

The Buddha's Truly Praiseworthy Qualities

According to the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* and Its Chinese Parallel

Abstract

With the present article, I intend to explore the potential of comparative studies between discourses from the Pāli Nikāyas and their parallels in the Chinese Āgamas, taking up the Madhyama-āgama counterpart to the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* of the Majjhima-nikāya as an example. An annotated translation of the Madhyama-āgama discourse is followed by a comparative study of some differences between the two versions.

Introduction

The central theme of the *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta* is the praiseworthiness of the Buddha, a topic the discourse approaches from two perspectives by first delineating those qualities that a contemporary *paribbājaka* like Sakuludāyī would consider praiseworthy, followed by contrasting these to those qualities of the Buddha that truly deserve praise.

The *Mahāsakuludāyi-sutta*, found as the seventy-seventh discourse in the Majjhima-nikāya, has a counterpart in the two hundred and seventh discourse in the Madhyama-āgama preserved in Chinese translation,¹ a translation undertaken by Gautama Saṅghadeva during the period A.D. 397–398, based on a written original read out to him by Saṅgharakṣa. Daoci (道慈) acted as the scribe, assisted by Libao (李寶) and Kanghua (康化).² The original used for the translation appears to

¹M 77 at M II 1–22 and MĀ 207 at T I 781b–783c. In order to facilitate comparison between the two versions, in my translation of MĀ 207 I adopt the paragraph numbering used in Ñāṇamoli (1995: 629–47). For the same reason, I employ Pāli terminology throughout, without thereby intending to take a position on the original language of the Madhyama-āgama.

²T I 809b26.

have been in a Prakrit and with considerable probability stems from a Sarvāstivāda tradition.³

Translation

Discourse to Sakuludāyī⁴

1. Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha, staying in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Feeding Place, in the company of a great congregation of one thousand two hundred and fifty monks who were observing the rains retreat.⁵

3. When the night was over, at dawn, the Blessed One put on his robes, took his bowl and entered Rājagaha to collect alms.⁶ Having collected alms [and partaken of them], he put away his [outer] robe and bowl, washed his hands and feet, put the sitting mat over his shoulder and went into the Peacocks' Grove,⁷ a park [frequented by] heterodox practitioners.

³On the original language of the Madhyama-āgama cf. Bapat (1969: 5), Enomoto (1986: 20) and von Hinüber (1982: 250). On its school affiliation, cf. Enomoto (1984), Lü (1963: 242), Mayeda (1985: 98), Minh Chau (1991: 27), Waldschmidt (1980: 136), and Yinshun (1962: 703).

⁴MĀ 207 at T I 781b27: 箭毛經, literally “discourse to Arrow Hair”. According to note 18 in the Taishō edition, 箭毛 corresponds to Sakuludāyī; cf. also Minh Chau (1991: 378). In SĀ² 323 at T II 481c15, the expression 箭毛 recurs as a rendering of *Sūciloma (another version of the same discourse, SĀ 1324 at T II 363c1, uses the more precise rendering 針毛, “Needle Hair”). The name used by the Buddha to address Sakuludāyī in MA 207 is 優陀夷, *ḷuw da ji* (Pulleyblank 1991), thus rendering the name *Udāyī, the form of address used by the Buddha in the M 77. The reasons for the translator's choice of 箭毛 remain unclear to me.

⁵Instead of describing the company of monks that dwelt with the Buddha, M 77 at M II 1,4 lists different well-known leaders of *paribbājakas* who were dwelling at the Peacocks' Feeding Place, Sakuludāyī being one of them (corresponding to paragraph 2 in Ñāṇamoli (1995: 629)).

⁶In M 77 at M II 1,8, the Buddha reflects that it is too early to collect alms and thereon decides to approach the Peacocks' Feeding Place to visit Sakuludāyī.

⁷MĀ 207 at T I 781c4: 孔雀林, “peacocks' forest”, whereas M 77 at M II 1,3 speaks of the *morānivāpa*, the “peacocks' feeding place”. Ps III 235,12

4. At that time there was a heterodox practitioner in the Peacocks' Grove called Sakuludāyī, a renowned leader and teacher of a congregation, very famous and esteemed by the people, head of a great congregation of disciples [comprising] five hundred heterodox practitioners who honoured him.⁸

He was staying with a great congregation that was noisy, agitated and disorderly, giving free rein to a great clamour, discussing various types of animal talk,⁹ namely talk about kings, talk about thieves, talk about battles, talk about food, talk about clothes, talk about married women, talk about girls, talk about adulterous women, talk about the world, talk about spacious districts, talk about the contents of the ocean, talk about country people — they were seated together talking these kinds of animal talk.¹⁰

Seeing the Buddha coming from afar, the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī admonished the congregation, “Keep silent! The recluse

explains that peacocks in this place were under protection and were provided with food, *tasmim̐ ihāne morānaṃ abhayaṃ ghoṣetvā bhojanaṃ paṭṭhapesuṃ*.

