

(Kalyāṇa,mittatā) Sāriputta Sutta

The Sāriputta Discourse (on Spiritual Friendship) | S 45.3/5:3 f

Theme: Spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life.

Translated by Piya Tan ©2007, 2010

[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 [2] below].

1 Introduction

The **(Kalyāṇa,mittatā) Sāriputta Sutta** (S 45.3), as the title suggests Sāriputta’s statement on the nature of spiritual friendship before the Buddha, who endorses it. The sutta is quite straightforward. In fact, it is a flipside, as it were, of **the Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2), which immediately precedes it in the Magga Saṃyutta.¹ The Buddha’s teaching is identical in the two suttas.²

While Ānanda thinks that spiritual friendship constitutes only half the holy life (one half is self-effort, the other the guidance of the spiritual friends, a meditation teacher), Sāriputta declares that spiritual friendship is *the whole* of the holy life. While the Buddha corrects Ānanda, Sāriputta on the other hand is praised by him for his wisdom.

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

2 STUDY METHOD

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

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

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

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| (4) Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness | SD 8.1, |
| (5) Spiritual friendship: A textual study | SD 34.18, |
| (6) Bad friendship | SD 34.1. |

— — —

¹ S 45.2/5:2 f = SD 34.9.

² For text nn, see **Upaḍḍh S** (S 45/5:2 f) = SD 34.9.

The Sāriputta Discourse (on Spiritual Friendship)

S 45.3/5:3 f

1 Originating in Sāvattihī.

Sāriputta's statement on spiritual friendship

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

“Bhante, **spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is *the whole of the holy life.***”³

The Buddha's approval

3 “Sadhu, Sāriputta! Sadhu, Sāriputta! Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is the whole of the holy life.”

It is to be expected of *a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend*,⁴ a good companion, a good comrade,⁵ that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, he will develop the noble eightfold path.⁶

The *viveka, nissita* formula

4 And how, Sāriputta, does a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, cultivate the noble eightfold path, that he will develop the noble eightfold path?⁷

Here, Sāriputta ,

a monk cultivates *right view* based on solitude, on dispassion,⁸ on cessation,⁹ maturing in release.¹⁰

He cultivates *right intention* based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

He cultivates *right speech* based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

He cultivates *right action* based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

He cultivates *right livelihood* based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

He cultivates *right effort* based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

He cultivates *right mindfulness* based on solitude, on dispassion, on cessation, maturing in release.

³ *Sakalam idaṃ bhante brahma, cariyam yadi daṃ: kalyāṇa, mittatā kalyāṇa, sahāyatā kalyāṇa, sampavaṅkatāti.*

⁴ “When a monk who is [who has] a spiritual friend,” *kalyāṇa, mittassa... bhikkhuno*: see Intro (2.2).

⁵ Variations of *kalyāṇa, mitta... kalyāṇa, sahāya... kalyāṇa, sampavaṅka...* appear at D 33.3.3(1c)/3:267, 34.2.3-(1c)/3:290; S 3.14/1:83, 3.18/1:87 f = 45.2/5:2 f, 45.3/5:3; A 3.27/1:127, 6.67/3:422, 8.54.9/4:284, 8.55.9/4:288, 8.57.2/4:290, 9.1.8/4:352, 9.3.13/4:357 f (= U 4.1/27 f), 10.17.4/5:24, 10.18.5/5:26, 10.50.5/5:90, 10.97.4/5:199, 11.15.4+13/5:338, 341; Pug 3.14/37. On the 3 terms, see **Spiritual friendship: A textual study** = SD 34.18 (4).

⁶ *Kalyāṇa, mittass'etaṃ sāriputta bhikkhuno pāṭikāṅkham kalyāṇa, sahāyassa kalyāṇa, sampavaṅkassa ariyam aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bhāvēssati ariyam aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bahulīkarissati.* See **Upaddha S (***)** = SD 34.9 Intro (2.2).

⁷ *Kathaṅ ca sāriputta bhikkhu kalyāṇa, mitto kalyāṇa, sahāyo kalyāṇa, sampavaṅko ariyam aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bhāveti, ariyam aṭṭhaṅgikam maggam bahulī, karoti?*

⁸ *Virāga* also “fading away (of lust).”

⁹ *Nirodha*, that is, “cessation of suffering.”

¹⁰ *Vossagga*, also “letting go, relinquishment.” MA says that there are 2 kinds of letting go or relinquishment (of suffering) (*vossagga*): “giving up” (*pariccāga*), ie the abandonment of defilements, and “entering into” (*pak-khandana*), ie culminating in nirvana. Gethin notes that this phrase is not unique to the 7 *bojjhaṅgā*, but is also found in connection with the factors of the noble eightfold path, the *indriyā* and *balā* (2001:162 f). This formula shows that that each *bojjhaṅga* is to be developed successively “as dependent on solitude, dispassion [fading away] and cessation” (Gethin 2001:166).

He cultivates *right concentration* based on solitude, on dispassion, [4] on cessation, maturing in release.

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

The Buddha as a spiritual friend

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

By relying upon me as a spiritual friend, Sāriputta ,

beings subject to birth are freed from birth,

beings subject to decay are freed from decay,

beings subject to death are freed from death,

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

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

— evaṃ —

100917