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Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta

The Greater Go,siṅga Discourse or The Greater Discourse in the Gosiṅga (Forest) | M 32

Theme: The saints' comments on the ideal monastic

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1 Sutta highlights

1.1 SUTTA VERSIONS. The Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta, the “Greater Gosiṅga Discourse,” records a gathering of eminent disciples on a moon-lit night in the Go,siṅga forest in full bloom, during which each of them describes the qualities of a monk who would “beautify” the Go,siṅga forest. This discourse has three Chinese parallels, one in the Madhyama Āgama, the second the Ekottarika Āgama, and the third an individual translation.¹ Besides these three parallels, a few lines of a version of the present discourse have also been preserved in a Sanskrit fragment.²

The Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta and its Chinese parallels report how several eminent monks visit Sāriputta, who welcomes them and asks their opinion about what kind of a monk would beautify the moonlit Gosiṅga Grove. The four versions agree that the monks present are Mahā Moggallāna, Mahā Kassapa, Anuruddha, Revata, and Ānanda.³ Besides these monks, the Madhyama Āgama version and the individual translation also mention the presence of Mahā Kaccāna.⁴

1.2 IDEALS OF MONKHOOD. Each of the elders describes qualities that mirror his own personal excellence. Thus Ānanda speaks in praise of a learned monk who is able to teach the Dharma [§4]; Revata, a monk who retires into seclusion for intensive meditation [§5]; Anuruddha, a monk who has the divine eye [§6]; Mahā Kassapa, a monk who keeps up the ascetic practices [§7]; Mahā Moggallāna, two monks in Dharma dialogue [§8]; and Sāriputta, a monk capable of attaining any of the 8 attainments at will [§9].

In fact, in the cases of all the elders, except for the two chief disciples, Mahā Moggallāna and Sāriputta, they each present an ideal monk who has their respective foremost or characteristic qualities (A 1:23-25). Mahā Moggallāna, on the other hand, is foremost of the monks who have psychic powers (A 1:23); while Sāriputta is foremost of the monks with great wisdom (A 1:23). They are the only monks in the group who praise ideals that are other than their own foremost qualities.⁵

1.3 ĀNANDA. Although Ānanda is the second last to join the group visiting Sāriputta to listen to his Dharma talk [§3], he is the first to be addressed by Sāriputta when the group meet [§4]. This attests to Ānanda's popularity, especially that he is the most effective personal attendant of the Buddha [§4.2]. However, Ānanda is actually the seniormost of the monks in the group after the two chief disciples [1.6.3], so that the honour would naturally fall on him.

¹ The parallels are MĀ 184 @ T1.726c-729b, EĀ 37.3 @ T2.710c-711c, and T154.16 @ T3.80c-82c (tr by Dharmarakṣa); cf Boucher 1996:269. MĀ 184 and EĀ 37.3 agree with M 32 on the location of the discourse. Similar to EĀ 24.8 (parallel to M 31, cf Analayo 2011:203 n7), EĀ 37.3 @ T2.710c5 gives the location as the “lion's park,” 獅子園, although later on EĀ 37.3 uses the expression “cow-lion's park,” 牛獅子園, eg, at T2.710c15, counterpart to a ref to the Go,siṅga,sala,vana in M 32/1:216,3. Perhaps this is a misreading of *siṅga*, “horn” (or its equivalent) in the original text) for *sīha*, “lion.” MĀ 184 has the title “discourse at the cow-horn sal forest,” 牛角娑羅林經, omitting the prefix “greater” used in the title of M 32. MĀ 184 has been studied and tr by THICH Minh Chau 1964:21, 73, 251-257.

² SHT V 1346:232-233, cf also SHT VII:293; parallels M 32/1:218 f. Hartmann 1992:39 notes another as yet unpublished fragment of the Hoernle collection that parallels M 32. For a discourse quotation in AbhkT, see Analayo 2011:215 n62.

³ EĀ 37.3 @ T2.710c6 omits Anuruddha amongst those present in the Gosiṅga forest, but then at T2.710c8 mentions him amongst those who approach Sāriputta. The fact that EĀ 37.3 reports the presence of 6 eminent disciples could be the reason for including it amongst the sixes of the Ekottarika Āgama.

⁴ MĀ 184 @ T1.727a1 and T154.16 @ T3.81a2, which in addition to Mahā Kaccāna also lists several other eminent disciples not mentioned in M 32. Comy similarly reports the presence of other eminent disciples without, however, giving their names (MA 2:248,9).

⁵ On the significance of a monk being foremost, see Piya Tan, 2002, 2013:5.36.

On Sāriputta's inquiry what type of monk would beautify the moonlit Go,siṅga forest, Ānanda speaks in praise of a learned monk who is able to teach the Dharma [§4.5-6]. Ānanda is of course speaking from his own experience. Ānanda, and also the other monks who define their ideal monk in a similar manner, might be misperceived as being self-centred, but this is not the case as it is natural for such saints to speak from their personal experience and attainment, instead of proposing an ideal that they have not yet themselves attained.

1.4 REVATA. Revata, that is, **Kaṅkhā Revata**, to be exact (MA 2:237), in his turn, praises a monk who delights in solitary meditation [§5.3]. Revata is, understandably, the foremost of monks who are meditators or dhyana-attainers (*jhāyī*) (A 1:24).⁶ As such, Revata praises such a monk as one who would beautify the moonlit Go,siṅga forest.

1.5 ANURUDDHA. Anuruddha, the foremost of monks who have the divine eye,⁷ praises a monk who similarly has the divine eye. He illustrates his ability to survey a thousand worlds with the divine eye with the example of surveying a thousand “wheel-rims” from an upper storey⁸ [§6]. The imagery here is clear: the wheel rims represents galaxies. Like a modern space scientist, Anuruddha is able to survey many such worlds, but beyond the powers of a space scientist, he understands the nature of such worlds and their inhabitants.

The Madhyama Āgama version, however, records him instead as comparing the world-systems he surveys to be like a thousand “clay bricks” on the ground below.⁹ Although such a scenario was more possible in ancient India,¹⁰ it is very hard to imagine how galaxies would compare to the clay bricks.

The other Ekottarika Āgama version and the individual translation, too, give a different imagery to illustrate the ability to survey a thousand worlds. The Ekottarika Āgama version compares this ability to looking at the sky. It is likely that at the time of the translation, the Chinese were not familiar with the notion of galaxies, and so resorted to a more plausible imagery.

The individual translation, apparently playing it safe, speaks of looking down from a high building and seeing people moving about and so on.¹¹ This image in fact closely follows the parable illustrating the exercise of the divine eye, but directed towards the arising and passing away of beings, common in the Pali suttas, which speaks of someone from a vantage point on a high building at a crossroads is able to see people below walking about on the road, resting by it, and entering or leaving a house.¹²

1.6 MAHĀ KASSAPA

1.6.1 Lists of his qualities

1.6.1.1 For Mahā Kassapa, the monk who beautifies the moonlit Go,siṅga forest is one who has 14 ascetic qualities [§7], as he himself does. Only the first four qualities are actual ascetic practices: (1) for-

⁶ See (**Kaṅkhā**) **Revata S** (U 5.7), SD 32.15.

⁷ According to A 1.14/1:23,20 and EĀ 4.2 @ T2.557b9, Anuruddha is the foremost of the monks with the divine eye. See also T1509 @ T25.247b23, tr in Lamotte 1970:1630.

⁸ M 32/1:213,29: *nemi,maṇḍala*, adopting M:ÑB 308, in accordance with the comy gloss at MA 2:254,24. M:C 1:154 tr *nemi,maṇḍala* as “concentric distances girdling him round,” and M:H 1:265 as “concentric circles.” Karl Neumann gives the German tr as “Gehöte im Kreise” (“farmsteads in circles (or spinning around)”) (M:Neumann 1:501). A rule of thumb in translating Pali text is to follow Occam's razor or the principle of parsimony: take the simplest translation and see if it works. Only when it does not, then look further.

⁹ MĀ 184 @ T1.727b14: 於下露地有千土壑; cf also MĀ 80 @ T1.554a12: 觀下露地, 見千土壑 (adopting the 宋, 元, 和明 variant 壑 instead of 壑). An illustration of Anuruddha's ability to survey a thousand worlds is described in another discourse, SA 537 @ T2.140a2, as that of seeing “many things,” 種之物, as of one looking from on high.

¹⁰ According to Härtel, during this period, “burnt bricks were not yet in regular use for buildings in India,” but their use is attested for the Mauryan period (1995:142); cf Verardi 2007:115.

