

PREFACE

The teachings of Lord Buddha in the course of 45 years of His Buddhahood have been divided into three collections called Tipiṭaka, literally meaning 'Three Baskets'.

The first collection is known as 'Sutta piṭaka'. It is the conventional teaching (Vohāra desanā) in which Buddha used common vocabulary to explain His teachings. Practical aspects of tranquility and insight meditations are included in this collection.

The second collection is called 'Vinaya piṭaka'. It is the authoritative teaching (Ānādesanā) in which Buddha used His authority over the monks to lay down rules and disciplines for them to follow. These disciplines embody the highest code of ethics and can surely purify one's action, speech and thought, thus making one noble and respectful.

The third collection is 'Abhidhamma piṭaka'. It is the higher teaching of the Buddha. Here Buddha employed abstract terms to describe the ultimate realities (paramatthas) in the Universe and Nibbāna which is the summum bonum and the highest goal of Buddhism.

So Abhidhamma may be regarded as the ultimate teaching (Paramattha desanā) of the Lord Buddha.

The principles and the causal relations which Buddha expounded in Abhidhamma are so natural, logical and beautiful that they can point out the root cause of miseries in the world and the ways to eradicate these miseries.

The most wonderful thing about Buddha's teachings is that the teachings contain both theory and practice, and they clearly and exactly define the human values, the best moral code, the eternal peace and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to that peace. All these valuable teachings have been verified time and again by millions of Ariyās, i.e. noble persons, who had trodden on the path, and can still

be verified at any time by any able person who will earnestly and steadfastly follow the path.

The Significance of Abhidhamma

Sutta piṭaka and Abhidhamma piṭaka are collectively known as Dhamma- a pāli word- meaning 'the doctrine or the teaching' of the Buddha. Dhamma is the doctrine that can salvage persons who abide by Dhamma from falling into the four lower abodes (apāyas) and that can purify the mind from defilements so as to achieve lasting peace and happiness.

The prefix 'Abhi' is used in the sense of preponderant, great, excellent, sublime, distinct, marvelous, etc.

Abhidhamma piṭaka is more preponderant, more sublime and more marvelous than Sutta piṭaka in the sense that

(I) Abhidhamma piṭaka contains more Dhamma groups (Dhammakkhandhas) than Sutta piṭaka and Vinaya piṭaka.

(Abhidhamma consists of 42000 dhammakkhandhas whereas sutta piṭaka and Vinaya piṭaka contain 21000 dhammakkhandhas each.)

(II) Buddha used more numerous methods in expounding Abhidhamma than when He taught Sutta Dhamma; and

(III) in Abhidhamma Buddha analysed mind and matter in detail in terms of the ultimate realities known as 'paramatthas'.

The Abhidhamma piṭaka consists of seven treatises-namely, Dhammasaṅgānī, vibhaṅga, Dhātukathā, Puggalapaññatti, Kathāvatthu, Yamaka and Paṭṭhāna.

The subject matter of Abhidhamma is the four ultimate realities (paramatthas) and causal relations between them. The treatment of the subject —matter is highly technical and remarkably systematic, using purely philosophical terms, true in the absolute sense.

There is, however, a well-known treatise called Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha, which is the most fitting essence to Abhidhamma. This

treatise, written by Venerable Anuruddha Thera, an Indian monk of Kañcipura (Kanjeevaram), summarises all the important points of Abhidhamma very systematically.

The treatise, originally written in pāli, has been translated into several languages. In Myanmar the subject matter of this treatise is included in the course of study for novices and monks, and is also used as the course of Abhidhamma examinations held every year throughout Myanmar by the ministry of Religious Affairs.

Abhidhamma is really the golden knowledge which will help one to discard wrong views and to acquire the right view for one's total liberation from all miseries.

Everybody who wants to liberate, from Saṃsāra or from all suffering, needs to understand Abhidhamma clearly. By that dedication I have submitted this dissertation entitled 'Abhidhammat-thasaṅgaha: A study' under the supervision of Prof.Dr. Kanchan Mande, Department of Sanskrit and Prakrit Languages, to the University of Pune for a degree of doctor of philosophy.