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Spiritual Friendship: A textual study

Theme: The nature and duties of friendship

An essay by Piya Tan ©2010

1 False friends

[RECOMMENDATION. If this is the first time you are studying about spiritual friendship, it is recommended that you first read the essay, **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness** = SD 8.1. Or better, for a more comprehensive study, follow the sequence study texts as recommended at **the Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2) @ SD 34.9 (1.4).]

1.1 NAMES FOR FALSE FRIENDS. There are two kinds of friends—true ones and false ones—those who care about us and those who do not. Often, in our need for friends (why do we need friends—have we ever examined this?), we may be so blind to their negative qualities that we are not even aware that they are affecting us negatively, too. We will begin our study of spiritual friendship by defining “bad friend” so that we are well prepared to help them; otherwise, it is better to avoid them.

The Pali word for “friend” is *mitta* (Skt *mitra*), which is closely related to *mettā*, “lovingkindness, amity” [2.5]. *Lovingkindness*, the basis of spiritual friendship, is an unconditional acceptance of ourselves and of others. We can either begin by unconditionally accepting ourselves, and relating to others with our positive emotions, or we can begin by relating to the positive qualities in others, so that we are inspired to cultivate such wholesomeness in ourselves.

A *false friend* is just the opposite of all this: he is *amitta*, not a friend at all. Let us now look at some of the Pali words for “false friend,” before we go on to better understand what true and spiritual friendship is.

<i>amitta</i>	“non-friend”	D 3:185; Sn 561 = <i>paccatthika</i> , “adversary,” SnA 455
<i>pāpa, mitta</i>	“evil friend”	PvA 5
<i>pāpaka mitta</i>	“evil friend”	Dh 78 equates it with <i>purisādhama</i> , “the lowest of men”
<i>mitta, dubbha</i>	“treacherous friend”	Pv 11.9.3 = J 4:352, 5:240, 6:310, 375
<i>mitta, dūbha</i>	“treacherous friend”	J 4:352, 6:310
<i>mitta, dūbhī</i>	“treacherous friend”	J 4:257, 5:97, 6:375; DhA 2:23
<i>mitta, paṭirūpaka</i>	“false friend”	D 3:185, 4 types
<i>paccatthika</i>	“adversary”	SnA 455
<i>purisādhama</i>	“the lowest of men”	Dh 78 = <i>pāpaka mitta</i>
<i>sapatta</i>	“hostile friend”	PvA 13

False friends are not helpful because, in the first place, they are really helpless themselves. They are unable to see their own goodness and unable to see the goodness in others: as such, they are incapable of helping anyone. Moreover, the situation gets worse when such false people think that they can actually benefit from the weaknesses and misfortunes of others or by exploiting the lapses or goodness of others.

The point is that false friends badly need help, but because of their predicament, they can be very difficult to help, especially if we ourselves lack sufficient wisdom and compassion. We need to be spiritually mature and strong ourselves before we can really help such people. Otherwise, it is best to keep away from them. For, then they would be like *fire*, and we would be like *oil* to them, and when we meet them, we are simply fuel for a greater burning.

1.2 FOUR KINDS OF FALSE FRIENDS. Just as **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31) speaks of the four kinds of true-hearted friends [2.3.1], it also warns us against these **four kinds of false friends**:

“Young householder, there are these four who should be known as enemies in the guise of friends:

- (1) **The downright taker**,¹ young householder, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.

¹ “The downright taker,” *añña-d-atthu, haro*, lit “one who merely takes away,” the out-and-out robber.

- (2) **The mere talker**,² young householder, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.
- (3) **The sweet-talker**,³ young householder, should be known as enemy in the guise of a friend.
- (4) **The destructive companion**,⁴ young householder, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.

Young householder, these are the four who should be known as enemies in the guise of friends.

(1) **The downright taker**, young householder, [186] should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He merely takes without ever giving.
- (b) With little, he desires much.
- (c) He does what needs doing only out of fear.
- (d) He serves only his own ends.

The downright taker, young householder, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons.

(2) **The mere talker**, young householder, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He claims to having been hospitable in the past.⁵
- (b) He promises hospitality in the future.⁶
- (c) He worms his way with empty favours.⁷
- (d) When you need help, he feigns his own misfortune.⁸

For these four reasons, young householder, the mere talker should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.

(3) **The sweet-talker**, young householder, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He approves of your doing wrong.
- (b) He approves of your doing right [or disapproves of it, depending on what profits him].⁹
- (c) He sings your praises to your face.
- (d) He runs you down behind your back.

For these four reasons, young householder, the sweet-talker should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.

² “The mere talker,” *vacī, paramo*, lit “who is word at best,” “a man of much profession” (DPL), one who merely pays lip-service, an empty vessel, an insincere person.

³ “The sweet-talker,” *anuppiya, bhānī*, lit “speaker of what is pleasant,” one who says what others like to hear, one who is politically correct at best, a flatterer, a toady.

⁴ “The companion who destroys one’s wealth,” *apāya, sahāya*, lit “a companion who leads one to loss”; Comy: “a companion who brings about loss of wealth” (*bhogānam apāyesu sahāyo hoti*, DA 3:948), a wastrel. Qu at J 2:390,-19*.

⁵ *Atītena paṭisantharati*, lit “he is hospitable with the past.” Comy: He sweetly claims, “So much maize was set aside for you. We waited by the road but you did not come. Now it has gone bad.” (DA 3:949).

⁶ *Anāgatena paṭisantharati*, lit “he is hospitable about the future.” Comy: He sweetly claims, “This time we have good maize and loads of fruit. We will be sure to set aside a pile of maize for you.” (DA 3:949).

⁷ *Niratthakena saṅgaṇhāti*, ie he displays kindness but it is an empty promise.

⁸ *Paccupannesu kiccesu vyasanam dasseti*, lit “he points to his misfortune in what is to be done now.” Comy: If you need a cart, he claims it has broken a wheel, etc (DA 3:949).

⁹ All MSS have vll reading either *kalyāṇam pi’ssa anujānāti* or *kalyāṇam pi’ssa nānujānāti*. Both Be (VRI) and Se (BUDSIR) edd read *anujānāti*, which is preferred as it reflects the moral nonchalance of the false friend. Alt tr: “He does not consent to your doing good.” Although this characteristic may at times apply to him, considering the fact that (d) “He runs you down behind your back,” the false friend, being a sycophant, is more likely to be a sort of “yes-man.” In the ultimate, both readings apply here since such a person would both approve or disapprove of one’s doing good, depending on whether it benefits him.

(4) **The destructive companion**, young householder, should be known as enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:¹⁰

- (a) He is your companion in taking strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.
- (b) He is your companion in roaming (and loitering in) the streets at unseemly hours.
- (c) He is your companion in frequenting fairs [shows].
- (d) He is your companion in indulging in gambling, a basis for heedlessness.

For these four reasons, young householder, the destructive companion should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.”

The Blessed One said this.

Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this:¹¹

The friend who merely takes, and the one who sweet-talks, these four are not friends. they should be avoided from afar	and the friend who only talks, and the companion who brings destruction— Thus the wise should know: like a dangerous path.
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(D 31.14-20/3:186 f) = SD 4.1

A more detailed study on “bad friendship” has been done elsewhere.¹²

2 Kalyāna,mitta: translation issues

2.1 KALYĀNA,MITTA: DIFFERENT SENSES.¹³

2.1.1 Some difficulties. Although the term *kalyāna,mitta* is often translated as “spiritual friend,” “good friend” or “wise advisor” (the last usually in translations of Chinese Mahayana texts), not all scholars agree on this. In fact, most translators, until recent times, have rendered it as a tatpuruṣa (adjectival compound) as “...who is a friend of righteousness” (C A F Rhys Davids, S:RD 1:113), “...a friend of what is lovely” (F L Woodward, S:W 5:2), and “...who is a friend of what is lovely” (John D Ireland, S:I 1:75).

It is likely that these translators followed the Sanskrit, such as *kalyāṇair janaiḥ samparkaḥ* (“mixing with good people”).¹⁴ However, scholars like Bodhi say that such renderings “all rest on a misunderstanding of the grammatical form of the expression” (S:B 1890 n6). In fact, there is no single way of translating the pregnant Pali term *kalyāna,mitta* into English. It depends on the context. We shall here examine some of these contexts.

2.1.2 Three overlapping senses. The term *kalyāna,mitta* is often translated as “spiritual friend” or “good friend,” as a technical term for someone who in some way acts as a “helper on the path,” that is, is cultivating moral virtue, mental focus, insight wisdom and spiritual liberation. However, this is only one of the senses that this term is used in the early Buddhist texts.

In this sense, the term is closely connected with other words related to friendship, such as “loving-kindness” (*mettā*), and of course “friendship” (*mittatā*). In fact, we can usefully distinguish three (albeit overlapping) senses or levels of the word.

¹⁰ These four reasons are also the ways of squandering one’s wealth [§7].

¹¹ This verse is qu at **Puṭa,dūsaka J** (J 280), where WHD Rouse gives a charming tr: *The friend who robs another without ceasing; | He that protests, protests incessantly; | The friend who flatters for the sake of pleasing; | The boon companion in debauchery;— | These four the wise as enemies should fear, | And keep aloof, if there be danger near.* (J:R 2:266)

¹² See **Bad friendship** = SD 64.17.

¹³ For this section, I have generally followed the structure of **Steven Collins’** “*Kalyāṇamitta* and *Kalyāṇamittatā*” (1987:57-68), but the defs and interpretations are mostly my own. He notes that “[t]he present PTS texts and translations of these passages [with *kalyāna,mitta*, etc] are seriously defective.” His paper is itself a “grammatical analysis of *kalyāṇamitta* and *kalyāṇamittatā*” and “a comprehensive survey of the use of the terms in all major Pali texts” (51), inspired by **Ludwig Alsdorf’s** 1962 article.

¹⁴ Eg Avadāna Śataka, ed PL Vaidya, Mithila, 1958:95: qu in Collins 1987:64.

2.2 KALYĀNA, MITTA AS A “GOOD FRIEND.” First, we have *kalyāṇa, mitta* in a simple and universal sense of a one (human or living being) who is trustworthy, grateful (reciprocally good) and respectful. This is not a specifically Buddhist quality, as it valued in every society,¹⁵ but it is often highlighted in Buddhist stories, especially relating to situations outside of the awakened state, such as the Jātaka stories.

In the apocryphal South Asian anthology, **the Paññāsa Jātaka**, for example, there is a story of the hunter who saves the life of the serpent king, Jambu, citta. For his promised boon, the hunter demands from Jambu, citta a magical snake-noose (for capturing celestial maidens). At first, the serpent-king objects, but then gives it to the hunter, who then says: “I see Jambu, citta as a present friend who keeps his promise. I have done you kindness, and you’ve returned kindness to me.”¹⁶

We see, or should see, this kind of quality amongst “relatives and friends” (*ñāti, mitta*) (“kith and kin,”¹⁷ somewhat like the more colloquial, “our people”), or “friends and colleagues” (*mitt’āmacca*).¹⁸ *Āmacca* by itself means “royal minister, courtier.” This dvandva is often used for the king’s palace entourage, and sometimes complements “relatives and blood relations” (*nāti, salohita*).¹⁹ In a word, this quality is “trustworthiness” (*vissāsa*), as **the Dhammapada** says, “The trustworthy are the best relatives” (*vissāsa, paramā ñātī*) (Dh 204c).²⁰ [2.5.1]

Apparently here the quality of trustworthiness includes or entails “gratitude,” that is, our acknowledging and rejoicing in a deed done to us (*kataññū kata, vedītā*).²¹ This sentiment is succinctly put by the ancient English proverb, “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”²² It is sometimes misunderstood as meaning that “a needy person becomes a friend to obtain help from others.” According to the *New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, the proverb means, “a friend who helps out when we are in trouble is a true friend—unlike others who disappear when trouble arises.”²³ In this same spirit, the Bodhisattva declares in **the Sara, bhaṅga Jātaka** (J 522), thus:

Yo ve kataññū kata, vedī dhīro

Wise indeed is one who acknowledges and rejoices in what is done (for him),

*kalyāṇa, mitto dalha, bhaddi ca hoti
dukkhitassa sakkacca karoti kiccam
tathā, vidham sappurisaṃ vadanti*

a good friend, firmly devoted, too, and
with respect, he does his duties to the suffering:
such a one they call a true individual.²⁴

(J 522/5:146,21-24; MA 1:21; SA 2:252; Nc 76; Pm 2:446; DhsA 349 f)

This sentiment is even more poetically envisioned in “the ten stanzas honouring friends” (*dasa mitta, pūja gāthā*) by the young Bodhisattva (in a previous life) in **the Mūga, pakkha (or Temiya) Jātaka** (M 538).²⁵

¹⁵ See SN Eisenstadt & L Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends*, 1984 & refs; RE Ewin, *Co-operation and Human Values*, 1981 ch 9: Ewin examines friendship from a modern philosophical perspective, observing that the morally necessary aspect of reciprocity makes friendship “in some ways like an economic arrangement” (1981:198).

¹⁶ *Passāmi’ham jambu, cittaṃ sandiṭṭhaṃ sa, phalaṃ mittam | guṇo kato mayā tuyham guṇaṃ paṭikarosi me ti* (PañJ 1:135,17-18): my own tr. *Sandiṭṭha* is pp of *sandissati*, “he sees together, easy to get along with”; *sa, phala* (“fruitful”) occurs at Dh 52 (cf 51) = Uv 18.7 = Tha 324.

¹⁷ Dh 219; J 3:396; Pv 1.12.6.

¹⁸ V 2:126; A 1:222; Sn p104; PvA 28.

¹⁹ Sn p104. Often with ref to deceased: *petā ñāti, sālohita* (M 1:33; A 5:132, 269; PvA 27, 28).

²⁰ Comy: A person in whom one has no trust is a stranger indeed, whether it is one’s own mother, or father. Even an unrelated person who is trustworthy is the best kind of relative. Hence, it is said: The trustworthy are the best relatives.” (DhA 3:267,6-10).

²¹ *Veditā* is the abstract n of *veda*, “joy, inspiration”: see (**Agata, phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10) @ SD 15.3 Intro (4.2).

²² According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (comp Elizabeth Knowles, 2009), the phrase has existed since 11th cent.

²³ Edd Joseph F Kett, ED Hirsch & James Trefil, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 3rd ed, 2002.

²⁴ Here *sappurisa* has the sense of a “good person” in the social or civil sense; for a broader study see **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45) @ SD 23.7 (3).

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| <p>1 <i>Pahūta, bhakkho bhavati
vippavuṭṭho²⁶ sakam-gharā
bahū nam upajīvanti
yo mittānam na dubbhati</i></p> | <p>There is food a plenty to feast on
when he is away from his own home,
there are many who support him—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>2 <i>Yam Yam janapadam yāti
nigame rāja, dhāniyo
sabbattha pūjito hoti
yo mittānam na dubbhati</i></p> | <p>Wherever he goes in the country,
in the market-town, or the capital,
he is honoured everywhere—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>3 <i>Nāssa corā pasāhanti²⁷
nātimaññanti khattiyā²⁸
sabbe amitte tarati
yo mittānam na dubbhati</i></p> | <p>Thieves would not oppress him,
nor kshatriyas look down upon him;
he is beyond the reach of all non-friends—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>4 <i>Akkuddho²⁹ sa, gharam eti
sabhāyam paṭinandito
ñātīnam uttamo hoti
yo mittānam na dubbhati</i></p> | <p>When he comes home, he is never angry,
he is welcomed by the assembly,
the best of relatives is he—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>5 <i>Sakkatvā sakkato hoti
garu hoti sagāravo³⁰
vaṇṇa, kitti, bhato hoti
yo mittānam na dubbhati</i></p> | <p>Honouring, he is honoured,
respected, he is respectful,
he draws praise and fame—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>6 <i>Pūjako labhate pūjam
vandako paṭivandanam
Yaso, kittiñ ca pappoti
yo mittānam na dubbhati.</i></p> | <p>Revering, he receives reverence,
saluting, he is saluted in return,
and he gains glory and fame—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>7 <i>Aggi yathā pajjalati
Devatā'va virocanti
siriya ajahito hoti
yo mittānam na dubbhati.</i></p> | <p>Like a flame he blazes,
shining like the gods,
never lost in glory—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>8 <i>Gāvo tassa pajāyanti
khetto vuttam virūhati
vuttānam phalam-asnāti
yo mittānam na dubbhati.</i></p> | <p>His cattle does multiply,
his fields richly sprout,
he feeds on the fruit of what is sown—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>9 <i>Darito pabbatāto vā
rukkhato patito naro
cuto patiṭṭham labhati
yo mittānam na dubbhati.</i></p> | <p>If into a hole, or from a mountain-side,
or from a tree a man should fall,
the fall would find a safe support—
he who betrays not his friends.</p> |
| <p>10 <i>Virūlha, mūla, santānam
nigrodham-iva māluto</i></p> | <p>With roots spread far and wide,
like the banyan withstands the wind,</p> |

²⁵ These verses have been published by Leon Feer, *Journal Asiatique* 6,18 1871:248 f.

²⁶ Be *vippavuttho*.

²⁷ Ce Ee Se *pasahanti*.

²⁸ Ce Ee Se *nātimaññeti khattiyo*.

²⁹ Se *akuddho*.

³⁰ Ke *garuko hoti gāravo*.

amittā na-p.pasāhanti he is not oppressed by non-friends—
yo mittānaṃ na dubbhatī ti he who betrays not his friends.

