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(Ahita) Thera Sutta

The Discourse on the Elder (who is unbeneficial) | A 5.88

Theme: Even famous teachers can have wrong views

Translated by Piya Tan ©2007

1 “Even famous teachers can have wrong views”

1.1 The message of **the (Ahitāya) Thera Sutta** (A 5.88) is simple and clear: Even an elder monk (thera) can have wrong views, and in addition to that he *is very senior, famous, deeply learned in the Dharma and receives a lot of public donations*. As a monastic becomes **more senior**, his self-confidence may grow in tandem with the respect he enjoys on that account. As he become **more famous**, his self-confidence might degrade into over-confidence, if he is not heedful.¹ As his **learning** grows, his rationalizing tendencies, too, might worsen his over-confidence and heedlessness.

The (Ahitāya) Thera Sutta also says that a famous teacher with wrong views also conduces to “the loss and suffering of **gods and humans**.” How does this happen? Although wrong view and right view can be as different as black and white, there are innumerable shades of grey and other colours in between. Often certain colours are confused for others, or we could simply be colour-blind, so that we are unable to distinguish the colours at all.

1.2 Worst of all, as a monastic becomes increasingly worldly, or **more wealthy**, or feels the need for more funds, even when it is not for his personal benefit, but attracts those funds on his own account, it is likely that he has fallen into some serious wrong views. A monastic who touches money breaks the precepts; a monastic who thinks about money transgresses the Dharma.²

The wrong views of such a teacher easily and deeply affect the public (including the gods) to their great detriment. Then, there are those who, merely on account of these last four qualities, attribute charisma to that teacher, so that they perceive him not only as “right,” but as *the only one who is right*, even awakened. Such a teacher easily attracts a cult.

1.3 On the other hand, a teacher, whether he has these wholesome qualities or not, only that **he is of right view**, would greatly benefit the public as well as the gods. In this case, the blessings of such a teacher serve to enhance his credibility and popularity so that his audience has even greater faith in the Dharma. While in the former case, the situation is more *teacher-centred*, in the latter, it is more teaching-centred, that is, the teaching is placed above the teacher.³

1.4 The advantage of giving *the highest priority to the teaching*, that is, the Buddha Dharma, is that our faith is rooted in the principles of truth and reality, and we can ourselves further investigate such teachings (and not merely taking our teacher’s word for it) so that our own wisdom truly deepens. Indeed, we might even become better than the teacher. “Green comes from blue, but surpasses the blue” as the well known Chinese saying by Xunzi goes.⁴

1.5 There are also *provisional* teachings, such as the accumulation of moral virtue (*siḷa*) and merits (*puñña*), which although not bad (*apāpa*), are only wholesome (*kusala*) when they serve as the bases or steps for mental cultivation (*samādhī*). This is, in turn, the basis for liberating wisdom (*paññā*). Doing good tends to bring us happy rebirths, or heavenly births as gods. But even these states are impermanent, and we, as a rule, “fall” (*cavati*) from heavenly states in due course, unless we have attained some level of sainthood.⁵

1.6 On a more historical and practical level, the (Ahitāya) Thera Sutta (A 5.88) is a grave warning that grounding in right view is imperative especially when we are in a position of presenting or representing the Buddha Dharma. The more people respect us, or listen to us, or turn to us for spiritual help, the

¹ See eg (Chakka) Appamāda S (A 6.53/3:364 f), SD 42.22.

² See Money and monastics, SD 4.19-23.

³ See The teacher or the teaching? SD 3.14.

⁴ 青出於藍，而勝於藍 qīng chū yú lán, ér shèng yú lán (荀子, Xúnzi, 300-230 BCE).

⁵ See (Nānā,kaṛaṇa) Puggala S 1 (A 4.123/2:126-128), SD 23.8a.

more constantly and more deeply we have to examine our level of goodness and rightness. The point is that status, seniority, fame, wealth, and learning, advantageous as they may be in Buddhist work, are not sufficient standards for truth. The truth must stand above the teacher; for, it is the truth that makes a true teacher and a teacher true.⁶

1.7 Reflecting on this amazing Sutta, I was wondering what examples I could give of the errant famous teachers the Buddha alludes to. I thought of quoting a few examples of the imaginative literati of Chinese Buddhism who introduced various idiosyncratic teachings to defeat their rivals in a desperate quest for patronage and power. My research opened up an amazing wealth of interesting and informative resources that were so instructive that it became a sizeable volume of its own, entitled *How Buddhism Became Chinese* (SD 40b), a work inspired by **the (Ahita) Thera Sutta** (A 5.88), and illustrating its teachings—that even famous monastic elders can have wrong views.

