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Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

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Summary

What does it mean to be a true friend to another and for our friendship to bless those we associate with? This article shows how qualities of being a good friend are developed within ourselves and that relationships based on the right wholesome attitudes and dispositions produce profoundly beneficial outcomes for those we are connected with and for ourselves.

Connecting with Warm-Hearted Friends

Many Buddha Dhamma texts explain the means of connecting with warm-hearted friends.

The famous text, the Mangala Sutta, explains the thirty-eight highest blessings in the most elegant verse, rightly starting with 'the avoidance of bad company'.

"Not to associate with fools, but to associate with the wise; and honour those who are worthy of honour. This is the highest blessing."

Narada Thera wrote: "To follow the ideals set forth in these verses is the sure way to harmony and progress for the individual as well as for society, nation and humankind."

To become a warm-hearted friend we need to be truly present in the company of our companions. Friendliness is one of the 'Five Styles' practised by our Members. These 'Five Styles' are: friendliness, practicality, professionalism, scholarship and cultural adaptability.

In a letter to our Centre Members from the Venerable Tan Achaan Boonyarith, a Thai Monk of the Forest Order, he noted that the Highest Friendship is developed only when people have completed or near-completed reciprocal "understanding" between each other. That only

when no secret is left behind, and totally seeing through the nature of things or the reality of the state or situation, can true friendship be realised. In Pali we call this type of friendship "kalyanamitta".

Buddha Dhamma Teachers are true kalyanamitta friends.

Our Resident Practitioner Anita Carter is our true kalyanamitta friend.

This highest friendship can only happen in Dhamma, as opposed to friendship based on kamma, causes and effects from past times.

The Venerable Tan Achaan Boonyarith noted that the highest friendship is accompanied by true happiness. The truth never changes - what appears to be changing is the interpretation which ignorant people attribute to their worldly situations.

Unfortunately, there does not exist much true friendship in the world. It is highly valued by human beings, and even by animals and ghost spirits.

To have no sense of friendship among persons is already very bad, but sadder still is when one cannot have it with "oneself".

In his keynote speech at the Australasian Buddhist Convention held in Melbourne, Australia, in June 2002, eminent Buddhist scholar Dr. Ananda Guruge said, "... the Buddha said, a well trained-mind is your best friend, an ill- trained mind is your worst enemy, and none of us want our minds to be our enemy."

"Dr. Ananda Guruge also said, "If you are mindful, if you are conscious of everything you do, from the very simple things such as how you react to people you meet, how you choose the words by which you address a situation, the way you would like to criticise a person, then the criticism is necessary. If you are mindful, you will be very careful, you will be

tactful, you will be doing exactly the kinds of things you would like others to do to you. This is 'mindfulness in action'.

The Sanskrit word for mindfulness, *smriti*, means "remember".

In *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, the great Bodhisattva Monk Thich Nhat Hanh explains that mindfulness is remembering to come back to the present moment.

The Chinese character for mindfulness has two parts one meaning "now" and the other meaning "mind" or "heart".

In the words of Thich Nhat Hanh:

"Mindfulness is to nourish the object of your attention.

When was the last time you looked into the eyes of your beloved and asked, "Who are you, my darling?"

Don't be satisfied by a superficial answer.

Ask again: "Who are you who has taken my suffering as your suffering, my happiness as your happiness, my life and death as your life and death? My love, why aren't you a dewdrop, a butterfly, a bird?"

Ask with your whole being. If you do not give right attention to the one you love, is it a kind of killing?

When you are in the car together, if you are lost in your thoughts, assuming you already know everything about her, she will slowly die. But with mindfulness, your attention will water the wilting flower.

"I know you are here, beside me, and it makes me very happy."

With attention, you will be able to discover many new and wonderful things: her joys, her hidden talents, her deepest aspirations. If you do not practice appropriate attention, how can you say you love her?"

The nature of existence is impermanent - friends can become enemies and enemies can become friends.

How can you become a warm-hearted friend?

Love and goodwill can be developed between persons where the comprehensive principles of the Siglovada Sutta are practiced.

The Sigalovada Sutta is known as the layperson's code of discipline or the vinaya of the householder.

