

Sigāl'ovāda Sutta

The Discourse on the Advice to Sigāla

[The lay code of ethics and social responsibilities]

(Dīgha Nikāya 31)

Translated with notes by Piya Tan ©2003

(1) Introduction

The Sigāl'ovāda Sutta is a classic text on lay ethics and social responsibilities, an exposition of the whole domestic and social duties of a layman according to the Buddhist point of view. It is often called by latter-day Buddhists as “the Householder’s Discipline” (*gihī,vinaya*). Due to the universal appeal of this sutta, it is one of the earliest English translations we have of a Pali sutta: Paul Grimbolt (the French Consul in Ceylon) in *Sept Suttas Palis* (Paris, 1876); D J Gogerly (a Wesleyan missionary), *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch*, 1847; and R C Childers, “The Whole Duty of the Buddhist Layman” in *Contemporary Review* (London, 1876).

Buddhaghosa, in his Commentary, relates how Sigāla’s parents were not only lay followers, but also stream-winners, but they could not persuade him to accompany them to hear the Dharma. Sigāla declared that he would have nothing to do with recluses because saluting them would make his back ache, stiffen his knees, and wear out his clothes having to sit on the ground. And having known the recluses, one has to invite them and give them donations, and so incurring losses upon oneself. Finally, the father, on his deathbed employed a skillful means. If a lay-follower’s son were to worship the directions (*disā namassana*), the Buddha and his disciples would surely notice him and teach him better things. And since one’s parent’s last wishes are to be honoured, the son obeyed. (DA 3:942)

The sutta opens with the Buddha’s meeting Sigāla and their conversation [1-2]. After the summary or synopsis [3a], the Buddha lists the four defilements of conduct [3b-4] and the four motives or biases [5-6]. These two brief sections are followed by more elaborate teachings. Section III deals with “Six ways of squandering wealth” where six dangers (*ādānavā*) are listed for each of the six ways of loss (*apāya,-mukhā*) [7-14]. Section IV deals with “four false friends and four true friends” which, following the same basic structure, lists four characteristics of a false friend [15-20] and of a true friend [21-26]. It is interesting to note that where usually the term “spiritual friend” (*kalyāṇa,mitta*) would be used (eg S 1:88, 5:29),¹ here we find “**true-hearted friend**” (*suhada,mitta*) [21-26].

The sutta climaxes and closes with the section on the six directions in relation to oneself [27-34], that is, a graphic presentation of a comprehensive code of social responsibilities and reciprocal ethics:

East	—	parents
South	—	teachers
West	—	wife and children
North	—	friends and colleagues
Nadir	—	slaves, servants, workers (the earth below)
Zenith	—	recluses and brahmins (the sky above)

Of the six directions [27-34], T W Rhys Davids remarks, “The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents’ care; teachers’ fees and the South are the same word: *dakkhiṇa*; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is ‘beyond,’ so by the help of friends, etc, he gets beyond troubles.” (D:RD 3:180). The six directions are conflated into the three fires (*aggi*) in (**Uggata,sarīra**) **Aggi Sutta** (A 4.44):

¹ See Piya Tan, “True Friendship: Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana” in “The Buddha and His Disciples” lecture series, Singapore, 2002b: ch 3.

- (1) the fire worthy of oblation (*āhuneyy'aggi*), ie one's parents;
- (2) the fire of the householder (*gahapat'aggi*), ie one's family;
- (3) the fire of religious offerings (*dakkhiṇeyy'aggi*), ie recluses and brahmins (viz religious practitioners) (A 4.44.12-16/4:45).²

The rationale for the Buddhist social ethics as embodied in the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta is the personal teaching (*attūpanāyikam dhamma,pariyāyam*), or what in modern philosophy is called “the golden rule,” as taught in **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.7.5/5:353). Stated positively, this entails that one should do to others that which one wishes others to do to one, or simply put, one should treat others (in a wholesome way) as one treats oneself.

The sutta happily closes with the young Sigāla taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

(2) Demythologization

In the Introduction to his translation of the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta, **T W Rhys Davids** (D:RD) notes that the Atharva Veda (iii, 26, 27) identifies each “region” with a god—Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Viṣṇu, and Brhaspati.³ In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa⁴ five as well as seven directions are mentioned in rites. In the Gṛhya Sūtras,⁵ the four quarters are to be worshipped in connection with certain rites. “And so much self-anointing or contact with water is enjoined that the lay celebrant may well have had both hair and garments wet as Sigāla had.” (D:RD 3:170). Even before the days of modern demythologization, Rhys Davids then remarks

The conversion from the invoking of animistically conceived nature-forces to that loving service to fellow-beings which is the truest worship of Deity, was the more easily effected because Sigāla's own convictions were not involved. (D:RD 3:171)

However, it should be noted that only three Vedas were known during the Buddha's time (see, for example, **the Tevijja Sutta**, D 13). The Atharva Veda was a less sophisticated collection of hymns, magic spells and incantations that remains partly outside the Vedic sacrifice and was a post-Buddhist compilation. However, its roots clearly lay in older traditions such as those reflected in the worship of the directions.

Michel Clasquin, in his paper, “Demythologisation in Axial Age India—the Singalovāda Suttanta,”⁶ gives an insightful study of the Sigāl'ovāda Sutta. Scholars and students of religion often associate the term demythologization (German *Entmythologisierung*) with the Lutheran theologian Rudolf Bultmann, and the word did not enter into the English language until 1950.⁷

It refers to an effort to see beyond the specific, culturally defined mythical embellishments of religious teachings. It differs, however, from ordinary positivist debunking in that the intention of demythologising is not just to prove the myths factually wrong, but to discern a deeper, timeless meaning that is assumed to lie buried beneath layer upon layer of mythical material.

