

Kalyāṇa,mittatā Sutta 1

Paṭhama Kalyāṇa,mittatā Sutta The First Discourse on Spiritual Friendship | S 45.49/5:29 f
Theme: The external condition for the noble eightfold path
Translated by Piya Tan ©2007, 2010

1 Introduction

The Kalyāṇa,mittatā Sutta 1 is a succinct statement on spiritual friendship spoken by the Buddha to an assembly of monastics. It opens with a parable of the dawn [§§2-3]: just as dawn marks the rising of the sun (which brings on a bright day), so too spiritual friendship is the precondition for the realization of the noble eightfold path leading to awakening [§4]. A spiritual friend, as it were, is someone who wakens us to the sun of wisdom.

Like many other sutta definitions of spiritual friendship, this sutta, too, mentions the eightfold path in terms of the *viveka,nissita* (“based on solitude”) formula.¹ This formula defines the progressive stages and goal of the spiritual life. When appears at the end of the noble eightfold path formula (in place of “right knowledge” and “right liberation”), for example, in **the Nāvā Sutta** (S 51.158),² and of course here in the Kalyāṇa,mittatā Sutta 1, where it qualifies each of the eight factors of the noble eightfold path.

2 Study method

After you are familiar with the Kalyāṇa,mittatā Sutta 1, you should go on to study related suttas. The key texts are these three suttas and three essays on spiritual friendship which should be studied together, as they are all closely related. It is recommended that you study them in this sequence:

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| (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:

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

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¹ See *Viveka,nissita* = SD 20.4.

² S 51.158/5:51 = SD 20.16.

The First Discourse on Spiritual Friendship

S 45.49/5:29 f

1 Originating in Sāvattḥī.

Parable of the dawn

2 “Bhikshus, just as dawn is the forerunner and harbinger of sun-rise, even so, bhikshus, [30] for a monk this is the forerunner, the harbinger of the arising of the noble eightfold path, that is, spiritual friendship.

3 Bhikshus, when a monk has a spiritual friend, it is to be expected that he will cultivate the noble eightfold path, develop the noble eightfold path.

And how, bhikshus, does a monk who has a spiritual friend cultivate the noble eightfold path, develop the noble eightfold path?

The *viveka,nissita* formula

4 Here, bhikshus,³
a monk cultivates *right view* based on solitude, on dispassion,⁴ on cessation,⁵ maturing in release.⁶

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.

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

In this way, bhikshus, a monk who has a spiritual friend, a good companion, a good comrade, cultivates the noble eightfold path, develops the noble eightfold path.”

— evaṃ —

100917; 100918

³ *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu sammā,diṭṭhiṃ bhāveti viveka,nissitaṃ virāga,nissitaṃ nirodha,nissitaṃ vossagga,pariṇāmiṃ*. This whole phrase, beginning with “based on solitude”—*viveka,nissitaṃ virāga,nissitaṃ nirodha,nissitaṃ vossagga,nissitaṃ vossagga,pariṇāmiṃ dhamma,vicaya,sambojjhaṅgaṃ*—is called **the *viveka,nissita* formula**. See R Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2003:162-168. On the *viveka,nissita* formula, see *Viveka,nissita* = SD 20.4; see also “Introduction to the Satipaṭṭhāna Suttas” = SD 13.1 §4.2c n.

⁴ *Virāga* also “fading away (of lust).”

⁵ *Nirodha*, that is, “cessation of suffering.”

⁶ *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” (*pakkhandana*), 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).