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Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2

Dutiya Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta The Second Discourse on Sāriputta and Moggallāna

or, **(Catukka) Sāriputta Sutta** The (Fours) Discourse on Sāriputta | A 4.168

or, **(Paṭipadā) Sāriputta Sutta** The Sāriputta Discourse (on the Ways of Progress)

Theme: Sāriputta’s spiritual progress and attainment

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Sutta theme

1.1 SĀRIPUTTA AND MOGGALLĀNA are the chief disciples (*agga, sāvaka*) of the Buddha, that is, the right-hand and the left-hand monks, respectively. They have been close friends from two close families since their childhood, and they discover the Dharma and renounce together before the Buddha.¹

In the two **Sāriputta Moggallāna Suttas** (A 4.167+168), they tell each other the nature of their respective modes of spiritual progress leading to their full liberation, that is, arhathood. In our Sutta here—the **Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2** (A 4.168), Sāriputta tells Moggallāna that his mode of spiritual progress is easy, with quick direct knowledge [§5].

1.2 SUTTA STRUCTURE

1.2.1 There are two discourses named **Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta**: in the first, Moggallāna is the chief interlocutor; hence, it is also called **the Moggallāna Sutta**; in the second (our Sutta here), Sāriputta is the chief interlocutor; hence, it is also called **the Sāriputta Sutta**. They are both found in **the Paṭipadā Vagga** of the Aṅguttara Nikāya [2.1.1]. Hence, they could alternatively be called **the (Paṭipadā) Moggallāna Sutta** and **the (Paṭipadā) Sāriputta Sutta**. The texts of the two suttas parallel each other closely, differing only in who is reporting his “way of progress” (*paṭipadā*) [2].

In **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 1** (A 4.167), Sāriputta visits Moggallāna and on being asked by Sāriputta, Moggallāna tells him that his (Moggallāna’s) mode of spiritual progress is difficult, but with quick direct knowledge [§5].² In **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2** (A 4.168)—our Sutta here—Moggallāna visits Sāriputta who says that his own mode of spiritual progress is easy, with quick direct knowledge.³

1.2.2 Each of the two Suttas here gives us the impression that they are recording separate events, that is, in **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 1** (A 4.147), Sāriputta “approaches” (*upasaṅkamati*) or visits Moggallāna and questions the latter, while in **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2** (A 4.148), it is Moggallāna who visits Sāriputta and questions him.

Taken as they are, these two suttas may appear rather odd and almost mechanical or contrived. For, it would be more natural that the two chief disciples must have met one another, and then question one another regarding their respective modes of progress to arhathood. It might also appear strange that being close friends that they do not know each other’s mode of spiritual progress.

The solution to this apparent puzzle is quite a simple one: the two suttas are composed according to the ancient oral tradition⁴ by the council elders who recounted the events and teachings, then recited them in a communal recital. The purpose of both the suttas is the same: to help us remember the 4 ways of progress and the respective manners in which the two chief disciples attain arhathood.

2 The 4 ways of progress

2.1 Related suttas

2.1.1 There is a whole chapter (*vagga*)—**the Paṭipadā Vagga**, the Chapter on the Ways of Progress—in the Aṅguttara Nikāya dealing with **way of progress** (*paṭipadā*) [§2] (A 4.161-170),

¹ For details on **Sāriputta & Moggallāna**, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, Singapore: The Minding Centre [2002], 2013 ch 5.

² **Sāriputta Moggallāna S 1** (A 4.167/2:154f), SD 46.16.

³ **Sāriputta Moggallāna S 2** (A 4.168/2:155), SD 46.17.

