

Kakacūpama Sutta

MN 21 *The Analogy of the Saw*
Translated by Ānanda
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Thus I have heard,

*Once the Awakened One was living at Sāvatti,
In Jeta's grove, at Anāthapiṇḍika's monastery.*

*At that time, the Venerable Moliya Phagguna
Was spending a lot of time, frequenting the nuns.¹*

*He was associating in such a way with the nuns
That if anyone spoke impolitely to the nuns in front of him;
He would become angry and offended
and would cause a commotion.²*

*And if anyone spoke impolitely to him in front of those nuns;
The nuns would become angry and offended
and would cause a commotion.*

*This is how much the Venerable Moliya Phagguna
was spending time, frequenting with nuns.*

*Then a certain monk went to the Awakened One
Paid loving respects and sat down next to him.*

Then he told the Awakened One:

[...The whole situation...]

Then, the Awakened One told the monk:

*“Go monk, and tell the monk Moliya Phagguna in my name:
‘The Teacher calls you friend Phagguna.’*

*“Yes Bhante” the monk agreed.
And he went to the Ven. Moliya Phagguna, and said:*

‘The Teacher calls you friend Phagguna.’

¹ *bhikkhunīhi saddhiṃ ativeლაṃ saṃsaṭṭho viharati.*

² *tenāyasmā molīyaphagguno kupito anattamano adhikaraṇampi karoti.*

'Yes friend' the Ven. Moliya Phagguna agreed.

*Then, the Venerable Phagguna went to the Awakened One.
Paid loving respects and sat down next to him.*

Then the Awakened One said:

*"Is it true that you Phagguna,
are spending a lot of time frequenting the nuns?" [...]*

"Yes Bhante"

*'Are you not a son of respected family,
Gone forth out of determination,³
From the homelife into homelessness?'*⁴

'Indeed Bhante'

*'It is not proper Phagguna,
For a son of respected family,
Gone forth with determination
From the homelife into homelessness,
That you should spend so much time frequenting the nuns.'*

[Mind Unshaken]

[Impolite Speech to Dear Ones]

*'Phagguna,
If anyone speaks impolitely of those nuns in front of you,
You should abandon any urge or thoughts
Connected with regular house-life.'*⁵

Then you should train:

*'My mind will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful speech,
I will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,*

³ Going forth is done for the sake of awakening, the final goal, realizing the highest truth, not for the sake of being lazy.

⁴ "Nanu tovaṃ, phagguna, kulaputto saddhā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajito"ti

⁵ tatrāpi tovaṃ, phagguna, ye gehasitā chandā ye gehasitā vitakkā te pajaheyyāsi.

Not obsessed by anger.⁶

This is how you should train.'

[Physical Violence to Dear Ones]

*'Phaggunā,
If anyone were to hit the nuns with their hand in front of you;
Hit them with stones;
Hit them with a stick;
Hit them with a knife;⁷*

*Then you should abandon any urge or thoughts
Connected with regular house-life.*

Then you should train:

*'My mind will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful speech,
I will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger.'*

'This is how you should train.'

[Impolite Speech to Oneself]

*'Phaggunā,
If anyone were to come up and speak impolitely to you,
Then you should abandon any urge or thoughts
Connected with regular house-life.*

Then you should train:

⁶ *'na ceva me cittaṃ vipariṇataṃ bhavissati, na ca pāpikaṃ vācaṃ nicchāressāmi, hitānukampī ca viharissāmi mettacitto, na dosantaro'ti.*

⁷ *pāṇinā pahāraṃ dadeyya, leḍḍunā pahāraṃ dadeyya, daṇḍena pahāraṃ dadeyya, satthena pahāraṃ dadeyya.*

*'My mind will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful speech,
I will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger.'*

'This is how you should train.'

[Physical Violence to Oneself]

*'Phaggunā,
If anyone were to hit you with their hand
Hit you with stones,
Hit you with a stick,
Hit you with a knife;*

*Then you should abandon any urge or thoughts
Connected with regular house-life.*

Then you should train:

*'My mind will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful speech,
I will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger.'*

This is how you should train.'

[Respect & Listening]

[Eating One Meal]

Then the Bhagavā addressed the monks:

'Once, the monks pleased my mind by their manners.'⁸

When, at a certain time I said:

*'Monks, I eat food only once a day.
By eating only a single meal per day
I know of no disease,*

⁸ "ārādhayaṃsu vata me, bhikkhave, bhikkhū ekaṃ samayaṃ cittaṃ.

