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How Can Buddhism Stay Relevant in Today's Capitalist Environment?

*Apichai Punthasen**

The Center for Buddhist Studies, Chulalongkorn University, organized a seminar on January 21, 2015, at the Conference Room 707 of its Boromrajakumari Building. Participants were Buddhist scholars from a number of institutes. The question of the seminar was put forward by Professor Emeritus Preecha Changkhwanyuen and taken up by Professor Apichai Panthasen who led the discussion. The following is a summary of the deliberations.

The Question

“Capitalism is a very powerful *Asura* demon

Whose mouth chants black magic spells like the Vedas from Brahma's mouth.

By its spell, forests disappear, leaving behind barren mountains.

By its spell, water and air are polluted.

By its spell, farmlands become an urban landscape dotted with ugly buildings.

By its spell, everything becomes mechanized – cars, boats, factories, and household appliances.

By its spell, entertainment establishments spring up offering alluring and sexual charms.

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By its spell, people are addicted to its creation of technology.

By its spell, people consume everything in their path, getting sick from its toxin in the process.

By its spell, money is created and the future of self and of the next generations is consumed.

It turns the rural areas into a place inhabited only by old people and young children – people who consume little.

By its spell, young people and affluent ones gather to live in cities.

By its spell, it creates slaves and masters who work together while worshipping money as their God.

Everyone everywhere, from every class and every education level, produces and consumes whatever it commands.

Profits grow as a result of consumption made possible by production, By which natural resources are wasted and polluted.

Even religious people, coming into contact with it, can be defeated.

Filled with a consuming desire, people are unafraid of diseases, dangers, poisons, prisons, or even forces of good and evil.

Even seemingly good deeds, for example, to preserve life, are done not out of kindness, but out of self-interest and for profit.

Its spell dominates the whole world – every State, town, district, sub-district, and village.

More importantly, it controls people's minds; much of Buddhism is already under its control.

How can one turn the dominated part into the dominating one?

How can Buddhism retain its significance in the capitalist society?

Will it lose to this *Asura*?

Will value succumb to volume? Will religion yield to *Kilesa*? Will the religious institute give way to corporate interests? Will spiritual Dhamma be defeated by material desire?

Will Buddhism be gone? What will bring it back?

This is the issue that the Buddhist Studies Center invites you to ponder on.

I hereby declare the seminar open and wish you every success.”

The following is the discussion on the issue led by Professor Apichai Panthasen and participants of the seminar:

The Discussion

This year will mark the advent of the ASEAN Community with its three pillars: ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, and ASEAN Economic Community. The first two pillars do not receive as much interest as does the economic component. When it comes to economic matters, what everyone in ASEAN expects to see is greater wealth and prosperity, simply because ASEAN countries have so many resources. Lao PDR, with its small population, is rich in resources. Myanmar, having emerged from being a closed society, has much of its natural abundance still unused. Others look to Cambodia as having abundant resources and cheap labor. At the same time, countries with higher technology and greater capital can capitalize on their advantages and increase their production capacity. They, naturally, talk more about trade. But when one talks about who will benefit and to what extent, the tone becomes somewhat different. People will speak in general terms that everyone will benefit, because production as a whole will increase. Yet, when capital is used as the principal production factor, those with more capital will reap greater benefits. Of course, those with less capital will also benefit but to a lesser degree. Benefits here refer to economic ones. So, if we are not united as ASEAN, we may still have room to set our own domestic policies. In Thailand, for example, His Majesty the King has graciously given us the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy by which Thai people are encouraged to live their lives in a sufficient manner. On the other hand, when we are integrated into the ASEAN Community, we like to see more foreign investment. According to our Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, if we want our GDP to have an annual growth of about 4-5% we must turn our country into a trade economy. However, we should recall that His Majesty the King graciously advised the nation of the importance of Sufficiency Economy as soon as he saw that the country was embracing too much of the trade economy, while at the same time still recognizing the significance of trade.

The way capitalism operates significantly undermines the possibility of happiness based on a simple way of life. Such simplicity of life lies at the heart of Buddhism and is also embraced by other religions. Even communism does not escape the capitalist influence, as it also attaches no less importance to materialism at the expense of spiritualism. We should first and foremost ask what capitalism is. Those who have studied philosophy would say that it is an economic system in which, according to Marx, the mode of production is governed by capital. Historically, human society started from the primitive communist stage where everyone would share what was produced by hunting and gathering. This was the time when labor was scarce. So, the extent of the production depended on the availability of labor. Each family would try to produce as many offspring as possible. They may also conquer other tribes and enslave their people to work for them. Primitive communism, thus, gave rise to slave society. Marx explained how slavery was practiced in Ancient Egypt and the Roman time. This was followed by the rise of agriculture on which prosperity was based and in which land became a major mode of production. At the same time the Roman Empire was in decline and finally lost its power. Europe went into the Dark Age in which war lords vied against one another for power and took control of available land. Marx called this period feudalism. This later gave way to the institution of monarchy, nation-state, trade cooperation between the state and traders, and colonialism. The accumulation of capital began – a form of capitalism in its early stage. This was followed by cooperation between the monarchy and traders – a form of money politics. In other words, monarchs and traders worked together as partners, with the former providing military protection, while the latter went into the world to trade and shared the profits with the former. More towns grew; so did the traders. Urbanization meant greater prosperity. Then, the trading class worked with peasants to overthrow the monarchy. In this regard, capitalism evolved with democracy.

The essence of capitalism is the presence of capital as one of the most important modes of production. Greater production entails more capital made possible by capital accumulation, which in turn is made possible by profit, which in turn is made possible by labor surplus. Workers

would, of course, receive some profits, while most would be kept by capitalists. In the case of Thailand, there are stories told again and again about foreign migrants in the old days who came here with almost nothing and worked their way up to eventually become millionaires and billionaires. This was possible because they benefited from the labor surplus. Whoever was able to expand their business would see greater capital accumulation at the same time. Apparently, everything looked good except for the fact that with capital expansion, returns per unit would be smaller. To ensure that production would continue unhindered, they needed to upscale the size of their capital on a continual basis. In addition, profits depended on sale volume. An inadequate volume would mean loss. So, to ensure volume, consumption demands needed to be constantly stimulated. At the same time, the production mode was changed from being agriculture-based to industry-based. The agriculture-based production much depended on climate conditions, while the industry-based counterpart could be operated non-stop day and night at an increasingly faster pace. Therefore, these three elements of capitalism, industrialism, and consumerism go hand in hand, lending support to one another. The final outcome of the combination is materialism as we know it. Actually, during Marx's lifetime there was another opposite school of thought led by Herbert Spencer. Nevertheless, despite their differences, both shared the belief that although capitalism was something of a problem, it was just a passing phase that would soon go away. Yet now, after centuries have lapsed, it still remains.

Modern capitalism is not the same as that during the Industrial Revolution in England. It has evolved with greater complexity. It is difficult to follow and, therefore, likely to stay for quite some time yet. A factor that has often been mentioned as a catalyst of change is knowledge economy or creative economy or, as it has been called more recently, digital economy. Whatever the name, the approach is still within the confines of capitalism. The author of this paper, while writing a book on Buddhist Economics, thought that in order to move beyond capitalism one needed to reach a stage called intellectualism, which the Asoke School here calls *Puñña-ism*, while the international community will talk about Alternative Economy. No matter what approach one wants to adopt, the move away

from materialism requires a presence of *Guṇadhamma* or moral conduct as an essential driver. This is a thought-based science, unlike a physical science or physics with its emphasis on relationships especially between matter and energy. In Buddhism, a consciousness or *Citta* is a state of energy that can occur in conjunction with matter or *Rūpa*. So *Citta* operates as both mind and matter or *Nāmarūpa*. In other words, if it is merely a form of energy without matter or *Rūpa*, it cannot observe how consciousness operates. Besides, *Citta* can be developed *ad infinitum*. In fact, *Citta* at different stages of development will have different perceptions or understandings of things. This is something that a physical science may fail to understand or refuse to acknowledge. If it does, it may be more willing to embrace the notion. A more developed *Citta* will better grasp the significance of various natural phenomena than a less developed one. It is a pity that we have not yet had a standard instrument that can gauge it. It is possible that there exist people with special abilities to do so. Even if there are such people, they could not and should not reveal themselves because it is considered a matter of individual talents. If someone claims to have reached attainments at such and such levels, they could be accused of showing *Uttarimanussadhamma*. Therefore, an assessment of *Citta* development is subject to individual judgments.

This is very important, as the ultimate aim of Buddhists is to reach a state of non-suffering or *Nibbāna*. Whether or not such a state is possible depends on the level of *Citta* development and its capability. When we say that capitalism is a bad guy, it comes in many guises. It does not abstractly manifest itself as a demon; its power is seen and felt in the form of goods and services in the marketplace as well as other amenities. Actually, in the olden days many people wanted to possess certain power and were willing to undergo extensive spiritual *Citta* practice. Capitalism, however, can empower us without necessarily going through such practice. It responds to our basic needs and beyond, making it possible for us to do something previously thought impossible, e.g. the possession of psychic powers such as *Dibbasota*, *Dibbacakkhu* or both as well as the abilities to fly in the sky, dive into the underworld, stay alive in the extreme heat or cold, extend life as long as possible, create comfortable environments

and minimize the difficulties of livelihood. Capitalism can make all this possible to those with access to capital, albeit not to everybody. At least they can say that “Anyone can fly AIRASIA.” So, a lot of people can now fly to someplace at a selected time. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that people want to enjoy such ease and comfort. They can be happy, thanks to capitalism. So, they are bent on accumulating more money and property. Capitalism is no longer equated with materialism; rather, it provides power and comfort sought by most people. The number of people who enjoy them is living proof that everything is attainable. What it does not provide, however, is the ability to solve sufferings experienced by the mind or *Citta* induced by *Kilesa* and clouded by hatred, greed, delusion and other cravings or *Kāmatanḥā*. These elements are also causes of conflict. In several instances, money cannot buy solutions, especially when sufferings originate from egoism. The more capable capitalism is in making things happen, the more aggrandized egoism becomes. Sufferings are experienced on a more regular basis when a person's *Citta* is clouded by *Kāmatanḥā*. In the world of reality, nothing is black and white. There are people who understand what capitalism is and who can make the most of it, especially those who adopt and practice *Buddhadhamma*. Those who lose are the ones who embrace capitalism in its extreme form or those who adhere to Buddhist traditions regardless of the changing reality.

Tradition is a keyword here. Let's review the situation in which the number of monasteries is getting smaller or more monasteries are left without monks. In the olden days, when people accumulated enough money, they wanted to do something before they died as a preparation for the journey after life or to do something useful to society. What they did was build monasteries. Today, such investment takes a different form with more focus on one's self and family. Investment no longer means building monasteries but includes such activities as education grants and hospital donations. There are now more choices. Certainly, people with a good understanding of *Buddhadhamma* who practice *Citta* development on a regular basis are better immune to capitalism. They can opt to adopt a comfortable way of life made possible by capitalism, or they choose to go without it. What the system provides is merely a tool which, if wisely

used, can lead to higher spiritual development and awareness. Again, there are people who, for all their spiritual practice, can succumb to *Kāmatanṇhā* stimulated by capitalism. And this is what seems to be the current situation in which decline is felt within the institution of Buddhism. Of course, this decline has nothing to do with Buddhism or its teachings. On the other hand, there are people who were born into capitalism and who have found that the system was sugar-coated with nothing substantial. They have come to better appreciate the value of Buddhism.

Yet, Buddhism in the future will not belong just to laity. Nor will it belong to *Saṅgha*, as some, if not many, of the ecclesiastical order cannot control their *Citta* and will more readily succumb to capitalism. In the future, those who enter monkhood must vow to be *Ariyasāṅgha*. The *Ariyasāṅgha* will continue to exist. Naturally, the number of monks will be smaller; those who stay will be only *Ariyasāṅgha* who retain their religious status under a set of conditions and in the contexts agreeable to them and the social environment. Meanwhile, laity will continue to grow as capitalism advances. The future generation of laypeople will learn how to reap profits from the system, while being able to resist capitalist lures and develop their *Citta* to an even higher level. Today, there are more young people who go to practice *Dhamma* at various religious places. Driven by capitalist pressures, they try to find their way out. Their counterparts in the past would seek refuge in socialism. Socialism has been in ruins for lack of moral purposes. As a matter of fact, it is just a form of materialism. Without some kind of control, it has turned into capitalism, as is happening in China and Vietnam. Today people have become more interested in the spiritual development than ever before. Whether their number will increase or decrease will depend on certain conditions. In short, all this is just a struggle between self and *Kilesa*. The latter comes in many devious guises. If we are not aware, we will lose out. In addition, capitalism could spell the end of humankind through, among other things, global warming and environmental degradation. These problems could strike so fast that humankind may come to an end. This is a possibility. If they happen gradually, the effect will not be readily felt. On the other hand, if their occurrence makes people re-think their ways of life, there

is still hope. How we can tackle the issue will depend on how fast it will emerge and hit us. We will have to wait and see.

At present, Buddhism seems to come out bruised. It is beset by many problems. A lot of monks are under the spell of material comfort. Fewer people enter monkhood. Fewer people go to the monastery to study Buddhism. More monasteries are left without resident monks. Hardly anyone mentions Buddhist studies or curriculums. Many Thais know little or nothing about Buddhism, and, even more importantly, they do not live their lives as Buddhists. All this makes us ponder how Buddhism can survive and continue to play its important role in the Thai society. In fact, capitalism and Buddhism have been locked in a struggle over the centuries. In the Buddha's time, there were spiritualists and materialists who pitted their wits against each other. Some were able to make their arguments into religious beliefs, while Buddhism has adhered to the middle path. In the midst of development, each society has come up with a number of coping mechanisms, whether they are religious, economic, social, political, educational or cultural, to ensure that it will reach its goal. Of these mechanisms, which is more dominant – political, economic, or politico-economic? The economic approach should take precedence. If Thailand faces economic problems, what approaches should it adopt? A social or religious approach cannot go off the economic path. Likewise, a Buddhist way of life has to constantly adjust itself to ensure its survival and to expand its base of influence. Constant monitoring, improvement and change are necessary just as capitalism has been subtly doing all along. Buddhism has to be revised. One has seen changes in spiritualism, theology and divinity. They need to change for survival. So, it can be said that a mindful change is the right solution.

For Buddhism to be able to remain here, Thai society needs to retain essential Buddhist elements despite being in the capitalist environment. It needs to be a capitalist Buddhist society. If the religion is alienated from the social mainstream, problems are bound to occur. A capitalist Buddhist society may make use of capitalist tools for religious purposes. Whatever one does, one must not forget the goals of Buddhism. One need not go as far as ending all desires or *Kilesa* like an *Arahant*. It suffices if a person

can live a happy life in a capitalist society as a good Buddhist, a good *Upāsaka/Upāsikā*.

In our attempts to adjust, we need to differentiate between form and content. The contents or essence of Buddhism will stay unchanged, while traditions and forms constantly undergo changes. While the dominance of capitalism may effect certain change of form, it cannot erode *Buddhadhamma* because of its absolute truth of life. As long as there is humanity, the truth will remain so, unmarred by any capitalist force. What we need to do is to strengthen our immunity against capitalism. Today, whether we like it or not, capitalism has become a very strong institution. The *Saṅgha* institution, once strong, is now weakened by capitalist influences. However, this does not mean that *Buddhadhamma* is destroyed. To combat capitalism, we must find leverage against it by knowing where its weaknesses lie. Two strategies are possible here. We can leverage against small points and see how they will affect the major part, or we tackle the major part head-on. It is advisable to do several small leverages to ensure that the major part is impacted. At the moment the situation is not hopeless. We still have two major *Saṅgha* universities where laypeople can study *Buddhadhamma*. We can make some adjustments here. The point is we must not get stuck with traditions or forms. To give a contemporary example, people today are addicted to a new form of social interaction, ironically called an “indifferent society”. While no harm is apparent yet, we can use it as a tool to disseminate correct information. At the same time *Sammatisaṅgha* or conventional *Saṅgha* still enjoys much social support. So, we cannot decisively say right now whether capitalism or Buddhism prevails. The struggle is still on-going. Further conditions are needed to determine loss or victory. How then can we ensure positive winning conditions? At any rate, we must take into account the fact that we are laypeople who live and work in the capitalist society on a daily basis, and we want to live our lives mindfully. This is very important. With mindfulness, wisdom will be effectively exercised.

At the moment capitalism dominates almost the entire world. How is this possible? In religious terms, there are two economic systems: one based on greed, the other on happiness. If we are happy doing good deeds

to others, this is a win-win situation. On the other hand, greed-based economy involves fierce competition, resulting in winners and losers. If the winners feel pity for the losers, they will also become part of the losers. In this case, there are no outright winners. If we ask whether we expect the economy to come to the rescue, the answer is “not really.” Essentially, to appreciate the significance of Sufficiency Economy, we need to follow the principle of *Bhojanemattaññutā*, i.e. moderation in consumption. Unless you understand the principle, you will not appreciate sufficiency economy. After our country has gone through the era of Thaksinomics, our society has become ridden with greed. This poses a barrier to understanding sufficiency economy, as people tend to prejudice from the very start that the idea was never sufficient for them. On the other hand, on the subject of happiness, people tend to grasp Bhutan's concept of “gross national happiness” more readily. They talk about happiness, while we focus on sufficiency. In fact, we should make a connection between them, making people happy and benevolent at the same time.

Another issue is how to use Buddhism in the management of people's daily life in a capitalist society. For example, a funeral rite can provide a lot of opportunities to educate people about Buddhism. Instead of just traditional chanting, explanation can be added. It does not mean just a translation of the chant, but a translation with explanation. Chanting need not consist of four separate religious stanzas, as is traditionally practiced. It can be only one stanza. At the cremation, we may consider how a sermon should be delivered. We could come up with a general model that can be adopted or adjusted to suit each monastery. The occasion may be about death, but it can be extended to cover birth, aging, and sickness. Much happens between birth and death. What can monks do? For example, on aging, a lot of old people are abandoned. Why does the *Saṅgha* institution not come up with a project by which there is a monastery in every district to provide a care center for old people until their dying day on a paid or unpaid basis? Here we can apply the principles propounded by capitalism: good quality at an affordable price. Wealthy people will be drawn to the service. Once they are there, they will see how helping fellow beings is a Buddhist way of life and how assistance in the capitalist setting is more

profit-oriented. Another possibility is on the issue of children. There are monasteries in some countries in which children are dropped off after school while their parents are still at work. The monasteries provide computers and allow the children to play in the monastic environment filled with mutual kindness and assistance. Every activity in life, concerning birth, aging or sickness, could be easily turned into a subject of *Dhamma*. If such activities are part of a Buddhist way of life, Buddhism and life will never be separated. The religion can make use of any effective means made available by capitalism to manage people's life. The point is we do not do it for profit but rather for humanitarian purposes or for benefits of those who we target. In this way, people will feel that there is another dimension of life that has nothing to do with profit and loss. Eventually, when we come up with quality goods, people will come. To do this, we need a management system and a strong institution. In a strong capitalist society, we will use capitalist-based activities as a springboard to disseminate Buddhist goals and concepts to every social fabric. In this way, we will never leave behind the essence of Buddhism. On the other hand, if we do not faithfully adhere to this ideology, everything will be profit-oriented. In short, it is possible to make monasteries a place where people will come to make merits and do useful activities. A network of monasteries can be created to cover every province. With good monitoring, supervision and control, development is bound to happen. If we can create such a system, we can live in a capitalist society with full advantages. What we provide is affordable and good. Unlike capitalists, we are not profit-oriented. In this manner, Buddhism may be able to retain its significance in a capitalist society.