⁸M 77 at M II 1,12 does not specify the size of Sakuludāyī's company, nor does it report that he was esteemed by the people.

⁹MĀ 207 at T I 781c8: 畜生之論; equivalent to *tiracchānakathā* in M 77 at M II 1,15. Bodhi in Ñāṇamoli (1995: 1282 note 748) explains that “*tiracchāna* means literally ‘going horizontally’, and though this term is used as a designation for animals ... in the present context it means talk that goes ‘horizontally’ or ‘perpendicularly’ to the path leading to heaven and liberation”. Norman 1994: 91 suggests that “*tiracchāna-kathā* was at one time one example of ... gossip, ‘talk about animals’, on the same lines as ‘talk about kings’, etc., and it then became used in a generic sense, to stand for all such talk”.

¹⁰The listings in the two versions differ. Both mention talk about: kings, thieves, battles, food, clothes, women, the world, and the ocean. MĀ 207 treats the theme of “women” in more detail by distinguishing between married women, girls, and adulterous women. Besides these, MĀ 207 also mentions spacious districts and country people. M 77 additionally lists great ministers, armies, fears, drink, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries, heroes, streets, wells, the dead, trifles, and becoming this or that.

Gotama is coming. His congregation is silent; they always delight in silence and praise silence. If he sees that this congregation is silent, perhaps he will come to join us.” Having silenced the congregation, the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī remained silent himself.

5. [When] the Blessed One had approached the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī, the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī promptly rose up from his seat, arranged his robes on one shoulder and, holding his hands [folded in respect] towards the Buddha,¹¹ [respectfully] said, “Welcome, recluse Gotama,¹² it is a long time that the recluse Gotama has not come here. Please be seated on this seat.”

The Blessed One sat on the seat prepared by the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī. Having exchanged greetings with the Blessed One, the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī sat down at one side. The Blessed One asked, “Udāyī, what have you been talking about, for what matter have you been seated together?”

6. The heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī replied, “Gotama, [let us] just leave that talk; that talk was not profound. If the recluse Gotama wishes to hear such talk, it will not be difficult to hear about it on a later occasion.” The Blessed One asked like this three times, “Udāyī, what have you been talking about, for what matter have you been seated together?”¹³ The heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī replied three times, “Gotama, [let us] just leave that talk, that talk was not profound, if the recluse Gotama wishes to hear such talk, it would not be difficult to hear about it on a later occasion.” [Then he said], “But since the recluse

¹¹M 77 at M II 2,¹³ only reports that Sakuludāyī invited the Buddha to a seat, without mentioning that he expressed his respect by getting up from his seat, arranging his robe on one side, and greeting the Buddha with folded hands.

¹²MĀ 207 at T I 781c17: 沙門瞿曇, whereas in M 77 at M II 2,¹¹ Sakuludāyī employs the address *bhante*, “venerable sir”, and refers to the Buddha as *bhagavā*, “Blessed One”.

¹³In M 77 at M II 2,¹⁹ the Buddha does not inquire three times after the topic of the conversation that had been going on when he arrived.

Gotama has three times expressed his wish to hear it, I shall now report it.¹⁴

“Gotama, we were seated together with many Brahmins from the country of Kosala in a study hall of [these] Kosalans,¹⁵ having the following discussion: ‘It is of great profit for the people of Aṅga and Magadha, it is of great profit for the people of Aṅga and Magadha, that a congregation that is such a great field of merit is spending the rains retreat in Rājagaha, namely [the congregation led by] Pūraṇa Kassapa. Why is that?’

“Gotama, Pūraṇa Kassapa is a renowned leader and teacher of a congregation, very famous and esteemed by the people, head of a great congregation of disciples [comprising] five hundred heterodox practitioners who honour him, and he is spending the rains retreat here in Rājagaha.¹⁶

“[Likewise for] [the congregation led by] Makkhali Gosāla ... Saṅjaya Belaṭṭhiputta ... Niḡaṇṭha Nāṭaputta ... Pakudha Kaccāyana ... Ajita Kesakambalī ...

“Gotama, Ajita Kesakambalī is a renowned leader and teacher of a congregation, very famous and esteemed by the people, head of a great congregation of disciples [comprising] five hundred heterodox practitioners who honour him, and he is spending the rains retreat in this Rājagaha.

“Continuing like this we also talked about the recluse Gotama, [saying], ‘This recluse Gotama is a renowned leader and teacher of a congregation, very famous and esteemed by the people, head of a great congregation of monks [comprising] one thousand two hundred and

¹⁴In M 77 at M II 2,21 the talk about the *paribbājakas* who were staying at Rājagaha constitutes a change of topic from what the wanderers had been discussing when the Buddha arrived.

