

WHAT A TRUE BUDDHIST SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE PALI CANON*

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Abstract

The Pali Canon refers to the set of scriptures in which the Buddha's teachings, the Dhamma "Doctrine" and Vinaya "Discipline", are enshrined. The Pali term *Tipiṭaka* "three baskets [of teachings]" denotes the three major divisions of the Canon.

As the Buddha clearly stated that the Dhamma and Vinaya were to succeed him as Teacher after his passing away, it follows that the Pali Canon is in effect where Buddhists can still have an audience with their Teacher and learn his Teaching even though he passed away over 2,500 years ago.

The First Rehearsal, whose purpose was to collect and organise the word of the Buddha, did not take place until three months after his demise. As it

was conducted by an assembly of 500 Arahant elders (*thera*), this event also gave rise to what is now known as Theravāda Buddhism. During the rehearsal, once any given portion of the teachings was agreed upon, it was chanted in unison by the assembly. The text chanted was thereby formally endorsed as the model to be committed word for word to the memory and to be passed on to others and handed down to posterity.

The teachings thus orally transmitted were first written down during the Fourth Rehearsal, conducted in Sri Lanka around B.E. 460.

The Pali Canon of Theravāda Buddhism, after two and a half millennia and six major rehearsals, has been generally recognised as the oldest, most original, most complete, and most accurate record of the Buddha's teachings still available today.

As the principal and ultimate authoritative reference, the Pali Canon provides the standards or criteria for judging whether a given teaching or way of practice truly belongs to Buddhism. It is thus the duty and responsibility of all Buddhists to preserve and protect the Pali Canon, which is crucial for the survival of Buddhism, and hence for the welfare and happiness of the world.

This paper offers an overview of the Pali Canon by addressing such crucial questions as: What is the Pali Canon? Why is it so important? What is a rehearsal and how was it conducted? How has the Pali Canon been preserved and handed down to us? What is its relevance in the modern world? A concise summary of the Pali Canon is also provided, with a discussion of its supplemental scriptures.

*Based on information from three sources: (1) the book entitled รู้จักพระไตรปิฎก เพื่อเป็นชาวพุทธที่แท้ "Get to know the Pali Canon to be a true Buddhist", (2) the book entitled กรณีธรรมกาย "The Dhammakāya Case", and (3) the preface to the forthcoming edition of the Romanised Pali Canon to be published by the Dhamma Society Fund, this English summary was prepared by Dr Somseen Chanawangsa, Fellow of the Royal Institute (Thailand), who is solely responsible for any shortcomings, linguistic or otherwise.

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Introduction

Buddhism is not a philosophy

Before going on to talk about the Pali Canon, it is necessary to make a distinction between philosophy and religion. Philosophy is primarily concerned with *rational investigation*, to try to arrive at the truth of something through reasoning or argumentation. What is at issue or being investigated might not have anything to do with how one's life is actually conducted. For instance, philosophers might debate the question of the origin and the end of the universe, the doomsday, or the origin of life. Furthermore, the ways philosophers lead their lives do not necessarily follow any principle, or even conform to what they investigate. While they are doing their philosophical thinking, their personal lives might be just the opposite. Some philosophers, for example, could be highly volatile and unpredictable, some could be habitually up to no good, indulging in drinking or gambling, and some were so miserable and depressed that they committed suicide.

By contrast, religion involves *practice*, a way of living, or useful application in real life. The way a religion is practised has to be based on a canon, or fundamental principle accepted as axiomatic, with a clear goal. Thus, practitioners of a given religion have to start with the accepting of the canon of that religion. More specifically, they have to believe in the enlightenment of, or the discovery of truth by, the *founder*; they have to accept the tenets laid down by him, his *teachings*. Therefore, a religious practitioner, in contradistinction to a philosopher, will zoom in on the founder's teachings,

and presumably practise what is preached to him if he is a devout one. As a rule, the founder's teachings are collected, preserved, and handed down in the form of a *scripture*.

In this light, Buddhism is definitely not a philosophy, but a religion. With Gotama the Buddha being the founder, whose Enlightenment all Buddhists believe in. Buddhism teaches a way of life which ultimately leads to the goal of final deliverance from suffering. The voluminous scripture where the tenets of Buddhism can be found, is called the *Pali Canon*. To derive the most benefit from the religion, a true Buddhist has to practise it properly. And to ensure the right practice, a basic understanding of the Pali Canon is called for.

The word of the Buddha: the quintessence of Buddhism

Generally speaking, the term *Buddha-sāsana* "Buddhism" has a very broad semantic coverage, embracing everything ranging from the teachings, the Order of monks, organisations, institutions and religious affairs, down to religious places and objects. According to its literal meaning, however, the term refers to "the Teaching of the Buddha". And technically speaking, this indeed constitutes the quintessence of Buddhism, anything other than this being merely its extension or offshoot.

Once this true meaning is grasped, it can be seen that the survival of Buddhism means in effect the existence of the Buddha's teachings. Should his teachings fade away, no matter how many people, religious affairs, and huge religious places and objects there might be, Buddhism cannot be said to exist any more.

Conversely, even if the foregoing external concrete things should be lost, but if the teachings survive, Buddhism can still become known. For this reason, the true preservation of Buddhism boils down to maintaining the Buddha's teachings.

To be more specific, the Teaching of the Buddha refers to the word of the Buddha or what the Buddha said (*Buddhavacana*). Essentially, then, to maintain Buddhism is to preserve the word of the Buddha.

By "the word of the Buddha" are meant the Doctrine (*Dhamma*) and Discipline (*Vinaya*) set forth and laid down by him. Not long before his Final Nibbāna, the Buddha himself said that not any one monk was to be appointed his successor as Teacher after his passing away. Instead, he made it known to all Buddhists that the Doctrine and Discipline would take his place. A great number of Buddhists even remember the exact wording in Pali, thus:

*Yo vo ānanda mayā dhammo ca
vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo
mamaccayena satthā*

"Ānanda! the Doctrine and Discipline I have set forth and laid down for you all shall be your Teacher after I am gone."

On this account, the word of the Buddha is both Buddhism (i.e. what the Buddha taught) and the dwelling place of the Teacher by virtue of maintaining and proclaiming the Doctrine and Discipline on his behalf.

The Pali Canon: a first look

The scripture enshrining the word of the Buddha—the Dhamma and Vinaya—is generally known to the

Westerner as the *Pali Canon* because it contains the fundamental principle, of a religion, Buddhism in this case, and the text of this canon is recorded in the Pali language. The Pali term for the Pali Canon, however, is *Tipiṭaka*, from *ti* "three" + *piṭaka* "text, scripture, or basket (where things are collected)", which literally designates its three major divisions:

The *Vinayaṭiṭaka* is the collection of monastic rules laid down by the Buddha for monks and nuns.

The *Suttantapiṭaka* is the collection of discourses, or specific teachings that were expounded by the Buddha to suit the individual, place, and event or situation in question, together with supplemental material.

The *Abhidhammapiṭaka* is the collection of the teachings that are purely substantive or academic, without reference to any individuals or events, and without any supplemental material.

As a matter of fact, the Pali Canon is not a single-volume scripture, but an enormous set of scriptures containing as many as 84,000 textual units. The version in Thai script is traditionally printed in 45 volumes, signifying the 45 years of the Buddha's ministry, with over 22,000 pages or approximately 24,300,000 letters. Each *piṭaka* is classified into sections and further classified into a complex of subdivisions (please see the outline of classification on page 111).

Part One

The significance of the Pali Canon

The significance of the Pali Canon in the maintenance of the Teaching can

be appreciated more when the Pali Canon is seen in relation to other components of Buddhism.

• The Pali Canon and the Triple Gem

The principal reason for the paramount importance of the Pali Canon is that it is where the Triple Gem, also the Three Refuges for all Buddhists, is preserved:

1. *The Pali Canon is the dwelling place of the Buddha.* As mentioned earlier, the Dhamma and Vinaya is our Teacher on the Buddha's behalf after his Final Nibbāna. In this light, we Buddhists can still have an audience with the Teacher in the Pali Canon even though he passed away over 2,500 years ago.

2. *The Pali Canon performs the duty of the Dhamma.* It is through the Pali Canon that we can get to know the Dhamma and Vinaya, or simply abbreviated as the Dhamma. This is also evidenced from the fact that when we need something to symbolise the Dhamma, it is the Tipiṭaka that is often used.

3. *The Pali Canon is where the Sangha is accommodated.* The Sangha owes its existence to the rules laid down by the Buddha in the Tipiṭaka. In other words, Buddhist monks that form the Sangha can be ordained and remain in their monkhood only because of the Vinaya.

The *Vinayapīṭaka* in the Pali Canon contains the rules and regulations laid down by the Buddha to maintain the Order of monks (*Bhikkhusaṅgha*). The Sangha can survive only because of the monastic disciplines. The Vinaya

is therefore the place where the Sangha is formed and where it is maintained. Conversely, the Sangha is entrusted with the duty to preserve and keep alive the Teaching. The Sangha is thus closely attached to the Tipiṭaka.

To sum up, the Triple Gem has to rely on the Pali Canon to manifest itself to the populace of the world, starting with the Buddhists themselves. The Pali Canon is therefore important as the vehicle through which the Triple Gem becomes known. Preserving the Pali Canon is in effect maintaining the Triple Gem, which is also maintaining Buddhism itself.

• The Pali Canon and the Four Assemblies

The Buddha once said he would enter the Final Nibbāna only when the Four Assemblies, namely monks and nuns—whether they were elders, middlings or newly ordained ones—together with laymen and laywomen—celibate and married alike—were endowed with the qualities of worthy custodians of the Teaching, as follows:

1. They must be well versed in the teachings of the Buddha and have proper conduct in accordance with the teachings;

2. They must be able to teach others, having conducted themselves well;

3. They must be able to confute false doctrines, or teachings that are distorted or different from the original Doctrine and Discipline, when such teachings arise.

Not long before the Buddha's demise, Māra the Evil One approached him and reminded him that it was time for him to attain his Final Nibbāna now

that the Four Assemblies were already endowed with the desired qualities mentioned above—which was the precondition the Buddha had earlier set for his own Final Nibbāna. When the Buddha saw that that was indeed the case, he immediately agreed to take the Final Nibbāna and therefore relinquished his will to live on.

This saying of the Buddha in effect entrusted the Teaching to the Four Assemblies. But care must also be taken as to what type of Buddhist is worthy of this task.

Buddhists can qualify as worthy custodians of the Teaching only when there is a scripture from which to learn and understand the authentic Doctrine and Discipline in the first place.

So in this sense, the Pali Canon is the guiding principle for the Four Assemblies and must exist alongside them, providing the basis for their becoming worthy custodians of the Teaching.

These two sides—preservers of the Teaching and the Teaching to be preserved—are mutually dependent. To put it another way, in order for the Teaching to survive and bear fruit, it is the Four Assemblies in whom the Teaching becomes manifested and by whom it is preserved, and at the same time it is also the Four Assemblies by whom the Teaching is utilised and in whom the results of practice in accordance with the Teaching are manifested.

• The Pali Canon and the three true doctrines

From another perspective, what Buddhism is all about can be summarised in three words: *Pariyatti*,

Paṭipatti, and *Paṭivedha*, or the three true doctrines.

Pariyatti refers to the word of the Buddha that we study, through the Pali Canon, without which the Buddha's teachings could never reach us. We can say that the *Pariyatti* is the result of the *Paṭivedha* and is also the basis for the practice (*Paṭipatti*).

After achieving the goal as a result of his practice, the Buddha proclaimed the Teaching, based on his own experiences. The word of the Buddha thus became our *Pariyatti*, i.e. what we have to learn. However, when we regard the *Pariyatti* as the result of the *Paṭivedha*, we exclusively refer to the *Paṭivedha* of the Buddha, the result of his own practice and the result of practice accepted by the Buddha, not the result of practice of just any yogi, rishi, ascetic, hermit, recluse, anchorite, preacher, cult leader, or founder of any other religion.

Without learning the *Pariyatti* or what the Buddha taught, our practice would be misguided, mistaken, and different from the original Teaching. If our practice was wrong, whatever result we achieved could not be correct. And if we continued to deceive ourselves with our own findings that were erroneously taken to be true, there could be no way for the *Paṭivedha* to ensue.

Hence, without the *Pariyatti* as basis, the *Paṭipatti* and the *Paṭivedha* would also fail to materialise. All would collapse together.

To recapitulate, from the Buddha's own *Paṭivedha* comes our *Pariyatti*, which we learn and which provides the basis for our practice (*Paṭipatti*). When we practise properly, we will achieve the *Paṭivedha* just as the

Buddha did. As long as this cycle still goes on, the Buddha's Teaching will survive.

The *Pariyatti* that comes from the Buddha's *Paṭivedha* and provides the basis for all Buddhists to practise is to be found in the Pali Canon.

When emphasis is put on the Teaching itself, only *Pariyatti* and *Paṭipatti* are highlighted, with *Paṭivedha* being understood as the foregone conclusion.

