

SD 64.4

Ghaṭa Sutta

The Discourse on the Barrel

S 21.3

Theme: The spiritual friendship of Sāriputta and Moggallāna

Translated and annotated by Piya Tan 2010, ©2026

1 Sutta summary

The 2 chief disciples, Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna, are staying at the squirrels feeding ground. When Sāriputta compliments Moggallāna on his personal radiance, the latter says that, through clairvoyance and clairsight, he is communicating with the Buddha in Jeta's grove. They talk about consummate effort (*āradḍha, viriya*).

Sāriputta then declares that, compared with Moggallāna, he himself is like a mere pile of gravel alongside the Himalayas, and that with his great spiritual power, Moggallāna might live on for an aeon if he wishes to. Moggallāna returns the compliment by saying that, beside Sāriputta, he is a mere pinch of salt alongside a large barrel (*ghaṭa*) of salt, and recalls the high praise bestowed on Sāriputta by the Buddha himself.

2 Kappa and its usages

In this section, we will briefly survey the various meanings and usages of **kappa** (aeon) as found in the canon, especially the suttas and the commentarial exegeses, for a better contemporary understanding of **kappa** and the early Buddhist notion of time.

2.1 THE MEANING OF KAPPA (COSMOLOGICAL)

2.1.1 Duration and varieties of kappa

2.1.1.1 The term **kappa** refers to the cosmological kalpa or aeon, that is, the duration of the physical universe in its cycle of 4 phases [2.1.2.1]. The duration of the universe is astronomical, with the stress of the term being that duration's unimaginable length (at least to the ancient Indian mind). We shall call this cosmological kalpa kappa 1. [2.1.1.2 f, 2.1.2 f]

Kappa also refers to the number of years, terrestrial or celestial, of the lifespan of beings in a certain realm; in this latter case, the durations are often relative to one another.¹ We shall call this existential kalpa or lifespan **kappa 2**. [2.1.1.3, 2.2.1]

Kappa 2, with its sense of "the lifespan" of beings is simple enough. Since **kappa 1** has a number of usages that is not always clear, we shall examine this first in some detail, with the help of the suttas and Commentaries.

2.1.1.2 Kappa 1, the cosmological kalpa or aeon.

(1) **Pabbata Sutta** (S 15.5) on the length of a kalpa (aeon).

Is a kalpa long? ... Long indeed is a kalpa ... It is not easy to reckon it as so many years or so many centuries ... (*kiṃ va dīgho nu kho ... kappa, dīgho kho ... kappa, so na sukaro saṅkhātum ettakāni vassāni ti vā ettakāni vassa, satāni ...*, S 15.5).²

¹ Take, eg, the lifespan of Tāvātimsa devas, where a day (from dawn to sunset) lasts for a full human lifespan: **DhA 4.4/1:362-366** + SD 54.15 esp (2.2); SD 57.10 (1.5.4.6).

(2) **Sāsapā Sutta** (S 15.6) on the length of a kalpa.

In such long kalpas, ... not one kalpa is reckoned, not one hundred kalpas are reckoned, not one thousand kalpas are reckoned, not one hundred thousand kalpas are reckoned (*evaṃ dīghānaṃ kho ... kappānaṃ n'eko kappo saṃsita n' ekaṃ kappā,sataṃ saṃsitaṃ n' ekaṃ kappā,sahassaṃ saṃsitaṃ n' ekaṃ kappā,sata,sahassaṃ saṃsitaṃ*, S 15.6).³

Apparently, the ancient Buddhists were impressing on their audience and followers on the notion of an unimaginably long duration of time (a characteristic of samsara), not some astronomical numbers that would interest and gratify the experts or specialists. Numbers hold and limit the mind; going beyond numbers gives one the momentum for a “quantum leap” into the unfettered freedom of awakening.⁴

(3) **The Buddha,vaṃsa Commentary** says that the term *kappa* should be seen as having various senses, that is, arising from various contexts set by the temporal and situational, that is, the time-based and the time-framed (BA 65,6 f).⁵ BA then goes on to discuss the various senses and usages of *kappa*.⁶

(4) **(Catukka) Kappa Sutta** (A 4.156) on the 4 phases of a kalpa.

