

5 Introduction

1 Historical note

The Sutta Discovery (SD) series started with the NUS Buddhist Society weekly Sutta Study Group (SSG) classes (with its own website) in February 2002, and the Buddhist Fellowship SD series started in February 2003. This is perhaps the longest running Buddhist class in Singapore. The SD volumes are also archived in the National Library.

2 Living Word of the Buddha project

The Sutta Discovery (SD) series is part of an ambitious umbrella undertaking called the Living Word of the Buddha (LWB), whose vision is to provide comprehensive resources and projects for the study of the early Buddhist texts for a practitioner and student.

In due course, we hope to launch an Internet course in Sutta and Buddhist Studies (SBS) and related correspondence course. We also plan to publish the Index volume, a Dharma Dictionary, a Sutta Dictionary, a Numerical Dharma Dictionary, a Dictionary of Pali Names, a Student's Dictionary of Critical Terms, and related works, as time and resources permit.

3 Regularity

The SD series is an annotated thematic study of the early Buddhist teachings and their relevance today. In 2003-2004, every year three volumes of Sutta translations and related essays have been published in a comb-bound A4 volume of about 180-200 pages. From 2005 onwards, four similar volumes are produced every year. Occasionally, we publish a special volume, such as *How Buddhism Became Chinese* (SD 40b, 250 pp, 2009).

4 A thematic study

The secret of the SD project success is that it is a thematic study. Each volume has its own theme, around which related suttas are translated for study in interrelated manner. In fact, often enough we have cases where texts are closely related either historically or doctrinally that they are best study together. Such a study may be called a "vertical approach."

A "horizontal approach" is that of special essays written on a doctrinal theme, such as *bhāvanā* (SD 15.1), karma (SD 18.1), *anusaya* (SD 31.3), and miracles (SD 27.5a); or on difficult and controversial topics, such as psychological defence mechanisms (SD 7.9) and memes (26.3); or even on a single difficult Pali term, such as *nibbidā* (SD 20.1), *atammayatā* (SD 19.13), and *pariyāya nippariyāya* (SD 68.2); and occasionally, we have a special study series, such as an essay on each of the five aggregates (SD 17).

5 Hermeneutical set-up

As far as relevant, each translation has an introduction, the translation itself, and a bibliography. The introduction usually discusses the sutta background, doctrines, terminology, cross-references (internal as well as to related suttas and essays) and related notes in a reader-friendly manner. The translation itself is conveniently paragraphed, sub-titled, numbered and indented as so to be easy on the reader's eye and to help remembering key ideas and passages.

Key teachings, even when repetitive or abridged (*peyyāla*) in the original texts, are laid out in full so that they can be read out or taped so as *to be heard* for contemplation. Key terms and teachings have footnotes which are often repeated in the early volumes so that students become familiar with them. This also facilitates teaching using these translations or essays as class notes.

On the odd page header is given the full traditional reference of the sutta (according to the World Tipiṭaka) followed by a short reference on the right corner. The footer bears the link to the Sutta Discovery website for those who wish to look up updated and related files.

Both the translations and essays include discussions or references to related books, journal articles and other works, so reflect the range and depth study involved. Such works are cited so that students can refer to them for further research if they wish.

The set-up as a whole presents the works as convenient teaching notes which the teacher could study and research before teaching. Or, the student could use them for self-study. They can also serve as study notes for correspondence or online courses in Buddhism.

6 A comparative Buddhist study

With the present availability of various other texts and translations, such as the Sanskrit, Prakrit and other languages (like Gāndhārī), they are referred to where relevant. Comparative studies are also made where useful with the Chinese Āgamas (the first two volumes of the Chinese Tripiṭaka). Often enough, such comparative references help to resolve problems of difficult readings, omissions, or even textual errors (occurring in transmission).

7 Social comments

Wherever relevant, the Buddha's teachings and remarks are related in a socially engaged way to our current situations, such as money and monastics (4.19), the wanderers of today (24.6b, on the problems of loose cannons in robes), the Three Roots Inc (31.12, on the institutionalization of the three unwholesome roots). Real-life social, ethical and other issues are discussed in the context of the Buddha Dharma.

8 Living Word of the Buddha series

The careful and detailed structure of the SD works is such that they form the foundational texts for a number of other possible projects, such as

- (1) a Buddhist correspondence course;
- (2) reference works such as *A Sutta Dictionary*, *A Dharma Dictionary*, and *Numerical Dictionary of Dharma*;
- (3) the Sutta translations will be published separately according to Nikaya, that is, *The Long Texts*, *The Middle-length Texts*, *The Connected Texts* and *the Numerical Texts*.

The SD texts are freely available online at <http://dharmafarer.org> and also separately on CDs. As such, they are freely available online to be used as is. All this as a whole is known as the Living Word of the Buddha series.

9 Right livelihood

Such works [8] will be published by the Minding Centre or some right livelihood project to serve as a support for Piya Tan and his work. While all such work are freely available, they are the copyrighted works of Piya Tan so that they could be properly revised, updated, published or reprinted in an appropriate manner.

10 The mere Buddhist vision

The whole project is inspired by a mere Buddhist vision, and reflect this spirit in its authenticity, comprehensiveness and spirit. Our mission is to present the Buddha's teachings in a manner relevant to our present way of life and beneficial to society, and to inspire us to keep to the practice of the Buddha Dharma as found in the early texts, so that we may be awakened in this life itself.