

Our Role Model

Ven. Maha-Moggalla Mahathera

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Buddha & His Two Chief Disciples



Ven. Maha Moggallana Mahathera

***"Of those things that arise from a cause
The Tathágata (Buddha) has told the cause
And also what their cessation is.
This is the Doctrine of the Buddha."***



**Moggallana concentrated his efforts on taking
the devotees from Sotápanna to Arahantship**

Introduction –

Traditionally there are ten major disciples who are representative of the different qualities. They are:

- 1. Sariputta - foremost in wisdom.**
- 2. Maha Kassapa (Mahakashyapa) - foremost in ascetic practices.**
- 3. Ananda - foremost in hearing the sutras.**

4. **Subhuti** - foremost in **understanding emptiness**.
5. **Purna** - foremost in expounding the **Dharma**.
6. **Moggallana** (Maudgalyayana) - foremost in **supernatural powers**.
7. **Katyayana** - foremost in **explaining the Dharma**.
8. **Anurudha** - foremost in using the **divine eye (clairvoyance)**.
9. **Upali** - foremost in **observing the precepts**.
10. **Rahula** - foremost in **inconspicuous practice**.

The Buddha appointed Sariputta (Shariputra) as His first chief disciple and Moggallana as His second chief disciple. The roles of the chief disciples are very important. They helped the Buddha with His growing congregation and had three main functions to perform as follows:

1. *To help the Buddha in the consolidation and teaching of the Dhamma for the benefit of men and Divine beings.*
2. *To be a role model for the Sangha (monks and nuns).*
3. *To supervise the training and administration of the Sangha.*

In search of a role model for us to imitate, in our search of our own liberation, I found the two chief disciples: **Ven. Maha Moggallana** and **Ven. Sariputtara** to be the best role models. Maha-Moggallana as one endowed with the Magical power; and Sariputtara on the wisdom. From the story of their past lives and their past performance instances, it becomes very clear to me that the magic power could be achieved through Samadhi meditation. Maha-Moggallana has the magic power much like a Brahma -

A bhikkhu who, Brahma-like, can see in a moment's flash the thousand fold universe before his eyes; who, master of magic powers, can also see in the flow of time the gods' arising and their death.

He found the Teacher willing to give him a intensive course on the vision of Nibbana and thus finally attained the potent magical power of –

- a. Penetrating others' mind and thought reading (telepathy)
- b. The Divine Ear (clair-audience)
- c. The Divine Eye (Clairvoyance, Second Sight, Visions)
- d. Travel by "mind-made body" ("Astral Travel")
- e. Telekinesis (Supernormal locomotion)

Most of all, the ability to realize Nibbana, in spite of all his hellish experiences as his past kamma come to fruition.

Two Brahmin youths, **Sariputta** and **Moggallana**, were close childhood friends and monks following another religious master who had 550 disciples of their own. Growing dissatisfied with their teacher's doctrine, they made a pact among

themselves that whoever would first discover the path to Truth would immediately inform the other. One day, the **Venerable Assaji**, one of the first five monks to join the Buddha, was going on alms round in Rajagaha. Sariputta was very impressed with a deep peace, his calm and composed deportment. Sariputta thought this was no ordinary monk, and requested the name of his teacher. When asked what the Buddha taught, the arahant monk modestly said that he was only newly-ordained and unable to give an explanation in full, but only a brief summary. Sariputta said he only required the substance, the spirit and essence of the teachings. The **Venerable Assaji** spoke the following teaching to Sariputta,

"Everything that ever has come into existence (through causes and conditions), or ever will come into existence, must pass away (when those conditions cease)."

Sariputta, who was clever and highly spiritually developed, perceived the implications of such a sublime teaching through a remarkably succinct formula, needing only a slight indication to discern the Truth. He immediately reached the first stage of sainthood (**Stream-entry**). So grateful was he to the Venerable Assaji that he demonstrated exceptional reverence to him throughout his life. Learning that the Buddha was residing in the Bamboo Grove, Sariputta returned to his friend who, subsequently, on hearing this brief verse, also became a Stream-Enterer. Very soon, both of them, along with their disciples, asked for ordination into the Monks Sangha. Before long, both realized Nibbana, the end of suffering. Later, they became the jewel-pair of disciples of the Buddha, becoming his right- and left-hand disciples, helping propagate the teachings and in assisting the administration of the Sangha community. Foremost in the Order, they were second only to the Buddha Himself. Venerable Sariputta was esteemed for his remarkable wisdom. Venerable **Moggallana was known for his psychic powers**. They passed away before the Buddha.

Moggallana, who was the second (**left**) chief disciple of the Buddha, was instrumental in preserving, cultivating and enriching the Dhamma for future generations. He was also foremost in supernormal powers. Before long he came to be known as Maha-Moggallana or "Moggallana the great", so as to distinguish him from other contemporaries with the same name.

There were many monks who were highly skilled in various supernormal powers. But they each mastered only one or two of the powers. **Anurudha** and the nun **Sakula** possessed supernormal vision or the divine eye. The monk **Sobhita** and the **nun Bhadda Kapilani** could recollect many past births. **Cula Panthaka** was skilled in astral travel, while the monk **Sagala** mastered the element of fire and **Pilindi Vaccha** excelled in communications with divine beings. Maha Moggallana,

however, mastered all of these supernormal powers in a comprehensive manner and as such surpassed in excellence these other monks and nuns. His powers were also stronger than those possessed by the nun Uppalavanna, who was foremost among the nuns in supernormal powers.

Through development of the four ways of power (*iddhipada*), Maha Moggallana was capable of a much wider experience in space and time. His knowledge transcended the limitations and boundaries of the normal mind. By developing his mind over an infinite period of time, Moggallana achieved supernormal powers that may seem like make-believe to modern man. Some of his powers and feats have been carefully documented and preserved to help future generations understand the full potential of the mind. There were six types of supernormal powers that Maha Moggallana had developed. They have been outlined briefly with some examples as documented in the texts.

(1) Penetration of others' minds and thought reading

Moggallana, like the Buddha, had the ability to penetrate and read the minds of others and often helped the Buddha by using this trait. One night the Buddha sat in silence in front of an assembly of monks, observing each of the monks gathered in turn, without uttering a word. When morning dawned the Buddha addressed the assembly and said that this assembly was impure, as there was among them a monk who was corrupt.

Moggallana surveyed the minds of each of the monks gathered and saw that one of the monks was corrupt. Approaching him he asked the monk to leave. The monk refused. Three times Moggallana requested that the monk leave the assembly. Each time the monk refused. Moggallana then led him out of the assembly and closed the door. Moggallana then asked the Buddha to recite the rules of monastic discipline (*Patimokkha*) as the assembly was now pure. The Buddha, observing that the assembly was pure, addressed the monks with a sermon on the Monastic Discipline.

The text also refers to an incident where Moggallana had penetrated the minds of 500 of his disciples and determined that they were all Arahants. The monk Vangisa, who was well-known for his poetic language, had

immediately realized what had happened and praised Moggallana's ability to the Buddha as follows:

**"While the sage is seated on the mountain slope,
Gone beyond to the far shore of suffering,
His disciples sit in attendance on him,
Triple knowledge men who have left death behind.
Moggallana, great in spiritual powers,
Encompassed their minds with his own
And searching (he came to see) their minds.
Fully released, without attachment."**

(2) Ability to hear sounds that cannot be heard by persons - Divine Ear

One evening when Shariputra came to visit Moggallana, he observed such a serene and calm expression on his friend's face that he questioned Moggallana if he had dwelt in one of the peaceful abodes of mind. Moggallana informed Shariputra that this was not the case, that he had been engaged in a deep talk with the Exalted One. Shariputra then remarked that the Buddha was living in Savatthi while they themselves were many miles away in Rajagaha. He then asked if Moggallana had gone to the Buddha or if the Buddha had come to him. Moggallana said that neither had happened. They had, by using the divine eye and ear, engaged in a Dhamma talk on the mental faculty of energy. Sariputta, observing the supernatural powers of his friend, then proclaimed that so powerful were Moggallana's supernatural powers that if he so wished, like the Buddha, he might be able to live through an entire aeon.

