

An Analytical Study on Buddhist  
Eschatology – Prophecy of  
Decline of Dharma Based on *the*  
*Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of*  
*Ānanda*  
(阿難七夢經)

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## ABSTRACT

The *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda* is a little-known text which Ānanda experienced a series of seven symbolic dreams. Of the seven, six dreams are symbols of the Buddhist eschatology which illustrates the fall of Buddhism in terms of:

1. The internal conflict among the monastic
2. The deprival of leadership in Buddhism
3. The laity would be more diligent in cultivation than the monastic
4. The monastic order would only care about their livelihood
5. Evil-views would harm Buddhist teachings
6. The destruction of Buddhism by Buddhists themselves, not by others

What are the Buddhist eschatology concepts based on the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda*?

Though Buddhist eschatology is being researched by various scholars, there is no existing analytical study which covers the Buddhist eschatology concepts based on the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda* and mapping of the symbolic dreams mentioned in the Sūtra to the real events in our modern history which is indeed in the “dharma degenerating age”.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed analytical study of the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda*. Many of these dreams suggest Buddhist Eschatology in various aspects. It attempts to show the development of the Buddhist eschatology and its concept in this Sūtra and what the symbolic dreams of Buddhist Eschatology mentioned in the Sūtra represent and how this Sūtra complements or contrasts the Buddhist Eschatology concepts of others. Also, as there is no official full English translation available, this paper presents an English translation based on my hermeneutics.

### Keywords

Buddhist eschatology, decline of Dharma, Buddhist prophecy, Mappō, mo-fa, Ananda’s dreams

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter describes the background pertaining to the topic of study, motivations and approaches. The analytical study would be based closely to the methodology presented with a structural approach to present the analysis and findings in this paper.

## 1.1 Background

The *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda* 《阿難七夢經》, short name as *the Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* 《七夢經》, is a little-known text which Ānanda experienced a series of seven symbolic dreams. Of the seven, six dreams are symbols of the Buddhist eschatology which illustrates the fall of Buddhism in terms of:

1. The internal conflict among the monastic
2. The deprivation of leadership in Buddhism
3. The laity would be more diligent in cultivation than the monastic
4. The monastic order would only care about their livelihood
5. Evil-views which would harm Buddhist teachings
6. The destruction of Buddhism by Buddhists themselves, not by others

Other than this Sūtra, there are also various sutras which talks about same or different aspects of Buddhist Eschatology. For instance, The *Mahā-karuṇā-puṇḍarīka* 《大悲經》 also illustrates the three periods of Dharma - currently, we are supposed to be at the Dharma Degenerating Age which would last for 10,000 years. Buddha also mentioned in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 《大般涅槃經》 his prophecy of Dharma decline and advices to his disciples. The *Sūtra of the Ceasing of the Dharma spoken by the Buddha* 《佛說法滅盡經》 further illustrates the scenarios which would happen in this time and emphasize Buddhism would be destroyed, not by external forces but Buddhists themselves. This is one of the earliest texts describing the degeneration of the Buddhism which is translated in the 4th to 5th century. Other than these, there would be Dharma preachers who would preach the wrong Dharma as predicted in The *Shurangama Sūtra* 《大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經》.

## **1.2 Motivations**

The study of the prophecy of dharma is very important currently since this is the so-called “Dharma-Degenerating Age” to many.

With the analysis of the dreams of decline of dharma in this short sūtra (slightly more than 500 words in Chinese), this paper hopes to contribute to the effort to lengthen the existence of orthodox Buddhism and right dharma in this world.

On top of that as there is no official English translation available (except for partial translation by Jan Nattier and some translations found in Internet). Thus, the comparison within the English Translations<sup>1</sup> of the sūtra attempts to validate which of the existing translations is the more accurate. On top of that, comparison among the sutras regarding the symbolic dreams in the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* validates that the Buddha’s teaching is consistent throughout the sutras though different means are used.

With the English translation, the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda* and its contents can be extended to more readers (especially English Native Buddhists) so that they are aware of the probable phenomena and help in protecting the right dharma.

Finally with the mapping of the dreams to the real events in the history, this paper hopes to highlight the importance of Buddhists’ responsibility in maintaining the lifespan of their own religion. Ways to prevent or slow down the decline are suggested with real life implementations (if any) to contribute to the effort of keeping Buddhism alive in this world.

## **1.3 Problem Statement**

There are various symbolic dreams mentioned in the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* which symbolize the Buddhist eschatology such as the “worms in the lion eating the lion’s flesh” symbolizes the destruction of Buddhism by the Buddhists themselves. What are the concepts of decline of dharma based this Sūtra?

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<sup>1</sup> Note that there are only partial translations available in print or on the Internet to date.

## **1.4 Literature Review**

To ensure that only relevant and up-to-date works are referenced, an ongoing and reflexive process of literature review is undertaken throughout this thesis writing..

During the writing of this paper, there has not been any existing research covering the concepts of decline of dharma based on the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams*. However, there are a few research papers on the concept of Buddhist eschatology or decline of the dharma (usually in term of the Japanese mappō) or the prophecy of decline.

A book named “*Once upon a Future Time*” by Jan Nattier is evolved from a doctoral dissertation on the prophecy of decline. However, Jan’s work is mainly on the Buddhist concepts of history and a case study, The Kauśāmbī prophecy.

There are also some articles written in Japanese and English on the Mappō. For instance, Marra Michele discusses about the development of Mappō thought in Japan. On top of that, there are some useful research papers in Chinese such as Huang Yun Xi’s Research on Recent History of Dharma Catastrophes in China’s Buddhism 1898 – 1937.

## **1.5 Purpose**

Though decline of dharma is being researched by various scholars, there is no existing analytical study which covers the Concepts of decline of dharma based on the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* and mapping of the symbolic dreams mentioned in the Sūtra to the real events in our modern history which is indeed in the “dharma degenerating age”.

There are five main purposes of this paper, mainly:

1. To provide a detailed analytical study of this sūtra
2. To attempt a comparative study of the partial English translations available
3. To present an English translation based on the author’s hermeneutics.
4. To show how this Sūtra complements or contrasts the concepts of decline of dharma of others with the symbolic dreams of Buddhist Eschatology
5. To suggest the possible solutions to prevent or slow down the events mentioned as the symbols in the dreams

## **1.6 Methodology**

The methodology used in this paper is qualitative research, mainly in the area of literature investigations to analyze and examine the concept of the symbolic representations of the decline of dharma and its importance in this sūtra as well as other sutras for comparative study.

Here, two methods are used generally:

a. Historical Approach

This is used to analyze the development of concepts of the terms relating to the decline of dharma and the developments of the various doctrines and sects and last but not least, the development of the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams*.

b. Philosophical investigation

This involves the use of either inductive or deductive reasoning or both (such as to understand why Buddha taught this Sūtra) as well as validity (e.g. whether a relationship is established) with some aspects from the epistemological perspective. There is a great use of hermeneutics to interpret the meanings of the dreams and translate the text into English version.

## **1.7 Structure of the Paper**

The paper is divided into four main sections:

1. The first section consists of Chapter 1 on Introduction
2. The second section consists of 3 chapters, namely
  - a. Chapter 2 presenting the concepts and definitions and the development of the various East Asian terms and doctrines and sects
  - b. Chapter 3 discussing on the historical background of the Chinese translation, comparing various partial English translation available and proposing a complete English translation of the text
  - c. Chapter 4 interpreting the representation of the symbolic dreams and each eschatology concept lying within. It then compares the dreams' contents of this *Sūtra on Seven Dreams* with the occurrences in various sutras.
3. The third section consists of 2 chapters, namely
  - a. Chapter 5 relating the symbols in the dreams to the actual signs or events in the modern history

- b. Chapter 6 proposing the various solutions which help to prevent or slow down the events mentioned as the symbols in the dreams
4. Last but not least, the last section presents a summary of the main points, research conclusions and some planned future research.

For the purpose of this conference, due to the limitation of the number of words and time constraints, Chapter 4 to 7 would not be included. Conclusions are made based on each section in the Chapters presented.

## Chapter 2 – Definitions, Concepts and Origins

This chapter covers the definition of the terms used in Sanskrit Buddhist literature to distinguish the duration of the dharma and its stages as interpreted by various schools of thoughts, the evolution of the last term which represents the Decline of the Dharma in East Asian terms and lastly the development of Doctrines and sects based on the Decline of Dharma.

### 2.1 *Buddhist Eschatology*

Eschatology is formed from two words: Eschatos from the Greek, Eschatos means "last" and -logy means "the study of". It is a part of theology and philosophy concerned with the final events in the history of the world, or the ultimate destiny of humanity, commonly referred to as the end of the world.<sup>1</sup> The term eschatology is used to denote the destiny that awaits each individual after death and is sometimes used in a wider meaning to connote the end of the world and the destiny that follows, specially the destiny that befalls man.<sup>2</sup>

In Buddhism, both these concepts can be found and the term eschatology used in Buddhist literature therefore covers both. Use of "Buddhist eschatology" requires careful qualification as it may be seen as a misnomer if we understand eschatology as "final things", in other words, the belief that the world will come to a definite end one day and Buddhism refers to "beginningless cycles of birth and death of the universe as well as individual. Thus, what we mean by Buddhist eschatology here is more of "relative eschatology". On cosmic level, we can talk about one phase of the cycle or a cycle of the formation and destruction of the universe. On historical level, we can talk about the demise of the Buddhism itself.

Here for the context of discussion, we would place "Buddhist Eschatology" as the "Demise of the Buddhism" itself, particularly the prophecy of decline of the dharma leading to this Buddhist eschatology or the latter day of the law.

