

# Scholar Monks and Meditator Monks Revisited

---

L. S. COUSINS

## SYNOPSIS

THE IDEA that there might be some conflict between those exploring the more theoretical aspects of the Buddhist teachings and those focused on experiencing meditative states or meditative knowledge is one that recurs both in Buddhist literature and in the study of Buddhism. Here I examine two particularly well-known contexts that relate to this. The first concerns the apparent opposition between *dhammayogas* and *jhāyins* in a discourse of the *Āṅguttaranikāya*, while the second is located in the Pali commentarial literature and relates to the issue as to whether theory is more important than practice and the apparent division of the Buddhist monastic order into those who focus on study as against those involved in some kind of practice. I revisit both of these contexts in order to examine how far they in fact justify the interpretations which have been placed upon them and conclude that it is doubtful whether they do.

## SCHOLARS AND MEDITATORS IN THE NIKĀYAS

What we are concerned with here are the teachings of one of the great arahat disciples of the Buddha: Mahācunda. (For the moment I am not concerned with the issue as to whether we are dealing with traditions concerning a historical figure or with what might be called a literary theme.) So let me begin by referring to some of the other contexts in which this disciple is mentioned in the early texts. According to Buddhaghosa, Mahācunda was the younger brother of Sāriputta, perhaps because in several discourses he is associated with Sāriputta, but he was in any case considered important in his own right; for six times he is included in a list of ten, eleven, or twelve renowned and famous elder monks accompanying or visiting the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> The *Sallekhasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya* is an exhortation to serious

practice addressed by the Buddha to Mahācunda. In a discourse found in both the *Majjhimanikāya* and the *Samyuttanikāya*, he goes together with Sāriputta to visit the sick Channa and is the last to speak with Channa before the latter's suicide. In a remarkable series of three short discourses in the *Bojjhaṅgasamyutta*, the Buddha successively heals two of his leading disciples from serious illness by reciting the seven factors of awakening, referring to them as qualities leading to higher knowledge and awakening. This is of course a very well-known Pali chant in the Theravāda countries today, and it is popular partly because in the third of these discourses the Buddha is then himself healed from some kind of illness when Mahācunda recites that same list at the Buddha's request. These various references to Mahācunda are sufficient to suggest that he was already considered a well-known figure during the Buddha's lifetime at some quite early date. But what concerns us here are three discourses in the *Ānguttaranikāya* given by Mahācunda himself. I shall refer to them as the *Cundasuttas*, but before looking at these, let me first quote the two stanzas attributed to Mahācunda in the *Theragāthā* (Th 141–42). The first of these is:

Sussūsā sutavaḍḍhanī. Sutaṃ paññāya vaḍḍhanaṃ.  
Paññāya atthaṃ jānāti. Nāto attho sukhāvaho. ||

This is translated as follows by K. R. Norman:<sup>2</sup>

141. Desire to hear increases hearing; hearing is an increaser of wisdom; by wisdom one knows the goal; the goal, when known, brings happiness.

This is certainly a possible translation of the stanza, but it is very different from that of the commentator Dhammapāla.<sup>3</sup> For him the first word means not “desire to hear” but implies “living in attendance upon a teacher.” In other words, he is taking *sussūsā* not in its literal sense of “desire to hear,” but in its normal extended meaning of “reverence for, obedience to” — a meaning it already has in the inscriptions of the Emperor Asoka. The second word: *suta* (= Skt. *śruta*), he takes in the sense of learning, specifically learning related to the truths and conditioned origination. Moreover, he understands *attha*, not only as “goal” but also as “meaning.”

So the commentator understands the stanza as follows: attendance upon a teacher enables one to acquire learning. That learning makes it possible to acquire understanding. That understanding enables one to understand

the meaning of the dhamma at progressively deeper levels. Understanding the meaning of the dhamma brings various forms of happiness, up to the happiness that comes from understanding and therefore realizing the four truths.

Dhammapāla's explanation is equally possible in terms of the language of the text and, as we shall see, it is far more likely to be right in the specific context. As he indicates, the language is directly parallel to various *Nikāya* passages. Many more could certainly be cited. The second stanza is:

Sevetha pantāni senāsanāni. Careyya saṃyojanavippamokkham.  
Sace ratiṃ nādhigaccheyya tattha, saṅghe vase rakkhit'atto  
satimā ti. ||

Norman renders it:

142. One should make use of solitary beds and seats; one should practise release from fetters. If one does not gain contentment there, one should dwell in the Order with guarded self, possessed of mindfulness.

Let us note that the emphasis in these stanzas is on two things: the development of wisdom and the attainment of joy (*rati*), preferably in the forest or, failing that, in a more communal setting. That is spelt out by Dhammapāla, who interprets the two stanzas as praising living in attendance upon a teacher and dwelling in solitude, the two things that were the cause of Mahācūnda's successful attainment of the six *abhiññā*.