(Clasquin, 1995:1 html ed)

Clasquin goes on to state that demythologization is not a modern process, but in the West goes as far back as Socrates and, in the East, the Buddha, that is, more specifically, the Sigālo'vāda Sutta (1995:2).

² See (**Uggata,sarīra**) **Aggi S** in Sutta Discovery 2003:3,16.

³ See also Clasquin 1995:4 html ed.

⁴ SBE xii, 382; xliii, 277, 314.

⁵ SBE xxix, 320; cf 232; xxx, 171, 194, 313, 278.

⁶ Demythologisation in Axial Age India—the Singalovada Suttanta.” Unisa [University of South Africa] Press Online: *Myth and Symbol* 2 1995:19-38.

⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed 1989, 4:452.

Clasquin further notes that the six directions, as demythologized by the Buddha “appear to display a clearly structured arrangement; they can be divided into a pair of triplets,” (1995:6 html ed) the first of which is the parents/teachers/wife triad. This early stage of a man’s life would in later Hinduism form the “celibate student” (or “bachelor” stage) of the “**stages of life**” (Skt *āśrama, dharma*). This would be followed by the “householder” stage (*grhastya*), when the youth takes a wife (Crawford, 1982:61-70). As Clasquin notes, these two stages (found in the first triad of parents/teachers/wife) is *diachronic in nature, tracing a person’s passage through time. The following two stages of the “forest-dweller” (vana, prastha) and the “ascetic” (sannyāsi), both involving withdrawal from the household life were introduced later as a Hindu reaction partly against Buddhist monasticism.*

The second triad of relationships involves one’s friends and companions, servants and co-workers, and religious practitioners (“recluses and brahmins”). This group, Clasquin notes, is synchronic in nature, “but shows a certain progression nonetheless. In this case, we observe an increase in formality.” (1995:6).

While Bultmann’s demythologization is theological, that of the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta is ethical—

...the Buddhist ethic is solidly based on the pan-Buddhist principle of interdependent causality. It might be summarized as follows: “You are free to do whatever you want: there will be consequences”. And these consequences are described in very positive terms, which is unusual for a Buddhist text. If we treat people in the ways prescribed, they will respond naturally and almost inevitably in very specific ways that will, incidentally, be to our benefit. (1995:9 html ed)

Clasquin closes his study with this remark:

And this is the final irony: In Theravada Buddhist countries, the Siṅgālovāda Suttanta has become such a popular source of religious inspiration drawn from antiquity, it has served as such an eminent source of pro-social codes of conduct, that it has become a myth itself. Moreover, it has become a myth that is itself sorely in need of demythologisation. (1995:9)

(3) Sigāla’s parents

Sigāla, māṭā (“Sigāla’s mother”) came from a merchant banker (*seṭṭhi*) family in Rājagaha and, after marriage, had a son called Sigāla. She heard the Buddha’s teaching and gaining faith, joined the Order. According to the Apadāna, the Buddha taught her the sutta regarding the worship of the directions (evidently the Sigāl’ovāda Sutta) (Ap 2:603 f). Having listened to it, she became a stream-winner.

She was full of faith and went to hear the Buddha teach so that she could gaze at his personal beauty. The Buddha, realizing her disposition, expedited her faith so that, in due course, she became an arhat. Later, she was declared the foremost of nuns who had won liberation by faith (*saddhādhimutānam*, A 1:25).

In the time of Padum’uttara Buddha, she belonged to a minister’s family, and once went with her father to hear the Buddha’s teaching. Full of faith, she entered the Order, and, hearing a nun declared as the foremost of those who had faith, she aspired to win the same honour (AA 1:381).

Sigāla, pitā (“Sigāla’s father”) was a householder of Sāvatthī. He joined the Order, and the Buddha asked him to meditate on the perception of a skeleton. He lived in the Bhesakalā, vana in Sumsumāra, giri, where a forest deity encouraged him with a verse (Tha 18). Thus inspired, he developed insight and became an arhat.

Ninety four aeons ago he had given a palmyra or palm (*tāla*) fruit to the Pratyeka Buddha named Sata,raṁsī. In the time of Kassapa Buddha he was a monk and developed meditation on the perception of a skeleton (ThaA.1:74 f).

The Advice to Sigāla

(D 31/3:180-193)

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Squirrels' Feeding Ground in the Bamboo Grove near Rājagaha.

Sigāla worships the directions

At that time, Sigāla the householder's son, having risen early in the morning⁸ and left Rājagaha, was with wet clothes and wet hair, and with lotus palms worshipping the different directions, that is, the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith.⁹

2a Then, the Blessed One, having dressed himself in the morning and taking robe and bowl, entered Rājagaha for alms. The Blessed One saw Sigāla the householder's son, having risen early in the morning and left Rājagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, and with lotus palms saluting the different directions, that is, the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith. Seeing Sigāla the householder's son the Blessed One said this to him:

2b "Householder's son, why do you, having risen early in the morning and left Rājagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, and with lotus palms salute the different [181] directions, that is, the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith?"

"Venerable sir, when my father was dying, he said: 'Son, the directions should be worshipped.' So I, venerable sir, honouring my father's word, respecting it, valuing it, hallowing it, having risen early in the morning and left Rājagaha, was with wet clothes and wet hair, and with lotus palms saluting the different directions, that is, the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir and the zenith."