Why is it called prophecy? Impermanence, the first of the "three marks of existence", holds that all phenomena arise and cease due to conditions and so is Buddhism. Therefore from the earliest times, it was felt that Dharma (Buddhist teachings) would not last long in this present age. The vast universe undergoes vast cycles of progress and decline. The entire cosmos and the mortal and spiritual capacity of human beings are viewed as being on the downward cycle. Thus, Buddhists have anticipated gradual decline both in the quality and quantity of the Dharma and the morality of its practitioners. Such expectations are recorded in many prophecies of decline and eventual disappearance of the Buddhism found in Buddhist canonical texts.

With these in mind, the next section discusses the duration of the dharma.

### 2.2 *Duration of Dharma*

The predictions of the eventual extinction of the Dharma are found in the earliest Buddhist literature. With such predictions, a belief that the Dharma would last only for

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<sup>1</sup> Jerry L. Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> ed. Paul Edwards, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 3 & 4, p. 48.



a fixed period of time arose. There are various sayings on the durations ranging from a minimum of 500 years to more than 10000 years. Jan Nattier has done an extensive survey on them which would be summarized and further analyzed together with my findings.

1. 500 years

Several different ordination lineages' (Nikāya) Vinaya texts<sup>3</sup> predict that Buddhism would only last for 500 years after Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. The period supposed to last for 1000 years but because of Buddha allowing women to the monastic order, it was reduced.<sup>4</sup>

This appears to date from a period 2 centuries or more before C.E and is the oldest.

2. 500 after-years

From the comparison of the available Sanskrit and Chinese sutras (the *Diamond Sūtra* and the *Lotus Sūtra*) Jan found that the paścimāyāṃ pañcaśatyām in the early Mahāyāna literature is simple "during the five hundred after-years".<sup>5</sup> However, a final conclusion on this issue needs a comparative study of all the extant versions (in all languages) of these sutras and those others which can be identified with this expression appears and thus, this would not be covered further in this paper.

3. 700 years

There are 2 texts that appear to predict that the dharma will disappear after 700 years – Mahāyāna's *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and Hinayana's<sup>6</sup> the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda*. A look on the text itself seems to suggest that the Dharma will disappear after 700 years. However, a closer look will tell us that there are descriptions of various activities by the good and evil Buddhists. This suggests that the Buddhism still continues for some time. The 700 years which is mentioned in both texts are well significant but it is difficult to uncover its meaning unless we probe further. [This would be left for further research.](#)

4. 1000 years

Around the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E, there appears a new version of the prophecy of decline. A 1000-year timetable seems to be popular in the Sarvastivada circles appearing in various literature including *sutras*, Vinaya texts, Avadāna tales and scholastic works.<sup>7</sup> This 1000-year timetable also appears in various Mahāyāna texts including the *Bhadrakalpika Sūtra* and a commentary on the larger *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* preserved only in the Chinese version. This 1000-year period is sometimes treated as consisting two sub periods of 500 years each.

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<sup>3</sup> Pāli *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* and *Milindapañha* cited from Jan Nattier, *Once upon Future Time*, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Vinaya, Cullavagga* X, 1, 6. English translation from Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, p. 447.

<sup>5</sup> Jan Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Documented as Hinalaya's text 「小乘修多羅失譯錄第二」 in Scroll 14 of *Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations* 《歷代三寶紀》 T49, no. 2034, p. 116, c4, 「小乘經單本」 in Scroll 1 of *Catalogue of Scriptures* 《眾經目錄》 卷 1 T55, no. 2147, p. 154, a3 and so forth.

<sup>7</sup> "Decline of The Dharma" from Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, p. 211.

For the non-Mahāyāna (Nikāya) Buddhist literature, there appears to be 10 such texts which mention the 1000-year period and most of them are preserved only in Chinese translation. There are 6 of them written by Sarvastivadins and Mulasarvastivadins, others not established.<sup>8</sup> From Jan's analysis, there is no standard system in Nikāya Buddhism for sub-dividing this 1000 period.

As for Mahāyāna on the other hand, all four texts containing the 1000 period shows that it is subdivided into 2 500-year periods.<sup>9</sup> The first period is the saddharma and saddharma pratirūpaka (see 2.3 Three-Stage Theory of Decline for explanation of these terms).

In the following, we will see a variety of new timetables and all of them are constructed in multiples of the original 500-year figure and appear only in Mahāyāna texts except a 5000-year timetable coming from Theravada school.

5. 1500 years

4 texts all from Mahāyāna tradition predict that the dharma will last only for 1500 years.<sup>10</sup> These texts treat the subdivisions differently (the division of the period into saddharma and saddharma-pratirūpaka) and all state that the saddharma will endure for only a portion of the time.

In the periods of 2000 years and over, the distinction between saddharma and saddharma pratirūpaka no longer exists.

6. 2000 years

Four texts of the *Candragarbha Sūtra* 《大集月藏經》 contain the 2000-years period.<sup>11</sup> Here the term saddharma pratirūpaka does not appear in most of the text and the subdivisions are different as well. Two other Tibetan texts<sup>12</sup>, both translations from lost Khotanese originals also include the period of 2000 years and all except one Sūtra that the saddharma pratirūpaka appear.<sup>13</sup>

7. 2500 years

According to chapter 55 of the *Mahāsaṃnipata Sūtra* 《大方等大集經》, there is a five five-hundred years saying. That is, the 2500 years after Buddha entered *nirvāṇa* is divided into 5 five-hundred years. No where in the text that the saddharma pratirūpaka is mentioned. The concept of a period of saddharma pratirūpaka may not be taken into consideration in the formulation of this period.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jane Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.46.

<sup>10</sup> *Candragarbha Sūtra* 月藏分 section of the *Mahāsaṃnipata Sūtra* 大集經(T13, no. 397, p. 379, c5-9); Sanskrit *Karuṇapundarīka Sūtra* as documented from Yamada Isshi, *Karuṇapundarīka*, p. 262, lines 9 – 11; Tibetan text *bdag youngs-su mya-ngan-las 'das-nas kyang lo stong-du dam-pa'i chos gnas-par gyur-cig // yang lo lnga-brgyar ni dam-pa'i chos gnas-par gyur-cig//* (Pek., no. 780, *mdo-sna-tshogs cu*, p. 269 a6-7); *Mahāmāyā Sūtra* 摩訶摩耶經 (T12, no. 383, p. 1013, b14 – p. 1014, a11).

<sup>11</sup> Jane Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> In the Tibetan version only. Source: ibid, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> T13, no. 397, p. 363, a29-b5.

In chapter 183 of the *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra* 《大毘婆沙論》, it was said that since women can be allowed to ordained, the True Dharma is reduced by 500 years and thus, the true dharma is the first 500 years of liberty can be obtained firmly, semblance dharma is the next 500 years which concentration can be obtained firmly and final dharma is the last 3 500 years which no practice nor realization can be obtained.<sup>15</sup>

One thing to note is that this 2500-years period is especially influential in the East Asia.

8. 5000 years

In Theravada, there is a 5000-year timetable adopted which has been known since at least the 5<sup>th</sup> century appearing in Buddhaghosa's commentary of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*.<sup>16</sup>

This also becomes a standard for the Tibetan Buddhism drawing from the two surviving Tibetan translations of the *Maitreya Sūtra* probably.

9. 5104 years

Strangely, there is a 5104-year timetable used by Tibetan Buddhists as well. The number is given such exact as it was calculated on the basis of an apocalyptic prophecy found in the *Kalacakra Tantra*.<sup>17</sup>

10. 10000 years and beyond

In the East Asian Buddhism, the years exceeding 5000 years are pretty common: a Chinese version of *Samantapāsādikā* has changed the 5000 years to 10000 years in its translation. Others extend this to be beyond 10000 years.<sup>18</sup> For instance according to the Chapter 29 of *Ju She Lun Bao Shu* 《俱舍論寶疏》<sup>19</sup> and Chapter 18 of *Samanta-pāsādikā* 《善見律毘婆沙》<sup>20</sup> explains that after 1000 years of true dharma, there would be 5000 years of semblance dharma then 5000 years of final dharma in the latter 10000 years period. These figures are unknown outside East Asia.

From these listings, we can see that 1000-year traditions may be a product or re-interpretations by the Buddhists from the original 500 years as Jan pointed out. The earliest Chinese translations of texts consisting 1000 years appear after early 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup> Those predicting more than 1000 years may seem to have arisen sometimes around a thousand years after the time of Buddha. One clear distinction is that the majority of the 500-year traditions belong to the schools of Nikāya group; 1000-year groups are more evenly divided between the Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna sources. Those exceeding 1000 years are almost exclusively found in the Mahāyāna sources.

<sup>15</sup> T27, no. 1545, p. 0917, b13 – p. 0918, a17.

<sup>16</sup> “Decline of the Dharma” from Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, p. 211.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> 11500 years appears in T, no. 1933, 46.786c4-6; 12000 years appears in T42, no. 1824, p. 18, b2-5, T47, no. 1960, p. 48, c7-8 and T35, no. 1709, p. 520, c10.

<sup>19</sup> X53, no. 0841, p. 0520, b15 - b231.

<sup>20</sup> T24, no. 1462, p. 0796, c25 – p. 0797, a09.

<sup>21</sup> Jane Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, p. 63.

Regardless of the different duration given in various texts, the duration is divided into two stages for Indian sources (Saddharma and saddharma-pratirupaka) and three periods for the East Asian Buddhism.

In the next section, we shall look at the three-stage theory of decline which the last stage is not applicable for the Indian Buddhism.