It is worth noting too that in the *Sallekhasutta*, the single discourse addressed by the Buddha to Mahācūnda, the latter's question is about how to be free from wrong views, but the Buddha's reply covers a range of practices and could be seen as very much in line with these two stanzas.<sup>4</sup>

Turning now to the three short discourses given by Mahācūnda himself, we should note that they have a number of interesting features which indicate clearly that the *Cundasuttas* at least should be taken as a set. All three are given while Mahācūnda was living among the Cetis (who probably dwelt in modern Uttar Pradesh).<sup>5</sup> Only one other discourse in the Pali Canon, also in the *Anguttaranikāya*, has that location. In that case Anuruddha is meditating in seclusion in that region and the Buddha uses his psychic power to disappear from where he was and instantly appear with Anuruddha. The subject matter of that discourse too is very much concerned with

meditative practice and culminates with Anuruddha's attainment of arahatship. But at least the Buddha is present in this discourse; in the three given by Mahācunda he is not, and he is not presented as giving subsequent approval. This suggests that these discourses were delivered in the decades following the Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha.

Although it is the third of these three suttas that is of most interest for present purposes, I shall look first at the other two. In the *Katthīsutta*, the "Discourse on the Boastful Person," Mahācunda addresses the case of a monk who boasts in various ways about his attainments, claiming that he enters and emerges from the four *jhānas* and various higher attainments. He gets into trouble on meeting the Tathāgata or a disciple of the Tathāgata who is a meditator (*jhāyin*) skilled in the attainments and skilled as to the workings of other people's minds. When the cause of his boasting is understood, it is seen that it is due to various long-standing bad qualities. In fact, a list of ten is given; so the discourse is included in the Elders Section (*Theravagga*) of the *Book of the Tens*. The list is a standard one, which includes poor observance of the precepts, lack of the quality of faith, failure to listen to teachings, being difficult to correct, keeping bad company, indolence, confused mindfulness, deceitfulness, demandingness (*dubbhara*), and poor development of wisdom. Mahācunda then points out that each of these qualities leads to decline in the *dhammavinaya* taught by the Tathāgata. He then gives a short parable. I will paraphrase it. This, says Mahācunda, is like one companion who promises another that he will provide money on request, whenever there is a need. But when asked, he shows various places to dig. But in each case, after digging, nothing is obtained, and the digger accuses the friend who promised the money of falsehood. Several times the response is to point out another place to dig, but at last the response is to deny that he is lying—on the grounds that he has become mentally disturbed (*ummādam . . . cetaso vipariyāyam*). This must be a reference to the *Vinaya* explanations of the fourth *pārājika* rule, concerning false claims to attainment.

This leads quite naturally to the subject matter of our second sutta,<sup>6</sup> in which Mahācunda sets out a warning against making claims as to either knowledge or meditation practice. Whatever one may claim, if greed overcomes him and remains in his mind, then the claim is false; for "the venerable one does not understand in the kind of way that, when one so understands, there is no greed; accordingly greed overcomes him and remains in his mind." The same statement is applied to nine more kinds of mental defilement, ending with wrong wishes; so this discourse too is included in

the *Book of the Tens*, but in this case in the *Great Section (Mahāvagga)*. Another parable follows. Such claims are compared to a man who is poor or lacks money or lacks goods who makes claims to possess wealth or money or goods—he would not be able to deliver when something arose that required wealth or money or goods. The close relation between this and the previous discourse is, by the way, underlined by its use of the compound *dhanakaraṇīya* “what can be done by money,” found six times in these two discourses but otherwise found only in a single twice-repeated context in the whole Pali Canon—the promise of his treasurer to the Universal Monarch in the *Mahāsudassanasutta* and in the *Bālapaṇḍitasutta*.<sup>7</sup>

In itself, this is simply an expansion of a very fundamental part of Buddhist teaching. Right view gives rise to right thought. Wrong view gives rise to wrong thought. At times when one’s mind is not free from sensuality or lacks loving-kindness and compassion, then one should not suppose that one has right view. This is of course important, but it is not so much this implication of Mahācunda’s teachings that comes to mind. In fact, Mahācunda distinguishes three cases:

- (1) The person who lays claim to knowledge: “I know this dhamma. I see this dhamma.”
- (2) The person who lays claim to self-development (*bhāvanā*): “I have developed my body, developed morality (*sīla*), developed my mind, developed understanding.”
- (3) The person who makes both these claims.

