

# BUDDHIST PROPHECIES FOR OUR TIMES

(A reflection on the Cakkavatti Sihanada Sutta)

by Piya Tan 2008

The Cakka,vatti Siha,nada Sutta (D 26) or the Discourse on Universal Monarch's Lion-roar is a long Buddhist prophecy of things to come. It relates to the distant future and the coming of the future Buddha. The good news here is that we need not worry about the world ending in 2012 (or any time soon), since the Future Buddha has not yet come. Even then, the world will continue for a very long, long time, after that.

## RISE OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The Cakkavatti Sutta (as it is called in short) at a high point, relates how the king, failing to help the poor, contributed to the rise of crime. Applying dependent arising to social development, the Sutta shows how the situation escalated:

Thus, bhikshus, by not providing funds for the poor, POVERTY became widespread.  
When poverty became widespread, STEALING became widespread.  
When stealing became widespread, ARMED VIOLENCE became widespread.  
When armed violence became widespread, LIFE-TAKING became widespread.  
When life-taking became widespread, LYING became widespread.  
When lying became widespread, SLANDER became widespread.  
When slander became widespread, SEXUAL MISCONDUCT became widespread.  
When sexual misconduct became widespread, the two things, HARSH SPEECH AND FRIVOLOUS TALK, became widespread.  
When the harsh speech and frivolous talk became widespread, the two things, COVETOUSNESS AND ILL WILL, became widespread.  
When covetousness and ill will became widespread, WRONG VIEW became widespread.  
When wrong view became widespread, the three things, ABNORMAL LUST, UNCONTROLLED DESIRE and DEVIANT PRACTICES, became widespread.  
When abnormal lust, uncontrolled desire and deviant practices became widespread, DISRESPECT towards mother, disrespect towards father, disrespect towards recluseship [the spiritual life], disrespect towards celibacy [the holy life], and lack of respect for family elders became widespread.  
When these things became widespread, the life-span of beings declined, their beauty declined, too.  
For these humans whose life-span and beauty were declining, whose life-span was 250 years, that of their children was 100 years. (D 3:70 f) = SD 36.10

## COMMENTARY

In his Commentary, Buddhaghosa explains "ABNORMAL LUST" (adhamma,raaga) as incest, that is, "lust between mother and mother's sister and father's sister and maternal uncle's wife and other such improper situations"; "EXCESSIVE GREED" (visama,lobha) or "neurotic desire," as excessive greed by way of consuming things, in other words, unbridled materialism and consumerism); and "DEVIANT PRACTICES" (micchaa,dhamma) as homosexuality, that is, sex "between men and men, women with women." (DA 3:853). On the Buddha's explanation on how sexuality arises, see Saññiga Sutta (A 7.48/4: 57-59) = SD 8.7 Intro (1), or click here:

<http://dharmafarer.googlepages.com/8.7Sa%7En%7EnogaSa07.48piya.pdf>.

## MESSAGE FOR OUR TIMES

Greed, especially when we do not know when to stop desiring, brings untold suffering. The greatest wealth you can enjoy is that which you have honestly and justly worked for. For, then you have created the good karma to attract wealth. People suffer great losses because they think they can cheat karma through gambling, cheating, absconding, unwise investments and so on. Evil friends also destroy our wealth and happiness: avoid them from afar, says the Sigalovada Sutta (D 31)

Here is an example of how an exemplary Buddhist monk's moneyless life impresses even the God-believers:

<http://www.blogpastor.net/2008/10/13/is-the-god-of-jesus-speaking-through-a-buddhist-monk/>

Sexuality is a very private thing. The reason is simple enough: sex hardwires biological survival and simply distracts us from spiritual evolution. Sex can be glorified when it is politicized into "power groups." Sexuality is disempowering when it makes us measure people, to seek only certain aspects ("nimitta") of a person that we perceive as attractive. And when that attraction changes (every thing changes!) or our love-object ages, we lose interest (we forget that we too age and decay).

Sex for lay people within marriage is perfectly acceptable, provided, too, there is love and respect between the partners. Monastics, however, have taken the vow not to indulge in any kind of sexuality at all. Lay people should always keep a physical and social distance from monastics so that we in no way make them even think of falling from their celibate life.

In our times, the safest place to seek the Dharma is within ourselves, in our mind, to an island unto ourself, that is, to learn and practise mindfulness:

our body is impermanent,  
our feelings are impermanent,  
our mind is impermanent,  
all phenomena are impermanent.

At the beginning and the end of the Cakka,vatti Sutta, the Buddha declares:

Bhikshus, those who now in my time or after me, would dwell with himself as an island, with himself as refuge, with no other refuge; dwell with the Dharma as an island, with the Dharma as refuge, with no other refuge they become the highest, but, bhikshus, they must be those who desire to learn [who have desire for training]. (D 3:77)

To read the whole of the Cakka,vatti Siiha,naada Sutta (D 26), click here:

[http://dighanikaya.googlepages.com/D26\\_Cakkavatti\\_Sihanada\\_S\\_sd36.10.pdf](http://dighanikaya.googlepages.com/D26_Cakkavatti_Sihanada_S_sd36.10.pdf)

© Piya Tan, 29 Oct 2008