

(Sāriputta) Niddasa,vatthu Sutta

The (Sāriputta) Discourse on The Seven Grounds for Commendation

[The complete spiritual training]
(Aṅguttara Nikāya 7.39/4:34-37)
Translated by Piya Tan ©2005

Introduction

The seven ground for commendation present a comprehensive framework of the threefold training (*ti,sikkhā*). Moral training (*sīla,sikkhā*) is covered by (1) and (2); mental training (*samādhi,sikkhā*), (3)-(5); training in wisdom (*paññā,sikkhā*), (6); and attaining the path of sainthood, (7). The seven ground for commendation are found in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33),¹ **the Niddasa,vatthu Sutta** (A 7.18)² and **the (Sāriputta) Niddasa,vatthu Sutta** (A 7.39).³

The Discourse on The Seven Grounds for Commendation (A 7.39/4:34-37)

1a At one time, the Blessed One was dwelling in Anātha,piṇḍika’s Park in Jeta’s forest near Sāvattihī.

Sāriputta visits the wanderers

1b Then the venerable Sāriputta, having dressed himself in the morning and taking robe and bowl, entered Sāvattihī for alms.

Then the venerable Sāriputta thought:

“It is too early to go into Sāvattihī for alms. What if I were to go to the wanderers’ park?”⁴

Then the venerable Sāriputta went into the wanderers’ park and exchanged greetings with them.

When this courteous and amiable exchange was concluded, he sat down at one side

2a Now at that time, this topic of conversation arose amongst the wanderers of other faiths who had gathered together there:

“Avuso, one who has lived the holy life perfectly pure for twelve rains, is fit to be called ‘a commendable monk’ (*niddasa bhikkhu*).”⁵

2b Then the venerable Sāriputta, neither approving nor disapproving of the word of the wanderers of other faiths, rose from his seat and left, thinking:

“I will learn the truth of this matter from the Blessed One himself.”⁶

¹ D 33.2.3(7)/3:252.

² A 7.18/4:15 = SD 19.9.

³ A 7.39.4/4:36, this sutta.

⁴ “Wanderers,” *nānā,titthiyā paribbājakā*, lit “other-fording wanderers”; fully: “the wanderers of other faiths,” “heterodox wanderers,” ie non-Buddhist wanderers. It is interesting that this is the closest that the Buddhist texts have for “gentile” (a non-Jew), ie an “outsider”.

⁵ *Yo hi koci āvuso dvādasa vassāni paripuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahma,cariyaṃ carati, “niddaso bhikkhū” ti alaṃ vacanāyā ti.*

Sāriputta questions the Buddha

3a Then the venerable Sāriputta, having gone into Sāvattihī for alms, having returned from the almsround and finished his meal, went up to the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side.

Sitting thus at one side, the venerable Sāriputta *related to the Blessed One what had happened at the wanderers' park, and [36] this topic of conversation that arose amongst the wanderers of the other religions who had gathered together there:*

“Avuso, one who has lived the holy life perfectly pure for twelve rains, is fit to be called ‘a commendable monk’.”

3b Then I, neither approving nor disapproving of the word of the wanderers of other faiths, rose from my seat and left, thinking:

‘I will learn the truth of this matter from the Blessed One himself.’

Is it possible, bhante, in this Dharma and Vinaya, to declare a monk commendable merely on account of so many years?”⁷

3c “No, Sāriputta, it is not possible, in this Dharma and Vinaya, to declare a monk commendable merely on account of so many years.

The seven grounds for commendation

3d These seven grounds for commendation, Sāriputta, have been declared by me, having realized direct knowledge.

What are the seven?

4 Here, Sāriputta,

- (1) a monk is keenly devoted to undertaking the training, and has unending love for such a devotion to continue undertaking the training;
- (2) he is keenly devoted to making a careful observation of phenomena, and has unending love for such a devotion to continue making a careful observation of phenomena;
- (3) he is keenly devoted to pushing away craving, and has unending love for such a devotion to continue pushing away craving;
- (4) he is keenly devoted to spiritual solitude, and has unending love for such a devotion to continue in spiritual solitude;
- (5) he is keenly devoted to putting forth effort, and has unending love for such a devotion to continue putting forth effort;
- (6) he is keenly devoted to mindfulness and mental discrimination, and has unending love for such a devotion to continue in mindfulness and mental discrimination;
- (7) he is keenly devoted to the penetrating of views,⁸ and has unending love for such a devotion to continue in the penetration of views.

These, Sāriputta, are the seven grounds for commendation that have been declared by me, having realized direct knowledge.

5 Sāriputta, one who has lived the holy life perfectly pure for twelve rains, accomplished in these seven grounds for commendation, is fit to be called ‘a commendable monk’;

or, if such a one has lived the holy life perfectly pure for twenty-four rains, [37] one too is fit to be called ‘a commendable monk’;

or, if such a one has lived the holy life perfectly pure for thirty-six rains, one too is fit to be called ‘a commendable monk’;

or, if such a one has lived the holy life perfectly pure for forty-eight rains, one too is fit to be called ‘a commendable monk’.”

— evaṃ — 051210; 080312

⁶ This is stock: D 1:178; M 1:84; S 5:108; A 4:35, 378.

⁷ “On the score of so many years,” *kevalaṃ vassa, gaṇana, mattena*.

⁸ Comy: *magga, dassane*, “a vision of the path” (DA 3:1040 = AA 4:9)