1 Migajala

1.1 Nothing is known of the elder Migajala, except that he is a son of the lady Visakhā. Having heard the Dharma during his frequent visits to the monastery, he renounces the world and in due course becomes an arhat (ThaA 1:452 f). The Migajala Thera, gathā records the elder Migajala’s verses (Tha 417-422).2

1.2 The Sānyutta Nikāya contains a whole chapter to his name, the Migajala Vagga (the chapter on Migajala), that is, the second chapter of the Salāyatanasānyutta (the connected discourses on the 6 sense-bases, S 35).3 Only the first two suttas of the Migajala Vagga are connected with Migajala.4

2 The Migajala Suttas

2.1 In Migajala Sutta 1 (S 35.63), Migajala asks the Buddha about the definition of a lone dweller (eka, vihāri), that is, one who practises solitary meditation. The Sutta defines it in terms of a mind that is free from sensual attachment.5

Clearly, the Migajala Sutta 1 (S 35.63) is taught before the Migajala Sutta 2 (they have the same theme, on the 6 sense-bases and spiritual solitude).6 This is because both Suttas record an almost identical teaching, but while the first Suts only mentions Migajala’s practice, the Migajala Sutta 2 (S 35.64) records his arhathood.7

2.2 In Migajala Sutta 2 (S 35.64), Migajala asks the Buddha for a brief teaching before going into his own solitary forest retreat. The Buddha instructs him on the nature of the 6 sense-objects, and how not delighting in them leads to the ending of suffering. Migajala practices as instructed and becomes an arhat.8

3 The lone dweller

3.1 EKA, VIHĀRĪ

3.1.1 The theme of the Sutta is the “lone dweller” or “solitary practitioner” (eka, vihāri) [§3], whose undivided task is that of solitary life dedicated to meditation. It should be noted here that the word vihāri also connotes a “practitioner.” We also have, for example, the term dhamma, vihāri, “one who lives the Dharma,” that is, one who practises the Dharma.9

This interesting expression has other nuances. It also refers to the monastic training to live the “holy life” (brahma, carīya), that is, one of celibacy, free from any socializing (including sexual intercourse), or dealings in economic or money terms. In short, he is a true renunciant.

3.1.2 The keyword eka, here rendered as “lone,” also means “one.” In meditative terms, it has a vital sense, that of the “oneness” of the mind, that is, samadhi (samādhi) or dhyana (jhāna).10 In other words, a lone dweller is a meditator who attains deep samadhi or high dhyana, which he uses as a tool for attaining arhathood. This especially refers to the monastic life. However, a lay practitioner, too, if

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1 Migajala generally means “animal, beast,” or specifically, “a deer,” while jāla means “net.” We could render his name into idiomatic English as “hunting-net” (S:W 4:16 n1).

2 SD 20.10.

3 S 35.63-73/4:35-45, dealing with the senses. For other details on Migajala, see SD 20.10 Intro.

4 In other words, the chapter derived its name from these first 2 suttas.

5 S 35.63/4:35-37 @ SD 44.6.

6 S 35.63/4:35-37 @ SD 44.6.

7 S 35.64/4:37 f @ SD 44.7.

8 S 35.64/4:37 f @ SD 44.7.

9 On dhamma, vihāri, see Dhamma, vihāri S (A 5.73+74/3:86-89), SD 44.4+5.

10 This sense of eka is esp significant in the cpd bhadd’eka-ratta, “the one who delights in the auspicious oneness”: see Bhadd’eka-ratta S (M 131, 13) + SD 8.9 (1), esp (1.3.3).
he so chooses, may lead such a life, even if only for a duration, for the sake of attaining dhyana, or even for some level of mindfulness, for the sake of attaining at least streamwinning.  

3.1.3 This phrase, “lone dweller” (eka,vihārī), strongly contrasts against the phrase “one who lives with a partner” or “a dweller with a partner” (sa,dutiya,vihārī), which is used in the Sutta in a moral sense to refer to craving (tanhā), since craving means desiring more, especially of others and other things, including coupling with another.

However, the term applies positively where a group of monks or nuns live together for the purpose of solitary meditation, as exemplified by Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila in the (Anuruddha) Upakkilesa Sutta (M 128). More broadly, a “second” (dutiya) can refer to any partner or partners that a monastic socializes with, or any immoral or distracting relationship that hinders the spiritual life.

The First Discourse to Miga,jāla

S 35.63

1 Originating at Sāvatthī.

Miga,jāla’s question

2 Then, the venerable Miga,jāla approached the Blessed One, saluted him and then sat down at one side.

3 Seated thus at one side, the venerable Miga,jāla said this to the Blessed One:

“A lone dweller, a lone dweller (eka,vihārī),” bhante, it is said. [36] In what way, bhante, is one a lone dweller, and in what way is one living with a partner?”

The dweller with a partner

4 (1) “There are, Miga,jāla, forms, cognizable by the eye, that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.  

If a monk is enticed by them, welcomes them, remains attached to them, then, on account of that approving, welcoming, remaining attached to them, delight arises.  

When there is delight, there is lust.

When there is lust, there is bondage.

Bound by the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be one living with a partner.

5 (2) “There are, Miga,jāla, sounds, cognizable by the ear, that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

If a monk is enticed by them, welcomes them, remains attached to them, then, on account of that approving, welcoming, remaining attached to them, delight arises.  

When there is delight, there is lust.

When there is lust, there is bondage.

Bound by the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be one living with a partner.