Trends of Monk Roles in Thai Politics in the Next Two Decades*

*Phra Maha Hansa Dhammhaso***

1. Introduction

Buddhism is an important religion in Asia; its role and influence are indelibly imprinted in the educational, social, psychological, and socio-economic development of the continent. Its manifestation can be seen in the philosophy, rites, beliefs, cultural practice, and way of life adopted by Buddhist monks and laypersons.¹ When one analyzes the influence of Buddhism in Thai society, it can be seen that monks and the public have enjoyed mutually good relationships for over 700 years.

The role and significance of monks as individuals and as organized bodies can be analyzed on the basis of the relationships between the *Saṅgha*, the ruling class, and the public since the Sukhothai period. Monks have played an important role as advisers to the monarchs; on occasions they even recommended alternative solutions to administrative issues for the monarchs, as evidenced in the reigns of King Ramkhamhaeng, King Lithai, and King Naresuan. When the villagers of Bang Rachan were caught in the battle against the Burmese invaders, monks helped to boost

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¹ Jerrold Schecter, 1967: XI

their morale. Thus, they have played an important role in inspiring and empowering political figures and the public as a whole and played no small part in helping the country pull through various crises. It can be seen that in the course of the nation's historical development since the Sukhothai period monks have acted as a "bridge" between the ruling party and the public, making it possible for them to co-exist peacefully under Buddhist principles.

During transitional times, monks of the Theravada sect in such countries as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand do not just act out their customary roles of "advisors to the rulers" on the basis of *Dasarājadhamma*, but they are also politically involved, directly or indirectly. Monks in Sri Lanka participated in the election of politicians; some even ran for election. Monks in Myanmar staged demonstrations in an attempt to sanction against the military regime or openly showed their support for the politicians who wanted to pursue a new political policy in line with what they most desired.

Organized and pronounced demonstrations against the government or politicians have also been a clear trend in Thai society, especially during the time when the country is advancing on the road to democracy. On several occasions monks were seen demonstrating for certain rights and justice, for example, seeking justice for Phra Phimontham (Ac Āsabhamahāthera), staging a demand to include Buddhism as the State religion in the Constitution, or recently showing support for the "red-shirt" or "yellow-shirt" movements.

Their involvement was not seen only in the protests against the government or for specific demands. Sometimes, they came out to urge the government to take more action. Some even went as far as interpreting Buddhist principles to justify certain political decisions. For example, Phra Kittivuddho once stated that "killing a communist is not evil." Incidents like this have caused a number of academics to criticize monks for trying to legitimize government actions in stopping demonstrations, making arrests, and detain politicians, students, private citizens, including

left-winged monks.² Such argument is in line with the research findings on Buddhism and politics by Rattanaphon Phongphatthana that “the government and Buddhist national leaders attempted to use religious principles to legitimize a political cause.”³

Her conclusion significantly reflects the similarity seen in the roles played by the *Saṅgha* in the political movements in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Lankan King Duṭṭhagāmiṇī-Abhaya deployed monks to fight in the front line against Tamil groups. The king was distressed on learning about heavy Tamil casualties because he had violated one of the major Buddhist precepts. The monks tried to console him by saying: “Please, do not worry too much. Killing anti-religious people is not considered evil.”⁴ In Myanmar in 1949, wishing to see the *Saṅgha* and religion play a greater role in Burmese politics, U Nu declared the country’s ideology of “Buddhist socialism”, integrating Marxism into the Buddhist principles.⁵ This act endeared a lot of monks who decided to join and support his cause.

All this has led to an important question on the role and attitude of the *Saṅgha*, individually or collectively, whether and how such acts “correspond with the basic principle or belief of Buddhism.” Indeed, did the Buddha intend or design the *Saṅgha* in such a way that monks are absolutely not allowed to get involved in politics, or did he permit them to intervene in politics in some flexible manner under certain circumstances?

The phrase “under certain circumstances” is inferred from the incident in which the Buddha intervened as “a mediator in the war between his kinsmen”⁶ and “in an attempt to stop King Viḍḍabha’s massacre of the Sakka clan.”⁷ What does the Buddha’s intervention mean in the context of conflicts and violence in which politicians and the public are caught?

² Somboon Suksamran, B.E. 2522 (2009): 15.

³ Rattanaphon Phongphatthana, B.E. 2547 (2004).

⁴ Phra Methithammaphon (Prayoon Dhammacitto), B.E. 2535 (1992): 14-15.

⁵ Melford Spiro, 1982: 389-390.

⁶ Mahamakutrajavidyalaya, n.d.: 363.

⁷ *Sn.* (Pali) 25/47/25; *Sn.* (Thai) 25/47/41.

Questions like this continue with other incidents when the Buddha chose to remain silent in the midst of war or violence. For example, when King Ajātasattu sent an army to attack the city of Vesālī⁸ or when the same king ordered an ambush on his father, King Bimbisāra, who was also a friend of the Buddha, the Buddha chose not to intervene. Furthermore, when the Buddha heard about the war between King Pasenadikosala and King Ajātasattu, he said to his disciple monks that “the victor begets hate, while the defeated lives in pain.”⁹ Still, he made no attempt to intervene.

An analysis of his stance on the aforementioned fighting and violence might lead some monks of the Theravada sect to interpret and conclude that “if the conflict and violence have something to do with their kin, monks can intervene, especially when it comes to the conflict among Thai people.” In this case, monks could go out to stop the dispute, or symbolically or directly intervene between the dissenting parties. However, if it concerns a war between two states, monks need to be more careful in their intervention or acts.

Some of the situations in which the Buddha forbade the monks to get involved happen to be the point cited by State rulers or by the public that it is inappropriate for monks to intervene in the affairs that have nothing to do with their mission or duty. This begs further questions as to how one should interpret the word “appropriate.” In the case of King Pasenadikosala, the commentary¹⁰ avers that monks should stay in the monastery to do their monastic duties rather than concern themselves with knowing how an army should be organized. Such knowledge is a worldly matter that relates to *Sīla* No. 1 and, therefore, not appropriate for the monks to get involved.

In comparison, in Thai society in the past, monarchs would request monks to sprinkle holy water on the troops who were about to go into

⁸ *A.Sn.* (Thai) 23/22/33; *A.Sn.* (Pali) 23/22/15; *A.Sn.A.* 3/22/170.

⁹ *S.I.* (Thai) 15/125/146-148; *S.I.* 15/126148-149; *S.I.A.* 1/125-125/146-147; *S.I.T* 1/125-126/198.

¹⁰ *Vin.* (Thai) 2/322/458.

battle in order to uplift their fighting spirit. In other words, the soldiers would be encouraged to breach *Sīla* No. 1 in the process. The point is that, in the Buddha's time, as in the case of King Pasenadikosala, it was deemed inappropriate for the monks to get involved in military affairs, including visiting the army or staying overnight in their midst. In the current situation, on the other hand, political factions are trying to get monks involved, asking them to give the troops their blessing and encourage them to harm fellow beings. How then should we explain the role of the monks and their relationships with politics to justify the correctness and appropriateness of their acts?

In this connection, it is necessary to return to the question "What are the real roles of the *Saṅgha*? If one analyzes the context in light of the Buddhist principles, one will see that "the *Saṅgha*'s roles lie in the study, practice, and dissemination of the Dhamma, including protecting and upholding Buddhism." Now, is their political involvement the role they should take up or is it in line with the Dhamma-Vinaya at all? Many have tried to tackle the issue by first asking for a definition of "politics." If we understand clearly what politics is, we will then be able to say whether or not monks should get involved. Those who tried to seek clarification about this issue included **Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu**,¹¹ **Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto)**,¹² **Nithi Iaosiwong**,¹³ and **Suraphot Thawisak**.¹⁴ Nevertheless, some Western thinkers have made an observation that such an approach is "a corruption of the teachings of the Buddha" (Ian Harris, 2007: 3), for in fact there is nothing in Buddhism from which it can be inferred that monks are allowed to get involved in politics. This is just an attempt by Theravada monks to interpret the Dhamma-Vinaya in such a way that would make it possible for them to serve political elements. The Scriptures were never intended that way.¹⁵

¹¹ Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, B.E. 2545 (2002).

¹² Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto), B.E. 2531 (1988).

¹³ Nithi Iaosiwong, B.E. 2547 (2004): 36.

¹⁴ Suraphot Thawisak, B.E. 2554 (2011): 42.

¹⁵ Richard F. Gombrich, 2006: 88.

Thus, this research tries to answer the following questions: (1) What are the roles of Thai monks in relation to Thai politics, taking into account the context of monks in Theravada countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Cambodia, focusing especially on their roles in both absolute monarchy and democracy? (2) Are their involvements or roles in the political arena in various guises in line with the original concept of Buddhism? If so, in what ways? Is it possible that in reality the Buddha did not specify such stance or role? The extent to which monks became involved in politics has been advocated by the *Saṅgha* today in the attempt to justify their approach by citing such pretexts as the security of Buddhism and the right to participate in the formulation of public policy. In such attempts to expand the scope of the roles, principles and practices of the *Saṅgha*, it is only right to ask whether they are in line with the Dhamma-Vinaya and how appropriate they are to the ecclesiastical status.

The above-mentioned questions led the researcher to find and design an approach that would best reflect the social and political reality based on the current situation or context – one that bears little or no similarity to the time of the Buddha or the past. Would the monks today have the right to make an interpretation in light of the changing context? The answers to these questions would lead to an explanation and recommendations on the possible roles that they should play or act out at present and in the next two decades in relation to politics, making it possible for the *Saṅgha* as individuals and organization to best respond to the current social situation and ensure the survival of the institution in the midst of the current social and political conflicts.

The methodology adopted consists of two parts: documentary research whereby studies were made of the *Tepiṭaka* texts, *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭīkā*, *Anuṭṭikā*, and other books related to this research, e.g. theses and newspaper researches, including such media as the internet and television, as well as field research. The researcher himself attended an Advanced Certificate Course in Politics and Governance in Democratic Systems for Executives Program, Class 15, King Prajadhipok's Institute. The class consisted of 140 politicians (Members of Parliament and Senates), high-level government officials, leaders of non-governmental organizations and

the private sector, and academics. Their input greatly contributed to the research by way of observations, interviews, group discussions, and seminars at various forums. After careful analysis, clarification, interpretation, and synthesis, the study yields the following interesting results.

2. Roles of the *Saṅgha* in Thai politics: from absolute monarchy to democracy

The researcher began by studying the contexts governing the roles of the *Saṅgha* and politics of Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Cambodia. As Theravada Buddhist countries with democratic government similar to that of Thailand, they yielded valuable lessons and provided a useful framework for the research and insight into the analysis of the trends in Thailand in the next two decades

The roles of the *Saṅgha* in the above three countries could be divided into the following categories: (1) advisory role, (2) advocacy, (3) protesting and making demands to the State, (4) exercise of the voting right, (5) protection of the country and religion, (6) mediation of disputes, (7) support and promotion of public affairs, (8) support of political parties, and (9) role as politicians.

An interesting observation is that countries like Sri Lanka have witnessed the status of monks develop from being merely interlocutors with politicians to becoming full-fledged politicians themselves. In the researcher's view, such role goes beyond the scope expounded in the Dhamma-Vinaya. The Dhamma-Vinaya has been interpreted to suit the social and political context. In other words, the interpretation is now made on the basis of social and political parameters – reminiscent of the attempt by some Thai monks to justify that “killing a communist is not evil” in light of the political context at the time. This is also similar to some Sri Lankan monks who tried to console Duṭṭhagāmiṇī-Abhaya, who was devastated by the breach of *Sīla* – killing many Tamils – by saying “Please, do not worry too much. Killing of anti-religious people is not considered evil”.

It could be seen that social and political contexts as well as ethnic survival have had an impact on the interpretation of the Dhamma-Vinaya to

serve certain ideologies. This was evident in Myanmar with the Rohingya case in which a number of monks, citing Buddhist principles, aroused their Buddhist followers to massacre the ethnic minority and destroy their homes, resulting in a lot of injuries and loss of lives.

Beside these attempts to interpret the Dhamma-Vinaya to serve social, political and ethnic causes, one has seen another phenomenon in Sri Lanka and Myanmar – “the preservation of Buddhism from the threats of forces from other doctrines and religions.” The colonial powers that occupied these two countries brought with them their religious faiths and tried to impose them on the locals. Such acts led the faithful Buddhists to put up resistance on several fronts. For example, monks from both countries led the armed insurgence against the occupying forces and started debates and counter-arguments in kind.

Such leadership roles by monks were not seen only in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, but also in Thailand. For example, Chao Phra Fang led a group of monks and villagers to take over the administrative power from the local authorities, claiming to preserve the integrity of the country. Thus, in the final analysis, monks in countries facing social, political, religious and ethnic crises would use religious principles as tools to serve ideology and ensure national survival. Such interpretation could be viewed as a kind of “distortion” for survival purposes. Evidently, in light of their fighting experience, monks would regard religious principles as “choices” rather than as hard and fast rules. The only significant variables they would consider are social, religious, political, and ethnic “survival”.

The roles of the *Saṅgha* in politics in Thai society from the past to the present have taken a number of dimensions: (1) advisory role, (2) promotion of the peace-building process, (3) advocacy and guiding of political leaders, (4) assistance in national affairs, (5) fulfillment of the State policy, (6) disobedience to the State power, (7) protest against the State and making demands, (8) support of political parties, and (9) running as candidates in the election of MPs.

Their roles in politics in two different periods and regimes – absolute monarchy and representative democracy – share a number of similarities,

especially the advisory role, advocacy role, mediation in dispute resolution, assistance of the State, and fulfillment of the State policy. It is noteworthy that their advisory role in the democratic age is no longer based on the “rule of Dhamma”, when compared to the absolute monarchy rule under which the ruler adhered to the framework of “*Cakkavatti-Vatta*” under the “*Paripucchā*” principle – an important principle observed and practiced by all rulers.

With regard to disobedience to the ruler, protest against or opposition to the State power, evidence could be found from the reign of King Narai the Great to the Rattanakosin period, to the transitional democracy period, to the democratic rule in 1932. Monks began to be more visibly involved in demonstrations to make demands of political leaders. For instance, they demonstrated to seek justice for Phra Phimontham (Ac Āsabhamahāthera), joined the farmers in their demonstration for justice, and pointed out injustice that the working class suffered at the hands of the capitalists.

Such expressions led to ideological and physical conflicts between two groups of monks, the left-wing group led by Phra Maha Chat and Phra Maha Phong and their right-wing counterpart led by Phra Kittivuḍḍho. The former participated in political activities, supporting certain political parties and running for election of MPs. The latter, on the other hand, showed their disapproval, seeing that such act would support the Socialist Party of Thailand, a communist-oriented element, and justify statements such as “killing a communist is not evil.” This eventually opened up an opportunity for the government to subsequently take action to suppress politically dissenting monks and public members.

Ideological and political differences of the two groups of monks have continued and are visible even today. Today, more Thai monks, whether main-stream or sub-stream, would openly show their support and participate in activities of the political parties or groups with similar viewpoints. They were seen siding with the left-wing “red-shirts” who claimed to favor democratic ideology and belief, or with the right-wing “yellow-shirts” with conservative political outlook and nationalism.

Nevertheless, monks' involvement and participation in activities organized by politicians or political groups have begged a lot of questions. At the same time, the *Saṅgha* Supreme Council of Thailand has issued rules forbidding monks to get politically involved in any way. Yet, monks, both with right-wing and left-wing inclinations, take little or no notice of the proclamation. Worse, they try to explain and interpret Dhamma-Vinaya principles to justify their way of thinking, claiming it is legitimate for them to do so.

Still, the comparison of Thai monks with their counterparts in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Cambodia shows that they all performed similar roles. First, they played the "role of advisor to political leaders", especially to the monarch under the *Rājādhīpateyya* rule, similar to the role of "a spiritual *Purohita*" or counselor to the king. At the same time, they acted as leaders or "guides;" again this leading role varied from country to country. In some periods Lankan, Burmese and Thai monks tended to guide their political leaders on the path of war and "ethnic" conflict as well as on issues of survival of the political and *Saṅgha* institutions. Cambodian monks, on the other hand, despite being subjected to the power of various political groups, were able to maintain their advisory role to King Sihanouk, giving rise to the concept of "Buddhist Socialism" in the country.

Another interesting role similarly played by the *Saṅgha* in the four countries was seen in their "protests and making demands" when the State's implementation of public policy had an impact on public feelings and emotion, as well as on social, political, ethnic and religious survival. Sri Lanka and Myanmar, for example, are cases in point as far as the ethnic issue is concerned. Therefore, any policy, designed by politicians and having an impact on the feelings of the *Saṅgha* and the general public, would be more likely to draw monks onto the street to protest against the government and demand a change of policy. Similarly, if a policy was seen to affect a well-preserved way of life and culture, monks in these countries would stage a demonstration to show their disapproval.

Thai monks were also found to launch an anti-government protest, although their reasons usually would have more to do with the survival

of Buddhism. Their demands included the inclusion of Buddhism in the Constitution as the State religion, establishment of the Ministry of Buddhism, and demand for justice for certain monks who suffered from a politically motivated action, as was the case with Phra Phimontham (Ac Āsabhamahāthera). Thai monks would come together to ask for a redress of justice. Similar incidents were also seen in King Narai the Great's reign when the *Saṅgha* disagreed with the king's allowing followers of another religion to act in ways disrespectful of Buddhism and became more distrustful of his approach.

In addition, monks in the “TMSC” countries – Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia – have played a similar role in their political participation in the protests with political groups. Monks in these four countries showed a clear stance when they joined political groups with similar ideology and goals. Sri Lanka is a case in point when monks acted as election canvassers and publicly persuaded their listeners to choose Prime Minister Rajapaksa. In Myanmar some groups of monks joined Aung San Suu Kyi's party; in Cambodia some sided with Prime Minister Hun Sen, while others supported the Opposition Party. Similarly, some monks in Thailand are staunch supporters of the Red-Shirt movement, and others are in favor of the Yellow-Shirt cause. It is only fair to say, however, that the mainstream monks in each country, who are usually close to the seat of the State power, have tried to act neutral without displaying any clear sign of their preference of a political group.