Moggallana also had the ability to hear the voices of divine beings and spirits. For example, a spirit had warned him of the impending danger to the Buddha by Devadatta, who was plotting to kill him. Moggallana also often visited the heavens and lower worlds and asked the beings that dwelt there about the actions that they had performed to obtain such birth. He then conveyed this information to his disciples to encourage them to perform wholesome deeds and refrain from unwholesome deeds.

(3) Ability to see things that cannot usually be seen by persons - Divine Eye

Moggallana often used his divine eye to perceive the whereabouts of the Buddha. He also used it to observe other beings. Once when Sariputta was seated deep in meditation Moggallana observed a demon pound his head. He then questioned his friend on how he was feeling. Sariputta replied that he had a slight headache resulting from the blow. Moggallana then praised his friend on his powers of concentration while Sariputta praised his friend on his ability to view the demon which he had not seen.

One such recorded incident occurred when Moggallana and the monk Lakkhana were descending Vulture's Peak. Moggallana, who had observed a peta (unhappy spirit) had smiled. Lakkhana, realizing that Moggallana had viewed something that he had not, questioned him. Moggallana agreed to give his answer when they were in the presence of the Buddha.

As they approached the Buddha, Lakkhana again questioned Moggallana as to why he had smiled. Moggallana replied that he had seen a spirit shaped like a huge snake engulfed in flames, screaming whilst being chased and pecked at by vultures. Moggallana had felt compassion for the suffering being and then relief in the knowledge that he himself would never in the future have such a birth, as this was his last birth. This relief had caused him to smile. Moggallana did not think that anyone would believe what he saw unless it was confirmed by the Buddha. He then went on to explain the kammic cause for such a birth. He said that in a former birth this spirit had been a farmer. He had a field, which he was plowing close to where a Pacceka (silent) Buddha was residing. The townsfolk often crossed his field to visit the Pacceka Buddha. This upset the farmer and he tried all kinds of methods to dissuade the people from crossing his field. The multitude of devotees, however, ignored his instructions and continued to walk over his field.

The farmer had then watched for an opportunity to observe the Pacceka Buddha leaving his residence, whereupon he had destroyed his belongings and burnt his shelter. The devotees were furious when they found out that the farmer had destroyed the Pacceka Buddha's shelter and belongings. They vented their anger on him by battering him to death. The farmer was reborn in the Avichi hell, and after many thousands of years was reborn in Vulture's Peak as the snake ghost (peta) engulfed in flames.

The Buddha confirmed Moggallana's sighting and story by saying that He Himself had viewed the same spirit on the day He attained enlightenment.

Like the Buddha, Moggallana could also view the law of kamma in operation. He could see persons with unwholesome deeds being reborn in peta and asura realms and those with meritorious deeds being reborn in heavenly realms. The Petavatthu documents 51 incidents and the Vimanavatthu 85 incidents that Moggallana had observed and used to help teach his disciples the effects of one's wholesome and unwholesome intentional actions. In fact, with this ability, Moggallana drew many disciples of other teachers into the Noble Path. This resulted in many jealousies among other teachers who lost disciples.

(4) Ability to travel through space - Astral Travel

During the seventh rainy season the Buddha recited the Abhidhamma, the higher teachings, to the Devas in the *Tavatimsa Heaven*, for three months. Using astral travel, Moggallana visited the Buddha from time to time to inform Him of the progress of the Noble Order.

On another occasion when Moggallana was seeking the Buddha, he saw that the Buddha had visited a Brahma realm to shake the arrogance of a Brahma. A certain Brahma was under the false view that as Brahma he was above the Buddha and the Noble Order. The Buddha, seeing this and realizing the potential of this Brahma, appeared on his throne. Moggallana, seeing and realizing the Buddha's intention, joined Him and thus subdued the pride and arrogance of the Brahma. The subdued Brahma was ready to accept the supremacy of the Buddha and His Teachings.

Moggallana also used his ability of astral travel to help Sariputta when he was sick. The doctor had recommended a medicine made of lotus stalks, which were only available in the Himalayan Mountains. Moggallana immediately traveled to the mountains and obtained the medicine required to cure his friend.

It was also Moggallana who brought the Ánanda Bhodi to Savatthi from Buddha Gaya. Ánanda asked the Buddha what could be done to help the many disappointed devotees who traveled to Savatthi to see the Buddha, only to find that He was away attending to another in distress.

The Buddha asked for a sapling from the great Bodhi tree under which He had attained enlightenment to be planted in Savatthi. He then proclaimed that the Bodhi Tree would be a symbol of the Buddha that devotees could venerate in His absence. Moggallana, using his supernormal powers, traveled to Buddha Gaya and brought the sapling.

(5) Mastery of matter- Supernormal Locomotion

The text indicates many instances where, at the request of the Buddha, Moggallana used his supernormal powers to shake people out of their inaction and non-diligence in the Dhamma. On one occasion the monks residing in the mansion of Migara's mother were negligent and slothful. The Buddha instructed Moggallana to instill confidence in them by performing a miracle. Moggallana shook the mansion by pushing it with his big toe. The monks, seeing the supernormal feat and recognizing the powers of Moggallana, went back to diligent practice and attained higher levels of spiritual development.

In another instance Moggallana observed that the King of the Heavens, **Sakka**, was being negligent and embroiled in sense pleasures. Traveling to Sakka's heavenly abode, Moggallana used his big toe to shake Sakka's mansion and thus reminded him of his mortality and the impermanence of all phenomenon. Sakka then went back to a more righteous way of life.

Once the Buddha and His retinue were going through great hardship as the rains were delayed and famine had set in. Moggallana offered to turn the earth so that the rich soil underneath would be brought up and crops harvested. The Buddha declined Moggallana's offer saying that many innocent creatures would be killed if such an act was performed as there were many small creatures that lived in the soil. Moggallana then offered to build a road by using his supernormal powers, between the city in which they were residing and another which was lush with vegetation. The Buddha again declined, saying that they would instead weather out this famine, which would soon be over. These are the only documented instances where the Buddha declined a request made by Moggallana. In general, the Buddha, who had great confidence and respect for Moggallana, supported his decisions and requests.

(6) Transformation of form

The most famous and spectacular of Moggallana's powers was his ability to transform himself into other beings. The power struggle and ultimate defeat of the **King Cobra NandopAnanda** are well-known. The Visuddhimagga describes this battle as follows. On one occasion the Buddha, with a retinue of 500 Arahants, visited the Tavatimsa Heaven. In so doing they passed above and disturbed the divine royal snake, NandopAnanda. In anger he surrounded Mount Sineru with his massive coils and spread his huge hood so that the world below was enveloped in darkness. Several of the monks offered to subdue the enraged snake but the Buddha, realizing the powers of the divine serpent, chose Moggallana for the task. Moggallana then transformed himself into a huge snake and engaged NandopAnanda in a terrible battle. Drawing upon one power after another, appearing in various shapes, he overcame his opponent. In the last phase of the battle he assumed the form of Supanna, a celestial eagle, archenemy of the snake. At this point NandopAnanda retreated in defeat and Moggallana, resuming his form as a monk, brought the subdued NandopAnanda to the Buddha for an apology.

