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True Friendship

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5

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana

1. THE BUDDHA'S COMPASSION

According to the Commentarial tradition, the Buddha would each day survey the world twice with his Buddha Eye: once at dawn, looking from horizon inwards towards his Fragrant Chamber, and in the evening looking from the Fragrant Chamber outwards to see who was ready for admonition and conversion. One day, the Buddha saw that a young sick monk was ready for instruction.

The young monk, named Tiṣya (Tissa), came from a rich Śrāvasti family. Not long after his ordination, he suffered from boils that broke out and festered as open sores all over his body. After a while, his bones began to disintegrate. Due to his sickness, he was called the **Elder Pūti,gātra Tiṣya** (Pūti,gatta Tissa, Tissa of the Festering Body), and he was left unattended and alone by the monks

The Buddha, knowing that Tiṣya was ready for Arhantship, thought to himself: “This monk has been abandoned by his colleagues. At present he has no other refuge than me.” Pretending to be making his rounds of the monastery, the Buddha went to Tissa’s quarters. There he prepared some hot water and was preparing to nurse Tiṣya.

When the monks noticed the Buddha doing such menial tasks, they quickly approached and took over the nursing of Tiṣya. The Teacher then instructed them how Tiṣya should be nursed. First, he had some warm water sprinkled over Tiṣya to loosen his soiled robes that had stuck to his festering body. The upper robe was thoroughly washed in warm water and then dried.

When the upper robe had dried, the Teacher had Tiṣya’s lower robe removed and after his body was carefully washed and dried, he was dressed in the clean dry upper robe. The soiled lower robe was then washed and dried. When the lower garment was ready, he was fully dressed with his body refreshed and mind tranquil.

The Teacher, knowing that Tissa had not long to live, stood by Tissa’s pillow and said to him: “Monk, consciousness will depart from you, your body will become useless and, like a log, will lie on the ground.” So saying, he pronounced this stanza:

In no long time, this body will lie on the ground,
Depised, with consciousness departed, like a useless log.

(Dh 41)

At the end of the lesson, Elder Pūti,gātra Tiṣya attained Arhantship and passed away into Nirvana. The Teacher performed the last rites over his body, and taking the relics, caused a shrine to be erected. (DhA 1:319 ff.)

2. THE MONK WITH A STOMACH DISORDER

The Vinaya records a similar story of the Buddha’s compassion. This event is so significant that it is actually the occasion (*nidāna*) for the Buddha to introduce Vinaya rules regarding monks taking care of one another. We have here a good example of how a Vinaya rule is introduced.

The sick monk

At one time, a certain monk had a **stomach disorder** (*kucchi, vikār'ābādha*), probably dysentery. He lay fallen in his own excrements. The Blessed One, as he was touring the monastic lodgings (*sen'āsana*) with the venerable Ānanda as his attendant (*paścā-c, chramaṇa/pacchā, samaṇa*), approached the monks' dwelling (*vihāra*). Then the Blessed One saw that sick monk lying fallen in his own excrements. Seeing him, he approached that monk, and spoke thus to him:

“What is your sickness, O monk?”

“I have a stomach disorder, Venerable Sir.”

“But, O monk, don't you have an attendant (*uppaṭṭhāka*)?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“Why don't the monks tend you?”

“I, Venerable Sir, am of no use to the monks, therefore the monks do not tend me.”

Tending the sick monk

Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Go, Ānanda, bring some water. We will wash this monk.”

“Yes, Venerable Sir,” said the venerable Ānanda assented. When he had brought the water, the Blessed One sprinkled the water over the monk's body, and then the venerable Ānanda washed him.

Then the Blessed One took him by the head, the venerable Ānanda by the feet, and having raised him up, they laid him down on a couch.

Investigating the Order

Then the Blessed One, on that occasion, in that connection, having assembled the Order of Monks, asked the monks:

“Is there, monks, in such and such a dwelling-place a monk who is ill (*gilāna*)?”

“There is, Venerable Sir.”

“What, monks, is that monk's illness?”

“The monk has a stomach disorder, Venerable Sir.”

Seeking the cause of neglect

“But, monks, is there anyone who is tending that monk?”

“There is none, Venerable Sir.”

“Why don't the monks tend him?”

“Venerable Sir, this monk is of no use to the monks. Therefore the monks do not tend that monk.”

Admonition

“Monks, you have not a mother, you have not a father who might tend you. If you, monks, do not tend one another, then who is there who will tend you? **Whoever, monks, would tend me, he would tend the sick** (*yo bhikkhave maṃ upaṭṭhaheyya so gilānaṃ upaṭṭhaheyya*).

“If he has a preceptor (*upajjhāya*), he should be tended for life by the preceptor, who should wait for his recovery.

“If he has a teacher (*ācariya*), ...

“If he has a co-resident (*saddhi, vihārika*)...

“If he has a pupil (*antevāsika*)...

“If he has a fellow preceptor (*samān'upajjāyaka*)...

“If he has a fellow teacher (*samān'ācariya*), he should be tended by the teacher, who should wait for his recovery.

“If he has neither preceptor nor a teacher nor a co-resident nor a pupil nor a fellow preceptor nor a fellow teacher, then he should be tended by the Order.

“If one should not tend him, then it is an offence of wrong-doing (*dukkaṭa*).”

(V 1:300 f.)

The above is an example of how a rule of Buddhist canon law is promulgated. The basis for this rule is **compassion** and fellowship. First, the Buddha questions the monk concerned regarding the personal reason for his indisposition (“What is your sickness?”), then regarding the social cause of his suffering (“Why don’t the monks tend you?”). Having established the reason, he then takes immediate measures to correct the situation—in this case, to tend to the sick monk.

Once the immediate problem has been resolved, the Buddha assembles the Order. He questions the Order if they are aware of a problem situation (“Is there, monks, in such and such a dwelling-place a monk who is ill?”) and asks the Order the reason for the problem (“He is of no use to the monks”).

Having established the case, the Buddha (in a gentle optative mood) goes on to admonish the Order on the value of fellowship, using himself as the example (“Whoever, monks, would tend me, he would tend the sick”). This is the spirit of the law. Then, he promulgates the rule: the letter of the law (“an offence of wrong-doing”). This is the basic pattern for the introduction of the monastic rules.

3. SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

It is clear from the Buddha’s personal examples cited here and many other such accounts recorded in the Buddhist Canon, that caring for one another is not only vital for community life, such as that of the Buddhist Sangha, but is also essential for spiritual development. The *locus classicus* or key reference for spiritual friendship is **the Upaḍḍha Sutta** (S 45.2) which, due to its importance, is quoted here in full:

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyas where there was a town of Sakyas named Nāgaraka. Then the Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down at one side, and said to him:

“Venerable Sir, spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is half of the holy life.”

“Not so, Ānanda! Not so, Ānanda! Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is **the whole of the holy life**. When a monk has a spiritual friend (*kalyāṇa, mittassa... bhikkhuno*)¹, a good companion, a good comrade, it is to be expected that he will develop the Noble Eightfold Path.”

“And how, Ānanda, does a monk who has a spiritual friend...develop the Noble Eightfold Path? Here, Ānanda, a monk develops right view, which is based on seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release. He develops right intention...right speech...right action...right livelihood...right effort...right mindfulness...right concentration, which is based on seclusion, dispassion and cessation, maturing in release. It is in this way, Ānanda that a monk who has a spiritual friend... develops the Noble Eightfold Path.

“By following the method, too, Ānanda, it may be understood how the whole of the holy life is spiritual friendship...: **by relying upon me as a spiritual friend**, Ānanda, beings subject to birth are freed from birth, beings subject to aging are freed from aging, beings subject to death are freed from death, beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair are freed from them. By this method, Ānanda, it may be understood how the whole of the holy life is spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship.”

(S 5:2 f.; also at S 1:87 f. = 3.18; cf. Śāriputra’s remark, S 5:4 [9].)

¹ *kalyāṇa, mittassa... bhikkhuno*. This expression has often been mistranslated. Bhikkhu Bodhi makes an important note here: “As an independent substantive, *kalyāṇamitta* means a good friend, i.e. a spiritual friend who gives advice, guidance, and encouragement. When used in apposition to *bhikkhu*, however, *kalyāṇamitta* becomes a *bahubhihi* compound, and the whole expression means “a bhikkhu who has a good friend”. (S:B 1890 n6).

The Commentary says that Ānanda thinks that the practice of an ascetic succeeds when he relies on spiritual friends and on his own personal effort, so half of it depends on spiritual friends and half on personal effort. But, as with children, it is not possible to say: “So much comes from the mother, so much comes from the father.”

The importance of this sutra is attested by the fact that it is repeated in full in the **Appamāda Sutta II** (S 3.18), where, at Śrāvastī, King Prasenajit shared his personal thoughts with the Buddha:

“Here, Venerable Sir, while I was alone in seclusion, the following reflection arose in my mind: ‘The Doctrine has been well taught by the Blessed One, and that is for one with spiritual friends, good companions, good comrades, not for one with bad friends, bad companions, bad comrades.’”

The Buddha replies by relating the incident of the Upaḍḍha Sutta. In this case, the Buddha applies **spiritual friendship on a more mundane level** for the benefit of the king, saying that through spiritual friendship, his kingdom and family would be guarded and prosper (S 1:88 f).

The Commentary says that although the Dharma is well taught for all, just as medicine is effective only for one who takes it, so **the Dharma fulfils its purpose only for a compliant and faithful person with spiritual friends**, and not otherwise. Elsewhere, the Buddha often mentions the importance of spiritual friendship:

Monks, dawn is the forerunner and harbinger of the rising sun. Even so, monks, spiritual friendship is the forerunner and harbinger of the Noble Eightfold Path.

(S 5:29)

Monks, I do not see any other thing by which the unarisen Noble Eightfold Path arises and the arisen Noble Eightfold Path develops to completion except through spiritual friendship.

(S 5:35)

4. VITALITY OF LOVE

(a) The 4 immeasurable acts

Spiritual friendship consists of **spiritual emotion**. Since spiritual friendship (like any good friendship) is a kind of positive emotion, it can be developed. A basic yet vital aspect of spiritual emotion is **love** in connection with faith, that is, “by a measure of faith and love” (*saddhā, mattakena pema, mattakena*), as the Buddha puts it in **the Bhaddāli Sutta** (M 65), where he was exhorting the monk Bhaddāli who has difficulty keeping up the training due to a strict practice. In his compassion, the Buddha remarks:

Here some monk progresses by a measure of faith (*saddhā*) and love (*pema*). In this case, the monks consider thus: “Friends, this monk **progresses by a measure of faith and love** (*saddhā, mattakena vahati pema, mattakena*). Let him not lose that measure of faith and love, as he may if we take action against him by repeatedly admonishing him.” Suppose a man had only one eye. Then his friends and companions, his kinsmen and relatives, would guard his eye, thinking: “Let him not lose this one eye.” So, too, some monk progresses by a measure of faith and love...”. Let him not lose that measure of faith and love, as he may if we take action against him by repeatedly admonishing him.

The Majjhima Commentary explains that the monks maintains himself by a measure of worldly faith (*saddhā*) and worldly love (*pema*) towards his preceptor and teacher. Because the other monks help him, he remains in the homeless life and may eventually become a great monk attained to direct knowledge. (MA 3:154)

It is interesting that the “love” mentioned here is “**worldly love**” (prema/pema) and not “lovingkindness” (*maitrī/mettā*). The point here is clear: the spirit of love nurses one to see the spirit of truth. Where spiritual training is concerned, a positive emotional state has to be encouraged at least initially and built up gradually into higher levels of spiritual emotions. Briefly, there are four stages as detailed in the Visudhi, magga (Vism 9:108):

(1) Think love. Spiritual friendship begins with a single wholesome thought. Then one examines the good qualities that one has, rejoices in them and helps others with them. This is the true “art of loving” or **lovingkindness** (*maitrī/mettā*), that is, a positive attitude shown towards equals (those having good fortune like oneself) when they are not in any difficulty. Even a single thought such as “May you be well and happy!” is a profound act of lovingkindness. This thought, however, should not be limited in any way—it should include oneself, beloved ones, neutral ones, hostile ones, and all beings.

In mythological terms, the Buddha’s lovingkindness is represented by the earth deity (*mahā,prthivī devatā*) **Sthavarā or Vasudhārā** [2:21b] who emerged from below and stood witness to the Buddha’s past good deeds to merit him the seat under the Bodhi tree. She wrung her long hair from which a great torrent of water gushed forth into a great flood that washed away Māra and his demon host. The symbolism here is quite clear, Sthavarā is not only Mother Earth but also represents our own mind and spirituality that always witness all our good deeds and protects us from evil. Like the earth, our lovingkindness and past good karma supports us, especially through our trials and tribulations.

(2) Show love. One should not judge nor evaluate others by way of looks, status, sex, race, religion, species, etc. One should look at another as a being with great potential for becoming a better person. This is the true “act of loving” or **compassion** (*karuṇā*), this is, a positive attitude shown to beings less fortunate than oneself. It should be accompanied by appropriate actions that help alleviate or remove the sufferings or misfortunes of others.

In mythological terms, the Buddha’s compassion is represented by **Mucalinda** [3:18], the nāga king who, on his own initiative emerges from under the earth to shelter the Buddha from a heavy thunderstorm. Then turning himself in to a handsome youth, he worships the Buddha. Like Sthavarā or Vasudhārā, the earth deity, Mucalinda, too, comes from deep beneath the earth, that is, from deep inside our unconscious or creative side (represented by his youth). To show compassion, we need to appear in a form (looks as well as actions) that would benefit others.

We can even stretch the mythology further to say that the nāga form of Mucalinda represents **compassion** while his form as a youth personified **wisdom**, from the fact that wisdom is eternal and unchanging. This dual aspect is also embodied in the Mahāyāna figure of **Avalokiteśvara**.

(3) Enjoy love. One should cultivate the capacity for arousing security and joy in others. When one sees another feeling secure and joyful, one also feels alike. This is the true “joy of loving” or **altruistic joy** (*muditā*), that is, magnanimous joy at the success of others. When someone else enjoys good fortune, one rejoices in it as if one is oneself enjoying that good fortune. This attitude counters self-consuming jealousy.

In terms of Buddhist mythology, altruistic joy is represented by **Brahmā** [4:1] who rejoices in the Buddha’s enlightenment and wishes others to rejoice in it, too. We might regard Brahmā here as **the wise old man** of Jungian psychology, an archetypal image of meaning and wisdom (Sharp 1991:148). In Jung’s terminology, the wise old man is a personification of the masculine spirit. In a man, the anima is related to the wise old man as daughter to father. In a woman, the wise old man is an aspect of the animus. The feminine equivalent in both men and women is **the Great Mother** (in this case represented by Sthavarā). In simple terms, in every human being there is the masculine and feminine aspects, both of which need to be balanced.

The wise old man also represents **unconditional love**, an important aspect of altruistic joy, that is, to respect people for what they are and rejoicing in their goodness. This can only be done if we regard each person, especially those we love and care about, as if we are meeting for first time each time we meet. This is like the Buddha appearing in our world **each time as if for the first time** even though there have been Buddhas in the past, and Buddhas to come in the future.

