

True Communion: The Exercise of Affection as Healing Device

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How often as Buddhists have we already heard that Buddhism is a cold, distant and dispassionate religion? How often have we heard that love and affection are opposite to non-attachment? According to the Buddha, however, friendship is an essential condition in the Path of Liberation. And he is not alone in this assumption. The intellectual basis of Western Culture as represented by Aristotle also places friendship as the stimulant for noble deeds, the safe shore against the perils of prosperity and power, the unifier of states, present in men and animals and more important than justice. In this paper I propose to show that Buddhism does not emphasize a cold out of reach attitude and that its view on friendliness goes well beyond a mere auxiliary practice. A comparison between Aristotle's and Buddha's Principles through a survey and reflection on Buddhist canonical and commentarial material and the thoughts of Aristotle, will show 'friendly affection' as the cornerstone of the Path to Liberation and Healing in Eastern and Western tradition. In an age of dissent, war, powerful egos and political struggles that leave deep emotional scars in everyone involved, the kind of friendship proposed by these Giants of Moral Teaching can provide the balm to sooth the wounds and recover the so needed sanity.

*Nur, wer die Sehnsucht kennt,
Weiss, was ich leide
None but the lonely heart
Knows what I suffer!*

Goethe, in: *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, bk.4, ch.11

Loneliness

According to John Cacioppo, a social neuroscientist at the University of Chicago¹, almost a quarter of people in the USA complain about frequently feeling lonely. Loneliness can manifest itself in many ways: feeling disconnected towards your fellow human beings, inability to relax, always stressed, depressed, not understood. Feeling disconnected can lead to aggression as a revolt against those elements that one feels are not 'receptive' and 'empathic' to oneself. Disconnection can lead to isolation, low self-esteem, withdrawing from the world. Not feeling one with nature and fellow beings one is never able to really relax, and instead of living with the flow of life, tension, insecurity and sadness build up.

Loneliness often is the cause for addictive behaviors, where drugs, alcohol and demeaning actions serve as ways to call for attention or deepen forgetfulness. In a comic strip, Snoopy appears complaining that his life is meaningless and empty. When Charlie

¹ Cacioppo, John T., Patrick, William. *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2008.

Brown comes with a bowl of food, Snoopy shouts: “*Ah, Meaning!*” Too often we use food, drugs, aggression and other harmful behaviors to forget even if temporarily the emptiness we feel inside.

Loneliness can lead to depression, sleep dysfunction, higher blood pressure, and is harmful to the general health and well-being. Its persistence permeates body and mind causing all kinds of dysfunctions. As Cacioppo says: “*It impairs the ability to feel trust and affection and people who lack emotional intimacy are less able to exercise good judgment in socially ambiguous situations*”. Here, in the disease (*dis-ease*) of loneliness, we have a kind of aloneness born from the incapacity to connect, love, open and feel. It is a heart condition that knows no limitations of age, class, race or sex. Loneliness can be present in any circumstance, affecting equally those living their day to day life in society as well as monastics in their secluded environment.

Psychologist Viktor Frankl frames well the relationship between loneliness and the non understanding of the human condition, as well as how sensitivity towards another human being gives meaning to one’s life:

*“This uniqueness and singleness which distinguishes each individual and gives a meaning to his existence has a bearing on creative work as much as it does on human love. When the impossibility of replacing a person is realized, it allows the responsibility which a man has for his existence and its continuance to appear in all its magnitude. A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the ‘why’ for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any ‘how’.”*²

Buddhism does not seem to help

A superficial glance on the Buddhist take on the matter, however, does not lead one to see how Buddhism can help. How often as Buddhists have we already heard that Buddhism is a cold, distant and dispassionate religion? Buddhism even seems to support the ideal that one should be alone. Visākḥā, after reaching Enlightenment, states: “*The Buddha’s will be done! See that ye do his will. And ye have done it, never more need ye repent the deed. Wash, then in haste your feet and sit ye down aloof, alone.*”³ Such an ideal is often depicted through the image of the recluse monk sitting alone in some cave or mountain top.

