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Saṅgha,sāmaggī Sutta

The Sangha Concord Discourse | It 19

Theme: Benefits of harmony in the sangha
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2014

1 Sutta highlights

Note: It is helpful to first study **the Saṅgha,bheda Sutta** (It 18), SD 46,19 and its detailed notes, and then go on to study the Saṅgha,sāmaggī (It 19) here.

1.1 TWIN SUTTAS

1.1.1 The Saṅgha,bheda Sutta (It 18)¹ and **the Saṅgha,sāmaggī Sutta** (It 19) are twin (*yamaka*) suttas that literally mirror one another, that is, their teachings “inversely” contrast one another. While **the Saṅgha,bheda Sutta** (It 18) has a negative theme (that of schism), **the Saṅgha,sāmaggī Sutta** (It 19) has a positive theme (that of harmony in the sangha).² As such, they are closely related, dealing with the harmony of the sangha,

1.1.2 These “twin” (*yamaka*) suttas reflect similar contrasting themes as found in the verses of **the Yamaka Vagga**, the very first chapter of the Dhammapada (Dh 1-20). As such, they should be read and reflected on together. In the case of the Yamaka Vagga verses, too, the first of the pair has a negative theme, while the second a positive one, contrasting the former.

1.1.3 Another example of twin suttas, but with a different theme, are the two **Sāriputta Moggallāna Suttas** (A 4.167+168), the two chief disciples tell each other the nature of their respective modes of spiritual progress leading to their full liberation, that is, arhathood. While the Saṅgha,bheda Sutta and the Saṅgha,sāmaggī Sutta have contradicting themes, the two Sāriputta Suttas have complementary ones.

1.2 HARMONY IN THE SANGHA

1.2.1 Sutta summary. While **the Saṅgha,bheda Sutta** (It 18) highlights the dangers of disunity in the sangha, **the Saṅgha,sāmaggī Sutta** (It 19) speaks of the benefits of harmony in the sangha, that is, it is for the good, happiness and benefit of all gods and humans [§2]. “**Harmony**” (*samaggī*) here means that there are no quarrels, or abusing, or disdaining, or rejecting of one another in the sangha [§4]. As a result, the faithless are won over, and the faithful become even more so [§5]. It is said that those who promote harmony in the sangha rejoice in heaven for a whole world-cycle [§7].

1.2.2 Harmony. **The Vinaya** defines harmony in the sangha in terms of the 18 bases of a Dharma speaker (*aṭṭhārasa vatthu dhamma,vādī*), that is, the bases for harmony,³ namely:

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|---|---|
| (1) <i>adhammaṃ adhammo 'ti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is not Dharma as not Dharma; ⁴ |
| (2) <i>dhammaṃ dhammo 'ti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is Dharma as Dharma; |
| (3) <i>avinayaṃ avinayo 'ti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is not Vinaya as not Vinaya; |
| (4) <i>vinayaṃ vinayo 'ti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is Vinaya as Vinaya; |
| (5) <i>abhāsitaṃ alapitaṃ tathāgatena
abhāsitaṃ alapitaṃ tathāgatenāti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is not spoken, not uttered, by the
Tathagata as not being so; |
| (6) <i>bhāsitaṃ lapitaṃ tathāgatena
bhāsitaṃ lapitaṃ tathāgatenāti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is spoken, uttered by the Tatha-
gata as being so; |
| (7) <i>anāciṇṇaṃ tathāgatena anāciṇṇaṃ
tathāgatenāti dīpeti</i> | he explains what is a habit of the Tathagata as
being so; |

¹ It 18 @ SD 46.19.

² It 19 @ SD 46.20.

³ The are the opp of 18 bases of disunity: Mv 10.5.4 @ V 1:354, Cv 7.5.2 @ V 2:204;³ cf V 2:88, 5:115; VA 1278. See SD 46.19 (3.2.2.1).

