Snp 3.7 — Sn 3:7 Sela

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

Source: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/KN/StNp/StNp3_7.html

Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

License: CC-BY-NC-4.0 — https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

License URL: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Copyright: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017

License notice: Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Attribution: From Handful of Leaves, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu; https://www.dhammatalks.org/Archive/Writings/Ebooks/SuttaPitaka_251113.epub. Copyright 2014 Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, Revised edition 2017 This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported. To see a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/. “Commercial” shall mean any sale, whether for commercial or non-profit purposes or entities. Questions about this book may be addressed to Metta Forest Monastery Valley Center, CA 92082-1409 U.S.A. Additional resources More Dhamma talks, books and translations by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu are available to download in digital audio and various ebook formats at dhammatalks.org. Printed copy A paperback copy of this book is available free of charge. To request one, write to: Book Request, Metta Forest Monastery, PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082 USA.

Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

3:7 Sela

(This sutta is identical with MN 92. Part of it also appears in Mv VI.35.1–8.)

I have heard that on one occasion, while the Blessed One was wandering on a tour among the Aṅguttarāpans with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all, he arrived at an Aṅguttarāpan town named Āpaṇa. Keṇiya the coiled hair ascetic heard it said, “Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan—on a wandering tour among the Aṅguttarāpans with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all—has arrived at Āpaṇa. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: ‘He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened,

blessed. He makes known—having realized it through direct knowledge—this world with its devas, Māras, & Brahmās, this generation with its contemplatives & brahmans, its rulers & commonfolk; he explains the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; he expounds the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely perfect, surpassingly pure. It is good to see such a worthy one.'"

So Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side.1 As he was sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with a talk on Dhamma. Then Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with the Blessed One's talk on Dhamma—said to him, "Master Gotama, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to him, "The Saṅgha of monks is large, Keṇiya, approximately 1,250 monks in all, and you are strongly confident in brahmans."

A second time... A third time, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, even though the Saṅgha of monks is large, approximately 1,250 monks in all, and I am strongly confident in brahmans, may Master Gotama acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, understanding the Blessed One's acquiescence, got up from his seat and returned to his own ashram. On arrival, he addressed his friends & companions, his relatives & kinsmen: "Listen to me, venerable friends & companions, relatives & kinsmen: I have invited Gotama the contemplative together with a Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all, for the meal tomorrow. Give me bodily assistance for that."

"As you say, master," his friends & companions, relatives & kinsmen responded to him. Some of them dug out ovens, some split wood, some washed dishes, some set out a water pot, some arranged seats, while Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic arranged a pavilion of garlands himself.

Now on that occasion Sela the brahman was staying at Āpaṇa. He was a master of the Three Vedas with their vocabularies, liturgy, phonology, etymology, & histories as a fifth; skilled in philology & grammar, he was fully versed in cosmology and in the marks of a Great Man. He was instructing 300 young brahmans in the (Vedic) mantras. Then, as he—surrounded by 300 young brahmans—was walking and wandering about to exercise his legs, he arrived at the ashram of Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic. He saw that some of the people in the ashram were digging out ovens, some were splitting wood... while Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic was arranging a pavilion of garlands himself. On seeing this, he said to Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, "Could it be that Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic is giving a son or daughter in marriage, or is he setting up a great sacrifice, or is Seniya Bimbisāra, the

king of Magadha, invited for tomorrow together with his army?"

"No, Sela, it's not that I'm giving a son or daughter in marriage, nor that Seniya Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, is invited for tomorrow together with his army. But I am setting up a great sacrifice. There is Gotama the contemplative—a son of the Sakyans, gone forth from the Sakyan clan—who, on a wandering tour among the Aṅguttarāpans with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 1,250 monks in all, has arrived at Āpaṇa. And of that Master Gotama this fine reputation has spread: 'He is indeed a Blessed One, worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.' He has been invited by me for the meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

"Did you say, 'Awakened,' master Keṇiya?"

"I said, 'Awakened,' master Sela."

"Did you say, 'Awakened,' master Keṇiya?"

"I said, 'Awakened,' master Sela."