¹¹ EĀ 37.3 @ T2.711a3: 觀空中 and T 154.16 @ T3.81b9: 從上視下, 悉見所有人民行來, 出入, 進退. According to Mahāvastu, already before going forth Anuruddha is endowed with superior sight. On one occasion, when he is enjoying himself in female company, he immediately notices that, instead of the usual 1000 lamps, only 999 lamps have been lit (Mvst 2:177; Basak 1968:108,23; in Senart 1897:177,6).

¹² Eg, D 2,96/1:83,4.

est dwelling, (2) resorting to almsfood and (3) to rag-robcs, and (4) the use of only the 3 robes,¹³ plus five other ascetic qualities: (5) few wishes, (6) contented, (7) secluded life, (8) not socializing, and (9) energetic; (10)-(12) the 3 trainings, (13) liberation and (14) the knowledge and vision of liberation itself.

1.6.1.2 However, the Pali and Chinese versions do have some differences in the list of qualities mentioned by Mahā Kassapa. The Madhyama Āgama version omits (2)-(4), (8), (10)-(14), but adds “right mindfulness and full awareness,” and “inspires others.”¹⁴ The Ekottarika Āgama version omits (2), (4), (5), (8), (9), but adds “teaches others.” The individual translation omits (1), (2), (4), (8), but adds “wise,”¹⁵ “peaceful,” “controlled mind,” “devoted to cultivation” and “teaches others.”¹⁶ Such discrepancies should give us an idea of the difficulties that the early Chinese translators had with the Indian texts.

1.6.2 Parable of the moon. The Candūpama Sutta (S 16.3) records the Buddha as declaring that a good monk should be like the moon when approaching families. The meaning is that just as the moon shines upon all of us without taking anything away from us, even so, a monastic should brighten up the families that they approach, but “holding himself back,” that is, neither exploiting nor corrupting them in any way. The Buddha holds up Mahā Kassapa as the model for this quality.¹⁷

1.6.3 Problem of seniority

1.6.3.1 It is interesting that the Madhyama Āgama version records Sāriputta, and all the other monks, too, as addressing Mahā Kassapa with “venerable sir” (*bhante*) and Mahā Kassapa replies with “friend” (*āvuso*).¹⁸ This is clearly an anachronism, since **the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta** (D 16) and its Chinese and Sanskrit counterparts record that these modes of monastic address in accordance to seniority are instituted by the Buddha only just before his passing away—at a time when Sāriputta has predeceased the Buddha.¹⁹

1.6.3.2 We can work out the chronology of the ordination of some of the elders mentioned in the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta, and so determine their relative seniority. Of the monks mentioned, **Sāriputta and Moggallāna** are clearly the seniormost, since they both go forth in the 2nd year of the ministry.²⁰ It is also known in the Chinese translations that Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna are ordained earlier than Mahā Kassapa.²¹

1.6.3.3 As for **Mahā Kassapa**, it is said that he goes forth at the same time as his wife Bhaddā Kapilānī.²² Assuming that the order of nuns is formed in the 5th year of the ministry,²³ Bhaddā could not have gone forth earlier than that. We could surmise that both Mahā Kassapa and Bhaddā Kapilānī renounced the world around the fifth year or perhaps a couple of years earlier. The bottom line is that Mahā Kassapa goes forth well after Sāriputta does.

1.6.3.4 Amongst the elders mentioned in the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta, **Ānanda** is the seniormost after Sāriputta and Moggallāna. When the Buddha visits Kapila,vatthu in the month of Phagguna (Feb-Mar) of

¹³ For a full list of **the 13 ascetic practices**, see SD 3.15 (2).

¹⁴ M 32/1:214,6+9, MĀ 184 @ T1.727c3+5, and T154.16 @ T1.81b18+19. Just as in the case of the Madhyama Āgama parallel to M 24 (cf above p162), MĀ 184 @ T1.726b21 includes right mindfulness in its list, a quality not mentioned in M 32 or in EĀ 37.3. T 154.16 @ T1.81b20 lists 定意. Although according to Brough 1977:90 Dharma-rakṣa elsewhere uses the character 意 to render “mindfulness in the present context the expression 定意 seems to stand just for “concentration,” cf also Karashima 1998:103.

¹⁵ T154.16 @ T3.81b17: 賢聖; cf also Karashima 1998:487 on the use of this expression by Dharma,rakṣa in the sense of “sagacious and saintly.”

¹⁶ M 32/1:214,4+10+15, EĀ 37.3 @ T2.711a9+11+12, and T154.16 @ T3.81b17+21+22.

¹⁷ S 16.3,15-16/2:199 @ SD 38.2.

¹⁸ In MĀ 184 @ T1.727c1 Sāriputta addresses Mahā Kassapa as 尊者, “venerable sir” (*bhante*), to which Mahā Kassapa replies with 賢者, “friend” (*āvuso*).

¹⁹ D 16,6.2/2:154,8 @ SD 9, EĀ 42.3 @ T2.752c17, and fragment 501V3 in Waldschmidt 1950:75. On the matter of Sāriputta’s death, see n at D 16,1.16/2:82 f @ SD 9.

²⁰ DhA 1:91.

²¹ Cf eg T1425 @ T22.412c26.

²² SA 2:195; AA 1:179; ThaA 3:133; ApA 263. See Piya Tan, 2013:6.11 f.

²³ On **the order of nuns**, see **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142) & SD 1.9..

the 2nd year, Ānanda (the 37 years old), goes forth along with Bhaddiya, Anuruddha, Bhagu, Kimbila and Deva,datta.²⁴ After listening to Puṅṅa Mantāni,putta teaching on the 5 aggregates and the notion “I am,” Ānanda becomes a streamwinner (S 3:105).²⁵

1.6.3.5 The Madhyama Āgama reports that Sāriputta addresses Mahā Kassapa as *bhante*, that is, in deference to his seniority is anachronistic, and is probably the result of a translation error. Perhaps the “error” was deliberate on the translator’s part (or the textual tradition from which the translation was made) to confer the highest respect to Mahā Kassapa.

Perhaps to the Chinese Buddhists or following the tradition of the Sarvāstivāda text,²⁶ the role of the eldest monk would only seem to suit Mahā Kassapa at the time of the so-called first council, when several of the monks mentioned in the present discourse had apparently passed away, and Mahā Kassapa could indeed have become the seniormost monk.²⁷

1.7 MAHĀ MOGGALLĀNA

1.7.1 *Abhidhamma*. At the start of the Sutta, Moggallāna, who has just emerged from his evening solitary retreat, calls on Mahā Kassapa, suggesting that they visit Sāriputta to listen to a Dharma talk from him [§1]. He is then followed by Anuruddha [§2], Ānanda and Revata [§3]. Mahā Moggallāna, in his turn, praises “two monks engaged in a talk about the Dharma” (*dve bhikkhū abhidhamma,katham kathenti*) [§8]. His answer raises two problems: (1) the meaning of *abhidhamma*, and (2) why he does not mention qualities for which he is declared foremost [1.7.2].

In this section, we will discuss the first problem: the meaning of *abhidhamma* as used in the Mahā Gosīṅga Sutta and the suttas generally. The Commentary explains *abhidhamma* as “higher dharma,” in the sense of self-realization. Those lacking “what pertains to the Dharma” (*abhi-dhamma*) are often in their “own-doctrines” (*saka,vāda*) and “other-doctrines” (*para,vāda*) (MA 2:256). Here *abhidhamma* clearly does not refer to the third basket (*piṭaka*), which was clearly a post-Nikāya development of the systematics.²⁸

In the suttas, the Buddha’s teachings as a whole are often referred to as “the doctrine and the discipline” (*dhamma,vinaya*).²⁹ Furthermore, even the term *abhidhamma* rarely occurs in the Pali Canon, and where it does, it occurs only as *abhidhamme*, a non-technical term simply meaning “in relation to the teaching [Dharma].”³⁰ Scholars are in agreement that *abhidhamma* here does not refer to the Abhidhamma as philosophical systematics, that is, as we know it today, especially as sectarian dogma in ethnic Buddhism.³¹

²⁴ His preceptor was Belaṭṭha,sīsa, V 1:202, 4:86; DA 2:418 ff; ThaA 1:68.

²⁵ Out of gratitude, Ānanda recounts this event in **Ānanda S** (S 22.83/3:105 f).

²⁶ According to THICH MINH CHAU, this MĀ 184 passage reflects the Sarvāstivāda tradition, which “accepts Mahā Kassapa as the foremost and highest patriarch...while the Theravāda tradition...considers Sāriputta as the foremost and highest Acariya.” (1964:21)

²⁷ V 2:286,17 reports that Mahā Kassapa addresses the assembled monks as *avuso saṅgho* and is addressed by them as *bhante*. In this case, clearly the events reported are post-Buddha.

