

## Individuals and Dharma-ending

Source: *The Dharma-ending Age, who is responsible for the decline of Buddhism?* (SD 1.10) © Piya Tan, 2012.<sup>1</sup>

**5.3.1.1 The Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** (S 16.13) is perhaps the most important of the prophetic suttas, delivered in Anāthapiṇḍaka's Park in Jetavana at Sāvattihī where the Buddha addresses Mahā Kassapa's concern regarding the decline of the Dharma:

Bhante, what is the reason, what is the cause, that formerly there were fewer training-rules but more monks were established in final knowledge (*aññā*), while now there are more training-rules but fewer monks are established in final knowledge [become arhats]?

That's the way it is, Kassapa ... .

Kassapa, just as gold does not disappear so long as counterfeit gold has not arisen in the world, even so, the true Dharma does not disappear so long as a counterfeit Dharma does not arise in the world. But when a counterfeit Dharma has arisen in the world, then the true Dharma disappears.

It is not the earth element, Kassapa, that causes the true Dharma to disappear, nor the water element, nor the fire element, nor the wind element. **It is the spiritually empty people (*mogha, purisa*) who arise right here (in this religion) who cause the true Dharma to disappear.**

(S 16.13/2:223-225, abridged), SD 104.10

**5.3.1.2** This Sutta (S 16.13) is important in stating that "it is the spiritually empty people" right here (in Buddhism itself) who cause the true Dharma to disappear. In other words, the true Dharma does not exist for such people as the Vinaya-less monks of Sri Lanka and other "modern" monastics and clerics who claim to be "Buddhist." Their presence does not promote the true Dharma because they do not present themselves to be genuinely calm and truly restrained like true monastic renunciants

They also tend to be worldly, giving priority to academic qualifications and titles so that they are able to secure paying jobs as lecturers and have their own houses or viharas. Despite their worldly status they still accept gifts of faith, especially cash donations from the laity who are generally less well off than they are! When the laity are not taught the true Dharma, and they also lack training in proper Dharma practice, then, the Dharma has ended for them, too. Hence, it is not so much a Dharma-ending "age," as it is a loss of access to the true Dharma; thus, not benefitting from it, and, practising the wrong and false Dharma, we accumulate bad karma instead and face painful consequences.

**5.3.2** This same question about training-rules and attainment is asked by the monk **Bhaddāli** (M 65) to which the Buddha replies the Teacher does not introduce the training-rules or code of conduct until "certain bases for taints become manifest here in the sangha," that is, to say, until the sangha has reached the peak of worldly gain, the peak of fame, the peak of learning, the peak of long-standing renown.<sup>2</sup> The Buddha gives a similar but shorter reply to Sāriputta's request that the Buddha introduce the training-rules (V 3:8).<sup>3</sup>

**5.3.3** The Commentary to **the Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** (SA 2:201 f) explains that there are 2 counterfeit forms of the true Dharma (*saddhamma, paṭirūpaka*): one with respect to **attainment** (*adhigama*), the other with respect to **learning** (*pariyatti*). The former is the 10 corruptions of insight

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/1.10-Dharma-ending-age-piya.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> M 65,29/1:445 f (SD 56.2).

<sup>3</sup> See Piya Tan 2002b 5:27.

knowledge, namely, with regards to illumination, knowledge, zest, calm, bliss, resolution, exertion, assurance, equanimity and attachment, explained in the Visuddhi, magga (Vism 20.105-128/633-638).

**5.3.4** The latter counterfeit teaching comprises texts other than the Buddha word as authorized at the 3 Buddhist Councils, with the exception of these 5 topics of discussion (*kathā, vatthu*): discussion on the elements, on mental objects, on foulness, on the bases of knowledge, on the casket of true knowledge. The counterfeit texts, according to the Commentary, include the following: The Secret Vinaya (*guḷha, vinaya*), the Secret Vessantara, the Secret Mah'osadha, the Vaṇṇa Piṭaka, the Aṅgulimāla Piṭaka, the Raṭṭhapāla Gajjita, the Āḷavaka Gajjita and the Vedalla Piṭaka.<sup>4</sup>

**The Porāṇa Ṭikā** on the Commentary glosses that **the “Vedalla Piṭaka”** is the Vetula Piṭaka, that some say was brought up from the abodes of the nagas [alluding to Nāgārjuna and the Prajñā, -pāramitā Śūtras]; others say it consists of what was spoken in debates (*vāda, bhāsita*).

**5.3.5 The Saddhamma Paṭirūpaka Sutta** continues with the Buddha saying:

The true Dharma does not disappear all at once in the way a ship sinks. There are, Kassapa, 5 detrimental things that lead to decay and disappearance of the true Dharma. Here the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen dwell without reverence and deference towards the Teacher, towards the Dharma, towards the sangha, towards the training, towards concentration.

These 5 things, Kassapa, lead to the longevity of the true Dharma, to its non-decay and non-disappearance. Here the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen dwell with reverence and deference towards the Teacher, toward the Dharma, towards the sangha, towards the training, towards concentration. (S 2:225, abridged)<sup>5</sup>

**The (Tika) Saṅgārava Sutta** (A 3.60) deals with a similar question, that is, “formerly there were fewer monks, but there were more who displayed superhuman feats of psychic miracles,” but now there are more monks but fewer (if any) who have such powers. The Buddha’s instruction here is to say that the greatest miracle is neither psychic powers nor mind-reading, but the miracle of learning (*anusāsani pāṭihāriya*).<sup>6</sup>

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha’s Example and Teachings]

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<sup>4</sup> An attempt to identify the texts cited by the Saṃyutta Commentary is made in the 14<sup>th</sup> century work, *Nikāya, saṅgraha*, discussed in Adikaram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, pp. 99-100. The *Nikāya, saṅgraha* assigns each text to a different non-Theravādin school. The late date of this work, according to **Bodhi**, casts doubts on its reliability, and its method of identification is just too neat to be convincing. The Porāṇa Ṭikā’s comments on the Vedalla Piṭaka suggests it may be a collection of Mahāyāna śūtras. The Mahāyāna is referred to in Sri Lankan chronicles as the Vetullavāda (Skt. Vaitulyavāda); see Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, pp. 87-90. (S:B 808 n312)

<sup>5</sup> On another discussion of the dangers of internal decay, see **Cosmic Buddhas and Paradises**, SD 40b.3 (3.4).

<sup>6</sup> A 3.60/1:168-163 (SD 16.10).