

Good Friendship for Wholesome Life in Pāli Nikāya



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ABSTRACT

We can see lots of disputes are arising among families, societies and among different countries due to lack of good friendship within them. As a result of secularism and the modernism of the society, the people have been more complex than any other time. Therefore, people are fighting to achieve their goals. Within such a condition, people always nourish selfish thoughts. They don't know each other in the same village around their residences. That is call anonymity of society. Therefore, many global crises have been appeared in the world. As a result of none understanding the usage of Buddhist doctrine to solve those problems, people are fighting with their own generation. The concept of *Kalyāṇamittata* in Buddhism is the best solution for the world peace. It leads to a peaceful and federal society. On the other hand, according to Buddhism the association with good friends (*Kalyāṇamittata*) is the way of liberation.

Keywords: Good Friendship, Wholesome life, Buddhism, Pāli Nikāya

Introduction

Friendship is a relationship of mutual affection between two or more people. It is a stronger form of interpersonal bond than an association. It has been studied in academic fields such as sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and philosophy. Various academic theories of friendship have been proposed, including social exchange theory, equity theory, relational dialectics, and attachment styles. A World Happiness Database study found that people with close friendships are happier. Due to the people's scarification of finding their day to day necessities, it seems that the people in modern society have no much time to spend for other things, like keeping touch or relationship with good friends. They find difficulties in handling the problems or conflict when they have to deal with some issue. Therefore, we have seen it is important to find out the Buddha's attitude towards good friendship and applicability of his teaching related to good friendship to the modern society.

The Buddha succinctly expresses the proper response of a disciple to such a good friend in a verse of the Dhammapada: "If one finds a person who points out one's faults and who reproves one, one should follow such a wise and sagacious counselor as one would a guide to hidden treasure"¹. Buddhism believes that listening to a spiritual friend or good friend (*kalyāṇamitta*) is a great way of cultivating wisdom, while associating with a bad friend (*pāpamitta*) encourages delusion and suffering. Do not have evil-doers for friends, do not have low people for friends: have virtuous people for friends, have for friends the best of men.²

In the *Kalyāṇamitta sutta* in *Samyutta Nikāya*³ is emphasizing the significance of friendship. In the sutta says that, Ānanda who had been contemplating this issue for some time confided to the Buddha: "Lord, I've been thinking, spiritual friendship is at least half of the holy life!"⁴ The Buddha replied: "Do not say that, Ānanda, do not say that. Spiritual friendship is the whole of the holy life, not half of the holy life.

¹ Dh. 76; *Nidhīnamva pavattāram, yam passe vajjadassinam; Niggayhavādim medhāvīm, tādisaṁ panditam bhaje; Tādisaṁ bhajamānassa, seyyo hoti na pāpiyo.*

² Dh. 78; *Na bhaje pāpake mitte - na bhaje purisādhame; bhajetha mitte kalyāne - bhajetha purisuttame.*

³ S.I.. 87-88; *Sakalamevahidam ānanda brahmacariyam yadidaṁ kalyāṇamittatā kalyāṇa sahāyatā kalyāṇa sampavankatā...kalyāṇa sampavankassa ariyam aṭṭhangikam maggam bhāvessati. Ariya aṭṭhangikam maggam bahulī karissati.*

⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi (tr.), *The connected Discourse of the Buddha*, (USA: Wisdom Publication, 2000.) pp.90-91.

Buddha's Attitude on Good Friendship

Good friendship, in Buddhism, means considerably more than associating with people that one finds amenable and who share one's interests. It means in effect seeking out wise companions to whom one can look for guidance and instruction it is Buddha's attitude on good friendship. Now it is time to introspect the perspective of Buddhist concept towards friendship *Mittatā*-(*Pāli*) *Mitratā*-(*Sanskrit*.) is a Buddhist concept of good friendship within Buddhist community life, applicable to both monastic and householder relationships. One involved in such a relationship is known as a good friend, virtuous friend, noble friend or admirable friend (*kalyāṇamittatā*).

The nouns or adjectives which are commonly found in combination with *kalyāṇamitta* denote the degree or type of relationship in the friendship as in *ñātisālohitamitta* (blood relatives), *mittāmacca* (colleague), *suhada* or *suhajja mittā* (a friend who is dear to one's heart).

