1. Caring for Suffering

Caring for those who are sick or vulnerable

Tending the Sick: Adapted from the Theravāda Vinaya (Vin. I, 302), translated by F.L. Woodward

Now, at that time a certain monk was suffering from dysentery and lay where he had fallen down in his own excrements. As the Buddha was walking about, he came to the lodging of that monk. When he saw that monk lying where he had fallen in his own excrements, he went over to him and said, “Brother, what ails you?”

“I have dysentery, Lord.”
“But is there anyone taking care of you, brother?”
“No, Lord.”
“Why is it, brother, that the monks do not take care of you?”
“I am useless to the monks, Lord, therefore the monks do not care for me.”

Then the Buddha said to the venerable Ananda, “Go, Ananda, and fetch water. We will wash this brother.”

When Ananda had fetched water, the Buddha poured it out, and the venerable Ananda washed that brother all over. Then the Buddha taking him by the head and the venerable Ananda taking him by the feet, together they laid him on a bed.

Then the Buddha, in this connection and on this occasion, gathered the order of monks together, and questioned them, saying, “Monks, is there in such a lodging a brother who is sick?”

“There is, Lord.”
“And what ails that brother?”
“Lord, that brother has dysentery.”
“But, brethren, is there anyone taking care of him?”
“No, Lord.”
“Why not? Why do the monks not take care of him?”
“That brother is useless to the order of monks, Lord. That is why the monks do not take care of him.”

“Monks, you have no mother and no father to take care of you. If you will not take care of each other, who else will do so? Monks, those who would attend to me, let them attend to the sick.”

AN 5.124 excerpt (Bodhi translation)

“Bhikkhus, possessing five qualities, an attendant is qualified to take care of a patient. What five? (1) He is able to prepare medicine. (2) He knows what is beneficial and harmful, so that he
withholds what is harmful and offers what is beneficial. (3) He takes care of the patient with a mind of lovingkindness \textit{(mettā)}, not for the sake of material rewards. (4) He is not disgusted at having to remove feces, urine, vomit, or spittle. (5) He is able from time to time to instruct, encourage, inspire, and gladden the patient with a Dhamma talk.

\textbf{AN 5.162 excerpt (Bodhi translation)}

“Suppose a sick, afflicted, gravely ill person was traveling along a highway, and the last village behind and the next village ahead were both far away. They would not obtain suitable food and medicine or a qualified attendant; they would not get [to meet] the leader of the village district. Another person traveling along the highway might see this person and arouse sheer compassion \textit{(kāruṇa)}, sympathy \textit{(anuddaya)}, and tender concern \textit{(anukampā)} for them, thinking, ‘Oh, may this person obtain suitable food, suitable medicine, and a qualified attendant! May they get [to meet] the leader of the village district! For what reason? So this person does not encounter calamity and disaster right here.’”

\textbf{MN 58 excerpt: To Prince Abhaya (Bodhi translation)}

\textit{[Note: The teaching on speech is more detailed and nuanced; important parts have been elided for this context]}

... On that occasion, a young tender infant was lying prone on Prince Abhaya's lap. Then the Blessed One said to Prince Abhaya: “What do you think, prince? If, while you or your nurse were not attending to this infant, he were to put a stick or a pebble into his mouth, what would you do to him?”

“Venerable Sir, I would take it out. If I could not take it out at once, I would take his head in my left hand, and crooking a finger of my right hand, I would take it out even if it meant drawing blood. Why is that? Because I have compassion \textit{(anukampā)} for this child.”

“So, too, prince, such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, and which is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others, such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. ... Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be true, correct, and beneficial, but which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech. ... Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has compassion \textit{(anukampā)} for beings.”

\textbf{Compassion and ethics: We realize that our own behavior is part of wishing non-harm for others}

\textbf{AN 8.39 excerpt (Bodhi and Frondsal translations)}

“... There are these five gifts, great gifts, primal, of long standing, traditional, ancient, ...

Abandoning the taking of life, one abstains from taking life. This gives freedom from danger, freedom from hostility, and freedom from oppression to limitless numbers of living beings. In
giving others freedom from danger, hostility, and oppression one gains a share in limitless freedom from danger, hostility, and oppression. This is the first great gift...

