be persuaded by others?"

"Yes, venerable sir."

5. "Monks, what do you think? When you take to quarrelling and brawling and are deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers, do you on that occasion maintain acts of loving-kindness by

body, speech, and mind in public and in private towards your companions in the holy life?"

"No, venerable sir."

"So, monks, when you take to quarrelling and brawling and are deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers, on that occasion you do not maintain acts of loving-kindness by body, speech, and mind in public and in private {...}

BV: Now, this is a set formula – body, speech and mind. But, for this particular sutta, I like to change that formula a little bit, because it makes more sense that it's: mind, speech and body. Because mind always comes up first, before body and speech. So, he said:

MN:

Misguided men, what can you possibly know, what can you see, that you take to quarrelling and brawling and are deep in disputes, stabbing each other with verbal daggers? That you can neither convince each other nor be convinced by others, that you can neither persuade each other nor be persuaded by others? Misguided men,

BV: This is a big slap by the Buddha, when he says something like "misguided men". That's like the dog that got beaten, his tail between his legs now. (Laughs)

MN:

that will lead to your harm and suffering for a long time."

6. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks thus: "Monks, there are these six principles of cordiality that create love and respect and conduce to cohesion, to non-dispute, to concord, and to unity. What are the six?"

BV: And again, I'm going to change this from "body, speech and mind" to "mind, speech and body".

MN: "Here a monk maintains {mental} acts of loving-kindness both in

public and in private towards his companions in the holy life. This is a principle of cordiality that creates love and respect, and conduces to cohesion, to non-dispute, to concord, and to unity.

BV: Now, when you stop and think about that, when you are doing your meditation practice in your daily activities, what are you doing with your mind? Your mind is kind of ho-humming around, thinking about this, thinking about this, thinking about past, thinking about the future – not really paying much attention to what’s happening in the mind – it’s just kind of rambling. Now, what he’s suggesting here is that you maintain acts of loving-kindness in public and in private towards everyone around you. So, how do you do that when you are practicing loving-kindness? You do that by letting go of the thoughts about the past and about the future, and then focusing on loving-kindness being with you and radiating that feeling to everybody else. And the easiest way to do that, is by smiling – smiling in your heart, smiling in your mind, smiling with your eyes, smiling with your mouth.

This particular sutta, the first time I gave it in Malaysia, was such a shock to everybody that had practiced meditation, had been practicing vipassana very, very hard and very diligently, and they had very somber faces and they took everything very sombrely and... And, when I came out and said: "Well, practice smiling", this particular sutta made me think... In all of Malaysia, because it was such a shock, I happened to be giving this talk to... there was sixty people in the retreat and about half of them were teachers, all over the country, of meditation... So, they were really surprised that the Buddha’s path wasn’t that serious, that you have to develop your loving-kindness towards whatever you’re doing. Now, if you get up in the middle of the night, and you got to go to the bathroom, and you stub your toe – what happens in your mind? First, pain arises, and then dislike arises, and then cursing arises, and then jumping around and really not liking it, and putting your anger into the toe. Now, pain when it arises, is telling you right then: "I need some love!" But, when you put dislike into that sensation, when you put anger and dissatisfaction, it makes that pain bigger and more intense. And you wind up hobbling around and cursing, and you go to the bathroom

and you are still hobbling around, and you go to bed and you wake up the next morning and you can hardly walk, because you really hurt your toe.

Now, I'll give you an example of what happened to me when I was at a monastery. They had this step that was about that high between me and the bathroom, and I had to get up in the middle of the night to use it, and I couldn't see the step and I immediately kicked it. And I watched my mind at that time and what I saw was: pain, real intense, dislike, and then I started watching the tightness that happened around it and I started relaxing, and then I started sending love into that. And I hobbled to the bathroom and coming back it didn't hurt so much so it wasn't so bad. And I woke up the next morning and I got up and I started moving around, and I looked down at my foot and – I had a bloody toe! And I went: "What in the world happened? I don't remember... Oh, that's right, I stubbed my toe last night." So, when you start practicing putting loving-kindness into everything that happens during the day, you start putting magic into your life. Because, as it turned out, I broke my toe! And of course, what do you do with a broken toe? You put a bow on it so you don't do it again any time soon and that's about it. But, within a day, I had completely forgotten about it, except on occasion if somebody came too close and they hit it, or you know, one of those kind of things, but it didn't bother me after that. Now, this was a really big insight into the nature of mind and how mind affects body. Any kind of sensation that arises in your body, if you put love into that sensation, it will start to change immediately and not be an emergency.

