

# 10

## Dhamma-ññū Sutta

The Discourse on the One Who Knows Dharma | A 7.64 [Be 7.68]

Theme: The qualities of a true individual

Translated by Piya Tan ©2008, rev 2009

### 1 Aryas and mlecchas

In the centuries leading up to the Buddha's time, the term *ariya* or Sanskrit *ārya* referred to a social class (*vaṇṇa*; Skt *varṇa*) by virtue of birth (*jāti*), which was regarded as being privileged and above the rest of society. In such a system, an *arya* was a free man, while a member of a lower caste was regarded as an outcaste (*milakkha*; Skt *mleccha*) or a slave (*dāsa*).<sup>1</sup>

In religious terms, an *arya* was a follower of Vedic traditions who regarded the Vedas as the focus of their religious and social identity. Generally speaking, the term *arya* was applied not only to the brahmins (*brāhmaṇa*), but also the kshatriyas (*khattiya*) or the ruling class, and the vaishyas (*vessa*) or merchant (or business) class. They regarded themselves as being "twice-born" (*dvijā*), that is, as of high divine origin and of biological issue.<sup>2</sup>

Just before and around the Buddha's time, such a culture predominated northern and central India, especially the Indus and Ganges plains, which was called Āryāvarta, meaning "the abode of the noble ones." However, with the rise of the reform movements, who reject Vedic authority (Skt *nāstika*), popular in the middle Gangetic plain and the surrounding area, the brahminical areas moved south, that is, until the later resurgence or transformation of brahminism into Hinduism.<sup>3</sup>

### 2 Ariya and sappurisa

#### 2.1 ARIYA AS "NOBLE"

The Buddha demythologizes the term *ariya/ārya* and applies it to all the renunciants who join his order. Early in the Buddha's public ministry, especially during the first few years when monkhood is simply a *recognition* of the renunciant's actual spiritual attainment, that is, at least as a streamwinner (as in the case of Aṅguli, māla)<sup>4</sup> but more commonly as arhats (as in the case of the group of 5 monks).<sup>5</sup>

In other words, these postulants join the Buddha's order as *saints* of the noble eightfold path (*ariya atṭhaṅgika magga*), which is so called because it is *the path of the noble ones*, that is, the arhats and those on the way to awakening. And their liberating knowledge is called the four noble truths (*catu ariya, sacca*), that is, the truths of the noble ones, or better, *the truths that liberate us into noble ones*.

In due course, during the early years of the Buddha's ministry, the ordination of renunciants into the order is *formalized* (or "rationalized," in the Weberian sense), so a properly constituted sangha or chapter of monks could perform a sangha act (*saṅgha, kamma*) by way of an ecclesiastical act (*kamma, vācā*) (the precursor of the parliamentary act!).<sup>6</sup> With this compassionate dispensation, almost anyone, especially the unawakened, can join the order. This is when the term *ariya* becomes more definite in usage, referring only to the saints of the path.

<sup>1</sup> Cf Skt *daśyū* (Manu, smṛti 10.45). See Romila Thapar: *A History of India* vol 1, 1966:34, 38; *The Penguin History of Early India*, 2002:12-14, 105.

<sup>2</sup> See eg **Vasala S** (Sn 1.7), SD 72.2. See also G Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, Cambridge, 1996:61-65, 202.

<sup>3</sup> See Arvind Sharma, "Ancient Hinduism as a missionary religion," *Numen* 39,2 Dec 1992:175-192.

<sup>4</sup> See **Aṅgulimāla S** (M 86/2:97-105), SD 5.11.

<sup>5</sup> See **Dhamma.cakka-p, pavattana S** (S 56.11/5:420-424) & SD 1.1 (9).

<sup>6</sup> See **Skillful means**, SD 30.8 (2.2.6).

## 2.2 SAPPURISA AS “NOBLE”

**2.2.1** In fact, there are two main generic terms for Buddhist saints, that is, those who are awakened (arhats) and those who are on the path to awakening. The first term, as mentioned, is *ariya* (“noble”), and the second, *sappurisa* (“true individual”).<sup>7</sup> Often, but not always, the two terms are synonymous. For example, the Commentary to the Mūla,pariyāya Sutta (M 1) gives the following definitions of the terms:

**2.2.2** The word *ariya* is defined as follows:

<i>ariyā ti</i> <i>ārakattā kilesehi,</i> <i>anaye na, iriyanato,</i> <i>aye iriyanato,</i> <i>sadevakena ca lokena araṇīyato</i>	He is “noble” ( <i>ariya</i> ) because of his aloofness from defilements; on account of their not moving toward misfortune; on account of their moving towards fortune; on account of their being approachable in the world with its gods.
<i>buddhā ca pacceka, buddhā ca</i> <i>buddha, sāvakā ca vuccanti,</i> <i>buddhā eva vā idha ariyā.</i>	The Buddhas, and the Solitary Buddhas, and the Buddha’s disciples are called “noble” here by the Buddha himself.

(MA 1:21 = SA 2:251; cf KhpA 81; ItA 2:155; NcA 76; PmA 2:446; DhsA 349)<sup>8</sup>

**2.2.3** The word *sappurisa* is defined as follows:

<i>Sappurisā ti ettha pana</i> <i>pacceka, buddhā tathāgata, sāvakā ca</i> <i>sappurisā ti veditabbā.</i> <i>Te hi lokuttara, guṇa, yogena</i> <i>sobhanā purisā ti sappurisā.</i>	But as regards “true individuals” here: the Solitary Buddhas and the Tathagata’s disciples should be understood as “true individuals.” For, being yoked with supramundane qualities, they are beautiful people: so they are <i>sappurisa</i> . (MA 1:21 = SA 2:252; cf Nc 76; PmA 2:446; DhsA 349)
--	---

It is interesting and important to note here that although *sappurisa* is defined basically as an *ariya*, the Buddha is *not* included in the list of those who are *sappurisa*. In other words, in a restricted sense, *sappurisa* refers to the pratyeka Buddhas and all saints, but excluding the Buddha.

