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Sugata Vinaya Sutta

The Discourse on the Sugata's Discipline | **A 4.160**
 = **Tatiya Saddhamma Sammosa Sutta** or **Saddhamma Sammosa Sutta 3**

The Third Discourse on Confusion Regarding the True Teaching (A 5.156)

Theme: 4 reasons for the disappearance of the Dharma

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 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 of the order** are found all over the Nikāyas, for example,

Cakka,vatti Sīhanāda Sutta	D 26/3:58-79	SD 36.10
Ovāda Sutta 1-3	S 16.6-8/2:203-210	SD 1.10(4) = 3.14(9)
Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta	S 16.13/2:224 f	SD 104.10
Āṇi Sutta	S 10.7/2:266 f	SD 11.13
Adhamma Vagga 1-2	A 1.10,33-42/1:18 f, 1.11/1:19 f	SD 104.14
(Duka) Saddhamma Sammosā Sutta	A 2.2,10/1:58 f	SD 104.13
(Pañcaka) Kimbila Sutta	A 5.201/3:247	SD 5.201
(Chakka) Kimbila Sutta	A 6.40/3:339 f	SD 106.13
(Sattaka) Kimbila Sutta	A 7.56/4:84	SD 106.14

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** (SD 1.10). It is an interesting subject of study not yet examined by many scholars.¹

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Sugata Vinaya Sutta

The Discourse on the Sugata's Discipline

A 4.160 = A 5.156

The Sugata and his discipline

1 The Sugata [well-farer],² 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.

1.2 Who, bhikshus, is the Sugata?

¹ Except, for example, Jan Nattier, 1991 & Liz Williams, 2002.

² See K R Norman, “Pāli Lexicographical Studies VIII,” *Journal of the Pali Text Soc* 14 1990:154.

Bhikshus, 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, bhikshus, 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, bhikshus, is the Sugata's discipline.

The Sugata [well-farer], bhikshus, 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.

The 4 things leading to the destruction of the Dharma

3 Bhikshus, there are these **4 conditions that conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.**

What are the four?

(1) Here, bhikshus, the monks **grasp the suttas in the wrong way**, with the sentences and words in the wrong order.

Bhikshus, one who *wrongly grasps the suttas, with their sentences and words in the wrong order, draws out the wrong sense, too.*

Bhikshus, this is the 1st condition that conduces to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

4 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, 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

Bhikshus, this is the 2nd condition that conduces to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

5 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, the monks who are **greatly learned**,⁷ masters of the sacred texts, Dharma experts, Vinaya experts, experts in the Māṭikā [doctrinal summaries],⁸

³ For details on this **Buddhānussati**, 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." **Anumāna S** (M 15) gives a list of these 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), SD 59.3.

⁶ As at (**Kassapa**) **Ovāda S 1** (S 16.6/2:204) where the same complaint is made by Mahā Kassapa to the Buddha. (SD 88.3)

⁷ "Greatly 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*,-

do not speak the suttas to others with respect, and after their passing, others do not recall the suttas, cutting them off at the root.

Bhikshus, this is the 3rd condition that conduces to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

6 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, many elder monks who, **being luxurious, [148] 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

Bhikshus, this is the 4th condition that conduces to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

Bhikshus, these are the 4 conditions that conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

The 4 things that do not conduce to confusion over the Dharma

7 Bhikshus, there are these 4 **conditions that do not conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction**.

What are the four?

(1) Here, bhikshus, the monks **grasp the suttas in the right way**, with the sentences and words in the proper order.

Bhikshus, for one who *grasps the suttas in the right way, with the sentences and words in their proper order, draws out the right sense, too*.

Monks, this is the 1st condition that does not conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

8 (2) Furthermore, bhikshus, 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).

Bhikshus, this is the 2nd condition that does not conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

9 (3) Furthermore, bhikshus, 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.

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 *māṭṛkā* is used syn with their Abhidharma Piṭaka.

⁹ Examples of the dangers this prophecy warns about can be found in **Anāgata,bhaya S 3** (A 5.79/3:105-108), SD 1.10 (3.3) (excerpt).

Bhikshus, this is the 3rd condition that does not conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

10 (4) Furthermore, bhikshus, 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.*

Bhikshus, this is the 4th condition that does not conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction. **[149]**

Bhikshus, these are the 4 conditions that do not conduce to confusion regarding the true teaching, to its destruction.

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