2 Vinaya parallels

2.1 CLOSE PARALLELS

2.1.1 The 4 aggravating conditions (Sutta)

2.1.1.1 In **the (Ahita) Thera Sutta** (A 5.88), the Buddha warns us that even a famous great elders can have wrong views, especially when he has any of the “aggravating conditions,” here a short-hand expression for the Sutta’s description of such a great elder as being

not for the good of the many, not for the happiness of the many, not for the benefit of the many: it is for the bad and suffering of gods and humans.

bahu.jana,ahitāya...bahu.jana,asukhāya bahuna janassa anattāya ahitāya dukkhāya deva,manussānam. [§§1+2.3]

2.1.1.2 **The 4 “aggravating conditions”** are that the elder is

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| (1) of long-standing (having long gone forth); | <i>rataññū</i> | |
| (2) famous (with great lay and renunciant followings); | <i>ñāta yasassī</i> | |
| (3) a recipient of basic supports (of wealthy abundance); and | <i>lābhī</i> | |
| (4) deeply learned (an expert in Buddhist learning). | <i>bahussuta</i> | [§4.1] |

But he has wrong views (*diṭṭhānugati*)—listed as the 5th aggravating condition [§2.1]—his followers accept his wrong views on account of any of the 4 aggravating conditions. Indeed, it is because he has these 4 aggravating conditions, that his followers and the public tend to think that his views, teachings and conduct are all based on right view [§4.2]. The problem is seriously aggravated when, in reality, he has wrong views.

In sociological terms, the followers attribute **charisma** to the elder on account of his seniority, fame, wealth and learning. Conversely, the charisma is further generated by the elder himself when these aggravating conditions are seen as his “good karma.” The follower-elder relationship then is a lop-sided one, in blind favour of the elder. Charisma tends to blind the followers to the elder’s follies and failures, and to see his wrong views as “right views.” In short, the followers do not think for themselves, and is unlikely to see the significance of self-effort and self-awakening.

2.1.1.3 While **the (Ahita) Thera Sutta** addresses the elder with the 4 aggravating conditions as having wrong views—that is, the individual elder—the Vinaya parallel addresses the sangha as a whole. In the Vinaya, the 4 aggravating conditions are called the “influx-based states” (*āsava-t,thāṇiyā dhammā*), or “conditions conducive that are the bases for mental influxes” [2.1.2].

It is important to understand that none of these “aggravating conditions” are in themselves “aggravating.” In fact, it would be obvious, from the examination below that these 4 conditions are actually positive

⁶ For a study on the historical significance of **(Ahitāya) Thera S** (A 5.88), see **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.

one, just they way they are. However, with the implication of the 5th aggravating condition—that of **wrong view**—in the person who is enjoying these conditions that they become seriously aggravating.

2.1.2 The 4 influx-based states (Vinaya)

2.1.2.1 A close parallel to the first 4 “aggravating conditions” —conditions that may cause even a great elder to have wrong views [§4]—is found in the Vinaya as **the “influx-based states”** (*āsava-t,thāṇ-iyā dhammā*) or “conditions conducive that are the bases for mental influxes.” The mental influxes are: (1) sense-desire, (2) existence, (3) views and (4) ignorance.⁷ These are the defilements that prevent any spiritual progress as they conduce to craving and ignorance.