Whether we trichotomise the Teaching into *Pariyatti-saddhamma*, *Paṭipatti-saddhamma*, and *Paṭivedha-saddhamma* (i.e. the three true doctrines) as above, or sometimes dichotomise it into *Pariyatti-sāsana* and *Paṭipatti-sāsana* (i.e. the two dispensations), it all boils down to the Pali Canon as the basis. Thus if we can preserve the Canon, so can we preserve Buddhism.

• The Pali Canon and the Threefold Training

On a more profound level, it is possible to incorporate Buddhism into the life of each individual.

Essentially, Buddhism can be seen as the resultant virtue, growth or development of the Threefold Training in one's life. In other words, having absorbed Buddhism, one can develop the Threefold Training into part and parcel of oneself.

The sort of Buddhism that constitutes one's life also has to rely on the Pali Canon, for Buddhism in this sense means the ability to get rid of greed, hatred and delusion, and to be able to get rid of greed, hatred and delusion, one has to train oneself in morality, concentration and wisdom.

In this regard, tradition has established a direct relationship between the three major divisions of the Pali Canon with the Threefold Training as follows:

The *Vinayapiṭaka* as the collection of monastic rules for monks, including both the 227 items of monastic rules of the *Pāṭimokkha* and those rules outside of the *Pāṭimokkha*, constitutes the Discipline or *sīla* "morality"—the training and development of bodily and verbal behaviour.

As a matter of fact, the *Suttantapiṭaka* encompasses all of the Threefold Training. But when it comes to the organisation of the teachings, the *Suttantapiṭaka* has traditionally been said to focus on the second component of the Threefold Training, viz. *samādhi* "concentration", or emotional development.

Finally, the focus of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* is on *paññā* "wisdom". In contemporary parlance, the contents of this *piṭaka* are purely scholarly or technical, bringing up for scrutiny phenomena that are subtle and profound. It thus belongs to the domain of wisdom, requiring profound penetrative knowledge.

If we observe the principles of morality, concentration and wisdom as expounded in the Pali Canon, our lives will become like the Teaching itself, thereby preserving Buddhism with our own lives. As long as we live, so will Buddhism survive. Wherever we are, there will be Buddhism. Whichever place we visit, Buddhism will reach there as well.

This is Buddhism at the consummate level of preservation. The Pali Canon is to be incorporated into an

individual's life. It does not merely exist in letter.

However, before Buddhism can be incorporated into individuals, the Pali Canon must first be there to contain and maintain the Teaching. Even when our practice progresses, we need to consult the monks who have learned from the Tipiṭaka, or from the ones who have learned from their predecessors who in turn have learned from the Tipiṭaka. The teachings may have been passed down dozens of generations like this to us. If we can read Pali, we can consult the Pali Canon ourselves. If not, we have to ask the learned monks for help. After we have obtained the required knowledge about the teachings, we can then practise properly to cultivate ourselves in morality, concentration, and wisdom.

***Saṅgāyana*: the rehearsal of the word of the Buddha**

What is a rehearsal?

As the maintenance of the word of the Buddha is essential to the maintenance of Buddhism, it is regarded as an absolute necessity and also an issue of crucial importance in Buddhism to preserve the word of the Buddha.

Therefore, great efforts have been made to preserve the word of the Buddha ever since the Buddha's time, even when he was still alive.

It was towards the end of the Buddha's lifetime when Nigantha Nātaputta, the founder of Jainism, passed away. His disciples had failed to collect his teachings and no agreement had been reached so that once their teacher was no longer alive, they were greatly

divided and engaged in heated arguments as to what exactly their teacher had preached.

Meanwhile the Venerable Cunda brought the news to the Buddha, who recommended that all the monks take part in rehearsing, or communally reciting, the Dhamma to ensure the sustainable existence of the Teaching for the welfare and benefit of the multitude.

At that time, the Venerable Sāriputta, the chief disciple, was still alive. On one occasion, when addressing this matter, he said that the problem with Jainism arose because the founder's teachings had not been collected and compiled. We the disciples of our Lord Buddha should therefore conduct a rehearsal to collect and compile his teachings, so that uniform standards could be established.

Having said this, the Elder Sāriputta demonstrated how a rehearsal should be conducted right before the Buddha and the assembly of monks. He collected the Buddha's teachings and expounded them, arranging them in groups of itemised dhamma according to the number of items involved, ranging from groups of one to groups of ten. Once the rehearsal was over, the Buddha voiced his approval, thereby endorsing the teachings collected and expounded by the Venerable Sāriputta. The teachings thus enumerated constitute a discourse called *Saṅgītisutta* "the discourse on communal recitations (*saṅgīti*)", and can be found in the *Dīghanikāya* of the *Suttantapiṭaka*.

The method of preserving the word of the Buddha is to collect the Buddha's teachings, classify them in such a way as to facilitate memorisation, rehearse

and review them until everything is in place, and chant them in unison, thus showing their approval for the text in question to serve as the model to be committed word for word to memory, then to be passed on to others and handed down to posterity. This method is called *saṅgāyana*, or *saṅgīti*, literally “chanting together” (from *saṃ* “together” + *gāyana* or *gīti* “chanting”).

The term *saṅgāyana* is variously rendered into English as *rehearsal*, *communal recital*, and *communal recitation*. Sometimes it is equated with a Western concept. In particular, a Buddhist rehearsal is often referred to as a *Buddhist Council*. Conversely, the term *council* (e.g. the Vatican Council in Christianity) is translated into Thai as *sangkhayana* (for the Pali *saṅgāyana*). The meanings of these two terms are only partially comparable, but in essence they are quite different.

In a Christian Council, they convene to settle disputes about their tenets, and even to formulate their dogma and policy in propagating their religion. In a Buddhist rehearsal, by contrast, the primary purpose is to preserve the original teachings of the Buddha as accurately as possible, not allowing anyone to alter, modify, omit, or add anything at whim. The duty of the participants is to check, rehearse, and review the teachings. Anyone's convictions or teachings that deviate or differ from the original, authentic teachings are to be adjusted or corrected accordingly.

The First Rehearsal

Although the Venerable Sāriputta set an example of how a rehearsal should be conducted, he did not live long enough to continue with his work, as

he himself passed away before the Buddha did. Nevertheless, the task of rehearsing the word of the Buddha was carried on by another senior disciple of the Buddha, namely the Venerable Mahākassapa, who was the most senior monk when the Buddha attained his Final Nibbāna.

The Venerable Mahākassapa learned of the Buddha's demise seven days later, when he was travelling, accompanied by a large group of his students.

On hearing the news, many of his followers who were still worldly beings started to weep and lament over the Buddha's demise. However, a monk by the name of Subhadda, who had been ordained in his old age, said to them, “Why bother to weep at all? Isn't it nice that the Buddha has attained his Final Nibbāna? When he was alive, he was always being very strict with us, forbidding us to do this, telling us to do that. We had difficulty being on our guard. Now that he has passed away, we shall do just as we like. We'll do whatever we like, and we'll not do whatever we don't like.”

On hearing this, the Elder Mahākassapa thought to himself that even as shortly after the Buddha's Final Nibbāna as this, there were already people who were intent on deviating from the Doctrine and Discipline. It was thus advisable to rehearse the Buddha's teachings.

He planned to invite the senior Arahant elders of the time to convene for a rehearsal, as they had all met the Buddha in person, listening to his teachings, and were among his disciples who had regularly held discussions, cross-checking one another, thereby knowing first-hand what

constituted the Buddha's teachings. The meeting was to expound and collect his teachings, and then to settle them by consensus.

In the meantime, however, the Elder Mahākassapa had to travel to Kusinārā and then presided over the cremation of the Buddha, a function under the auspices of the Malla kings.

When the cremation was over, the Venerable Mahākassapa embarked on his plan and invited the Arhant elders for the rehearsal.

Then came the great rehearsal itself, which took three months to prepare before taking place at the Sattapaṇṇa-guhā Cave, on Mount Vebhāra, outside of Rājagaha, under the auspices of King Ajātasattu.

The Venerable Mahākassapa presided over this assembly, and also acted as the interrogator about the teachings, which were divided by the Buddha himself into two major domains: the Doctrine (*Dhamma*) and the Discipline (*Vinaya*).

The Dhamma refers to the teachings on the truth of all things, along with ways of practice advised by the Buddha, which are consonant with the truth thus expounded.

The Vinaya, on the other hand, refers to the collection of rules laid down by the Buddha that regulate the conduct of monks and nuns.

Therefore, Buddhism is also known as *Dhamma-Vinaya*, and the rehearsal of the Buddha's teachings is the rehearsal of the Dhamma and Vinaya.

For the purpose of this rehearsal, two eminent elders were selected for their

accurate retention of the word of the Buddha and for their expertise in each domain of the Teaching.

As for the Dhamma, the elder who had always been close to the Buddha and listened to his teaching was the Elder Ānanda, the Buddha's personal attendant. He was thus assigned by the assembly to expound the Doctrine.

When it comes to the Vinaya, the elder personally praised by the Buddha as excellent in the Vinaya was the Venerable Upāli. He was thus chosen by the assembly to clarify issues relating to the Discipline.

Once the individuals concerned were all set, the assembly of 500 Arahant elders started to convene.

The two elders were then made to recite the Buddha's teachings to the assembly. The Elder Mahākassapa, who presided over the assembly, laid down the method of presentation, i.e. by systematically interrogating them on the teachings in sequence and in classified groups.

The Buddha's teachings together with related matters thus rehearsed would have been approved by the Buddha himself during his lifetime. However, in the First Rehearsal, the task of certifying his teachings fell on the shoulders of this 500-strong assembly instead. Once a consensus was reached on the content of a given topic, the elders would chant it together so that the content thus approved would be settled as the model for memorisation and transmission later on.

It took them seven months to complete this historic rehearsal, whose account can be found in the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.

The advent of Theravāda Buddhism

The teachings thus agreed upon that have been handed down to us are called *Theravāda*, or “the teachings laid down as principles of the Elders.” The word “Elders” in this context refers to those 500 Arahant elders participating in this First Rehearsal.

The Buddhism that is based on the First Rehearsal mentioned above is called *Theravāda Buddhism*. In other words, the Buddha’s teachings, namely the Doctrine and Discipline, both in letter and in spirit, that were thus rehearsed were to be remembered as such and strictly adhered to.

Even the original language of the text, namely Pali, was to be kept for the purpose of preserving the original wording of the authentic teaching. Therefore, the Canon of Theravāda Buddhism has been in Pali just as it was rehearsed.

How did the Tipiṭaka come about?

In the rehearsal, the Buddha’s teachings were not only collected, but also categorised. The purpose of the classification was to facilitate memorisation and division of labour in maintaining the teachings. The classification was also meant to be conducive to learning and research.

The original division of the teachings into Dhamma and Vinaya was later revised to allow further divisions.

Unlike the Vinaya, whose scope was narrower, dealing with monastic rules to protect the Sangha for the wellbeing of the communities of monks and

nuns, the Dhamma embraced the entirety of the teachings, for all the Four Assemblies. Due to the enormous size of its text, the Dhamma was regrouped into two major divisions.

1. The first category of Dhamma was expounded on specific occasions.

On being asked by the individuals he met, the Buddha would answer their questions. The answers he gave to, or the dialogues he had with, a farmer, a brahmin, a king, or a prince would each constitute a complete unit in itself, called *sutta* “discourse”. The teachings expounded in this way were collected and classified as a group called the *Suttanta*.

2. The other category of Dhamma was expounded contentwise, without reference to individuals or events, and without regard to the audience, aiming only for the content, i.e. purely in scholarly or academic terms.

When a particular topic of dhamma is brought up, it will be explained in exhaustive detail. For example, in discussing the five aggregates, there are explanations as to what they are, and how they are divided, followed by the nature of each aggregate. The explanations will go on until the topic of the five aggregates is completed. The discussion of Dependent Origination will also proceed in the same way, with explanations in various aspects given until the details of this topic are exhausted. The teachings expounded by content in this manner were classified as another group called the *Abhidhamma*.

With the division of the Dhamma into the *Suttanta* and the *Abhidhamma*, plus the *Vinaya*, which remained as such, there arose a new way of

classifying the Doctrine and Discipline into three divisions, which came to be known as the *Tipiṭaka*.

The term *piṭaka* literally means “basket”, with a metaphorical meaning of “collection.” Just as a basket or other similar type of container collects articles, so each *piṭaka* collects each major division of the Buddha’s teachings.

How has the Pali Canon been preserved and handed down to us?

The First Rehearsal is without doubt the most important, as all the word of the Buddha that was collected on this occasion, memorised and handed down, was treated as settled and final. From then on, it was a matter of retaining and preserving the word of the Buddha collected in the First Rehearsal as accurately, purely and completely as possible—in short, pristinely and perfectly. For this reason, from then on the elders preserving the word of the Buddha would focus on preservation through recitation, devolving the retention of different divisions of the teachings to different groups of monks.

On this account, the First Rehearsal is the only one which truly collected the Buddha’s teachings. In later rehearsals the elder monks who retained the word of the Buddha simply convened to rehearse and review what had been preserved in the First Rehearsal to ensure that the teachings were pristine and perfect, i.e. complete, accurate and unadulterated.

