

| 1.6B ☸ TEXT <i>Numerical Discourses 4.73</i>  | 1.6B ❁ PALI <i>Aṅguttara Nikāya 4.73</i>  |
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| <p>1) A true person is one who, even when asked, does not reveal the faults of others, —and still less so when not asked.</p> <p>When asked, however, and obliged to reply to questions, one speaks of other’s faults with omissions and hesitatingly, incompletely and not in detail.</p> <p>2) A true person is one who, even unasked, reveals what is praiseworthy in others, —how much more so when asked.</p> <p>When asked, however, and obliged to reply to questions, one speaks of what is praiseworthy in others without omitting anything, without holding back, fully and in detail.</p> <p>3) A true person is one who, even unasked, reveals one’s own faults, —how much more so when asked.</p> <p>When asked, however, and obliged to reply to questions, one speaks of one’s own faults without omitting anything, without holding back, fully and in detail.</p> <p>4) A true person is one who, even when asked, does not reveal one’s own praiseworthy qualities, —still less so when not asked.</p> <p>When asked, however, and obliged to reply to questions, one speaks of one’s own praiseworthy qualities with omissions and hesitatingly, incompletely and not in detail.</p> | <p><i>sappuriso yo hoti parassa avaṇṇo<br/>taṃ puṭṭhopi na pātu karoti,<br/>ko pana vādo apuṭṭhassa.</i></p> <p><i>puṭṭho kho pana<br/>pañhābhiniṭo<br/>hāpetvā lambitvā<br/>aparipūraṃ avitthārena<br/>parassa avaṇṇaṃ bhāsītā hoti.</i></p> <p><i>sappuriso yo hoti parassa vaṇṇo<br/>taṃ apuṭṭhopi pātu karoti,<br/>ko pana vādo puṭṭhassa.</i></p> <p><i>puṭṭho kho pana<br/>pañhābhiniṭo<br/>ahāpetvā alambitvā<br/>paripūraṃ vitthārena<br/>parassa vaṇṇaṃ bhāsītā hoti.</i></p> <p><i>sappuriso yo hoti attano avaṇṇo<br/>taṃ apuṭṭhopi pātu karoti,<br/>ko pana vādo puṭṭhassa.</i></p> <p><i>puṭṭho kho pana<br/>pañhābhiniṭo<br/>ahāpetvā alambitvā<br/>paripūraṃ vitthārena<br/>attano avaṇṇaṃ bhāsītā hoti.</i></p> <p><i>sappuriso yo hoti attano vaṇṇo<br/>taṃ puṭṭhopi na pātu karoti,<br/>ko pana vādo apuṭṭhassa.</i></p> <p><i>puṭṭho kho pana<br/>pañhābhiniṭo<br/>hāpetvā lambitvā<br/>aparipūraṃ avitthārena<br/>attano vaṇṇaṃ bhāsītā hoti.</i></p> |

1.6B ❖ COMMENT

A. I've known people to have difficulty with this text, on account of it apparently encouraging people to be at least unforthcoming and possibly even downright deceptive. I don't read it that way, though, and see it rather as praising humility in those who might be praised, and kindness toward others in those who are asked for criticism. Let's look at each of these cases individually.

B. A person who speaks freely of the faults of others when not prompted to do so is simply gossiping. Even if others are doing so, and one is thus encouraged to join in, a worthy person does not do so. The text goes on to consider a case in which one is required to answer, and here one speaks the truth of the person's faults, though does so reluctantly. It just does not feel good, and overall is not healthy, to speak badly of others, even though some situations require it to be done.

C. In contrast to this, one who speaks freely of other peoples' good qualities is being generous and kindly, and one need not wait to be invited to do so. Of course such speech should be honest, and it is important to avoid the kind of 'coloring' brought about by empty praise. But when a person is called upon to give a thorough account of someone else's praiseworthy qualities, one can feel free to do so without limitation.

D. When it comes to speaking of oneself, our text is encouraging us to be open and honest about our own shortcomings. This is not meant to involve an unhealthy self-deprecation, or a morbid dwelling on our faults that might be rooted in or might encourage low self-esteem, but is more a matter of courageous self-honesty. It depicts a person who is willing to face up to their own inner difficulties, and even share these with others if necessary.