2c "But householder's son, the directions are not to be worshipped in this manner in the Noble One's discipline."

"In that case, venerable sir, how are the directions to be worshipped in the Noble One's discipline? It would be good if the Blessed One were to teach me that dharma [duty] regarding how the directions should be worshipped."

"Then, listen, householder's son, pay close attention, I will speak."

"Yes, venerable sir," the householder's son replied.

Summary

The Blessed One said this:

3a "Householder's son, the noble disciple gives up the four defilements of conduct,¹⁰ he does no evil deeds out of the four motives,¹¹ he does not indulge in the six ways of squandering wealth¹²—through avoiding these fourteen evil ways, he covers¹³ the six directions, and he is on his way to conquering both worlds, successful both in this world and in the next. When the body has broken up after death, he arises in a heavenly world.

⁸ "Early in the morning," *kālassa eva*.

⁹ The ancient Indians of the Buddha's time had no magnetic compass. They literally "orientate" (turn to the east) by facing the sun at dawn, calling that direction the "front" (*puratthima*). The right-hand direction (*dakṛhina*) is the south; the direction at the back (*pacchima*) is the west; the left-hand direction is the north (*uttara*).

¹⁰ "Defilements of conduct," *kamma, kilesa*, lit "defilements of karma"; alt tr "vices of conduct" (Prayudh Payutto, 1969). These refer to actions of body and of speech, ie moral virtue (*sīla*).

¹¹ "Out of... motives," *thānehi*, or "for... the reasons".

¹² "Ways of squandering wealth," *bhogānaṃ apāya, mukhāni*, or "the sources of loss of wealth".

¹³ "Covers," *paṭicchadi*, lit "get... covered," protect.

I. THE FOUR DEFILEMENTS OF CONDUCT

3b What are the four defilements of conduct that he has given up?

Householder's son, they are:

- (1) The defilement of deed that is the harming of life;
- (2) The defilement of deed that is the taking of the not-given;
- (3) The defilement of deed that is sexual misconduct;
- (4) The defilement of deed that is the uttering of false speech.

—These are the four defilements of conduct that he has given up.”

The Blessed One said this.

4 Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this: [182]

The harming of life, taking the not-given, and uttering falsehood,
And going with the women of others—these the wise praise not.

II. THE FOUR MOTIVES

5 “By which four motives¹⁴ does he do no evil deed?

- (1) He does no evil deed led by the bias of desire;¹⁵
- (2) He does no evil deed led by the bias of hate;
- (3) He does no evil deed led by the bias of delusion;
- (4) He does no evil deed led by the bias of fear.

Because the noble disciple, householder's son, is not led by the bias of desire, nor led by the bias of hate, nor led by the bias of delusion, nor led by the desire of fear, he does no evil deed through these four motives.”

The Blessed One said this.

6 Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this:

Whoever by desire, by hate, by fear, by delusion
Transgresses the Dharma
His power wanes
Like the moon during the dark half.

Whoever by desire, by hate, by fear, by delusion
Transgresses not the Dharma
His power waxes
Like the moon during the bright half.

¹⁴ “Motives” (*ghāṇā*), here syn with *agati*, lit “not coming,” ie wrong course or “bias”, conditioned by the four motives here (V 1:339; Vism 683).

¹⁵ *Chandāgatim gacchanto pāpa,kammaṃ na karoti*. *Chanda* normally tr neutrally as “desire” but here is used in the negative sense, meaning “sense-desire”. *Agati* has been rendered as “bias”. *Gacchanto* here lit tr as “going (by)” and is idiomatically rendered as “led by,” “by way of” or “because of”. Alt tr: “He does no evil by way of being led by desire”.

III. SIX WAYS OF SQUANDERING WEALTH

7 “What are the six ways of squandering wealth that he does not indulge in?”¹⁶

- (1) The addiction to strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness,¹⁷ householder’s son, is a way of squandering wealth.¹⁸
- (2) Roaming [and loitering] the streets at unseemly hours is a way of squandering wealth.
- (3) Frequenting fairs [or shows] is a way of squandering wealth.
- (4) Addiction to gambling, a basis for heedlessness,¹⁹ is a way of squandering wealth.
- (5) Associating with evil friends is a way of squandering wealth.
- (6) The habit of idleness is a way of squandering wealth.

8 (1) These, householder’s son, are **the six dangers from the addiction to strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness:**

- (a) The immediate [and visible] loss of wealth.
- (b) An increase of quarrels.
- (c) The likelihood of illness.
- (d) It is a source of disgrace. [183]
- (e) The indecent exposure of oneself.
- (f) It weakens one’s intelligence.

These, householder’s son, are the six dangers from the addiction to strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

9 (2) These, householder’s son, are **the six dangers from the habit of roaming the streets at unseemly hours:**

- (a) He is himself without guard or protection.
- (b) His family [wife and children] are without guard or protection.
- (c) His wealth is without guard or protection.
- (d) He is liable to be suspected of evil deeds [and crimes].
- (e) He falls prey to false rumours.
- (f) He is flooded by numerous troubles.

These, householder’s son, are the six dangers from the habit of roaming the streets at unseemly hours:

10 (3) These, householder’s son, are **the six dangers from frequenting fairs [or shows]:**²⁰

- (a) ‘Where is there dancing?’
- (b) ‘Where is there singing?’
- (c) ‘Where is there music playing?’
- (d) ‘Where is there a talk show [or story-telling]?’
- (e) ‘Where is there hand-clapping [hand music]?’²¹
- (f) ‘Where is there drum-beating?’²²

¹⁶ These vices are also those of an evil friend (*pāpa, mitta*) who is a “reckless companion” [19].

