

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE BUDDHA-SĀSANA? A CRITICAL STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

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Theravāda discourses express a concern for the decline and disappearance of Buddhism. Originally, the *Mahāpajāpati-gotamī Sutta* assures that the admission of women into the monastic order promotes the decline and disappearance of the *Buddha-Sāsana* while the *Saddhammasammosa Suttas* confirms that monks are responsible for this problem. On the other hand, there are three *Suttas* by the name *Kimbila* which noticeably indicate that one person or one group alone should not be blamed for this misfortune. The *Saddhammapaṭirūpaka Sutta* further claims that even the four elements other than the fourfold assemblies within Buddhism cannot bring about the demise of the *Buddha-Sāsana*. Additionally, several *Suttas* and scholarly works reveal that there are various internal and external causes contributing towards the decline and disappearance of the *Buddha-Sāsana*. They can be summarized into the following categories according to their same groups. (1) carelessness in the transmission of the teachings, (2) the emergence of counterfeit *Dhamma*, (3) lack of diligence in meditation practice, (4) lack of respect toward various elements of the Buddhist tradition, (5) the emergence of divisions within the *Saṅgha*, (6) excessive association of the *Saṅgha* with secular society, (7) admission of women into the monastic community, (8) over-regulation of the *Saṅgha* by the State, (9) oppression of non-Buddhists and (10) impact of social calamities. In this paper, the following research questions are adequately addressed. “Who is responsible for the decline and disappearance of the *Buddha-Sāsana*? Can Buddhist monks be alone blamed for this problem? Are the nuns and the laity responsible? What about the people outside of Buddhism? This research applies the qualitative method and textual analysis. In this study, *Pāli* Texts and its Commentaries as primary sources and books, monographs and scholarly works as secondary sources were utilized in order to collect data and information. The findings in this research suggest that the fourfold assembly of disciples can directly give rise to the decline and disappearance of the *Buddha-Sāsana*, and the followers of other faiths as well as natural catastrophes like wars, conflicts, famine, flood, earthquakes and so on can indirectly and secondarily lead the *Sāsana* to its decay and withdrawal.

Keywords: *Buddha-Sāsana*, Counterfeit *Dhamma*, Buddhist Tradition