2.1.2.2 These 4 “influx-based states” are presented in the introduction to the 1st Pārājika, in the *Verāñja* chapter (*verañja-k,kaṇḍa*), where the Buddha declares them to the conditions that defile the sangha and bring about its decline. The sangha is perilously threatened with defilement and decline when it begins to attain any of these aggravating factors, known as **the 4 kinds of greatness** (*mahatta*), that is:

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| (1) the greatness of long standing, | <i>rattaññu,mahatta</i> | |
| (2) the greatness of fame and abundance, | <i>vepulla,mahatta</i> | |
| (3) the greatness of excellent gains, and | <i>lābh’agga,mahatta</i> | |
| (4) the greatness of deep learning. | <i>bahu.sacca,mahatta</i> | (Pār 1.3.4 @ V 3:11) ⁸ |

2.1.3 The teachings of the 6 past buddhas

2.1.3.1 In the introduction to the 1st Pārājika (an offence entailing “defeat,” or immediate expulsion from the sangha), the Buddha is addressing the sangha on how the teaching (*sāsana*) can last long. In the times of the past buddhas Vipassī, Sikhī and Vessabhū,⁹ the teaching did not last long. After these buddhas’ deaths, the holy life (*brahma,cariya*), that is, the monastic life, stopped growing, and with the passing away of his last immediate disciples, the teaching disappeared completely. The reason for this disappearance of the teaching is that these buddhas only taught the Dharma directly (but not in great detail) to their respective disciples but did not institute the Dharma and the Vinaya.

2.1.3.2 On the other hand, the past buddhas Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa,¹⁰ not only taught the Dharma in great detail to their disciples for their own immediate full liberation, but they also instituted the Dharma—formally known as the “9-limbed teacher’s teachings” (*nav’aṅga satthu,sāsana*), comprising the suttas, the suttas with verses, the elaborate expositions, the verses, the inspired utterances, the jataka stories, the marvels, and the catechisms¹¹—and the Vinaya, by way of the training-rules and the Pāṭimokkha or monastic code of conduct.

2.1.4 When Sāriputta requests the Buddha to introduce **the training-rules** (*sikkhāpada*) and **the monastic code of conduct** (*pāṭimokkha*), the Buddha replies that such rules should only be introduced when it is clear that the 4 “influx-bases stated” have arisen in the sangha, that is, it is enjoying the greatness (*mahatta*) of long standing, of fame and abundance, of excellent gains, and of deep learning (V 3:9). It is then the dangers of corruption would be very real for the sangha, and the Vinaya (the training-rules and monastic code) must be introduced and observed.

⁷ The 4 influxes are also called “floods” (*ogha*) or “yokes” (*yoga*): SD 30.3 (1.3.2).

⁸ Thanks to Robert Florent (Myanmar) for pointing this out (16 Aug 2015).

⁹ On Vipassī, see **Mahā;padāna S** (D 14), SD 49.8. He was the 6th buddha from our Gotama Buddha and lived 91 aeons ago. On Sikhī, see **Aruṇa,vati S** (S 6.14/1:155-158). On Vessabhū, see **Vessabhū S** (S 12.6). On all three, see D 2:2 ff; J 1:4 ff. Sikhī and Vessabhū arose 31 aeons ago. On the list of the past buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3) & SD 49.8 (2).

¹⁰ Kakusandha, Konāgamana and Kassapa are the last 3 buddhas before our Gotama Buddha (**D 14**,1.4-1.12/2:2-6; J 1:43; DhA 1:84, 3:236). On Kassapa, see SD 49.3 (2). These 3 buddhas all arose in the “auspicious aeon” (*bhad-da,kappa*) just before our Gotama Buddha. On the list of the past buddhas, see SD 36.2 (3) & SD 49.8 (2).

¹¹ Respectively, *suttam geyyam veyyākaranam gāthā udānam iti,vuttakam jātakam abbhuta,dhammam vedallam* (V 3:8,7). On the 9 limbs of the Teacher’s teaching, see SD 26.11 (3.2.1.3) & SD 30.10 (4). Three of them are mentioned in **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122,20), SD 11.4; four in **Kāraṇa,pāli S** (A 5.194,1.5(1)), SD 45.11.

2.1.5 From textual evidence alone, we could surmise that **Pārājika 1**, the rule against monastics having any kind of sexual intercourse.¹² This rule was promulgated by the Buddha on account of the monk Sudinna Kalandaka,putta.¹³ His erstwhile family succeeded in coaxing him to give a child to his erstwhile wife so that they do not lost their property by escheat to the Licchavis on account of intestacy. Not aware that his act is wrong, Sudinna, although a monk, indulged in intercourse with her. (V 3:18)

When the matter comes to the Buddha's knowledge, he at once summons the sangha. He questions Sudinna as to the truth of the matter, then rebukes him accordingly,¹⁴ and then declares, "You, hollow man, are the first-doer, the precursor, of many wrong things!"¹⁵ From this statement, it is possible that Sudinna is the "first-doer" (*ādi,kammika*) of the training-rules.