How often have we heard that love and affection are opposite to non attachment? Arahant Sumedhā even says: “*One or the other shall be – choose ye which: Or let me leave the world, or let me die*” and adds: “*O set not the heart’s affections on this sensual love. See all the peril, the satiety of sense.*”⁴ And is it not the Buddha himself who said that a monk having uprooted the five mental bondages: “*comes to be without attachment to sense-pleasures, without desire, without affection...*”? Add to this the common understanding that Buddhism aims for some kind of extinction of individual personhood and it becomes easy to draw the conclusion that there is no place for love and affection in it. Such conclusion is then propagated by monks and lay people alike, by people with some knowledge of Buddhism as well as by those who do not know it at all. In the day to day life of a Western Buddhist it is not unusual to meet with surprise when someone sees him/her laughing, having relationships and enjoying with friends: “*Can you have friends, being a Buddhist?*”

² Frankl, Viktor. *Man’s Search for Meaning*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1985, p. 101

³ Rhys Davids, Caroline (trans.). *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*. I. Psalms of the Sisters. Oxford: PTS, 1994, p.18.

⁴ Rhys Davids, Caroline (trans.). *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*. I. Psalms of the Sisters. Oxford: PTS, 1994, p.168, 171.

Words, however, are often subjected to different meanings. Not being clear about its context and use, one can easily misunderstand what the Buddha really meant. Equanimity is often taken as indifference; the exhortation for no passion is understood as an ideal of apathy; aloofness and reclusion sound like an incentive for the socially handicapped to justify oneself for his incapacity to have affectionate relationships. Words being relative to context, codependent and co-originated, must be interpreted against the whole background of all the information available.

Another kind of loneliness

The kind of loneliness that harms body and mind, and makes one withdrawn and sad is really nothing similar to what the Buddha calls *viveka*, a perfect singleness that is full, undisturbed and happy. Ajahn Buddhādāsa translates *viveka* as: “*utmost aloneness, perfect singleness, complete solitude,*” adding that: “*people no longer understands this correctly.*” *Viveka* can be understood in three levels.⁵ *Kāya-viveka* is a physical separation of others, while *citta-viveka* is a sort of mental state where emotions do not disturb the mind. However, the kind of *viveka* one is most interested is *upadhi-viveka*, a spiritual *viveka* defined by Buddhādāsa as: “*when no feelings or thoughts of attachment to ‘I’ and ‘mine’, ‘soul’ or ‘myself’ disturbs.*”⁶ We can see here that the highest meaning of solitude (*viveka*) relates to being alone away from the self and its cravings, aversions and other egotistical demands. Sometimes it is needed to be physically alone in order to discover our ‘nibbanic-viveka’ and be strong enough to be able to distance ourselves from the grasp of self. But the occasional means is not the final end. It is the tyranny of the self that clearly the true practitioner is aiming to escape from. It is being able to be alone without the ‘voices’ of the ego chatting in useless talks within us. As Ajahn Chah says: “*this mind of ours is already unmoving and peaceful... really peaceful! Just like a leaf which is still as long as no wind blows. If a wind comes up the leaf flutters. The fluttering is due to the wind -- the ‘fluttering’ is due to those sense impressions; the mind follows them. If it doesn’t follow them, it doesn’t ‘flutter.’ If we know fully the true nature of sense impressions, we are unconcerned.*”

Having seen that the loneliness and reclusion that Buddhism speaks of is of a different sort than the pathological one that pesters our modern society, our next aim is to show that the demonstration of affection is a virtuous action. And as such it is to be trained and cultivated in thoughts, words and behavior; that only feeling affection within oneself is not enough. And this is not only to be done as a preparation while we tread the path, but also that this is the norm among enlightened disciples. We could say it is the shoes we use to walk the path, as well the clothes we wear after having arrived.

Buddha’s Higher Friendship

Let us start with the Buddha himself. That after his Awakening he has chosen to teach and be among ‘devas and men’ shows that his Awakening did not urge him to isolate himself from the company of people. In the SN.i.206 we can see what motivated him through a dialogue with a deity. In such occasion, a deity comes to the Buddha reproaching that it was not fit for one who had cut all ties, renounced and emancipated from everything, that he should stay teaching other men. That the one who had cut all ties should remain isolated is exactly the kind of thought that many people have still today, including even some Buddhists. That the deity reproaches the Buddha for not complying

⁵ Nd 26. *Upadhi-viveka* is here equivalent to *nibbāna*.

⁶ Santikaro, Bhikkhu, (ed.). *Evolution Liberation* # 2. Surat Thani: Suan Mokkh, 1987, p. 18.

with the ‘expected’ behavior shows exactly that the Enlightened One did not follow that approach.