¹⁷ “Strong drinks...that causes heedlessness,” *surā, meraya, majja-p, pamāda-ṭ, thāna*, also *tr as* “strong drinks, distilled drinks and fermented drinks that causes heedlessness.” Comy says that there are five kinds of “strong drinks” (*surā*): made from crushed seeds (*piṭṭha, surā*), from cakes (*pūva, surā*), from rice (*odana, surā*), from fermented yeast (*kiṇṇa, pakkhita, surā*), from a mixture of ingredients (*sambhāra, saṃyutta, surā*) (DA 3:944; VvA 73; VbhA 381). Comy also says there are 5 kinds of “distilled drinks” (*meraya = āsava*): made from flowers (*pupph’ā-sava*), from fruits (*phal’āsava*), from honey (*madhv-āsava*), from sugar (*gul’āsava*), and from a mixture of ingredients (*sambhāra, saṃyutt’āsava*) (DA 3:944). *Majja* seems to be a general term for “drinks”. However it is likely that *majja* is the weakest of the three, while *surā* is the strongest. On when the precept against intoxicants is not breached, see Pāc 51 (V 4:110).

¹⁸ “A way of squandering wealth,” *bhogānaṃ apāya, mukhaṃ*, also “a way of losing wealth.”

¹⁹ “Gambling, a basis for heedlessness,” *jūta-p, pamāda-ṭ, thāna*.

²⁰ The questions below suggest that such a person is perpetually dissatisfied and emotionally empty.

²¹ “Hand-clapping,” *pāni-s, sara*, lit “hand sound.” See **Brahma, jāla S**, D 1.1.13/1:6.

These, householder's son, are the six dangers from frequenting fairs [or shows].



11 (4) These, householder's son, are **the six dangers from addiction to gambling, a basis for heedlessness:**

- (a) When one wins, one begets hatred.
 - (b) When one loses, one regrets one loss.
 - (c) There is immediate [and visible] loss of wealth.
 - (d) One's word carries no weight in an assembly.
 - (e) One is looked down by friends and colleagues.
 - (f) One is not sought after for marriage, for how could a person addicted to gambling support a wife?
- These, householder's son, are the six dangers from addiction to gambling, a basis for heedlessness.

12 (5) These, householder's son, are **the six dangers from associating with evil friends:**

One has friends and companions such as these—

- (a) The gamblers.
- (b) The libertines.
- (c) The drunkards.
- (d) The cheats.
- (e) The swindlers.
- (f) The violent. **[184]**

These, householder's son, are the six dangers from associating with evil friends.

13 (6) These, householder's son, are **the six dangers from the habit of idleness:**

- (a) He avoids work, saying, 'It's too cold.'
- (b) He avoids work, saying, 'It's too hot.'
- (c) He avoids work, saying, 'It's too late.'
- (d) He avoids work, saying, 'It's too early.'
- (e) He avoids work, saying, 'I'm too hungry.'
- (f) He avoids work, saying, 'I'm too full.'

—Thus much of what he should do remains undone: his wealth grows not, and the wealth that he has slips away.

These, householder's son, are the six dangers from the habit of idleness.”

The Blessed One said this.

14 Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this:

²² “Drum-beating,” *kumbha, thūna*, a type of drum, probably an ancestor of the modern tabla and duggi.

There is the bottle friend,
 There is the one who [only] says, ‘Dear friend! Dear friend!’
 But when in need, one is a friend indeed,
 When a need arises, one is a companion, too!

Sleeping late, consorting with the women of others,
 Given to anger and given to frivolous deeds,
 Evil friends and stinginess—
 These six things ruin a person.

The man who has an evil friend or evil companion,
 Who resorts to evil ways,
 Comes to ruin in both world,
 In this world and in the next.

Gambling and women, drinking, dancing and singing,
 Sleeping by day, roaming about for fun at unseemly times,
 Evil friends and stinginess—
 These six things ruin a person.

Those who delight in gambling, who take strong drinks,
 Who go to women dear as life to others, [185]
 Who associate with those of low morals,²³ not with the wise—
 They wane²⁴ like the moon in the dark half.

The drunkard, without wealth, having nothing,
 Who haunting bars, drinks when thirsty
 Will sink into debt like a stone in water
 Will quickly be without family [and home].

Who habitually sleeps [or dreams] by day,
 Who hates rising in the night [before dawn],²⁵
 Ever drunk and loose
 Is unfit to lead a household life.

Who thus says: ‘It is too cold;’²⁶
 It is too hot; it is too late,’
 Thus leaving his work undone,
 Opportunity slip by such men.

Whoever regards cold and heat
 No more than he does a blade of grass,
 And does his work as a man should—
 His happiness will never fall away.

²³ “Who associate with those of low morals,” *nihīna, sevī*, lit “who associate with the low.” This is a wordplay to link it to the verb *nihīyati* (falls into ruin or “fades (away)”) in the next line.

²⁴ “They wane,” *nihīyati*, lit “he goes down, falls into ruin, is destroyed”.

²⁵ “Who detests rising at night,” following Be & Se reading: *rattin-uṭṭhāna, dessinā*; so Comy (DA 3:948).

²⁶ These last two quatrains are identical to those ascribed to Mātanga,putta (Tha 74/231 f).