According to Buddhaghosa all three of these are simply false claims to arahatship. No doubt this is so, but what is of special interest is the way in which Mahācunda contrasts the three possibilities of developing knowledge, practising meditation, and combining the two. This is clearly something with which he was concerned; for in the third discourse too he makes a very similar distinction.<sup>8</sup>

The contrast here is between bhikkhus who are devoted to dhamma and those who meditate (*jhāyin*). The tendency in discussion of this well-known passage has been to interpret “bhikkhus who are devoted to dhamma” as preachers of doctrine, following Buddhaghosa who says this is a name for dhamma preachers (*dhammakathika*). However, as we shall see, this is too limited an interpretation of *dhamma* which here, as often elsewhere, means more than simply “book knowledge.” And Buddhaghosa no doubt intends rather more than this, but for the moment I will take the opposition here

as simply that between scholars and meditators. Mahācunda goes on to explain the way in which these two groups sometimes criticize each other.

The scholars sometimes denigrate the *meditators*: “But these people *constantly think* and imagine that they are *meditators*. What pray do they *think* of? Why do they *think*? How pray do they *think*?”<sup>9</sup> In fact the passage is difficult to render into English because, as already indicated by Buddhaghosa, it plays on the meanings of the verb *jhāyati* which both means “to meditate” in the sense of practising *jhāna* and “to think” in more general senses of the word, including obsessive or imaginative thinking. Indeed forms related to this verb occur a number of times in the translated passage—I have italicized them above. The point is clear enough. These so-called thinkers don’t really think!

In the next paragraph the meditating bhikkhus denigrate the scholars: “But these people who keep saying that they are devoted to dhamma are excited, elated, unsteady in mind, garrulous, loose in speech, of muddled mindfulness, lacking clear comprehension, unconcentrated, with wandering minds and uncontrolled senses. What pray is the dhamma they are devoted to? Why are they devoted to dhamma? How pray are they devoted to dhamma?” Here the intended contrast is between dhamma as something to study (*pariyatti*) and dhamma as something to practise (*paṭipatti*). The list of qualities is very close to a reversal of the usual lists of qualities required to successfully practise meditation. Again the point is clear. How can these people be devoted to dhamma if they don’t practise it?

Mahācunda goes on to describe the tendency of the scholars to praise only scholars and for the meditators to praise only meditators. He points out that all this undermines confidence both for scholars and for meditators. Because they behave in this way, neither party has practised “for the happiness of the many folk, for the profit of people in general, for the good and happiness of devas and human beings.” Mahācunda concludes by exhorting both kinds of bhikkhu to train themselves to give praise to the other kind. He supports this by pointing out the special qualities of each. Meditators would be praised because: “Wondrous, sirs, are those persons and hard to meet in the world who dwell touching the deathless element.” Those devoted to dhamma would be praised because: “Wondrous, sirs, are those persons and hard to meet in the world who by means of understanding pierce profoundly meaningful terms and see.”<sup>10</sup> In the light of his two other discourses, we may suspect that Mahācunda’s real concern here is the claim-making implicit in such criticisms.

The two possibilities are both interesting. In the first case Mahācunda

is referring to those advanced practitioners of *samathavipassanā* meditation who master the most advanced attainments so as to achieve the attainment of cessation, that is, the fullest possible experience of nibbāna in life. The second case uses the rather unusual expression “*atthapada*” and is interpreted by Buddhaghosa as “the secret, concealed meaning of the aggregates, elements, bases, and so forth.”<sup>11</sup> Initially, he explains “piercing and seeing through understanding” as the understanding of the path together with insight. So the second case is taken by him as referring to the kind of understanding (*paññā*) associated with enlightenment as well as to the kind of insight which is close to that. This must be correct in the light of the other passages where “*atthapada*” is used. In other words, Mahācunda is implying that “those devoted to dhamma” achieve some profound level of realization.

Buddhaghosa then adds a sentence that is perhaps his own addition to the commentary handed down: “But in regard to this matter both the understanding of comprehension (*sammasana*) and penetration and also the understanding of learning and questioning are appropriate.” This extends the meaning to the earlier stages of insight and even to the prior establishing of a basic knowledge of the five aggregates and so on which the *Visuddhimagga* tells us is “the soil in which understanding grows.”<sup>12</sup> While in a general sense this is no doubt necessary in order to become “devoted to dhamma,” I suspect it is not quite Mahācunda’s intention here.

Turning to the other passages in which *atthapada* is used, it occurs in just two other passages in the first four *Nikāyas*.<sup>13</sup> The first of these is a sutta in which the Buddha points out that someone’s morality can be known only by living with them, their gentleness can be known only by talking with them, their staying power can be known only in times of trouble, and their understanding can be known only through discussion—in each case only after a long time, not a short period, by someone who pays attention, not by someone who does not, and by someone with understanding, not by someone with poor understanding. In the discussion of this last case, it is pointed out that a person without understanding “does not utter a profoundly meaningful expression, which is peaceful, subtle, beyond the reach of reasoning (*takka*), astute, to be known by the wise.”

