

2 Guidelines for Study and Teaching

1 How to study the texts

- (1) Read through the whole text, including the Introduction, once without making any notes, except for looking up difficult words, and marking those lines or sections you find difficult.
- (2) Read through the whole text again, this time carefully *highlighting* important words, points and passages, and making your own notes. Read the *internal* cross-references and footnotes carefully. If you have any difficulty with a topic or teaching, omit it for the moment.
- (3) Read up the *external* cross-references (to other translations and essays).
- (4) Question your teacher on those terms, sections, etc that still trouble you.

2 Teaching the Suttas effectively

- (1) Spend a short time in meditation (breath or lovingkindness) before studying the text yourself.
- (2) Go through the whole text, making sure you understand all the difficult words, terms and teachings. Go through all the footnotes.
- (3) Highlight the key ideas and teachings for attention and elaboration in class.
- (4) You can *either* begin teaching with the Introduction first and then the text, or begin straightaway with the text and then refer to the Introduction for explanations.
- (5) For essays, summarize the points or present them in a conversational manner, reading only passages that are of special significance. *Difficult passages* dealing with controversial issues may be omitted or briefly mentioned for interested students to read on their own, or for discussion during special sessions or workshops.
- (6) For most repetitive passages, you can do responsive reading as a class reflection or “sutta puja.”
- (7) Before closing, allow some time for questions and answers.

3 How to look for a Sutta

- (1) MODERN REFERENCE. Make sure you know the Sutta’s or text’s *reference number*, which is in the footer of the chapter title or at the top of the even page. If you look up the first Sutta in SD 1 (Sutta Discovery volume 1), you will see “Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta” and its reference is given as “Saṃyutta Nikāya 56.11/5:420-424.” For easier memorizing, this can be shortened to “S 56.11” (which means Saṃyutta Nikāya chapter 56, sutta 11). The second set of numbers refers to the “volume and page/s” of the Pali Text Society (UK) edition of the Pali texts.
- (2) TRADITIONAL REFERENCE. There are two kinds of Sutta reference: the modern and the traditional. The *modern reference* has been explained in (1) above. The *traditional reference* is found in the header of the odd page. This numbering is complicated and follows the way the chapters are named and numbered in the ancient manuscripts. This reference helps us locate the text in the ancient Pali texts. Start by simply remembering the shorter reference. For example, for the Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta, it is “S 5.12.2.1.” It is found on the far right end of the header.
- (3) SUTTA (OR TEXT) NAME. It is very useful to remember either the Pali title of the Sutta or text, or its English translation (or both if you can). The title, as a rule, is separated with commas and hyphens, or broken up, to show the different words, so that it is easier to pronounce and remember.
- (4) SD NUMBER. This is the “Sutta Discovery Number,” which is unique to this series. For example, “SD 1.1” is the Dhamma,cakka-p,pavattana Sutta. This number helps you locate the translation or essay in the SD series.
- (5) INDEX. The best way to locate the text you need is to look it up in the “Index & Glossary.” Note that in the index and the headers the titles are given *without* any separators (such as “Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta”) for easy locating when using a global search on your computer. See (6).
- (6) SIMPLIFIED HEAD-WORDS. The Index contains simplified head-words, that is, Pali words without any diacritics (eg “dhammacakkapavattana”) for easier locating. Do a global search (using even a part of the word, say “dhammacakka”) in your SD file on your computer until you find the word you are looking for.
- (7) SANSKRIT AND ANGLICIZED TERMS. The general principle is that we try to represent names and technical terms *historically* (that is, reflecting their origins), for example, the R̥gveda and the other brahminical texts, and Sanskrit names of ancient Vedic teachers (D 13.10/1:237 = SD 1.8). We use the anglicized Buddhist terms such as arhat, bhikshu, karma, nirvana, and pratyeka-buddha, when they are found in standard dictionaries. Such words should be understood from their context, although as a rule they are used to represent early Buddhist terms. As they are anglicized terms, not strictly Sanskrit terms, they should not be taken as Mahāyāna terms, unless the context dictates so.