(4) Balance love. Despite what we do, the eight winds or worldly conditions (*loka,dharma/loka,-dhamma*: gain, loss; honour, dishonour; praise, blame; happiness, sorrow) still blow. Yet one's love remains constant and strong to all and sundry. This is the true "end of loving" or **equanimity** (*upekṣā/upekkhā*), which is a calm mirror-like state of mind that at once reflects the nature of things without any distortion. It is not an indifferent attitude, but an active response to the feelings and needs of others like a mirror that reflects the image of the object before it. Only when one's mind is calm and peaceful can one really show this responsive wisdom.

In Buddhist mythological terms, the Buddha's equanimity is represented by **the Bodhi tree** [3:16, 22], another ancient symbol of unification of opposites. The roots of the tree go deep into the ground, our humanity, but the branches and leaves reach up high into the sky, our divinity. Like the proverbial rain-cloud of the Lotus Sutra that rains on all and sundry, the good and the evil, the tree provides shade for all who come to it. It neither trembles nor bends in the eight winds.

The Bodhi tree is no ordinary tree, but a Cosmic Tree (an imagery found in most ancient mythologies). Like Jacob's ladder in biblical mythology, the Bodhi tree is our link to a higher reality, a liberating spirituality.

In her paper "A Buddhist Inspiration for a Contemporary Psychotherapy", **Gay Watson** gives a succinct summary of the vitality of these four immeasurable mental states in terms of contemporary psychology and psychotherapy:

...Buddhist therapy is based on a profound belief of 'basic sanity' of each person, in the clear light mind or Buddha nature, unhindered by the adventitious veils and obstructions imposed upon it. Expression of this basic sanity are found in the four immeasurable states of friendliness, compassion, joy and equanimity.

(Gay Watson, 1996:271)

In other words, the four immeasurables should be our basic and sustained mental state for a healthy and productive life.

(b) The shadow

There is another important mythological figure in Buddhism we must mention: that of **Māra** [3:7-13]. **The shadow**, in Jungian psychology, is the hidden or unconscious aspects of oneself, both good and bad, which the ego has either repressed or never recognized. The shadow is composed for the most part of repressed desires and uncivilized impulses, morally inferior motives, childish fantasies and resentments, etc.—all those things about oneself one is not proud of. These unacknowledged personal characteristics are often experienced in others through the psychological defence mechanism of projection.

The shadow is, however, not only the dark underside of the personality. It also consists of instincts, abilities and positive moral qualities that have been long been buried or never been conscious (Sharp 1991:123-125). As such, unlike the Abrahamic Satan, Māra can be converted to goodness (as in the case of Maudalyāyana) [36a]. After all, **Māra is our own sense-faculties, our own mind**.

Before we can truly become wise, we have to face our own shadow. Just as Māra is defeated simply through recognizing him, our shadow is cleared through the light of acknowledgement, through self-

knowledge. The value of spiritual friendship is that it acts as a mirror for us to gain this self-knowledge. Here, the Buddha is our best mirror.

Having said that, we can summarize that **spiritual friendship is the interaction and balance of love and wisdom.**

5. LIKE MILK AND WATER

A testimony of how the early monks and nuns live in spiritual friendship is found in **the Dhammacetiya Sutta** which records the praises of king Prasenajit (Pasenadi) of Kośala for the monks:

...Venerable Sir, kings quarrel with kings, nobles with nobles, brahmins with brahmins, householders with householders; mother quarrels with child, child with mother, father with child, child with father; brother quarrels with brother, brother with sister, sister with brother, sister with sister, friend with friend.

But here I see monks living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, **blending like milk and water**, looking at each other with kindly eyes. I do not see any other assembly elsewhere with such concord.

Again, Venerable Sir...I have seen some recluses and brahmins who are lean, wretched, unsightly, jaundiced, with veins standing out on their limbs, such that people would not look at them again...

But here I see monks **smiling and cheerful**, sincerely joyful, plainly delighting, their faculties fresh, living at ease, unruffled, subsisting on what others give, abiding with mind [as aloof] as a wild deer's... Surely, these venerable ones have certainly realized the great and full significance of the Blessed One's teaching.

(M 1:121) [8:16]

This event occurred in the last year of the Buddha's life, when both he and the king were 80 years old.

6. MISINTERPRETATION OF "SELF-RELIANCE"

Spiritual friendship is perhaps the most neglected aspect of Buddhism today—even virtually unknown to many Buddhists—mainly because of “over-interpreting” and taking out of context the Buddha's call to be self-reliant as recorded in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta:

Therefore, Ānanda, live **as an island unto yourself**, with self as refuge, with no other refuge, **the Dhamma as an island**, the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

*Tasmā-t-ih'Ānanda **atta,dīpā** viharatha **atta,saraṇā anañña,saraṇā, **dhamma,dīpā** dhamma-saraṇā anaññasaraṇā.***

(D 2:100 = 3:58, 77; S 3:42, 5:154, 163, 164)

Very often, this is taken to be either a carte blanche for religious licence (an oxymoron!) or an individualistic do-it-yourself private philosophy. It should be noted that immediately after making this important statement, “Live as an island unto yourself,” the Buddha explains what he means:

And how does one live as an island unto oneself...with no other refuge? Here, Ānanda, a monk abides contemplating **the body** as body, earnestly, clearly aware, mindful, and having put away all hankering and fretting for the world,² and likewise with regard to **feelings,...mind...and mind-**

² Hankering and fretting after the world. This is a brief statement of the 5 Hindrances [10:6a].

objects. And those in my time or afterwards live thus, **they will become the highest, if they are desirous of learning.**

(D 2:100 = 3:58, 77; S 3:42, 5:154, 163, 164)

In short, this is **the 4 stations of mindfulness** (*smṛtyupasthāna/satipaṭṭhāna*), the basis of Buddhist meditation. One of the key aspects of the practice of mindfulness or meditation is that of “skillful consideration” or “skillful attention”. [10:6]

7. SKILLFUL ATTENTION

(a) Meghiya Sutta

Skillful attention (*yoniso,manasikāra/yoniso,manasikāra*) is intimately interlinked with spiritual friendship. The best case study we have from the Pali Canon is perhaps that found in the **Meghiya Sutta**, about Meghiya, one of the Buddha’s personal attendant before Ānanda [Chapter 6]:

On one occasion, the Blessed One was dwelling on Cālika Hill at Cālikā. There the venerable Meghiya, who then was the Blessed One’s attendant, approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him and stood at one side:

“Lord, I wish to go to Jantu, gāma for alms.”

“You may do so as you think fit, Meghiya.” (*Yassa dāni tvam Meghiya kālam maññāsī ti.*)

Then the venerable Meghiya, having dressed himself in the morning and taking robe and bowl, entered Jantugāma for alms. Having made the almsround and taken his meal, he went to the bank of the Kimikālā River.

There, while walking around to stretch his legs, he saw a pleasant and beautiful mango grove. Seeing it, he thought: “Pleasant, indeed, is this mango grove; it is beautiful. Truly, it is fit for a clansman who wishes to strive in meditation. If the Blessed One allows it, I shall return to the mango grove to strive in meditation.”

Then Meghiya approached the Buddha and related to him what he had thought.

“Wait a while, Meghiya. We are now alone here. Wait awhile until another monk comes.”

But the venerable Meghiya repeated his request, saying: “Lord, the Blessed One has completed his business and has nothing further he needs to do. But I have not completed my business here and have something to do. If the Blessed One permits, I shall go that mango grove and strive in meditation.”

Again, the Buddha repeated his advice, but Meghiya persisted. After the third time that Meghiya repeated his request, the Buddha finally replied:

“As you speak of striving, Meghiya, what can I say? You may do now as you think fit.”

Then the venerable Meghiya rose from his seat, prostrated himself before the Lord, and keeping his right side towards him, went to the mango grove. Having entered the mango grove, he sat down at the foot of a certain tree for the noonday rest. But while doing so, three kinds of evil, unwholesome thoughts constantly assailed him: **sensual thoughts, thoughts of ill-will and thoughts of violence.**

“This is strange, it’s amazing!” he thought, “Out of faith I have gone forth from home into homelessness, and yet I am harassed by these three kinds of evil, unwholesome thoughts.”³

(b) **Benefits of spiritual friendship**

So, the Venerable Meghiya returned to the Blessed One and told him what had occurred.

“If, Meghiya, the mind still lacks maturity for liberation, there are 5 conditions conducive to making it mature. What five?”

1. **Spiritual friendship.**

2. Moral conduct in keeping with the Code of Discipline, seeing danger in the slightest fault.
3. Talk on contentment, aloofness and the spiritual life.
4. Energy in abandoning unwholesome states and promoting wholesome states.
5. The wisdom that sees the rise and fall of phenomena that leads to the complete destruction of suffering.

“When, Meghiya, a monk has a **spiritual friend**, it can be expected that he will be virtuous...that he will engage in talk conducive to an ascetic life and to mental clarity...that his energy will be set on abandoning anything unwholesome and promoting anything wholesome...that he will have the wisdom that leads to the complete destruction of suffering.

“Then, Meghiya, when the monk is firmly grounded in these five things, he should cultivate four other things:

- Meditation on the foulness of the body for abandoning lust.
- Cultivation of lovingkindness for abandoning ill-will.
- Mindfulness of breathing for cutting off distracting thoughts.
- Perception of impermanence for eliminating the conceit “I am”.

For one who perceives impermanence, Meghiya, the perception of non-self becomes firmly established, and one who perceives non-self eliminates the conceit “I am”, and attains Nirvana here and now.”

(A 9.3; U 4.1; abridged)

Then, realizing the significance of the teaching, the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance (*udāna*):

Trivial thoughts, subtle thoughts,
When followed they distract the mind.
Not understanding those thoughts
The roaming mind runs back and forth.

But by understanding those thoughts
One ardent and mindful restrains the mind.

³ The Aṅguttara Commentary gives a curious explanation why these thoughts assailed Meghiya so suddenly and so strongly: In 500 successive rebirths, Meghiya had been a king. When he went out into the royal park for sport and amusement together with dancing girls of three age groups, he used to sit down at the very spot called “the auspicious slab” (P. *maṅgala, silā, paṭṭa*). Therefore, at the very moment when Meghiya sat down at that place, he felt as if his monkhood had left him and he was a king surrounded him by beautiful dancers. And when, as a king, he was enjoying that splendour, a thought of sensuality arose in him. At that very moment it happened that his great warriors brought to him two bandits whom they had arrested, and Meghiya saw them as distinctly as if they were standing in front of him. Now when (as a king) he was ordering the execution of one bandit, a thought of ill-will arose in him, and when he was ordering the manacling and imprisonment of the other, a thought of violence arose in him. So even now, as Meghiya, he became entangled in these unwholesome thoughts like a tree in a net of creepers or like a honey-gatherer in a swarm of honey bees. (AA 4:165; cf. UA 217 ff.)

An awakened one has overcome them completely
So, they do not arise to distract the mind.

(U 4.1)

The Dhammapada Commentary says that when Meghiya, after being troubled by the unwholesome thoughts returned to the Buddha, he actually chided Meghiya for abandoning him when he asked him to remain. “A monk should never lose control thus. Thoughts are flighty, and a person should always keep them under control.” So saying, the Teacher pronounced the following Dhammapada stanzas:

Thoughts, unsteady, fickle, difficult to guard, difficult to control,
A wise man makes straight, even as a fletcher straightens his arrow.

Like a fish thrown upon dry land from its watery home,
These thoughts twist and tremble in their efforts to shake off the power of Māra.

(Dh 33-34; DhA 3.1)

8. CONDITIONS FOR RIGHT VIEW

The **Mahā Vedalla Sutta** mentions that there are two conditions for the arising of Right View, namely, “the voice of another” (P. *parato,ghosa*) and skillful consideration (P. *yoniso,manasikāra*) (M 1:294; A 1:87). The Commentary glosses *parato,ghosa* as “the teaching of beneficial Dharma”, but this interesting term also includes **spiritual friendship** by way of right speech or positive communication.⁴

The Mahā Vedalla Sutta continues by saying that **Right View** (pertaining to the path of Arhantship) is assisted by 5 factors when it has deliverance of mind (from lust) and the deliverance by wisdom (from ignorance) as goal (both referring to the fruit of Arhantship). These 5 factors are: **moral conduct, learning, discussion, calmness and insight**. (M 1:294)

These teachings are further found in the Saṃyutta Nikāya where it is mentioned that spiritual friendship is the chief **external support** for spiritual development and skillful means its chief **internal support** (S 45.49, 55). Here, moral conduct, learning and discussion would fall under the category of **spiritual friendship**, while calmness and insight (that is, cultivation or meditation) come under **skillful consideration**. This analysis similarly applies to the teaching of the 5 factors given by the Buddha to Meghiya:

1. **Spiritual friendship**. [Here referring to **faith**, *saddhā*. Cf. UA 221.]
2. Moral conduct in keeping with the Code of Discipline, seeing danger in the slightest fault. [Moral conduct]
3. Talk on contentment, aloofness and the spiritual life. [Study & Discussion]
4. Energy in abandoning unwholesome states and promoting wholesome states. [Calmness]
5. The wisdom that sees the rise and fall of phenomena that leads to the complete destruction of suffering. [Insight]

(A 4:357 = U 36 f.; UA 221) [7]

9. SACCA,VIBHAṄGA SUTTA

Who are the models for spiritual friendship? The Ānguttara twice records the Buddha declaring:

⁴ The Majjhima Commentary says that these two conditions—“the voice of another” and “skillful consideration”—are necessary for the disciple desiring to arrive at the right view of insight and the right view of the supramundane path. But the Individual Buddhas (*pratyeka,buddha/pacceka,buddha*) arrive at their enlightenment, and fully self-enlightened Buddhas (*samyak,sambuddha/sammā,sambuddha*) arrive at their omniscience solely in dependence on skillful consideration without “the voice of another”.

Monks, the believing monk, if he would correctly aspire, should aspire thus: “May I be like Sāriputta and Moggallāna!”

Monks, they are the standard and measure (*tulā etaṃ pamāṇaṃ*) for my disciples who are monks, namely, Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

(A 1:88 = 2:164)

A whole sutra is expounded in answer to the same question, that is, **the Sacca,vibhaṅga Sutta** (The Discourse on the Analysis of the Truths) (M 141). The sutra opens with the statement that “in the Deer Park at R̥ṣipātana near Vārāṇasī, the Tathāgata...set rolling the incomparable Wheel of the Dharma, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or god or Māra or Brahmā or anyone in the world,” that is, the teaching of the Four Noble Truths. The venue of the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta is also the Deer Park at R̥ṣipātana near Vārāṇasī. Then the Buddha declares:

Cultivate the friendship of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, monks. Associate with Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They are wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. **Sāriputta is like a mother; Moggallāna is like a nurse.** Sāriputta trains others for the fruit of stream-entry; Moggallāna for the supreme goal. Sāriputta, monks, is able to declare, teach, describe, establish, reveal, expound and exhibit the Four Noble Truths.”