IV. FOUR FALSE FRIENDS AND FOUR TRUE FRIENDS

A. False friends

15 “Householder’s son, there are **these four who should be known as enemies in the guise of friends**:

- (1) The taker [who never gives],²⁷ householder’s son, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend
 - (2) The talker,²⁸ householder’s son, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.
 - (3) The sweet-talker,²⁹ householder’s son, should be known as enemy in the guise of a friend.
 - (4) The reckless companion,³⁰ householder’s son, should be known as enemy in the guise of a friend.
- Householder’s son, these are the four who should be known as enemies in the guise of friends.

16 (1) **The taker** [who never gives], householder’s son, [186] should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He merely takes without ever giving.
- (b) With little, he desires much.
- (c) He does what needs doing only out of fear.
- (d) He serves only his own ends.

The taker [who never gives], householder’s son, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons.

17 (2) **The talker**, householder’s son, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He claims to having been hospitable in the past.³¹
- (b) He promises hospitality in the future.³²
- (c) He worms his way with empty favours.³³
- (d) When you need help, he feigns his own misfortune.³⁴

For these four reasons, householder’s son, the talker should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.

18 (3) **The sweet-talker**, householder’s son, should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He consents to your doing wrong.
- (b) He consents to your doing right.
- (c) He sings your praises to your face.
- (d) He runs you down behind your back.

For these four reasons, householder’s son, the sweet-talker should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend.

19 (4) **The reckless companion**, householder’s son, should be known as enemy in the guise of a friend for these four reasons:³⁵

²⁷ “The taker without ever giving,” *añña-d-atthu, haro*, lit “one who merely takes away,” the out-and-out robber.

²⁸ “The talker,” *vacī, paramo*, lit “who is word at best,” one who merely pays lip-service.

²⁹ “The sweet-talker,” *anuppiya, bhāṇī*, lit “speaker of what is pleasant,” a flatterer, a toady.

³⁰ “The reckless companion,” *apāya, sahāya*, lit “a companion who leads one to destruction,” fellow wastrel.

³¹ *Atītena paṭisantharati*, lit “he is hospitable with the past.” Comy: He sweetly claims, “So much maize was set aside for you. We waited by the road but you did not come. Now it has gone bad.” (DA 3:949).

³² *Anāgatena paṭisantharati*, lit “he is hospitable about the future.” Comy: He sweetly claims, “This time we have good maize and loads of fruit. We will be sure to set aside a pile of maize for you.” (DA 3:949).

³³ *Niratthakena saṅgaṇhāti*, ie he displays kindness but it is an empty promise.

³⁴ *Paccupannesu kiccesu vyasanāṇi dasseti*, lit “he points to his misfortune in what is to be done now.” Comy: If you need a cart, he claims it has broken a wheel, etc (DA 3:949).

³⁵ These four reasons are also the ways of squandering one’s wealth [7].

(a) He is your companion in taking strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

(b) He is your companion in roaming [and loitering in] the streets at unseemly hours.

(c) He is your companion in frequenting fairs [or shows].

(d) He is your companion in indulging in gambling, a basis for heedlessness.

For these four reasons, householder's son, the reckless companion should be known as an enemy in the guise of a friend."

The Blessed One said this.

20 Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this:³⁶

The friend who is a mere taker,
And the friend who is a mere talker,
And the one who sweet-talks,
And the companion who is reckless—
These four are not friends.
Thus the wise should know:
They should be avoided from afar
Like a dangerous path. [187]

B. True friends

21 "Householder's son, there are **these four who should be known as true-hearted friends**.³⁷

(1) The helper (*upakāra*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.

(2) One who is the same in joy and in pain (*samāna, sukha, dukkha*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.

(3) One who gives good counsel (*atth'akkhāyī*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.

(4) One who is compassionate (*anukampaka*) should be known as a true-hearted friend.

22 (1) **The helper**, householder's son, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:³⁸

(a) He guards you when you are heedless.³⁹

(b) He guards your property when you are heedless.

(c) He is a refuge to you when you are in fear [and danger].

(d) When you have tasks to complete, he provides you with double the supply you need.⁴⁰

The helper, householder's son, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.

23 (2) **The one who is the same in joy and in pain** should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:

(a) He tells you his secrets.

(b) He keeps your secrets.

(c) He does not abandon you in your troubles.⁴¹

(d) He would even give his life for you.

³⁶ This verse is qu at **Puṭa, dūsaka J**, where W H D Rouse gives a charming tr: *The friend who rob another without ceasing; | He that protests, protests incessantly; | The friend who flatters for the sake of pleasing; | The boon companion in debauchery;— | These four the wise as enemies should fear, | And keep aloof, if there be danger near.* (J 280/2:290).

³⁷ "True-hearted friends" *suhadā mittā*, or "friends with good hearts."

³⁸ The first three qualities below are given as part of those reciprocal qualities that your "friends and companions" should show you [31fgh].

³⁹ Comy: "When he sees that you have fallen in the middle of town or at the city gate or on the road after having taken some drinks, he sits down by you until you wake, lest your clothes be stolen." (DA 3:949)

⁴⁰ *Uppannassa kicca, karaṇīyesu tad diguṇaṃ bhogaṃ anuppādeti.*

⁴¹ This is also the reciprocal quality that your "friends and companions" should show you [31i].

The one who is the same in joy and in pain, householder's son, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.

24 (3) One who gives good counsel should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:⁴²

- (a) He restrains you from evil.
- (b) He exhorts you to do good.
- (c) He lets you hear what you have not heard before.
- (d) He shows you the way to heaven.

The one who gives good counsel, householder's son, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.

