

23

Suddhika (Bhāra,dvāja) Sutta

The Discourse to Suddhika (Bhāra,dvāja) | S 7.7 [Ee S 7.1.7]

Theme: Spiritual purity is the highest purity

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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 brahmins, 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:

S 7.7	Suddhika (Bhāra,dvāja) Sutta	The brahmin Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja
S 22.98	Suddhika (Nakha,sikha) Sutta	Essential version of S 22.97
S 29.1	Suddhika (Nāga) Sutta	Essential sutta on nagas
S 30.1	Suddhika (Supaṇṇa) Sutta	Essential sutta on suparnas
S 31.1	Suddhika (Gandhabba) Sutta	Essential sutta on gandharvas
S 32.1	Suddhika (Valāhaka) Sutta	Essential sutta on the cloud-dwellers
S 36.30	Suddhika (Vedanā) Sutta	Essential sutta on feelings
S 48 (S 5.4.1)	Suddhika Vagga (Indriya Saṃyutta)	Essential versions of teachings on the 5 faculties
S 48.1	Suddhika (Indriya) Sutta	Essential sutta on the 5 physical faculties
S 48.31	Suddhika (Sukh’indriya) Sutta	Essential sutta on the pleasure faculty
S 51.24	Suddhika (Iddhi,pāda) Sutta	Essential sutta on the path of spiritual success
S 54.3	Suddhika (Ānāpāna,sati) Sutta	Essential sutta on the mindfulness of the breath

4 Sutta teaching

4.1 NATURAL ADAPTATION

4.1.1 The well known phrase *vijjā,carāṇa,sampanna*, “accomplished in knowledge and conduct” [S 629c]—one of the 9 virtues (*guṇa*) 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**” (*carāṇa*), the ways of one’s clans (*gotta,carāṇa*)—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 **Vāsetṭha S** (M 98,11), SD 37.1.

² SA 1:231; SAPT: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, caraṇa, sampanna**, “accomplished in knowledge and conduct,” is one of the 9 virtues (*guṇa*) of the Buddha. It also describes an arhat (see S 596).⁴

In fact, this is explained in some detail by the Buddha to the brahmin youth Ambaṭṭha in **the Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3).⁵

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The Discourse to Suddhika (Bhāra,dvāja)

S 7.7

1 Originating in Sāvattṭhī.

Then, the brahmin Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja 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 Bhāra,dvāja said this verse before the Blessed One:

Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja’s verse

[Suddhika Bhāra,dvāja:]

3 *Na brāhmaṇo sujñhati koci loke
sīlavā pi tapo karaṃ
vijjā, caraṇa, sampanno so sujñhati
na aññā itarā pajā’ti*

S 629

No brahmin is ever purified in the world,
though he is virtuous⁶ and observes austerities.
The one with knowledge and conduct⁷ is purified;
no other, none other in this generation.

[The Blessed One:]

4 *Bahum pi palapaṃ jappaṃ
na jaccā hoti brāhmaṇo.
Anto, kasambu saṅkiliṭṭho
kuhanam upanissito.*

S 630

Much as one may mutter and chant,
one is not a brahmin by birth,
if one is rotten within, defiled,
supporting oneself fraudulently.⁸

5 *Khattiyo brāhmaṇo vesso
suddo caṇḍāla, pukkuso
āradḍha, vīriyo pahitatto
niccaṃ daḥha, parakkamo.*

Kshatriya, brahmin, vaisya,
shudra, outcaste or scavenger—
if one exerts effort, resolute,
ever steady in exerting,

⁴ **Sanañ,kumāra S** (S 6.11 @ S 596), SD 63.12.

⁵ D 3,2.2-2.3/1:99 f (SD 21.3).

⁶ The Porāṇa Tīkā 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.

*Pappoti paramaṃ suddhiṃ
evaṃ jānāhi brāhmaṇāti.*

S 631

one attains the supreme purity⁹—
know this to be so, O brahmin!

Alternate translation for S 631:

S 631 (alt)

One of the ruling, or priestly, or business class,
or a worker, one of low class, or a dirt cleaner,
if one puts forth effort, determined,
who always acts with firm determination,
one will win the highest good—
know this to be true, O brahmin!

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 ARHATHOOD PERICOPE¹⁰

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.”¹¹

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

— evaṃ —

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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.