¹⁵M 77 does not indicate that the discussion happened with Kosalan Brahmins, who in MĀ 207 appear to be visiting Magadha.

¹⁶M 77 does not specify the number of disciples of Pūraṇa Kassapa, etc., or of the Buddha.

fifty men who honour him, and he is spending the rains retreat in this Rājagaha.’

“Gotama, then we had the following thought: ‘Now, out of these honourable recluses and Brahmins, who is respected by his disciples, honoured, worshipped, and treated with respect, not being abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, having no disciples who challenge their teacher [saying], “This is entirely impossible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and saying this they abandon him and go away?’

“Gotama, then we had the following thought: ‘Pūraṇa Kassapa is not respected by his disciples, he is not honoured, worshipped, and treated with respect by them, he is abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, with many disciples who challenge their teacher [saying], “This is not possible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and saying this they abandon him and go away.’

“Gotama, on a former occasion Pūraṇa Kassapa, while being with a congregation of disciples, repeatedly raised his hand and called out, ‘You should stop! People have not come to ask you about this matter, they have come to ask me about this matter. You are not able to settle this matter, I am able to settle this matter.’ Yet the disciples continued to talk among themselves [even] more on that matter, without waiting for the teacher to complete his exposition on that matter.

“Gotama, then we had the following thought: ‘In this way, Pūraṇa Kassapa is not respected by his disciples, he is not honoured, worshipped and treated with respect by them, he is abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, with many disciples who challenge their teacher [saying], “This is not possible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and saying this they abandon him and go away.’

“[Likewise for] Makkhali Gosāla ... Sañjaya Belatthiputta ... Niṅaṅṭha Nāṭaputta ... Pakudha Kaccāyana ... Ajita Kesakambalī ...

“Gotama, we had the following thought: ‘Ajita Kesakambalī is not respected by his disciples, he is not honoured, worshipped and treated with respect by them, he is abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, with many disciples who challenge their teacher

[saying], “This is not possible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and saying this they abandon him and go away.’

“Gotama, on a former occasion Ajita Kesakambalī, while being with a congregation of disciples, repeatedly raised his hand and called out, ‘You should stop! People have not come to ask you about this matter, they have come to ask me about this matter. You are not able to settle this matter, I am able to settle this matter.’ Yet the disciples continued to talk among themselves [even] more on that matter, without waiting for the teacher to complete his exposition on that matter.

“Gotama, then we had the following thought: ‘In this way, Ajita Kesakambalī is not respected by his disciples, he is not honoured, worshipped and treated with respect by them, he is abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, with many disciples who challenge their teacher [saying], “This is not possible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and saying this they abandon him and go away.’

“Gotama, then we had the following thought: ‘The recluse Gotama is respected by his disciples, he is honoured, worshipped and treated with respect by them, he is not abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, having no disciples who challenge their teacher [saying], “This is not possible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and who, saying so, would abandon him and go away.

“Gotama, on a former occasion the recluse Gotama was giving teachings surrounded by an immeasurable congregation of hundreds of thousands.¹⁷ Among them there was one man who had nodded off and was making a noise by snoring.¹⁸ Another man then addressed this man,

¹⁷MĀ 207 at T I 782b₁₇: 無量百千眾; whereas M 77 at M II 4,34 just speaks of a company of several hundred, *anekasatāya parisāya*.

¹⁸MĀ 207 at T I 782b₁₈: 鼾眠作聲; whereas in M 77 at M II 4,35 a disciple merely clears his throat, *ukkāsi*. According to a description of the conduct of ancient Indian *śramaṇas* attributed to Megasthenes, during the delivery of a discourse the hearers are not allowed to speak or to cough, and someone who does so is sent away for being a person who lacks self-restraint, cf. McCrindle (1877: 99) or else Majumdar (1960A: 273); on the reliability of the information attributed to Megasthenes, cf. also the discussion between Majumdar

saying, ‘Don’t make a noise by snoring while nodding off! Don’t you want to hear the sublime teachings taught by the Blessed One, which are like the deathless?’ That other man immediately became quiet and made no [more] noise.¹⁹

“Gotama, then we had the following thought: ‘In this way this recluse Gotama is respected by his disciples, he is honoured, worshipped and treated with respect by them, he is not abused by his disciples with abuse in regard to the teaching, having no disciples who challenge their teacher [saying], “This is not possible, it is not proper, it does not fit”, and who, saying so, would abandon him and go away.’”

7. Having heard this, the Blessed One asked the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī, “Udāyī, how many qualities do you see in me, owing to which my disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking away?”

