Introduction

The Jaṭilā Sutta (S 3.11) recounts how rajah Pasenadi claims that a group of passing ascetics are “arhats.” If he does this unconscious of his real motive, it would be a classic case of what in psychology is called “projection,”1 that is, what quality we lack but desire (in his case as a rajah, religious power) we “project” it (see it) in others. However, if Pasenadi were to consciously remark that they are arhats (but in reality they are not), then, he is clearly lying. In fact, he does this merely to see the Buddha’s reaction (UA 331).2

In religions where status, wealth and worldliness take precedence, it is common to see how religious shoppers and followers measure and grade religious teachers. Often the quest is not for self-awakening but for seeking approval for our own views, status and personality. A monastic or teacher that we approve of is then canonized as a “saint” or an “arhat.” Without really working on our personal development, we unwittingly continue to live in the shadows, the dark self-centred view, that we have owned a “saint.” But all is not lost: we can still find worthy teachers, as Nina van Gorkom notes:

How can we find out who is an ariyan? There is no way to know who is an ariyan, unless we have become enlightened ourselves. It cannot be known from someone’s outward appearance whether he is an ariyan or not. People who are very amiable and peaceful are not necessarily ariyans. However, we can take our refuge in the ariyan Sangha even if we do not personally know any ariyans. We can think of their virtues, no matter whether they are in this plane of existence or in other planes. The ariyans prove that there is a way to the end of defilements. We should know what the condition is for the end of defilements: the cultivation of wisdom. The monks, nuns, men and women layfollowers who were ariyans in the Buddha’s time proved that what the Buddha taught can be realized in daily life. The Buddha did not teach abstract ideas, he taught reality. Should those who want to realize the truth not walk the same Path they walked, even if they still have a long way to go? (Nina van Gorkom, 1977:76)3

The Satta Jaṭila Sutta (S 3.11) makes a brief but important statement on how to analyse or judge another’s spiritual state. Rajah Pasenadi, seeing some ascetics passing by, comments that they are all arhats. The Buddha replies (summarized):

The character of another can be known thus:

1. through living with another, one knows his moral virtue (sīla);
2. through dealing with another, one knows his honesty (socceyya);
3. through adversities, one knows his fortitude [emotional strength] (thāma);
4. through discussing with another, one knows his wisdom (paññā).

That is, only through careful observation over time by one who is attentive and wise.

(S 3.11/1:78 f = U 6.2/65 f; detailed in the (Catu) Ṭhāna Sutta, A 4.192/2:187-190), SD 14.12

This brief exposition is elaborated here in the (Catu) Ṭhāna Sutta.4

---

1 This is one of the many psychological ego-defences or psychological defence mechanisms.
2 See Jaṭilā S (S 3.11), SD 14.11 (2).
4 See also Right livelihood, SD 37.8 (6.3.3).

http://dhammfarer.org
The Discourse on (Four) Conditions
A 4.192

The 4 ways of truly knowing a person

1 Bhikshus, from these four conditions (sīla) is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard.

2 Bhikshus, it is through living together with another (sīla) is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard.

3 Bhikshus, it is through adversity (thāma) is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard.

4 Bhikshus, it is through discussing with another (paññā) is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard.

Through living with a person, his virtue is known

2 (1) ‘Bhikshus, it is through living together with someone’ (sīla) is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard,’ thus it is said. In what connection is this said?

(a) The UNVIRTUOUS. Here, bhikshus, a person, living with another, knows thus:

‘For a long time indeed this venerable one is one...’

---

5 Thāna (from sthā, to stand), “standing, stopping, halting; place, spot, situation; station, state, condition; place, post, office, appointment; rank, dignity; point, matter, subject, topic, proposition, thesis, thing; basis, source, origin, cause, reason” (DPL).
6 Cattā’ imāni bhikkhave thānāni catuḥi thānehi vedītabbāni.
7 This fourfold exposition are found in Jātīya S (S 1:78 f = U 65 f) without further comment, but are here elaborated. See SD 10.11a.
8 Samvāsa, living together, co-residence (V 1:97, 2:237, 3:28; A 2:57 f. 187, 3:164, 4:172; J 1:236, 4:317; Sn 283, 290, 335; Dh 207 [SD 24.6b (5.4)], 302); intimacy (J 2:39); cohabitation, intercourse, sexual relationship (D 1:97; J 1:134, 2:108).
9 Paññavatā here, apparently, refers to the true individual (sappurisa): Dhammaññū S (A 7.64), SD 30.10 (3.1).
10 Samvohāra, transaction, business, traffic (V 3:239; S 1:78 = A 2:187; A 3:77). The proper word for “business” as commercial dealings is vohāra: see §3 n.
12 Sākacchā, conversation, talking over, discussing (D 1:103, 2:109; M 1:72; S 1:79; A 2:140, 187 f, 3:81; Sn 266; J 4:414).
13 “Venerable one,” āyasmato. It is possible that the Buddha is referring to monastics here. Although this vocative appears to address only monastics, there are other occasions when terms like āyasmato and bhante are used for lay people. See Dhānañjāni S (M 97), SD 4.9 (5).
14 In Mahāparinibbāna S (D 16), the 5th of the 6 conditions for conciliation is given as: “Monks, so long as monks would dwell compatibly accomplished in the moral virtue with the moral precepts unbroken, untorn [con-
who leaves his task tattered [uncompleted],
whose deed is rent [faulty],
whose deed is mottled [defective],
whose deed is blotchy [irregular],
who is inconsistent in deed,
who is inconsistent in moral virtue.

