

9

(Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta

The (Fives) Discourse on the Faithful | A 5.38

Theme: The 5 benefits of being faithful

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Sutta highlights

1.1 BENEFITS OF BEING FAITHFUL. The (Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta (A 5.38) is a discourse on the 5 benefits of being a person of faith. In simple terms, the first 4 benefits are aspects of the faithful’s affinity with the arhats. The Sutta highlights our spiritual friendship with the arhats so that they

- (1) show us compassion (accept us as we are),
- (2) visit us (to advise and inspire us as needed),
- (3) accept our offerings (so that we accumulate merits as the basis for our personal and spiritual development), and,
- (4) most importantly, teach us the Dharma.

These are the four benefits that are visible (*sandiṭṭhika*), that is, benefitting us in this life itself.¹

- (5) Happy rebirth.

This last benefit is a future or otherworldly (*samparāyika*) one, which is actually the sum effect of all the previous four factors.

1.2 FAITH (*saddhā*). The suttas speak of **2 kinds of faith**:

- (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlaka, saddhā*),² baseless or irrational faith, blind faith (M 2:170), and
- (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāra, vati saddhā*), faith founded on seeing, reasonable faith.³

“Faith with a good cause” is also called “wise faith” (*avecca-p, pasāda*).⁴ The word *avecca* (“having understanding, penetrated”) is the absolutive of *aveṭi*, “he goes down to, understands”; and *pasāda* means “clear brightness, satisfaction, faith.”

Hence, wise faith means faith that is based on understanding (not blind faith). Significantly, there is a clear sense of joy and radiance in such a faith (that is, it is with neither fear nor guilt).⁵

2 Related suttas

2.1 Although **the (Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta** (A 5.34) may be studied as a stand-alone text, we will be well rewarded if we see how its teachings—along with those of **the (Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 5.34)—are incorporated into **the (Sattaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 7.54).

2.2 **The (Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 5.34) contains teachings that are expanded in **the (Sattaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 7.57/4:79-82), which further, but only partly, incorporates teachings of **the (Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta** (A 5.38/3:42 f).

Here is a collation table showing how these three Suttas are connected, thus:

¹ On the significance of *sandiṭṭhika*, see SD 45.1 (1.6.1).

² *Amūlaka* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy).

³ *Vīmaṃsaka S* (M 47,15-16/1:320), SD 35.6; *Apaṇṇaka S* (M 60,2/1:401,23), SD 35.5.

⁴ *Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1* (S 12.41,11/2:69), SD 3.3.

⁵ See *Pañca Vera Bhaya S* (S 12.41,11), SD 3.3(4.2); *Vassa S* (S 55.38), SD 45.10. On how faith arises from suffering, see *Upanisā S* (S 12.23), SD 6.12.

<u>A 7.54</u> (SD 22.16)	<u>A 5.38 [§2]⁶</u> (SD 45.9)	<u>A 5.34 [§3]</u> (SD 45.2)
(1) the arhats would <u>show compassion</u> to him first [§2]	(1)	[] ⁷
(2) the arhats would <u>visit</u> him first [§3]	(2)	--
(3) the arhats would <u>accept alms</u> from him first [§4]	(3)	(2) ⁸
(4) the arhats would <u>teach</u> him first [§5]	(4)	--
(5) <u>a good report</u> about him would spread about [§6]	--	(3)
(6) he would <u>approach any assembly</u> with confidence [§7]	--	(4)
(7) after death, he will be reborn in a <u>happy destination</u> [§8]	(5)	(5)

TABLE 2.2 Collation of factors in the Suttas on giving and faith.⁹

2.3 CORRELATIONS

2.3.1 Notice that (in Table 2.2) (1)-(4) are personal benefits, or the spiritual friendship¹⁰ with a saint or a wholesome teacher. Factors (5) and (6) are social benefits, and (7) is a spiritual benefit. **The (Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta** (A 5.38) shares the first 4 factors (all the personal benefits) and the last factor, the spiritual benefit of a happy rebirth, with the other two Suttas.

2.3.2 The (Pañcaka) Saddha Sutta (A 5.38) deals with the giver's faith. Hence, it give more details to how this faith is shown, as expressed by benefits (1)-(4), of which factors (2)-(4) are found in summarized form in **the (Pañcaka Dāna,phala) Sīha Sutta** (A 5.34) (2) "truly good [peaceful] individuals associate with the giver," taught to general Sīha, and where the focus is on giving.