Due to the subsequently added burden of preventing bogus teachings and ways of practice, the retention of the word of the Buddha had an additional

emphasis on applying the teachings thus retained as criteria for verifying teachings and practices claimed to be Buddhist. As a result, the Pali word *saṅgāyana* when used in Thai acquired the extended meaning of purging bogus teachings and practices.

Furthermore, after a long lapse of time, some people took this extended meaning to be the central meaning of “rehearsal”, to the extent that they even forgot its true meaning. At present, some might go so far as to misunderstand that the participants in a rehearsal will collaborate in checking the teachings in the Pali Canon to see whether the “views” or “opinions” expressed therein are right or wrong—which in effect amounts to judging whether some of the Buddha’s teachings are right or wrong—and then proceed to amend them. It is thus necessary to understand clearly which meaning of *saṅgāyana* is original, and which meaning is derived.

Rehearsals in the true sense of the term—assemblies where the Buddha’s teachings as handed down to us were rehearsed, reviewed, and preserved as completely, accurately, pristinely and perfectly as possible—had two stages of development. The first stage involved reciting the teachings orally, called *mukhapāṭha* “oral transmission”, and the second stage—in later periods—involved writing the teachings down, called *poṭṭhakāropana* “putting down in books”.

In the initial stage of development or the first period, which extended from the Buddha’s time up to approximately 460 years after that, the elders preserving the Teaching would retain and pass down the word of the Buddha orally, by means of *mukhapāṭha*, i.e. learning, memorising, and transmitting

from mouth to mouth. This in effect entrusted the preservation to individuals. The good thing about this was that as monks in those days were well aware of the utmost importance of preserving the word of the Buddha, they would be very heedful, taking the best care to keep the teachings pristine and perfect. The preservation of the word of the Buddha was always regarded as the top priority in maintaining Buddhism.

The oral transmission was carried out by means of recitation, which can be divided into four levels:

(a) It was the responsibility of large groups of monks to pass down the teachings through the line of teachers, called *ācariyaparamparā* “succession of teachers” (also known as *theravāṇisa* “elders’ lineage”). This was started with the initial elders since the First Rehearsal; for instance, the Elder Upāli, the expert in the Discipline, had his line of students who were successively entrusted with preserving, teaching and expounding that particular division of the teachings.

(b) It was the main activity in a monk’s way of life to learn the teachings to acquire the basis for proper practice, which in turn would lead to the penetration of the Dhamma. Which division of the teachings a monk intended to specialise in was at his discretion. Therefore, there arose different groups of monks who were well versed in different parts of the Buddha’s teachings in the Pali Canon. For instance, the group with expertise in the *Dīghanikāya* including its commentaries was called *Dīghabhāṇaka* “reciter of the Collection of Long Discourses”. Likewise, there were *Majjhimbhāṇaka* “reciter of the Collection of Middle Length Discourses”,

Saṃyuttabhāṇaka “reciter of the Collection of Connected Discourses”, *Aṅguttarabhāṇaka* “reciter of the Collection of Numerical Sayings”, and *Khuddakabhāṇaka* “reciter of the Collection of Minor Works”, and so on.

(c) It was the routine of monks in each monastery or group to assemble and perform “group recitations”, or reciting the word of the Buddha together. (This practice may have been the origin of the daily routine of morning and evening chanting we are familiar with nowadays.)

(d) It was the routine or daily practice of each monk. As evidenced from the commentaries and other scriptures, monks when free from other tasks, e.g. when they were by themselves, would recite the word of the Buddha. Thus reciting the word of the Buddha was in effect a part of their daily Dhamma practice.

Regulated by the monastic rules of the Sangha to lead their lives along the path of the Threefold Training, and living in an atmosphere of learning and teaching for the purpose of proper practice, monks would naturally be prompted to recite and review the teachings on a regular basis all along.

How accurate was the memorised version of the Pali Canon?

Many people might wonder that since the Pali Canon was in the beginning preserved through memorisation, some of the text might be corrupted, vaguely remembered or even forgotten.

But on closer analysis, it becomes clear that preservation through recitation, i.e. by means of collective chanting and then rote memorisation,

can indeed be more accurate than writing down the teachings.

Why is that so? In committing the Buddha's teachings to memory, monks would recite them together, just as we do our chanting nowadays. When 10, 20, 50, or 100 people are chanting in unison, all the words chanted must be identical. No omissions are allowed. Nor is it permissible to add even a single word. Otherwise, the collective chanting would be out of sync and incongruous to such an extent that it might be halted altogether.

For this reason, in order for a great number of people's chanting to proceed smoothly and harmoniously, it is necessary for all of them to chant in exactly the same way. The Buddha's teachings were thus preserved through the collective reciting by large numbers of monks, who appreciated the value of the Pali Canon, knowing full well that it was in effect Buddhism. If the Pali Canon was lost, or corrupted, so was Buddhism.

Elders of old held the Pali Canon in high esteem. Even in the age when the Pali Canon was already written down, they still had this to say:

"A single letter of the Buddha's teachings is worth a Buddha image."

— *Ñāṇodayapakaṇṇa*

On the plus side, therefore, it is the duty of Buddhists to help preserve the Pali Canon. Even playing a small part in writing it down, or having it written down, is considered great merit.

Conversely, if anyone commits an error even with one single letter, it is tantamount to destroying a Buddha image, which is a serious offence.

Thus they were very careful about keeping the Pali Canon intact.

The confidence in the purity and completeness of the teachings was bolstered when the same teachings of the Buddha repeated four or five times in different sections of the Canon that came under the responsibility of different groups of specialist monks still turned out to be the same and hence mutually confirming. This attested to the accuracy in retention and rehearsal, and also the ability of even a single monk to retain so much of the word of the Buddha. In Myanmar nowadays we can find living examples in several monks on whom the title *Tipiṭakadhara* "bearer of the Pali Canon", has been bestowed, who are word-perfect in reciting the entire Pali Canon, which, according to the printed version in Thai script, is well over 22,000 pages in length.

What about the written version?

The second stage of development was the preservation of all the word of the Buddha and other related matters in the Pali Canon in writing, thus entrusting the preservation to external objects. This started around B.E. 460, when the Fourth Rehearsal was conducted at Ālokaleṇa in Sri Lanka.

The Fourth Rehearsal was conducted on account of the changing circumstances that posed a threat to the commitment of the word of the Buddha to memory. Monks of the future generations would presumably degenerate in terms of mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, with their faith and zeal diminishing, so that they would not be capable of preserving the word of the Buddha through oral transmission. It was thus decided that

the Pali Canon should be inscribed on palm leaves.

On the one hand, the writing down of the Pali Canon seemed to provide the much needed certitude and stability. The Canon would remain as such until the inscription materials were badly decayed, lost, damaged or destroyed. On the other hand, this method of preservation also had its weakness. Buddhists might become careless, being complacent that the Pali Canon was already on the palm leaves or in the books. The attention paid to reciting, reviewing or even learning the word of the Buddha would decrease, even to the point of total negligence.

Moreover, the inscribing or copying in ancient times was done manually. In each copying, lapses of concentration, errors, and omissions were inevitable, resulting in corrupted letters or even entire lines of text missing. In particular, when the preservers were not skilled in the inscribing themselves, they had to have the task carried out by artisans, who might not be proficient in the Pali language or the word of the Buddha, or who might even be absolutely ignorant of both. This of course increased the risk of mistakes. A familiar example among Thai people in the past had to do with the copying of medical recipes, as reflected in the saying: "A recipe that has gone through three rounds of copying can cause death".

For this reason, in entrusting the preservation of the Canon to external objects, an official copy for the whole community had to be created, which had been properly inscribed, and carefully reviewed and checked. This official copy would be kept at a centre,

to serve as the authority for the entire Sangha or the country.

It just happened that during the period in which the word of the Buddha was written down, Buddhism had flourished and spread to several countries, becoming their state religion. Each country created an official version of the Pali Canon of its own and took care of it from generation to generation to ensure that it would remain unadulterated and complete. A case in point is Thailand, where there were rehearsals conducted in the reigns of King Tilokarāja (or Tilakarāja) of the Lanna Kingdom and King Rama I of the current Rattanakosin period.

In each recension of the Pali Canon, the participants will bring together the different versions from all the countries involved and cross-check them to see if there are any discrepancies in wording down to the letter. For instance, the name *Aññā-konḍañña* appears in the Thai version as such, but it is *Aññātakonḍañña* in the Pali Text Society's version. Such differences, albeit minor, are recorded in footnotes.

Although it has been well over a thousand years, when the different versions of the Pali Canon preserved in different Buddhist countries are compared, it can be said that overall they are the same and mutually agreeing. Despite some textual differences found here and there, e.g. the letter व (*va*) versus च (*ca*), the discrepancies are negligible considering the huge size of the entire text. This attests to the accuracy in the preservation, which has been done with great care and full awareness of the significance of the task in hand.

Theravāda Buddhism is, therefore, legitimately proud that the original Buddhism has been preserved. In contrast, the Mahāyāna discourses of the Ācariyavāda/Ācāryavāda school are now known by all to have been composed later, not preserving the original, authentic teachings. The majority of these scriptures are now lost. It has, therefore, been acknowledged that the most complete, original teachings of the Buddha that are still available today can only be found in the Pali Canon of Theravāda Buddhism.

This has been universally recognized by Buddhist scholars and academics worldwide, no matter whether they profess Mahāyana, Theravāda, or Vajrayāna Buddhism.

It must be emphasised that in order to preserve the original teachings as accurately as possible, there was no place for the monks participating in that particular rehearsal to inject their own opinions into the teachings.

It is sometimes misunderstood that in a rehearsal the participants are entitled to alter or modify anything about the Pali Canon, or even rewrite the whole thing. Such serious misunderstanding only indicates one's total ignorance of Buddhist rehearsals.

However, it must also be pointed out that the Pali Canon does not contain exclusively the word of the Buddha. The teachings of the Buddha's disciples can be found as well. For instance, the Venerable Sāriputta's teachings which demonstrated how a rehearsal should be conducted are also in there, in the *Saṅgītisutta*. Even so, the teachings rehearsed by this elder were none other than the word of the Buddha himself. In addition, there

were dialogues in which the Buddha engaged with others, thus containing other people's words as well.

Old teachings before the Buddha's time that the Buddha accepted and passed on as models for practice are also included in the Pali Canon, e.g. the main teachings forming the core of the Buddha's birth stories.

Also included in the Pali Canon are some scriptures composed after the Buddha's time. In the Third Rehearsal during the reign of King Asoka the Great, the Elder Moggalliputtatissa, who presided over the assembly, composed a treatise to purge the false teachings prevalent among certain groups of monks at the time.

Even so, in making his judgement, all he did was to cite the Buddha's teachings here and there that were collected as references to demonstrate what the Buddha actually said concerning the issue in question. In this light, this "new" scripture in essence is merely a collection of the Buddha's teachings, reorganised in another way around the core of a given issue or a particular consideration.

The *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* and after

When there was greater convenience in communications around the world, as all Buddhist countries were celebrating the twenty-fifth century of Buddhism in their respective countries, an international rehearsal of the Buddha's teachings was conducted in Myanmar during the years B.E. 2497 and 2499. Monks and scholars from all Theravāda Buddhist countries, and some other countries where Buddhism was practised, convened to rehearse the Pali Tipiṭaka prepared by the Burmese in tandem with the Pali

Canon in various scripts from other countries. This Sixth Rehearsal is known in Pali as the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti*, and has been generally recognised among Buddhist countries.

However, shortly after the Sixth Rehearsal was over, there was a wind of change as well as political turmoil in Myanmar, which presumably hampered the care and publication of the *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* version of the Pali Canon. Some confusion thus arose, for example, between the draft version provided by the Burmese for deliberation during the rehearsal and the finalised version, the end product of the rehearsal.

The Dhamma Society Fund, under the patronage of His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, has undertaken to republish the Pali Canon of the Sixth Rehearsal in Roman script, which is a universal script for international readers.

With great efforts and assiduous attention, and by a meticulous and rigorous process, the working group of this Fund discovered the different *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* versions of the Pali Canon, and managed to objectively distinguish the draft version from the finalised one, along with those of later impressions, thereby having procured the most reliable version. In addition, this latest *Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti* version itself was further cross-checked against the different versions of the Pali Canon in various scripts from several countries, which in effect has brought the very goal of the Sixth Rehearsal to perfection.

Apart from this, the latest advances in computer technology have been utilised, resulting in an efficient researching and referencing system,

and also a database readily available for further projects relating to studies and researches in the Pali Canon, such as the porting of the entire data onto a CD-ROM with a search engine to facilitate data retrieval.

In any case, the true or ultimate essence of this project is to maintain and preserve the word of the Buddha handed down to us in the form of the Pali Canon in as pristine and complete a state as possible, i.e. to keep the teachings as they were collected in the First Rehearsal. This will enable the reader to gain direct access to the original teachings of the Buddha without interventions from anybody else's interpretations, even those of the collectors of the teachings themselves. Should there be such views included, they are explicitly marked off, thereby leaving it open to the fullest scrutiny with the reader's own wisdom.

