

MISSIONARY WORK OF THERA SĀRIPUTTA

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Thera Sāriputta worked together with *TheraMogallana* to propagate *Dhamma*, restore order and faith in the *Sangha*. They won back 500 monks led astray by *Devadatta* by preaching them at Vultures' Peak in Rajgir. They also admonished monks who misbehaved themselves like the monks led by *Assaji* (not the Elder *Assaji*), and *Punnabbasu* of Kitagiri. *Thera Sāriputta* had very good relations with fellow monks. *Thera Sāriputta* repeated to *Ananda* what Buddha often said, 'the whole of Holy life was good friends.' *VenerableAnanda* would give ordination to young pupils and then bring them to *Thera Sāriputta* for Higher ordination. *Thera Sāriputta* did likewise and between the 2 of them, they shared 500 pupils in common. *VenerableAnanda* also would offer robes and other requisites, which he received to *Thera Sāriputta*.

I would like to explain *TheraSāriputta's* disposition or character and insight according to *Tipitaka* literature. *TheraSāriputta* has unique surprised good disposition and insight. Here I would like to advance as many aspects: gratefulness of *Thera Sāriputta*, patience of *TheraSāriputta*, helpfulness of *TheraSāriputta*, and insight of *TheraSāriputta*. Firstly, I will discuss about the good disposition of *TheraSāriputta*. He was well-known that he has gratefulness, patience, compassion, humilit 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.

Patience of Thera Sāriputta

We may see this verse which use to be addressed by all of the Buddha in Dhmmapada:

“*Khantīparamamtapotitikhā, NibbānamparamamvadantiBuddha, Na hi pabbajitoparūghātī, Na samanohoti param vihethayanto.*”

“The best moral practice is patience and forbearance; “Nibbāna is Supreme” said the buddhs. A bhikkhu does not harm others; one who harmes others is not a bhikkhu.”

This verse is one of three instructional verses given by all the Buddhas. While the Buddha was residing at the jetavana monastery, *Ānanda Thera* asked the Buddha whether the fundamental instructions to Bhikkhus given by the preceding Buddhas were the same as those of the Buddha himself. The Buddha replied him that the instructions given by all the Buddhas are the same as the three verses I have given.

First line of this verse is “*Khantīparamamtapotitikhā*”. It means that “*The best moral practice is patience and forbearance.*” It is instructed by not only our Gotama Buddha but also all of the Buddhas. The patience or forbearance is best morla practice. Here we can find that how *TheraSāriputta* was patience in *the Dhammapada commentary* and many places of Tipitaka literature. *TheraSāriputta* was often praised by many people for his patience and forbearance.

Once occasion a group of people in the *Sāvutthi* city were praising *Sāriputta's* patience thus: “our teacher is a monk of great patience and extreme endurance. If he is abused or even beaten by others, he does not feel temper”. A Brahmin who was a holder of false views asked them “Who is this that never gets angry?” They told him “It is our *TheraSāriputta*”. He declared that “That must be because nobody has ever provoked him.” To prove that *Sāriputta*, like others, would be in a temper, when the *TheraSāriputta* entered the city on his alms round, the Brahmin came after him from behind and punched him hard on his back.

The *TheraSāriputta* did not even look round to find out who was the person that attacked him and continued walking on his way as if nothing had happened. When he saw the magnanimity of the *Thera*, the Brahmin was overcome with guilt at his conduct. In every part of the Brahmin's body, there arose the fire of regret. He was very much shaken. Falling on his knees at the feet of *the TheraSāriputta*, he begged pardon and told *TheraSāriputta* how he had hit him to provoke anger. The *Thera* asked, “for what?”. “I struck you. So, to be pardon my conduct on you, I begged.” the Brahmin replied. The *TheraSāriputta* told him “Very well, I

pardon you.” the Brahmin then continued “if you are willing to pardon me, please come to my house for your alms-food.”