(M 3:248)

According to the Majjhima Commentary, Śāriputta trains his pupils until he knows they have attained the fruit of Stream-entry. Then, he lets them develop the higher paths on their own, and takes on a new batch of pupils [18]. Maudgalyāyana, on other hand, continues to train his pupils until they have attained Arhantship. (MA 5:63)

After the Buddha has made the above announcement, he leaves the assembly for his dwelling. Soon after that, Śāriputra gives a detailed exposition of the Four Noble Truths [cf. 29]. Due to the teacher, topic and context of this exposition, it is said to be “**the second turning of the Wheel of the Dharma**”. The whole section on the Truths are included in the Mahā Sati’paṭṭhāna Sutta, where the second and third Truths are elaborated (D 22.18-21 = 2:305-13).⁵

In **the Sāriputta Sutta** of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, Śāriputra repeats the key statement the Buddha has made to Ānanda in connection with spiritual friendship: “**Spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is the whole of the holy life.**” (S 5:4). The Buddha praises Śāriputra for making this statement. The Commentary says that Ānanda [3] does not make the statement correctly because he has not reached the peak of the knowledge of the disciple’s perfection but that Śāriputra has.

10. CHILDHOOD FRIENDS

(a) The hill-top festival

The story of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana is given in **the Dhammapada Commentary** (bk 1 story 8) on Dh 11-12. Before the Buddha appeared in the world, there were born on the same day two boys in two brahmin villages in India, called Upaṭiṣya,grāma (Upatissa,gāma) and Kolita,grāma (Kolita,gāma), both about a league (*yojana*)—about 11 km—apart, both about half a league from Rājagṛha in Magadha. Since they were the firstborn of the villages’ leading families, they were respectively named after their own villages—Upaṭiṣya and Kolita (cf. M 1:150). It was likely that the village came to be called “Upaṭiṣya” or “Upaṭiṣya,grāma” since it was inhabited by the Upaṭiṣya clan (*gotra/gotta*). Other accounts say that Śāriputra’s village was Nālaka or Nālānda,grāmaka (Mvst 2:56).

⁵ For other definitions of birth, ageing and death, see the Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta, M 9.22, 26.

Upatisya's mother was Rūpā Śārī, his father, the brahmin Vaṅganta; Kolita's mother was Maudgalī or Maudgalyānī (Moggallī) (DhA 2:84). Their families had been close for seven generations, and the two boys grew up together. As young men, the two friends attended the annual Hilltop Festival (*giri-y-agra,-samāja/gir'agga,samajjā*) at Rājagrha. It was time of laughter and excitement with plays and dances. They attended the festival for two days, but on the third, they found that they could neither laugh or share the excitement any longer with the realization, "What is there to look at here? Before these people have reached a hundred years, they will all be dead! Shouldn't we go seek a teaching of deliverance?"

(b) Sañjayin Vairāṭi,putra

Sharing the same troubling thought, they both decided to leave home as ascetics and find a teacher. At that time a wandering ascetic (*parivrājaka/paribbājaka*) named **Sañjayin Vairāṭi,putra** (Sañjaya Belaṭṭhi,putta) [8:7], one of the six well-known sectarian teachers, an agnostic and skeptic, lived in Rājagrha. The two friends, each with their own following of 500 brahmin youths joined Sañjayin, greatly increasing his reputation and support.

Sañjayin's method was not a commit himself to any answer to a philosophical or religious question. In that way, he would never be wrong. However, there was a serious note to this approach: it is likely that his standpoint was not made out of ignorance but based on the notion that knowledge was not necessary, even dangerous, for salvation. In other words, when one really knows nothing, one realizes everything.

Within a short time, they mastered whatever Sañjayin had to teach. Realizing that they had not found what they were seeking, the two friends decided to go their separate ways with the promise to meet again at an appointed time so that whoever had found the Deathless would inform the other. Shortly after this, the Buddha had completed his first rains retreat following his enlightenment and taken up residence at the Bamboo Grove. [4:20]

11. ŚĀRIPUTRA MEETS AŚVAJIT

Among the first 60 Arhants whom the Buddha had sent forth to proclaim the Dharma [4:17] was an elder named **Aśvajit or Aśvakin** (Mvst 3:328), one of first Five Monks who had attended to the Bodhi-sattva during his self-mortification period and later became the first enlightened disciple. When one day Upatisya saw Aśvajit (or Upasena, Mvst 3:60) on the latter's almsround, he was struck by Aśvajit's dignified and serene appearance, something he had not seen before, but hesitated to approach him since it was not the proper time.

When it was time for Aśvajit to have his meal, Upatisya attended to him as a pupil would—spreading out his own sitting cloth for Aśvajit and offering him drinking water from his own water-pot. After the meal and having exchanged customary greetings, Upatisya questioned Aśvajit:

"Serene are your features, friend. Pure and bright is your complexion. Under whom have you gone forth as an ascetic? Who is your teacher? Whose doctrine do you profess?"

It is interesting here that Upatisya did not ask: "You look well-dressed, rich, and well-qualified. What are your paper qualifications? What titles do you have? How much salary do you earn a month? How many-room house do you live in? What important people do you know?" Upatisya was simply impressed by the inner peace exuding from the humble figure—he was not "measuring" Aśvajit; he was simply rejoicing in his joyful presence and eager to partake of Aśvajit's spiritual joy. Aśvajit, however, was to subtly test him before answering him.

"These wandering ascetics are hostile to the teaching I profess. Therefore I will show this monk the profundity of our teaching," Aśvajit thought to himself. First, he explained that he was a mere newly-

ordained monk (*nava*), confessing that he was unable to expound the Dharma at length, but could tell the general sense of the teaching in brief (P. *sāṅkhittena atthaṃ vakkhāmi*, V 1:40).

“I am Upatissa. Say much or little according to your ability. I will undertake to fathom the meaning in a hundred ways or a thousand ways.”

Say little or much; tell me the essence only;
I have need of the essence only; why utter so many words?

The Mahāvastu mentions **Upasena** instead of Aśvajit and he said: “I have but little learning, venerable sir. I can only formulate the general sense of the teaching (*artha, mātram kalpeyam*).” Upaṭiṣya replied:

“I am concerned with the sense, what matters the letter? For he who teaches the sense knows the sense, and seeks to do good thereby. We, too, for many a day have borne such a profitless burden of words and text, and before this have been many a time deceived.” (Mvst 3:60 f).

In response, Aśvajit pronounced one of the most famous of Buddhist stanzas:

*ye dharmā hetu, prabhavā, hetuṃ teṣāṃ Tathāgato ’ vadat,
teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃ vādī Mahā, śramaṇaḥ.*

[Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra, ed. Nanjio, 444; Ārya, pratītya, samutpāda Sūtra (in the Ārya Śālistamba Sūtra, ed. Śāstri, 26. See Jayatilleke, 1963: 454)

According to the Pali tradition, the verse and story run as follows:

Of all things that arise from a cause, *Ye dhammā hetu-p, pabhavā*
Their cause the Tathāgata has told. *tesaṃ hetuṃ tathāgato āha*

As soon as Upaṭiṣya heard these first two lines, he was established in the Fruit of Stream-winning. Then Aśvajit completed the stanza:

And also how these cease to be— *tesaṃ ca yo nirodho*
This too the great sage has told. *evaṃ vādī mahā, samaṇo*

(V 1:40; J 1:85)

However, after he had attained the Fruit of Stream-winning, the Higher Excellence (P. *upari, viśesa*), i.e. any higher attainment, failed to appear (DhA 1:94). Therefore, he considered, “There must be a reason for this,” and said to Aśvajit. “Please do not elaborate your teaching any further; let this suffice. Where does our Teacher reside?”

“At the Bamboo Grove, brother.”

Śāriputra then took his leave and went to look for Kolita, who seeing that Śāriputra’s face has a brightness not seen before, knew that he had found the Deathless. Śāriputra uttered the stanza and at the end of it, Kolita attained the fruit of Stream-winning. Then they decided that they should meet the Buddha himself. (V 1:39 f)

12. MORE FOOLS THAN THE WISE

It was Upaṭiṣya’s special quality that he always held his teachers in high respect. Therefore, he suggested, “Friend, let us inform our teacher, the wandering ascetic Sañjayin, that we have attained the Deathless. Thus, will his mind be awakened, and he will comprehend. But, should he fail to comprehend,

he will at any rate believe what we say to be true. And as soon as he has listened to the teaching of the Buddhas, he will attain the Path and the Fruit.”

The two good friends informed Sañjayin that the Buddha had arisen in the world, that Sañjayin was walking the wrong path and invited him to go together to meet the Buddha.

“You may go; I cannot go.”

When asked for the reason, Sañjayin replied:

“I have gone about as a teacher of the multitude. For me to become a pupil again would be as absurd as for a chatty (earthen jug) to go to the well. I shall not be able to live the life of a pupil.”

When pressed to see the benefit of meeting the Buddha, Sañjayin asked: “Friends, which are more numerous in the world: the stupid or the wise?”

“Teacher, the stupid are more numerous in this world, the wise are few.”

“Well, then, friends, let the wise men go to the wise monk Gotama, and let the stupid come to stupid me. You may go, but I shall not go.”

The two friends then departed with the words: “You will be a famous man, teacher!”

When the two friends left, Sañjayin’s congregation broke up, leaving the grove empty, at which sight Sañjayin vomited hot blood. Five hundred wandering ascetics accompanied to two friends for some distance. Of these 250 remained loyal to Sañjayin and turned back; the other 250 became the disciples of the two and they headed for the Bamboo Grove. The Mahāvastu, however, says that all 500 of Sañjayin’s disciples left with the two friends without any mention of his unhappy reaction. (V 1:39-44; Ap 1:24 f; J 1:85; DhA 1:90-95; SnA 1:326 ff; Mvst 3:63)

The Mūla,sarvāstivādin Vinaya and other Mahāyāna texts give a more favourable picture of Sañjayin. While Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were still his disciples, Sañjayin fell ill and they cared for him. In return, he predicted to them the arrival of the Buddha and affirmed the Buddha’s sanctity, encouraging them to learn from the Buddha. When Sañjayin died, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana felt a great appreciation for their former teacher and realized that his teachings were truly marvelous. As such, in the early Mahāyāna texts, Sañjayin was not, as in the Pali texts, a hostile and tragic figure, but a generous precursor of the Buddha, somewhat like John the Baptist was to Jesus Christ. (T 1444 2:1026a-c; *Gilgit MSS* 3,4:20-25; cf. Lamotte 1988:659 ; Ray 1994:139 f.)

13. CHIEF DISCIPLES

When Upaṭiṣya and Kolita arrived at the Bamboo Grove, the Buddha, seated in the midst of the four-fold assembly (of monk, nuns, laymen and laywomen) was teaching the Dharma. When he saw the two wanderers approaching, he addressed the monks: “These two friends, Upaṭissa and Kolita, who are now approaching, will be my two chief disciples, an excellent pair.”

Having arrived, the friends prostrated before the Buddha in homage and sat down at one side. Thus seated, they said to the Buddha: “May we obtain, Lord, the going-forth under the Blessed One, may we obtain the ordination.”

“Come, O monks! Well proclaimed is the Dharma. Live the holy life for making a complete end of suffering.” This was the ordination of Upaṭiṣya and Kolita. (V 1:42) [cf. 4:10]. Then the Blessed One continued his discourse, taking the individual temperament of audience into consideration. With the

exception of Upatiṣya and Kolita, all of them attained to Arhantship. They did not attain to higher paths and fruits because they needed a longer period of preparatory training to fulfil their personal destiny of serving as the Buddha’s chief disciples.

Out of respect for Upatiṣya and Kolita after their ordination, they were respectfully known by their respective metonyms (based on the mother’s names), **Śāriputra and Mahā Maudgalyāyana**. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the three disciples closest to the Buddha—Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana and Ānanda—did not attain stream-winning by the Buddha’s own instruction but through the guidance of others: Upatiṣya through Aśvajit; Maudgalyāyana through Upatiṣya, Ānanda through the Arhant Purna Maitrayāṇī,putra (Puṇṇa Mantāni,putta). For such an attainment to be possible, Kolita needed to possess strong confidence in his friend as well as in the truth, both of which Kolita had (Nyanaponika et al 1997: 382 n5). These are classic examples of spiritual friendship.

14. INSTALLATION AS CHIEF DISCIPLES

On the same day as they were received into the Order, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were installed as the Buddha’s chief disciples—his right-hand and left-hand disciples respectively. Some unenlightened monks and disciples were displeased, and rightly so, feeling that the Buddha should have given the positions to those who were ordained first, that is, the Five Monks headed by Kauṇḍinya, or the group of 50 monks headed by Yaśa, or the group of 30, or the 3 Kāśyapa brothers (V 1:15-35). “The Teacher shows favouritism,” they thought. When the Buddha learned of this negative reaction regarding the chief disciples, he responded:

Monks, I show no favouritism in bestowing this distinction. On the contrary, I bestow on these monks and on all others that for which each has made his aspiration. For Aññā Koṇḍaññā gave the first fruits of a certain crop nine times, but in doing so did not make an aspiration for the place of chief disciple. On the contrary, in making the gift, he made the aspiration that he might be the first to win the foremost state of all, namely, Arhantship.

(DhA 1:97)

In the case of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, they made their aspiration to become chief disciples many aeons ago beginning in the time of Anoma,darśī (Anoma,dassī), the 18th Buddha before our own (V 1:42 f; Ap 2:31 ff; AA 1:96 ff. 124 ff; DhA 1:88 f; SnA 326 ff; Mvst 3:56).

15. MAUDGALYĀYANA’S TORPOR

For his intensive training, Maudgalyāyana went to live near a village called **Kallavāla,putta** (P. “liquor-dealer’s son”; called Kallavāla,mutta in the Pacala Sutta, A 4:85) in Magadha. On the seventh day of his ordination, when he was engaged in meditation, he was troubled by **fatigue and torpor**. According to the Aṅguttara Commentary, Maudgalyāyana had been walking up and down vigorously in meditation, so when he sat down for his meditation, drowsiness overcame him.

The Buddha, with his divine eye, saw Maudgalyāyana nodding in his meditation and teleported himself and appeared before Maudgalyāyana. The Buddha taught him **seven successive ways of overcoming torpor**:

- (1) You should not give attention to that thought (associated with drowsiness).
- (2) Reflect on the Dharma as you have learned and mastered it, examine and investigate it closely in your mind.
- (3) Recite the Dharma in detail as you have learned and mastered it.
- (4) Pull both ear-lobes and rub your limbs with your hands.
- (5) Get up from your seat and, after washing your eyes with water, you should look around in all directions and upwards to the stars and constellations.

- (6) Practise the perception of light (*āloka.samjñā/āloka,saññā*), resolve upon the perception of day-time: as by day, so at night; as at night, so by day. Thus, with an open and unburdened heart, you should develop a luminous mind.
- (7) With your senses turned inward and your mind not straying outward, you should take to walking up and down, being aware of going to and fro.