In fact, these five adjectives (beginning with “peaceful”) which are used in this discourse to qualify *atthapada* occur together in a passage which is found a number of times in the *Nikāyas*, qualifying “profound dhamma that is hard to see, hard to awaken to.”<sup>14</sup> In general they do not refer to doctrine or teaching in any superficial sense. The Buddha, for example, uses

this expression several times in regard to his famous hesitation to preach: he refers to it as the dhamma which he has attained, and we may suppose that it is the precise experience of enlightenment that is meant. Similarly, in the *Brahmajālasutta* this expression (in the plural) is used just as the Buddha turns from the *mahāsīla* practised by his bhikkhu disciples to the practice of meditation, and so forth. In fact he refers to the dhammas which he has “known for himself by higher knowledge and realised.” In the *Caṅkīsutta*, the Buddha explicitly declares that this profound dhamma cannot easily be taught by someone whose mind is attached or possesses anger or delusion. Again, it is not simply a matter of verbal knowledge.

The other passage in the four *Nikāyas* which refers to *atthapada* is found in the *Awakening Section* of the *Book of the Nines* in the *Āṅguttaranikāya*. Here the Buddha praises the dhamma discourse of a bhikkhu called Nandaka and comments that when those gone forth are seated together, one of two things is appropriate: either discourse connected with dhamma or the noble silence. After describing four qualities that monks should possess, the Buddha retires and Nandaka outlines the five advantages in “from time to time hearing dhamma, from time to time discussing dhamma.” The third advantage is that, just when a bhikkhu is teaching dhamma to his fellows, by means of understanding he pierces profoundly meaningful terms and sees in regard to that dhamma. Since the second advantage is that he understands the letter and the meaning, what is meant here must be something more than that.

The expression *atthapada* is also found in the Pali recension of the *Dhammapada* in a set of three verses concerned with its opposite: *anathapada*. I quote them from Ven. Ānanda Maitreya’s translation of the *Dhammapada*:<sup>15</sup>

A single word full of sense  
which brings peace of mind to the hearer,  
is far worthier than a thousand utterances  
full of senseless words. (100)

A single word full of meaning  
which brings peace to the mind of the hearer,  
is far worthier than a thousand verses  
full of senseless words. (101)



One may utter a hundred verses  
 full of vain descriptions.  
 But a single verse  
 that brings peace of mind to the hearer,  
 is far worthier than all that. (102)<sup>16</sup>

The peace that is meant here is certainly the bliss of nibbāna because the verb *upasammati* (“becomes peaceful”) corresponds to *upasama* (“inner peace”), which is usually used in that sort of context. In fact, the stories of the *Dhammapada Commentary* show that these verses were later understood in this way. All of the stories connected with these verses concern cases of arousing insight and subsequent attainment as a result of hearing just a few words of teaching. This is perhaps not surprising, since in Pali the word *attha*, especially in compounds, tends to have both the sense of “meaningful” and the sense of “connected with the goal.” It is then easy to understand *atthapada* as a word which brings one to the goal.

To summarize what Mahācunda is saying: scholars and meditators should not criticize one another, but rather each should actively praise the other. They should do so because each form of the life of the Buddhist bhikkhu has the potential of achieving rare and lofty levels in the realization of the Buddha’s teaching.

#### INTERPRETATIONS OF WHAT IS MEANT HERE

A number of studies have suggested that the fact that Mahācunda puts forward these teachings indicates that there was already some kind of division or even conflict in the saṅgha between scholars and meditators.<sup>17</sup> This is obviously possible, but it is far from proven and does not at the present time really amount to more than speculation.

There are essentially three positions held by scholars on the dating of the texts contained in the *Nikāyas*:

- (a) The position of most Buddhist and some non-Buddhist scholars is that they were collected shortly after the Mahāparinibbāna;
- (b) Many non-Buddhist scholars suggest that they were mostly in a form similar to their present form by around the third century B.C.;
- (c) Other scholars argue that production of suttas continued after this period, possibly much later.

An eclectic position is also possible. It is also uncertain how fixed the form of the discourses was in the early period.

#### DATING AND INTERPRETING THE CUNDASUTTAS

If we follow position (a), then the interpretation of Mahācunda as somehow trying to harmonize a division or even an incipient schism in the *saṅgha* is clearly wrong. Rather, we have evidence that a leading disciple in, or shortly after, the lifetime of the Buddha was emphasizing that both approaches in question were viable and valuable. So we may consider it likely that the Buddha's own teaching in his later years was similar. Equally, if we follow position (c), then the *Cundasuttas* are evidence only for the views of their composers and may reflect a position that arose only at a very late date. In the case of the prose discourses included in the first four *Nikāyas*, this seems unlikely, given the evidence we now have from materials in Gāndhārī.<sup>18</sup>

Most, if not all, scholars who have seen the *Cundasuttas* as evidence for some kind of conflict between “scholars” and “meditators” have probably held to some version of position (b). In fact, however, even with this position, it cannot be certain evidence for such a conclusion. What it is certain evidence of is that at least one individual thought it important for those practising Buddhism to value both intellectual insight and meditative experience. That should not greatly surprise us. Such a combination is typical of a great deal of both earlier and later Buddhism.<sup>19</sup> Its presence during the Mauryan period is quite plausible. We could conclude that the author or authors of the *Cundasuttas* intend to present an ideal approach. Indeed, they certainly do. The suggestion that they were doing so in response to a perceived division is overly literal. It may just as well be a question of presenting the alternatives in a graphic and vivid manner.