25 (4) One who is compassionate⁴³ should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons:

- (a) He does not delight in your misfortunes.
- (b) He delights in your good fortunes.
- (c) He prevents others from speaking ill of you.
- (d) He commends others who speak well of you.

The one who is compassionate, householder's son, should be known as a true-hearted friend for these four reasons.”

The Blessed One said this.

26 Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this: **[188]**

The friend who is a helper,
And the friend in weal and woe,
And the friend who gives good counsel,
And the compassionate friend—
These four are friends,
Thus the wise should know
And devote himself with respect
As a child would his parents.

The wise accomplished in moral virtue,
Glows like a fire on a hill-top,⁴⁴
Building his wealth
The way bees do,⁴⁵
His wealth piles up
The way an anthill grows,
Having gathered his wealth thus
He is ready for family and home,
And truly binds his friends to himself.⁴⁶

⁴² These duties are almost identical to those of the recluses and brahmins reciprocating the son of family [33f-k].

⁴³ “Compassionate,” *anukampaka*, fr the verb *anukampati* = *anu* (after) + *kampati* (shake, tremble), lit “he shakes or trembles along after (someone)” (D:RD 3:171).

⁴⁴ Comy: That is, like a fire burning on a hill-tip at night (DA 3:951).

⁴⁵ An allusion to Dh 49.

⁴⁶ Cf **Aḷavaka S**: How does one bind friends to oneself?...By giving, one binds friends (S vv850, 852/1:214 f).

**He divides his wealth into four:
One part he enjoys,⁴⁷
With two he invests in his work,
And the fourth he should save
Should there be any misfortune.**

V. THE SIX DIRECTIONS

27 And how, householder's son, should the noble disciple cover⁴⁸ the six directions?⁴⁹
Householder's son, these should be regarded as the six directions, namely:⁵⁰

- (1) Parents should be regarded as the front direction [the east].
- (2) Teachers should be regarded as the direction to the right [the south]. **[189]**
- (3) The wife and children should be regarded as the direction at the back [the west].
- (4) Friends and companions should be regarded as the superior direction [the north].
- (5) Slaves, labourers and workers [employees and charges] should be regarded as the direction below [nadir].
- (6) Ascetics and brahmins [religious renunciates and practitioners] should be regarded as the direction above [zenith].

28 (1) In five ways, householder's son, **parents** as the front direction [the east], should be ministered to by a son [or daughter], considering:

- (a) 'Having been supported by them, I will support them in turn.'
- (b) 'I will do their work for them.'
- (c) 'I will keep the family line and tradition.'⁵¹
- (d) 'I will myself be worthy of my heritage'
- (e) 'And I will make offerings (*dakkhiṇa*) on behalf the dead and departed.'

The parents, householder's son, as the front direction [the east], having been ministered thus by the son [or daughter] show them their⁵² compassion in these five ways:⁵³

- (f) They restrain him from evil.
- (g) They exhort him to do good.
- (h) They have him trained in a profession.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Buddhaghosa thinks that of these four, the first is the best for doing skillful acts since one could both donate to monks, the destitute and travellers, and also pay the weavers, bathmen, etc [ie for personal services] (DA 3:952).

⁴⁸ "Cover," *paṭicchadi*, lit "get...covered," protect.

⁴⁹ The six directions are conflated into the three fires (*aggi*) in (**Uggata,sarīra**) **Aggi S** (A 4.44): (a) the fire worthy of oblation (*āhuneyy'aggi*), ie one's parents; (b) the fire of the householder (*gahapat'aggi*), ie one's family; (c) the fire of religious offerings (*dakkhiṇeyy'aggi*), ie recluses and brahmins (viz religious practitioners) (A 4.44.12-16/4:45). See (Uggata,sarīra) **Aggi S** in Sutta Discovery 2003:3,16.

⁵⁰ Rhys Davids remarks: "The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents' care; teachers' fees and the South are the same word: *dakkhiṇa*; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is 'beyond,' so by the help of friends, etc, he gets beyond troubles." (D:RW 3:180).

⁵¹ "Family line and tradition," *kula,vamsa*, that is, by guarding the wealth and property gathered by one's parents, and if parents lack faith in the Dharma, one restores family honour by giving different types of donations (ticket food, etc) to the Order (DA 3:953).

⁵² This is a common-gender plural.

⁵³ Duties (f) & (g) are identical to those of the recluses and brahmins reciprocating the son of family's goodness [33fg].

⁵⁴ "Profession," *sippa*, lit "the arts," but here, following Comy it has been rendered so. Comy says that the son is trained in the family profession such as conveyancing [transfer of property], accounting, etc (DA 3:953).

- (i) They arrange for his marriage to a suitable wife.⁵⁵
- (j) They hand over his inheritance in due time.⁵⁶

In these five ways, householder's son, the parents, as the front direction [the east], having been ministered thus by the son [or daughter] show them their compassion.

Thus the front direction [the east] is covered by him and made safe and secure.

29 (2) In five ways, householder's son, **teachers** as the direction on the right [the south], should be ministered to by the student:

- (a) By rising [in salutation].
- (b) By waiting upon them.
- (c) By eagerness to listen [to learn].
- (d) By personal service.
- (e) By learning the arts [and professions] (*sippa*)⁵⁷ with respect.

The teachers, householder's son, as the direction to the right [the south], having been ministered thus by the student,⁵⁸ show him their compassion in these five ways:

- (f) They discipline him so that he is well-disciplined.
- (g) They teach him so that he is well-taught and learned.
- (h) They ensure that he is learned in every art and learning.⁵⁹
- (i) They introduce him to friends and companions.
- (j) They provide him with safety in every quarter.