²⁸ See Frauwallner 1995. According to Frauwallner, the Abhidhamma was prob composed btw 200 BCE and 200 CE (1971:106). Furthermore, the early Buddhist sects, each had their own Abhidharma collection, often at variance with one another (1995:3-11 = ch 1). F Watanabe says that the Buddha’s early disciples originally conceived of the Abhidhamma as an elementary philosophical study in an attempt to define, analyse and classify “realities or states” (*dhamma*) and to explore their mutual relationship (1983).

²⁹ Even in the records of the so-called 1st council (Rājagaha) mentions only “the teaching and the discipline” (*dhamma,vinaya*), without mentioning any Abhidhamma (Cv 11 @ V 2:284-293).

³⁰ See Horner, 1941; Otto von Hinüber, 1994:1109; also Oskar von Hinüber, 1996:66 (§133).

³¹ M 32,8/1:214,24 speaks of *abhidhamma,kathā*, “talk related to the Dharma.” The corresponding statement in MĀ 184 @ T1.727b24 (although attr to a different disciple) similarly refers to “Abhidharma,” 阿毘曇. M:ÑB 1226 n362 points out that even “though the word cannot refer here to the Piṭaka of that name—obviously the product of a phase of Buddhist thought later than the Nikayas—it may well indicate a systematic and analytical approach to the doctrine that served as the original nucleus of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka.” Muck 1980:19 understands *abhidhamma* as representing the “essence of the teaching,” in the sense of “basic essential truths.” Von Hinüber 1996:64 explains that “the word *abhidhamma* occurs in earlier parts of the canon, but without any technical connotation, simply

1.7.2 The spiritual position of psychic powers

1.7.2.1 The ideal Moggallāna praises in the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta—two monks expertly engaged in Dharma dialogue—does not at first seem to be typical of him. According to the list of foremost disciples found in the Aṅguttara Nikaya and in its parallel in the Ekottarika Āgama, Moggallāna was rather outstanding for his exercise of supernormal powers.³²

This ability has been so closely associated with Moggallāna that the Catuspariṣat,sūtra and the Mahā,-vastu report that the Buddha already predicted his pre-eminence in supernormal powers at the time of their first meeting, when Moggallāna approached the Buddha to request the going forth.³³ Hence, it is understandable that the three Chinese parallels and in the Sanskrit fragment parallel present Moggallāna as extolling such psychic powers.³⁴

1.7.2.2 The appropriateness of associating Moggallāna with such supernormal powers here seems to be supported by **the Caṅkamana Sutta** (S 14.15), which similarly takes the characteristic qualities of several eminent disciples as its theme.³⁵ This discourse agrees with the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta on associating Ānanda with deep learning, Anuruddha with the divine eye, and Mahā Kassapa with the ascetic practices. Unlike the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta, however, the Caṅkamana Sutta associates Moggallāna with psychic powers, thereby agreeing here with the Chinese and Sanskrit parallels to the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta.

On closer examination, however, the approaches of the two Suttas are very different. While in the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta the elders speak for themselves, in the Caṅkamana Sutta, it is the sutta compilers or council elders who list their various personal qualities. This difference is highly significant as it concerns what the great elders see as being the foremost (*agga*) and what later textual tradition uphold as the foremost.

1.7.2.3 In terms of learning and teaching the Dharma, psychic powers (*iddhi*) have never been upheld as being of any spiritual significance. Indeed, in discourses such as **the Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11),³⁶ **the**

meaning ‘things relating to the teaching’; cf Geiger 1920:118, Gethin 2005:10020, Horner 1941, Sujato 2009:228-230, van Zeyst 1959, and Watanabe 1983:18-36. Hirakawa 1980:173 (also Sung 1999:174) notes that in the Mahā,-saṅghika the entire “nine-fold canon of the word of the Buddha...is referred to as *abhidharma*”: see Roth 1970:-248,17: *abhidharmo nāma nava,-vidhaḥ sūtrāntaḥ* and T1425 @ T22.536b21: 阿毘曇者九部修多羅, with T1425 @ T22.281c18 explaining that the expression “9 types of discourse” refers to the 9 *aṅga*’s. Watanabe 1983:27 draws attention to the qualification “profound” or “deep,” 甚深, used in MĀ 184 @ T1.727b24 to qualify 阿毘曇, which he thinks here refers to “talk on *dhammas* (they may be specific doctrines) in the form of question and answers,” in order to reveal “the intrinsic value or the profound theory” of these *dhammas*. DhsA 29,1 takes up the reference to *abhidhamma,kathā* in M 32 as an argument in support of the authenticity of the *Abhidhamma,piṭaka* as original Buddha-word. On the status of the *Abhidhamma* as a “basket” (*piṭaka*), see **Dhamma and Abhidhamma**, SD 26.1.

³² He is said to be *iddhimanta* (A 1.14/1:23,17), EĀ 4.2 T2.557b6: 神足; cf also the Divyāvadāna (Cowell 1886: 395,9; Vaidya 1999:252,28), according to which he was *ṛddhimatām agro nirdiṣṭo bhagavatā*. Horner notes here: “Moggallāna is chiefly famed for his psychic powers, and there is little reason to suppose him to have had gifts of an *abhidhamma* nature or we should have heard more about them” (1941:309). Cf Gifford on the significance of Moggallāna’s mastery of psychic powers Theravāda (2003). The Sarvāstivāda, however, associated him with Abhidharma abilities. According to Hirakawa, the *Abhidharma,kośa,vyākhyā* attributes one of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma treatises, the *Prajñapti,śāstra*, to Mahā Moggallāna (1993:132); cf Wogihara 1971:11,28. Understandably, these are later sectarian attributions. For descriptions of the psychic powers, see Piya Tan, 2002, 2013:5.34.

³³ Fragment S 360(32)R6 in Waldschmidt 1952: 24 and Basak 1968/2004:38,17 or Senart 1897:63,18.

³⁴ MĀ 184 @ T1.727c16, EĀ 37.3 @ T2.711a18, T154.16 @ T3.81b29, and SHT V 1346 V2-6. For extracts from the present discussion, see Analayo 2005b:9 and 2007i:27.

³⁵ The Sutta at S 14.15/3:155,9, after depicting how each of the eminent disciples practises walking meditation surrounded by a group of disciples, explains that those of similar inclination tend to associate with each other. S 14.15/2:156,18 then describes that the monks associating with Ānanda were all of much learning, while the monks that associated with Anuruddha were, according to S 2:156,6, endowed with the divine eye, those who associated with Mahā Kassapa were, according to S 2:156,2, practitioners of the ascetic practices, and the monks who were associating with Mahā Moggallāna were, according to S 14.15/2:155,31, all of great [supernormal] power, *mah’iddhika*. See SD 34.6.

³⁶ D 11,8 & SD 1.7 (3.1).

(Pāṭihāriya) Saṅgārava Sutta (A 3.60), and the **Pāṭika Sutta** (D 24),³⁷ have always decried psychic powers. Instead, the Buddha, as a rule, highlights “education (or instruction)” as the true miracle (*anusāsani, pārihāriya*).³⁸

1.7.2.4 Moreover, none of the 9 psychic powers,³⁹ amazing as any of them might be, are the defining marks of an awakened person or contribute to our personal development nor awakening.⁴⁰ Rather, they are merely the side-effects of profound meditation, that is, the 4th dhyana, when the meditator can direct his mind to the cultivation of such powers.⁴¹

Such powers may be useful in reaching out to those who cannot be taught through the conventional approach of verbal instruction. However, more often, the direct teaching method would work for most people, especially monastics who have dedicated their lives to study, practise and realize the Dharma.

1.7.2.5 In this connection, it is also understandable that there are at least three rules that limit or prohibit the display of psychic powers, namely, that monastics are not allowed to display psychic powers before the laity (Cv 5.8),⁴² the fourth Pārājika (Pār 4) and the eighth Pācittiya (Pāc 8).

The fourth Pārājika states that a monk who makes a false claim to any kind of superhuman state entails defeat (that is, automatic falling from monkhood).⁴³

The eighth Pācittiya prohibits the declaration of a superhuman state that one actually possesses to an unordained (that is, either a novice or the laity), an offence that entails expiation.⁴⁴ An offence entailing **expiation** (*pācittiya*) means that the monastic has transgressed on account of being deluded, and so need to “expiate” (make amends) himself. This is done through confession.⁴⁵

The severity of such rules attests to the problems that can arise from their misuse and their misperception by others. As such, no monastic worth their salt would promote psychic powers above Dharma training.