Finally, it is important to note that, although it is common to speak of “scholars,” “intellectual,” and the like (and I have followed this above), what is meant here is not mere skill in the manipulation of concepts. Rather, it is a process leading to the gaining of Buddhist insights of a transformative kind. The teachings have to be understood in a way that leads naturally to the abandonment of the unskillful, the development of the skillful, and the direct experience of nibbāna. This is dhammayoga. Throughout the history of South Asian Buddhism, it has played an important role in the training of Buddhist monks. It and meditation are complementary practices. Success in one leads naturally to success in the other.

### SCHOLARS AND MEDITATORS IN EARLY SINHALESE BUDDHISM

The issue of the relationship between scholars and meditators arises again in a slightly different form in Ceylon in a story concerning the early first century B.C. At this time a serious famine had depleted the population, and there was some fear for the preservation of the teaching. Indeed it was at this point, we are told in much later sources, that the Pali Canon was first set in writing, precisely for this reason. The dispute was between the preachers (dhammakathikas) and the forest practitioners of the purificatory exercises known as the *dhutaṅgas*, specifically referred to as the rag-robe wearers (*pamsukūlikas*). The issue was whether theory (pariyatti) or practice (paṭipatti) was the root of the *sāsana*. The upshot of the debate, as recorded for us in texts written by scholars rather than forest practitioners, is that theory is the foundation. Surprisingly, of the commentaries of Buddhaghosa himself, only the *Aṅguttara Commentary* in fact records the story, although it is referred to in the *Vinaya Commentary*.<sup>20</sup> Otherwise, it is hardly mentioned in any unrelated source before the twelfth century, although the context in which the story occurs is the tradition of the future decline of the *sāsana* and that is found elsewhere.

There is a great danger that such a debate is presented as a victory of textual studies over the actual practice of Buddhism. This is misleading. Those who advocated the view that theory was the foundation of the *sāsana* did so because they believed that the preservation of the texts was the way to assure the continuation of practice and realization of dhamma for the future. Unfortunately, E. W. Adikaram,<sup>21</sup> followed by Ven. Walpola Rāhula,<sup>22</sup> interpreted this story as indicating a rejection or devaluing of practice.

What is involved in the decision that theory is fundamental is a particular understanding of the relationship between the two. This is actually emphasized quite strongly when the simile is given of a hundred or a thousand cattle who cannot continue their lineage if there is no cow capable of providing milk—similarly even if there are a hundred or a thousand bhikkhus who have aroused insight, if the theory of the Buddha's teaching is not available, there can be no penetration of the noble path.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the teachings of the Buddha are important for the actual achievement of enlightenment. At the same time as theory is regarded as fundamental, practice is seen as variable—surely a historically correct observation! So we

read that the degree of practice and penetration is something that varies from time to time. Several commentaries even refer in the same background context (but without the story of the dispute) to a time when there was no bhikkhu in the island of Ceylon who had not achieved some degree of enlightenment, that is, stream-enterer or more.<sup>24</sup> So theory is crucial, but nevertheless the commentator explicitly declares that the learned bhikkhu will go on to fulfill practice too.

Clearly the fact that the dispute is between preachers and forest practitioners indicates that there was already a distinction between two lifestyles for bhikkhus. And it is this issue that I want to go on to discuss now. Later sources usually give two *dhuras*, one of which would normatively be adopted by a monk from the beginning of his career. This is usually expressed today in Pali as the difference between the *ganthadhura* and the *vipassanādhura*. But during the first millennium of the so-called Common Era and later, an alternative, and probably older, terminology is also found: *ganthadhura*, “a life in which study is foremost,” and *vāsadhura*, “a life in which forest-dwelling is foremost.”<sup>25</sup> The word *dhura* means literally a “yoke,” but at the end of a compound it means “having anything as the chief (foremost) part or ingredient” (MW). So the two alternatives were:

*ganthadhura*—a life in which books are foremost;

*vāsadhura*—a life in which forest-dwelling is foremost, that is, practising such purificatory practices as eating only from the alms bowl, and so on

In fact no such distinction is found earlier than the fourth- or fifth-century commentaries. Surprisingly, Buddhaghosa does not mention the two duties in the *Visuddhimagga* nor in the commentaries to the *Dīghanikāya* and *Samyuttanikāya*, but they are mentioned four times in Buddhaghosa’s commentary to the *Aṅguttaranikāya*.<sup>26</sup>