*I live at ease,
free from sickness,
with lightness and strength.⁹*

*In the same way monks,
Eat only a single meal per day.
Then also you will know of no disease,
You will live at ease,
Free from sickness,
With lightness and strength.*

*And I did not have to repeatedly teach the monks,
I only had to arouse awareness¹⁰ in them.*

[Analogy of the Chariot]

*'Just as if there were, on flat grounds at a crossroad,
A chariot tied to swift horses standing, with a goad ready,
Then a skilled charioteer, a trainer of horses would climb in:
He would grab the reins in his left hand,
Grab the goad in his right hand,
And he could go wherever he liked.'*

*In the same way monks,
I did not have to repeatedly teach the monk,
I only had to spark their attention.*

[Wholesome Mental Development]

[Wise Practice]

*Monks,
Abandon unwholesome states,¹¹
And be relentless in [cultivating] wholesome states.¹²*

*This is how you will come upon growth,
increase and prosperity¹³*

⁹ *ahaṃ kho, bhikkhave, ekāsanabhojanaṃ bhuñjāmi. Ekāsanabhojanaṃ kho ahaṃ, bhikkhave, bhuñjamāno appābādhataṅca sañjānāmi appātaṅkataṅca lahuṅṅhānaṅca balaṅca phāsuviḥāraṅca.*

¹⁰ *Satuppādakaraṇīyameva me*

¹¹ *Akusalaṃ pajahatha*

¹² *Kusalesu dhammesu āyogaṃ karotha.*

¹³ *Vuddhiṃ virūḷhiṃ vepullaṃ āpajjissatha.*

in this Dhamma and way of life.¹⁴

[Analogy of the Sal Tree Grove]

*'Monks, just as if, close to a village or town
There was a great Sal tree grove,
Covered with castor bean plant.¹⁵*

*Then someone would come up
Wanting it to live,
Wanting it to thrive,
Wanting its liberation.*

*That person would cut down the Sal tree saplings that were
frail, crooked and drawing vitality,
and would bring them away,
completely clearing the inner-grove.¹⁶*

*And that person would carefully tend to the young saplings
Which were strong and upright.*

*Then, the Sal tree grove,
Would quickly come to growth,
increase and prosperity.'*

[Wise Practice]

*In the same way monks,
Abandon unwholesome states,¹⁷
And be relentless in [cultivating] wholesome states*

*This is how you will come upon growth,
increase and prosperity
in this Dhamma and way of life.*

¹⁴ *Dhammavinaye*

¹⁵ *Tañcassa eḷaṇḍehi sañchannaṃ.*

¹⁶ *Beautiful analogy with the "inner grove."*

¹⁷ *akusalaṃ pajahatha*

[Vedehika's Story]

*'In the past monks, in this very Sāvatti
There was an influential countess named Vedehikā.¹⁸*

*The countess Vedehikā's beautiful renown was such:
The countess Vedehikā is pious,
The countess Vedehikā is humble,
The countess Vedehikā is serene.¹⁹*

*Now, countess Vedehikā had a servant named Kālī
who was skilled, steadfast and well organized in her work.²⁰*

One day, the servant Kālī thought:

*'The beautiful renown of my noble lady's is such:
The countess Vedehikā is pious,
The countess Vedehikā is humble,
The countess Vedehikā is serene.'*

*'But how is it in reality?
Is my noble lady really peaceful
though she harbors anger within
and it is simply not showing.²¹*

*Is it only because my work is well-organized
that my noble lady appears peaceful,
though she harbors anger within
and it is simply not showing?'*

*'What if I were to test my noble lady?'*²²

Then, the servant Kālī decided to get up after sunrise.²³

The countess Vedehikā said to Kālī:

¹⁸ vedehikā nāma gahapatānī

¹⁹ evaṃ kalyāṇo kittisaddo abbhuggato 'soratā vedehikā gahapatānī, nivātā vedehikā gahapatānī, upasantā vedehikā gahapatānī' ti.

²⁰ kālī nāma dāsī ahoṣi dakkhā analasā susaṃvohitakammantā.

²¹ Kiṃ nu kho me ayyā santāmyeva nu kho ajjhattaṃ kopaṃ na pātukaroti udāhu asantaṃ udāhu mayhamevete kammantā susaṃvohitā yena me ayyā santāmyeva ajjhattaṃ kopaṃ na pātukaroti, no asantaṃ

²² Kiṃ nu kho me ayyā santāmyeva nu kho ajjhattaṃ kopaṃ na pātukaroti udāhu asantaṃ udāhu mayhamevete kammantā susaṃvohitā yena me ayyā santāmyeva ajjhattaṃ kopaṃ na pātukaroti, no asantaṃ.