“These 4, bhikkhus, are the incalculable⁷ periods of a kalpa” (*cattār' imāni bhikkhave kappassa asaṅkheyyāni*) (A 4.156).⁸ In Pali usage, an *incalculable* (*asaṅkheyya*) is a generic term for each of the 4 phases of an aeon, usually called “**great aeon**” (*mahā,kappa*)⁹ [2.1.2].

For convenience, we can call each of these phases a “quarter-kalpa,” since there are 4 such phases.

(5) **Commentaries** on the “intermediate kalpas.”

Elsewhere, the Commentaries mention a much greater number of “intermediate kalpas” (*antara,-kappa*), that is, a “time-period” or “epoch.” Thus, “in one kalpa, there are 64 intermediate kalpas” (*ekasmiṃ kappe catu,saṭṭhi antara,kappa nāma honti*).¹⁰

(6) **Loka,paññatti** on the indeterminability of a kalpa, that is, as simply an immensely long duration.

“Even one intermediate kalpa is a kalpa; 20 intermediate kalpas are a kalpa; 40 intermediate kalpas are a kalpa; 60 intermediate kalpas are a kalpa; 80 intermediate kalpas are a great kalpa” (*eko pi antara,-kappo kappo, vīsati pi antara,kappa kappo, cattārīsa pi antara,kappa kappo, saṭṭhi pi antara,kappa kappo asīti pi antara,kappa mahā,kappo*, Loka-p 90,15 f).

(7) One way of understanding this number of **intermediate kalpas** is to see each quarter of a cosmological kalpa as comprising 4 durations: (1) the arising, (2) arising to stable, (3) stable to devolving, and (4)

² S 15.5/2:181,19 f (SD 2.19 (9.1.1)).

³ S 15.6/2:182,1 f (SD 49.8b(15.2)).

⁴ For a parable of the duration of a *kappa* in **Pabbata S** (S 15. 5/2:181 f), SD 2.19(9.2.1); also SD 49.8b (15.2) & SD 57.10 (1.5.3.2).

⁵ Cf MA 2:125 f; SA 1:15; AA 2:377; KhpA 115 f; CA 10. Of these only CA incl “great aeon” (*mahā,kappa*) in its register of meanings and nuances.

⁶ Fir tr, see BA:H 97 f.

⁷ On the term “incalculable” (*asaṅkheyya*), see SD 57.10 (1.5.3.3).

⁸ A 4.156/2:142,15 quoted at Vism 414,10 = CA 11,6 = ItA 2:135,20 = DAPT 1:182,17 = Loka,paññatti 191,14.

⁹ The Skt *asaṅkheyya kalpa* is 10¹⁶ (10 with 16 zeroes) or a quadrillion (a thousand trillions) great aeons (*mahā,-kalpa*). See Abhk:Pr 480; SD 2.19 (9.1, 9.3).

¹⁰ DA 162,10 = MA 3:230,12; Saddh 257.

devolving. Each quarter-kalpa is further divided into 4 more phases; thus, each quarter-kalpa now has 16 sub-phases, totalling 64 “in-between ages” (*antara,kappa*).

In our own memorable epoch, for example, we may consider “**recent time**” as comprising (1) prehistoric age, (2) premodern history, (3) modern history and (4) postmodern history. However, the prehistoric period is itself millions of years long, which may be divided into various periods.

This is not an exact way of slicing up the time on earth that has passed. This time-slotting exercise is at best approximate and imaginative, simply to help us envision the cosmic or worldly changes over time. We are in a relatively stable period of historical time, but all this will change. Civilization and empires rise and fall, religions come, grow and go, too. Our society is still evolving, and should be ready for more changes to come. In short, this is a reflection on impermanence and change.

2.1.1.3 *Kappa* 1 (aeon) and *kappa* 2 (lifespan)

(1) Not only do the various **types of *kappa*** differ in duration and the events that fill each of them (*kappa* 1), but the lifespans of beings (*kappa* 2) inhabiting them also differ. For convenience, we can call *kappa* 1 “a great aeon” (*mahā,kappa*) and *kappa* 2 “a lifespan” (*āyu,kappa*). A great aeon—as we have noted in (6) above—can be further divided into different phases each.