1.7.3 Moggallāna as a teacher

1.7.3.1 From Moggallāna’s definition of an ideal monk, or rather, monks—two monks adroitly engaged in Dharma dialogue [§8.3]—it is clear that he places Dharma-training above even his own foremost attainment in psychic powers. As any informed sutta student would know, a well known means of teaching used amongst the monastics of the Buddha’s time is the catechetical (*saṅgāyanā*) method.⁴⁶

In fact, such teachings form their own category, known as **vedalla** (one of the 9 limbs, *aṅga*).⁴⁷ They are teachings comprising various questions and their answers (catechetical suttas), usually between two monastics, a questioner and a respondent. Examples of such suttas are:⁴⁸

³⁷ D 24,1.4-5 @ SD 63.3.

³⁸ Eg D 11,8 @ SD 1.7.

³⁹ Traditionally, these are metamorphosis (self-multiplication), dematerialization, going through solid structures, earth-diving, walking on water, teleportation, touching the sun and the moon, astral travel and mind-reading: see eg **Kevaḍḍha S** (D 11,5+6) & SD 1.7 (1).

⁴⁰ See eg **Rohitassa S** (A 4.45), where the ascetic Rohitassa, despite using his psychic powers throughout his life is able to find the “end of the world” (A 4.45/2:47-49), SD

⁴¹ On the 4th dhyana and the attaining of psychic powers, see **Miracles**. SD 27.5a esp (4.3). The Buddha also decries miraculous events, such as when, during his last moments, the devas fill the air with divine music, with fragrant sandalwoods, and heavenly blossoms fall knee-high in his honour. Instead, he declares the “supreme practice” (*paramā, pūjā*) to be our personal practice for self-awakening (D 16,5.2-3a/2:137 f) & SD 9 (7b); also SD 12.3 (2.3).

⁴² Cv 5.8 = V 2:110-112. On the related story, see **Piṇḍola Bhāra, dvāja Vatthu** (DhA 14.2.2a), SD 27.6a(2.5).

⁴³ Pār 4 = V 3:73,10-16, 87-109.

⁴⁴ Pāc 8 = V 4:25,22 f, 23-30. See also **(Pāṭihāriya) Mahaka S** (S 4.14/4:288-291), SD 27.2 & **Miracles**, SD 27.5a (7.2).

⁴⁵ See *The Pātimokkhs* (ed W Pruitt; tr K R Norman), Oxford, 2001:l.iii,

⁴⁶ Anderson suggests that *abhidhamma, kathā* refers to “a question-and-answer exchange, a form of debate among equals which has the capacity to clarify one’s understanding and teaching of dhamma.” (1999:157)

⁴⁷ On these 9 factors (*aṅga*), see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), SD 30.2 (2.1); also SD 26.11 (3.2.1.3).

⁴⁸ For a longer list of catechetical suttas, esp involving Mahā Koṭṭhita, see SD 28.4 (1.2).

Sakka,pañha Sutta	D 21/2:263-389	Shakra and the Buddha	SD 70.6
Sammā Ditṭhi Sutta	M 9/1:46-55	Sāriputta questions and answers ⁴⁹	SD 11.14
Mahā Vedalla Sutta	M 43/1:291-297	Mahā Koṭṭhita & Sāriputta	SD 30.2
Cūla Vedalla Sutta	M 44/1:299-305	Visākha & Dhammadinnā ⁵⁰	SD 40a.9
Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta	M 109/3:15-20	The Buddha and a monk ⁵¹	SD 17.11
Māha Koṭṭhita Sutta	A 9.13/4:382-385	Mahā Koṭṭhita & Sāriputta	SD 39.11

1.7.3.2 **The Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141) exhorts us to cultivate the spiritual friendship of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, and to associate with them. They are wise and helpful to their companions in the holy life. Sāriputta is like a mother and Moggallāna a nurse. While Sāriputta trains others for the fruit of streamwinning, Moggallāna prepares them for the supreme goal, awakening, itself.⁵²

In other words, the true foremost role of Moggallāna, while he lives, is that of a Dharma teacher and guide for his students to attain the spiritual goal in this life itself. Only after his passing, in later times, is he seen as being foremost in psychic powers to the extent of forgetting his vital role as an effective teacher (just as Sāriputta is seen as foremost in great wisdom, but his humility, gratitude and great compassion, all of which he is just as well known for, are sidelined or forgotten).⁵³

1.7.3.3 The Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta is, as such, a significant text in presenting Moggallāna not as a champion of psychic powers—he has never declared himself so—but as a Dharma teacher who praises monks who are skilled in Dharma and engages in Dharma discussion. It might even be said that Moggallāna probably never see himself as being the foremost monk in psychic powers.

It should be noted that although the suttas mention Moggallāna’s being foremost in psychic powers is a tradition that could only have arisen rather late in the Buddha’s time. Perhaps in Moggallāna’s own lifetime (or in those of the foremost monastics and laity), none of them sees themselves as being foremost in an institutionalized or traditional sense as we now do. Some sense of chronology of events in the suttas, not always easy, is helpful.

1.7.3.4 Indeed, if Moggallāna were to praise a monk with psychic powers [1.7.2], it simply would not have sounded right. This would, for example, go against the spirit of the Kevaddha Sutta (D 11).⁵⁴ In contrast to the spiritual qualities of the other elders’ ideals, it would appear as if he were promoting worldliness. As such, it is highly significant that Moggallāna praises the two monks well engaged in Dharma dialogue.

We could, of course, think of these “two monks” as being Moggallāna and Sāriputta themselves. In fact, we have records where Moggallāna engages in such dialogues with Sāriputta, that is, to say,

Ghaṭa Sutta	S 21.3/2:275	spiritual friendship of the two great elders	SD 64.4
Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 1	A 4.167/2:154 f	on Moggallāna’s mode of progress	SD 46.16
Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2	A 4.168/2:155	on Sāriputta’s mode of progress	SD 46.17
Juṇhā Sutta	U 4.4/39-41	they praise one another’s special qualities	SD 24.9

1.7.4 Other elders who are eminent Dharma speakers. Regarding the statement in the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta that extols the ability to answer questions about deeper aspects of the Dharma without faltering, the Madhyama Āgama version attributes a similar statement to **Mahā Kaccana**.⁵⁵ According to the

⁴⁹ On the variations in the actors here, see SD 11.14 (2).

⁵⁰ While Visākha is a layman, erstwhile husband of Dhamma,dinnā, she is an arhat nun: see SD 40a.9 (3).

⁵¹ The questioner is said to be an arhat monk who is teacher to 60 other monks (SA 2:306): see SD 17.11 (1.4).

⁵² M 141/3:248 @ SD 11.11.

⁵³ On Sāriputta’s great compassion, see Piya Tan 2002:5.23-26.

⁵⁴ D 11/1:211-223 @ SD 1.7. See also **Miracles**, SD 27.5a.

⁵⁵ MĀ 184 @ T1.727b24. T154.16 does not record Mahā Kaccana as being questioned by Sāriputta. However, once all the elders gather before the Buddha, T154.16 @ T3.82a12 associates Mahā Kaccāna and several others (such as Upāli, Subhūti, Rāhula, etc) with short statements, which in the case of Mahā Kaccāna is concerned with his vision of the 4 truths, 四諦 (with the prefix “noble”): see Analayo 2011:803.

list of eminent disciples found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, Mahā Kaccana is outstanding for his skill in explaining short sayings in detail, while the listing of outstanding disciples in the Ekottarika Āgama extols his ability in analysis and teaching.⁵⁶ Although Mahā Kaccāna is upheld in the Pali suttas as an elucidator of brief sayings (that is, as a teacher), at least once, he does feature as a participant in a discussion with other monks.⁵⁷

Speaking in praise of two monks expertly engaged in a Dharma talk would also fit **Puṇṇa Mantani-putta**, who according to the Aṅguttara Nikāya's list of eminent disciples, is the foremost of those monks who speak on the Dharma,⁵⁸ or **Mahā Koṭṭhita**, who is a frequent participant in Dharma discussions with other monks⁵⁹ [1.7.3.1].

Although to reply to questions about the Dharma would fit Mahā Koṭṭhita even better than Mahā Kaccāna, the same statement does fit both of them much better than Mahā Moggallāna. Perhaps, during the process of transmission of the Pali discourse, the presence of Mahā Kaccana was lost, as a consequence of which what was originally his reply ended up in the mouth of Mahā Moggallāna.⁶⁰

1.8 SĀRIPUTTA. Traditionally, Sāriputta is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks who have great wisdom (*mahā,paññā*).⁶¹ Sāriputta, in the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta, however, upholds as ideal a monk capable of attaining any of the 8 attainments at will [§9]. Again here, instead of seeing someone extolling his personal qualities, the elder proposes the ideal monk as one who is adept in meditation to its fullest extent, that is, the mastery of the 4 dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments for the winning of full-fledged arhathood, just like Sāriputta and Moggallāna.