Friendship is a mutual attachment, affection or deep regard that exists between two or more persons and is distinguished from sexual or family attachments. It is a reciprocal relationship and forms an important element in every society, though not generally regarded as an indispensable requisite of life. According to Buddhist ethics people who lead a community life are morally bound to develop friendliness among them. If they happened to be concerned only with themselves and are indifferent with regard to others they would be going against a moral obligation. Friendliness is an indispensable requisite of community life for, it lays a firm foundation for community life. Therefore, the Buddha in his ethical teachings stressed the importance of cultivating friendliness for the progress of community life.

In the *Suttanipāta*, it is noted that like our mother, father, brother and other relatives, animals are also counted as our friends. According to the stanza in *Suttanipāta*, the cow gave humans medicine, eatables, power, beauty and also pleasantness. Therefore, it says that the cow became their best friend, and humans, knowing this by experience, they did not kill cattle.⁵ This is in keeping with the universally egalitarian outlook of Buddhism

⁵ Sn. 50, *Yathā mātā pitā bhātā, aññe vāpi ca ñātakā; Gāvo no paramā mittā, yāsu jāyanti osadhā.*

towards all living beings as expressed in the words *sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā*.⁶

Friendship can be a difficult and complex topic for a young person to grasp. At times it can be difficult to know who means one well and who does not. Someone can either be a friend, an enemy or neither a friend nor an enemy (neutral). However, this can also be subject to change (*anicca*). Generally, friends are the beings that are dear, mean one well and offer protection. Enemies on the other hand are the opposite of this; they are not dear, wish to cause one to harm and to see one's demise, suffering, loss and unhappiness. Neutral beings (e.g. acquaintances) neither mean one well nor any harm. Friendship is one of the most valuable and priceless possessions one can have in Buddhism. In a sense, it's something we cannot put a price on or it becomes devalued. The term of friendship plays into the Buddhist concept as social welfare, betterment of spiritual development, which is about interdependence and reciprocity. We have to be there for our friends as they would be there for us. The true concept of friendship is something that transcends riches and jewels as Buddhism teaches. These particular terms which extracted from some Buddhist texts, may make us more understandable about the concept of association or friendship in Buddhism.

Kalyāṇamittatā, Bāla samāgama & Satā samāgama, Bāla sevanā & panditha sevanā, Mittāniṣaṇasa, Bhajetha mitte kalyāne & bhajetha purisuttame, according the meaning of the terms, Buddhism introduces association, or in another term the friendship that it has a great influence on our life, present and next. In short, to be successful in every manner, we need good association or friendship.

Buddhism emphasizes on for worldly and spiritual development. In the same way, it emphasizes association in the terms of happiness about the way to the highest blessings. In the very first stanza of his reply involving in *Maigalasutta*, the Buddha states that the highest blessing comes from avoiding fools and associating with the wise “*Asevanāca bālānam, paññitānañca sevana*”⁷ Since the rest of the sutra goes on to sketch all the different aspects of human felicity, both mundane and spiritual, the assignment of association with the wise to the opening stanza serves to emphasize a key point: that progress along the path of the Dharma hinges on making the right choices in our friendships.

⁶ Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli, **The Minor Reading (Khuddaka Nikāya)**, (Bristol: PTS, 2015), p.282.

⁷ Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli, **The Minor Reading (Khuddaka Nikāya)**, (Bristol: PTS., 2015), p.3.

- “The highest blessing comes from avoiding fools and associating with the wise.”
- “That progress along the path of the Dharma hinges on making the right choices in our friendships.”⁸

Particularly critical to our spiritual progress is our selection of friends and companions, who can have the most decisive impact upon our personal destiny. It is because he perceived how susceptible our minds can be to the influence of our companions that the Buddha repeatedly stressed the value of good friendship in the spiritual life.

Characteristics of Good Friendship

The Buddha preached to Singāla about different kind of friends, that we come across in society. Friends are important for any person to prosper or for his downfall. We meet them in school, then the friends are of the same age. Friends are better if they are of the same age group. We meet friends in sports clubs, dhamma school, playground, in the bus etc. If your friends have different tastes or, if they are of different age groups, if they are of the higher age group such friends are not very helpful to the younger ones, who have completely different tastes. If they are very young then the growing up child would develop childish behavior. So, it is best to have friends of the same age group. Friends differ in status depending on their own social status. The Buddha preached about 4 kind of good friends in *Sigālovādasutta*.

