1 Sutta significance

1.1 The Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja Sutta (S 7.7) is a short discourse on the definition of a true brahmin. While Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja speaks of the brahmin as one who upholds the traditional purity of “knowledge and conduct” of the brahmans, that is, through birth and lineage, the Buddha declares that brahminhood as purity is attainable by anyone who asserts himself with determination for the highest good. One is not born a brahmin; by one’s good conduct is one a brahmin.¹

1.2 Listed here are 11 suttas with the title Suddhika (usually meaning “the purified”) and a chapter (vagga) of that name. Except for the first sutta, where suddhika (“purified”) is a person’s name, in the other suttas, it simply means “essential” or “simplified,” thus:

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4 Sutta teaching

4.1 NATURAL ADAPTATION

4.1.1 The well known phrase vijjā, caraṇa, sampanna, “accomplished in knowledge and conduct” [S 629c]—one of the 9 virtues (guna) of the Buddha—is here used by the brahmin Suddhika in a brahminical sense.

By “knowledge” (vijjā), the brahmin means the three Vedas; by “conduct” (caraṇa), the ways of one’s clans (gotta, caraṇa)—the clan (gotta) itself is called “conduct.”²

Here, we see the Buddha applying the principle of what I call “natural adaptation”³ to give a more spiritual sense—a Dharma-spirited meaning—to the class-centred brahminical terms.

¹ See Vāseṭṭha S (M 98,11), SD 37.1.
² SA 1:231; SAPṬ:Be 1:258.
³ On natural adaptation, see SD 39.3 (3.3.4).
4.1.2 The lines S 629cd, if read by itself, expresses the Buddhist rather than the brahmanical point of view. The phrase vijjā, carana, sampanno, “accomplished in knowledge and conduct,” is one of the 9 virtues (guna) of the Buddha. It also describes an arhat (see S 596). In fact, this is explained in some detail by the Buddha to the brahmin youth Ambaṭṭha in the Ambaṭṭha Sutta (D 3).

The Discourse to Suddhika (Bhāra, dvāja)

1 Originating in Sāvatthī.
Then, the brahmin Suddhika Bhāradvāja approached the Blessed One.
Having approached, he exchanged greetings with the Blessed One.
2 When the courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, the brahmin Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja sat down at one side.
Sitting at one side, the brahmin Suddhika Bhāradvāja said this verse before the Blessed One:

Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja’s verse

[Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja:]

3 Na brāhmaṇo sujjhati koci loke
   sīlavā pi tapo karaṁ
   vijjā, carana, sampanno so sujjhati
   na aṁñā itarā pajā’ti

   S 629

[The Blessed One:]

4 Bahum pi palapaṁ jappaṁ
   na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo.
   Anto, kasambu sāṅkiliṭṭho
   kuhanam upanissito.
   S 630

5 Khattiyo brāhmaṇo vesso
   suṛdo caṇḍāla, pukkuso
   āraddha, viṛiyo pahitatto
   niccaṁ dalha, parakkamo.

---

4 Sanaṅ,kumāra S (S 6.11 @ S 596), SD 63.12.
5 D 3.2-2.3/1:99 f (SD 21.3).
6 The Porāṇa Ṭīkā explains that sīla here comprises the “fivefold order” (pañca, vidha niyama), an allusion to the second limb of Patañjali’s Yoga system (SAPṬ:Be 1:257).
7 See (4.1).
8 On this verse, cf the Buddha’s teaching to Vāseṭṭha that one is not born pure or impure: Vāseṭṭha S (M 98,11), SD 37.1.
Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja joins the order

7 When this was said, the brahmin Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja said this to the Blessed One:
   “Excellent, Master Gotama! Excellent! Master Gotama!
   Just as if one
   were to place upright what had been overturned,
   were to reveal what was hidden,
   were to show the way to one who was lost, or
   were to hold up a lamp in the dark so that those with eyes could see forms,
   in the same way, in numerous ways, has the Dharma been made clear by the Blessed Gotama.
   I go to the Blessed Gotama for refuge, to the Dharma, and to the community of monks.
   May the Blessed Gotama give me the going-forth (pabbajjā), give me the ordination (upasampadā).”

8 And the brahmin Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja received the going-forth and the ordination in the Blessed One’s presence.

Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja becomes an arhat

9 The full arhatthod pericope

Then, not long after he was ordained, the venerable Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja, dwelling alone, aloof,
diligent, exertive, and resolute,
in no long time at all, right here and now, having realized it for himself through direct knowledge,
attained and dwelled in the supreme goal of the holy life,
for the sake of which sons of family rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness.

10 The arhat’s review knowledge

He directly knew:
   “Birth is destroyed,
   the holy life has been lived,
   done what is to be done,
   there is no more of this state of being.”

And the venerable Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja became one of the arhats.

— evam —

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9 The “supreme purity” is nirvana.
10 For details, see Poṭṭhapāda S (D 9,56.2+56.3), SD 7.14.
11 On this para and the next (the attainment of arhathood), see Poṭṭhapāda S (D 9,56.2/1:203) n, SD 7.14.