Thus, there are 3 main types of *kappa*, as explained in **the Kathāvatthu Commentary**:

“A kalpa is threefold: (1) a great aeon (*mahā,kappa*), (2) a portion of an aeon (*kapp’eka.-desa*), and (3) a lifespan (*āyu,kappa*).” (KvuA 131)¹¹

The 3 terms are explained as follows:

(1) **A great aeon** (*mahā,kappa*) refers to “the 4 incalculables (*asaṅkheyya*) of a kalpa” as a set sequence (A 2:142).

(2) **A portion of an aeon** (*kapp’eka,desa*) refers, for example, to the lifespan (*āyu-p,pamāṇa*) of a deva¹² of Brahmā’s host (*brahma,kāyika deva*), as stated in **the (Catukka) Mettā Sutta 1** (A 4.125),¹³ which the Kathāvatthu Commentary says that is only “a portion of an aeon” (*kapp’eka.desa*, KvuA 131,-18). This means that this brahma’s lifespan is nearly a kalpa, but does not exceed a kalpa.

(3) **A lifespan** (*āyu,kappa*) refers to the duration that one undergoes suffering in hell, or that one enjoys happiness in heaven (V 2:205).

2.1.2 Phases of a *kappa*

2.1.2.1 The 4 phases of *kappa* 1.

(1) The phases of a cosmological *kappa* or aeon—also called *mahā kappa* or “great aeon”—is described by **the (Catukka) Kappa Sutta** (A 4.156) as follows (abridged):

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. the kalpa when the world devolves [collapses] ... ; | <i>saṃvaṭṭati</i> |
| 2. the kalpa when the world remains in a devolved state ... ; | <i>saṃvaṭṭato tiṭṭhati</i> |
| 3. the kalpa when the world evolves [expands] ... ; | <i>vivaṭṭati</i> |
| 4. the kalpa when the world remains in an evolved state. | <i>vivaṭṭato tiṭṭhati</i> |

¹¹ **Kappa** *nāma mahā,kappa, kapp’eka,deso, āyu,kappa ti tividho ... ettha hi mahā,kappa va kappa ti vutto* (KvuA 131,14 f; cf DA 164,12-15 [*mahā,kappa*]).

¹² “Deva or god” (*deva*) is a generic term for both sense-world devas, form-world brahmas and formless world brahmas. “Brahma” (*brahmā*) refers only to the devas of the form-world or the formless world.

¹³ A 4.125/2:129,9 (SD 33.9).

*Katamāni cattāri? yadā kappo saṁvaṭṭati ..., yadā kappo saṁvaṭṭo tiṭṭhati ..., yadā kappo vivaṭṭati ..., yadā kappo vivaṭṭo tiṭṭhati.*¹⁴

(2) A *kappa* is thus made up of 4 intermediate aeons (*antara,kappa*),¹⁵ each of which is thus a “small aeon.” The 4 phases are those of:

1. a period of contraction or “collapse”;
2. then, the world remains stably contracted, fully devolved (the big crunch);
3. then, a period of expansion; and
4. finally, a period of expanded stability, a fully evolved world.¹⁶

These are the 4 stages in a single cycle of a world-period or great aeon (*mahā,kappa*)—of a **pulsating universe**.¹⁷

(3) We see here the term *kappa* is used interchangeably with or inclusive of “world.” As the **Iti,vut-taka Commentary** explains:

“For when the world is being destroyed, the kalpa is itself destroyed; hence, it is said [in the **Mūla Pariyāya Jātaka**, J 245]: ‘Time devours all creatures, including itself.’¹⁸” (ItA 1:76,7-9)

The **Visuddhi,magga** describes the phases of the kalpa at length (Vism 13.28-65).¹⁹

2.1.2.2 The above description of the evolving universe is remarkably modern, indeed, quite unique, even radical, during its own time. Such knowledge arises from the ability of recalling past lives, both of one’s own (retro-cognition) and those of others (the divine eye).²⁰

The **Mā Puñña,bhāyī Sutta** (It 22) mentions the bodhisattva’s rebirth in Ābhassara brahma-world.