This venerable one is immoral, this venerable one is not morally virtuous.'

(b) THE MORALLY VIRTUOUS. But here, bhikshus, a person, living with another, knows thus:

‘For a long time indeed this venerable one is one
who does not leave his task tattered [he completes his work],
whose deed is not rent [faultless],
whose deed is unmottled [without defect],
whose deed is not blotchy [regular], [188]
who is consistent in deed,
who is consistent in moral virtue.

This venerable one is morally virtuous, this venerable one is not immoral.’

‘Bhikshus, it is through living together (with someone), that his moral virtue is to be known,
and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;
by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;
by the wise, not a dullard,’

thus it is said. It is in this connection that this is said.

Through dealing with a person, his honesty is known

3 (2) ‘Bhikshus, it is through dealing with another, that his honesty is to be known,
and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;
by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;
by the wise, not a dullard,’

thus it is said. In what connection is this said?

(a) THE DISHONEST. Here, bhikshus, a person, through dealing with another, knows thus:

‘Indeed, this venerable one behaves in a certain way towards one. He behaves in a different way towards two; yet again differently with three; yet again differently with many. His earlier conduct differs from his later conduct.\[16\]

-\[15\] “By dealing,” samvoharena, ie through transactions (in business, etc) and working together (in a project, etc) (V 3:239; A 2:187 = S 1:78; A 3:77; SnA 471). A syn is vohara (M 2:360; Sn 614; J 1:495, 2:133, 202, 5:471; PvA 111, 278). Comys qu a well known stanza from Vāseṭṭha S: “Whoever amongst man makes a living by trade (vohāra) | know him thus, Vāseṭṭha: he is a merchant, not a brahmin [priest]” (M 98/2:196 = Sn 614/119), qv for similar stanzas. See Ṣataḷa S (3.11), SD 14.11 Intro.

\[14\] Apparently, he behaves one way in a private exchange, when he says one thing; but he behaves in a different way when in a group, when he says something quite different. In either case, he could be harbouring an ulterior motive.

http://dharmafarer.org
This venerable one is impure [not transparent] in his conduct. This venerable one is not of pure conduct.’

(b) THE HONEST. But here, bhikshus, a person, through dealing with another, knows thus:

‘Indeed, this venerable one behaves in a certain way towards one. He behaves in the same way towards two; so too with three; so too with many. His earlier conduct differs not from his later conduct.

This venerable one is pure [transparent] in his conduct. This venerable one is not of impure conduct.’

‘Bhikshus, it is through dealing with another, that his honesty is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;

by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;

by the wise, not a dullard,’

thus it is said. It is in this connection that this is said.

Through adversities, a person’s fortitude is known

4 (3) ‘Bhikshus, it is through adversities, that one’s fortitude [emotional strength] is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;

by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;

by the wise, not a dullard,’

thus it is said. In what connection is this said?17

(a) THE WEAK. Here, bhikshus, a certain person, when touched by the loss of relatives, or by the loss of wealth, or by the loss through illness, does not reflect thus:

‘Such is the nature of life, such is the obtaining of individuality [personality].18 These eight worldly conditions keep the world turning; the world turns on these eight worldly conditions, namely:

gain and loss, lābhā ca alābhā ca
fame and ill-fame, yaso ca ayaso ca
praise and blame, nindā ca pasāṁsā ca
joy and pain, sukhaṁ ca dukkhaṁ ca

When touched by the loss of relatives, or by the loss of wealth, or by the loss through illness, he is grieved and distressed, laments and beats his breast, and falls into confusion.