At any rate, Lankan monk roles are completely different from those of other countries in that they tend to be “political monks” directly involved as MPs. The reasons they have cited for this political role are to “protect their ‘Singhalese Only’ identity, to protect Buddhism when it is affected by the public policy, and to promote Buddhism in all dimensions. Such involvement is met with much disapproval by mainstream Buddhists and monks. One *Mahānāyaka* of the Siamvangsa School made a point that “monks should stay in the monastery, not in the house.” He seemed to advocate that “if a monk wants to enter politics, he should leave monkhood and go to Parliament or stay in the house just like any layperson. If he chooses to stay in the monastery, he should not assume a political role.”

3. Roles of the *Saṅgha* in Politics as evidenced in Theravada Buddhism

A study of the *Saṅgha* role in politics in the *Tepiṭaka* texts reveals the following salient features: (1) advisory role, (2) advocacy and political guide, (3) mediation of disputes, (4) protest against political leaders, (5) development of State citizenship, (5) guidance of politicians to create mass support for a separate *Saṅgha* administration.

The role of the Buddha in politics could be seen as part of his duty related to and based on Dhamma. In his view, besides Dhamma study and practice, the *Saṅgha* had an important task to disseminate what they learned to political leaders or the ruling class. He declared his “first instructions” to his disciples thus:

Go forth and wander for the good of many, for the happiness of many. Do not go together in two in one direction. Preach the Dhamma that is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end. Proclaim a holy life complete with meaning and expression, perfect and pure. There are still beings with little impediment in their eyes. They will fare worse because they do not hear the Dhamma from you, O Bhikkhus. I myself will go to the district of Uruvelāsenānigama to teach Dhamma.¹⁶

It is evident that to preach such beneficial Dhamma in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end was an important duty on which the Buddha placed an emphasis. However, in this context, he made it clear to the first group of his disciples that the preaching of the Dhamma was intended for the good and happiness of many. This corresponds with the principle of “*Lokatthacariyā*.” The underlying notion could generate at least two topics of Dhamma: “*Brahmavihāra* and *Saṅghavattthu*.” These two sets of Dhamma focus on performing one’s duties based on loving

¹⁶ *caratha, bhikkhave, cārikaṃ bahujaṇahitāya bahujaṇasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ; mā ekena dve agamittha desetha, bhikkhave, dhammaṃ ādikalyāṇaṃ majjhakalyāṇaṃ pariyoṣānakalyāṇaṃ, sātthaṃ sabyañjanaṃ kevalaparipuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ pakāsetha* (Vin. Mahāvagga 4/32/40).

kindness, attention, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. They were designed to help fellow beings by offering insight into Dhamma with a friendly spirit, benevolent intent and fair mind, and on equal terms.

It is noteworthy that preaching or propagating the Dhamma was the “duty” of the Buddha and His disciples. This could be seen in such principles as *Disā 6* in which the Buddha wanted the monks to conduct themselves by refraining from doing evil deeds, whether physical, verbal or mental, keeping virtue, giving a helping hand with loving kindness, helping people to listen to something not heard before, explaining and providing greater insight into what was already heard, and showing the way to Heaven by pointing out what was or was not good, as well as what should or should not be done,¹⁷ taking into consideration what was going on at that particular moment. He gave the following guidelines for preaching the Dhamma:

This was not easy to do. When a Bhikkhu wanted to preach to others, he must observe the following five principles: (1) I will preach Dhamma sequentially,¹⁸ (2) I will explain by referring to the causes, (3) I will preach Dhamma with compassion,¹⁹ (4) I will preach without thinking of material gains,²⁰ and (5) I will not preach to hurt self and others.^{21,22}

Furthermore, in the Dhamma-preaching role, the Buddha taught the following:

¹⁷ *DIII* (Thai) 11/272/216.

¹⁸ *Anupubbikathaṃ kathesāmi*, preaching Dhamma sequentially, means showing Dhammaprinciples in an orderly manner without making shortcuts or losing the train of statements, e.g. teaching *Sīla* after *Dāna*, and *Sagga* or Heaven after. (*Sīla*, *A.III Pañcaka. A.* (Thai) 36/334.)

¹⁹ *Anuddayatam paṭicca*, with compassion, means assisting on the assumption that I will rid beings who suffer from the suffering. (*A.III Pañcaka. A.* (Thai) 36/334.)

²⁰ *Na āmisantaro*, without thinking of *Āmisa* or material gains, means not expecting material gains for oneself (*A.III Pañcaka. A.* (Thai) 36/335.)

²¹ *Attānañca parañca anupahacca*, not teaching to hurt self and others, means not preaching to show that one is superior to others. (*A.III Pañcaka. A.* (Thai) 36/335.)

²² *A.III Pañcaka.* (Thai) 22/159/263.

A person who harms another cannot be called a *Pabbajita*; a person who makes another suffer cannot be called a *Samaṇa*. Therefore, when one disseminates the Dhamma, one must not talk ill of others or make them suffer. Rather, one must observe the *Pāṭimokkha* rules, partake of food in moderation, keep *Senāsana* in solitude, and constantly strive for further mental development.

He made it clear that “this is the teachings of every Buddha.”²³

Yet, with a great vision (*Lokavidū*) and desire to see a long-term result after his *Parinibbāna*, he mentioned that “after my passing away, the Dhamma-Vinaya will be your teacher”²⁴ and laid down “*Mahāpadesa* 4,” a set of principles whereby a monk on hearing a word or statement from another will consider whether or not it is Dhamma or Vinaya, as well as another set of principles on “eight criteria for considering the Dhamma-Vinaya.” These would serve as a tool to consider whether or not something was Dhamma or Vinaya and, on that basis, to lessen desires for pleasure and for material accumulation and to be content with frugality, solitude and quiet away from the crowd. If the subject under consideration was in line with these principles, i.e., a quest for Dhamma-based peace and happiness, it was Dhamma or Vinaya as regulated by the Buddha.

At the same time, in one sense the political role of the *Saṅgha* needs to be related to the “Vinaya”, a Dhamma-based practice. Examples of the Vinaya designed by the Buddha include what to do in the presence of an army, acts likely to be interpreted as inappropriately importuning a layperson, and entry into someone’s house at night – actions that would pose potential danger to the monks concerned. All this reflected the socio-political and economic realities in his time and could change with the passage of time. Nevertheless, explanation and interpretation of those

²³ *Na hi pabbajito parūpaghātī samaṇo hoti paraṃ viheṭṭhayanto Anūpavādo anūpaghāto pāṭimokkhe ca saṃvaro mattaññutā ca bhattasmiṃ pantañca sayanāsanaṃ adhicitte ca āyogo etaṃ Buddhāna sāsanaṃ* (D.II (Thai) 10/90/50-51.)

²⁴ D.II (Thai) 10/141/178.

acts need to correspond to the Dhamma. Corresponding to the Dhamma here means “corresponding to the role and duty or nature appropriate to the monks.”

4. Trends of Roles of the *Saṅgha* in Thai Politics in the Next Two Decades

In an attempt to answer what the trends of the *Saṅgha*’s roles in Thai politics may be in the next two decades, the researcher believes that first it is important to explain “politics” in a clear and comprehensive manner. Indeed, many thinkers and academics explain and interpret the word “politics” differently according to their perspectives and experiences in a variety of situations. A comprehensive understanding of politics would enable us to position the *Saṅgha*’s roles in politics appropriately and avoid doing damage to the *Saṅgha* and Buddhism in the long run.

In the researcher’s view, politics could be tackled from two different angles: (1) politics as goal and (2) politics as tool.

(1) Politics as goal is a validation of political acts as part of the work of the State or national administration designed to maintain peace, order, and harmonious coexistence, observe rules and regulations, resolve differences and foster human dignity, on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity, and solve disputes by peaceful means, including inculcating public-mindedness, responsibility towards self and others in the society.

(2) Politics as tool, on the other hand, focuses on the management or means to ensure that people could live together without resorting to criminal acts, that justice could be sought, that opportunity is made available, and that benefits and needs are shared by all on a fair and equitable basis. It is politics built upon a moral base, using the Dhamma as a tool to create immunity, mold and reinforce the relationship between citizens and politicians. It is not used as a tool for self-seeking purposes or for the benefits of a particular group or political clique. It is not used as a competitive tool of materialism and consumerism intended to drive the citizens relentlessly forward without caring for any long-term damage that may follow.

It is the researcher's view that defining "politics" according to these two dimensions would provide a basis for monks to be involved in and associated with political affairs without losing track of the Dhamma-Vinaya. The Dhamma-Vinaya will serve as a criterion for the monks' positive political involvement in "white politics" or "politics of compassion." The principles on which such politics is based consist of *Disā 6* by which monks would be allowed space to offer advice and express the concerns of the citizens as well as their own to political leaders. Their action would be meant for the good of the self, the relatives, and the world. The Buddha himself repeatedly said that it was the monks' duty to wander about in order to bring help and happiness to the world.

However, the Dhamma-Vinaya²⁵ in Buddhism denies the space for political expression by the *Saṅgha* if their involvement falls under one or more of the following categories: (1) joining a political group for self-seeking and power-seeking purposes, (2) showing prejudice, taking sides and sowing seeds of divisiveness, (3) acting as election canvassers, (4) causing unfair advantage or disadvantage to a particular group, and (5) playing a role or showing an attitude indicative of lack of neutrality. As a result, (1) society would lose a pillar of support if the monks decide to take sides for one or another conflicting party, (2) the *Saṅgha* would become a tool of politicians who could use them as election canvassers and for a political base, and (3) the *Saṅgha* would lose credibility from those who hold different views and political ideology.

When one looks at the issue of the "*Saṅgha* and politics in Thai society" against the background of both absolute monarchy and democratic rule, one will find that despite the change of the form of government the

²⁵ With regard of the Dhamma, decision is made on the criteria of 18 aspects of the Dhamma-Vinaya (*Vin. 6* (Thai) 7/606/324) concerning prejudice and loss of neutrality of a group of people on whom all social groups are supposed to depend, as well as their falling under the influence of *Akusalamūla* and *Papañcadhamma*. For the Vinaya, the criteria would be based on the *Sikkhāpada* in *Acelakavagga Pācittiyaṅgaṇa* (*Vin. 4* (Thai) 2/322-33/458/459) explaining the presence of monks in inappropriate places, their behaviors, or involvement in affairs unbecoming for monkhood.

Saṅgha and monarchy have always enjoyed a positive relationship in cultural and traditional matters. Despite the change of government to a more democratic rule in 1932, the Thai Constitution has acknowledged the relationship between the *Saṅgha* and monarchy as expressed in Article 9 of the 2007 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand that “the King is a Buddhist.” On the other hand, the role of the *Saṅgha* and politicians in the democratic rule see no such legal, traditional and cultural bond in any practical or ceremonial way.

As to the question what roles the *Saṅgha* should play in relation to politics in a way that is acceptable and responsive to social needs, the researcher believes the following set of priorities needs to be examined in order to reach a satisfactory answer.

(1) The *Saṅgha* as a conflict-managing engineer through peaceful Buddhist means

With the Thai society recently being caught in the middle of conflict and violence, the actors consist of various factions and interest groups, while the political groups concerned who could contribute to reconciliation have rarely shown any appropriate positive attitude or response. As a result, it is rather reasonable to foresee less than peaceful political circumstances in the next two decades. Thai society will be compelled to turn to religious organizations for help, asking what they can do to put an end to conflicts and restore reconciliation. In this connection, the Independent Investigation for Truth for Reconciliation Commission of Thailand has called for religious personnel “to increase their roles in the efforts to reduce divisiveness, promote peace and resolve social conflicts through peaceful means.”²⁶

This engineering task will, therefore, be an important role for the *Saṅgha* who will need to work with agencies, both public and private, to find ways and means to manage ongoing conflicts and violence in Thai society. The *Saṅgha* has a considerable social capital compared to other social organizations. On the Dhamma-Vinaya basis, the Buddha designed the *Saṅgha* community to be free from interest-seeking scenarios and

²⁶ Independent Investigation for Truth for Reconciliation Commission of Thailand, n.d.: 275.

power structure of the political elite. However, the *Saṅgha*'s social capital alone will not adequately equip them to take on this role if they do not have the capacity and tool to act as peace engineers to promote the peace-building process in Thai society.

It is imperative, therefore, for the *Saṅgha* to join hands with both public and private organizations in order to develop monks to be effective peace engineers in line with a recommendation made by the Independent Investigation for Truth for Reconciliation Commission of Thailand which states that "every party attach importance to the restoration of moral and ethical principles and encourage religious institutions to play a role in reducing conflict and ending violence."²⁷ At any rate, one still feels confident that the *Saṅgha*'s social capital, together with their capacity, will contribute to peace-building attempts in Thai society today and in the future.

(2) The *Saṅgha* as an advocacy and political guide

Historically, political leaders have had confidence and faith in the *Saṅgha*'s way of life and the principles of Dhamma on which their behavior is based. Thus, their advice had been constantly sought by politicians as to the administration of the country. Such advice is known as "*Paripucchā*", as propounded in the *Cakkavatti-vatta* principles, encouraging the political leaders to seek counsel and guidance from *Samaṇa-brāhmaṇa*," spiritual mentors who lead virtuous lives and avoid temptations at all times.

The *Saṅgha* will need to maintain this role and develop their counseling techniques even further. Indeed, one of the most prominent qualities of the *Saṅgha* is their skill in "mindful listening." Since they are believed to have no conflict of interest with any group, they will be in a favorable position to give counsel to political leaders. At any rate, when performing the role of "*Purohita*" or "guide," they will need to act on the principles and practice beyond political interests and not expect to receive any self-gratifying rewards, as such practice has been known as "fawning on certain families" and is against the Buddhist principle.

²⁷ Ibid.

(3) The *Saṅgha* as a developer of democratic civic citizenship

In a democratic rule, it is commonly believed that “a good democracy begins with a good citizen.” A good citizen possesses a number of attributes such as responsibility for self and society, public-mindedness, respect for rules and regulations as well as for law, and management of conflict through peaceful means. It could be seen that the development of democracy does not focus simply on “form” but rather on “human development” to ensure that an individual will turn out to be a good citizen of the country, as well as of ASEAN and the world.

Although monks are Buddhist ascetics, they are also citizens of the country and as such are subject to the same laws as other nationals. Their role in the future should be bound with helping the State develop “good people” in a religious sense into “good citizens” of the country and of the world. Buddhist principles can facilitate such development, through tenets like *Saṅghavattthu Dhamma*, *Sucarita Dhamma*, *Gāraḍa Dhamma*, and *Santi Dhamma*. The monks need to learn how to apply them in order to assist the State accordingly. At the same time, it is the duty of the latter to develop the former’s capacity more fully in this regard by opening up more space for them to perform this duty accordingly through various programs and activities and by providing necessary budgets and tools.

It is noteworthy to point out that there is no reason for the State not to support this role. Having morally good citizens will be good for the State in that it could manage the country more effectively. The Buddha talked about this in *Kuṭadantasutta* that “the enemy of the State is not bandits but poverty.”²⁸ Poverty is not manifested only physically only but also in the form of happiness experienced by the citizens of the State. Therefore, support given to the *Saṅgha* can ensure that democratic development will be secured and sustained.

In summary, the more democratic and developed the country becomes, the harder the *Saṅgha* organization needs to work in order to apply its Buddhist moral principles accordingly. In present-day democracy, the State can no longer keep Buddhism out of the political

²⁸ *D.I.* (Pali) 9/323-358/127-150; *D.I.* (Thai) 9/323-358/124-150.

arena, especially when it comes to issues of morality. It needs to open up the space for the *Saṅgha* to step in to help in the moral and ethical development of politicians and, through the application of Buddhist principles, foster good democratic civic citizenship in a proper manner.

(4) The *Saṅgha* as a commentator exercising the right to criticize politicians and State policies

An honest criticism may well be the function of mass media or critics in general. Yet, we have seen more monks acting as political commentators in various guises. For instance, they criticized certain behaviors of political leaders or politicians and State policies that might lead to loss of life and property or to greater materialism and consumerism as a way of life.

The Buddha mentioned that criticism of this kind is “like showing the way to the treasure.” Various studies have pointed out that such gesture was often met with a negative response from several politicians and political leaders. Well aware of this fact, the *Saṅgha* Supreme Council as the highest authority of the *Saṅgha* issued announcements about sermons or discourses of political nature to prevent any possible confrontation between monks and State leaders. In any case, a number of monks have continued to perform this role on a regular basis.

The question remains: “What kind of political comments should monks make in order to prevent political leaders having an adverse response to them?” There are at least four factors or variables that can enhance this role in the next two decades: (1) The issues raised in the comments must be clear; (2) the monks or *Saṅgha* institutions must show proper understanding of the public policy implementation and its positive and negative impacts on the basis of clear information; (3) the monks need to learn and possess political communication skills and an understanding of the communication process of **SMCR** (S standing for Source, M for Message, C for Channel, and R for Receiver); and (4) the monks must have an open mind, willing to also listen to the State, leaders and politicians.

At the same time, a commentary should be made and properly phrased on the basis of truth and respect. In other words, (1) the issue raised is a truthful statement about a subject that society at large is aware of as being deficient in some way. (2) The presentation should be made

with a proper language and attitude, as, in several instances, the issue is not about the contents but about how they are presented. Presentation should sound right and respectful. (3) The presentation must be made in a timely and proper manner. (4) A commentary must be geared toward fostering a cordial relationship between the commentator, the person in question, and their supporters. (5) The commentary in essence must be beneficial to the community, society, and the nation as a whole, especially to the political leaders who should be given diverse and more circumspect treatments. (6) A commentary should be made on the basis of *Mettā Dhamma* or loving kindness. The objective of the communication is to bring about positive results. Any kind of communication that may cause conflict leading to verbal and physical violence should be avoided at all costs.

(5) The *Saṅgha* as a protestor making political demands

At present more monks are seen engaged in this activity and will likely continue to do so in the future, as Thai traditional practice, the Dhamma-Vinaya, and the Constitutional law have enabled them (a) to pass a resolution, at a village level up to the national level, to boycott individuals or groups of individuals who have committed verbal or physical offences against Buddhism or undertaken a policy that adversely affects or violates the Dhamma-Vinaya, the objectives being to ensure the sustainability of Buddhism and to give well-intentioned warnings against doing such unwholesome acts, and (b) to boycott the State or politicians who have implemented a policy that adversely affects the way of life of the citizens, community, society and religion, the objective being to protect the interests and culture of the Thai society.

However, in doing so, monks should avoid participating in political rallies in favor of any political group, especially as individuals, in issues that have little or nothing to do with Buddhist boycotting. They should also be careful that their verbal, physical and spiritual expressions do not lead to violence, especially when under the influence of *Lobha*, *Dosa*, and *Moha*, making it easier for them to take sides or want to cause good or harm to others. This is something against Buddhist principles that forbid fawning on an influential group for material gains, as it will adversely affect the survival of Buddhist organizations in the short and long run.

