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Upaḍḍha Sutta

The Discourse on the Half | S 45.2/5:2 f
Theme: Spiritual friendship *is* the holy life
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1 Significance of the Sutta

1.1 SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP LOCUS CLASSICUS. The **Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2) is the locus classicus of the Buddha’s famous statement that “spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life” [§3], which is made in response to Ānanda’s remark that it is “only half (*upaḍḍha*)¹ of the holy life [§2]. According to the Sutta Commentary, Ānanda thought that half the holy life is “personal effort” (*paccatta, purisa, kāra*), while the other half, the admonition and guidance of spiritual friends. Just as we cannot separate the individual effort of many people supporting a stone pillar, or parents raising a child (SA 1:156 f).²

1.2 THE (KALYĀṆA, MITTATĀ) APPAMĀDA SUTTA. The Upaḍḍha Sutta is found almost verbatim in the **(Kalyāṇa, mitta) Appamāda Sutta** (S 3.18), but with a verse ending, not found in the former.³ There, the Buddha recounts to the rajah Pasenadi his conversation with Ānanda, as recorded in the Upaḍḍha Sutta.

1.3 THE (KALYĀṆA, MITTATĀ) SĀRIPUTTA SUTTA. In the Magga Saṃyutta (S 45), the Upaḍḍha Sutta (S 45.2) is immediately followed by the **(Kalyāṇa, mitta) Sāriputta Sutta** (S 45.3). There too Sāriputta declares to the Buddha that *spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life*, and the Buddha approves of it, closing with the same teachings as that of the Upaḍḍha Sutta.⁴

1.4 WHY ĀNANDA IS WRONG. The Saṃyutta Commentary explains that because Ānanda has not attained the peak of knowledge of the disciple’s perfections (*sāvaka pāramī*), he does not know that *the whole* of the holy life of the path depends on spiritual friends. The “Dharma General” Sāriputta, on the other hand, has attained the peak of knowledge of the disciple’s perfections, and so knows this. So he speaks thus and the Blessed One therefore praises him. (SA 3:118)

2 Difficult passages

2.1 SAKALAM-EVA H’IDAM ĀNANDA BRAHMA, CARIYAM.

2.1.1 “Spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life.” This is the key idea in both the Upaḍḍha Sutta (S 45.2) and the Kalyāṇa, mitta Appamāda Sutta (S 3.18), the context of which is as follows:

When this was spoken, maharajah, I said this to the monk Ānanda:

‘Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comrade-ship, is **the whole of the holy life**. It is to be expected of a monk who is a spiritual [68] friend, a

¹ *Upaḍḍha* (mfn & n), ie *upa* + *aḍḍha*, used absolutely, whereas *aḍḍha* appears only in cpds (n); cf BHS *upār-dha* (Divy 86, 144, 514; AvŚ I.211, 240) half. **1 adj** V 1:301,25 (*sace amutra ~am (vassam), amutra ~am vasati, amutra ~o, amutra ~o cīvara, paṭiviso dātabbo*); D 1:192,22 = 195,5 (*~am vā rattim ~am vā divasam*); J 1:406,13 (*~am isi, gaṇam ādāya...agamāsi*) Ee *upaddham*; MA 1:112,4 (*~, maṃsam khāditvā ~am pātheyyam katvā...*); **adj in cpd** V 1:281 (*~kāsina*), 2:200 (*~āsana*); J 3:11 (*~rajja*); Vism 320 (*~gāma*); DhA 1:15, 205 (*~uposatha, kamma*), 2:85; KhpA 239 (*~gāthā*); SnA 298; VvA 38, 61, 120; PvA 209, 276. **2 subst n** V 1:309,32,33 (*~am dātabbam*); J 6:557,34* (*bhakkho cāyam anappako, tato ~am dassāmi*); S 1:59,21 (*yo āyo sañjāyati, tato ~am ante, puram pave-setha, ~am tatth’eva dānam detha*; S 1:87,27 (*~am idaṃ brahma, cariyassa*); Ja 5:317,25* (*~am vā pi rajjassa ma-yam bhoto dadāma*); VvA 120,21 (*attanā laddha, paṭiviṃsato ~am deti, ~am attanā paribhuñjati*); PvA 276,10 (*ito ~am tumhe gaṇhetha, ~am ca...mayham dhūāya detha*); VA 239,20 (*purim’agghato ~am pi na agghati*).

