SN 20.7 — Āṇi Sutta — Discourse on the Drum-Peg

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

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Changes: Presentation only: original heading retained in edition details; reviewed paragraph boundaries retained and continued prose reflowed without word changes. No words, punctuation, notes or closings removed or repaired.

Completeness: UNKNOWN. Whole reviewed source translation, including section headings and closings; completeness and translation accuracy remain unverified.

Text

This is what I personally heard.

At one time, when The Blessed One was staying at the monastery donated by Anāthapiṇḍika at Jeta’s Grove in Sāvatthī, He turned to the Bhikkhus and said:

“Bhikkhus, once upon a time, the people of Dasāraha had a large kettledrum, which they had named ‘The Summoner.’

“Now, over time, the drum skin began to loosen and then crack, as it split open around its edges, and the people of Dasāraha began inserting more and more drum-pegs to fix it in place, while they kept beating on it.

“This method of trying to salvage the drum skin went on until ‘The Summoner’ drum’s original drumhead completely vanished, and all that remained was the framework of countless pegs that had been added to it over time.

“In just the same manner, Bhikkhus, there will come a time in the future, when Bhikkhus will not want to listen to the discourses (suttantā) spoken by The Tathāgata Himself.

“Thus, the Bhikkhus will not want to listen to, nor examine those truly profound and meaningful teachings that are so far-reaching and that lead one to the supramundane

state; teachings that far surpass anything mundane, having nothing to do with the world. Teachings that pertain to and discuss emptiness will thus be ignored, discarded, and fully abandoned by the Bhikkhus in the future, who will neither pay attention to these profound discourses to try and understand their meanings, nor find them worthwhile to be memorized or even recited.

“In fact, these Bhikkhus will discourage and minimize the importance of studying and memorizing those profound teachings provided by The Tathāgata Himself, as found within the Suttas.

“On the other hand, Bhikkhus, when other teachings and ideas come to later infiltrate and be added into the Suttantā by poets, commentators, or disciples from outside this Dispensation, then the Bhikkhus will take up those teachings, studying and memorizing them, along with the flowery and fancy language employed by them, which they will eagerly recite.

“Thus, those Bhikkhus of the future will want to listen to such teachings; they will worship those words and memorize them while showing much respect and reverence to them, even though those are not the words of The Tathāgata. Nevertheless, they will keep claiming them as the words of The Blessed One, as it fits their defiled minds.

“Therefore, it is in this manner that the teachings found within the Suttantā as spoken by The Tathāgata Himself, those truly profound and meaningful teachings that are so far-reaching and that lead one to the supramundane state, teachings that far surpass anything mundane and thus pertain to and discuss emptiness, will come to be fully ignored, discarded, and abandoned by the Bhikkhus in the future. As a result, This Dhamma will disappear and no longer be available.

“To this end, Bhikkhus, you must instead train and prepare yourselves by ensuring that you wholeheartedly listen to, memorize, as well as examine those truly profound and meaningful teachings that are so far-reaching and that lead you to the supramundane state; teachings that far surpass anything mundane, having nothing to do with the world; those teachings I have given you that pertain to and discuss emptiness, which you then must engage in and seek to penetrate, and never abandon or ignore.

“You must do so by paying attention to these discourses, as you try and understand their deep meaning, for they are indeed worthwhile to be memorized and recited by you, continuously.

“Furthermore, Bhikkhus, you must encourage and highlight the importance of studying and memorizing these profound teachings provided by The Tathāgata Himself, as found within the Suttas. You must give them your full attention, in order to penetrate and understand their depth of meaning within your hearts.

“It is in this way that you must constantly train yourselves, and do so with dedication, O Bhikkhus!”

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu