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Sama,jīvi Sutta 1

The First Discourse on Compatible Living | A 4.55/2:61 f

Theme: Living as ideal loving partners here and hereafter

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

The importance of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā are attested by the fact that **the Nakula,pitā Vagga** opens the Khandha Saṃyutta (S 3:1-21). The Aṅguttara records that Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā are declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of his lay disciples who show one another harmonious and mutual trust (*vissāsika*) (A 1:26).¹ The Aṅguttara Commentary says that they have been for 500 lives the parents, for 500 lives the grandparents, and for 500 lives the uncle and aunt of the Buddha. As such, when they first meet the Buddha in Bhesakalā Forest, they immediately call him “son” (AA 1:400, 457, 3:95 f).

The Sama,jīvi Sutta’s main teaching is about how a loving couple can remain happily together for this life and in future lives. The factors that promote this happy partnership are “**the factors of compatibility**” (*sama,jīvi,dhamma*), that is, compatibility in faith, moral virtue, generosity and wisdom [§2c]. On a spiritual level, their counterpart are the 6 “**conditions for conciliation**” (*sāraṇīya,dhamma*):

- (1) showing lovingkindness through bodily deeds (*mettā,kāya,kamma*),
- (2) showing lovingkindness through speech (*mettā,vacī,kamma*),
- (3) showing lovingkindness through thought (*mettā,mano,kamma*),
- (4) mutual sharing of what one has (*sādhāraṇa,bhogī*),
- (5) compatibility in moral virtue (*sīla,samaññatā*),
- (6) compatibility in view (*diṭṭhi,sāmaññatā*). (D 3:245; A 3:288 f)

These 6 qualities endear one to others and causes others to constantly recall one with respect, joy and love. As such, they also conduce to social and communal harmony, solidarity and progress.

The Nakula Sutta (A 6.16) recounts how once when Nakula,pitā was very ill, Nakula,mātā notices that he is deeply anxious. She assures him that there is no need of any anxiety on his part either for her or for their children. She speaks with such conviction that he regains peace of mind and recovers immediately. Later when they meet the Buddha, he congratulates Nakula,pitā on having such a wise and virtuous wife (A 6.16/3:295 f).

The Nakula,mātā Sutta (A 8.48) recounts how Nakula,mātā visits the Buddha at Bhesakalā Forest where the Buddha tells her of eight qualities which will secure a woman’s birth amongst the Manāpa,-kāyika devas (A 8.48).² These eight qualities (in summary) are:

- (1) She serves, respect and loves her husband well.
- (2) She respects her husband’s relatives.
- (3) She is capable and industrious in her work (especially in assisting her husband).
- (4) She manages her household duties well.
- (5) She takes good care of the goods and wealth that her husband brings home.
- (6) She is a lay disciple who has taken refuge in the three jewels.
- (7) She keeps the five precepts well.
- (8) She is a charitable person.

¹ See also A 3:465, 4:348, where they are mentioned amongst the eminent disciples.

² A 8.48/4:268 f. In (**Manāpa,kāyika,devā**) **Anuruddha S** (A 8.46/4:262-266), it is recorded that these devas visit Anuruddha and try to entertain him with their powers of colours, sounds and happiness, but Anuruddha is not impressed. The Buddha later tells Anuruddha of the 8 qualities that enable women to be born amongst the Manāpa,-kāyikā devas (A 4:265 ff). The two following suttas repeat the main text with different interlocutors. In (**Manāpa,-kāyika,devā**) **Visākhā S** (A 8.47), the Buddha teaches the same thing to the lady Visākhā (A 8.46/4:268). The **Nakula,mātā S** (A 8.48/ 4:268 f) follows. These suttas should be studied with **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31).

The Nakula,pitā Sutta (S 22.1) recounts how the old and infirm Nakula,pitā approaches the Buddha for a brief teaching and the Buddha instructs him: “Therefore, houselord, you should train yourself thus: ‘My body may be sick but my mind will not be sick.’” In due course, Sāriputta elaborates on the statement in terms of seeing the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) in terms of not-self (S 22.1/3:1-5).

The life of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā is found in the concluding chapter of Nyanaponika and Hecker (1997:375-378).³

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The virtuous couple

[61] 1 At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Deer Park⁴ in the Bhesakalā Forest⁵ at Sumsumāra,giri⁶ in the Bhaggā country.⁷ Then in the morning, the Blessed One, having dressed himself and taking robe and bowl, went to the house of Nakula,pitā and sat down on the prepared seat.