There are these four types of who can be seen to be loyal friends the friend who is a helper is one, the friend who is the same in happy and unhappy times is one, the friend who points out what is good for you is one and the friend who is sympathetic is one.⁹

1. *Upakāraka Mitta* (Friend who are helpers)
2. *Samānasukha Dukkha Mitta* (Friend who are the same in happy and unhappy times)
3. *Atthakkhāyi Mitta* (Friend who point out what is good for you)
4. *Anukampaka Mitta* (Friend who are sympathetic)

⁸ Bhikku Bodhi, **Association with the Wise**, [Online], Source: <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/bps-essay_26.html> [28 January 2020].

⁹ D.III. 188; *Upakāro ca yo mitto, yo ca mitto sukhe dukkha, Atthakkhāyī ca yo mitto, yo ca mittānukampako, Ete pi mitte cattāro iti viññāya pañdito.*

Appearance of Bad Friendship

The invincible theory of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) emphasizes consistently that every existing phenomenon in the world is results of the continuous combination cause and effect. So, prior to revelation the consequences of bad association or relationship, in my view, it is worthwhile to have, even not in-depth but brief investigation on what bad association is and what kind of people involve in evil deeds, because the results of bad association according to Buddhism is relatively processes of associating with fool.

From point of view of content of the Dhammapada, fool (*bāla*) peoples' characteristics are supposed to be revealed in brief; despite it is very broad sense. As we ever know that the fool thinks that he is wise but he doesn't know that he is called a fool indeed¹⁰, because of his mean works derived from his defilements which make him not understand everything clearly¹¹. A fool, whose action, words and intention harm others cannot appreciate as the spoon (tastes) the flavor of soup, the value of the dharma, and the teachings of the Buddha, which guides him to lead righteous life. Likewise, fool always attempts to do evil deeds which bestow bitter consequences and behave in a manner hostile to themselves¹², as it is evident from the so-called events ever happened in the world by the severity of terrorists, criminals, and robbers. As pointed out in the Dhammapada, the fool does deed that cause repentance and whose consequences one has to bear with tearful eyes¹³. He never does the well-done deeds, after doing which, there is no repentance and the consequences of which can be borne with satisfaction and pleasure, and evil-doers always come to grief¹⁴. In short, do not have “evil” people as friends. Because Evil people in Buddhism lie cheat, steal, and do other bad things for their own gain without putting other people into consideration. They have no respect for laws, customs, and cultures. Those are people who you should

¹⁰ Dh. 63; *Yo bālo maññati bālyam, paññito vāpi tena so; Bālo ca paññitamānī, sa ve “bālo”ti vuccati.*

¹¹ Dh. 64; *Yāvajīvampi ce bālo, paññitam payirupāsati; Na so dhammam vijānāti, dabbi sūparasam yathā.*

¹² Dh. 66; *Caranti bālā dummedhā, amitteneva attanā; Karontā pāpakam kammam, yam hoti katukaphalam.*

¹³ Dh. 67; *Na tañ kammañ katam sādhu, yañ katvā anutappati; Yassa assumukho rodam, vipākam paṭisevati.*

¹⁴ Dh. 69; *Madhuvā maññati bālo, yāva pāpanī na paccati; Yadā ca paccati pāpanī, bālo dukkham nigacchati.*

not be friends with as it will drain your store of “wealth”. Keep in mind that there’s a difference between “passionate” and downright “disrespectful”. Those are the people you want to avoid, because keeping company with them remain us nothing, but both physical and mental misery, tearful eyes-disturbances, repentance, and chain of problems as much they are suffered from their own deeds describing above.