According to all versions, Mahā Moggallāna in turn questioned Sāriputta, who spoke in praise of a monk who has mastery over his own mind, being able to attain any dhyana that he wishes at any time, comparable to the ability to choose any garment from a full wardrobe.⁶²

2 The Buddha's ideal practitioner

2.1 THE SAINTS APPROACH THE BUDDHA. The monks then approached the Buddha [§10], and Sāriputta recounts the exchanges of the elders. The Buddha approves every monk's declaration, closing with his own description of a monk who would beautify the moonlit Go,siṅga forest. This is a monk who sits

⁵⁶ A 1.14/1:23,25: *saṅkhittena bhāsītassa vitthārena attham vibhajantānam*, EĀ 4.2 @ T2.557b14: 善分別義, 敷演道教, tr by Huyen-Vi as: "capable d'analyser de façon très subtile le sens profond du Dharma et de l'expliquer par la suite" (1986:133).

⁵⁷ A 6.28/3:321,20.

⁵⁸ A 1.14/1:23,24: *dhamma,kathikānam* (cf also S 14.15/2:156,10), an expression that brings to mind the *abhidhamma,kathā* mentioned in M 32,8/1:214,24. See (1.7.1).

⁵⁹ On **Mahā Koṭṭhita**, see SD 28.4 (2) & SD 30.2 (1); on catechetical suttas related to him, see SD 28.4 (1.2).

⁶⁰ Cf also Anesaki 1901:899, THICH Minh Chau 1964/1991:76, and Prasad 1998:417.

⁶¹ A 1:23; said to be the "**16 great wisdoms**" (*soḷasa mahā,paññā*) (BA 44). These comprise his 6 great wisdoms: "**broad wisdom**" (*puthu,paññā*), the great understanding of the various aggregates, the elements, dependent arising, etc; "**joyful wisdom**" (*hasa,paññā*), experiencing the joys that such knowledges bring; "**quick wisdom**" (*javana,paññā*), quick in fully understanding the 5 aggregates; "**sharp wisdom**" (*tikkha,paññā*), his wisdom cuts through defilements; "**penetrating wisdom**" (*nibbedhika,paññā*), totally unattracted to any negative state, so that this wisdom liberates him (DA 3:932); **wisdom in attaining of the 9 successive abodes** (*navānupubba,vihāra,samāpatti,paññā*)—the 4 dhyanas, 4 formless attainments, cessation—and **the wisdom of the arhat path** (*arahatta,magga,paññā*). See ch 7 (*mahā,paññā*) of **Sotāpatti Saṅgīyutta** (S 55.62-74/5:412 f); also Pm 21.8/2:190 f; MA 3:209; 4:82-87; AA 2:81-86; DhA 1:110; PmA 1:61. On **the Buddha's parinirvana and the successive abodes**, see D 16,6.8 +9/2:156 @ SD 9 & SD 8.4 (1.2).

⁶² M 32/1:214,36, MĀ 184 @ T1.727c29, EĀ 37.3 @ T2.711a28, and T154.16 @ 3.81c14. The description of mastery over the mind (*cittam vasam vatteti, no ca cittassa vasena vattati*) is more detailed in A 7.38/4:34,1; a ref to such mastery of the mind is also found in Sikṣā,samuccaya (Bendall 1902:122,1).

down cross-legged, determined not to move in any way until he has destroyed the mental influxes.⁶³ Interestingly, there are discourses indicating this type of determined practice as being a characteristic of the Buddha himself.⁶⁴

2.2 THE IDEAL MONK. A minor difference in relation to this passage on the ideal monk who beautifies the moonlit Go,siṅga forest, is that while according to the Mahā Go,siṅga Sutta and the individual Chinese translation, the Buddha speaks only of the determination to attain the destruction of the influxes. According to the Ekottarika Āgama version, however, he includes the success of such a determination in his description of the ideal monk.⁶⁵

This Buddha's unique reply [§10] not only highlights one of his own outstanding qualities, but also highlights the supremacy of the destruction of the mental influxes over all the other ideals presented by the other elders, by way of leading them all to the full accomplishment of the spiritual goal.

2.3 DO ARHATS HAVE VIEWS?

2.3.1 View, an influx or not?

2.3.1.1 This point, indeed, the whole of the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta, raises an interesting question: Are the saints, including the Buddha, expressing their views and opinions here? After all, as arhats (except for Ānanda, who is still a streamwinner), shouldn't they be free from all views?

Firstly, we should note that arhats are defined as those who have destroyed the mental influxes, of which the suttas usually list only 3, namely, the influxes of sense-desire (*kām'āsava*), of (desire for) existence (*bhavāsava*) and of ignorance (*āviññāsava*).⁶⁶ The later texts and the Abhidhamma (post-Buddha) add a fourth influx—that of “views” (*diṭṭh'āsava*)—to the list.⁶⁷

2.3.1.2 “**View**” is not found in the older lists of mental influxes [2.3.1.1]. Does this mean that view is not, or need not, be a mental influx? We do know from such texts as **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44) that arhats still have the 5 aggregates, but they are of the non-clinging kind—they are not “fuel” (*upādāna*) for new karma or further births for the arhats.

In the non-clinging aggregates of the arhats, “formation” (*saṅkhāra*) is always in the singular, and this is very significant.⁶⁸ Simply put, the arhats do not have any proliferation of thoughts (*papañca*). In other words, they may have “views,” but these are simply spontaneous expressions that are *free from greed, hate and delusion*. In short, these views—such as those expressed in the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta—are all “wholesome” to us, but are really karmically neutral.

2.3.1.3 Another way of explaining the arhats' views in the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta is that they are not views at all, or at least not “views” in an unawakened sense. An arhat is simply incapable of forming or expressing any view or opinion (in an unawakened sense) because his mind is free from the 3 unwhole-

⁶³ M 32/1:219,31, MĀ 184 @ T1.729b21, EĀ 37.3 @ T2.711c20, and T154.16 @ T3.82b8, which at T specifies 3.82b7 that the practice undertaken at this point is to contemplate the whole world as impermanent, 觀於世一切無常.

⁶⁴ MĀ 204 @ T1.777a12 (for a tr: Bareau 1963:72) reports that on the eve of his awakening, the Buddha makes the same determination; cf also MĀ 157 @ T1.679c11 and T212 @ T4.644c14. The Buddha's famous unshakable determination to keep on striving, even if his whole body should dry up, is also recorded in A 2.1.5/1:50,9, Sn 3.2/-434, in Lalita,vistara (Lefmann 1902:262,3; Vaidya 1958b:192,1), in Mahāvastu (Basak 1965:332,13; Senart 1890:-239,3), in Saṅgha,bheda,vastu (Gnoli 1977:113,23), and in Bu ston's “History of Buddhism” (Obermiller 1932:35). A discourse quotation in Abhk 2.44 (Pradhan 1967:71,12) parallels the description of this determination (but prob not relayed to the present instance), with parallels in T1558 @ T29.25b12, T1559 @ T29.183c15, and D (4094) mngon pa, ju 68b1 or Q (5595) tu 76b3.

⁶⁵ EĀ 37.3 @ T2.711c21. MĀ 184 a@ T1.729b22 could be indicating the same, since after referring to the monk's determination not to change posture, it reports that the monk does indeed not change posture (cf the similar pattern in the Mahā'vadāna,sūtra fragment S 360 folio 137R4-5 in Fukita 2003: 18 or in Waldschmidt 1953: 27, which also first records the bodhisattva Vipassi's determination to refrain from changing posture, followed by reporting that he does indeed not do so, thereby implicitly indicating that he stands up from this sitting as a fully awakened Buddha).

⁶⁶ D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63. See SD 30.3 (1.3.2).

⁶⁷ D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937.

⁶⁸ M 44,13/1:301 @ SD 40a.9.

some roots [2.3.1.2]. Hence, whatever that an arhat expresses that appears to us as views are simply an expression or verbalization of aspects of true reality, often reflecting that arhat's state leading up to or just before his awakening. This is, in fact, the closest we can speak of any "personality" of an arhat.⁶⁹

The arhats' views on the ideal monk comparable to the beautiful moonlit night of the sal grove recorded in the Mahā Gosiṅga Sutta are, in short, a spiritual play or sport (*kīḷā*) of the saints. They are simply expressing themselves and their natural and spontaneous joy, celebrating their awakened state.⁷⁰

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The Greater Gosiṅga Discourse

M 32

1 Thus have I heard.

Saints in a moonlit forest

At one time, the Blessed One was residing in the Gosiṅga sal forest grove with a great many very well known elder disciples,⁷¹

such as the venerable Sāriputta, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna, the venerable Mahā Kassapa, the venerable Anuruddha, the venerable Revata, the venerable Ānanda, and other very well known elder disciples.

