Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda Sutta

The Discourse on the Lion-roar at Udumbarikā

[The Buddha pays back a zealot in his own coins]
(Dīgha Nikāya 25/3:36-57)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Introduction

At the Udumbarikā Wanderers' Park, the wanderer Nigrodha boasts that he could "knock the recluse Gotama over like an empty pot" with a single question. The Buddha answers his challenge in a most unexpected way—by going along with the wanderer Nigrodha's train of thoughts—that ultimately points to "the heartwood" or pith of the teaching.

The Buddha employs the delightful set of similes in reference to the parts of a tree. The full sequence of **the tree simile** comprises:

(1) the loose outer bark (*papaṭika*), ie crust or pieces of dry bark that flake off [§15b]; this word also translates as "shoots, sprouts";
(2) the bark (*taca*) [§17b], lit "skin";
(3) the sapwood (*pheggu*) [§18c], ie the layer surrounding the pith,
(4) the heartwood (*sāra*) [§19c] (lit "essence"), ie the core or pith,[1] and
(5) the root (*mūla*).

In all the passages[2] these similes are found, the various parts are always contrasted with the pith (*sāra*).

This sutta is a good example of early Buddhist humour. It is also an important document on the Buddhist tolerance of other faiths and as such serves as an excellent platform for interfaith dialogue.

This sutta has been translated by T.W. Rhys Davids (1921) [D:RD] and by Maurice Walshe (1995) [D:W]. It contains some challenging Pali words like *go,kaṇṇa* (n7), *ācariyaka* (n8), *adhi,jeguccha* (n9) and *tapa,jeguccha* (n11), most of which have here been differently translated from those of T.W. Rhys Davids and of Maurice Walshe.

KP Jain, in his article, "The Jaina References in the Buddhist Literature" (1926), points out that the practices of "asceticism of loathsomeness" mentioned in §8 are actually the rules of the Jain recluses (*muni*). If this were the case, then Nigrodha and the wandering ascetics (or at least Nigrodha) in the Udumbarikā Wanderer's Park were actually Jain.

2 The Buddha's challenge

The Udumbarikā Sīhanāda Sutta contains one of the most important state of **Buddhist missiology**, that is, the seven statements [§23] towards the end of the Sutta, that is:[3]

(1) "Let whoever is your teacher (*ācariya*) remain as your teacher."
(2) "Let your training (*uddesa*) remain as your training."
(3) "Let your livelihood (*ājīva*) remain as your livelihood."
(4) "Let what you consider unwholesome (*akusala*) continue to be so considered."
(5) "Let what you consider wholesome (*akusala*) continue to be so considered."
(6) There are unabandoned unwholesome states that conduce to rebirth and future suffering.
(7) "By you own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom."

Let me comment on each of these seven points [7.3] as I understand them to be so in the Buddha's time, and in a manner applicable of our own times.

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[1] "Heartwood," *sāra*, ie, the core or essence of anything; the pith or the best of wood—a simile for spiritual strength and attainment. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.12/1:111) = SD 6.14. Here, the Buddha's humour is evident in such a simile given in the latter (D 25.15-19/3:47-53) = 1.4). In **(Saṅgha) Uposatha S** (A 4.190.1b/2:182) = SD 15.10b, *sāra* means "essence," in the sense of accomplished in moral virtue, etc (AA 3:168).

[2] See D 3:51; M 1:192 f; S 4:168; A 1:152, 2:10 = Pug 52; A 3:20; cf M 1:488 where a slightly more elaborate version—incl branches and leaves—is used by Vacchagotta.

[3] For an interpretation in the context of *papañca,* see SD 19.1(7.3-7.4).

(1) You can keep to the religious discipleship or academic training; or, you need not give up your religion or academic training to practise the Buddha's teachings. Even after some followers of other religions converted to Buddhism, the Buddha encouraged them to continue to respect and even support their erstwhile teachers. The best known case it that of the householder Upāli of Nālandā, ex-follower of the Jain teacher, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta. The Buddha admonishes him, "Householder, long indeed has your family supported the Nirgranthas, and please consider that almsfood should still be given to them when they come."[4]

(2) You can continue keeping to training or rules you have been observing, or are used to, while you are practising the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha is not interested in religious identities, or parallels, or similarities, especially where *language* (words, thoughts and expression) is the basis of such systems. The are moral and spiritual issues that you will realize that are beyond comprehension and capacity to resolve: only spiritual liberation can transcend such worldly failures.

(3) You do not need to give up your occupation or means of supporting yourself. You need some kind of suitable livelihood to support yourself and others. The more conducive your livelihood is for spiritual development, the easier it is for you to understand the true purpose and efficacy of the Buddha Dharma. Often enough, the light of the Buddha's truth is so penetrating that we see through our own lifestyles, and realize what to do about it to take that next step up the spiral path to spiritual liberation.

(4) You need not change your opinions regarding what is good. Whatever notion of good that you may have, understandably reflects your own understanding of self and the world. As you reflect on the profound teachings of the Buddha, that understanding matures into greater insight into true reality.

(5) You need not change your opinions regarding what is evil. Your understanding of what is unwholesome or evil is often based on past pains and present conditioning. When you begin to see the universality of such pains and lack as the Buddha has experienced them, you begin to connect to a larger reality, so that your pains flower into compassion and your confusion becomes wisdom.

Religion, education, profession, philosophies and morals—as the above five are—are all secondary to spiritual development. We can have all these five things at their best, but we may still lack spiritual wisdom and liberation. Indeed, these are the very things that could be holding us back from being better than what we are right now. How often these self-approved systems are actually the result of comparing ourselves with others, and defining happiness as *having* things (wealth, status, power, pleasure), instead of truly *being* happy.

(6) There are unabandoned unwholesome states that conduce to rebirth and future suffering. In others, there is still a missing piece in our life's puzzle, a vital piece that often eludes us as we are distracted by the religion of words, wealth, status, power, and pleasure. How often we are goaded on mostly by the fear of loss, the promise of power, the comfort of other-love, or the dependence on pleasure. All that we have really achieved is only a sense of a very private limited self-fulfillment.