(J 538/6:14)

2.3 KALYĀNA, MITTA AS A “TRUE-HEARTED FRIEND.”

2.3.1 The four true-hearted friends. On a more “Buddhist” level, that is, from teachings of *the Buddha* (instead, for instance, of his utterances as a Bodhisattva), we have the well known “layman’s discipline” (*gihi, vinaya*),³¹ found in **the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta** (D 31). The Sutta lists four kinds of “true-hearted friends” (*suhada mitta*) and defines them as follows:

THE 4 KINDS OF TRUE-HEARTED FRIENDS (OR, 4 ASPECTS OF A TRUE-HEARTED FRIEND)

“Young householder, there are these four who should be known as true-hearted friends:³²

- (1) **The helper** (*upakāra*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.
- (2) **The one constant in joy and in sorrow** (*samāna, sukha, dukkha*)³³ should be known as a true-hearted friend.
- (3) **The good counsellor** (*atth’akkhāyī*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.
- (4) **The caring** (*anukampaka*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.

(1) **The helper**, young householder, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:³⁴

- (a) He guards you when you are heedless.³⁵
- (b) He guards your property when you are heedless.
- (c) He is a refuge to you when you are in fear [or danger].
- (d) When you have tasks to complete, he provides you with double the supply you need.³⁶

The helper, young householder, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.

(2) **The one constant in joy and in sorrow** [a friend through thick and thin] should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:³⁷

- (a) He tells you his secrets.
- (b) He keeps your secrets.
- (c) He does not abandon you in your troubles.³⁸
- (d) He would even give up his life for you.³⁹

³¹ This term is commentarial (DA 3:492), a byname for **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31/3:180-193) = SD 4.1 (DA 3:959). For suttas related to the householder’s discipline, see **Dīgha, jānu S** (A 8.54/4:281-285) = SD 5.10 Intro.

³² “True-hearted friends” *suhada mitta*, or “friends with good hearts”: see **Dūta S** (A 8.16) = Intro (8.2). Here the context is social one. For “spiritual friend” (*kalyāna, mitta*), on a more spiritual level, see SD 8.1. **Ṭhānāni S** (A 4.192) lists and defines these 4 ways of truly knowing a person: (1) through living with another, another’s moral virtue is known; (2) through dealing with another, another’s honesty is known, (3) through adversities, another’s fortitude [moral strength] is known and (4) through discussing with another, his wisdom is known (A 4.192/2:187-190) = SD 14.12.

³³ Alt trs: “the one who shows benefits,” “the shower of the goal.”

³⁴ The first three qualities below are given as part of those reciprocal qualities that your “friends and companions” should show you [D 31.31fgh/3:189].

³⁵ Comy: “When he sees that you have fallen in the middle of town or at the city gate or on the road after having taken some drinks, he sits down by you until you wake, lest your clothes be stolen.” (DA 3:949)

³⁶ *Uppannassa kicca, karaṇīyesu tad diguṇaṃ bhogaṃ anuppādeti.*

³⁷ These 4 qualities are part of the 7 listed in **Mitta S 1** (A 7.35/4:31 = SD 34.13) as those of one worthy of having as a friend. See below: “Two levels of friendship.”

³⁸ This is also the reciprocal quality that your “friends and companions” should show you [D 31.31i/3:190].

³⁹ A famous example here is that of **Ānanda**, who stands right in front of the Buddha to prevent the intoxicated elephant Nālāgiri from trampling the Buddha. Ānanda remained where he is despite the Buddha forbidding him thrice. The Buddha “makes the earth turn around” to get Ānanda out of the way (J 533/5:335 f; DhA 1.12/1:140 f). In this

The one who is constant in joy and sorrow, young householder, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.

(3) The good counsellor [the one who shows benefits or the goal] should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:⁴⁰

- (a) He restrains you from evil.
- (b) He exhorts you to do good.
- (c) He lets you hear what you have not heard before.
- (d) He shows you the way to heaven.

The good counsellor, young householder, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.

(4) The caring⁴¹ should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He does not delight in your misfortunes.
- (b) He delights in your good fortunes.
- (c) He prevents others from speaking ill of you.
- (d) He commends others who speak well of you.

The one who is compassionate, young householder, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.”

The Blessed One said this.

Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this:

The friend who is a helper, and the friend who gives good counsel, these four are (true) friends, and devotes himself with respect	and the friend in weal and woe, and the caring friend— thus the wise should know as a child would his parents.
The wise accomplished in moral virtue, building his wealth his wealth piles up having gathered his wealth thus, truly he binds his friends to himself. ⁴⁴	glows like a fire on a hill-top, ⁴² the way bees do, ⁴³ the way an anthill grows, he is ready for family and home—

(D 31.21-26/3:187 f) = SD 4.1

2.3.2 Friendship on a wholesome social level. The context here is a *social* one⁴⁵ [6.1]. In fact, the term the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta uses for a wholesome friend is not “spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa,mitta*) [2.2], but

connection, the Buddha relates **Cūḷa Haṃsa J** (J 533, 5:333-354), **Mahā Haṃsa J** (534/5:354-382), and **Kakkaṭṭa J** (267/5:341-345) on how even in previous lives, Ānanda gave up his own life to save the Buddha’s. For something even higher than dying for those (or what) we love, see (2.5.3) below.

⁴⁰ These duties are almost identical to those of the recluses and brahmins reciprocating the son of family [§33f-k].

⁴¹ “Caring,” *anukampaka*, fr the verb *anukampati* = *anu* (after) + *kampati* (shake, tremble), lit “he shakes or trembles along after (someone)” (D:RD 3:171).

⁴² Comy: That is, like a fire burning on a hill-top at night (DA 3:951).

⁴³ An allusion to Dh 49.

⁴⁴ *Save mittāni ganthati*: this line actually comes after the next line, “He divides his wealth into four,” but fits better with the preceding quatrain. Cf **Aḷavaka S** (S 10.12): “How does one bind friends to oneself?...By giving, one binds friends” (S vv850, 852/10.12/1:214 f).

⁴⁵ “True-hearted friends” *suhadā mittā*, or “friends with good hearts”: see **Dūta S** (A 8.16) = SD 46.7 Intro (8.2). For “spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa,mitta*), on a more spiritual level, see (2.1.1.3) below & SD 8.1. **The Ṭhānāni S** (A 4.192) lists and defines these 4 ways of truly knowing a person: (1) through living with another, another’s moral virtue is known; (2) through dealing with another, another’s honesty is known, (3) through adversities, another’s fortitude [moral strength] is known and (4) through discussing with another, his wisdom is known (A 4.192/2:187-190) = SD 14.12.

“true-hearted friend” (*su,hada mitta*), a much less common term.⁴⁶ The Pali word for “true-hearted” (or “good-hearted”) (*su,hada*) is also spelt *su,hadaya*, as found in **the Miga,luddaka Peta,vatthu** (Pv 3.7), the story of the deer-hunter:

*Tassa me sahāyo suhadayo*⁴⁷
saddho āsi upāsako
*so’pi*⁴⁹ *mam anukampanto*
nivāresi punappunam

There is a true-hearted friend of mine,
he was a layman of faith:⁴⁸
he, too, out of kindness to me,
often warned me thus:

Mā’kāsi pāpakam kammaṃ
mā tāta duggatiṃ agā
sace icchasi pecca sukham
virama pāṇa,vadhā asaṃyamā

“Do no evil deeds,
my friend, do not go to a state of misery.
If you wish for happiness hereafter,
refrain from wantonly killing of living beings.”

(Pv 3.7.4-5/59; PvA 205 f)

Clearly, here we see an overlapping of the qualities of a spiritual friend with those of the true-hearted friend. In all the references to the true-hearted friend, however, there is no reference to meditation, which is the specialty of the spiritual friend.

2.3.3 Two levels of friendship. We find these two stanzas in the ancient **Khagga,visāṇa Sutta** (Sn 1.3), warning us against false friendship:⁵⁰

Mitte suhajje anukampamāno
hāpeti attham paṭibaddha,citto
etaṃ bhayaṃ santhave pekkhamāno
eko care khagga,visāṇa,kappo

Being kind with friends and comrades, (but)
he, with fettered heart, neglects his goal:
seeing this danger in intimacy—
let him wander alone like a rhinoceros’ horn.

(Sn 37/1.3.2/6 = Ap II.11/8)

Bhajanti sevanti ca kāraṇ’atthā
nikkāraṇā dullabhā ajja mittā
att’attha,paññā asucī manussā
eko care khagga,visāṇa,kappo

People mingle and associate with others with a motive.
Friends without motive are hard to find today.
Wise only for their own advantage, humans are impure—
let him wander alone like a rhinoceros’ horn.

(Sn 75/1.3.41/12 = Ap II.49/12)

⁴⁶ DA 3:949; J 518/5:81 (*Sahāyā vā’ti suhadaya,mittā vā*), 358/3:181*, 532/5:330*. One who is *suhadaya* is said to have a “beautiful and beneficent mind” (*suhadayo ti sundara,citto hita,cittako*, J 5:114).

⁴⁷ Ce *suhada*.

⁴⁸ “Faith,” *saddhā*. There are 2 kinds of faith (*saddhā*): (1) “rootless faith” (*amūlika,saddhā*), baseless or irrational faith, blind faith. (M 2:170); (2) “faith with a good cause” (*ākāravati,saddhā*), faith founded on seeing (M 1:320,8 401,23); also called *avecca-p,pasāda* (S 12.41.11/2:69). “Wise faith” is syn with (2). *Amūlika* = “not seen, not heard, not suspected” (V 2:243 3:163 & Comy). **Gethin** speaks of two kinds of faith: the cognitive and the affective (eg ERE: Faith; also Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963:387): “Faith in its cognitive dimension is seen as concerning belief in propositions or statements of which one does not—or perhaps cannot—have knowledge proper (however that should be defined); cognitive faith is a mode of knowing in a different category from that knowledge. Faith in its affective dimension is a more straightforward positive response to trust or confidence towards something or somebody...the conception of *saddhā* in Buddhist writings appears almost, if not entirely affective, the cognitive element is completely secondary.” (Gethin 2001:207; my emphases).

⁴⁹ Se *So hi*.

⁵⁰ **Khagga,visāṇa S** recurs at Ap 2.9-49/8-13, and with detailed comys: Nc 56 ff (Be 25:229-307, Se 30:317-429) & ApA 129-206. NA Jayawickrama discusses it in *University of Ceylon Review* 7,2:119-128. The sutta is ancient and is said to be the teachings of the Pratyeka Buddhas (SnA 1:46-131), as JJ Jones notes: “The Khaggavisāṇa Sutta in Sn (35-75) contains only 41 stanzas. But it is implied here that there were 500 stanzas, ie the number of the Pratyekabuddhas.” (Mvst:J 1:305 n1). The Mvst version (Khaggaṅgaviṣāṇa Sūtra, Mvst 1:357 -359), however, differs from the Pali version.

An interesting point to note here is that *su,hajja* (“kind, kind-hearted”) is used here in a general sense [2.3.2]. Being kind to friends is certainly mutually beneficial in lay life, but a renunciant who is avowedly bent on spiritual attainment must renounce any “kindness” (that is, attachment) to other until he has attained his goal. Only then, the renunciant is able to really help other without being distracted by his friendliness.

The Khagga,visāṇa Sutta single-mindedly extols the solitary life, the teachings of pratyeka-buddhas. They are self-awakened Buddhas who arise at a time when human beings, for various reasons (especially when their life-span is too long or too short),⁵¹ are unwilling or unable to listen to the Dharma, so that the pratyeka-buddhas are unable to effectively found a dispensation, that is, to spread the Dharma widely and to make it last.

What should interest us here, too, is **the Cūḷa Niddesa’s commentary** on the first two lines of the Khagga,visāṇa Sutta (Sn 37ab), thus:

Regarding “friends” (*mittā*), there are two kinds:

- (1) The householder (or layman) friend (*agārika mitta*), and
- (2) The left-home (or renunciant) friend (*anāgārika mitta* or *pabbajita mitta*).

What is a householder friend?⁵² Here, someone gives what is hard to give; sacrifices what is hard to sacrifice; does what is hard to do; reveals (his own) secrets; keeps one’s secrets; does not forsake one; will even lay down his life for one; and does not look down on one when one has failed [is destitute].⁵³ This is the householder friend.

What is a left-home (or renunciant) friend? Here, a monk is loving [pleasant]; agreeable; respectful; worthy of respect; patient when admonished; profound in conversation; does not engage one in the impossible.⁵⁴ He urges one on to higher moral virtue. He urges one to devote oneself to the cultivation of the four focusses of mindfulness,...of the four right strivings,...of the four paths of spiritual accomplishments,...of the five spiritual faculties,...of the five spiritual powers,...of the seven awakening-factors, and the noble eightfold path.⁵⁵ This is the left-home friend.

(Nc 2:227 f)⁵⁶

Now let us examine these two categories of friends in some detail. First, let us the qualities of a householder friend with the kind of friend worth having, as stated in the (Sevitabba) Mitta Sutta.

2.3.4 (Sevitabba) Mitta Sutta (A 3.133). Compare the first three qualities listed under “householder friend” (*agārika mitta*) [2.3.5] with the three qualities of a friend worth having (*sevitabba mitta*):

⁵¹ B 26.21/98; BA 54, 273; J 48 = J:J 64.

⁵² Seven of these qualities (excepting “will even lay down his life for you”) are those listed in **Mitta S 1** (A 7.35/4:31 = SD 34.13) as those of one worthy of having as a friend. See below: “Two levels of friendship.” On the first 3 qualities, cf (Sevitabba) **Mitta S** (A 3.133/1:286): see below here.

⁵³ Cp these qualities with the 7 in **Piya Mitta S 1** (A 35/4:29) = SD 64.3.

⁵⁴ These 7 qualities are listed in **Piya Mitta S 2** (A 36/4:30) = SD 64.4.

⁵⁵ These are the “7 sets” of teachings forming the 37 limbs of awakening (*bodhi,pakkhiyā dhammā*): see **Bodhi,-pakkhiyā Dhammā** = SD 10.1.

⁵⁶ *Mitte suhajje anukampamāno, hāpeti atthaṃ paṭibaddhacitto ti* (Sn 37ab). *Mittā ti dve mittā: agārika,mitto ca anāgārika,mitto* [Ke pabbajita,mitto: thus above , too] ca. | *Katamo agārika,mitto? Idh ’ekacco duddadaṃ dadāti, duccajaṃ cajati, dukkaraṃ karoti, dukkhamāṃ khamati, gūyhamassa ācikkhati, gūyhamassa parigūhati* [Ke Se parigūhati] āpadāsu na vijahati, jīvitam pi ’ssa atthāya pariccattam hoti, khīṇe nātimaññati—ayaṃ agārika,mitto. | *Katamo anāgārika,mitto? Idha bhikkhu piyo ca hoti manāpo ca garu ca bhāvanīyo ca vattā ca vacana-k,khamo ca gambhīraṃ ca katham kattā no ca aṭṭhāne niyojeti, adhisīle samādapeti, catunnaṃ satipaṭṭhānānaṃ bhāvanā ’nu-yoge samādapeti, catunnaṃ samma-p,padhānānaṃ...pe...catunnaṃ iddhi,pādānaṃ...pañcannaṃ indriyānaṃ...pañcannaṃ balānaṃ...sattannaṃ bojjhaṅgānaṃ...ariyassa aṭṭhaṅgikassa maggassa bhāvanā ’nuyoge samādapeti — ayaṃ anāgārika,mitto. (Nc 227 f). On the layman friend, see (**Piya**) **Mitta S 1** (A 7.35/4:31 = SD 34.13; on the renunciant friend, see (**Piya**) **Mitta S 2** (A 7.36/4:32 = SD 34.14*

SD 34.1(3.2.4)**(Sevitabba) Mitta Sutta**

The Discourse on the Friend (Worth Associating With) | A 3.133/1:286
 A 3.3.4.3 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 3, Tika Nipāta 3, Tatiya Paṇṇāsaka 4, Yodh'ājīva Vagga 3
 Theme: Three qualities of a friend worth having

Bhikshus, a friend accomplished in three qualities is worth associating with. What are the three qualities?

Here, bhikshus, a monk

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (1) gives what is hard to give; | <i>duddadam dadāti</i> |
| (2) does what is difficult to do; | <i>dukkaram karoti</i> |
| (3) bears what is hard to bear. | <i>dukhamam khamati</i> |

A friend, bhikshus, accomplished in these three qualities are worth associating with.⁵⁷

— evaṃ —

2.3.5 The Saddhamma.pajjotika (vol 3), the Commentary on the Culla Niddesa,⁵⁸ summarizes the above passage (basing on the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta passage) [2.3.1], by saying that of the two, the householder friend (*agārika mitta*) is of *three kinds* (that is, the first two and fourth kinds of true-hearted friends), namely,

- (1) The helper (*upakāra* or *upakāraka*),
- (2) The one constant in joy and in sorrow (*samāna, sukha, dukkha*), and
- (4) The caring (*anukampaka*).

The left-home friend, on the other hand, is the third kind of true-hearted friend, namely,

- (5) The good counsellor (*atth'akkhāyī*). (NcA 113 f)

The qualities of these four kinds of true-hearted friends have been listed earlier [2.3.1].

It is likely that the Culla Niddesa Commentary categorizes the helper, the constant friend and the caring friend as “householder friends” because a significant level of *socializing and personal involvement* is involved, something which is discouraged in a renunciant.⁵⁹ On the other hand, the task of a good counsellor (*atth'akkhāyī*) is not an easy one, as he is one who “who shows” (*akkhāyī*) what is *attha*, which means “benefit, the goal (moral virtue, mental concentration, wisdom or awakening), or the good.”