The sutra is included in the Book of Sevens of the Aṅguttara because it enumerates seven ways of dispelling torpor, but it also includes as **an eighth item**: taking a nap when all else fails! The Buddha advised that “then, mindful and circumspect, you may lie down, lion-like, on your right side, placing one foot on the other, keeping in mind the thought of rising; and on awakening, you should quickly get up, thinking: “I must not indulge in the pleasure of resting and reclining, in the pleasure of sleep.”

The Buddha went on to admonish Maudgalyāyana on **humility, self-control, and conducive environment**. When asked for a brief teaching on liberation through the elimination of craving, the Buddha taught him: “Nothing is fit to be clung to” (P. *sabbe dhammā n’ālaṃ abhinivesāya*), that is, by way of craving or wrong views. “All things” here refer to the 5 Aggregates, the 12 sense-bases and the 18 elements, all of which are not fit to be clung to. While listening to the Buddha expounding these teachings on the meditation of the elements (*dhātu,karmasthāna/dhātu,kammaṭṭhāna*), Maudgalyāyana won the three higher paths and the apex of a chief disciple’s perfection by attaining Arhantship. (A 4:85 f; AA 4:42)

16. ŚĀRIPUTRA’S ENLIGHTENMENT

Śāriputra spent the fortnight after his ordination with the Teacher, living near him in the Boar’s Cave (P. *sūkara,khata,leṇa*), depending on Rājagrha for alms. At the end of the fortnight, the Buddha expounded **the Vedanā,pariggaha Sutta** (on the contemplation of feelings, M 74) to Śāriputra’s maternal nephew, the ascetic Dīrgha,nakha/Dīgha,nakha (“Long Nails”). Śāriputra was standing behind the Teacher, fanning him and following the discourse attentively, like one “sharing a rice-meal with another”. Doing so, Śāriputra gained the apex of a chief disciple’s perfection and attained Arhantship.

According to **the Paṭisambhidā Sutta** (A 4.173), reported in his own words, Śāriputra mentions that he won the four analytical knowledges (*pratisamvidā,jñāna/paṭisambhidā,nāṇa*)—of meanings (*artha/-attha*), of conditions (*dharmā/ dhammā*), of definitions (*nirukti/nirutti*) and of intellect (*pratibhāna/paṭi-bhāna*)—only six months after his ordination.

Śāriputra’s enlightenment process is described in **the Anupada Sutta** (M 111), “The Discourse on One by One as they Occurred”. In the discourse, the Buddha declares that “in a fortnight [that is, between his ordination and the exposition of the Dīgha,nakha Sutta], monks, Sāriputta had insight into states one by one as they occurred (P. *anupada,dhamma,vipassanā*)”. The Majjhima Commentary explains that he developed insight into states in successive order by way of the meditative attainments and the absorption-factors. The minute analysis of mental states their components anticipates the methodology of the Abhidhamma, so that it is no coincidence that his name is so closely connected with the **Abhidhamma literature** (M:Ñ 1315 n1047).

Traditionally, Śāriputra is renowned for his great wisdom, indeed, he is second only to the Buddha himself. That being the case, **why did he attain Arhantship later than Maudgalyāyana?** According to the Commentaries, this was because of the extensiveness of preparations required. When poor people want to go anywhere, they usually take to the road immediately; but in the case of kings, extensive preparations must be made, and these require time. So, it is in the case of the preparation for becoming the Buddha’s chief disciple.

17. FUNCTIONS OF THE CHIEF DISCIPLES

The basic functions of the chief disciples are threefold:

- (1) to help the Buddha consolidate the Dharma, thereby making it a vehicle of spiritual transformation and deliverance of beings;
- (2) to serve as models for other monks to emulate and to supervise their training;
- (3) and to assist in the administration of the Sangha, particularly when the Buddha was in retreat or away on an urgent mission.

Of the two chief disciples, the right-hand one, on account of his great wisdom (*mahā,prajñā/mahā,paññā*), is regarded as closest to the Buddha. In the case of Gautama Buddha, this was **Śāriputra**, whose special task in our Dispensation was **the systematization of the Doctrine and the detailed analysis of its contents** (a methodology later called Abhidharma/Abhidhamma).

The other chief disciple, **Mahā Maudgalyāyana**, who stands on the Buddha's left, is distinguished for his strength and versatility in the exercise of **psychic power** (*rddhi/iddhi*) [34]. This power is not a means of dominating others or for self-aggrandizement, but is the product of profound mental concentration and the experience of selflessness, founded on the mastery of mental concentration (*samādhi*). This power is used where beings cannot be reached by the conventional approach of verbal instruction.

In the **Sacca,vibhaṅga Sutta**, the Buddha exhorted his disciples to cultivate the spiritual friendship of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana and to associate with them. They were wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. Śāriputra was like a mother and Maudgalyāyana was like a nurse. Śāriputra trained others for the fruit of stream-entry; Maudgalyāyana for the supreme goal (M 3:248) [9]. Let us look at some example of these qualities of the chief disciples.

18. ŚĀRIPUTRA'S TEACHING SKILL

Although we usually associate Śāriputra with wisdom, he was also famous for **great patience and love**. He would admonish and instruct up to a hundred or a thousand times until his pupil gained the fruit of Stream-entry. Only then did he discharge him to help other students. There were a great number of those who, having received his instructions and following them faithfully, attained to Arhantship.

The Majjhima Commentary states that Śāriputra would instruct his students to lead them only up to stream-entry, after which they had to progress on their own (MA 5:63). Even so, in individual cases, he helped various monks to gain the higher stages of spirituality. The Udāna Commentary, for example, says that "at that time, monks in higher training often used to approach the Venerable Śāriputta for a subject of meditation that could help them to attain to the three higher paths" (UA 362). Such was the case of the elder **Lakuṇṭhika Bhaddiya** ("the Dwarf"), who as a Stream-winner was instructed by Śāriputra and as a result gained Arhantship (U 7.1).

The most famous episode regarding Śāriputra's teaching skill was his admonition to **Aniruddha** (Anuruddha) as recorded in **the Anuruddha Sutta II** of the Ānguttara Nikāya (A 3.128). When Aniruddha, who was chief amongst the monks who were clairvoyant (P. *dibba,cakkhuka*) (A 1:23; Tha 916 f; Ap 35), was unable to make significant progress in his meditation, he approached Śāriputra:

Friend Sāriputta, with **the divine eye** that is purified, surpassing the human eye, I can see the thousandfold world-system. Firm is **my energy**, unremitting; **my mindfulness** is alert and unconfused; **the body** is tranquil and untroubled; **my mind** is concentrated and one-pointed. And yet, my mind is not freed from the cankers, not freed from clinging.

Friend Anuruddha, that you think thus of your divine eye, this is the conceit (*māna*)⁶ in you. That you think thus of your firm energy, your alert mindfulness, your undisturbed body and your concentrated mind, these are the restlessness (*auddhatya/uddhacca*)⁶ in you. That you think of your mind not being freed from the cankers, this is worrying (*kaukrīya/kukkucca*)⁶ in you. It will be good, indeed, if the Venerable Anuruddha, abandoning these three states of mind and paying no attention to them, will direct the mind to the Deathless Element (*amṛta, dhātu/amata, dhātu*).

Following Śāriputra's advice, Aniruddha, living alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, with determined mind, before long, in this very life, became one of the Arhants. (A 1:281 f).

19. THE CĀTUMĀ SUTTA

In historical terms, **the Cātumā Sutta** (M 67) is perhaps the most problematic sutra in the Pali Canon: the Buddha appears to show anger; and he declares that either he himself or that Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana shall lead (P. *parihareyyaṃ*) the Sangha, apparently contradicting statements he had made elsewhere in the Canon. [20]

The sutra opens with the arrival in the Myrobalan Grove at the Śākya village of Cātumā of 500 visiting (*āgantuka*) “monks, newly ordained, newly arrived in this Doctrine and Discipline” (P. *bhikkhū nāvā acira, pabbajitā adhunāgatā imaṃ dhamma, vinayaṃ*), led by the chief disciples themselves, to meet the Buddha. The visiting monks “were exchanging greetings with the resident monks and were preparing resting places and putting away their bowls and outer robes, they were very loud and noisy” (M 1:456).

The Buddha commented to Ānanda that the noisy monks were like “fishermen hawking fish”, and in due course dismissed them, “Go, monks, I dismiss you! You cannot live with me!” The Śākyas of Cātumā then interceded on the monks' behalf and beseeched the Buddha to recall them. They compared the novice monks to “**young seedlings,**” not getting any water, and to “**a young calf,**” not finding its mother, “might change or alter”. Then Brahmā Sahampati, too, interceded repeating the request that the Buddha showed his compassion “now as he used to show compassion towards the Sangha in the past” (M 1:458 f).

Responding to the pleas of the Śākyas and of Brahmā himself, the Buddha recalled the novice monks. Then he questioned Śāriputra: “What did you think, Sāriputta, when the Sangha was dismissed by me?”

“Venerable Sir, I thought thus: ‘The Blessed One will now abide carefree (P. *apposukko*), devoted to pleasant abiding here and now (P. *diṭṭha, dhamma, sukha, vihāraṃ anuyutto viharissati*), and that we too shall now abide carefree, devoted to pleasant abiding here and now.’”

“Stop, Sāriputta, stop! Such a thought should not be entertained by you again.”⁷

Then the Buddha asked Mahā Maudgalyāyana the same question, to which he replied:

“Venerable Sir, I thought thus: ‘The Blessed One will now abide carefree, devoted to pleasant abiding here and now, and that the venerable Sāriputta and I shall lead the Sangha (P. *bhikkhu, sanghaṃ parihareyyaṃ*).’”

“Good, Moggallāna, good! Either I (*ahaṃ*) shall lead the Sangha, or Sāriputta and Moggallāna shall lead it.”

⁶ Conceit (*māna*) and restlessness (*uddhacca*) are two of the three fetters (*saṃyojana*) which are destroyed only at the stage of Arhantship. Worry or scruples (*kukkucca*), however, is removed at the stage of the Non-returner (*anāgāmi*).

⁷ The Majjhima Commentary remarks here that the Buddha rebuked him because he failed to recognize his duty (*bhāra-bhāva*), for the Sangha is the responsibility of the two chief disciples.

Then the Buddha went on to speak to the novice monks on **the four dangers that threaten their lives as monks**, inducing them to return to lay life, and he used four similes:

- (1) The danger of waves (*ūmi, bhaya*). Newly ordained monks, instructed regarding proper postures and other rules of decorum, find it annoying, and as a result return to lay life out of **anger and despair** (*kodh'upāyāsa*).
- (2) The danger of crocodiles (*kumbhīla, bhaya*). Newly ordained monks are instructed in the restraint regarding food, feel as if they have been given “a muzzle over our mouths”, and as a result return to lay life out of **gluttony** (*odarika*).
- (3) The danger of whirlpools (*āvatta, bhaya*). Newly ordained monks go out for alms with body, speech and mind unguarded, and seeing lay people enjoying sense-pleasures, they recall their own lay lives of pleasure. As a result return to lay life because of **five objects of sense-pleasures** (*pañca kāma, guṇa*) [pleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch].
- (4) The danger of fierce fishes (*susukā, bhaya = canda, maccha, bhaya, AA 3:123*). Newly ordained monks go out for alms with body, speech and mind unguarded, with sense-faculties unrestrained, and seeing a woman lightly dressed, lust infect them. As a result, they return to lay life because of **women** (*mātugāma*) [here, a euphemism for sexuality].

(M 1:459-463; A 4.122)

20. LEADERSHIP OF THE SANGHA

Another interesting feature of the Cātumā Sutta is that the Buddha uncharacteristically addressed himself as *ahaṃ*, instead of the standard *tathāgata*: “Good, Moggallāna, good! Either I (*ahaṃ*) shall lead the Sangha, or Sāriputta and Moggallāna shall lead it.” (M 1:459). This seems to contradict the statement the Buddha made in **the Maha,parinibbāna Sutta**, where he declared:

If there is anyone who thinks: “I shall take charge of the Order (*ahaṃ bhikkhu, saṅghaṃ pariharissāmi*),” or “The Order should refer to me (*mam'uddesiko bhikkhu, saṅgho*),” let him make some statement about the Order, but the Tathāgata does not think in such terms.

(D 2:100) [10:7b]

As for the Buddha’s usage of the personal pronoun *ahaṃ*, **I.B. Horner**, however, does not see this as a problem since “even a Buddha uses the conventional parlance of the world” (M 1:500).⁸

The problem remains, however, with the Buddha’s statement (“Either I shall lead the Sangha, or Sāriputta and Moggallāna shall lead it.” M 1:459), especially in connection with the Buddha’s rebuke of Devadatta after his proposal to take over the Sangha from the aged Buddha:

Devadatta, I would not hand over the Order of Monks even to Sāriputta and Moggallāna. How then could I hand it over to you, a wretched one, to be rejected like spittle?

(V 2:188; quoted at DhA 1:139 f; cf. M 1:393)

In her Translator’s Introduction, I.B. Horner makes an important attempt to address the problem:

Is it possible that at that time he [the Buddha] thought his chief disciples too old? He himself, according to Devadatta, was approaching the end of his life, although there may have been about eight

⁸ Cf. “He makes use of common phrases of the world without adhering to them”, *yañ ca loke vuttaṃ voharati aparāmasaṃ* (M 1:500) (M:H 2:xxix; see also M:B 1277 n737).

years still to run before the *parinibbāna*. Sāriputta however seems to have been well and active at the time of this episode as he was sent to Rājagaha to carry out an Act of Information against Devadatta....

On the other hand, it is not impossible that **the *Vinaya-bhāṇakas* and the *Majjhima-bhāṇakas*** [the school of Sāriputta, DA 15] followed somewhat different traditions concerning the possible leadership of the Order, the former holding that only Gotama could lead, and for that reason they attribute the formulation of practically every one of the Vinaya rules to him; and the latter holding that others also could look after the Order, as our *M*[*ajjhima*] context suggests, and as is borne out to some extent by the Discourses given by disciples and of which Gotama is recorded to have approved. However, this is a point that could only be substantiated by further research.

Again, is it possible, and perhaps it is even probable, that the episodes recorded in *M*. i.459 and *Vin*. ii.188 refer to **different Saṅghas**. For saṅgha is not necessarily a comprehensive word for the whole Order of monks, and which indeed S. Dutt [*Early Buddhist Monachism*] thinks was known as the Saṅgha of the four quarters. It can also refer, and does often refer to this Order or that, each regarded as part of the whole and bound by the same rules and regulations, but marked off from one another by virtue of the residence of monks within this *sīmā* (boundary) or that. If this is so, then Sāriputta and Moggallāna might well have been regarded as **the right disciples to be in charge of some particular Saṅgha**, but not necessarily of another; and, accepting this hypothesis, the apparent contradiction between *M*. i.459 and *Vin*. 2:188 would be resolved.