The *TheraSāriputta* accepted the invitation. After the meal, a people who saw the assault had gathered with sticks and stones to punish the Brahmin at the Brahmin’s house. *TheraSāriputta* asked them what the commotion was about. They replied: “The man struck you. So, we are going to kill him”. *Thera* asked them that ‘Whom did the Brahmin strike, you or me?’ They replied, “he struck you”. *Thera* said them “Well, if he struck me, he has already begged my pardon. I also have forgiven him. What cause is there for anger when I whom he struck feel none?” Go your ways. The *TheraSāriputta* also calmly made his way back to the monastery. This is described in the *Sāriputta Theravutthu of Brahmana Vaggain the Dhammapada Commentary*. According to this story, we may see his great patience. Even if the Brahmin punched him hard on his back, he did not appear any anger in his mind. He looked after kindly on other.

When *TheraSāriputta* visited the city of his birth with a large gathering of monks, he came to his mother’s house for alms. His mother affronted him in front of all the monks by shouting at him: "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. You have ruined me. Now go on and eat."

She then berated the monks for having her younger son as a helper by saying: "So you are the men who have made my younger son your page-boy". *TheraSāriputta*, however, did not say any word. He took his food in silence and returned to the monastery.

Rāhula who had been among monks recounted this incident to the Buddha. The Buddha praised *TheraSāriputta* 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).

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

Helpfulness of Thera Sāriputta

TheraSāriputta caring or helpfulness is also documented in the text. In the *Devadaha Sutta of Samyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha said himself that “*Sāriputta*, bhikkhus, is wise, and a

helper of his fellow monks.” In the commentary of this sutta, there were explained these words, “*Thera Sāriputta* was a helper in two ways:

“By giving material help (*āmisānuggaha*) and By giving the help of the Dhamma (*dhammānuggaha*).”

Among the bhikkhus *Thera Sāriputta* was excellent as one who helped others. He was ready to help in every way, in small things as in great. When the monks went to a city for their alms round early in the morning, *Thera Sāriputta* did not join them. He stayed in the monastery and made sure that everything was not disorder. If one of the novices had forgotten to sweep out a room or if any thing was disordered, he swept the premises and put it in place. He wanted to always make sure that the monastery should be in order so that visiting devotees would not have a negative notion of the Order.

Thera Sāriputta sometimes used to visit the sick hall and provided comfort and medicine for the monks who were sick. One day, there was a sick monk named *Tissa* that everyone had rejected. The Buddha instructed “who want to tend me should tend the sick monks”. *Thera Sāriputta* encouraged the novices to help with the caring and relieving of the sick. If some sick monks required medicine that was not available on location, he arranged to get it. These are helping by giving material (*āmisānuggaha*) of *Thera Sāriputta*.

When the *Thera Sāriputta* returned from this visiting to the *Brahmin Dhānañjāni*, he has died and has been reborn in the Brahma-world. These are that *Thera Sāriputta* gave the help of *Dhamma*.

In *Channovāda Sutta*, *Thera Sāriputta* with *Venerable Mahācunda* went to *Venerable Channa* who was sick and in great pain to encourage. When he saw the sick monk’s distress, *Thera Sāriputta* immediately wanted to go in search of medicines and suitable foods for him. *Venerable Channa* asked them that “let me kill myself by a knife so that I don’t want to feel this distressing suffering. Please give me the knife!” *Thera Sāriputta* requested him to throw out such thoughts, then invited him to accept suitable medicines and foods from him and preached *Dhamma* that make recovery from the painful suffering. But it was not successful. After they went back from *Channa*, he used the knife. Later the Buddha explained that the *Venerable Channa* was innocent. He had attained arahantship while dying and had passed away into final *Nibbāna*. In These manners, it was that *Thera Sāriputta* would give material and *Dhamma* help together.

