

AN 7.42

Paṭhama Niddasa Sutta
True Measure for Seniority – Part 1

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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One morning, the Venerable Sāriputta having put on his robes, and by taking his alms bowl and outer robe entered Sāvatti for alms. Then it occurred to the Venerable Sāriputta, *‘it is still too early to go for the alms round. What if I go to the monastery of the wandering ascetics of other sects.’*

So, the Venerable Sāriputta entered the monastery of the wandering ascetics and having exchanged friendly greetings with the wandering ascetics of other sects, he sat to one side. Now, while those wandering ascetics of other sects were assembled there, the following conversation took place:

‘Friends, whoever leads the Holy Life by completing twelve years living it in its purity, is to be recognized as a senior Bhikkhu; one of distinction; someone who has “made the cut.”’

Witnessing this conversation taking place among the wandering ascetics of the other sects, the Venerable Sāriputta neither was delighted by agreeing to it, nor showed any displeasure by rejecting it, instead, he simply got up from his seat and went away, thinking to himself: *‘I will find out the truth about this matter, from The Blessed One, Himself.’*

Later, the Venerable Sāriputta having wandered for alms in Sāvatti, and after taking his meal, he returned to the monastery and went straight to The Blessed One, and having paid homage to the Blessed One, he sat to one side and reported to Him what had taken place earlier that day, while also adding:

“Bhante, is it correct or possible that within this Dhamma and Discipline of the Tathāgata, we may recognize a Bhikkhu as one of seniority; someone of true distinction, and who has “made the cut,” simply by counting the number of Vassas he has spent?”

“Sāriputta, it is neither correct nor possible that within this Dhamma and Discipline of the Tathāgata, one may recognize a Bhikkhu as one of seniority; someone of true distinction, and who has “made the cut,” by simply counting the number of Vassas he has spent.

“The Bhikkhu has a strong desire in subduing and eradicating any lingering vain wishes from his heart without losing his love for subduing and eradicating any lingering vain wishes from his heart, in the future.

“The Bhikkhu has a strong desire for seclusion, without losing his love for seclusion in the future.

“The Bhikkhu has a strong desire for arousing effort, without losing his love for arousing effort, in the future.

“The Bhikkhu has a strong desire for maintaining careful and discriminating mindfulness, without losing his love for maintaining careful and discriminating mindfulness, in the future.

“The Bhikkhu has a strong desire to penetrate into Right View, without losing his love for penetrating into Right View, in the future.

“Sāriputta, when the Bhikkhu is endowed with these seven attributes, then he is declared to be living the purity of the Holy Life in its completeness. Therefore, such a Bhikkhu may be recognized as one of seniority; one of true distinction, and who has “made the cut,” even if he has not lived the Holy Life for twelve years, let alone thirty-six years, or even forty-eight years, for he indeed is to be called one of true distinction, a Senior Bhikkhu; the one who has “made the cut,” without any doubts.”

Sadhu

Sadhu

Sadhu