Abandoning the taking of what is not given, one abstains from taking what is not given... abstains from sexual misconduct... abstains from false speech... abstains from liquor, wine, and intoxicants, the basis for heedlessness. ... This is the fifth gift, a great gift, primal, of long standing, traditional, ancient...”

SN 55.7 excerpt: The People of Bamboo Gate (Bodhi translation)

[...]

“Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to take from me what I have not given, that is, to commit theft, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to take from another what he has not given, that is, to commit theft, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?’ Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from taking what is not given, exhorts others to abstain from taking what is not given, and speaks in praise of abstinence from taking what is not given. Thus this bodily conduct of his is purified in three respects.

“Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to commit adultery with my wives, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to commit adultery with the wives of another, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?’ Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from sexual misconduct, exhorts others to abstain from sexual misconduct, and speaks in praise of abstinence from sexual misconduct. Thus this bodily conduct of his is purified in three respects.

“Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to damage my welfare with false speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to damage the welfare of another with false speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagreeable to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is displeasing and disagreeable to me?’ Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from false speech, exhorts others to abstain from false
speech, and speaks in praise of abstinence from false speech. Thus this verbal conduct of his is purified in three respects.

“Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If some-one were to divide me from my friends by divisive speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to divide another from his friends by divisive speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either...’ Thus this verbal conduct of his is purified in three respects.

“Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to address me with harsh speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to address another with harsh speech, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either...’ Thus this verbal conduct of his is purified in three respects.

“Again, householders, a noble disciple reflects thus: ‘If someone were to address me with frivolous speech and idle chatter, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to me. Now if I were to address another with frivolous speech and idle chatter, that would not be pleasing and agreeable to the other either. What is displeasing and disagreeable to me is displeasing and disagree- able to the other too. How can I inflict upon another what is dis- pleasing and disagreeable to me?’ Having reflected thus, he himself abstains from idle chatter, exhorts others to abstain from idle chatter, and speaks in praise of abstinence from idle chatter. Thus this verbal conduct of his is purified in three respects....”

Glimpses of the Buddha's vulnerability in old age

SN 48.41 excerpt: Old Age (Sujato translation)

At one time the Buddha was staying near Sāvatthī in the Eastern Monastery, the stilt longhouse of Migāra’s mother.

Then in the late afternoon, the Buddha came out of retreat and sat warming his back in the last rays of the sun.

Then Venerable Ānanda went up to the Buddha, bowed, and while massaging the Buddha’s limbs, he said:

“It’s incredible, sir, it’s amazing, how the complexion of your skin is no longer pure and bright. Your limbs are flaccid and wrinkled, and your body is stooped. And it’s apparent that there has been a deterioration in your faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body.”

“That’s how it is, Ānanda. When young you’re liable to grow old; when healthy you’re liable to get sick; and when alive you’re liable to die.”

DN 16 excerpt: Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (Walshe translation)

Sections 2.25-2.26:
“Ānanda, I am now old, worn-out, venerable, one who has traversed life’s path, I have reached the term of life, which is eighty. Just as an old cart is made to go by being held together with straps, so the Tathāgata’s body is kept going by being strapped up. It is only when the Tathāgata withdraws his attention from outward signs, and by the cessation of certain feelings, enters into the signless concentration of mind, that his body knows comfort.

“Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge...”

Transition: Development of the **mind** is what dispels suffering

**SN 22.1 excerpt: Nakulapita (Bodhi translation)**

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Bhaggas at Sunīsumaragira in the Bhesakāḷa Grove, the Deer Park. Then the householder Nakulapita approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“I am old, venerable sir, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, come to the last stage, afflicted in body, often ill. I rarely get to see the Blessed One and the bhikkhus worthy of esteem. Let the Blessed One exhort me, venerable sir, let him instruct me, since that would lead to my welfare and happiness for a long time.”

“So it is, householder, so it is! This body of yours is afflicted, weighed down, encumbered. If anyone carrying around this body were to claim to be healthy even for a moment, what is that due to other than foolishness? Therefore, householder, you should train yourself thus: ‘Even though I am afflicted in body, my mind will be unafflicted.’ Thus should you train yourself.”

Then the householder Nakulapita, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One’s statement, rose from his seat and, having paid homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he approached the Venerable Sāriputta. Having paid homage to the Venerable Sāriputta, he sat down to one side, and the Venerable Sāriputta then said to him:

“Householder, your faculties are serene, your facial complexion is pure and bright. Did you get to hear a Dhamma talk today in the presence of the Blessed One?”