In these five ways, householder's son, **[190] the teachers**, as the direction to the right [the south], having been ministered thus by the student, show their compassion.

Thus the direction to the right [the south] is covered by him and made safe and secure.

30 (3) In five ways, householder's son, **the wife**⁶⁰ as the direction at the back [the west], should be ministered to by the husband:

- (a) By treating her with respect.
- (b) By not showing her discourtesy.
- (c) By not being unfaithful to her.
- (d) By handing over authority to her.
- (e) By providing her with ornaments.⁶¹

The wife, householder's son, as the direction at the back [the west], having been ministered thus by the husband shows him her compassion in these five ways:

- (f) She manages her work very well.
- (g) She is hospitable to those around her [such as servants and husband's relatives].⁶²
- (h) She is not unfaithful to him.

⁵⁵ *Paṭirūpena dārena saṃyojenti*, lit "they have him bound to a suitable woman," which is said in reference to Indian society in the Buddha's time. In contemporary terms, this has to be contextualized to "they let their son or daughter find a suitable spouse."

⁵⁶ That is, at proper times and at death (DA 3:953).

⁵⁷ Here *sippa* apparently refers to "education" in general. Cf n to §28h.

⁵⁸ "Student," *antevasī*, lit "inmate," ie a resident student, apprentice.

⁵⁹ This refers to a well-balanced (even cross-disciplinary) curriculum.

⁶⁰ "Wife," *bhāriyā*, but above [27] given as "wife and children," *putta, dārā*, lit "wife and son," or "women and children," which reflects the social conditions of the Buddha's days. In our own times, it would be appropriate to contextualize this to "family". Similarly, "husband," *sāmika*, lit "owner" should here be contextualized in a gender-neutral way to reflect the current situation.

⁶¹ *Alaṅkāraṇuppadāna* = *alaṅkāra* + *anuppadāna*. The verb for *alaṅkāra* is *alaṅ, karoti*, meaning (a) to adorn; (b) to dress oneself, to put on; (c) to content oneself with (CPD); here appears to be a wordplay connoting that the husband should keep his wife happy and contented.

⁶² "The servants [and husband's relatives]," *parijana*, lit "the people around," ie "attendants, servants, retinue, suite" (PED) but Comy explains as "husband's relatives" (DA 3:955).

- (i) She looks after the household stores [and property].⁶³
- (j) She is skillful and diligent in all her duties.

In these five ways, householder's son, the wife, as the direction at the back [the west], having been ministered thus by the husband, shows him her compassion.

Thus the direction at the back [the west] is covered by him and made safe and secure.

31 (4) In five ways, householder's son, **friends and companions** as the superior direction [the north] should be ministered to by the son of family.⁶⁴

- (a) Through generosity.
- (b) Through pleasant [courteous] speech.
- (c) Through beneficial conduct [in looking after their welfare].
- (d) Through impartiality [treating them as he would treat himself].
- (e) Through not going back on his word.

Friends and companions, householder's son, as the superior direction [the north], having been ministered thus by the son of family, show him their compassion in these five ways.⁶⁵

- (f) They guard him when he is heedless.
- (g) They guard his property when he is heedless.
- (h) They are a refuge to him when he is in fear [or danger].
- (i) They do not abandon him in his troubles.⁶⁶
- (j) They respect his family members.⁶⁷

In these five ways, householder's son, friends and companions, as the superior direction [the north], having been ministered thus by the son of family, show him their compassion.

Thus the superior direction [the north] is covered by him and made safe and secure.

32 (5) In five ways, householder's son, **slaves, labourers and workers** [employees and charges]⁶⁸ as the direction below [nadir], **[191]** should be ministered to by the master.⁶⁹

- (a) By allocating work according to the strength of the worker.
- (b) By providing them with food and wages.⁷⁰
- (c) By attending to their medical and health needs.⁷¹
- (d) By sharing excellent tastes [food, etc] with them.⁷²

⁶³ Including goods brought back by her husband.

⁶⁴ The first four items below are called *saṅgha, vatthu*, the four conditions (*dāna, peyya, vajja, attha, cariya, samān'attatā*) for the integration of a group or of society, or consolidating friendship, partnership and unity. (D 3:152, 232; A 2:32, 248, 4:218, 363). **The (Saṅgha) Paññā, bala S** (A 9.7/4:363-365) explains them as follows (a) the gift of Dharma is the foremost gift (cf Dh 354a); (b) The foremost of pleasant speech (*piya, vācā* or *peyya, vajja*) is the teaching of the Dharma again and again to those who desire for it and listen attentively; (c) the foremost of beneficial conduct (*attha, cariyā*) is to rouse, instill, establish faith (*saddhā*) in the faithless; to rouse, instill, establish moral virtue (*sīla*) in the immoral; to rouse, instill, establish charity (*cāga*) in the miser; to rouse, instill, establish wisdom (*paññā*) in the foolish [ignorant]; (d) the foremost impartiality is a stream-winner's **impartiality** towards a stream-winner, a once-returner's impartiality towards a once-returner, a non-returner's impartiality towards a non-returner, an Arhat's impartiality towards an Arhat. See (Saṅgha) Paññā Bāla S in Sutta Discovery 2003:2,21.

⁶⁵ Qualities (f), (g), and (h) are part of those of the true-hearted friend who is "a helper" [22(1)].

⁶⁶ This is a quality of the true-hearted friend "who is the same in joy and in pain" [23(2)].