(M:H 2:xxvii f; my emphases)

Pali is a most precise instrument in many ways, and I believe that where a certain term is used it is for some definite reason and has something definite convey. It is for us to ‘swelter at the task’ [Dh 276] of regaining the wonderful precision of language the teachers and *bhāṇakas* of old knew so well how to employ.

(I.B. Horner, M:H 2:xxix)

21. ŚĀRIPUTRA REBUKED

According to the *Majjhima Commentary* on the *Cātumā Sutta*, Śāriputra failed in his duty (*bhāra-bhāva*), that is, that of taking charge of the newly ordained monks. Maudgalyāyana, however, answered the Buddha’s question correctly, that “the venerable Sāriputta and I shall lead the Sangha,” and was commended by the Buddha for that (MA 3:176). There were only two or three occasions in the Canon where Śāriputra was rebuked by the Buddha, of which this was the first.

The other occasion for the Buddha’s rebuking Śāriputra is found in **the *Dhānañjāni Sutta*** (M 97), when he only established the dying brahmin Dhānañjāni “in the lesser, the Brahma-world” (*hīne brahmaloke*) and departed “when there was still more to be done” (P. *sati uttara, karaṇīye*), that is to say, Dhānañjāni could have been instructed so as to gain the supramundane path and destined for enlightenment (M 2:195; cf. M:H 2:xxix f & 378 n2). However, it should be noted that the Buddha himself teaches the only way to the Brahma-world when any higher potential is lacking in his listener, as in the case of the youth Subha Todeyyaputta (M 2:207 f) in **the *Subha Sutta*** (M 99).

The *Cātumā Sutta* comprises two separate sections: the first, the episode of the noisy monks, is also found in **the *Yasoja Sutta*** of the *Udāna* (U 24-25; cf. S 3.80), where Yasoja led the 500 monks but the venue was Śrāvastī; and the second, the four dangers to newly ordained monks, is also found in **the *Ūmi Sutta*** of the *Ānguttara* (A 4.122=2:123-126). It is possible that the *Majjhima Reciters* combined these two suttas together and extrapolated the episode of the Buddha’s rebuke.

The story of Śāriputra’s lapse in his duty towards the newly-ordained monks is highly uncharacteristic of him if we go by his track record in the Canon. Could the *Cātumā Sutta* story be a late addition? This is unlikely since the *Majjhima Reciters*, who belonged to his lineage, have preserved a story of dispraise

regarding their own teacher. Or, is it likely that Śāriputra made that one and only lapse and had learned his lesson well, not repeating it at all after that.

Śāriputra's reply to the Buddha's question about what they had thought when the Buddha dismissed the monks is interesting: it reflects a compassionate side of Śāriputta, or perhaps the Majjhima Reciters introduced this episode to reflect Śāriputra's compassionate side. It is highly unlikely that they did so out of political aspiration to promote their own teacher as the future Sangha leader since both the chief disciples predeceased the Buddha himself.

22. THE BUDDHA'S "ANGER" AND FOREKNOWLEDGE

(a) Was the Buddha angry?

Was the Buddha angry when he dismissed the noisy monks at Cātumā? Or, was he pleased when he did so (in which case the action would have been groundless and in ignorance)? The Cātuma Sutta, in fact, inspired two dilemmas in **the Milinda,pañha**, the first of which opens by quoting the Dhaniya Sutta: "I am without anger, gone is mental barrenness" (Sn 19). Just as the great earth shows neither anger nor satisfaction should anyone fall onto it, just as the great ocean does not associate with a corpse but quickly casts it ashore, showing neither anger nor satisfaction, even so, the Buddhas are beyond approval and repugnance (P. *anunaya-p,paṭigha,vipamutta*). It was out of desire for the welfare that the Buddha dismissed the monks [i.e. as a skilful means]. (Miln 186-188)

In the lesson of **the four similes**, the first simile, that of the waves, warns against the danger of "anger and despair". As such, it is clear here that the Buddha spoke against anger, and as he spoke so he acted (*yathā,vādi tathā,kārī*, D 2:224, 229; Sn 357; It 122). The Buddha's rebuke of Śāriputra is like the father's rebuke of his eldest son: it is a friendship based on spiritual strength, or what can be called "clay-pot friendship" [6:29], an analogy found in the Mahā Suññatā Sutta in connection with Ānanda:

I shall not treat you as the potter treats the raw damp clay. Repeatedly restraining you, I shall speak to you, Ānanda. Repeatedly admonishing you, I shall speak to you, Ānanda. The sound core will stand the test."

(M 3:118; cf. the Gandhāra Jātaka, J 3:368) [6:29]

(b) The Buddha's foreknowledge of the two similes

The Milinda,pañha further asks whether the Buddha had foreknowledge of the two similes used by the Śākya and by Brahma, that is, the similes of young seedlings and of a young calf. If the Buddha did not know these similes, then he would not be omniscient. If he knew the similes and still dismissed the monks, then he must be lacking in compassion. Nāgasena answered using various other similes, one of which is: "As, sire, a woman propitiates, pleases and conciliates her husband by means of wealth that belongs to her husband himself, and the husband approves; even so, sire, the Śākyas of Cātumā and Brahmā Sahampati propitiated, pleased and conciliated the Tathāgata with the very similes that had already been known by him." (Miln 210).

The two similes were already used by the Buddha in **the Piṇḍolya Sutta** (S 3.80) where the Buddha had similarly dismissed some young monks in Nigrodha's Park at Kapilavastu, who had been noisily quarrelling over the distribution of gifts (SA 2:297). In his solitary meditation, the Buddha reflected that the newly ordained monks were like a young calf that needs its mother and like young seedlings that need water. Then the Buddha summoned the novice monks to "come to him, **singly or in pairs, in a timid manner**" (P. *eka,dvīhikāya sārājja,mana,rūpā*) [so that they show reverence and are tractable, SA 2:300], rebuked them and counselled them on the true purpose of renunciation (S 3:91-94).

23. ŚĀRIPUTRA'S CHARITY

In the **Devadaha Sutta**, the Buddha praises Śāriputra for being “wise, and a helper of his fellow monks” (S 3:5). The Commentary then gives a long account of how Śāriputra assisted his fellow monks with both their material needs (*āmiṣānugraha/āmiṣānuggaha*) and with their spiritual needs (*dharmānugraha/dhammānuggaha*) [Nyanaponika & Hecker 1997:21-25]. By way of “**material help**”, the Commentary says, Śāriputra did not go on almsround in the early morning as the other monks did. Instead, when they had all gone, he walked around the entire monastery grounds, and wherever he saw an unswept place, he swept it; wherever refuse had not been cleared, he cleared them; and he arranged furniture in good order. In this way, if non-Buddhist ascetics should visit the monastery, they would not see any disorderliness and show no contempt of the monks.

Then he would go to the infirmary, and having consoled the indisposed, he would ask them about their needs. If he needed to get any medicine, he would bring along some young novices and find them through almsround or from some appropriate sources. When the medicine had been obtained, he would give them to the novices, saying, “**Caring for the sick has been praised by the Master** [1-2]. Go now, good people, and be heedful!” After that, he would go on his almsround or take his meal at a supporter’s house.

When he went on a journey, he did not walk at the head of the procession, shod with sandals and umbrella in hand, thinking: “I am the chief disciple.” Instead, he would let the novices take his bowl and robes, asking them to go on ahead with the others, while he himself would first attend to the very old, very young and the indisposed, making them apply oil to any sores on their bodies. Only later in the day or on the next day, he would leave together with them.

Due to this maternal predisposition, Śāriputra often arrived late at his destination. On one occasion he was so late in arriving that he could not get proper quarters and had to spend the night seated under a tent made from robes. Seeing this, the Buddha assembled the monks and related **the Tittira Jātaka** (J 37), the story of the elephant, the monkey and the partridge who, after deciding which of them was the eldest, lived together showing respect for the most senior. Then he laid down the rule that “lodgings should be allocated according to seniority” (V 2:160 f).

24. ŚĀRIPUTRA'S RESPECT FOR OLD AND YOUNG

(a) Gratitude

The Book of Twos of the Aṅguttara Nikāya mentions 2 kinds of rare people: **one who is first to do a favour** (P. *pubba,kārī*, or one who is a previous benefactor) and **one who is grateful and repays the favour done** (P. *kataññū,kata,vedī*) (A1:87). Such a rare person is Śāriputra who would remember the smallest kindness rendered to him.

Before becoming a monk, **Rādha** was a poor brahmin neglected in old age by his children. Rādha lived with the monks and assisted in the daily monastic chores. Although the monks were kind to him, none of them was willing to ordain him. As a result, Rādha became depressed and thin.

One day, the Buddha, seeing him with his divine eye, went to him, and hearing of his wish to join the Order, summoned the monks and asked if any of them remembered any favour done by Rādha. Śāriputra answered that he had once received a ladleful of Rādha’s own food while on almsround in Rājagṛha. Śāriputra then agreed to receive Rādha into the Order. (V 1:54 f.; DhA 2:104 ff.; ThaA 2:12 f.)

Śāriputra also extended his gratitude to his **lay supporters**. When Paṇḍita (DhA 4:176 ff) and Sukha (DhA 3:95 ff), both 7-year-old children of different lay supporters, requested to be admitted into the Order, Śāriputra received them. Their parents rejoiced by holding week-long alms-giving celebrations.

(b) Humility

The Dhammapada Commentary here relates a story about Śāriputra's forbearance and forgiveness towards those inimical to him. It is said that once when the Buddha was residing in Rājagṛha, some people were praising the noble qualities of Śāriputra: "Such great patience has our elder," they claimed, "that even when people abuse him and strike him, he feels no trace of anger."

Then a certain brahmin, holding wrong views, came along and challenged those men, claiming that he could provoke Śāriputra to anger. In the morning, when Śāriputra was on his almsround, the brahmin came up to him from behind and gave him a heavy blow on the back. "What was that?" said Śāriputra, and without so much as turning to look, he continued on his way.

The evil brahmin felt remorse burn throughout his body. Going up to the elder, he prostrated at Śāriputra's feet and begged for forgiveness. "For what?" asked Śāriputra gently. "To test your patience, I struck you," replied the brahmin. "Very well, I pardon you." "Venerable sir," replied the brahmin, "if you are willing to pardon me, please take your meal at my house."

Bystanders who had seen the brahmin strike Śāriputra were enraged and gathered around the brahmin's house, armed with sticks and stones, ready to kill him. When Śāriputra emerged, followed by the brahmin carrying his bowl, they cried out: "Venerable sir, order this brahmin to turn back!"

"What do you mean? Did he strike you or me?"

"You, venerable sir."

"If he struck me, he begged my pardon. Go your way." So saying, he dismissed the bystanders, and permitting the brahmin to turn back, Śāriputra headed for the monastery. (DhA 4:146-148)

The Dhammapada verses 389-390 were spoken by the Buddha in connection with Śāriputra:

One should not strike a brahman,
Nor should a brahman show his anger to one who strikes him.
Shame on him who strikes a brahman!
Greater shame on him who shows his anger.

For a brahman, this is no small gain,
When he holds back his mind from endearing things.
As far as one has no intent to harm,
That far does suffering subside.

(Dh 389-390)

(c) Learning from the young

There is a heartwarming story about how the master of wisdom himself was willing to learn from a young novice recounted in the Commentary on **the Susīma Sutta** (S 2.29). The events of the sutra itself occurred in Śrāvastī, where the Buddha asks Ānanda if he approves of Śāriputra. Ānanda replies:

"Indeed, Venerable Sir, who would not approve of the venerable Śāriputta, unless he were foolish, full of hatred, deluded, or mentally deranged? The Venerable Śāriputta, Venerable Sir, is wise, one of great wisdom, of wide wisdom, of joyous wisdom, of swift wisdom, of sharp wisdom, of penetrative

wisdom.⁹ The Venerable Śāriputta, Venerable Sir, has few wishes; he is content, secluded, aloof, energetic. The Venerable Śāriputta, Venerable Sir, is one who gives advice, one who accepts advice, a reprover, one who censures evil. Indeed, Venerable Sir, who would not approve of the venerable Śāriputta, unless he were foolish, full of hatred, deluded, or mentally deranged?”

The Buddha approves of Ānanda’s eulogy. In due course, a host of devas led by the young deva Susīma, an erstwhile pupil of Śāriputra’s, approached the Buddha, and approves of him in the same terms. Then the Buddha spoke this verse:

He is widely known to be a wise man,
Śāriputta, who is free from anger;
Of few wishes, gentle, tamed,
The seer adorned by the Teacher’s praise.

(S 1:64 f).

The Commentary to the sutra relates a story showing that Śāriputra’s humility was as great as his wisdom. It is said that once, through a momentary negligence, a corner of the elder’s under-robe was hanging down unevenly, and a seven-year-old novice, seeing this, pointed out to him. Śāriputra stepped aside at once and arranged his robe in a proper even manner. Then he stood before the novice with palms together, saying: “Now it is correct, teacher!”¹⁰ **The Milinda,pañha** refers to this incident and quotes a verse it attributes to Śāriputra:

If one who has gone forth this day at the age of seven
Should teach me, I accept it with lowered head;
At the sight of him I show my zeal and respect;
May I always set him in the teacher’s place.

(Miln 397)

25. ŚĀRIPUTRA’S GRATITUDE TO HIS TEACHERS

(a) Śāriputra’s gratitude to Sañjayin

From Śāriputra we can learn an important lesson in gratitude. Although Śāriputra was declared by the Buddha to be the foremost among those who possess wisdom (A 1:23), he was also renowned for his remarkable sense of gratitude. Hearing the True Dharma for first time from Aśvajit, Śāriputra attained Stream-winning. Śāriputra then transmitted the True Dharma to his best friend, Maudgalyāyāna, who similarly became a Stream-winner.

After becoming a Stream-winner, Maudgalyāyāna suggested to Śāriputra that both of them went to see the Buddha at Veṇuvana, but Śāriputra, who always had a profound respect for his teachers, replied that they should first seek their erstwhile teacher, **Sañjayin**, to give him the good news and go with him to the Buddha. (AA 1:159 f; DhA 1:93 ff; ThaA 3:94 f; Ap 1:15 ff; cf. V 1:39 ff)

(b) Śāriputra’s gratitude to Aśvajit

Śāriputra had the greatest respect for **Aśvajit**, from whom he received the True Dharma. We are told in the Commentary to the Nāvā Sutta (Sn ii,8) and the Dhammapada Commentary that from the day of their first meeting, in whatever quarter he heard that Aśvajit was staying, in that direction he would extend his clasped hands in an attitude of reverent supplication, thinking “This venerable one was my first

⁹ This wisdom phrase is repeated in the Anupada Sutta, M 3:25. The 7 kinds of wisdom here are explained in various places: Pm 2:190-202, SA 1:119-122, ThaA 3:105 f.

¹⁰ This story is also found in the Thera,gāthā Commentary with a few variations, ThaA 3:103.

teacher. It was through him that I came to know the Buddha’s Dispensation,” and in that direction he would turn his head when he lay down to sleep (SnA 1:328; DhA 4:150 ff).

