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## MANDALAY AND PAKOKKU TECHNIQUES: TRADITIONAL WAYS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING ABHIDHAMMATTHA- SANGAHA

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**KEYWORDS:** Abhidhammā, Abhidhammattha-Sangaha, Pathamapyān, Mūla, Pathamange, Pathamalat and Pathamage, Vinaya, Kaccāyana, Tikamātikā, Dukamātikā-Dhātukathā, Jātakapāli-Atthakathā, Payagyi Niyam, Mandalay, Pakokku.

Abhidhammattha-Sangaha is very useful and essential for all students. It has brief and grand techniques of teaching on seven treatises of Abhidhamma Pitaka. According to Ācariya Anuruddha Thera, it had nine chapters which is described about Abhidhamma in brief and grand as following: Citta, Cetasika, Pakinnaka, Vithi, Vithimutta, Rūpa, Samuccaya, Paccaya and Kammatthāna chapter.

The Abhidhammattha- Sangaha and its popularity could be accounted for remarkable balance between concision and comprehensiveness. The essential things of Abhidhammā are briefly and carefully summarized within a short scope and it leads the students to lead the life confidently through the winding maze of system to a clear perception of entire structure (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2006, 15; Narada Thera, 1956, 35).

The seven treatises of Abhidhamma which were widely accepted in Theravāda Buddhism were expounded by the Buddha. It was difficult to understand without clear explanation because these terms are stranger than the terms used in daily routine of life as the meaning is quite deeper to understand. The subject matters of Abhidhamma are the four ultimate realities, the perceptions and the causal relations between them like Citta (Consciousness), Cetasika (Mental concomitants), Rūpa (Matter), Nibbāna (Stage of freedom from attachments), and Paññatti (Concepts). The treatment of the subject-matter is highly technical and remarkably systematic making use of purely philosophical terms true in the absolute sense. Thus, Abhidhamma is very useful, worthy unit of Buddhism (Ven. Nandamālābhivamsa, 2011, 14; Min Tin Mon, 2002, 20).

The Abhidhammattha- Sangaha can serve as a primer of Abhidhamma and its utility which ranks highly, and excessively condensed points stimulating students, who wish to study with efforts. It cannot be easily understood without explanation because of extreme concision.

The monks, novices and nuns in Myanmar eager to study the Abhidhammattha-Sangaha as part of the syllabus at various levels from basic to advanced courses: Mūla Course, Pathamange Course, Pathamalat Course and Pathamage course called as Pathamapyān examination. In 1638 A.D, the Pathamapyān examination was held in Myanmar. There are four types of grades in Pathamapyān examination as following, pre-primary grade, primary grade, middle grade, and higher grade.

Among them, the pre-primary grade was started in 1984 and held yearly because the primary grade is very difficult for the young novice and nuns. However, it comes to the end in 2002 and was resurrected in 2016 current years. The students aged 12 years must enter to take that pre-primary examination.

There are four types of subjects in pre-primary grade as following, Vinaya subject, Kaccāyana subject, Abhidhammattha-Sangaha subject, and Tikamātikā subject. Each subject pertains five questions which are equal each 10 marks. The students who got 20 marks in each subject were recognised as successful.

The Abhidhammattha- Sangaha subject is concerned with distinctive features, original definition, interpretation and canonical of Citta, Cetasika, Pakinnaka, Rūpa and Samuccaya chapters.

The students aged 13, who passed pre-primary grade must enter to take primary examination. There are five types of subjects in primary grade as following, Vinaya subject, Kaccāyana subject, Abhidhammattha- Sangaha subject, Tikamātikā- Dukamātikā-Dhātukathā subject and Jātakapāli-Atthakathā subject.

For Abhidhammattha- Sangaha, the distinctive features, original definition, interpretation and canonical of Citta, Cetasika, Pakinnaka, Vithi, Vithimutta, Rūpa, Samuccaya, Paccaya and Patthāna chapters. The detailed explanations and definitions (Citta to end chapters) according to VibhāvanīTīkā (Venerable Khammai Dhammasāmi, 2004).

The students who have been 14 years and who have passed primary grade must enter to take middle examination. There are six types of subjects in middle grade as following, Vinaya subject, Kaccāyana subject, Abhidhammattha- Sangaha subject, Suttantikamātikā-Dhātukathā subject, Yamaka subject and Jātakapāli- Atthakathā subject.