Then Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and then sat down at one side. Seated thus at one side, Nakula,pitā said this to the Blessed One:

2a “Bhante, ever since the house lady [housewife]⁸ Nakula,mātā was brought here (in marriage)⁹ as a mere girl when I was myself still a mere lad, I do not recall ever having wronged her even in thought, much less in deed. Bhante, we wish that we would be able to see one another not only in this very life but also to be able to see one another in the lives to come.”

2b Then Nakula,mātā, too, said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, ever since the house lord, Nakula,pitā was brought here as a mere lad when I was myself still a mere girl, I do not recall ever having wronged him even in thought, much less in deed. Bhante, we wish that we would be able to see one another not only in this very life but also to be able to see one another in the lives to come.” **[62]**

The fourfold compatibility

2c “If, house lords, both wife and husband¹⁰ wish to see one another so long as this life lasts and in the lives to come as well, they should have¹¹

(1) compatible faith (sama,saddhā),

³ For more details, see **Nakula,pitā S** in SD 5.2 Intro.

⁴ “Deer Park,” *miga,dāya*. This park in the Bhesakalā forest is mentioned at M 1:95, 332, S 4:116; A 3:295. Another well known Deer Park is outside Benares (S 5:421), where the First Discourse was given.

⁵ So called because it is the home of the yakshini Bhesakalā (SA 2:249). The house of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā is nearby.

⁶ Sumsumāra,giri: see **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1-5) in SD 5.2 Intro (1).

⁷ Bhagga was not amongst the 16 great states, for which see (**Tadah**) **Uposatha S** (A 3.70) in SD 4.18 App.

⁸ “House lady” (*gahapatānī*; Skt *grhapatnī*), housewife, the mistress of the house, wife of a house lord (*gaha,pati*): V 3:213,30, 219,5; M 1:125,4 (= *ghara,sāminī*, MA 2:98.32); A 2:61,29, 3:295,16, 4:268,6.

⁹ “Was brought,” *ānūtā* (pp of *aneti*). The conveying of a bridegroom to the groom’s house is called *vivāha*, “sending off” or “the giving away of a maiden” (*kaññā,dāna*, SnA 448) (V 3:135; D 1:99; Sn p105). The bringing in of a bride into the household is called *āvāha*, ie, the giving of a son in marriage. In this Sutta, the same verb *ānūtā* is used in both cases [2ab].

¹⁰ “Both wife and husband,” *ubho jāni,patayo*.

¹¹ The following 4 virtues share the same adjective *sama*, often tr as “same,” but this sounds contrived here. Alt tr “matching,” as in “matching faith,” etc. See line 3e of the concluding verse.

- (2) compatible virtue (sama, sīlā),
 (3) compatible charity (sama, cāgā),
 (4) compatible wisdom (sama, paññā).

Then they shall be able to see one another so long as this life lasts and in the lives to come as well.”

- 3 When both are full of faith, wise in words, restrained, living by Dharma,
 The wife and husband, speaking loving words to one another,
 Blessed with abundance, they shall arise again in a prosperous home.
 Dejected are their foes, for both [wife and husband] are compatible in virtue.
 Having lived by the Dharma here, both matching in virtue and piety,¹²
 Blissfully they delight in the deva realm, enjoying any pleasure they desire.¹³

— evaṃ —

Bibliography

Nyanaponika & Helmuth Hecker

1997 *Great Disciples of the Buddha: Their lives, their works, their legacy.* Ed with introd by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society & Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997. xxxiii 1411 pp, hb. See pp375-378.

040330; rev 060811; 090912 NYF; 091102; 101009; 110825; 111228; 120302

¹² “Virtue and piety,” *sīla-b, bata* = *sīla* (precepts, moral virtue) + *vata* (vows, rituals, austerity). Here the term is used in a positive sense of religious life. The term *sīla-b, bata paramāsa*, “attachment to rules and rituals,” is the third of the three fetters (*saṃyojanā*) overcome by the stream-winner. See **Alagaddūpama S** in SD 3.13.34n.

¹³ This line at A 2:62 = It 112; Tha 242; J 3:154; Pv 2:1, 3:1. Here *kāmā.kāmino* rendered as “enjoying any pleasure they desire.” Elsewhere tr as “desiring after sense-pleasure,” eg Dh 83, Sn 239, J 5:165, 167, DhA 2:156.