2.1.6 Although Pārājika 1 is the first training-rule in the monastic code (Pāṭimokkha), it is clearly so by virtue of its entailing the most serious of all monastic offences, that of breaking the celibacy rule. It is unlikely to be the first rule that is actually instituted. In fact, it is quite difficult, if not impossible, for us to know exactly the historical sequence in which all the monastic training-rules have been introduced.

From a careful examination and comparison of textual teachings and narratives in both the sutta and the Vinaya—and with the help of the commentaries and other sources—we might be able to know how certain rules were introduced before another or others. Perhaps, from this, we might have a clearer idea of the chronology of many of the training rules.

2.1.7 For example, we could surmise or conjecture on the possibility that the very first rule of the monastic code, said to be introduced by the Buddha himself, is probably in connection with the serious wrong view regarding sexuality held by Ariṭṭha, the vulture-catcher's son. [2.2.4.2]

Whichever rule comes first, it is clear that once the Buddha notices that there are signs of the bases for influxes arising in the sangha, he would introduces the appropriate training-rules. This is certainly the case of **Pācittiya 68** [2.2.4.2], when Ariṭṭha holds the wrong view that monastic may indulge in sexual, or when Sudinna actually commits this serious breach, prompting the Buddha to promulgate **Pārājika 1** [2.2.4.2].

2.2 THE 4 "AGGRAVATING CONDITIONS." The Vinaya Commentary explains these 4 kinds of greatness (*mahatta*) as follows.

2.2.1 "The greatness of long standing" (*rattaññu,mahatta*)

2.2.1.1 This means the reputation that accrues with the long duration of having gone forth. Here, the Commentary explains that this "greatness" refers to the seniority of a capable elder, one of 10 monastic years or more, who is allowed to ordain others. Such an elder is said to be a preceptor (*upajjhāya*), and is usually the seniormost elder in the community. However, he may appoint other suitable elders as preceptors. Such a position is clearly one of greatness in the community, and, as such, in the eyes of the world, too.¹⁶

2.2.1.2 According to the Commentary, as soon as the Buddha notices certain ordaining practices which may bring about the arising of the bases for mental influxes, we promulgated training-rules so that preceptors do not abuse their positions and the candidates are serious about renunciation. Such training-rules, then, are veritable quality control measures. Their main task is induce and inspire monastics to keep to their task of going forth every further in renunciation until they attain spiritual awakening.

2.2.2 "The greatness of fame and abundance" (*vepulla,mahatta*)

2.2.2.1 This means that the sangha has an abundance of monastics—novice, middle-age and senior—and who have themselves attained greatness. When the bases for inflouxes arise in any such monastics, the Buddha at once introduces training-rules such as **Pācittiya 5**, which forbids the unordained (including

¹² Pār 1.5 (V 3:11-21).

¹³ The son of Kalandaka, the great merchant from a village of the same name near Vesālī (V 3:11).

¹⁴ "It is not fit, hollow man, it is not becoming, it is not proper, unworthy of a recluse, unallowable, ought not to be done." (*Ananucchaviyaṃ mogha,purisa ananulomikaṃ appaṭirūpaṃ assāmaṇakaṃ akappiyaṃ akaraṇīyaṃ*, V 3:20,-18).

¹⁵ *Bahunnaṃ kho tvaṃ mogha,purisa akusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ ādi,kattā pubbaṅ,gamo* (V 3:21,4).

¹⁶ V 1:59 f; VA 1:193 f; MA 3:157.

novices) from sleeping together with monks in the same room for more than a couple of nights (to promote decorum in terms of living quarters).¹⁷

2.2.2.2 The Buddha also introduced training-rules for the nuns to ensure that the bases for influxes do not arise amongst them in terms of abundance. **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 82** forbids nuns from being ordained every year, to prevent overcrowding in the nunneries (or nuns' monasteries). **Bhikkhuṇī Pācittiya 83** forbids the ordination of more than 2 probationers (*sikkhāmānā*) in year (by a preceptor).¹⁸ Again, this rule is to prevent overcrowding.¹⁹ In the case of both rules, we can also understand them to be some kind of “quality control” training-rules. (VA 1:194.)