**2.2.4** In a popular stock passage, someone who is not inclined towards spiritual training or who lacks the desire for spiritual growth, is described as follows:

Here ... an untutored worldling, who has no regard for the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma, who has no regard for the true individuals and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dharma ...

*Idha ... assutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassavī ariya, dhammassa akovido ariya, dhamme avinīto, sappurisānaṃ adassavī sappurisa. dhammassa akovido sappurisa, dhamme avinīto ...*  
(M 1:8, 135, 300, 310, 433, 3:17, 188, 190, 227;  
S 3:3, 16, 42, 44, 46, 96, 102, 113, 138, 4:287)

<sup>7</sup> On def of *sappurisa*, see (Majjhima) *Sappurisa S* (M 113), SD 23.7 (3).

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed study on *araha*, etc, see Vism 7.4-25/198-202. For *ariya* = *arahata*, see also A 4:145; DA 3:801, 1060; AA 3:231; DhA 4:228; UA 267; ItA 1:12; SnA 2:470; ThaA 1:105, 2:25, 142; Ency Bsm: arahant; ariya puggala.

## 2.2.5 Associating with a true individual

**2.2.5.1 The Nāva Sutta** (Sn 2.8) closes with admonishing that we should associate with such a true individual; for, we would gain great spiritual benefits:

*Tasmā have sappurisaṃ bhajetha  
medhavināṇ c'eva bahu-s, sutañ ca  
aññāya atthaṃ paṭipajjamāno  
viññāta, dhammo so sukhaṃ labhetha.*

Therefore, indeed, associate with the true individual,  
wise and widely learned, too;  
practising for the goal of true knowledge,  
He will be happy, gaining Dharma understanding.

(Sn 323)

**2.2.5.2** And, conversely, one who is inclined towards spiritual training or who has the desire for spiritual growth, is described as follows:

Here ... an instructed noble disciple, who has regard for the noble ones and is skilled and well disciplined in their Dharma, who has regard for the true individuals and is skilled and well disciplined in their Dharma ...

*Idha ... sutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ dassavī ariya, dhammassa kovido ariya, dhamme vinīto,  
sappurisaṇaṃ dassavī sappurisa, dhammassa kovido sappurisa, dhamme vinīto ...*

(M 1:8, 136, 300, 310, 434, 3:18, 189, 190, 228;

S 3:3, 16, 42, 44, 46, 96, 102, 113, 138, 4:287)

**2.2.6** In these stock passages, we can take the terms *ariya* and *sappurisa* as near-synonyms, in the sense (following the MA 1:21 definitions above) that *ariya* includes the Buddha, but *sappurisa* refers only to the saints of the path, *but not the Buddha*. The reason that there is a provision for the exclusion of the Buddha is a spiritually strategic one. Even after the Buddha has entered parinirvana, there are still saints of the path around (whom we can emulate), and that it is still possible to win the path to awakening for ourselves. This Dhammapada confirms the availability of such saints:

*Dhīrañ ca paññāñ ca bahu-s, sutañ ca  
dhorayha, sīlaṃ vatavantam āriyaṃ  
taṃ tādisaṃ sappurisaṃ sumedhaṃ  
bhajetha nakkhatta, pathaṃ'va candinā*

The wise, the insightful, the widely learned,  
enduring in virtue, keeping to his vows, noble—  
such a one is a true individual, truly wise,  
we should track like the moon on its celestial path.

(Dh 208)

## 2.3 SAPPURISA AS A GOOD WORLDLING

**2.3.1** In many canonical passages, we also find *sappurisa* referring to a true practitioner but one who is yet unawakened. In the closing of **the Deva, dūta Sutta** (M 130) and its briefer Aṅguttara version, **the (Deva, dūta) Yama Sutta** (A 3.35), for example, it is said that:

*Ye ca kho deva, dūtehi | santo sappurisa idha  
Coditā na-p, pamajjanti | ariya, dhamme kudācanaṃ*

There are good people (*sappurisa*) here, | Who when warned

By the divine messengers, | Neglect not the noble Dharma [teaching, practice, truth].

(M 130, 30/3:187), SD 2.23; (A 3.35, 6/1:142)

### 2.3.2 The Asappurisa Sutta 2 (S 45.26) has this definitive passage:

And what, bhikshus, is the true individual?

Here, someone is of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

This is called the true individual.

And what, bhikshus, is the one better than a true individual (sappurisa, tara)?

Here, someone is of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, right knowledge, and right liberation.

This is called the one better than a true individual. (S 45.26/5:20)

Let us examine the closing section on “the one better than the true individual.” He not only has all the factors of the eightfold path but also of “right knowledge” (*sammā ñāṇa*) and “right liberation” (*sammā vimutti*), that is, all the tenfold rightness (*sammattā*).<sup>9</sup> These tenfold rightness form the adept’s qualities (*asekha, dhamma*), that is, the qualities of an arhat.

### 2.3.3 Furthermore, it is interesting that the streamwinner is also connected with “rightness.” For, in **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), he is said to have

... entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, gone beyond the plane of the worldlings.<sup>10</sup>

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the ghost realm. He is incapable of dying without attaining the fruit of stream-winning.<sup>11</sup> (S 25.1/3:225), SD 16.7

**2.3.4** The Saṃyutta Commentary explains “the fixed course of rightness” (*sammatta niyata*) as the noble path (*ariya.magga*) (SA 2:346). On the clause, “he is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning,” the Commentary says that once the path has arisen there can be no obstruction to the fruit. It quotes **the Puggala Paññatti**, where such a saint is called an “aeon-stopper” (*hita, kappī*):

Should this person, practising for the realization of the fruit of streamwinning, and it were the time for the burning-up of the aeon, it would not burn up until that person realizes the fruit of streamwinning. (Pug 1.20/13)

<sup>9</sup> **Saṅgīti S** (D 33) lists only the 8 path-factors first as “wrongness,” *micchatta* (D 33,3.1(1)/3:255) and then as “rightness,” *sammatta* (D 33,3.1(2)/3:255); as *sammattam*: **Micchatta S** (S 45.21/5:17 f). The 10 rightness (*dasa sammattā*): **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,3.3(6)/3:272), **Das’uttara S** (D 34,2/2(10)/3:292); **Micchatta S** (A 10.103/5:211 f); **Samaṇa Vg**, **Paccorohaṇi Vg**, **Parisuddha Vg**, **Sādhū Vg**, **Ariya, magga Vg**, **Puggala Vg** (A 10.103-166/5:211-249), ie excl A 10.101-102.

