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ความรักผู้อื่น.

Loving others.

Good people, all those interested in the Dhamma, today's lecture delivered during the Visaka puja season is the fifth of the series devoted to those 'important things that we tend to overlook.' Today's important thing that we tend to overlook takes the heading of 'Loving Others,' something we, all of us, are guilty of not doing. At this time we'll look particularly at this subject because it's at the heart of every religion, and we want to consider it in some detail.

Observe carefully and you'll see that this is something grievously ignored. Missing things which have value means that we don't get any benefit from them; when we overlook important things we lose out. So, pay attention: loving others – how, in what ways have we overlooked it? I'll point them out one by one.

Point one: we've overlooked loving others as the way to liberation, safety, peace and happiness for us both socially and individually. Here it's not necessary to explain what loving others is to any great extent, what it means is having that metta, that love, and karuna, that compassion we've been talking about for so long, so that there's always love, kindness and compassion towards all beings - that's loving others. However, we don't mean those who aren't really 'others' in the true sense, loving our children, our wife, our husband, our drinking companions, our playmates, our work mates, and so on, isn't loving others in the true sense, it still involving selfishness, the feeling of love for others must go further, spread wider than that if it's to be the real thing.

If we could all love each other properly then the world would be as 'one,' that is, all people, experiencing metta, feeling love for each other, would become 'one,' so to speak. Every religion wants this, for the human world to be as 'one,' because if there is this true form of love people will truly join together, then there'll be no harm done, no killing, no thievery, no sexual misconduct, no lying, no drunkenness and the damage it causes.

When there's love for others there's no taking advantage, no causing of even a little harm. Paraphrasing the scripture it's said that on seeing through the eyes of love all people will mingle together like milk and water - milk mixing easily with water. If there's no love for others that can't happen, just as water and oil can't really mix. When there's love there's no wrong doing of any sort and human society is peaceful and happy, then we, being as one, each derive the highest benefits, because in loving others selfishness is destroyed, and humankind has no greater enemy than selfishness. Harmfulness, conflict in every form, arises from excessive selfishness.

Our purpose is to destroy selfishness, but selfishness is very strong, very difficult to be rid of, and we'll need something powerful, something which is strong enough to destroy it. Only metta, only feeling love for others can do that job. Like opposing elements within us, selfishness represents the kilesa, the defilement side, while selflessness, or love for others represents the 'bodhi,' the

wisdom side. It's a fact that loving others is the way to safety, to well-being, to contentment, yet we overlook it, we don't see it as being the most important thing for us to have, hardly giving it any attention or talking much about it, neither do we treat children in such a way that they could become interested in it.

We're all the time stuck in the prison of selfishness enduring continual torment. Yet we don't see the fetters that bind our ankles, don't see the collar around our necks, we don't see the prison which encloses the mind so we don't recognize loving others as the way out from that situation. Hence I say that loving others is something noble that we overlook, yet it's our way out, it's the escape route that we don't recognize, that we miss.

The second point is that we don't recognize the need to love others yet expect other people to love us - excuse me, but how stupid is that? We want others to feel love for us but we don't go about loving them, we don't practise loving others ourselves. We overlook this too: if we want everyone to love us then we need to love in return.

This is the present truth, because we overlook it we go wrong, we make mistakes, we're foolish, we dream of being loved even though we don't feel love ourselves. We don't really love anybody and we're used to being that way, to not loving others, to not doing anything for anybody until it's become normal behaviour for us. We're indifferent to other people. We, in the usual way of life, don't love or help anybody much, neither do we see the harm in that, we overlook that too.

