

Sammatta,niyāma Suttas

The Discourse on the Certainty of Rightness

[How to prepare yourself for spiritual liberation]

(Āṅuttara Nikāya 5.151-153/3:174-176)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

These are three succinct suttas on the wrong ways of listening to the Dharma and the certainty of rightness (*sammatta,niyāma*) in the same connection. Like many of the teachings of the Āṅuttara, these suttas are probably summaries or key points of longer suttas found elsewhere (but many of which must have been lost); hence the repetitions in parts. The key points of the three suttas, bearing the same title of **Sammatta,niyāma Sutta**, are as follows:

- (1) He does not belittle the lesson.
- (2) He does not belittle the speaker.
- (3) He does not belittle oneself.
- (4) He listens to the Dharma without an agitated mind.
- (5) He listens with a one-pointed mind and giving skillful attention.
- (6) He is wise, not a dullard, intelligent.
- (7) He holds no conceit that he knows when he does not.
- (8) He listens to the Dharma without false pretence, not full of false pretence.
- (9) He listens to the Dharma without a hostile mind, not seeking flaws.
- (10) He does not have a fixed mind like a post regarding the Dharma teaching.

Two other suttas should be studied in this connection: **the Sussūsā Sutta** (A 6.88/3:437),¹ a short text where six conditions are mentioned as preventing one from entering the certainty of rightness; and a prophetic sutta, **the Āṇi Sutta** (S 20.7/2:266 f), warning of students giving priority to literature that lack spirituality.

In the Introduction of my translation of **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1), I have proposed that the faith-follower (*saddhā'nusārī*) and the truth-follower (*dhammānusārī*) are the “lesser streamwinner” referred to in the Abhidhamma and Commentaries.² The lesser streamwinners are said to be on the course of “rightness” (*sammatta*), which here refers to the eightfold path of the saints. These two individuals, however, are spiritual attainers who are not yet aryas, as suggested by **the Sammatta,niyāma Suttas 1-3** (A 5.151-153). These three Suttas, I think, describe the training of the faith-follower and the truth-follower, that is, the lesser streamwinners. This training expedites their attaining streamwinning in this life itself.

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¹ Suggested by Ven Soorakkulame Pematana of Sri Lanka.

² S 25.1/3:225 = SD 16.7 Intro (1.6).

SD 4.2

Sammatta,niyāma Sutta 1**The Discourse on the Certainty of Rightness 1**

(A 5.151/3:174 f)

[174]

1 Bhikkhus, one accomplished in five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is unable to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states. What are the five?

- 2** (1) One belittles³ the lesson.
 (2) One belittles the speaker.
 (3) One belittles oneself.
 (4) One listens to the Dharma with an agitated mind.
 (5) One listens without a one-pointed mind and without giving skillful attention.

Bhikkhus, one accomplished in these five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is unable to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states.⁴

3 Bhikkhus, one accomplished in five ways even when listening to **[175]** the True Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states. What are the five?

- 4** (1) One does not belittle the lesson.
 (2) One does not belittle the speaker.
 (3) One does not belittle oneself.
 (4) One listens to the Dharma without an agitated mind.
 (5) One listens with a one-pointed mind and giving skillful attention.

Bhikkhus, one accomplished in these five ways when listening to the True Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states.

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SD 4.3

Sammatta,niyāma Sutta 2**The Discourse on the Certainty of Rightness 2**

(A 5.152/3:175)

1 Bhikkhus, one accomplished in five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is unable to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states. What are the five?

- 2** (1) One belittles the lesson.
 (2) One belittles the speaker.
 (3) One belittles oneself.
 (4) One lacks wisdom, a dullard, unintelligent.
 (5) One holds the conceit that one knows when one does not.

Bhikkhus, one accomplished in these five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is unable to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states.

³ “One belittles,” *paribhoti* = *paribhavati*, to treat with contempt, neglect, despise (S 1:69; A 3:174 f; J 3:16; 5:442).

⁴ *Pañcahi bhikkhave dhammehi samannāgato suñanto saddhammaṃ bhabbo niyāmaṃ okkamituṃ kusalesu dhammesu sammattaṃ.*

3 Bhikshus, one accomplished in five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states. What are the five?

- 4** (1) One does not belittle the lesson.
(2) One does not belittle the speaker.
(3) One does not belittle oneself.
(4) One is wise, not a dullard, intelligent.
(5) One holds no conceit that one knows when one does not.

Bhikshus, one accomplished in these five ways when listening to the True Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states.

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SD 4.4

Sammatta,niyāma Sutta 3

The Discourse on the Certainty of Rightness 3

(A 5.153/3:175 f)

1 Bhikshus, one accomplished in five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is unable to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states. What are the five?

- 2** (1) One listens to the Dharma as a hypocrite, full of false pretences.
(2) One listens to the Dharma with a hostile mind, seeking flaws.
(3) One has a fixed mind like a post regarding the Dharma teaching.
(4) One lacks wisdom, dullard, unintelligent.
(5) One holds the conceit that one knows when one does not.

Bhikshus, one accomplished in these five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is unable to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states.

3 Bhikshus, one accomplished in five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states. What are the five?

- 4** (1) One listens to the Dharma without being a hypocrite, not full of false pretences.
(2) One listens to the Dharma without a hostile mind, not seeking flaws.
(3) One does not have a fixed mind like a post regarding the Dharma teaching.
(4) One is wise, not a dullard, intelligent.
(5) One holds no conceit that one knows when one does not.

Bhikshus, one accomplished in these five ways even when listening to the True Dharma is able to plunge into the certainty of rightness of wholesome states.

—evam—

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