In the Jataka there are many references to Moggallana's past births. In many birth stories the Bodhisattva, Moggallana and Sariputta had been together as brothers, friends, ministers or disciples . There are also recorded instances of other past associations. The Jataka also brings to light the strong bond between Moggallana and Sariputta. For in many instances they were associated and close friends. In general, however, Sariputta was of a higher station than Moggallana though this is more apparent when they were both in animal births. In all, more than 30 instances of their past associations are recorded in the Jataka.

Moggallana's Enlightenment

Moggallana has left a legacy of his experiences in sixty-three verses, which are recorded in the Theragatha. The following emphasize his inwardly-directed efforts, his powers of meditation, his happiness at his friends' emancipation, His experience of the truth of no soul and of the supernatural, and his final deliverance.

**"Living in the forest, subsisting on alms food,
Delighting in the scraps that came into our bowl,
Let us tear apart the army of Death**

Firmly concentrated within ourselves.
Living in the forest, subsisting of alms food,
Delighting in the scraps that came into our bowl,
Let us shatter the army of Death
As an elephant does a hut of reeds.
Then there was terror, then there was excitement,
When Sariputta, possessed of many qualities,
Had been quenched.
Truly the constituent elements are impermanent,
Subject to arising and passing away.
Having arisen, they cease,
Their quiescence is happiness.
Those who see the five elements of existence as other
And not as self,
Have pierced a subtle thing as a tip of hair
With an arrow.
Flashes of lightning fall upon the cleft
Of the mountains Vebhara and Pandava
But gone within the cleft he meditates,
The son of the peerless, Stable One.
Tranquil, still the sage resorts
To remote places for his lodgings,
A true heir of the supreme Buddha
He is venerated even by Brahma.
In but a moment I can create
Ten times a million bodies,
I am skilled in transformation,
I am the master of psychic powers.
A master of concentration and knowledge,
Moggallana, gone to perfection
A sage in the dispensation of the Detached One,
With concentrated faculties has cut off his bonds
As an elephant bursts a rotten creeper.
The Teacher has been served by me,
The Buddha's Teaching has been done,
The heavy burden has been dropped,
and The conduit to becoming has been uprooted.
The goal has been attained by me,
For the sake of which I have gone forth,
From the home life into the homeless,

The destruction of all fetters."

-- (Theragatha 1146, 1147, 1158, 1160, 1167, 1168, 1182-1186)

Moggallana's Last Days

Even though Moggallana had supernormal powers and was an Arahant he did not, unlike his friend Sariputta, have a peaceful death. Moggallana's ability to see into other realms and explain the operation of the law of kamma, together with his extraordinary teaching skills, made him very popular. Many disciples of other teachers were placed in the Buddha's Noble Path by Moggallana.

Ascetics of other sects, seeing their numbers dwindle, decided to kill Moggallana. Unwilling to perform the evil deed, for fear of exposure, they hired assassins to kill Moggallana. Moggallana was meditating in his hut in Black Rock on Mount Isigili on the outskirts of Rajagaha when they made the first attempt. Moggallana used his supernormal powers to escape unseen. The second time too the assassins found an empty hut. On the third attempt Moggallana's supernormal powers momentarily deserted him. The assassins battered and crushed his bones and left him for dead.

Moggallana, however, was the second chief disciple of the Buddha. He was not going to pass away without first paying homage to the Buddha and obtaining permission for his Parinibbána. Gathering his battered body with supreme effort, using astral travel, Moggallana went to where the Buddha was residing and asked permission to die. Then, as was the custom for the chief disciple, he dispensed the Dhamma to those in attendance, performed many miracles to give confidence to the multitude gathered, and passed away to Parinibbána. Moggallana passed away two weeks after his friend Sariputta, in the month of Kattika (October/November).

The monks and disciples were outraged at the untimely death of their beloved teacher. The king ordered an investigation into the murder and caught the assassins, who informed him that they had been hired by Niganthanatha ascetics. The king then had the ascetics tortured and killed, in keeping with the laws at that time for murderers.

The devotees also asked the Buddha why Maha Moggallana had come to such a painful death. The Buddha explained the law of kamma that even an Arahant could not avoid, and spoke of a grave crime that Moggallana had performed in a previous birth.

At the instigation of his wife, Moggallana had murdered both his parents, who were blind, by pounding them to death. His aged parents, who thought that they were being attacked by a band of robbers, implored their son, whom they loved, to save himself. Little did they know that it was their own son, who, in the guise of robbers, had committed this evil act. Moggallana suffered in hell for many thousands of years and had to die a violent death even as an Arahant, for killing one's parents is a grave (garuka) crime, the effects of which are not easily extinguished.

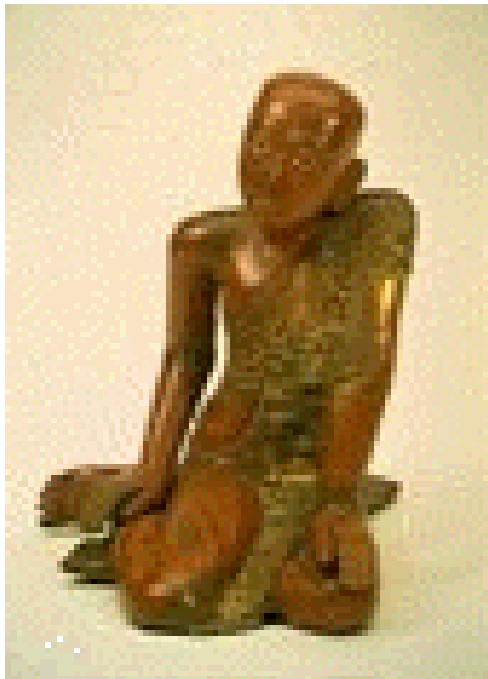
Moggallana's ability to teach and his supernormal powers assisted him in his role of training the Sangha and the multitude. It was also Moggallana who, together with his friend Sariputta, brought the errant monks back to the Buddha when Devadatta caused a schism in the Sangha. He also assisted in the consolidation of the Dhamma and the administration of the Sangha.

Our Role Model

Ven. Sariputta Mahathera



Ven. Sariputta Thera



Sariputta, who was foremost in wisdom, was steady and focused his energies on leading as many persons as possible to the first stage of sainthood, Sotápanna

Sariputta. A name that inspires many in the Buddhist World is Sariputta. Sariputta was the foremost of the two chief disciples of the Blessed One. If Ananda the constant attendant on the Buddha is called the Treasurer of the Dhamma as he was well known for retentiveness of memory, so Sariputta is known as the **Commander-in-Chief of the Dhamma**. In exposition of the Law and for Wisdom he was second only to the Buddha.

Often he was prevailed upon to preach whenever the Blessed One required rest. Once, a Brahmin gave him a severe blow to test his capacity for patience. He was unmoved. Then the Brahmin asked for forgiveness which was readily given. Hereafter, the Brahmin wished him to take the midday meal, which offer was also readily accepted. Could such conduct be equaled save by the Blessed One Himself?

Once, Sariputta was in the throes of a stomach-ache. His friend Moggallana, the chief disciple of the Buddha was present. On inquiry Moggallana learnt that when Sariputta was young his mother gave him unadulterated milk rice with honey in a similar affliction. This was overheard by a deva spirit who lost no time in getting a layman's family who lived on the way to prepare such food on pain of dire consequences.

The layman replied that such threats were unnecessary to offer food to Ven. Moggallana. When Moggallana got the food on his rounds he gave it to Sariputta who was suffering from intense pain. It is said that Sariputta, before he took the food, saw with his divine eye how it was procured and felt that it was not meant for him. Instantly, it is said, the pain disappeared, so great was his Virtue.