The Buddha’s answer shows the full strength of his actions and motivations: “*Whatever the apparent cause, whereby men come to dwell together, none do fit the Arahant. Compassion moves his mind, and if, with mind thus satisfied, he spends his life instructing other men, yet he thereby is nowise bound as by a yoke. Compassion move him and sympathy.*”⁷ The Buddha does not dwell with others in order to socialize. Arahants do not need company to fill their loneliness or need to be loved. What moves them? The motivation behind their actions is expressed through the Pāli compound *anukampā-anuddaya*, in the present translation conveyed as compassion and sympathy. *Anukampa* is said to be the characteristic motivation for the Buddha to teach. Usually translated as compassion, *anukampa* means a deep stir inside born out of the seeing the existential condition of another being, a stir that moves one to help in any way. *Anuddaya* has a similar meaning expressing an inner move to give help.

The case of the Buddhas and Arahants is an instance of what Aristotle calls relationship between unequals, a kind of association where both parties have not exactly the same roles.⁸ In the Buddhist text Sigalovāda Suttanta, such relationship of mutual affection between teachers and students is shown as follows: “*In five ways should teachers as the southern direction be respected by a student: by rising for them, regularly attending lessons, eagerly desiring to learn, duly serving them, and receiving instruction. And, teachers so respected reciprocate with compassion in five ways: by training in self-discipline, ensuring the teachings are well-grasped, instructing in every branch of knowledge, introducing their friends and colleagues, and providing safeguards in every direction. In this way, the southern direction is protected and made peaceful and secure.*”⁹ One notices that all actions expected from teachers are to be done motivated by compassion (*anukampa*).

The same applies to the relationship between religious persons (monks or not) and their supporters: “*In five ways should ascetics and Brahmans as the upper direction be respected: by kindly actions, speech, and thoughts, having an open door, and providing material needs. And, ascetics and Brahmans so respected reciprocate with compassion in six ways: by restraining you from wrongdoing, guiding you to good actions, thinking compassionately (loving with kindly thoughts), telling you what you ought to know, clarifying what you already know, and showing you the path to heaven. In this way, the upper direction is protected and made peaceful and secure.*”¹⁰

But outside the amorous, friendly and compassionate relationship between teachers and students and religious people and their supporters and devotees (a kind of unequal relationship), is there place for affection and love between equals?

Does the Buddha have a teaching on affection?

The answer is a big: ‘YES’.

⁷ ‘yena kena-ci vaṇṇena, saṃvāso sakka jāyati. na taṃ arahati sappañño, manasā anukampitum. Manasā ce pasannena, yadaññamanusāsati na tena hoti saṃyutto, ya-anukampā anuddaya ti.’

⁸ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.7

⁹ “*Pañcahi kho, gahapatiputta, thānehi antevāsinaṃ dakkhiṇā disā ācariyā paccupaṭṭhātabbā – uṭṭhānena upaṭṭhānena sussusāya pāricariyāya sakkaccaṃ sippapaṭṭiggaṇaṇena. Imehi kho, gahapatiputta, pañcahi thānehi antevāsinaṃ dakkhiṇā disā ācariyā paccupaṭṭhitā pañcahi thānehi antevāsinaṃ anukampanti – suvinītaṃ vinenti, suggahitaṃ gāhāpentī, sabbasippassutaṃ samakkhāyino bhavanti, mittāmmaccesu paṭiyādentī, disāsu parittānaṃ karonti. Imehi kho, gahapatiputta, pañcahi thānehi antevāsinaṃ dakkhiṇā disā ācariyā paccupaṭṭhitā imehi pañcahi thānehi antevāsinaṃ anukampanti. Evamassa esā dakkhiṇā disā paṭicchannā hoti khemā appaṭibhayā.*”

¹⁰ *Sigalovada Sutta: The Buddha’s Advice to Sigalaka* (<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.ksw0.html>). Translated from the Pāli by John Kelly, Sue Sawyer, and Victoria Yareham. © 2005 John Kelly. Transcribed from a file provided by the translators. Access to Insight edition is © 2005–2011.

To start with, love and candor are virtues to be looked for in any people we associate with. Association with the good is praised in *Mangala Sutta* as one of the blessings. It is explained that such association consists of: “*Serving, respecting, revering, honoring, love, reverence, friendship for those people who are faithful, virtuous, learned, possessed of devotion and candor.*” From this we realize that ‘serving, respecting and revering’ is much more than a behavior born from authority and hierarchy, but a loving friendship imbued of candor and affection. The blessing (*maṅgala*) is being able to love and befriend those who are virtuous, devoted and have candor.