“When the world-cycle was devolving, I was reborn into Ābhassara; I arose in an empty brahma-mansion” (*saṁvaṭṭamāne ... kappe ābhassarūpago homi, vivaṭṭamāne kappe suññaṁ brahma,vimānaṁ upapajjāmi*).²¹ Here, the Commentary glosses: “Kalpa means world” (*kappe ti loke*, ItA 1:76,7) [2.1.2.1]. Thus, it is said, “While the world is waning ... the aeon too wanes,” (*loke ... khīyamāne kappo pi khīyat’ eva*, ItA 176,8).

2.1.3 Kappa 1 and arising of buddhas

2.1.3.1 Significantly, there are kappas or aeons without any buddha and those with **buddhas**, which are explained as follows in the **Buddha,vaṁsa Commentary**:

The **Buddha,vaṁsa Commentary** first speaks of 2 kinds of kalpa or aeon, that is, in terms of whether it is “void” (*suñña,kappa*) of buddhas or it is “non-void” (*asuñña,kappa*), that is, it has at least one

¹⁴ A 4.156/2:142,17 f ≠ Lokap 191,14 f. Also: *parihāyamāno kappo saṁvaṭṭa,kappo, vaḍḍha,māno vivaṭṭa,kappo*, Vism 414,6 = VA 159,14 = ItA 2:135,16. On 2.1.8 f., see SD 54.3c (3.4.3).

¹⁵ In Pali usage, an intermediate aeon (*antara,kappa*) is an indeterminate period, whose length varies with context. The Skt usage defines it as a fixed subdivision that is 1/20 of a great aeon (*Imahā,kalpa*; P *mahā,kappa*). On the “incalculable” (*asaṅkheyya*), see (1.5.3.3).

¹⁶ See (**Catukka**) **Kappa S** (A 4.156/2:142) + SD 2.19 (9).

¹⁷ For a diagram of the stages of the cosmic cycle, see SD 2.19 (8).

¹⁸ *Kalo ghasati bhūtāni sabbān’eva sah’attanā ti* (J 245/2:260).

¹⁹ Vism 13.28-65/414,13-421,27.

²⁰ These are respectively the 8th and the 9th of the 10 knowledges or powers (*dasa,bala*) of the Buddha: SD 63.14 (2.1.8 f).

²¹ It 22/1.3.2/15,7 f (SD 2.11b).

buddha (BA 191,10 f).²² No buddhas, pratyeka-buddhas, or universal monarchs arise during a **void aeon**. It is so called because it is void of an individual with special qualities.²³

A **non-void aeon** is fivefold: the core aeon (*sāra,kappa*), the cream aeon (*maṇḍa,kappa*), the blessed aeon (*vara,kappa*), the core-and-cream kalpa (*sāra.maṇḍa,kappa*) and the fortunate aeon (*bhaddaka,-kappa*).²⁴

(1) A **core aeon** is so called due to the arising of one fully self-awakened buddha. “Core” refers to the buddha who appears alone and declares the heart of true reality.

(2) A **cream aeon** sees the arising of 2 such buddhas (that is, one in each epoch). “Cream” here refers to the highest and best that are offered by the buddhas.

(3) A **blessed aeon** has 3 fully self-awakened buddhas. “Blessed” is a play on *vara*, “blessing, boon,” that is, for those who aspire to various sangha status, such as those of chief disciples, who have these aspirations affirmed (*varayanti*).

(4) A **core-and-cream aeon** is so called because therein arise 4 fully self-awakened buddhas.

(5) A **fortunate aeon** has 5 buddhas, each appearing in his own epoch. [2.1.3.2]

2.1.3.2 A fortunate aeon (*bhaddaka,kappa*) is rare, wherein arises 5 buddhas; beings therein enjoy great happiness and are capable of great goodness. They are capable of attaining the 3-root condition (*ti,hetuka*), that is, freedom from the roots of greed, hatred and delusion. Even those with only 2 roots, that is, only non-greed and non-hatred are capable of attaining the 3rd root, that of non-delusion (or wisdom).

The **Buddha,vaṃsa** explains that “in this [our] fortunate kalpa” (*imamhi bhaddake kappe*)²⁵ we have Gotama Buddha (B ch 26), and 3 buddhas before him, that is, Kakusandha (B ch 23), Koṇāgamana (B ch 24) and Kassapa (B ch 25). The 5th buddha, the future fully self-awakened buddha, will be Metteyya.²⁶ Significantly, Metteyya (Skt *maitreya*) is the only future Buddha mentioned in the Pali canon, that is, as the 5th buddha in our current aeon (B 17.19/101).