### **2.3 Three-Stage Theory of Decline**

The calculation of the duration of Dharma is used by later sources which developed a three-stage theory of decline:

1. saddharma – True/Real Dharma

This period refers to the transmission of the Buddha's teachings in minimum distortion and sentient beings had a good chance understanding and practicing them and of achieving enlightenment (Bodhi).

During this period, the Buddhist teachings are still available in their full form and enlightenment can still be attained.

According to the latter Chapter of the *Mahāyānābhisamaya Sūtra* 《大乘同性經》<sup>22</sup>, Chapter 6 of the *Essays on the Forest of Meanings in the Mahāyāna Dharma Garden* 《大乘法苑義林章》 (Da Cheng Fa Yuan Yi Lin Zhang)<sup>23</sup> and etc, this period is the period after Buddha entered Nirvana but the teaching are still available in this world. By following the teaching to practise, one can attain the fruit of enlightenment.

This term saddharma occurs in numerous texts of Pali canon which implied that it has appeared seen the 30 BCE or even earlier.<sup>24</sup> After it had been introduced into the Buddhist terminology, it was able to serve as the basis for the construction of another compound expression saddharma-pratirupaka.

2. dharma-pratirupaka/ pratirupakadharmā/ saddharma pratirūpaka – Counterfeit/ Semblance Dharma

During this second period, the substance would be gone and only the outer forms of practice would remain. Fewer beings would attain enlightenment at this time. During the second, at least some elements of the Buddhism remain available but conditions for spiritual practice are far less propitious.

According to the latter Chapter of the *Mahāyānābhisamaya Sūtra* 《大乘同性經》<sup>25</sup>, Chapter 6 of the *Essays on the Forest of Meanings in the Mahāyāna Dharma Garden* 《大乘法苑義林章》<sup>26</sup> and etc, this period is the period after the former period which the teachings and practitioners exist but most are not able to attain the fruit of enlightenment.

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<sup>22</sup> T16, no. 0673, p. 0651, c14.

<sup>23</sup> T45, no. 1861, p. 0344, b04.

<sup>24</sup> The Theravādan canon was first written around 30 BCE (see Lamotte, *Histoire*, pp. 403 – 405).

<sup>25</sup> T16, no. 0673, p. 0651, c14.

<sup>26</sup> T45, no. 1861, p. 0344, b05.

3. pascimadharma/ saddharma-vipralopa/ paścimakāle – End of the Dharma/Final Dharma/Decline of the Dharma  
During this third period, the semblance of the genuine practice would also vanish and humans would be left to their own devices.

There is no fixed Sanskrit term referring to this period in contrary to the common thinking that pascimadharma is the expression. In fact, there is no occurrence of this term in the Indian Buddhist literature.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, a fixed third and final period is unknown in the Indian sources and is understood as a period when Buddhism is still known but human spiritual ability is at the lowest. In China, this period was commonly calculated as started in 552 C.E in Japan, the more common date is 1052 (drawing on different translated scriptures)<sup>28</sup>

After these periods, A new period, in which the true faith will again flower, will be ushered in some time in the future by the bodhisattva (“buddha-to-be”) Maitreya. **This would not be covered in the scope of this paper.**

According to the latter Chapter of the *Mahāyānābhisamaya Sūtra* 《大乘同性經》<sup>29</sup>, Chapter 6 of the *Essays on the Forest of Meanings in the Mahāyāna Dharma Garden* 《大乘法苑義林章》<sup>30</sup> and etc, this period is the period after the former period which the teachings disappears from this world and though people has followed the teaching, they are not able to cultivate and attain the fruit of enlightenment.

According to the Chapter 10 of the *Fa Hua Xuan Lun* 《法華玄論》<sup>31</sup>, there are many different sayings regarding the differences of saddharma and saddharma pratirūpaka /pratirupakadharmas:

- a. True dharma is the period when Buddha existed in this world; semblance dharma is the period after Buddha entered *nirvāṇa*.<sup>32</sup>
- b. True dharma is the period before different schools emerged; semblance dharma is the period when different sects and schools emerged.<sup>33</sup>
- c. True dharma is the period which many practitioners attained the path (i.e. enlightenment); semblance dharma is the period which few attained the path.<sup>34</sup>
- d. True dharma is the period which the dharma is yet to be broken; semblance dharma is the period which the dharma is broken.<sup>35</sup>
- e. True dharma is the period which there is no arising of evil dharma; semblance dharma is the period which various evil dharmas arise.<sup>36</sup>
- f. True dharma is the first two thousand years; semblance dharma is the 10000 years of dharma declining.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Jane Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, p. 91.

<sup>28</sup> “Decline of the Dharma” from Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, p. 212.

<sup>29</sup> T16, no. 0673, p. 0651, c14.

<sup>30</sup> T45, no. 1861, p. 0344, b05.

<sup>31</sup> T34 no 1720, p. 0450.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, a12 – a13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, a13 – a14.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, a15 – a16.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, a17 – a19.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, a20 – a23.

- g. True dharma is the infinite period ranging from 12000 years which various bodhisattvas see the Buddha's teaching as no prosperity nor cessation and frequently see various buddhas. Semblance dharma is only applicable to the Two Vehicles 二乘 as they see that there is prosperity and cessation in the Dharma. Thus, there would be the difference between true and semblance dharma to them.<sup>38</sup>

There are differences among the sources over the length of the first two phases which are briefly touched below:

- a. According to chapter 3 of the *Bhadrakalpika Sūtra* 《賢劫經》, *Mahāyāna Sūtra of Three Gatherings of Repentance* 《大乘三聚懺悔經》 and etc, the true dharma is 500 years and the semblance dharma is 500 years.<sup>39</sup>
- b. According to the *Commentary on the Mādhyamika-śāstra* 《中觀論疏》, chapter 3 of the *Shi Jing Tu Qun Yi Lun* 《釋淨土群疑論》 and etc, the true dharma is 1000 years and semblance dharma is 1000 years.<sup>40</sup>
- c. According to the chapter 56 of the *Mahāsaṃnipata Sūtra* 《大方等大集經》, the latter chapter of the *Mahamaya Sūtra* 《摩訶摩耶經》, the *Vow of the Great Dhyāna Master of Nanyue* 《南嶽思大禪師立誓願文》 and etc, the true dharma is 500 years and semblance dharma is 1000 years.<sup>41</sup>
- d. According to chapter 7 of the *Karuṇā Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* 《悲華經》 translated by Dharmakṣema in the Northern Liang dynasty 414 – 442, chapter 5 of the *Karuṇā Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* 《大乘悲分陀利經》 with unknown translator and is translated in the Jin dynasty 350 – 431 and etc, true dharma is 1000 years and semblance dharma is 500 years.<sup>42</sup>

Regarding the Final Dharma, various Mahāyāna texts say it would be at least 10000 years. For instance according to the chapter 2 of the *Commentary of Avataṃsaka Sūtra* 《華嚴經隨疏演義鈔》, the period is 2500 years with the first 1000 years as True Dharma, second 1000 years as Semblance Dharma and the last 500 years as the 1<sup>st</sup> 500 years of the Final Dharma which would last for 10000 years.<sup>43</sup> Other than that, Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344 – 413) and Amoghavajra's 不空 (705 – 774), translations of the *Benevolent King Sūtra* 《仁王經》 have various sayings of the 3 periods: 80 years or 50 years of True Dharma, 800 years or 500 years of Semblance Dharma and 8000 years or 5000 years of the Final Dharma.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, according to chapter 10 of the *Sheng Man Jing Shu Xiang Xuan Ji* 《勝鬘經疏詳玄記》, the various masters like Jing Ying (淨影), Dao Zuo (道綽), Fa Shang (法上), Xian Shou (賢首)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, a23 – a24.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, a25 – a26.

<sup>39</sup> Chapter 3 of the *Bhadrakalpika sutra* 《賢劫經》 T14, no. 0425, p. 0021, a25; *Mahāyāna Sūtra of Three Gatherings of Repentance* 《大乘三聚懺悔經》 T24, no. 1493, p. 1094, a17- a18.

<sup>40</sup> Chapter 1 of *Commentary on the Mādhyamika-śāstra* 《中觀論疏》 T41, no. 1824, p0017c-18c; chapter 3 of the *Shi Jing Tu Qun Yi Lun* 《釋淨土群疑論》 T47, no. 1960, p. 0047a17- p. 0048a25.

<sup>41</sup> Chapter 56 of the *Mahāsaṃnipata Sūtra* 《大方等大集經》 T13, no. 0397, p. 0379, c05 and c09; the latter chapter of the *Mahamaya Sūtra* 《摩訶摩耶經》 T12, no. 0383 p1013, c04 and c12; the *Vow of the Great Dhyāna Master of Nanyue* 《南嶽思大禪師立誓願文》 T46, no. 1933, p0786, c04 – c05.

<sup>42</sup> Chapter 7 of the *Karuṇā Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* 《悲華經》 T03, no. 0157, p. 0211, b26 – b27; chapter 5 of the *Karuṇā Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* 《大乘悲分陀利經》 T03, no. 0158, p. 0270, a04.

<sup>43</sup> Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Fo Guang Big Dictionary* 《佛光大辭典》, p. 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

said that the true dharma lasts for 500 years but Nan Shan (南山), Qing Liang (清涼), Ling Zhi (靈芝) and etc claimed that the true dharma lasts for 1000 years.<sup>45</sup> Experts in Pure Land practitioners believe that all practices except Pure Land would deteriorate and cease in the three periods. Pure Land sect would instead flourish and last for 100 years after the 10000-year Final Dharma.<sup>46</sup>

The influence of the concept of the Final Dharma or the Decline of Dharma on Pure Land is only one of the many examples of how this concept affects the later development of Buddhism. Indeed, the notion of the decline of the Dharma has great influence in the East Asian Buddhism. Since the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* exists only in Chinese, the study of this paper would focus on East Asia developments pertaining to the decline of Dharma. With that in mind, the following section looks into the evolution of the related East Asian terms.