Even after having gained all this, we may find the costs are very high and we are still utterly hollow. We wish for some inner stillness, but find ourselves again and again caught up by the storm around us. Sometimes we think we have found something strong and meaningful to hold on to, but the force of the storm is too strong, and we get sucked into the maddening maelstrom again. This seems to be endless.

(7) "By your own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom." We are not able to realize our true goodness, especially when we are always seeking the limelight, the bright lights, of the perceived success of others. Like moths, we mistake the candle for the sun, but the candle still burns and kills. But like Prometheus being punished from bringing fire to the world, we are burned again and again by the flame, moment after moment, life after life. It is all so boringly familiar.

In the dazzling lights of worldly success, we see our shadows darkly cast on the ground. Our shadows are darkest when the lights are brightest. But these are the light of others, and the shadows are false, they are not really us. When we look within, we truly see that the brightest light is right there, ready to shine out from our hearts when the hindrances are removed. This light casts no shadow, but illuminating of true reality.

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[4] *Dīgha,rattaṁ kho te gah,apati nigaṇṭhānaṁ opāna,bhūtaṃ kulaṁ, yena nesaṁ upagatānaṁ piṇḍakaṁ dātabbaṁ maññeyyāsî ti.* See **Upālī S** (M 56.17/1:379) = SD 27.1.

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The Discourse on the Lion-roar at Udumbarikā

(D 25/3:36-57)

[36] 1 Thus have I heard.

Sandhāna

[5]At one time the Blessed One stayed on the Vulture's Peak near Rājagaha. At that time the wanderer Nigrodha was staying at the Udumbarikā Wanderers' Park[6] with a large company of some three thousand wanderers.

At dawn, the householder **Sandhāna**[7] came to Rājagaha to see the Blessed One. Then he thought:

"It is not the proper time to see the Blessed One since he is still in retreat. It is also not the proper time to see the monks worthy of esteem,[8] since these esteemed monks, too, are still in retreat. Perhaps I should go to the Udumbarikā Wanderers' Park and call on the wanderer Nigrodha."

And he went there.

The wanderers

2 Now at that time the wanderer Nigrodha was sitting with a large crowd of wanderers who were all talking loudly, shouting, making loud noises, and indulging in various **low talk**,[9] such as these: talk about kings, robbers, **[37]** ministers of state; about armies, alarms, and battles; about food and drink; about clothing, furniture, garlands, and scents; about relatives; about vehicles; about villages, towns, cities, the countryside; about women and men; the gossip of the street and the well; tales of the dead; tales of diversity [philosophical discussions of the past and future], talk about the creation of the world and of the sea, and talk of whether things exist or not [or, talk about gain and loss].[10]

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[5] §§1-3 parallel **Samaṇa,maṇḍikā S** (M 78.1-3/2:22 f) = SD 18.9.

[6] *Udumbarikā paribbājak'ārāma.* This park belonged to queen Udumbarikā who dedicated to the wanderers for their use. Nearby was the Peacocks' Feeding Ground (*mora,nivāpa*) beside the Sumāgadhā lotus tank (DA 3:835), both of which were part of the Bamboo Forest (*Velu,vana*).

[7] According to Buddhaghosa (DA 3:832), Sandhāna was the leader of 500 laymen and was a non-returner. The Aṅguttara lists him amongst the foremost lay disciples who have six qualities: faith in the Buddha, faith in the Dharma, faith in the Sangha, noble virtue, noble knowledge, noble release. (A 3:451; cf Divyāvadāna 546).

[8] "Worthy of esteem" and "esteemed," *mano,bhāvaniyā* or *-bhāvanīyā,* often used in apposition with *bhikkhū* (D 2:140; M 2:23, 3:36, 3:261; S 3:1, 5:369, 371; A 3:317-322, 5:185, 189; Vv 34.13/49; Miln 129); used of the Buddha, *mano,bhāvanīyaṁ buddhaṁ,* at **Sovaṇṇa,kattarika Ap** (Ap 427.1/2:389). SA comments that "those great elders such as Sāriputta and Moggallāna are called 'worthy of esteem because the mind grows in wholesome qualities whenever they are seen" (SA 2:249 f). See DA 3:832; MA 3:17, 266. **Bodhi** notes that "the expression is a gerundive meaning literally 'who should be brought to mind,' ie who are worthy of esteem" (S:B 1043 n2). **Sadda,-nīti** (Dhātu,mālā), however, gives both meanings of *mano,bhāvanīya*: (1) one who is worthy of being greeted and asked after his health; (2) one who develops his mind (Sadd:Be 330).

[9] *Tiracchāna,kathā*, lit animal talk. As animals mostly walk parallel to the earth, so this kind of talk does not lead on upwards. This section is *mutatis mutandis* as at **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.3/1:178 f). Cf **Lohicca S** (D 1:228). For a fuller list, called "the moralities" (*sīla*), see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.43-62/1:4-12) = SD 25.2 & Intro (3), & **Sāmañ-ña,phala S** (D 2.43-63/ 1:63-70) = SD 8.10 & Intro (3).

[10] *Iti,bhavâbhāva,kathā*, may be rendered as "being and non-being" or as "profit and loss," but according to Walshe, the philosophical sense (as in Horner and Ñāṇamoli translations of Sandaka S, M 76) is preferable.

3 Then the wanderer Nigrodha saw the householder Sandhāna approaching from a distance, and he called his own company of followers to order, saying:

"Good sirs, be quiet please! Don't make a noise, good sirs! The householder Sandhāna, a follower of the recluse Gotama, is approaching. He is one of those white-dressed lay disciples[11] of the recluse Gotama in Rājagaha. And these good folks are fond of quiet; they are taught to be quiet and speak in praise of quiet. If he sees that this company is quiet, he will most likely want to come and visit us."

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent.

