

## Direct Dhamma

When the teacher brings us the Dhamma  
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In **the Rūpa Sutta** (A 4.65), the Buddha gives a clear explanation of the Buddhist notion of charisma. He lists the 4 “measures” (*pamāṇā*), that is, how we attribute charisma to another, and become “inspired” (*pasanna*) or powerfully moved by that person or an aspect of him.

According to the Rūpa Sutta, there are 4 kinds of persons who attribute charisma to others, that is, how charisma can be attributed to another, namely:

- (1) One who measures by **looks** (*rūpa*) [form] and has faith in looks.
- (2) One who measures by **voice** (*ghosa*) and has faith in voice.
- (3) One who measures by **austerity** (*lūkha*) [external holiness] and has faith in austerity.
- (4) One who measures by **teachings** (*dhamma*) and has faith in teachings<sup>1</sup>.

The first three are popular criteria but faulty and personal at best: only the fourth is the true standard for one’s faith or devotion to another. The Buddha, however, enjoys all 4 measures from the faithful who know him although he clearly disapproves of them (as evident from the Sutta).

On the relationship of measures (*pamāṇa*) to conceit (*māna*), see **Pubba Sambodha Sutta 1** (S 35.13), SD 14.9 (3) & **Me: The problems of conceit**, SD 19.2a (3.5).

**The 4 measures of charisma** are explained in the **Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 4.22) as follows:

(1) What sort of person measures by **looks** (*rūpa*) [looks] and has faith in looks?

Here a person, having seen the height, the breadth, the shape, or the whole (of a person), grasping such measures (*pamāṇa*), feels inspired (in his physical looks).

Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by looks.

(2) What sort of person measures by **voice** (*ghosa*) and has faith in voice?

Here a person, on the basis of comments, of praise, of applause, of compliments of others, grasping such measures, feels inspired.

Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by voice.

(3) What sort of person measures by **austerity** (*lūkha*) [external holiness] and has faith in austerity?

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<sup>1</sup> (A 4.65/2:71), SD 3.14(7).

Here a person, having seen the austerity (or roughness) of the robes, of the almsbowl, of the lodgings, of various (other) austerities [things difficult to do, including “miracles”], grasping such measures, feels inspired.

Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by austerity.

(4) What sort of person measures by **teachings** (*dhamma*) and has faith in teachings?

Having seen the moral virtue, the mental concentration, the wisdom (of another), grasping such measures, one feels inspired.

Such a person is one measuring by and inspired by doctrine<sup>2</sup>.

One clear sign that we are trapped by the **teacher trap** is that we tend to be very defensive of our teacher (“the Sage,” etc), and we will be upset and angry when others disagree with him, or criticize him. We keep saying “lovingkindness” and *mettā*, yet our acceptance of others is limited by our own Teacher!

However, when we strive to know the Buddha Dhamma through the suttas, we will be united by a common curiosity and aspiration to understand and practise what the Buddha teaches. In due course, we realize that we are ourself our best teacher, which moves us to aspire for the path of awakening, that is, to be a **streamwinner** in this life itself.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha’s Example and Teachings]

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[1] Please study this useful and interesting article:

“The Teacher or the Teaching?” SD 3.14:

<http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.14-Teacher-or-teaching-piya.pdf>.

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<sup>2</sup> (Pug 4.22/53 f; PugA 229 f; cf A 2:70; SnA 242; DhA 3:113 f)