Now, I've worked a lot, with older folks, My mother had a nursing home for 20 years. So, I had the opportunity of... oh, washing old men, and shaving them, and taking care of them, and sometimes they would be in extreme pain, because their body was deteriorating. And I got to learn a lot about how mind works when pain arises.

After I became a monk, I started working with hospice in Malaysia. And there were people that, they had cancer and they were in extreme pain, and they would have me come and visit them. And I

learned the definition of compassion. And the real definition of compassion is – seeing another person’s pain, allowing them the space to have that pain, and loving them anyway. So, when I was going to the hospital to visit these people that had cancer and they were in extreme pain, before going there, while I was walking down the hallway, I was practicing smiling and wishing them well. And I was also, in my mind, I was allowing them the space to have whatever arose to be there. Now, there was one lady, she had stomach cancer, and just about every time I went to see her she was moaning: “Oooh...” and she would get really loud with it. And I’d walk in and I would allow her the space to have that and then I would start saying things like: “Can you send some loving-kindness to me?” And she started sending some loving-kindness to me. And then I’d say: “Can you send some loving-kindness into your stomach?” And within two or three minutes, the pain wasn’t near as intense. Now, when pain arises, the first thing that arises is dissatisfaction, dislike of that sensation, because it’s painful, it hurts, “Don’t want it”. That’s the craving – “I don’t want it”. And then all of the thoughts and reasons why you don’t want it, why you want to try to control the sensation with your thoughts.

Now, we have five aggregates that make up this entire mind and body process. You have a physical body; you have feeling. Feeling is pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Either physical or emotional, but feeling is still feeling – it’s pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. You have perception, that’s the thing that puts the name on things and it also has memory involved with it. You have thoughts; and you have consciousness. Now, when a painful feeling arises, the first thing we try to do is think the feeling away. And the more you think about the feeling, the more intense the feeling becomes – the more aversion you have towards it, the bigger it gets. So, the first thing we have to learn is to allow those thoughts to be there by themselves and don’t get involved in the storyline with them. Let the thoughts be and relax, now you can see the pain for what it really is and you can see the tight mental fist wrapped around it – the want to control. And you have to allow the sensation to be there. As you allow the sensation to be there, the emergency starts to come out of it. And you relax your mind and your body as best you can, just one time,

and then come back and wish somebody well. And then that pain is going to happen again and the thoughts are going to happen again, so you get to do it over again. And as you see that more and more, you start to recognize this as a process that happens in the same way every time. As you start to see your mind go to that sensation, you can relax a little bit more easily and then you don't have the thoughts about it. And you start developing that mind that has equanimity in it, it has balance in it. So, the painful feeling all of a sudden just turns into – a feeling. It's not: "My feeling, and I don't like it and I want it to be different." It's: "This is a feeling, and it's all right for the feeling to be there, because that's the truth." When a feeling arises, it's there. What you do with what arises in the present moment dictates what happens in the future. As you allow that sensation to be there more and more, you have more and more balance. That doesn't mean that the pain from the cancer is going to go away, but, it doesn't tug your mind to it, it doesn't dictate all of these other things that it normally would when you learn how to relax into it.

Now, when I gave you the instructions for the meditation, I said: when a sensation arises in your body – whether it's a heat, or vibration, or an itch, or a want to cough, or a want to sneeze, or a pain – you treat them all in the same way. So, by doing the meditation you are learning how to handle unpleasant feeling when it arises, so that you can carry that with you with your daily activities. So, your mindfulness becomes much sharper. Now, mindfulness is your observation of how mind's attention is moving. When you start putting loving-kindness into whatever arises with your daily activities, you start getting more and more a sense of balance. And with that, you start affecting the world around you in a very positive way.

Now when I was a layman, I had heard this I don't know how many times: "Aah, all you have to do is send love out and everybody will start changing, and that's what the world needs." You know, and I'll hear something long enough and finally I'll start to say: "Ok, Let's see if it's really true." So, I went to a mall, and I walked around with a frown on my face. And I started looking at other people and I noticed that they were all frowning. And I thought: "OK, I know I can

affect people negatively, let's see if I can affect them positively." So, I went to a bench and I sat down, and I started smiling a little bit and I started radiating loving-kindness, and after four or five minutes, I started feeling eyes staring at me. So, I thought: "I can't stand this, I got to see what's happening!" (Laughs) And I opened up my eyes, and there was twelve or fourteen people standing around me, complete strangers, smiling, watching me smile. And I thought: "Well, yeah, that works." (laughs) So, I got up and I left: "OK, I know I can affect the world that way."