The third point we overlook is that all the evil things happening in this world, all the wrongdoing happens because there's no love for others. Consider the crises that arise, like the ongoing war between two ideologies, both of which we already know about so that it's hardly necessary to name them, we can call them 'communists' and 'capitalists.' How did that come about? It came about because there wasn't any knowledge of metta, of love for others. If we had held to the Dhamma, had followed religion, that is, had developed love for others, it wouldn't have happened. We'll look at the communists first. If we take a good look we'll find that, in this world at a certain time and in a certain place there was no love for others at all, communism began at that time and in that place. There being no feelings of love there was exploitation, that is, people took advantage of each other: because on one side there were those of strong intellect, of greater ability, these were able to exploit the others who weren't too bright, who were unable to deal well with the situation, and who, therefore, lost out. Hence there came to be those with too much - the 'haves' - and those with too little - the 'have nots.' The 'haves' exploited the 'have nots' until the latter could bear it no longer and joined together in order to resist, to fight. That gave rise to the term 'communism' or 'socialism.' The 'have nots' in their resentment thus rose up to resist, and continue to do so, each side seeking out and employing various strategies, various ways and means, intellectual and material, of subduing the other.

To sum up: Communism, aimed at the destruction of the capitalist, arose because at that time there was a shortage of love for others, if love had been generally

present it wouldn't have happened. Once it did happen there wasn't any metta practice, any development of love available to straighten things out, malice, ill-will took its place, manifesting as the capitalists wanting to destroy the power of the proletariat, the communists, while the proletariat sought to destroy the power of the capitalists. There was no love between the two sides, if there had been the problem would have been solved, and both ideologies would have disappeared into the air element leaving no trace. If love of others was the general rule then the 'haves' would quite naturally feel love for the 'have nots,' for the poor, while the latter would reciprocate and there'd be no problem.

We should recognize that crises worldwide, like the destructive interactions occurring between these two groups, originate from a lack of love for others. At this stage it's only metta practice, the development of love for others, that can put matters right. If love for others could be successfully created communism, and the social division which gave rise to it, would disappear from this world in the twinkling of an eye.

Loving others is the heart of religion, bear this in mind: loving others lies at the heart of all religious systems. The communists say that religion is the opiate of the masses, that it makes people stupid; we say that religion is the potion, the medicine that can eliminate communism. A religion which is a sort of drug won't be religion in the true sense, it will be a spurious, false form of the genre. It isn't true religion that's a drug, but take on a religion which is abnormal, eccentric, which has nothing really religious about it, one which requires blind belief in its tenets, then it would be true to say that such a religion is a kind of drug.

We don't see that all crises come from an inability to love others. In a certain sense capitalism and communism are in the same boat, in that they share the inability to love, hence they continue to dispute.

Neither the capitalists nor the communists have any love for others, two such kinds of people on meeting together might seek to destroy each other in some way. Take a look, in any parliament, in any assembly that will lead a country, there's no love for others, there's only division, and the desire is to destroy the opposition in some way. When this is the state of affairs how can there be any love for others in political circles. Look at any parliament, any political assembly in this world and it will display this lack of love, hence a country won't know peace because the root, the cause from which crises develop will be present, that is, there'll be a lack of love for others manifesting in negative attitudes between people.

In any village or town there won't be any love for others, hence people will be like enemies. In a country which is more developed, more prosperous, there'll be more people incapable of loving others so more crime too. Things which are lawless in a small way also emanate from a lack of love for others. I often read in the newspaper, too often, the problem of the street vendor who sets up business on the sidewalk so that the Police have to come and move them away. Because there's a lack of love for others the municipality has to do a lot of things it shouldn't have to do: putting things where they get in other people's way, causing

trouble for other people, is one small matter which has its roots in a lack of love. We overlook the fact that love for others can remove any kind of crisis, in fact we never consider using it for that purpose, we instead use economic, political, judicial, military, or whatever methods so never realize the complete ending of such problems. If there was that proper moral behavior which caused people to experience love such things as crises would disappear of their own accord.

Now, looking at siladhamma, at that proper moral behaviour which has love for others as its foundation: As has already been mentioned, to love others is be unselfish, and to be unselfish is to love others, hence we can sum sila up as being based, or founded on one thing only, that is, on love for other people. Siladhamma grew out of our inability to love each other, which had resulted in harmful, oppressive behaviour between people and races. If we could have had love one for another then none of that would have happened in the first place. Hence sila, in its various forms, has its roots in love for others. There's sila, that is, love for others, in all religions, but we overlook it, we don't make beneficial use of it, we don't develop it to solve social problems.