4 Then the householder Sandhāna approached the wanderer Nigrodha and exchanged courtesies and then sat down at one side. Then he [Sandhāna] said:

"Good sirs, the way those wanderers outside the faith conduct themselves when they assemble is one thing: they make such a great noise **[38]** and indulge in all kinds of low talk…[*as in §3*]… The Blessed One's way is different—he resorts to a dwelling in the forest, in the jungle, free from noise, with little sound, alone with the winds,[12] away from humans, conducive for seclusion."

Nigrodha's challenge

5 Then the wanderer Nigrodha replied:

"Well now, householder, do you know with whom the recluse Gotama talks? Whom does he converse with? From whom does he find his clarity of wisdom? The recluse Gotama is destroyed by the solitary life. He is awkward in an assembly. He is no good at conversation. Just as a one-eyed cow,[13] walking in circles, keeps to the fringes (of a field), so is the recluse Gotama only occupied with the fringes of things. Indeed, householder, if the recluse Gotama were to come to this assembly, we will baffle him with a single question, we will knock him over like an empty pot!"

The Buddha arrives

6 Now the Blessed One with his divine ear faculty, purified and superhuman [reaching beyond the normal human range], heard this exchange between the householder Sandhāna and the wanderer Nigrodha. And, descending from the Vulture's Peak, he came to the Sumāgadhā Tank beside the Peacocks' Feeding Ground and **[39]** walked up and down there in the open.

Then the wanderer Nigrodha saw him and called his company to order, saying:

"Good sirs, be quiet please! Don't make a noise, good sirs! The recluse Gotama is walking up and down in the open beside the Sumāgadhā Tank. He is fond of quiet, and speaks in praise of quiet. If he sees that this company is quiet, he will surely want to come and visit us. If he does so, we will put this question to him:

'Venerable sir, what is the doctrine in which the Blessed One trains his disciples, and which those disciples so trained as to benefit from it as regard their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life?'"

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent.

7a Then the Blessed One approached the wanderer Nigrodha, who then said:

"Please come, venerable Blessed One! Welcome! It has been a long time since the good sir has gone out of his way [taken the trouble] to come here.[14] Let the venerable Blessed One take a seat. Here is a seat that has been prepared."

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[11] Lay follower, *sāvaka gīhi,* lit householder disciple.

[12] Alone with the winds, *vijana,vatāni*; D:W has "far from the madding crowd." Cf D:RD 3:35 n1.

[13] *Go,kāṇā;* cf *go,kaṇṇa,* "a large species of deer, J 5:406" (PED). D:W has "bison." D:RD and here follow the Comy. Cf *go,maṇḍala va parinesi* ("led around in a circke like a cow"): see Tha 1143 = SD 20.9.

[14] "Please come,...to come here," *etu kho bhante Bhagavā sagataṁ bhante Bhagavato,cirassaṁ kho marisā imaṁ pariyāyaṁ akāsi yadidaṁ idh'āgamanāya,* using the 3rd imp sg *etu* ("Let …come!") as a polite formality (D 25.7a/3:39): so too in **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.5/1:179). This is stock: D 1:90, 179, 2:270, 3:2, 39; M 1:252, 326, 481, 2:2, 30, 3:7; S 1:142; U 13. In **Brahma Nimantanika S** (M 49), Baka Brahmā says: *ehi kho marisā, sāgataṁ marisā, cirassaṁ kho marisā imaṁ pariyāyaṁ akāsi yadidaṁ idh'āgamanāya,* which is cold formality.

The Blessed One sat down on the prepared seat, and the wanderer Nigrodha taking a low seat, sat down at one side. Having sat down, the Blessed One said this to him:[15]

"Nigrodha, what is the subject of your talk that you have gathered together for just now? What is the discussion that is unfinished [that has been interrupted]?"

The wanderer Nigrodha replied:

"Venerable sir, we saw the Blessed One walking up and down exercising his legs[16] by the Sumāgadhā Tank at the Peacock's Feeding Ground, **[40]** and we thought:

'If the recluse Gotama were to come here we could ask him this question: Venerable sir, what is the doctrine that the Blessed One trains his disciples, and which those disciples so trained as to benefit from it regard as their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life?'

This, venerable sir, is the discussion just now that was unfinished when the Blessed One arrived."

The Buddha's counter-question

7b "Nigrodha, it is hard for one, holding a different view, keeping different priority, having a different personal preference [under a different influence], keeping to a different practice, following a different teaching,[17] to understand the doctrine that I teach my disciples (regarding their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life).

Come on, then, Nigrodha, ask me about your own teachings, about what you regard as loathsome,[18] thus:

'And how, bhante,[19] is the asceticism of loathsomeness[20] fulfilled, and how is it not fulfilled?'"

When this was said, a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:[21]

"It is wonderful, it is marvellous how great the powers and virtues of the recluse Gotama in holding back his own doctrine and in inviting others to discuss theirs!"

8a Silencing them, the wanderer Nigrodha said:

"Venerable sir, we live by the doctrine of asceticism of loathsomeness, by the essence of asceticism of loathsomeness, by keeping to asceticism of loathsomeness. Such being the case, what constitutes their fulfillment or non-fulfillment?"

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[15] This episode of the Buddha interrupting a "unfinished conversation" (*antarā,kathā vippakatā*) is stock, eg, D 1.1.4/1:2; D 2.7a/3:39 f; M 119.2/3:89, U 2.2/11.

[16] "Walking up and down exercising his legs," *jaṅghā,vihāraṁ anucaṅkamanaṁ anuvicaramāno,* lit "wandering to and fro on foot and walking up and down" (KR Norman, *Group of Discourses II,* 1992:63).

[17] "Holding a differing view…following different teachings," *aññ a,diṭṭhikena aññ a,khantikena aññ a,rucikena aññatr'āyogena aññatr'ācariyakena.* This is stock: **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9.24/1:187 ×2); **Pāṭhika S** (D 24.2.21/3:35 x2); **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72.18/1:487); **Udumbarikā Sīha,nāda S** (D 25.7/3:40); **Vekhanassa S** (M 80.14/2:43). D:W has "holding different views, being of different inclinations and subject to different influences, following a different teacher," apparently missing *aññatr'āyogena.*

[18] *Adhi,jegucche.* lit "regarding what is loathsome" following CPD. D:W has "about your extreme austerity," following Comy: *uttamaṁ jegucchaṁ* (DA 2:369). See D:RD 3:37 n1.