<sup>10</sup> “**Worldling**,” *puthujjano*, ie “born of the crowd”; more fully called “untutored worldling,” one unskilled (*akovidā*), ie, lacks theoretical knowledge of the Dharma, and is undisciplined (*avinīta*), and also lacks practical training in the Dharma. He is not a “seer of the noble ones” (*ariya, dassavī*), ie, of the Buddha and the noble disciples (the saints), because he lacks the wisdom-eye that discerns the truth they have seen. “Noble ones” (*ariya*) and “true persons” (*sappurisa*) are synonymous. Cf “instructed noble disciple” at §11. MA 1:20-25; SA 2:98-101, 2:251 f; AA 1:61-63; Nc 75-78; Pm 2:445-449; DhsA 348-354.

<sup>11</sup> *Abhabbo taṃ kammaṃ kātuṃ yaṃ kammaṃ katvā nirayaṃ vā tiracchāna, yoniṃ vā petti, visayaṃ vā uppajjeyya. Abhabbo ca tāva kālaṃ kātuṃ yāva na sotāpatti, phalaṃ sacchikaroti*. This is also **(Anicca) Cakkhu S’s** (S 25.1 = SD 16.7) key statement and clearly refers to what, after the Buddha’s time, is referred to as a “lesser streamwinner” (*culla, sotāpanna, cullaka, sotāpanna*). See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(6).

As such, it is obvious that the eightfold path factors are those of the learner (*sekha*) or saints of the path (short of the arhat), that is, the supramundane path (*lok'uttara magga*). However, this set of 8 path-factors can also refer to the “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*), that is, one who is practising the way.

### 2.3.5 The Aputtaka Sutta 1 (S 3.19) speaks of a true individual as a lay person who is wealthy, thus:

... when a true individual [a superior person] gains abundant wealth,

he	enjoys it and is pleased with it;
his parents	enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his wife and children	enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his slaves, labourers and servants	enjoy it and are pleased with it;
his friends and colleagues	enjoy it and are pleased with it.

He places in the ascetics and brahmins offerings, which raises him upwards, heavenward, fruiting in happiness, conducive to the heavens.

Since his wealth is being properly used,

kings	do not take it away, or
thieves	do not take it away, or
fire	does not burn it away, or
water	does not wash it away, or
unloving heirs	do not take it away.

Such being the case, maharajah, that wealth, being properly used, is enjoyed, goes not to waste.

(S 3.19,4/1:90), SD 22.4<sup>12</sup>

The true individual described here clearly is not a saint on the path, as he is one who enjoys wealth and worldly pleasures. Since the Aputtaka Sutta contrasts him with the false individual (*asappurisa*), he is an example of a “good worldling,” one amenable to spiritual instruction and capable of spiritual growth.

**2.3.6** The Sakka Saṃyutta (Connected Sayings on Sakra) of the Saṃyutta Nikāya contains three discourses—the **Vata, pada Sutta** (S 11.11), the **Sakka.nāma Sutta** (S 11.12) and the **(Sakka) Mahāli Sutta** (S 11.13)—all of which end with an identical verse on the true individual, which I think refers to both the good worldling as well as the streamwinner and the once-returner:<sup>13</sup>

*Mātā,petti,bharaṃ janturū  
kule jetṭh'āpacayinaṃ  
saṇhaṃ sakhila,sambhāsaṃ  
pesuṇeyya-p,pahāyinaṃ*

A person who supports his parents,  
who respects the elders of the family,  
whose speech is gentle and courteous,  
who refrains from divisive speech,

*Macchera,vinaye yuttaṃ  
saccaṃ kodhābhibhuṃ naraṃ  
taṃ ve devā Tāvatiṃsā  
āhu sappuriso itī ti*

who is devoted to removing stinginess,  
who is truthful man who has conquered anger—  
him the devas of Tāvatiṃsa  
say is indeed a true individual.

(S 904 f = S 11.11-12/1:228-230)

<sup>12</sup> See also **Dīgha,jānu S** (A 8.54,5) + SD 5.10 (1.1) related suttas.

<sup>13</sup> Non-returners are excluded because they are reborn in the Pure Abodes, while arhats are not reborn.

### 3 The virtues of the true individual

#### 3.1 THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL'S ACUMEN

The **Cūḷa Puṇṇama Sutta** (M 110) states that it is impossible for a false individual (*asappurisa*) to recognise another false individual, but it is possible for a true individual (*sappurisa*) to recognize another true individual.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, it can be said that a false individual would also be unable to recognize a true individual. In short, it takes a good person to know a bad person or a good person, but a bad person cannot really know either one. A similar teaching is found in **the (Sappurisāsappurisa) Vassa, kāra Sutta** (A 4.187).<sup>15</sup>

The acumen of the good is further noted in such discourses as **the Jaṭṭila Sutta** (S 3.11) and **the Thānāni Sutta** (A 4.192). The discourses list the ways by which the character of another can be known, that is,

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| (1) through living with another,     | one knows his moral virtue ( <i>sīla</i> );          |
| (2) through dealing with another,    | one knows his honesty ( <i>soceyya</i> );            |
| (3) through adversities,             | one knows his fortitude [strength] ( <i>thāma</i> ); |
| (4) through discussing with another, | one knows his wisdom ( <i>paññā</i> );               |

and even that is after a long time, not after a short time; by one who is attentive, not by one inattentive; by the wise, not a dullard.