Beginning with two works traditionally attributed to Buddhaghosa, but probably of slightly later date, we find *vipassanādhura* in place of *vāsadhura*.<sup>27</sup> It may be the popularity of these two great story collections that accounts in part for the eventual disappearance of *vāsadhura*. Perhaps the relative obscurity of the term is also a factor. We should note that already the *Mūlaṭīkā* feels the need to explain the term and glosses *vāsa* as the perfuming of the mind with skillful states, that is, meditation practice.<sup>28</sup>

There are a few other variations. In one passage, the *Suttanipāta Commentary* uses *pariyattidhura*, “with theory foremost,” in place of *ganthadhura*.<sup>29</sup>

A few sources, perhaps tongue in cheek, have a third dhura: building work.<sup>30</sup> But perhaps the most interesting variation is provided by Buddhaghosa himself, in the commentary to the *Majjhimanikāya*:

The reason for this is difference in the faculties. Therefore, among those going by way of calm (*samatha*), one monk has one-pointedness of mind as his dhura—he is called one liberated by mind. Another has wisdom as his dhura—he is called one liberated by wisdom. Among those going by way of insight (*vipassanā*), one monk has wisdom as his dhura—he is called one liberated by wisdom. Another has one-pointedness of mind as his dhura—he is called one liberated by mind. The two chief disciples reached arahatship by means of the dhura of samathavipassanā. Of these two, the General of Dhamma began as one liberated by wisdom and the Elder Mahāmogallāna as one liberated by mind.<sup>31</sup>

The notion of two dhuras had perhaps not yet become standardized in Buddhaghosa's sources. But already by the time of the commentary to the *Suttanipāta*, the exact meaning of the two choices had been set out:

A *kulaputta* who has gone forth should live for five years with his *ācariya* and *upajjhāya*. He should fulfill the duties and minor duties. He should memorize the *Pātimokkha* and *Suttanta* to the extent of two or three *bhāṇavāra*. He should learn a meditation subject. He should enter the forest without any settled dwelling in a family or monastic group and should strive and endeavor for the realization of arahatship. This is *vāsadhura*. In the other case, he should by his own strength learn one or two or five *Nikāyas* and should examine the teaching so as to make it very clear both as to theory and as to meaning. This is *pariyattidhura*.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The *Cundasuttas* cannot safely be used to support the notion that there was some kind of dispute or conflict between scholars and meditators in the period to which these canonical texts refer. Instead, they should be seen as indicating that the combination of wisdom and concentration was seen as a priority from an early date. The tradition preserved in the earliest extant commentaries from Ceylon that the maintenance of scriptural

learning (pariyatti) should have a high priority should be seen in the same light. Similarly, the choice between forest practice and study (*gantha*) concerns rather the lifestyle to be adopted. What we now call “meditation” would have been a part of both lifestyles.

The later change to vipassanādhura is probably significant in this context. Initially it was no doubt just an alternative designation. But it does seem to imply that meditation was not conceived as part of the life of study, and this is likely to have been a later development. It is in fact highly likely that both forest dwelling and meditation practice would be things that would vary both from time to time and from monastery to monastery. As late as the medieval period, the *Dambadeni Katikāvata* recommends that town-dwelling (*gāmaśin*) monks should practise meditation as well as studying and performing their other duties.<sup>33</sup> We may suspect that even after the first millennium CE this view always remained present in traditional Theravāda Buddhism, coexisting with the view that meditation was something to practise when one is older.