2.2.2.3 Fame can arise for a monastic when they are perceived as having high attainments, whether it is in terms of dhyana or the levels of the path (sainthood). To prevent such inappropriate self-marketing, the Buddha promulgated **Pārājika 4**, which forbids a monastic from, directly or indirectly, making any kind of claims to a “superhuman” state (*uttari,manussa,dhamma*).²⁰

The Commentary explains superhuman state as referring to any kind of human excellence as dhyana-attainers and as noble saints.²¹ To discourage such claims, Pārājika 4 states that the offence has been committed even when the monastic confesses that he is mistaken about such attainments and does not mean to make any such claim. Moreover, if other monastics or the laity perceive that monastic as having such superhuman powers, they would fall into serious wrong themselves, being deluded by such claims, and give offerings and patronage for the wrong reasons. This is how the greatness of fame and abundance can be the basis for mental influxes.

2.2.3 “The greatness of excellent gains” (*lābh'agga,mahatta*)

2.2.3.1 This means that the monastics attaining gains or donations in an extensive way in terms of both objects and greatness (such as titles, honours, and official positions). As soon as the Buddha notices the risk of the bases for the influxes arising amongst the monastics, he introduced such training-rules as **Pācittiya 41**, which forbids monastics from personally sharing their almsfood (when in abundance) with non-Buddhist practitioners to prevent scandals and gossips that they are being intimate with the monks, and that the sangha might be misconstrued as being opulent.²² (VA 1:194.)

2.2.3.2 Monastic easily attract great crowds and wealth when they have large monasteries or retreat centres, especially those that are palatial and luxuriously furnished. These should be understood as “memes,”²³ and their occupants should be carefully and politely investigated as to whether they are virtuous and true practitioners and Dharma teachers.

Such luxurious temple complexes can be so expensive to maintain, that they often have to be run like a business corporation or tourist centre, and often do so today. This then would be classic example of how such structures have become the bases for the arising of mental influxes. Our understanding and practice of Buddhism are then likely to be defined and limited by the temple walls or retreat fencing, so to speak. Nirvana has neither wall nor fences, and so has neither windows nor gates, too.

2.2.4 “The greatness of deep learning”

2.2.4.1 “The greatness of deep learning” (*bahu.sacca,mahatta*) means the state of an extensive amount of deep learning. So long as the sangha has not attained to extensive deep learning to that extent the grounds for mental influxes will arise in the teachings. But when extensive learning has been un mindfully attained by way of one nikaya, or two nikayas, ... or five nikayas, there emerge [“there is the emerging of”] people who, having put together whatever they see as working for themselves, explain the Bud-

¹⁷ Pāc 5 (V 4:16,31 f).

¹⁸ Bhī Pāc 82 (V 4:336,9 f).

¹⁹ Bhī Pāc 4:338,5 f).

²⁰ Pār 4 (V 3:91,19-25).

²¹ *Uttari,manussānaṃ vā seṭṭha,purisānaṃ jhāyīnaṃ ca ariyānaṃ ca dhammassa* (A 2:480).

²² Pāc 41 (V4:82,4 f).

²³ A meme is technically “an idea, behaviour, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture,” and works at replicating itself. A large temple (or any religious building), for example, functions as a meme in that it projects the idea that its owners or inhabitants are karmically successful, even perfect people, who represent the best in the religion. However, such projections are not necessarily true nor even good. See **Memes**, SD 26.3.

dha's teaching in a manner that is contrary to the Dharma and to the Vinaya. Hence, the Teacher promulgated this training: (Pāc 68, the Ariṭṭha rule).²⁴ (VA 1:195)

2.2.4.2 **The Alaggadūpama Sutta** (M 22) records the circumstances of how Ariṭṭha declares his wrong view that sexual intercourse is not a stumbling block to the holy life. The problem reaches a point when the Buddha sees its necessary to promulgate a training-rule, known as the Ariṭṭha rule.²⁵ **Pācittiya 68**, known as the Ariṭṭha rule, states as follow:

“Whatever monk should say thus, ‘In such a way I understand the Dharma taught by the Blessed One that those things said by the Blessed One to be obstructive are not in fact an obstruction for one indulging in them,’ then that monk is to be spoken to by the monks, thus,

‘Do not, bhante, speak thus, do not misrepresent the Blessed One, for misrepresentation of the Blessed One is not good; the Blessed One would not say thus. Obstructive things, avuso, have been said by the Blessed One in many ways to be obstructive, and are enough of an obstruction for one indulging in them.’