⁴ See **The oral tradition**, SD 58.1.

which should be consulted for details. Both **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Suttas 1 & 2** (A 4:167 + 168) are located in this Chapter. [1.2.1]

The Paṭipadā Vagga itself is part of **the Catukka Nipāta**, the Book of Fours, in the Aṅguttara. Hence, we can alternatively call these two discourses as **the (Catukka) Moggallāna Sutta**, the (Fours) Discourse on Moggallāna (A 4.167) and **the (Catukka) Sāriputta Sutta**, the (Fours) Discourse on Sāriputta (A 4.168). This helps to distinguish our Sutta here, for example, from the following Sāriputta Suttas:

(Kalyāṇa,mittatā) Sāriputta Sutta	S 45.3 (SD 34.10)	spiritual friendship
Sāriputta Sutta 1⁵	S 55.4 (SD 70.1(2))	the 4 limbs of streamwinning
Sāriputta Sutta 2⁶	S 55.5 (SD 16.5)	the stream (streamwinning)
(Anusaya) Sāriputta Sutta	A 3.32b (SD 31.8b)	overcoming I-making
(Sa,citta) Sāriputta Sutta	A 10.52 (SD 88.7)	on teaching Dharma
(Pabbata) Sāriputta Sutta	U 24 (SD 95.18)	on Sāriputta meditating

2.1.2 In the Sampasādanīya Sutta (D 28), Sāriputta declares the Buddha’s teaching on the 4 ways of progress as one that is unsurpassable, that is,

(1) difficult progress, with	slow direct knowing,	<i>dukkhā paṭipadā</i>	<i>dandh’ābhiññā</i>
(2) difficult progress, with	quick direct knowing,	<i>dukkhā paṭipadā</i>	<i>khipp’ābhiññā</i>
(3) easy progress, with	slow direct knowing,	<i>sukhā paṭipadā</i>	<i>dandh’ābhiññā</i>
(4) easy progress, with	quick direct knowing.	<i>sukhā paṭipadā</i>	<i>khipp’ābhiññā</i>

2.2 Sāriputta further explains the nature of these 4 ways of progress as follows:

Type of progress	Quality	due to
(1) difficult progress, with slow direct knowing	inferior [low] ⁷	difficulty and slowness ⁸
(2) difficult progress, with quick direct knowing	inferior	difficulty ⁹
(3) <u>easy progress, with slow direct knowing</u>	inferior	slowness ¹⁰
(4) <u>easy progress, with quick direct knowing</u>	excellent	ease and speed. ¹¹
		(D 28,10), SD 14.14 ¹²

2.3 These 4 ways of progress are explained in terms of the 3 motivational roots (mūla) and the 5 spiritual faculties (pañc’indriya) in **the (Vitthāra) Paṭipadā Sutta** (A 4.162f).¹³ Buddhaghosa says that the “practice” or “progress” (*paṭipadā*) here refers to meditation leading up to access concentration, while

⁵ Also called **(Sotāpatti-y-aṅga) Sāriputta S.**

⁶ Also called **(Sota) Sāriputta S.**

⁷ The first three modes of practice (*paṭipadā*) are here said to be “inferior” (*hīna*), but the fourth is said to be “excellent” or “exquisite” (*paṇīta*). This evaluation is similarly reflected in **Nalaka S** (Sn 714): see SD 18.3 Intro.

⁸ The elder **Soṇa Koḷivisa**, after being given a meditation subject by the Buddha, goes into retreat but his progress is severely impaired because he has too many visitors. He struggles in his meditation, especially the walking meditation until his feet bleed. The Buddha then admonishes him on the middle way. The elder Soṇa is an example of one who exerts great effort (viriyam dhuraṇ katvā)⁸ and is declared as the foremost of those monks who put forth effort (aggam āradha,viriyānam), A 1:24).

⁹ The example here is that of Moggallāna: see **Sāriputta Moggallāna S 1** (A 4.167/2:154 f), SD 46.17; also **Pacalā S** (A 7.58/4:85-91), SD 4.11.

¹⁰ One is tempted to quote **Ānanda** as an example here, since he was only a streamwinner during the Buddha’s life, and only became an arhat after the Buddha’s passing.

¹¹ The example here is that of **Sāriputta**: see **Sāriputta Moggallāna S 2** (A 4.168/2:155); see also **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74/1:497-501), SD 16.1.

¹² On these 4 modes of progress, see also **Paṭipadā Ss** (A 2:149 f), **Asubha S** (A 2:150-152), **Ubhaya S** (A 2:153); cf **Kosala S 1** (A 5:63); DhsA 182-185.

¹³ A 4.162/2:149 f (SD 18.3).

