

Sugata Vinaya Sutta
The Discourse on the Sugata's Discipline
Also called Saddhamma Sammosa Sutta
(On the Confusion regarding the Teaching)
[Four reasons for the disappearance of the Dharma]
(Āṅuttara Nikāya 4.160/2:147-149)
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

This sutta belongs to the category of teachings dealing with the “Dharma-ending age,” that is, listing those modes of thinking and conduct that are not conducive for the growth of the Teaching, but in fact would contribute to its demise. Or at least, such qualities would prevent one from growing spiritually. Early Buddhist prophecies regarding **the decline of the Teaching and the Order** are found all over the Nikāyas, for example,

the Cakka,vatti Sīhanāda Sutta (D 26),
the three Ovāda Suttas (S 16.6-8),
the Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta (S 16.13/2:224 f),
the Āṇi Sutta (S 10.7/2:266 f);¹
the two Adhamma Suttas (A 1.10.34-42, 1.11.1-10/1:18-20);
the Saddhamma Sammosā Sutta (A 2.2.10/1:58 f);
the three Kimbila Suttas (A 5.201, 6.40, 7.56), and others.

A more detailed study of such factors contributing to the decline of the Teaching is found in a separate study entitled “The Dharma-ending Age” (Sutta Discovery 2003:1,10). It is an interesting subject of study not yet examined by many scholars.²

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¹ See Sutta Discovery, 2004.

² Except, for example, Jan Nattier, 1991 & Liz Williams, 2002.

The Discourse on the Sugata Discipline

(A 4.160/2:147-149)

The Sugata and his discipline

1a The Sugata [well-farer], monks, or the Sugata's Discipline remains in the world for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good and happiness of gods and humans.

1b Who, monks, is the Sugata?

Monks, there arises in this world the Tathāgata [thus come], arhat [worthy], fully self-awakened, accomplished in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, knower of worlds, supreme guide of persons to be tamed, teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.³

This, monks, is the Sugata.

2 And what, monks, is the Sugata's Discipline?⁴

He teaches the Dharma good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.

This, monks, is the Sugata's Discipline.

The Sugata [well-farer], monks, or the Sugata's Discipline remains in the world for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good and happiness of the gods and humans.

Four things leading to the destruction of the Dharma

3 Monks, there are these four things that conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

What are the four?

(1) Here, monks, the monks grasp the Suttas in the wrong way, with the sentences and words in the wrong order. Monks, one who wrongly grasps the Suttas, with their sentences and words in the wrong order, draws out the wrong sense, too.

Monks, this is the first thing that conduces to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

4 (2) Furthermore, monks, the monks are difficult to speak to; possessed of qualities that make them difficult to speak to;⁵ impatient; when taught, they learn without respect [for the teaching and the teacher].⁶

Monks, this is the second thing that conduces to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

5 (3) Furthermore, monks, the monks who are very learned,⁷ masters of the sacred texts, Dharma experts, Vinaya experts, experts in the Māṭikā [Doctrinal Summaries],⁸ do not speak the Suttas to others with respect, and after their passing, the others do not recall the Suttas, cutting them off at the root.

³ For details on this **Buddhānussati**, see SD 15.7b.

⁴ *Katamo ca bhikkhave sugata,vinayo?* The answer to this question is given as a stock passage. The tr keeps to the Pali.

⁵ "Possessed of qualities that make them difficult to speak to." **The Anumāna S** (M 15) gives a list of such qualities: (1) one has evil desires and is overcome by it; (2) one lauds oneself and disparages others; (3) one is angry and overcome by it; (4) one is angry, and resentful as a result; (5) one is angry, and stubborn as a result; (6) one is angry and utters words bordering on anger; (7) one is reproved, but resists the reprover; (8) one is reproved, but denigrates the reprover; (9) one is reproved, but counter-reproves the reprover; (10) one is reproved, but beats about the bush; (11) one is reproved, but fails to account for one's conduct; (12) one is contemptuous and insolent; (13) one is envious and avaricious; (14) one is fraudulent and deceitful; (15) one is obstinate and arrogant; (16) one sticks stubbornly to one's views (M 15/1:95).

⁶ As at **Ovāda S I** (S 16.6/2:204) where the same complaint is made by Mahā Kassapa to the Buddha..

Monks, this is the third thing that conduces to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

6 (4) Furthermore, monks, many elder monks who, being luxurious, lax, backsliders, shirking the task of spiritual solitude, do not put forth effort to attain the unattained, to master the unmastered, to realize the unrealized.

And the generations that come after them, too, following them, being luxurious, lax, backsliders, shirking the task of spiritual solitude, do not put forth effort to attain the unattained, to master the unmastered, to realize the unrealized.⁹

Monks, this is the fourth thing that conduces to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

Monks, these are the four things that conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

Four things that do not conduce to confusion over the Dharma

7 Monks, there are these four things that do not conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

What are the four?

(1) Here, monks, the monks grasp the Suttas in the right way, with the sentences and words in the proper order. Monks, for one who rightly grasps the Suttas with their sentences and words in their proper order, draws out the right sense, too.

Monks, this is the first thing that does not conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

8 (2) Furthermore, monks, the monks are easy to speak to; possessed of qualities that make them easy to speak to; patient; when taught, they learn with respect [for the teaching and the teacher]

Monks, this is the second thing that does not conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

9 (3) Furthermore, monks, the monks who are very learned, masters of the sacred texts, Dharma experts, Vinaya experts, experts in the Māṭikā [Doctrinal Summaries], speak the Suttas to others with respect, and after their passing, they recall the Suttas, not cutting them off at the root.

Monks, this is the third thing that does not conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

10 (4) Furthermore, monks, many elder monks who, being not luxurious, not lax, not backsliders, engaging in the task of spiritual solitude, put forth effort to attain the unattained, to master the unmastered, to realize the unrealized.

And the generations that come after them, too, being not luxurious, not lax, not backsliders, engaging in the task of spiritual solitude, put forth effort to attain the unattained, to master the unmastered, to realize the unrealized.

⁷ “Very learned...the Māṭikā [Doctrinal Summaries],” *bahu-s,suta āgat'āgamā dhamma,dharā vinaya,dharā māṭikā,dharā* (V 1:127, 337, 2:8; D 2:125; A 1:117, 2:147). “The fact that there is always mention here [*satthu,-sāsana*, “the Teacher’s teaching”] of the Sutta and Vinaya but not the Abhidhamma, proves that, at the time when this Sutta was completed, only two Piṭakas were recognised as authorities.” (Winternitz, HIL 1, 1933:11 n2).

⁸ “Doctrinal summaries,” *māṭikā*, also tr “matrix, matrices, summaries.” Winternitz: “The Māṭikās are the ‘lists’ or ‘tabulated summaries’ of those ideas which are of importance in the doctrine and the monastic order. These Māṭikās were subsequently worked into the texts of the Abhidhammapiṭaka.” (HIL 1, 1933:11). In Thailand, the ancient tradition of reciting the Māṭikā (here, “Abhidhamma Summaries”) during last rites is still practised today, but this text includes the summary of the Kathā.vatthu, a post-Buddha work. In the Mahāyāna, the term *mātrkā* is used syn with their Abhidharma Piṭaka.

⁹ Examples of the dangers that this prophecy warns about can be found in **Anāgata,bhaya S III** (A 5.79/3:105-108). See Sutta Discovery 2001:1,10 §3c.

Monks, this is the fourth thing that does not conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

Monks, these are the four things that do not conduce to confusion regarding the True Teaching, to its destruction.

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