The Buddha preached about four kind of bad friends in *siṅgālovādasutta*. The friend who seeks what he can get, the friend who talks but empty words, the friend who merely flatters you, the friend who is a fellow wastrel. These four are really foes, not friends. The wise man, recognizing this, should hold himself aloof from them as from some path of panic fear.¹⁵

1. *Aññadattuhara* (He who associate for gain)
2. *Vacīparama* (He who renders lip service)
3. *Anuppiyabhāni* (He who flatters)
4. *Apāya sahāya* (He who brings ruin)

Consequences of Good Friendship

The consequences are resulting entities from cause, the phenomenon ever function in the world. In clear sense or in short, associating with, keeping company with, listening to good, righteous, moral people, in return we are inherited the good qualities as well as good outcomes of deeds done by people we are associating with. Therefore, it is time to diverse your attention to focus on some important characteristics of wise and their deeds.

It is explained in wider complicated sense in the Dhammapada, the Wise that one who associate with wise man will always be benefited, not deprived, because Wiseman reveals our faults, like revealing a treasure¹⁶. And wise who sought by good men, always advise, instructs, dissuades others from evil and rejoices the Dharma revealed by the

¹⁵ D.III. 186; *Annadatthu-haro mitto, yo ca mitto vacī-paro, Anuppiyañ ca yo āha, apāyesu ca yo sakhā, Ete amitte cattāro iti viññāya pañdito; Ārakā parivajjeyya maggam paṭibhayam yathā ti.*

¹⁶ Dh. 76; *Nidhīnamva pavattāram, yan passe vajjadassinam; Niggayhavādim medhāvīm, tādisam pañditam bhaje; Tādisam bhajamānassa, seyyo hoti na pāpiyo.*

*Ariyas*¹⁷, remains unruffled by the praise or blame, perfectly wise who is virtuous and righteous, does not do evil deeds either for one's own sake or the sake of others and does not wish for one's prosperity through foul means¹⁸. Undoubtedly one who makes friends with such a person endowed with pre-mentioned right characteristics, personality, attitudes and concept formations, will taste not experiences of bitter, but sweet.

On the other hand, in simplified sense, good friend or good association means, in brief, the one who protects you and your interests, who encourages you to do good things, who helps you, who never abandons you when you are in trouble, who asks you to refrain from doing bad things, who does not gossip about you, who appreciates your good qualities and achievements, who acknowledges his own weak points and who is not boastful he is a good friend.

Let us go back to what the Buddha says about friends and companions in the *siṅgālovādasutta*. In the modern West, friendship is probably the most neglected of all the primary human relationships, but from the spiritual point of view, from the Buddhist point of view, friendship is extremely important. It has, according to Buddhist tradition, a direct connection with spiritual life, as we shall see later on. Buddha says that friends and companions are the lords, and they are to be ministered to, to be served and looked after in five ways¹⁹. In other words, he says we have five duties towards our friends. If we perform these five duties towards our friends, the friendship will be kept alive and flourishing.

First of all, are generosity, giving, and sharing. We should share with our friends whatever we have. There is a lot that could be said about this. So this is one of the duties we have, according to the Buddha, towards friends, to share with them whatever we have: time; money; resources; interest; energy -to share everything. So this is the first of the five duties.

And then, secondly, we should speak to our friends kindly and compassionately²⁰. We should never speak harshly or bitterly to our friends. Never be sarcastic or (unclear).

¹⁷ Dh. 77; *Ovadeyyānusāseyya, asabbhā ca nivāraye; Satañhi so piyo hoti, asatam hoti appiyo.*

¹⁸ Dh. 81; *Selo yathā ekaghano, vātena na samīrati; Evam nindāpasamsāsu, na samīñjanti paññitā.*

¹⁹ D.III. 180-194.

²⁰ Walshe Maurice (tr.), **Thus Have I Heard The Long Discourses of the Buddha**, (USA: Wisdom Publication, 1987), pp. 461-469.

Now in Buddhism, as you probably know, we have five precepts and ten precepts and so on. And in the list of ten precepts there are no less than four precepts which cover speech. There is only one for action even, but there are four precepts for speech. So why is this? It's so easy to use wrong speech. Only so easily we speak a bit roughly, we speak a bit unkindly, harshly even, to our friends. So, the Buddha says the second duty we have towards our friends is to speak kindly and affectionately. Not even in an indifferent sort of way. With respect and kindness and affection, and this should be something that we do all the time with our friends.