His attitude to a seven-year-old samanera is most touching. It speaks volumes for his modesty. Once he was going about with a corner of his under-garment trailing contrary to Vinaya rules. The Samanera pointed this out to him. He promptly thanked him in salutation and put the matter right.

We all know the hearing of a single stanza uttered by **Assaji**, one of the first five Disciples of the Buddha, set him on the road to Saintship. It is said that he always slept with his head turned towards Assaji wherever he was, out of reverence for his teacher. He had a deep concern for Sanjaya his first teacher. He exhausted all his persuasive powers to have him converted to his views by following Buddha. But Sanjaya would not budge. He had a special regard for Rahula and his mother Rahulamata. When the latter was suffering from flatulence, he was responsible for getting a particular mango juice to serve as a medicine. When she was suffering from some stomach ailment he obtained from king Pasenadi some rice mixed with ghee and flavored with red fish to serve as a cure.

When **Anathapindika** the treasurer lay dying he visited him with Ananda and preached to him the sermon called Anatha Pindikawade Sutta.

He was named after his mother Sari the **Brahamin lady**. It was written that the two Chief Disciples should predecease the Buddha. Following custom Sariputta went to his mother's residence at **Nalagamaka** (Nalanda) after paying obeisance to the Buddha. It was on this occasion he is said to have remarked that his mortal eyes would never behold the august feet of his Master again. Samsaric existence was over. At the sick bed, his brother Cunda Samanuddesa attended on him.

It was on this last visit that the conversion of his diehard Hindu mother took place when the four guardian deities of the Deva realm, Sakka and Maha Brahma each in turn, flooding the place with increasing brilliance of light, visited him on his sick bed.

Upatissa (Sariputta) and Kolita (Moggallana)

At the time of the Buddha, in a village called Upatissa, there lived a well-known Brahmin family. The father, Vanganta, and mother, who was named Rupasari, had a beautiful baby boy whom they named Upatissa, after the village in which they lived. On the very same day, in the village known as Kolita, a Brahmin woman named Moggali gave birth to a son whom they named Kolita, after the village in which they lived. The two families were well known to each other and the two boys, Upatissa and Kolita, were best friends.

Both families were wealthy and well respected. As was the custom at the time, each of the young men had a retinue of 500 companions. Upatissa traveled in luxury by palanquin while Kolita traveled by carriage. Both youths led a life of pleasure and luxury.

One day Upatissa and Kolita, together with their companions, decided to attend a festival known as the Hilltop Festival, which included dance, music and drama. At first they enjoyed the festivities and joined in the merrymaking. However, on the third day, reflecting on the fleeting nature of sense pleasures, Upatissa and Kolita decided to give up their wealth and luxuries and take to the holy life of ascetics. At about the same time that Upatissa and Kolita gave up sense pleasures, Prince Siddhartha married Princess Yashodhara.

On hearing of their renunciation some of their companions joined them. Upatissa and Kolita decided to study under the well-known Ascetic Sañjaya. Before long they had learned everything that Sañjaya could teach. Realizing that they had not found the truth they were seeking, Upatissa and Kolita decided to seek other teachers and learn their doctrine in search of the Truth. The friends parted after deciding that they would come back and teach the other, if either of them realized the enlightenment they were seeking.

Upatissa was still searching for a teacher when he saw a monk seeking alms for his noonday meal. The serenity and bearing of the monk impressed Upatissa. Thinking that he should not disturb the monk until after his meal, Upatissa followed him back to the forest grove where he dwelled. He then asked the monk under whom he had studied and if he could teach the doctrine of his master. The monk who impressed Upatissa was none other than Assaji, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha. Assaji informed Upatissa that he was himself a new disciple of the fully enlightened Buddha. He said that he would teach the Master's doctrine, but that being new to the doctrine he would have to be brief.

Upatissa requested that he teach whatever he knew. Assaji then said:

*"Of those things that arise from a cause
The Tathágata (Buddha) has told the cause
And also what their cessation is.
This is the Doctrine of the Buddha."*

On hearing the first two lines of these four lines the spiritually advanced Upatissa attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotápanna. After inquiring as to where the Buddha dwelt he then went back to inform Kolita that he had found the Master who would show them the path to deliverance.

The moment that Kolita saw his friend he knew that Upatissa had found the path to deliverance. There was radiance in his friend that had not been there before. Upatissa confirmed that a Fully Enlightened Being had been born on earth for the benefit of men and Devas. He then explained about His meeting with Assaji and repeated the four lines he had heard. On hearing the four lines Kolita too attained Sotápanna.

Kolita was now anxious to meet the Master. However, Upatissa suggested that they should first go back and inform Sañjaya that a Fully Enlightened Being had appeared so that he too could benefit by the Doctrine. The two friends went back and informed Sañjaya.

Sañjaya, however, did not want to go back to being a student. He had a large retinue and was a respected teacher. Blinded by vanity and ignorance he disregarded the pleas of his former students. Sañjaya realized the wisdom of the Buddha and he acknowledged the supremacy of the Buddha. He asked, "Are there more wise men or fools on this earth?" When Upatissa replied that there were more fools than the wise Sañjaya said, "Then let the wise go to the Buddha. Let the fools come to me."

Upatissa and Kolita left Sañjaya and set off towards Rajagaha, where the Buddha was residing in the bamboo grove. About half of Sañjaya pupils decided that they would join Upatissa and Kolita and follow the Doctrine of the Buddha. The text says that Sañjaya was so upset at seeing his retinue dwindle that he was stricken with illness and vomited hot blood.

Upatissa and Kolita approached the Buddha and requested permission to be ordained. The Buddha ordained the two and preached the Dhamma. On hearing the Dhamma all of their retinue attained Arahantship and joined the order. It took Kolita a week with further instruction from the Buddha and Upatissa two weeks of concentrated effort to realize the Truth. After ordination Upatissa was known as Sariputta and Kolita as Moggallana.

The Buddha then appointed Sariputta as His first chief disciple and Moggallana as His second chief disciple. The roles of the chief disciples are

very important. They helped the Buddha with His growing congregation and had three main functions to perform as follows:

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- *To be a role model for the Sangha (monks and nuns).*
- *To supervise the training and administration of the Sangha.*

When Sariputta and Moggallana were appointed as the chief disciples there arose a dispute among the Sangha. Even though the Noble Order was young, the Buddha had many Arahants in His retinue of monks. The five monks who were His first pupils – [Kondanna](#), [Bhadhiya](#), [Vappa](#), [Mahanama](#) and [Assaji](#), Yasa and his fifty-four friends, the three Kassapa brothers, and many others who were senior to Sariputta and Moggallana. Why had the Buddha not selected one of them? The Buddha then explained that He had not selected His chief disciples. All that He had done was to appoint the persons who had many aeons ago aspired to these positions and worked tirelessly, performing meritorious deeds, to fulfill their aspiration. The fruits of their labor were being fulfilled under His order.

[And so we go back 100,000 world cycles](#) and one incalculable period in time to the era of the Buddha [Anomadassi](#), the 18th Buddha prior to the Gotama Buddha. Sariputta at that time was known as [Sarada](#), and Moggallana as [Sirivaddhana](#). Sarada, unsatisfied with his luxurious life of wealth and pleasures, had adopted the life of an ascetic. Inspired by the radiance of the Anomadassi Buddha, he had prepared a canopy of fragrant flowers, which he held above the Buddha to form a fragrant arbor. The Anomadassi Buddha, accompanied by His chief disciples, [Nisabha](#) and [Anoma](#), attained a higher meditative stage, which He retained for a week. Sarada was so inspired by the Anomadassi Buddha that he remained thus, holding the fragrant canopy, so as not to disturb the Buddha. The Buddha Anomadassi, seeing the merit of Sarada and desiring to inspire Sarada to further heights, instructed Nisabha to dispense the Dhamma to Sarada and the devotees who were present. So inspiring were the Dhamma and the deportment of the chief disciple that Sarada paid homage to the Buddha Anomadassi and [aspired to be the first chief disciple of a future Buddha](#). The Buddha Anomadassi looked into the future and seeing that his aspiration would be fulfilled, [prophesied that 100,000 world cycles and one infinite period into the](#)

future, Sarada would be the first chief disciple, by the name of Sariputta, of the Gotama Buddha.