2 Then in the evening, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna emerged from his solitary retreat, approached the venerable Mahā Kassapa, and said this to him,

"Come, avuso Kassapa, let us go to the venerable Sāriputta and listen to the Dharma."⁷²

"Yes, avuso," the venerable Mahā Kassapa assented to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna.

Then the venerable Mahā Moggallāna and the venerable Mahā Kassapa and the venerable Anuruddha approached the venerable Sāriputta to listen to the Dharma.

3 Then the venerable Ānanda saw *the venerable Mahā Moggallāna and the venerable Mahā Kassapa and the venerable Anuruddha approach the venerable Sāriputta to listen to the Dharma.*

Seeing the venerable Revata, he approached him and said this to him,

"Those true individuals, avuso Revata, are approaching the venerable Sāriputta to listen to the Dharma. Come, avuso Revata, let us approach the venerable Sāriputta and listen to the Dharma, too."

"Yes, avuso," the venerable Revata assented to the venerable Ānanda.

Then the venerable Revata and the venerable Ānanda approached the venerable Sāriputta to listen to the Dharma.

The beautiful moonlit night

4 Now the venerable Sāriputta saw the venerable Revata and the venerable Ānanda coming from afar. Seeing the venerable Ānanda,⁷³ he said this to him,

⁶⁹ On whether the Buddha or an arhat is a person, see **The person in Buddhism**, SD 29.6b (5.2).

⁷⁰ For an example of the Buddha's transcendental wordplay, see **(Saddha) Subhūti S** (A 11.15,1.3), SD 45.1.

⁷¹ *Ekam samayam bhagavā go.sīṅga,sāla,vana,dāye viharati sambahulehi abhiññātehi abhiññātehi therehi sāvakehi saddhim*. This phrase is stock: **Mahā Go,sīṅga S** (M 32,1/1:212), SD 44.12; **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,1/3:78 f), SD 7.13; **Kaṇṭhaka S** (A 10.72,1/5:133), SD 80.17. Cf the opening of **Naḷaka,pāna S** (M 68,2/1:462), SD 37.4.

⁷² *Āyāma'āvuso kassapa yen'āyasmā sāriputto ten'upāsankamissāma dhamma-s,savanāyāti*.

⁷³ Ānanda is declared by the Buddha to be the foremost of monks who are learned (*bahu-s,suta*) (MA 1:23). In **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), the Buddha praises him for his great popularity and that his discourses always delight the 4 assemblies (D 16,5.16/2:145), SD 9. See Intro (1.3).

4.2 “Come now, venerable Ānanda! Welcome to the venerable Ānanda, the Blessed One’s attendant, who is always in the Blessed One’s presence.⁷⁴

4.3 Avuso Ānanda, delightful⁷⁵ is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!⁷⁶

Ānanda’s ideal monk

4.4 Avuso Ānanda, **what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?**”

4.5 “Here, avuso [213] Sāriputta, a monk is widely learned, remembers what he hears, a store of learning.⁷⁷

Whatever teachings

that are beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end,
endowed both in the spirit and in the letter,

that proclaims the holy life, utterly complete and pure—

in such a Dharma, he is deeply learned, remembers it, masters it verbally, investigates it mentally, well penetrates it by seeing [by right view].⁷⁸

4.6 He teaches to the 4 assemblies⁷⁹ that Dharma, well sounding in word and letter, well flowing, for the sake of uprooting the latent tendencies.⁸⁰

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.”

Revata’s ideal monk

5 When this was said, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the venerable Revata,⁸¹

“Indeed, avuso Revata, the venerable Ānanda has spoken according to his own ready wit.⁸²

5.2 Now we ask the venerable Revata about this.

Avuso Revata, *delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!*

Avuso Revata, *what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?*”

⁷⁴ *Etu kho āyasmā ānando, svāgataṃ āyasmato ānandassa bhagavato upaṭṭhākassa bhagavato santikāvacarassa.*

⁷⁵ Comy says that the delightfulness is twofold: that of the forest and that of people. Both are meant here; for the forest is not only full of flowers and scents, but the highest of men, the Buddha, is staying with 30,000 renowned monks here (MA 2:250).

⁷⁶ *Ramaṇīyaṃ āvuso ānanda gosiṅga,sāla,vanam, dosinā ratti, sabba,phāli,phullā [Ce sabba,pāli,phullā] sālā, dibbā maññe gandhā sampavanti.*

⁷⁷ *Idh’āvuso sāriputta bhikkhu bahu-s,suto hoti suta,dhara suta,sannicayo.*

⁷⁸ *Tathā,rūpāssa dhammā bahu-s,sutā honti dhātā [Ce Ee Ke Se dhatā] vacasā paricitā manasānupekkhitā diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā.* Cf **Gopaka Moggallāna S** (M 108,15/3:11), SD 33.5; (**Ahitāya**) **Thera S** (A 5.88/3:114-116), SD 40.16. “Well penetrates it by seeing it” (*diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā*), ie, by his wisdom: here *diṭṭhi* has a positive sense of “right view, insight” (V 4:51,28 = D 3:267,9; A 3:349,13, 4:98,4*; AA 49,19; Sn 471; SnA 409,26; Vbh 328,26

⁷⁹ The 4 “assemblies” (*parisa*) are the monks, the nuns, the laymen and the laywomen. This a broad term covering *all* such followers, incl the disciples (*sāvaka*), ie, the saints. The “noble sangha” (*ariya,sangha*) refers to only the saints, ie, streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats, both monastic and lay. The word *sangha* is never, and should not, be used for a lay community.

⁸⁰ *So catassannaṃ parisānaṃ dhammaṃ deseti parimaṇḍalehi pada,vyañjanehi anuppabandhehi [Ce Ee appabaddhehi] anusaya,samugghātāya.* Comy speaks of the 7 latent tendencies (*satta anusaya*) without elaborating (MA 2:254). The 7 latent tendencies are those of sensual lust, of aversion, of conceit, of views, of doubt, of lust for existence, and of ignorance (M 18,8/1:109 f), SD 6.14; D 33,2.3(12)/3:254). See **Anusaya**, SD 31.3

⁸¹ Comy says that Kaṅkhā Revata, Revata the doubter, is meant, not Revata Khadira,vaniya, of the acacia forest (MA 2:247). He is the foremost of the monks who are meditators or dhyana-attainers (*jhāyi*) (A 1:24). On the meaning of *jhāna*, see SD 33.1b (1.1). See Intro (1.4)/

⁸² *Vyākatam kho āvuso revata āyasmatā ānandena yathā,sakam paṭibhānam.*

5.3 “Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk delights in solitude, enjoys solitude, devoted to mental calm, never neglecting dhyana, accomplished in insight, and frequents empty places.⁸³

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.”

Anuruddha’s ideal monk

6 When this was said, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the venerable Anuruddha,⁸⁴
“Indeed, avuso Anuruddha, the venerable Revata has spoken according to his own ready wit.

6.2 Now we ask the venerable Anuruddha about this.

Avuso Anuruddha, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Anuruddha, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?”

6.3 “Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk surveys a thousand worlds with the divine eye, purified, surpassing that of the human.⁸⁵

Just as a man with eyes, avuso Sāriputta, who has gone up to the upper storey of a mansion would survey a thousand wheel-rims (on the ground),⁸⁶

even so, avuso Sāriputta, that monk surveys a thousand worlds with the divine eye, purified, surpassing that of the human.

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.”

Mahā Kassapa’s ideal monk

7 When this was said, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the venerable Mahā Kassapa,⁸⁷
“Indeed, avuso Kassapa, the venerable Anuruddha has spoken according to his own ready wit.

7.2 Now we ask the venerable Mahā Kassapa about this.

Avuso Kassapa, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Kassapa, what kind of monk [214] would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?”

7.3 “Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk

is himself a forest dweller,⁸⁸

is himself one who lives on almsfood,

is himself one who resorts to the dust-heap cloth,

is himself one who uses only the three robes,

is himself one of few wishes,

is himself one who is contented,

and praises forest-dwelling,⁸⁹

and praises living on almsfood;⁹⁰

and praises the practice of resorting to it;⁹¹

and praises the use of only the three robes;⁹²

and praises having only few wishes;⁹³

and praises contentment;⁹⁴

⁸³ *Idh’āvuso sāriputta bhikkhu paṭisallān’ārāmo hoti paṭisallāna,rato, ajjhataṃ ceto,samatham anuyutto, anirā-kata-j,jhāno, vipassanāya samannāgato, brūhetā suññāgārānaṃ.* See SD 41.4 (2). On *anirākata-j,jhāna*, see 41.4 (2.1.2). On *brūhetā suññāgārānaṃ*, see SD 41.4 (2.1.3).

