

The Proper Classification for Sutta and Vinaya as Depicted in the Four Great References

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The Four Great References in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta of Sutta Piṭaka are (1) from the mouth of the Buddha (*Buddhāpadesa*) (2) from the mouth of a company of monks (*sanghāpadesa*) (3) from the mouth of many theras (*sambahulattherāpadesa*) and (4) from a learned thera (*ekattherāpadesa*). By rejecting these great references, Buddha advised his followers, 'the word of that monk neither should be received with praise nor should be treated with scorn. The sutta further states 'his every word and syllable should be carefully understood and then put beside the Suttas and compared with the Vinaya.

The Four Great References (Mahāpadesa) found in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta is of special importance to the students of Buddhist religious thought. It helps to identify whether the doctrine which has been preached by disciples is true or false. The term *mahāpadesa* has been defined by Ven. Buddhaghosa in the second volume of the commentary of Dīgha Nikāya. He breaks up the word '*mahāpadesa*' into Mahā+apadesa. It derives from *apadisati* (*apa* + √ *dis*) which means 'reference, proposition, reason or authority'.

In the commentary, Buddhaghosa defines the two terms, sutta and vinaya in three different ways. The Nettippakaraṇa defines the two terms in another way. Therefore, to enumerate what the sutta and vinaya are, all the enumerations given by the Buddha are to be examined here especially with reference to the thirty-seven dharmas of enlightenment.

Key Words: Great References, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, Sutta and Vinaya, Proper Classification.