Sarada then urged his friend to perform meritorious deeds and to aspire to be the second chief disciple of the Gotama Buddha. Inspired by his friend, Sirivaddhana built an alms hall, provided meals and robes to the Anomadassi Buddha and His retinue of 100,000 monks and *aspired to be the second chief disciple of the Gotama Buddha*. The Anomadassi Buddha, seeing that Sirivaddhana's aspiration would be fulfilled, prophesied that he would be the second chief disciple, named Moggallana, of the Gotama Buddha.

The knowledge, wisdom and abilities of the Buddha were incomparable. There was no one in the Sangha who could take His place or substitute for the Teacher. However, the combined qualities of the two chief disciples complemented those of the Buddha. *Sariputta, who was foremost in wisdom, was steady and focused his energies on leading as many persons as possible to the first stage of sainthood, Sotápanna* (also known as stream enterer). This was because once they had entered this stage they would move forward and reach the other stages within seven more births. There was no longer the danger of their falling back or obtaining birth in an unhappy realm. Sariputta felt that he should place as many persons as possible in the Path. Moggallana, the more aggressive of the two, was foremost in psychic powers. Feeling that even one more rebirth was one too many, *Moggallana concentrated his efforts on taking the devotees from Sotápanna to Arahantship*. The two friends continued to work together as one, each drawing on the strengths of the other, for the betterment of men and gods.

The Buddha had the deepest respect and regard for His chief disciples and used them as an example for His monks. He encouraged His monks to associate with and emulate the chief disciples by saying:

"Associate, O monks, Sariputta and Moggallana and keep company with them. They are wise Bhikkhus and helpers of their fellow monks..."

Sariputta

Sariputta was the first (right) chief disciple of the Buddha and foremost in wisdom. His special task was the detailed analysis and systematization of the

doctrine. Because of his deep insight of the ultimate Truth he was responsible for drawing out the subtle implications of the Dhamma and for explaining the meaning of complex teachings.

In addition to his wisdom, Sariputta was well known for his patience, compassion, humility and helpfulness to others. Not only did he help the community and the monks in the Dhamma, but he also provided material help and comfort. When the monks left for their alms round early in the morning Sariputta did not join them. Instead, he stayed in the monastery and made sure that everything was in order. If one of the novice monks had forgotten to sweep out a room or if any item was disarranged Sariputta put it in place and swept the premises. He wanted to ensure that the monastery should at all times be in order so that visiting devotees would not have a negative impression of the Order.

Sariputta's Caring

He then visited the sick hall and provided comfort and medicine for the monks who were sick. Tending a sick monk named Tissa that everyone had rejected, the Buddha had said, "Those that tend the sick tend me (follow my teachings)." Sariputta, reminding the monks of this, encouraged the novice monks to help with the caring and comforting of the sick. If any of them required medicine that was not available on site, he arranged for it to be obtained. It was only after such duties were taken care of that Sariputta went on his alms round.

There are many documented instances of Sariputta's ministering to the sick. His instruction and comfort to Anathapindika are noteworthy. Sariputta helped Anathapindika on two occasions. The first was when he was sick and in excruciating pain. Sariputta had reminded Anathapindika that he was a Sotápanna and as such on the path to enlightenment. He could not fall away from the Dhamma or obtain rebirth in one of the unhappy plains. These words relaxed Anathapindika's mind and gave him great happiness. The excruciating pain disappeared. So grateful was Anathapindika to Sariputta that he offered him the rich meal that had been prepared by his servants to tempt him to eat.

The second instance was at Anathapindika's deathbed. Anathapindika, who had a lot of confidence in Sariputta and respect for him had requested his presence 'out of compassion for him'. Sariputta, accompanied by Ánanda,

had come and given an inspiring sermon on non-attachment. Anathapindika was moved to tears by the profound discourse, the likes of which he had never heard before. Shortly after, Anathapindika died and was reborn in the Tushita heaven as a Deva. That night he came in splendor to Jetavana to praise the glory of the chief disciple. Saluting the Buddha, he said:

*"Sariputta truly is endowed with wisdom
With virtue and with inner peace,
Even a monk that has gone beyond
At best can only equal him."*

The next morning the Buddha told His monks of His visitor and what he had said, without identifying the Deva. Ánanda immediately identified Anathapindika correctly by saying that the Deva must be Anathapindika, reborn as a Deva, as he had great respect for and confidence in Sariputta.

Sariputta's Humility

Sariputta's humility is also documented in the text. When traveling with the Buddha he did not feel that as the first chief disciple his place should be next to the Buddha. Instead, he trailed behind, helping the sick and infirm monks who usually lagged behind. In fact, because of his immense compassion and caring, on one such instance Sariputta was the last to arrive. As all the good accommodation had been taken, Sariputta slept in a tent made of robes. When this was brought to the Buddha's attention He said that accommodation should be arranged based on seniority in the order and dispensed the Tittira Jataka, where in a previous birth the Buddha and His chief disciples had similarly decided that the three of them would pay homage and obeisance to the most senior member.

On another occasion a seven-year-old novice monk brought to Sariputta's attention the fact that his inner robe dragged below his outer robe. Moving aside, Sariputta adjusted his robe, then saluted the young monk and asked, "Now is it correct, teacher?" The Milindapanha documents Sariputta's account of this incident as follows:

*"If one who has gone forth this day, at age seven
Should teach me, I accept it with lowered head;
At sight of him I show my zeal and respect:
May I always set him in the teacher's place."*

Sariputta's respect for his teacher [Assaji](#) who first taught him the Dhamma is an example that all should follow. Each night before sleeping Sariputta would pay obeisance to the Buddha. Then he would look around, prostrate himself and worship a direction. Observing this, the monks informed the Buddha that Sariputta had taken to worshipping the different directions (north, south, east and west). The Buddha corrected their assumption by saying that each night Sariputta looked with his divine eye to see in which direction his first teacher, Assaji, was residing. Then, after paying obeisance to him, he slept placing his head in that direction, careful to ensure that his feet were not in the direction in which Assaji was residing.

The honoring of one's teachers is an integral part of the Buddha's teaching. The Nava Sutta instructs that one should honor one's teacher, especially those who teach the nectar of the Dhamma. The Sutta starts as follows:

*"As the Devas pay devout homage to Indra¹,
So should one revere the person
Through whom one has learnt the Dhamma."*

Sariputta's Patience

Sariputta's patience and forbearance are also legendary. A group of men were praising the noble qualities of the elder when a young Brahmin challenged them saying that the reason Sariputta had never shown anger was because he had never been provoked. To prove that Sariputta, like others, would resort to anger, he walked up behind the elder and dealt him a resounding blow. Sariputta said 'What was that?' and then, without even turning around to find out who had hit him, continued walking. The Brahmin was overcome with guilt and shame at his conduct. Falling on his knees he begged pardon and told Sariputta how he had hit him to provoke anger. Sariputta then forgave the Brahmin. The Brahmin, not satisfied with a verbal pardon, asked Sariputta to come to his home for the noonday meal to show that he bore no malice towards him. Sariputta accepted the invitation.