Further, “*when a good friend possesses seven factors he should never be rejected by one as long as life lasts... What seven? He is endearing, venerable, an example, he is willing to talk to and willing for one to talk with him, is willing to explain what is profound and never exhorts groundlessly. A friend like that may well be served for life by one who is desirous of a friend.*”¹¹ Such willingness in your friend to talk to you and easiness to be talked with are only possible in true friendship tempered by affection. We can see here a kind of friendship that is not foolish or based in sharing sense pleasures but one based on wisdom and compassion.

One of the best stories related to this appears in *Cūlagosīṅga Sutta* MN 31. Once, when Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila were living together in the Gosīṅga forest for a while, the Buddha came to visit and asked them how they were living. Anuruddha responded, “*Surely, Lord, we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.*” And asked by the Buddha how they were able to live in such harmony, Anuruddha answered, “*I do so by thinking, ‘How blessed and fortunate I am to be living with such companions in the holy life!’ I maintain towards my companions loving-kindness in bodily action, speech, and thought, and I consider, ‘let me set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do.’ In this way, though we are different in body, we are one in mind.*” So happy was the Buddha with such declaration of harmonious living that later he stated, “*If the clan from which those three young men went forth...the village...the town...the city...the country...the world with its devas, māras and brāhmas, this generation with its recluses and Brahmins, its princes and people, should remember them with confident heart, that would lead to the welfare and happiness of that of the whole world for a long time.*”¹²

Cūlagosīṅga Sutta eloquently expresses the caring affection between the three venerables to the point of Ven. Anuruddha saying that though they are different in body, they are one in mind.¹³ What a beautiful expression of unity and friendship when the three monks explain that they are “*living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.*”

Demonstration of affection in speech

One can notice in the dialogue of *Cūlagosīṅga Sutta* that friendly expression towards their companions on the Path is not to be kept only as a mental attitude, as nowadays some may think *mettā* as merely a mental meditative exercise, but also is to be manifested as bodily and verbal acts. Not only that, but it is manifested either openly or in private.¹⁴

¹¹ AN. iv.32.

¹² Horner, I.B. trans. *The Middle Length Sayings*. Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1993. vol. I, p.258.

¹³ *Nānā hi kho no, bhante, kāyā ekañca pana maññe cittanti.* Also in MN 128.

¹⁴ *Tassa mayhaṃ, bhante, imesu āyasmantesu mettāṃ kāyakammaṃ paccupaṭṭhitāṃ āvi ceva raho ca, mettāṃ vacīkammaṃ paccupaṭṭhitāṃ āvi ceva raho ca, mettāṃ manokammaṃ paccupaṭṭhitāṃ āvi ceva raho ca.*

Pp 43¹⁵ classifies people in three categories in regarding speech: foul-mouthed, flower-speaker and honey-tongued, in a clear hierarchical way. While the ‘flower-speaker’ is someone who does not speak untruth consciously “*either for his own sake, or for the sake of others or for the sake of any least to him,*” the ‘honey-tongued’ by his turn takes a much more active stance. He “*speaks those words that are blameless, pleasing to the ear, lovely, appealing to the heart, urbane, coveted by many and fascinating to many.*” So, while the ‘flower-speaker’ limits himself to not distancing from truth, the ‘honey-tongued’ seems to reveal an intention towards causing a beneficial impact to those he speaks to. He is active in his use of speech, while the other merely avoids harsh and untrue words.

Both attitudes are conjoined in DN iii.236 expressing the mindfulness necessary when speaking to another and the intention to act for his good. “*If a bhikkhu wishes to reproach another, 5 things he should keep in mind (a) I will speak at the proper time, not the wrong time, (b) I will state the truth, not what is false, (c) I will speak gently, not roughly, (d) I will speak for his good, not for his harm, (e) I will speak with love in my heart, not with enmity.*”¹⁶

This taking an action following an intention is made clearer in Pp 57 when, after the person of lovely disposition is defined, a most interesting question is asked, “*What sort of person is more lovely than one of lovely disposition?*” Such a person is explained as doing the same as the lovely disposition one, i.e., he/she refrains from killing life, taking what is not given, misbehaving in sensual pleasures, speaking falsehood, slanderous speech, using harsh language, gossip, one who is not covetous or malevolent, is an upholder of right views, i.e., avoiding all the inappropriate behavior. The difference between them is only one, and this one and only thing makes all the difference, in that one ‘more lovely than one of lovely disposition’: *incites others to also refrain from those actions, and incites others to right views.* The ideal of a realized person is that he/she not only avoids making mistakes, a ‘negative’ understanding of the precepts training. The ideal superior behavior is to engage oneself in ‘positive’ action, in relating skillfully with one’s fellow human beings. Here the superiority is established on the **willingness and action** to help others and to use speech in beneficial ways.