8. The heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī said, “Gotama, I see five qualities in Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking off. What are the five?²⁰

“The recluse Gotama is contented with coarse robes and praises contentment with coarse robes. That the recluse Gotama is contented

(1958) and Sethna (1960), with a rejoinder in Majumdar (1960B). The description of a disciple who is admonished for clearing his throat recurs in M 89 at M II 122,10, where the parallel MĀ 213 at T I 797a18 again indicates that the disciple was actually snoring, while a parallel to the same discourse in the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, T 1451 at T XXIV 238a26, agrees with the Pāli version that he merely cleared his throat.

¹⁹M 77 at M II 5,2 continues at this point by describing that whenever the Buddha would give teachings, his disciples would be absolutely quiet and intent on what their teacher was saying, comparable to a crowd that watches a man pressing out honey at a crossroads. M 77 also indicates that even disciples who disrobe continue speaking in praise of the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the monastic community, and maintain the five precepts as lay followers.

²⁰The two versions list these five qualities in different sequences, cf. Table 1, p. 149.

with coarse robes and praises contentment with coarse robes, this is the first quality I see in the recluse Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking away.

“Again, the recluse Gotama is contented with coarse food and praises contentment with coarse food. That the recluse Gotama is contented with coarse food and praises contentment with coarse food, this is the second quality I see in the recluse Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking away.

“Again, the recluse Gotama takes little food and praises taking little food. That the recluse Gotama takes little food and praises taking little food, this is the third quality I see in the recluse Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking away.

“Again, the recluse Gotama is contented with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats, and praises contentment with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats. That the recluse Gotama is contented with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats, and praises contentment with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats, this is the fourth quality I see in the recluse Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking away.

“Again, the recluse Gotama dwells in seclusion and praises dwelling in seclusion. That the recluse Gotama dwells in seclusion and praises dwelling in seclusion, this is the fifth quality I see in the recluse Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking away.

“These are the five qualities I see in the recluse Gotama owing to which his disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat him with respect, always following him without breaking away.”

9. The Blessed One replied, “Udāyī, it is not on account of these five qualities in me that my disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking away.

“Udāyī, the robes worn by me have been suitably and perfectly cut with a knife,²¹ and [then] dyed with an unattractive colour.²² Thus [I wear] perfect robes [that are just] dyed with an unattractive colour. Udāyī, some disciples of mine might be wearers of robes made of discarded rags for their whole life. Even [if], saying, ‘Our Blessed One is contented with coarse robes and praises contentment with coarse robes’,²³ my disciples were to praise me because of contentment with coarse robes, Udāyī, [merely] because of that they will not respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, or follow me.

“Again, Udāyī, I [at times] eat cooked rice and grains, without husks, and with a limitless variety of tastes. Udāyī, some disciples of mine might go begging alms food for their whole life, eating what has been left over.²⁴ Even [if], saying, ‘Our Blessed One is contented with coarse food and praises contentment with coarse food’, my disciples were to praise me because of contentment with coarse food, Udāyī, [merely] because of that they will not respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, or follow me.

²¹Adopting the 元, 明, and 聖 variant 刀 instead of 力.

²²M 77 at M II 7,16 does not refer to the colour of the robes, only indicating that the Buddha would at times wear robes given by householders of finer texture than pumpkin down, *gahapatāni cīvarāni dhāremi daḥhāni yattha lūkhāni alābulomasāni* (B^c, C^c *gahapaticīvarāni*; B^c *satthalūkhāni* and S^c *suttalūkhāni*; C^c *alāpulomasāni* and S^c *alāvulomasāni*).

²³Instead of the address “our Blessed One”, 我世尊, used by the Buddha’s disciples in MĀ 207 at T I 783a, according to M 77 at M II 7,2 they refer to their own teacher as “recluse Gotama”, *samaṇo Gotamo*. Here the Pāli version appears to have suffered from some transmission error, as in the discourses the expression “recluse Gotama” is used by those who do not consider themselves disciples of the Buddha. According to Wagle (1966: 56), the address “*samaṇa*, although a term of respect, denotes a certain indifference”.

²⁴M 77 at M II 7,30 additionally mentions that they go on uninterrupted alms round and that they will not even consent to sitting down when being among the houses, *sapadānacārīno ... antaragharaṃ pavīṭṭhā samānā āsanena pi nimantiyamānā na sādīyanti*.

“Again, Udāyī, I [at times] take food equal to a single *bilva* fruit or equal to half a *bilva* fruit.²⁵ Udāyī, some disciples of mine might [at times] take food equal to a cupful or equal to half a cupful. Even [if], saying, ‘Our Blessed One takes little food and praises taking little food’, my disciples were to praise me because of taking little food, Udāyī, [merely] because of that they will not respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, or follow me.

“Again, Udāyī, I [at times] might stay in tall buildings, or in pavilions.²⁶ Udāyī, some disciples of mine might for nine or ten months stay every night out in the open.²⁷ Even [if], saying, ‘Our Blessed One is contented with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats, and praises contentment with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats’, my disciples were to praise me because of contentment with coarse dwellings, beds, and seats, Udāyī, [merely] because of that they will not respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, or follow me.