“direct knowing” (*abhiññā*) refers to the knowledge that arises between access and dhyanas (Vism 3.15/86). He further notes that when we are overwhelmed by craving, progress is difficult; when we are overcome by ignorance, direct knowing is difficult; if we do not practise calmness (*samatha*), progress is difficult; if we lack insight (*vipassanā*), direct knowing is difficult (Vism 3.18/87).¹⁴

3 Sāriputta’s way of progress

3.1 In the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 2 (A 4.168), in answer to Moggallāna’s question, Sāriputta replies that his way of progress, that is, his mode of meditation leading to arhathood or full awakening, is that of “easy progress, with quick direct knowing” (*sukhā paṭipadā, khipp’ābhiññā*) [§5]. Moggallāna, on the other hand, attains arhathood with “difficult progress, with quick direct knowing,” as stated in **the Sāriputta Moggallāna Sutta 1** (A 4.167 @ SD 46.16).

Sāriputta’s full awakening to arhathood is recorded in **the Dīgha,nakha Sutta** (M 74), where it is said that he swiftly gains insight while listening to the Buddha exhorting his nephew, the wanderer Dīgha,nakha. Sāriputta’s awakening, however, occurs after two weeks of meditation practice. However, on account of how easily he awakens as he stands behind the Buddha fanning him, and listening to his teachings to Dīgha,nakha, Sāriputta’s progress to arhathood is easy or pleasant (*sukha,paṭipadā*) (M 74 @ SD 16.1).

Although Moggallāna has the Buddha’s personal guidance in his progress, he has a lesser range of insight, whereas Sāriputta is not only independent in his progress but has a wider range of insight. Hence, Sāriputta’s supremacy in wisdom.¹⁵

3.2 SUTTA RELATING TO SĀRIPUTTA’S MEDITATION AND ARHATHOOD. While Moggallāna’s spiritual progress towards arhathood is detailed in nine separate suttas (S 40.1-9), the progress of Sāriputta’s meditation towards arhathood is famously recorded in a single discourse, **the Anupada Sutta** (M 111). His progress is recounted *dhyana by dhyana*, that is, the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless dhyanas, ending in the cessation of perception and feeling.¹⁶

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The Second Discourse on Sāriputta and Moggallāna

A 4.168

[The internal numbering here does not follow that of the PTS ed.)

1 Then, the venerable Moggallāna approached the venerable Sāriputta, and exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, he sat down at one side.

Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

2 “Avuso, there are these **4 ways of progress** [modes of spiritual progress].

What are the four?

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| (1) difficult progress, with | slow direct knowing, | <i>dukkhā paṭipadā</i> | <i>dandh’ābhiññā</i> |
| (2) difficult progress, with | quick direct knowing, | <i>dukkhā paṭipadā</i> | <i>khipp’ābhiññā</i> |
| (3) easy progress, with | slow direct knowing, | <i>sukhā paṭipadā</i> | <i>dandh’ābhiññā</i> |
| (4) easy progress, with | quick direct knowing, | <i>sukhā paṭipadā</i> | <i>khipp’ābhiññā</i> |

These, avuso, are the 4 ways of progress.

¹⁴ See **Pubba,kotṭhaka S** (S 48.44/5:220-222), SD 10.7 (4).

¹⁵ **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74/1:497-501), SD 16.1.

¹⁶ M 111 (SD 56.4).

3 [PTS 2] Avuso, of these 4 ways of progress, by which way of progress was your mind liberated from the influxes through non-clinging?¹⁷

4 “Avuso, there are these 4 ways of progress [modes of spiritual progress].

What are the four?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| (1) difficult progress, with | slow direct knowing, |
| (2) difficult progress, with | quick direct knowing, |
| (3) easy progress, with | slow direct knowing, |
| (4) easy progress, with | quick direct knowing. |

These, avuso, are the 4 ways of progress.

5 Avuso, of these four ways of progress, my mind was liberated from the influxes through non-clinging by easy [pleasant] progress, with quick direct knowing.”

— evaṃ —

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¹⁷ *Imāsaṃ āvuso catunnam¹⁷ paṭipadānaṃ katamaṃ te paṭipadaṃ āgamma anupādāya āsavehi cittaṃ vimuttan'ti.*