Part Two

The relevance of the Pali Canon in the modern world

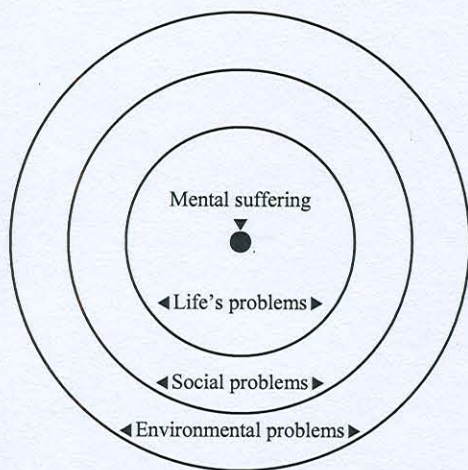
Although human civilisation has made great progress over the last several millennia up to the so-called globalisation age of the present, the human race is by no means free or removed from the problems of suffering, infliction of harm, distress, and war. People look to the ethical systems of various cults and religions to help resolve these problems. But these cults and religions in general only come up with rules or dictates for them to follow with their faith, thereby releasing them from their personal and interpersonal problems only to subject them to punishment and reward by forces believed to be supernatural.

In this regard, Buddhism according to the word of the Buddha in the Pali Canon is unique in that it teaches an ethical system of self-development for human beings to be released from all sorts of problem, and become truly independent by not relying upon any forces from without.

The modern man has progressed to a certain stage, which can be regarded as the zenith of human civilisation. It is at this very point that civilisation has presented the human race with problems of suffering from all fronts: life's problems and social problems, to be compounded, and complemented, by environmental problems.

It is quite evident that while civilisation at its zenith like this can hand all sorts of problem to human beings, it can never lead them out of the suffering triggered by these problems.

Nevertheless, an increasing number of people are beginning to realise that Buddhism as represented in the Pali Canon holds the key to solving the three-tier problems of human suffering, which can be represented as three circles.



Three circles of human suffering

The innermost circle represents *life's problems*, the most profound of which is one of suffering in the human mind. Even its crudest form, namely stress, is quite a pressing problem for the modern man.

In this regard, Buddhism is a system of teachings quite specialised in ridding life's ultimate problem of mental suffering. With one's own wisdom, one can ultimately attain the objective truth of nature, and completely eradicate the germ of mental distress, the mind being thus released once and for all from suffering, becoming relieved and radiant.

From oneself outwards, in a wider circle, are social problems, sufferings caused by wrongful relationships, which have resulted in violence and infliction of mutual harm.

In solving problems at this level, Buddhism has manifested itself all along as a religion without resorting to violence. Buddhists have never had any religious wars. Nor are there any religious tenets to be used as pretexts for aggression or waging wars. Buddhism has boasted a history of genuine peace, propagating the principle of universal loving-kindness, so that it has been recognised by many scholars as the world's first genuine pacifist movement. The Pali Canon is therefore the most important source from which peace seekers can learn the rationale and methods in maintaining and protecting peace for the human world.

The outermost circle surrounding man and society represents environmental problems, in particular the issue of the eco-system, which is now posing the most serious threat to the survival of humanity.

As far as environmental problems are concerned, it has been acknowledged that such problems have stemmed from the misguided view that humans are distinct from nature. The hostile attitude towards nature has led to their striving to conquer it and act upon it to serve human interests alone. To solve these problems, the human race needs a fresh mentality as a basis.

In this regard, Buddhism preaches the Middle Way, pointing to the objective fact that nature is a system of relations of all phenomena—man included—that are causally and conditionally interdependent.

The human race is a unique component part in that system of relations, the part that learns and that can be trained and developed. The positive qualities human beings should develop are on three fronts: behaviourally, to be mutually supportive; mentally, to possess a constructive intent; and intellectually, to have a proper understanding of the system of interdependent relations, and of how such a system should best proceed.

Endowed with such good qualities, individuals will know how to conduct their lives and render the components of the system of relations more harmonious and mutually supportive, thereby leading humanity to attain a world of happiness, free of any infliction of harm.

In short, Buddhism provides a new basis for thinking that changes man's concept of development. Neither is man separated from nature; nor should he be its antagonist, constantly trying to conquer it. Instead, he is to be regarded as the component part that brings about a system of peaceful coexistence with nature.

In view of the availability of Buddhism in solving these greatest problems, the Pali Canon constitutes an abundant source for studies and researches to achieve that end.

The Classification of scriptures in the Pali Canon

We can now turn to the structure and organisation of the Pali Canon.

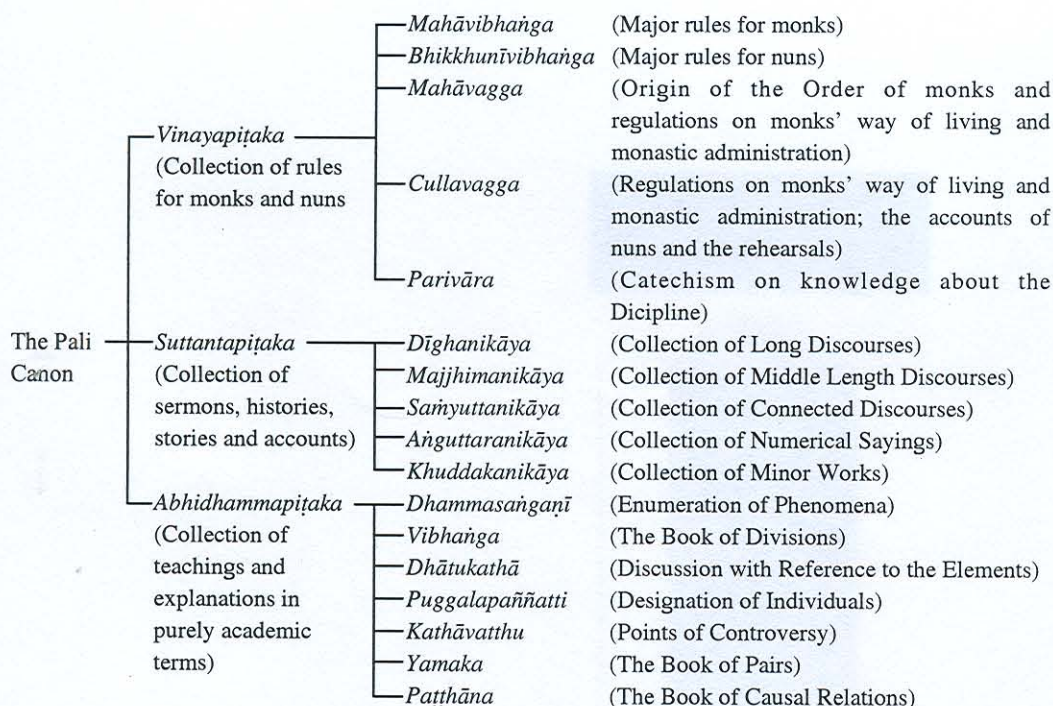
In Thailand the Pali Canon was published in book form using the Thai script for the first time during the reign of King Rama V in B.E. 2431. After the publication was completed, there was a celebration in B.E. 2436, along with the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration for the King's accession to the throne. The Pali Canon published on that occasion came in a set of 39 volumes.

In B.E. 2468 during the reign of King Rama VII, the Pali Canon was reprinted by royal command. The merit being dedicated to the late King Rama VI, the new impression came in a complete set of 45 volumes, and has ever since served as the standard for volume division of any Thai-script version in Thailand.

For convenience of discussion, therefore, references in this summary are made to this version, which is known in Thai as *phra traipidok chabap sayamrat* "the Siamese official version of the Tipiṭaka".

Generally speaking, it is the Doctrine and Discipline contained in the Pali Canon that serves as the basis for its classification.

The outline of the classification is shown in the following diagram.



Outline of the Pali Canon's major classifications

A Concise Summary of the Pali Canon in 45 volumes (arranged by volume number)

A. The Vinayapiṭaka

This is a collection of the word of the Buddha in the domain of the Discipline. It covers the rules laid down by the Buddha concerning the conduct, ways of living, customs, and administration of monastic affairs for monks and nuns. The *Vinayapiṭaka* is divided into five scriptures (known by their abbreviations as: *Ā*, *Pā*, *Ma*, *Cu*, *Pa*)*, and published in eight volumes.

* The first two abbreviations, *Ā* and *Pā*, reflect another way of classification as follows:

1. *Ādikammika* includes the contents in Volume 1, which cover the first part of the *Mahāvibhaṅga* (concerned with the

Volume 1: *Mahāvibhaṅga*, Part 1.

This volume covers the first 19 precepts within the *Pāṭimokkha* (major monastic rules) for monks. These rules are all concerned with grave offences, i.e. the four rules of Defeat (*Pārājika*), the 13 rules entailing Initial and Subsequent Meetings of the Sangha

precepts relating to monks' grave offences).

2. *Pacittiya* includes the contents in Volumes 2, which cover the second part of the *Mahāvibhaṅga* and Volume 3, *Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga* (concerned with the precepts relating to monks' minor offences up to all the precepts for nuns).

In addition, all the eight volumes of the *Vinayapiṭaka* or these five scriptures can sometimes be further collapsed into three, viz. *Vibhaṅga* or *Suttavibhaṅga* (= *Mahāvibhaṅga* and *Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga*, i.e. Volumes 1–3), *Khandhaka* (= *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*, i.e. Volumes 4–7), and *Parivāra* (Volume 8).

(*Saṅghādisesa*), and the two Indefinites (*Aniyata*).

Volume 2: *Mahāvibhaṅga, Part 2*. This volume covers the monks' remaining *Pāṭimokkha* precepts, which are concerned with minor offences, i.e. starting with the 30 rules entailing Expiation with Forfeiture (*Nissaggiya-pācittiya*), thereby bringing the total of the *Pāṭimokkha* precepts to 227.

Volume 3: *Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga*. It deals with the 311 precepts for nuns.

Volume 4: *Mahāvagga, Part 1*. This volume covers the precepts outside of the *Pāṭimokkha*, i.e. the general regulations on the monks' ways of living and administration of monastic affairs. The first part covers four divisions (*khandhaka*), i.e. rules for admission to the Order, the Uposatha meeting and recital of the *Pāṭimokkha*, residence during the rainy season, and the Invitation.

Volume 5: *Mahāvagga, Part 2*. This volume deals with the precepts outside of the *Pāṭimokkha* (continued). There are six divisions (*khandhaka*), i.e. rules on the use of leather, medicines, the annual presentation of robes (*kaṭṭhina*), materials for robes, formal censure, and ways of settling disputes and schism.

Volume 6: *Cullavagga, Part 1*. This volume covers the last section of the precepts outside of the *Pāṭimokkha*. There are four divisions (*khandhaka*), i.e. formal censure, rules for reinstatement of a monk, and ways of settling a legal procedure.

Volume 7: *Cullavagga, Part 2*. This volume covers the last section of the monastic rules outside of the *Pāṭi-*

mokkha precepts (continued). There are eight divisions (*khandhaka*), i.e. miscellaneous rules, dwellings and furniture, schism, specific rules and etiquette, abrupt termination of the *Pāṭimokkha* recital, nuns, and the First and Second Rehearsals.

Volume 8: *Parivāra*. This volume is a manual, compiled in the form of a catechism, for reviewing one's knowledge of the Discipline.

B. The *Suttantapiṭaka*

This is a collection of the word of the Buddha in the department of the discourses, i.e. his sermons, lectures or explanations of dhamma that were adapted to suit the individuals and occasions concerned, along with compositions, narratives, and stories that were of early Buddhism. Printed in 25 volumes, the whole collection is divided into five *nikāyas* (known by their abbreviations as *Dī*, *Ma*, *Saṃ*, *Aṃ*, *Khu*) as follows:

1. The *Dīghanikāya* "Collection of Long Discourses"
2. The *Majjhimanikāya* "Collection of Middle Length Discourses"
3. The *Saṃyuttanikāya* "Collection of Connected Discourses"
4. The *Aṅguttaranikāya* "Collection of Numerical Sayings"
5. The *Khuddakanikāya* "Collection of Minor Works"

1. The *Dīghanikāya* "Collection of Long Discourses" (in 3 volumes)

Volume 9: *Sīlakkhandhavagga*. This volume contains 13 long discourses, starting with *Brahmajālasutta*. Several

discourses deal with Minor Morality (*cullasīla*), Middle Morality (*majjhima-sīla*), and Major Morality (*mahāsīla*). Hence the collective name of the whole section: *Sīlakkhandhavagga* “the Division Concerning Morality”

Volume 10: *Mahāvagga*. This volume contains 10 long discourses, mostly starting with the word *mahā* “great”, e.g. *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, *Mahāsamayasutta*, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*, etc.

Volume 11: *Pāṭikavagga*. This volume covers 11 long discourses, starting with *Pāṭikasutta*. There are also well-known discourses such as *Cakkavattisutta*, *Aggaññasutta*, *Sīṅgālaka-sutta* and *Saṅgītisutta*.

2. The *Majjhimanikāya* “Collection of Middle Length Discourses” (in 3 volumes)

Volume 12: *Mūlapaṇṇāsaka* “the first batch of 50”. This volume covers the first 50 middle length discourses, some of whose names might sound familiar, e.g. *Dhammadāyādasutta*, *Sammāditṭhisutta*, *Satipaṭṭhānasutta*, *Rathavināśasutta*, *Vīmaṃsakasutta*.