“Again, Udāyī, I am constantly crowded in by monks, nuns, male lay followers, and female lay followers. Some disciples of mine might join the community only once every fortnight, just for the sake of the *Dhamma* and [to declare their] purity [at the *pātimokkha* recital]. Even

²⁵MĀ 207 at T I 783a4: 我食如一鞞羅食, 或如半鞞羅. This seems to be a textual corruption, since in keeping with the general trend of the exposition one would expect some example of partaking of plenty of food to provide a contrast to the cupful of food taken by the disciples. M 77 at M II 7,1 provides such a contrast by describing that at times the Buddha would eat the full contents of his bowl, or even more, *iminā pattena samatittikam pi bhujjāmi, bhiyyo pi bhujjāmi*.

²⁶M 77 at M II 8,16 describes how the Buddha would at times stay in gabled mansions that are completely plastered and sheltered from the wind by having bolted doors and shuttered windows, *kūṭāgāresu pi viharāmi ullittāvalittesu nivātesu phussitaggā^cesu pihitavātapānesu* (B^c, S^c: *phusitaggā^cesu*).

²⁷Adopting the 宋, 元, 明, and 聖 variant 露 instead of 覆. In addition to the practice of dwelling in the open, *abbhokāsika*, M 77 at M II 8,14 also mentions living at the root of a tree, *rukhamūlika*. These are two out of the standard set of ascetic practices, on which see also Bapat (1937), Dantinne (1991), and Nanayakkara (1989).

[if], saying, ‘Our Blessed One dwells in seclusion and praises dwelling in seclusion’, my disciples were to praise me because of dwelling in seclusion, Udāyī, [merely] because of that they will not respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, or follow me.

“Udāyī, it is not due to these five qualities in me that my disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.

10. “Udāyī, there are five other qualities in me, owing to which my disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off. What are the five?²⁸

11. “Udāyī, there are disciples of mine who praise me for supreme virtue, saying, ‘The Blessed One practices virtue and is of great virtue, he does what he says and he says what he does’.²⁹

“Udāyī, in this way my disciples praise me for supreme virtue, and it is because of this that they respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.

13. “Again, Udāyī, there are disciples of mine who praise me for supreme wisdom, saying, ‘The Blessed One dwells in wisdom and is of supremely great wisdom. If a disputant comes with counterarguments, [the Blessed One] will certainly be able to defeat him, that is to say, [the disputant] will be unable to give [satisfactory] explanations in regard to the right teaching and discipline, and will [even] be unable to [satisfactorily] explain his own proclamations.’³⁰

²⁸The two versions list these five qualities in different sequences, cf. Talbe 1, p. 151.

²⁹MĀ 207 at T I 783a25: 如所說所作亦然, 如所作所說亦然. M 77 at M II 9,16 instead mentions the Buddha’s endowment with the supreme aggregate of virtue, *paramena silakkhandhena samannāgato*. A counterpart to the statement in MĀ 207 can, however, be found in other Pāli discourses, e.g. D 19 at D II 224,3 (repeated at D II 229,25): *yathāvādī kho pana so bhagavā tathākārī, yathākārī tathāvādī*, cf. also D 29 at D III 135,16 and A 4.23 at A II 24,7, who formulate the same principle with the Tathāgata as their subject.

³⁰M 77 at M II 10,5 only treats the abilities of the Buddha in a debate situation, not the inabilities of the opponent.

“Udāyī, in this way my disciples praise me for supreme wisdom, and it is because of this that they respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.³¹

12. “Again, Udāyī, there are disciples of mine who praise me for supreme knowledge and vision, saying, ‘The Blessed One dwells knowing, not without knowing, he dwells seeing, not without seeing. The *Dhamma* he teaches to his disciples is with causes, not without causes; it is with conditions, not without conditions; it is able to [offer] replies [to questions], not unable to [offer] replies [to questions]; it is endowed with [the potential for reaching] deliverance, not bereft of [the potential for reaching] deliverance.’³²

“Udāyī, in this way my disciples praise me for supreme knowledge and vision, and it is because of this that they respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.

14. “Again, Udāyī, there are disciples of mine who feel repugnance towards the arrow of craving and who come and ask me about [the nature] of *dukkha*, its arising, its cessation, and the path [to its cessation].³³ I promptly answer them about [the nature] of *dukkha*, its arising, its cessation, and the path [to its cessation].

“Udāyī, in this way my disciples come and ask me, and I satisfy their minds with my answers and arouse their delight, and it is because of this that they respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.

³¹M 77 at M II 10,8 reports that at this point the Buddha asked Udāyī if he thought that the Buddha's disciples would nevertheless interrupt their teacher, which Udāyī denies, followed by the Buddha indicating that he did not expect to be instructed by his disciples; on the contrary, his disciples expected to be instructed by him.