But, when people are in their everyday lives, you get caught in a traffic jam, what are you doing with your mind? "Oh, I hate this, why can't they just all hurry up and let me go where I want to go and do what I want to do?" and your mind will get caught very much in dissatisfaction. Your mindfulness needs to kick in at that time and you realize that everybody else around you that stopped – they're having the same kind of thoughts, they're having the same kind of dislike. So, you let go of that and you start radiating a smile and wishing everybody well, and before long, you see the guy over there, he's kind of tapping to the music and not really worried about even being in the traffic jam, and you see these kind of things. That's what I mean when I say: "When you practice loving-kindness enough during your daily activities, you start to see magical things happen." People change from either neutral or negative, to smiling and they have an uplifted mind.

Now, one of the things that's really most important, and you'll not hear this said by too many other Buddhist monks, is that you need to laugh. Everybody has this idea that the spiritual path is serious, and by god, they're going to do well and they are going to be serious all the way. But, joy is one of the enlightenment factors. When you have a serious mind, your awareness of things as they come up isn't as sharp as it could be, your mindfulness isn't as good as it could be. When you have joy in your mind, your mind is very alert and very agile, because you can see joy can be there for a moment and then it starts to go away and you notice it and you go: "Oh, wait, let that go, that's nothing."

Now, when you start laughing at yourself for being serious and being caught, it changes your perspective. I was a layman and I was living in Hawaii at the time, and I decided that one of my friends needed help building his house and I was just going to help him. And, I was just doing it because I wanted to do it, I wasn't getting paid for it, I was getting nothing out of it, I was just doing it. And all of a sudden he decided that he was my boss. And, I took exception to that: "I'm just being nice and all of a sudden you are bossing me around and telling me whether I do a good job or bad job and I'm helping you! What is this?" And he did it one day in particular, and man, it really got me. So, I'm walking to my truck and my heels are digging into the ground, and I'm really walking: "That no good so and so." and I'm thinking all kinds of bad thoughts about him. And then, I stopped and I thought: "He really does think he is my boss!" And it made me laugh, and as soon as I laughed, the anger, the dissatisfaction mind, the mind that was taking everything so personally, and disliking the situation, changed into: "Oh, it's only anger. And what's anger? Nothing. Why do I need to have this turkey bother me? I just won't come back any more, I don't have to help him." So, that lesson of developing a sense of humor about your self and laughing at yourself for getting caught by dislike, dissatisfaction, sadness, depression, whatever the catch of the day happens to be, when you can laugh with that, you are not caught by it anymore. And your perspective goes from "I am that!" to "Oh, it's only this." So, you've gone from an attached state, a very tight mental state, to an open state.

So, laughing with yourself and developing that sense of joy, is one of the very necessary aspects of the spiritual path. Very necessary. When you stub your toe and you laugh into that: "How dumb I was for doing that" or whatever. I've been doing a lot with a hammer lately and I've whacked myself more than once, and I laugh and then I go on and do whatever I'm going to do, I don't even have any bruises from it. Now, what's happening? When you have joy arise in your mind, you have a lot of endorphins released into your body – that's the painkiller. When you go out for a walk, one of the reasons you like going for a walk, is because that's the time the endorphins come into your body. It makes you feel good, so here is another way

to help them come along. And, when you start developing on the spiritual path, you notice that your sense of humor begins to change. You stop laughing at things, and you start laughing with things. Like I was telling you about the dog that caught the butterfly and he didn't know what to do with it, I mean he was pretty perplexed, and he opened up his mouth and the butterfly came out. I was cursing myself I didn't have a camera with me (laughs). But it made me laugh. And he's that kind of an animal, I mean, he loves to go swimming in the water and then come and knock you over with his wet body, you know, he does all kinds of things like that (laughs). And how can you get angry at something like that?