## **2.4 Evolution of East Asian Terms**

The concepts of the saddharma and saddharma pratirūpaka appeared in China by the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E. where they were translated as the Chinese terms 正法 (correct dharma) and 像法 (image/semblance dharma) respectively by Dharmarakṣa (竺法護, fl. 265 – 309 C.E. )

The last term, Final Dharma or the Decline of Dharma, gained its momentum when Dharmarakṣa used the term 末世 in his translations. Some Chinese Buddhists began to interpret this term as the name for the Final Dharma Period. When Kumārajīva started using 末法, this brings the term Final Dharma closer to the other two periods. Thus we see from the previous sections how the Chinese Mahāyāna texts created the duration of dharma to more than 2500 years and reveal the optimism of Chinese in hoping the Buddhism would last forever (10000 year – implicitly mean eternity).

We would now see how the Chinese and its related terms develop in terms of the first occurrence and its appearance in the Tripitaka (implicitly shows the popularity among the translators and influence). The terms are ordered based on the period of first occurrences in ascending order.

### **2.4.1 法没**

This term appears in 9 sutras of the Taisho Tripitaka and these sutras are translated by few translators (less than 10). The earliest occurrence is in the Latter Qin dynasty.<sup>47</sup> However, this term can be used to describe the disappearance of the Final Dharma and also the cessation of phenomenon or dharma (conditional co-arising). [Further analysis is required to filter out the latter to have a more accurate figure for this term used as the Final Dharma and its first occurrence in the sutras.](#)

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Due to the time constraint, the analysis is only on the surface level (search based on dynasties) but not in the detailed analytical level (to go through each Sūtra to verify the translation period) .

### 2.4.2 法滅

This term appears in 77 sutras of the Taisho Tripitaka. These sutras are translated by various translators (more than 10) and the earliest occurrences are probably in the Latter Qin dynasty 221 BC - 206 BC (for instance, chapter 12 of the *Dīrghāgama* 《長阿含經》<sup>48</sup>, chapter 4 of the *Aṣṭa Sāhasrikāprajñā Pāramitā* 《小品般若波羅蜜經》<sup>49</sup> and so forth).<sup>50</sup> This term can be used to describe the disappearance of the Final Dharma and also the cessation of phenomenon or dharma (conditional co-arising). [Further analysis is required to filter out the latter to have a more accurate figure for this term used as the Final Dharma and its first occurrence in the sutras.](#)

### 2.4.3 滅法

This term appears in 47 sutras of the Taisho Tripitaka and 3 sutras from the 卍 Xuzangjing (the Supplement to the Manji Canon). These sutras are translated by various translators (more than 10). Its earliest occurrence is in the chapter 1 of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* 《妙法蓮華經》<sup>51</sup> translated the latter Qin dynasty.<sup>52</sup> Similar to 法滅, this term can be used to describe the disappearance of the Final Dharma and also the cessation of phenomenon or dharma (conditional co-arising). [Further analysis is required to filter out the latter to have a more accurate figure for this term used as the Final Dharma and its first occurrence in the sutras.](#)

### 2.4.4 末世

This term appears in 105 sutras of the Taisho Tripitaka and these sutras are translated by various translators (more than 10). Its earliest occurrence is in the translations of Dharmarakṣa (fl. 265 -313) and also in T No373 which is assigned to the Latter Han. It is difficult to establish the reliability of the Han-period attributions but the popularization of the term is made possible by Dharmarakṣa.<sup>53</sup>

### 2.4.5 末法

This term appears in 47 sutras of the Taisho Tripitaka and 3 sutras from the 卍 Xuzangjing and these sutras are translated by various translators (more than 10). The first occurrences of this term are in texts translated by Kumārajīva at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It may be also earlier depending on the exact date of the anonymous translation (T17 No. 748 *Fo Shuo Hu Jiao Jing* 《佛說護淨經》) assigned to 317 – 420 by the *Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era* 《開元釋教錄》.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> T01, no. 1.

<sup>49</sup> T08, no. 227.

<sup>50</sup> Refer to footnote 47.

<sup>51</sup> T09, no. 0262, p. 0003, b16.

<sup>52</sup> Refer to footnote 47.

<sup>53</sup> Jane Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, p. 101.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



## 2.4.6 Mappō

In Japan, the concept of decline is known as Mappō. It is in fact the Japanese equivalence of 末法, thus it is the last to evolve. According to the most calculation of the time of the Buddha's death, the world was already in the period of Mappō.<sup>55</sup>

As seen from the above, 末世 is more commonly used followed by 末法. Though 灭法 has the same occurrences as 末法, it is an incorrect figure as this is just the preliminary search. The final number would be definitely lesser as it has two meanings. The use of other terms is less in frequency may be due to the fact that those terms have more than one meaning other than the Final Dharma. 末世 and 末法 has a clear meaning of Buddhist eschatology or Decline of Dharma respectively. Thus, this may be the reason why the translators used these two terms more frequently.

Also, though these terms may be used frequently by one or two translators, it is found that the influence of the terms is not just restricted to these few people. In fact, more than 10 translators used the terms thus proving that they are most likely being accepted as a "common standard" for the translation of the sutras in terms of the description of the Final Dharma.

The sūtra under study is translated at the same time of the evolution of all the Chinese terms. However, there is no mentioning of any of these terms in this Sūtra. Also, 曇無蘭 is not the translator any of the sutras using the terms listed. Though none of these terms is being mentioned, the concept of decline of dharma is embedded within most of the dreams. This would be discussed further in Chapter 3.

## 2.5 Development of the East Asian Doctrines and Sects

Though most Buddhists before the modern period have shared the same idea that Buddhism is in the process of decline, the response to this ideas have varied widely.

In Sri Lanka, Buddhaghosa's writings emphasized on the importance of preserving the written Dharma and were in tune with the assumption that it is no longer possible to attain Arhatship. On the other hand, in Tibet, there is greater optimism about the possibilities for practice and attainment in this present age since tantric practice is a short-cut to enlightenment.<sup>56</sup>

In East Asia, instead of responding negatively to the fact that we are in the decline age of the Dharma, many advocate new and creative doctrines. In China, the concern of decline of dharma seemed to reach its peak in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E. Ways of coping with the age of *mappō* was a particular concern of Japanese Buddhists during the Kamakura period (1192–1333) and were an important factor in the rise of new sects, such as Pure Land and Nichiren School.

[Some schools are briefly described in the following.](#)

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<sup>55</sup> "mappō." Encyclopedia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 14 Jul. 2008 <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/363605/Mappō>>.

<sup>56</sup> "Decline of The Dharma" from Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, p. 212

### 2.5.1 Pure Land School

The Pure Land School (淨土宗) focuses on the chanting of the Amitabha (南無阿彌陀佛). It was founded by Huiyuan (慧遠) during the Eastern Jin dynasty (in the same dynasty which the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* was translated). However, monk Shandao (善導) 631 - 681 was its forming patriarch. The Pure Land schools of Buddhism in China and Japan believe we are now in this latter age of "degenerate Dharma". Pure Land followers therefore attempt to attain rebirth into the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha, where they can practice the Dharma more readily.

### 2.5.2 Three Stages School

The founder of the San Jie Jiao (Three Stages School 三階教) is Xinxing 信行 (540-594) in the Sui dynasty. It was in fact, the product under the influence of the Northern dynasty's concept of the decline of dharma. Xinxing held the concept that even greater efforts were needed in order to make progress in such period. During that time, it was not concerned as an orthodox Buddhist school and was highly oppressed by the government.

The main doctrine is based on time, place and person. It divided Buddhism into three period: 500 years after Buddha's *nirvāṇa* as True Dharma with this world as Buddha's pure land and all buddhas and bodhisattvas are equipped with the highest capability and practice the One-Vehicle dharma, another 500 years as Semblance Dharma with this world turning evil and the people with high capability practice three-vehicle dharma, and the subsequent 1000 years as Final Dharma with the world turning evil and there are many wrong understandings and practices. During the final period, the sect believes that the only way to liberation or salvation is through their doctrine.

In the Song dynasty, this sect died off. However, during the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the literature of Three Stages School is spread to Japan and subsequently to Korea in 11<sup>th</sup> century.

### 2.5.3 Nichiren Buddhism

Nichiren Buddhism is founded by Nichiren (日蓮) in the 13th century. This Nichiren Buddhism is a major Japanese Buddhist stream encompassing several schools of often widely conflicting doctrine.

Mappō has remained a central and governing concept for this school and Nichiren school believes that the age of Mappō constitutes a new dispensation requiring an easier and more universal religious practice and that different Buddhist teachings are valid (i.e., able to lead practitioners to enlightenment) in each period due to the different capacity to accept a teaching (機根) of the people born in each respective period. Nichiren's personal communications and

writings to his followers (called "Honorable Writings", or "Gosho") detail his view of the correct form of practice for the "Latter Day of the Law" (Mappō), and many are preserved to this day.

From the above, we see the influence of the concept of Decline of Dharma in China and Japan. Instead of being pessimistic about the future of Buddhism, new sects and doctrines are founded with optimistic views. This once again demonstrates the optimism of the Chinese in terms of facing the decline.

With the clarification of the terminology and development of these terms, the next chapter dives into the analysis of the Sūtra. [Subsequently, Chapter 4 would discuss the concept of decline of dharma in the Sūtra and how it differs from other sutras which focus on the decline as well.](#)

## Chapter 3 – Analysis of the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda*

This chapter covers the authenticity of text, the historical background of both the setting in the sūtra and the translation including the information of the translator. The analysis of the verification is also documented in this section. A comparative study among the existing English translations is also presented. Based on references to the original texts, English translations and various commentaries of the texts, a full English translation of the text based on my hermeneutics marks the end of this chapter.