After the meal, as Sariputta was leaving, he saw that a mob of angry supporters had gathered with sticks and stones to punish the Brahmin. They had witnessed the Brahmin's treatment of the elder whom they loved and respected. Sariputta asked them what the commotion was about. When informed he asked, 'Who did the Brahmin strike, you or me?' On being told that it was the Elder whom the Brahmin had struck he dispersed the angry

crowd by saying, "I have pardoned him. What cause is there for anger when I whom he struck feel none."

Sariputta's caring, compassion and humility won him many friends. He was the chief disciple of the Buddha, second in wisdom to the Buddha. But he was humble, caring and compassionate. He also did not in any way use his position for special treatment. In addition to his close friendship with Moggallana, his childhood friend, he had a close relationship with Ánanda, the Buddha's personal attendant.

Sariputta, who felt that as Chief disciple he should be attending to the needs of the Buddha, was deeply grateful for the respect, care and attention that Ánanda lavished on the Buddha. In turn, Ánanda was deeply respectful of the chief disciple of the Buddha who helped to administer and train the Buddha's large following. When Ánanda gave ordination to novice monks he took them to Sariputta for higher ordination. Similarly when Sariputta gave ordination to novice monks he took them to Ánanda for higher ordination. In this way the two great elders shared a large congregation of monks.

Ánanda also, with the Buddha's permission, often kept choice robes that he received for Sariputta. In the same manner, Sariputta passed on to Ánanda choice offerings that had been made to him. Once Ánanda received a very expensive robe from a wealthy Brahmin and, with the Buddha's permission, kept it for ten days for Sariputta's return. The other monks commented on this deep friendship, saying, "We can understand Ánanda, who has not as yet attained Arahantship, feeling such deep affection for Sariputta, but how is it that Sariputta, who is free of taints, should reciprocate?" The answer, of course, was that Sariputta's attachment was not a worldly attachment but a love and respect for Ánanda's virtues. It is also because Arahants have not eradicated samsaric virtues (vasana gune). It is only the Buddha who has eradicated vasana gune.

Sariputta must have been a stimulating companion for he was sought after by many. What attracted people to him was his deep caring for others, his enormous patience and his exemplary behavior. When Sariputta entered the meditative stage on the void, even the Devas came to pay homage to him. The following is Maha Kassapa's praise of the elder:

*"These many Devas, powerful and glorious,
Ten thousand (Devas), from Brahma's company,
Stand with joined hands worshipping him,
Sariputta, wise marshal of the Dhamma,
The great meditator in concentration.
"Homage to you, O thoroughbred man,
Homage to you, O supreme man..."
-- (Theragatha 1082-1084)*

Despite the fact that he had a large following and was well-respected, Sariputta had difficulties convincing his mother, Rupasari, of the Truth, as she had been taught from birth the doctrine of the Brahmins. Sariputta had three brothers, Cunda, Upasena and Revata, and three sisters, Cala, Upacala and Sisupacala. All six took ordination under the Buddha and attained Arahantship. Cunda was in later years Sariputta's attendant. Despite the fact that Rupasari had such distinguished children in the Order, she herself was a non-believer, deeply set in Brahmin rites and rituals. In fact, she had not wanted her youngest son, Revata, to be ordained, and had planned a marriage for him at a very young age to prevent him from entering the order. However, on his wedding day, when Revata viewed the very old grandmother of his bride-to-be, he became disillusioned and, realizing the impermanence of all things, ran away from the wedding to the monastery to be ordained. His three sisters married, but gave up the household life and became nuns. Their children too entered the order.

None of her children or grandchildren, however, could influence Rupasari. When Sariputta visited the city of his birth with a large gathering of monks, he came to his mother's house for alms. His mother, whilst offering them food, insulted him in front of all the monks by berating him. She said, "O you, eater of others' leavings. When you fail to get food you go from house to house among strangers, licking the leavings from the back of their ladles. And so it was for this that you gave up eighty crores of wealth. You have ruined me. Now go on and eat." She then went on to berate the monks for having her younger son as an attendant by saying, "So you are the men who have made my younger son your page boy". Sariputta, however, did not say a word. He took his food in silence and returned to the monastery.

Rahula, who had been among the retinue of monks, related this incident to the Buddha. Thereupon the Buddha praised Sariputta in front of the assembly of monks by saying:

*"He that is free from anger,
Who performs his duties faithfully,
He that guards the precepts and is free from lust,
He that has subdued himself,
He that wears his last body -
He it is I call a Brahmin (Arahant).
-- (Dhammapada 400)*

We can all learn from Sariputta's great patience, forbearance and humility. The Buddha has instructed us on the respect we should have for our mothers. Sariputta's exemplary behavior is one that we should all follow.

Sariputta's Enlightenment

Sariputta attained supreme knowledge whilst listening to a discourse that the Buddha was addressing to Dighanakha, Sariputta's nephew. The Buddha was teaching the comprehension of feeling and began by explaining the nature of the body. He then asked Dighanakha to contemplate the body so that desire and concern for the body should be abandoned. He then went on to explain the impermanence of all feeling and the doctrine of dependent arising. Sariputta, who was fanning the Buddha, listened to the discourse and describes his attainment of Arahantship as follows:

*"The Blessed One, The Buddha, The One with Vision,
Was teaching the Dhamma to another.
Whilst the Dhamma was being taught,
I lent an ear keen on the goal.
That listening of mine was not in vain,
For I am released free from cankers."
-- (Theragatha 995-996)*

The Buddha repeatedly praised and reinforced Sariputta's administration and handling of the monks. There is, however, one occasion on which the Buddha mildly admonished Sariputta. Sariputta had taught the Brahmin Dhananjani at his deathbed and ensured rebirth in a Brahma realm by teaching him about the four Brahma Vihara: Mettá (loving-kindness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (sympathetic joy) and Upekkha (equanimity). The Buddha questioned him as to why he had not taught Dhananjani further and helped him to destroy all cankers and attain Nibbána. Sariputta, unlike the Buddha, did not have the ability to know the spiritual capabilities of a

person. As Dhananjani was a Brahmin he had ensured that his goal, which was birth in the Brahma realm, was met. The Buddha explained that as a result Dhananjani would need to obtain birth again in the human realm to achieve Arahantship. This shows that rebirth, even in a Brahma realm, is not desirable, as one who has not attained Sotápanna could in a subsequent birth perform an unwholesome deed that could lead to rebirth in an unhappy realm. The Buddha had seen that Dhananjani would have been capable of attaining Arahantship with some well-directed instruction.

Sariputta's Last Days

When Sariputta's life was nearing its end he decided that it was time to convince his mother of the Truth and place her on the Buddha's Path. Sariputta knew that he had to first open her mind so that she would be receptive to the Buddha's Teaching. He also knew that the only way that could be done was by shaking the confidence she had in Maha Brahma. Knowing that the Brahmas, including Maha Brahma, had great regard for him, he decided to go to his birthplace to pass away on the same bed in which he had been born. But first he had to take leave of the Buddha. With his retinue of monks he visited the Buddha and saluted Him respectfully. He then said:

*"Lord of the world, O Great Sage,
I soon shall be released from life,
Going and coming shall be no more.
This is the last time I worship you,
Short is the life that now remains in me
But seven days from now I shall lay
This body down, throwing the burden off.
Grant it, O Master! Give permission, Lord!
At last the time has come for my Nibbána
Now I have relinquished the will to live.*

The Buddha then asked Sariputta where he would attain final Nibbána. Sariputta replied that it would be in the Magadha country, in the village named Nalaka (Upatisa). The Buddha then asked Sariputta to dispense the Dhamma to his younger and elder brothers, as they would no longer have the opportunity to see a Bhikkhu like him.