Volume 13: *Majjhimaṇṇāsaka* “the middle batch of 50”. This volume covers the next 50 middle length discourses). Among those discourses whose names might sound familiar are *Sekhapaṭipadāsutta*, *Jīvakasutta*, *Upāli-vādasutta*, *Abhayarājakumārasutta*, *Māgaṇḍīyasutta*, *Raṭṭhapālasutta*, *Bodhirājakumārasutta*, *Āṅgulimāla-sutta*, *Dhammacetiya-sutta*, and *Vāseṭṭha-sutta*.

Volume 14: *Upariṇṇāsaka* “the last batch of 50”. This volume covers the remaining 52 middle length dis-

courses, their subject matters being multifarious. Among the discourses are, for example, *Devadahasutta*, *Gopakamoggallānasutta*, *Sappurisa-sutta*, *Mahācattārīsakasutta*, *Ānāpānasatisutta*, *Kāyagatāsatisutta*, *Bhaddekarattasutta*, *Cūlakammavibhaṅgasutta*, *Puṇṇovādasutta*, *Salāyatanavibhaṅga-sutta*, and *Indriyabhāvanāsutta*.

3. The *Saṃyuttanikāya* “Collection of Connected Discourses” (in 5 volumes)

(This collection of 7,762 discourses is classified into 56 groups (*saṃyutta*), arranged in a special order by subject matter. Each group deals with a specific doctrine or personality.)

Volume 15: *Sagāthavagga*. This volume is a collection of verses mostly uttered by the Buddha and in response to different personalities, e.g. deities, Māra the Evil One, nuns, brahmins, King of Kosala, etc. This section is classified mainly according to the type of individual concerned into 11 *saṃyuttas*.

Volume 16: *Nidānavagga*. The first half of this volume deals with causes and conditions, i.e. the law of Dependent Origination. The rest deals with the elements, the penetration of the Dhamma, the round of rebirths, material gain, etc. This section is classified into 10 *saṃyuttas*.

Volume 17: *Khandhavāravagga*. This volume deals with the various aspects of the five aggregates and miscellaneous subjects including concentration, together with some false views. This section is classified into 13 *saṃyuttas*.

Volume 18: *Salāyatanavagga*. Almost half this volume deals with the six sense bases in accordance with the

Three Characteristics. The rest deals with the five precepts, ways of practice leading to the unconditioned, false views, etc. The section is classified into 10 *samyuttas*.

Volume 19: *Mahāvāravagga*. This volume covers the 37 virtues partaking of enlightenment, which are rearranged, starting with the Noble Eightfold Path (including other virtues before the Path) the seven enlightenment factors, the four bases of mindfulness, the five controlling faculties, the four right efforts, the five powers, the four paths of accomplishment, including other topics concerned, e.g. the five hindrances, the ten fetters, the Four Noble Truths, the absorptions, along with the attributes of Stream Entrants and the meritorious consequences of the fruition of Stream Entry. The section is classified into 12 *samyuttas*.

4. The *Āṅguttaranikāya* “Collection of Numerical Sayings” (in 5 volumes)

(This collection of 9,557 discourses is classified into 11 divisions known as *nipāta*, which are arranged in progressive numerical order, starting from the groups of single items, followed by the groups of two and so on, to the groups of eleven.)

Volume 20: *Eka-*, *Duka-*, and *Tikanipāta*. This volume covers those topics of dhamma classified into groups of one (e.g. the prime object which when trained is apt for work, i.e. the mind; the inner prime virtue that is for great benefit, i.e. heedfulness; etc. including the Buddha’s foremost disciples), groups of two (e.g. 13 sets of two types of happiness, two types of fool, two types of wise man, two types of kind reception, two

types of mental power, etc.), and groups of three (e.g. three parental duties towards their children, three types of intoxication, three supremacies, the Threefold Training, etc.).

Volume 21: *Catukkanipāta*. This volume covers those topics of dhamma classified into groups of four (e.g. the four noble dhammas, the Four Assemblies, the four efforts, the four biases, the four virtues wheeling one to prosperity, the four bases of social solidarity, etc. etc.)

Volume 22: *Pañcaka-*, and *Chakkanipāta*. This volume covers those topics of dhamma classified into groups of five (e.g. the five powers, the five hindrances, the five ideas to be constantly reviewed, the five warriors), and groups of six (e.g. the six states of conciliation, the six excellent experiences, the six reverences, the six impossibilities, etc.)

Volume 23: *Sattaka-*, *Aṭṭhaka-* and *Navakanipāta*. This volume covers those topics of dhamma classified into groups of seven (e.g. the seven noble treasures, the seven latent tendencies, the seven conditions of welfare, the seven qualities of a good man, the seven qualities of a good friend, the seven types of wife, etc.), groups of eight (e.g. the eight worldly conditions, the eight qualities of a messenger-to-be, the eight donations, the eight bases of donation, the eight levels on which to perfect the three bases of meritorious action, the eight gifts of a good man, the eight virtues conducive to the present and future benefits), and groups of nine (e.g. the nine objects of malice, the nine mental states of gradual attainment, the nine progressive abidings, the nine states of immediate Nibbāna).

Volume 24: *Dasaka-*, and *Ekādasaka-nipāta*. This volume covers those topics of dhamma classified into groups of ten (e.g. the ten fetters, the ten perceptions, the ten virtues which make for protection, the ten growths, etc.), and groups of eleven (e.g. the eleven phenomena that naturally arise one after another without volition, the eleven advantages of loving kindness, etc.).

In the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, the teachings included are multifarious in nature, ranging from the benefits in the present (*diṭṭhadhammikattha*) to the highest benefit (*paramattha*), meant for both the ordained and the laity. Scattered all over the whole collection, such teachings are arranged in groups according to the number of items in each group.

5. The *Khuddakanikāya* “Collection of Minor Works” (in 9 volumes)

(This is a collection of discourses, verses, sayings, explanations, and miscellaneous subjects that cannot fit into the first four collections. There are 15 scriptures.)

Volume 25 includes five minor scriptures, namely:

1. The *Khuddakapāṭha* “Shorter Texts” covers minor discourses commonly used for chanting, e.g. *Maṅgalasutta*, *Ratanasutta*, *Karaṇīya-mettasutta*.

2. The *Dhammapada* “Anthologies of Sayings” contains 423 verses of dhamma.

3. The *Udāna* “Paens of Joy” covers 80 discourses with the Buddha’s solemn utterances in verse, but with introductory prose.

4. The *Itivuttaka* “Thus Said” covers 112 discourses not beginning with *Evam me sutam* “Thus have I heard”, but connected by the expression *Iti vucceti* “It is thus said.”

5. The *Suttanipāta* “Collected Discourses” is a special collection of discourses, composed either entirely in verse, or mostly in verse but with introductory prose.

Volume 26 comprises four scriptures composed entirely in verse, namely:

1. The *Vimānavatthu* “Stories of Celestial Mansions” covers accounts by those born in heaven, narrating their own good deeds in their past lives that brought about their present births. There are 85 such stories.

2. The *Petavatthu* “Stories of the Departed” covers accounts narrated by ghosts (*peta*) of their own evil deeds in the past. There are 51 such accounts.

3. The *Theragāthā* “Verses of the Elders” contains verses (*gāthā*) uttered by 264 Arahant elders, expressing the calm and delicate feeling in attaining the penetration of the Dhamma.

4. The *Therīgāthā* “Verses of the Women Elders” contains verses uttered by female Arahant elders, expressing the same kind of feeling as in the *Theragāthā*.

Volume 27: The *Jātaka* “Birth Stories”, *Part 1*. This volume is a collection of verses that expound the Buddha’s teachings in his previous lives, when he was still a *bodhisatta*. These are interspersed with a number of verses uttered by others. The first section ranges from stories with only one verse (*ekaniṭṭha*) to stories with

40 verses (*cattālīsanipāta*). There are altogether 525 stories.

Volume 28: The *Jātaka* “Birth Stories”, *Part 2*. This volume is an additional collection of verses like those in Part 1. But the stories are longer, ranging from those with 50 verses (*Paññāsanipāta*) to those with a great number of verses (*Mahānipāta*), the last one being *Mahāvessantarajātaka*, with 1,000 verses. There are 22 stories in this part, bringing the total to 547 in both parts.

Volume 29: *Mahāniddeśa* “Great Expositions”. This volume covers the Elder Sāriputta’s explanations on the 16 discourses preached by the Buddha in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*.

Volume 30: *Cūlaniddeśa*. “Small Expositions”. This volume covers the Elder Sāriputta’s explanations on the 16 discourses preached by the Buddha in the *Pārāyanavagga* and *Khaggavisāṇasutta* in the *Uragavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*.

Volume 31: *Paṭisambidāmagga* “Way of Analysis” This volume covers the Elder Sāriputta’s explanations in great detail on such profound topics as the absoptions, false views, mindfulness on breathing, spiritual faculties, and deliverance, all of which constitute the way of discriminating knowledge.

Volume 32: *Apadāna* “Lives of Arahants”, *Part 1*. This volume is a collection of verses about the personal histories of Arahants, especially in their past lives. It covers histories of Buddhas (*Buddha-apadāna*), accounts of Individually Enlightened Ones (*Pacceka-buddha-apadāna*), and autobiographies of Arahant elders, beginning with the Elder Sāriputta, Mahāmoggallāna, Mahākassapa,

Anuruddha, ... Ānanda, etc., totalling 410 in number.

Volume 33: *Apadāna* “Lives of Arahants”, *Part 2*. This volume is a continuation of the first part, covering additional autobiographies of Arahant elders, to be concluded with the 550th’s.

Then comes the *Therī-apadāna* “Lives of Female Arahants”, which covers the stories of 40 female Arahant elders, starting with 16 elders whose names might not sound familiar, to be followed by such major female elders as Mahāpajāpati Gotamī, Khemā, Uppalavaṇṇā, Paṭācārā, ... Yasodharā and others.

After the *Apadāna* comes the *Buddhavaṃsa* at the end of Volume 33. It is a collection of verses dealing with the stories of the 24 past Buddhas with whom the present Buddha had an audience, and by whom his own future Buddhahood was also predicted. It is then concluded with the history of the present Buddha himself, thus bringing the total to 25 Buddhas.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* is a short treatise at the end of this whole collection. It deals with the 35 stories of the Buddha’s modes of conduct in his past lives which are already covered in the *Jātaka* but which are retold, also in verse, exemplifying certain stages of the ten Perfections.

As a whole, the *Khuddakanikāya* can be seen as a collection of miscellaneous treatises. Although there are 15 scriptures in nine volumes, only the first volume (Volume 25) focuses on the substance of the Buddha’s teachings. All the five scriptures included in this single volume, albeit small, are quite important and very profound.

The other three volumes (28–30), namely *Niddesa* and *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, though directly dealing with the Buddha's teachings, are actually explanations given by his disciple (i.e. Sāriputta). These explanations further clarify the Buddha's teachings which are already in the previous volume, and can thus be regarded as prototypes of the commentaries.

The remaining eight scriptures are all composed in verse, aiming for poetic beauty and to rouse feelings, e.g. to boost confidence.

Volume 26 (*Vimānavatthu*, *Petavatthu*, *Theragāthā*, and *Therīgāthā*). This volume deals with experiences, feelings, and courses of existence of virtuous and vicious individuals, as well as Arahant disciples, which should serve as examples or models for rousing the sense of urgency, providing admonitions, and raising morale for Buddhists not to do any evil, to do good, and to follow the Noble Path diligently.

Volumes 27–28 (*Jātaka*). These stories give moral lessons, which provide instruction, admonition, and moral support, from the Buddha's own experience in perfecting the ten qualities leading to Buddhahood.

Volume 32–33 (*Apadāna*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, and *Cariyāpiṭaka*). Composed in verse, they describe the history, way of practice, and conduct of the Buddhas, Individually Enlightened Ones (*Paccekabuddha*), and Arahant disciples in such a literary style that will boost one's confidence in the Teaching.

C. Abhidhammapiṭaka

The collection of the Buddha's teachings classified as the *Abhi-*

dhmma deals with the quintessence of the Doctrine in purely academic terms, without reference to individuals and events. Published in 12 volumes, the *Abhidhamma* is divided into seven treatises (known by their abbreviations as *Sam*, *Vi*, *Dhā*, *Pu*, *Ka*, *Ya*, and *Pa*) as follows:

1. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* "Enumeration of Phenomena"
2. *Vibhaṅga* "The Book of Divisions"
3. *Dhātukathā* "Discussion with Reference to the Elements"
4. *Puggalapaññatti* "Designation of Individuals"
5. *Kathāvatthu* "Points of Controversy"
6. *Yamaka* "The Book of Pairs"
7. *Paṭṭhāna* "The Book of Causal Relations".

