

# Udāyī Sutta (1 of 5)

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Hello and welcome to this Monday as we begin the week with a new theme of teaching.

There's a discourse of the Buddha in the suttas that is called the *Udayi Sutta*. In it, the Buddha lists five qualities that are to be established when one teaches the Dharma. So hopefully these are established in me as I teach now.

These five are also interesting because they make a reference point for any time we're speaking with others. It can be helpful to ask, are these five qualities established in ourselves when we're speaking? Some of them might be a little bit of a stretch for ordinary speaking, but I think they are valuable reference points. They are also certainly valuable reference points for being your own teacher in the Dharma; how we navigate and find our own way through practice. These are included when I teach people to become Dharma teachers. I want them to be familiar with these five qualities. Some of them I put greater importance on than others.

I'll read the core of the discourse to you. The context for it is that one of the Buddha's main disciples – his attendant, Ananda – is in town for something and he sees that there is a monk named Udayin who is surrounded by a large number of lay people, teaching them the Dharma. We're not sure who this Udayin is, but there is someone of more or less that name elsewhere in the suttas and it's possible this is the same person. He is one of the most misbehaving monks in the suttas, who breaks the monastic rules, and seems to be filled with greed and wanting things from people. So, he's not necessarily an exemplar of being a good monk. This may explain why Ananda went back to the Buddha and told him Udayin was sitting in town surrounded by lay people and teaching them. The Buddha neither approves nor disapproves of what he hears. But when the Buddha neither approves nor disapproves, sometimes that indicates that he's not so happy. If he approves of someone's teaching, he would make that clear, as he does at times. So, the Buddha then offers five qualities that are to be established in oneself if one is to teach the Dharma. This is how it goes:

*The Dhamma should be taught to others thinking, I will speak step by step. I will teach progressively. The Dhamma should be taught to others thinking, I will speak for practical reasons. I will speak providing instructions on how to become free of suffering. The Dhamma should be taught to others thinking, I will speak grounded in kindness. The Dhamma should be taught to others thinking, I will not speak for material reward. The Dhamma should be taught to others thinking, I will speak without wounding myself or others.*

AN 5.159

So these are the five qualities. I like when there are five qualities because we have these five days of the week together, so I'll go through them. But I'd like to go through them in a different order than they appear because I'd like to connect them just lightly to the themes of the last two weeks that were the core foundational teachings that underlie how I teach the Dharma, and what I teach.

The last few weeks have been the what. And as important as what we teach is how we teach - the manner in which we teach. I've known people who taught in a manner that seemed so much about themselves, like they were praising themselves or building themselves up to the audience, that it didn't feel like they were teaching the Dharma. How they were teaching wasn't conveying what the Dharma was; Their words might have been good teaching but the how was not a teaching for people.

I would like to start with the first one: I will speak without wounding or harming myself or others. This lightly connects to the first quality of the last two weeks: the first foundation of the core teachings, suffering and the end

of suffering; and to a heightened sensitivity to all the things that cause suffering, stress, harm, or tension within us. If we use the word *dukkha* as suffering, some people interpret it to be suffering as the big catastrophic kind of challenges of our lives. But in the Dharma, the word *dukkha* applies to the whole range from the lightest little extra tension or stress that we add to our situation unnecessarily to the full-blown existential challenges of being a human.

But clearly, the focal point of the Dharma is not exactly being offended or hurt or made uncomfortable by reality, but being harmed by it, being wounded by it. That distinction is very interesting to look into because some people are confused by it, so their response to others is confused. There's a distinction between being harmed and being offended. Being offended doesn't mean that we're harmed in any way. But maybe we just feel disrespected or feel very uncomfortable. In a certain kind of way, we might feel hurt, meaning we feel kind of an ache or feel somehow deflated or discouraged. But when we have the resilience, we have the capacity to just go with that and not hold onto it and not be caught in it. However, when we harm ourselves or others, we're causing lasting damage; a wound that lasts for a long time that does not fall away and is not easily let go of.

So, to teach the Dharma without harming self or others. When I teach people to be teachers, it's that first part that becomes crucial: Don't teach the Dharma in such a way that you're harming yourself. One of the reasons I emphasize that to new teachers is that how we are is a big part of what we teach. If you're harming yourself, you're teaching harming yourself. If you're teaching caring for yourself, then you're teaching the Dharma. For example, when I'm teaching with other teachers on retreat and they get sick, I tell them, "Please, rest, take care of yourself" because that's how you're going to teach the Dharma. If you have challenges and you need to take care of yourself, you actually teach something very profound in doing that. Even though you're scheduled to give the Dharma talk and you feel the responsibility to show up and everybody's expecting it, if you show up and override the self-care that's needed then you're not really conveying the kind of inner care that we want everyone to be involved in with the Dharma. And part of what Dharma practice is for everyone is to understand that things are constantly shifting, changing, and becoming not what we expected. This way, everyone practices with that.

With regards to ordinary life, it is to speak without wounding oneself or others and to be in conversations without harming the relationship. One of the heightened sensitivities that can come with mindfulness and a regular meditation practice is we can feel and sense when what we say shifts the dynamics between self and others. It becomes easier to see when people flinch or when they shut down. I've been in conversations where people said something to me that felt like they closed the door to the conversation; it would seem like "Well, then there's no way forward now." They said something definitively, declaratively, and we're no longer in a conversation or a discussion. In my mind, I think that the door has been closed. So now something is shut down in the relationship temporarily or in this conversation. We're not in a relationship anymore. So there's a kind of interpersonal harm that's caused; a loss of connectivity.

Anger creates a real divide between people. As does hostility, sarcasm, cynicism, and a lot of times complaining. People who complain a lot are generally very self-focused and not as tuned into how it is for other people as they could be. So maybe we are not harming other people, but we are harming the relationship between two people. Sometimes what we say is offensive and we don't even know we're offending someone. But if we're attentive, we can watch, feel, and see their posture has shifted, their eyes have moved away, that the smile they had dropped away, or some kind of energetic quality of their body slumps or settles. So, what's the effect that we have on others?

The orientation that I did in the last two weeks, focusing on suffering and the end of suffering, can translate intimately to how we are in relationship with other people. The Dharma is not only something private and personal. The Dharma sensitivity that awakens within us, this mindfulness sensitivity, puts us into a mindfulness field with others as well. It becomes natural to be sensitive and caring for others and oneself so we're not harming either self or others.

For some people, it is self that they don't pay enough attention to. There are plenty of people who harm themselves in relationships. They sacrifice themselves, put themselves down, limit themselves, excuse themselves, or apologize too much; all ways which may be very subtle but are a kind of self-harm. So, when we speak and when we're in relationships, can we avoid harming ourselves and can we avoid harming others?

I think this is a phenomenal guide for living a wise life and, for the theme of the sutta, it's a phenomenally important orientation for teaching the Dharma. Most of you, I suppose, are not Dharma teachers but you might have an occasion when you want to tell someone something about the Buddhist teachings that you're learning and that are important for you. Be careful in how you tell other people so that you don't harm them or harm yourself in doing it. I've certainly harmed others, or at least harmed the relationship between self and others, when I was too caught up in the teachings, too enamored of it, and maybe even too dogmatic about it. I was so excited about teaching it or speaking about it that I lost touch with the person I was speaking with.

So thank you very much. I hope that as we go through these Udayi Sutta qualities that you find ways that are meaningful for yourself.