When assessing the appropriateness of political participation by the *Saṅgha*, attention must be paid to the following considerations: (1) Concept on the basis of which are built the demands, intent, objectives, rationale, cause, interests and needs, (2) Content, including its presentation, scope, plausibility, possible advantages and disadvantages, details, credibility, source, and methodology, and (3) Context covering the historical background and significance of the issue; history of the demonstration; people or group of people involved, venue, time and occasion of the demonstration; political/economic situation; and attitudes of the community and society. These three considerations need to be in line with the principles of the Dhamma-Vinaya, as well as the traditions and laws that govern the monks' behaviors in Thai society.

An observation made by a large number of people is that, in joining a demonstration to make political demands, monks need not join any one political group, as it may lead to divisiveness and loss of neutrality. If they disagree with the idea or action of political leaders, they could directly make known their intention without going to any one side. Their inclination to one side or another may become a tool for political groups to justify their cause in the name of the *Saṅgha*. Examples of such cases could be found in Sri Lanka and Myanmar where political leaders were not fully aware that the participating monks were not representative of Buddhists as a whole but rather elements with political interests and inclination one way or another.

(6) The *Saṅgha* as individuals exercising voting rights

While Sri Lanka and Cambodia opened up the space for Buddhist monks to exercise their voting rights in the election of politicians at every level, the Thai constitutional laws since 1932 have barred monks from political activities. Of course, the laws state that voting is a duty rather than a right of the citizen. Such restriction has led to much debate in Thai society with regard to its pros and cons, each with its own rationale and explanation.

Those in favor of the monks' exercising their voting rights argue that (1) monks are good quality people, (2) they are honest people without self-seeking interests, (3) voting can decide their fate, (4) voting

is a tool to protect Buddhism, (4) voting is the right of every citizen, (6) the country is Buddhist and therefore it is natural that monks should vote. It is evident that these arguments are partly attributable to the quality of the monks, while some groups cite examples of some Buddhist countries that have opened up the space for monks to do so.

Those against monks' exercising their voting rights present the following argument: (1) Politics is concerned with vying for interests and power. (2) Casting a vote shows taking sides with one group or another, although the group chosen may have a better quality. (3) Voting is likely to lead a number of monks to act as canvassers and serve the interests of politicians. (4) There will likely be a conflict between monks supporting different political groups. (5) Casting a vote can be advantageous or disadvantageous to different groups. (6) Society will lose its pillar of support if monks take sides. (7) Monks will become tools for politicians. (8) Voting is a worldly activity that monks should not get involved in. (9) Voting is not the monk's duty. (10) The Dhamma-Vinaya does not allow monks to do so. (11) The law does not allow such possibility, and (12) voting is not in line with the accepted practice by which monks are not supposed to vote.

An analysis of the voting role of Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka and Cambodia shows that today the mainstream *Saṅgha* in these two countries are not willing to see the exercise of monks' voting right. The interviews also reveal that if they could choose, the monks would rather not vote for any politician, because the political situation was such that the politicians would use them as tools to win the election or promise to give something in return. Sometimes they even invited the monks to speak on their behalf; some monks even became their canvassers. As a result, monks in the monasteries found themselves in conflict with one another because of ideological differences.

Yet, the analysis of the future trends of the roles of monks in Thailand and elsewhere points in the same direction. An important variable governing the monks' growing demand to exercise their voting right in political election will come from the following factors: (1) The State's policy on Buddhism lacks understanding and does not seriously support the religion even though the majority of Thai people are followers

of Buddhism. (2) Politicians do not really have personal or legal awareness of the fate of Buddhism. (3) Action taken by followers of other religions or religious faiths has an adverse emotional impact on Buddhists, or it is not possible to stop the former from hurting or undermining Buddhism in some way or other.

There is an interesting lesson that prompts the monks to exercise their voting rights and the right to run for political election. In this matter, “an important variable is that politicians or political leaders do not fully realize or care enough for the survival of the religion, whether in terms of the application of its Dhamma or its continuity.” This fact can be substantiated by an establishment of a political party of “Jathika Hela Urumaya: JHU” by monks in Sri Lanka. Phra Sumaṅgala, the political party chief in Colombo, averred that “an election is just a *Dhamma Yuddhaya* to protect Buddhism and the Singhala. Phra Mettānanda and Dhamlogā pointed out that “the government failed so miserably to protect Buddhism that the monks had to come out and fight for a law that could prevent an unethical change of religion... Thus, monks had to run for election to protect the country and stop power-hungry politicians from self-seeking and adversely affecting Buddhism.”²⁹

A number of monks and Buddhist academics have made a salient point that an important variable leading to the growth or decline of Buddhism is associated with politicians responsible for policy formulation and national administration. Still, the pressure from external variables seen in the form of religious aggression, ethnic conflicts, and political policy implementation is an important factor causing monks in the four countries to perform their duty through political activity, demanding to exercise their political rights and becoming politicians to protect the survival of Buddhism. This, of course, sometimes led to the question whether or not religion was used as a pretext for something else. Nevertheless, an analysis of various external factors lent a greater weight to political movements of those monks.

²⁹ H.R. Perera, 1988: 3.

5. Recommendations

In relation to politics, Buddhism has been “a symbol of cooperation in the development of the State since the Buddha’s time.” In this matter, politics is an important variable in the physical and material developments. To harmonize these developments, it is necessary to design some kind of order, rules and regulations to ensure that the citizens can live together happily in mutual respect. In this regard, Buddhism can take on the task of spiritual development, aligning morality and natural truth with the said order, rules and regulations, including legal provisions and people’s way of life. Buddhism and politics are, in fact, “two sides of the same coin as far as the development of the State is concerned” whether in physical or psychological terms.

This study wishes to make recommendations on the political involvement of the *Saṅgha* to politicians and various organizations concerned and provide proper guidelines for monks and politicians as follows:

5.1 Recommendations to individual monks:

(1) To participate in political activities, monks should adopt a correct and fair stance. They should not support or oppose any political system, political groups or politicians on a personal basis of like or dislike but should at all times show *Upekkhā*. Monks may function as “guides” pointing the ways to politicians and providing appropriate Dhamma and advice to political systems, groups and politicians in a timely manner in tune with social, economic and political needs and contexts.

(2) The dangers against which monks should guard themselves in their political involvement are pursuits of material and financial gains, honors and recognition, as they all give rise to *Agati*, loss of objectivity and loss of freedom necessary for their spiritual guidance. Without such moral symbols of Dhamma and spiritual leadership for the general public and politicians, they are more likely to turn into tools and followers of politicians and political interest groups.

(3) A number of situations shed light on the fact that, despite the laws against monks’ exercising their voting and election rights, in

practice they are encouraged by politicians or political groups to do so. Some political groups were seen to participate in and provide support for activities of some monasteries. An adverse result that follows is that these monastic centers may start to consider their own survival rather than that of the religion. When a rival political power comes to power, the activities associated with the former administration will become minimal or less significant. Thus, keeping one's neutrality, regardless of whether or not one likes a politician or political group/party, and not making a public display of favor or disfavor, will be an important variable in sustaining Buddhism in the long term.

5.2 Recommendations to *Saṅgha* institutions

(1) On recommendations made by academics who expect the *Saṅgha* institutions to play an important role in promoting public and social peace, the researcher thinks it suitable to set up an institution or a work cluster responsible for managing conflicts in every province. Each province should have a center for dispute resolution whether it concerns the environment, family, monastery, community, or any other local issue. The center should act as a place for study and analysis of local wisdom on the basis of which conflicts are managed, as well as a place for the management of political conflicts at the local and national level in an effective manner.

(2) As Thai academics and advocates of democracy expect the *Saṅgha* to work with the State and private sector organizations to develop democracy from the grassroots community level, the *Saṅgha* institutions should review the monk development direction to ensure that monks have a better education and understanding of democratic government. They could work with State organizations in designing and implementing certificate-level education programs on monks in the modern era and democratization, after whose completion qualified monks could perform work to develop desirable citizenship in the 26th Buddhist century from the grassroots community level onward.

(3) At present a number of monks have been more politically involved on a clear and regular basis. They have been seen expressing their opinions on stage and criticizing various political groups. Such acts

will have wide repercussions on a wide scale in the *Saṅgha* institutions. If there are certain monks who have been engaged in the expression of their political opinions with a positive and appropriate result, the mainstream *Saṅgha* institutions with monks well-versed in Buddhism should recruit them to work in the subcommittee to answer questions posed by the media or do research on how to solve some specific issues.

5.3 Recommendations to politicians and political leaders

(1) As a large number of monks and Buddhist academics have little confidence in the way Buddhist sustainability and security have been treated, they have come out to demand more political involvement, especially in exercising their political election rights and to ensure that their elected politicians can more effectively defend and protect Buddhism. It follows therefore that politicians or the ruling elite must explain and find ways and means to develop Buddhism in response to the concerns of those monks and academics. If such attempts are properly made, they will put an end to excuses given for siding with various political groups, an act that will complicate the problem even further.

(2) Article 100 of the Constitution bars Buddhist monks from any political expression, especially in the exercise of their right to vote at an election of members of Parliament. Such prohibition is in line with the traditional political practice initiated in 1932. As time has long since elapsed, what explanation will the State provide to the new generation of monks who have been making demands for the removal of such restriction? The existing prohibition clause is a constitutional contradiction in itself. When a new constitution is drafted in the future, the new generation of monks will surely demand a change in the clause. A recommendation is, therefore, made to political leaders to open forums for public hearing on this issue as comprehensively as possible. When each side gives its consensus, the explanations will become even more legitimate.

(3) Several politicians may have observed that making political commentaries is “not the job of the monks,” and entertained a negative reaction to the act. Be that as it may, it is advisable to provide space for them to perform their duties as citizens of the country or as members of the media. If the comment is not made in good faith, giving rise to libel

or slander, the politicians concerned can always resort to legal action. As a matter of fact, politicians should welcome such move and proceed in the framework of “*Paripucchā*,” i.e. going to the *Samana* and engaging in an exchange of views – an act likely to be more beneficial to their policy implementation.

(4) As a number of people have criticized the politicians’ attempts to induce or persuade monks to act as their “canvassers” to gain victory, it is recommended that politicians guard against such act or tendency. Their ploys may obtain the result they want, but may have a long-term adverse impact on the *Saṅgha* or *Saṅgha* institutions. Monks or monasteries in the community are not personal possessions of politicians; they are public assets that every political party needs to preserve to ensure that the *Saṅgha* remains a true dependable pillar of every social group and community as intended by the Buddha with his saying “*Saṅgham saraṇam gacchāmi*.”

(5) Politicians should coordinate and cooperate with the *Saṅgha* in civic development, providing budgetary support and necessary development tools. They should study and understand the Bhudda-Dhamma in a proper manner under the guidance of the monks in theory and practice. Equipped with all the means, they should be able to facilitate monks in the following attempt: “let any monk who is not yet there come and let those who are already there conduct their *Samaṇadhamma* in peace.” They should ensure safety and do everything possible for the *Saṅgha* to perform their duty of civic development alongside their political counterparts.

(6) The political conflict and violence in the administrative power struggle over the past 12 years (2002-2014) has divided the country and provoked much animosity. Politicians should not exploit the situation by using individual monks or *Saṅgha* organizations as their allies or as a symbol to legitimize their political cause. Those with a political stake in national administration should keep monks away from the arena and open up space for them to play an appropriate role in making demands or bringing about national reconciliation in a more concrete and systematic manner and with full support of all parties concerned.

(7) A large number of academics and monks have pointed out that ever since 1932, the State or political elite have kept religion or

morality separate from politics. Religion has been confined to being just a political ceremonial tool. As a result, politicians or political leaders have been engaged in immoral, unethical, or corrupt practice seen in various activities and programs. It is appropriate, therefore, for political leaders to encourage and promote moral integrity and ethical behavior in members of Parliament in a speedy and effective fashion. Such principle should then be made part of the “lifestyle” of politicians in pursuit of good governance.

5.4 Recommendations to the Office of National Buddhism

Many Buddhists have been more vocal in their demands and concerns about the monks’ behaviors and participation in various political groups. Under such circumstances, the *Saṅgha* cannot remain the true pillar on which Buddhists are supposed to depend; many have lost their confidence and faith in Buddhism as a whole. It is advisable, therefore, for the Office of National Buddhism to undertake the following measures:

(1) Short-term measures: A multilateral sub-committee should be set up, consisting of an appropriately proportional number of members from the Office of National Buddhism, members of academic and ecclesiastical working groups and experts from agencies concerned such as Buddhist universities, the Thai Royal Police, Intelligence Department, mass media, and lawyers. This sub-committee will answer all the queries and demands on Buddhism and policy implementation of public authorities in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

(2) Long-term measures: Attempts should be made to study, analyze, and formulate guidelines for managing the existing problems in a realistic manner responsive to the needs of Buddhists. Such plans should then be submitted to the *Saṅgha* Supreme Council of Thailand that will instruct the agencies concerned to effectively take further action.

5.5 Recommendations to Buddhist Universities

Observations have been brought to the attention of the Thai Buddhist Universities by groups of academics and members of the public regarding the escalation of conflicts and political violence. The Universities, who are supposed to act as the resource centers in supplying correct information and answers, have not been able to come up with any concrete solutions for the society.

(1) Although at present more faculty members have taken on the task of providing information, they tend to act on an individual basis. In this regard, both Buddhist Universities may already have in place some working groups assigned to answering questions or giving clarifications concerning political matters, especially issues that affect the way of life of the people as a whole or their morality.

(2) Buddhist Universities should serve as technical database on which correct informations could be passed on to political leadership and citizenship. To be able to do so, it is imperative to open up greater opportunity for research on Buddhism and politics in various aspects including the Dhamma principles, good governance, and Buddhist-based political structure, for this will provide the Thai society with alternative means to better develop a political system in consonance with the Thai way of life.

5.6 Recommendations to the mass media

An increasing number of people have shown lack of confidence in the way the *Saṅgha* behaves recently, especially as a result of a number of monks involved in political activities and parties. It is recommended that the *Saṅgha* image be presented in the following manners:

(1) News presentation should be geared toward developing the *Saṅgha* or their organizations in such a way that can bring about better organizational management. The presentation should be based on facts and not on sensational material, although it is true that sensationalism is good for business but at the expense of Buddhism.

(2) Amidst political conflict, attempts should be made to cooperate with the *Saṅgha* organizations to sensitize society about possible solutions. Presentations should be made in a positive light, reflecting a happy way of life conducted through such activities as praying and meditation. Peaceful society should be constantly presented with the message showing how the *Saṅgha* and the community work together to promote positive coexistence within religious, linguistic, cultural and ethnic differences.

5.7 Recommendations to the general Buddhist public

(1) As a result of monks joining political demonstrations, many people have begun to lose confidence in their faith. It is, therefore, recommended that the Buddhist public be more tolerant and understanding about the *Saṅgha* role and objective in the matter. Some monks may feel that their action is good for the society, for example, in their protests against listing alcohol businesses in the Stock Market, liberalization of illegal lottery, and opening of casinos in Thailand. All this is in line with the Thai social ethical standard and the *Saṅgha* as the country's ethical symbol needs to participate in it.

(2) As a result of monks participating in political activities and parties or expressing their political ideology for or against various groups, the society has become more concerned about their political neutrality. The Buddhist public needs to adhere to “the Dhamma principle” rather than to the activist monks. It should consider whether their action is meant to facilitate or bring about happiness for the public good or whether it is spurred by their individual cause. If the action has a negative intent, the Buddhist public should impose social sanction against them in order to lead them back to the more acceptable lifestyle of monkhood.

6. Suggestions of topics for future research

The present study has come across a number of other related issues that the researcher feels should be taken up further in future studies as follows:

(1) There should be a study on “patterns and ways to develop democracy in an integrated Buddhist manner in line with Thai society in the 26th century of the Buddhist Era.” The rationale is that present-day democracy is mainly copied from the Western model without really reflecting the Thai way of life. Democracy should be studied in terms of how its structure and contents could be adopted. How should the *Saṅgha* institutions or monks be positioned in light of the new democratization? This is relevant, considering how the democratic rule since 1932 has kept the *Saṅgha* away from the government and in some aspects has led to alienation with politics.

(2) There should be a study on “patterns and ways to develop citizenship in an integrated Buddhist manner in the desired democratization.” Citizens are an important variable in the development of quality democracy. It can be seen that “the quality of democracy depends upon the quality of citizenship;” therefore, a study of this kind should analyze and find a pattern conducive to civic development. Essentially, it should recommend how opportunities should be made available for monks to help develop citizenship so that they will not be “a surplus” force in the democratic rule and civic development as is currently the case.

(3) There should be a study on “possibility of monks voting in the 26th century of the Buddhist Era: problems, obstacles and desirable solutions.” Some guidelines for the approach could include a presentation of problems, obstacles, demands, history, law and the Dhamma-Vinaya, and the possibility of the exercise of the *Saṅgha* voting right in Thai society. Its findings could then be used as the basis for further analysis and debate, as studies on government administration over the years have left out this aspect. It could provide some interesting answers.

(4) There should be a study on “roles and desirable status of *Saṅgha* institutions under democratic government in the 26th century of the Buddhist Era.” The objective should be to provide answers to how the *Saṅgha* institution as the country’s unifying force should be positioned in the 26th century of the Buddhist Era against the background of economic, social and cultural change and how it should be managed in line with the Buddha’s intention and in response to the needs of the people, society, nation, and global community.

Such studies, in the researcher’s view, would help project the images of the *Saṅgha* and politics in other dimensions, with substance rather than ceremony or form. Their findings should be beneficial to Buddhism as an organization and help to put Buddhism even more firmly in the people’s way of life and social fabrics in all possible dimensions. When that becomes reality, Thai society will be able to confidently answer the question as to why it needs Buddhism as the unifying force for the people, society, politics, nation, and global community.

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The Necessity of Learning Pali in Buddhist Studies*

*Rangsi Suthon***

1. Preamble

This research focuses on the importance of learning Pali and its application to Buddhist studies, especially to understanding the Buddha's teachings. Naturally, the numerous Pali quotations are unavoidable, despite the author's effort to condense the work into a succinct summary paper. It is based on a personal study of tens of scriptures, such as the *Tepiṭaka*, *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Tīkā*, *Pakaraṇavisesa* and grammar both in Thai and Pali. For historical parts, the author relies on documents written by a number of experts. In a way, this summarized version is an attempt to provide further improvement and elaboration to the original research piece.

2. Language as a tool of communication

Language serves as a tool to communicate messages as well as recording past events for future references. Today, we know about the past from the languages used and written ancient alphabets. Pali is a language in which the Buddha's teachings were recorded, accommodated, learned, and

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recited by his disciples, initially through oral traditions and later through writing on such materials as palm leaves (compiled into *Tepiṭaka* texts) and stones (*Tepiṭaka* inscriptions on marble slabs). For instance, King Mindon had the Pali Canon inscribed on 729 marble slabs at Muthodaw Pagoda in Pagan after the fifth *Saṅgīti*. In Thailand, His Holiness Somdet Phra Maharatchamangkhalachan, the abbot of Wat Pak Nam, when holding the ascetic title of Phra Dhammapanyabodi, and a group of his disciples, had another 1,418 marble slabs of *Tepiṭaka* inscriptions made and housed at Buddhamonthon. The work was not only a homage to the Buddha, but also a celebration of the 60th Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibhol Adulyadej and the Raja Mangala Bhisek marking His Majesty's longest reign in the history of Thailand, equal to the duration of the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). On that occasion, the Saṅgha and the Thai government held another *Saṅgāyana* in 1987, and the result was the Marble Version of the *Tepiṭaka*. The Pali Canon was also produced in CD ROM in Thai and English, serving as a database system with a search engine program.