The great elder then gave a discourse in which he displayed all his wondrous powers. Rising to the loftiest height of truth descending to mundane truth, rising again and again, he expounded the Dhamma directly and with similes.

He then worshipped the feet of the Buddha, embraced them and said: "So that I may worship at these feet I fulfilled the perfections throughout an incalculable period and one hundred thousand world cycles. My heart's wish has found fulfillment. From now on there will be no more contact and feeling. Soon I will enter the City of Nibbána the un-aging, peaceful, blissful and secure, which has been attained by many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas. *If any deed or words of mine did not please you, O Lord, may the Blessed One forgive me.* It is now time for me to go."

The Buddha then forgave Sariputta by saying, "There is nothing either by deed or words that I have to reproach you, Sariputta, for you are learned, of great wisdom, of broad and bright wisdom, of quick, keen and penetrative wisdom."

Immediately after the Buddha gave permission for Sariputta to attain Nibbána the great Earth shook and the skies tore open with a deluge of rain as if the very heavens were crying for the passing away of the great elder. The Buddha then rose and went to His perfumed chamber. Three times Sariputta circumambulated the chamber and paid reverence, and said: "It was one incalculable period and one hundred thousand world cycles ago that I prostrated myself at the feet of the Anomadassi Buddha and made the aspiration to see you. This aspiration has now been fulfilled and I have seen you. At the first meeting it was my first sighting of you. This is my last. There will be none in the future." And with raised hands joined in salutation, he revered the Buddha and walked backwards until the Blessed One was out of sight.

The Blessed One then addressed the Bhikkhus who surrounded Him and asked them to accompany Sariputta on his last journey. At His words all four assemblies at Jetavana left the Master alone and accompanied the great elder. The citizens of Savatthi also joined in with incense and fragrant flowers. A multitude of weeping and lamenting devotees followed the elder. Sariputta then addressed the devotees and reminded them of the impermanence of all things. "Have I not, he said, taught you of the impermanence of all near and dear to us"? He then asked everyone to go back to Savatthi, as the Master was alone and should not be left unattended.

Accompanied by a retinue of five hundred monks whom he himself had ordained, Sariputta set off for his birthplace. It took them a week to travel to Nalaka and on the way he spent one night in each of the different cities, teaching the Dhamma with compassion to the devotees for the last time. Upon entering the city of his birth he sent a message through his nephew informing his mother that he and his retinue would be staying with her for a day, and asking her to prepare his birth chamber and residence for his 500 monks.

He then walked slowly to his childhood home. Rupasari was perplexed at her son's appearance. "I wonder," she thought, "if he has realized the error of his thinking in leaving all his wealth. Perhaps in his old age he has grown wiser and has come back to reclaim his wealth." She then went about preparing for her son and his retinue.

Sariputta approached his mother's house and entered the bedchamber where he had been born. But he was now in great pain and very sick with dysentery. He lay down to rest whilst his brother, the novice Cunda, attended to his needs.

The four leading Devas of the [Catumaharajika Heaven](#), seeing that the Marshall of the Dhamma was about to pass away, descended in all Their radiance to pay obeisance to the Venerable elder. Shortly after, [Sakka](#), the king of the Tavatimsa Heaven, illuminated the whole area and descended to earth, and kneeling before the elder, paid obeisance to the Venerable One. Finally, [Maha Bahama](#), in His full radiance, descended to earth to pay His last respects and catch a last glimpse of the elder.

Rupasari approached her son and questioned him on his visitors. "Who were the four radiant beings", she asked, "who paid obeisance to you?" Sariputta replied, "The four great divine kings, Upasika." "[Are you then greater than them?](#)" asked his mother. "They are like temple attendants", replied Sariputta. "Ever since our Master took rebirth they have been standing guard over Him, swords in hand."

His mother then questioned him on his next visitor who surpassed the four kings in radiance. "That", said Sariputta, "is Sakka, the king of the Devas." "Are you then greater than the king of the Devas, dear?" asked his mother. "He is like a novice who carries a Bhikkhus belongings," replied Sariputta.

"When our Master returns from the Tavatimasa Heaven, Sakka takes His bowl and extra robe and descends to earth with Him."

"And when Sakka had gone" asked his mother, "who was it who descended to your room, filling the room with his radiance?" "That," replied Sariputta, "is your Maha Brahma. The lord and master to whom you have been paying obeisance." "Are you then greater than my lord Maha Brahma?" asked his mother.

"Yes, Upasika," replied Sariputta, "on the day our master was born it is said that Maha Brahma received the Great Being in a golden net."

Upon hearing this the Brahmin woman thought, "How great must be the power and goodness of my son's Master," and she was suffused with happiness, joy and confidence in the Exalted One.

Sariputta, seeing that his mother was now ready to receive the teachings of the Buddha, explained to her the Dhamma based on the virtues of the Buddha. At the end of the discourse his mother attained the first stage of sainthood, Sotápanna. Enjoying the bliss of Sotápanna, she then asked him why during all these years he had not bestowed the ambrosia of the knowledge of the deathless on her. Sariputta realized that his end was imminent. Seeing that his mother was now on the Path to Emancipation, and that she would not fall away from the Path, Sariputta requested the presence of his retinue of monks.

When the monks had assembled he asked Cunda to help him to a sitting position. And addressing the monks, he said, "For forty-five years I have lived and traveled with you. If by deed or word I caused you pain, forgive me, brethren."

And the monks replied that he had never given any cause for displeasure or pain and in turn asked Sariputta for forgiveness for any wrong they may have done. Then the elder, pulling his robe around him, lay on his right side and entered into the nine successive attainments of meditation in forward and reverse order, then passed through the four absorptions, and just as the crest of the sun was rising, at early dawn passed away to final Nibbána.

Next morning when his mother found that he had passed away she lamented at the missed opportunity to perform meritorious deeds for her son. And thus

lamenting and crying at her own former folly spent the morning, for even as a Sotápanna she still had not eradicated all attachments.

After a week of ceremonies and homage a funeral pyre was built of sandalwood with rich arches of gold to cremate the elder. News of the elder's death spread and people from all over came to pay homage and their last respects to the Marshal of the Dhamma. Throughout the night the devotees listened to discourses of the Dhamma until finally Venerable [Anuruddha extinguished the glowing embers with scented water and, using a filter cloth, sifted the relics of the elder.](#)

When Cunda, Sariputta's attendant, informed Ánanda that Sariputta had passed away and handed him his master's robe and bowl, Ánanda became weak and pale with grief over his friend. He addressed the Buddha and said, "Lord, the novice Cunda has told me that Sariputta has passed away. Then, Lord, my own body became weak as a creeper; everything around me became dim and things were no longer clear to me..."

The Buddha then questioned Ánanda as to how this could be, as Sariputta had not taken any of Ánanda's knowledge or virtue with him when he passed away. The Buddha then reminded Ánanda of impermanence and of the fact that He had taught him that all near and dear to us would eventually pass away.

Sariputta's Contribution

Sariputta's enormous contribution as the Marshal of the Dhamma can be understood by his description of his attainment of the supreme knowledge and the Buddha's praise of the elder. Sariputta said:

"It was half a month after my ordination, friends, that I realized in all their parts and details, the analytical knowledge of meaning, the analytical knowledge of the doctrine, the analytical knowledge of language, the analytical knowledge of perspicacity.

