

## **The Buddha Speaks the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma Sutra**

Thus I have heard. At one time the Buddha was in the state of Kushinagara. The Tathagata was to enter nirvana within three months and the bhikshus and Bodhisattvas as well as the great multitude of beings had come to pay homage to the Buddha and to bow in reverence. The World Honored One was tranquil and silent. He spoke not a word and his light did not appear. Worthy Ananda bowed and asked the Buddha,

”O Bhagavan, heretofore whenever you spoke the Dharma, awesome light would naturally appear. Yet today among this great assembly there is no such radiance. There must be a good cause for this and we wish to hear the Bhagavan’s explanation.”

The Buddha remained silent and did not answer until the request had been repeated three times. He then told Ananda,

”After I enter nirvana, when the Dharma is about to perish, during the evil age of the five turbidities, the way of demons will flourish. Demonic beings will become shramanas; they will pervert and destroy my teachings. Monastics will wear the garb of laypersons and will prefer handsome clothes. Their precept sashes will be made of multi-colored cloth. They will use intoxicants, eat meat, kill other beings and they will indulge in their desire for flavorful food. They will lack compassion and they will bear hatred and exhibit jealousy even among themselves.

”Even then Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Arhats will reverently and diligently cultivate immaculate virtue. They will be respected by all people and their teachings will be fair and egalitarian. These cultivators of the Way will take pity on the poor, they will be mindful of the aged, and they will save and give counsel to those people they find in difficult circumstances. They will at all times exhort others to worship and to protect sutras and images of the Buddha. They will do meritorious deeds, be resolute and kind, and never harm others. They will make physical sacrifices for others’ benefit. They will hold no great regard for themselves but will be patient, yielding, humane, and peaceful.

”As long as such people exist, the hordes of demonic bhikshus will be jealous of them. The demons will harass them, slander and defame them, expel them from their midst and degrade them. They will ostracize the good monks from the monastic community. Thereafter these demons derive no virtue from their practice. Their monastic buildings will be vacant and overgrown with weeds. For want of care and maintenance their Way-places will drift into ruin and oblivion. The demonic bhikshus will increase their greed for wealth and will amass great heaps of goods. They will refuse to distribute any of it or to use it to gain blessings and virtue.

”At this time, the evil monks will buy and sell slaves to till their fields and to slash and burn the mountain forests. They will do harm to living creatures and they will feel not the least bit of compassion. These slaves will themselves become bhikshus and maidservants will become bhikshunis. Totally lacking in Way-virtue, these people will run amok, indulging in licentious behavior. In their turbid confusion they will fail to separate the men from the women in the monastic communities. From this generation on, the Way will be weakened. Fugitives from the law will seek refuge in my Way, wishing to be shramanas but failing to observe the moral regulations. Monastics will continue to recite the precepts twice a month, but in name alone. Being lazy and lax, no one will want to listen any longer. These evil shramanas will be unwilling to recite the sutras in their entirety and they will make abbreviations at the beginning and at the end of the texts as they please. Soon the practice of reciting sutras will stop altogether. Even if there are people who recite texts, they will be unlettered, unqualified people who will insist, nonetheless, that they are correct. Bumptious, arrogant, and vain, these people will seek fame and glory. They will put on airs in the hope of attracting offerings from other people.

”When the lives of these demonic bhikshus come to an end their essential spirits will fall into the Avichi Hell. Having committed the five evil deeds, they will suffer successive rebirths as hungry ghosts and as animals. They will know all such states of woe as they pass on through eons as numerous as sands on the banks of the Ganges River. When their offenses are accounted for they will be reborn in a border land where the Triple Jewel is unknown.

”When the Dharma is about to disappear, women will become vigorous and will at all times do deeds of virtue. Men will grow lax and will no longer

speaking the Dharma. Those who are genuine shramanas will be looked upon as dung and no one will have faith in them. When the Dharma is about to perish, all the gods will begin to weep. Rivers will dry up and the five grains will not ripen. Pestilences will frequently take millions of lives. The masses will toil and suffer while the local officials will plot and scheme. No one will adhere to principles. Instead, the human race will multiply, becoming like the sands of the ocean-bed. Good persons will be hard to find; at most there will be one or two. As the eon comes to a close, the revolutions of the sun and the moon will grow short and the lifespan of people will decrease. Their hair will turn white by the time they are forty. Because of excessive licentious behavior they will quickly exhaust their seminal fluids and will die at a young age, usually before sixty years. As the lifespan of males decreases, that of females will increase to seventy, eighty, ninety, or one hundred years.

”The mighty rivers will flood and lose harmony with their natural cycles, yet people will not take notice or feel concern. Extremes of climate will soon be taken for granted. Beings of all races will mix together at random, without regard for the noble and the mean. Their births and rebirths will cause them to sink and float, like feeding aquatic creatures.

”Even then Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Arhats will gather together in an unprecedented assembly because they will all have been harried and pursued by the hordes of demons. They will no longer dwell in the assemblies but the Three Vehicles will retreat to the wilderness. In a tranquil place they will find shelter, happiness, and long life. Gods will protect them and the moon will shine down upon them. The Three Vehicles will have an opportunity to meet together and the Way will flourish. However, within fifty-two years the Shurangama Sutra and the Pratyutpanna [Standing Buddha] Samadhi, will be the first to change and then to disappear. The twelve divisions of the canon will gradually follow until they vanish completely, never to appear again. Its words and texts will be totally unknown ever after. The precept sashes of shramanas will turn white of themselves. When my Dharma disappears it will be just like an oil lamp that flares brightly for an instant just before it goes out. So too, will the Dharma flare and die. After this time it is difficult to speak with certainty of what will follow.

”A period of ten million years will follow before the time when Maitreya is about to appear in the world to become the next Buddha. At that time the

planet will be entirely peaceful. Evil vapors will have dissipated, rain will be ample and regular, and crops will grow abundantly. Trees will grow to a great height and people will grow to be eighty feet tall. The average lifespan will extend to 84,000 years. It will be impossible to count all the beings who will be taken across to liberation.”

Worthy Ananda addressed the Buddha, “What should we call this Sutra and how shall we uphold it?”

The Buddha said, “Ananda, this sutra is called The Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma. Tell everyone to propagate it widely; the merit of your actions will be measureless, beyond reckoning.”

When the four-fold assembly of disciples heard this sutra they grieved and wept. Each of them resolved to attain the true path of the Supreme Sage. Then bowing to the Buddha, they withdrew.

[End of The Buddha Speaks the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma Sutra.](#)