Such a good counsellor needs to be a wise and compassionate teacher, morally virtuous and spiritually mature, qualities often found in a good renunciant. However, this does not mean that a lay person could not have such qualities, too. Indeed, any true friend, renunciant or lay, should have all these four qualities. In fact, the commentarial categorization of the true friend into four types may be said to be “ideal types” or “typical functions” of a true-hearted friend. In other words, a true-hearted friend should have all these four qualities.⁶⁰

2.4 KALYĀṆA, MITTA AS A “SPIRITUAL FRIEND”

2.4.1 A renunciant as a spiritual friend. The third sense of *kalyāṇa, mitta* is the most important, also the most common, and which we usually render as “**spiritual friend**.” The Culla Niddesa’s definition of a renunciant friend (*anāgārika mitta*), especially where he exhorts us on the 37 limbs of awakening (which

⁵⁷ For a list of 7 such qualities, see **Piya Mitta Ss 1+2** (A 35+36/4:29 f) = SD 64.3+4.

⁵⁸ Also spelt Cūla Niddesa (Nc). The Saddhamma-pajjotika 3 is the Comy (NcA) on the Comy (Culla Niddesa = Nc) on Pārāyana Vagga (Sn ch 5 + Khagga, visāṇa S, Sn 1.3.1-41/35-75).

⁵⁹ See “the 5 conditions that conduce to spiritual maturity” (3, item 4): **Meghiya S** (U 4.1.7-13/35-37 = A 9.3.7-13/4:356 f) = SD 34.2.

⁶⁰ On how to recognize a true-hearted friend, see **(Piya) Mitta S 1** (A 7.35) @ SD 34.13 (1.3).

have to do with the three trainings of moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom), clearly qualifies as the ideal “spiritual friend.”

The special qualities that the ideal spiritual friend must have are those connected with mental cultivation or meditation. This is best exemplified in the Buddha himself, who is reported in the suttas as tirelessly instructing and assisting his disciples in their meditation. Here are some examples of the Buddha’s instructions on mental cultivation to specific disciples:

Amba,laṭṭhikā Rāhul’-ovāda Sutta	M 61/1:414-420	Dangers of lying, and the need for constant review.
Mahā Rāhul’ovāda Sutta	M 62/1:420-426	Meditation to overcome attachment to the body.
Dhātu Vibhaṅga Sutta	M 140/3:237-247	The Buddha instructs Pukkusāti on various elements.
(Mahānāma) Gilayāna S	S 55.54/5:408-410	Mahānāma is taught how to die like a saint.
Moggallāna Pacālā Sutta	A 7.58/4:85-91	Moggallāna is taught how to overcome drowsiness.
(Kalyāṇa,mitta) Rāhula S	Sn 2.11/p58 f	General meditation instructions to Rāhula.

Many of the Buddha’s instructions on various kinds of meditation are addressed to his early disciples at large, and amongst those valuable teachings that have been preserved for our benefit are the following:

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	M 10/1:55-63	The four focusses of mindfulness.
Aṭṭhaka,nagara Sutta	M 52/1:1:349-353	Cultivating calm and insight.
Vitakka Saṅghāna Sutta	M 20/1:118-122	How to overcome distractions during meditation.
Ānāpāna,sati Sutta	M 118/3:77-88	The cultivation of the mindfulness of the breath.
Kāya,gatā,sati Sutta	M 119/3:3:88-99	Body-based satipatthana.
Naḷa,kalāpiya Sutta	S 12.67/2:113-115	Analysis of name and form.
Metta Sahagata Sutta	S 46.54/5:115-121	The liberation of mind through lovingkindness.
Titth’āyatana Sutta	A 3.61/1:173-177	Overcoming wrong views through meditation.
Āghāta Paṭivinaya Sutta	A 5.162/3:185 f	Five methods of overcoming ill will.
Tikaṇḍaki Sutta	A 5.144/3:169 f	Dealing with repulsive and attractive mental objects.
Pabbateyya Gāvī Sutta	A 9.35/4:418-422	How to progress through the dhyanas.

2.4.2 A lay person as a spiritual friend. Both from the early suttas and from experience, we can say that a spiritual friend need not only be a “renunciant friend” or “monastic counsellor,” but even a lay person with the necessary qualities can be a spiritual friend. In fact, many lay disciples have been declared by the Buddha as being “foremost” (*etad-agga*) in spiritual abilities (such as Dharma speakers and dhyana attainers).⁶¹

Citta the householder (a layman non-returner),⁶² for example, has not only realized profound teachings but is the greatest of the laymen Dharma teachers himself,⁶³ who is recorded as clarifying difficult points on the Dharma to the monks.⁶⁴ **The Go,datta Sutta** (S 41.7) records how Citta the householder explains to the monk Go,datta that the proper cultivation of the four divine abodes as “the immeasurable liberation of mind” (*appamāṇā ceto,vimutti*).⁶⁵ Even on his deathbed, he instructs the devas and his own relatives.⁶⁶

⁶¹ A 1:25 f. See **Laymen saints** = SD 8.6 (7).

⁶² **Dighāvu S** (S 55.3/5:344-347) = SD 23.16; see also SD 8.6 (11).

⁶³ See eg **Eka,putta S** (S 17.23/2:235 f), **Citta Saṃyutta** (S 41.1-10/4:281-304); **Etad Agga S** (A 1.14.6/1:26). On the dying Citta, see **Gilāna Dassana S** (S 41.10/4:303 f) = SD 16.16.

⁶⁴ See eg **Saṅṅojana S** (S 41.14/4:281-283) = SD 32.11.

⁶⁵ S 41.7/4:296 f = SD 60.4.

⁶⁶ See eg **Eka,putta S** (S 17.23/2:235 f), **Citta Saṃyutta** (S 41.1-10/4:281-304); **Etad Agga S** (A 1.14.6/1:26). On the dying Citta, see **Gilāna Dassana S** (S 41.10/4:303 f) = SD 16.16.

Another well known lay Dharma teacher is **Anātha,piṇḍika**, who often receives teachings from the Buddha himself,⁶⁷ and on his deathbed he even requests that such teachings that are up till then only taught to monastics (such as the five aggregates) be also freely taught to the laity, too.⁶⁸ Yet another lay Dharma teacher is **Pañcakaṅga** the carpenter, who loves discussing the Dharma.⁶⁹

Khujj’uttarā, the hunchback servant of queen Sāmāvatī, is famous in her own way as a Dharma teacher. According to Dhammapāla, the teachings that Khujj’uttarā received from the Buddha (which she conveys to Sāmāvatī) are canonized as **the Iti-vuttaka**, the fourth book of the Khuddaka Nikāya (ItA 24 ff).⁷⁰

2.5 SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP AND *METTĀ*.

2.5.1 The meaning of *mitta*. *Kalyāṇa,mitta*, when translated as “spiritual friend,” refers to an ideal relationship between a teacher (especially a meditation mentor) and a pupil, or on a simpler level, it refers to the act of wisely and kindly advising another with right knowledge on personal development or mental cultivation. From our discussion so far, we have a very good idea why *kalyāṇa* basically means “beautiful” in the sense that it uplifts us with inner joy, and that it is “good” because it brings out our moral virtue and capability for greater good.

Often enough, we see the word “friend” (*mitta*) used by itself in a positive sense, including the sense of “spiritual friend,” as attested in these sayings:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| • <i>Mātā mittam sake ghare</i> | A mother is a friend in one’s own house. | S 1:37 |
| • <i>N’atthi etādisam mittam
yathā kāya,gatā sati</i> | There is no friend ever like mindfulness
of the body. | Tha 1035 |
| • <i>Yādisam kurute mittam...
sa ve tādisako hoti</i> | Whomever one takes as a friend...,
one indeed becomes like him. | It 3.3.7/67 f |
| • <i>Tādisam mittam kubbetha</i> | He should make such a friend. | It 3.4.10/86 = V 2:203 |
| • <i>Yasmim ca seti urasīva putto
sa ve mitto yo parehi abhejjo</i> | In whose bosom one rests like a son,
he is truly a friend whom none can set apart. | Sn 255cd |
| • <i>...bhajetha mittam ulāram
paṭibhānavantam</i> | One should cultivate a friend of great
intelligence. | Sn 58ab = Ap 1. |

Now, we go on to further examine the word *mitta*, and let us begin by looking at its usages. *Mitta* is often found in compounds referring to relationships, such as follows:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • <i>ñāti,mitta</i> | “relatives and friends” ⁷¹ | “kith and kin,” somewhat like the more colloquial,
“our people” |
| • <i>nāti,salohita</i> | “relatives and blood relations” ⁷² | family members and those related by marriage |
| • <i>mitt’āmacca</i> | “friends and colleagues” ⁷³ | <i>āmacca</i> by itself means “royal minister, courtier.”
This dvandva is often used for the king’s palace
entourage, and sometimes complements <i>nāti,sa-
lohita</i> . |

⁶⁷ See **Anātha,piṇḍika S 1** (S 55.26) = SD 23.2a Intro (1); DhgA 1:3; J 1:226.

⁶⁸ **Anātha,piṇḍik’ovāda S** (M 143/3:258-263) = SD 23.9.

⁶⁹ See eg **Bahu,vedaniya S** (M 59/1:396-400) = SD 30.4; **Samaṇa.maṇḍika S** (M 78/2:22-29) = SD 18.9 Intro (1.1); **Anuruddha S** (M 127/3:144-152).

⁷⁰ On layman teachers, see **Laymen saints** = SD 8.6 (8).

⁷¹ Dh 219; J 3:396; Pv 22/1.5.9/4 (*ñāti,mitta sakhā ca*), 89/1.12.5/13 (*ñāti,mitta,suhajja*).

⁷² V 2:126 (*mitt’āmaccā ñāti,sālohitā*); A 1:222 (*mittā vā amaccā vā ñātī vā sālohitā vā*); Sn p104 (*mitt’āmaccā ñāti,sālohitā*); PvA 28. Often with ref to deceased: *petā ñāti,sālohitā* (M 1:33; A 5:132, 269; PvA 27, 28).

⁷³ V 2:126; A 1:222; Sn p104.

Synonyms for *mitta* include *suhada* (“the good-hearted,” D 3:187) [2.3.1], *suhajja* (“the good-hearted,” PvA 191), *sahāya* or *sahāyaka* (“companion”).⁷⁴ [2.3.2]

The key word here is, of course, *mitta* (Skt *mitra*), generally translated as “friend.” The word is closely related to *mettā*, usually translated as “lovingkindness,”⁷⁵ which is now a universally accepted term. The PED defines it as “love, amity, sympathy, friendliness, active interest in others.” Ideally, lovingkindness is an unconditional acceptance of ourselves and of others, a wholesome openness that breaks down any distinction between self and others, which inspires goodness in ourselves as well as in others.

The Attha,sālinī (the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī Commentary) gives a quaint folk etymology for lovingkindness, thus: *mejjati mettā siniyhatī ti attho*, “lovingkindness is having an affection for; it means to feel tenderly for” (DhsA 192). There are a couple of wordplay here: *mejjati* literally means “to fatten,” which alludes to treating a friend amiably with food, which is a common hospitality in the East; and *siniyhati* literally means “to lubricate, make tender,” suggesting a feeling of harmonious acceptance of another.

2.5.2 Mettā as the basis for spiritual friendship. Lovingkindness (*mettā*) is the first of four positive emotions, known as the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*) or perfect abidings [2.5.3]. Just as it is said that charity must begin at home,⁷⁶ even more so, *lovingkindness should begin with oneself*, that is, we have to unconditionally accept ourselves, warts and all,⁷⁷ as it were, before we can really accept others in the same spirit. Self-hate tends to make a person generally destructive and, if he is religious, painfully intolerant, too.

However, if we are to stop at self-love, then we are likely to fall into the rut of narcissism. This is essentially an infantile state, crying out for attention to oneself, and being unfeeling towards others. This is in fact *self-lust*, an extremely narrow and squinted perception of the self, which is one of the basest forms of self-identity view, rooted in ignorance. Not only is such a pathological self-centredness destructively anti-social, it is also ultimately self-destructive, especially when we think that we have failed to realize our demands and desires.⁷⁸ Like Narcissus, pining away at the poolside, obviously admiring his own reflection, we would turn into a heartless plant, rooted to the spot.⁷⁹

Lovingkindness, as such, is a feeling of a wholesome openness to oneself and to others, of rejoicing in mutual commonality and a desire for the good of others. It is the ideal expression of the golden rule, of doing unto others the good that we would wish for ourselves.⁸⁰ When such an emotion predominates and pervades a group or community, it truly becomes divine; hence, it is said to be a divine emotion.

In such a wholesome ambience, the relationship between individuals is that of *spiritual friendship*. Between equals, such as saints and the creative, the fruits are *beauty* and *truth*; between unequals, it is a

⁷⁴ *Sahāya*, D 3:154 = Dh 328 f = Sn 45 f; Sn 35 PvA 86. *Sahāyaka*, D 2:349-352; M 3:130 f; A 2:186, 5:159; Tha 37.

⁷⁵ OED cites its oldest recorded appearance as “louinge kyndnesses” by Coverdale, ie, Lord Myles Coverdale in his tr of the Hebrew *chesed* (the love of God for man) in his Bible (dedicated to Henry VIII). The form “lovingkindness” appeared about 100 years later. The modern form used by Buddhists is generally spelt “lovingkindness” (without the hyphen). See Collins 1987:69 n13.

⁷⁶ As early as around 1380, John Wycliffe, the English theologian and dissident in the Roman Catholic Church had written; “Charity should begin at himself.” In 1642, Sir Thomas Browne, an English physician, wrote “Charity begins at home.”

⁷⁷ This phrase means to accept something, or more usually someone, unconditionally. It is attributed to Oliver Cromwell, in his remark to the artist, Peter Lely, who painted Cromwell’s portrait when he became Lord Protector of England (1653). Cromwell was recorded as saying, “Mr Lely, I desire you would use all your skill to paint your picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughness, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me. Otherwise, I will never pay a farthing for it.”

⁷⁸ See **Udak’upama S** (A 7.15) = SD 28.6 (1.2.8).

⁷⁹ In Greek mythology, Narcissus (Gk *Narkissos*, possibly from *narke*, “sleep, numbness”) is a handsome young hunter who is exceptionally arrogant, spurning all advances. As a divine punishment (by Venus or by Nemesis), he is made to fall in love with his own image, which he longingly gazes at in a forest pool, and eventually turns into a narcissus plant (commonly called daffodil in English).

⁸⁰ On the golden rule, see **Veḷu,dvāreyya S** (S 55.7) = SD 1.5 (1).

learning situation, where the mentor enriches the mind and uplifts the hearts of his pupils. In so doing, the true Teaching of beauty, wisdom, compassion and awakening are perpetuated.

2.5.3 Breaking the barriers. As a positive emotion, lovingkindness can and must be cultivated by each of us for ourselves. Just as we must ourselves partake of a healthy meal to keep our bodies well, we need to cultivate lovingkindness to keep our minds healthy. Indeed, lovingkindness is a key ingredient in sustenance of a healthy mind in a healthy body.

In cultivating lovingkindness, we begin with accepting *ourselves* unconditionally, so that we are free from all negative thoughts. Then, we direct our minds to *a loving person*, one who has been unconditionally and singularly kind to us. This is followed by showing our lovingkindness to *a neutral person or persons* (such as those with us in the same room, whether we know them or not).⁸¹ The last stage is the most important, that is, when we “break all barriers” to include all beings in our lovingkindness,⁸² which is basically a perception of not-self.

One of the most beautiful commentarial teachings is found in connection with lovingkindness, in Buddhaghosa’s parable of the four friends, which he uses to highlight and explain “the breaking of the barriers” (*sīma,sambheda*), thus:

Suppose a person were sitting in a certain place with someone dear, a neutral person, and a hostile person, and himself as the fourth. Then bandits come to him and say, “Bhante, give us a monk,” and on being asked why, they answer, “So that we may kill him and use the blood of his throat as an offering.”

Now, if that monk thinks, “Let them take this one or that one,” he has not broken the barriers. Or, if he thinks, “Let them take me but not these three,” he has not broken the barriers, too.

Why? Because the one whom he wishes to be taken would be harmed; only the others would be well.

It is only when he does not see a single one among the four people to be given to the bandits, and he directs his mind impartially towards himself and towards those three people that he has broken the barriers.
(Vism 9.41/307)⁸³

2.5.4 Cultivating true “friendliness” (*mittatā*). Lovingkindness (*mettā*) is the first of four positive emotions, also known as the divine abodes or perfect abidings (*brahma, vihāra*). While the ancient brahmins claim that they are the only way to God and heaven, the Buddha brings them right down to earth, declaring that they can be cultivated in our own hearts. While other religions turn to an external deity or power, and making promises of heaven and threats of hell, the Buddha rejects such approaches as unwholesome and fanciful. Instead, the Buddha teaches that, by cultivating the godly qualities of compassion (*karuṇā*), appreciative joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*), we can experience godliness and heaven right here and now.

Lovingkindness is the foundation of these divine qualities in the sense that we must start with cultivating it successfully before proceeding on to the other levels of positive emotions. Buddhaghosa further explains: Why is lovingkindness alone spoken of so distinctly? Because it is the foundation of all the four divine abodes;⁸⁴ and also on account of its fulfilling all of the wholesome states beginning with giving (Vism 9.124/325).⁸⁵

⁸¹ Traditionally (eg Vism 9.4/296), the fourth stage is to direct lovingkindness to enemies or those we are having difficulties with. However, this should be done only when our lovingkindness is strong enough; otherwise, negative thoughts would arise.

⁸² Vism 9.40-43/307.

⁸³ While Biblical love peaks in death: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15.13, New International Version), we can see here how *lovingkindness* rises even above this; for, there is a much greater love than dying for friends, that is, to *live* for all beings, human and non-human, and to accept them unconditionally.

⁸⁴ The four are listed in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.11(6)/3:223 f).

⁸⁵ On the primacy of lovingkindness, see further **Mettā Bhāvanā S** (It 1.3.7) = SD 30.7 (1.2.1.2).