³²M 77 at M II 9,25 notes that the Buddha teaches the *Dhamma* through direct knowledge, *abhiññāya*, with a causal basis, *sanidāna*, and in a convincing manner, *sappāṭihāriya*.

³³MĀ 207 at T I 783b11: 苦是苦, 習是習, 滅是滅, 道是道, literally: “**dukkha* is **dukkha*, arising is arising, cessation is cessation, path is path”.

34–36. “Again, Udāyī, I explain to my disciples how to attain realization of the higher knowledge of recollection of past lives or how to attain realization of the higher knowledge of the destruction of the influxes.³⁴

37. “Udāyī, in this way my disciples gain experience and deliverance in this right teaching and discipline and are able to reach the other shore, having become free from doubt and confusion, without vacillation in regard to this wholesome teaching, and it is because of this that they respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.

38. “Udāyī, these are the other five qualities in me, owing to which my disciples respect, honour, worship, and treat me with respect, always following me without breaking off.”

Then the heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī promptly rose up from his seat, arranged his robes on one shoulder, and holding his hands [with palms together in respect] towards the Buddha, [respectfully] said, “Gotama this is very exceptional, this is very special! You have explained a profound matter well and nourished my innermost being as if with ambrosia. Gotama, just as a great rain nourishes the whole earth, above and below, in the same way the recluse Gotama has explained a profound matter well to us and nourished my innermost being as if with ambrosia. Blessed One, I have understood, Well-gone One, I have comprehended. Blessed One, from now on I go for refuge to the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the community of monks. May the Blessed One accept

³⁴At this point a rather substantial difference becomes apparent, as instead of the two higher knowledges mentioned in MĀ 207, M 77 from M II 11,3 to M II 22,15 lists a range of different aspects of the path to liberation, covering the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, the five *indriyas*, the five *balas*, the seven *bojjhaṅgas*, the noble eightfold path, the eight *vimokkhas*, the eight *abhibhāyatanas*, the ten *kaṣiṇas*, the four *jhānas*, insight into the nature of body and consciousness, production of a mind-made body, supernormal powers, the divine ear, telepathic knowledge of the mind of others, recollection of past lives, the divine eye, and the destruction of the influxes.

me as a lay follower who has taken refuge for life from now on until life ends.”³⁵

The Buddha spoke like this. The heterodox practitioner Sakuludāyī listened to what the Buddha said, was delighted, and put it into practice.

Comparison

Given the fact that the praiseworthy qualities of the Buddha are the main theme of the *Mahāsakuludāyī-sutta* and its parallel, it is not surprising if the tendency to elevate the Buddha's status would to some degree also have influenced the reciters responsible for transmitting the discourse. A comparison of the two versions in fact reveals several instances where this tendency is at work in one or the other out of the two versions.

Thus whereas the Pāli version does not count the number of disciples of the Buddha or the other teachers, the Madhyama-āgama account depicts the Buddha as surrounded by “one thousand two hundred and fifty” disciples, whereas the other teachers only command a following of “five hundred” each.³⁶ Its presentation thus implicitly indicates that Sakuludāyī and the six well-known contemporary teachers were far less influential than the Buddha.³⁷ In the Madhyama-āgama account, the Buddha's influential status manifests not only in regard to his monk disciples, but also when it comes to an audience in general. Thus, according to this version, on a former occasion the Buddha was teaching an “immeasurable congregation of hundreds of thousands”.³⁸

³⁵M 77 does not record that Sakuludāyī expressed his respect or that he took refuge.

³⁶MĀ 207 at T I 782a13 (the Buddha's disciples), T I 781c6 (Sakuludāyī's disciples), and T I 782a4+9 (the disciples of the other teachers).

³⁷Manné (1990: 49) explains that in discourses that have a debate character and feature a meeting with an opponent “the description of the size of the following around each of the opponents ... serves to enhance, or otherwise, the importance of each adversary”.

³⁸MĀ 207 at T I 782b17.

The corresponding section in the Pāli version only speaks of an audience of “several hundreds”.³⁹

Another facet of the same tendency in the Madhyama-āgama is its depiction of Sakuludāyī’s behaviour when the Buddha arrives. Even though Sakuludāyī is introduced as a famous and well-known teacher, seated amidst his disciples, according to the Madhyama-āgama report he rises from his seat, arranges his robe over one shoulder and greets the Buddha with hands together in respect,⁴⁰ a behaviour expressing the kind of deep respect a Buddhist lay disciple might show when the Buddha arrives. In the Pāli version, Sakuludāyī only welcomes the Buddha verbally and offers him a seat, a more realistic depiction of how a famous and well-known *paribbājaka* would have welcomed the leader of another group.