²³ kālī dāsī divā uṭṭhāsi

'Hey Kālī'

'Yes noble lady'

'Why do you wake up pass sunrise?'

'For nothing lady'

*'You wake up pass sunrise for nothing you say uh!
You useless slave!'*

She shouted, angry and enraged.²⁴

Then the servant Kālī thought:

'Surely, there is anger within my noble lady and it is simply not showing.

*But because my work is well-organized,
my noble lady looks peaceful,
though she harbors anger within
and it is simply not showing.'*

'What if I were to test my noble lady a little further?'

Then the servant Kālī got up even later in the day.

Countess Vedehikā said to Kālī:

'Hey Kālī'

'Yes noble lady?'

'Why do you get up still later in the day?'

'For nothing noble lady'

*'You wake up even later in the day for nothing you say uh!
You useless slave!'*

She shouted, angry and enraged and launched into spiteful speech.

Then the servant Kālī thought:

'Surely, there is anger within my noble lady

²⁴ 'No vata re kiñci, pāpi dāsi, divā uṭṭhāsī' ti kupitā anattamanā bhākuṭiṃ akāsi.

*and it is simply not showing.
It is not absent within her.*

*But it is because my work is well-organized
That my noble lady looks peaceful
though she harbors anger within,
and it is simply not showing.'*

'What if I were to test my noble lady a little further?'

*Then the servant Kālī got up even later in the day.
Countess Vedehikā said to Kālī:*

'Hey Kālī'

'Yes, noble lady?'

'Why do you get up still later in the day?'

'For nothing noble lady'

*'You wake up even later in the day for nothing you say uh!
You useless slave!'*

*She shouted, angry and enraged she grabbed a long bolt
And gave her a blow on the head and cut her head open.²⁵*

*Shocked,
with the cut on her head bleeding profusely,
Kālī went up to the neighbors and said:*

*'Look at the pious lady's work,
Look at the humble lady's work,
Look at the serene lady's work.'*

*'In what name can she become angry and enraged
at her only servant for waking up late?
To then grab a long bolt and hit her on the head
and cut her head open?'*

Then, not long after, a terrible report spread about:

*'Countess Vedehikā is violent,
Countess Vedehikā is fierce,
Countess Vedehikā is unstoppable.'²⁶*

²⁵ *kupitā anattamanā aggaḷasūciṃ gahetvā sīse pahāraṃ adāsi, sīsaṃ vobhindi.*

²⁶ *'caṇḍī vedehikā gahapatānī,*

[Contact with Coarse Speech]

Similarly monks,
Should there be a monk here who looks
 Kinder than kindness,
 More gentle than gentleness,
 Calmer than calmness;

He may well be so,
as long as he does not come upon unpleasant speech.²⁷

But it is when that monk comes upon unpleasant speech that
it can be known if he is truly kind,
 truly gentle
 and truly calm.

[Disrespectful]

I call not a monk 'respectful,'
He who is respectful only for the sake of
 robes,
 food,
 shelter
 and medicine,
and who pretends to be respectful.²⁸

Why?

Because that monk,
when he does not get
 robes,
 food,
 shelter
 and medicine
 is not respectful,
And he stops pretending to be respectful.

*anivātā vedehikā gahapatānī,
anupasantā vedehikā gahapatānī* ' ti.

²⁷ *Evameva kho, bhikkhave, idhekacco bhikkhu tāvadeva soratasorato hoti nivātānivāto hoti upasantūpasanto hoti yāva na amanāpā vacanapathā phusanti.*

²⁸ *Yato ca, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ amanāpā vacanapathā phusanti,
atha bhikkhu 'sorato'ti veditabbo, 'nivāto'ti veditabbo, 'upasanto'ti veditabbo.*

*Nāhaṃ taṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ 'suvaço'ti vadāmi yo
cīvarapiṇḍapātasenāsanagilānappaccayabhesajjaparikkhārahetu suvaço hoti, sovaccasataṃ āpajjati.*

[Respectful]

*But a monk who is respectful because he
Esteems the Dhamma,
Respects the Dhamma,
Thinks highly of the Dhamma,
Reveres the Dhamma,
Praises the Dhamma;
That monk behaves respectfully.*

Him I call respectful.²⁹

Therefore monks [thinking]:

*'We will be respectful because we
Esteem the Dhamma,
Respect the Dhamma,
Think highly of the Dhamma,
Revere the Dhamma,
Praise the Dhamma;
We will behave respectfully.'*

'This is how you should train monks.'