2.2 KAPPA IN THE GHAṬA SUTTA [§12]

2.2.1 Kappa as meaning “lifespan”

2.2.1.1 The suttas often use *kappa* in the sense of a world-cycle, that is, an aeon. The full world cycle is often called “a great aeon” (*mahā,kappa*), comprising 4 phases of arising, evolving, evolved and devolving [2.1.2.1]. However, when *kappa* is mentioned in connection with humans (or other non-celestial living beings), the rule is that it refers to an “**existential kalpa**” that is, the lifespan of humans or of particular beings during a particular time-frame.

In fact, this is the sense of *kappa* that is univocally defined in the Commentaries, thus:

“Kappa means life-span (life-time, life-term, duration of life)” (*kappan ti āyu,kappam*).²⁷

²² This is briefly given at Jtm 29 f. **Sāra,saṅgaha** also mentions that a kalpa is twofold: an empty kalpa and a not-empty kalpa (**kappo** *duvidho hoti, suñña,kappo asuñña,kappo ti*, Sāras 310,35).

²³ Comy is abridged and in part paraphrased below.

²⁴ **Dasabodhisatta,uddesa** reprises “The core, the essence, the excellent, the kalpa with core and essence, and fortunate: these 5 kinds of kalpas are well-taught by the Buddha” (*sāro maṇḍo varo kappo sāra,maṇḍo ca bhaddako, ete pañca,vidhā kappā sambuddhena sudesitā*, Dasab 39,1*+2*).

²⁵ *imamhi bhaddake kappe* (B 23.10 = *bhadda,kappamhi*, BA) = B 24.12 = 25.16 = Ap 508,2 = ThaA 2:230,20*; Ap 34,13.

²⁶ See SD 36.2 (3.1.2). ²⁶ On the buddhas and the cosmos, see SD 57.10 (4.3.2).

²⁷ DA 554,30 (*ad* D 2:103,3) = SA 3:251,19-252,4 (*ad* S V 259,20) = AA 4:149,8 (*ad* A4:309,7) ≠ UA 323,27 (*ad* U 62,19), quoted ApA 10,17.

2.2.1.2 The Commentaries consistently define a **kappa** or aeon, when applied to humans—such as the Buddha or a meditator who cultivates the 4 bases of power (*iddhi,pāda*)²⁸—as “a lifespan” (*āyu,-kappa*), thus: **kappan** *ti āyu,kappaṃ* [2.2.1.1].

Similarly, we have the following confirmations by the Commentaries:

(1) “Let the Blessed One remain for a kalpa, let the wellfarer remain for a (whole) lifespan!” (*tiṭṭhatu bhante bhagavā kappaṃ, tiṭṭhatu sugato kappan ti*) (D 2:115).²⁹ In such contexts it is “**lifespan**.”³⁰

(2) **Cariyā,piṭaka Commentary:**

“A **kappa** is what is imagined (*kappīyati*); so called because it cannot be reckoned in terms of years, whether so many years, or so many centuries of years, or so many millennia of years, or so many hundred thousands of years” (*kappīyati ti kappa, ettakāni vassāni ti vā ettakāni vassa,satāni ti vā ettakāni vassa,sahassāni ti vā ettakāni c’assa sata,sahassāni ti vā saṃvacchara,vasena gaṇetum asakkuṇeyattā* (CA 11,8-11).

(3) Specifically, the Commentaries define **an existential kappa** as follows:

“A **kappa** is a lifespan (*āyu,kappa*), in which one continues to live, remaining in it to the fullest duration of life, which is the life expectancy of humans at that particular time” (**kappan** *ti āyu,kappaṃ, tasmiṃ tasmim kale yaṃ manussānaṃ āyu-p.pamānaṃ hoti taṃ paripuṇṇaṃ karonto tiṭṭheyya*, DA 554,-29 = SA 3:251,19).

2.2.1.3 The suttas further say that a good meditator who has cultivated the 4 bases of power [2.2.1.2], may be able to live out a full human lifespan or a little more. The Commentaries are unified in this understanding, which makes good and natural sense, considering the context of the usage of **kappa**, such as in **the Ghaṭa Sutta** [§12]. This understanding fits very well into the key passage in this connection with this key sutta passage:

“(Whoever) has cultivated the 4 bases of power, if he wishes, may remain for a lifespan or a little more or less of it.”