The students who are aged 15 years and who have passed middle grade must be enter to take the high examination. There are seven types of subjects in high grade as following, Vinaya subject, Kaccāyana subject, Abhidhammattha- Sangaha subject, Abhidhāna- Subodhālinkāra-Vuttodaya subject, Yamaka subject, Patthāna subject and Jātakapāli-Atthakathā subject.

In the aspects of teaching, the essential things are the teaching techniques and qualities of teacher. There are various techniques to make students understand their literatures easily for students. However, the three kinds of techniques widely used in Myanmar are as follows- Mandalay teaching technique, Pakokku teaching technique, and Modern teaching technique.

In Mandalay, a city in Myanmar, the teachers (monks) taught the Buddhist literature day and night by turns. So, the Mandalay became an important center of teaching and learning of Buddhist literature. Subsequently, the teachers taught the students by their own style and technique to easily understand the learning of the Buddha. This teaching technique was handed over from one generation to another.

The Mandalay method has developed numerous treatises on teaching of mastering the Tipitaka. It takes two years for an exceptionally capable student to read them and up to 12 years for a less able one. An auxiliary work called Bayargyi Niyam is an example of how one could study writing in Pali and commentarial methods. Written in Burmese poetic language, it is a summary of all Pali grammatical rules, with the length of each rule that usually has two lines, and that runs around 254 sentences to 15 pages of A4 size. One has to study it under the guidance in order to comprehend it fully. This Bayargyi Niyam is widely used throughout the country and was written by Bayargyi Sayadaw.

This is, "Naywar" "day-lessons" taught in Mandalay. In the whole day, the monks, novices and nuns are reciting to memorize all of literature from books. In the night, the monks, novices and nuns are reciting to memorize all of literature in the dark without seeing books (Venerable Khammai Dhammasāmi, 2004).

The Mandalay teaching technique was mostly dependent on commentaries and sub-commentaries which is analytical and critical analysis of Pāli grammar rules because it always analyses literature word by word. For example, it needs to describe the relation with different texts using words, sentences, adjectives, to show **Sambandha (relation)** in the sentences. The Bhāva of the interpretation of active voice of pre- words like **Tta and Taare** explained in details, for example, Pākam tassa phalattā or āpodhātu Sītātā and Rūpassa lahutā. There are other associations like, if there is **Idāni and Āha** in the sentence, the word of **Āhas** to be considered as present tense. If there is word Tattha mentioned in the sentence, it has to be understood differently eg. Tattha katamam kāmāvacaram (Venerable Khantīcāra, 2006). Thus, the meaning of the sentence changes with the additional words.

Obviously, the Mandalay teaching technique is quite ancient and reputed. It emphasizes on all examinations related to Tipitaka literature. In Mandalay teaching technique, the lecturer explains the various shades of meaning in a word and a sentence.

However, if it is necessary, Ñyāsa technique (definition in connection with other allied facts), Netti technique (inferred definition), Patthāna technique (definition connected with Abhidhamma), and Samvannanā technique (detailed definition) is given as follow, Sambandha Samvannanā technique, Pada-Samvannanā technique, Padattha

Samvannanā technique, Padavibhāga - Samvannanā technique, Codanā Samvannanā technique, and Parihāra-Samvannanā technique. The lecturer makes an evidence in his resourcefulness in the grammar and Abhidhamma knowledge by these techniques. Therefore, Mandalay teaching technique develops resourcefulness and abilities (Silācāra Thera, 1928, 76; Venerable Jāgara, 1924, 54).

Apart from its emphasis on grammatical study, the Mandalay-nee studies the Abhidhammattha-sangaha, both exegetical and canonical works, through tables. For example, one can study Mūla Yamaka and Khandha Yamaka with only three tables each. One teaches how to produce the original Pali passages in the canonical text without ever having seen the original. And there are many different interpretations of a passage, not so much of a text, in the Mandalay method. So, a student may spend as much as several months studying only a few passages in a Pali text from various teachers. Therefore, it is essential in the Mandalay method that the student who lives in Mandalay follows lectures by a particular teacher, who may be one of those who set the questions for exams. This is known as Saya-Ābaw, “teachers’ opinions”, in interpreting any passage of the prescribed texts (Venerable Khammai Dhammasāmi, 2004).