The tendency to present Sakuludāyī as if he were a Buddhist lay disciple manifests again towards the end of the Madhyama-āgama discourse. Whereas the Pāli version merely reports Sakuludāyī’s delight in the exposition he had just heard, according to the Madhyama-āgama version he takes refuge and asks to be accepted as a lay disciple.⁴¹ This is rather surprising, since Sakuludāyī was a *paribbājaka*, so that one would expect him to rather request ordination instead of becoming a lay disciple.⁴² Thus the depiction of Sakuludāyī’s reaction at the conclusion of the discourse may be yet another instance of the tendency to enhance the status of the Buddha, manifesting in the present case by relying on a standard formula for discourse conclusions applied to the present case without sufficient consideration of its appropriateness to the context.

³⁹M 77 at M II 4,34.

⁴⁰MĀ 207 at T I 781c16.

⁴¹MĀ 207 at T I 783b28.

⁴²As I already noted in relation to a similar variation occurring between M 80 and MĀ 209 (Anālayo 2007: 104 note 35); the articles by Freiburger (1997: 128) and Karunaratne (2004: 318) indicate that for someone who has already gone forth as a wanderer and who becomes a Buddhist, the most natural thing to do would be to join the Buddhist order of monks.

The tendency to enhance the status of the Buddha is not confined to the Madhyama-āgama version. Thus whereas in the Madhyama-āgama account Sakuludāyī addresses the Buddha with the expression “recluse Gotama”,⁴³ in the Pāli version he uses the respectful address *bhante* and, instead of using the Buddha's name, refers to him as *bhagavā*.⁴⁴ In this way, the Pāli version also presents him acting in a way suitable for a disciple of the Buddha, though it employs means that differ from those used in the Madhyama-āgama discourse.

Another facet of the same tendency occurs in relation to the Pāli version's portrayal of the disciples of other teachers, which serves as a contrast to the way the Buddha's followers behave. Although the two versions agree that the other teachers were not able to silence their disciples, according to the Pāli version these disciples would go so far as to openly tell visitors that their teacher does not know how to reply, proclaiming that they should be asked instead of their teacher.⁴⁵ Had these disciples indeed been so outrageously disrespectful towards their teacher in public, one would not have expected these teachers to command the esteem and respect among the populace that both versions attribute to them.

The Pāli version also provides a sharper contrast to the poor impression cut by the disciples of other teachers, as it portrays the disciples of the Buddha in a more favourable light than the Madhyama-āgama discourse. When reporting a former occasion during which a particular disciple made some noise during the delivery of a discourse, the Pāli version merely records that he cleared his throat, whereas according to the Madhyama-āgama version he had fallen asleep and was

⁴³e.g. MĀ 207 at T I 781c17.

⁴⁴e.g. M 77 at M II 2,11: *bhante bhagavā*. In relation to another similar instance, Allon (1997: 121) comments that “the use of *bhante* ‘venerable sir’ is particularly unusual as a form of address used by an ascetic towards the Buddha, as is the ascetic referring to the Buddha as *Bhagavā*.”

⁴⁵M 77 at M II 3,17.

snoring, a not too flattering description of what could happen when the Buddha was giving a discourse.⁴⁶

According to the Pāli account, whenever the Buddha gives a teaching his disciples will be poised in silent expectancy comparable to a crowd of people at a crossroads that observes a man who is pressing out honey. This description seems to some degree to conflict with other discourses, which indicate that the disciples of the Buddha were not invariably paying attention during a talk given by their teacher. An example would be the *Bhaddāli-sutta* and its Chinese parallel, according to which the Buddha had to rebuke one of his monk disciples for recurrently paying no attention when his teacher was delivering a discourse.⁴⁷

The Pāli version also stands alone in indicating that disciples who disrobe will nevertheless continue to speak in praise of the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the monastic community.⁴⁸ Other discourses give a less impressive account of former Buddhist monks, suggesting that they did not always speak in praise of their former teacher and his teaching. Thus a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* reports the disparaging remarks made by the former Buddhist monk Sarabha, and according to the *Mahāsīhanāda-sutta* the former Buddhist monk Sunakkhatta's denigration of his earlier teacher caused the Buddha to deliver a rather long discourse in order to reveal his qualities and abilities.⁴⁹

In sum, it seems as if the theme of the praiseworthiness of the Buddha did exert some influence on the reciters of the discourse, causing an enhancing of the status of the Buddha that manifests in different ways in the Pāli and Chinese versions.

⁴⁶M 77 at M II 4,35 and MĀ 207 at T I 782b18.

⁴⁷M 65 at M I 445,32 and MĀ 194 at T I 749b3.

⁴⁸M 77 at M II 5,14.

⁴⁹A 3,64 at A I 185,8 and M 12 at M I 68,8.