² Cf UA 222, where spiritual friendship is def as the 5 conditions that bring full maturing (*pañca dhammā paripakkāya*), which is an elaboration of the 3 trainings of the path as given in **Meghiya S** (A 9.3.7-12 = U 4.1/35 f) = SD 34.2.

³ S 3.18.4-10/1:87 f = SD 34.3.

⁴ S 45.3/5:3 = SD 34.10.

companion, a good comrade, that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, he will develop the noble eightfold path. (S 3.18.6/1:87 f) = SD 34.3; (S 45.2.3/5:2) = SD 34.9

When Ānanda declares, “Bhante, spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is *half* of the holy life” (*upaḍḍham-idaṃ, bhante, brahma,cariyassa, yad idaṃ kalyāṇa,mittatā kalyāṇa,sahāyatā kalyāṇa,sampavaṅkatā*)⁵ [§5], the Buddha at once corrects him by saying:

Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is the whole of the holy life.
Sakalam-eva h’idaṃ, ānanda, brahma’cariyaṃ, yad-idaṃ kalyāṇa,mittatā kalyāṇa,sahāyatā kalyāṇa,sampavaṅkatā. [§6]

According to the Sutta Commentary, Ānanda thought that half the holy life is “personal effort” (*paccatta,purisa,kāra*), while the other half, the admonition and guidance of spiritual friends. Just as we cannot separate the individual effort of many people supporting a stone pillar, or parents raising a child (SA 1:156 f).⁶

2.1.2 Two levels of spiritual friendship. The Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54) lays out two levels of spiritual friendship: *the worldly* and *the spiritual*. On both levels, the empowering virtues are these four qualities of the spiritual friend, namely, faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom. They are the conditions that we should cultivate for happiness here and now, and for future happiness, that is, for both worldly happiness and spiritual bliss.

On a more mundane level, a wholesome relationship between friends, especially between a teaching *role* and a learning *role*, that is, either side can benefit the other, who has greater virtue or wisdom. Such a relationship is known as “true-hearted friendship” (**suhada,mittatā*). It is based on the four qualities of the spiritual friend, as explained in the Dīgha,jānu Sutta, above, and elaborated in the Sigal’ovāda Sutta (D 31).⁷

On a higher or spiritual level, these four qualities are, in fact, the bases of spiritual friendship, that is, the “whole of the holy life” [§6] **the bases for spiritual welfare and future happiness**, listed in the Dīgha,jānu Sutta (A 8.54) as follows:

- (1) The accomplishment of faith (*saddhā,sampadā*),
- (2) The accomplishment of moral virtue (*sīla,sampadā*),
- (3) The accomplishment of charity (*cāga,sampadā*),
- (4) The accomplishment of wisdom (*paññā,sampadā*).

The Sutta defines the first quality—the accomplishment of faith—as faith in the Buddha’s qualities, especially his awakening. The second quality is moral virtue by way of keeping to the five precepts. The third quality is that of delighting in the joy of giving on our own and of community giving. And the fourth is the “wisdom directed to the rising and falling away (of phenomena) that is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.”⁸

Spiritual friendship, in other words, is the effecting of **the three trainings** (*ti,sikkhā*), that is, in moral virtue, mental concentration, and wisdom. On the moral level, the mentor as spiritual friend serves as a virtuous exemplar. On the mental level, he is a teacher who gives a meditation subject to the pupil, and further inspires and nurtures his meditation and mental cultivation.⁹ And on the spiritual level, the mentor

⁵ Lit, “It is *half* the holy life, that is to say, spiritual friendship, spiritual companionship, spiritual comradeship.”

⁶ Cf UA 222, where spiritual friendship is def as the 5 conditions that bring full maturing (*pañca dhammā paripakkāya*), which is an elaboration of the three trainings of the path as given in **Meghiya S** (A 9.3.7-12 = U 4.1/35 f) = SD 34.2.

⁷ D 31/3:180-194 = SD 4.1. On the renunciant, see **(Piya) Sutta 2** (A 7.36/4:32) = SD 34.14.

