

MAHA MANGALA SUTTA

Introduction

- Town hall discussion on the subject of “blessings”.
- What is “blessing”?
 - Auspicious sights?
 - Auspicious sounds?
 - Favourable experiences?
- Men and devas were divided in their opinions.
- The devas approached their leader, Sakka, who in turn sought the advice of the Buddha.
- Sakka ordered a deva, who approached the Buddha thus:

*Many deities and men,
Yearning after good,
Have pondered on Blessings.
Pray, tell me the Highest Blessings!*

The 38 Blessings

1. Asevana ca balanam

- Not to associate with the fools:
 - If we associate with fools or ignorant people, we will follow their ways and so harm ourselves, because all troubles or fear arise from foolishness or ignorance.
 - Even if we do not follow their ways, associating with them will harm our reputation.

2. Panditanam ca sevana

- To associate with the wise:
 - The “wise” are men who are rich with virtues, good deeds and good thoughts.
 - Men who abstain from unwholesome deeds and thoughts are free from craving through ignorance.

3. Puja ca pujaniyanam

- Honour those who are worthy of honour:

- The Buddha, parents and elders are all worthy of honour.
- We can honour them by tending to their needs, observing the Precepts, accepting the Triple Gem and practising meditation.
- Similarly,
 - the young should respect the elders;
 - sons and daughters should respect and care for their parents; and
 - the housewife should respect and administer to the wants of her husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law, etc.

4. Patirupadesa vaso ca

- To reside in a suitable locality:
 - We should always live among good and friendly neighbours, i.e. good and virtuous men.
 - Only then will the place be peaceful, safe and prosperous.
 - If one’s neighbours are unprincipled and corrupted, then sorrow and trouble will come naturally.
 - There will always be quarrels and discontent.
 - The strong will be aggressive towards the weak, and life and property will never be safe.

5. Pubbe ca katapunnata

- To have done meritorious actions in the past:
 - This is bliss because we are the product of our own actions in our previous births, i.e. kamma.
 - This accounts for why some people are born ugly or beautiful, clever or stupid, rich or poor, etc.

6. Attam samma panidhi ca

- To set oneself in the right course:
 - One must decide a proper objective in life and set oneself on the right path leading to it.

- This encourages self-confidence and discourages dependence upon the grace of gods or men.
- For example, if we are not virtuous, we should establish ourselves in virtue (e.g. by observing the Precepts).

7. Bahu saccanca

- Be well-read (vast learning):
 - Education.
 - Possess abilities such as a good memory, keen desire to learn and to associate with the learned.
 - If one is well-read, one would not be ignorant.

8. (Bahu) sippanca

- Proficiency in one's work (perfect handicraft):
 - One's 'craft' should be in accordance with the Precepts whether it be used for hobby or livelihood.
 - If one is well-instructed, one would not be ignorant.

9. Vinayo ca susikkhito

- A highly trained discipline:
 - Character is the very essence of a man – helps one refrain from committing evil, especially the 10 unwholesome actions.
 - Happy is the man who has a well-controlled mind and behaviour, e.g. Prince Rahula.

10. Subhasita ca ya vaca

- Pleasant speech:
 - Every person likes to be spoken nicely and pleasantly to.
 - No one likes to be addressed in a harsh manner.

11. Mata pitu upatthanam

- The support of father and mother:
 - Duty bound by birth.

12. Putta darasa sangaho

- The cherishing of wife and children:

- Every man who is married should remain faithful to his wife, respect her and be kind to her.
- He must also allow his wife to manage her property/affairs without undue interference and mistrust.
- In return, the wife should perform her duty in managing his home with diligence, thrift and care.
- In respect of children, the man should:
 - Keep them away from the grip of vices.
 - Teach them the way of virtues.
 - Train or help them to become skilful in a trade or profession.
 - Get for them a suitable marriage.
 - Hand over to them their inheritance.

13. Anakula ca kammanta

- Peaceful occupations:
 - Seek a wholesome trade or occupation; honest and clean, with no evil purpose to deceive or to do harm.
 - Be diligent in your work; do not idle your time away.
 - Be independent; do not become an added burden to anyone else, so as to achieve a happy and peaceful frame of mind.

14. Danam

- Liberality/charity:
 - Without thought of reward or craving.
 - Not motivated by poor value of gift, but by the needs of others.

15. Dhammacariya

- Righteous conduct:
 - Do not kill, steal, etc. to satisfy one's cravings.

16. Natakanam ca sangaho

- The helping of relatives:
 - To render help, to relieve the sufferings of fellowmen.

- Liberality/charity starts at home – including from parents to next of kin/neighbours.

17. Anavajjani kammani

- Blameless actions:
 - Be sincere, true and honest.
 - Do things which are wholesome and with good purpose.
 - In making a living, refrain from or having anything to do with:
 - Trading in arms/weapons.
 - Trading in human/living beings.
 - Trading in flesh/meat.
 - Trading in intoxicating drinks.
 - Trading in poison.