The superior bhikkhu is clearly defined as a “*reconciliator of those that have separated, as an augments of the unity of those who are already united, rejoicing in union, jubilant over unity, he is in the habit of uttering words tending to reunion; putting away rough words, he refrains from offensive language, he speaks those words that are blameless, pleasing to the ear, affectionate, appealing to the heart of many.*”¹⁷ And *sīla*, we must remember, is expressly stated as “*bodily and verbal good conduct.*” (Peṭ 695)¹⁸

Desire to be useful as basis for friendship

In AN.vii.iv.36¹⁹ the Buddha exhorts that a monk cultivates a friendship with one who is: “*a speaker, genial, grave, cultured, bland, profound in speech, not urging when not fit: In whom these things are found, that is the friend to cultivate if any need a friend,*

¹⁵ Pp – Puggalapaññatti (trans. Law. B.C. *Designation of Human Types*. Oxford: PTS, 1992.), p. 43.

¹⁶ “*codakena, āvuso, bhikkhunā param codetu-kāmena pañca dhamme ajjhataṃ upaṭṭhapetvā paro codetabbo. Kālena vakkhāmi no akālena, bhūtena vakkhāmi no abhūtena, sañhena vakkhāmi no pharusena, attha-saṃhitena vakkhāmi no anatta-saṃhitena, mettacittena vakkhāmi no dosantarenāti.*”

¹⁷ Pp p. 79

¹⁸ Peṭ - Peṭakopadesa (trans. Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu. *The Piṭaka-Disclosure*. London: PTS, 1979.)

¹⁹ AN.iv.30 Devatāvaggo Dutiyamittasuttam.

- a man moved always by desire for weal, - yea, tho' he drive thee forth, yet follow him."²⁰

Here the action of befriending is tied to the ability of the other to be profound in speech, caring not to urge what is not fit and a desire for the other's happiness. The valour is placed here in the positive active role of the one 'moved by desire for weal'. As Aristotle says: "*Friendship, moreover, is thought to consist in feeling, rather than being the object of, the sentiment of Friendship, which is proved by the delight mothers have in the feeling.*"²¹ And drawing both together, the one profound and desirous of the other's happiness, and the one able to recognize in this a desired virtue in the other, builds up a true friendship for, as Aristotle says: "*And the good, in loving their friend, love their own good (inasmuch as the good man, when brought into that relation, becomes a good to him with whom he is so connected), so that either party loves his own good, and repays his friend equally both in wishing well and in the pleasurable: for equality is said to be a tie of Friendship. Well, these points belong most to the Friendship between good men.*"²² The valor placed in the Goodness and Virtue becomes the common denominator of this kind of friendship.

"*A man moved always by desire for weal*" is the PTS translation for the compound *atthakāma-anukampato*. *Atthakāma* is a friend and a well-wisher. *Arthakāma* in Skr is a desire to be useful, and generally wishing well to another.²³ A friend does not look to one's own desires and needs only, but has one's focused attention on the needs of the other. *Anukampato* means he is moved from deep inside through seeing the need of his/her friend. *Anukampato* is usually translated as compassion, showing its importance in friendship.

Atthakāma-anukampato are not only for humans, but devas also feel them. In SN.i.197 out of *atthakāma* and *anukampa* a deva approached a bhikkhu who had "*indulged in wrong and evil thoughts connected with worldly matters*", in order to exhort him to come back to the right track. It is said that the devatā appeared due to "*having compassion (anukampa) for that bhikkhu, desiring his good, desiring to stir up a sense of urgency in him*". In SN.i.201 a deva approaches a bhikkhu living in too much care by a family, and its motivation is said to be the same. The cases multiply in the whole section of Vana Saṃyutta.

Why Affection?

Now we can ask why affection and its clear expression are so important. Is it a virtue that is only marginally meaningful or truly a constituent part of the Path? Is *mettā* and *karunā* meditation rather an accessory, to be practice rather in the recess of our sitting place inside our homes and through a few phrases by the end of religious services? Or is there a more substantive reason to really develop a deep caring love connected to the Path itself?