⁸ A 8.54.10-15/4:284 f = SD 5.10. An explanation is also found at UA 222. See **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.1 (6.1).

⁹ See **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.1 (2.4). On the 3 trainings, see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235 = SD 24.10c).

motivates his mentee to aspire towards spiritual liberation in this life itself. Spiritual friendship is the mutual rejoicing of both the teacher and this pupil in the Dharma as well as in the goals that such a friendship entails, namely, awakening.

2.1.3 Two aspects of spiritual friendship. Spiritual friendship is the *whole* of the holy life in the sense that the “holy life” (*brahma, cariya*) is basically our training in moral virtue, that is, the taming and refining of our bodily actions and our speech, or what we do and how we communicate with others. This is the “external” or social aspect of our spiritual training, so called because our moral training, in an important way, is how wholesomely we relate with others in keeping with at least the five precepts.

Spiritual friendship as moral training is the basis of our mental training, where our spiritual friend is our mentor in mental cultivation. In either case, there is a vital level of instruction from the spiritual friend and wholesome communication between mentor and mentee. This instruction is sometimes known as “the voice of others” (*parato ghosa*), that is, the beneficial instructions and inspiration from the spiritual friend. **The Aṅguttara Commentary** explains *parato ghosa* in the context of giving rise to right view as that of “hearing the true Dharma” (*saddhamma, savana*) (AA 2:157).

“The voice of another” is one of two ways in which right view arises; the other way is the personal effort of wise attention (*yoniso manasi, kāra*). “Wise attention” here is the mindfulness that is the basis of proper mental cultivation leading to mental focus and wisdom. Our wise attention is fortified through spiritual friendship by way of an inspiring and experienced guide.

Moral virtue is our wholesome relationship or interbeing with others, which in turn is also the wholesome conditions that nurture our mental cultivation and wisdom (the other two trainings). Moral virtue is always present in the arhat. When we are still worldlings, moral virtue is a catalyst to our spiritual development, and when we become noble disciples, as awakened beings, moral virtue comes naturally to us. We are then spiritual friends to those who are less developed than we are. Hence, spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life.¹⁰

2.2 KALYĀṆA, MITTASSA...BHĪKKHUNO. The phrase *kalyāṇa, mittassa...bhikkhuno* [§3] has been translated by **Bodhi** as “When a monk has a spiritual friend.” He makes this innovative suggestion without elaborating, except saying that, “As an independent substantive, *kalyāṇamitta* means a good friend, ie, a spiritual friend who gives advice, guidance, and encouragement. When used in apposition to *bhikkhu*, however, *kalyāṇamitta* becomes a *bahubbīhi* compound, and the whole expression means “a bhikkhu *who has a good friend.*” (S:B 1890 n6).¹¹

A close look at the passage context will show that it actually makes good sense to simply follow the text and render the phrase as above.¹² The point is that spiritual friendship must go both ways, that is, a reciprocal goodwill and beneficent action between teacher and pupil, mentor and mentee. The translation “who has a spiritual friend” can be negative in that it suggests the relationship is one-sided, where the pupil is spurred on by the teacher, or dependent on him.

However, the scholarly understanding of *kalyāṇa, mitta* can be useful where the context allows it, that is, the teacher plays an important or more active role in the pupil’s spiritual development. Our vital task as translators of religious texts, especially those of early Buddhism which rests on an oral contemplative tradition, is not so much to present a grammatically accurate translation, as it is to tease out the *intended meaning* of the passage or teaching.¹³

¹⁰ See **Yoniso Manasikāra Sampadā S** (S 45.5/5:31) = SD 34.12 (2.2.1).

¹¹ Steven Collins, too, suggests the same: **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.1 (3.3.1).

¹² C A F Rhys Davids translates *kalyāṇa, mitto* as “A bhikkhu who is a friend of righteousness” (S 1:113); F L Woodward, “a monk who is a friend of what is lovely” (S 5:2); J D Ireland, “a bhikkhu who is a friend of the good” (S:I 1:75).

¹³ Further, see **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.1 (3.3.1).