And should that monk, being spoken to thus by the monks, persist in the same way, then that monk is to be admonished by the bhikkhus up to the third time to give it up.

If, being admonished up to the third time, he should give it up, that is good. If he should not give it up, there is an offence entailing expiation.” (Pāc 68 @ V 4:135.18-30; VA 1:25)

2.2.4.3 The phrase *rasena rasam samsanditvā* is difficult here. Ñānamoli, in his Paṭisambhidāmagga translation (Pm:Ñ) glossary explains *rasa* as “function.” I have rendered *rasa* contextually, but somewhat freely, rendered it as “whatever they see as working [functioning] for themselves.” The Tīkā apparently elaborates how this is done, depending on one’s karmic propensity.

2.2.4.4 There is a close relationship between the respective case histories behind the promulgation of **Pārājika 1** [2.1.5] and of **Pācittiya 68** [2.2.4.2]—they are both related to monastic indulging in sex. It is very interesting that the Alaggadūpama Sutta (M 22) there is *no* mention of Pārājika 1 (the defeat rule against monastics indulging in sexual intercourse). Since Ariṭṭha is clearly holding the view that sexual intercourse is not a stumbling-block to the holy life, that a monastic may indulge in sex (which is stressed by the Sutta as a very serious wrong view), we would have expected Pārājika 1 to be invoked.

We must then conclude that this Pārājika rule has not yet been promulgated. Furthermore, since Ariṭṭha is recorded as only *holding* such a view, and there is no mention of his ever having indulged in it, **Pācittiya 68**, which is only an expiatory rule against holding such a wrong view, was introduced. Moreover, if Ariṭṭha were to have indulged in sex (before the introduction of Pārājika 1), he would have been the “first-doer” (*ādi,kammika*), not Sudinna, as recorded in the Vinaya [2.1.5].

We can now conclude that it is very likely that Pācittiya 68 was promulgated before Pārājika 1. Or that the events behind the introduction of Pācittiya 68 occur earlier than those of Pārājika 1. The Buddha’s declaring that Sudinna’s is “the first-doer, the precursor, of many wrong things” [2.1.5] refers to Sudinna as the first monk to break the rule of celibacy by impregnating his erstwhile wife. Such a serious misdeed could or would be used as an excuse for other unconscientious or morally weak monastic to contemplate such an act.

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²⁴ *Bāhu.sacca,mahattan’ti* bāhu,saccassa mahanta,bhāvaṃ saṅgho hi yāva na bāhu.sacca,mahattam patto hoti, tāva na āsava-ṭ,thānīyā dhammā uppajjanti. Bāhu.sacca,mahattam patte pana yasmā ekam pi nikāyam, dve pi ... pe ... pañca pi nikāye uggahetvā ayoniso ummujjamānā puggalā rasena rasam samsanditvā uddhammam ubbinayam satthu,sāsanam dīpenti. Atha satthā yo pana bhikkhu evam vadeyya—tathā’ham bhagavatā dhammam desitam ājānāmi.. pe...samañuddeso’pi ce evam vadeyyā’ti,ādinā [Pāc 68] nayena sikkhāpadam paññapetī. (VA 1:195)

²⁵ For the context of the Ariṭṭha rule, see **Alaggadūpama S** (M 22,3-4) + SD 3.13 (3).

(Ahita) Thera Sutta The Discourse on the Elder (who is unbeneficial)

A 5.88

The elder with wrong view

1 Bhikshus, the conduct [the way] of an elder,²⁶ accomplished in **5 qualities**, is not for the good of the many, not for the happiness of the many, not for the benefit of the many: it is for the bad and suffering of gods and humans: it is for the loss and suffering of gods and humans. What are the five?