Mandalay teachers often make literary criticism of each other, although a student is not encouraged to present his own interpretation. To study a sutta in the Mandalay method, one has to study some Pali grammar and basic Buddhist philosophy. Despite having learnt many techniques for mastering the Tipitaka in a shorter time, a student in the Mandalay method does not become well-read. He may still have to read half of the Vinaya-Pitaka at the end of his training. This makes him less well-informed and does not enable him to develop a general understanding of a certain topic, for instance, about the development of the early monastic community, because he has not read the whole Vinaya-Pitaka. But the efficient students of the Mandalay-nee are known for their thorough knowledge of Pali grammar and for their skill in explaining the hidden meaning of the Pali passages in a canonical text.

The Pali Nikāyas form a central part of the curriculum, are studied with commentaries and sub-commentaries under a teacher. The Pakokku disapproves of the Mandalay technique for wasting time on auxiliary works that do not help one directly to “see the Buddha”. According to Pakokku’s masters, it was the way one could master both Pali and the Tipitaka at the same time. The Pakokku technique also retained the tradition of a Sar-so, “reciter of Burmese paraphrase”, who was treated as an assistant teacher. A Pakokku Sar-so was well respected in any part of the country (Ven. Kesavābhivaṁsa, 1938).

Neither of the two traditions are committed to memorising of the suttas, while some basic texts, such as Kaccāyana Pali Grammar, the Abhidhammattha- Sangaha and the Pātimokkha, were learnt by heart in both techniques. Being a higher study center, the Pakokku tradition in Myanmar did not teach a foundation course as well as there is a lack of any formal examination in a way that lay supporters and patrons could be convinced that the monks had made progress in study. Because of these two factors, the Mandalay technique has become more popular throughout the country. With oral and written tests, and the award of certificates and properties, it was easier for other parts of the country to adopt Mandalay teaching method as standard. The most important factor was, however, that since the Ava period, as we have discussed so far, the Mandalay method has been favored by successive governments for it had formal examinations.

Each tradition had its own excellence and, perhaps, shortcomings. The Pakokku student was valued for his mastery of a wealth of information, and for the ease with which he could locate any reference within the canon. In an approaching Tipitaka literature, the Pakokku teaching technique focuses on the ability to understand and translate the original texts oneself applying all relevant

commentaries and sub-commentaries. It explains in details, the forms of using relevant commentaries and sub-commentaries to focus the original senses of each canonical words (Venerable Paññā Thera, 1944).

The Mandalay student, however, was marked by his mastery of grammar and logic. It was felt that any deficiencies of a particular technique were remedied when one came to teach: the one who had a lot of information at his fingertips learnt coherence and logic through his teaching; the one who was skilled in grammar and logic found out how to apply them practically by acquiring more information.

The problem would, however, be that, as qualifications from various formal examination boards became increasingly important, the teachers would not get to teach “great texts” which would bring them a wealth of information for students had no time to study these texts because, as mentioned earlier, they were not a part of the syllabus for examinations. Although both approaches were highly regarded in the Order, nevertheless, successive governments had ignored the Pakokku technique, and thereby caused damage to both approaches, and indeed, in the long run, to the study of Buddhist scriptures.

Nowadays, most students have to combine the Mandalay teaching technique with Pakokku teaching technique to be qualified and be completed in understanding of Buddhist literatures. Both of these teaching techniques are effective in their respective areas because the Mandalay teaching technique emphasis on techniques and grammar rules and Pakokku teaching technique emphasis on understanding of the entire texts. However, the Mandalay teaching technique elaborates a slight of text in various techniques. Therefore, if those who have been learning Pāli grammar by Mandalay teaching technique should study continuously the whole Tipitaka literature by Pakokku teaching technique, their grammar and text can be integrated and reinforce the learning and teaching of Tipitaka literatures effectively owing to the mastery of grammar rules and techniques by ways of Mandalay can be supplemented in extensive reading and the abilities of holding canonical relevant commentaries and sub-commentaries is also important thing. Actually, there is no easy way to become a qualified teacher in Mandalay teaching technique whereas there is difficult to become a complete teacher in Pakokku teaching technique.

Finally, the teaching techniques of Mandalay and Pakokku together can support to understand Abhidhammattha-Sangaha easily for fresh students in short time. As the benefits of these techniques, most monks, novices and nuns can get their degree and be successful in examinations.

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