Aristotle, a giant teacher of Ethics from the Western philosophical tradition, can help us here. It is well known a passage of Saṃyutta Nikāya when one day Ānanda was thinking about the factors of the path and came to the conclusion: "*This practice of an ascetic succeeds for one who relies on good friends and on his own manly effort, so half of it depends on good friends and half on one's own manly effort,*" and turning to the Buddha he exclaimed: "*Venerable Sir, this is half of the holy life, that is, good friendship,*

²⁰ 'piyo garu bhāvanīyo, vattā ca vacanakkhāmo. Gambhīrañ'ca kathāṃ kattā, no ca-ṭṭhāne ni-yojako ya-mhi etāni ṭhānāni, saṃvijjantīdha puggale. So mitto mitta-kāmena, atthakāma-anukampato. Api na-asi-yama-anena, bhajitabbo tatha-a-vidho'ti.'

²¹ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.8

²² Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.5

²³ Monier Williams p.90.

good companionship, good comradeship.” And the Buddha replied: “Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! This is the entire holy life, Ānanda, good friendship, good companionship, good comradeship. When a bhikkhu has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.”²⁴

Aristotle would not agree more, as he considers friendship to be: “the bond of Social Communities, and the legislators seems to be more anxious to secure it than Justice even.”²⁵ His remark that legislators are eager to secure friendship over justice is expanded when he says that: “where people are in Friendship, Justice is not required” and finds an echo in the formation of the Disciplinary Rules of the Buddhist Monastic Sangha. In fact, the Buddhist Vinaya was not a set of rules delivered *in toto* from the beginning but a gradually constructed body of prescriptions, one could say born when friendship and all the accompanied virtues like respect, restraint and compassion were diminishing in influence.

While the Buddha considers friendship the whole of the spiritual path, Aristotle affirms that it is most necessary with a view to living: “For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.”²⁶ For Aristotle, friendship is a virtue welcomed in all stages of life. It: “helps the young to keep from error; the old, in respect of attention and such deficiencies in action as their weakness makes them liable to; and those who are in their prime, in respect of noble deeds, because they are more able to devise plans and carry them out.” The Buddha would complement saying that to begin the spiritual path, friendship is also necessary: “When mind-deliverance is as yet immature, Meghiya, this (good friends, good associates, good companions) is the first thing that leads to its maturity.”²⁷

For the Buddha, loving kindness towards all beings is the root for many good states. Non-hate as a root of profit is: “Any unannoyance, non-resistance, non-ill-willing, non-hate, loving kindness, kindly-loving, desire for good (*atthakāmatā*), desire for welfare, confidence of heart, with respect to creatures or determinations.”²⁸ Here we clearly see non-hate as equivalent of loving kindness.

One should not love one thing only, like a particular being. Such kind of love is limited and not enough. Peṭ 213 states that: “Should a man with no hate in his heart kindly-love | One breathing thing only, by that he is skilled; | But when he feels pity for all breathing things, | He has infinite scope in the merit he makes.”²⁹ Again the superior attitude is to extend the reach of love. Peṭ 215 explains that *mettā* here functions as a cause of the skillfulness of such a man in producing the outcome. Ill-will hinders the appearance of loving kindness³⁰, while loving kindness keeps the mind from being soaked by hate.³¹ Through the cultivation of loving kindness (*mettā*) we keep non-ill-will present in the mind; through the cultivation of compassion (*karunā*) we keep non-cruelty present in the mind; through the cultivation of sympathetic joy (*muditā*) one acts with happiness, pleasure, and awareness.³² Such trio ensures happiness in the here and now through caring for the others.

²⁴ SN 45.2.2. Bodhi, B. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, vol.2

²⁵ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.1

²⁶ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.1

²⁷ Udāna 4.1

²⁸ Vbh.169 | Peṭ 501.

²⁹ ‘*ekam ‘pi ce pāṇa-ma-duṭṭhacitto mettāyati kusālī tena hoti. Sabbe ca pāṇe manasa-anukampī, pahūta-mariyo pakaroti puñṇam.*’ Also AN.iv, 151: “Who makes unbounded amity become, | Mindful, he sees th’attachments all destroyed, | The fetters wear away. If, pure in heart, | He but one being love, good follows thence | The Aryan, with heart compassionate | For all mankind, abounding merit makes.” PTS edition.