These I expound in many ways, teach them and make them known, establish and reveal them, explain and clarify them. If anyone has any doubt or uncertainty, he may ask me and I shall explain the matter." (Anguttara Nikáya)

Sariputta, with this fourfold analytical knowledge, not only excelled in understanding the Dhamma, but also in teaching it so that others could understand. Because of his excellence in the Anupada Sutta, the Buddha declared him to be a true spiritual son and His chief assistant in "turning the Wheel of the Dhamma". The Buddha said:

"If one could ever say rightly of one that he has come to mastery and perfection in noble virtue, noble concentration, noble wisdom and noble liberation, it is of Sariputta that one could thus rightly declare.

If one could ever say rightly of one that he is the Blessed One's true son, born of His speech, born of the Dhamma, formed of the Dhamma, heir to the Dhamma (not heir to worldly benefit), it is of Sariputta that one could thus rightly declare.

After me, O monks, Sariputta rightly turns the Supreme Wheel of the Dhamma even as I have turned it."

There are many discourses and books attributed to Sariputta, which form a comprehensive body of the Buddha's teaching. Sariputta understood in a unique way how to organize and present the rich and deep Dhamma in a lucid manner that was intellectually stimulating and inspirational. He was also responsible for the codification of the Abhidhamma that the Buddha taught in the Tavatimsa heaven to the Devas. Each day the Buddha would come back to earth to partake of His alms food and then would transmit this knowledge to Sariputta. Thus the giving of the method of the Higher Teachings was to the chief disciple who was endowed with the analytical knowledge, who then passed it on to the monks.

The Buddha's high regard for Sariputta is seen again and again. In one instance the Buddha compared Sariputta to a crown prince as follows:

"If he is endowed with five qualities, O monks, the eldest son of a world monarch righteously turns the wheel of sovereignty that has been turned by his father. And the wheel of sovereignty cannot be overturned by any hostile human being. What are the five qualities? The eldest son of a world monarch knows what is beneficial, knows the law, knows the right measure, knows the right time and knows the society (with which he has to deal).

Similarly, O monks, is Sariputta endowed with five qualities and rightly turns the Supreme Wheel of the Dhamma, even as I have turned it. And the Wheel of the Dhamma cannot be overturned by ascetics or priests, by deities or Brahma, nor by anyone else in the world. What are those five qualities? Sariputta, O monks, knows what is beneficial, knows the Dhamma, knows the right measures, knows the right time and knows the assembly (he is to address)."

Sariputta encouraged those in the Noble Order by his wisdom and gentle ways. He said:

"Of restrained conduct, full of mindfulness,
Like a mindful one meditating with restrained intentions,
Vigilant, delighting in inward things,
With self well-concentrated,
Alone, content, him they call a Bhikkhu.
Whether eating moist or dried food,
He should be satisfied;
A Bhikkhu should wander with unfilled belly,
Eating in moderation, mindful.
Leaving four or five mouthfuls,
He should drink water;
This is sufficient for the abiding in comfort
Of a resolute Bhikkhu.
If he covers himself in the proper robe,
Which is for this purpose,
This is sufficient for the abiding in comfort
Of a resolute Bhikkhu.
Just as a rocky mountain is unmoving,
Well-founded, so a Bhikkhu,
Like a mountain does not tremble,
After the annihilation of delusion.
To a man who is without sin,
Always seeking purity,
A hair's tip measure of evil seems
As if the size of a cloud.
I do not long for death,
I do not long for life,
I shall lay down this body attentive
And mindful.

As a frontier city is guarded inside and out
So you should guard yourselves.
Let not the opportunity pass you by,
For those who have missed the opportunity
Grieve when consigned to hell.
Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in
moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet,
speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation,
Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in
moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation,
Not conceited, he shakes off evil characteristics,
As the wind shakes off the leaves of a tree.
Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in
moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet,
speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation,
Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in
moderation, Calm, quiet, speaking in moderation,
Not conceited, he plucks off evil characteristics
As the wind plucks off the leaves of a tree.
Calm, without grief, settled and undisturbed,
Of good virtue, He should put
An end to pain.
Desire for sensual pleasure,
Malevolence, sloth and torpor,
Conceit and uncertainty,
These are the five defilements of the mind for a Bhikkhu.
Meditating, persevering,
Having subtle insight into views,
Having delight in the annihilation of grasping,
Him they call a good man.
Even the great sea, the earth, a mountain and wind,
Are not applicable in simile,
To the Teacher's excellent release.
Keeping the wheel rolling,
Having great knowledge,
Concentrated, being like earth, water, fire,
The elder is not attached,
Is not opposed.
Having attained the perfection of wisdom,
Having great discernment and great thought,

Not dull (but) as though dull,
He always wanders, quenched.
The Teacher has been waited on by me,
The Buddha's Teaching has been done,
The heavy load has been put down,
That which leads to renewed existence has been rooted out.
-- (Theragatha 981-984, 1000 – 1002, 1005-1008, 1010, 1012-1016)

Sariputta's great reputation long survived him. His great work still remains today, preserved and enshrined in some of the oldest books of Buddhism alongside the words of the Buddha.

Last Meeting between the Buddha and Sariputta

- 1. The Blessed Lord was staying in Shravasti in the Jetavana in the Gaudhakuti Vihar.*
- 2. Sariputta arrived there with a company of five hundred brethren.*
- 3. After saluting the Blessed One Sariputta told him that the last day of his life on earth had arrived. Will the Blessed Lord be pleased to permit him to give up his mortal coils?*
- 4. The Blessed Lord asked Sariputta if he had selected any place for his parinibbana.*
- 5. Sariputta told the Blessed One, " I was born in the village Nalaka in Magadha. The house in which I was born still stands. I have chosen my home for my parinibbana."*
- 6. The Lord replied, " Dear Sariputta! Do what pleases you."*
- 7. Sariputta fell on the feet of the Blessed Lord and said, "I have practised the paramitas for one thousand Kalpas with only one wish, to have the honour of falling on your feet. I have achieved that end and there is no end to my happiness."*
- 8. " We do not believe in rebirth. Therefore this is our last meeting. Let the Lord forgive me my faults. My last day has come."*
- 9. " Sariputta! There is nothing to forgive," said the Lord.*
- 10. When Sariputta rose to go, the Lord in his honour got up and stood up on the verandah of the Gauohakuti Vihar.*
- 11. Then Sariputta said to the Blessed Lord, "I was happy when I saw you first. I am*

happy to see you now. I know this is the last darshan of you I am having. I shall not have your darshan again."

- 12. Joining together the palms of his hand he walked away without showing his back to the Blessed Lord.*
- 13. Then the Blessed Lord said to the assembled brethren—"Follow your Elder Brother," and the assembly for the first time left the Blessed Lord and went after Sariputta.*
- 14. Sariputta on reaching his village died in his home in the very room in which he was born.*
- 15. He was cremated and his ashes were taken to the Blessed Lord.*
- 16. On receiving the ashes the Blessed Lord said to the brethren-"He was the wisest, he had no acquisitive instinct, he was energetic and industrious, he hated sin, ye brethren see his ashes. He was as strong as the earth in his forgiveness, he never allowed anger to enter his mind, he was never controlled by any desire, he had conquered all his passions, he was full of sympathy, fellowship and love."*
- 17. About that time Mahamogallan was then living in a solitary Vihar near Rajagraha. He was murdered by some assassins employed by the enemies of the Blessed Lord.*
- 18. The sad news of his end was conveyed to the Blessed One. Sariputta and Mahamogallan were his two chief disciples. They were called Dharma-Senapati — Defenders of the Faith. The Blessed Lord depended upon them to continue the spread of his gospel.*
- 19. The Blessed Lord was deeply affected by their death in his lifetime.*
- 20. He did not like to stay in Shravasti and to relieve his mind he decided to move on*

References :

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