(*yassa kassaci*) ... *cattāro iddhipādā bhāvitā ... so akaṅkhamāno ... kappaṃ vā tiṭṭheyya kappāvasesaṃ vā*³¹ [§2.2]

The above passage is found in the following suttas and related sources:

Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta	D 16,3.3/2:103,4 = 3.44/2:117,7	SD 9;
Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda Sutta	D 26,29/3:77,27;	SD 36.10;
(Iddhi,pāda) Cetiya Sutta	S 51.10/5:259,24;	
(Aṭṭhaka) Bhūmi,cala Sutta ³²	A 8.70/4:309,7;	
Āyu,saṅkhār’ossajjana Sutta	U 6.1/62,19-21 ³³ .	

²⁸ The 4 bases of power (*iddhi,pāda*) are those of (1) will (*chanda*), (2) effort (*virīya*), (3) mind (*citta*) and (4) investigation (*vīmaṃsā*): **Cattāro Iddhi,pāda**, SD 10.3; **Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20), SD 28.14; SD 57.22 (1.2.3.9).

²⁹ **D 16,3.38 f/2:115,2+7+10** (SD 9). See DA 103,15 quoted at BA 65,17.

³⁰ V 2:294, 289; D 2:104, 115; S 2:276; A 4:309; U 62. Quoted at DA 103.

³¹ On **kappa**, cf BHSD sv; P S Jaini, “Buddha’s prolongation of life,” *Bulletin of SOAS* 21 1958:546-552; “Vie au-delà du kalpa,” AbhkVv tr Index sv *kalpāvaśeṣa*; *presupposing kappa* = *mahā,kappa*; cf Kvu:SF 259 n5, in contrast to *comys kappa* = *āyu,kappa* (so already Miln 141,9-11); CPD: ¹¹kappa & ¹ava-sesa. See also SD 2.19 (9); SD 49.8b (15.2).

³² A 8.70 up to the verse is reprised at S 51.10/5:258-265.

³³ For a tr, see Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha*, 1984:305.

and also see Kathā,vatthu, Milinda,pañha, and Commentaries.³⁴

2.3 KAPPĀVASESA

2.3.1 Details are given in the commentary to **the (Iddhi,pāda) Cetiya Sutta** (S 51.10) where **kappa** is also explained as *āyu,kappa*, “lifespan,” that is, the full normal lifespan of human beings at a particular time, presently 100-120 years. The expression used in this connection is **kappāvasesa** “for the remainder of an aeon” (DP), that is, “a little less or more than (a lifespan of) 100 years (*appaṃ vā bhiyyo ti vutta,vassa,-satato atirekaṃ*. DA 554,32).

2.3.2 Kappāvasesa, literally, “the remainder of the aeon,” is explained as a little more than the normal lifespan of 100 years. The Commentary mentions the view of one Mahāsiva Thera, who thought that it might be that the Buddha could live on for the rest of this *bhadda,kappa*, “fortunate aeon,” if he wished so. He however rejected this view on the basis of the ancient commentaries (SA 3:251,19-252,4).

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³⁴ Kvū 457,26 = Miln 140,25 = (DA 554,32 [discussed at length] = SA 3:251,19 = AA 4:149,11 = UA 323,29) qu Sadd 552,5; “The Blessed One, on account of the bases of power is able to remain for a lifespan or a little more or less of it,” *samattho ca bhagavā iddhi,balena kappaṃ vā tḥāturaṃ kappāvasesaṃ vā*, Miln 141,32.

Ghaṭa Sutta

The Discourse on the Barrel

S 21.3

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Anāthapiṇḍika's park in Jeta's grove outside Sāvatthī.

2 Now at that time, the venerable **Sāriputta** and the venerable **Mahā Moggallāna** were staying at Rāja,gaha in the same dwelling³⁵ in the squirrels feeding ground in the bamboo grove.

3 Then, in the evening, the venerable Sāriputta emerged from seclusion and approached the venerable Mahā Moggallāna. He exchanged greetings with the venerable Mahā Moggallāna. When they had concluded their greetings and cordial talk, he sat down at one side.

