

## **FRIENDSHIP AS MEANS TO HAPPINESS: A STUDY OF THE SIGĀLOVĀDA SUTTA AND THE NICOMACHEAN ETHICS ON STRUCTURES AND TYPES OF FRIENDSHIP**

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As Cicero states, “friendship springs from nature rather than from need” and “nature, loving nothing solitary, always strives for some sort of support, and man’s best support is a very dear friend.” In the history of philosophy and religion, the attention given to the concept of friendship has enabled man to appreciate his connectedness to the other and to value the important role that others play in one’s life. The thinkers we study here, the Buddha in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* and Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, give a prominent place to the concept of friendship and they, with their rational approach to life and to things in this world of phenomena, expended great efforts to construct a rationally coherent and humanly consistent understanding of friendship that would facilitate one’s aim of living a good life and attaining the goal of life. Man is both rational and social, and this implies that man has the innate desire to belong, to live with others, and to form bonds of friendship. To live is to live with/co-exist. Aristotle who calls man a political creature states that man’s nature is to live with others. He devoted one fifth of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to a discussion on friendship and calls friendship a virtue and states that no one would choose to live without friends. Aristotle who identifies three species of friendship, namely, friendship of the good, the friendship of pleasure and friendship of utility talks about the final end of man as happiness and states that it consists in a life of reason according to virtue. From the Buddhist perspective the goal of life is twofold, namely, to be happy in this life and to achieve emancipation, which is *Nibbāna*. Buddhism talks about different types of friends, yet to the Buddha the highest form of friendship is the spiritual friendship (*Kalyānamitta*). While good hearted friends (*Suhadamitta*) offer social and emotional support, the spiritual friend helps us understand and practice the *Dhamma*, which is the path to Freedom. The Buddha in the *Sigālovāda Sutta* identifies two categories of persons, namely, *amitta/mitta-patirūpaka* and *mitta*. Friendship plays a role of crucial importance in the rationally coherent ethical worldviews of the Buddha and Aristotle because for them ethics is essentially and primarily the art of living well. Living well can only be achieved by those who are gifted with friends since friendship provides the ideal conditions and necessary milieu for the successful pursuit of living well.

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