⁸⁴ Anuruddha is the foremost of monks who have the divine eye (A 1:23). See Intro (1.6).

⁸⁵ *Idh’āvuso sāriputta bhikkhu dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkanta,mānusakena sahasaṃ lokānaṃ voloketi.*

⁸⁶ *Seyyathā’pi āvuso sāriputta cakkhumā puriso upari.pāsāda.vara,gato sahasaṃ nemi.maṅḍalānaṃ volokeyya.* See Intro (1.5).

⁸⁷ Mahā Kassapa is the foremost of monks how practise the austerities or ascetic practices (A 1:23). See Intro (1.6).

⁸⁸ The first 4 practises are very ancient: see **Pasāda,kara,dhamma Vagga** (A 1.20.1/1:38) = A:B 1:378-381. See also **Santuṭṭhi S** (A 4.27), SD 104.8.

⁸⁹ “Forest-dwelling” (*ārañṇika*). This is one of the 13 ascetic practices: see Intro (1.6.1) n.

⁹⁰ “Living on almsfood” (*pīṇḍapātika*). This is one of the 13 ascetic practices: see Intro (1.6.1) n.

⁹¹ “Resorting to the dust-heap cloth” (*pāmsu,kūlika*). This is one of the 13 ascetic practices: see Intro (1.6.1) n.

⁹² “Using only the 3 robes” (*te,cīvarika*). This is one of the 13 ascetic practices: see Intro (1.6.1) n.

⁹³ “Having only few wishes” (*appicchatā*). This is a special quality that the Buddha attr to Hatthaka of Ālavaka: see **Hatthaka S** (A 8.23), SD 87.1; see also SD 37.6 (1.2.5). Both this and the foll are 2 of the 10 conditions that conduce to “growth, increase, abundance” (*vuddhi virūlhi vepulla*) (A 10.82,3/5:153,29).

is himself one who lives in solitude,
 is himself one who is above socializing,
 is himself one who exerts effort,
 is himself accomplished in moral virtue,
 is himself accomplished in concentration,
 is himself accomplished in wisdom,
 is himself accomplished in liberation,
 is himself accomplished in the knowledge and
 vision of liberation,

and praises solitude;⁹⁵
 and praises non-socializing;⁹⁶
 and praises the exertion of effort;⁹⁷
 and praises the accomplishment in moral virtue;
 and praises the accomplishment in concentration;
 and praises the accomplishment in wisdom;
 and praises the accomplishment in liberation;
 and praises the accomplishment of knowledge
 and vision of liberation.⁹⁸

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.”

Mahā Moggallāna’s ideal monk

8 When this was said, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna,⁹⁹
 “Indeed, avuso Moggallāna, the venerable Mahā Kassapa has spoken according to his own ready wit.
 8.2 Now we ask the venerable Moggallāna about this.

Avuso Moggallāna, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Moggallāna, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?”

8.3 “Here, avuso Sāriputta, there are two monks engaged in a talk about the Dharma.¹⁰⁰

They question one another; they clarify to one another the question that has been asked, without hesitation, their dharma talk smoothly flowing.¹⁰¹

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.”

Sāriputta’s ideal monk

9 Then the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this to the venerable Sāriputta,¹⁰²

“Indeed, avuso Sāriputta, we have all answered in accordance with our ready wit.

9.2 Now we ask the venerable Sāriputta this.

Avuso Sāriputta, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Sāriputta, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?”

9.3 “Here, avuso Moggallāna, it is a monk who masters his mind, not a monk who is ruled by his mind.¹⁰³

In the morning [forenoon], in whatever dwelling or attainment¹⁰⁴ he wishes, [215] he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the morning.

⁹⁴ “Being contented” (*santutṭha*): see prec n.

⁹⁵ *Attanā ca pavivitto hoti, pavivekassa ca vaṇṇa, vādī*. See **Paviveka S** (A 3.92) & SD 44.2 esp (1.1.2).

⁹⁶ *Attanā ca asaṃsaṭṭho hoti, asaṃsaggassa ca vaṇṇa, vādī*. Comy mentions 5 kinds of socializing (*samsagga*): through hearing, seeing, conversing, eating with, and bodily contact (MA 2:143). For an example of a monk who is above such socializing, ie Puṇṇa Mantāni,putta, see **Ratha,vinīta S** (M 24,2/1:145 f), SD 28.3. See SD 31.7 (2.3) n.

⁹⁷ *Attanā ca āradhāvīriyo hoti, vīriyārambhassa ca vaṇṇa, vādī*.

⁹⁸ *Attanā ca vimutti,ñāṇa,dassana,sampanno hoti, vimutti,ñāṇa,dassana,sampadāya ca vaṇṇa, vādī*.

⁹⁹ Traditionally, Moggallāna is said to be the foremost of monks who have psychic powers (A 1:23). See Intro (1.7).

¹⁰⁰ *Idh’āvuso sāriputta dve bhikkhū abhidhamma,katham kathenti*.

¹⁰¹ *Te aññam-aññam pañham pucchanti, aññam-aññassa pañham puṭṭhā vissajjenti, no ca samsādenti* [Ke *samsārenti*], *dharmī ca nesam,kathā pavattinī hoti*.

¹⁰² Sāriputta is foremost of the monks who have wisdom (A 1:23). See Intro (1.8).

¹⁰³ *Idh’āvuso moggallāna bhikkhu cittam vasam vatteti, no ca bhikkhu cittassa vasena vattati*.

In the day [In the middle of the day], in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the day.¹⁰⁵

In the evening, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the evening.

9.4 Suppose, avuso Moggallāna, a king or a king's minister has a closet full of cloths, dyed in various colours.¹⁰⁶

In the forenoon, whatever pair of cloths he wishes to wear, he would wear that very pair of cloths in the forenoon.

In the middle of the day, whatever pair of cloths he wishes to wear, he would wear that very pair of cloths in the middle of the day.

In the evening, whatever pair of cloths he wishes to wear, he would wear that very pair of cloths in the evening.

Even so, avuso Moggallāna, is a monk who masters his mind, not a monk who is ruled by his mind.

In the forenoon, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the forenoon.

In the middle of the day, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the middle of the day.

In the evening, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the evening.

Such a monk, avuso Moggallāna, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.”

They go before the Buddha

10 Then the venerable Sāriputta said this to all the venerables,

“Avuso, you have all answered in accordance to your ready wit.

Come, avuso, let us approach the Blessed One and present this matter before the Blessed One.

Whatever the Blessed One clarifies to us, let us remember that.”

10.2 “Yes, avuso,” the venerables assented to the venerable Sāriputta.

The saints meet the Buddha

10.3 Then the venerables went before the Buddha, saluted him and sat down at one side.

Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the Blessed One,

11 “Here, bhante, the venerable Revata and the venerable Ānanda approached me to listen to the Dharma.

Now, bhante, I saw the venerable Revata and the venerable Ānanda coming from afar.

Seeing the venerable **[216] Ānanda**, I said this to him,

11.2 *‘Come now, venerable Ānanda! Welcome to the venerable Ānanda, the Blessed One’s attendant, who is always in the Blessed One’s presence.*

11.3 *Avuso Ānanda, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!*

11.4 *Avuso Ānanda, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?’*

11.5 When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said this to me,

¹⁰⁴ Here, “dwelling” (*vihāra*) refers to a form dhyana, while “attainment” (*samāpatti*) refers to a formless dhyana. Comy says that they can be either worldly (of the unawakened) or supramundane (of the saint) (MA 2:255). See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 16,34.2-43/1:174 f), SD 1.11.

¹⁰⁵ *Yāya vihāra,samāpattiyā ākaṅkhati majjh’anhika,samayam [Ce Ee Ke Se majjhantika,samayam] viharitum, tāya vihāra,samāpattiyā majjh’anhika,samayam viharati.*

¹⁰⁶ *Seyyathā’pi avuso moggallāna rañño vā rāja mahāmattassa vā nānā,rattānam dussānam dussa,karaṇḍako pūro assa.* This parable is at **Vattha S** (S 46.4/5:71 f), SD 95.16 and **Anuruddha Mahā,vitakka S** (A 8.30/4:230), SD 19.5.

'Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk is deeply learned, a sutta expert, a store of learning.

Whichever teachings

*that are beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end,
endowed both in the spirit and in the letter,*

that proclaims the holy life, utterly complete and pure—

in such a Dharma, he is deeply learned, remembered, mastered verbally, investigated mentally, well penetrated by view.

That Dharma he teaches the 4 assemblies, well sounding in word and letter, well flowing, for the sake of uprooting the latent tendencies.

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.'"