(S 3.11/1:78 f = U 6.2/65 f; for details, see **the Thānāni Sutta**, A 4.192/2:187-190, SD 14.12)

Here, “the wise” (*paññavatā*) apparently refers to the true individual (*sappurisa*). The wisdom of the true individual is none other than the understanding of the four noble truths. **The Ratana Sutta** (Kh 6.8 = Sn 3.1), for example, defines the true individual as one who “sees the noble truths with wisdom” (*sappurisaṃ vadāmi, yo ariya, saccāni avecca passati*).<sup>16</sup>

#### 3.2 THE TRUE INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS OTHERS

The true individual's qualities (*sappurisa, dhamma*) are fully discussed in the **Sappurisa Sutta** (M 113).<sup>17</sup> An outstanding quality of the true individual is that *he greatly benefits others*. **The Sappuris'ānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 4.240/2:239), a very short discourse, for example, says:

### SD 30.10(3.2a)

## Sappuris'ānisaṃsa Sutta

The Discourse on the Benefits From a True Individual | **A 4.240/2:239**

Traditional: A 4.5.4.11 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 4, Catukka Nipāta 5, Pañcama Paṇṇāsaka 4, Kamma Vagga 11

Theme: The advantages of associating with a true individual<sup>18</sup>

We are assured of 4 advantages, bhikshus, on account of a true individual. What are the four?

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| (1) One grows in the moral virtue of the noble ones.  | <i>ariyena sīlena vaḍḍhati.</i>    |
| (2) One grows in the concentration of the noble ones. | <i>ariyena samādhinā vaḍḍhati.</i> |
| (3) One grows in the wisdom of the noble ones.        | <i>ariyāya paññāya vaḍḍhati.</i>   |
| (4) One grows in the liberation of the noble ones.    | <i>ariyāya vimuttiyā vaḍḍhati.</i> |

These are the 4 advantages we are assured of on account of a true individual.

— evaṃ —

<sup>14</sup> M 110/3:20-24 = SD 45.4.

<sup>15</sup> A 4.187/2:179-181 = SD 45.6.

<sup>16</sup> Kh 6.8/4 = Sn 3.1.8/229.

<sup>17</sup> M 113/3:37-45 = SD 23.7.

<sup>18</sup> Cf (**Majjhima**) **Sappurisa S** (M 113), SD 23.7.

A true individual, in other words, is *a spiritual friend*, through whose influence, we are greatly motivated to work for our own awakening [§9(7)]. A summary of these wonderful other-helping qualities is given in **the Sappurisa Sutta** (A 8.38), which is fuller given here, with a beautiful parable of the rain cloud.

## SD 30.10(3.2b)

## (Mahā,megha) Sappurisa Sutta

The Discourse on the True Individual (Who is Like a Great Rain Cloud) | A 8.38/4:244 f

Theme: The true individual benefits everyone

Traditional: A 8.1.4.8 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 8, Aṭṭhaka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 4, Dāna Vagga 8

- 1 Bhikshus, when a true individual (*sappurisa*) is born into a family, it is  
for the good and happiness of the many, of the people;  
for the good and happiness of parents;  
for the good and happiness of wife and children [of spouse and children];  
for the good and happiness of slaves, labourers and servants;  
for the good and happiness of friends and colleagues;  
for the good and happiness of the departed [ancestors];  
for the good and happiness of the king [the government];  
for the good and happiness of the devas;  
for the good and happiness of recluses and brahmins.
- 2 Bhikshus, just as when *a great rain cloud brings growth to all plants*,<sup>19</sup> it is for the good of the many, of the people;  
even so, bhikshus, when a true individual is born into a family, it is  
for the good and happiness of the many, of the people;  
for the good and happiness of parents;  
for the good and happiness of wife and children [of spouse and children];  
for the good and happiness of slaves, labourers and servants;  
for the good and happiness of friends and colleagues;  
for the good and happiness of the departed [ancestors];  
for the good and happiness of the king [the government];  
for the good and happiness of the devas;  
for the good and happiness of recluses and brahmins.

*Bahunnaṃ vata atthāya sappañño gharam āsavam  
mātaraṃ pitaraṃ pubbe rattin,divaṃ atandito  
pūjeti saha dhammena pubbe katam anussaraṃ  
anāgāre pabbajite apace brahma,cārayo  
rañño hito deva,hito ñātinaṃ sakhinaṃ hito  
sabbesaṃ sa hito hoti saddhamme suppatiṭṭhito  
vineyya macchera,malaṃ sa lokaṃ bhajate sivaṃ ti*

<sup>19</sup> *Mahā,megho sabba,sassāni sampādentō*. This parable seems to appear only here. However, the rain cloud and its simile is common enough: **Pāyāsi S** (D 23/2:344x3, 245x3), SD 39.4; **Bāhitika S** (M 88/2:117), SD 49.12; **(Ti-ka) Bhaya S** (A 3.62/1:179), SD 51.26; **(Pañcaka) Sappurisa S** (A 5.42/3:47); **(Aṭṭhakka) Sappurisa S** (A 8.38/4:244), SD 30.10(3.2b); **Dhaniya S** (Sn 30/1.2), SD 50.20; **Āyāga Dāyaka Tha Ap** (ThaAp 3.38,98/1:89); **Gandh'odaka Tha Ap** (ThaAp 3.54,2/1:105); **Pulin'uppādaka Tha Ap** (ThaAp 3.484,15/2:427); **Lomasak'aṅgiya Tha Ap** (ThaAp 3:545,-11/2:505); **Udaka Dāyikā Thī Ap** (ThīAp 2.10,8 f/2:521); **Paṭācārā Thī Ap** (ThīAp 2.20,3/2:559); **Vessantara C** (C 123-/10).



Truly good for the many is a truly wise man of the house,  
 Who tirelessly, night and day, first honours mother and father,  
 Recollecting the Dharma-spirited good they have done before.  
 The homeless holy-living [celibate] renunciant he venerates,  
 honours, being firm in faith, knowing the Dharma, of pleasant manners,  
 benefitting the king [the country], benefitting the gods, benefitting relatives and friends,  
 benefitting all, he is himself well founded in the true Dharma;  
 having put away the stain of stinginess, he dwells in a happy world.

