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Sama,jīvi Sutta 1

The 1st Discourse on Harmonious Living | A 4.55

Theme: Living as ideal loving partners here and hereafter

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Introduction

1.1 The importance of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā are attested by the fact that **the Nakula,pitā Vagga** opens the Khandha Saṃyutta (S 3:1-21). The Aṅguttara records that Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā are declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of his lay disciples who show one another harmonious and mutual trust (*vissāsika*) (A 1:26).¹ The Aṅguttara Commentary says that they have been for 500 lives the parents, for 500 lives the grandparents, and for 500 lives the uncles and aunts of the Buddha. As such, when they first meet the Buddha in Bhesakalā Forest, they immediately call him “son” (AA 1:400, 457, 3:95 f).

1.2 The Sama,jīvi Sutta’s main teaching is about how a loving couple can remain happily together for this life and in future lives. The factors that promote this happy partnership are “the factors of harmony [compatibility]” (*sama,jīvi,dhamma*), that is, harmonious compatibility in faith, moral virtue, generosity and wisdom [§2.3].

On a broader social level, there is a longer set of qualities, a sort of expansion of the 4 factors of compatibility, that is, the 6 **“conditions for conciliation”** (*sāraṇīya,dhamma*):

(1) showing lovingkindness through bodily deeds	(<i>mettā,kāya,kamma</i>),
(2) showing lovingkindness through speech	(<i>mettā,vacī,kamma</i>),
(3) showing lovingkindness through thought	(<i>mettā,mano,kamma</i>),
(4) mutual sharing of what one has	(<i>sādhāraṇa,bhogī</i>),
(5) harmony [compatibility] in moral virtue	(<i>sīla,samaññatā</i>),
(6) harmony in view	(<i>diṭṭhi,sāmaññatā</i>).

(D 3:245; A 3:288 f)

These 6 qualities endear one to others and causes others to constantly recall one with respect, joy and love. As such, they also conduce to social and communal harmony, solidarity and progress.

1.3 The Nakula Sutta (A 6.16) recounts how once when Nakula,pitā was very ill, Nakula,mātā notices that he is deeply anxious. She assures him that there is no need for any anxiety on his part, either for her or for their children. She speaks with such wisdom and conviction that he regains peace of mind and recovers immediately. Later, when they meet the Buddha, he congratulates Nakula,pitā on having such a wise and virtuous wife (A 6.16/3:295 f).

1.4 The Nakula,mātā Sutta (A 8.48) recounts how Nakula,mātā visits the Buddha at Bhesakalā Forest where the Buddha tells her of 8 qualities which will secure a woman’s birth amongst the Manāpa,kāyika devas (A 8.48).² These 8 qualities (in summary) are:

¹ See also A 3:465, 4:348, where they are mentioned amongst the eminent disciples.

² A 8.48/4:268 f. In (**Manāpa,kāyika,devā**) **Anuruddha S** (A 8.46/4:262-266), it is recorded that these devas visit Anuruddha and try to entertain him with their powers of colours, sounds and happiness, but Anuruddha is not impressed. The Buddha later tells Anuruddha of the 8 qualities that enable women to be born amongst the Manāpa,-kāyikā devas (A 4:265-269). The two following suttas repeat the main text with different interlocutors. In (**Manā-**

- (1) She serves, respects and loves her husband well.
- (2) She respects her husband's relatives.
- (3) She is capable and industrious in her work (especially in assisting her husband).
- (4) She manages her household duties well.
- (5) She takes good care of the goods and wealth that her husband brings home.
- (6) She is a lay disciple who has taken refuge in the 3 jewels.
- (7) She keeps the 5 precepts well.
- (8) She is a charitable person.

1.5 The Nakula,pitā Sutta (S 22.1) recounts how the old and infirm Nakula,pitā approaches the Buddha for a brief teaching and the Buddha instructs him: “Therefore, houselord, you should train yourself thus: ‘My body may be sick but my mind will not be sick.’” In due course, Sāriputta elaborates on the statement in terms of seeing the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) in terms of nonself (S 22.1/3:1-5).

1.6 The life of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā is found in the closing chapter of Nyanaponika and Hecker (1997:375-378).³

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Sama,jīvi Sutta 1

The First Discourse on Harmonious Living

A 4.55

The virtuous couple

[61] 1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the deer park⁴ in the Bhesakalā Forest,⁵ at Suṃsumāra,-gira⁶ in the Bhaggā country.⁷

Then, in the morning, the Blessed One, having dressed himself and taking robe and bowl, went to the house of the houselord Nakula,pitā. Having gone there, he sat down on the prepared seat.

pa,kāyika,devā) Visākhā S (A 8.47), the Buddha teaches the same thing to the lady Visākhā (A 8.46/4:268). The **Nakula,mātā S** (A 8.48/4:268 f) follows. These suttas should be studied with **Sigāl'ovāda S** (D 31), SD 4.1.

³ For more details, see SD 5.2 Intro.