6 (3) “There are, Miga,jāla, smells, cognizable by the nose, that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

11 On streamwinning, see (Anicca) Cakkhu S (S 25.1), SD 16.7.
12 M 128,11-14 @ SD 5.18.
13 “One who lives with a partner” or “a dweller with a partner” (sa,dutiya,vihārī): see (3.1.3).
14 “Desirable…delightful,” iṭṭhā kantā manāpā piya,rūpā kāmūpasamhitā rajanjīvā.
If a monk is enticed by them, 
welcomes them, 
remains attached to them, 
then, on account of that approving, welcoming, remaining attached to them, delight arises. 
When there is delight, there is lust. 
When there is lust, there is bondage. 
Bound by the bonds of delight, Miga, jāla, a monk is said to be one living with a partner. 

7 (4) “There are, Miga, jāla, tastes, cognizable by the tongue, 
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing. 
If a monk is enticed by them, 
welcomes them, 
remains attached to them, 
then, on account of that approving, welcoming, remaining attached to them, delight arises. 
When there is delight, there is lust. 
When there is lust, there is bondage. 
Bound by the bonds of delight, Miga, jāla, a monk is said to be one living with a partner. 

8 (5) “There are, Miga, jāla, touches, cognizable by the body, 
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing. 
If a monk is enticed by them, 
welcomes them, 
remains attached to them, 
then, on account of that approving, welcoming, remaining attached to them, delight arises. 
When there is delight, there is lust. 
When there is lust, there is bondage. 
Bound by the bonds of delight, Miga, jāla, a monk is said to be one living with a partner. 

9 (6) “There are, Miga, jāla, mind-objects, cognizable by the mind, 
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing. 
If a monk is enticed by them, 
welcomes them, 
remains attached to them, 
then, on account of that approving, welcoming, remaining attached to them, delight arises. 
When there is delight, there is lust. 
When there is lust, there is bondage. 
Bound by the bonds of delight, Miga, jāla, a monk is said to be one living with a partner. 

10 And, Miga, jāla, even if such a monk resorts to a remote lodging in the wilds of the forests and jungles, 
where there is little noise, little sound, deserted, hidden from humans, conducive to seclusion, 
he is still called ‘one living with a partner.’ 

11 What is the reason for this? 
Because, bhikshu, craving is his partner, but he has not abandoned it— 
therefore, he is called one living with a partner. 

The lone dweller 

12 (1) There are, Miga, jāla, forms, cognizable by the eye, 
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing. 
If a monk is not enticed by them, 
does not welcome them, 
does not grasp them, 

15 This section is missing from Se. 

16 Evaṁ vihārī ca miga, jāla bhikkhu kiñcāpi rañña, vana, patthāni pantānī senāsanāni paṭisevati appa, saddāni appa, nigghosāni vijana, vātāni manussa, rāha-s, seyyakāni paṭisallāna, sāruppāni, atha kho sa, dutiya, vihārīti vac-cati. 

17 Tāñhā hi ’ssa dutiyā, sāssa appahīnā.
does not remain attached to them, then, on account of that not approving, not welcoming, not remaining attached to them, delight ends.

When there is no delight, there is no lust.

When there is no lust, there is no bondage.

Freed from the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be a lone dweller.

13 (2) There are, Miga,jāla, sounds, cognizable by the ear,
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

If a monk is not enticed by them,

does not welcome them,

does not remain attached to them,

then, on account of that not approving, not welcoming, not remaining attached to them, delight ends.

When there is no delight, there is no lust.

When there is no lust, there is no bondage.

Freed from the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be a lone dweller.

14 (3) “There are, Miga,jāla, smells, cognizable by the nose,
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

If a monk is not enticed by them,

does not welcome them,

does not remain attached to them,

then, on account of that not approving, not welcoming, not remaining attached to them, delight ends.

When there is no delight, there is no lust.

When there is no lust, there is no bondage.

Freed from the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be a lone dweller.

15 (4) “There are, Miga,jāla, tastes, cognizable by the tongue,
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

If a monk is not enticed by them,

does not welcome them,

does not remain attached to them,

then, on account of that not approving, not welcoming, not remaining attached to them, delight ends.

When there is no delight, there is no lust.

When there is no lust, there is no bondage.

Freed from the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be a lone dweller.

16 (5) “There are, Miga,jāla, touches, cognizable by the body,
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

If a monk is not enticed by them,

does not welcome them,

does not remain attached to them,

then, on account of that not approving, not welcoming, not remaining attached to them, delight ends.

When there is no delight, there is no lust.

When there is no lust, there is no bondage.

Freed from the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be a lone dweller.

17 18(6) “There are, Miga,jāla, mind-objects, cognizable by the mind,
that are desirable, pleasant, agreeable, lovely, arousing sense-desire, enticing.

If a monk is not enticed by them,

does not welcome them,

does not remain attached to them,

then, on account of that not approving, not welcoming, not remaining attached to them, delight ends.

When there is no delight, there is no lust.

When there is no lust, there is no bondage.

Freed from the bonds of delight, Miga,jāla, a monk is said to be a lone dweller.

18 This section is missing from Se.
True lone dwelling

18 And, Migajāla, if such a monk resorts to the vicinity of a village, crowded with monks, with nuns, with laymen, with laywomen, with rajahs, with courtiers, with sectarian teachers, with the pupils of sectarian teachers, he is still called a lone dweller.

19 What is the reason for this? Because, bhikshu, craving was his partner; but he has abandoned it—therefore, he is called the lone dweller.¹⁹

— evaṁ —

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¹⁹ Taṁ kissa hetu, taṁhā hi’ssa dutiyā, sāssa pahīnā, tasmā eka, vihāritī vuccatīti.