⁶⁷ "Other family members," *apara, paja*, lit "other generation," which Comy explains as "one's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, such as organizing auspicious occasions for them" (DA 3:956).

⁶⁸ Slavery evidently existed in Indian society of the Buddha's time and these instructions reflect his attempt at manumission (the emancipation of slavery), or at least their humane treatment.

⁶⁹ "Master," *ayyira*, an unusual form, probably "clerical contamination of *ayya*" (CPD: *ayyira-kula*). The better reading is perhaps *ayira(ka)*, from *ariya* or *ayya*, a nobleman, lord, sir, master. On the metathesis, see Müller, *Simplified Grammar of the Pali Language*, London, 1884:49.

⁷⁰ This is one of the earliest documented statement on a fair wage scheme and perks.

⁷¹ This is one of the earliest documented statement on a medical aid scheme.

(e) By giving them timely breaks and holidays.⁷³

The slaves and labourers [employees and charges], householder's son, as the direction below [ie the nadir],⁷⁴ having been ministered thus by the master, show him their compassion in these five ways:

- (f) They rise before him.
- (g) They retire after him.
- (h) They take only what is given.
- (i) They do their work well.
- (j) They spread about his good name and praise.⁷⁵

In these five ways, householder's son, the slaves and labourers [employees and charges], as the direction below [ie the nadir], having been ministered thus by the master, show him their compassion.

Thus the direction below [ie the nadir] is covered by him and made safe and secure.

33 (6) In five ways, householder's son, **ascetics and brahmins [religious renunciates and practitioners]** as the direction above [zenith],⁷⁶ should be ministered to by the son of family:

- (a) By physical acts of lovingkindness.
- (b) By words of lovingkindness.
- (c) By thoughts of lovingkindness.
- (d) By keeping the house open to them.
- (e) By providing them with material needs.

The ascetics and brahmins [religious renunciates and practitioners], householder's son, as the direction above [ie the zenith], having been ministered thus by the son of family, show him their compassion in these five ways:⁷⁷

- (f) They restrain him from evil.
- (g) They exhort him to do good.
- (h) They, with a good mind, show him compassion.
- (i) They let him hear what he has not heard before.
- (j) They clarify what he has heard.
- (k) They show him the way to heaven.

In these five ways, householder's son, the ascetics and brahmins [religious renunciates and practitioners], as the direction above [ie the zenith], having been ministered thus by the son of family, show him their compassion.

Thus the direction above [ie the zenith] is covered by him and made safe and secure."

The Blessed One said this.

34 Having said that, the Sugata [well-gone], the Teacher, further said this:

Mother and father are the direction in front,
Teachers are the direction on the right,
Wife and children are the direction at the back, [192]
Friends and companions are the north,
And slaves and labourers the nadir,

⁷² *Acchariyānaṃ rasānaṃ samvibhāgena*, lit "by giving a portion of marvellous tastes." Comy mentions "honey" as an example (DA 3:956). *Rasa* has a wide range of meanings including "juice, taste, object of enjoyment (entertainment), flavour and its substances (eg soup)" (PED). One could take all these meanings as applicable here.

⁷³ Comy: Giving them enough rest so that their work is better performed without working all day, and giving special leave during festivals, etc, when they should be provided with extra food and adornments for the occasion (DA 3:956).

⁷⁴ "Nadir," ie the earth below, representing the material support and services provided by this quarter.

⁷⁵ *Kitti.vaṇṇa, harā ca*, lit "and they are bearers of fame and praise."

⁷⁶ "Zenith," ie the sky above, representing the potential for personal and spiritual development and liberation.

⁷⁷ Significantly, all these duties are similar to those of the true-hearted friend "who gives good counsel" [24] and the first two duties here are those of the parents to their child [28fg].

Ascetics and brahmins the zenith—
 These are the directions to be honoured
 By one who would be fit to be a householder in his clan.

The wise one, accomplished in moral virtue,
 Refined and eloquent,
 Humble, free from pride—
 Such a one wins fame.

The early riser, industrious,
 Unshaken by troubles,
 Flawless in conduct, wise—
 Such a one wins fame.

Hospitable, a maker of friends,
 Wise in words, free from stinginess,⁷⁸
 Fore-runner, leader, guide,⁷⁹ —
 Such a one wins fame.

Generosity and pleasant speech,
 And beneficial conduct here,
 And impartiality in all things,
 Everywhere as is fitting—

These are what holds the world together
 Like a linch-pin holding the chariot-wheel;
 Without such welfare
 No mother would receive from her son
 Any honour or respect
 Nor the father from his son.

But since there are these things
 The wise regard⁸⁰ as welfare, [193]
 Therefore they bring greatness,
 And are win their praises.

35 When this was said, Sigāla the householder's son said this to the Blessed One:

“Excellent, venerable sir! Excellent, venerable sir! Just as if one were to place upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what was hidden, or were to show the way to one who was lost, or were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way the Blessed One has, in numerous ways, made the Dharma clear.

I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a layman who has gone to him for refuge from this day forth for life.”

—evaṃ—

⁷⁸ *Vadaññū vīta, maccharā*, this line (*pada*) as in **Macchari S** (S vv166 f/1:34).

⁷⁹ *Netā vinetā anunetā*, lit “one who leads, who leads away, who leads after,” ie one who is wiser than others, keeps others away from evil, and sets an example himself (ie as a follower himself).

⁸⁰ “Regard,” *samavekkhanti* = *sam* + *avekkhati* (he looks) (M 1:225; A 2:32; It 30).

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