Lovingkindness should also pervade all the three kinds of Buddhist trainings (*sikkhā*).⁸⁶ We keep the five precepts out of compassion for others: this is lovingkindness in action, enriching our moral virtue.⁸⁷ When we are joyful with lovingkindness, our mental cultivation becomes easier and quickly effective.⁸⁸ And the wisdom that arises from this is a compassionate wisdom, one that reaches out to others with lovingkindness.⁸⁹

The divine abodes are said to be “perfect, divine” (*brahma*) because of they are the best of emotions and because of their faultless nature. They are the best ways to relate to others. As the High Gods (*brahmā*) are fearless, even so these emotions infuse such godliness in us. They are called “immeasurable” (*appamāṇā, appamaññā*) because they can reach out to countless beings in an immeasurable manner.⁹⁰

3 Spiritual friendship: grammatical aspects

3.1 “SPIRITUAL FRIEND” AS UNCOMPOUNDED ADJECTIVE OR NOUN. “Spiritual friend” or “good friend,” and their opposites, “evil friend” or “enemy,” often occur as uncompounded or as a split compound, such as in the following passages:

<i>mittam...kalyāṇa</i>	Tha 588a (verse)
<i>mitte...kalyāṇe</i>	Dh 376a; Sn 338a; Tha 249c (verse)
<i>mitte...pāpake</i>	Tha 681b
<i>pāpake mitte</i>	M 1:10 = A 3:389 (prose)
<i>pāpake mitte... mitte kalyāṇe</i>	Dh 78ac (verse)

We can, of course, translate *mitta...kalyāṇa* here as “a friend who is good,” and *pāpaka...mitta* or *mitta...pāpaka* as “a friend who is bad (or evil).” However, the translation “spiritual friend” is less cumbersome.

It is interesting that these split compounds occur almost only in the verses, but their commentaries invariably give the compound form⁹¹—which means that the compound form, *kalyāṇa,mitta* is more common. The passages from which these phrases are taken make perfect sense when we take *mitta kalyāṇa* as “spiritual friend” and *pāpaka mitta* as “evil friend.” Clearly, the compounds are split merely because of poetic licence.

Steven Collins (1987:57) quotes an example from **the Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2) and **the Āsava Sutta** (A 6.58), where a monastic, “through wise attention, would avoid associating with any kind of bad friends” (*pāpake mitte paṭisaṅkhā yoniso parivajjeti*).⁹² The Commentary explains “bad friends” (*pāpake mitte*) here as those who are “evil, immoral, false friends, enemies.”⁹³

Collins (id) also notes that the passages here are addressed to monks (without elaborating). That these teachings are addressed to the monks is understandable, as they are the ready audience, the best of the Buddha’s followers. However, as long the teachings are classified as Dharma, and not Vinaya, such teachings are applicable to nuns as well as lay followers. The Buddha’s teachings, we must remember, is for all beings.

The uncompounded phrase, “a friend who is good” (*mitta kalyāṇa*), in other words, is the most general kind of spiritual friends. According to **the Piya Mitta Sutta 1** (A 7.36), such a spiritual friend (qualities echoed at Nc 227 as those of a renunciant friend) [2.3.3], has the following qualities:

⁸⁶ See *Sīla samādhi paññā* = SD 21.6.

⁸⁷ See **Ti Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235) = SD 24.10c (2.1)

⁸⁸ See **Ekā, dasaka Cetanā’karaṇīya S** (A 11.2) = SD 33.3b (1.3.2).

⁸⁹ See **Udumbarikā Siha, nāda S** (D 25) @ SD 1.4 (2.1)(7).

⁹⁰ DhA 192-197; Vism 263-270. For a description of the immeasurable or divine abodes with similes, see **Tevijja S** (D 13.76-79/1:251) = SD 1.8. On the divine abodes with the elements, see **Vuṭṭha Vass’āvāsa S** (A 9.11.4/4:375 f) = SD 28.21. On how the divine abodes limit karma, see **Brahma, vihāra S** (A 10.206/5:299) = SD 2.10.

⁹¹ DhA 2:111, 4:111; SnA 1:341; ThaA 2:102, 252, 3:6 (glosses *mitte...pāpake* as *akalyāṇa,mitte*);

⁹² (M 2.19/1:11 = SD 30.3) = (A 6.58.6/3:389 = SD 62.1).

⁹³ *Lāmake dussīle mitta, paṭirūpake amitte* (MA 1:80 = AA 3:389), my own tr. See Collins 1987:57 & n.

(1) He is loving	(<i>piya</i>).
(2) He is pleasant	(<i>manapa</i>).
(3) He is respectful	(<i>garu</i>).
(4) He is worthy of esteem	(<i>bhāvanīya</i>).
(5) He is dutiful [keeps to his word]	(<i>vatta</i>).
(6) He is patient in speech	(<i>vacana-k,khama</i>).
(7) He is profound in his words, not exhorting groundlessly	(<i>katham kattā no ca aṭṭhāne niyojeti</i>).

(A 7.36/4:30) = SD 64.4; also at Nc 227 [3.3.1.1]

It should be noted here, too, that while *the spiritual friend* may be a teacher or mentor, the pupil or mentee may not be such a positive person (at least at the start). Collins (1987:57) quotes **the Dhammapada Commentary** account of the monk Channa who reviles Sāriputta and Moggallāna, although they are his spiritual friends.⁹⁴ The point here is that spiritual friendship, the relationship between a spiritual teacher and his pupil or mentee, need not always be a harmonious or smooth one. A good spiritual friend, however, is skillful in inspiring or maturing a difficult charge to become a spiritual friend, too. Then, the spiritual friendship is total. In short, the underlying purpose of spiritual friendship is to make spiritual friends of others, too.

3.2 “SPIRITUAL FRIEND” AS A DESCRIPTIVE COMPOUND (KARMADHĀRAYA).

3.2.0 Descriptive compound. A descriptive compound (Skt *karma,dhāraya*) is a class of compounds which has the sense of “A that is B” for nouns, and “B expressed in the manner of A” for adjectives, where A is the first constituent, and B the second. Basically, there are these three kinds of descriptive compounds, that is,

- a noun with an adjective as its first constituent and a noun as the second, eg, *mahā,purisa* (“great man, superman”);
- a noun with an attributive noun as the first constituent and a noun as the second, eg, *nara,sīha* (“man-lion, lion of a man”); or
- an adverb as the first constituent and an adjective as the second, eg, *adhamma,kara* (“acting unjustly.”)

As such, we can parse *kalyāṇa,mitta* (as a noun) either as “adjective + noun,” that is, “a good/spiritual friend,” or as “attributive noun + noun,” that is, “a friend of the good.” This second sense actually makes the compound a tatpuruṣa (a dependent compound), too (glossed as *kalyaṇassa mitto*, that is, one who points out what is good).

Collins divides “spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa,mitta*) as a karmadharaya or descriptive compound into these four categories:⁹⁵

- (1) the Buddha, as the ideal spiritual friend; [3.2.1]
- (2) other arhat monastics as “exemplars”; [3.2.2]
- (3) a monastic or lay disciple who “advises and encourages”; [3.2.3]
- (4) a giver of a meditation-subject (*kammaṭṭhāna,dāyaka*). [3.2.4]

Let us look at each of these four kinds of spiritual friends in turn.

3.2.1 The Buddha as spiritual friend

3.2.1.1 THE BUDDHA IS THE IDEAL SPIRITUAL FRIEND. In a number of discourses—namely, **the Kal-yāṇa,mitta Appamāda Sutta** (S 3.18), **the Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2), **the (Kalyāṇa,mittatā) Sariputta Sutta** (S 45.3)—record the Buddha as declaring himself as the ideal spiritual friend, thus:

⁹⁴ **Channa-t,thera V** (DhA 6.3/2:110-112); Cv 11.1.12-16 = V 2:290-292; cf D 2:154,17-22; ThaA 1:165-167.

⁹⁵ See Collins 1987:57-63: where he restricts himself to only “monks” (as in nos 2 & 3), I have used a broader term, “monastics” to include nuns, too.

aspects.”⁹⁹ The Buddha wisdom and compassion are unparalleled. In terms of spiritual friendship in the role of a giver of meditation-subject (*kammaṭṭhāna dāyaka*), for example, the Buddha always gives the right one, as attested in **the story of the goldsmith’s son**.

He is a pupil of Sāriputta who, thinking that the young man might need to rid himself of lust, gives him the subject of the impurities of the body (*asubha kammaṭṭhāna*). Despite his encouragement, the young monk fails in his meditation. When the matter is brought before the Buddha, he explains that the goldsmith’s son has for a long time been working on reddish gold turning them into flowers. As such, the Buddha gives him a kasina meditation on a red flower. The youth succeeds in his meditation, and is liberated in due course. The Buddha explains that “As regards the knowledge of thoughts and inclinations, this is only within the range of the Buddhas who have fulfilled the perfections and attained omniscience, making the ten-thousandfold world-system exult.”¹⁰⁰

3.2.1.3 THE BUDDHA AS THE IDEAL SPIRITUAL GUIDE. Another point highlighted by Collins in this section on the Buddha as spiritual friend is the kind of topics that he would teach his disciples, namely, the “ten bases of discourse” (*dasa kathā, vatthu*). Collins helpfully gives us a number of the important contexts of this teaching,¹⁰¹ some details of which I have added.

In **the Kosala Sutta 2** (A 10.30), Pasenadi, the king of Kosala, sees the Buddha in his cell and shows his profound devotion and gratitude (apparently for being his spiritual friend).¹⁰² Amongst the qualities that Pasenadi praises the Buddha for is that he is one who admonishes on the ten bases of discourse, listed in **the Mahā Suññata Sutta** (M 122), as follows:

Such talk concerning austerity [effacement], conducing as a support for the mind’s release, and that leads to complete disillusionment, to fading away (of lust), to ending (of suffering), to inner peace, to higher knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana; that is to say,

- (1) talk about wanting little,
- (2) talk about contentment,
- (3) talk about solitude,
- (4) talk about aloofness from company,
- (5) talk about arousing effort,
- (6) talk about moral virtue,
- (7) talk about mental concentration,
- (8) talk about wisdom,
- (9) talk about liberation,
- (10) talk about the knowledge and vision of liberation. (M 122.12b/3:114) = SD 11.4¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Collins, commenting on Ñānamoli’s tr of this passage (“it is only the Fully Enlightened One who possesses all the aspects of the Good Friend,” *Vism*:Ñ 99), thinks that Nānamoli takes “*yeva* in a strong sense as ‘only,’ which may not be necessary” (1987:70 n24). Collins goes on to quote Pe Maung Tin’s tr (*The Path of Purity*, 1923-31), noting that he simply has: “The Buddha supreme himself was a good friend endowed with all qualities.” (114).

¹⁰⁰ *Āsayānusaya, ñānaṃ nāma’etaṃ pāramiyo pūretvā dasa, sahasi, loka, dhātum unnādetvā sabbaññutaṃ pattānaṃ buddhānaṃ yeva visayo ti. Savaṇṇa, kāra-t, thera Vatthu* (DhA 20.9/3:425-429).

¹⁰¹ Collins 1987:57 f.

¹⁰² Comy thinks that Pasenadi is grateful to the Buddha for having taught him to cut down on food consumption, so that his weight is healthily reduced: see **Doṇa, pāka S** (S 3.3/1:81 f) = SD 76.2.

¹⁰³ These *dasa kathā, vatthu* are listed in **Ratha, vinīta S** (M 24.2c/1:145), **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122.12/3:113); **Kosala S 2** (10.30.9/5:67); **Vatthu Kathā S 1** (A 10.49/5:129). In **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122), this list is preceded by the stock, “Such talk concerning austerity [effacement], conducing as a support for mind’s release, and that leads to complete disillusionment, to fading away (of lust), to ending (of suffering), to inner peace, to higher knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana; that is to say,…” (WT *Yā ca kho ayam, ānanda, kathā abhisallekhikā ceto, vinīvaraṇa, sappāyā* [Ce Se Ke *ceto, vicāraṇa, asappāyā*; Ee *ceto, vivaraṇa, sappāyā*] *ekantanibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upa-samāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattati, seyyathidam*) (M 122.12/3:113) = SD 11.4. Cf (**Sāriputta**) **Susīma S** (S 2.29/1:63). Alluded to as a quality of a spiritual friend at **Vism 1.49/19**. Some of these qualities are mentioned separately, eg **Jiṇṇa S** (S 16.5) says that this passage constitutes Mahā Kassapa’s lion-roar regarding his

In this connection, **Buddhaghosa** speaks of the three kinds of “resort” (*gocara*), that is, a psychosocial environment that a monastic or meditator should resort to, that is, proper resort by way of support (*upanissaya gocara*), proper resort by way guarding (*ārakkha gocara*), and proper resort by way of mental connection (or “anchoring”) (*upanibandha gocara*). The first kind of resort (which acts as a spiritual support for the spiritual life), is a “spiritual friend endowed with the virtues of the ten bases of discourse” (*dasa, kathā, vatthu, guṇa, samannagata kalyāṇa, mitta*).¹⁰⁴

The Cariyā Piṭaka Commentary speaks, in similar terms, of the four causes for a person’s great aspirations (*mahā’bhinīhāra*) to become a Bodhisattva, that is, the future Buddha. Firstly, the Great Man (*mahā, purisa*) (as the Commentator calls him) is naturally endowed with the spiritual support (*upanissaya*) through his serving past Buddhas. Secondly, he is compassionate by nature. Thirdly, he is capable of undergoing any kind of hardship for as long as it takes, without his being disenchanted with samsaric sufferings, all for the sake of the welfare of other beings. And, fourthly, he relies on spiritual friends, who restrain him from evil and establish him in the good.¹⁰⁵

Clearly such spiritual friends would include the various Buddhas of the past that the Great Man has served. The teachings he receives from these Buddhas—though they do not bring him to attain arhathood—builds up his moral virtue and wisdom. And in his lives where there is no Buddha, he is ever ready to learn from various wise teachers who would teach him moral virtue, mental training and wisdom available at that time. All such experiences help the Great Man evolve as a Bodhisattva into a fully self-awakened Buddha.

3.2.2 Other arhats as exemplars and spiritual friends.

3.2.2.1 AN ARHAT AS A SPIRITUAL FRIEND OF MONASTICS. The early Buddhist texts have many accounts of spiritual friendship. Indeed, we could even say that the early Buddhist texts *are* a record of the spiritual friendship of the Buddha and his saints (monastic and lay) *with the world*, especially with those who listen to the Dharma or come in touch with it. After all, spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life [3.2.1.1].

Although the Buddha himself is the ideal spiritual friend for any of his disciples, it is the Dharma that defines this spiritual friendship. Since all the saints attain this same Dharma, it is just as well that the Buddha’s disciples take the saints as their spiritual friends. In **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141), for example, the Buddha exhorts his disciples to emulate Sāriputta and Moggallāna, thus:

Emulate Sāriputta and Moggallāna, bhikkhus! Associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna, bhikkhus! They are wise and helpful¹⁰⁶ to their companions in the holy life. Sāriputta is like a child-

forest-dwelling (S 16.5/2:202); so too in **Mahā Gosiṅga S** (M 32), he describes the ideal monk in the same terms; **Piṇḍola S** (U 4.6/42 f); **Vaṅganta,putta Upasena Tha** (Tha 581).

¹⁰⁴ The second resort (guarding) is that of sense-restraint (Nm 474), and the third (mental connection) is that of the 4 focusses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) (S 5:148). Vism 1.49-51/19.

¹⁰⁵ CA 285, 287 f, 311. For tr, see Bodhi (tr), *The All-embracing Net of Views*, Kandy, 1978:266-269.

¹⁰⁶ “Wise and helpful,” *pañḍitā bhikkhū anuggāhakā*. In **Devadaha S** (S 22.2/3:5) and **Cunda S** (S 47.13/5:162), Sāriputta alone is mentioned so. SA gives two kinds of help (*anuggaha*): help with material things and help with the Dharma (SA 2:256). **Vinaya** (on the nuns’ monastic code) defines “should not help” (*n’eva anuggaṇheyya*) as “should neither herself help (her pupil) with the recitation, questioning, exhortation and instruction” (V 4:325; cf V 1:50). Clearly, this refers to help with the Dharma, as evident in the next sentence. IB Horner: “It also appears that when *anugga[ṇ]hāti* is used in relation to the attitude of a more experience member of the Order to a less experienced one, it carries a technical or semi-technical sense” (M:H 3:295 n1). On Sāriputta’s compassion, see Intro (2-3) above.

giver [mother]; Moggallāna is like the child's nurse.¹⁰⁷ Sāriputta trains others for the fruit of streamwinning, and Moggallāna for the supreme goal.¹⁰⁸ (M 141.5/3:348) = SD 11.11

This is reiterated in **the Duka Nipāta** (“the book of twos”) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, where pairs of disciples are given as examples and criteria, “the scales and measure” (*tulā...pamāṇam*), of discipleship, and whom practising disciples should aspire to emulate:

For monks, they should aspire to be like the monks Sāriputta and Moggallāna. (A 2.12.1/1:88)
For nuns, they should aspire to be like the nuns Khemā and Uppala,vaṇṇā. (A 2.12.2/1:88)

3.2.2.2 THE ARHAT AS A SPIRITUAL FRIEND OF LAYMEN. The discourses also record cases of arhats who are spiritual friends of laymen. The best known case is that of **Citta the householder** (Citta Gaha-pati) of Macchika.sanḍa, who is well known for his friendship with various monks. One day, seeing the elder Mahānāma (one of the first five monks) on almsround, he is impressed with the elder's calm and radiant demeanour. He invites the elder to his park, the Ambaṭak'ārāma, and there offers him almsfood. After listening to a detailed exposition on the six sense-bases (*saḷāyatana, vibhatti*) expounded by the elder, Citta becomes a streamwinner (AA 1:387). On another occasion, Sāriputta and Moggallāna visit Citta, and after listening to Sāriputta, Citta becomes a non-returner.¹⁰⁹ Citta himself becomes a spiritual friend to the monastics. [3.2.3.2]

The Bakkula Sutta (M 124) records how the elder Bakkula's old friend, Acela Kassapa (the naked ascetic),¹¹⁰ impressed at the elder's spiritual attainments, joins the order, and later becomes an arhat.¹¹¹ However, *his namesake* (another Acela Kassapa) is also said to have been a friend of Citta the householder, on account of whom, he too renounces the world and becomes an arhat [3.2.3.2].¹¹²

3.2.3 The monastic or the lay disciple as a spiritual friend

3.2.3.1 THE MONASTIC AS A SPIRITUAL FRIEND OF MONASTICS. The best known *non-arhat* spiritual friend of the monastics is the streamwinner **Ānanda**, who is famously the Buddha's personal attendant during the last 25 years of his life.¹¹³ Although the Buddha himself requests Ānanda to be his personal attendant (*upaṭṭhāka*), Ānanda only agrees on **eight conditions**.