⁴ The context here is clearly the monastic discipline. As such, it is possible to tr *dhamma* as “the rule,” ie, “he explains what is not the rule as being the rule,” etc. “Vinaya” (in the foll points) then refers to general discipline, right livelihood, etc.

(8) <i>āciñṇaṃ tathāgatena āciñṇaṃ tathāgatenāti dīpeti</i>	he explains what is not the habit of the Tathagata, as not being so;
(9) <i>appaññattaṃ tathāgatena appaññattaṃ tathāgatenāti dīpeti</i>	what has not been promulgated by the Tathagata, he explains as not being so;
(10) <i>paññattaṃ tathāgatena paññattaṃ tathāgatenāti dīpeti</i>	what has been promulgated by the Tathagata, he explains as being so;
(11) <i>anāpattiṃ anāpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains what is not an offence as not an offence;
(12) <i>āpattiṃ āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains what is an offence as an offence;
(13) <i>gārukaṃ āpattiṃ gārukā āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains a grave offence as a grave offence;
(14) <i>lāhukaṃ āpattiṃ lāhukā āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains a light offence as a light offence;
(15) <i>sāvesasaṃ āpattiṃ sāvesasā āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains an offence with redress as being so; ⁵
(16) <i>avesasaṃ āpattiṃ avasesā āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains an offence without redress as being so;
(17) <i>duṭṭhullaṃ āpattiṃ duṭṭhullā āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains a heavy offence as a heavy one;
(18) <i>aduṭṭhullaṃ āpattiṃ aduṭṭhullā āpattīti dīpeti</i>	he explains a light offence as a light one.

(Mv 10.5.5 @ V 1:354 f)

1.2.3 Harmony and fellowship. The **Dhamma, cetiya Sutta** (M 89) records how Pasenadi, rajah of Kosala, in his last meeting with the Buddha, remarks how the followers of other sects look sad, troubled and unfriendly, while the monks exude joy and fellowship.

This is how, bhante, we are living in concord, with mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, seeing each other with kindly eyes.⁶ (M 89,11)

There are at least two key reasons for the joy and fellowship of such a sangha. Firstly, there is internal harmony and unity. Secondly, they meditate on the breath for inner peace and clarity, and cultivate lovingkindness for unconditional love and external harmony. In either case, they also feel a great sense of joyful peace.

1.3 CONDITIONS FOR NON-DECLINE

1.3.1 In the Mahā,parinibbāna Sutta (D 16), the Buddha gives the following 7 conditions for non-decline of the sangha (*saṅgha aparahāṇiya, dhamma*), that is,

- (1) The monks meet regularly and often.
- (2) The monks meet in fellowship, disperse [adjourn] in fellowship and do the Sangha duties in fellowship.
- (3) The monks do not authorize what has not been authorized, and do not abolish what has been authorized, but conduct themselves in accordance with the promulgated training-rules.
- (4) The monks honour, respect, esteem and venerate the elder monks, those long-standing, long gone forth, sangha elders, sangha leaders, and consider it worthwhile to listen to them.
- (5) The monks do not fall under the power of craving that arises in them, that leads to continued births.
- (6) The monks love to dwell in the forest.⁷
- (7) The monks keep themselves up in mindfulness, so companions in the holy life of virtuous conduct who have not yet come would come (to meet them), and they who have come would dwell in comfort.

Bhikshus, so long as these 7 conditions for non-decline endure amongst the monks, then, bhikshus, growth for the monks is to be expected, not their decline. (D 16,1.6.2/2:76 f), SD 9

⁵ “Offences with redress” refers to *saṅgh’ādi, sesa* offences (those entailing a sangha conclave at the start and at the end) and lesser ones, while those “without redress” are the “defeat” offences (*pārājika*).

⁶ *Evaṃ kho mayaṃ...samaggā sammodamānā avivadamānā khīr’odakī, bhūtā aññaṃ aññaṃ piya, cakkhūhi sampassantā viharāmā ti: Dhamma, cetiya S* (M 89,11/2:120 f), SD 64.10. The same remark is made by the Buddha to Anuruddha and his companions in (**Anuruddha**) **Upakkilesa S** (M 128,11 @ SD 5.19).