### 3.1 *Authenticity of the Text*

A question may arise if this text is authentic given that there is no Sanskrit version and Pali version. Before moving into the historical background and the information of the translator, the authenticity of this text is discussed here.

To prove its authenticity, catalogues in the Taisho Tripitaka are first verified to see if this text exists within.

6 catalogues classified it as a text from Small Vehicle <sup>1</sup> and 5 catalogues classified it as a single book or single translation. <sup>2</sup> Note that the Sūtra is sometimes called *Sūtra on the Eight Dreams* 《八夢經》 due to wrong categorization. <sup>3</sup>

Surprisingly, the text is classified in some catalogues (namely Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations 《歷代三寶紀》 (Fei Changfang; 597), *A Compilation of Notices on the Translation of the Tripitaka* 《出三藏記集》 (Seng You, ca. 515), *Catalogue of Scriptures* 《眾經目錄》 (Fajing et al.; 594) and *Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era* 《開元釋教錄》 (Zhisheng; 730) as 失譯 which means that the translator is anonymous. <sup>4</sup> The *Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations* 《歷代三寶紀》 and the *Catalogue of*

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 14 of the *Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations*, T49, no. 2034; chapter 1 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55, no. 2147; chapter 1 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55 no. 2148; chapters 7 - 9 of the *Catalogue of Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* T55, no. 2149; chapter 7 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures Authorized by the Great Chou* T55, no. 2153, chapters 13 and 20 of the *Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era* T55, no. 2154, chapter 3 or the *Summary of Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan* T55, no. 2155, chapters 23 and 30 of the *Newly Established Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Zhenyuan Era* 《貞元新定釋教目錄》 T55, no. 2157.

<sup>2</sup> Single book: chapter 1 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55, no. 2147; chapter 1 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55 no. 2148. Single translation: chapters 7 - 9 of the *Catalogue of Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* T55, no. 2149; chapter 7 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures Authorized by the Great Chou* T55, no. 2153, chapters 13 and 20 of the *Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era* T55, no. 2154, chapter 3 or the *Summary of Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan* T55, no. 2155, chapters 23 and 30 of the *Newly Established Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Zhenyuan Era* 《貞元新定釋教目錄》 T55, no. 2157.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 3 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55 no. 2146, p. 0130, c01; chapters 7 of the *Catalogue of Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* T55, no. 2149, p. 0299, b19; chapter 1 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55 no. 2147, p. 0154, c07; chapter 1 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55 no. 2148, p. 0187, a17; chapter 9 of the *Catalogue of Scriptures*, T55 no. 2149, p. 0323, b03.

<sup>4</sup> Refer to the scriptures or texts with translator information lost. Also refers to scriptures or texts with no records of the translators. Chinese source from Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Fo Guang Big Dictionary* 《佛光大辭典》, p. 1881.

*Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* 《大唐內典錄》 state further why: from First Year of Jianwu (317) under the Emperor Yuan's (Sima Rui) reign till the second year of Yuanxi under Emperor Gong's reign (and 140 years), there were 27 translators (including Chinese military people, monks and laity) in that period. The fascicles and scrolls of the sutras which were produced and had the old translation's translators lost were 263 and 585 respectively.<sup>5</sup>

On top of that *Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations* also states there were 11 emperors in between these periods. There is a slight difference between this catalogue and the former two as it documents that during that period, 16 persons were described and there are 168 fascicles, 468 scrolls of sutras with unknown translators in the translated Sutras, vinayas, commentaries and the new and old collections.<sup>6</sup>

*The Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* is one of such Sutras. A further look at the *Catalogue of Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* shows that this text is a re-translation with the old translator lost. Thus, the translator 曇無蘭 is the re-translator.

*A Compilation of Notices on the Translation of the Tripitaka* deemed this text with lost translator attributions which make the identification of spurious texts difficult. The *Catalogue of Scriptures* re-categorized more texts to spurious texts but did not include this text within this category. *Record of the Three Treasures throughout Successive Generations* has little standing for us to base on as all the source it relied on (or claimed to have relied on) are either unspecified or lost.<sup>7</sup>

The *Catalogue of Buddhist Works in the Great Tang* not include this text in its "Suspicious-Spurious Scriptures and Treatises" which Daoxuan categorized based on the popular customs or "Taoist" elements, portray vulgar human emotion or are concerned with the worldly activities than spiritual advancement.<sup>8</sup> The *Catalogue of Scriptures Authorized by the Great Chou* does not have any listing for suspicious scriptures and classified all indigenous texts in this catalogue as spurious.

Once again, the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams* is not found within. *Record of Sakyamuni's Teachings Compiled during the Kaiyuan Era* which has an impeccable organization has a register "Record of Doubtful [Scripture] that are to be reexamined" and a register "Record of the Falsified, which Confuse the Genuine" did not record this Sūtra within either. This catalogue can be trusted as there are three discernible types of criteria (known authorship, internal textual evidence and combination of the internal textual evaluations with an external factor) used by the author.<sup>9</sup>

Since this text is not classified anywhere in the spurious and indigenous sections of the catalogues mentioned but classified in the other sections of the same catalogues, the text is authentic unless further evidence is discovered.

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<sup>5</sup> T49, no. 2034, p. 68, b11-c6 ; T55, no. 2149, p. 243, c24- p. 244, a25.

<sup>6</sup> T55, no. 2154, p. 502, c8 – 13.

<sup>7</sup> Kyoko tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues", p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

### 3.2 *Historical Background of the Text*

Nowhere in the earliest layers of the surviving Buddhist literature, do we find any indication that the Indian Buddhism had a systematic concept of history. It is also so in this case for the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams*. Therefore, the attempt here is to make an association between one/some sutras and the event happened in the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams*. This is done through the analysis of the historical background is based on these traces of setting of the text are:

1. Buddha and Ānanda were at Savatthi
2. Buddha was giving a discourse to King Pasenadi in the general assembly lecture hall before Ānanda came
3. The discourse was about Suffering, the Practice of Cessation to get the Way (i.e. the Four Noble Truths)

Savatthi was the capital city of the kingdom of Kosala ruled by King Pasenadi, who was a disciple of Buddha. The Buddha passed the greater part of his monastic life in Savatthi. His first visit to Savatthi was at the invitation of Anathapindika, whom he met in Rajagaha. The main monasteries in Sravasti were the Jetavana and the Pubbarama. Savatthi also contained the monastery of Rajakarama, built by King Pasenadi, opposite Jetavana.

The commentaries state that the Buddha spent twenty five rainy seasons in Sāvattthi. Out of which, he spent 19 in the monastery named Jetavana, and 6 in the monastery called Pubbarama. Thus, Savatthi is the place where Buddha lived the longest amount of time, and it is the place where he gave the largest amount of discourses and instructions. Buddha spent only twenty rainy seasons elsewhere.

FL Woodward states that, of the four Nikāyas, 871 sutras are said to have been preached in Savatthi; 844 of which are in Jetavana, 23 in the Pubbarama, and 4 in the suburbs of Savatthi.<sup>10</sup> These sutras are made up of 6 in the *Digha Nikāya*, 75 in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, 736 in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, and 54 in the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Among those texts in the Pali Canon, there are 2 sutras<sup>11</sup> which talk about the Four Noble Truths in Savatthi with King Pasenadi as part of the audience. However, presence of Ānanda or entrance is not found in either of the texts.<sup>12</sup>

Since it is not conclusive based on only Pali texts, I move to Mahāyāna texts for more analysis.

As time concept is not strongly kept within the Indian literature, I turn to the information of persons, discourse given and place for analysis.

From the Chinese translated text, we know that Buddha taught this Sūtra in the common assembly lecture hall (普會講堂). This term also appears in 9 fascicles of the *Ekottaragama-Sūtra* 《增壹阿含經》 translated by Gautama-saṃghadeva in Eastern Jin as well, 1 occurrences in the *Sumāgadhāvadānasūtra* 《須摩提女經》 by Ji Qian around 200 A.D, 2 fascicles in the *Dharmapāda* 《出曜經》 translated by Zhu Fonian

<sup>10</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names: Pāli – English*, p. 1127.

<sup>11</sup> SN 3.25: Pabbatopama Sutta, AN 5.49: Kosala Sutta

<sup>12</sup> See *Appendix A – Analysis of the Setting based on the Pāli Canon*.

(竺佛念) in the Qin dynasty of the Yao Clan (0384-0417) and 2 fascicles of *Mahīśāsaka-Vinaya* 《五分律》 translated by Zhu Daosheng 竺道生 (355? - 434). The *Mahīśāsaka-Vinaya* also contains the presence of King Pasenadi.

On top of that, the Tripitaka is searched through CBETA website ([www.cbeta.org](http://www.cbeta.org)) with the keywords in Chinese for King Pasenadi, Suffering, the Practice of Cessation to get the Way and Savatthi. 35 sutras are found. Of which, 3 sutras consist of Buddha teaching a discourse regarding Four Noble Truths (description of the suffering, cessation and so forth).<sup>13</sup> Among these, only one sūtra consists of presence of Ānanda before the discourse is given.<sup>14</sup> Thus, this is highly not possible to be the related sūtra. The other two do not mention whether Ānanda is present.