“Why not, venerable sir? Just now I was anointed by the Blessed One with the ambrosia of a Dhamma talk.” [...]

2. **Karuṇā: Meditative Cultivation**

MN 62 excerpt (Bodhi translation)

“Rāhula, develop meditation on loving-kindness [mettā]. For when you develop meditation on loving-kindness, any ill will will be abandoned.

“Rāhula, develop meditation on compassion [karuṇā]. For when you develop meditation on compassion, any cruelty will be abandoned.

“Rāhula, develop meditation on altruistic joy [muditā]. For when you develop meditation on altruistic joy, any discontent will be abandoned.

“Rāhula, develop meditation on equanimity [upekkhā]. For when you develop meditation on equanimity, any aversion will be abandoned.”

MN 7 excerpt (Bodhi and Anālayo translations)

“He considers thus: ‘The imperfections of the mind have in part been given up, expelled, released, abandoned, and relinquished by me,’ and he gains inspiration in the meaning, gains inspiration in the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is glad, rapture is born in him; in one who is rapturous, the body becomes tranquil; one whose body is tranquil feels pleasure; in one who feels pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated. […]

“He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness [mettā], likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, completely and everywhere; he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

“He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion [karuṇā]…with a mind imbued with altruistic joy [muditā]…with a mind imbued with equanimity [upekkhā], likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, completely, and everywhere; he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with equanimity, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.”

MN 99 excerpt (Bodhi and Anālayo translations)

“He abides pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with loving-kindness [mettā], likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, completely and everywhere; he abides pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility and without ill will.

[...] Just as a vigorous conch-shell blower could make himself heard without difficulty in the four quarters, so too, when the deliverance of mind by loving-kindness [mettā cetovimutti] is developed in this way, no limiting action remains there, none persists there.”

[And likewise for karuṇā, muditā, and upekkhā.]
AN 10.219 excerpt: Karajakāya Sutta (Bodhi and Anālayo translations)

[The Buddha asks] “What do you think? Suppose a youth were to develop the liberation of mind by lovingkindness [mettā cetovimutti] from childhood on. Would this person still perform unwholesome deeds later on?”
[The monks reply] “Certainly not, Blessed One.”

[The Buddha] “Suppose a youth were to develop the liberation of mind by compassion [karunā]... by altruistic joy [muditā]... by equanimity [upekkhā] from childhood on. Would this person still perform unwholesome deeds later on?”
[The monks reply] “Certainly not, Blessed One.”
3. **Kāruñña**

AN 5.162 excerpt (Bodhi translation) – *repeated from Section 1 above*

“Suppose a sick, afflicted, gravely ill person was traveling along a highway, and the last village behind and the next village ahead were both far away. They would not obtain suitable food and medicine or a qualified attendant; they would not get [to meet] the leader of the village district. Another person traveling along the highway might see this person and arouse sheer compassion [kāruñña], sympathy [anuddaya], and tender concern [anukampā] for them, thinking, ‘Oh, may this person obtain suitable food, suitable medicine, and a qualified attendant! May they get [to meet] the leader of the village district! For what reason? So this person does not encounter calamity and disaster right here.’”

AN 5.166 excerpt (Sujato translation)

*Setting:* The Venerable Sāriputta has given a teaching, and a junior monk, Udāyī, objects to it.

... “This is not possible, Reverend Sāriputta, it cannot happen!”
But for a second ... and a third time Sāriputta repeated his statement.
And for a third time, Udāyī said to him, “This is not possible, Reverend Sāriputta, it cannot happen!”
Then Venerable Sāriputta thought, “Even in front of the Buddha, Venerable Udāyī disagrees with me three times, and not one mendicant agrees with me. I’d better stay silent.” Then Sāriputta fell silent. [...] Then the Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda! There is a senior mendicant being harassed, and you just watch it happening. Don’t you have any compassion [kāruñña] for a senior mendicant who is being harassed?”

MN 26 excerpt (Bodhi translation)

“I considered: ‘This Dhamma that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise. But this generation delights in attachment, takes delight in attachment, rejoices in attachment. It is hard for such a generation to see this truth, namely, specific conditionality, dependent origination. And it is hard to see this truth, namely, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna. If I were to teach the Dhamma, others would not understand me, and that would be wearying and troublesome for me.’ ... Considering thus, my mind inclined to inaction rather than to teaching the Dhamma.