The influence of oral transmission can also be seen in regard to the sequence in which listings are preserved. Variations in the sequence of listings are in fact one of the most prominent features noticeable in comparative studies, often involving differences that are of little doctrinal import. In the present case, such variations manifest in regard to both of the sets of five qualities of the Buddha: those described by Sakuludāyī and those described by the Buddha as what make him truly praiseworthy (see Tables 1 and 2 below).

Table 1 : Sakuludāyī's Listing of Five Qualities of the Buddha⁵⁰

M 77	MĀ 207
takes little food (1)	content with robes (2)
content with robes (2)	content with food (3)
content with food (3)	takes little food (1)
content with dwelling place (4)	content with dwelling place (4)
lives in seclusion (5)	lives in seclusion (5)

Table 2: The Buddha's Listing of His Five Qualities

M 77	MĀ 207
higher virtue (1)	supreme virtue (1)
knowledge and vision (2)	supreme wisdom (3)
higher wisdom (3)	supreme knowledge and vision (2)
teaching of four noble truths (4)	teaching of four noble truths (4)
teaching ways of development (5)	teaching higher knowledge (5)

Another and considerably more significant difference occurs in regard to the last quality in the second of these two groups of five, the Buddha's quality as a teacher of meditative development. The Madhyama-āgama version lists merely recollection of past lives and the eradication of the influxes. Though this is rather brief, as one would have expected at least a reference to the divine eye to complete the standard set of three higher knowledges, the Pāli version in contrast is

⁵⁰To facilitate comparison, corresponding qualities in the two versions are provided with numbers in brackets which reflect the sequence of their occurrence in the Pāli version.

unexpectedly long, as it presents a detailed exposition of various aspects of the path (see Table 3).⁵¹ Notably, the first part of this listing follows a numerical ascending order up to the ten *kaṣiṇsas*, while the items listed later instead come in the same sequence as found in the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta*.⁵² This gives the impression that two originally independent listings may have been combined in the present instance.

Table 3: The Buddha's Fifth Quality in M 77

Teaching the development of
 the four establishments of mindfulness,
 the five faculties,
 the five powers,
 the seven factors of awakening,
 the noble eightfold path,
 the eight liberations,
 the eight spheres of transcendence,
 the ten *kaṣiṇas*,
 the four *jhānas*,
 insight into the nature of body and consciousness,
 production of a mind-made body,
 supernormal powers,
 the divine ear,
 telepathic knowledge of the mind of others,
 recollection of past lives,
 the divine eye,
 the destruction of the influxes.

In a passage repeated after each of these items, the Pāli version indicates that with every one of these practices many disciples of the Buddha have been able to attain accomplishment and perfection of direct knowledge.⁵³ According to the commentary, this description

⁵¹M 77 from M II 11,3 to M II 22,15.

⁵²D 2 from D I 73,23 to D I 84,12; this has been highlighted by Eimer (1976: 53).

⁵³M 77 e.g. at M II 11,8: *tatra ca pana me sāvakā bahū abhiññāvosaṇa-pāramippattā viharanti*.

intends full liberation.⁵⁴ Such a potential is somewhat unexpected in regard to the development of such practices as the spheres of transcendence (*abhibhāyatana*), the ten *kaṣiṇas*, the production of a mind-made body, supernormal powers, or the divine ear, etc. This specification thus does to some extent read as if an earlier listing may have only had qualities the discourses generally reckon as capable of leading to consummation and perfection through direct knowledge, a listing that might subsequently have been expanded.

In fact, the rather long exposition of all these practices is somewhat out of proportion in comparison with the space allotted to the other four truly praiseworthy qualities of the Buddha. Owing to this long treatment of the fifth quality, the *Mahāsaikuludāyī-sutta* has become an unusually long discourse in the Majjhima-nikāya collection, one that, had this long treatment already been part of the discourse at the time of the collection of the Nikāyas, might have earned it a placing in the Dīgha-nikāya instead.

Though a comparative study of the two versions thus brings to light a number of differences that testify to the vicissitudes of oral transmission and its influence on the actual shape of the discourses in the canonical collections of different Buddhist schools, the main message given by both versions remains the same:

What makes the Buddha truly worthy of praise, what causes his disciples to follow him and practise in accordance with his instructions, is not external aspects of behaviour that were held in high esteem in ancient India. Though frugality, a secluded life style and detachment in regard to the requisites of life are key aspects of the path of development in early Buddhism, they are not an end in themselves. What really makes the Buddha worthy of praise is his teaching of how to develop the mind, his disclosure of the path to liberation.

Bhikkhu Anālayo

⁵⁴Ps III 243,5.

Abbreviations

A	Āṅguttara-nikāya
B ^c	Burmese edition
C ^c	Ceylonese edition
D	Dīgha-nikāya
M	Majjhima-nikāya
MĀ	Madhyama-āgama (T 26)
Ps	Papañcasūdanī
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ ²	“other” <i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
S ^c	Siamese edition
T	Taishō (CBETA)

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