Then the thought occurred to Sela the brahman, "Even just this word is hard to come by in the world: 'Awakened.' Now, these 32 marks of a Great Man have come down in our mantras. For a Great Man endowed with them, two future courses, and no other, exist. If he inhabits a home, he will become a wheel-turning king, righteous, a king through righteousness, a conqueror of the four quarters, a stabilizer of his countryside endowed with the seven treasures. The seven treasures are these: the wheel-treasure, the elephant-treasure, the horse-treasure, the jewel-treasure, the woman-treasure, the householder-treasure, and the adviser-treasure as the seventh. He will have a thousand sons, valiant, heroic in body, crushers of enemy armies. He will dwell, having conquered the earth to the edge of the sea, by means of Dhamma, without rod, without sword. But if he goes forth from the home life into homelessness, he will become a worthy one, rightly self-awakened, with his roof opened in the world."2

"Master Keṇiya, where is he staying now, that Master Gotama, worthy & rightly self-awakened?"

When this was said, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic lifted his right arm and said to Sela the brahman, "There, by the dark green line of the forest."

Then Sela the brahman, together with the 300 young brahmans, headed toward the Blessed One. Then he addressed the young brahmans, "Come noiselessly, masters, placing a footstep in a footstep. These Blessed Ones are hard to approach, like a lion wandering alone. And when I engage Gotama the contemplative in counsel, don't break into the middle of my talk. Wait until the end of my talk."

Then Sela the brahman went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he looked for the 32 marks of a Great Man in the Blessed One's body. He saw most of the 32 marks of a Great Man in the Blessed One's body, except for two. About the two marks he was doubtful, uncertain, undecided, and wasn't reassured: about the male organ being in a sheath, and about the size of the tongue.

The thought occurred to the Blessed One, "Sela the brahman sees most of my marks of a Great Man, except for two. About the two marks he is doubtful, uncertain, undecided, and isn't reassured: about the male organ being in a sheath, and about the size of the tongue." So the Blessed One willed a willing of power such that Sela the brahman saw that the Blessed One's male organ was in a sheath. And then, extending his tongue, the Blessed One licked both ear-holes and nostrils back and forth, and covered his whole forehead with his tongue.

The thought occurred to Sela the brahman, "Gotama the contemplative's 32 marks of a Great Man are complete and not incomplete. But I don't know whether he is awakened or not. Still, I have heard the aged line of teachers, along in their years, say that Blessed Ones, worthy & rightly self-awakened, reveal themselves when their praise is spoken. What if I were to praise Gotama the contemplative face-to-face with fitting verses?"

So Sela the brahman praised the Blessed One face-to-face with fitting verses:

"Perfect your body, shining well,

well-born, lovely to look at,

Blessed One, you have a golden complexion,

you have white teeth, you're vigorous.

The characteristics of a well-born man,

the marks of a Great Man,

are all present in your body.

Clear your eyes, good your face,

imposing, splendid, straight upright:

In the midst

of a community of contemplatives

you shine like the sun.

A monk with skin resembling gold

is admirable to look at,

but what use is the contemplative state

for you, so superlative in appearance?
You deserve to be a king,
a wheel-turner,3 lord of charioteers,
conqueror of the four quarters,
sovereign lord of the Jambu grove.4
Noble warriors, feudal lords, & kings
are your devotees.
King of kings, monarch of human beings:
Rule, Gotama!”

The Buddha:
“I am a king, Sela:
a Dhamma king unexcelled.
I turn the wheel with Dhamma—
the wheel whose turning
can’t be stopped.”

Sela:
“You claim to be rightly self-awakened,
a Dhamma king unexcelled.
But who, master, is your general,
the disciple right below the teacher?
Who keeps rolling
the Dhamma-wheel set rolling by you?”

The Buddha:
“The wheel set rolling by me
the unexcelled Dhamma-wheel:
Sāriputta keeps it rolling
taking after the Tathāgata.5
What should be directly known
has been directly known,

what should be developed, developed,
what should be abandoned, abandoned6:
Therefore, I’m awakened, brahman.
Subdue your doubt about me.
Be decided, brahman.
It’s hard often to gain
sight of the Rightly Self-Awakened.
I am one
whose appearance in the world
is hard often to gain:
Rightly Self-Awakened,
an arrow-remover unexcelled.
Brahmā-become, without compare,
crusher of Māra’s armies,
having overmastered all enemies,
I rejoice, with no fear
from anywhere.”

Sela (to his following):
“Observe carefully, masters,
how he speaks, this One with Eyes,
arrow-remover, great hero:
He roars like a lion in the forest.
Brahmā-become, without compare,
crusher of Māra’s armies:
Who,
even one of a dark birth,7
on seeing him,
would not have confidence?
Whoever wants to may follow me.

Whoever doesn't may go.

I will here go forth

in the presence of the one

of foremost discernment."

Sela's following:

"If, master, you thus delight

in the message

of the Rightly Self-Awakened One,

we, too, will here go forth

in the presence of the one

of foremost discernment."