— evaṃ —

From such discourses as these two, we can see the roots of the later Mahāyāna thinkers and writers' conception of a *bodhisattva*—a being of great compassion who emulates the Buddha. This conception, however, with its clear emphasis on moral virtue, wisdom and compassion, all inalienably linked, do not have any ethical and spiritual problem that plague the Mahāyāna view of skillful means where it puts compassion above everything else, to an almost licentious and transmoral level.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4 The 9 limbs of the Teacher's teaching

The Dhammaññū Sutta mentions the “9 limbs of the Teacher's teaching” (*nav'aṅga satthu,sāsana*) [§3]. Interestingly, the list is mentioned only once in the Majjhima Nikāya, once in a Sutta commentarial work, the Mahā Niddesa, twice in the Abhidhamma (Vbh & Pug), and *almost all the other references (the majority) are in the Aṅguttara Nikāya*.

What does this mean? The Aṅguttara Nikāya, or the numerical discourses, comprises mostly teachings for the laity, the group that the Buddha gives priority to after the monastics.<sup>21</sup> Understandably, the laity, being more worldly and busy than the more spiritually committed monastics, would need a more varied syllabus and sustained effort in their spiritual training. Their numbers only grew after the monastic community was established that is, after the first 20 years of the Buddha's ministry.<sup>22</sup>

**The 9 limbs of the Teacher's teaching** are defined as follows:<sup>23</sup>

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| (1) <b>sutta</b>       | the discourses, ie, prose passages; eg Sutta Nipāta prose passages, Niddesa, Vinaya, Vibhaṅga, and texts with “Sutta” in their titles; |
| (2) <b>geyya</b>       | the hymns, the mixed prose and verse, such as the Sagāthā Vagga of Saṃyutta (S 1), Kasi Bhāra,dvāja Sutta (Sn 1.4/12-26);              |
| (3) <b>veyyākaraṇa</b> | the expositions, ie, elaboration of brief teachings of the Buddha; <sup>24</sup>   |
| (4) <b>gāthā</b>       | the verses, eg, Dhammapada, Thera,gāthā, Therī,gāthā, Sutta Nipāta verses;   |

<sup>20</sup> See **Skilful Means**, SD 30.8 (6.4.2).

<sup>21</sup> See the parable of the 3 fields: (**Khetta**) **Desanā S** (S 42.7/4:315 f), SD 12.1 (3.2).

<sup>22</sup> See **Language and Discourse**, SD 26.11 (3.2.1).

<sup>23</sup> See eg DA 1:23; MA 1:133 f, 5:109; UA 4; ItA 1:2; VvA 4; PvA 2; ThaA 1:2; ApA 103; CA 2; NmA 1:10; PmA 1:4, 9; DhsA 26; Miln 263.

<sup>24</sup> Eg the discourses of the Vibhaṅga Vagga (M 131-142) of the Majjhima Nikāya, namely, **Bhadd'eka,ratta S** (M 131/3:187-189), **Ānanda Bhadd'eka,ratta S** (M 132/3:189-191), **Mahā Kaccāna Bhadd'eka,ratta S** (M 133/3:192-199), **Lomasak'aṅgiya Bhadd'eka,ratta S** (M 134/3:199-203, taught by the Buddha himself), **Cūḷa Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 135/3:202-206), **Mahā Kamma Vibhaṅga S** (M 136/3:207-215), **Saḷāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137/3:215-222), **Uddesa Vibhaṅga S** (M 138/3:223-229), **Araṇa,vibhaṅga S** (M 139/3:230-237), **Dhātu Vibhaṅga S** (M 140/3:237-247), **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141/3:248-252), **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142/3:253-257).



- (5) *udāna* the inspired utterances, especially Udāna, also M 1:171, V 1:1 ff, etc;
- (6) *iti,vuttaka* the sayings, ie, the Iti,vuttaka;
- (7) *jātaka* the birth-stories, such as those in Kūṭa,danta Sutta (D 5,10-20/1:134-143), Mahā Sudassana Sutta (D 17/2:169-199), Mahā,govinda Sutta (D 19,29-61/2:230-251), and the Jātaka verses;
- (8) *abbhuta,dhamma* the marvels, including extraordinary qualities of disciples (eg D 16,5.15-16/2:144 f; Acchariya,abbhuta Sutta (M 123); VA 1:28),<sup>25</sup> and
- (9) *vedalla* the answers to questions (catechetic suttas): Sakka,pañha Sutta (D 21), Mahā Vedalla Sutta (M 43), Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44), Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9), Mahā Puṇṇama Sutta (M 109).<sup>26</sup>

## 5 The ideal practitioner

**5.1** The Dhammaññū Sutta is about **studying, practising and spreading the Dharma**. The discourse builds up on a natural and gradual progress in 7 stages leading up to the ideal practitioner or true Buddhist, thus:

- (1) Studying the true Dharma to master it [§3].
- (2) Understanding the meaning and purpose of the true Dharma [§4].
- (3) Knowing oneself, that is, our own spirituality: faith, moral virtue, learning and charity [§5].
- (4) Knowing moderation [§6].
- (5) Knowing timeliness, that is, the right time for action or non-action [§7].
- (6) Knowing society [the group], that is, how to communicate with an assembly [§8].
- (7) Knowing how to communicate with an individual [§9].

**5.2** This list of 7 qualities can also be taken, more or less, as **the 7 stages of true discipleship**. The first three qualities are clearly progressive, but the other qualities can be cultivated in any sequence. However, the sequence here evidently has an important purpose. It culminates with “knowing the individual,” which is clearly the most difficult or most important task for the disciple.

Moreover, the 7<sup>th</sup> quality is ramified into another 7 qualities (on the pairs of people, the positive and the negative). Only the positive or wholesome individual is listed here in its proper sequence:

- (1) He wishes to see the noble ones (the saints), that is, to see good teachers,
- (2) for the purpose of listening to the Dharma,
- (3) which he listens to attentively,
- (4) remembers what he hears,
- (5) examines what he has heard,
- (6) practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma,
- (7) and benefits both himself and others.

It should be noted that here the true practitioner both cultivates these 7 qualities in himself, and is also able to recognize or inspire them *in another*.