## NOTES

- 1 Ten: M III 78; A III 299; Ud p. 3. Twelve: Vin I 355. (and in *uddāna* at I 360). Eleven: Vin II 16; IV 66. Abbreviations of the names of Pali texts are as used in Margaret Cone, *A Dictionary of Pāli*, Part I (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001).
- 2 K. R. Norman, *The Elders' Verses*, 2nd edn. (Lancaster: Pali Text Society, 2007).
- 3 Th-a II 19f.: Tattha **sussūsā** ti sotabbayuttassa sabbasutassa sotum icchā, garusannivāso pi. Diṭṭhadhammikādibhedam hi attham sotum icchantena kalyāṇamitte upasaṅkamitvā, vattakaraṇena payirupāsītvā, yadā te payirupāsānāya ārādhītacittā kañci (so VRI. PTS: *kiñci*) upanisīditukāmā honti. Atha ne upanisīditvā adhigatāya sotum icchāya ohitasotena sotabbaṃ hotī ti garusannivāso pi sussūsāhetutāya 'sussūsā' ti vuccati. Sā panāyaṃ sussūsā saccapaṭṭicasamuppādādīpaṭisaṃyuttaṃ sutam taṃsamaṅgino puggalassa vadḍhetti brūhetti ti **sutavaddhanī**; bāhusaccakārī ti attho.  
**Sutam paññāya vaddhanan** ti yaṃ taṃ “sutadharo sutasannicayo” ti (DN III 267; MN I 213; AN II 23) “idh' ekaccassa bahussutam hoti suttaṃ geyyaṃ veyyākaraṇan” ti (AN II 178, etc.) ca evam ādinā nāyena vuttaṃ bahusaccaṃ, taṃ akusalappahānak usalādhigamanahetubhūtaṃ paññaṃ vaddhetti ti sutam paññāya vaddhanam. Vuttaṃ h'etaṃ Bhagavatā: “sutāvudho kho, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako akusalam pajahati, kusalam bhāveti, sāvajjam pajahati, anavajjam bhāveti, suddham attānam pariharati” ti (AN IV 110).  
**Paññāya attham jānāti** ti bahussuto sutamayañāne t̥hito taṃ paṭipattim paṭipajjanto sutānusāreṇa atthūpaparikkhāya dhammanijjhānena bhāvanāya ca lokiyalokuttarabhedam diṭṭhadhammādivibhāgaṃ dukkhādivibhāgaṃ ca attham yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti ca paṭivijjhati ca. Tenāha Bhagavā: “Sutassa yathāpariyattassa attham aññāya dhammam aññāya dhammānudhammapaṭipanno hoti” ti (cf. AN II 97) “Dhatānam

dhammānaṃ atthaṃ upaparikkhati. Atthaṃ upaparikkhato dhammā nijjhānaṃ khamanti. Dhammanijjhānakkhantiyā sati chando jāyati. Chandajāto ussahati. Ussahitvā tuletī. Tulayitvā padahati. Pahitatto samāno kāyena ceva paramaṃ saccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca naṃ ativijja passatī” ti (MN I 480; II 173) ca.

Ñāto artho sukhāvaho ti yathāvutto diṭṭhadhammikādiattho c’eva dukkhādiattho ca yāthāvato ñāto adhigato lokiyalokuttarabhedam sukham āvahati nipphādeti ti attho.

- 4 There are also references to a Cunda who is a *samañuddesa* and to a Cūlacunda, but I do not address those here, as it is not clear whether either of them should be identified with Mahācunda. See DPPN s.v. Cunda.
- 5 At a place variously named as Sahajāti and Sayamjāti, etc. Buddhism probably did not reach this area until after the death of the founder.
- 6 AN V 41–45. (There is a Chinese parallel to this discourse.)
- 7 DN II 176; MN III 175.
- 8 AN III 355–56.
- 9 Idha āvuso dhammayogā bhikkhū jhāyī bhikkhū apasādentī: ‘ime pana jhāyino ‘mhā, jhāyino ‘mhā ti jhāyanti pajjhāyanti. Kim h’ime jhāyanti? Kin t’ ime jhāyanti? Kathaṃ h’ime jhāyanti?’ ti. Tattha dhammayogā ca bhikkhū na ppasādanti, jhāyī ca bhikkhū na ppasādanti, na ca bahujanahitāya paṭipannā honti bahujanasukhāya bahuno janassa atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ.  
Idha pan’ āvuso, jhāyī bhikkhū dhammayoge bhikkhū apasādentī: ‘ime pana dhammayog’ amhā, dhammayog’ amhā ti uddhatā unnaḷā capalā mukharā vikiṇṇavācā muṭṭhassatīasampajānāsamāhitāvibbhantacittāpākāṇḍriyā. Kim h’ime dhammayogā? Kin t’ime dhammayogā? Kathaṃ ime dhammayogā?’ ti. Tattha jhāyī ca bhikkhū na ppasādanti, dhammayogā ca bhikkhū na ppasādanti, na ca bahujanahitāya paṭipannā honti bahujanasukhāya bahuno janassa atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ.
- 10 Acchariyā h’ ete, āvuso, puggalā dullabhā lokasmiṃ ye gambhīraṃ atthapadam paññāya ativijja passantī ti.
- 11 Mp III 379; cf. IV 168.
- 12 Vism 443.
- 13 AN II 189–90; IV 362; cf. Dh 100; J V 104; 146; VI 318.
- 14 Vin I 4; DN I 12; II 36–37; M I 167; 487; S I 136; cf. Nidd II 185; It 37.
- 15 *Dhammapada (Law Verses), freely rendered into English* (Colombo: Metro Printers, 1978).
- 16 <100> Sahassam api ce vācā anathapadasaṃhitā,  
ekaṃ atthapadam seyyo, yaṃ sutvā upasammati. ||  
<101> Sahassam api ce gāthā anathapadasaṃhitā,  
ekaṃ gāthāpadam seyyo, yaṃ sutvā upasammati. ||  
<102> Yo ca gāthāsataṃ bhāse anathapadasaṃhitā,  
ekaṃ dhammapadam seyyo, yaṃ sutvā upasammati. ||
- 17 Louis de La Vallée Poussin, “Musila et Nārada: Le chemin du Nirvāna,” *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, 1936–37, V, 189–222; Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), 173–77; Richard Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings* (London and Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Athlone Press, 1996), 127–34.
- 18 Mark Allon, *Three Gāndhāri Ekottarikāgama-Type Sūtras*, British Library Kharaṣṭhī Fragments 12 and 14 (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001).
- 19 David Seyfort Ruegg, *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a*

*Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1989). See chapter 4.4, “The Conjunction of Quieting and Insight and of Means and Discriminative Knowledge.”