2.3.3 Notice how all the three Suttas share a common factor—no (5), the only "future" benefit—that is, the consistent giver and the consistently faithful are reborn in heaven. That the teachings in all three Suttas go no further is understandable, as in A 7.54 and A 5.34, the audience or interlocutor is general Sīha, a new convert to the Dharma. Hence, this is only a provisional and preparatory teaching forming the basis for further teaching (especially the 4 noble truths) and meditation.¹¹

The (Fives) Discourse on the Faithful

A 5.38

Benefits for one with faith

1 Bhikshus, there are these 5 benefits for a son of family who is faithful [who has faith].

What are the five?

1.2 Bhikshus, when the truly good individuals¹² in the world

⁶ **Saddha S** (A 5.38) uses the term "the peaceful and the true individuals" (*santo sappurisā*) instead of arhats.

⁷ "(1) One is dear and agreeable to the multitude."

⁸ "(2) The truly good individuals associate with the giver."

⁹ See also Table 1.4 @ SD 45.2 (1.4). For more details, see SD 45.3 (Table 1.2).

¹⁰ On spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa,mittatā*), see **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1.

¹¹ This teaching method is called the "gradual teaching" or "progressive talk" (*anupubbī,kathā*): see SD 30.8 (3.4.-2.2). For a more detailed analysis of related Suttas, see **Dān'ānisaṃsa S** (A 5.35) @ SD 45.3 (1.2).

¹² "Truly good individuals" (*santo sappurisā*), ie wholesome persons who are at peace with themselves, a common phrase: M 3:187* = A 1:142*; A 2:193, 3:39×3, 41×2, 42, 43; J 6* (Deva,dhamma J); Kvu 349*; also SA 1:-130; AA 3:251; SnA 2:422; ThaA 1:40. Here, it means the saints, esp arhats. **Santo** can be "good" as well as "peace-

- (1) show compassion, they would surely show compassion first to the faithful, not the faithless.
 - (2) When approaching, they would surely first approach the faithful, not the faithless;
 - (3) When receiving (gifts), they would surely receive from the faithful, not the faithless;
 - (4) When teaching Dharma, they would surely teach Dharma to the faithful, not the faithless;
 - (5) When the body has broken up, after death, the faithful is reborn in a happy destination, in heaven.
- These, bhikshus, are the 5 benefits for a son of family who is faithful.

One with faith benefits others

3 Bhikshus, just as in some pleasant place, where four highways meet, a great banyan tree is a refuge for winged creatures all around, [43]

even so, bhikshus, the son of family with faith is a refuge for many people, for monks, for nuns, for laymen, for laywomen.

Verses on giving

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|---|--|---|
| 4 | <i>Sākhā,patta,phalūpeto
khandhimāva mahā,dumo
mūlavā phala,sampanno
patiṭṭhā hoti pakkhinam</i> | Branches rich with leaves and fruits,
a mighty tree with a great trunk,
with roots endowed, laden with fruit,
where the winged roost: |
| 5 | <i>Mano,rame āyatane
sevanti nam vihaṅgamā
chāyam chāy'atthikā yanti
phal'atthā phala,bhojino</i> | the realm that delights the heart—
the sky-goers resort there,
seeking shade, they go for shade,
seeking fruits, they enjoy the fruits. |
| 6 | <i>Tath'eva sīla,sampannam
saddham purisa,puggalam
nivāta,vuttim atthaddham
soratam sakhilam mudum</i> | Even so is one accomplished in moral virtue,
an individual who is faithful [who has faith],
humble by nature, not self-centred,
meek, congenial [soft-spoken], mild, |
| 7 | <i>Vīta,rāgā vīta,dosā
vīta,mohā anāsavā
puñña-k,khettāni lokasmim
sevanti tādisam naram</i> | rid of lust, rid of hate,
rid of delusion, influx-free—
a field of merit in the world—
they associate with such a man. |
| 8 | <i>Te tassa dhammam desenti
sabba,dukkhā,panūdanam
yam so dhammam idha-ñ,ñāya
parinibbāti anāsavo'ti</i> | To him they teach the Dharma
that dispels all suffering,
who here, having known that Dharma,
is totally cooled, influx-free. |

— evam —

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ful.” Here *santo* is pl nom as in S 384d/1:71,22* = Dh 151d (Comy: *santo buddh'ādayo*, “the Buddha, etc,” DhA 3:123); Sn 450a (Comy: *buddh'ādayo*, SnA 398,23), 453d, 932d. For details, see SD 45.3 (2.1).