<sup>25</sup> Here the example refers to the Buddha’s referring to Ānanda’s charisma as a “marvel” (*abbhuta,dhamma*). Very likely it is such passages (as D 16,5.15-16/2:144) that constitutes “marvels” (*abbhuta,dhamma*), rather than miraculous stories: see eg **Abbhuta,dhamma Ss** (eg **Acchariya,abbhūta S**, M 123) mentioned in the nn there. It is possible to incl lion-roars (*sīha,nāda*) here, too: see SD 36.10 (3). See also Ency Bsm: Aṅga (under abbhutadhamma).

<sup>26</sup> On these 9 limbs (*aṅga*), see **Mahā Vedalla S** (M 43), SD 30.2 (2.1) & **Listening Beyond the Ear**, SD 3.2 (1).

**5.3** Looking at the list as a whole, we have actually a total of 14 qualities or stages of discipleship. There is a similar list of **12 steps or “gradual training”** found in **the Caṅki Sutta** (M 95), thus:

- (1) Faith (*saddhā*) conduces one to visit (that is, to see) a teacher.
- (2) Approaching (*upasaṅkamana*) the teacher conduces one to respectfully attending to the teacher.
- (3) Respectfully drawing near (*payirupāsana*) to the teacher conduces to lending the ear.<sup>27</sup>
- (4) Lending the ear [listening attentively] (*sotāvadhāna*) conduces to listening to the Dharma.<sup>28</sup>
- (5) Listening to the Dharma (*dhamma, savana*) conduces to remembering the Dharma.
- (6) Remembering the Dharma (*dhamma, dhāraṇā*) conduces to the examination of its meaning.
- (7) Investigating the meaning (*atth’upaparikkhā*) of the teachings helps us reflectively accept them (or to accept them after pondering on them).
- (8) Reflectively accepting the teachings (*dhamma, nijjhāna, khanti*)<sup>29</sup> conduces to will-power [desire].
- (9) Will-power [wholesome desire] (*chanda*) conduces to effort.
- (10) Exertion (*ussāha*) conduces to scrutiny.
- (11) Weighing [balancing the practice] (*tulanā*) conduces to striving.
- (12) Striving on (*pahit’atta*), he realizes through his own body the supreme truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom [arhathood].<sup>30</sup> (M 70,23-24/1:480) SD 11.1, = (M 95,20/2:173), SD 21.15

This 12-step learning process works in 2 ways:

- (1) the natural sequence is for one who has great faith (that is, strong in the faith faculty (*saddh’indriya*), or the concentration faculty (*samādh’indriya*), and
- (2) the reverse sequence is for one who has the wisdom faculty (*paññ’indriya*) or strong in the effort faculty (*viriy’indriya*).

The main difference between the two sets is this: while the 12-step training focuses on individual training, the 14-step discipleship covers both individual training and outreach work.

**5.4** The Dhammaññū Sutta concludes by saying that a monk (or nun) with the 14 qualities has *5 of the 9 qualities of the noble sangha*.<sup>31</sup> Spiritually speaking, anyone with such qualities would make him or her a “true individual” (*sappurisa*). It is safe to say that since the list of virtues here is abbreviated, it refers to *both* a true individual (a good monastic or lay practitioner) as well as a saint of the path.

— — —

<sup>27</sup> Here “drawing near” refers to a spiritual closeness, not a physical or social closeness (cf Dh 64-65). Indeed, it is a task of the lay follower to keep a social distance from the renunciant so that his/her rule of celibacy and mindfulness are well kept. On indirect ways by which the monastic’s spiritual training can be endangered, see **Methuna S** (A 7.47/4:54-56), SD 21.9.

<sup>28</sup> This incl esp switching off our handphones and similar devices totally, and definitely not using them during such teaching or meditation sessions. We should also prepare ourselves by not conversing about unrelated topics, so that the mind is calm and clear to receive the Dharma. See SD 37.11 (3.1).

<sup>29</sup> The phrasing here shows or suggests how *dhamma, nijjhāna, khanti* should be resolved, ie with *dhammā* as pl.

<sup>30</sup> Be Ee: *Pahitatto samāno kāyena c’eva paramaṃ saccaṃ sacchikaroti, paññāya ca naṃ aṭṭhijha passati*. Here, **Caṅki S** (M 95) has: “Striving (*padhāna*) conduces to the attaining of truth (*saccānupatti*).” M 95,21/2:173 f (SD 21.15). Both passages mean the same thing. Comy on Caṅki S says that **saccānubodha** means “awakening to the path” (*maggānubodha*), and **saccānupatti** means “realization of the fruit” (*phala, sacchikiriyā*) (MA 3:427). See §20(12) n.

<sup>31</sup> For all the 9 virtues of the noble sangha and related details, see **Aṭṭha, puggala S 1** (A 8.59/4:292), SD 15.10a(1).

# Dhammaññū Sutta

## The Discourse on the One Who Knows Dharma

A 7.64

### The monk accomplished in 7 qualities

(Originating in Sāvatthī.)

- 1 Bhikshus, a monk who is accomplished in 7 seven qualities<sup>32</sup> is<sup>33</sup>  
 worthy of offerings,  
 worthy of hospitality,  
 worthy of gifts,  
 worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,  
 a supreme field of merit for the world.

What are the seven?

- 2 Here, bhikshus, the monk

(1) **knows the Dharma [the teaching];***dhamma-ññū*<sup>34</sup>(2) **knows the meaning [purpose of the Dharma];***attha-ññū*(3) **knows himself;***atta-ññū*(4) **knows moderation;***matta-ññū*(5) **knows the time [timeliness];***kāla-ññū*(6) **knows society; and***parisa-ññū*(7) **knows (the differences in) the individual.***puggala-ññū or puggala,parovara-ññū*

### (1) The one who knows the Dharma

- 3 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows the Dharma (*dhamma-ññū*)**?

THE 9 LIMBS OF THE TEACHER'S TEACHING.<sup>35</sup>

- 3.2 Here, bhikshus, a monk knows the Dharma as<sup>36</sup>

Sutta,	the discourses;
Geyya,	the songs [prose and verses];
Veyyākaraṇa,	the expositions;
Gāthā,	the verses;
Udāna,	the inspired utterances;
Iti,vuttaka,	the sayings;
Jātaka,	the birth-stories;
Abbhūta,dhamma,	the extraordinary marvels; and
Vedalla,	the catechisms.