The first four conditions are of a negative nature, that is, no perks from the Buddha's (1) alms-offerings, (2) gifts of robes, (3) shelter, or (4) being included in his personal invitations (such as to an alms-offering). The second four conditions are positive, namely,

- (5) that Ānanda is allowed to receive invitations on behalf of the Buddha;
- (6) he could bring people who have come from the outlying areas to see the Buddha;
- (7) he could consult the Buddha at any time should he have any doubt; and
- (8) if he misses a teaching, the Buddha would repeat it to him. (AA 1:293 f)

The significance of these eight conditions are quite obvious. Firstly, Ānanda would not be accused of favouritism or living on perks on account of his position. Secondly, and more importantly, the positive

¹⁰⁷ *Seyyathā pi bhikkhave janettī evaṃ Sāriputto bhikkhave, seyyathā pi jātassa āpādetā evaṃ Moggallāno*. Here the drift of the similes is that Sāriputta inspires or initiates others into the spiritual life, and Moggallāna nurtures and trains them further, as expressed in the following sentence.

¹⁰⁸ *Sāriputto bhikkhave sotāpatti,phale vineti, Moggallāno uttam'atthe*. Here *uttam'attha*, “highest goal,” refers to arhathood. Sāriputta makes it a point to train the newly-ordained monks rather than those who are already more spiritually developed. On his compassion, see SD 11.11 Intro (3) above.

¹⁰⁹ AA 1:387; DhA 2:74 ad Dh 303. On Citta the householder, see also **Laymen saints** = SD 8.6 (8.3).

¹¹⁰ On the term *acela*, see SD 18.15(1.1).

¹¹¹ M 124/3:124-128 = SD 3.15.

¹¹² On the problem of Acela Kassapa's identity, see **Bakkula S** (M 128) = SD 3.15 Intro (1.2).

¹¹³ Tha 1041-1043. See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16.5.14/2:144) = SD 9.

conditions assure that all those who wish to meet the Buddha could do so, and as for Ānanda himself, he would fully benefit from the Buddha's teachings.

On account of Ānanda's dedication to the Buddha and his conscientiousness in learning the Dharma as the Buddha's attendant, he has effectively preserved a significant section of the early Buddhist scripture. Those texts that were recited by him and were canonized at the First Buddhist Council¹¹⁴ open with the statement, "Thus have I heard" (*evam me sutam*), and they constitute the ancient collections called the "four Nikāyas," that is, the Dīgha Nikāya, the Majjhima Nikāya, the Saṃyutta Nikāya and the Aṅguttara Nikāya.¹¹⁵

Ānanda is not only a wise teacher and spiritual friend to many monks, but he has a very engaging character. In fact, he is so popular with the fourfold assembly that they often ask to meet him and hear him speak. The Buddha himself praises Ānanda in this connection, comparing his charisma to that of a universal monarch.¹¹⁶

Ānanda greatly benefits from his spiritual friendship with the Buddha, so that even as a streamwinner, he has great wisdom. In **the Sīla-b, bata Sutta** (A 3.78), the Buddha declares that "Ānanda is still on the path of higher training, yet it is hard to find someone who is his equal in wisdom."¹¹⁷

After the Buddha's passing (Sāriputta and Moggallāna having passed away only weeks before),¹¹⁸ Ānanda, already an arhat, reflects on the deaths of his senior spiritual friends, thus:

<i>Ye purāṇā atītā te</i>	The old ones have passed away.
<i>navehi na sameti me</i>	I do not get on with the new ones.
<i>svajja ekova jhāyāmi</i>	Today I meditate all alone,
<i>vass 'upeto 'va pakkhimā</i>	like a bird gone to its nest. (Tha 1036)

The Commentary glosses "the new ones" (*nava*) in the line, "I do not get on with the new ones," as referring to "the novice monks" (*navaka*, ThaA 3:120). However, it would be rather uncharacteristic of Ānanda not to connect with such monks after being the best public relations officer that the sangha has. It is more likely here, I think, he is referring to those newly ordained monks or new generations of monks (after the Buddha) who are not very serious about the training.¹¹⁹

3.2.3.2 THE LAYMAN AS A SPIRITUAL FRIEND OF MONASTICS. In **the Duka Nipāta** ("the book of twos") of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, pairs of disciples are given as examples and criteria, as "the scales and measure" (*tulā...pamāṇam*), of discipleship, and whom practising disciples should aspire to emulate:

For laymen, they should aspire to be like laymen Citta the householder [3.2.2.2] and Hatthaka Āḷavaka [of Āḷavī]¹²⁰ (A 2.12.3/1:88).

For laywomen, they should aspire to be like the laywomen Khujj'uttarā¹²¹ and Uttarā the mother of Nanda [Nanda, mātā] (of Veḷukaṅṭa)¹²² (A 2.12.4/1:88 f)

¹¹⁴ VA 4-30 (tr NA Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline*, 1962: 27); DA 2:413, 3:897; MA 4:114; SA 2:130; AA 2:10.

¹¹⁵ Ānanda is said to be foremost of those monks with a great memory (A 1:24 f). On the 4 Nikāyas, see **Skillful means** = SD 30.8 (4.1.2).

¹¹⁶ D 16.5.6/2:145 f = SD 9; also at **Abbhuta Dhamma S 3** (A 4.129/2:132); but not in the Tib Dulva (Vinaya).

¹¹⁷ A 3.78/1:225 = SD 71.10. Cf **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 9.5.14/2:114) = SD 9.

¹¹⁸ Sāriputta, knowing that he would die in a week's time, takes leave of the Buddha and visits his mother at Nāla, gāmaka (S 47, 12/5:161), and passes away on the full moon day of Kattikā (Oct-Nov) (Tha 1158-1161; DA 2:549 f; SA 3:214-221; J 1:391). **Moggallāna**, his closest friend and the Buddha's left hand monk, passes away a fortnight later on the new moon day of Māgasira (Nov-Dec), 5 months before the Buddha (J 522/5:125-127; DhA 10.7/3:65-71).

¹¹⁹ We are reminded of the case of the elderly Subhadda, who joins the order in old age, and actually rejoices at the Buddha's passing away: see **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16.6.20/2:161 f) = SD 9.

¹²⁰ On Hatthaka Āḷavaka, see **(Hatthaka) Āḷavaka S** (A 3.34/1:136-138) = SD 4.8..

¹²¹ On Khujj'uttarā, see **Laymen saints** = SD 8.6 (8.2).

In the **Eka,putta Sutta** (A 17.23/2:235 f), the Buddha says that a faithful lay disciple would rightly implore her only son to be like Citta and Hatthaka. In the **Eka,dhitu Sutta** (A 17.24), the faithful female disciple would rightly implore her only daughter to be like Khujj'uttarā and Nanda,mātā Veḷukaṇṭakiyā. The fact that they are presented in pairs is vital in emphasizing spiritual friendship.¹²³

The most famous case of a layman acting as a spiritual friend to the monks is that of **Citta the householder**, declared by the Buddha to be the foremost Dharma speaker amongst his laymen disciples (A 1:26)¹²⁴ [3.2.2.2]. There are a number of discourses that recount his teaching the Dharma *to the monks* and is applauded for it (S 41.1, 41.5, 41.7).

The Saññojana Sutta (S 41.1) is a short discourse to a group of monastic elders (*thera*) by Citta, who clarifies the nature of a mental fetter, that is, it is neither the sense-faculty nor its sense-object, but “the fetter here is the desire-or-lust that arises therein dependent on both.”¹²⁵

Two discourses—the **Kāmabhū Suttas 1 and 2** (S 41.5+6)—record Citta’s admonitions to the monk Kāmabhū. In the **Kāmabhū Sutta 1** (S 41.5), the monk Kāmabhū asks Citta about the meaning of a verse of uplift (*udāna*) which the Buddha utters to Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya (U 7.5).¹²⁶ After pondering a moment, Citta explains the verse.¹²⁷ **The Kāmabhū Sutta 2** (S 41.6) records Citta’s detailed explanation of the three kinds of formations (bodily, verbal and mental) in answer to Kāmabhū’s question.¹²⁸

The Go,datta Sutta (S 42.7) records the monk Go,datta’s question on the immeasurable liberation of mind, the liberation of mind through nothingness, the liberation of mind through emptiness, and the signless liberation of mind,¹²⁹ and Citta’s answer. Such discourses attest to Citta’s deep experience of meditation and his understanding of them.¹³⁰

In the **Acela Kassapa Sutta** (S 41.9), the naked ascetic Kassapa, an old friend of Citta [3.2.2.2], confesses that his 30 years of naked asceticism is fruitless. When Citta says that during that same period he is able to attain the four dhyanas and the fruit of non-return, Kassapa is impressed, and joins the order as a result.¹³¹ Humour is also evident while Citta is on his deathbed. His relatives think he is babbling away when he is actually addressing some local deities who have befriended him, and admonishing them on impermanence. Before taking his last breath, Citta exhorts his relatives in generosity. Understandably, he is regarded as the ideal layman (A 1:88, 2:164, 3:451).

3.2.3.3 A MEDITATION COACH. Ideally, a spiritual friend is one who inspires and sustains us in mental cultivation so that we progress in our meditation, and in due course become emotionally independent individuals. In later literature, a spiritual friend seems to play an almost ritualized role as “a giver of a meditation-subject” [3.2.4]. However, various discourses attest to the fact that the Buddha often closely monitors the progress of his disciples’ meditation, especially where they need assistance. Where necessary, he would visit them¹³² or appear before them¹³³ to help them in their practice.

In due course, the Commentaries identified various “patron saints” of meditation, especially those individual arhats who were known to make exceptional effort in overcoming the five mental hindrances. In a

¹²² On Uttarā Nanda,mātā, see **Nanda,māta S** (A 7.50/4:63-67) = SD 70.5; DhA 17.3/3:308-313; also **Why some marriages fail** = SD 3.8 (4).

¹²³ A 17.24/2:236. See further **Laymen saints** = SD 8.6 (7). On the spiritual friendship of the monks, see **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89.11+12/2:120 f) = SD 64.10.

¹²⁴ On Citta the householder, see further **Gilāna Dassana S** (S 41.10/4:303 f) = SD 16.16 Intro (1).

¹²⁵ S 41.1/4:281-283 = SD 32.11.

¹²⁶ **Lakuṇṭaka S = Lakuṇṭaka Bhaddiya S 3** (U 7.5/76) = SD 71.8.

¹²⁷ S 41.5/4:291 f = SD 71.9.

¹²⁸ S 41.6/4:293-295 = SD 48.7.

¹²⁹ On these liberations, see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43.30-34/1:296-298) = SD 30.2.

¹³⁰ S 41.7/4:295-297 = SD 60.4.

¹³¹ For details, see **The layman and dhyana** = SD 8.5(8a).

¹³² As in the case of Meghiya: **Meghiya S** (A 9.3/4:354-358 ≈ U 4.1/34-37) = SD 34.2.

¹³³ As in the cases of Anuruddha, in **Anuruddha Mahā,vitakka S** (A 8.30/4:228-235) = SD 19.5, and of Moggallāna, in **Pacalā S** (A 7.58/4:85-91) = SD 4.11.

well known commentarial analysis of the mental hindrances and how they are overcome, the following arhats are upheld as exemplars of spiritual friends for those who need to overcome a particular hindrance (this list is based on the Sammoha,vinodanī, the Vibhaṅga Commentary):

<u>Mental hindrance</u>	<u>abandoned by associating with spiritual friends like</u>
(1) Lust	Tissa the foulness-meditator (Asubha,kammika Tissa). ¹³⁴
(2) Ill will	Assa,gutta (lovingkindness cultivation). ¹³⁵
(3) Sloth and torpor	Mahā Kassapa (foremost of monks practising austerity).
(4) Restlessness and remorse	Upāli (expert in the Vinaya).
(5) Doubt	Vakkali (foremost of monks with faith). (DA 777-782; MA 1:281-286; ItA 2:176-182; VbhA 269-275)

3.2.4 A giver of a meditation-subject. Buddhaghosa, in his **Visuddhi,magga**, states that the Buddha is the ideal spiritual friend as a giver of meditation-subject (*kammaṭṭhāna dāyaka*). After his death, the meditator should approach the following persons, in order of hierarchical priority, for instructions (as long as they exist), namely: any of the 80 great disciples,¹³⁶ an arhat who is a dhyana-attainer, a non-returner, a once-returner, a streamwinner, a worldly dhyana-attainer, a master of the Tipiṭaka, a master of two Piṭakas, a master of one Piṭaka, one familiar with a single collection (*saṅgīti*)¹³⁷ with its Commentary, that is, one who is conscientious (*lajjī*)—for, such a person would preserve the “teachers’ opinions” (*ācariya,-matika*), rather than his own.

Then, Buddhaghosa makes a curious remark. He adds that all these teachers, beginning with the arhat “will explain only the path they have themselves attained; but with one who is learned who has approached these teachers, would obtain answers with a purified mind (*visodhit’attā*), and so will explain the meditation subject in a broad manner” quoting the suttas, and so on. (Vism 3.60-73/98-101)¹³⁸

RATIONALIZATION OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP. We see here what sociologists would identify as an attempt at *rationalizing* spiritual friendship, that is, social behaviour being motivated or defined, not by morality, emotion or even tradition, but by certain purposes or goals (not necessarily religious ones).¹³⁹ It should be remembered that Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhi,magga* was a thesis of sorts that he had to submit to the Mahāvihāra in 5th century Sri Lanka. The Mahāvihāra, founded by king Devanampiya Tissa (247-207 BCE), centred around Anurādhapura, and was a very well-structured urban monastic church.

Understandably, Buddhaghosa, if he were to gain approval for his thesis (so that he could have access to the Suttas and Commentaries preserved by the Mahāvihāra), it must reflect its power-structure. We could the apparent contradiction above as a disguised attempt by him to play down the hierarchy by promoting a more religiously qualified way of teaching the students of the time. Ironically, such an attempt by Buddhaghosa only encouraged and supported a more academic approach (*gantha,dhura*) at the cost of meditation training (*vipassanā*).

In such a system, where a meditator, as a rule, must consult only approved teachers in the hierarchy, means that the meditation becomes *ritualized* as an external practice, even a status symbol, for the adoration and approval of the affluent or powerful laity. Indeed, a meditator might even be expected to “attain”

¹³⁴ Vism 1.54-55/20. Interestingly, the commentators fail to mention Ānanda here, as recorded in (**Vaṅgīsa**) **Ānanda S** (S 8.4/1:188) = SD 16.12 & **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.10/5:154-157) = SD 24.2.

¹³⁵ DA 3:779; MA 1:283, 3:276; SA 3:166; AA 1:48; ItA 2:180, 254.

¹³⁶ ThaA 3:205. See **Aṭṭha,puggala S** (A 8.59) = SD 15.10a (7).

¹³⁷ Here, presumably a Nikāya is meant.

¹³⁸ This section of Vism is of some psychosocial interest as Buddhaghosa openly hints at how to look for a good teacher and the problems that such a seeker is like to face (such as those who are hostile to that teacher).

¹³⁹ “Rationalization” is a central concept in classical sociology, and was introduced by Max Weber in trying to explain how western society became more modernized, so that even religiosity served the material goals of society: see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationalization_\(sociology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationalization_(sociology)).

certain kinds of prescribed meditative “states” (such as one of the five kinds of rapture),¹⁴⁰ or that discursive thought occurs in “dhyana,” so that we should reflect on impermanence, etc, while *still* in dhyana.¹⁴¹

If we carefully read Buddhaghosa’s advice on how we should find a meditation teacher, he clearly hints at some internal strife or rivalry even amongst the teachers of his time. He advises that we should not even stop to rest, but go directly to the teacher. His reason for this is interesting:

Why? If there are bhikkhus there who are hostile to the teacher, they might ask him the reason for his coming and speak dispraise of the teacher, saying “You are done for if you go to him”; they might make him regret his coming and turn him back. So he should ask for the teacher’s dwelling and go straight there.
(Vism 3.67/99 f; Nāṇamoli’s tr)

This remark might be true of Buddhaghosa’s time in 5th-century Sri Lanka, but the situation today is much more complicated. Cultish teachers are the norm, and good meditation teachers are difficult to find. It would be wise to ask around regarding such teachers before approaching them ourselves. The best people are of course the students of those teachers themselves, and we should be wise enough to read or profile these individuals as to whether they wholesomely or unwholesomely reflect on these teachers. We might also learn quite a bit about the personality and spirituality of these teachers from ex-students.

Only then, if we feel quite confident in the teacher’s quality, we should approach him in the spirit of **the Vīmaṃsaka Sutta** (M 47), where the Buddha invites us to investigate whether he himself has any greed, hate or delusion in any of his deeds, words or thoughts,¹⁴² and **the Thāna Sutta** (A 4.192), which teaches us how to know the true character of a person.¹⁴³

3.3 “SPIRITUAL FRIEND” AS AN ADJECTIVAL COMPOUND (BAHUVRIHI)

3.3.1 *Kalyāna,mitta* as “one who has as spiritual friend.”