3. Pali as the language through which the Buddha disseminated his teachings

The Buddha used the language of Magadha to teach his Dhamma and Vinaya. The *Aṭṭhakathā* and the authorities of Pali grammar all confirm that the language He used was that of Magadha, later called Pali. All His teachings are recorded in that language which existed before the Buddha's time. The Buddha attained Enlightenment in the Kingdom of Magadha and spent much of His time traveling and teaching in the Kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha. For that reason, evidently, He expounded His Dhamma in the language of that region. Mention was made by authors of *Aṭṭhakathā* in *Sammohavinodanī* of *Abhidhammapiṭaka Vibhaṅga* as follows:

“*sammāsambuddho 'pi tepiṭakam buddhavadanam tantim āropento māgadhabāsāyameva āropesi*”¹

¹ Vbha.2/415.At.2/436 mcu.

(Translation: The Buddha used the language of Magadha, a systematic language, to disseminate his words, i.e. the Tepiṭaka.)

Evidently, His 45 years of teaching covered a lot of words. After His *Parinibbāna*, His teachings continued to be orally transmitted – a practice called *mukhapāṭha*.² His disciples met to rehearse His teachings, an event known as *Sanḅāyana*. After the third *Sanḅāyana*, a group of monks led by Mahinda-Thera disseminated Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Sometime later there was unrest in the country, adversely affecting the livelihoods of the Lankan monks who fled to the forests and lived on fruits and roots. There were stories told about the events leading to the decision to inscribe the Buddha’s teachings on palm leaves. When the monks met to review the situation, they felt that there were fewer monks who could recite the teachings in the old oral tradition, and decided that the recording of the Scriptures be made on palm leaves. The practice has continued to the present time.³

4. Pali in the Buddha’s time

In the Buddha’s time Pali was known as “the language of Magadha, the language of the Magadhi people, or Magadhi language,” or “Ariyaka language,” but it was not called “pāli or pāli *bhāsā*” in India then. According to the evidence found in *Aṭṭhakathā*, there had been no systematic learning of the language in the way that Pali grammar was subsequently taught. In other words, there was no Pali grammar at the time although the Sanskrit grammar existed. The local Magadhi people used the language in their everyday conversation; it was passed on from generation to generation in the same way as Thai people learn how to speak Thai from their forefathers. The teachings of the Buddha and his disciples were understood by their audience, in this case the people of Magadha who naturally spoke without any need to learn the grammar. The disciples came from the higher caste background and were well-versed in the

² For more details, see Da. 1/13-15 mcu.

³ For more details, see AA. 1/13-15 mcu.

language used by people of higher classes, such as Sanskrit. In the *Tepiṭaka* mention was made of Mogharāja Thera thus:

“*ajjhāyako mantadharo tiṇṇaṃ vedāna pāragū
gotamassa bhagavato sāsane pabbajissati*”⁴

(Translation: He will be a learned person, possessing manta, complete with the knowledge of *Tiveda*. He will be ordained in the religion of the Buddha named Gotama.)

Also, mention was made of Tissa-Metteyya Thera in this manner:

“*ajjhāyako mantadharo tiṇṇaṃ vedāna pāragū
sambuddhaṃ upagantvāna arahā so bhavissati*”⁵

(Translation: He will be a learned person, possessing manta, complete with the knowledge of *Tiveda*. He will see the Buddha and become an arahant.)

The authors of *Aṭṭhakathā* explained that “*ajjhāyako 'ti anekabrāhmaṇānaṃ vācetaṃ sikkhāpetā. mantadharo 'ti mantāna dhāretā...vedassa sajjhāyanasavanadānānaṃ vasena dhāretā...tiṇṇaṃ vedānanti iruvedayajurvedasāmavedasaṃkhātānaṃ tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ...pāraṃ pariyosānaṃ gato*.”⁶ This means that “a learned person is one who teaches a large number of Brahmins. A person possessing *manta* is one who remembers all the *manta*, who can explain the knowledge by himself, listen to others and teach the Vedas to others, and who has completed the study of all three Vedas, i.e. (1) the *Iruveda* or *Ṛgveda*, (2) the *Yajurveda*, and (3) the *Sāmaveda*.” These three Vedas were explained differently in various dictionaries.⁷

Such explanations indicate that both Mogharāja Thera and Tissa-Metteyya Thera had completed the study of the Vedas and taught

⁴ Ap. 32/79/125 mcu.

⁵ Ap. 32/23/477 mcu.

⁶ Apa. 1/330 mcu.

⁷ For more details, see Ratchabandittayasathan, **Photchananukrom Chabap Ratchabandittayasathan B.E. 2554 (2011)**. Bangkok: Siriwatthana Interprint, p. 1129.

them to a large number of Brahmins. Furthermore, there is a literal translation from Pali to Thai of a learned person as a teacher of grammar, as in “*kovidam chekam ajjhāyakaṃ anekesaṃ sissānaṃ byākaraṇavācakaṃ mantadharaṃ vedattayasamkhātamantadhārakaṃ paṇḍitaṃ*,”⁸ which means “a bright learned person is a pundit who teaches a large number of students and who knows by heart the *mantas*, in other words, all the three Vedas.” Therefore, the knowledge of the Buddha’s disciples belonged to the higher class. They were able to teach by using the language readily understood by the audience. In subsequent times when there was a need to apply linguistic structures to the language of Magadha or Pali, these learned disciples well-versed in Sanskrit could transfer their linguistic skills to writing Pali texts and Pali grammar.

Mention was also made of higher-caste Brahmins with the knowledge of Sanskrit grammar as experts of the grammar of *Tepitaka*:

“*brāhmaṇassa pokkharasātissa ambaṭṭho nāma māṇavo antevāsī hoti ajjhāyako mantadharo tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sanighaṇḍukeṭubhānaṃ sakkharappabhedānaṃ itihāsapañcamānaṃ padako veyyākaraṇo*.”⁹

(Translation: Ambaṭṭha-mānava, disciple of Brahman Pokkharasāti, is a learned person, possessing *manta*, complete with the knowledge of *Tiveda*, including *nighaṇḍu*, *keṭubha*, arts and history, well-versed in the text and grammar.)

“*brahmāyussa brāhmaṇassa uttaro nāma māṇavo antevāsī hoti tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sanighaṇḍukeṭubhānaṃ sakkharappabhedānaṃ itihāsapañcamānaṃ padako veyyākaraṇo*”¹⁰

(Translation: Uttara-mānava, disciple of Brahman Brahmāyu, has completed the study of *Tiveda*, including *nighaṇḍu*, *keṭubha*, arts and history, well-versed in the text and grammar.)

⁸ Apa. 1/531/344 mcu.

⁹ D. 9/256/87-88 mcu.

¹⁰ M. 13/383/366 mcu.

“selo brāhmaṇo āpaṇe paṭivasati, tiṇṇaṃ vedānaṃ pāragū sanighaṇḍukeṭubhānaṃ sākkharappabhedānaṃ itiḥāsapañcamānaṃ padako veyyākaraṇo lokāyatamahā purisalakkhaṇesu anavayo, tīṇi ca māṇavakasatāni mante vāceti”¹¹

(Translation: Brahmin Sela, living at a forest in the Āpaṇa area, has completed the study of *Tiveda*, including *nighaṇḍu*, *keṭubha*, arts and history, well-versed in the text and grammar, expert in popular philosophy and prediction of *mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*, and taught *manta* to 300 young men.)

All this shows that these people were knowledgeable of the elements of the grammar. The researcher wishes to present only the following issues concerning grammar:

“nigaṇḍū 'ti nigaṇḍur ukhādīnaṃ vevacanapakāsakaṃ satthaṃ. keṭubhaṇ 'ti kiriyākappavikappo kavinaṃ upakārāvahaṃ satthaṃ. Akkharappabheda 'ti sikkhā ca nirutti ca. paḍaṃ tadavasesaṇca byākaraṇaṃ adhīyati vedeti cāti padako veyyākaraṇo”¹²

(Translation: *nighaṇḍu* is a book of vocabulary covering a number of categories, such as the variety of plants. *keṭubha* is a book of lexicography very useful to poets. *Akkharappabheda* is a set of educational handbooks for correct pronunciation and recital of grammar and vocabulary, (such as the Book of *Pāṇinīsikkhā* and the Book of *Nāradasikkhā*).”¹³

Nighaṇḍu, in particular, is the oldest thesaurus which Moggalāna used to compose the Book of *Abhidhānappadīpikā* and others.¹⁴

¹¹ Sn. 25/7/444 mcu.

¹² Da. 1/222-223, Ma. 2/262 mcu.

¹³ For more details, see Aphithanwanna, translated and edited by Phra Maha Sompong Mudito, Bangkok : Thammasapha Printing House, B.E. 2542 (1999), p. 162.

¹⁴ Khamphi Aphithanwanna, translated and edited by Phra Maha Sompong Mudito, p. 163.

A *Tīkā* text provides even a clearer explanation on this matter as follows:

*“pajjati attho etenāti padaṃ, nāmākhyātopasagganipātādivasena anekavibhāgaṃ vibhattiyantapadaṃ. taṃ taṃ saddaṃ, tadatthañca byākaro 'ti byācikkhati etenāti byākaraṇaṃ padako 'ti byākaraṇesu āgatapadako sallaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ. veyyākaraṇo 'ti tadavasitṭhapakatipaccayādisaddavidhikosallaṃ 'ti imassatthassa viññāpanatthaṃ padadvayassa ekato atthavacanaṃ. ayaṃ aṭṭhakathāto aparo nayo te eva vede padaso kāyātīti padako 'ti. tattha padaso 'ti gajjabandhapajjabandhapadena”*¹⁵

(Translation: The text or pada (cited in the *Aṭṭhakathā*) refers to content words, classified into several categories: nouns, *ākhayātas*, verbal prefixes and prepositions. Grammar provides explanations to make those words and contents clearer. *Padako* – a person who knows the text – is said to be one well-versed in grammar-derived *pada*, while *veyyākaraṇo* refers to a person who knows grammar. The two words are used together to indicate that the person is clever in the use of lexical items with all the right affixes – according to the *Aṭṭhakathā*. In another sense, the person who recites the Vedas in the form of *pada* is said to be the *padako* who knows the words in the forms of prayers and poetries.)

In the *Veyyākaraṇa* scripture mention was made about the Buddha possessing the knowledge of grammar surpassing other grammarians:

*“bhagavāyeva loke asadiso mahāveyyākaraṇo mahāpuriso visārado parappavādamaddano. bhagavantañhi padakā veyyākaraṇā ambaṭṭhamāṇavapokkharasātisoṇadaṇḍādayo ca brāhmaṇā saccakanigaṇṭhādayo ca paribbājakā vādena na sampāpuṇiṃsu”*¹⁶

¹⁵ Dṭ. 2/279-280 mcu.

¹⁶ Nīti. pada. 173.

(Translation: Only the Blessed One, the *Mahāpurisa*, is the greatest grammarian, able to subdue the rhetoric of others, unequal in this world. Such Brahmins as Ambaṭṭha-mānava, Pokkharasāti, Soṇadaṇḍa and *Paribbājaka* like Saccakaniṅgaṭṭha, who are polished men of letters and grammarians, are no match to the Blessed One.)

However, nowhere in the *Tepitaka* was the Buddha praised as a person knowledgeable in the use of language or grammar. Usually, he would be revered by writers of sacred texts for his virtues and Buddhahood, as follows:

*“ekapuggalo bhikkhave loke uppajjamāno uppajjati adutiyo asahāyo appaṭiṃ appaṭisamo appaṭibhāgo appaṭipuggalo asamo asamasamo dipadānaṃ aggo. Katamo ekapuggalo, tathāgato araham sammāsambuddho”*¹⁷

(Translation: The supreme person when born into the world would be second to none, with no peer, with identity unlike any person's, unparalleled, incomparable, without match, greater than any two-footed being. Who is this supreme person? It is the Buddha, the Accomplished One.)

These praises are fitting for the Buddha. For instance, the word “*asamāsamo*” (unmatched by any other) means that the Gautama Buddha is equal to all the other past and future *Sabbaññū* Buddhas who are unparalleled.)¹⁸

5. The home of the systematic study of Pali

The Buddha's teachings were first preserved in the language of Magadha. When Buddhism was disseminated to other countries where people had no knowledge of that language, young men who went into monkhood had to learn it. The language that later came to be known as Pali housed all the Dhamma-Vinaya.

¹⁷ A. 20/174/22 mcu.

¹⁸ Aa. 1/174/105 mcu.

When the Buddha's disciples reached Sri Lanka, they wrote Pali grammar based on their knowledge of Sanskrit. The Pali texts became the basis for studying the *Tepiṭaka* and *Aṭṭhakathā*. When the Lankan monks became more proficient, they started to compose the *Aṭṭhakathā* to explain parts of the *Tepiṭaka* that were not accompanied by the *Aṭṭhakathā* as well as composing further *Ṭṭkā* to explain the *Aṭṭhakathā*. Unlike any other language, Pali retains all the original meanings unchanged with time. As a deposit of the Buddha's teachings, the language has been used as a basis for verification of the translation of the *Tepiṭaka* and for comparison with other approaches adopted by Buddhists elsewhere in the analysis and production of the text.

Thus Pali was seriously studied in Sri Lanka after it was introduced by Moggaliputta Tissa Thera. The study still relied on the oral tradition, i.e. memorizing and learning by word of mouth. Only after the Fifth Rehearsal did the Lankan Thera monks decide to preserve the Buddha's teachings on palm leaves that have been passed on from generation to generation.

Monks from India, well versed in Pali, taught the language to their Lankan counterparts who subsequently translated the *Aṭṭhakathā* accompanying the *Tepiṭaka* in Sinhalese to facilitate the study and understanding of the texts. It was recorded that the Sinhalese translation attempt was made to avoid confusion with other *nikāyas*, as follows:

*“saṃvaṇṇiyati attho etāyāti saṃvaṇṇanā, aṭṭhakathā
sāpana dhammasaṃgāhakattherehi paṭhamaṃ tīṇi piṭakāni
saṃgāyitvā tassa atthavaṇṇanānurunēva vācanāmaggaṃ
āropitattā tisso saṃgītiyo āruḥhoyeva buddhavadanassa
atthasaṃvaṇṇanābhūto kathāmaggo. soyeva ca mahindat-
therena tambapaṇṇidīpaṃ ābhato, pacchā tambapaṇṇiyehi
mahātherehi nikāyantaraḷaddhīhi saṃkarapariharaṇatthaṃ
sīhaḷabhāsāya ṭhapito”*¹⁹

¹⁹ Vinṭ. 1/24 mcu.

(Translation: The *Aṭṭhakathā* explains certain statements of the Buddha's teachings based on the consensus reached by the Dhamma-expert monks in the Rehearsal that they should mean so and so. There have been three Rehearsals. Mahinda Thera introduced the *Aṭṭhakathā* to Sri Lanka and subsequently Lankan monks translated it into Sinhalese to avoid confusion with other religious sects.)

The phrase “*nikāyantaraḷaddhīhi saṃkarapariharaṇattham*” (to avoid confusion with other religious sects) refers to the attempt to ensure that the explanation of the *Tepiṭaka* is not confused with that of other 17 sects that depart from the original Theravāda.

The *Tepiṭaka* continued to be preserved in Pali, but the commentary and explanation were given in the local language, just as was the case with Thailand where the Vinaya texts were taught in Thai. A little later than 900 B.E. (357) Buddhaghosācariya arrived in Sri Lanka and had the Sinhalese *Aṭṭhakathā* rendered back to Pali. The *Aṭṭhakathā* henceforth was preserved in Pali.

With the *Tepiṭaka* and *Aṭṭhakathā* now in Pali, Lankan monks were obliged to learn the language by studying its grammar and thereby became more proficient. Around 1700 B.E. (1157) they composed a lot of *Ṭīkā* and were responsible for the dissemination of these three kinds of texts to other Theravāda countries.

There are a large number of texts of Pali grammar composed by Lankan monks, because Pali is the language that the Buddha used to teach Dhamma and Vinaya. The Dhamma recorded in the *Tepiṭaka* is elaborate and complex both in lexicography (vocabulary) and *attha* (meaning). Only those with a thorough knowledge of the language could really understand the contents of the Dhamma. In Thailand alone, there are 45 volumes of the *Tepiṭaka* and more than 100 volumes of *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭīkā*, *Anuṭṭikā*, and *Pakaraṇavisesa*, all in Pali. Thus, it is most important to study in depth the Pali grammar before embarking on the study of more important scriptures. In the Buddha's time there was no Pali grammar. His disciples, mostly from the Brahman caste, had studied the *Tiveda* and had a good knowledge of Sanskrit before entering monkhood. Making use of their Sanskrit

background, they composed Pali grammatical texts. It is important, therefore, to have a good grasp of the Pali grammar. The Buddha himself said:

*“idha bhikkave bhikkhū duggahitaṃ suttantaṃ pariyāpuṇanti dunnikkhittehi padabyañjanehi, dunnikkhittassa bhikkhave padabyañjanassa attho’pi dunnayo hoti. ayaṃ bhikkhave paṭhamo dhammo saddhammassa sammosāya antaradhānāya saṃvattati”*²⁰

(Translation: O Bhikkhu, there are those engaged in the Dhamma-Vinaya that have not studied the *Suttanta* well, because the words have not been properly passed on.²¹ O Bhikkhu, when they were not properly passed on, the meaning and explanation could not be clearly understood. This is one of the reasons that will lead to the confusion and eventual loss of the *Saddhamma*.)

The phrase “*duggahitaṃ suttantaṃ pariyāpuṇanti*” (learning and memorizing the *Suttanta* badly) implies a mistaken study of the *Tepiṭaka*, and the phrase “*dunnikkhittehi padabyañjanehi*” (because the words have not been properly passed on) refers to deficiency of the words used. In order to study the *Tepiṭaka* correctly, first and foremost, one needs to have a good grasp of its grammar. The students of Pali who do not understand its grammar are unlikely to attain a clear understanding of the Dhamma-Vinaya.

The Pali grammar scriptures are textbooks on word formation and sentence construction necessary for the study of the language to make possible communication and translation of meanings to others.

Thai students of Buddhism or Buddhist Studies with knowledge of Pali would be best served to use their skills to study the scriptures and the Buddha’s teachings in Pali. By avoiding using the Thai version of the *Tepiṭaka*, it is less likely for them to misinterpret or misanalyze due to

²⁰ A. 21/160/167 mcu.