[19] *Bhante,* found in all MSS, but omitted by both D:RD and D:W.

[20] *Tapo,jigucchā,* defined as "efforts in the burning (*santāpa*) of the defilements" (*kilesa,santāpaka,viriya*) (DA 2:369). See also D 1:174, 3:40, 42 f, 48 f; A 2:200, 205 ff; DA 3:840. There is a wordplay on *santāpa* which means "burning" and "torture, mortification." In **Mahā Sīhanāda S** (D 8.21), the Buddha declares that he is supreme in *tapo,jigicchā*—which Walshe tr as "self-mortification and scrupulous austerity"—that is to say "as regards loathsomeness" (*adhijeguccha*) (D 8.21/1:174), Walshe tr as "the super-austerity": see n on *adhijegucche* above. This is clearly a syn of self-mortification (*attā,kilamathânuyoga,* S 5:421; *dukkara,kiriya*). **The Vibhaṅga Mūla Ṭīkā** in fact says it refers to "mortifying practices such as the five fires, etc" (*pañcâtapa,tappan'ādi,dukkara,kiriyā*) (Be 106). PED wrongly defines as "disgust for asceticism."

In his article, "The Jaina References in the Buddhist Literature" (1926), KP Jain points out these practices of "asceticism of loathsomeness" are actually the rules of the Jain recluses (*muni*). If this were the case, then Nigrodha and the wandering ascetics (or at least Nigrodha) in the Udumbarikā Wanderer's Park were actually Jain.

[21] The assembly is amazed probably because the Buddha has proposed to discuss a topic that is at the heart of their training or system.

The Buddha's reply

8b [22]"Here, Nigrodha, a [self-mortifying] ascetic[23] is one who goes about naked, shows no polite restraints, licking his hands; not coming when invited, not stopping when invited. **[41]**

He does not accept food brought to him nor food specially prepared for him nor a meal invitation.

He accepts nothing from a pot, from a bowl, across a threshold, among the firewood, among the rice-pounders, from two eating together, from a pregnant woman, from a woman giving suck, from a woman in the midst of men,[24] from a food-distribution centre, from where a dog is waiting, from where flies are swarming.

He accepts neither fish nor meat; drinks no wine nor beer nor rice-wine.[25]

He keeps himself to one house, to one morsel (when collecting alms)…to two houses, to two morsels…to seven house, to seven morsels.

He lives on one small serving (of food), or two...or seven small servings a day.[26]

He takes food once a day; once every two days…once every seven days. Thus even up to a fortnight, he dwells pursuing the practice of taking of food at such regular intervals.

He is an eater of greens or of millet or of wild rice or of hide-parings or of water-lettuce[27] or of rice-bran or of rice-water[28] or of sesamum flour or of grass or of cow-dung,

He lives on forest roots and fruits, or on windfalls as food.

He clothes himself in hemp; in hemp-mixed cloth; in shrouds;[29] in refuse rags; in tree bark; in antelope hide; in strips of antelope hide; in kusa-grass fabric; in bark fabric; in wood-shaving fabric; in a human-hair cloak; in animal wool; in owl's wings.

He pulls out (his) hair and beard, and is devoted to this practice.

He stands continuously, rejecting seats.

He squats continuously, and is devoted to such a posture.

He uses a bed of spikes, making it his bed.

[30]*He makes a plank his bed.*

He makes the hard stony ground his bed.

He lies on one side only covered in dirt and mud.

He lies in the open on whatever groundsheet there is.

He lives on dirt, devoting himself to eating dirt.

He does not drink [cold water], devoting himself to not drinking [cold] water.[31]

He engages in [the ritual of] bathing in water three times a day, the third one in the evening.[32]

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[22] This whole section is a stock passage: **(Kassapa) Mahā Sīhanāda S** (D 8.14/1:166), **Mahā Sīhanāda S** (M 12.45/1:77). In **Kandaraka S** (M 51.8/1:342 f) and **Apaṇnaka S** (M 60.36/1:412), this is the description of one intent of self-torment, but the practices listed towards the end differ from the D stock phrase. In his article, "The Jaina References in the Buddhist Literature," Kamta Prasad Jain points out that the descriptions and rules in section are actually those of a Jaina recluse (*muni*) (*Indian Historical Quarterly* 2,4 1926.12:698-709). See foll n & Introd above.

[23] Ascetic, *tapassī,* that is, one who practises *tapa*, religious austerities or self-mortification. Here probably a Jain ascetic is meant. See prec n.

[24] *Puris'antara'gatā.* This phrase is used to define *gihi,gata,* "gone to a householder" (V 4:322); defines *itthi,* "woman" at MA 2:209, DA 78. Comys say that this is a danger to their pleasure (as such putting the ascetic at a dis-advantage).

[25] "Rice-wine," *thus'odaka,* lit "rice chaff." My tr is contextual and following Comy; M:ÑB has "fermented brew." See D:RD 1:229 n2, D:W n196.

[26] "Small serving," *datti.* Comy says that a *datti* is a small bowlful from which they leave out the main food (MA 2:45).

[27] "Water-lettuce," *haṭa,* a kind of water-plant, Pistia stratiotes (PED) of the Arales order.

[28] "Rice-water," *ācāma*, or according to Comy "burnt rice remnants in a pot."

[29] Shrouds collected from corpses in a charnel ground.

[30] Practices listed from here until "devoting himself to not drink [cold] water" are not listed in M stock passage.

[31] *Apānaka,* lit "non-drinker." I follow Walshe in the amplification. This practice probably refers to those who (like the Jain monks) do not drink cold water because of living beings in it. (D:W n200).

—What do you think, Nigrodha, is the asceticism of loathsomeness fulfilled or not?"

"Indeed, venerable sir, it is fulfilled."

"But, Nigrodha, this asceticism of loathsomeness has various imperfections, I say!"

