

The Lead in a Buddhist's Good Life by the Study of the Most Eminent Practice Text

Daw Thiri Nyunt (Ph.D Candidate)

ITBM University

Yangon, Myanmar

Introduction

Appalling hardship such as financial crises, arguments, iniquities, disasters, weather-changes and various diseases have been undergone by today-people are taken as the worldwide problems. Religious teachers are endeavouring to solve those problems in line with their respective religions. No doubt, they will edify their people to be benign, to develop loving-kindness, to help the poor and to have non-discrimination. In the view of Buddhism, threefold training rule – morality, mental development and wisdom, which is the one and only trend towards liberation from all miseries is the core of all Buddha's teachings that logically pinpoints the map of good life and deduces to lessen the risk of problems.

“The Lord Buddha used to praise the noble morality training, concentration training and wisdom training and He urged people to undertake in the threefold training”¹. That is the answer of Venerable Ananda to a lad named Subha who asked the question, after the demise of the Buddha, thus: “Venerable sir, what kinds of dhammas are used to praise by the Buddha? In which dhamma, people are urged to undertake by the Buddha?” His answer is correct. When three repositories (*Tipitaka*) expounded by the Buddha during forty-five years of His preaching *dhammas* are recapitulated, three very essences morality, mental development and authentic wisdom are said to be the heart of the Buddha's dispensation. Since the Buddha was alive, He himself claimed and extolled the virtue of threefold training rule, as “One who practices too much morality, concentration and wisdom is graceful like the sun owing to liberation from three cyclic processes impelled by the interaction of lust, deed and its consequences which are the territory of the devil”².

Whoever wishes to emancipate from the cycle of rebirths must practice them. It is uneasy, however, to accumulate and learn these essences and to practice them entirely from the whole *Tipitaka*, which is similar to the vast ocean. In order to approach them straightforwardly, many great disciples of the Buddha extracted efficiently the practice of ethics, mental training and insightful understanding from *Tipitaka* and arranged the practice texts (*Patipatti* treatises) in a methodical approach. *Patisambhidāmagga* and *Visuddhimagga* are the two eminent Theravada Buddhist practice texts. Of them, *Visuddhimagga* is the world-famous practice text. *Visuddhimagga* text appeared, about one thousand year later (412 AC) after the demise of the Buddha, by the product of Venerable Buddhaghosa reckoned as a would-be Buddha by the name of Arimettayya is highly beneficial for those from many countries in the world who follow Buddha's teachings. It offers the grantee to attain profitable benefit in mundane and supra mundane as well.

¹ Dighanikaya, Subhasutta, p.189.

² Khudakkaniyaya, Vol. I, Maradhēyyasutta, p. 230.

The Comparison of *Patisambhidamagga* and *Visuddhimagga*

The very first practice treatise in the dispensation of the Buddha is *Patisambhidamagga* named as the Path of Discrimination produced by Venerable Sariputta who is the the Right-hand side Chief disciple of the Lord Buddha as well as one who is called the Generalissimo of the *Dhamma* (*dhammasenapati*). The treatise of the path of purification, *Visuddhimagga* which was the work of the author named Ashin Maha Buddhaghosa (5th century CE) is like the space which is of full of stars. It is represent as the commentary (*atthakatha*) for being excessively and analytically simplified threefold training rule by broadening *Jatasutta* included in *Samyuttanikaya*; thus it becomes the most influential commentary text. In undertaking meditation, these two texts play in a crucial role as the prime instruction manuals for the meditation teachers in order to provide the guidance to the practitioners. Of them, *Visuddhimagga* is better known than *Patisambhidamagga*. It is noteworthy that the description of *Visuddhimagga* consisted of threefold training is very clear to understand for the meditators despite having precise clarification in *Patisambhidamagga*. Another reason is that *Visuddhimagga* is popularized due to making interpretation in several languages such as English, Myanmar, and German etc.

Comparison of *Vimuttimagga* and *Visuddhimagga*

Ahead of emerging *Visuddhimagga*, or after *Patisambhidamagga*, *Vimuttimagga* which means ‘the path of freedom’ created by Arahant Upatissa was appeared as a prior treatise in which thirteen sections are integrated and is written by Singhalese language. Both of those texts direct to the only way to the Nibbana, although they have different names. Morality, concentration, wisdom and deliverance are systematically clarified in *Vimuttimagga* that was expensively materialized based on Anubuddhasutta³ in Anguttaranikaya. Both of them, *Vimuttimagga* and *Visuddhimagga*, are regarded as the commentaries because of the great elaboration of the practice to attain Nibbana. *Visuddhimagga* is entirely organized with twenty-three explanations (*niddesa*) and one hundred and seventy-one chapters (*katha*). It is assumed that *Vimuttimagga* seems to be hard to use as a reference nowadays. The reason why is when *Visuddhamagga* text which is an excessively ideal text appears, the sector of *Vimuttimagga* that is not as perfect as *Visuddhimagga* seem to be dim. *Vimuttimagga* text can be found in this present is a Chinese translation of the 6th century A.C.

