



Barre Center for  
Buddhist Studies  
149 Lockwood Road  
Barre, Massachusetts 01005  
(978) 355-2347  
www.dharma.org

Non-Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage

**PAID**

Permit No. 653  
Providence, RI

PALI POETRY

## The Steadfast Family Man

*Anguttara Nikaya 5:40 and 3:48*

yathā pi pabbato selo  
araññasmiṃ brahāvane  
taṃ rukkhaṃ upanissāya  
vaḍḍhanti te vanaspati

Just as a mountain, made of stone,  
In the wild forest wilderness,  
Beneath whose shelter safely grows  
A mighty grove of forest trees,

tath' eva sīlasampannaṃ  
saddhaṃ kulapatim idha  
upanissāya vaḍḍhanti  
puttadārā ca bandhavā  
amaccā nāṭisaṅghā ca  
ye c'assa anujīvino

So also, here's a family head,  
Faithful, established in virtue,  
Beneath whose shelter safely grow  
Wife and children and relatives,  
Companions and a host of kin,  
And all those who share life with him.

Most Buddhists have always been and continue to be laypersons and householders. These verses from the Numerical Collection of discourses paint a picture of a householder who is both refuge and support for an entire family unit or of a community. Of course these days such a person might just as soon be a woman as a man, or might even be an organization or a group. In either case it is the shelter provided by faith and virtue that enables the family to flourish. Its members are protected from the unwholesomeness of the world like a grove of trees is sheltered by the mountain from harsh winter winds.

Faith, or confidence in the truth of the teachings, allows access to the nurture and guidance of the Buddha's wisdom, while virtue is both a foundation upon which a life of practice can be built and a shield against the potentially dire consequences of immoral activities. As the Buddha has often suggested, one's true safety only comes from a network of relationships that have been carefully and respectfully cultivated. And as he has further said and demonstrated, a life of virtue can serve a much larger good than merely one's own when it is shared with one's companions on the path.

--A. Olendzki