Insight of Thera Sāriputta

Here, “I would like to present *Thera Sāriputta*’s insight according to *Tipitaka* literature, I would like to advance as two aspects; good disposition and insight”, now I am going to advance the insight of *Thera Sāriputta* because the first aspect, good *disposition* of the *Thera Sāriputta*, have been done. *Thera Sāriputta* was known as a great wisdom. In the assembly of monks and nuns, *Thera Sāriputta* was declared by the Buddha foremost among those who possessed wisdom; “*Eatdagambhikkhave mama sāvakānambhikkhunammahāpaṇṇānamyadidamsāriputto*. It means that *Sāriputta* is a great wisdom among my follower monks. He was considered by the Buddha as inferior only to himself in wisdom.

According to these quotations or confirmation and emphasis of the Buddha on *Thera Sāriputta*’s wisdom, we can understand that how the Buddha praise the *Thera Sāriputta* about his wisdom. A *Anupada Sutta* is one long eulogy of *Sāriputta* by the Buddha. In this sutta, we may know that *Thera Sāriputta* was praised concerning his wisdom by the Buddha as follow:

“*Proficient, monks, is Sāriputta; of great wisdom, monks, is Sāriputta; of wide wisdom, monks, is Sāriputta; of bright wisdom, monks, is Sāriputta; of swift wisdom, monks, is Sāriputta; of acute wisdom, monks, is Sāriputta; of piercing wisdom, monks, is Sāriputta.*”

He is there held up as the supreme example of the perfect disciple, risen to mastery and perfection in noble virtue, noble concentration, noble perception, noble deliverance.

Buddha Ghosa Thera in *Atthasālinī* said that the way to teach *Abhidhamma* was started by the *Thera Sāriputta*. Basic architecture of *Abhidhamma* originated from the Buddha. The actual working out of the details and the prototypes of the texts themselves are to be ascribed to the illustrious *Thera Sāriputta* and his follower of 500 monks. The *Thera Sāriputta* is ascribed as an order of the *Abhidhamma* discourse. In other early Buddhist schools, too, the *Abhidhamma* is closely connected with the *Thera Sāriputta*, who in some traditions is regarded as the literal author of *Abhidhamma* treatises. According to these commentaries, we may know *Thera Sāriputta*’s extensive insight and wisdom. For example, Debating

With *Kundalakesa* also highlight his great wisdom. *Kundalakesa*, she was born in Rajagaha. One day, she saw a thief being led to the place of his capital punishment through the window of her home and fell in love with him at first sight. She was married with him. One day, he wanted to push her over a high cliff to steal her valuable treasure. But finally,

she pushed him over a high cliff. She did not want to return to lay life and entered the order of Jains as an ascetic. When she was ordained, her hair was torn out at the roots. Her hair grew again, and it was very curly. So she was called as a *Kundalakesa* (Curly-hair). *Kundalakesa* was not satisfied by the Jain doctrine. That is why she became a solitary wandering ascetic. For fifty years she traveled throughout ancient India and visited many spiritual teachers. In that way, she accrued a wide-ranging knowledge of religious scriptures and philosophies. With her knowledge, she became one of the foremost debaters of her time. Whenever she entered a town, she would make a sand-pile and stick a rose-apple branch into it. This would challenge whoever was interested in a debate to trample upon the sand-pile.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, *Venerable Sariputta* was well-known as his missionary works such as, 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. In the world, to find out grateful person as *Thera Sariputta* is very difficult. We should practice ourselves to be grateful person on our supporters or helpers who have done good things for us such as teaching, supporting, and helping etc... Compassion and loving-kindness are also one of very important things in our life. If all most people would have them, our world will be peaceful without fighting each other. So, we should have compassion and help with it when we see someone who face some problem and need something from our hands. And as a *Thera Sāriputta*, we should try to more develop our loving-kindness to other and should help them kindly with loving-kindness by understanding that all of beings all over the world want to get and possess wonderful and peaceful life with their family.

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