The fourth point we overlook is that loving others rids us of the kilesa, the defilements. Learning to love other people will get rid of greed, lobha, of anger, koda, of delusion, moha, and of jealousy and envy, of mistrust, suspicion, etc. hence we won't create 'enemies' any longer and then it will be as if we live our lives within a protective wall.

If we really loved others we wouldn't know how to be greedy: lobha, the defilement of greed, must always impinge on the interests of others, in that to take more than someone else is a manifestation of lobha. Being greedy without causing someone else to lose out isn't possible, because greed desires, ignorantly desires, to get more, to get too much to the detriment of other people. We're selfish so we don't love others; we love ourselves hence we're greedy. If we were to love others then lobha, greed, wouldn't be a factor in our lives.

Now, anger, or the root defilement of dosa, aversion: if we could feel love for others how could we ever be angry? If we didn't experience greed we wouldn't feel disappointment so wouldn't feel anger either - no greed, no anger. We should be aware that lobha, greed, is connected to anger, in that when we don't get what we want we can feel anger. When we aren't angry it means that we haven't been infected by greed, that is, we haven't had desire for anything so can't feel disappointment at not having had our desires fulfilled. When there's this propriety there's no infatuation with anything. Hence feeling love for others rids the mind of such automatically, that is, there's rightness, and when there's rightness there's no infatuation. Loving others, being unselfish, represents right knowledge and understanding, hence there's no infatuation. When there's love for others there can't be that envy, that jealousy which can be so disastrous, which can cause so much conflict - when there's envy there's malice, there's conflict, then it's as if one were on fire; loving others is like the water that quenches the fires of envy, of jealousy, of conflict.

Now, when there's love for others one isn't suspicious or apprehensive; truly loving others one doesn't live in fear, and isn't easily alarmed. Some might not believe this because there's always some risk involved in being alive so that we might not be able to stop this kind of thinking from appearing. However, in the Dhamma we're taught the development of metta and karuna, the practice of loving others, which will allow the mind to dispense with wariness, with suspicion, and to dwell contented, without alarms. Loving others doesn't create 'enemies,' one dwells without them, then it's as if there were a 'sima,' an invisible wall of virtue protecting us. This is a benefit of metta.

To re-iterate: practising loving others is our way out from the prison of selfishness. Selfishness brings the defilements of greed, anger, and delusion, brings jealousy, suspicion, and so on, when we display love for others we escape from this prison. We don't think of selfishness in this way, but in truth it's what imprisons, what binds us to, immerses us in the mass of dukkha from which we're unable to escape. Perhaps we'll come to see that loving others is the way out from the prison of selfishness.

Now, we'll repeat some of what has already been said: loving others is the religion of Mettraya, and the religion of Mettraya is just at the tip of our nose, although we tend to overlook it. Whenever we, as already explained, can feel genuine love for other people we'll also experience the religion of Mettraya. We want to re-emphasize here that we overlook, or aren't aware of this so don't get the benefit from it that we should get. For instance: if we can love each other then, in this world, there won't be any need for things like laws, law-courts, prisons, and so on. The laws, the courts, the prisons, and the shameful feelings, the trouble associated with them, exist for one reason, that is, because people don't love each other, hence those things – we call them crimes, or 'cases' - happen which make it necessary that there be such things as laws, law-courts, judges, prisons, authorities, and all the bother that comes with them. When we can love other people these things won't be necessary, there being no cases requiring prosecution and judgement why would they be needed? Putting it simply, there won't be any necessity for laws, for courts, for prisons, or any of that paraphernalia once we can learn to love each other properly. This being a social matter, a social problem, the benefit accruing would be for the whole of society.

Now, we want to talk about some personal benefits, that is, that loving others automatically brings sila, samadhi, panna, the path, its fruit, and nibbana. When we can feel genuine love for other people we'll necessarily be restrained in our behaviour, hence there'll be full sila and full samadhi present too, that samadhi called mettabhavana, or appamannabhavana. When there's firm love for others the mind will be samadhi, so feeling love for others will also bring panna, wisdom, that panna which can cut the defilements. Observe carefully and we'll find that loving others automatically brings panna, right knowledge, concealed within it.