[Love as a Practice]

*These are five possible manners of speech
That others people could say to you, [their speech may be]:
Timely or untimely
True or false
Soft or harsh
Bent on goodness or bent on harm
With a Loving mind or inner hate.³⁰*

If others should speak to you [in any of these ways],

At that time, you should train in this way:

*'Our minds will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful words,
We will dwell with a heart full of Love,*

²⁹ *dhammaṃyeva sakkaronto, dhammaṃ garuṃ karonto, dhammaṃ mānento, dhammaṃ pūjento, dhammaṃ apacāyamāno suvaco hoti, sovacassataṃ āpajjati, tamahaṃ 'suvaco'ti vadāmi.*

³⁰ *Pañcime, bhikkhave, vacanapathā yehi vo pare vadamānā vadeyyuṃ— kālena vā akālena vā; bhūtena vā abhūtena vā; saṅghena vā pharusena vā; atthasaṅghitena vā anattasaṅghitena vā; mettacittā vā dosantarā vā.*

*Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger'*

*We will dwell, suffusing that person
with a heart filled with Love
And with this as a support,
We will dwell suffusing the all-encompassing universe.
With a heart filled with Love
Vast, expanded
Boundless
without anger or resentment³¹*

'This is how you should train monks.'

[Analogy of the Earth]

*Just as if a person would arrive
with a shovel and a basket
He would say:*

'I shall take away the earth from this great big Earth.'

*He would dig some soil here and there
He would scatter some soil here and there,
He would spit here and there,
He would urinate here and there, saying:*

'Be without earth, be without earth.'³²

*What do you think monks?
'Could that person take away the earth from this great big earth?'*

'No Bhante'

Why?

*Because Bhante, this great big earth is deep and immeasurable.³³
It is not possible to take away its earth.
That person could only reap misery and disappointment.³⁴*

³¹ *Tañca puggalaṃ mettāsahagatena cetasā pharitvā viharissāma, tadārammaṇañca sabbāvantaṃ lokaṃ mettāsahagatena cittena vipulena mahaggatena appamaṇena averena abyābajjhena pharitvā viharissāmā' ti.*

³² *So tatra tatra vikhaneyya, tatra tatra vikireyya, tatra tatra oṭṭhubheyya, tatra tatra omutteyya 'apathavī bhavasi, apathavī bhavasi' ti.*

³³ *"Ayañhi, bhante, mahāpathavī gambhīrā appameyyā.*

³⁴ *Sā na sukarā apathavī kātum; yāvadeva ca pana so puriso kilamathassa vighātassa bhāgī assā" ti.*

[Training]

These are five possible manners of speech
That others people could say to you, [their speech may be]:

Timely or untimely
True or false
Soft or harsh
Bent on goodness or bent on harm
With a Loving mind or inner hate.

If others should speak to you [in any of these ways],

At that time, you should train in this way:

'Our minds will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful words,
We will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger'

We will dwell, suffusing that person
with a heart filled with Love
And with this as a support,
We will dwell suffusing the all-encompassing universe.
With a heart like the Earth³⁵
Vast, expanded
Boundless
without anger or resentment

This is how you should train monks.

[Analogy of the Painter]

Just as if a person were to come
With yellow, blue and red paint
And he would say:

'I will paint shapes in the air,
I shall make forms appear.'³⁶

³⁵ pathavisamena cittena

³⁶ 'ahaṃ imasmiṃ ākāse rūpaṃ likhissāmi, rūpapātubhāvaṃ karissāmi' ti.

What do you think monks?

'Could the person paint shapes in the air,
and make forms appear?'

'No Bhante'

Why?

'Because Bhante, space is without form, without attribute³⁷
It is not possible to paint shapes on it,
and make forms appear on it.
That person could only reap misery and disappointment.'

[Training]

These are five possible manners of speech
That others people could say to you, [their speech may be]:

Timely or untimely
True or false
Soft or harsh
Bent on goodness or bent on harm
With a Loving mind or inner hate.

If others should speak to you [in any of these ways],

At that time, you should train in this way:

'Our minds will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful words,
We will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger'

We will dwell, suffusing that person
with a heart filled with Love
And with this as a support,
We will dwell suffusing the all-encompassing universe.
With a heart like Space³⁸
Vast, expanded
Boundless
without anger or resentment

³⁷ "Ayañhi, bhante, ākāso arūpī anidassano.