3 How to study the texts on spiritual friendship

3.1 RELATED SUTTAS. The **Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45), on *spiritual friendship*, is recounted by the Buddha himself to the rajah Pasenadi in the **(Kalyāṇa,mitta) Appamāda Sutta** [§4-10]—centering around the statement that “spiritual is not half of the holy life, but all of the holy life.”¹⁴ The Upaḍḍha Sutta is, in fact, the locus classicus for the teaching on spiritual friendship.

The importance of spiritual friendship is attested by the fact that it is mentioned and discussed in many discourses, such as these:

Saṅgīti Sutta	(D 33.3.3(1c)/3:267)	One of the 10 things that bring about refuge (<i>nātha,karaṇa,dhamma</i>).
Das’uttara Sutta	(D 34.2.3(1c)/3:290)	= D 33.3.3(1c)
Saṅgama Sutta 1	(S 3.14/1:83)	Unlike Ajāta,sattu, Pasenadi has spiritual friends.
(Kalyāṇa,mitta) Appamāda Sutta	(S 3.18/1:87 f) = S 45.2	Spiritual friendship is all of the holy life (the Buddha to Pasenadi).
Upaḍḍha Sutta	(S 45.2/5:2 f) = S 3.18	Spiritual friendship is all of the holy life (the Buddha to Ānanda).
Sāriputta Sutta	(S 45.3/5:3)	Spiritual friendship is all of the holy life (Sāriputta to the Buddha).
Jigucchitabba Sutta	(A 3.27/1:127)	We should follow, serve, honour a spiritual friend (cf Pug 3.14).
Mitta Sutta	(A 6.67/3:422)	A spiritual friend helps us realize the good.
Dīgha,jānu Sutta	(A 8.54.9/4:284)	Spiritual friendship is one of the four qualities a lay person should cultivate to fulfillment.
Ujjaya Sutta	(A 8.55.9/4:288)	(As at A 8.54)
Āhuneyya Sutta 1	(A 8.57.2/4:290)	Spiritual friendship is one of 8 qualities of a monk who is a supreme field of merit (cf A 10.97).
Sambodhi Sutta	(A 9.1.8/4:352)	Spiritual friendship is the first step to the cultivating of the limbs of awakening.
Meghiya Sutta	(A 9.3.13/4:357 f) = U 4.1	Spirituality is the first of the 5 conditions for spiritual maturity.
Nātha Sutta 1	(A 10.17.4/5:24)	Spiritual friendship is a refuge (<i>nātha</i>).
Nātha Sutta 2	(A 10.18.5/5:26)	Spiritual friendship is a refuge (<i>nātha</i>).
Bhaṇḍa Sutta	(A 10.50.5/5:90)	Spiritual friendship is a refuge (<i>saraṇīya</i>).
Āhuneyya Sutta	(A 10.97.4/5:199)	Spiritual friendship is one of 10 qualities of a monk who is a supreme field of merit (cf A 8.57).
Subhūti Sutta	(A 11.15.4+13/5:338, 341)	Spiritual friendship is a mark of faith.
Meghiya Sutta	(U 4.1/27 f)	= A 9.3.13.
Puggala Paññatti	(Pug 3.14/37)	We should follow, serve, honour a spiritual friend (cf A 3.27).

3.2 STUDY METHOD. These three suttas and three essays on spiritual friendship should be studied together, as they are all closely related. It is recommended that we study them in this sequence:

- (1) **The Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2/5:2 f) SD 34.9,
- (2) **The (Kalyāṇa,mitta) Appamāda Sutta** (S 3.18/1:87 f) SD 34.3,
- (3) **The (Kalyāṇa,mittatā) Sāriputta Sutta** (S 45.3’5:3) SD 34.10.

And if you want to have more details on the topics, go on to read the following essays:

- (4) **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness** SD 8.1,

¹⁴ S 3.18.4-10/5:87 f = SD 34.3.

- (5) **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**
 (6) **Bad friendship**

SD 34.1,
 SD 64.17.

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The Discourse on the Half

S 45.2/5:2 f

Thus have I heard.

