

Soulmates¹

In Richard Bach's² *The Bridge Across Forever*, the protagonist, Leslie Parrish, in the love-story's climax says:

"A soul mate is someone who has locks that fit our keys, and keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we are; we can be loved for who we are and not for who we're pretending to be. Each unveils the best part of the other. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person we're safe in our own paradise. Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction. When we're two balloons, and together our direction is up, chances are we've found the right person. Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life." (1989:474)

The "locks" are those memories that are so personal, precious or precarious to us that we never think of sharing them with any one. Or, they have been long forgotten. The "keys" are the special engaging moments we share with our soulmate when we are so disarmingly happy that we easily recall such rare moments. We feel safe, even rewarded, fulfilled, to share them.

If we are in a life-partner relationship, we have remained and settled with our partner for many reasons. Perhaps, we have a fear of being alone. Or, we really see something attractive or endearing in our partner. More likely, it is the enduring time we had spent together like water running over rocks and carving a flowing channel, or we are the surfaces of two flat rocks gently rubbing against one another until we fit just right.

We know each other so well that we would prefer the familiar than risk new challenges that may not work out. Above all, as partners, we probably celebrate the happiness of our own children, or something bigger than the both of us, like doing Dharma work, and ministering to the greater good.³

I find Dr Carmen Harra's "The 10 elements of a soulmate"⁴ helpful as a vehicle for my thoughts and feelings on this topic that is so close to my heart and work as a lay Dharma teacher and therapist. Many of our ideas overlap, but there is one key difference. As one informed and inspired by early Buddhist teachings, I see being a "soulmate" not so much as a *person* but rather as a role we often play at crucial moments in our lives.

Such a role is vital to us as Dharma workers, when such a soulmateship expedites our efforts in helping or healing others. In brief, we can say that this is the basis for a truly Dharma-hearted relationship of openness, learning, creativity and joy. I call them, "the 10 qualities of being a soulmate."

¹ To my soulmate, past, present and future.

² Richard D Bach is the author of the classic *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1972).

³ On how to truly know another person, see **Satta Jaṭila Sutta** (S 3.11), [SD 14.11](#) & **Thāna Sutta** (A 4,192), [SD 14.12](#).

⁴ Based on "The 10 elements of a soulmate" of Dr Carmen Harra, clinical psychologist and relationship expert: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-carmen-harra/elements-of-a-soulmate_b_3595992.html.

The 10 qualities of being soulmates:

1. It's something inside. We don't just "know" a soulmate: we often *feel* our soulmate. We feel the joy or pain behind his words, smile and laughter. We feel the love behind his anger. We see the wisdom behind his silence. Care and love are well felt and enhanced by a gentle touch or warm hug.

2. Flashbacks. Our moments of soulmateship with another is often rooted in our past friendships that we have rekindled and celebrate anew. The past setting may be different, but the feeling is the same. Now are the chances for it to deepen. In the Dhammapada story of king Udena, love and friendship are said to be rooted in both the past and the present, thus:

"Through being together in the past, | or through present goodness,
so, this love is born | like a blue lotus in the water." (DhA 2.1) SD 38.4 (3.2.5.6)

3. We just get each other. Often, we know one another so well that we are able to finish the other's sentences. This is one of the clearest signs favouring our soulmateship with someone, such as our parent, or best friend, or partner, or a positively attentive person.

4. We love the soulmate, flaws and all. No relationship is perfect. In fact, the more we know a person (who is unawakened), the more we know his faults. The more we know a person, the more we experience ups and downs – especially with a soulmate. Yet, that bond is much harder to break. Soulmates find it easier to accept, even learn, to love, each other's flaws. This is where a soulmate is able to wisely restrain the other, and to inspire him in good, whenever needed.⁵

5. Soulmateship is intense. Soulmateship is often more intense than normal relationships, in both good and sometimes bad ways. The most important thing is that, even during negative moments, we're focused on resolving the problem and can see beyond it. These are the learning and healing moments when we share our secrets that benefit our soulmate, and who well keeps those secrets as if they were his own.⁶

6. Two against the world. Soulmates often see their relationship as if it is "us against the world." We feel so connected that we're willing and ready to take on any feat of life, so long as we have our soulmate by our side. Soulmateship, then, is founded on a strong bond and full confidence in one another. We fully accept one another even when there's disagreement and differences: we happily agree to disagree. This is lovingkindness (*mettā*),⁷ unconditional acceptance.

7. We're mentally connected. Soulmates often have a mental connection similar to twins. We may pick up the phone to call each other at the exact same time. Though life may keep us apart at times, our minds are always in tune, and synchrony are common enough – when we are soulmates. With such a strong bond, we delight not in our soulmate's misfortune, but rejoice in his fortunes as if they are our own.⁸

8. We feel safe and secure. Our soulmate, regardless of gender, always make us feel safe and secure. We are like guardian angels, one guarding the other. In **the Sigāl'o-**

⁵ On "the good counsellor," see **Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31,24), [SD 4.1](#).

⁶ On "the one constant in joy and in sorrow," see **Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31,23), [SD 4.1](#).

⁷ On lovingkindness (*mettā*), see **Brahma, vihāra**, [SD 38.5](#).

⁸ On "the caring," see **Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31,25), [SD 4.1](#).

vāda Sutta (D 31), the Buddha mentions a characteristic of a “true-hearted” friend (*suhadā,mitta*) as one “who guards you when you are heedless.”⁹

9. We enjoy sharing our life with our soulmate. If our life is defined by the people we care about, then, the soulmate is surely the first of them. We are *not* emotionally dependent on a soulmate but emotionally connected with him. He is the one we never forget wherever we are, no matter how far away. He is naturally always a part of our lovingkindness practice.¹⁰

10. We look each other in the eye. One of the clear signs of an open and honest person is that he easily looks us in the eye. When soulmates converse, they tend to naturally look into each other’s eyes more often than ordinary people. There is always a gentle smile or rapt attention in those loving eyes that reflect a deep level of comfort, confidence and concern.

In the suttas, the monastics are often described to dwell with one another “in concord, in mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, looking at each other with kindly eyes.”¹¹ So do soulmates.

Soulmateship is the deepest joy we can experience with another. When we relate with another as soulmates, we see in each other a compelling sense of beauty and truth. In the moments of our togetherness there is always joy and laughter, we ascend level after level of mutual awareness and goodness.

We profoundly inspire one another in creative growth and simply joyful living. It can bring out the best in us to create great literature and works of art. Together, we unravel the mysteries of life and wisdom that make life so meaningful and purposeful. It can even be the basis for a deeper awakening to the higher realities of life when it blossoms into spiritual friendship.

In this sense, we can understand why our soulmate is the only true friend of this very moment.

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⁹ On “the helper,” see **Sigal’ovāda Sutta** (D 31,22), [SD 4.1](#).

¹⁰ On [the cultivation of lovingkindness](#) (*mettā,bhāvanā*), see [SD 38.5 \(3\)](#).

¹¹ See **Dhamma,cetiya Sutta** (M 89,11), [SD 64.10](#), & **(Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta** (M 128,11), [SD 5.18](#).