- 20 Mp I 92f.; cf. Sp IV 874. Not in Sp (Chin. trans.).
- 21 E. W. Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Colombo/Migoda: M.D. Gunasena/Puswella, 1953 [1946]), 77f.
- 22 Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1966), 158.
- 23 Mp I 93.
- 24 Sv III 899; Ps IV 115; Vibh-a 431f.
- 25 Sp III 561; Mp I 37; 312; II 40; V 69; Pp-a 224f.; Pj II 194f.; 306; Sv-pt II 164; cp. also Sp I 238f.; VI 126of.
- 26 There is some variation in the readings of the Asian editions and recorded manuscripts. Mp I 37 (= C<sup>c</sup> 1923 I 22); I 312 (= C<sup>c</sup> 1923 I 172); II 40 (= C<sup>c</sup> 1923 I 267) all read *vāsadhura* where the Burmese editions read *vipassanādhura*, and the Thai edition given on the BUDSIR (BUDdhist Scriptures Information Retrieval) CD reads *vāsadhura* in two of these three cases. At Mp V 69 (where the reading is ensured by the *ṭikā*), all editions appear to read *vāsadhura*. It seems almost certain that this is a case of normalization in the scribal traditions. The fact that commentaries in the twelfth and thirteenth century gloss *vāsadhura* with *vipassanādhura* shows clearly that the term had already become less familiar by that date. Furthermore, two of the occasions in the commentary to the *Aṅguttaranikāya* concern the identical story, that of Upāli who was not allowed to dwell alone in the forest (*araññavāsa*), but was instead kept with the Buddha so that he could fulfil both the *ganthadhura* and the *vāsadhura* in the Buddha’s own presence. Yet, the Burmese sources have *vipassanādhura* in one case and *vāsadhura* in the other. This seems most unlikely when the preceding word *araññavāsa*, “dwelling in the forest,” reveals so clearly the exact meaning of the term *vāsadhura*.
- 27 Dh-p-a I 7; 68; 154; II 240; IV 37; Ja VI 69; cp. Th-a II 101; III 117.
- 28 Pp-mṭ (VRI B<sup>c</sup> 42): kusalahammehi cittassa vāsanā bhāvanā vāsadhuraṃ.
- 29 Pj II 194f.
- 30 Sp I 238f.; III 561; Nidd-a I 30; Kkh-ṭ (VRI B<sup>c</sup> 165). *Uddesa* is equivalent to *gantha* here.
- 31 Ps III 147f.: Ettha hi indriyanānattatā kāraṇaṃ. Samathavasen’ eva hi gacchantesu ekassa bhikkhuno cittekaggatā dhuraṃ hoti. So cetovimutto nāma hoti. Ekassa paññā dhuraṃ nāma hoti. So paññāvimutto nāma hoti. Vipassanāvasen’ eva gacchantesu ekassa paññā dhuraṃ hoti. So paññāvimutto nāma hoti. Ekassa cittekaggatā dhuraṃ hoti. So cetovimutto nāma hoti. Dve aggasāvakā samathavipassanādhurena arahattaṃ pattā. Tesu Dhammasenāpati paññāvimutto jāto, Mahāmoggallānathero cetovimutto.
- 32 Pj II 194f.: Tattha pabbajitena kulaputtena ācariyupajjhāyasantike pañca vassāni vasitvā, vattapaṭivattaṃ pūretvā, pātimokkhaṃ dvetiṇibhāṇavārasuttantaṃ ca paṇaṃ karvā, kammaṭṭhānaṃ uggahetvā, kule vā gaṇe vā nirālayena araññaṃ pavisitvā, arahattasacchikiriyāya ghaṭitabbaṃ vāyāmitabbaṃ. Etaṃ **vāsadhuraṃ**. Attano thāmena pana ekaṃ vā nikāyaṃ pariyāpuṇitvā dve vā pañca vā nikāye pariyattito ca atthato ca suvisadaṃ sāsanaṃ anuyūñjitabbaṃ. Etaṃ **pariyattidhuraṃ** ti.
- 33 H. B. M. Ilangasinha, *Buddhism in Medieval Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992), 62.