²¹ Meaning that the Pali words were passed on in the wrong fashion. See AA. 2/20/28 mcu.

the incorrect translation of the texts. An incorrect analysis would result in a misconception and a misinformed transmission of Buddhist principles. It is highly advisable that those who wish to study Theravāda Buddhism have a good background of the Pali language and use their linguistic skills to study the *Tepiṭaka*, *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭīkā*, and *Pakaraṇavisesa* accordingly. This will enable them to understand the Buddha's teachings in a more thorough and correct manner.

Some passages in the Thai version of the *Tepiṭaka* are not quite correctly translated, as they do not seem to correspond with the Pali original. Some Dhamma points are incorrectly explained. Some Pali scriptures that were published were not properly edited in the Pali tradition. It is, therefore, imperative to study Pali from the mainstream Pali grammar before translation is attempted. Each word must be properly perused, and careful editing must be made before publication. Without a proper knowledge of Pali, any teaching, explanation and analysis on the basis of the Thai translated version of the *Tepiṭaka* and *Aṭṭhakathā* could easily be mistaken.

6. The study of Pali in the region currently known as Thailand

Indian languages reached the region currently known as the Kingdom of Thailand since ancient times. Towns and cities were named in the Indian fashion. The language used was a mix of Thai and Indian. There are records testifying to the phenomenon. Words adopted had been used by the Indians who introduced them to the land in the first place. So, words of Indian origin have long been amalgamated into the Thai vocabulary.

Indians in the ancient times were seafarers and traders who controlled much of the trade route far and wide.²² When these merchants arrived at a foreign port, they would usually stay for some time. During these periods, they would share exotic stories about their country to the

²² Jawaharlal Nehru, **Chom Na Prawatsat Sakon** (Glimpses of World History), Trans. Phraratcharattanamoli (Dr. Nakhon Khempali). Bangkok: The Rapid Print, B.E. 2541 (1998), p. 169.

locals, and, in a sense, contribute to progress and development in these foreign places.²³

Around the 8th century of the Buddhist Era, Indians who came to the region later known as Thailand included merchants, Brahmins, Khattiya (warriors and nobles), and Buddhist monks. They brought with them Indian civilization in the forms of religion, arts, literature, government and other sciences, and imparted them to the ruling classes and people in the region. They were educated and skilled in various fields, and thus served as advisors to the rulers and noblemen, introducing much of Indian culture, religion, government and language.²⁴ With the introduction of religious beliefs and cultural practice, Pali and Sanskrit words were used to name places like towns and cities. Monarchs were named in Pali and Sanskrit.²⁵ Indian civilization became the model of arts and literature.²⁶ Literary traces are found in such names as Suvannaphūmi, Dvāravatī, Siwichai, and Sukhothai. Many Pali and Sanskrit words have been integrated into the Thai vocabulary so much that they are perceived by Thai people as Thai. When the Indians ventured to this part of the world, it had already been called Suvannaphūmi.

Pali and Sanskrit were important languages of communication. Religious stories and beliefs were inscribed on stones. The roots of the civilization on the Thai soil nowadays date back to events that took place in the ancient period and were subsequently enhanced by such external events as the visits of Indian merchants to the Southeast Asian coast.²⁷

²³ Department of Fine Arts, **Charuek Nai Prathet Thai**, Volume 1. Bangkok: Phap Phim Printing House, B.E. 2529 (1986), p. 15.

²⁴ Sisak Wanliphodom, **Khwaam Kaona Nai Kan Sueksa Boran Khadi Lum Nam Chao Phraya**, in Warasan Mueang Boran, 10 (4), October-December B.E. 2527 (1984), Bangkok: Victory Powerpoint, B.E. 2527 (1984), pp. 13-14.

²⁵ Summarized from Charles Higham and Ratchani Thotsarat, **Thai Duekdamban Yuk Kon Prawatsat Thueng Samai Sukhothai**, Bangkok: River Books, B.E. 2542 (1999), pp. 174-175.

²⁶ Sisak Wanliphodom and Suchit Wongthet, **Wiwatthanakan Khong Watthanatham Chak Miti Thang Prawatsat Lae Boran Khadi**, in **Su Khwaam Khaochai Watthanatham**, Bangkok: Amarin Printing, B.E. 2533 (1990), pp. 34-36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

The Indian languages were thus incorporated into Thai with regard to the Buddha's teachings. Pali entered the region with the Indian civilization. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that the Indian languages have exerted so much influence in this part of the world.

The study of the Indian languages in Thailand in the past was centered on Pali and Sanskrit. Pali has been seriously taken up since the arrival of Buddhism from Sri Lanka. Thai Buddhist monks, proficient in Pali, started translating the *Tepiṭaka* and *Aṭṭhakathā* into Thai. However, the Thai language has evolved with time, causing some translation to depart from the original, making the need to study the original meaning from the Pali text more imperative.

On the basis of archeological evidence in Thailand, we know that the Indian languages and writings were introduced by merchants, Brahmins and Buddhist monks since ancient times. To be more precise, the study of Pali and Buddhism started in the region about 1800 B.E. (1257) with the arrival of a group of Lankan monks. This led monks from the region to travel to study Buddhism in Sri Lanka. On their return, the study of Pali was first introduced in the southern region of what is nowadays Thailand, and subsequently moved northwards and elsewhere. It prospered most significantly in the northern region which saw monks composing Pali literary texts – a tradition that continues today.

Pali then became a tool for studying Lankawong-doctrine Buddhism from the time of Sukhothai and Lanna to the Ayuttaya, Thonburi, and early Rattanakosin periods. The Buddha's teachings in Thai today were rendered from Pali by Siamese monks and laymen who were former monks.

Pali is an important medium in which the Buddha's teaching are preserved. Theravāda countries have, therefore, maintained a tradition of Pali studies and encouraged monks and novices to study the language.

In Thailand today the Buddha's teachings as recorded in the *Tepiṭaka* and explanations in the *Aṭṭhakathā* have been used to examine various Dhamma-Vinaya issues. Indeed, despite certain incorrect renderings from Pali to Thai, all the decisions on the Dhamma-Vinaya practices and the Buddha's words have been made on the basis of the Thai versions. This issue has often led to problems, and careful attention needs to be given in dealing with it.

In considering the Pali version of the *Tepiṭaka*, thorough knowledge of the language is obviously imperative. Since the Thai version derives from the Pali original, irregularities are best dealt with by resorting to Pali for verification. Therefore, in an earnest pursuit of Buddhist studies, monks and novices of the Theravāda tradition need to uphold the Pali *Tepiṭaka* and study the language. In order to be able to do so, one needs to study the Pali grammar before going to the *Tepiṭaka* or the Buddha's actual teachings. Pali textbooks are, therefore, essential tools for the study of Pali grammar and *Tepiṭaka* in the original, including the *Aṭṭhakathā*.

7. The importance of Pali in the study of Buddhism

The study of Buddhism means the study of the Buddha's teachings, which is originally preserved in Pali. In other words, a student of Buddhism should be able to study the scriptures written in Pali. The *Tepiṭaka* and the *Aṭṭhakathā* in the Thai versions are available today as a result of the efforts of Pali scholars who rendered them into Thai. Still, Pali remains important, as it serves to verify the Thai translated texts. When a query occurs as to the authenticity, one needs to go back to the Pali originals. For instance, a person asked the Buddha: “*kiṃ issariyaṃ loke*”²⁸ (What is the most prominent in the world?). A person who knows anything about Buddhism will conjecture that the Buddha would reply that “Dhamma is the most important”. In truth, his answer was “*vaso issariyaṃ loke*”²⁹ (Power is the most prominent in the world). One would wonder what power is the most prominent over and above everything else. One needs to seek an explanation in the *Aṭṭhakathā*. The Pali version says “*vaso 'ti āṇāpavattanaṃ*”.³⁰ The translation is “*vaso* (power) means extension of authority over something”, i.e. extension of the kingdom. Again, this point is not completely clear. One has to go to the explanation in the *Ṭīkā* that elaborates the commentary in the *Aṭṭhakathā*. In the *Samyuttanikāya Ṭīkā*, Item No. 77 begins the explanation with “*āṇāpavattanaṃ*” thus:

²⁸ S. 15/77/50 mcu.

²⁹ S. 15/77/50 mcu.

³⁰ Sa. 1/77/97 mcu.

“*āṇāpavattanan ’ti appake vā mahante vā yattha katthaci attano āṇāya pavattanavasena vasanaṃ issariyattamicchanti.*”³¹

This *Samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga-Ṭīkā* has not yet been translated into Thai. Using the knowledge of Pali, the writer attempts to translate as follows: “the phrase “*āṇāpavattanaṃ*” (extension of authority over something) refers to the fact that all kings wish to gain prominence over others and extend their kingdoms to cover other lands, big or small.”

In the explanation, there is only the predicate “*icchanti*” without a subject. In the phrase “*vasanaṃ issariyattamicchanti*” (*vasanaṃ issariyattaṃ icchanti*), even though there is no subject part, i.e. the agent (a person who wishes to have power over others), knowledge of Pali will let one know that the subject of the sentence is *rājāno* (kings). The context that lends this meaning is “*attano āṇāya pavattanavasena*” (extension of their kingdoms). Since there is no precedent translation, if a translation is felt to be inexact, one needs to examine each word. In this instance, the translator is not certain whether it refers to the extension of authority or the extension of kingdom or the use of military power to invade another kingdom. One needs to examine the text word for word and sense for sense. Using a search engine, one will find comparable passages. In the *Aṭṭhakathā*, the commentator told a story about the subjects of King Bimbisāra wanting to punish Devadatta for encouraging Prince Ajātasattu to murder the king. A statement about the king reads, “*rañño āṇāvasena karissāma*”,³² meaning “we will act according to the law of the kingdom, i.e. executing Devadatta.”³³ The author of the *Aṭṭhakathā* explained the origin of the words used in the *Tepīṭaka* about the place that the king annexed as a result of his victory as follows: in the expression “*vijite ’ti*”³⁴ *āṇāpavattidese*³⁵ the word “*vijite*”³⁶ (kingdom) means the country that

³¹ St. 1/77/47 mcu.

³² For more details, see Da. 1/150/123-124 mcu.

³³ For more details, see Da. 1/150/122 mcu.

³⁴ D. 9/166/58 mcu.

³⁵ Da. 1/166/145 mcu.

³⁶ Da. 3/84/35 mcu.

expands its boundary,” and in the phrase “*vijite ’ti attano āṇāpavattiṭṭhāne*”,³⁷ the word “*vijite ’ti*”³⁸ (land) refers to “the annexed place”. The word “*vijite*” was used twice but was translated differently by the translation team that exercised its judgment in light of the *Aṭṭhakathā*. The commentary explained that “*vijite*” is an adjunct modifying the noun, meaning “that has been conquered.” In the first example it modifies the word “...*dese*”, meaning the land that the king has conquered. In the second example it modifies the word “*ṭhāne*”, meaning the place that the king has conquered. In short, the word “*āṇā*” in “*vaso ’ti āṇāpavattanaṃ*”³⁹ is used to explain “*vaso issariyaṃ loke*”⁴⁰ (prominent power in the world), and refers to worldly power, military might, or someone with such military power as to be able to conquer or annex another land. It could refer to, for instance, the might of the non-Buddhist army that invaded and occupied a Buddhist country, as was the case of the Muslim army that invaded India and destroyed such places as Nālandā, driving Buddhism out of India for centuries. This is why the Buddha mentioned that “*vaso issariyaṃ loke*” (Power is the most prominent in the world).

There are a number of Thai translations from Pali that the present writer thinks are not accurate for the context. These need to be re-examined. For example, the following Pali passage from the *Aṭṭhakathā* reads:

“*tesu tesu janapadesu tasmim̐ tasmim̐ kale ekappahāreneva
rukkhānaṃ pupphaphalagahaṇādīni, vātassa vāyanaṃ
avāyanaṃ, ātapassa tikkhatā mandatā, devassa vassanaṃ
avassanaṃ, padumānaṃ divā vikaṣanaṃ rattiṃ milāyanaṃ
’ti evamādi utuniyāmo*”⁴¹

The translation team translated the passage as “in such rural areas at such times flowers and fruit, for instance, are picked only once, the wind blows, the wind does not blow, the sun is strong, the sun is mild, rain falls,

³⁷ Da. 3/84/35 mcu.

³⁸ D. 11/84/51 mcu.

³⁹ Sa. 1/77/97 mcu.

⁴⁰ S. 15/77/50 mcu.

⁴¹ Da. 2/17/27 mcu.

rain does not fall, lotus flowers bloom during the day and close at night. They are all examples of *utuniyāma* (the physical laws).⁴²

The translation does not seem to be accurate as far as the meaning is concerned, because in the word “*utuniyāma*”, “*utu*” refers to the changing seasons or parts of the year divided on the basis of climate into the rainy season, cool season, summer, spring, autumn and dry season. “*Niyāma*” refers to the physical laws on temperature or natural events related, in particular, to soil, water, air, and seasonal change. In the above Pali passage, however, “*ekappahāreneva rukkhānaṃ pupphaphalagahaṇādīni*” is translated as “flowers and fruit are picked only once”. It makes one wonder what *utuniyāma* has to do with the picking of flowers and fruit. One has to understand both Pali and the nature of seasons (including other seasonally related matters).

In the phrase “*pupphaphalagahaṇādīni*” (*puppha* + *phala* + *gahaṇa* + *ādī*), *puppha* means flowers, *phala* fruit, *gahaṇa* taken, and *ādī* for instance. The expression “*rukkhānaṃ pupphaphalagahaṇādīni*” can be literally translated as “picking of flowers and fruit, for instance.” However, on examining the context, this has nothing to do with the picking of such things. In the phrase, “*tesu tesu janapadesu*” (in such rural areas) means in each area, while “*tasmiṃ tasmiṃ kāle*” (at such times) means each season, and “*ekappahāreneva*” (executed only once) means once, as in once a year. In this light, the statement “*tesu tesu janapadesu tasmiṃ tasmiṃ kāle ekappahāreneva rukkhānaṃ pupphaphalagahaṇādīni*” should be rendered as “Flowers blooming only once in that season at that place...are examples of *utuniyāma*”. The Thai translation is passable but not well rendered. All this is meant to emphasize the importance of Pali study in Buddhism. Knowledge of Pali is essential for understanding the Pali text and for a proper translation.

8. Using Pali to facilitate the understanding of the *Vinayaṭīkā*

The *Vinayateṭṭhaka* is akin to something written in stone. A problematic translation can be a cause for concern for those studying the

⁴² *Suttantapiṭaka Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga Aṭṭakathā* No. 2 Part 1, p. 101.

scripture. An example can be found in the translation of the *Vinayatepiṭaka Cūlavagga*:

Ānanda was found to have breached the *Vinaya* in every way at the end of the First Rehearsal. All the Thera monks at the Rehearsal found him to have breached the rules on five occasions: He did not ask the Buddha to explain what the minor breaches were; he mended the Buddha's *vassikasātikā* (rain cloth) while standing on it; he allowed women folk to pay homage to the Buddha's body on which their tears fell; he did not request the Buddha to live until the end of the kappa; and he led women to get ordained in the Dhamma-Vinaya.⁴³ The Pali text reads: “*idante āvuso Ānanda dukkaṭaṃ, yaṃ tvaṃ...desehi taṃ dukkaṭaṃ*”⁴⁴ (Ānanda, as a result of your act...you are found to breach the Vinaya rules in every way. You shall admit to the charge).

An example of the Pali and translated texts is given here for consideration:

“*atha kho therā bhikkhū āyasmantaṃ Ānandaṃ etadavocuṃ*
“*idante āvuso Ānanda dukkaṭaṃ, yaṃ tvaṃ bhagavantaṃ*
na pucchi: ‘katamāni pana bhante khuddānukhuddakāni
sikkhāpadāni ‘ti, desehi taṃ dukkaṭanti. ahaṃ kho bhante
asatiyā bhagavantaṃ na pucchim: ‘katamāni pana
bhante khuddānukhuddakāni sikkhāpadāni ‘ti. nāhaṃ taṃ
dukkataṃ passāmi, apicāyasmantānaṃ saddhāya desemi
taṃ dukkaṭanti.”⁴⁵

The *Tepiṭaka* translation team offered the following rendering: “All the therā monks said to Ānanda, “Venerable Ānanda, the fact that you did not ask the Buddha which disciplinary rules are minor is a breach of the rule. You shall admit to the charge.”

Ānanda said, “Sirs, as it did not cross my mind, so I did not ask the Buddha which disciplinary rules were minor. I do not see that not asking

⁴³ For more details, see Vin. 7/443/280-281 mcu.

⁴⁴ Vin. 7/443/280-281 mcu.

⁴⁵ Vin. 7/443/284 mcu.

the question would constitute a breach of the Vinaya in every way. But I believe you, so I will admit to every charge.”⁴⁶

The translated *āpatti* against Ānanda raises a question. As a rule, the Buddha would announce practices known as *sikkhāpada* or disciplinary rules. Any monk that did not follow the rule would be considered as having committed *āpatti*. Therefore, one needs to examine the explanation in the *Aṭṭhakathā* and compare its Pali text with other Pali scriptures. Buddhaghosa Thera provided an explanation in the *Samantapāsādikā* scripture – the commentary on the charge against Ānanda – that it was not so. He said:

“*idampi te āvuso Ānanda dukkaṭaṇ’ti idaṃ “tayā duṭṭhu katan” ’ti kevalaṃ garahantehi therehi vuttaṃ, na āpattiṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ na hi te āpattānāpattiṃ na jānanti. idāneve hetam anussāvitam “saṃgho apaññattam na paññāpeti paññattam na samucchindatī” ’ti. desehi taṃ dukkaṭaṇ’ti idampi ca: ‘āma bhante, duṭṭhu mayā katan’ ’ti evaṃ paṭijānāhi taṃ dukkaṭaṇ’ti idaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ, na āpattadesanam.*”⁴⁷

The sentence “*idampi te āvuso Ānanda dukkaṭaṃ* (Ānanda, this matter you did not do well) is rendered in every translated version of the *Tepiṭaka* as “You have committed *āpatti* in every way”. In fact, the Thera seniors wanted to simply admonish Ānanda for not having done a good job, which had nothing to do with the *āpatti*. They knew what constituted an *āpatti*, and Mahā-Kassapa Thera then announced to the gathering that “the *Saṅgha* would not add any *sikkhāpada* to the ones that the Buddha had issued and would not remove any *sikkhāpada* that he had provided.”

Buddhaghosa Thera put it in Pali as follows: “*idāneva hetam anussāvitam “saṃgho apaññattam na paññāpeti paññattam na*

⁴⁶ Thai translation of the *Tepiṭaka* published from 1957 to 1987. The same translation is also found in the Mahamakutrajavidyalaya and Mahachulalongkonrajavidyalaya [Vin. (Thai) 7/443/384-385.].