Now, when there's love for others it destroys selfishness, which is the arising of magga, the path, while the actual destruction of selfishness is the fruit, or result of

the path having arisen, and then, if and when selfishness is seen to have been completely destroyed, that will be the experience of nibbana, of freedom from the heat of the defilements and of dukkha. We can say then that loving others in the proper manner involves sila, samadhi, and panna, as well as the path, magga, its fruit, and nibbana, which is also something that we tend to overlook.

Now I say that if anyone reads this and doesn't agree then they're welcome to criticize me, to claim that I don't speak the truth, or that all this is something I made up myself; even so I'll continue to say that loving others involves and automatically brings sila, samadhi, and panna, along with the path, its fruit, and nibbana as part of the deal. So, take it up, examine it, take a good look, don't just skip lightly over it.

We've talked enough about the problem of us overlooking metta, now we'll look at the problem of how to acquire love for other people? As mentioned it's difficult, loving others is a difficult skill to acquire, because ever since we were born into the world we've been developing self-love, selfishness. From birth until this time loving others hasn't had a chance because self-love, selfishness, has been continually crammed into the mind. So, how do we now develop love for others? Well, it must be a matter of training, of practice, until people come to see clearly enough that training themselves to love others is the Dhamma duty of all people. Consider the four meanings of Dhamma here: Dhamma as nature, as the law of nature, as the duty one has according to the law of nature, and as the fruit, the result of fulfilling that duty.

There is a natural law, a fixed, unalterable law which decrees that if we have only self-love we must be selfish and, therefore, must create trouble for others, whereas if we can learn to love other people we won't create any such problems. This is a natural law. Hence we have a duty to practise in accord with this law of nature to try to cultivate love for other people. So, think about ways of training love for others. Anyone who has knowledge of how to make love arise, whether the method comes from within or from without Buddhism, if it makes people feel genuine love for others, then it can be put to use - but there will need to be a course of training involved. In all religious systems it's said that loving others should be cultivated because it counteracts the selfish feelings usually developed by people in the world, hence we'll now propose some ways of re-aligning, of rectifying our selfishness, our self-love, our inability to love others.

We can split this into two sections, one aimed at infants, at young children, one at adults.

That time of life when we're still infants is very important, because at that time children have yet to attach to anything as being fundamental, so if we can have them attach to something which is right and true it will ease matters. Hence we will have a system, a methodology for training children to love others, in which we allow such children as are capable of understanding to acquire, for example, the belief that there is an ultimate being, a god who created us, and, further, that we should love this god, our creator, because this god loves us. Now God wants us to love other people, hence, if we love our God we should do as God wishes

and love other people too, we should love others just as God loves us. If children can acquire this as a fundamental belief it will be a useful, wholesome and beneficial addition, one which will allow them to develop love for others without undue difficulty.

At present we don't train children this way, rather we go in the opposite direction allowing children to become selfish, to love themselves - there's no intention to do this on the part of the children, or on the part of their parents, but the trend is towards selfishness, towards self-love, and not towards loving others. It's because the parents don't have enough sammaditthi, enough proper understanding, enough Dhamma, enough religion, that they aren't much interested in encouraging the habit of loving others in their children, rather they let them follow the path of selfishness, of the seeking of personal advantage regardless of the welfare of others. Hence in this world people are mostly selfish, so training children to be unselfish is very important.

If we truly love our children then we should leave them this legacy, we should leave them the Dhamma as their legacy, then we'd leave them with something precious, something most beneficial, most auspicious, from which they'd gain advantage, in that they'd come to develop beneficial habit patterns, like fear of wrong-doing and love of the good, so that, courageously pursuing the good, the virtuous, they'd avoid wrongdoing for the rest of their lives. Parents quite unconsciously create habit patterns in their children, but we're not much interested in that, it being another thing we tend to overlook. If parents could instill the habit of fearing the bad and loving the good in them their children would then behave accordingly.