Imperfections of the asceticism of loathsomeness

9 "In what way, venerable sir, do you say that it has various imperfections?"

"Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises a certain austerity. As a result, he rejoices thinking that he has won his goal—this, Nigrodha, is a fault in that ascetic.

Furthermore, Nigrodha, in so doing, he elevates himself and disparages others….

Or, Nigrodha, he becomes intoxicated with conceit, infatuated and heedless—this, Nigrodha, **[43]** is a fault in the ascetic.

10 Furthermore, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises a certain austerity, and this brings him gains, honours and fame. As a result, he rejoices, thinking he has won his goal…

Or, Nigrodha, in so doing, he elevates himself and disparages others…

Or, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises a certain austerity, and he divides his food into two portions, saying: 'This portion suits me, that doesn't suit me!' And what does not suit him he readily rejects, while what suits him he eats with relish,[33] unaware of the danger, knowing no way out—this, Nigrodha, is a fault in that ascetic. **[44]**

Furthermore, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises a certain austerity for the sake of gains, honours and fame, thinking:

'Kings, ministers, nobles, brahmins, householders, religious teachers will honour me.'—This, Nigrodha, is a fault in that ascetic.

11 Furthermore, Nigrodha, an ascetic disparages some recluse or brahmin, saying:

'See how he lives in abundance, eating all sorts of things—that is, these five [parts of a plant], namely, roots, stems, joints, cuttings, and seeds,[34]—how he chews them up with that thunderbolt jawful of razor-teeth of his, and they call *him* an ascetic!'…

Or, he sees another recluse or brahmin being patronized, honoured, respected, worshipped by families, and he thinks:

'They are patronizing that fellow living in luxury, but they do not patronize me who lives a rough life!" Thus he is envious and jealous because of those householders…

Furthermore, an ascetic sits in a prominent position…

Or, he goes about ostentatiously[35] among the families, as if to say: 'Look at my asceticism! Look at my asceticism!'… **[45]**

Or, he behaves in an underhand way. On being asked: 'Do you approve of this?', when he does not approve, he says, 'I do', or when he does approve, he says, 'I do not'. In this way, he becomes a conscious liar—this, Nigrodha, is a fault in that ascetic.

12 Furthermore, an ascetic, when the Tathāgata or a Tathāgata's disciple presents the Dharma in a way that deserves his assent, withholds his assent…

Or, he is angry and ill-tempered…

Or, he is mean and spiteful, envious and jealous, crafty and deceitful, obstinate and proud, with evil desires and under their sway, holding wrong views and given to extreme opinions; stuck in worldliness, firmly holding on to it, unable to let go—this, Nigrodha, is a fault in that ascetic.

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[32] Apparently to wash away his sins as related in **Saṅgārava S** (S 7.21/1:183). This whole passage [§8b] is at **Apaṇṇaka S** (M 60.36/1:412) = SD 35.5, where this last sentence is replaced by "This is called the person who torments himself and is intent on tormenting himself." (M 60.36/1:412)

[33] Read *ajjhopanno* (see CPD), "being addicted to, being enthralled by," (to enjoy doing something) with relish. PTS has *ajjhāpanna*, "with guilt," guiltily.

[34] Cf Brahmajāla S where the Buddha states that he does not destroy plants propagated from any of these five (D 1.1.11).

[35] There are difficulties with *adassayamāno* (which D:RD renders as "furtively"). The Sub-Comy, according to D:W, explains its meaning as *ādassamāno* ("showing off"). I follow D:W here.

What do you think, Nigrodha: are these things imperfections in the asceticism of loathsomeness or not?"

"Certainly they are, venerable sir. It is possible, venerable sir, that a certain ascetic might have all these imperfections, what is there to say of any other!"

The purified ascetic

13 Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic practises a certain austerity. As a result, he does not rejoice when he has not won his goal. That being the case **[46]** to that extent he is purified.

Furthermore, Nigrodha, in so doing, he does not elevate himself nor disparage others…[§10 *with the proper changes*]…

14 Furthermore, Nigrodha, an ascetic does not disparage some recluse or brahmin, saying:

[47] 'See how he lives in abundance, eating all sorts of things…[see §11 *with the proper changes*]

Or, he does not behave in an underhand way. On being asked: 'Do you approve of this?' when he does not approve, he says, 'I do not', or when he does approve, he says, 'I do'. In this way, he is not a conscious liar—to that extent, he is purified.

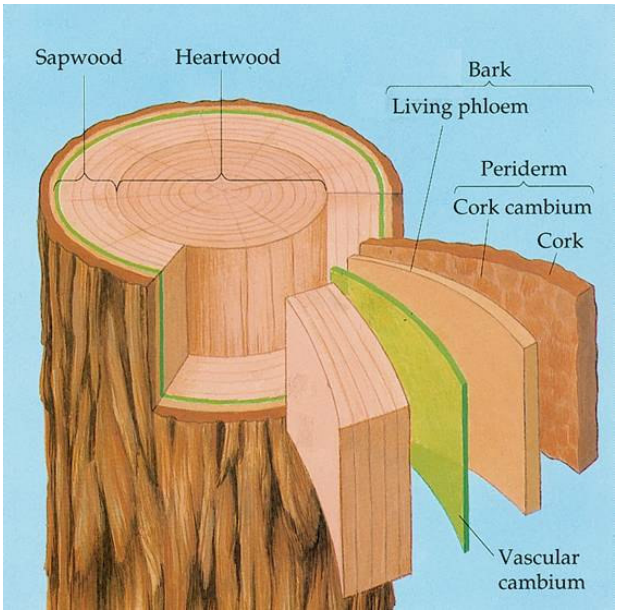
15a Furthermore, an ascetic, when the Tathāgata or a Tathāgata's disciple presents the Dharma in a way that deserves his assent, he gives his assent…

Or, he is not angry nor ill-tempered…

Or, he is not mean nor spiteful, envious and jealous, crafty and deceitful, obstinate and **[48]** proud; he is without evil desires and not under their sway; he has no wrong views and is not given to extreme opinions; he is not stuck in worldliness, does not hold on to it, able to let go—to that extent, he is purified.