“Then, bhikkhus, the Brahmā Sahampati knew with his mind the thought in my mind and he considered: ‘The world will be lost, the world will perish, since the mind of the Tathāgata, accomplished and fully enlightened, inclines to inaction rather than to teaching the Dhamma.’ Then, just as quickly as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, the Brahmā Sahampati vanished in the Brahma-world and appeared before me. He arranged his
upper robe on one shoulder, and extending his hands in reverential salutation towards me, said: ‘Venerable sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma, let the Sublime One teach the Dhamma. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are wasting through not hearing the Dhamma.’ […]

“Then I listened to the Brahmā’s pleading, and out of compassion [kāruñña] for beings I surveyed the world with the eye of a Buddha. Surveying the world with the eye of a Buddha, I saw beings with little dust in their eyes and with much dust in their eyes, with keen faculties and with dull faculties, with good qualities and with bad qualities, easy to teach and hard to teach, and some who dwelt seeing fear and blame in the other world.

“Then I replied to the Brahmā Sahampati in stanzas:

‘Open for them are the doors to the Deathless, Let those with ears now show their faith. Thinking it would be troublesome, O Brahmā, I did not speak the Dhamma subtle and sublime.’

[...]  
“I considered thus: ‘To whom should I first teach the Dhamma? Who will understand this Dhamma quickly?’ …”
4. **Anukampā**

The Buddha acts and teaches out of *anukampā*

**SN 4.11 excerpt: (Bodhi translation)**

[The Buddha in reply to Māra] “… I sleep in peace, full of compassion [anukampā] for all beings.”

**MN 58 excerpt: To Prince Abhaya (Bodhi translation) – repeated from Section 1 above**

[...] “So, too, prince, such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be untrue, incorrect, and unbeneficial, and which is also unwelcome and disagreeable to others, such speech the Tathāgata does not utter. ... Such speech as the Tathāgata knows to be true, correct, and beneficial, but which is unwelcome and disagreeable to others: the Tathāgata knows the time to use such speech. ... Why is that? Because the Tathāgata has compassion [anukampā] for beings.”

**MN 103 excerpt: (Bodhi translation)**

[The bhikkhus think of the Buddha]: “The Blessed one is compassionate [anukampaka] and seeks our welfare; he teaches the Dhamma out of compassion [anukampā].”

**SN 43 excerpt: (Bodhi translation)**

“Whatever should be done, bhikkhus, by a compassionate [anukampaka] teacher out of compassion [anukampā] for his disciples, desiring their welfare, that I have done for you.”

**Hearing the teachings, disciples also become inspired to the quality of anukampā**

**MN 27 excerpt: (Sujato translation)**

“A Realized One arises in the world, perfected, a fully awakened Buddha, accomplished in knowledge and conduct, holy, knower of the world, supreme guide for those who wish to train, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed. He realizes with his own insight this world—with its gods, Māras and Brahmās, this population with its ascetics and brahmans, gods and humans—and he makes it known to others. He teaches Dhamma that’s good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end, meaningful and well-phrased. And he reveals a spiritual practice that’s entirely complete and pure.

A householder hears that teaching... They gain faith in the Realized One and... [at some later time] they take up the training and livelihood of the mendicants. They give up killing living creatures, renouncing the rod and the sword. They’re scrupulous and kind, living full of compassion [anukampā] for all living beings...”
Disciples are instructed to practice or to “wander forth” out of anukampā

**DN 16 excerpt: Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (Walshe translation)**

Section 3.50:
“Monks, ...those matters which I have discovered and proclaimed should be thoroughly learned by you, practiced, developed, and cultivated, so that this holy life may endure for a long time, that it may be for the benefit and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion [anukampā] for the world, for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans. And what are those matters...? They are: The four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four roads to power, the five spiritual faculties, the five mental powers, the seven factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path.”

**AN 4.5 excerpt: The Buddha sends his arahant disciples out into the world (Bodhi translation)**

“Wander forth for the welfare of the multitude, for the happiness of the multitude, out of compassion [anukampā] for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of devas and humans.”

*[More to come]*