This open devotion of his led some unenlightened monks to think, “After becoming a chief disciple, Śāriputta still worships the heavenly quarters! Even today he cannot give up his brahminical views!” When these complaints reached the Buddha, he explained the real reason, and then expounded **the Nāvā Sutta** (Sn 2.8), which opens with the words:

As the devas pay homage to Indra,
So should one revere the person
Through whom one has learnt the Dharma.

(Sn 316)

(c) Śāriputra’s lion-roar

Śāriputra’s greatest gratitude was shown to none other than the Buddha himself, as recorded in **the Sampāsadanīya Sutta** (D 28). Towards the end of the Buddha’s public ministry, while he was staying at Pāvārika’s Mango Grove in Nālandā, Śāriputra declared that there has been, is and will be, no one greater than the Buddha, or wiser as regards self-enlightenment (*sambodhi*). This sutra is an elaborate account of the brief episode recorded in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (D 2:81-83). [10:3b]¹¹

When questioned by the Buddha if Śāriputra had known the Buddhas of the past or of the future, or that he was able to comprehend the present Buddha’s mind with his own, Śāriputra admitted that he did not at all. However, he declared, he knew the “Dharma-lineage” (P. *dhamm’ anvaya*, lit. “drift of the Dharma; the flow of the truth”), that is, the retrospective knowledge (P. *anvaye nāṇaṃ* or *paccavekkhaṇā nāṇa*, S 2:58) that enabled him to deduce the qualities of past and future Buddhas. Śāriputra then went on to recount the qualities and attainments in which the Buddha is unsurpassed (D 2:82 f, 3:99 ff; M 1:69, 2:120).¹²

26. ŚĀRIPUTRA’S GRATITUDE TO HIS MOTHER

A week before his final Nirvana, Śāriputra decided that he should pass away in his mother’s house at Nalaka, his birthplace. His mother, Rūpā Śārī, a brahminee, had still not seen the Dharma. Although a mother of seven Arhants,¹³ she was extremely disappointed that all her children had joined the Order.

While Śāriputra lay sick with dysentery in the room he was born, his mother remained in her own room. The Four Guardian Kings and Mahā Brahmā waited upon the sick Śāriputra. When the lady Śārī saw the radiant deities, she reflected upon the greatness of her son and her whole body was suffused with joy. Śāriputra then taught her the Dharma and she became a Stream-winner. It was then that she asked Śāriputra why he had not admonished her earlier on.

Feeling that he had repaid his debt to his mother, he sent his attendant (and younger brother), the “Novice” (*śramaṇ’ uddesa/ samaṇ’ uddesa*) Cunda, to fetch the monks. When the monks arrived, Śāriputra sat up with Cunda’s help and asked if he had offended them in any way during the 44 years of his life as a monk. On receiving their assurance that he had been entirely blameless, he covered his face with his robe and lay down, and after passing through various Absorptions, died at daybreak. (SA 3:181; J 1:391)

¹¹ Cf. Prasenajit’s remarks about Arhants, S 3.11 [8:14].

¹² Cf. a similar situation over king Prasenajit’s statement on Arhants [8:14].

¹³ Śāriputra’s younger brothers are Cunda, Upasena, and (Khadira, vaniya) Revata, and younger sisters are Cālā, Upacālā and Sisūpacālā, DhA 2:188; cf Mvst 3:56 which gives different names with Upaṭiṣya as the youngest.

27. OUR DEBT TO ŚĀRIPUTRA

Śāriputra was deeply concerned about the life of the Buddha's dispensation. The Vinaya records an important episode relating how Śāriputra approaches the Buddha and asks him why the dispensations of some of the past Buddhas did not last long and why some of them did. The dispensations of the Buddhas Vipasyī (Vipassī), Śikhin (Sikhī) and Viśvabhū (Vessabhū) (the 4th, 5th and 6th Buddhas before Śākya-muni), for example, were short because they did not teach the Dharma “in detail...and little of the suttas”, nor did they lay down the training-rules (*śikṣā,pada/sikkhā,pada*) for their disciples, nor did they institute the recital of the Prātimokṣa (Pāṭimokkha) or monastic code of conduct. Moreover, Viśvabhū Buddha resided with his disciples in “a certain awe-inspiring jungle thicket” which terrified those still ruled by passion (V 3:8). [6:2]

The dispensations of the Buddhas Krakucchanda (Kakusandha), Kaṇakamuni (Koṇāgamana) and Kāśyapa (Kassapa) [3:14]—the three Buddhas before Śākyamuni—lasted very long because they “were diligent in giving Dharma in detail to the disciples...the training-rules was laid down, the Pāṭimokkha instituted” (V 3:9). It is as if various flowers, loose on a piece of wood, well strung together by a thread, are not scattered about or destroyed by the wind (ib.).

However, when Śāriputra requests that the Buddha introduce the training-rules and institute the Prātimokṣa, the Buddha answers that it is not the right time. The training-rules and the Prātimokṣa would only be introduced after the Order “**has attained long standing...has attained great gains...when some conditions causing the cankers (*āśrava/āsava*) appear here in the Order...**”. Moreover, it is not the right time because at that time “the most backward (*paścimaka/pacchimaka*) of these 500 monks is one who has entered the stream” (V 3:9 f). The Buddha uses this same term *pacchimaka* in connection with Ānanda in the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (D 2:155) and the Kusinārā Sutta (A 2:80). The Commentaries on these two passages confirm that the term *pacchimaka* refers to Ānanda.¹⁴

In due course, the training-rules were introduced and the weekly recital of Prātimokṣa instituted. As we shall see later, it was an initiative made by **king Bimbisāra** [8:4] that in due course motivated the Buddha to introduce the weekly recital of the Prātimokṣa.

28. PRESERVING THE TEACHINGS

(a) The *bhāṇaka* system

Śāriputra, being the foremost of those monks endowed with great wisdom (P. *etad-aggam mahā-paññānām*), understandably had the special task of systematizing the Doctrine and the detailed analysis of its contents—which latter was also the task of **Mahā Kātyāyana** (Mahā Kaccāna). Buddhaghosa tells us that at the First Council, the Vinaya was entrusted to Upāli and his pupils [6:27a]. Similarly, the Dīgha, Majjhima, Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas were entrusted to Ānanda, Śāriputra (deceased), Mahā Kāśyapa and Aniruddha respectively, and their pupils (DA 13, 15) [6:27b].

Scholars generally agree that this was probably the beginning of **the system of Reciters (*bhāṇaka*)** of the first four Nikāyas (Norman 1983:8), but there are also Commentarial references to the Jātaka-reciters and the Dhammapada-reciters (Adikaram 1946:24-32). There were probably also Reciters of other texts such as the Khuddaka (Miln 342). These schools of Reciters were quite independent of one another:

We may deduce from the fact that versions of one and the same *sutta* or utterance in different parts of the canon sometimes differ, that the *bhāṇakas* responsible for the transmission of each text were quite independent, and were not influenced by the traditions of the *bhāṇakas* of other *nikāyas*.

¹⁴ VA 195, however, is silent; but see A:W 2:89 n2.

This would explain why the versions of Vaṅṅīsa’s stanzas in the Saṃyutta-nikāya and the Theragāthā do not entirely agree.¹⁵

(Norman, 1983:9)

Earlier on, we saw how a passage in the Cātumā Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya apparently contradicts similar statements in the Vinaya and Dīgha texts [19].¹⁶

(b) The 6 memorable qualities

The passing away of the Jain leader, Mahāvīra or Nātha,putta at Pāvā, which was the occasion for internal strife and disunity amongst the Jains, affected the Buddhists, too, and was the occasion of at least three important sutras: the Pāsādika Sutta (M 29), the Saṅgīti Sutta (M 33) and the Sāmagāma Sutta (M 104). In **the Pāsādika Sutta** (M 29), the Buddha tells of the conditions of a perfect religion, and lists the characteristics of a Tathāgata and his powers. In **the Sāmagāma Sutta** (M 104), the Buddha declares that “a dispute about livelihood or about the Pāṭimokkha would be trifling,” but should a dispute arise in the Saṅgha about the Path or the Way would be a great loss to the world. The Buddha then mentions the various disciplinary procedures for the guidance of the Saṅgha to ensure harmony after his passing away.

The closing of **the Sāmagāma Sutta** contains an important exposition on the practice of spiritual friendship, a teaching that is repeated in **the Kosambiya Sutta** (M 48). The teaching is known as **the six memorable qualities** (*sāraṇīyā dhammā*) “that create love and respect, and conduces to helpfulness, non-dispute, concord and unity”, that is to say:

- (1) Deeds of lovingkindness, both in public and in private, to fellow companions in the holy life.
- (2) Words of lovingkindness, both in public and in private, to fellow companions in the holy life.
- (3) Thoughts of lovingkindness, both in public and in private, to fellow companions in the holy life.
- (4) Sharing things, without reservation with virtuous companions in the holy life.
- (5) Sharing common virtues conducive to mental concentration, both in public and in private with companions in the holy life.
- (6) Sharing common views conducive to the complete destruction of suffering, both in public and in private with companions in the holy life.

(D 3:245; M 2:250 f.; A 3:288 f.)

(c) Doctrine summaries

What concerns us directly here is the **Saṅgīti Sutta** (M 33), attributed to Śāriputra. As the title suggests, the sutra represents a recital of doctrines, “perhaps an attempt to provide a summary of the doctrine as a precaution against a comparable confusion arising in the Buddhist *Saṅgha* [as it did amongst the Jains following Mahāvīra’s death]” (Norman 1983:43). The nature of the text is reminiscent of the *māṭikās* of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. It is noteworthy that the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma Piṭaka has a text called **Saṅgīti, paryāya**, which seems to be a Commentary on the Saṅgīti Sūtra, of which fragments have been found in Turkestan. The Saṅgīti Sutta appears to be an early attempt to compile all points of doctrines, evident from the overlapping and duplication of topics (see D 3:233 f).

Śāriputra is also credited with **the Das’uttara Sutta** (M 34), which “seems to be a systematic selection from the previous *sutta*” (Norman 1983:43). Some of the wording is identical with the Saṅgīti Sutta, and it follows the same pattern of sections dealing with subjects from one to ten, but has ten in each section, thus totally 100.¹⁷

¹⁵ Compare esp. Tha 1253-62 with S 1:196, 11-21.

¹⁶ For the differing opinions of the Reciters on early Buddhist history, see Norman 1983:9.

¹⁷ Cf. D:R 3:viii.

Śāriputra's conversations with various monks were often occasions for profound discourses.¹⁸ He was always keen to meet learned and noble monks, especially those that the Buddha had commended. A famous example of such a meeting was with the venerable Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇī,putra (Puṇṇa Mantāṇi,putta), both of whom had never met before. Without revealing his identity, Śāriputra engaged him in a profound discussion on the seven stages of purity (*sapta,viśuddhi/satta,visuddhi*) with Pūrṇa leading the discussion and Śāriputra asking the questions. Their discourse is recorded in **the Ratha,vinīta Sutta** (M 24), the Discourse on the Stage Coach Simile, later used by Buddhaghosa as the framework for his encyclopaedic treatise, the Visuddhimagga.

(d) Śāriputra's works

Śāriputra's spiritual importance is attested by the fact that he has a whole *saṃyutta* (chapter of connected themes)—**the Sāriputta Saṃyutta**, that is, *saṃyutta* 28 of the Saṃyutta Nikāya—to his name, where he is depicted as an adept in meditation as well (besides being the disciple foremost in wisdom). The first nine suttas of the Sāriputta Saṃyutta were composed from a stereotyped formula in which Śāriputra explains how he enters and emerges from the nine meditative attainments without giving rise to ego-affirming thoughts. Each time his reply is applauded by Ānanda. In the tenth sutta, Śāriputra replies to some provocative questions from a female wanderer and his answers win her approval.

The Niddesa Commentary, **the Niddesa**, according to the Saddhamma-p,paṭṭikā, was composed by Śāriputra (NmA 1). A.P. Buddhadatta (NmA vii), however, has pointed that if that were the case then it is curious that Śāriputra himself should give three different explanations of his own words as recorded in the Sutta Nipāta (NmA 446 *ad* Sn 955). Although it is possible that some of the explanations given in the Niddesa go back to the Buddha's time, and were perhaps compiled by Śāriputra himself, the whole work as we have it now must have been produced at a later time. According to K.R. Norman, the attribution was probably made because the Niddesa is of the same type as the exegetical explanations attributed to Mahā Kātyāyana and Śāriputra in various canonical texts (Norman 1983:63, 65, 85)

The Paṭisambhidā,magga, the 12th book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, is another work attributed to Śāriputra (PA 1). It comprises 3 sections (*varga/vagga*), each containing 10 topics (*kathā*), and teaches the path of mental discrimination (*pratisaṃvidā/paṭisambhidā*). It attempts to explain the Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta, that is, how understanding the 4 Noble Truths leads to enlightenment. The Paṭisambhidā,magga is attributed to Śāriputra probably because of its close relationship to the Das'uttara Sutta (D 34), also attributed to him. [9]¹⁹

The Cariyā,piṭaka, the 15th and last book of the Khuddaka Nikāya, was related by the Buddha at Śāriputra's request. Each story is told in the first person, of a past rebirth, in which the Buddha practised one of the ten perfections leading to his enlightenment, and which are mentioned in the Buddha,vaṃsa (B 1:76). Of the 35 stories or "conducts" (*cariyā*), 32 of them can be traced to the Jātakas; one is related to the Mahā Govinda Sutta (D 19), and another to the Mahā Sīhanada Sutta (or Loma,haṃso Pariyāya) (M 12) (Norman 1983:94 f; C:H viii f).

29. TWO MASTERPIECES

Śāriputra's great skill as a teacher of the Dharma is attested by his two classic discourses found in the Majjhima Nikāya, that is, the Mahā Hatthi,padōpama Sutta (M 28) and the Sammā,dīṭṭhi Sutta (M 9). **The Mahā Hatthi,padōpama Sutta** (The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint) opens with a statement that just as the footprint of an elephant can contain the footprints of all other animals, so the Four Noble Truths comprise everything wholesome. [Cf. 8:15c]

¹⁸ See DPPN s.v. Sāriputta, and also Nyanaponika & Hecker 1997:59-66.

¹⁹ See Warder's note, P:W xxxiii.

He then singles out the Truth of Suffering for detailed analysis. Next, he enumerates the Five Aggregates—physical form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness—and then goes on to analyze each of them in detail in terms of the Four Elements. All these Aggregates arise interdependently. As such, quoting the Buddha, he declares: **One who sees dependent origination, sees the Dharma; one who sees the Dharma, sees dependent origination.**

The Sammā,diṭṭhi Sutta (the Discourse on Right View) (M 9) is a long and important discourse by Śāriputra, with separate sections on the wholesome and the unwholesome, nutriment, the Four Noble Truths, the 12 factors of Dependent Origination, and the cankers. The Commentary declares: “In the Buddha Word as collected in the Five Great Collections (*pañca, mahā, nikāya*), there is no discourse other than the Discourse on Right View, wherein the Four Noble Truths are stated 32 times, and 32 times the state of Arhantship.”