³⁰ Peṭ 560

³¹ Peṭ 833

³² Peṭ 607

The Path of Happiness

The keystone of the Buddhist message of deliverance is the Noble Eightfold Path. We have seen that for the Buddha: *“When a bhikkhu has a good friend, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path.”* Then, it is only natural that noble living is to be built on a strong basis of friendship. According to the Buddha, an unkind person has not abandoned hatred from one’s mind. Kindness is to be developed. In SN.iv.305 the Buddha attributes harassment to the strong presence of passion in one’s mind. When passion is abandoned: *“He is styled ‘kindly’”*, and resentment is abandoned.

It is appropriate here to notice the resemblance of the concept of happiness in both Aristotle and the Buddha. As, according to Aristotle: *“every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good,”*³³ to show affection is not merely a ‘natural’ feeling that is displayed just because it happens – and then subject to mere likes and dislikes of the individual. In order for an action to be virtuous, it is not enough that it ‘just happens’. As Aristotle says, *“it is thought to aim at some good”*. This is the reason why Buddhists are taught to **practice mettā** instead of just waiting it to manifest by itself.

This kind of action is a cause for happiness in both recipient and subject, and so is an essential part of the Path leading away from suffering. In Aristotle, then, *“happiness is an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue,”*³⁴ - i.e.: happiness is a function of the exercise of virtue; and that is the reason why virtue must be studied in its deepest dimensions.

So when the Buddha says that the 3rd Noble Truth is cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), that is just another way of saying true happiness is the aim. And what does he propose as the means to achieve *dukkha-nirodha*? Not waiting on the grace of gods or the chances of destiny, but the solution is none other than the Eightfold Path, i.e.: activities to be taken upon oneself and developed to the utmost.

Only by action virtue can be perfected: *“Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced.”* ... *“by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly.”*³⁵ In other words, virtues arise and are developed through the exercise of them.

We notice that Buddha urges his disciples not to be afraid of doing deeds of merit and says that such deeds have another name: happiness³⁶, and goes on to explain how he developed friendship for *“seven ages of the world’s rolling on and rolling back.”*

Benevolence and Friendship

Aristotle distinguishes two virtues: Benevolence and Friendship. To him, benevolence exists when only one side wishes well-being to another. Friendship, however, is more complete. Here, the desire for the good has to be reciprocal. It implies a step further regarding benevolence. Moreover, the desire must be acknowledged by the other. If we were to apply this principle, Buddhist *mettā* would rather be translated by universal benevolence than friendship, since it does not imply that the recipients are aware of the well wishing nor reciprocate it.

³³ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1.1

³⁴ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1.13

³⁵ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 2.1

³⁶ AN.iv.88

Regarding the relationship between men, Aristotle asks, “*is there but one species of Friendship, or several?*” and categorizes it in three types:

1. They are friends due to the utility they have for each other.
2. They are friends due to the pleasure and enjoyment one causes to the other.
3. The third and superior kind is the one based on goodness and affinity in virtue.

In all three, he singles out one thing as object of our affection, respectively if someone is useful, pleasurable or good, and chooses goodness as the noblest virtue on what friendship can be based.

In the first two cases a person is not loved by being what one is, but only by what one can give to the other: usefulness or pleasure. They are examples of fragile friendships, that can be dissolved easily: “*liable to dissolution if the parties do not continue alike: I mean, that the others cease to have any Friendship for them when they are no longer pleasurable or useful.*” This kind of friendship lasts only as much the other: “*furnishes advantage or pleasure as the case may be.*”³⁷

The third case is the friendship between those that desire the well-being and goodness of one another because both are good and virtuous. Such friendship lasts because of the goodness of both. Goodness is more durable than usefulness or pleasure. “*Now it is the nature of utility not to be permanent but constantly varying: so, of course, when the motive which made them friends is vanished, the Friendship likewise dissolves... on the motive of pleasure... they form and dissolve Friendships rapidly: since the Friendship changes with the pleasurable object and such pleasure changes quickly.*”³⁸ The Buddha could not agree more on the shallow and quick impermanence of egotistic interest and pleasure.

For Aristotle, love is a feeling, while friendship is a disposition of character. The mutual love that exists in friendship depends of choice, and choice is a disposition of character. That is why Buddhism emphasizes cultivation of virtues in place of free rein to one’s thoughts and feelings. The good man, in being good, becomes at the same time useful and pleasant to those that appreciate goodness. Love arises as a mutual admiration for goodness. For Aristotle, love is the characteristic virtue between friends, but friendship depends more of loving than being loved.