With all this information, I propose that this discourse happened in one of the halls in Jetavane Anāthapindikassa ārāma as the Vinaya describes this complex as consisting of halls, monastery buildings, cells, porches, attendance halls, fire rooms, toilets, covered walkways, wells, bathrooms, lotus ponds and sheds. **However, further verification is required to conclude if this is so.**

As for what sūtra Buddha was teaching to King Pasenadi, as we can see there are various candidates. **Further analysis has to be conducted to narrow the candidates. This would not be covered in this paper.**

### **3.3 Texts referring to this Sūtra**

There are 3 texts which refer to this Sūtra or extract its content: mainly, chapter 3 of the *Annotations of Bodhisattva Precepts of the Brahmaṅgala Sūtra* 《梵網經菩薩戒注》 X38 No. 691 (Song dynasty) and chapter 2 of the *Praises of Sakyamuni Buddha's Whereabouts* 《釋迦如來行蹟頌》 X75 No. 1510 (Yuan dynasty) in the 卅 Xuzangjing and chapter 98 of *Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Dharma* 《法苑珠林》 T53 No. 2122 (Tang dynasty). These texts do not differ in content from the Sūtra probably they were written in later dynasties thus extracting the contents from the *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams*.

### **3.4 Historical Background of the Chinese Translation**

The Jin dynasty (晉朝) lasted from 266 to 420. It is one of the six dynasties in China. The Jin dynasty was founded by the Sima family (司馬).

The first of the two periods, the Western Jin dynasty (西晉 266–316), was founded by Emperor Wu (晉武帝) or Sima Yan (司馬炎). As for the Eastern Jin dynasty (東晉 317–420), it was set up in 317 and ended in 420, established by the last of the Western Jin who governed a limited area lying to the South of Yangtze River. The first emperor

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter 42 of the *Saṃyuktāgamasūtra* 《雜阿含經》, T02, no. 99; chapter 2 of the *Zhong Ben Qi Jing* 《中本起經》, T04, no. 1961; chapter 8 of the *Fo Shuo Guan Fo Sanmei Hai Jing* 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》 (A scripture preached by the Buddha about meditation [samādhi] on the characteristic marks of the Buddha, which is as profound as the sea), T15, no. 643.

<sup>14</sup> chapter 8 of the *Fo Shuo Guan Fo Sanmei Hai Jing* 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》 (A scripture preached by the Buddha about meditation [samādhi] on the characteristic marks of the Buddha, which is as profound as the sea), T15, no. 643.

of the Eastern Jin dynasty was Emperor Yuan (晉元帝) or Sima Rui (司馬睿). The Eastern Jin dynasty was successively reined by 11 emperors and was recorded as a single dynasty in Chinese history. At the end of the Han dynasty, the Small Vehicle dhyāna and the Great Vehicle prajñā were prevalent.<sup>15</sup>

During the early period, the Eastern Jin court consists of two factions due to the cultural differences based on different regions (nobles from the central plains and the aboriginals from the south of Yangtze River). The latter faction launched many rebellions which greatly weakened the ruling. In the late period of Emperor Yuan's reign, many ministers started rebellions. However, all the rebellions were successfully suppressed by the court.

Although the Eastern Jin occupied a small territory, it achieved many great cultural successes. Significantly, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism coexisted in such a way that despite their rivalry, the three actually complemented each other so much so that certain practices and precepts were often “borrowed” and amalgamated.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, literature, painting and calligraphy also reached a high level of development.

Buddhism arrived in China during the mid of the Han dynasty which quickly gained a lot of followers as it filled the metaphysical gap which the Confucianism was unable to fill.<sup>17</sup>

The Eastern Jin dynasty is the first great time of Buddhism in China when the new religion entered the gentry class. Disappointed and not more interested in governmental officials, the landowning class joined the Buddhist community. Scholars, who were more interested in Daoism since the end of the Later Han dynasty, became fond of the new religion, that gave both groups a stronghold in a time of ceaseless war. Because of the missing of a central power during the 3rd and 4th centuries, it gave room for the Buddhist religion of liberation of the individual. The power of spells and charms had a great attraction not only to Chinese peasants, but also for the foreign rulers in the north. Finally, many people escaped military service and tax duty by entering a monastery. As for the ruling court, it did not only worship the Buddha, but the emperor protected monasteries and sponsored them. This Sūtra is translated between 0381 – 0395 which was under the ruling of Emperor Xiaowu 孝武帝 or Sima Yao (司馬曜 372–396). Emperor Xiaowu during his reign neglected the affairs of the state but he was a great supporter of Buddhism which even allowed monks to meddle in the state affairs<sup>18</sup>. During that time, a great problem for the Buddhist community was the question of autonomy from the government.

As for Daoism, its origins may be traced to prehistoric Chinese religions in China. Initially Daoism was spreading mainly among the people, involved with contemporary peasant uprisings. After the Wei and Jin Dynasties, it gradually began to move up on the social ladder, owing to the influence of feudal rulers. By absorbing Confucianist and Buddhist theories, the new Taoists made their religion into a center of superstitious beliefs and practices, seeking immortality by means of elixirs and playing a subordinate

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<sup>15</sup>Zhang Guogang, *Buddhism and Society of the Sui and Tang dynasties* 《佛学与隋唐社会》, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Valerie Hansen, *The Open Empire*, p. 185.

<sup>17</sup> Edward Craig, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 325.

<sup>18</sup> Chinese Buddhist Society, *Chinese Buddhism* 《中国佛教》, p. 29.



role under the ruling circles. After the 3rd century it was influenced increasingly by Buddhism. The development of Daoism reached a new stage in the Eastern Jin period (fourth century A.D.) as it finally became an established religion. An ancient school of esoteric learning already existed at that time in southern China, exemplified by Ge Hong. The retreat of the Jin to southern China in the early 4th century brought to that region the organized religion and priesthood that had arisen in the north and west during the Dong Han. In that context, new priestly cults arose in the south. By the end of the period of division, Daoism had its own canons of scriptural writings, much influenced by Buddhist models but forming a quite independent religious tradition.

Buddhist ideas and practices were absorbed into Daoism (and vice-versa) but during this century, there were also periods of intense rivalry between Daoists and Buddhists

Thus from this historical background, we understand the following points during the translation of this text which can later be used as elements of analysis for the interpretation and thus the English translation:

1. Political situation is chaotic with many rebellions
2. Government was supportive of Buddhism
3. Daoism and Buddhism both prospered during the period as ideological and political rivals, inevitably deeply influencing one another

### **3.4 *Translator***

While the first translators of sutras were foreigners, during the 4th century, more and more Chinese monks translated the Buddhist texts. However, this text found in the Taisho Tripitaka is translated or more accurately re-translated in the Eastern Jin dynasty (0317 -0420) by 曇無蘭, also known as 法正 (Dharmarakṣa), a foreigner. Little is known about Dharmarakṣa except that he was from the western region and translated from the sixth year of Taiyuan (太元) Era of Emperor Xiaowu of the Jin dynasty (0381 – 0395). He translated 110 sutras and 112 scrolls in the Xi Monastery of the Village Xie at Yangdou<sup>19</sup>. Some were self-translated; others were simplified from the majority of the translated texts. Among those translated is this *Sūtra on the Seven Dreams*.

### **3.5 *Comparative Study of the Partial English Translations***

There are four English translations found to date on this *Sūtra*. However, they are only partial translations. One is translated by Hon Sing Lee (HSL) from Master Hsing Yun's *Biography on Ten Eminent Disciples* 《十大弟子傳》; another by Sen Shou Lin (SSL) published in the *Tzu Chi Quarterly 1996 Winter*, one posted (CW) in the web of Falun Dafa ([www.clearwisdom.net](http://www.clearwisdom.net)) in 14 Nov 2007 and lastly, Jan Nattier's (NL) translation in her book *Once upon a Future Time*.

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<sup>19</sup> Chapter 2 of the *An Illustrated Record of Translated Scriptures Past and Present* 《古今譯經圖紀》, T55, no. 2151, p. 353, a19-22

The comparison is made based on the title, overall structure, description of the dreams and their interpretations with the basis of the Chinese text (T14 No. 494 《阿難七夢經》 卷 1) as shown in the following.

### **3.5.1 Title**

HSL's and SSL's works are focused on the story of the Buddha or Ānanda. Thus the dreams formed a part of the story in simple English. For CW, Anand may not be the right word to use as it is a parasmaipada verb (lit. "Word for another"). Ānanda is the correct word to use.

### **3.5.2 Overall Structure**

With reference to the Chinese text, SSL's and CW's are much closer in translation, esp CW. In this context, CW's version is more correct in this. However, the Chinese version did not mention that Ānanda had served Buddha for 27 years. This is incorrect in the context of translating the Chinese text. However, more research needs to be done to verify why this is being mentioned and whether the correct figure is 27 years and this would not be covered in this paper.

HSL's text on Buddha expressing that noble ones do not interpret is incorrect in the Sūtra translation context. Buddha's position on feasibility of interpretation of the dreams would require further analysis and would not be covered in this paper.

SSL and CW has a closer flow of the dreams descriptions and interpretations to the Chinese text. HSL changed the style of the story, probably to ease the reading and mapping back to each dream.

As for JN case, the story is more for her analysis and thus the overall structure differs totally.

One thing to note is that there is no mentioning of King Pasenadi in the general assembly lecture hall and the discourse on the Four Noble Truths given by Buddha before Ānanda came. The translators may possibly exclude this as this may not be an important factor. However, further research is required to conclude if there is a relationship between the dreams' interpretations and the Four Noble Truths.