And then, thirdly, we should look after the welfare of our friends²¹, especially their spiritual welfare. We should just see that they're all right. Look after their health, look after their economic well-being. Should they have any sort of difficulty, help them. Help them to grow as human beings, help them to develop. So that's the third duty.

And then the fourth duty is that we should treat our friends in the same way that we treat our own self²². This is a very big thing indeed. It means breaking down the barrier between us and others.

Good Friendship and Wholesome Life

Association with the wise becomes so crucial to spiritual development because the example and advice of a noble-minded counselor is often the decisive factor that awakens and nurtures the unfolding of our own untapped spiritual potential. The uncultivated mind harbors a vast diversity of unrealized possibilities, ranging from the depths of selfishness, egotism and aggression to the heights of wisdom, self-sacrifice and compassion. The task confronting us, as followers of the Dharma, is to keep the unwholesome tendencies in check and to foster the growth of the wholesome tendencies, the qualities that lead to awakening, to freedom and purification. However, our internal tendencies do not mature and decline in a vacuum. They are subject to the constant impact of the broader environment, and among the most powerful of these influences is the company we keep, the people we look upon as teachers, advisors and friends. Such people silently speak to the hidden potentials of our own being, potentials that will either unfold or wither under their influence.

²¹ Loc. cit.

²² Loc. cit.

In our pursuit of the Dharma it therefore becomes essential for us to choose as our guides and companions those who represent, at least in part, the noble qualities we seek to internalize by the practice of the Dharma. This is especially necessary in the early stages of our spiritual development, when our virtuous aspirations are still fresh and tender, vulnerable to being undermined by inward irresolution or by discouragement from acquaintances who do not share our ideals. In this early phase our mind resembles a chameleon, which alters its color according to its background. Just as this remarkable lizard turns green when in the grass and brown when on the ground, so we become fools when we associate with fools and sages when we associate with sages. Internal changes do not generally occur suddenly; but slowly, by increments so slight that we ourselves may not be aware of them, our characters undergo a metamorphosis that in the end may prove to be dramatically significant.

If we associate closely with those who are addicted to the pursuit of sense pleasures, power, riches and fame, we should not imagine that we will remain immune from those addictions: in time our own minds will gradually incline to these same ends. If we associate closely with those who, while not given up to moral recklessness, live their lives comfortably adjusted to mundane routines, we too will remain stuck in the ruts of the common place. This specific function is accepted by so-called psychologists, such as Albert Bandura²³. If we aspire for the highest, for the peaks of transcendent wisdom and liberation, then we must enter into association with those who represent the highest. Even if we are not so fortunate as to find companions who have already scaled the heights, we can well count ourselves blessed if we cross paths with a few spiritual friends who share our ideals and who make earnest efforts to nurture the noble qualities of the Dharma in their hearts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the facts referred to above in this thesis would reveal that the concept of friendship has received a place of prime importance in almost all of the psycho-sociological and religious-philosophical schools of both in the East and the West. It is also evident that it is in the teachings of the Buddha, who lived 2500 years ago, that the concept of friendship has been dealt with an extensively, and in clarity. The emphasis has also been

²³ Dennis Coon, **Psychology: A journey**, (Belmont: Thomson wads worth.2005), 243-251.

extended to clarify not only the importance of it towards the well-being of the worldly life but also the spiritual life of both the laity and the sangha.

There is saying that “life has no blessing like a prudent friend”. There can be no friendship without confidence and no confidence without integrity. The concept of friendship is defined in Buddhism with the term *Kalyāṇamittatā*. There are various adjectives which are commonly found in combination with the term *Kalyāṇamitta*.

In early days, man was afraid of wild animals and devils, so he carried weapons for his protection. Today, man is not that scared of them. He is afraid of human beings, because he does not know how to deal with them. So, he has to carry weapons to protect himself from his own species. But Buddhism emphasizes the friendship not only with human beings but also with animals in order to improve happiness and abate misery, by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief. We can understand that the language of friendship is not words, but meanings and it is intelligence above language. This is keeping with the universally egalitarian outlook of Buddhism towards all living beings.

The false friendship is like the ivy, decays and ruins the walls it embraces; but the true the friendship gives new life and animation to the object it supports. The friendship must be accompanied with virtue, and always lodged in great and generous mind. That is the attitude on friendship stressed in the Buddhism.

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