The Buddha's Teaching on the characteristics of a foe in the guise of a friend and the qualities of a warm-hearted friend is expounded with clarity and in great detail in the Sigalovada Sutta. The following is an excerpt from Narada Thera's translation of the Sigolavada Sutta.

"These four, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

- (1) he/she who appropriates a friend's possessions,
- (2) he/she who renders lip-service,
- (3) he/she who flatters,
- (4) he/she who brings ruin.

(1) In four ways, young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend: he/she appropriates his friend's wealth; he gives little and asks much; he does his duty out of fear; he associates for his own advantage.

(2) In four ways, young householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as foe in the guise of a friend: he/she makes friendly profession as regards the past; he makes friendly profession as regards

the future; he tries to gain one's favour by empty words; when opportunity for service has arisen, he expresses his inability.

(3) In four ways, young householder, should one who flatters be understood as foe in the guise of a friend: he/she approves of his friend's evil deeds; he disapproves his friend's good deeds; he praises him in his presence; he speaks ill of him in his absence.

(4) In four ways, young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as foe in the guise of a friend: he/she is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness; he is a companion in sauntering the streets at unseemly hours; he is a companion in frequenting theatrical shows; he is a companion in indulging in gambling which causes heedlessness.

Thus spoke Buddha, the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken he spoke yet again:

"The friend who appropriates,
the friend who renders lip-service,
the friend that flatters,
the friend that brings ruin,
these four as enemies the wise behold,
avoid them from afar as paths of peril".

These four, young householder, should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

(1) he/she who is a helpmate,

(2) he/she who is the same in happiness and sorrow,

(3) he/she who gives good counsel,

(4) he/she who sympathises.

(1) In four ways, young householder, should a helpmate be understood as a warm-hearted friend: he/she guards the heedless; he protects the wealth of the heedless; he becomes a refuge when one is in danger; when there are commitments he provides one with double the supply needed.

(2) In four ways, young householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a warm-hearted friend: he/she reveals his secrets; he conceals one's own secrets; in misfortune he does not forsake one; his life even he sacrifices for one's sake.

(3) In four ways, young householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a warm-hearted friend: he/she restrains one from doing evil; he encourages one to do good; he informs one of what is unknown to oneself; he points out the path to heaven.

(4) In four ways, young householder, should one who sympathises be understood as a warm-hearted friend: he/she does not rejoice in one's misfortune; he rejoices in one's prosperity; he restrains others speaking ill of oneself; he praises those who speak well of oneself."

Thus spoke the Buddha, the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"The friend who is a helpmate,
the friend in happiness and woe,
the friend who gives good counsel,

the friend who sympathises too-
these four as friends the wise behold
and cherish them devotedly,
as does a mother her own child".

The wise and virtuous shine like blazing fire.

He/she who acquires his wealth in harmless ways
like to a bee that honey gathers, riches mount up for him
like an anthill's rapid growth.

With wealth acquired this way,
a layman fit for household life,
in portions four divides his wealth:
thus will he/she friendship win.

One portion for his wants he uses,
two portions on his business spends,
the fourth for times of need he keeps.

The Vyagghapajja Sutta also contains guidelines for connecting with
warm-hearted friends:

"What is good friendship?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, in whatsoever village or market town a
householder dwells, he/she associates, converses, engages in
discussions with householders' sons, whether young and highly cultured
or old and highly cultured, full of faith (saddha), full of virtue (sila), full of
charity (caga), full of wisdom (panna). He acts in accordance with the

faith of the faithful, with the virtue of the virtuous and, with charity of the charitable, with the wisdom of the wise. This is called good friendship."

Based on the advice of the Buddha, at our Centre we practice meeting in harmony, conducting our activities in harmony and dispersing in harmony. We say "Let the goodly co-mates in the righteous life come here and let those who have already come live happily".

May you, and we, associate with the wise.

May you, and we, be truly present in the company of warm-hearted friends.

May you, and we, connect with warm-hearted friends this life.

May you, and we, be well and happy.

We dedicate the merits of the production of this script to our warm-hearted Resident Practitioner, Anita Carter.

This script was written and edited by John D. Hughes, Leanne Eames and Pennie White.

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