Volume 34: (*Dhamma*)*Saṅgaṇī*. The earlier portion of this volume deals with matrices (*mātikā*) or summaries of all phenomena (*dhamma*) organised in sets of three, e.g. things wholesome (*kusaladhamma*), unwholesome (*akusaladhamma*), and indeterminate (*avyākatadhamma*); things past (*atīta-dhamma*), future (*anāgatadhamma*), and present (*paccuppannadhamma*), etc.; and sets of two, e.g. things conditioned (*saṅkhatadhamma*), and unconditioned (*asaṅkhatadhamma*); things mundane (*lokiyadhamma*), and supramundane (*lokuttaradhamma*), etc. Altogether there are 164 sets or matrices.

After this comes the important part of this scripture, which comprises expositions on the first matrices as an

example, showing how wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate states are distributed in terms of consciousness (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*), corporeality (*rūpa*) and *nibbāna*.

Towards the end of the scripture there are two chapters, each giving brief explanations or definitions of the dhammas in the foregoing matrices until all the 164 matrices are dealt with, yielding two different sorts of definition of the dhammas in the two chapters (though definitions of only 122 matrices are given in the last chapter).

Volume 35: *Vibhaṅga*. In this volume 18 important topics of the teachings are separately enumerated, analysed and discerned in all aspects, namely the five aggregates, the 12 sense-fields, the 18 elements, the Four Noble Truths, the 22 faculties, the Dependent Origination, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four paths of accomplishment, the seven enlightenment factors, the eightfold path, the absorptions, the four unbounded states of mind, the five precepts, the four modes of practice, the various types of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and miscellaneous topics on the unwholesome states. Each section dealing with any of these topics is called the *vibhaṅga* of that topic, e.g. *khandha-vibhaṅga*, on the five aggregates. Thus there are 18 sections (*vibhaṅga*) altogether.

Volume 36 comprises two scriptures: *Dhātukathā* “Discussion with Reference to the Elements”, and *Puggalapaññatti* “Designation of Individuals.” In the former, the teachings in the matrices (*Mātikā*) and other 125 topics of dhamma are brought up to see whether each of

them can fit into any of the five aggregates, the 12 sense-fields, and the 18 elements. In the latter, definitions are given to designations of individuals according to their virtue. For instance, a *Sotāpanna* “Stream Entrant” is an individual who has severed the first three fetters.

Volume 37: *Kathāvatthu*. This treatise was compiled by the Elder Moggalliputtatissa, who presided over the Third Rehearsal, to correct the false views held by the various groups in Buddhism at that time, which had been split into as many as 18 sects. Examples of the false views are that it is possible for an Arahant to retrogress from the Fruit of the Worthy One (*arahattaphala*); that it is possible for an Arahant to be reborn; that all things are conditional only on past deeds. There are altogether 219 subjects composed in the form of questions and answers.

Volume 38: *Yamaka, Part 1*. This volume explains important topics of dhamma to elucidate the meaning and scope and test one’s in-depth knowledge of dhamma by means of posing a pair of questions in reverse order of each other (literally, *yamaka* “pair”). For instance, whether all phenomena that are wholesome are wholesome roots, or all phenomena that are wholesome roots are wholesome; whether (all) corporeality are corporeal aggregates, or (all) corporeal aggregates are corporeal; whether (all) sufferings are the truth of suffering, or (all) the truth of suffering is suffering. The topics of dhamma to be explained in this volume are seven in number, namely roots (e.g. *kusalamūla*), aggregates, sense-fields, elements, truth, compounded things, and latent dispositions. The question pairs as well as their answers and explanations on each topic are known by the name

of that topic, e.g. *Mūlayamaka*, *Khandhayamaka*. Thus there are altogether seven *yamakas*.

Volume 39: *Yamaka, Part 2*. This volume covers questions and answers explaining the teachings in addition to Part 1 with three more topics: *Cittayamaka*, *Dhammayamaka* (wholesome, unwholesome and neutral states) and *Indriyayamaka*, adding up to a total of 10 *yamakas*.

Volume 40: *Paṭṭhāna, Part 1*. This volume explains the 24 factors in detail, showing the interdependent relationships among phenomena in various respects.

The first volume of *Paṭṭhāna* explains the meaning of the 24 factors, providing background information before delving into the main subject of the volume, namely *anuloma-tika-paṭṭhāna*. It explains the mutual conditionality of all phenomena in the group-of-three matrices through the 24 factors, e.g. how wholesome states are conditions for wholesome states through inducement conditions, how wholesome states are conditions for unwholesome states through inducement conditions, how unwholesome states are conditions for wholesome states through inducement conditions, how unwholesome states are factors for unwholesome states through inducement conditions, etc. etc. This volume provides the explanations in regular order, rather than in negative order; hence the term *anuloma-paṭṭhāna* (*anuloma* “regular”).

Volume 41: *Paṭṭhāna, Part 2, Anuloma-tika-paṭṭhāna* (cont.). This volume further explains the mutual conditionality of all phenomena in the group-of-three matrices as a continuation of volume 40, e.g. past

states are conditions for present states through object conditions (as when grief arises after visual forms and sounds that are gone and past are considered to be impermanent, oppressed, and not-self), etc.

Volume 42: *Paṭṭhāna, Part 3, Anuloma-duka-paṭṭhāna*. This volume explains the mutual conditionality of all phenomena in the group-of-two matrices, e.g. how mundane states are conditions for supramundane states through object conditions (*ārammaṇa-paccaya*) (as when visible forms are conditions for eye-consciousness), etc.

Volume 43: *Paṭṭhāna, Part 4, Anuloma-duka-paṭṭhāna* (cont.)

Volume 44: *Paṭṭhāna, Part 5*. This volume is still on *Anuloma-paṭṭhāna*, but explains the mutual conditionality of all phenomena in the matrices across different groups. It comprises *Anuloma-dukatika-paṭṭhāna*, relating phenomena in the group-of-two matrices (*dukamātikā*) to those in the group-of-three matrices (*tikamātikā*), e.g. how wholesome states that are supramundane are conditions for wholesome states that are mundane through predominance conditions; *Anuloma-tikaduka-paṭṭhāna*, relating phenomena in the group-of-three matrices (*tikamātikā*) to those in the group-of-two matrices (*dukamātikā*); *Anuloma-tikatika-paṭṭhāna*, relating phenomena in the group-of-three matrices (*tikamātikā*) to different groups of phenomena in the group-of-three matrices (*tikamātikā*), e.g. how past wholesome states are conditions for present unwholesome states; and *Anuloma-dukaduka-paṭṭhāna*, relating phenomena in the group-of-two matrices (*dukamātikā*) to different groups of phenomena in the group-of-two matrices (*dukamātikā*), e.g. the

group of mundane and supramundane states to the group of conditioned things and the Unconditioned.

Volume 45: Paṭṭhāna, Part 6. This volume deals with *paccanīya-paṭṭhāna*. It explains the mutual conditionality of all phenomena, just as in the previous volumes, but in a negative way. The divisions are as follows: *paccanīya-paṭṭhāna*, i.e. *paṭisedha* (negative) + *paṭisedha* (negative), e.g. how non-wholesome states arise from non-wholesome states; *anulomapaccanīya-paṭṭhāna*, i.e. *anuloma* (regular) + *paṭisedha* (negative), e.g. how non-supramundane states arise from mundane states; and *paccanīyānuloma-paṭṭhāna*, i.e. *paṭisedha* (negative) + *anuloma* (regular), e.g. how un-wholesome states arise from non-wholesome states. In each of the three models, explanations are given using phenomena in the group-of-three matrices, followed by those in the group-of-two, and then across the groups, i.e. the group-of-two to the group-of-three, the group-of-three to the group-of-two, the group-of-three to the group-of-three, and the group-of-two to the group-of-two, until all are covered. Therefore, each model is further divided into *tika*-, *duka*-, *dukatika*-, *tikaduka*-, *tikatika*-, and *dukaduka*-, respectively (the full forms are: *paccanīya-tika-paṭṭhāna*, *paccanīya-duka-paṭṭhāna*, *paccanīya-dukatika-paṭṭhāna*, etc., to be concluded with *paccanīyānuloma-dukaduka-paṭṭhāna*).

In the *Paṭṭhāna*, fairly detailed explications are given only in the earlier volumes, while in the later volumes only bare outlines can be found, thereby leaving it for those who have already grasped the line of thought to elaborate for themselves. Part 6, in particular, gives the briefest accounts of all. Even so, it comprises

six tomes or some 3,320 printed pages. Had detailed explanations been all provided, the number of volumes would have been multiplied. Hence this scripture is known as *Mahāpakaraṇa*, literally meaning “great scripture,” both in size and in significance.

According to the commentarians, the Pali Canon comprises 84,000 units of teaching (*dhammakkhanda*), of which 21,000 units belong to the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 21,000 units to the *Suttantapiṭaka*, and the remaining 42,000 units to the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*.

The commentaries and subsequent generations of scriptures

After the Buddha expounded his teachings, namely the Doctrine and Discipline, his disciples, both ordained and lay, would study them. When they found any teachings difficult to understand, not only did they directly put queries to the Buddha, but they also sought help from the senior disciples who were their preceptors or teachers for advice or to clarify the point in question.

The important explanations and replies were then committed to memory and handed down in tandem with the Buddha’s teachings themselves from one generation of disciples to the next. After the classification of the Buddha’s teachings in the form of the *Tipiṭaka*, such explanations became systematised and arranged in accordance with the Pali Canon.

The explanations of the word of the Buddha, namely the Doctrine and Discipline, or the explanations of the Pali Canon are called *Atthakathā* (commentaries).

When the Pali Canon was inscribed on palm leaves in Sri Lanka around the year B.E. 460, legend has it that the commentaries were also put in writing at the same time.

It is noteworthy that the Buddha's word or the text in the Tipiṭaka is usually referred to, in academic jargon, as the *Pāli*, meaning "the word of the Buddha as enshrined in the Tipiṭaka. (This should not be confused with the *Pali language*.)

The Pali Canon or Tipiṭaka was memorised, handed down and recorded in the Pali language, while the commentaries were in Sinhala.

The Pali Canon as the primary source text obviously belongs to the teacher's side. It should therefore be preserved in its original state as accurately as possible according to what the Teacher taught.

The commentaries, on the other hand, are explanations meant for the learner. They are therefore supposed to aid his understanding in the best possible way. When the commentaries were

introduced into Sri Lanka, they were transmitted in Sinhala. It was not until around B.E. 950–1000 that they were translated and compiled back to Pali by the Elder Buddhaghosa and the Elder Dhammpāla, who travelled from India to Sri Lanka. Hence the extant Pali version we study today.

One important characteristic of the commentaries is that they directly expound on the Canon. This means that for individual discourses, sections, or topics in the Canon there will be specific commentaries arranged in sequence, which provide explanations on some technical terms or elaborations on the Doctrine and Discipline by giving supplemental information, including for example the circumstances or origin of the Buddha's sermon on that particular occasion. Such background information would undoubtedly help the learner understand the teachings more clearly.

The Pali Canon volumes together with the corresponding commentaries are given on the next page.

Pali Canon	Commentaries	Author
A. Vinayapīṭaka		
1. Vinayapīṭaka (all)	<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>	Buddhaghosa
B. Suttantapīṭaka		
2. <i>Dīghanikāya</i>	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i>	Buddhaghosa
3. <i>Majjhimanikāya</i>	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>	”
4. <i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i>	<i>Sāratthapakāsinī</i>	”
5. <i>Aṅguttaranikāya</i>	<i>Manorathapūraṇī</i>	”
6. <i>Khuddakapāṭha</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i>	”
7. <i>Dhammapada</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*</i>	”
8. <i>Udāna</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i>	Dhammapāla
9. <i>Itivuttaka</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	”	”
10. <i>Suttanipāta</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i>	Buddhaghosa
11. <i>Vimānavatthu</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i>	Dhammapāla
12. <i>Petavatthu</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	”	”
13. <i>Theragāthā</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	”	”
14. <i>Therīgāthā</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	”	”
15. <i>Jātaka</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Jātaṭṭhakathā*</i>	Buddhaghosa
16. <i>Niddesa</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Saddhammapajjotikā</i>	Upasena
17. <i>Paṭisambidāmagga</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Saddhammapakāsinī</i>	Mahānāma
18. <i>Apadāna</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Visuddhajanavilāsinī</i>	(Author unknown)**
19. <i>Buddhavaṃsa</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Madhuratthavilāsinī</i>	Buddhadatta
20. <i>Cariyāpīṭaka</i> (<i>Khuddakanikāya</i>)	<i>Paramatthadīpanī</i>	Dhammapāla
C. Abhidhammapīṭaka		
21. <i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>	<i>Aṭṭhasālinī</i>	Buddhaghosa
22. <i>Vibhaṅga</i>	<i>Sammohavinodanī</i>	”
23. The remaining five scriptures	<i>Pañcapakaraṇaṭṭhakathā</i>	”

* As a matter of fact, it was also specifically entitled *Paramatthajotikā*. As for the contention that Buddhaghosa was the author of both scriptures, he must have been the chief author with the assistance of others.

** According to *Cūḷagāthavaṃsa*, a scripture composed in Myanmar, this was ascribed to Buddhaghosa.

In addition to the commentaries, which are consulted as major references in the study of the Pali Canon, there were a large number of Buddhist scriptures written in Pali in different periods after the demise of the Buddha, in both pre- and post-commentaries periods, and even in the same period as the commentaries themselves, but these scriptures were not compiled in such a format as to be regarded as commentaries.