(b) THE STRONG. But here, bhikshus, a certain person, when touched by the loss of relatives, or by the loss of wealth, or by the loss through illness, reflects thus:

‘Such is the nature of life, such is the obtaining of individuality [personality]. These eight conditions turn with19 the world, and the world turns with these eight worldly conditions, namely:20

gain and loss,

fame and ill-fame,

praise and blame,

joy and pain.’

When touched by the loss of relatives, or by the loss of wealth, or by loss through illness, [189] he is neither grieved nor distressed, neither laments nor beats his breast, and does not fall into confusion.

‘Bhikshus, it is through adversities, that one’s fortitude [emotional strength] is to be known,

17 This whole passage is similar in teaching as Loka, dhamma S 2 (A 8.5/157-160), SD 42.3.
18 “The obtaining of individuality” (atta, bhāva, paṭṭilābhe), lit “by the receiving of a self-state.” Comy elsewhere glosses it as “obtaining of a physical body” (saṁjīva, paṭṭilābhe) (AA 3:277). Cf NcA 13. It might be added here that atta, bhāva may also refer to personality or image in general, one that one assumes or comes as a result of one’s work and association with others, etc.
19 “Turn with,” anupārivatthati, 3 pres pl of anu (“after, following, keeping on”) + pari (“all around”) + vattati (“it turns”), from vṛt, to turn; the overall sense is that of “turning” or a repetitive, cyclic rut, applied figuratively here, “to move or turn after, to follow in moving, to keep on moving”: D 1:240,26; M 2:232,24, 3:72,27; S 3:150,-94,18; A 2:188,32 = 4:156,29 = 157,3+18 (attha, loka, dhammā lokaṁ –); Miln 204,8, 253,10.
20 On these 8 worldly conditions, see Loka, dhamma S 1 (A 8.5/156-29-157,2), SD 42.2 = Loka, dhamma S 2 (A 8.5/157,18-22), SD 42.3, where the passages are almost identical.
and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;
by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;
by the wise, not a dullard,'

thus it is said. It is in this connection that this is said.

Through discussion, a person’s wisdom is known

5 (4) ‘Bhikkhus, it is through discussing with another, that his wisdom is to be known, and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;
by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;
by the wise, not a dullard,’

thus it is said. In what connection is this said?

(a) THE FOOLISH. Here, bhikkhus, through discussing with another, one knows thus:
‘From this venerable one’s 21 approach to a problem [manner of examining a problem] (ummaggo),

defining the problem [formulating of the question] (abhinnhāro), and
discussion of the question (pañha,samudācāro),

this venerable one is unwise, this venerable one is not wise.

What is the reason for this?

This venerable one does not utter words that are profound, calming, sublime, beyond thinking [in-accessible through reasoning], 23 subtle, intelligible to the wise. 24 And when this venerable one speaks of the Dharma, he is unable to say, teach, proclaim, establish, reveal, analyse, clarify, its meaning, either briefly or in detail. This venerable one is unwise, this venerable one is not wise.

---

21 The foll 3 terms appear to overlap in parts (as near-synonyms), or perhaps synonymous: (1) Yathā kho imassa āyasmatu ummaggo, (2) yathā ca abhinīhāro, (3) yathā ca pañha,samudācāro, duppañño ayam āyasma nāyaṁ āyasā paññāvā. Comy explains the key words thus: (1) ummagga as pañ̄h’ummaggo ("approach to a question"), and the Ṭikā explains it as pañ̄hā,gevasana, lit “question-quest,” ie examining a question or problem, and that it refers to knowing how to examine the desired goal (nātuṁ icheṭṭhassā attassā visamāsanān ti attho) (AA:Be 2:383) [see below, on ummagga]; (2) abhinīhāra (CPD: initiative, intent); pañ̄hābhisankhārana,vasena cittassā abhinīhāro, “the mind’s application into the formulating of a question,” ie how one defines a problem; (3) pañ̄ha,samudācāro = pañ̄hā,pucchana (“the asking of a question”), which means asking the right question, or understanding the nature of the problem (AA 3:172). Ummagga (sometimes spelt ummaṅga) has 2 or 3 meanings: (1) rise, emergence; discernment, invention (tr “penetration,” “approach”): see A:W 2:184 n5; (2) lit “off-track” (cf uppatha), a wrong way, a devious road; (of an idea) excess, extreme (V 1:8 = M 1:171 = 3:5; S 4:195; A 4:191); (3a) a tunnel (DhA 1:252, 2:37; J 1:187, 6:444); (3b) a subterranean aqueduct, underground watercourse (MA 3:221; Dīpv 22.11; Mahv 35.98). A fourth specific meaning is possible here: that of a fish’s underwater movement (as reflected in the above tr). See CPD: ummaṅga & ummaṅga for full refs.