3.3.1.1 SUMITTA THERA,GĀTHĀ (Tha 502-506). Often enough, we can translate *kalyāna,mitta* as a bahuvrihi (P *bahibbīhi*; Skt *bahuvrīhī*), that is, an adjectival compound, that is, as “one who has a spiritual friend.” Let us first look at five of the verses of **the Sumitta Thera,gāthā**, especially Tha 505:

1	<i>Akkodhano ’nupanāhī amāyo ritta,pesuṇo sa ve tādisako bhikkhu evaṃ pecca na socati</i>	Without anger, without resentment, undeceitful, free from slander, indeed, a monk <i>such as this</i> , grieves not when he has thus passed away.	(Tha 502)
2	<i>Akkodhano ’nupanāhī amāyo ritta,pesuṇo gutta,dvāro sadā bhikkhu evaṃ pecca na socati</i>	Without anger, without resentment, undeceitful, free from slander, the monk <i>who is ever guarded in his senses</i> , grieves not when he has thus passed away.	(Tha 503)
3	<i>Akkodhano ’nupanāhī amāyo ritta,pesuṇo kalyāna,sīlo so bhikkhu evaṃ pecca na socati</i>	Without anger, without resentment, undeceitful, free from slander, the monk <i>who has morally good virtue</i> , grieves not when he has thus passed away.	(Tha 504)
4	<i>Akkodhano ’nupanāhī amāyo ritta,pesuṇo kalyāna,mitto so bhikkhu evaṃ pecca na socati</i>	Without anger, without resentment, undeceitful, free from slander, the monk <i>who has a spiritual friend</i> grieves not when he has thus passed away.	(Tha 505)

¹⁴⁰ This is a commentarial list: Vism 4.94-99/143 f; see **Dhyana** = SD 8.4 (6.3) & **Bhāvanā** = SD 15.12 (9.3).

¹⁴¹ On this last point, see **Buddha discovers dhyana** = SD 33.1b esp (6.2).

¹⁴² M 47/1:317-320 = SD 35.6.

¹⁴³ A 4.193/2:187-190 = SD 14.12.

<p>5 <i>Akkodhano ’nupanāhī</i> <i>amāyo ritta,pesuṇo</i> <i>kalyāṇa,pañño</i> <i>so bhikkhu</i> <i>evaṃ pecca na socati</i></p>	<p>Without anger, without resentment, undeceitful, free from slander, the monk <i>who has wisdom regarding the good</i>, grieves not when he has thus passed away [in the hereafter].</p>	<p>(Tha 506)</p>
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A few scholars¹⁴⁴ have pointed out that in such contexts, *kalyāṇa,mitta* should be translated as “who has a spiritual friend.” Collins, in fact, makes a useful observation, that the three stanzas, **Tha 504-506**, actually correspond to the three trainings of moral virtue (*sīla*), mental concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*).¹⁴⁵ Tha 505 evokes the monk as a meditator; as such, argues Collins, he should be a “one who has spiritual friend.” Apparently, Collins also thinks that the semantic structure of the lines c of the five stanzas have the sense of “one who has...”

Bodhi, in a similar vein, proposes 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).¹⁴⁶

However, some might say all this is simply scholarly pedantry—not that it is problematic, but there are other possibilities—especially, if we appreciate the early Buddhist teachings, where the spirit is always held above the letter. In other words, we should look at *the context* of the term or phrase, and then tease out its sense. In this case, from the flow of ideas in these five stanzas, we can safely say—because these stanzas are about the special qualities of a spiritually mature monk—that it actually makes better sense to simply render *kalyāṇa,mitta* as “spiritual friend,” so that the stanza reads:

<p>Without anger, without resentment, the monk <i>who is a spiritual friend</i></p>	<p>undeceitful, free from slander, grieves not when he has thus passed away.</p>	<p>(Tha 505)</p>
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That is to say, when a such a spiritual friend dies, he is no more reborn (free from suffering), or reborn in a happy rebirth.

Furthermore, the Commentary explains *kalyāṇa,mitta* as having these qualities listed in **the Piya Mitta Sutta 2** (A 7.36) (which it quotes), thus:

<p><i>Piyo garu,bhāvaniyo</i> <i>vattā ca vacana-k,khamo</i> <i>gambhīraṇ ca kathaṃ kattā</i> <i>no ca-ṭ-ṭhāne niyojaye ti</i></p>	<p>He is one who is loving, respectful, worthy of esteem, one who admonishes, and patient when admonished, profound in words, and not exhorting groundlessly. (A 7.36/4:32) = SD 34.14</p>
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Note especially the last line (“not exhorting groundlessly”), which clearly refers to a teacher or a spiritual friend to another. Moreover, the Thera.gāthā Commentary adds, “He is a spiritual friend on account of having thus clarified (*vibhāvita*) regarding this, that is, the characteristics of a spiritual friend” (ThaA 2:211).¹⁴⁷

3.3.1.2 THE SALLEKHA SUTTA (M 8). Collins gives a further example quoted from **the Sallekha Sutta** (M 8), where *kalyāṇa,mitta* is apparently best translated as “who has a spiritual friend,” or to that effect.¹⁴⁸ This term *kalyāṇa,mitta* appears in five related places: let us look at the first one, where a medi-

¹⁴⁴ Such as Steven Collins, 1987:63 and Bodhi, S:B 1524, 1890 n6.

¹⁴⁵ On the 3 trainings, see **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235) = SD 24.10c.

¹⁴⁶ See **Kalyāṇa,mitta Appamāda S** (S 3.18) = SD 34.3 (2.1).

¹⁴⁷ *Evaṃ vibhāvita,lakkhaṇo kalyāṇa,mitto etassāti kalyāṇa,mitto.* (ThaA 2:211)

¹⁴⁸ M 8/1:40-47 = SD 51.2.

tator reflects in 44 ways that he will not follow the wrong ways of others, thus (*the last eleven reflections are abridged here*):¹⁴⁹

(34) Others may be hard to admonish (<i>dubbaca</i>);	here, we shall be easy to be admonished (<i>suvaca</i>).
(35) Others may have <u>evil friends</u> ;	here, we have <u>spiritual friends</u> .
(36) Others may be heedless;	here, we shall be heedful.
(37) Others may lack faith;	here, we shall have faith.
(38) Others may be morally shameless;	here, we shall have moral shame.
(39) Others may lack moral fear;	here we shall have moral fear.
(40) Others may have little learning;	here, we shall have much learning.
[Others may lack listening;	here, we shall listen much.]
(41) Others may be lazy;	here; we shall exert effort.
(42) Others may be unmindful;	here, we shall be established in mindfulness.
(43) Others may lack wisdom;	here, we shall be accomplished in wisdom.
(44) Others may cling to self-view, grasping them tenaciously, have difficulty in giving them up;	here, we shall not cling to self-view, not grasping them tenacious, easily giving them up.

(M 8.12/1:43 = SD 51.2; see also M 8.13-16/1:43-46)

These reflections or qualities listed here are clearly those of a meditator in training. In fact, these teachings are given to Mahā Cunda (Sāriputta’s younger brother) for this training. From the list of reflections, we can deduce that Mahā Cunda is a student or learner, and as such should be one “with a spiritual friend,” as stated in reflection (35).

Another interesting point to note is that the last eight reflections (37-44) closely parallel what the Commentator **Dhammapāla**’s list of the eight “characteristics of a spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa,mitta lak-khaṇa*), that is, accomplishment (*sampanna*) in the following qualities:

(1) faith	(<i>saddhā,sampanna</i>),	
(2) moral virtue	(<i>sīla,sampanna</i>),	
(3) learning	(<i>suta,sampanna</i>),	
(4) charity	(<i>cāga,sampanna</i>),	
(5) effort	(<i>vīriya,sampanna</i>),	
(6) mindfulness	(<i>sati,sampanna</i>),	
(7) mental concentration	(<i>samādhi,sampanna</i>),	
(8) wisdom	(<i>paññā,sampanna</i>).	(UA 222) [3.3.2.1]

Furthermore, a closely related term, *abhisallekhika* (“relating to the effacements”) is found in **the Meghiya Sutta** (U 4.1) [3.3.2.1], in the expression, “talk concerned with austerity that conduces to the opening of the heart.”¹⁵⁰ Basically, this is *right speech* for the monastics and the laity working for self-liberation in this life itself.¹⁵¹

3.3.1.3 THE KALYĀṆA,MITTA SUTTA 1 (S 45.49). Another discourse where *kalyāṇa,mitta* refers to “one who has a spiritual friend” is found in **the Kalyāṇa,mitta Sutta 1** (S 45.49), where it is said that just as the rising of the sun is the harbinger of dawn, “even so, when a monk has a spiritual friend, it is to be expected that he will cultivate the noble, eightfold path, he will develop the noble eightfold path.” The

¹⁴⁹ Each of these reflections closes with the phrase, “(this) should made an effacement” (*sallekho karaṇīyo*). The term *sallekha* here lit means “scratching away,” and refers to ascetic practices leading to the uprooting of the defilements. In simple terms, it is determined effort towards mental purification leading to liberation.

¹⁵⁰ *Kathā abhisallekhikā ceto,vivaraṇa,sappāyā*, ie talk on wanting little, on contentment, on seclusion, on not socializing, on exerting effort, on moral virtue, on mental cultivation, on wisdom, on wisdom, on the knowledge and vision of liberation (A 9.3.10/4:357).

¹⁵¹ See A 9.3.10/4:357 & SD 34.2 Intro (3).

term “spiritual friendship” (*kalyāṇa,mittatā*) is also used here. Surely, this suggests that we can also render *kalyāṇa,mitta* here (in the Kalyāṇa,mitta Sutta 1) simple as “spiritual friend,” without affecting the intended sense in any significant way. Again, this points to the latitude of language that is natural to the early texts.

3.3.1.4 THE (KALYĀṆA,MITTA) DEVATĀ SUTTA (A 6.69). Collins, in his last sutta reference in this connection, himself admits (somewhat guardedly) that “in a certain (and certainly non-technical) sense a monk can be both one who has a good friends and a good friend to others” (1987:64).¹⁵² **The (Kalyāṇa,-mitta) Devatā Sutta** (A 6.69) opens with a devata (deity) approaching the Buddha and listing “**these six qualities that prevent decline in a monk**” (*cha-y-ime dhammā bhikkhuno aparihānāya saṁvattanti*),¹⁵³ that is,

(1) respect for the Teacher (ie the Buddha)	<i>satthu,gāravatā,</i>
(2) respect for the Dharma (the true teaching)	<i>dhamma,gāravatā,</i>
(3) respect for the sangha (the noble disciples)	<i>saṅgha,gāravatā,</i>
(4) respect for the training	<i>sikkhā,gāravatā,</i> ¹⁵⁴
(5) being easy to admonish (tractability)	<i>sovacassatā,</i>
(6) spiritual friendship	<i>kalyāṇa,mittatā.</i>

A 6.69/3:423-425 = SD 64.16

After the deva has left, the Buddha recounts this meeting to the monks and endorses the deva’s words. Then the elder Sāriputta, elaborating on what the Buddha has presented briefly, says that one who has these qualities also inspires others to cultivate them. For our purposes, we shall only look at what Sāriputta says of spiritual friendship, that is (taking *kalyāṇa,mitta* as a bahuvrihi),

Idha,...bhikkhu attanā ca kalyāṇamitto hoti kalyāṇamittatāya ca vaṇṇavādī. Ye c’aññe bhikkhū na kalyāṇa,mittā te ca kalyāṇa,mittatāya samādapeti. Ye c’aññe bhikkhū kalyāṇa,mittā tesaṃ ca vaṇṇam bhaṇati bhūtam taccham kālena. (A 6.69.3/3:424)

Here a monk has good friends, praises (such) good friendship, and encourages in (such) good friendship those other monks who do not have good friends; he speaks praise truly, justly and at the right time of (such) good friendship.¹⁵⁵ (A 6.69.3/3:424, Collins’ tr)

Let me suggest a simpler, more natural translation, keeping to the grain of the early texts, thus: Here,...a monk who himself is a spiritual friend and speaks in praise of spiritual friendship, and he inspires spiritual friendship in another monk who is not a spiritual friend. And he speaks in praise in truth, in reality, timely, of these qualities in other monks who are spiritual friends.

(A 6.69.3/3:424) = SD 64.16

3.3.1.5 OTHER RELATED DISCOURSES. Collins finally lists the following references “for other uses of *kalyāṇa,mitta* as bahuvrihi”: **A 4:145, 5:123-125, 146** (only reference to *pāpa,mitta*), **148-149, 153, 159** (only mentions *pāpa,mitta* and *sāhayaka*), and **161** (only reference to *pāpa,mitta*). The related references are identified as follows, with their key teachings:¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Collins alludes to “A III 423-4” (1987:64) which is the (Kalyāṇa,mittatā) Devatā S (A 6.69) very briefly, but is here mentioned in greater detail.

¹⁵³ Lit, “these six things that bring about non-decline in a monk.”

¹⁵⁴ This discourse apparently recurs first briefly as **Aparihānāya Dhammā S 1** (A 7.33/4:29), and more fully as **Aparihānāya Dhammā S 2** (A 7.34/30 f): they are also called **Sovacassatā S**. Both these suttas have these 6 qualities, with an additional quality of “respect for mental concentration” (*samādhi,gāravatā*) foll *sikkhā,gāravatā*. Totaling 7 qualities that prevent decline in a monk (*satt’ime dhammā bhikkhuno aparihānāya saṁvattanti*). Collins does not mention these suttas.

¹⁵⁵ Collins prob misread *kalyāṇamittā* in the closing sentence as *kalyāṇa,mittatā* (hence, his “good friendship”).

¹⁵⁶ More refs can be found in the indexes of the 4 Nikāyas and of the books of the Khuddaka Nikāya.

The Anāyussa Sutta 2 (A 5.126) lists these five things conducive to long life (*pañca dhamma āyussa*), that is,

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) he makes himself comfortable | (<i>sappāya, kārī hoti</i>), | |
| (2) he knows the limit in comfort | (<i>sappāye mattam jānāti</i>), | |
| (3) he eats ripe things | (<i>pariṇata, bhojī ca hoti</i>), | |
| (4) he is morally virtuous | (<i>sīlavā</i>), | |
| (5) he is [has] a spiritual friend | (<i>kalyāṇa, mitto ca</i>). | (A 5.126.4/3:145) |

The Naḷaka, pāna Sutta 1 (A 10.67) recounts Sāriputta’s teaching that in one who has faith, moral shame, moral fear, energy and wisdom in wholesome states, “night or day the wholesome states is expected to grow in him, not diminish.” One who “does not diminish” (*aparihāna*) here refers to a spiritual friend (or one who has a spiritual friend).¹⁵⁷

The (Abhabba) Tayo, dhamma Sutta (A 10.76) concludes with this sequential teaching, showing the role of spiritual friendship in the training towards spiritual awakening, thus:

There is this recluse, bhikshu, who has moral shame, has moral fear and is heedful.

Being heedful, he is able to give up disrespect, intractability and evil friendship.

As **a spiritual friend [one who has a spiritual friend]**, he is able to give up lack of faith, un-friendliness and laziness.

Being assertive,¹⁵⁸ he is able to give up restlessness, lack of restraint, and immorality.

Being morally virtuous, he is able to give up lack of desire to see the noble ones, lack of desire to listen to the noble Dharma, and a fault-finding mind.

Not having a fault-finding mind, he is able to give up unmindfulness, lack of clear awareness, and a distracted mind.

Having an undistracted mind, he is able to give up unwise attention, following the wrong way, and mental sluggishness.

Being without mental sluggishness, he is able to give up personality view, spiritual doubt and clinging to rituals and vows.

Being free from spiritual doubt, he is able to give up greed, hate and delusion.

And having given up greed, hate and delusion, he is able to give up birth, decay and death.

(A 10.76.39/5:148 f) = SD 2.4

As a spiritual friend, says the (Abhabba) Tayo, dhamma Sutta, we are able to give up lack of faith, un-friendliness and laziness. In other words, when we show *spiritual friendliness*, we are very likely to have wise faith, friendliness and industry (spiritual energy). That is to say, even when in a hostile environment, if we have spiritual friendship, that is, a mind of lovingkindness, we will be able to progress, even if others are not kind or supportive of us. On the other hand, *if we have a spiritual friend*, and we have cultivated spiritual friendship, too, then we easily develop these wholesome qualities.

The (Abhabba) Ānanda Sutta (A 10.82) lists these ten conditions that conduce to “growth, increase, abundance” (*vuddhi virūḷhi vepulla*) in the Dharma-Vinaya, that is, the Buddha’s teaching, namely,

- (1) he is faithful (*saddha*),
- (2) he is morally virtuous (*sīlava*),
- (3) he is deeply learned, who remembers what he has heard (*bahussuta sutadhara*),
- (4) he is easy to speak to (*suvaca*),
- (5) he is a spiritual friend [one who has a spiritual friend] (*kalyāṇa, mitto*),
- (6) he is one who exerts effort (*āradha, viriya*),

¹⁵⁷ A 10.67.4+5/5:124 f.

¹⁵⁸ “Assertive,” *āradha, viriya*.

- (7) he is one with mindfulness established (*upaṭṭhita,sati*),
 (8) he is contented (*santuṭṭha*),
 (9) he is of few wishes (*appiccha*),
 (10) he is one with right view (*sammā,ditṭhika*). (A 10.82.3/5:153,29)

Again here, the Sutta simply says, *so...bhikkhu kalyāṇa,mitto samāno*, which translates either as “he is a monk who *is* a spiritual friend” or “he is a monk *with* a spiritual friend.” If we look at the other qualities, many of them are actually those of a teacher who is a spiritual friend, too [3.2.1.3].