“*Fault-finding and blame arises, either solely or most naturally, in Friendship of which utility is the motive: for they who are friends by reason of goodness, are eager to do kindnesses to one another because this is a natural result of goodness and Friendship,*” (Book 8.13) Aristotle says.

True friends, being good are also useful and pleasant to one another. “*It is the real good which is the object of Friendship,*” says Aristotle. Compare this to what the Buddha says in Sigalovāda Suttanta, where he also answers that there are different kinds of friendship,

“Young man, be aware of these four good-hearted friends: the helper, the friend who endures in good times and bad, the mentor, and the compassionate friend.

“The helper can be identified by four things: by protecting you when you are vulnerable, and likewise your wealth, being a refuge when you are afraid, and in various tasks providing double what is

³⁷ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.3

³⁸ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 8.3

requested. (Aristotle says, “to the friend they say one should wish all good for his sake.”)

“The enduring friend can be identified by four things: by telling you secrets, guarding your own secrets closely, not abandoning you in misfortune, and even dying for you.

“The mentor can be identified by four things: by restraining you from wrongdoing, guiding you towards good actions, telling you what you ought to know, and showing you the path to heaven.

“The compassionate friend can be identified by four things: by not rejoicing in your misfortune, delighting in your good fortune, preventing others from speaking ill of you, and encouraging others who praise your good qualities.

That is what the Buddha said. And summing up in verse, the sublime teacher said:

“The friend who is a helper, The friend through thick and thin, The friend who gives good counsel, And the compassionate friend; These four are friends indeed, The wise understand this And attend on them carefully, Like a mother her own child. The wise endowed with virtue Shine forth like a burning fire, Gathering wealth as bees do honey And heaping it up like an ant hill. Once wealth is accumulated, Family and household life may follow. By dividing wealth into four parts, True friendships are bound; One part should be enjoyed; Two parts invested in business; And the fourth set aside Against future misfortunes.”

Asked as to: “what is the doctrine in which the Blessed One trains his disciples,” the Buddha’s answer was: “Abandoning hankering for the world, he dwells with a mind free from such hankering, and his mind is purified of it. Abandoning ill-will and hatred, he dwells with a mind free from them, and by compassionate love for the welfare of all living beings, his mind is purified of them... Having abandoned these five hindrances, and in order to weaken by insight the defilements of mind, he dwells, letting his mind, filled with loving-kindness, pervade one quarter, then a second, then a third, then a fourth. And so he continues to pervade the whole wide world, above, below, across, and everywhere with a mind filled with loving-kindness, extensive, developed, measureless, free from hatred and ill-will.”³⁹

Why to study this?

Aristotle says, “the present inquiry does not aim at theoretical knowledge like the others - for we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use.”⁴⁰ The teaching of the Buddha as well is not for mere accumulation of knowledge, but is to be used practically for our own benefit and of all living beings. To interpret His teachings as an egotistical

³⁹ DN.iii.49 “The Great Lion’s Roar to the Udumbarikans”.

⁴⁰ Nicomachean Ethics, Book 2.2

withdraw from the world of living beings is to grossly misrepresent it and to devoid it of its healing power regarding suffering. As the 7th century Buddhist teacher Śāntideva says, “*All joy in this world comes from wanting others to be happy, and all suffering in this world comes from wanting only oneself to be happy.*”

The superior and most noble path according to all Buddhist schools is not one of indifference and inaction. The canonical Theravāda Abhidhamma work, *Puggalapaññatti*,⁴¹ shows a person who strives after his own welfare as well as after that of others, as someone who: “*attains to the moral life and also encourages others to attain the same, himself attains to meditation and also encourages others to attain the same, himself attains to insight and also encourages others to attain the same, himself attains to emancipation and also encourages others to attain the same, himself attains to the perception of emancipation and also encourages others to attain the same,*” contrasting to others who just strive after his own welfare but not after that of others. Such is a clear statement that the superior path is not one that aims only for one’s own welfare; encouraging others to lead a moral life, practice meditation, and attain insight and emancipation are integral to the superior attitude, incetivadas e presentes na literatua clássica Pāli. “*Without friends no one would choose to live,*” says Aristotle, and since there is no true living without a spiritual path, the Buddha complements: “*Friendship is the whole of the spiritual path*”. This is why we must study, train and apply this teaching in our everyday life.

⁴¹ Pp – Puggalapaññatti (trans. Law. B.C. *Designation of Human Types*. Oxford: PTS, 1992.), p.75