What do you think, Nigrodha: is the asceticism of loathsomeness purified by these things or not?"

"Certainly it is, venerable sir, it reaches its peak here, penetrating the heartwood."



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ANALOGY OF THE HEARTWOOD

15b "No, Nigrodha, it does not reach its peak there, penetrating the heartwood. It has only reached the loose outer bark!"[36]

16a "Well then, venerable sir, how does the asceticism of loathsomeness reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood? It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One were to cause my asceticism of loathsomeness to reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood!"

The fourfold restraint

16b **"**Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic observes the fourfold restraint.[37] And what is the the fourfold restraint? Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic

(1) does not harm a living being, nor cause any to be harmed, nor does he approve of such harming;

[49] (2) he does not take the not-given, nor cause any to be taken, nor does he approve of such taking;

(3) he does not tell a lie, nor cause any lie to be told, nor approve of such lying;

(4) he does not desire for achievements,[38] nor cause others to do so, nor approve of such desire.

In this way, an ascetic observes the fourfold restraint. And through this restraint, through making this his austerity, he moves upwards [spiritually] and does not fall back into lower things.

The five hindrances[39]

16c Then he resorts to a solitary lodging, a forest, foot of a tree, a mountain gully, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, the open air, a heap of straw. Then on returning from the alms-round, having eaten, he sits down cross-legged and holding his body erect, establishes mindfulness before him.

Abandoning covetousness[40] for the world, he dwells with a mind free from such covetousness, and his mind is purified of covetousness.

Abandoning ill-will and hatred, he dwells with a mind free from them, and by compassion for all living beings, his mind is purified of ill-will.

Abandoning sloth and torpor, he dwells with a mind purified of it, and by the perception of light, mindful and fully comprehending, his mind of purified of sloth and torpor.

Abandoning restlessness and worry, he dwells with a mind purified of it, and by a pacified mind is purified of restlessness and worry.

Abandoning doubt, he dwells having overcome doubt, without uncertainty regarding the wholesome, his mind is purified of doubt.

The four immeasurables

17a Having abandoned these five hindrances, and in order to weaken the impurities of the mind by applying insight, he dwells letting his mind, filled with lovingkindness, pervade one quarter, then the second, then the third, then the fourth quarter. And so he continues to pervade the whole world, above, below, across and everywhere with a mind full of lovingkindness, extensive, **[50]** grown great,[41] measureless, free from hatred and ill-will.

…he dwells letting his mind, filled with compassion, pervade…everywhere…

…he dwells letting his mind, filled with altruistic joy, pervade…everywhere…

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[36] "The loose outer bark," *papaṭika,* ie pieces of dry bark that flake off. Cf §§17b, 18c, 19c. This imagery forms part of a series of similes in reference to the parts of a tree: see Introd. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.12/1:111) and **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.8/3:80) for other applications of the heartwood (*sāra*) simile.

[37] *Catu,yāma,saṁvara,* D 1:57, 3:48; S 1:66; M 1:377; Vism 416. This is the practice of the Jain recluse (*muni*). See Prasad 1926:704 f.

[38] *Na bhāvitaṁ āsaṁsati.* A difficult reading that Comy explains as "he does not crave for sense-pleasures" which D:RD and D:W follows. I have based my tr on Walshe's alternate tr in D:W n766.

[39] For details, see **Sāmaññ,phala S** (D 2.68-74/2:71-73) & **Saṅgārava S** (S 46.55/5:121-126). Both employ colourful similes.

[40] "Covetousness," *abhijjhā = kāma-,chanda*, which is the more usual term (A 3:62; Vbh 378). Alt tr "longing."

[41] *Maha-g,gata,* "grown great" through any of the eight dhyanas (cf D 22.12/2:299).

Having abandoned these five hindrances, and in order to weaken the impurities of the mind by applying insight, he dwells letting his mind, filled with equanimity, pervade one quarter, then the second, then the third, then the fourth quarter. And so he continues to pervade the whole world, above, below, across and everywhere with a mind full of equanimity, extensive, **[50]** grown great, measureless, free from hatred and ill-will.

17b What do you think, Nigrodha: is the asceticism of loathsomeness purified by these things or not?"

"Certainly it is, venerable sir, it reaches its peak here, penetrating the heartwood."

"No, Nigrodha, it does not reach its peak there, penetrating the heartwood. It has only reached the bark!"[42]

18a "Well then, venerable sir, how does the asceticism of loathsomeness reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood? It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One were to cause my asceticism of loathsomeness to attain to its peak, penetrating the heartwood!"

Recollection of past lives: the sapwood

18b "Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic who observes the fourfold restraint…[*as in §§16-17*]… free from hatred and ill-will.

He recalls various **past lives**… There my name was so-and-so…[*as in D 1.1.31*]… I experienced such-and-such pleasant and painful conditions…Having passed from there, I arose there… **[51]** Thus he remembers various past lives with their conditions and details.[43]

18c What do you think, Nigrodha—is the asceticism of loathsomeness purified by these things or not?"

"Certainly it is, venerable sir, it attains its peak here, penetrating the heartwood."

"No, Nigrodha, it does not attain its peak there, penetrating to the heartwood. It has only reached the sapwood!"[44]

19a "Well then, venerable sir, how does the asceticism of loathsomeness reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood? It would be good, venerable sir, if the Blessed One were to cause my asceticism of loathsomeness to reach its peak, penetrating the heartwood!"

The divine eye: the "heartwood"

19b "Here, Nigrodha, an ascetic who observes the fourfold restraint…[*as in §§16-17*]… free from hatred and ill-will.

Thus he **[52]** recalls various past lives with their conditions and details. And then, with the purified divine eye…he sees beings passing away and arising—low-born and high-born, beautiful and ugly, in happy states and in painful states—faring according to their **karma**.

19c What do you think, Nigrodha—is the asceticism of loathsomeness purified by these things or not?"

"Certainly it is, venerable sir, it attains its peak here, penetrating the heartwood."