To reiterate a vital point: *kalyāṇa,mitta* need not be taken as a technical term so that it *must* be translated as a bahuvrihi (“one who has a spiritual friend”), except where the context is very clear, dictating such a rendition. In most cases, it makes good sense to translate *kalyāṇa,mitta* as a karmadharaya (“a spiritual friend”). In other words, as a rule, spiritual friendship is a two-way communication between teacher and pupil, and between colleagues, especially saints [6.2]. 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.

4 *Kalyāṇa,mittatā* as a compound

4.1 KALYĀṆA,MITTA KALYĀṆA,SAHĀYA KALYĀṆA,SAMPAVAṆKA. We often find *kalyāṇa,mitta* in the phrase, *kalyāṇa,mitta kalyāṇa,sahāya kalyāṇa,sampavaṇka*, translated as “spiritual friend, spiritual companion, spiritual comrade.”¹⁵⁹ Dhammapāla, in his commentary on **the Meghiya Sutta** (U 4.1), gives this explanation of these three terms:

*Tattha kalyāṇa,mitto ti kalyāṇo bhaddo sundaro mitto etassā ti kalyāṇa,mitto. Yassa sīl’ādi, -
 guṇa,sampanno “agghassa ghātā, hitassa vidhātā ti evaṃ sabb’ākārena upakāro mitto hoti, so
 puggalo kalyāṇa’mitto’va.*

*Yathā,vuttehi kalyāṇa,puggaleh’eva sabb’iriyā,pathesu saha ayati pavattati, na vinā tehī ti
 kalyāṇa,sahāyo.*

*Kalyāṇa,puggalesu eva cittena c’eva kāyena ca ninna,poṇa,pabbhāra,bhāvena pavattatī ti
 kalyāṇa,sampavaṇko.*

Pada-t,tayena kalyāṇa,mitta,samsagge ādaram uppādeti.

Therein, *kalyāṇa,mitta* means that he has a friend who is good, auspicious, beautiful; hence, he is a “spiritual friend [one who has a spiritual friend].” The one for whom there is a friend, accomplished in such virtues as moral virtue and so on, who is of service in every way, such as “a slayer of evil [misfortune], a provider of good [good fortune].”¹⁶⁰ That person is a **spiritual friend**.¹⁶¹

Since he is accompanied by (*saha ayati*), proceeds along, in every posture, with only good individuals as already mentioned, not without them, he is “*kalyāṇa,sahāya, spiritual companion*.”

He proceeds, in both body and mind, in a state that tends, slants, inclines towards only good [spiritual] persons, therefore, he is a “*kalyāṇa,sampavaṇka, spiritual comrade*.”

By means of these three words, he gives rise to devotion in associating with spiritual friends.

¹⁵⁹ D 33.3.3(1)/3:267 (10 *nātha,karaṇa.dhamma*), 34.2.3(1)/3:290 (10 *bahu,kāra.dhamma*); S 3.4.7/1:83, 3.18.-5+6+10+11/1:87 f, 45.2.4+5/5:2 f, 45.3.3-5/5:3 f, A 3.27/1:127, 5.47.2/3:422, 8.54.9/4:284, 8.55.9/4:288, 8.57.2/-4:290, 9.1.3+58/5:351-353, 9.3.13/4:357 f, 10.17.4/5:24 (*dhamma nātha,karaṇa*), 10.18.4/5:26 (*dhamma nātha,karaṇa*), 10.50.5/5:90, 10.97.4/5:199, 11.15.4/5:338, 11.15.13/5:341; U 4.1/36 f; Pug 3.14/37.

¹⁶⁰ *Aghassa ghātā, hitassa vidhātā ti*. This quote also at DA 229; MA 1:130 f; UA 287 (in the context of refuge-going); ItA 1:65; ThĀ 177. See UA:M 650 n71.

¹⁶¹ W Pruitt: “That individual is a good friend” (ItA:P 226).

(UA 221 f; cf ItA 64 f; ThĀ 177)

Dhammapāla then states that a spiritual friend is defined by the eight “characteristics of a spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa,mitta lakkhaṇa*) [3.3.1.2], and then explains each of them (UA 222).

4.2 KALYĀṆA,SAHĀYA. The second component of the spiritual friendship phrase is “spiritual companion” (*kalyāṇa,sahāya*). This is defined by Dhammapāla with the following etymology:

Since he is accompanied by (*saha ayati*), proceeds along, in every posture, with only a good individuals as already mentioned, not without them, he is “*kalyāṇa,sahāya, spiritual companion.*” (UA 222)

Although this is a synonym of *kalyāṇa,mitta*, we can actually tease out its special function: it highlights the friendship or fellowship aspect of the relationship, that is, the *joy* of spiritual friendship. This joy arises from on all the three levels of human action. On the physical level, the spiritual friendship is real due to the physical proximity or *propinquity* of other spiritual friends, resulting in a truly spiritual community.¹⁶² On the speech level, there is wholesome *communication*, especially the exchange of Dharma teachings, in which spiritual friends rejoice, benefitting even those who listen to such exchanges.¹⁶³ And on the mental level, there is constant *lovingkindness* towards everyone, whether they are spiritual friends or not.¹⁶⁴

All these qualities are mentioned at the closing of **the Sāmagāma Sutta** contains an important exposition on the practice of spiritual friendship, a teaching that is repeated in **the Kosambiya Sutta** (M 48). The teaching is known as the six memorable qualities (*sāraṇīyā dhammā*) “that inspire love and respect, and conduce to helpfulness, non-dispute, concord and unity,” that is to say:

- (1) Deeds of lovingkindness, both in public and in private, to fellow companions in the holy life.
- (2) Words of lovingkindness, both in public and in private, to fellow companions in the holy life.
- (3) Thoughts of lovingkindness, both in public and in private, to fellow companions in the holy life.
- (4) Sharing things, without reservation with virtuous companions in the holy life.
- (5) Sharing common virtues conducive to mental concentration, both in public and in private with companions in the holy life.
- (6) Sharing common views conducive to the complete destruction of suffering, both in public and in private with companions in the holy life. (D 3:245; M 2:250 f; A 3:288 f)

In short, there is spiritual fellowship on all levels.

4.3 KALYĀṆA,SAMPAVAṆKA. While *kalyāṇa,sahāya*, “spiritual companion,” is a synonym of *kalyāṇa,mitta, kalyāṇa,sampavaṅka*,¹⁶⁵ as Collins has noted, the last word—*sampavaṅka*—is problematic (1987:64). The Sanskrit form of this phrase is *kalyāṇa,mitra kalyāṇa,sahāya kalyāṇa,samparka*; but only the first two have an abstract noun form, that is, *kalyāṇa,mīratā* and *kalyāṇa,sahāyatā*.

Samparka is a noun from the verb *sam-ṛc*, to mix or mingle. The nominal form *kalyāṇasamparkaḥ* (which corresponds to the Pali *-sampavaṅkatā*, as an abstract noun) is most obviously interpreted as a tatpuruṣa [adjectival compound] with the meaning “mixing with good people” (= *kalyāṇair janaiḥ samparkaḥ*).

¹⁶² See eg **Dhamma,ceṭiya S** (M 89/2:118-125) = SD 64.10.

¹⁶³ See **Ghaṭa S** (S 21.3/2:275-277) = SD 38.12.

¹⁶⁴ See (**Anuruddha**) **Upakkilesa S** (M 128.11-12/3:156) = SD 5.18; **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31.33/3:191) = SD 4.1.

¹⁶⁵ See eg Avadāna Śataka, ed P L Vaidya, Mithila, 1958:58. The Skt, Pali and Tib forms are given by Alsdorf. [Collins’ n]

The adjectival form appears in the Sanskrit text as a plural, *kalyāṇasamparkāḥ*, agreeing with the first person plural verb *vihariṣyāmaḥ*, in the aspiration to be made by monks “we shall live [as] *kalyāṇamitra* (etc).”

Given that the nominal form is a tatpuruṣa, this is best taken as a bahuvrīhi based on the tatpuruṣa, with the literal meaning “one of whom there is mixing with good people.”

(Collins 1987:64; reparagraphed with abbreviation given in full)

The Pali etymology of *sampavaṅka* is not clear. Collins notes that there are two commentarial exegeses (both by Buddhaghosa), which are sometimes overlap. First, there is this commentarial explanation on **the Jigucchitabba Sutta** (A 3.27) and **the Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 3.14), which reads

Kalyāṇa,sampavaṅko ti kalyāṇesu suci,puggalesu sampavaṅko tan,ninna,tap-poṇa.tap,pab-bhāra,manāso ti attho.

“**Spiritual comrade**” means one who, with his mind, tends towards, slants towards, inclines towards, persons pure in the good.

(AA 2:198 ad A 3.27/1:127; PugA 219 ad Pug 3.14/37; my own translation)

The commentary on **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Nātha Sutta 1** (A 8.54) says:¹⁶⁶

*Cittena c’eva kāyena ca kalyāṇa,mittesu y’eva*¹⁶⁷ *sampavaṅko onato ti kalyāṇa,sampavaṅko.*

“Spiritual comrade” means those bent towards, bent upon towards spiritual friendship by way of both mind and body. (DA 1046 ad D 33.3.3(1)/3:267; AA 5:6 ad A 10.17/5:24)

K R Norman, reports Collins,¹⁶⁸ helpfully suggests that *vaṅka* is the cognate of the Sanskrit *vakra*, with the prefixes, *sam-pa*. Both *vaṅka* and *vakra* have a negative sense of “bent, crooked, curved,” which is in line with the commentarial glosses. Collins then notes that “[t]he compound is thus to be taken as a tatpuruṣa, in both adjectival and nominal/abstract forms, and I suggest ‘inclined/inclination to good friends’ as a translation, to preserve the metaphor.” (1987:65)

The Peṭakopadesa links spiritual comradeship directly to the attaining of dhyana, that is, a successful meditation that ripens in samadhi. The spiritual friend or spiritual comrade is said to be an “immediate (or proximate) cause” or “prerequisite” (*upanisā*)¹⁶⁹ for dhyana, meaning that with the guidance and inspiration of a spiritual friend or comrade, it is very much easier for us to approach and enter dhyana.

Therein, what is an immediate cause [prerequisite] (*upanisā*)?

Spiritual friendship is	an immediate cause for attaining dhyana.
Spiritual comradeship is	an immediate cause for attaining dhyana.
Sense-restraint is	an immediate cause for attaining dhyana.
Discontentment with wholesome states is	an immediate cause for attaining dhyana.
Listening to the Dharma is	an immediate cause for attaining dhyana.
The wise striving for samvega [religious urgency] ¹⁷⁰ when the occasion is worthy of samvega:	this is an immediate cause for attaining dhyana. (Peṭk 606/148 f) ¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Collins does not mention A 8.54.

¹⁶⁷ *Y’eva* omitted by Collins, but crucial here.

¹⁶⁸ In a private communication. Norman translates *kalyāṇa,sampavaṅka* as “(well-)disposed towards people who are *kalyāṇa*.” (Collins 1987:71 n38).

¹⁶⁹ On *upanisā*, see **Upanisā S** (S 12.23/2:29-23) = SD 6.12.

¹⁷⁰ On 8 such occasion or places (*aṭṭha samvega,vatthu*), see KhpA 235. See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16.5.8/-2:140 f) = SD 9 (7f).

As such, *kalyāṇa,sampavaṅka* literally translates as “one who inclines [tends] towards the good,” that is, one who is well disposed towards those who are exemplars of the good (as persons) and towards goodness itself (as a quality), on both a moral and mental level.

4.4 SUMMARY. From all this, we can say that the term “spiritual comrade” refers to (1) a spiritual friend as one who seeks and sustains wholesome qualities in himself, and (2) he initiates and inspires such qualities in his spiritual comrade. Or, (3) he is a spiritual friend as a student or mentee of a more mature spiritual mentor, whose qualities have been listed in various ways in the Suttas and Commentaries.

Suffice it here then, by way of summary, to simply but usefully differentiate the usages of each of the three component terms, thus:

- *kalyāṇa,mitta* is a general term for a spiritual relationship or *activity* between mentor and mentee, or between spiritual equals;
- *kalyāṇa,sahāya* highlights the friendship or fellowship aspect of the relationship, that is, the *joy* of spiritual friendship; and
- *kalyāṇa,sampavaṅka* refers to the *proclivity* of spiritual friends to recognize and be well-disposed towards one another: it celebrates friendship in goodness.

5 Spiritual friendship as refuge

5.1 THE TEN VIRTUES THE GIVE PROTECTION. When we seriously decide to become a Buddhist, we “go for refuge” (*saraṇam gacchāmi*) in the Three Jewels, that is, the ideals upon which the whole of our lives, insofar as we aspire to live the spiritual life or holy life, are based. “**Spiritual life**” (*dhamma,cariya*) broadly means living in accordance to the Buddha Dharma, and in a narrower sense, refers to the Dharma-based lay life. On a more committed level, especially involving celibacy, it is known as “**the holy life**” (*brahma,cariya*).

When we have “taken refuge,” we look up to the Buddha as our exemplar of awakening, the Dharma as *the path* to awakening, and the noble sangha (the saints of the path) as our ideal spiritual friends. We have already noted Buddhaghosa’s hierarchy of *spiritual friends* we should approach [3.2.4]. As we are living in post-Buddha times when it is difficult to recognize or meet a saint of the path, we can just as effectively rely on the Dharma, that is, the three trainings,¹⁷² as our spiritual refuge.

In other words, spiritual friendship, as *the whole of the spiritual life* [3.2.1.1], embodies such a refuge. We can have a good idea of this in the formula of the “ten virtues that give protection [provide refuge] (from bad karma)” (*nātha,kaṛaṇa.dhamma*), where spiritual friendship is the third quality. These ten virtues are listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34, where are they said to be “of great benefit,” *bahu,kāra*) and **the Nātha Suttas 1 and 2** (A 10.17 +18). The “ten virtues that give protection” are defined as follows (abridged):

- (1) He is morally virtuous (*sīlavā*): he carefully keeps to the monastic rules. (A lay follower carefully keeps to the lay precepts, such as the five precepts.)
- (2) He is deeply learned (*bhussuta*): he practises and understands the Buddha’s teaching.
- (3) He is “**a spiritual friend, a spiritual companion, a spiritual comrade.**”
- (4) He is easy to speak to [tractable]. (*suvaca*): he is gentle, patient, responsive to instruction.
- (5) He is able in whatever he does (*kimkaraṇīyāni...dakkho*): in any task related to his religious colleagues, he works with foresight and skill.

¹⁷¹ *Tattha katamā upanissā? Kalyāṇa,mittatā jhānassa upanissā. Kalyāṇa,sampavaṅkatatā jhānassa upanissā. Indriyesu gutta,dvāratā jhānassa upanissā. Asantuṭṭhitā kusalesu dhammesu jhānassa upanissā. Saddhamma-s,savanam jhānassa upanissā. Samvejanīye thāne samviggassa yoniso padhānam, ayam jhānōpanissā.*

¹⁷² See **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88/1:235) = SD 24.10c.

- (6) He loves the Dharma (*dhamma, kāma*), speaks lovingly of the Dharma (*piya, samudāhāra*): he rejoices greatly in connection with the Dharma, in connection with the Vinaya (*abhidhamme abhivinaye uḷāra, pāmojjo*).¹⁷³
- (7) He is contented (*santuṭṭha*) in regards to the four requisites (that is, food, clothing, shelter, health needs).¹⁷⁴
- (8) He is one who exerts effort (*āradḍha, vīriya*): he is tireless in ridding of unwholesome states and cultivating wholesome states.
- (9) He is mindful (*satimā*), able to recall things done or said long ago.
- (10) He is wise (*paññavā*): he wisely perceives arising and passing away of things, that leads to the true end of suffering.
- (D 33.3.3(1)/3:267, 34.2.3(1)/3:290; A 10.17/5:23-25, 10.18/5:25-29): see SD 79:4+5

What is of great interest here is that we have the definition of an ideal settled monastic, that is, one is not or not yet a solitary forest monk. These are the qualities of *coenobites*, harmoniously living and working together with other monastic residents. With these ten qualities, such a monastic is able to guard his body and speech, cultivate himself with knowledge, skill and wisdom, and industriously train his mind so that he is awakened to true reality.

5.2 SELF AS REFUGE. We have already seen above how spiritual friendship serves as the third of the “ten virtues that gives protection [provide refuge] (from bad karma)” (*nātha, karaṇa, dhamma*) [5.1]. The usual word for refuge is *saraṇa*, but here *nātha*, has the same sense of “protection” or “refuge.” We see this same sense in the famous Dhammapada verse:

<p><i>Attā hi attano nātho ko hi nātho paro siyā attanā'va sudantena nātham labhati dullabham</i></p>	<p>The self is the master of the self, for, who else could the master be? with a self well-tamed, indeed, one gains a master that is hard to find.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Dh 160; cf 380)¹⁷⁵</p>
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The essence of this stanza is identical to the Buddha’s final admonition that we “live as islands unto ourselves,” as recorded in a number of discourses, especially **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16), together with its import, thus:

Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands unto yourselves,¹⁷⁶ being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dharma as an island,¹⁷⁷ with the Dharma as your refuge, with no other refuge. And how does a monk live as an island unto himself... with no other refuge?

Here, Ānanda, a monk abides contemplating the body in the body, earnestly, clearly aware, mindful and having removed all covetousness and discontent for the world, and likewise with regard to feelings, mind and dharmas. That, bhikshus, is how a monk lives as an island unto himself... with no other refuge.

¹⁷³ See Magdalena & Wilhelm Geiger, *Pāli Dhamma*, Munich, 1920:18 f & I B Horner, “*Abhidhamma abhivinaya* in the first two of the Pali Canon,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* 17,3 Sep 1941:291-310: <http://www.buddhanet.net/budsas/ebud/ebut064.htm>.