³⁸ ākāsasamena cittena

This is how you should train monks.

[Analogy of the River Ganges]

*Just as if a person were to come
with a blazing grass torch
and would say:*

*'With my blazing grass torch
I shall burn away and dry up the river Ganges.'*

*What do you think monks?
'Could that person, burn away and dry up
the river Ganges with a blazing grass torch?'*

'No Bhante'

"Why?"

*'Because the River Ganges is deep and immeasurable.
It is not possible to burn it away and dry it up with a blazing grass-torch.
That person could only reap misery and disappointment.'*

[Training]

*These are five possible manners of speech
That others people could say to you, [their speech may be]:
Timely or untimely
True or false
Soft or harsh
Bent on goodness or bent on harm
With a Loving mind or inner hate.*

If others should speak to you [in any of these ways],

At that time, you should train in this way:

*'Our minds will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful words,
We will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger'*

We will dwell, suffusing that person

*with a heart filled with Love
And with this as a support,
We will dwell suffusing the all-encompassing universe.
With a heart like the River Ganges³⁹
Vast, expanded
Boundless
without anger or resentment*

This is how you should train monks.

[Analogy of Skin Bag]

*Just as there was a skin bag which was polished,
smoothly polished and thoroughly smoothly-polished
Which was soft and silky, oiled and not dry.⁴⁰*

*And a person came with a stick and a pebble.
And he would say:*

'I shall make this [...] skin bag rustle and crackle.'

*What do you think monks?
'Could that person make this thoroughly smoothly polished skin bag
Soft and silky
Oiled and not dry
rustle a crackle with a stick and a pebble?'*

'No Bhante'

Why?

*'Because that skin bag is polished,
smoothly polished, thoroughly smoothly-polished
Soft and silky,
Oiled and not dry.*

*It is not possible to make it rustle and crackle with a stick and a pebble
That person could only reap misery and disappointment.'*

³⁹ *gaṅgāsamena cittena*

⁴⁰ *Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, biḷārabhastā madditā sumadditā suparimadditā, mudukā tūlinī chinnasassarā chinnabhabharā.*

[Training]

These are five possible manners of speech
That others people could say to you, [their speech may be]:

Timely or untimely
True or false
Soft or harsh
Bent on goodness or bent on harm
With a Loving mind or inner hate.

If others should speak to you [in any of these ways],

At that time, you should train in this way:

'Our minds will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful words,
We will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger'

We will dwell, suffusing that person
with a heart filled with Love
And with this as a support,
We will dwell suffusing the all-encompassing universe.
With a heart like a skin bag⁴¹
Vast, expanded
Boundless
without anger or resentment

This is how you should train monks.

[Analogy of the Saw]

Monks, even if brigands or spies were to come
And sever you, limb after limb
with a two-hand saw;⁴²

At that time,
He who would harbor a hateful mind
Would not be practicing my teaching.⁴³

⁴¹ *biḷārabhastāsamena cittena*

⁴² *Uḃhatodaṇḍakena cepi, bhikkhave, kakacena corā ocarakā aṅgamaṅgāni okanteyyumaṃ,*

⁴³ *tatrāpi yo mano padūseyya, na me so tena sāsanakaro.*

[Training]

At that time, you should train in this way:

*'Our minds will be unshaken,
And I will not retaliate with hurtful words,
We will dwell with a heart full of Love,
Caring for their well-being,
Not obsessed by anger'*

*We will dwell, suffusing that person
with a heart filled with Love
And with this as a support,
We will dwell suffusing the all-encompassing universe.
With a heart filled with Love
Vast, expanded
Boundless
without anger or resentment*

This is how you should train monks.

[Keep in Mind]

*Monks, you should frequently call to mind this analogy of the saw.*⁴⁴

*'Seeing in such a way, monks,
Could there be any manner of speech,
Subtle or rough,
That you could not endure?'*⁴⁵

'No Bhante'

'Then frequently call to mind this analogy of the saw.'

*'This will be for your welfare and happiness for a long time.'*⁴⁶

*This is what the Awakened One said.
The monks were uplifted by the Awakened One's words.*

⁴⁴ *Imañca tumhe, bhikkhave, kakacūpamaṃ ovādaṃ
abhikkhaṇaṃ manasi kareyyātha.*

⁴⁵ *Passatha no tumhe, bhikkhave, taṃ vacanapathaṃ, aṇuṃ vā thūlaṃ vā, yaṃ tumhe nādhivāseyyāthā ” ti*

⁴⁶ *Taṃ vo bhavissati dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāyā ” ti.*



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