Certain important scriptures were independent works by learned monks who were well versed in the Doctrine and Discipline. Their works were either compiled according to their own outlines, or brought out under special circumstances, e.g. to answer others' questions or dispel their doubts about the teachings. Some of such treatises are highly regarded and very often cited, especially *Nettipakaraṇa* (or *Netti*, for short) "Book of Guidance", *Peṭakopadesa* "Instruction on the Piṭaka" and *Milindapañhā* "Questions of Milinda", all of which came about before the commentaries period. In Myanmar, these scriptures are included in the Pali Canon (subsumed under the *Khuddakanikāya*).

In the commentaries period, the *Visuddhimagga* by Buddhaghosa, the great commentarian, was held in high esteem on a par with a commentary, though it was technically regarded as a special scripture since it was composed according to the author's own outline, not a commentary on any particular portion of the Pali Canon. All Theravāda Buddhist countries attach considerable importance to this treatise, regarding it as a standard text on the tenets of Buddhism.

The scriptures that came about after the commentaries period are of two

categories. There are scriptures that are exegetical of the Canon, the commentaries, and some of these scriptures themselves, successively down the hierarchy. There are also scriptures outside the line of the Canon, e.g. legends, histories and grammars. These scriptures or treatises are known by the various names that distinguish their categories.

The two subcategories of the former category worth mentioning here are *Ṭīkā* (subcommentaries) and *Ānuṭīkā* (sub-subcommentaries), which are further exegetical down the line of *Atthakathā* (commentaries).

Arranged along the line of the Canon and commentaries, all the scriptures are of the following hierarchy:

- (a) the Pali Canon, or the *Tipiṭaka*
- (b) the commentaries (*Atthakathā*), or the scriptures expounding on the Pali Canon
- (c) the subcommentaries (*Ṭīkā*), or the scriptures elaborating on the commentaries
- (d) the sub-subcommentaries (*Anuṭīkā*), or the scriptures further clarifying the subcommentaries.

There are several types of scripture other than these down the hierarchy, which are sometimes collectively referred to as *tabbinimutta* "scriptures over and above [the main ones]".

In Thailand, very few of the voluminous Buddhist scriptures have been published in book form. Most of them remain on palm leaves. Only recently has there been more awareness to revise and publish them. It is hoped that before long a relatively complete collection of Buddhist scriptures will become available to all Buddhists and interested readers for scrutiny.

The Pali Canon and the commentaries were published in their entirety in B.E. 2535. Other scriptures of later generations that are relatively complete and not difficult to obtain are those used in the traditional Pali studies curriculum.

As these scriptures form a hierarchy of explanations (the commentaries expounding on the Canon, and the

subcommentaries clarifying the commentaries), the following list will pair the Pali Canon, volume by volume with the corresponding commentaries, thereby providing background information for further research, and facilitating the cross-referencing of information between scriptures.

List of the Pali Canon paired, volume by volume, with the corresponding commentaries

I. The Vinayapīṭaka

Pali Canon			Commentaries		
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation
1	<i>Mahāvibhaṅga</i> 1 1.1 <i>Verañjakanda–Pārājikakanda</i> 1.2 <i>Terasakanda–Aniyatakanda</i>	<i>Vin.1</i>	1	<i>Vinayaṭṭhakathā (Samantapasādikā)</i> 1 1.1 <i>Verañjakanda–Pārājikakanda</i>	<i>VinA.1</i>
2	<i>Mahāvibhaṅga</i> 2 2.1 <i>Nissaggiyakanda–Adhikaraṇasamathā</i>	<i>Vin.2</i>	2	<i>Vinayaṭṭhakathā (Samantapasādikā)</i> 2 2.1 <i>Terasakanda–Aniyatakanda</i> 2.2 <i>Nissaggiyakanda–Adhikaraṇasamathā</i>	<i>VinA.2</i>
3	<i>Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga</i>	<i>Vin.3</i>	3	<i>Vinayaṭṭhakathā (Samantapasādikā)</i> 3 3.1 <i>Mahāvagga</i> 3.2 <i>Cullavagga</i> 3.3 <i>Parivāra</i>	<i>VinA.3</i>
4	<i>Mahāvagga</i> 1	<i>Vin.4</i>			
5	<i>Mahāvagga</i> 2	<i>Vin.5</i>			
6	<i>Cullavagga</i> 1	<i>Vin.6</i>			
7	<i>Cullavagga</i> 2	<i>Vin.7</i>			
8	<i>Parivāra</i>	<i>Vin.8</i>			

II. The Suttantapīṭaka

Pali Canon			Commentaries		
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation
9	<i>Dīghanikāya</i> <i>Silakkhandhavagga</i>	<i>D.1</i>	4	<i>Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā (Sumaṅgalavilāsini)</i> 1	<i>DA.1</i>
10	<i>Dīghanikāya</i> <i>Mahāvagga</i>	<i>D.2</i>	5	<i>Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā (Sumaṅgalavilāsini)</i> 2	<i>DA.2</i>

Pali Canon			Commentaries		
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation
11	<i>Dīghanikāya</i> <i>Pāṭikavagga</i>	<i>D.3</i>	6	<i>Dīghanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Sumanāgalavilāsini)</i> 3	<i>DA,3</i>
12	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i> <i>Mūlapaṇṇāsaka</i> 12.1 <i>Mūlapariyāyavagga</i> – <i>Sihanādavagga</i>	<i>M.1</i>	7	<i>Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Papañcasūdanī)</i> 1 7.1 <i>Mūlapariyāyavagga</i> <i>Sihanādavaggavaṇṇanā</i>	<i>MA.1</i>
	12.2 <i>Opammavagga</i> – <i>Cūlayamakavagga</i>		8	<i>Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Papañcasūdanī)</i> 2 8.1 <i>Opammavagga</i> – <i>Cūlayamakavagga-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>MA.2</i>
13	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i> <i>Majjhimapāṇṇāsaka</i>	<i>M.2</i>	9	<i>Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Papañcasūdanī)</i> 3 9.1 <i>Majjhimapāṇṇāsaka-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>MA.3</i>
14	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i> <i>Uparipaṇṇāsaka</i>	<i>M.3</i>	10	<i>Majjhimanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Papañcasūdanī)</i> 4 10.1 <i>Uparipaṇṇāsaka-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>MA.4</i>
15	<i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i> <i>Sagāthavagga</i>	<i>S.1</i>	11	<i>Saṃyuttanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Sāratthapakāsinī)</i> 1 11.1 <i>Sagāthavagga-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>SA.1</i>
16	<i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i> <i>Nidānavagga</i>	<i>S.2</i>	12	<i>Saṃyuttanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Sāratthapakāsinī)</i> 2 12.1 <i>Nidānavagga-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>SA.2</i>
17	<i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i> <i>Khandhavāravagga</i>	<i>S.3</i>		12.2 <i>Khandhavagga-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	
18	<i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i> <i>Salāyatanavagga</i>	<i>S.4</i>	13	<i>Saṃyuttanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Sāratthapakāsinī)</i> 3 13.1 <i>Salāyatanavagga-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>SA.3</i>
19	<i>Saṃyuttanikāya</i> <i>Mahāvāravagga</i>	<i>S.5</i>		13.2 <i>Mahāvāravagga-</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>AA.1</i>
20	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya 1</i> 20.1 <i>Ekanipāta</i>	<i>A.1</i>	14	<i>Aṅguttaranikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Manorathapūraṇī)</i> 1 14.1 <i>Ekanipātavaṇṇanā</i>	<i>AA.2</i>
	20.2 <i>Dukanipāta</i> 20.3 <i>Tikanipāta</i>		15	<i>Aṅguttaranikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>(Manorathapūraṇī)</i> 2 15.1 <i>Dukanipātavaṇṇanā</i> 15.2 <i>Tikanipātavaṇṇanā</i>	
21	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya 2</i> 21.1 <i>Catukkanipāta</i>	<i>A.2</i>		15.3 <i>Catukkanipātavaṇṇanā</i>	

Pali Canon			Commentaries		
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation
22	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya 3</i>	A.3	16	<i>Aṅguttaranikāyaṭṭhakathā (Manorathapūraṇī) 3</i>	AA.3
	22.1 <i>Pañcakanipāta</i>			16.1 <i>Pañcakanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
	22.2 <i>Chakkanipāta</i>			16.2 <i>Chakkanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
23	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya 4</i>	A.4		16.3 <i>Sattakanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
	23.1 <i>Sattakanipāta</i>			16.4 <i>Aṭṭhakanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
	23.2 <i>Aṭṭhakanipāta</i>			16.5 <i>Navakanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
	23.3 <i>Navakanipāta</i>			16.6 <i>Dasakanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
24	<i>Aṅguttaranikāya 5</i>	A.5		16.7 <i>Ekādasakanipāta-vaṇṇanā</i>	
	24.1 <i>Dasakanipāta</i>				
	24.2 <i>Ekādasakanipāta</i>				
25	<i>Khuddakanikāya 1</i>	Kh.	17	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Khuddakapāṭhavaṇṇanā (Paramatthajotikā)</i>	KhA.
	25.1 <i>Khuddakapāṭha</i>		18	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 1 Yamakavaggavaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.1
	25.2 <i>Dhammapada</i>	Dh.	19	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 2 Appamāda-Cittavagga-vaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.2
			20	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 3 Puppha-bālavagga-vaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.3
			21	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 4 Paṇḍita-Sahassavagga-vaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.4
			22	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 5 Pāpa-Jarāvaggavaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.5
			23	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 6 Atta-Kodhavaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.6
			24	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 7 Mala-Nāgavaggavaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.7
			25	<i>Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā 8 Taṇhā-Brāhmaṇavagga-vaṇṇanā</i>	DhA.8
	25.3 <i>Udāna</i>	Ud.	26	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Udānavāṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī)</i>	UdA.
	25.4 <i>Itivuttaka</i>	It.	27	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Itivuttakavaṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī)</i>	ItA.

Pali Canon			Commentaries					
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation			
26	25.5 Suttanipāta	Sn.	28	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Suttanipātavaṇṇanā (Paramatthajotikā) 1	SnA.1			
	Khuddakanikāya 2 26.1 Vimānavatthu 26.2 Petavatthu 26.3 Theragāthā 26.3.1 Eka–Tikanipāta 26.3.2 Catukka– Mahānipāta 26.4 Therīgāthā	Vv. Pv. Thag. Thīg.	29	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Suttanipātavaṇṇanā (Paramatthajotikā) 2	SnA.2			
			30	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Vimānavatthuvaṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī)	VvA.			
			31	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Petavatthuvaṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī) 1	PvA.			
			32	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Theragāthāvaṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī) 1 32.1 Eka–Tikanipāta- vaṇṇanā	ThagA.1			
			33	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Theragāthāvaṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī) 2 32.2 Catuka–Mahānipāta- vaṇṇanā	ThagA.2			
			34	Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā Therīgāthāvaṇṇanā (Paramatthadīpanī)	ThīgA.			
			27	Khuddakanikāya 3 27.1 Jātaka 1 Eka– Cattālīsa-nipāta	J.	35	Jātakatṭhakathā 1 Ekanipātavaṇṇanā (1)	JA.1
						36	Jātakatṭhakathā 2 Ekanipātavaṇṇanā (2)	JA.2
						37	Jātakatṭhakathā 3 Dukanipātavaṇṇanā	JA.3
38	Jātakatṭhakathā 4 Tika–pañcakanipāta- vaṇṇanā	JA.4						
39	Jātakatṭhakathā 5 Chakka–Dasakanipāta- vaṇṇanā	JA.5						
40	Jātakatṭhakathā 6 Ekādasakanipāta- vaṇṇanā	JA.6						
41	Jātakatṭhakathā 7 Vīsati–Cattālīsanipāta- vaṇṇanā	JA.7						
42	Jātakatṭhakathā 8 Paññāsa–Sattatinipāta- vaṇṇanā	JA.8						
28	Khuddakanikāya 4 28.1 Jātaka 2 Paññāsa – Mahānipāta	J.						