⁴⁷ Vina. 3/413.

samucchindati”.⁴⁸ He also repeated what Mahā-Kassapa Thera had announced to the Thera monks at the Rehearsal as recorded in the *Vinayaepiṭaka Cūḷavagga* (Pali) thus:

“*saṃgho apaññattaṃ na paññāpeti, paññattaṃ na samucchindati, yathāpaññattesu sikkhāpadesu samādāya vattati, khamati saṃghassa, tasmā tuṇhī. evamevaṃ dhārayāmi*”⁴⁹

(Translation: The *Saṅgha* will not regulate anything that the Buddha did not regulate and will not remove any rules that the monks should follow as *sikkhāpada*. The *Saṅgha*, having agreed, remains silent, and I take silence to be consent to the resolution.)

The above statement implies that the Thera at the Rehearsal did not invent any new regulation such as charging Ānanda with the *āpatti* offence. Therefore, the version of the *Tepiṭaka* translation team that turned an admonition to a charge of *āpatti* would amount to regulating what the Buddha did not regulate. The translation on this matter departs from the real meaning and truth.

The clause “*desehi taṃ dukkaṭaṃ* (You shall confess [admit] that you have not done well in this matter) was rendered as “You shall admit to the charge of *āpatti* in every way” in every translated version of the *Tepiṭaka*. The Thera simply wanted to say that “You shall admit that you did not do a good job” and Ānanda would say that “Yes, Sirs, I did not do a good job”. It does not mean charging him with the *āpatti* offence.

The reply to the Thera reads: “*ahaṃ kho bhante asativā bhagavantam na pucchim: “katamāni pana bhante khuddānukhuddakāni sikkhāpadāni” ti. nāhaṃ taṃ dukkaṭaṃ passāmi, apicāyasmantānaṃ saddhāya desemi taṃ dukkaṭaṃ*”.⁵⁰

The *Tepiṭaka* translation team rendered the passage in Thai as follows: “Sirs, as it did not cross my mind, so I did not ask the Buddha which disciplinary rules were minor. I do not see that not asking the

⁴⁸ Vina. 3/441/413 mcu.

⁴⁹ Vin. 7/442/284 mcu.

⁵⁰ Vin. 7/443/284 mcu.

question would constitute a breach of the Vinaya in every way. But I believe you, so I will admit to every charge of *āpatti*.”

Although Ānanda admitted that he was guilty as charged, it was not an act of *āpatti*. According to the evidence, there were monks found guilty in similar incidents in which they helped sew the robe that the Buddha used for traveling purposes. However, Bhaddāli-thera did not intervene and was admonished by those monks for not doing so. He then took the matter up with the Buddha so that He might consider the mistake he had made:

*“Āyasmā bhaddāli...yena bhagavā tenupasaṃkami;
upāsāṃkamitvā bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi.
ekamantaṃ nisinno kho āyasmā bhaddāli bhagavantaṃ
etadavoca “accayo maṃ bhante accagamā yathābālaṃ
yathāmūlhaṃ yathā akusalaṃ, yohaṃ bhagavatā sikkhāpade
paññāpiyamāne bhikkhusaṃghe sikkhaṃ samādiyamāne
anussāhaṃ pavedesiṃ. tassa me, bhante, bhagavā accayaṃ
accayato paṭiggaṇhātu āyatiṃ saṃvarāyā ’ti.”⁵¹*

Bhaddāli-thera went to see the Buddha. After paying homage and taking a seat in one corner, he said: “O, Blessed One, a mistake has descended upon me, being foolish, deluded, unwise, and unable to maintain the *sikkhāpada* that you have regulated for the monks to follow. May you consider the mistake that I have committed so that others will be more careful?”

When a mistake is pointed out, it must be acknowledged. A person who refuses to do so is considered a *bāla*. The Buddha said:

*“dve me, bhikkhave, bālā. katame dve, yo ca accayaṃ accayato
na passati. yo ca accayaṃ desentassa yathā dhammaṃ
nappaṭiggaṇhāti. ime kho bhikkhave, dve bālā ’ti. dve me
bhikkhave, paṇḍitā. katame dve, yo ca accayaṃ accayato passati.
yo ca accayaṃ desentassa yathā dhammaṃ paṭiggaṇhāti.
ime kho bhikkhave, dve paṇḍitā ’ti.”⁵²*

⁵¹ M. 13/135/111.

⁵² A. 20/22/58-59.

The Buddha said: “O bhikku, there are two kinds of *bāla*: (1) those who do not see the mistakes as mistakes and (2) those who do not accept the fact when others point out to them that they have made a mistake.

There are two kinds of *paṇḍita*: (1) those who see the mistakes as mistakes and (2) those who accept the fact when others point out to them that they have made a mistake.”

Ānanda was a *paṇḍita*. He did not see what he did as a mistake, but he believed the Thera monks who told him so and, therefore, accepted the charge.

After much research, it is found that the Buddha called the act of committing *āpatti* offence in every way as “*āpatti dukkaṭassa*” (commit *āpatti* in every way). Some examples are:

“*na ca bhikkhave sabbamattikāmayā kuṭikā kātabbā, yo kareyya, āpatti dukkaṭassa.*”⁵³

(Translation: O Bhikkhu, monks shall not make *Kuṭi* solely from clay. Those who do are said to commit *āpatti* in every way.)

“*na bhikkhave nahāyamānena bhikkhunā rukkhe kāyo ugghaṃ setabbo, yo ugghaṃ seyya, āpatti dukkaṭassa*”⁵⁴

(Translation: O bhikkhu, when monks bathe, they shall not rub themselves against a tree. Any monk who does so shall be said to commit *āpatti* in every way.)

“*na bhikkhave bhikkhuniyā attano paribhogatthāya dinnam aññesaṃ dātabbā yā dadeyya, āpatti dukkaṭassa*”⁵⁵

(Translation: O bhikkhu, food that a *dāyaka* offers to an individual bhikkunī to eat, she shall not give it to others. Any bhikkunī who does so shall be said to commit *āpatti* in every way.)

⁵³ Vin. 1/85/56.

⁵⁴ Vin. 7/243/1.

⁵⁵ Vin. 7/421/253.

When one compares the above examples against the rule of *āpatti* that the present writer wants to raise, it can be seen that the Buddha used the same wording. All 604 items of *sikkhāpada* about *āpatti* (514 for bhikkhu and 90 for bhikkhunī) in *Mahāvagga* and *Cūlavagga* scriptures that carry the meaning of “committing *āpatti* in every way” use the wording “*āpatti dukkaṭassa*”.⁵⁶

The charge of *āpatti* against Ānanda was consistently translated by the *Tepiṭaka* translation teams in every version from 1957 to 1987. Even the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya version gave the same translation because of the expression “*idante āvuso Ānanda dukkaṭam, yaṃ tvaṃ... desehi taṃ dukkaṭam*,”⁵⁷ especially the word “*dukkataṃ*”. If this sentence was translated as: “Ānanda, as a result of your not doing a good job... you shall admit that you did not do so,” the question would not be raised as to why the Thera monks wanted to charge *āpatti* against Ānanda. Some even went as far as saying that Mahākassapa-thera regulated something that the Buddha had not regulated, i.e. charging *āpatti* in every way.

In order to settle this issue, one needs to make an examination based on the *suttānūloma* and *Ācariyavāda*. *suttānūloma* refers to supporting statements from the *Tepiṭaka* that support the word “*dukkataṃ*”. It does not mean “*āpatti in every way*”. An examination of the evidence in the *Tepiṭaka* reveals that the word “*dukkataṃ*” does not mean “*āpatti in every way*”. The researcher wishes to give some examples here:

In the *Dīghanikāya Sīlakkhandhavagga* scripture the Buddha told a story about *Mahābrahmā* chiding a bhikkhu for bringing a question to him when he should have gone to the Buddha, as follows:

“*atha kho so Mahābrahmā taṃ bhikkhuṃ bāhāyaṃ gahetvā ekamantaṃ apanetvā taṃ bhikkhuṃ etadavoca “... ahaṃ ’pi kho bhikkhu na jānāmi, yatthime cattāro mahābhūtā aparisesā nirujjhanti, seyyathidaṃ paṭhavindhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātū ’ti, tasmātiha bhikkhu tuṃhevetam dukkaṭam tuyhevetam aparaddham, yaṃ tvaṃ bhagavantam*

⁵⁶ For more details, see Winyakkamachantika: Sikkhaphathakkama Bali Plae, Bangkok: Winyan Printing House. B.E. 2547 (2004), Introduction, 2-186.

⁵⁷ Vin. 7/443/280-281.

*abhimuñcitvā bahiddhā pariyetṭhiṃ āpajjasi imassa pañhassa veyyākaraṇāya, gaccha bhikkhu tameva bhagavantam upasaṅkamitvā imam pañham puccha, yathā te bhagavā byākaroti, tathā nam dhāreyvāsīti*⁵⁸

(Translation: Suddenly, *Mahābrahmā* took hold of the Bhukku's hand and led him to another side of the place, saying... "Even I do not know where the four *Mahābhūtarūpa* [primary elements] – *paṭhavīdhātu* [earth element], *āpodhātu* [water element], *tejodhātu* [fire element], and *vāyodhātu* [air element] – are completely extinguished. Therefore, bhikkhu, in this regard you forgot the Buddha and sought the answer from outside. You have made a wrong move. You have made a mistake. Go, bhikkhu, go to seek the audience with the Buddha and ask Him about this problem and you shall take note of what He will answer.)

The phrase "*tuyhevetam dukkatam*" (You have made a mistake in this matter, i.e. instead of asking the Buddha, you went out of your way to ask others) is true for all the incidents in the *Tepiṭaka*. No Bhikkhu was charged with committing *āpatti* in every way for not asking the Buddha about something.

The *Samyuttanikāya Saḷāyatanavagga* scripture tells a story about how the Buddha answered the question posed by a former warrior. He had heard from his martial masters that if a warrior died in battle, he would be reborn in the Sarajita heaven. The Buddha gave the following answer:

"apica tyāham byākarissāmi. yo so gāmaṇi yodhājīvo saṅgāme ussahati vāyamati, tassa tam cittam pubbe gahitam dukkaṭam duppaṇihitam "ime sattā haññantu vā bajjhantu vā ucchajjantu vā vinassantu va mā vā ahesum iti vā" 'ti, tamenam ussahantam vāyamantam pare hananti pariyāpādentī, so kāyassa bhedā param maraṇā sarajito nāma nirayo, tattha upapajjatīti."⁵⁹

⁵⁸ D. 9/495/222.

⁵⁹ S. 18/355/279.

(Translation: Now, I will reply to you, master of the house. When a warrior goes to battle, he puts his mind on the wrong thing. He starts on the wrong footing, thinking that these are animals that shall die, shall be stabbed, cut to pieces, crushed, or destroyed. His opponents kill him striving toward those goals. After his death, he will be reborn in the hellish Sarajita.)

The phrase “*tassa taṃ cittaṃ pubbe gahitaṃ dukkaṭaṃ duppaṇihitaṃ*” (the warrior from the beginning clings to the thought of not doing something good [*dukkataṃ*], i.e. he starts with the wrong thought) cannot be considered or translated as committing *āpatti* in every way, because this is a matter concerning ordinary people and has nothing to do with the *āpatti* in every way. The *Aṭṭhakathā* explains the word “*dukkataṃ*” as follows: in “*dukkataṇ ’ti duṭṭhu kataṃ*”⁶⁰ the word “*dukkataṃ*” means that the warrior does not do a good deed.

In the *Khuddakanikāya Itivuttaka* scripture, the Buddha talked about how a bhikkhu with *sīla*, dhamma, and a beautiful mind was a true Arahant. The story was summarized in verse that such a bhikkhu would never do anything bad physically, verbally, and spiritually. The saying in Pali is as follows:

“ <i>yassa kāyena vācāya</i>	<i>manasā natthi dukkaṭaṃ</i>
<i>taṃ ve “kalyāṇasīlo” ’ti</i>	<i>āhu bhikkhuṃ hirīmanam</i> ” ⁶¹

(Translation: Every Buddha calls a bhikkhu who commits no physical, verbal or spiritual wrong and who has *hiri* governing his mind a person with beautiful *sīla*.)

The word “*dukkataṃ*” in this verse may refer to actions of a bhikkhu, but it does not mean “*āpatti* in every way” because there is no such thing as mental/spiritual *āpatti*. The *Aṭṭhakathā*, which may be considered the principle on which the Ācariyavāda is based, provides

⁶⁰ Sa. 3/355/165.

⁶¹ It. 25/97/315.

an explanation that “*dukkaṭaṇ ’ti duṭṭhu kataṃ, duccharitaṇ’ti attho*.”⁶² This can be translated as “the word ‘*duṭṭhu kataṃ*’ referring to the fact that a person does not do a good deed is explained as ‘a person conducts himself poorly’.” Evidently, if the word “*duṭṭhu kataṃ*” is used without the word “*āpatti*”, it does not refer to *āpatti*; rather, it refers to a poor act. The scripture that illustrates the incident of Ānanda provides the explanation in line with the *Suttānuloma* and *Ācariyavāda* found in other scriptures.

Besides this *Ācariyavāda*-level illustration, some *Aṭṭhakathā* texts do not provide an explanation about the use of “*duṭṭhu kataṃ*” in the sense of a poor act. For instance, the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* Commentary tells a story about Pūrāṇa Kassapa, using the word “*duṭṭhu kataṃ*” as follows:

“*pūraṇo ’ti tassa satthupaṭiñṇassa nāmaṃ kassapo ’ti gottaṃ so kira aññatarassa kulassa ekūnadāsaśataṃ pūrayamāno jāto, tenassa “pūraṇo” ’ti nāmaṃ akaṃsu. maṅgaladāsattā cassa “dukkaṭaṇ” ’ti vattā natthi*.”⁶³

(Translation: The word “*pūraṇo*” refers to the name used when he declared himself “*satthu*”, while the word “*kassapo*” means “*gotta*” [clan]. Story was told that Kassapa was one of 100 full “*dāsa*” of a family; that is why he was called “*pūraṇa*”. Nobody referred to him as “doing a poor deed” because he was a good “*dāsa*”).

This final example is evidence at the level of the *Ācariyavāda*. The word “*duṭṭhu kataṃ*” cannot possibly be translated as *āpatti* in every way, because Pūrāṇa Kassapa was not a Buddhist monk. When Pali users see the word “*duṭṭhu kataṃ*”, they tend to readily assume out of habit that it referred to *āpatti*. In this matter, some scriptures of semantic nature provide explanation of the word as follows:

In the expression “*dukkaṭa, dukkata*” du-precedes radical *kr / kar*; meaning something evil, immoral, a bad act. The phrase “*Asobhaṇaṃ kataṃ dukkaṭaṃ*” means a bad act committed

⁶² Ita. 97/351.

⁶³ Da. 1/151/130.

by a person or *dukkaṭa*, while “*du ninditaṃ karaṇamassa dukkaṭaṃ*” refers to a blameworthy act called *dukkaṭa*. The word saw “*k*” doubled and “*r*” deleted, changing the element “*ta*” to “*ṭa*” and resulting in “*dukkaṭa*”.”⁶⁴

Admittedly, as far as the *Tepiṭaka* translators are concerned, *Tepiṭaka* translation is one way to study the Pali Canon. In all Theravāda Buddhist countries, those who wish to study the *Tepiṭaka* need to have knowledge of Pali advanced enough to pursue the *Aṭṭhakathā* and *Ṭīkā* in Pali as well as its grammar.

Incorrect translation of the *Tepiṭaka* will considerably effect the dissemination of the knowledge in printed form.⁶⁵ Ānanda’s admission of guilt is not to *āpatti* but merely to misconduct, a behavioural failure in the eyes of 499 Thera monks.

9. Using Pali to understand the translated version of the *Suttantapiṭaka*

It is not always possible to verify the Thai translation against the Pali original, which is evidence at the Suta level. One needs to go further to such other explanatory texts as the *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭīkā*, and *Pakaraṇavisesa*. These are secondary scriptures at the *Ācariyavāda* level. There is a Pali passage in the *Tepiṭaka* which sees the same Thai translation everywhere. A closer examination against other texts at the *Pakaraṇavisesa* level sheds a different light. The passage in question relates a story of a village headman, named Asibandhakaputta, talking to the Buddha thus:

“*brāhmaṇā bhante pacchābhūmakā kāmaṇḍalukā
sevālamālikā udakorohakā aggiparicārakā, te mataṃ
kālaṇkataṃ uyyāpentī nāma, saññāpentī nāma, saggaṃ nāma
okkāmenti. bhagavā pana bhante araham sammāsambuddho*

⁶⁴ Abhidhānavannanā, translated to Thai and edited by Phra Maha Sompong Mudito, p. 133

⁶⁵ For more details, see Mettānando Bhikkhu, **Het Koet Pho. So 1, Volume 2: Wikhro Korani Pathom Sangkhayana Lae Phiksuni Song**, Bangkok: S.P.K. Paper and f form, B.E. 2545 (2002), pp. 74-75.

*pahoti tathā kātuṃ, yathā sabbo loko kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā sugatiṃ saggaṃ lokaṃ upapajjeyya.*⁶⁶

Every Thai translated version of this passage reads: “O, Blessed One, Pacchābhūmma Brahmans carrying water pitchers, wearing weed garlands, bathing every morning and evening, and indulging in fire, bring dead animals back to life, lead them to the righteous path of knowledge and enable them to go to heaven. O, Blessed One, the Enlightened One, can all the beings on earth after their death be made to reborn in a blissful heaven?”

In the translation, the Pacchābhūmma Brahmans were able to bring the dead back to life, teach them all the righteous things and enable them to be reborn in Heaven. Yet, the question put to the Buddha was “Can the dead be reborn in Heaven?” and not “Can they bring them back to life?”, or else, this would mean that these brahmans had the ability to bring the dead back to life.

It does not seem correct to translate the Pali word “*uyyāpentī*” as “bring back to consciousness”. The element “*u*” means “up, outside”, and “*yāpentī*” “to let go”. It may be acceptable to render the word “*saññāpentī*” as knowing the righteous things, for the element “*saṃ*” means “righteous” and “*ñāpentī*” “to make someone know”. In the *Aṭṭhakathā*, the authors changed the word to “*upari yāpentī*” (to go up, NOT to bring back to consciousness) and changed the word “*saññāpentī*” to “*sammā ñāpentī*” (to enable someone to know righteous things), and this seems correct. The question remains about bringing the dead back to life and teach them righteous things. Consulting other texts, one will find an explanation in the *Netti Aṭṭhakathā*, a scripture at the *Ācariyavāda* level, taken directly from the *Samyuttanikāya Aṭṭhakathā*, using different wording as follows:

*“uyyāpentīti upari yāpentī, saññāpentīti sammā yāpentī.”*⁶⁷

The word “*uyyāpentīti*” means “to let go upward” and the word “*saññāpentīti*” refers to “to let go righteously”.

⁶⁶ S. 18/358/281 mcu.

⁶⁷ Nettia.118 mcu.