¹⁷⁴ In **Nātha S 1** (A 10.17/5:25 = SD 79.4) & **Nātha S 2** (A 10.18/5:28 = SD 79.4), nos (7) and (8) are switched around.

¹⁷⁵ See **Ādhipateyya S** (A 3.40) = SD 27.3 (3.1).

¹⁷⁶ P *atta, dīpa*, Skt *ātma, dvīpa*. See S:B 1921 n143.

¹⁷⁷ “The Dharma as an island,” P *dhamma, dīpa*, Skt *dharma, dvīpa*.

And those who now in my time or afterwards live thus, they will become the highest,¹⁷⁸ but they must be anxious to learn.

(D 16.2.26/2:100 f = 26.1/3:58, 26.27/77; S 22.43/3:42, 47.9/5:154, 47.13/5:163, 17.14/5:164)¹⁷⁹

Spiritual friendship and refuge-going (taking self as refuge) have one important thing in common: they entail *mental cultivation*. In the above suttas, this is satipatthana practice, but it can be any suitable meditation that leads to calm, clarity and liberation. Here, the spiritual friend as mentor is the meditation teacher (who gives the meditation object) guides the spiritual friend as mentee in the holy life.

5.3 THE MEGHIYA SUTTA (U 4.1). The best known example of a spiritual friendship where the mentee takes refuge in the mentor centering around moral virtue, mental cultivation, wisdom and liberation, is that between the Buddha and the monk Meghiya, as recorded in **the Meghiya Sutta** (A 9.3 ≈ U 4.1), that is, the Buddha serves as a refuge to Meghiya [5.2].

Meghiya was a Sākya of Kapilavattu, and who, after joining the order, was for some time the Buddha's personal attendant.¹⁸⁰ During the thirteenth year of the Buddha's ministry (BA 3), when the Buddha is staying with him at Cālikā, Meghiya goes into Jantu, gāma for alms. On his return, he is drawn to a mango grove on the banks of the river Kimi, kālā. In his over-enthusiasm to go on a solitary meditation retreat there, he seeks the Buddha's permission to dwell there. Seeing his enthusiasm, the Buddha allows him to do so.

While dwelling there, however, Meghiya is consumed by evil thoughts and returns to the Buddha for advice. The Buddha teaches him "the five conditions that bring about the full maturing in the liberation of mind" (*ceto, vimuttiyā pañca paripakkāya, dhammā*), namely, spiritual friendship, moral virtue, Dharma-centred talk, zealous exertion, and insight in impermanence.

The Dhammapada Commentary summarizes the Meghiya Sutta in **the Meghiya Thera Vatthu** (the Story of the Elder Meghiya) (DhA 29.1): the Buddha rebukes him for disobeying him, and then admonishes him. At the end of the Buddha's teaching, Meghiya, along with "many other beings," become streamwinners.¹⁸¹ He becomes an arhat in due course. (UA 237 f)

6 Social aspects of spiritual friendship

6.1 THE DĪGHA, JĀNU SUTTA: THE FOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. When a spiritual friendship does not involve much mental training (especially meditation), but still inspires *a wholesome relationship*, it is called "true-hearted friendship" (**suhada, mittatā*). This is based on the concept of the true-hearted friend (*suhada mitta*), mentioned in **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31) [2.3.1-2]. However, as evident from **the Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (A 8.54), spiritual friendship is still possible, indeed recommended, in such a relationship. The Dīgha, jānu Sutta speaks of "worldly welfare," that is, happiness *in this very life*, as comprising these four qualities, namely,

- | | |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (1) The accomplishment of diligence | (<i>uṭṭhāna, sampadā</i>), |
| (2) The accomplishment of watchfulness | (<i>ārakkha, sampadā</i>), |
| (3) Spiritual friendship | (<i>kalyāṇa, mittatā</i>), |
| (4) Balanced livelihood | (<i>sama, jīvitā</i>). |

These are the four conditions for **worldly bliss or happiness here and now**. The first quality—the accomplishment of diligence—is that of being skillful and industrious in our work or occupation. The accomplishment of watchfulness is to properly protect the wealth that we have rightly accumulated. The last quality—balanced livelihood—is that of joyfully living within our means. The Dīgha, jānu Sutta goes on to define spiritual friendship as follows:

¹⁷⁸ "The highest," *tamatagge*. On the difficult term, *tamatagge* ("the highest"), see *Last Days of the Buddha* (D no 16). Tr (rev ed) Sister Vajirā & Francis Story. Wheel 67/68/69. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1998: n20. <http://www.accesstoinight.org/canon/digha/dn16.html>

¹⁷⁹ See **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16.2.26/2:100 f = 26.1/3:58, 26.27/77) & SD 9 Intro (6).

¹⁸⁰ See **Meghiya S** (A 9.3/4:354-358 ≈ U 4.1/34-37) & SD 34.2 (1).

¹⁸¹ DhA 29.1/1:286-289.

What is spiritual friendship (*kalyāṇa, mittatā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, in whatever village or market town the son of family dwells, he associates, converses, discusses with householders or householders' sons, young men mature in virtue, or old men mature in virtue, endowed with faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom.¹⁸² He emulates the faith¹⁸³ of the faithful, the virtue of the virtuous, the charity of charitable, and the wisdom of the wise.

This, Vyagghapajja, is called the accomplishment of spiritual friendship.

(A 8.54.6/4:283) = SD 5.10

Significantly, we see these four qualities of the spiritual friend—faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom—prescribed as the conditions that we should cultivate for happiness here and now, and for future happiness, that is, for both worldly happiness and spiritual bliss. These four qualities are, in fact, the basis of spiritual friendship, that is, the “whole of the holy life” [3.2.1.1].

When these four qualities are well accomplished, they become **the bases for spiritual welfare and future happiness**, listed in the Dīgha, jānu Sutta 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 communal 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.”¹⁸⁴

Significantly, the potency of these four accomplishments (*sampadā*) as the conditions for spiritual welfare, when accompanied by Dharma learning (*suta*),¹⁸⁵ is that they serve as the conditions for *a happy future rebirth*. In fact, **the Saṅkhār'upapatti Sutta** (M 120) says that, if we are accomplished in faith, moral virtue, spiritual learning, charity and wisdom, we can *aspire* towards any kind of happy rebirth that we choose.¹⁸⁶ These five qualities are those of the fivefold noble growth (*ariya, vaḍḍhi*, A 3:80), that is, conditions for spiritual growth leading to the attaining of the noble path and awakening.¹⁸⁷

6.2 THE (SAṄGAHA) BALA SUTTA: THE FOUR BASES OF CONCILIATION. An important aspect of social relationship, whether monastic or secular, is harmony, so that we blend together “like milk and water, looking at one another with loving eyes”¹⁸⁸ [6.3]. **The Saṅgaha Bāla Sutta** (A 9.5) defines the four bases of conciliation in this way:

Bhikshus, there are these **four bases of conciliation** (*saṅgaha, vatthu*):

- (1) giving [generosity] (*dāna*),
- (2) pleasant speech (*piya, vācā*),
- (3) beneficent conduct (*attha, cariyā*),
- (4) impartiality (*samān'attatā*).

(1) The foremost of gifts (*dāna*), bhikshus, is *the gift of the Dharma*.¹⁸⁹

(2) The foremost of pleasant speech (*piya, vācā*), bhikshus, is *teaching the Dharma* again and again to those who are desirous of it and listen attentively.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸² These four are the conditions for spiritual welfare: see below.

¹⁸³ “Faith,” *saddhā*: see (2.3.2) n on the stanza (Pv 3.7.4).

¹⁸⁴ A 8.54.10-15/4:284 f = SD 5.10. An explanation is also found at UA 222.

¹⁸⁵ “Spiritual learning,” *suta*, lit “listening,” ie “one who has heard much Dharma,” cognate with today's “well-read, learned,” but in spiritual matters.

¹⁸⁶ M 120/3:99-103 = SD 3.4.

¹⁸⁷ A 5.63/3:80 & S 37.34/4:250 = A 5.64/3:80: see SD 3.4 (4).

¹⁸⁸ M 59.5b/1:398 = SD 30.4. For details, see **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89.11/2:120 f) = SD 64.10.

¹⁸⁹ This sentence is clearly the root of Dh 354a.

- (3) The foremost of beneficent conduct (*attha, cariyā*), bhikshus, is
- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| to rouse, instill, establish | faith | (<i>saddhā</i>) | in the faithless; |
| to rouse, instill, establish | moral virtue | (<i>sīla</i>) | in the immoral; |
| to rouse, instill, establish | charity | (<i>cāga</i>) | in the miser; |
| to rouse, instill, establish | wisdom | (<i>paññā</i>) | in the foolish [ignorant]. |
- (4) The foremost of impartiality (*samān'attatā*), bhikshus, is
- | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a streamwinner's impartiality towards | a streamwinner, |
| a once-returner's impartiality towards | a once-returner, |
| a non-returner's impartiality towards | a non-returner, |
| an arhat's impartiality towards | an arhat. ¹⁹¹ |
- This, bhikshus, is called the power of conciliation. (A 9.5.6/4:364) = SD 2.21

These are **the four conditions** for the integration and solidarity of a group or society, and for consolidating friendship, partnership and unity.¹⁹² A closer look at the first two conditions will show that, on a high level, they actually refer to the same thing: the teaching of the Dharma. However, while the first condition defines on the idea of *what* the best gift is, the second stresses on *how* it is to be done.

Beneficent conduct (*attha, cariyā*) is defined as comprising these four qualities: faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom, which are, in fact, an abridgement of the 7 noble treasures (*ariya, dhana*): faith, moral virtue, moral shame, moral fear, great learning, charity, wisdom,¹⁹³ so called because they are spiritual treasures that, unlike material wealth, cannot be lost. *Moral shame* and *moral fear* are what motivates one to cultivate moral virtue, and so can be included in moral virtue. **Great learning** is elaborated into *generosity* and *pleasant speech*, the first two bases of solidarity here.

These noble treasures are also called “**the virtues of great assistance**” (*bahu, kāra dhamma*) (D 3:-282) since they provide us with the tools for personal development and for people-helping. **The Dīgha, jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) lists spiritual friendship as one of the four accomplishments (*sampadā*), the conditions for happiness *here and now* (that is, diligence, watchfulness, spiritual friendship and balanced livelihood); and the following four (faith, moral virtue, charity and wisdom) are the characteristics of a *kalyāṇa, mitta* [3.3.1.2], and are also the four accomplishments (*sampadā*), the conditions for *future* happiness [6.1].¹⁹⁴

Here, **impartiality** (*samān'attatā*) means freedom from biases (*āgati*), that is, greed, hate, delusion, and fear.¹⁹⁵ They are called “motives” (*thāna*) in **the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta** (D 31), that is, they are the grounds that motivate us to commit evil.¹⁹⁶ As long as we are unawakened, we are bound to have some level of bias in our actions: our actions are likely to be moved or tinged by greed, hate, delusion or fear. The saints of the path, however, have significantly overcome these biases, especially when communicating with one another on the same level.

Hatthaka of Āḷavī is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost amongst the laity who has a following through the four bases of conciliation (A 1:26).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁰ *Etad-aggam, bhikkhave, peyya, vajjānam yad-idam atthikassa ohita, sotassa punappunam dhammam deseti.*

¹⁹¹ A good example of this impartiality amongst the saints is that of Anuruddha and his companions Nandiya and Kimbila as recorded in **Upakkilesa S** (M 128) where Anuruddha, after saying that he shows lovingkindness in deed, speech and thought to them, declares to the Buddha: “Bhante, here I think thus: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and instead do what these venerables wish to do. It seems, bhante, that we are of different bodies but of one mind!’” (M 128.12a/3:156). See SD 8.2.12a (2005).

¹⁹² D 3:152, 232; A 2:32, 248, 4:218, 363.

¹⁹³ D 3:163, 267; A 4:5.

¹⁹⁴ A 8.54/4:282 = SD 5.10.

¹⁹⁵ V 1:339; D 3:182, 228; A 2:18; Vism 22.55/683.

¹⁹⁶ D 31.5-6/3:182 = SD 4.1.

¹⁹⁷ See **Āḷavaka S** (A 3.34/1:136-138) = SD 4.8.

6.3 THE JOY OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP. One of the most important canonical records we have of spiritual friendship is that between peers in the Dharma, such as the Buddha’s statement in **the Bahu-vedaniya Sutta** (M 59):

Ānanda, when the Dharma has been shown thus by me in a relative manner, it may be expected that there are those who would approve of, or allow, or rejoice in what is well said, well spoken, by others, such that they would dwell in concord, rejoicing in one another, without disputing, blending like milk and water, looking at one another with loving eyes.

(M 59.5b/1:398) = SD 30.4¹⁹⁸

Spiritual friendship, ideally, as such, is a relationship of profound joy, and here we see it as *an ultimate fellowship of beings on an equal level*, as it were, like clear mirrors reflecting into one another. The joy of spiritual friendship of the early monastics are elaborated in **the Dhamma,cetiya Sutta** (M 89), where the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala praises the Buddha, thus:

Bhante, kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders; mother quarrels with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, sister with sister, friend with friend.

But here I see monks living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, looking at each other with kindly eyes. I do not see any other assembly elsewhere with such concord.

Again, bhante... I have seen some recluses and brahmins who are lean, wretched, unsightly, jaundiced, with veins standing out on their limbs, such that people would not look at them again...

But here I see monks smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful, plainly delighting, their faculties clear, living at ease, unruffled, subsisting on what others give, abiding with mind [as aloof] as a wild deer’s... Surely, these venerable ones have certainly realized the great and full significance of the Blessed One’s teaching.

(M 89.11/1:120 f) = SD 64.10¹⁹⁹

6.4 THE FREEDOM OF SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP. The purpose of spiritual friendship is to provide the ideal or best conditions for moral, mental and spiritual growth. On the moral level, the mentor as spiritual friend serves as a virtuous exemplar. On the mental level, he inspires and nurtures the meditation and mental cultivation of his mentee, which is of course more than just being a giver of a meditation subject [3.2.4]. And on the spiritual level, the mentor motivates his mentee to aspire towards spiritual liberation in this life itself.

At every level of communication between spiritual friends, both as mentor and mentee, teacher and student, there are the foundations of the joy of love for the Dharma (*dhamma,veda*) and the joy for the goal (*attha,veda*) that such a joy entails. This persistent joy of spiritual friendship is described in **the Vimutt’āyatana Sutta** (A 5.26) as follows:

Here, bhikshus, the teacher or some fellow brahmachari worthy of respect²⁰⁰ teaches the Dharma to a monk.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ For a more elaborate context, see **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89.11/2:120 f) = SD 64.10.

¹⁹⁹ See **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness** = SD 8.1 (6).

²⁰⁰ “In the role of a teacher,” *garu-ṭṭhāniya*, which **Paññā S** (A 8.2/4:151) glosses as “one who is respectable and esteemed, being a condition giving rise to respect” (*gārav’uppatti,paccaya,bhūtam garu,bhāvanīyam*, AA 4:71). Alt trs: “occasioning reverence” (ItA:M 396), or “in the standing of a teacher” (PED). I take *garu,bhāvanīya* (“respected and esteemed”) as dvandva (as at **M 6.3/1:33**; **A 3**:111-114 ×14, 136 ×2, 195 f×4, 262 ×2, **4**:2 ×4, 32, 157 ×4, 361, 5:131): see **Piya Mitta S 2** (A 7.36), where they form two of the qualities of a worthy friend, viz: loving (*piya*), pleasant (*manāpa*), worthy of respect (*garu*), worthy of esteem (*bhāvanīya*), a speaker (*vatta*), one patient with

And, bhikshus, as that monk listens to the Dharma taught by the teacher or the respected colleague in the holy life, he knows the goal and he knows the Dharma [he knows the spirit of the Dharma and the letter of the Dharma].²⁰²

Knowing the goal and knowing the Dharma,

joy (<i>pāmuja</i>)	arises in him;
because of joy,	zest (<i>pīti</i>) arises;
because of zest,	the body becomes tranquil (<i>passadha</i>);
when the body is tranquil,	he feels happiness (<i>sukha</i>);
a happy mind becomes	concentrated (<i>samādhīyati</i>). ²⁰³

This, bhikshus, is the first ground for liberation where the unliberated mind of a monk, dwelling heedful and exertive, finds liberation; or where the mental influxes, not wholly destroyed become wholly destroyed, where the unattained unsurpassed safety from the yoke is attained. (A 5.26.2/3:21) = (briefly, D 33.2.1(25) = SD 21.5

This joy and liberation can also arise *in any of the other four ways* mentioned in the Vimutt'āyatana Sutta, that is, by way of teaching the Dharma (by the spiritual friends), by their reciting of the Dharma, by their reflecting on the Dharma, or, the best of all, by meditation.²⁰⁴

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words (*vacana-k, khama*), who converses profoundly (*gambhīraṇ ca katham kathā hoti*), and does not lead one in wrong [unreasonable] ways (*no c'atthane niyojeti*) (A 7.36/4:32).

²⁰¹ *Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno satthā dhammaṃ deseti aññataro vā garu-ṭṭhāniyo sa, brahma, cārī.*

²⁰² “He knows...the Dharma,” *attha, paṭisaṃvedī...dhamma, paṭisaṃvedī*. See Intro (1).

²⁰³ Here, Comy explains “mind becomes concentrated” (*cittam samādhīyati*) as referring to the samadhi of having attained the fruit of arhathood (*arahatta, phala, samādhinā*, AA 3:230). However, it is clear from the closing para of each section that these methods are capable of making us “learners,” or “where the mental influxes, not wholly destroyed become wholly destroyed,” arhats.

²⁰⁴ See **Vimutt'āyatana S** (A 5.26) = SD 21.5 (1).

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