Parents unknowingly create habit patterns in their children, causing them to fear lizards, worms, centipedes, so that they're often afraid of such things even once they're grown up because those habits have become so deeply imbedded they can't be easily got rid of, hence they remain frightened by things that they shouldn't be frightened by. Don't make light of this childish habit-building process, it's of great import. Why encourage fear of lizards, etc. so that children make it habitual? Why not encourage fear of the defilements, fear of evil, fear of dukkha, fear of selfishness, if we could create a habit in children of fearing the kilesa, the defilements, it would put an end to their problems. It would be very important in the training of children if they had knowledge and understanding of those habit patterns which are right and proper. For children the starting point for training the habit of loving other people begins with their parents, with those who feed and clothe them, and is then gradually extended to include others in the true sense, that is, their companions in birth, ageing, sickness, and death, eventually taking in the entire population of the world, the idea being that all can, eventually, dwell together in contentment, as would be fitting.

We've been concerned here with infants, with young children being trained by their parents to feel love for other people so that they can dwell safely behind that 'sima,' that invisible wall which protects them from dukkha, from the heat of the defilements, while still retaining the inclination, the habit of developing the path, its fruit, and nibbana - of reducing selfishness until it's finally gone for good.

Now we come to the second subject, which concerns adults. Being adults ourselves how will we train so that we too can feel love for others? Well, it can be done in the traditional way by taking the trouble to repeat every morning and evening the adage that all beings are companions in dukkha, in birth, ageing, sickness, and death. I implore you all as adults to bear this teaching in mind, and each and every day, in the mornings and evenings, remind yourselves that all beings are comrades in dukkha, in birth, ageing, sickness, and death, even though they be our enemies and usually cause us to feel anger, hatred, don't now see them in that way, rather see them as people afflicted by the defilements and dukkha just as we are, hence we shouldn't hate those we call enemies, we should learn to love them.

Don't dismiss the teaching which encourages us to feel love for our perceived enemies: because they're people prone to change, then we, if we're smart enough, can try to make them into friends by learning to love them, because we're all friends in dukkha, in birth, ageing, sickness, and death.

We train adults to train themselves by recognizing that we all have to experience dukkha, which should make it somewhat easier for them to develop love for others. Usually it's every man for himself, but once we recognize the threat of dukkha then altruistic love can be developed. If we can see that we, all of us, have to experience dukkha, that it dominates us completely, then it's possible to develop love for other people, but if we think life is fine, if we feel comfortable and happy as we are, it will be hard to develop that skill. Acknowledging that all people have to experience dukkha can bring about the arising of love for others - as our ancestral teachers taught: all beings are companions in birth, ageing, sickness, and death, so seeing humanity as drowning in the ocean of dukkha can bring about the arising of love for other people.

Challenging the dominance of selfishness by practising unselfishness is another Buddhist form of training. Selfishness has been deplored for ages, the excessively selfish being everywhere disliked; selfishness is an abomination in the world, so the desire should be to put an end to it. We can try to destroy it, but we're going to need some form of practice if we're to attempt that. If we want a practice that is true, genuine, there's really only that which involves learning to love other people: learn to love others and the result will be unselfishness.

Once we've come to dislike selfishness intensely enough we'll feel the need to do something about it, then we can start to practise loving others and to practise it regularly, day by day over the months and years ahead, always keeping it in mind that we're all companions in dukkha, in birth, ageing, sickness, and death, and that selfishness is the ignorance, is that foolishness which makes us bear with dukkha throughout our lives without us ever being fully aware of it. In Buddhism there's 'mettabhavana,' the practice aimed at developing altruistic love. We, being mindful of the fact that all beings are our companions in dukkha, will want to help them, so we make them the object of our metta practice, we fix the mind on them. This is 'mettabhavana,' the development of love for others, which can break down the boundaries between individuals.

Practise mettābhavana with the greatest enthusiasm and there'll be a change in the mind, in the sub-conscious, as selfishness gradually decreases. Mettā, love for others, appeared earlier in history, before the Buddha arrived people knew about this practice, they didn't know how to put an end to the 'self' idea, but, mostly, forest dwelling hermits did practise mettābhavana in the belief that after death they'd find themselves in the Brahmāloka. So, develop that powerful, unlimited mettā, then the habit of being unselfish will gradually supplant selfishness.