In short, the Pacchābhūma Brahmins could make the dead be reborn in a blissful Heaven rather than bring them back to life and teach them righteous matters. In addition, one also needs to study grammar scriptures that explain the etymology of words. In those texts the authors usually cite examples from the *Tepiṭaka*; for instance, in the *Saddanīti Dhātumālā* the radical “*yap*” is explained followed by an example from the same *Sutta*:

“*yapa yāpane yāpanaṃ pavattanaṃ. tena so tattha yāpeti (mātukucchiggato naro)*⁶⁸. *yāpayati. yāpanā. tattha yāpetīti idaṃ yādhātussa payogatte sati kāritapadaṃ bhavati. tathā hi “uyyāpenti nāma” ti*⁶⁹ *pāli dissati.*”⁷⁰

(Translation: “*yapadhātu*” is used to denote a state of something, while “*yāpana*” means the state of being. That is to say, in this state he lives in the womb on such food,⁷¹ for “*yāpana*” denotes the state of being. The word “*yāpeti*” in the example is a “*karitapada*” illustrating the element “*yā*”. In Pali “*uyyāpenti nāma*” means “allowing to go up to heaven”).⁷²

The *Saddanīti Dhātumālā* is a very important grammatical work. The Pali version is 518 pages long, while the Thai translated version is 995 pages long. The work is a tool for grammatical studies in addition to the usual texts and is very useful for translation. The sentence “*tena so tattha yāpeti mātukucchiggato naro*”⁷³ is taken from the *Indaka Sutta* in which the Buddha explained the development of human birth, from *kalala*, in the form of a minuscule round speck, the size of oil drop at the end of the sheep hair after it is shaken off three times,⁷⁴ to *abbuda*, a very fine

⁶⁸ S. 15/235/248.

⁶⁹ S. 18/358/281.

⁷⁰ *nīti. dhātu.* 435.

⁷¹ S. (Thai) 15/235/338 mcu.

⁷² *nīti. dhātu.* (Thai) 842.

⁷³ S. 15/235/248 mcu.

⁷⁴ Sa. 1/235/284, St. 1/235/326 mcu.

form developing after 7 days of *palala*, having a pale reddish color, with a white tin appearance⁷⁵, to *pesi*, a piece of flesh, and to *ghana*, a lump of flesh with five nodes after 5 weeks (these nodes being two arms, two legs, and one head).⁷⁶ Then appear hair and nails. Whatever the mother eats or drinks will be ingested by the fetus in the womb.

Such stories have been mistakenly passed on from one group to another. They took the radical “*yā*” (meaning to go) for the radical “*ñā*” (meaning to know). Similarly, the Buddha said, “*bhikkhū duggahitaṃ suttantaṃ pariyāpuṇanti dunnikkhittehi padabyañjanehi*.”⁷⁷ Many bhikkhus learn the *Suttanta* that has been mistakenly memorized. In other words, they start learning the *Tepiṭaka* on the wrong foot, because the words have been mistakenly passed on. These words and learning are therefore defective.

Good knowledge of Pali is necessary for studying and examining the true meaning of passages of this nature. Without such knowledge, misinterpretation may easily ensue.

10. Pali in the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* as aid in understanding the translated version of the *Suttantapiṭaka*

The explanation in the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* helps to better understand the words in the Sutta that the Buddha taught in the *Neyyattha* manner. For instance, the Buddha taught the Dhamma and explained its contents at the same time. Such a practice was the model of all *Aṭṭakathā* commentaries. Words were first put forward, followed by explication. Consider an example from the *Abhidhamma*:

“*cattārome bhikkhave puggalā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasmiṃ katame cattāro, ugghaṭitaññū vipacitaññū neyyo padaparamo. ime kho bhikkhave cattāro puggalā santo saṃvijjamānā lokasminti*.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Sa. 1/235/284, St. 1/235/326 mcu.

⁷⁶ Sa. 1/235/285 mcu.

⁷⁷ A. 21/160/167 mcu.

⁷⁸ A. 21/133/153 mcu.

(Translation: O bhikkhu, there are four kinds of people to be found in this world, i.e. (1) *ugghaṭitaññū* [a person of quick intuition], (2) *vipacitaññū* [a person who understands after clarification], (3) *neyya* [a person who is guidable], and (4) *padaparama* [a person who can be taught the words of the text].)

After this passage, the Buddha elaborated, 42 pages later, thus:

“katamo ca puggalo ugghaṭitaññū, yassa puggalassa saha udāhaṭavelāya dhammābhisamayo hoti, ayaṃ vuccati puggalo ugghaṭitaññū.

katamo ca puggalo vipacitaññū, yassa puggalassa saṃkhittena bhāsitaṃ vitthārena atthe vibhajiyamāne dhammābhisamayo hoti, ayaṃ vuccati puggalo vipacitaññū.

katamo ca puggalo neyyo, yassa puggalassa uddesato paripucchato yoniso manasikaroto kalyāṇamitte sevato bhajato payirupāsato evaṃ anupubbena dhammābhisamayo hoti, ayaṃ vuccati puggalo neyyo.

*katamo ca puggalo padaparamo, yassa puggalassa bahumpi suṇato bahumpi bhaṇato bahumpi dhārayato bahumpi vācayato na tāya jātiyā dhammābhisamayo hoti, ayaṃ vuccati puggalo padaparamo.”*⁷⁹

(Translation: What is an *ugghaṭitaññū*? He is a person who is enlightened as soon as he is taught the Dhamma. Such a person is called an “*ugghaṭitaññū*”.

What is a *vipacitaññū*? He is a person who is enlightened when detail is given about the dhamma. Such a person is called a “*vipacitaññū*”.

What is a *neyya*? He is a person who is gradually enlightened after much perseverance, memorizing, questioning and

⁷⁹ Pug. 36/148-151/152.

reflecting, and being in the company of good people. Such a person is called a “*neyya*”.

What is a *padaparama*? He is a person who will not be enlightened in this life despite so much learning, and teaching. Such a person is called a “*padaparama*”.)

The terms referring to these four kinds of people, especially *padaparama*, have undergone a change in meaning, probably because most Thai Buddhists have studied the text copied from the *Suttantapīṭaka* in which the Buddha explained each topic in terms of *Neyyasutta*. In other words, the Sutta needs further elaboration for teaching purposes. Initially, the Thai Buddhist academic circle may not have known that the explanation is available in the *Abhidhammapīṭaka* under the heading “*Puggalapāṇṇatti*”, nor did they study the meanings in the *Aṭṭhakathā* and *Ṭīkā*. Instead, a “*padaparama*” is explained as a person who has much “*pada*”, i.e. much fuss, a person who goes about slowly and who does not take things seriously. The notion has been taken up to mean a person who knows just the word of the text but not its meaning, an ignorant person who will remain so for a very long time.

In the *Abhidhammapīṭaka* there is a “*niddesa*” or exposition in which a “*padaparama*” is explained as a person who will not get enlightened in this life despite much learning, and teaching.

The authors of the *Aṭṭhakathā* everywhere will cite the passage from the *Abhidhammapīṭaka Puggalapāṇṇatti* to support their commentary thus:

“*yassa puggalassa bahumpi suṇato bahumpi bhaṇato bahumpi gaṇhato bahumpi dhārayato bahumpi vācayato na tāya jātiyā dhammābhisamayo hoti, ayaṃ vuccati puggalo padaparamo*”⁸⁰

(Translation: Any person who, despite much listening, talking, learning, memorizing and teaching many people, but is unable to attain the dhamma in this life, is called a *padaparama*.)

⁸⁰ Pug. 36/148-151/152.

The *Ṭikā* authors explained the meaning of *Padaparama* in their texts, providing greater clarity to the “niddeśa” in the *Abhidhammapiṭaka Puggalapaññatti* as follows:

*“na tāya jātiyā dhammābhisamayo hotīti, tena attabhāvena maggaṃ vā palaṃ vā antamaso jhānaṃ vā vipassanaṃ vā nibbattetuṃ na sakkoti. ayaṃ vuccati puggalo padaparamo ’ti ayaṃ puggalo byañjanapadameva paranaṃ assāti padaparamoti vuccati”*⁸¹

(Translation: The words “*na tāya jātiyā dhammābhisamayo hotīti*” [but unable to attain the Dhamma in this life] is explained as “unable to attain the “*magga-phala*” or at least do the *samādhi-vipassanā* by oneself. In the expression “*ayaṃ puggalo byañjanapadameva paranaṃ assāti*” [such a person is called a *padaparama*], there is an analysis to the effect that the person is so called because he has only the word with him.)

In particular, the phrase “*ayaṃ puggalo byañjanapadameva paranaṃ assāti padaparamoti vuccati*” means “such a person is called called a *Padaparama* because he has only the word with him”.

The word “*byañjanapada*” does not mean “such a person has only the word, the letter or the *pada* with him”. Rather, it means that he knows only the word or the *pada*. The *Ṭikā* authors who analyzed the term “*padaparama*” gave the following explanation:

*“pajjati attho etenāti padaṃ, pajjate ñāyateti vā padaṃ tadattho. padaṃ paramaṃ etassa, na saccābhisambodho ’ti padaparamo”*⁸²

⁸¹ Dt. 2/79, Mt. 2/170, St. 2/10.

⁸² St. 1/251 mcu.

(Translation: The substance, i.e. the meaning, is attained. In other words, a person shall obtain knowledge through the word. Therefore, the word is called the *pada*, something that which makes it possible to know the substance. The word is something that makes it possible for such a person to know the substance but without knowing the *sacca*. Thus, he is called *padaparama*, a person who has something that makes it possible to know the substance.)

They went on to elaborate what is meant by *pada* in the word “*Padaparama*”, a person who has the essential *pada*:

“*ayaṃ vuccati padaparamo 'ti ayaṃ puggalo chabbidham byañjanapadam chabbidham atthapadanti idaṃ padameva paramam assāti padaparamo 'ti vuccatīti attho*”⁸³

(Translation: The words “*ayaṃ vuccati padaparamo 'ti*” [such a person is called *padaparama*’] can be analyzed in this manner: a person is called *padaparama*, because he has a *pada*, i.e. six kinds of word-*pada* and six kinds of *attha-pada*.)

The six kinds of word *pada* are *akkharapada*, *byañjana*, *nirutti*, *niddesa*, and *ākāra*, while the six kinds of *atthapada* are *saṃkāsa*, *pakāsa*, *vivaraṇa*, *vibhajana*, *uttānīkaraṇa*, and *paññatti*. The explanation can be found in *Sāyanettapakaraṇa*.⁸⁴

11. The use of Pali to gain a better understanding of the translation of *Aṭṭhakathā*

Incorrect Thai translation of the Pali original could lead even those with the knowledge of Pali to pass over the Pali scriptures without giving due attention, adopt the translation, and pass it on to others. A notable problematic statement deserves careful consideration here:

⁸³ St. 1/250-251 mcu.

⁸⁴ For more details, see netti. 23-24/6 mcu.

*“paraṃ vā attabhūta dhammakāyato aññaṃ paṭipakkhaṃ
vā tadanatthakaraṃ kilesacoragaṇaṃ mināti hiṃsatīti
paramo, mahāsatto”*⁸⁵

(Translation: or *pāramī* shall destroy other enemies from the *dhammakāya* that is *attā* or bandits being *kilesa* that will bring destruction to that person; therefore, it is called *parama*.)⁸⁶

Aggavaṃsa-Thera, the author of the *Saddanīti*, explained the term “*bhūta*”, citing the problematic sentence as an illustration:

*“paraṃ vā attabhūta dhammakāyato aññaṃ paṭipakkhaṃ
vā tadanatthakaraṃ kilesacoragaṇaṃ mināti hiṃsatīti
paramo”*⁸⁷

(Translation: In other words, the person who purges other parties, i.e. other Dhamma, of the *dhammakāya* that is inherent in self or *Paṭipakkha* Dhamma that acts as *kilesa* bandits bringing destruction, is called *Parama*, meaning the Bodhisatta.)⁸⁸

For the Pali phrase “*paraṃ vā attabhūta dhammakāyato aññaṃ paṭipakkhaṃ vā tadanatthakaraṃ kilesacoragaṇaṃ mināti hiṃsatīti*”, the Mahamakutrajavidyalaya version provides the following translation: “or *pāramī* shall destroy other enemies from the *dhammakāya* that is *attā* or bandits being *kilesa* that will bring destruction to self”.

This translation has had repercussions, because Phra Maha Soemchai Jayamaṅgalo has adopted it as the basis for his concept of *dhammakāya* being *attā* as follows:

⁸⁵ cpa. 324-325.

⁸⁶ *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddakanikāya Cariyāpiṭaka*, Volume 9, Part III, Mahamakutrajavidyalaya Version, pp. 570-572.

⁸⁷ **Satthanitipakon Thatumala**, Bhumipalo Bhikkhu Verson, Bangkok : Bhumipalo Bhikkhu Foundation Printing House, B.E. 2523 (1980), p. 487.

⁸⁸ Aggavaṃsa-Thera, **Saddhanīti-Dhatumala Khamphi Lakphasa Bali Maha Waiyakon**, Bangkok: Thai Rai Wan Kan Phim Limited Partnership, B.E. 2546 (2003), p. 939.

Dhammakāya is also *attā*, as stated by the author of *Paramatthadīpanī Aṭṭhakathā* to *Suttantapiṭaka Khuddakanikāya Cariyāpiṭaka*, page 324:

“*paraṃ vā attabhūtaṃ dhammakāyaṃ aññaṃ paṭipakkhaṃ vā tadanatthakaraṃ kilesacoragaṇaṃ mināti himsatīti paramo*”

It was translated as: “In other words, *pāramī* shall destroy other enemies from the *dhammakāya* that is *attā* or shall destroy bandits being *kilesa* that will bring destruction to that *dhammakāya* that is *attā*; therefore, it is called *parama*.”⁸⁹

It has been referenced and quoted widely, including such dissertations as “Teachings on *pāramī* Creation of Wat Phra Dhammakāya.”⁹⁰

On the other hand, the translator of the *Saddanīti Dhātumālā* rendered the following “*paraṃ vā attabhūtaṃ dhammakāyaṃ aññaṃ paṭipakkhaṃ vā tadanatthakaraṃ kilesacoragaṇaṃ mināti himsatī*” as “In other words, the person who purges other parties, i.e. other Dhamma, the *dhammakāya* that is inherent in self or *paṭipakkha* Dhamma that acts as *kilesa* bandits bringing destruction to them.”

The word “*Bhūta*” derives from the radical “*bhū*”. It has several meanings, one of which is “to take place”.

“*bhūtasaddo pañcakkhandha-amanussadhātuvijjamāna-khīṇāsavasattarukkhādisu dissati. ... (“yo pana bhikkhu anupasampannassa uttarimanussadhammaṃ āroceyya) bhūtasmiṃ pācittivaṃ”*” *ti ādisu*⁹¹ *vijjamānesu*.⁹²

⁸⁹ Phra Maha Soemchai Jayamaṅgalo, *Ariyasat* 4, Bangkok : T.P. Press, B.E. 2538 (1995), p. 145.

⁹⁰ For more details, see Sorakan Si-tong-on, Khamson Rueang Kan Sang Barami Khong Wat Thammakai”, **M.A. Dissertation**, in Buddhist Studies, B.E. 2547 (2004), Bangkok: Graphic Art Printing, B.E. 2548 (2005), pp. 244-245.

⁹¹ Vina. 2/69/143.

⁹² ma. 1/3/34.

(Translation: The term “*bhūta*” is used to mean *pañcakkhandha*, non-human, elements, living entities, becoming, an arahant, animals and plants...It means “having” in the following sentence: “Any bhikkhu who boasts of having *uttarimanussadhamma* (superhuman power) to an *anupasampanna* (novice and layperson) shall be guilty of *āpatti Pācittīya*”, for instance.)

“(nanu evaṃ Ānanda mayā paṭikacceva akkhātaṃ ‘sabbeheva piyehi manāpehi nānābhāvo vinābhāvo aññathābhāvo. taṃ kutettha Ānanda labbhā, yantaṃ) jātaṃ bhūtaṃ saṅkhataṃ (palokadhammaṃ, taṃ vata mā palujjīti netam thānaṃ vijjati) ti ādisu⁹³ bhūtasaddo uppāde dissati.⁹⁴”

(Translation: The term “*bhūta*” is used to mean “having happened/come into being” as in the following [Ānanda, didn’t I tell you that separation, abandonment, and change from something loving and favourable to something else are all inevitable? So, what can you hope to seek from this *saṅkhāra*?) Whatever has happened, has come into being, or has been shaped by various factors [will eventually break down as a rule. It is not possible to wish for it not to do so], for example.

The *dharmakāya* here, as a result of the detailed study of the entire *Cariyāpiṭaka-Aṭṭhakathā*, means a group of Dhamma, a collection of dhamma, i.e. *dāna*, *sīla*, *nekkhamma*, *paññā*, *virīya*, *khanti*, *sacca*, *adhiṭṭhāna*, *mettā*, and *upekkhā*, dhamma that the Bodhisatta has practiced for four *asaṅkheyya* and 100,000 *kappa*. This quality is inherent in the Bodhisatta like virtues that already exist in the person. One could also say these qualities are self-inherent.

⁹³ D. 10/183/106. The Pali words in brackets are something that the writer puts in for greater clarity.

⁹⁴ Mt. 1/3/101. The Pali words in brackets are something that the writer puts in for greater clarity

The term “*attā*” means self. It can be transliterated as *attā* in Thai. In the Pali phrase “*attabhūta*” was translated as “that is *attā*”. However, there are three separate places where the term “*attā*” is used:

1. “*param sattaṃ attāni mavati bandhati guṇavisesayogena*”⁹⁵: It was translated as “*Pāramī* will bind other animals to oneself through virtuous deeds”. The question may be raised as to why it was not translated as “bind...to the *attā*”?

2. “*param vā ativiya sīlādiguṇagaṇaṃ attano santāne minoti pakkhipati*”⁹⁶: It was translated as “or” *Pāramī* will immensely reap such virtues as *Sīla* into one’s *Santāna*”. Again, one needs to ask why it was not translated as “into the *Atta*’s *Santāna*”?

3. “*param vā attabhūta dhammakāyato aññaṃ paṭipakkaṃ vā tadanatthakaraṃ kilesacoragaṇaṃ mināti hiṃsati*”⁹⁷: It was translated as “or *pāramī* shall destroy other enemies from the *dhammakāya* that is **attā** or bandits being *kilesa* that will bring destruction to that person”. In a similar vein, why not translate this as “that is in the self”?

Conclusion:

Cases will arise when those who have studied the Thai translated version of the scriptures have queries in their minds. If they have good knowledge of Pali, they may go to the sources and compare the translation to the original text word for word and sense for sense. If they are not so equipped, they may organize seminars calling on people with similar interests, especially those with some Pali background. This will constitute an intellectual Buddhist pursuit for as correct a knowledge of the Dhamma-Vinaya of Theravāda Buddhism, through a study of the *Aṭṭhakathā*, *Ṭīkā*, *Pakaraṇavisesa* and Pali grammar, as is possible. Such activities will advance the Saddhamma further, providing further light to Buddhists and contributing to the further dissemination of the Buddha’s teachings.

⁹⁵ Khu. carivā. a. 324-325.

⁹⁶ cpa.324-325.

⁹⁷ cpa.324 mcu.

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