<sup>32</sup> *Sattahi bhikkhave dhammehi samannāgato bhikkhu.*

<sup>33</sup> On the foll 5 virtues (of the Sangha), see **Atṭha,puggala S 1** (A 8.59/4:292), SD 15.10a(1).

<sup>34</sup> The suffix *-ññū* in all these 7 terms is from Skt *-jñā*, "to know."

<sup>35</sup> *Nav'āṅga satthu,sāsana* see (4).

<sup>36</sup> For details on these limbs of the Teacher's teaching, see (4).

3.3 If he, bhikshus, were not to know the Dharma as *the discourses, the songs, the expositions, the verses, the inspired utterances, the sayings, the birth-stories, the extraordinary marvels, and the catechisms*, he would not here be called one who knows the Dharma.

3.4 But, bhikshus, because *he knows the Dharma as the discourses, the songs, the expositions, the verses, the inspired utterances, the sayings, the birth-stories, the extraordinary marvels, and the catechisms*, therefore, he is called one who knows the Dharma.

Thus he is one who knows the Dharma.

## (2) The one who knows the meaning

4 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows the meaning [the purpose] (*attha-ññū*)?**

4.2 THE PURPOSE OF A BUDDHIST LIFE. Here, bhikshus, a monk knows the meaning [purpose] of this or that statement, thus:

“This is the meaning of this statement; this is the meaning of that statement.”

4.3 If he, bhikshus, were not to know the meaning of this or that statement, thus:

“This is the meaning of this statement; this is the meaning of that statement,” he would not be called one who knows the meaning.

4.4 But, bhikshus, because he knows the meaning of this or that statement, thus:

“This is the meaning of this statement; [114] this is the meaning of that statement,” therefore, he is called one who knows the meaning.

Thus he is *one who knows the Dharma, who knows the meaning*.

## (3) The one who knows himself

5 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows himself (*atta-ññū*)?**

5.2 NOBLE GROWTH. Here, bhikshus, a monk knows himself sagaciously,<sup>37</sup> thus:

“To this extent do I have faith, moral virtue, learning, charity.”<sup>38</sup>

5.3 If he, bhikshus, were not to know, thus:

“To this extent do I have faith, moral virtue, learning, charity,” he would not be called one who knows himself.

5.4 But, bhikshus, because he knows himself, thus:

“To this extent do I have faith, moral virtue, learning, charity,” therefore, he is called one who knows himself.

Thus, he is *one who knows the Dharma, who knows the meaning, who knows himself*.

<sup>37</sup> “Sagaciously,” *paṭibhāṇena*, “shrewdly, astutely.” *Sagacity* is the mental ability to understand and discriminate between relations. *Paṭibhāṇa* is the last of the 4 “analytic insights” (*paṭisambhidā*), viz (1) analytic insight in effects (*attha, paṭisambhidā*), (2) analytic insight in causes (*dhamma, paṭisambhidā*), (3) analytic insight in language (*nirutti, paṭisambhidā*), and (4) analytic insight in ready wit (*paṭibhāṇa, paṭisambhidā*) (A 2:169; Pm 1:119; Vbh 294). These are the 4 mental qualities of an arhat that make him an excellent Dharma teacher. See (**Samyojana**) **Koṭṭhita S** (S 35.232), SD 28.4 (4) & Bhikkhu Kusalaguna (Le Xuan Do), “The Catupatisambhidā in Theravāda Buddhism,” 2005: <http://www.buddhanet.net/budsas/ebud/catu/catu00.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> These are *saddhā*, *sīla*, *suta*, and *cāga*, respectively, and which I call the “shorter noble growth formula.” The better known “noble growth” (*ariya, vaḍḍhi*) formula adds a fifth quality, wisdom (*paññā*) (A 5.64/3:80). A related set of 5 qualities, “the states that bring about intrepidity in a learner” (*sekha, vesāraja, karaṇa, dhamma*), comprises faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), great learning (*bahu-s, sacca*), exertion of effort (*viriy’ārambha*), and wisdom (*paññā*) (A 5.101/3:127), SD 38.9a(3).

#### (4) The one who knows moderation

6 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows moderation** (*matta-ññū*)?

6.2 THE 4 SUPPORTS. Here, bhikshus, a monk knows moderation, in accepting robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine, support and necessities for the sick.

6.3 If he, bhikshus, were not to know *moderation, in accepting robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine and support for the sick*, he would not be called one who knows moderation.

6.4 But, bhikshus, because he knows *moderation, in accepting robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine and support for the sick*, therefore, he is called one who knows moderation.

Thus he is *one who knows the Dharma, who knows the meaning, who knows himself, who knows moderation*.

#### (5) The one who knows timeliness

7 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows the time** [knows timeliness] (*kāla-ññū*)?

7.2 Here, bhikshus, a monk knows the time, thus:

"This is the time for recitation [study],"	<i>ayaṃ kālo uddesassa</i>
"This is the time for questioning,"	<i>ayaṃ kālo paripucchāya</i>
"This is the time for meditation," <sup>39</sup>	<i>ayaṃ kālo yogassa</i>
"This is the time for solitude."	<i>ayaṃ kālo paṭisallānā</i>

7.3 If he, bhikshus, were not to know the time, thus:

"*This is the time for recitation [study],*"  
 "*This is the time for questioning,*"  
 "*This is the time for meditation,*"  
 "*This is the time for solitude,*"

he would not be called one who knows the time.

7.4 But, bhikshus, because he knows the time, thus:

"*This is the time for recitation [study],*"  
 "*This is the time for questioning,*"  
 "*This is the time for meditation,*"  
 "*This is the time for solitude,*"

therefore, he is called one who knows the time [knows timeliness].

7.5 Thus, he is one who knows the Dharma, who knows the meaning, who knows himself, who knows moderation, *who knows the time*.

#### (6) The one who knows society

8 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows society** [the group] (*parisa-ññū*)?