The last thing we want to mention is the Bodhisattva ideal. 'Bodhisattva' means one who plants, or sows bodhi, wisdom; as a farmer plants, or sows seeds and gets the fruit of that activity so the Bodhisattva engages in sowing the seeds of bodhi. 'Bodhi' is the highest knowledge; the Bodhisattva sows the seeds of bodhi, mettā being the seed. The Bodhisattva ideal consists in devoting one's life to helping others reach safety, helping people to attain freedom even though it means that one gives up one's life in the doing. Jesus explained it in a similar manner: one gave up one's life so that all beings would have the opportunity of escaping ignorance, of coming to know God and getting the concomitant benefit. At that time the ignorant didn't accept that there was a God so it was necessary to fight their ignorance, to speak against the danger, to oppose the existing form of teaching so that people could receive the true word, knowing all the while that they would kill him for so doing.

The Bodhisat is the redeemer, the saviour of beings, in that he shows them the way to escape from ignorance. For the Bodhisat it, in the end, comes down to mettā, without which one couldn't live up to the Bodhisattva ideal, a Bodhisattva couldn't arise, the ideal couldn't be sustained without mettā, hence the Bodhisattva has mettā first and foremost. But it's not just mettā alone that makes a Bodhisattva, such must also possess several other Dhammic attributes, other 'parami,' other perfections of behaviour, such as dana - charity, sila - morality, nekkhamma - renunciation, sudhi - purity, panna - wisdom, sacca - truth, khanti - patience, adhiṭṭha - resolve, determination, uppekkha - equanimity, these, along with mettā, are usually called the ten 'perfections.' However, I think four perfections are enough: sudhi, purity, panna, wisdom, mettā, love, and khanti, patience, as are inscribed on the statue of Avalokitesvara. Sudhi is purity, mental cleanliness, uprightness, panna is the seed form of bodhi, which, once planted, blossoms as wisdom in the fullest sense. Mettā is that love which makes the Bodhisat give up his life for the benefit of other people, drawing them along to the end of the road with patience, because such takes a long time to achieve. There must be khanti, patience, so that, although there are difficulties and the process takes a long time to develop, one can endure, then everything that goes to make a bodhisattva will be in place, with mettā to the fore. Thus the bodhisat arises complete with love for others. The practice which develops real love for others is of this kind, and, it must be admitted, is difficult to achieve, really difficult - as Jesus is said to have said: 'leading the selfish to God is like passing a camel through the eye of a needle(sic),' meaning that leading rich, infatuated, selfish people to God is a very, very difficult affair.

So, getting rid of the defilements, eliminating selfishness and coming to feel love for others is difficult, even so we shouldn't be discouraged because the most beneficial things usually are hard to achieve - as with the Buddha taking an enormous period of time to attain the four perfections. It's difficult because learning to love others can help the world in the ways we've already touched upon, it being able to solve every problem of whatever kind, and especially one current in the world: if love for others arises fully then division and conflict will decline and fall. If we, all of us, were able to develop love for other people the Dhamma would arise and those doctrines based in selfishness and conflict would pass away.

So, those things that we ignorantly overlook, including loving other people, please, don't go on overlooking them. Give attention to developing love and, in the fullness of time, perhaps the heat of dukkha won't be felt in this world, rather there'll be sila full and complete, at which time killing, stealing, sexual profligacy - trouble making in all its forms - will have disappeared and people will dwell in mutual regard. Loving others is at the heart of all religious systems. Religion thus isn't the opiate of the people, rather it's the purgative that can destroy division in this world.

OK. Enough about that love we've been so prone to overlook, perhaps from now on we won't overlook it, rather we might try to make it into the protector of the human world, so that we humans can dwell problem-free. Apart from that which is the heart of all religions there isn't any other way to bring peace to the world. At this time economies are in a mess, politics is a dirty business, and there's fighting and slaughter a-plenty in the world because there's no love for other people.