11.6 "Good, good, Sāriputta! Ānanda is indeed speaking rightly what should be spoken.¹⁰⁷

For, Sāriputta, Ānanda is deeply learned, remembers what he has learned, a store of learning.

11.7 *Whichever teachings*

*that are beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, beautiful in the end,
endowed both in the spirit and in the letter,*

that proclaims the holy life, utterly complete and pure—

in such a Dharma, he is deeply learned, remembered, mastered verbally, investigated mentally, well penetrated by view.

11.8 *That Dharma he teaches the 4 assemblies, well sounding in word and letter, well flowing, for the sake of uprooting the latent tendencies."*

12 "When this was spoken, bhante, I said this to the venerable **Revata**,

'Indeed, avuso Revata, the venerable Ānanda has spoken according to his own ready wit.

12.2 *Now we ask the venerable Revata about this.*

Avuso Revata, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Revata, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?"

12.3 When this was said, the venerable Revata said this to me:

'Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk delights in solitude, enjoys solitude, devoted to mental calm, never neglecting dhyana, accomplished in insight, and frequents empty places.'

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.'"

12.4 "Good, good, Sāriputta! Revata is indeed speaking rightly what should be spoken.

For, Revata, Sāriputta, is one who *delights in solitude, enjoys solitude, devoted to mental calm, never neglecting dhyana, accomplished in insight, and frequents empty places.*" [217]

13 "When this was spoken, bhante, I said this to the venerable **Anuruddha**,

Indeed, avuso Anuruddha, the venerable Revata has spoken according to his own ready wit.

13.2 *Now we ask the venerable Anuruddha about this.*

Avuso Anuruddha, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Anuruddha, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?"

13.3 When this was said, the venerable Revata said this to me:

'Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk surveys a thousand worlds with the divine eye, purified, surpassing that of the human.

Just as a man with eyes, avuso Sāriputta, who has gone up to the upper storey of a mansion would survey a thousand wheel-rims (on the ground),

even so, avuso Sāriputta, that monk surveys a thousand worlds with the divine eye, purified, surpassing that of the human.

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.'"

¹⁰⁷ *Sādhu sādhu sāriputta, yathā taṃ ānando 'va sammā vyākaramāno vyākareyya.*

13.4 “Good, good, Sāriputta! Revata is indeed speaking rightly what should be spoken.
For, Sāriputta, Anuruddha is one who surveys a thousand worlds with the divine eye, purified, surpassing that of the human.”

14 When this was said, bhante, I said this to the venerable **Mahā Kassapa**,
‘Indeed, avuso Kassapa, the venerable Anuruddha has spoken according to his own ready wit.

14.2 *Now we ask the venerable Mahā Kassapa about this.*

Avuso Kassapa, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Kassapa, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?’

14.3 When this was said, the venerable Mahā Kassapa said this to me,

‘Here, avuso Sāriputta, a monk

is himself a forest dweller,

is himself one who lives on almsfood,

is himself one who resorts to the dust-heap cloth,

is himself one who uses only the three robes,

is himself one of few wishes,

is himself one who is contented,

is himself one who lives in solitude,

is himself one who is above socializing,

is himself one who exerts effort,

is himself accomplished in moral virtue,

is himself accomplished in concentration,

is himself accomplished in wisdom,

is himself accomplished in liberation,

*is himself accomplished in the knowledge and
vision of liberation,*

and praises forest-dwelling;

and praises living on almsfood;

and praises the resorting to the dust-heap cloth;

and praises the use of only the three robes;

and praises having only few wishes;

and praises contentment;

and praises solitude;

and praises non-socializing;

and praises the exertion of effort;

and praises the accomplishment in moral virtue;

and praises the accomplishment in concentration;

and praises the accomplishment in wisdom;

and praises the accomplishment in liberation;

*and praises the accomplishment of knowledge
and vision of liberation.*

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify [218] this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.’”

14.4 “Good, good, Sāriputta! Kassapa is indeed speaking rightly what should be spoken.

For, Sāriputta, Kassapa

is himself a forest dweller,

is himself one who lives on almsfood,

is himself one who resorts to the dust-heap cloth,

is himself one who uses only the three robes,

is himself one of few wishes,

is himself one who is contented,

is himself one who lives in solitude,

is himself one who is above socializing,

is himself one who exerts effort,

is himself accomplished in moral virtue,

is himself accomplished in concentration,

is himself accomplished in wisdom,

is himself accomplished in liberation,

*is himself accomplished in the knowledge and
vision of liberation,*

and praises forest-dwelling;

and praises the living on almsfood;

and praises the resorting to the dust-heap robe;

and praises the use of only the three robes;

and praises having only few wishes;

and praises contentment;

and praises solitude;

and praises non-socializing;

and praises the exertion of effort;

and praises the accomplishment in moral virtue;

and praises the accomplishment in concentration;

and praises the accomplishment in wisdom;

and praises the accomplishment in liberation;

*and praises the accomplishment of knowledge
and vision of liberation.’”*

15 “When this was said, bhante, I said this to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna,

‘Indeed, avuso Moggallāna, the venerable Mahā Kassapa has spoken according to his own ready wit.

15.2 *Now we ask the venerable Moggallāna about this.*

Avuso Moggallāna, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Moggallāna, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?"

15.3 When this was said, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this to me,

'Here, avuso Sāriputta, there are two monks engaged in a talk about the Dharma.

They question one another; they clarify to one another the question that has been asked, without hesitation, their dharma talk smoothly flowing.

Such a monk, avuso Sāriputta, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove."

15.4 "Good, good, Sāriputta! Moggallāna is indeed speaking rightly what should be spoken.

For, Sāriputta, Moggallāna is a Dharma speaker."

16 When this was said, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this to the Blessed One,

"Then, bhante, I said this to the venerable Sāriputta,

'Indeed, avuso Sāriputta, we have all answered in accordance with our ready wit.

16.2 *Now we ask the venerable Sāriputta this.*

Avuso Sāriputta, delightful is the Go,siṅga sal forest grove! Lovely is the moonlit night! The sal trees are all in full blossom! There seems to be a divine fragrance wafting about!

Avuso Sāriputta, what kind of monk would beautify this Go,siṅga sal tree grove?'

16.3 When this was said, the venerable Sāriputta said this to me:

'Here, avuso Moggallāna, a monk masters his mind, not a monk who is ruled by his mind.

In the forenoon, in whatever dwelling or attainment¹⁰⁸ he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the forenoon.

In the middle of the day, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the middle of the day.

In the evening, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the evening.

16.4 *Suppose, avuso Moggallāna, a king or a king's minister has a closet full of cloths, dyed in various colours.*

In the forenoon, whatever pair of cloths he wishes to wear, he would wear that very pair of cloths in the forenoon.

In the middle of the day, whatever pair of cloths he wishes to wear, he would wear that very pair of cloths in the middle of the day.

In the evening, whatever pair of cloths he wishes to wear, he would wear that very pair of cloths in the evening.

Even so, avuso Moggallāna, is a monk who masters his mind, not a monk who is ruled by his mind.

In the forenoon, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the forenoon.

In the middle of the day, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the middle of the day.

In the evening, in whatever dwelling or attainment he wishes, he dwells in that dwelling or attainment in the evening.

Such a monk, avuso Moggallāna, would beautify this Go,siṅga sal forest grove.'"

The ideal practitioner

17 When this was spoken, the venerable Sāriputta said this to the Blessed One,

"Now, bhante, which of us have spoken well?"¹⁰⁹

17.2 "Sāriputta, you have all spoken well, each in your own way."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Here, "dwelling" (*vihāra*) refers to a form dhyana, while "attainment" (*samāpatti*) refers to a formless dhyana. See **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 16,34.2-43/1:174 f), SD 1.11.

¹⁰⁹ *Kassa nu kho bhante subhāsitan'ti.*

But listen now to me, too, on the kind of monk who would beautify Go,siṅga sal forest.
 Here, Sāriputta, a monk, after returning from his almsround and finishing his meal, sits cross legged,
 keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness before himself, thinking,
 ‘I will not break this sitting posture if I have not freed my mind, through not clinging, from the mental
 influxes!’¹¹¹

Such a monk, Sāriputta, would beautify the Go,siṅga sal forest.”

The Blessed One said this. The venerable monks joyfully delighted in the Blessed One’s word.

— evaṃ —

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¹¹⁰ *Sabbesaṃ vo sāriputta subhāsitaṃ pariyāyena.*

¹¹¹ *Na tāvāhaṃ imaṃ pallāṅkaṃ bhindissāmi, yāva me nānupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuccissatīti.* While the other great elders hold up the ideal monk as one who has some level of spiritual attainment, the Buddha proposes a renunciant persevering on his goal, just as he himself has done, highlighting the purpose of the holy life. See Intro (2).

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