Pali Canon			Commentaries		
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation
29	<i>Khuddakanikāya 5</i> <i>29.1 Mahānidessa</i>	<i>Nd¹.</i>	43	<i>Jātakatthakathā 9</i> <i>Mahānipātavaṇṇanā (1)</i>	<i>JA.9</i>
30	<i>Khuddakanikāya 6</i> <i>30.1 Cūḷaniddesa</i>	<i>Nd².</i>	44	<i>Jātakatthakathā 10</i> <i>Mahānipātavaṇṇanā (2)</i>	<i>JA.10</i>
31	<i>Khuddakanikāya 7</i> <i>31.1 Paṭisambhidāmagga</i>	<i>Ps.</i>	45	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Mahāniddesavaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Saddhammapajotikā)</i>	<i>Nd¹A.1</i>
32	<i>Khuddakanikāya 8</i> <i>32.1 Apadāna 1</i> <i>32.1.1 Buddhavagga</i>	<i>Ap.</i>	46	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Cūḷaniddesavaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Saddhammapajotikā)</i>	<i>Nd²A.2</i>
	<i>32.1.2 Sīhāsaniya–</i> <i>Metteyyavagga</i>		47	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Paṭisambhidāmagga–</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Saddhammapakāsinī) 1</i>	<i>PsA.1</i>
33	<i>Khuddakanikāya 9</i> <i>33.1 Apadāna 2</i> <i>33.1.1 Bhaddāli–</i> <i>Bhaddiyavagga</i> <i>33.1.2 Theriyāpadāna</i> <i>33.2 Buddhavaṃsa</i> <i>33.3 Cariyāpiṭaka</i>	<i>Bv.</i> <i>Cp.</i>	48	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Paṭisambhidāmagga–</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Saddhammapakāsinī) 2</i>	<i>PsA.2</i>
			49	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Apadānavaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Visuddhajanavilāsinī) 1</i> <i>49.1 Buddhavagga–</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>ApA.1</i>
			50	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Apadānavaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Visuddhajanavilāsinī) 2</i> <i>50.1 Sīhāsaniya–</i> <i>Metteyyavagga–</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i> <i>50.2 Bhaddāli–</i> <i>Bhaddiyavagga–</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i> <i>50.3 Theriyāpadāna–</i> <i>vaṇṇanā</i>	<i>ApA.2</i>
			51	<i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Buddhavaṃsavaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Madhuratthavilāsinī)</i> <i>Khuddakanikāyaṭṭhakathā</i> <i>Cariyāpiṭakavaṇṇanā</i> <i>(Paramatthadīpanī)</i>	<i>BvA.</i> <i>CpA.</i>

III. The *Abhidhammapiṭaka*

Pali Canon			Commentaries		
No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Name of scripture	Abbreviation
34	<i>Dhammasaṅgaṇī</i>	<i>Dhs.</i>	53	<i>Abhidhammatthakathā</i> <i>Dhammasaṅgaṇīvaṇṇanā</i> (<i>Atthasālinī</i>)	<i>DhsA.</i>
35	<i>Vibhaṅga</i>	<i>Vbh.</i>	54	<i>Abhidhammatthakathā</i> <i>Vibhaṅgavaṇṇanā</i> (<i>Sammohavinodanī</i>)	<i>VbhA.</i>
			55	<i>Abhidhammatthakathā</i> <i>Dhātukathādivaṇṇanā</i> (<i>Pañcapakaraṇatthakathā</i>)	<i>PañcA.</i>
36	1. <i>Dhātukathā</i> 2. <i>Puggalapaññatti</i>	<i>Dhtk.</i> <i>Pug.</i>	55.1	<i>Dhātukathāvaṇṇanā</i>	
			55.2	<i>Puggalapaññattivaṇṇanā</i>	
37	<i>Kathāvatthu</i>	<i>Kvu.</i>	55.3	<i>Kathāvatthuvaṇṇanā</i>	
38	<i>Yamaka 1</i>	<i>Yam.1</i>	55.4	<i>Yamakavaṇṇanā</i>	
39	<i>Yamaka 2</i>	<i>Yam.2</i>			
40	<i>Paṭṭhāna 1</i>	<i>Paṭ.1</i>	55.5	<i>Paṭṭhānavāṇṇanā</i>	
41	<i>Paṭṭhāna 2</i>	<i>Paṭ.2</i>			
42	<i>Paṭṭhāna 3</i>	<i>Paṭ.3</i>			
43	<i>Paṭṭhāna 4</i>	<i>Paṭ.4</i>			
44	<i>Paṭṭhāna 5</i>	<i>Paṭ.5</i>			
45	<i>Paṭṭhāna 6</i>	<i>Paṭ.6</i>			

Some other important scriptures

(in particular, those texts used in the traditional Pali studies curriculum in Thailand)

No.	Main scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Exegetical scripture	Abbreviation
56	<i>Milindapañhā</i>	<i>Milinda.</i>			
57	<i>Visuddhimagga 1</i>	<i>Vism.1</i>	61	<i>Visuddhimaggasaṃvaṇṇanā</i> <i>Mahāṭīkā</i> (<i>Paramatthamañjūsā</i>) 1	<i>VismT.1</i>
58	<i>Visuddhimagga 2</i>	<i>Vism.2</i>	62	<i>Visuddhimaggasaṃvaṇṇanā</i> <i>Mahāṭīkā</i> (<i>Paramatthamañjūsā</i>) 2	<i>VismT.2</i>
59	<i>Visuddhimagga 3</i>	<i>Vism.3</i>	63	<i>Visuddhimaggasaṃvaṇṇanā</i> <i>Mahāṭīkā</i> (<i>Paramatthamañjūsā</i>) 3	<i>Vism.T.3</i>
60	<i>Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha</i> ¹	<i>Saṅgaha.</i>	60	<i>Abhidhammatthasaṅgahaṭīkā</i> (<i>Abhidhammatthavibhāvīnī</i>)	<i>Saṅgaha.T.</i>
1	<i>Vinayaṭṭhakathā</i> (<i>Samantapasādikā</i>) ¹²	<i>VinA.1</i>	64	<i>Vinayaṭīkā Samanta-</i> <i>pāsādikāvaṇṇanā</i> (<i>Sāratthadīpanī</i>) 1 (<i>Sātattadīpanī</i>) 2	<i>VinT.</i>

¹Printed as a single volume.

²Same as the *Vinayaṭṭhakathā* in the first list above.

No.	Main scripture	Abbreviation	No.	Exegetical scripture	Abbreviation
	1.1 <i>Verañjakaṇḍavaṇṇanā</i> 1.2 <i>Paṭhama-Catuttha-pārājikavaṇṇanā</i>		65	<i>Vinayaṭṭhaka Samanta-pāsādikāvaṇṇanā</i> <i>Vinayaṭṭhaka Samanta-</i>	<i>Vin.Ṭ.2</i>
2	<i>Vinayaṭṭhakathā</i> (<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>) ²	<i>VinA.2</i>	66	<i>pāsādikāvaṇṇanā</i> (<i>Sāratthadīpanī</i>) ³	<i>Vin.Ṭ.3</i>
3	<i>Vinayaṭṭhakathā</i> (<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>) ³	<i>VinA.3</i>	67	<i>Vinayaṭṭhaka Samanta-pāsādikāvaṇṇanā</i> (<i>Sāratthadīpanī</i>) ⁴	<i>Vin.Ṭ.4</i>
–	<i>Khuddakanikāya Suttanipāta</i> <i>Maṅgalasutta</i> ³		68	<i>Maṅgalatthadīpanī 1</i>	<i>Maṅgal.1</i>
70	<i>Bhikkhupātimokkhaṭṭhapaṭi</i>	<i>Pāṭimokkha</i>	69	<i>Maṅgalatthadīpanī 2</i> (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 64, 64, 65, 66, 67)	<i>Maṅgal.2</i>

³In the *Khuddakapāṭha* and also the *Suttanipāta* in Volume 25 of the Pali Canon.

Concluding remarks

To recapitulate what was discussed earlier, the importance of the Pali Canon can be summarised as follows:

1. The Pali Canon is the collection of the word of the Buddha. What the Buddha himself said has been handed down to us in the Pali Canon. It is through the Pali Canon that we have come to know the Buddha's teachings.

2. The Pali Canon is where the Teacher of all Buddhists resides, as the Doctrine and Discipline, which the Buddha said would be his successor after his Final Nibbāna, are enshrined in it. We can have an audience with, or get to know, the Buddha through his word preserved in the Pali Canon.

3. The Pali Canon is the original source of the Buddha's teachings. Any teachings, explanations, scriptures, books, or textbooks that are regarded as Buddhist must of necessity be derived from and in compliance with the principal tenets, the basis or original source, found in the Pali Canon.

4. The Pali Canon is the reference in expounding or confirming the principles claimed to be Buddhist. Any explanations or claims about the tenets of Buddhism will be reliable or well accepted only when referring to evidence found in the Pali Canon, regarded as the ultimate reference, with the final say.

5. The Pali Canon provides the standards against which the Buddhist teachings are to be judged. Any teachings or sayings claimed to be Buddhist teachings must be in compliance with the Doctrine and Discipline recorded in the Pali Canon. (Even any words or texts in the Pali Canon itself that are suspected to be bogus must also be cross-checked against the general teachings in the Pali Canon.)

6. The Pali Canon provides the standards against which beliefs and ways of practice in Buddhism can be checked. It is by the Doctrine and Discipline found in the Pali Canon that we can judge whether certain beliefs or ways of practice, as well as any behaviour, are right or wrong, whether

they really belong to the Buddha's teachings.

7. For these reasons, the study of the Pali Canon is a task of crucial importance for Buddhists. It is regarded as the maintenance or survival of Buddhism. In other words, as long as the Pali Canon is studied as the guiding principle for proper practice, Buddhism will survive. Otherwise, whatever practice one might have would not be in accordance with the tenets of Buddhism, and the Teaching itself would die out.

In addition to the importance it directly bears on Buddhism, the Pali Canon is valuable in other respects as follows:

1) The Pali Canon is a huge record of cults, beliefs, religions, philosophies, customs, traditions, cultures, affairs, events, and localities, such as the various city states, in the past.

2) The Pali Canon is the source of concepts relating to various fields of study, as the teachings in the Doctrine and Discipline are related to, or inclusive of, many different disciplines such as psychology, law, governance, and economics, to name a few.

3) It is the original source of Pali words used in the Thai language. As the Pali language is an important basis for the Thai language, studies and researches in the Pali Canon are especially helpful to the study of Thai.

In sum, studies and researches in the Pali Canon are of significance not only for the study of Buddhism, but also for the study of a broad spectrum of disciplines including the Thai language, geography, history,

sociology, anthropology, archaeology, political science, economics, law, education, religion, philosophy, psychology, etc.

However, it is rather surprising and disheartening that most Buddhists nowadays do not seem to understand what the Pali Canon is, why it should be preserved and protected, why it should be employed as the standards or criteria for judging what constitutes the Dhamma and Vinaya, or in other words what constitutes the Buddha's teachings. Without such a basic understanding, they might go so far as to assume wrongly that the Buddha's teachings can be just anything they like.

Furthermore, there is confusion between the objective principles of the religion and the subjective opinions of individuals. This confusion, perhaps not unrelated to the first problem, is bound to lead to a lot of problems.

If we ask what the Buddha taught, or what he taught about a particular topic, we have to turn to the Pali Canon for the answer, for there is no other source that can answer this question.

But if we are asked, given what the Buddha taught, what we think about it, then we are entitled to what we think; it is our freedom of expression to comment on what the Buddha taught.

Even in the latter case, to do justice to the Teacher, we should first study the explanations in the scriptures until we understand them clearly before making a summary of what we have studied. If it is properly summarised, then the summary will be in accord with what the Buddha taught. Otherwise, it would be faulty, in which case further study is called for.

But at least, as pointed out above, we have to draw a distinction between what the Buddha taught, which should be faithfully presented, and what we ourselves think about it, which we are free to express. Unfortunately, this distinction has now often been blurred, with a great deal of confusion going around.

As a matter of fact, the main tenets of Buddhism are quite distinct and definitive, and not a matter of opinion or conjecture. They are firmly based on the evidence regarded by Buddhists to have directly come down from the Buddha, in the form of the Tipiṭaka, with the commentaries, among other scriptures, providing supplemental explanations. Recognised by Buddhists of all times to constitute the Teaching proper, to be the most authoritative references, these scriptures have been painstakingly preserved in their original state as accurately as possible.

Whoever claims that he can practise without recourse to the Tipiṭaka in effect says that he can practise without recourse to the Buddha. Since he practises without recourse to the word of the Buddha, how can we call his practice Buddhist? Of course, it is simply practice in accordance with a cult, faith or opinion of his own, or of somebody else who has come up with his own way of practice, or at best based his view on something derived from the Tipiṭaka by word of mouth, which naturally runs the risk of deviation or distortion.

Thus, all Buddhists should keep a watchful eye on these two types of individual: (1) those who confuse the actual word of the Buddha with their personal opinions on the pretext of so-called “academic freedom” and under the guise of “academic research”, and

(2) those who claim that they can practise without recourse to the Buddha. Such individuals, who it is not uncommon to find in our present society, can indeed cause serious damage to the Teaching in the long run, especially when they have garnered a great number of gullible followers.

We should therefore be alerted to the threat and join forces to tackle it by promoting proper practice based on the true teachings, which we should help preserve in the pristine state. In fact, it is high time for Buddhists to be rehabilitated, i.e. to be directed back to the course of the Dhamma and Vinaya, and take up a serious study of the Pali Canon once again.

As pointed out earlier, as long as the Pali Canon exists, so will Buddhism, the original, authentic Buddhism. Hence, as long as the Pali Canon is there, we still have a chance to get to know Buddhism and derive the genuine benefits that are available from this noble religion.

It is hoped that the Pali Tipiṭaka will become the vehicle, like a Buddhist missionary who travels far and wide, for expounding the Dhamma, which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end, in accordance with the Buddha's instruction for the first batch of his disciples to proclaim the Teaching so as to attain the goal of expanding the welfare and happiness of the multitude to cover the entire populace of the world for many years to come. To make this happen is, in short, to achieve the lofty Buddhist ideal of *Lokānukampāya*.