4 Sitting thus at one side, he said to him:

“Serene, avuso Moggallāna, are your faculties! Pure and clear is your countenance!

In which dwelling has the venerable Moggallāna dwelled today? [How did the venerable Moggallāna dwell today?]³⁶

“I spent the day in a gross dwelling,³⁷ avuso, but I did have some Dharma talk.”

5 “With whom did the venerable Mahā Moggallāna have some Dharma talk?”

“I had some Dharma talk with the Blessed One, avuso.”

6 “But the Blessed One is far away, avuso. He is now dwelling in Anāthapiṇḍika's park in Jeta's grove outside Sāvatthī. Did the venerable Mahā Moggallāna approach the Blessed One by means of spiritual power, or did the Blessed One approach the venerable Mahā Moggallāna by means of spiritual power?” [276]

7 “I did not approach the Blessed One by means of spiritual power, avuso, nor did the Blessed One approach me by means of spiritual power.

Rather, the Blessed One cleared his divine eye and divine ear element to communicate with me, and I cleared my divine eye and divine ear element to communicate with the Blessed One.”³⁸

8 “What kind of Dharma talk did the venerable Mahā Moggallāna have with the Blessed One?”

9 “Here, avuso, I said to the Blessed One:

‘Bhante, it is said, **“One with energy aroused, one with energy aroused.”** In what way, bhante, does one have energy aroused?’

³⁵ That is, in the same room (*ekasmim gabbhe*. SA 2:234,13).

³⁶ *Vip̐pasannāni kho te, āvuso moggallāna, indriyāni; parisuddho mukha,vaṇṇo pariyodāto. Santena nun'āyasmā mahā,moggallāna ajja vihārena vihāsī ti?* In **Viveka,ja S** (S 28.1), Sāriputta similarly asks after Moggallāna (S 28.1/-2:235), SD 33.3a.

³⁷ The dwelling is said to be “gross” (*oḷārikena*) on account of its object. For he dwelt in the exercise of the divine eye and divine ear element, which take gross objects, namely, the form base and the sound base. (SA 2:234,20)

³⁸ Comy: The Blessed One purified [clarified] form so that both can see each other, and purified sound so that they can hear each other. The elder, cultivating light, saw the Blessed One sitting in the fragrant cell in Jeta's grove, and with the divine ear element heard him. The Blessed One did the same, and thus they could see each other and hear each other. (SA 2:234,25-235,5)

10 When this was said, the Blessed One then said to me:

‘Here, Moggallāna, a monk with energy aroused dwells thus:

“Willingly, I will let only skin, sinews and bones remain;
let my body dry up, and flesh and blood, too.”³⁹

11 It is in such a way, Moggallāna, that one has aroused energy.’
Such, avuso, is the Dharma talk that I had with the Blessed One.”

12 “Avuso, compared to the venerable Mahā Moggallāna we are like a few grains of gravel compared to the Himalayas, the king of mountains.

For the venerable Mahā Moggallāna is of such great spiritual power⁴⁰ and might that if he so wished he could live on for an aeon.”⁴¹

13 “Avuso, compared to the venerable Sāriputta we are like a few grains of salt compared to a large barrel of salt. [277]

14 For the venerable Sāriputta has been extolled, lauded, and praised in many ways by the Blessed One:

<i>sāriputto va paññāya</i>	As Sāriputta is supreme
<i>sīlen’upasamena ca</i>	in wisdom, virtue, and peace,
<i>so pi pāraṅgato bhikkhu</i>	so a monk who has gone beyond
<i>eso paramo siyā ti</i>	at best can only be like him.

15 In this manner, both these great nagas⁴² together rejoiced in what was well said and well declared by the other.

— evaṃ —

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³⁹ As at **Dasa,bala S 2** (S 12.22/2:28,24-28), SD 63.15.

⁴⁰ Specifically, these powers are the “bases of power” (*iddhi,pāda*).

⁴¹ See (**Iddhi,pāda**) **Cetiya S** (S 51.10/5:259,18-20). On the meaning of “aeon,” *kappa*, here see [2.2.1.2].

⁴² *Nāga* in a figurative sense means “the best or foremost of a kind”; here refers to an arhat: SD 63.14 (2.4.1.1).