23 2/36avacara, ie, beyond intellectual knowledge, accessible only through direct experience, ineffable: V 1:4,35 (cf Mvst 3:314-2) = D 2:36,3 = 37.24; D 1:13,20; M 1:167,32 = S 1:136,10 = M 1:487,7 = 2:172,31; A 2:189,15; It 2.2.6/37; UA 391. See Mahāpadāna S (D 14.3.1.2), SD 49.8. Further see (Musila Narada) Kosambi S (S 12.68/-2:115-18), SD 70.11 & The Buddha discovered dyhana, SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

24 Tathā hi ayam āyasā na c’eva gambhiraṁ attha,pañha udāhārati sāṁtaṁ pañ̄hanāt atakkāvacaraṁ nipuṇaṁ paññāta,vedaniyām; see V 1:4 = S 2:36 = 37 = M 1:167 = S 1:136. 25 “To say…clarify,” acikkhitum desetāṁ pañ̄hāpetaṁ vibavatiṁ vibhaṭtāṁ uttānākātum: Comys say that although these are syns, they differentiate their usages thus: as an indication (uddesa) they “say” (ācikkhati); as a description (niddesa) they “teach” (deseti); as a restatement (paṭiṇiddesa) they “proclaim” (pañ̄hāpenti); by laying down the meaning in one way or other they “establish” (paṭṭhapenti); when showing the reason for a certain meaning they “reveal” (vivaranti); when showing the classification of a detail they “analyse” (vibhajanti); in order to do away with what is inverted or profound, or when creating a basis for their audience’s knowledge, they “clarify” (uttānikaranti); and when abolishing their audience’s ignorance and blindness in all these ways, they “make known

---

http://dharmafarer.org 91
PARABLE OF THE SMALL FISH. Just as if, bhikshus, a man with eyes, standing on the bank of a pool of water, were to see a small fish emerging [moving underwater] (ummujjamāna),\(^{26}\) he would think:

‘From the emergence [underwater movement] (ummagga)\(^{27}\) of this fish, from the size of the ripple it makes, from its speed, this is a small fish, this is not a big fish’\(^{28}\)—

in the same way, bhikshus, through discussing with another, one knows thus:

‘From this venerable one’s approach to a problem [manner of examining a problem],

defining the problem [formulating of the question], and

discussion of the question,

this venerable one is unwise, this venerable one is not wise.

(b) THE WISE. Here, bhikshus, through discussing with another, one knows thus:

‘From this venerable one’s approach to a problem [manner of examining a problem],

defining the problem [formulating of the question], and

discussion of the question,

this venerable one is wise, this venerable one is not unwise.

What is the reason for this?

This venerable one utters words that are profound, calming, sublime, beyond thinking [inaccessible to thought], subtle, intelligible to the wise. And when this venerable one speaks of the Dharma, he is able to say, teach, proclaim, establish, reveal, analyse, clarify its meaning, briefly or in detail. This venerable one is wise, this venerable one is not unwise.

PARABLE OF THE BIG FISH. Just as if, bhikshus, a man with eyes, standing on the bank of a pool of water, were to see a big fish emerging [moving underwater], he would think:

‘From the emergence [underwater movement] of this fish, from the size of the ripple it makes, from its speed, this is a big fish, this is not a small fish’—

in the same way, bhikshus, through discussing with another, one knows thus:

‘From this venerable one’s approach to a problem [manner of examining a problem],

defining the problem [formulating of the question], and

discussion of the question,

this venerable one is wise, this venerable one is not unwise.

‘Bhikshus, it is through discussing (with another), that his wisdom is to be known,

and even that is after a long time, not after a short time;

by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive;

by the wise, not a dullard,’

thus it is said. It is in this connection that this is said.

Bhikshus, from these four conditions four (other) conditions can be known.

---

\(^{26}\) The imagery here, I think, means that the observer is able to allow for water reflection and refraction in clear water, and judging from the water movements in murky water, so that he is able to size the fish correctly. The key word *ummujjamāna* is also used in a *Brahma,jāla Sūtra* (D 1) imagery, illustrating how even if one who is view-driven “emerges” (*ummujjamānām*)—ie whether he is reborn in a suffering state or in a happy one—is still caught in the net of views (D 1.146/1:45), SD 25.2.

\(^{27}\) Vl ummānga.

\(^{28}\) Yathā kho imassa macchassa ummaggo yathā ca īmi,ghāto yathā ca vegāyiattām paritto ayān maccho nāyaṁ macho mahanto ti.

\(^{29}\) See §5(4)a.

\(^{30}\) See §5(4)a.
A 4.4.5.2

— evam —

060107; 071204; 080128; 101211; 111216; 121105; 130802