"Yes, indeed it is, Nigrodha, that austerity is so purified as to reach its peak here, penetrating to the pith. It has reached the pith.[45]

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[42] "The bark," *taca* [cf §15b]. See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.12) and **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.8) for other applications of the heartwood (*sāra*) simile.

[43] As in **Sāmaññ,phala S** (D 2.93/1:81).

[44] "The sapwood," *pheggu,* ie the fibre surrounding the pith [cf §15b]. Cf M 29. See also **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.12/1:111) and **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118.8) for other applications of the heartwood (*sāra*) simile.

[45] "Pith," *sāra*, or "heartwood," ie, the core or essence of anything; the pith or the best of wood—a simile for spiritual strength and attainment. Here, the Buddha's humour is evident in such a simile given in the latter (D 25.15-19/3:47-53) = 1.4). See **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18.12/1:111) = SD 6.14. In **(Saṅgha) Uposatha S** (A 4.190.1b/2:182) = SD 15.10b, *sāra* means "essence," in the sense of accomplished in moral virtue, etc (AA 3:168). Cf §15b. See §18c n.

19d And so, Nigrodha, when you ask: '*Venerable sir, what is the doctrine in which the Blessed One trains his disciples, and which those disciples so trained as to benefit from it regard as their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life?*' [let me say that] I train my disciples in something higher and finer through which they recognize as their principal support and the fundamentals of the holy life."

When this was said, a great commotion arose amongst the wanderers:

"We and our teaching are ruined! We know of nothing higher or more far-reaching!" **[53]**

Sandhāna's retort

20 And when the householder Sandhāna realized that these wanderers outside the faith were actually heeding the Blessed One's word, giving ear to it, directing their minds towards direct knowledge, he said to Nigrodha:

"Venerable Nigrodha, you had said to me:

'*Well now, householder, do you know with whom the recluse Gotama talks?...*[*as in §5*]*…if the recluse Gotama were to come to this assembly, we would baffle him with a single question, we would knock him over like an empty pot!*'

So now that the Blessed One has come here, why don't you baffle him with a single question and knock him over like an empty pot?"

And at these words, the wanderer Nigrodha sat silent, dismayed, his shoulders drooping, hanging his head, downcast, at a loss for words.

The Buddha's admonition

21 Seeing that the wanderer Nigrodha was silent…bewildered, the Blessed One said:

"Is it true, Nigrodha, that you said those words?" **[54]**

"Venerable sir, it is true that I said those words—foolishly, mistakenly, unskilfully."

"What do you think, Nigrodha—have you heard it said by wanderers who were old, venerable, teachers and the teachers of teachers, that those who in the past were arhats, fully self-awakened Buddhas used to talk, when they gather, by shouting, screaming, making a great noise, and indulging in low talk… [*as in §2*]…like you with your teaching?

Or did they not say rather that those Blessed Ones resort to dwelling in the forest, in the jungle, free from noise, with little sound, alone with the winds, away from humans, conducive for seclusion, just as I do now?"

"Venerable sir, I have heard it said that those who were arhats, fully self-awakened Buddhas did not indulge in loud talk nor low talk…but resort to dwelling in the forest…just as the Blessed One does now."

"Nigrodha, you are an intelligent man of mature years. Has it never occurred to you that,

'Having awakened himself, the Blessed One teaches the Dharma of awakening;

having tamed [disciplined] himself, the Blessed One teaches the Dharma for taming oneself

having calmed himself, the Blessed One teaches the Dharma leading to calm;

having gone beyond (suffering) himself, **[55]** the Blessed One teaches the Dharma for going beyond (to the far shore of awakening).

having attained nirvana himself, the Blessed One teaches the Dharma for the sake of nirvana?'"[46]

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[46] *Buddho so bhagavā bodhāya dhammaṁ deseti; danto so bhagavā damathāya dhammaṁ deseti; santo so bhagavā samathāya dhammaṁ deseti; tiṇṇo so bhagavā taranāya dhammaṁ deseti; parinibbuto so bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṁ desetî ti.* Also at **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (D 35.26/3:235). This passage and its Chinese Āgama parallel (T1 = 1.49a26-28 & T11= 1.226a4-7) have been cited as the locus classicus of the Bodhisattva vows, such as that found in the early Mahāyāna work, **Ugra Paripṛcchā**: "The unrescued I will rescue. The unliberated I will liberate. The uncomforted I will comfort. Those who have not yet reached parinirvana I will cause to attain parinirvana." (UgraP:N §2C)—also found in **Avadāna Śataka, Aṣṭa,sahaśrikā Prajñā,pāramitā** (Chin tr Lokakṣema & Chih Ch'ien), **Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra** (Lotus Sutra) (Chin tr Dharmarakṣa & Kumārajīva), and **Karuṇā,puṇḍarīka Sūtra** (with a variant 3rd vow. A differing version of the vow is found in **Dīpaṅkara jātaka, Mahāvastu, Aṣṭa,-sahaśrikā Prajñā,pāramitā** (in the extant Skt and in Kumārajīva's Chin tr), **Pañca,viṁśati,sahaśrikā Prajñā,-pāramitā** (Chin trs of Mokṣala, Kumārajīva, & Xuanzhang) and some Skt MSS of **Lotus Sutra**, thus: "Having

Nigrodha's confession

22a When this was said, the wanderer Nigrodha said to the Blessed One:

"I have transgressed, venerable sir! Foolish, mistaken and inept as I was, that I spoke thus of the Blessed One. May the Blessed One forgive this trangression that I may restrain myself in future!"[47]

"Indeed, Nigrodha, you have transgressed through your being foolish, mistaken and inept that you spoke thus of me. But since you recognize the nature of your transgression and make amends as is proper, we[48] forgive your transgression.

For, Nigrodha, it is a mark of progress in the discipline of the noble ones, if anyone recognizes the nature of his transgression and makes amends as is right, restraining himself in future.