30. MAHĀ GOSIṄGA SUTTA

The two chief disciples often lived together in the same cell and held many dialogues for the benefit of their fellow monks. A good example of their fellowship is found in the **Anaṅgana Sutta** (Discourse on Without Blemish, M 5) and the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta (The Greater Discourse in Gosiṅga, M 32). In the Anaṅgana Sutta, Śāriputra, inspired by Maudgalyāyana, speaks on the removal of “evil wishes”. At the end of the discourse, Maudgalyāyana applauds Śāriputra’s eloquence, comparing his discourse to a garland of flowers that one might place on one’s head as an ornament.

On another occasion, recorded in **the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta** (M 32), when a group of leading disciples, such as Mahā Kāśyapa, Aniruddha, Revata, and Ānanda, have gathered in the Gosiṅga Sal Grove on a beautiful full-moon night, Śāriputra asks each of them in turn to describe who they consider to be the ideal monk, “one who could illumine this forest” (M 1:212-214). When it is Maudgalyāyana’s turn to answer, he says:

Here, friend Sāriputta, two monks engage in a talk as regards the Dharma (*abhidharma/abhidhamma*)²⁰, and they question each other, and each being questioned by the other answers without foundering, and their talk rolls on in accordance with the Dharma. That kind of monk could illumine this Gosiṅga sal-grove.

(M 1:214; cf. Anderson 1999:156 f)

At the end of their Dharma talk, Śāriputra proposes that they go to see the Buddha, who then praises them, saying that each of them is a capable Dharma speaker, each in their own way. Then the Buddha himself gives his own answer:

Here, Sāriputta, when a monk has returned from his almsround, after his meal, he sits down, crosses his legs together, keeps his body erect, and establishing mindfulness before him, resolves: “I shall not break this position until, through not clinging, my mind is liberated from the defilements.” That kind of monk could illumine this Gosiṅga sal-grove.

(M 1:219)

While the disciples, in their respective answers, hold up the spiritually accomplished monk as their ideal, the Buddha’s ideal monk is one still striving for the goal, hence underscoring the purpose of the holy life.

²⁰ Abhidhamma. The term here clearly does not refer to the Piṭaka of that name, which is a post-Nikāya product. It may well indicate “a systematic and analytical approach to the doctrine that served as the original nucleus of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka” (M:B 1224 n362). In his survey of the contexts of the term *Abhidhamma* in the Canon, the Japanese scholar Fumimaro Watanabe concludes that the Buddha’s own disciples formed the conception of Abhidhamma as an elementary philosophical study that attempted to define, analyse and classify *dhammas* and to explore their mutual relations (*Philosophy and Its Development in the Nikāyas and Abhidhamma*, 1983:34-36). On the etymology and usage of *abhidhamma*, see CPD, s.v. & Norman, 1983:97.

Later, the Buddha confirms that Maudgalyāyana is a very capable Dharma speaker, as is evident from his discourses recorded in the Canon. Examples of such **discourses given by Maudgalyāyana** are:

Anumāna Sutta (M 15), where Maudgalyāyana enumerates the qualities that make a monk difficult to admonish and teaches how one could examine oneself to remove the defects from one's character.

Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta (M 37), where he overhears the Buddha give a brief explanation to Śakra, ruler of the devas, as to how a monk is liberated through the destruction of craving. Wishing to know if Śakra has understood the meaning, Maudgalyāyana travels to the Heaven of the Thirty-three to find out.

Avassuta Sutta (S 35.243), where the Buddha, suffering from backache, asks Maudgalyāyana to give a Dharma talk, and he gives an exposition on “the corrupted and the uncorrupted” regarding restraint of the senses.

Moggallāna Sutta (S 44.7) and **Vaccha Sutta** (S xliv,8) where Maudgalyāyana answers the questions unanswered by the Buddha, explaining why other ascetics asks such questions.

Byākaraṇa Sutta (A 10.84), where he speaks on 10 negative conditions to be abandoned before one can grow and mature in the spiritual life.

31. MUTUAL RESPECT

The Ghaṭa Sutta (The Barrel Discourse, S 21.3) records an episode showing the warm friendship existing between Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. On one occasion when the Blessed One was dwelling in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park in Prince Jeta's Grove at Śrāvastī, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were dwelling at Rājagṛha in a single dwelling in the Squirrel Sanctuary in the Bamboo Grove.

Emerging from his meditation retreat, Śāriputra approached Maudgalyāyana and remarked: “Friend Maudgalyāyana, your faculties are serene, your countenance is pure and bright. Has the Venerable Mahā Maudgalyāyana spent the day in a peaceful dwelling?”

“Actually I spent the day in a gross dwelling,²¹ friend, but I did have some Dharma talk.”

When Śāriputra asks further, Maudgalyāyana replies that he has had some Dharma conversation with the Buddha.

“But the Blessed One is far away, friend. He is now dwelling in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park in Prince Jeta's Grove at Sāvattī. Did the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna approach the Blessed One by means of spiritual power, or did the Blessed One approach the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna by means of spiritual power?”

Neither, replies Maudgalyāyana, rather “the Blessed One cleared his divine eye and divine ear element to communicate with me, and I cleared my divine eye and divine ear element to communicate with the Blessed One”.²²

When asked again, Maudgalyāyana replies that he has asked the Buddha what is meant by the expression “one with energy aroused” (*āradḍha, viriyo*). The Buddha replies:

Here, Moggallāna, a monk with energy aroused dwells thus: “Willingly, let only my skin, sinews and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up in my body, but I will not relax my energy so

²¹ Saṃyutta Comy. The dwelling is called “gross” on account of its object. For he dwelt in the exercise of the divine eye and divine ear element, which takes gross objects, namely the form sense-base and the sound sense-base.

²² P. *Api ca me yāvatā bhagavatā ettavatā dibba, cakkhu visujjhi dibbā ca sota, dhātu, Bhagavato 'pi yāvatā 'haṃ ettavatā dibba, cakkhu cakkhu visujjhi dibbā ca sota, dhātū ti.* (S 2:276). Free tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi, S:B 1:715 & n.

long as I have not attained what can be attained by personal strength, by personal energy, by personal exertion (P. *purisa, thāmena purisa, viriyena purisa, parakkamena*).” It is in such a way, Moggallāna, that one has aroused energy. [This teaching is also given in the Dasa, bala Sutta II, S 22.22.]

“Friend,” Śāriputra confesses, “compared to the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna, **we are like a little piece of gravel compared to the Himalayas, the king of mountains**. For the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna is of such great spiritual power and might that if so he wishes he could live on for an cycle (*kalpa/kappa*).”²³

“Friend,” replies Maudgalyāyana, “compared to the Venerable Śāriputta [in wisdom] **we are like a little grain of salt compared to a barrel of salt**. For the Venerable Śāriputta has been extolled, lauded and praised in many ways by the Blessed One.”

As Śāriputta is supreme
In wisdom, virtue and peace,
So a monk who has gone beyond
At best can only equal him.

(S 2:276 f)

32. MAHĀ MAUDGALYĀYANA’S ENLIGHTENMENT

Like Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana was an Arhant “liberated both ways” (*ubhayato, bhāga, vimukta/ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*). All Arhants are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain **the eight deliverances** (*aṣṭa, vimokṣa/aṭṭha, vimokkha*), which include the four Formless Attainments and the Attainment of Cessation, are called “liberated both ways”, that is, liberated from the physical body by means of the Formless Absorptions, and from all defilements by the Path of Arhantship.

Those who have destroyed the defilements but lack the mastery over the eight deliverances are called “liberated by wisdom” (*prajñā, vimukta/paññā, vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **the Mahā, nidāna Sutta** (D 2:70 f) and **the Kīṭāgiri Sutta** (M 1:477 f). Within the same week of striving, Maudgalyāyana had not only mastered the successive planes of meditative concentration but also won the “paths of spiritual power” (*rdhhi, pāda/iddhi, pāda*), and thus had attained higher knowledge (*abhijñā/abhiññā*).

There is a whole chapter (*varga/vagga*) in the Aṅguttara Nikāya dealing with **modes of spiritual progress** (*pratipadā/paṭipadā*) (A 4.161-170), of which four are mentioned:

- (1) painful progress with slow insight (P. *dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
- (2) painful progress with quick insight (P. *dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*).
- (3) pleasant progress with slow insight (P. *sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā*).
- (2) pleasant progress with quick insight (P. *sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā*).

(A 2:149-152, 154 f)

Of the sutras in the chapter, two are called **Śāriputta Moggallāna Sutta** (A 4.167-168). In Śāriputta Moggallāna Sutta I, Śāriputra visits Maudgalyāyana and on being asked by Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana tells him that his (Maudgalyāyana’s) mode of spiritual progress was **painful but with quick progress**. In Śāriputta Moggallāna Sutta II, Maudgalyāyana visits Śāriputra who says that his own mode of spiritual progress was **pleasant with quick insight**.

²³ Bhikkhu Bodhi remarks here in his notes that although SA glosses *kappa* as *āyukappa*, meaning the full human life span of 120 years, there seems to be no textual basis for taking *kappa* in this passage as meaning anything other than a cosmic aeon, the full extent of time required for a world system to evolve and dissolve.

Maudgalyāyana attained Arhantship by swift realization (P. *khippābhiññā*), that is, in one week, but his progress was difficult (*dukkha,paṭipadā*) and needed the Buddha’s help, hence the swiftness in his insight (*khippābhiññā*) [15]. Śāriputra, on the other hand, took only slightly longer in his progress (two weeks), but his progress was smooth (*sukha,paṭipadā*) and he swiftly gained insight while listening to the Buddha exhort Dīgha,nakha [16]. While Maudgalyāyana had the Buddha’s personal guidance in his progress, he had a lesser range in insight, whereas Śāriputra was not only independent in his progress but had a wider range of insight. Hence, Śāriputra’s superiority and supremacy in wisdom.

33. THE JUṆHA SUTTA

The “Treatise on Psychic Power” of the Paṭisambhidā,magga attributes Śāriputra with “the power of intervention by concentration” (*samādhi,vipphāra,iddhi*), that is capable of intervening in certain normal physiological processes or other natural events (Pm 2:212). The canonical basis for this attribution is a story in **the Juṇha Sutta** (the Discourse on the Moonlit Night) of the Udāna (U 4.4). Once, when Śāriputra was living with Maudgalyāyana in the Pigeon Cave (P, *kapota,kandara*) near Rājagrha, he sat down in meditation in the open air on a full-moon night, his head freshly shaven. A malicious yaksha who was passing overhead gave his head a mighty blow that could kill an elephant or split a mountain peak. He was so deeply engrossed in meditation that he was not bothered at all. The sutra continues:

The Venerable Moggallāna, with his divine eye purified and surpassing that of humans, saw the yaksha giving the Venerable Śāriputta a blow on the head. On seeing this, he approached the Venerable Śāriputta and said: “Are you all right, friend? I hope you are bearing up. I hope you are not in pain.”

“I am all right, friend Moggallāna. I am bearing up, friend Moggallāna, although I do have a slight headache.”

“It is wonderful, friend Śāriputta! It is marvelous, friend Śāriputta! Just now, friend Śāriputta, **a certain yaksha gave you a blow on the head**. And so great was the blow, it might have felled an elephant seven or seven and a half cubits high or split a great mountain peak. And yet the Venerable Śāriputta just says: ‘I am all right, friend Moggallāna. I am bearing up, friend Moggallāna, although I do have a slight headache.’”

“It is wonderful, friend Moggallāna! It is marvelous, friend Moggallāna! How great is the psychic power and potency of the Venerable Moggallāna in **that he can actually see a yaksha**. Now, we could not even see a dust-sprite (P. *paṃsu,pisācika*).”

Then the Blessed One, with divine hearing purified and surpassing that of humans, heard this conversation of these two “great dragons” (*mahā,nāga*). Then, seeing its significance, the Lord uttered this verse of uplift (*udāna*):

Whose mind stands unmoving like a rock,
Unattached to things that arouse attachment,
Unangered by things that provoke anger—
When his mind is cultivated thus,
How can suffering come to him?

(U 40 f; verse tr. John D. Ireland, 1990)

34. MAUDGALYĀYANA’S SPIRITUAL POWERS

(a) The four paths of spiritual power

Maudgalyāyana’s psychic abilities come from his cultivation of **the four paths of spiritual power** or “bases of success” (*rddhi,pāda/iddhi,pāda*), which the Buddha teaches as a means of winning superknowledge, thus:

Here, monks, a monk develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to **zeal** (*chanda*) and determined striving. He develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to **energy** (*vīrya/viriya*) and determined striving. He develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to **mind** (*citta*) and determined striving. He develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to **investigation** (*mīmāṃsana/vīmaṃsā*) and volitional forces of striving.

(D 2:213 = M 1:103 = 2:11; D 3:221, 230; Vbh 216)

These four bases of spiritual power are mental factors related to mental absorptions (*dhyāna/jhāna*) to ascertain that these absorptions are not merely states of calm but will also serve as reservoirs of energy, each accompanied by “determined striving” (*pradhāna,saṃskāra/padhāna,saṅkhāra*). It is from this vast store of mental energy that can manifest itself as psychic power (*rddhi/iddhi*) (D 3:281; A 3:280).

Maudgalyāyāna is the foremost amongst the cultivation of these four paths of spiritual power, and so is a master of psychic skills. Although there are many other monks who have amazing psychic powers, it is Maudgalyāyāna who surpasses them all in this field. Let us briefly look at some examples of the manifestations of Maudgalyāyāna’s psychic skills.

(b) Psychic powers

Maudgalyāyāna has a wide variety of psychic powers (*rddhi,vidhi,jñāna/iddhi,vidhā,nāṇa*), such as teleportation, telekinesis and metamorphosis. In **the Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** (the Shorter Discourse on the Destruction of Craving), it is said:

Then, just as quickly as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, the Venerable Mahā Moggallāna vanished from the Mansion of Migara’s Mother in the Eastern Park and appeared among the gods of the Thirty-three.

Then, just as quickly as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm, he vanished from among the gods of the Thirty-three and appeared in the Mansion of Migara’s Mother in the Eastern Park.

(M 1:252, 255)

1. Teleportation

In this manner, Maudgalyāyāna uses his power of **teleportation** to go wherever he wishes in order to instruct others or to attend to the affairs of the Order. This was how he finds out for himself whether Śakra, the leader of the realm of the Thirty-three (*trāyastriṃśa/tāvatiṃsa*), has understood the teaching about the extinction of craving (M 37).

The Buddha spends the entire 7th rains-retreat in Trāyastriṃśa (Tāvatiṃsa) teaching the Abhidharma to his mother, Māyā Devaputra. During that time, it is Maudgalyāyāna who shuttles between the heaven and Śrāvastī to report to the Buddha on events in the Order and receive instructions (DhA 3:216 ff; DhsA 1:15; J no. 483).