2 THE 5 AGGRAVATING CONDITIONS²⁷

- (1) The elder is of long standing, long gone forth.
- (2) He is well known, famous, with a following of great crowds of householders and renunciants.
- (3) He is a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine, support and necessities for the sick.
- (4) He is deeply learned, an expert, a store of learning.

Those teachings that are good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and the letter [both in meaning and phrasing], that affirm the holy life fully complete and pure—such teachings he has deep learning, remembered, recited verbally, investigated with the mind, and penetrated well by view.²⁸

- (5) But he is of wrong view and perverted vision.²⁹

2.2 Having made the masses turn away from the true Dharma, he establishes them in what is not the true Dharma.

Thinking, “The elder monk is of **long standing**, long gone forth,” [115] they come to hold this wrong view, too.³⁰

Thinking, “The elder monk is **well known, famous**, with a great following of householders and renunciants,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

Thinking, “The elder monk is **a recipient** of robes, almsfood, lodging and medicine and medication,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

Thinking, “The elder monk is **deeply learned**, an expert, a store of learning,” they come to hold this wrong view, too.

2.3 Bhikshus, the conduct [the way] of an elder, accomplished in these 5 qualities, is not for the good of the many, not for the happiness of the many, not for the benefit of the many: it is for the bad and suffering of gods and humans.

The elder with right view

3 Bhikshus, the conduct [the way] of an elder, accomplished in **5 qualities**, is for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the benefit of the many: it is for the good and happiness of gods and humans: it is for the benefit and happiness of gods and humans. What are the five?

²⁶ “Elder,” *thera*. Monks of less than 5 rains (years of rains retreat properly observed) are referred to as “newly ordained” (*nava* or *navaka*) (V 1:47; S 1:9, 2:218; Sn p93; DhA 1:92); monks between 5 and 10 rains are called “mid-dling” (*majjhimaka*) (D 1:78; A 4:22); those of 10 rains are called “elder” (*thera*) (V 1:159, 290, 2:16, 212); and those of 20 rains and above, “great elder” (*mahā,thera*) (J 5:456). The last-named, however, may apply to any monk with great wisdom (A 2:22). Comys often speak of the “80 great elders” (*asīti mahā,thera*) (DhA 1:14, 19; cf *mahā,-sāvaka*, Vism 98). Distinguished monks are often referred to as “community elder” (*saṅgha,thera*) (V 2:212, 303). See V:H 4:xi.

²⁷ A close parallel to these 4 aggravating conditions are found in intro to the 1st Pārājika: see (2).

²⁸ That is, by his wisdom. Cf **Gopaka Moggallāna S** (M 108,15/3:11), SD 33.5.

²⁹ *Micchā,ditṭhiko hoti viparīta,dassano*. This last quality underlies all the prec 4 aggravating qualities.

³⁰ *Iti pi'ssa ditṭhānugatim āpajjanti*.

4 THE 5 FAVOURABLE QUALITIES

(1) *The elder is of long standing, long gone forth.*

(2) *He is well known, famous, with a following of great crowds of householders and renunciants.*

(3) *He is a recipient of robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicine, support and necessities for the sick.*

(4) *He is deeply learned, an expert, a store of learning.*

Those teachings that are good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and the letter [both in meaning and phrasing], that affirm the holy life fully complete and pure—such teachings he has deep learning, remembered, recited verbally, investigated with the mind, and penetrated well by view.

(5) *And he is of right view and not of perverted vision.*³¹

4.2 Having made the masses turn away from what is not the true Dharma, **he establishes them in the true Dharma.**

Thinking, “The elder monk is of **long standing**, long gone forth,” they come to hold this view, too.³²

Thinking, “The elder monk is **well known**, famous, with a great following of householders and renunciants,” they come to hold this view, too.

Thinking, “The elder monk is **a recipient** of robes, almsfood, lodging and medicine and medication,” they come to hold this view, too.

Thinking, “The elder monk is **deeply learned**, an expert, a store of learning,” they come to hold this view, too.

4.3 Bhikshus, the conduct [the way] of an elder, accomplished in these 5 qualities, *is* for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the benefit of the many: it is for the good and happiness of gods and humans.

— evaṃ —

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³¹ *Sammā,diṭṭhiko hoti aviparīta,dassano.*

³² *Iti pi'ssa diṭṭhānugatim āpajjanti.*