⁷ *Āraññakesu sen’āsanesu sāpekhā*, lit “one who has a fondness for the dwellings in the forest.”

In short, for the harmony and progress of the sangha, the monastics should meet regularly, often and in fellowship. They should respect the old rules and ways, and the elders. They should rise above craving and delight in the solitary life (that is, not to socialize). They should constantly be mindful with one another.

1.3.2 The essence of all this is tersely captured in this Dhammapada verse:

<i>Sukho buddhānaṃ uppādo</i>	Happy is the arising of buddhas.
<i>sukhā saddhamma,desanā</i>	Happy is the teaching of the true Dharma. ⁸
<i>sukhā saṅghassa sāmaggī</i>	Happy is the harmony of the sangha.
<i>sammaggānaṃ tapo sukho</i>	Happy is the austerity of the harmonious [united]. (Dh 194)

The first line of this verse is quoted in Dhammapāla’s Udāna Commentary, but the Pali there reads it as *sukho buddh’uppādo*, which however has the same sense. There, Dhammapāla says that just as a cause can be described by way of a metaphor of the fruition, so too can fruition be described by way of a metaphor of the cause,⁹ as in “Happy is the arising of the buddhas” and “The bad deed was experienced.”¹⁰ (UA 340)

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The Concord Discourse

It 19

- 1 This was indeed spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arhat [worthy one], thus have I heard.¹¹
- 2 “Bhikshus, the one thing [dharma] arising in the world, arises
for the good of the many,
for the happiness of the many,
for the benefit of the many,
the happiness of gods and humans.
- 3 What is that one thing? **Harmony** [Fellowship] in the sangha (*saṅgha,sāmaggī*).¹²
- 4 For, bhikshus, when the sangha is harmonious [has fellowship],
there are no quarrels amongst one another, *na bhaṇḍana*
and also no abusing of one another, *na paribhāsa*
and no disdaining of one another, *na parikkhepa*
and no rejecting of one another, too. *na pariccajanā*¹³
- 5 In such a situation, those lacking faith only gains faith,
and the faithful become even more so.”
- 6 This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. The meaning here is spoken thus:¹⁴

⁸ *Saddhamma* can also be tr as “the teaching of the good [the Buddha]”: Dh:N 110 n194.

⁹ *Phalūpacārena viya hi kāraṇaṃ kāraṇūpacārena phalam pi vohariyati* (UA 340).

¹⁰ *Pāpa,kammaṃ paccanabhūtaṃ* [Be *paccanubhoti*]. In other words, we can also say “The arising of buddhas is something happy,” and “he experienced the bad karma.”

¹¹ *Vuttam h’etaṃ bhagavatā. Vuttam arahatā’ ti me sutam*. This is said to be spoken by the laywoman **Khujj’utarā**: see SD 16.14 (1).

¹² So Be Ce’ Ee Se *saṅghassa sāmaggī*.

¹³ So Be Ce Se; Ee *pariccjana*.

- 7 *Sukhā saṅghassa sāmaggī
samaggānañ c'anuggaho
samagga,rato dhamma-ṭ,ṭho
yoga-k,khemā na dhaṃsati
saṅghaṃ samaggaṃ katvāna
kappaṃ saggamhi modatīti* Happy is the harmony of the sangha,¹⁵
and so, too, the support of the harmonious.
Those who delight in fellowship, stay in the Dharma,
they fall not from the safety from the yoke.
Having brought harmony to the sangha,
one rejoices in heaven for an aeon [a world-cycle].
- 8 This matter [meaning] too was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.¹⁶

— evaṃ —

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¹⁴ *Etam atthaṃ bhagavā avoca, tath'etam iti vuccati.*

¹⁵ Alt tr: "Happy is the fellowship of the community."

¹⁶ *Ayam pi attho vutto bhagavatā. Iti me sutan ti.*