A Variety of *Visuddhimagga* texts

There is no one Pali practice text far exceeds *Visuddhimagga* which appeared after Third Buddhist Synod and arranged since Sasana Era 973 has not been appeared until now. After some years of appearing *Visuddhimagga*, for the more understanding some specific words and the sake of rendering in the difficult passages, the grate sub-commentary on *Visuddhimagga* called the *Paramatthamañjūsa* is appeared by the attempt of the elder named Dhammapala. To be helpful in reading *Visuddhimagga* for those who are not skillful in *Pali*, it is rendered in success into their respective languages. In Myanmar, many Buddhists can study that commentary without complicatedness since the facilitator Ashin Nandamala, who resided in Phayar Thonesue Mountain in Kyaikhto Township, translated it into Myanmar language. Consequently, three volumes in Myanmar treatises of *Visuddhamagga* were emerged in 1934 and well known by the name ‘Kyaikhti version or Phayarthonesue version’. These are the curricula for the three stages of *Visuddimagga* examination has been held annually by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Myanmar. A concise *Visuddhimagga* text, which is named as

³ Anguttaranikaya, p. 308 (Anubuddhasutta); Dighanikaya, p. 102 (Mahaparinibbanasutta)

‘The Taste of *Visuddhimagga*’ (Myanmar version) created by Venerable Ariya (Nyaung Lay Bin Toya Sayadaw) in 1953, is very famous in Myanmar as the essence of *Visuddhimagga* book to be simply understandable for the readers. In 1963, Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw arranged four volumes of it in succession again for the request of Buddha Sasana Society when the sixth synod was held in Myanmar. These volumes are known as ‘Mahasi version’. Of some English translation books of *Visuddhimagga*, two has been prominent excessively in the world. U Pe Maung Tin (Burmese) writes one and another is generated as the product of Bhikkhu Ñanamoli.

The Fundamental Sector of *Visuddhimagga*

In *Visuddhimagga*, which is related to four *Nikayas*, twenty-three explanations (*niddesa*) are comprised as three clusters: morality, concentration, wisdom, and in which seven classifications of purification (*visuddhi*) are completely pinpointed. As the purification of morality (*sila visuddhi*), the sense of morality, different kinds of morality, the benefits of observing morality are elucidated with several stories. Besides, the exposition of ascetic practices (*dhutंगा*) is exhaustively clarified as a section of the purification of morality. To be purification of mind (*citta visuddhi*), the definition of concentration, diversification of concentration, how the concentration can be established by forty meditation subjects, the benefits of it are made clear to understand. In the training of wisdom, from purification of view (*ditthi visuddhi*) up to purification by knowledge and vision (*ñānadassana visuddhi*), illuminating to contemplate the ultimate *dharmas* such as five aggregates, twelve bases, twenty-two faculties, eighteen elements are pointed out to practise the insight meditation. In addition, therein four noble truths, dependent origination and sixteen kinds of wisdom are amplified too.

From practical point of view, by realizing thoroughly the advantages of ethics from *Visuddhimagga* and applying the training of moral conduct, good association, keeping sympathy and holding love support most in need of peaceful world. Ascetic practices give the guidance to the meditator who desires for shaking off the disgusting defilements. In the meditation part, the tranquility meditation (*samatha bhavana*) makes mental quality to improve dramatically when one undertakes one of forty subjects of meditation. Furthermore, with *samatha* meditation, every one can train of oneself to be purification of mind if he wants his inner spiritual increasing. Typically the ordinary people’s mind, it is improbable to purify the polluted mind. By the time firm concentration is established, the mind is temporarily free from impure defilements including hindrances and becomes untainted mind. Much of training of it supports to be dominant mind by which one can reduce stress, dissatisfaction, tiredness as well as make complete good health and finer life. However, as described in *Visuddhimagga*, only with *vipassana* meditation, which is the unique way to be emancipation from all sufferings, defilements can be set aflame all over by penetrating the ultimate realities. For the familiarized one with the basic of *Abhidhamma* can be readily comprehensible in studying *Visuddhamagga*.

Conclusion

Reading *Visuddhimagga* strength of faith in the Buddha, in His excellent conduct and in His complete teachings, much of respect in the trainings of the noble ones including all Buddhas, Pācakkabuddhas and Arahants, and ardent aspiration for the emancipation from the repeated rebirths will be increased. Additionally, it acts as a facilitator for meditation masters to give the guidance to the meditator and for the scholars who study the Buddhist literature to make use of a reference. Culturing the mind, *Visuddhimagga* brings the blessings of civilization to possess genuine happiness, peaceful lives, and beautiful mind. In view of that, it is assured that

Visuddhimagga will be standing in the future sasana as an ideal practice text existing like in the past and in this present due to ability of upgrade to be successful culmination of one's life.

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