### 3.5.3 Descriptions

Description	HSL	SSL	CW	JN	Findings and Analysis
Dream 1	No title specified to the sutra. The story forms part of the story of Ananda.	No title specified to the sutra. The story forms part of the story of the Buddha.	A Story from Buddha Shakyamuni's Time: Anand's Seven Dreams	Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda.	The 陂池 refers to a pond or a lake. However, in HSL's and SSL's translations, they refer it as the ocean or oceans. CW refers it as large water surface. All are incorrect in this context. Nonetheless, the 火炎滔天 is described differently by all the three translators but the meaning of the Chinese context is brought out correctly in this context.
Dream 2	The story is presented in such a way that Ananda speaks about his dreams individually followed by Buddha's interpretations to his dreams. Buddha expressed that noble ones do not interpret dreams. The story ends with HSL's commentary on recognizing the signs to extend the	In this translation, Ananda was described to ask Buddha on his strange dreams after Ananda spoke about his seven dreams. The story ends with Buddha saying sadly the dreams is the future of Buddhism.	The story starts with Ananda being Buddha's disciple for 27 years and the nightmares he had in Sravasti. In this translation, Ananda was described to ask Buddha on his dreams after the text describes his seven dreams. The story ends with the author's commentary on the	The story forms part of JN's analysis. It starts with Ananda seeking Buddha's explanations. There is no description of the dreams and only interpretations are shown.	All three translations only mention the sun for the 日 but no mentioning of the 月 is found in the translations. SSL's translation does not mention the star. Without the sun and stars, all three translations further state that the world is in darkness. This is an implicit meaning which may or may not be omitted from the translation. Here, I would prefer to omit it as we are not sure of the original's meaning. SSL's translation further says about Ānanda carrying the Mount Sumeru. This may be incorrectly placed as the supporting of the Mount Sumeru or Meru is the fifth dream.

	lifespan of Buddhism.		dreams as predictions of the future of Buddhism and promotion of his cult.		
Dream 3	<b>Descriptions</b>				HSL's translation starts with the monks not wearing the robes and SSL's starts with the monks putting on the robes. This is contradictory. Also, mapping back to the Chinese text shows that there is no mentioning of the robes wearing or disrobing. <a href="#">Further analysis is required to verify why they mention the robe and which is true if the robes should be mentioned.</a> HSL and CW refer the 不淨坑塹 as pit but the number of pits differs. It would be difficult to know the number of pits from the Chinese context. Both translations are literal translation of the Chinese text on the laity stepping onto the monks' heads. Here, we see that SSL did not mention about the laity but only say that the sangha does not follow the Buddha's teaching. CW has a more correct translation than the others.
Dream 4	The entire ocean was burning. The flames were so great that they rises all the way to the sky	All the rivers and oceans were burned up by great fire.	A raging fire burned on a large water surface, with the flame reaching into the sky	Not Applicable (NA)	This is the dream which the 3 translators translated differently. Only CW has the translation closer to the Chinese text. It is strange that HSL and SSL raised up the similar content – thorns which is not mentioned in the Chinese text. <a href="#">Further analysis is required to verify why they mention that and which is true.</a> Though CW mention the mountain boars digging in the thick

					forest. It is found that the 梅檀林 is translated as Bodhi Tree. Also, 舐揆 refers to resisting and hitting against <sup>20</sup> . On the surface level, CW's translation may not be accurate for this dream. However, further analysis required to conclude this and understand why the other two translations differ – possibly due to organization of the content or availability of another version of this Sūtra which has not been found for the preparation of this paper.
Dream 5	The sun is gone, the world is in darkness, there were no stars in the sky.	The sun had descended and the world was in total darkness. My head was supporting Mount Sumeru, but I didn't feel its weight.	The sun disappeared, leaving the Saha World in complete darkness. There was not a single star in the sky.	NA	As HSL's and SSL's translations start to differ from the Chinese text from Dream 4, inevitably, this dream differs from the Chinese text. Here, we see that HSL also mentions Bodhi tree and digging. SSL mentions candana tree <sup>21</sup> and rooting instead. Further research is required to find out why Bodhi tree instead of candana forest. CW continues to follow closely to the Chinese text. The Chinese text does not mention Ānanda is carrying the Mount Meru. CW has deduced from the text. For this dream, CW has an accurate translation of the Chinese original.
Dream 6	monks do not wear robes, they fall into pits and the laymen	I saw the sangha putting on Buddhist robes,	Buddhist monks and nuns fell into a large pit and	NA	Here HSL and CW has translated quite accurately. 大象 is translated big/large elephants by HSL and SSL. The more accurate term should

<sup>20</sup> 舐揆 – Extracted and translated from the Kangxi Dictionary 《康熙字典》, p. 1141 (character 9) and p. 444 (character 4).

<sup>21</sup> 梅檀 refers to a plant called Candana - Extracted and translated from *Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary* 《重編國語辭典修訂本》, [http://www.nlcsearch.moe.gov.tw/EDMS/admin/dict1/dict/113/m\\_112126.html](http://www.nlcsearch.moe.gov.tw/EDMS/admin/dict1/dict/113/m_112126.html) and online *Ding Fubao Buddhist Dictionary* 《丁福保佛学大辞典》 <http://www.suttaworld.org/dictionary/> extracted on 1 Jul 2008.

	step on their heads	but not following the Buddha's teachings.	layman were stepping over their heads.		be adult elephants. However, HSL continues on the dream of the death of the lion which should be the last dream. For the story of the death of the lion, HSL mentions on the flower dropping onto the lion's head which is not mentioned in the Chinese text's seventh dream. SSL's version expands the abandonment by the large elephants explaining why the large elephants choose to leave. <a href="#">Verification is further required to check the validity of this expansion.</a>
Dream 7	The monks robes are incomplete and they kneel on thorns.	The monastic order did not wear Buddhist robes, and they faltered among the thorns and difficulties of the world.	Many mountain boars in the thick forest were digging up the roots of the Bodhi tree.	NA	HSL's translation refers the fifth dream to be this seventh dream while SSL and CW still refers to the death of the lion. HSL refers to the death of the lion in the sixth dream. In all the translations regarding the death of the lion, they accurately translate the part of the worms come out of the corpse and feed the flesh. However, SSL's version is milder than HSL and CW in terms of the animals' reaction: they dare not to approach to eat the flesh. Note that there is no mentioning of eating the flesh by the animals in the Chinese text. HSL's is milder than CW as the animals are scared and keep a distance away but for CW's the animals ran away. With reference to the Chinese text, HSL's dream of the death of the lion is more accurate but is not placed as the last dream.

### 3.5.4 Interpretations

Interpretations	HSL	SSL	CW	JN	Findings and Analysis
Dream 1	In the future Sangha, many are evil, few are good, after receiving offerings, they would fight and argue, just as if this clear and clean water becomes a flame.	in the future, monks and nuns will betray Buddha's teachings and start disagreements within the sangha	sometime in the future, monks will turn wicked and lack compassion. And just like the water of the ocean turning into a sea of fire, they will fight each other for alms.	The good thoughts of the monks will decrease, evil thoughts will increase, and the monks will injure and kill one another.	Here, all translated close to the literal meaning of the Chinese text except that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HSL and CW map back to the dreams on the flame or fire. This is not found in the Chinese text.</li> <li>2. HSL adds the "receiving of offerings" which is once again not found in the Chinese text.</li> <li>3. SSL's translated part on the disagreement with the sangha, CW's part on the fighting would be very mild compared to what the Chinese text points out. Here, JN has a much closer meaning.</li> </ol> Thus, JN has translated more accurately. However, all translations do not translate 不可稱計 which means "immeasurable". This causes the English translated text having a milder impact than what the Chinese text brings out.
Dream 2	Buddha is going into final Nirvana soon, many of the great disciples will go into final Nirvana as well, this signifies that the eyes of	In ninety days Buddha will pass away. All the monks, heavenly beings and human beings will need Ananda's help to	very soon, the Buddha and his disciples will reach nirvana. And it is a hint to let the people know that the eye of heaven will soon enter annihilation.	The Buddha's main disciples will follow him into nirvana and the Buddhist community will be deprived of	In this second dream, all except SSL use the Buddhist terminology "nirvana" which matches the Chinese text content. 聲聞 is referred as the great disciples. A more correct term should be the sound hearer. 眾生眼滅 is translated differently in HSL's and SSL's text: one as eyes of wisdom, one as heaven. Both are incorrect as it refers to the sentient beings. SSL's text continue to talk about the ninety days before Buddha's nirvana ( <a href="#">this requires further verification if 90 days is correct</a> ) and the need for Help from Ananda which is not covered in the dream 2's context in

	wisdom will soon fade.	remember and pass down Buddha's teachings		its leadership.	Chinese text. As for JN's translation, her intention is obviously to interpret the meaning of the dreams on the part of the eyes being ceased based on interpretation than direct literal translation.
Dream 3	The future monks give public speeches but not follow what they preach. They are jealous of each other, do not respect the law of cause and effect, ultimately they fell, the laymen rises and look down on the Sangha. They go into monasteries and frame monks, and damage the temples.	After Buddha passes away, the sangha will give lectures on my teachings to large gatherings of people, but the sangha itself will not follow my teachings.	in the future, the Buddhist monks and nuns will envy and slander each other, not believe in karmic retribution, disregard self-discipline, enjoy a life of comfort and eventually become the opposite to good and descend to hell after death. On the other hand, there will be people cultivating in ordinary society who will be	Monks will increasingly live in impure places, and will harbor jealousy toward one another; the lay people will observe this and will remonstrate with the monks. The monks will be reborn in hell after their death' the lay people, by contrast, will be reborn in heaven.	HSL, CW, JN have talked about the jealousy or slander which matches closely to the 懷毒嫉妬 in the Chinese text. JN's translation is much closer to the Chinese text as compared to the rest as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HSL mentions lack of respect of the law and added the framing of monks and more which are not mentioned in this particular dream of the Chinese text.</li> <li>2. SSL does not mention the lay people's part.</li> <li>3. CW added the non-belief of karma and etc but does not include the observation by lay people.</li> </ol> However, JN's translation still lack of the diligence of the laypeople and Taoist's act of chopping the heads (literal translation) which thus makes it close but not totally matching the Chinese text.