One of the things that I tell people that work on the telephone a lot, talk to people a lot on the phone, is to put a mirror so that they are looking at themselves to see what their expression is while they are talking on the phone. And if they are not smiling – then to start smiling. And, they get amazed at how much more successful they are with the things that they are doing on the phone. So, I have some of my students stand in front of a mirror every day and smile, because that's a really good thing to do. While you are smiling, you are not only smiling here, you are smiling here, here, and here. And wishing yourself happiness, wish yourself a peaceful, calm day.

With loving-kindness, there's a lot of people that teach that you only make four wishes with loving-kindness: "May I be well and happy, may my mind be peaceful and calm, may my body be healthy..." and whatever the last one is, I can't even think of it anymore. Anyway, that kind of dehumanizes the wish and it turns into a mantra, and that turns into one-pointed concentration. But, when you make a wish with loving-kindness, you can wish yourself or your spiritual friend a clear mind, an open mind, an accepting mind, a mind that's filled with joy, a mind that's filled with confidence, but the trick is with the loving-kindness – you have to feel it yourself before you can give it away. So you have to feel that! You have to feel having a clear mind and confidence and whatever it is that you're wishing. So, when you stand in front of the mirror, you're making a wish for your own happiness in one way or another, and you feel like your mind is a little dull today, then you make a wish for your mind to be very alert

and sharp, very clear. And feel that. As you feel that wish and you start radiating that feeling, you become that. Now, I'm going to go to another sutta real quick.

OK, this is what the Buddha says about this kind of thing:

"Whatever a monk frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will be the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of love and kindness, then his mind inclines to thoughts of love and kindness."

Now, so, when you are practicing your daily activities and you start wishing, you can wish all beings happiness, you can wish the ants that are walking over here happiness, you can wish individual people happiness, and it doesn't necessarily have to be of the same sex with daily activities, but it does have to when you are sitting. Now, if you are sending loving and kind thoughts to a person of the opposite sex, let's say you are going into a grocery store and there is a person of the opposite sex that is at the counter and you wish them well, don't look them in the eye when you are doing that because it is misunderstood. But you can still give them loving-kindness with words too, you know, appreciation of what they are doing, how they are doing it, telling them a joke, feeling happy in yourself, and wishing that happiness for them, however you want to do it. The more you can practice doing that during your daily activities, the better your sitting meditation is, and your walking meditation is.

Now, when you are walking from here to the car, what's your mind doing? Ho-hum, thinking this, thinking that, got to go here, got to do that, whatever. You already know where you are going and what you got to do, you don't have to repeat it to yourself, that's just your mind's habit. So, what you do is you let go of those and start wishing everybody that you see during the day a smile and wishing them happiness, and you get into the car and you look into the mirror and you smile. And then while you're driving, you smile to everyone whenever it's appropriate, but you pay attention while you are driving, too.

So, there's a lot of daily activities that you can practice and practice your loving-kindness at the same time. What are you doing with your mind when you brush your teeth in the morning? You got to smile anyway, right? So, put the smile in your mind, put it in your eyes while you are brushing your teeth. Try to get some activities that you get into the habit that every time I do this it's going to remind me to practice some loving-kindness. So, the more that we can do that, the softer mind becomes, the more balance there is in mind, the more even your mind handles whatever it is that arises.

When I was in Malaysia, I had more than a thousand students that had practiced intensive meditation with me in loving-kindness. And it was really a kind of an odd phenomenon, because somebody would go and they would do a vipassana retreat for a couple of weeks, and it made their mind so hard and so harsh, that they were saying things that were hurtful to other people and they didn't really mean it, it was just coming out that way. So, they'd find out that I was giving a retreat and they'd come running over to me: "I have to have this, I need my fix of loving-kindness!" And, after two or three days, their mind settled down, they started getting into the jhana, they started really progressing spiritually, where two weeks of vipassana meditation had made them digress. And I had trouble showing them that the loving-kindness that I'm teaching is vipassana and loving-kindness at the same time, because it's a kind of an awareness of what your mind is doing, and it's something that you can carry with you no matter where you are or what you are doing. The more times you can focus on loving-kindness, the easier everything becomes.

Now, at one time I had my own construction company and I had a lot of people working for me, and I was building million dollar houses. And, there was a lot of stress in that. And also the people I was building them for, because of my connections with Asia, I've had them just about all my life it seems like, was with the Chinese community. And, the people I was building the houses for, were people that were very busy, presidents of banks, presidents of companies that owned four or five blocks of downtown San Francisco, you know, this kind of thing, they didn't have time to mess

around. Now, I'd be building their house and there would be some questions as to what, do you want to do it this way, or you want to do it this way, if you do it this way and we have to add this on, it's going to cost that much more, and all of this kind of business stuff.