In **the Aparā,diṭṭhi Sutta** (S 6.5), a certain Brahmā holds the unwholesome speculative view that “There is no ascetic or brahmin who can come here.” Reading the Brahmā’s mind, the Buddha teleports himself from Jeta’s Grove to the Brahmā realm, appearing there sitting cross-legged meditating on the fire element. Maudgalyāyāna, then similarly appears there, as do Mahā Kāśyapa, Mahā Kapphaṇa (Mahā Kappina) and Aniruddha successively. Maudgalyāyāna then asks the Brahmā if he has changed his view as such, to which he acquiesces. (S 1:145)

The Aṅguttara has two suttas—the **Mahā Moggallāna Sutta** (A 4.34, Śrāvastī) and **the Tissa Sutta** (A 7.53, Rājagṛha)—that relates how Maudgalyāyana teleports himself before the Brahmā Tissa, a student of his who has died recently, to instruct him on stream-entry and the realization of the Deathless (A 3:331-334, 4:74-79).

Once when Śāriputra is ill and needs lotus stalks as medicine, Maudgalyāyana teleports himself to the Himalayas to obtain them (V 1:214 f, 2:140). On another occasion, when Anāthapiṇḍada wants to plant a **Bodhi tree** in Jetavana, Maudgalyāyana uses his psychic skill of teleportation to catch a seed from it just as it drops from the tree [3:21; 6:8].

2. Telekinesis

Maudgalyāyana also has the power of **telekinesis** or psychic mastery over solid matter. Once, when the Buddha is residing in the Mansion of Migāra’s Mother in the Eastern Park at Śrāvastī, a number of monks on the ground floor “were restless, puffed up, personally vain, rough-tongued, rambling in their talk, muddle-minded, without clear comprehension, unconcentrated, scatter-brained, loose in their faculties” (S 5:270).

The Buddha then instructs Maudgalyāyana to teach the indisciplined monks a lesson. The Commentary relates that Maudgalyāyana goes into the meditation on the water meditation (*apas, kṛtṣṇa/āpo, kaṣiṇa*), emerges, and determines that the ground on which the mansion stands should become water. Then he rises into the air and strikes the “water” which his toe.

Then the monks, shocked and terrified, stand to one side, wondering how when there is no wind at all, the whole building with a strong foundation could quake and tremble. Then, the Buddha admonishes the monk on the four bases of spiritual power. (S 5:269-272)

Similarly, **the Cūḷa Taṇhā,saṅkhaya Sutta** relates how when Maudgalyāyana finds that Śakra and his heavenly host are frolicking mindlessly in divine pleasures, he shakes the whole of the heavenly Vaijayaṅta (Vejayanta) palace with his toe to awaken the gods to reality. (M 1:254)

3. Metamorphosis

Maudgalyāyana’s power of **metamorphosis** or psychic transformation is one of his most formidable abilities. The Visuddhi, magga tells the story of how he subdues the serpent king **Nandopananda** (a sort of celestial dragon) who is offended when the Buddha and 500 monks, on a visit to Trāyastrimṣā heaven, passes above Nandopananda’s abode. In his rage, Nandopananda seeks revenge by coiling around Mount Sineru (the world axis) and spreads his hood, enveloping the whole world in darkness.

Although various monks volunteer to subdue the serpent, the Buddha picks Maudgalyāyana, the last to volunteer, since only he has enough power and skill to defeat the serpent. Maudgalyāyana then transforms himself into a huge serpent king and engages Nandopananda in a cosmic battle of flame and smoke. Drawing upon his various powers, he assumes various shapes and sizes, the last of which is a celestial bird (*suparṇa/supaṇṇa*) or *garuḍa*, his mortal arch-enemy, and so defeats him. (Vism 12.106-116; ThaA 3:177 f)

(c) Clairaudience

Through **clairaudience** or the divine ear (*divya, śrota/dibba, sota*), Maudgalyāyana can hear events from great distances: the voices and conversations of humans as well as non-humans (divine beings, etc.) It is said, for example, a young deva (Kakuda/Kakudha the Krauḍya/Koliya who has been Maudgalyāyana’s attendant before) warns him against Devadatta, who has evil intentions against the Buddha (V 2:185).

This event is recorded immediately after that of Devadatta's winning over of the impressionable young Ajātaśatru by a display of his psychic powers [Chapter 7].

The Ghaṭa Sutta (The Barrel Discourse, S 21.3), as we have seen [31], records an episode where Maudgalyāyana uses his powers of **clairaudience and clairvoyance** to converse with the Buddha who is dwelling in Anāthapiṇḍada's Park in Prince Jeta's Grove at Śrāvastī, and Maudgalyāyana is dwelling in the Squirrel Sanctuary in the Bamboo Grove at Rājagrha.

(d) Thought reading

Once, when the monks have assembled for the Upoṣadha (Uposatha), the weekly conclave for the recitation of the Prātimokṣa, the Buddha remains silent even after being invited to recite it. On the third invitation, when it is already dawn, the Buddha replies that there is an impure monk amidst the Assembly. Then Maudgalyāyana surveys the Assembly with his divine eye and discovering the guilty monk, takes him by the arm, throws him out and bolts the assembly hall door. (V 2:236-237; A 8.20; U 5.5)

Maudgalyāyana is able to read the minds of others through his power of **telepathy** or "penetration of the minds of others."²⁴ Once when the Buddha is dwelling on the Rṣi.giri (Isigili) Slope of the Black Rock at Rājagrha with 500 monks who are all Arhants, Maudgalyāyana scans all their minds and confirms the fact.

Now, one of those in this assembly is the elder **Vāgīśa (Vaṅgīsa)**, who even before he joined the Order, had the unique ability of tapping skulls (a kind of **psychometry**, i.e. divination regarding an object or its owner through contact with or proximity to the object) and thereby knowing where the erstwhile owners were reborn (DhA 26.37). Vāgīśa, who is so called because he is a master of the spoken word (*vāk/vacana*) (Ap 2.497 = 5.27) and declared by the Buddha as being foremost amongst the monks with ready wit (*pratibhāna/patībhāna*). Inspired by Maudgalyāyana, Vāgīśa responds with these verses:

While the sage is seated on the mountain slope,
Gone to the far shore of suffering,
His disciples sit in attendance on him,
Triple-knowledge men who have left Death behind.

Moggallāna, great in spiritual power,
Encompassed their minds with his own,
And searching [he came to see] their minds:
Fully released, without acquisitions!

Thus those perfect in many qualities
Attend upon Gotama,
The sage perfect in all respects,
Gone to the far shore of suffering.

(S 7.10 = 1:194 f. tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi)

(e) Clairvoyance

The Juṇha Sutta (U 40 f) records how Maudgalyāyana, through his **clairvoyance** or divine eye (*divya,cakṣus/dibba,cakkhu*) witnesses a malicious yaksha deal a heavy blow on the meditating Śāriputra's head (but not harming him) [33]. Through his divine eye, Maudgalyāyana is able to know how beings fare according to their karma. Often, for example, he sees how beings, through their evil deeds that

²⁴ Skt. *cetaḥ,paryāya-jñāna, cetaḥ,paryāya-jñāna* or *para,citta-jñāna*; P. *ceto,pariyāyañāna*.

harm other beings, are reborn among the hungry ghosts (*preta/peta*) and have to experience great suffering, and how others, who practise virtue and charity, arise in the heavenly realms.

The Dhammapada Commentary relates that each time Maudgalyāyana sees hungry ghosts, he would **smile**. But, when asked about why he has smiled, he replies that he would explain it in the Buddha's presence. After doing so, the Buddha adds that he too has seen those apparitions himself while meditating under the Bodhi tree, but has not spoken about them out of compassion for others. Now that Maudgalyāyana himself has seen them, he acknowledges them. (DhA 2:64 f, 70, 3:61, 3:411, 479)

Maudgalyāyana uses such episodes to illustrate the law of karma, and these stories are compiled into **the Peta, vatthu** (Stories of the Departed) and **the Vimāna, vatthu** (Stories of the Mansions), both canonical books of the Khuddaka Nikāya of the Sutta Piṭaka. Many stories of hungry ghosts are also found in **the Vinaya** (V 3:104-108) and in **the Lakkhaṇa Saṃyutta** (events related by Maudgalyāyana to the monk Lakṣaṇa/Lakkhaṇa, S 19.1-21 = 2:354 ff).

35. MAUDGALYĀYANA'S DEATH

(a) The Māra Dūsī

Maudgalyāyana has the power of **retrocognition** or the recollection of past lives (*pūrvā.nivāsānu-smṛti/pubbe.nivāsānussati*), but of his recollection of his own past lives, he only speaks once, and this is recorded in **the Māra,tajjaniya Sutta** (the Discourse on the Rebuke to Māra) (M 50). Śāriputra passes away on the full-moon day of Kartikā (Kattikā, October-November), half a year before the Buddha's final Nirvana. Soon after that, Maudgalyāyana encounters Māra in a rather bizarre way.

One night, while Maudgalyāyana is walking back and forth in meditation, Māra enters his bowels. Realizing it is Māra, Maudgalyāyana instructs him to leave him. Maudgalyāyan then relates how in the time of Krakucchanda (Kakusandha) Buddha (the first of the 5 Buddhas in this fortunate cycle, *bhadra-kalpa/bhadda,kappa*), he was the Māra named **Dūsī** who had a sister named Kālī, whose son was the Māra of our own age. As such, Maudgalyāyana is, in that life, the uncle of the present Māra!

The Māra Dūsī committed various evil deeds, the worst of which was to have caused hurt upon Krakucchanda's chief disciple so that his blood flowed. For this, Dūsī (Maudgalyāyana) had to suffer ten thousand years all alone in a suffering state as a being with a fish's head on a human body.

(b) Painful death

The circumstances of Maudgalyāyana's death are related **in the Commentaries to the Dhammapada** (Dh 137-140) **and to the Jātaka** (J no. 523), both of which vary in some details. It is said that in a past life, Maudgalyāyana had killed his own blind parents (or according to the Jātaka Commentary, he spared them at the last minute). For this evil deed, he suffered a very long period in a hell state, but the karma still is not yet fully exhausted, and continues even into his last life.

In his last life, Maudgalyāyana, through his psychic skills helps countless people to happier births and also related accounts of the painful rebirths of other non-Buddhist ascetics. His efforts win over a significant number of followers from other religions, which infuriate those badly affected, especially the Jain naked ascetics.

In retaliation, these desperate and jealous Jain naked ascetics hire thugs to murder Maudgalyāyana. However, each time these thugs try to kill him, Maudgalyāyana, through his psychic powers, manages to escape (once through a key-hole). When the attacks do not abate for six days, Maudgalyāyana, examining his own past lives, realizes that he has to let the momentum of his past karma run its course although he is not in any way mentally affected by them.

On the seventh day (according to the Jātaka account), the thugs enter his hut on the Ṛṣigiri Slope of the Black Rock at Rājagṛha, knock him down and “pounded his bones until they were as small as grains of rice”. Thinking he is dead, they throw his body behind a clump of bushes and flee to collect their reward. Summoning his psychic powers, Maudgalyāyana teleports himself to the presence of the Buddha to take his leave. (DhA 3:65 ff; J 5:125 ff)

Maudgalyāyana has won the four spiritual powers (*rddhi/iddhi*) which allows him to live on for the rest of the world-period, but he chooses to let his karma run its course. His greatest spiritual power is none other than **the knowledge of the destruction of the cankers** (*āśrava, kṣaya, jñāṇa/āsava-k, khayañāṇa*) that liberates him from all suffering and wins him the Deathless. The perpetrators of his tragic death, some jealous Jains, are caught by Ajātaśatru’s men and severely punished.

36. THE MEANING OF BEING FOREMOST

(a) Two roles of Śāriputra

Early Buddhism began as a forest tradition with Siddhārtha as a wandering ascetic. Even the early living quarters donated to the Buddha and the Sangha (such as the Bamboo Grove, a garden, *udyaṇa/uyyāna* in Rājagṛha, V 1:38 f) [4:20] were open parks (*ārāma*), serving as residence for those “who have gone forth from the home into homelessness” (P. *agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajati*, D 1:18; M 1:161, 451, 2:55; Tha 46; Sn 274). Discourses such as **the Vana,pattha Sutta** (M 17) (The Discourse on the Jungle Wilderness) praise and give advice on the life of a forest wanderer.

There are two images of Śāriputra, often mutually exclusive, in the Pali Canon. In the earlier strata of the Pali Canon—in the Udāna, Theragāthā and Sutta Nipāta—he is presented as **a forest saint**. In the majority of the other texts, he is “**the scholarly ideal and champion of settled monastic tradition**” (Reginald Ray 1994:136). In this Chapter, I have presented Śāriputra mostly as the latter, a settled monastic figure. However, it is important to remember that it was his life as a wandering forest monk that led to his conversion (and that of Maudgalyāyana) when he met Aśvajit.

The story of Śāriputra does not end with his more or less complete monasticization in the Pali Canon. For, in the early Mahāyāna sutras, such as the Aṣṭa,śāhasrikā Prajñā, pāramitā, we find Śāriputra once again presented as a forest saint. We shall look at the phenomenon of urbanization and the tension between the forest tradition and the monastic tradition in early Buddhism in Chapter 9.

(b) Unique individuals

The Buddha’s disciples who were foremost (*etad-agra/etad-agga*) in various qualities were not merely specialists in those wonderful qualities attributed to them, and they did not gain these special qualities in their last life by being the Buddha’s enlightened disciples. They humbly began with a simple asseveration after being inspired by another disciple with similar qualities, and then they themselves spent countless world-cycles cultivating those qualities often meeting other Buddhas.

More importantly, in their last lives, these foremost disciples were not merely specialists in wisdom (Śāriputra), or in psychic skills (Maudgalyāyana), or in retentive memory (Ānanda), or with a sweet voice (Lakuṇṭaka Bhadrīya), but they had various wholesome and spiritual qualities that conduce to the teaching of the Dharma and to the bringing of others closer to the holy life. In some cases, their foremost qualities are historical facts witnessing how they came to realize the Deathless. Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya (Añña Koṇḍañña), for example, was foremost amongst those monks who were of long standing; Raṣṭraāla (Raṭṭhapāla) was foremost of those monks who renounced out of faith; Bāhiya Dārucīriya was foremost of those quick to gain higher knowledge (*abhijñā/abhiññā*).

In some such monks, their foremost qualities reflected their chosen way of life: for example, **Revata Khadira, vanika** (Khadira, vaniya) was the foremost of those monk who were forest dwellers, and **Mogha, rāja**, the foremost amongst wearers of coarse robes. Such special qualities show that these great saints, although sharing the same moral conduct, the same liberating mental discipline, and the same liberating wisdom, were not cast from the same mould or mass-produced stereotypes, as it were. They were each an interesting individual in his or her own right. Yet these special qualities, in their diverse forms, serve a common function as lightning rods to attract other beings with similar inclinations as these great individuals to follow the liberating path to the Deathless.



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