⁴ “Deer park,” *miga,dāya*, the best known of which is this one outside Benares (S 5:421), where the 1st discourse is given, as recorded in **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,1/4:420), SD 1.1; another in Bhesakalā forest, near where Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā live: see **Anumāna S** (M 15,1/1:95) SD 59.3; **Māra Tajjaniya S** (M 50,1/1:332), SD 36.4; **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1), SD 5.4; **Sama,jīvi S** (A 4.55,1/2:61), SD 5.1; **Nakula S** (A 6.16/3:295), SD 5.2; **Nakula,mātā S** (A 8.48,1), SD 5.3; and another outside Nādikā [Ñātikā]: see **Cūla Gosiṅga S** (M 31,1), SD 44.11, **Mahā Gosiṅga S** (M 32,1),SD 44.12. For other refs, search CSCD using “migadāy*”.

⁵ So called because it is the home of the yakshini Bhesakalā (SA 2:249). The house of Nakula,pitā and Nakula,mātā is nearby.

⁶ Suṃsumāra,gira: see **Nakula,pitā S** (S 22.1/3:1-5), SD 5.2 (1).

⁷ Bhaggā was not amongst the 16 great states, for which see **(Tad ah') Uposatha S** (A 3.70) @ SD 4.18 App.

Then, The houselord Nakula,pitā and the houselady Nakula,mātā approached the Blessed One. Having approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and then sat down at one side.

Seated thus at one side, the houselord Nakula,pitā said this to the Blessed One:

2 “Bhante, ever since the houselady [housewife]⁸ Nakula,mātā was brought here (in marriage)⁹ as a mere girl when I was myself still a mere lad, I do not recall ever having wronged her even in thought, much less in deed. Bhante, we wish that we would be able to see one another not only in **this** very life, but also to be able to see one another in the lives **to come**.”

2.2 Then, Nakula,mātā, too, said this to the Blessed One:

“Bhante, ever since the houselord Nakula,pitā was brought here as a mere lad when I was myself still a mere girl, I do not recall ever having wronged him even in thought, much less in deed. Bhante, we wish that we would be *able to see one another, not only in **this** very life, but also to be able to see one another in the lives **to come***.” [62]

The fourfold harmonious compatibility

2.3 “If, houselords, both wife and husband¹⁰ **wish to see one another, not only in **this** very life, but also to be able to see one another in the lives **to come****, they should have:¹¹

(1) harmonious faith,	<i>sama,saddhā</i>
(2) harmonious virtue,	<i>sama,sīlā</i>
(3) harmonious charity,	<i>sama,cāgā</i>
(4) harmonious wisdom.	<i>sama,paññā</i>

Then, *they shall be able to see one another, not only in **this** very life, but also to be able to see one another in the lives **to come***.”

3 CLOSING VERSES

3.1 *Ubho saddhā vadaññū ca
saññatā dhamma,jīvino
te honti jāni,patayo
aññam-aññam piyaṃvadā.*

When both are faithful, easy to speak to,
restrained, living by Dharma,
both of them, wife and husband,
speaking loving words to one another,

3.2 *atthā sampacurā honti
phās’atthaṃ upajāyati¹²
amittā dummanā honti
ubhinnaṃ sama,sīlinaṃ.*

Blessed with abundance,
they shall arise again in a prosperous home.
Dejected are their foes,
for both (wife and husband), harmonious in virtue.

⁸ “Houselady” (*gahapatānī*; Skt *grhapatnī*), housewife, the mistress of the house, wife of a houselord (*gaha,pati*): V 3:213,30, 219,5; M 1:125,4 (= *ghara,sāminī*, MA 2:98.32); A 2:61,29, 3:295,16, 4:268,6.

⁹ “Was brought,” *ānītā* (pp of *aneti*). The conveying of a bridegroom to the groom’s house is called *vivāha* “sending off” or “the giving away of a maiden” (*kaññā,dāna*, SnA 448) (V 3:135; D 1:99; Sn p105). Bringing her into the household is called *āvāha*, ie, the giving of a son in marriage. In this Sutta, the same verb *ānītā* is used in both cases [§§2.1-2.2].

¹⁰ “Both wife and husband,” *ubho jāni,patayo*.

¹¹ The following 4 virtues share the same adjective *sama*, often tr as “same,” but this sounds contrived here. Alt tr “matching,” as in “matching faith,” etc. See line 3e of the concluding verse.

¹² Be Se *phāsukarṃ upajāyati*; Ce *phās’atthaṃ* (= *phāsu + atthaṃ*) ... ; Ee *vās’atthaṃ*

3.3 *Idha dhammaṃ caritvāna
Sama,sīla-b,batā ubho
nandino deva,lokasmim
modanti kāma,kāmino'ti.*

Having lived in Dharma [Dhamma] here,
both matching in virtue and piety,¹³
blissful in the deva world,
they enjoy whatever pleasure they desire.¹⁴

— evaṃ —

Bibliography

Nyanaponika & Helmuth Hecker

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¹³ "Virtue and piety," *sīla-b,bata* = *sīla* (precepts, vows, moral virtue) + *vata* (rituals, austerity, vows). Here the term is used in a positive sense of religious life. The term *sīla-b,bata paramāsa*, "attachment to vows and rituals," is the 3rd of the 3 fetters (*saṃyojanā*) overcome by the streamwinner. See **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,44) n (SD 3.13).

¹⁴ This line at A 2:62 = It 112; Tha 242; J 3:154; Pv 2:1, 3:1. Here *kāmā,kāmino* rendered as "enjoying any pleasure they desire" (in the wholesome sense). Elsewhere tr as "desiring after sense-pleasure," eg Dh 83, Sn 239, J 5:165, 167, DhA 2:156.