Ānanda's remark on spiritual friendship¹⁵

1 At one time, the Blessed One was staying amongst the Sakyas near a market-town of the Sakyas named Nagaraka.

2a Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, saluted him and then sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Ānanda said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is *half* of the holy life.”¹⁶

The Buddha's statement on the spiritual friendship

3 “Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is **the whole of the holy life**.¹⁷ It is to be expected of *a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend*,¹⁸ a good companion, a good comrade,¹⁹ that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, he will develop the noble eightfold path.”²⁰

The *viveka, nissita* formula

4 And how, Ānanda, does a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he will develop the noble eightfold path?²¹

Here, Ānanda,

a monk cultivates *right view*

based on solitude, on dispassion,²² on cessation,²³ maturing in release.²⁴

¹⁵ This whole sutta also in (**Kalyāṇa, mitta**) **Appamāda S** (S 3.18), but where there is a verse ending (S 3.18.4-10/1:87 f) = SD 34.3.

¹⁶ *Upaddham-idaṃ, bhante, brahma, cariyassa, yad idaṃ kalyāṇa, mittatā kalyāṇa, sahāyatā kalyāṇa, sampavaṅkatā ti*, lit “It is *half* the holy life, that is to say, spiritual friendship, spiritual companionship, spiritual comradeship.” See (**Kalyāṇa, mitta**) **Appamāda S** (S 3.18) @ Intro (1.2).

¹⁷ *Mā h'evaṃ ānanda mā h'evaṃ ānanda! Sakalam-eva h'idaṃ ānanda brahma, cariyāṃ, yad-idaṃ kalyāṇa, -mittatā kalyāṇa, sahāyatā kalyāṇa, sampavaṅkatā*. See Intro (2.1).

¹⁸ “When a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend,” *kalyāṇa, mittassa... bhikkhuno*: see Intro (2.2).

¹⁹ Variations of *kalyāṇa, mitta... kalyāṇa, sahāya... kalyāṇa, sampavaṅka...* appear at **D 33.3.3**(1c)/3:267, **34.2.3**-(1c)/3:290; **S 3.14**/1:83, **3.18**/1:87 f = **45.2**/5:2 f, **45.3**/5:3; **A 3.27**/1:127, **6.67**/3:422, **8.54**.9/4:284, **8.55**.9/4:288, **8.57**.2/4:290, **9.1**.8/4:352, **9.3**.13/4:357 f (= **U 4.1**/27 f), **10.17**.4/5:24, **10.18**.5/5:26, **10.50**.5/5:90, **10.97**.4/5:199, **11.15**.4+13/5:338, 341; **Pug 3.14**/37. On the 3 terms, see **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.1 (4).

²⁰ *Kalyāṇa, mittass'etaṃ, ānanda, bhikkhuno pāṭikaṅkham kalyāṇa, sahāyassa kalyāṇa, sampavaṅkassa ariyāṃ aṭṭhaṅgikāṃ maggaṃ bhāvēssati ariyāṃ aṭṭhaṅgikāṃ maggaṃ bahulīkarissati*. See Intro (2.2).

²¹ *Kathaṃ ca, ānanda, bhikkhu kalyāṇa, mitto kalyāṇa, sahāyo kalyāṇa, sampavaṅko ariyāṃ aṭṭhaṅgikāṃ maggaṃ bhāveti, ariyāṃ aṭṭhaṅgikāṃ maggaṃ bahulī, karoti?*

²² **Virāga** also “fading away (of lust).”

²³ **Nirodha**, that is, “cessation of suffering.”

He cultivates <i>right intention</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.
He cultivates <i>right speech</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.
He cultivates <i>right action</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.
He cultivates <i>right livelihood</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.
He cultivates <i>right effort</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.
He cultivates <i>right mindfulness</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.
He cultivates <i>right concentration</i>	based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

In this way, Ānanda, a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, will cultivate the noble eightfold path, will develop the noble eightfold path. [3]

The Buddha as a spiritual friend

5 In this way, too, Ānanda, it should be known, in a manner of speaking, how spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship is the whole of the holy life:

By relying upon me as a spiritual friend, Ānanda,

beings subject to birth are freed from birth,

beings subject to decay are freed from decay,

beings subject to death are freed from death,

beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, bodily pain, mental pain, and despair are freed from them.

In this way, Ānanda, it should be known, in a manner of speaking, how spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship is the whole of the holy life.”

— evaṃ —

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²⁴ *Vossagga*, also “letting go, relinquishment.” MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pakkhandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. **Gethin** notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).