Sela:

"These three hundred brahmans

request, with hands palm-to-palm

over the heart:

We will follow the holy-life,

Blessed One, in your presence."

The Buddha:

"The holy-life is well-expounded,

to be seen here-&-now, timeless,

where the Going-forth is not in vain

for a heedful person who trains."

Then Sela the brahman, together with his following, obtained the Going-forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained Acceptance.

Then, as the night was ending, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, having had choice staple & non-staple foods prepared in his own ashram, announced the time to the Blessed One, "It is time, master Gotama. The meal is ready."

Then, early in the morning, the Blessed One—after adjusting his lower robe and carrying his bowl & outer robe—went together with a Saṅgha of monks to Keṇiya's ashram. On arrival, he sat down on an arranged seat. Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic, with his own hand,

served & satisfied the Blessed One & the Saṅgha of monks with choice staple & non-staple foods. Then, when the Blessed One had eaten and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic took a lower seat and sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One expressed approval of him with these verses:

“The fire oblation is the chief of sacrifices,

the Sāvitti, the chief of Vedic hymns,8

a king, chief among human beings,

the ocean, chief among rivers,

the moon, chief of the zodiac stars,

the sun, chief of things that burn,9

and for those who sacrifice, wishing for merit,

the Saṅgha, truly,

is chief.

Then, having expressed approval of Keṇiya the coiled-hair ascetic with these verses, the Blessed One got up from his seat and left.

Then Ven. Sela, together with his following—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—in no long time reached & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, knowing & realizing it for himself in the here-&-now. He knew: “Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world.” And so Ven. Sela, together with his following, became another one of the arahants.

Then Ven. Sela, together with his following, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, arranging his upper robe over one shoulder and extending his hands palm-to-palm over the heart toward the Blessed One, addressed him in verse:

“This is the eighth day

since coming for refuge,

One with Eyes.

Blessed One,

for seven nights,

we have tamed ourselves

with your message.

You : Awakened.

You : Teacher.

You : Sage who has conquered Māra.

You : Having cut obsessions,

having crossed over,

bring this generation across.

Your acquisitions transcended,

your effluents torn apart,

you are a lion

free of clinging,

your fear & terror abandoned.

These three hundred monks

stand with hands palm-to-palm

over the heart.

Extend your feet, hero:

The nāgas venerate them,

the feet of the Teacher."10

vv. 548–573

Notes

1. According to Mv VI.35.3, at this point in the narrative Keṇiya offered a juice drink to the Buddha, who told him also to offer the drink to the Saṅgha. This became the occasion for the allowance for monks to consume juice drinks after noon.

2. See Sn 1:2, note 3.

3. To be a wheel-turner meant, in ancient Indian parlance, to establish rule over the entire "wheel" of the eight directions. The sutta containing the Buddha's first sermon (SN 56:11), in stating that the sermon set the Dhamma-wheel rolling, thus borrowed this image to make the point that the Buddha's Dhamma ruled in all directions.

The Dhamma-wheel is also a wheel in another sense. In ancient Indian texts, a "wheel" was a list of a permutations of two or more variables. The Dhamma-wheel in the Buddha's first sermon lists all twelve permutations of two variables: the four noble truths—stress, its origination, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation—and the three levels of knowledge appropriate to each truth: knowledge of the truth, knowledge of the task appropriate to the truth, and knowledge that the task has been completed.

4. An epithet for the Indian subcontinent.

5. See MN 141. MLDB, in its translation of this verse in MN 92, mistakenly says that Sāriputta will keep the Dhamma wheel rolling; GD mistakenly identifies him as the Buddha's successor, rather than as the disciple right below him. Translations of this sort have led at least one scholar to cite this verse as a late addition to the Canon, in conflict with MN 108, which clearly states that the Buddha left no successor, and with SN 47:13, which notes that Sāriputta passed away before the Buddha. However, when the verse is correctly translated, there is no conflict.

6. Three of the four duties with regard to the four noble truths. See SN 56:11 and MN 149.

7. Sela, despite his newfound confidence in the Buddha, has not yet abandoned his racism. In AN 4:85, however, the Buddha redefines the brahmanical concept of dark birth in such a way that is based on kamma rather than race.

8. Chandas. This term normally means "meter," but it also means Vedic hymn. See the discussion in The Buddhist Monastic Code, volume II, chapter 8. On the Sāvitti as the chief Vedic hymn, see Sn 3:4, note 4.

9. See Dhp 387.

10. See Sn 3:6, note 25.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: SN 4:20