18. Arati / 19. Virati Papa

- To cease and abstain from evil:
 - Avoiding evil = mental non-delight in evil; a shrinking away from evil thoughts that have arisen.
 - Abstaining from evil = abstinence by way of body and speech (c.f. abstinence as custom).
 - 3 kinds of avoiding and abstaining:
 1. From wrong speech;
 2. From wrong (bodily) action; and
 3. From wrong livelihood.

20. Majjapana ca sannamo

- Forbearance with respect to intoxicants:
 - Consequences:
 - Loss of wealth;
 - Become quarrelsome;
 - Liable to disease;
 - Loss of social status;
 - Be prone to act in a shameful manner; and
 - Weakening of intellect.

21. Appamado ca dhammesu

- Steadfast in virtue: *only constant in life is change*
 - The Buddha: "All things are transient, work out your own deliverance with earnestness."
 - Weakness subjects one to inactivity and hence, a slave to the senses.

- Life is short. So, should we strive to:
 - attain Nibbana; or
 - squander it away in search of things mundane to gratify the senses?

22. Garavo ca

- Reverence: *pay respect*
 - Veneration of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.
 - Respect for parents and teachers, wise people, good persons and elders.

23. Nivato ca

- Humility:
 - Important for the successful practice of the Dhamma. Hence, to be humble is bliss.

24. Santutthi ca

- Contentment:
 - To be without craving.
 - Accepts conditions and situations as they arise, with equanimity and without grumbling.
 - Do material possessions bring more happiness or more trouble?

25. Katannuta

- Gratitude:
 - People must always be grateful.
 - Without this quality, a person forgets his parents, relatives, friends, teachers and those who teach him the Dhamma. He turns his back on them just when they could be helped by him or when they are in need of aid.
 - The grateful person makes for harmony and peace. He will always be remembered and loved.

26. Kalena dhammasavanam

- Opportune hearing of Dhamma:
 - When one still possesses a healthy body and mind.
 - On sacred days such as Full Moon days or during Buddhist festivals.

- When disease and suffering make one thoughtful enough to want to understand the Truth of Sufferings.
- When evil thoughts have invaded the mind but have not yet fully taken possession of it.
- At the time of approaching death, when concentration of the mind can condition a happy rebirth or may even help to attain one of the Paths.

27. Khanti ca

- Patience:
 - Includes forbearance, forgiveness, tolerance and equanimity.

28. Sovacassata

- Obedience:
 - Be obedient to elders, listen to them and follow their advice.
 - Be tolerant of criticism.
 - People having no obedience are difficult to train and others may find them hard to get along with.

29. Samananamca dassanam

- Sight of the Samanas (ascetics):
 - Inspirational, a source of inspiration.
 - 'Sight' is accompanied by the desire to pay respects, and so we must have a desire to meet holy persons, particularly the members of the Sangha.

30. Kalena dhammasakaccha

- Religious discussions at due season:
 - To be done whenever we are in doubt so as to gain knowledge, which is bliss.
 - Helps one understand the Dhamma, and apply it for practical use.
 - Should be well timed; in particular, when one's mind is troubled.

31. Tapo ca

- Self-control:
 - Subdue craving and ignorance, and conquer laziness. Once passion is restrained, then unwholesome mental states will not appear.

32. Brahmachariyam ca

- Holy life:
 - Moral purity through the study and practice of the Dhamma.
 - To attain self-control, especially that relating to sex.
 - For the lay followers, sex is limited to that allowed in the third of the 5 Precepts.
 - For bhikkhus, complete sexual abstinence is necessary.

33. Ariyasaccana dassanam

- Perceptions of the Noble Truths:
 - When we understand and fully realise the Four Noble Truths we are on the right path to Nibbana. This is most blissful.
 - The Noble Truths are:
 - All forms of existence are subject to suffering;
 - Craving is the cause of suffering;
 - Suffering can be ceased; and
 - There is a path leading to the cessation of suffering known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

34. Nibbana sacchikiriya ca

- Realisation of Nibbana:
 - The person who attains Nibbana is free from the cycle of birth and death. He is also free from all worldly attachments such as birth, death, sorrow, decay, anger, craving and ignorance.
 - Nibbana is the blessed state of perfect freedom from the vicissitudes of existence. It is supermundane.

35. Putth'assa lokadhammehi cittam yassa na kampati

- He whose mind does not flutter by contact with worldly contingencies, i.e. the 8 Lokadhammas of gain/loss; honour/dishonour; praise/blame; and happiness/pain:
 - Ordinary people cling to the pleasant halves of the Lokadhamma pairs

We should develop equanimity towards these worldly changes

(worldly changes) and reject the other unpleasant halves.

- We should develop equanimity towards these worldly changes.

36. Asokam

- Sorrowless:
 - Ignorance is the cause of sorrow.
 - If we understand the cause of sorrow (namely, craving), we can realise that to completely root out the cause of sorrow is the final removal of sorrow itself.

37. Virajam

- Stainless:
 - If we are addicted to lust and passion, then it is impossible for us to be free from sorrow.
 - Therefore, not to be addicted to lust and passion is most blissful.

38. Khemam

- Secure:
 - He who maintains equal balance of thoughts in respect of what he does or experiences without being even slightly moved and is always calm and quiet, is most blissful.