# SN 7.9 — With Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā

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Source: https://suttacentral.net/sn7.9/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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## Text

Linked Discourses 7.9

1. The Perfected Ones

With Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā

At one time the Buddha was staying in the Kosalan lands on the bank of the Sundarikā River.

Now at that time the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā was serving the sacred flame and performing the fire sacrifice on the bank of the Sundarikā.

Then he rose from his seat and surveyed the four quarters, wondering, “Now who might eat the leftovers of this oblation?”

He saw the Buddha meditating at the root of a certain tree with his robe pulled over his head. Taking the leftovers of the oblation in his left hand and a pitcher in the right he approached the Buddha. When he heard Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā’s footsteps the Buddha uncovered his head.

Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā thought, “This man is shaven, he is shaven!” And he wanted to turn back.

But he thought, “Even some brahmins are shaven. Why don’t I go to him and ask about his birth?”

Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā went up to the Buddha, and said to him, “Sir, what are you by birth?”

“Don’t ask about birth, ask about conduct;

for the fire of Jātaveda is born from sticks.

A steadfast sage, even though from a low class family,

is a thoroughbred checked by conscience.

Tamed by truth, fulfilled by taming,

a complete knowledge master who has completed the spiritual journey—

that’s who a sacrificer should woo,

and offer a timely oblation to one worthy of a religious donation.”

“My sacrificial offering must have been well performed,

since I have met such a knowledge master!

It’s because I’d never met anyone like you

that others ate the leftover oblation.

May the worthy Gotama eat! The worthy one is a brahmin.”

“Food enchanted by a verse isn’t fit for me to eat.

That’s not the principle of those who see, brahmin.

The Buddhas cast aside things enchanted with verses.

Since there is such a principle, brahmin, that’s how they live.

Serve with other food and drink

the consummate one, the great seer,

with defilements ended and remorse stilled.

For he is the field for the seeker of merit.”

“Then, Worthy Gotama, to whom should I give the leftovers of this oblation?”

“Brahmin, I don’t see anyone in this world—with its gods, Māras, and divinities, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans—who can properly digest these leftovers, except the Realized One or one of his disciples. Well then, brahmin, throw out those leftovers where there is little that grows, or drop them into water that has no living creatures.”

So Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā dropped the leftover oblation in water that had no living creatures. And when those leftovers were placed in the water, they sizzled and hissed, steaming and fuming. Suppose there was an iron cauldron that had been heated all day. If you placed it in the water, it would sizzle and hiss, steaming and fuming. In the same way, when those leftovers were placed in the water, they sizzled and hissed, steaming and fuming.

Then the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā, shocked and awestruck, went up to the Buddha, and stood to one side. The Buddha addressed him in verse:

“When you’re kindling the wood, brahmin,

don’t imagine this is purity, for it’s just external.

For those who are skilled say this is no way to purity,

when one seeks purity in externals.

I’ve given up kindling firewood, brahmin,

now I light only the inner flame.

Always blazing, always serene,

I am a perfected one leading the spiritual life.

Conceit, brahmin, is the burden of your pack,

anger your smoke, and lies your ashes.

The tongue is the ladle, the heart the fireplace;

a well-tamed self is a person's light.

The teaching is a lake, brahmin, into which ethics are the stairs,

unclouded, praised by the fine to the good.

There the knowledge masters go to bathe,

and cross to the far shore with dry limbs.

Truth, principle, restraint, the spiritual life,

attaining divinity based on the middle, brahmin—

pay homage to the upright ones.

I declare that man one who follows the teaching."

When he had spoken, the brahmin Bhāradvāja of Sundarikā said to the Buddha, "Excellent, worthy Gotama ..." ... And Venerable Bhāradvāja became one of the perfected.