What I got into the habit of doing was before I would see them, I would stand in front of the mirror and wish them well. And I would wish loving-kindness into the meeting, and wish loving-kindness guiding my mind to say exactly the right thing at exactly the right time. Then, I would be smiling that whole time, I walk into their office smiling, and it was like the loving-kindness just kind of grabbed that person and said: "Let's be agreeable right now." And then I'd discuss what I had to discuss and the meeting went incredibly fast, you know sometimes I'd only be in there for three or four minutes and we did what we had to do, I was out of there and happy, they were happy, and it was just a good situation. And I attribute that to the loving-kindness of being able to practice that seriously but happily with a smile in my mind, with the smile in my heart, and honestly wishing them well.

The times that I didn't do that, I got there late and I didn't have time to prepare myself – terrible meetings. So, I started learning: "I don't care what's going to happen, I'm going to be there early so I can do this."

So, in the healing aspects of loving-kindness, you have to prepare yourself to allow whatever situation there is to be, and love it anyway. There was a man that had a tumour growing on his carotid artery, and it was really serious to get it taken off. And he was supposed to have an operation that lasted five hours and it wound up lasting twelve. Now, the night before he went into the operation, I got his family together and we all sat down, and we started radiating loving-kindness to the man that was going to have the operation, to the doctor that was doing the operation, to all the nurses that were involved in the operation. And that's what I did all the next day, was, I spent time sending loving-kindness to the doctors, to the nurses, to him, whatever felt right at the moment. The next day, he got out of surgery after twelve hours, they put him on complete life support and

just kind of put his body to sleep and said: "We are going to take care of it for a few days."

The next day he was on complete life support system, the day after that he was in his room, so the family came and got me and they were all very concerned. And I went to see him, and he couldn't talk and he was kind of fading in and out of consciousness and this sort of thing. So, I sat down beside him and I held his hand and I just started radiating loving-kindness. Now, I did this for about an hour and a half or so. And all of a sudden, I looked at him and he had a glow in his face and his eyes were open, and he's starting to sit up and he's starting to talk. And I was watching him get stronger, and stronger, and stronger just in an incredibly short period of time. And, after about two hours, it seemed like I had been there enough: "OK, so I'm going to leave now." I walked out of the room and there's this big dormitory of beds. And there's all kinds of people in the beds – Malaysians, and Chinese and Indians. And in Malaysia, it's a Muslim country, but there's a lot of Chinese and a lot of Indians, so it's Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist. As I started walking away, these people in the beds are starting to ask me to come over, and they just wanted to touch my hand. And it was seven or eight people that did this and they were complete strangers, I didn't know them from anybody, but I was wishing them well and wishing them happiness, whatever, before I got out.

Three days later, he was out of the hospital and walking, and he was a school teacher, and he said he had lost his voice – he had a very kind of scratchy low voice. So, I told him: "Well, you have to practice loving-kindness for yourself now. So, I want you to sit couple times a day, do the loving-kindness, just for yourself, wishing yourself well, seeing yourself happy, seeing yourself helping other people." And after about two weeks, he spit up some blood and his voice came back. It was pretty amazing, and those kinds of miracles are things that I saw a lot, because I was going to the hospital and seeing them. And I have to tell you, it wasn't me that was doing anything, all I was doing was focusing on loving-kindness, and the loving-kindness is the thing that was healing. I can tell you all kinds of stories about that, but I'm not going to.

Anyway, the more you can remember to focus on loving-kindness with whatever you are doing, whether you are washing the dishes, or cleaning the floor, or going up to the car to do something, or doing something around here, try to remember to radiate loving-kindness. And you can just generally do it. You can do it to the trees, or do it to the grass, it doesn't really matter as long as your mind is focused on loving-kindness.

OK, so, this is basically what this sutta is all about – is learning how to practice loving-kindness in public and in private towards all beings. And the more you can do that, the easier it is to smile, the easier it is to have a perspective that is fun.

May suffering ones, be suffering free
And the fear struck, fearless be
May the grieving shed all grief
And may all beings find relief.

May all beings share this merit that we have thus acquired
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth
Devas and nagas of mighty power
Share this merit of ours.

May they long protect the Lord Buddha's dispensation.

Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . . Sadhu . . .

Transcription: Pete Argli

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