			more diligent than these Buddhist monks and nuns. And these cultivators will ascend to heaven after their death.		
Dream 4	Future monks do not wear the holy robes, do not follow precepts, like the worldly pleasures, have wives, this is a big misfortune of the Dharma.	In the future there will be monks not wearing the robes but commoners' clothes. They will abandon the precepts and adopt commoners' lives, and they will also have wives and children.	Future Buddhist monks will only care about their own livelihood, and will sell Buddha statues and scriptures to make ends meet.	Lay people will enter the stupas and monasteries and will criticize the monks; they will destroy stupas and damage temples.	All except JN have inaccurate translation: HSL and SSL both talk about monks having wives which <a href="#">require further analysis to understand why</a> . For CW, it was a way out as it talks about selling statues and etc to make a living which are unfounded from the Chinese text.
Dream 5	future monks only care about making a living, they sell Buddha statues and sutras as	The sangha in the future will not promote Buddha's teachings, but will only look after their	After the Buddha reaches nirvana, Ananda will be responsible for compiling and teaching the	Ananda will be able to recite all the sutras without forgetting a single line.	HSL and SSL continue similarly to CW in the dream 4 talking about selling statues and Sutras. This poses a serious problem that all 3 translators mention this without a basis from the Chinese text. A further analysis is required to understand why all three mention this. Again, JN has a closer translation but she did not mention certain part of the text making hers incomplete translation.

	occupations.	own livelihood by selling statues of buddhas and holding various services for commoners.	scriptures to the future Buddhist disciples.		As for CW, it is similar to JN's content thus is also incomplete.
Dream 6	In the future Sangha the elders are selfish and would not groom the young. The worms feeding on the lion's meat, this means no other religions can damage Buddhism, but it is our own Buddhists who will destroy Buddha's teachings.	In the future, new monks and nuns will not listen to the teachings of the elder monks, and they will fall into purgatory after death.	Evil-minded views will become popular and thus harm my Buddhist teachings. And people with virtue and good moral values will all hide from it.	False views will become prevalent and will destroy the Buddha-Dharma.	HSL and SSL have put their hermeneutics into this translation rather than literal translating it. HSL talks about elders not grooming the young and the contradicting fact is SSL talks about novices not listening to the elders. Which is correct? Or both are wrong? <a href="#">Again, this requires further analysis to find out.</a> Here, CW is much closer to the Chinese text than JN as JN once again misses certain parts. Note that HSL further talks about the Dream 7 here which is quite correctly translated but placed in a wrong place.

<p>Dream 7</p>	<p>Buddha will attain final Nirvana in 3 months' time, all great monks and people will need Ananda's help to compile the sutras.</p>	<p>It indicates that no other religions will destroy my teaching, but the monastic order itself will be destroyed from within.</p>	<p>No external element can destroy the upright Dharma. Only my disciples, professional and amateur, can destroy the Dharma.</p>	<p>1470 years after the Buddha's nirvana the mind with which the Buddha's disciples cultivate virtue cannot be shaken by all evil demons. "The 'seven hairs'," the text the states, "refers to matters after seven hundred years"</p>	<p>Here, HSL similarly pointed out 3 months period. This would need further analysis and if proven it is 3 months period, then this Sūtra should be a Sūtra told by Buddha when he was eighty years old. HSL moved the requirement of <i>Help from Ananda</i>, thus is different from the Chinese context. As for SSL, he claim that monastic order will destroy Buddhism but this is not said in the Chinese Sūtra. A similar case is found in CW's translation. Thus, once again, JN has a more appropriate translation as her work matches closely to the literal meaning of the Chinese text for this dream's interpretation. It is puzzling why the Chinese text mentions 1490 years (an exact figure). <a href="#">Further analysis would need to be done to understand if there is any special meaning in this number.</a></p>
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From this analysis, the four translations are not completely literal translation and are strongly based on the translators' hermeneutics. Since there is no full English translation of the text to date, the following presents the literal English translation based on my hermeneutics.

### **3.6 Translation: *The Sūtra on the Seven Dreams of Ānanda***

Ānanda had seven types of dreams in Savatthi and came to ask Buddha.

The first was that there was great flame overcast the sky from the rugged reservoir.

The second dream was there were no sun and moon as well as the star constellation.

The third was the Buddhist monks were in turn within the impure pit moat and the lay white robes stepped on their heads to come out.

The fourth dream was a group of boars resisting and [hitting against the trees](#) strangely in the Candana forest.

The fifth dream was the head carried the Mountain Meru without feeling heavy.

The sixth dream is the adult elephants abandoned the young elephants.

The seventh dream is the holy flowers were scattered on the lion king's head which had seven fine hairs. It died on the ground. All animals saw this and thus were terrified. Afterwhich, they saw worms coming out from the corpse which later fed on the corpse.

With this nightmare, he came and asked Buddha. During that time, Buddha was in the common assembly lecture hall at Savatthi, together with King Pasenadi, giving a discourse on Suffering, the Practice of Cessation to get the Way. Buddha was happy to see Ānanda but Ānanda looked worried and was unable to speak.

Buddha told Ānanda "Your dreams all refer to the future evil world in the five kaSaya periods of turbidity, impurity or chaos. They would not affect you adversely, why worry?"

The first dream regarding there is great flame overcast the sky from the rugged reservoir means that the monks' and nuns' kind hearts turn lesser, the flame of evilness and betrayal flourishes, causing to harm and kill each other and cannot be measured.

The second dream regarding there were no sun and moon as well as the star constellation means that after Buddha enters Nirvana, all voice hearers would follow Buddha to enter Nirvana and would not stay in this world. The eyes of the sentient beings will cease.

The third dream regarding the Buddhist monks were in turn within the impure pit moat and the lay white robes stepped on their heads to come out means that the monks in the future bear poisonous jealousy, resulting in killing and harming each other. The Taoist priests chopped off their heads. White robes see this and criticizes the monks but the monks refuse to observe. The monks die and enter the hell. White robes are diligent and when they die, they are born in heaven.

The fourth dream regarding the a group of boars resisting and [hitting against the trees](#) strangely in the Candana forest means that the future white robes come to the stupas and monasteries to slander the monks and ask for their right and wrong. They damage the pagoda and harm the monks.

The fifth dream regarding the head carries the Mountain Meru without feeling heavy means that when Buddha enters Nirvana, Ānanda would become the one thousandth Arahant and the master of producing the sutras without forgetting any verses. As Ānanda has much enlightenment, he would not think this is heavy.

The sixth dream regarding the adult elephants abandon the young elephants means that in the future, the evil views flourish like flame and break my Dharma. The people with morality would all hide and would not be present.

The seventh dream regarding the death of the lion means that one thousand, four hundred and seventy years after Buddha enters nirvana, all demons cannot chaotically disturb my fellow disciples' mind of cultivation. The seven hairs mean the matter after seven hundred years.

## Appendix A – Analysis of the Setting based on the Pāli Canon

Sutra	Theme	Place	Speaker	Targetted Audience	With King Pasenadi's presence?	With Ananda's presence?
<a href="#">SN 3.25: Pabbatopama Sutta</a>	Aging, Death and Practice	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">AN 5.49: Kosala Sutta</a>	Aging, illness, death, end, destruction	Jeta's Grove	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">MN 86: Angulimala Sutta</a>	Angulimala	Jeta's Grove	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.7: Atthakarana Sutta</a>	Bad Deeds	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.1: Dahara Sutta</a>	Buddha's age as Enlightened Being	Jeta's Grove	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.20: Aputtaka Sutta</a>	cause and effect	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.13: Donapaka Sutta</a>	Diet	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 44.1: Khema Sutta</a>	Existence of Tathagata	Jeta's Grove	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.6: Appaka Sutta</a>	Few in Practice	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.17: Appamada Sutta</a>	Heedfulness	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.5: Atta-rakkhita Sutta</a>	Practice	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">Ud 5.1: Raja Sutta</a>	Self Attachment	Jeta's Grove	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.24: Issattha Sutta</a>	Skills	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned

Sutra	Theme	Place	Speaker	Targetted Audience	With King Pasenadi's presence?	With Ananda's presence?
<a href="#">MN 87: Piyajatika Sutta</a>	Suffering from Attachment	Savatthi in the Palace	Queen Mallika	King Pasenadi	No	No
<a href="#">SN 3.23: Loka Sutta</a>	three poisons	Savatthi	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">Ud 6.2: Jatila Sutta</a>	Unaware of other's attainment	Savatthi at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migara's mother	Buddha	King Pasenadi	Yes	Not mentioned
<a href="#">Ud 2.6: Gabbhini Sutta</a>	Suffering	Jeta's Grove	Buddha	Monks	No	Not mentioned
<a href="#">Ud 2.2: Raja Sutta</a>	Topic for Discussion	Jeta's Grove - Meeting Hall	Buddha	Monks	No	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.14: Sangama Sutta</a>	War	Savatthi	Buddha	Monks	No	Not mentioned
<a href="#">SN 3.15: Sangama Sutta</a>	War	Savatthi	Buddha	Monks	No	Not mentioned
<a href="#">MN 24: Ratha-vinita Sutta</a>	Conversation between two sages	Grove of the Blind	Sariputta and Punna	Sariputta and Punna	No	No
<a href="#">Ud 2.9: Visakha Sutta</a>	Suffering from Attachment	Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migara's mother	Buddha	Visakha	No	Not mentioned

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