SKILLFUL MEANS.<sup>40</sup> Here, bhikshus, a monk knows society [the group], thus:<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Here, *yoga* means "application of mind, exertion, devotion, meditation" as in Dh 282a; cf 209ab. See D Andersen, *A Pāli Glossary*. 1901 sv.

<sup>40</sup> For a study, see **Skillful means**, SD 30.8.

<sup>41</sup> A brief version is found in **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,3.21/2:109), SD 9. The list of assemblies there, however, is longer: the assemblies of kshatriya, brahmins, householders, recluses, the 4 great kings, the 32 gods, and Māra, which is clearly a later list.

"This is an assembly of nobles,"	<i>ayaṃ khattiya, parisā,</i>
"This is an assembly of priests,"	<i>ayaṃ brāhmaṇa, parisā,</i>
"This is an assembly of householders,"	<i>ayaṃ gahapati, parisā,</i>
"This is an assembly of recluses,"	<i>ayaṃ samaṇa, parisā,</i>
8.2 "Here, one should approach them in this manner,"	<i>evaṃ upasaṅkamitabbam,</i>
"One should stand in this manner," [115]	<i>evaṃ thātabbam,</i>
"One should act in this manner,"	<i>evaṃ kattabbam,</i>
"One should sit in this manner,"	<i>evaṃ nisīditabbam,</i>
"One should talk in this manner,"	<i>evaṃ bhāsītabbam,</i>
"One should remain silent in this manner."	<i>evaṃ tuṇhībhavītabbam.</i>

8.3 If he, bhikshus, were not to know, thus:

"This is an assembly of nobles [kshatriyas],"  
 "This is an assembly of priests [brahmins],"  
 "This is an assembly of householders,"  
 "This is an assembly of recluses,"

8.4 "Here, one should approach them in this manner,"

"One should stand in this manner,"  
 "One should act in this manner,"  
 "One should sit in this manner,"  
 "One should talk in this manner,"  
 "One should remain silent in this manner,"

he would not be called one who knows society.

8.5 But, bhikshus, because he knows society, thus:

"This is an assembly of nobles,"  
 "This is an assembly of priests,"  
 "This is an assembly of householders,"  
 "This is an assembly of recluses,"  
 "Here, one should approach them in this manner,"  
 "One should stand in this manner,"  
 "One should act in this manner,"  
 "One should sit in this manner,"  
 "One should talk in this manner,"  
 "One should remain silent in this manner,"

therefore, he is called one who knows society.

8.6 Thus, he is one who knows the Dharma, who knows the meaning, who knows himself, who knows moderation, who knows timeliness, who knows society.

## (7) The one who knows individuals

9 And how, bhikshus, is a monk **one who knows individuals** (*puggala-ññū*) [**one individual from another, *puggala, parovara-ññū***]?<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> An example of the Buddha's knowledge of the individual is when the Buddha instructs prince Abhaya with the parable of the charioteer: see **Abhaya Rāja, kumāra S** (M 58,9-12/1:395 f), SD 7.12.



9.2 PROGRESSIVE TRAINING. Here, bhikshus, a monk knows people by way of 2 kinds.

(1) There are **2 kinds of people**:

1. one who *wishes* to see the noble ones and
2. one who does *not*.

The one who does *not* wish to see the noble ones is to be censured for that reason;  
the one who wishes to see noble ones is, for that reason, to be praised.

(2) There are 2 kinds of people who wish to see noble ones:

1. the one who wants to *hear* the true Dharma and
2. one who does *not*.

The one who does *not* wish to hear the true Dharma is to be censured for that reason;  
the one who wishes to hear the true Dharma is, for that reason, to be praised.

(3) There are 2 kinds of people who wish to hear the true Dharma:

1. one who listens with an *attentive* ear and
2. one who does *not* listen with an attentive ear.

The one who does *not* listen with an attentive ear is to be censured for that reason; [116]  
the one who listens with an attentive ear is, for that reason, to be praised.

(4) There are 2 kinds of people who listen with an attentive ear:

1. one who, having listened to the Dharma, *remembers* it, and
2. one who, having listened, does *not*.

The one who, having listened to the Dharma, does *not* remember it, is to be censured for that reason,  
the one who, having listened to the Dharma, does remember the Dharma is, for that reason, to be praised.

(5) There are 2 kinds of people who, having listened to the Dharma, remember it:

1. one who *examines* the meaning of the Dharma he has remembered, and
2. one who does *not* examine the meaning of the Dharma he has remembered.

The one who does *not* examine the meaning of the Dharma he has remembered is to be censured for that reason;  
the one who examines the meaning of the Dharma he has remembered is, for that reason, to be praised.

(6) There are 2 kinds of people who, having examined the meaning of the Dharma they have remembered:

1. one who *practises* the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, knowing the Dharma, knowing the meaning, and
2. one who does *not* practise the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, not knowing the Dharma, not knowing the meaning.

The one who does *not* practise the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, not knowing the Dharma, not knowing the meaning, is to be censured for that reason;  
the one who practises the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, knowing the Dharma, knowing the meaning is, for that reason, to be praised.

(7) There are 2 kinds of people who practise the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma, knowing the Dharma, knowing the meaning:

1. one who practises for both *his own benefit* and that of *others*, and
2. one who practises *for his own benefit* but *not* that of others.<sup>43</sup>

The one who practises *for his own benefit* but *not* that of others is to be censured for that reason; the one who practises for both his own benefit and that of others is, for that reason, to be praised.

This is how, bhikshus, the 2 kinds of people are known to a monk.

And this is how a monk is one with a sense of distinctions among individuals. [117]

9.3 Bhikshus, a monk who is accomplished in these 7 qualities is  
 worthy of offerings,  
 worthy of hospitality,  
 worthy of gifts,  
 worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,  
 a supreme field of merit for the world.

— evaṃ —

080128 091027 091030r 091230 101025 110712 130928 140201 150702 160130 171006 180320 191021 250707

---

<sup>43</sup> For summary, see **Sappuris'ānisaṃsa S** (A 4.240/2:239); for details, see **Sappurisa S** (A 8.38/4:244 f), both above [3.2].