E. It is equally important to acknowledge one's own praiseworthy qualities—this path is not only about changing what causes harm but is equally about celebrating what is healthy. Be as equally honest about your good qualities, but there is no need to advertize or emphasize these to others. This text depicts a modest and humble person, who has no need of bragging or drawing attention to themselves.

F. In the context of right speech, we are simply being encouraged here to focus on what is positive, in both ourselves and others, and to shy away from emphasizing the negative qualities we all possess. Praise others when appropriate, drawing attention to their good qualities, but be careful about praising oneself, as such speech is often rooted in and nurtures conceit. Acknowledge your own shortcomings when appropriate, exemplifying self-knowledge and self-honesty, but do not rush to disparage others because such speech can be harsh, abusive, unkind, and unnecessary. One is a 'worthy' or 'authentic' or 'true' person when one exhibits such healthy habits of speech.

1.6B ◆ LANGUAGE

A. The first word of this text, *sappuriso*, is a combination of *purisa*, a relatively straightforward word for 'person', and 'sat' a smaller word with a larger range of meanings. Related to the verb 'to be' (*atthi, sant*), *sat* can be rendered as 'true', 'real', 'actual' or 'good'. I read it in this context to mean something like a worthy person or an authentic person, referring to a person of integrity. It is not a comparative usage, suggesting this person is better than others, but is meant in the constitutive sense of them possessing many good qualities, in this case humility and kindness.

B. Here the words ‘*vaṇṇa*’ and ‘*avaṇṇa*’, familiar to us from the previous unit [1.6a], are used to convey the ideas of ‘praiseworthy qualities’ and ‘faults’. They retain their primary meaning of ‘coloring’ the qualities of others, either favorably or unfavorably.

C. There are four interesting words used in this text to describe ways one can speak that are worth looking at more closely (and they all appear also in their opposite forms, preceded with an ‘*a*’).

- 1) *hāpetvā*, from the root  $\sqrt{hā}$  = to leave, meaning to leave things out (‘with omissions’);
- 2) *lambitvā*, related to our word ‘to limp’, a graphic image for our rendering ‘hesitantly’;
- 3) *paripūraṃ*, combining ‘whole, full’ (*pūraṃ*) with the prefix ‘*pari-*’ (= all around, complete);
- 4) *vitthārena*, from a root  $\sqrt{str}$  = strewn, meaning ‘spread out’ and thus fully revealed ‘in detail’.

#### 1.6B ★ INVESTIGATION

A. Pay attention to patterns of speech around this issue, both in the people around you and in your own habits of speaking. Can you identify people you know who are the opposite of this, who are quick to talk about their own strengths and the weaknesses of others? Can you catch yourself eager to tell stories that amplify your virtues, or gossiping about the shortfalls of others? It happens.

B. Once you have noticed this in yourself, is it really so difficult to change? Yes, things just come out without our choosing that they do so, but once we see a behavior, what does it take to simply change it? Maybe you decide not to tell that story, or maybe you search for something positive to say about someone. Seeing what is going on is half the battle. Acting in a skillful way to alter it is the other half.

C. Investigate in your own experience the texture of these four ways of speaking: with and without omissions; hesitantly or without hesitation; fully or completely or incompletely; in detail or not.

#### 1.6B ✪ PRACTICE

A. See if you can develop some practices for yourself that move in the other direction:

- 1) Notice when the habit of finding fault in others is coming up in the course of your speaking with people, and intentionally let go of it in this moment instead of following through.
- 2) Look for opportunities to find the good qualities of others and praise them. Even if it does not naturally occur to you to do this, make a point of doing it as an active exercise.
- 3) Be forthcoming in revealing your own shortcomings to others, not in a morbid or self-blaming way, but just as a simple move of self-honesty, modesty, and truthfulness.
- 4) Take care in the way you broadcast your own praiseworthy qualities, noticing as you do so whether there may be some conceit or need for self-aggrandizement at work.