The Buddha's challenge

22b But, Nigrodha, I tell you this: Let an intelligent man come to me, who is honest, trustworthy, upright,[49] and I will instruct him, I will teach him the Dharma. If he practises what he is taught, then, within seven years, he can attain the goal.[50]

Let alone seven years, Nigrodha,…six years….
Let alone six years…five years….
Let alone five years,…four years….
Let alone four years,…three years….
Let alone three years,…two years….
Let alone two years,…one year….
Let alone one year,….seven months….
Let alone seven months…six months….
Let alone six months,… five months….
Let alone five months,… **[56]** four months….
Let alone four months,….three months….
Let alone three months,…two months….
Let alone two months,….one month….
Let alone one month,…half a month….

Let alone half a month, Nigrodha, let an intelligent man come to me, who is honest, trustworthy, upright, and I will instruct him, I will teach him the Dharma. If he practises what he is taught, then, within just seven days, he can attain the goal.

23 Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to win disciples.' But you should not think so. Let whoever is your teacher remain as your teacher.

Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to make us fall from our rules.' **[57]** … Let your rules remain as your rules.

Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this out of desire to make us fall from our livelihood… Let your livelihood remain as your livelihood.

Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this with the desire to establish us in the unwholesome things along with teachings considered unwholesome.'… Let what you consider unwholesome continue to be so considered.

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crossed over, I will rescue (others). Liberated, I will liberate (others), Comforted, I will comfort (others). Having attained parinirvana, I will cause (others) to attain parinirvana." See KAGAWA Takao, "Shi guzeigan no genryū" [The origins of the four universal vows], *Indodaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 30,1 1989:294-302; & UgraP:N 147-151.

[47] Cf Ajātasattu's confession in Sāmaññ,phala S (D 2.99 ff).

[48] "We forgive," *paṭigaṇhāma,* lit "we accept"; here the 1st pl is not the royal pronoun, but the Buddha, on behalf of the Sangha, forgives the transgression.

[49] "Honest, trustworthy, upright," *asaṭho amāyāvī uju,jātiko* (= M 2:44/80.16), lit "not treacherous, not deceitful, straightforward." M:ÑB has "honest and sincere, a man of rectitude" (M:ÑB 664)

[50] This section on the Buddha's "prediction" of realization is also found in **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22.22) and **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.46). See SD 13 & also Analayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The direct path to realization,* 2003:250-257 .

Nigrodha, you may think, 'The recluse Gotama says this with the desire to separate us from the wholesome things along with teachings considered wholesome.'… Let what you consider wholesome continue to be so considered.

—I do not speak for any of these reasons.

There are, Nigrodha, unwholesome things that have not been abandoned, defiled, conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in future, associated with birth, decay and death. It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dharma.[51]

If you practise accordingly, these defiled things will be abandoned…and by your own insight and realization, you will attain the fullness of wisdom."[52]

Māra the Evil One

24 When this was said, the wanderers sat silent, dismayed, their shoulders drooping, hanging their heads, downcast, at a loss for words, so possessed were their minds by Māra [the Evil One].[53]

Then the Blessed One said:

"Every one of these misguided men[54] is possessed by the Evil One, so that not even one of them thinks: 'Let us now follow the holy life proclaimed by the recluse Gotama, that we may know it—for what do seven days matter?'"

Then the Blessed One, having uttered the lion-roar[55] in the Udumbarikā Wanderer's Park, rose up into the air and returned to the Vultures' Peak. And the householder Sandhāna, too, returned to Rājagaha.[56]

— evaṁ —

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[51] *Santi ca kho Nigrodha, akusalā dhammā appahīṇā saṅkilesikā ponobhavikā sadarā dukkha,vipākā āyatiṁ jāti,jarā,maraṇiyā, yesâhaṁ pahānāya dhammaṁ desemi yathā paṭipannānaṁ vo saṅkilesikā dhammā pahīyissanti.*

[52] On the significance of this whole passage, see SD 19.1(7.3).

[53] Like Ānanda in **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.4/2:103). In both cases, it is obvious that "**Māra**" refers to a distracted mind that is unable to comprehend the significance of the Buddha's invitation. If it were really Māra the deity, the Buddha could have easily exposed him. It is interesting to see here that Māra is always dealt with the person himself, and not "exorcised" by another. This further points to the fact that Māra is the distracted mind.

[54] *Mogha,purisa,* lit "empty person." I've followed a safe well-tested translation here. However, while *mogha* evokes more deeply a spiritual lack, "misguided" connotes more of psychosocial errancy. Cf TS Eliot's "Hollow Men" (where "empty men" is also mentioned) which fully brings out the meaning here but lacks emotional connection for those unfamiliar with the poem.

[55] "Lion-roar," *sīha,nāda.* MA says that a lion-roar is a statement of supremacy and fearlessness, one that cannot be debunked (A 4.33, 10.21). **The (Kassapa) Mahā Sīhanāda S** defines it thus: "The ascetic Gotama roars his lion-roar in company and confidently, they question and he answers, he wins them over with his answers, the find it pleasing and are satisfied with what they have heard, they show that they are satisfied, they practise for the sake of realizing true reality, and they are satisfied with the practice" (D 8.22/1:175). The Buddha specifically defines the "lion-roar" as the declaration that the four types of Saints are found only in his Teaching (D 16.5.27/2:152; M 11.2/-1:64 f). The most elaborate lion-roars are those given by the Buddha himself in reply to the naked ascetic Kassapa's question on asceticism (D 8) and in reply to Sunakkhatta's accusation that he lacked spiritual powers (M 12). Other disciples have also made lion-roars: Mahā Kassapa on his ascetic forest practice (M 1:214/32.7; S 2:202/16.5) and Sāriputta on his faith in the Buddha (D 16.1.16-17 = 28.1). In the late **Cakkavatti Sīhanāda S**, a lion-roar is made by the royal sage, admonishing to the king to become an "Ariyan wheel-turner," that is, a just king (D 26.5/3:61). The monk who is foremost amongst lion-roarer is Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja (A 1:23) due to his readiness to answer the questions of any doubting monks.

[56] Comy says that although the Buddha's word was unsuccessful at that time, they benefitted the wanderers in the future (DA 3:844).