

THE VIMUTTI-MAGGA

THE 'WAY TO DELIVERANCE'

THE CHINESE COUNTERPART OF THE PĀLI
VISUDDHI-MAGGA.

By M. NAGAI.

Since that happy discovery, more than twenty years ago,¹ of the Chinese translation (A.D. 488) of the Samanta-pāsādikā, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Vinaya-pitaka, no trace of any other Pāli text was found extant among the Buddhist literature of China and Japan. We have, however, no reason to despair in this line of research, when we see that the Jātaka of over 500 stories and the Vinaya of the Theravāda had been translated as early as A.D. 483-493 by an Indian priest named Mahāyāna, though these were lost already in A.D. 730². Meanwhile I may be allowed to call attention herewith to the existence of a work which seems in several ways to illustrate the history of the early Buddhist literature. It may not be a Pāli text, yet so much is certain, that it is akin in its form and nature to Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi-magga, which, I understand, is now being edited and translated by the Pāli Text Society.

1. *The Text.*

The text in Nanjio's Catalogue, No. 1293, is called the 'Way to Deliverance,' Chin. 'Cié-to-táo-lun', which has been restored by Professor Nanjio to Sanskrit 'Vimokṣa-mārga.'

¹ "Takakusu; Pāli Elements in Chinese Buddhism," *J.R.A.S.*, July, 1896, pp. 416-439.

² Nanjio's Catalogue, p. 420 (94).

It was translated A.D. 505 by a Cambodjan (Funan) priest, Seng-chie-po-lo.¹ It consists of twelve books, amounting to twelve Chinese volumes. We may reasonably style it an encyclopædia of Buddhist Theology, as Childers' Dictionary does in the case of the Visuddhi-magga.

There is a legend that it was composed by the Arahā Upatissa, who is usually identified with Sāriputa, the famous disciple of the Buddha.

At the beginning of the text we have the usual invocation: 'Adoration to the world-honoured, the worthy, the fully and properly enlightened', and we can at once see that it is a translation of the Pāli "Namo tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammāsambuddhassa." No other Chinese Buddhist texts, except the Chinese Samanta-pāsādikā above referred to, begin with such a sentence of adoration. When I first came across the text it was this formula that aroused my suspicion as to its Pāli origin.

2. *The Translator and His Date.*

Sangha-pāla, the translator of the text, was a priest from the Fu nan country (Cambodja, Siam). After his arrival in China, he became a pupil of Guṇa-bhadra, who was then in China coming from Mid-India. Sangha-pāla was well versed in several languages and translated the text in question, which belongs to the Hinayāna, along with some Mahāyāna texts, during his stay in China (A.D. 505-520). He died at the age of sixty-five, A.D. 520. His master, Guṇa-bhadra, was himself a noted scholar of the Mahāyāna school. On his way to China, he visited Sihala-dīpa (now Ceylon) and other southern countries. After his arrival in China in A.D. 435 until A.D. 443, he was actively engaged in translation. Thus, though we do not know which of the two is the importer of the text, it is certain that it originated from the region of the southern Buddhism, either from Ceylon or from Cambodja.

¹ Nanjio's Catalogue, p. 422 (102). There are two Chinese renderings for the name; one is 'Community-nourishment' (Sangha-bala or -bhara), and the other 'Community-armour' (Sangha-vara or -varman). The Chinese *po lo* can be rendered either *pāla*, *vara*, *batā* or *bhara*, and it may be *pāla*, "guarding" (i.e., support and protector).

A text brought by either one or the other cannot be placed later than A.D. 435, or, in any case, later than A.D. 505. So our text is in all probability anterior to Buddhaghosa, whose arrival in Ceylon is put at A.D. 420.

3. *The Author and His Date.*

Sāriputta (Buddha's disciple) was named Upatissa before he entered the Sangha, as Moggallāna, another disciple of the Buddha, was called Kolita.¹ But this by no means forces us to identify our Upatissa with Sāriputta. In fact, as we find the venerable Sāriputta often quoted in Upatissa's text, it becomes necessary to look for another Upatissa whose date is nearer to the date of our text. The *Samanta-pāsādikā* and *Parivāra* of the *Vinaya-pitaka* fortunately give the list of venerable theras in Ceylon, from Mahinda, the son of the King Asoka, down to Sīva, probably much anterior to Buddhaghosa (c. A.D. 420). In this list of a lineage of tradition (*param-parā*) we find the name Upatissa, whom I have reason to identify with our author. Upatissa of the list was an eminent Buddhist scholar and specially versed in the *Vinaya-pitaka*. According to the *Samanta-pāsādikā*, he had two great pupils, Mahāsummatthera and Mahāpadumatthera by name, and the former in the course of time left his master and went over to the Continent (India), while the latter remained with his master to attend further his lectures on the *Vinaya*. The *Samanta-pāsādikā* itself often quotes Upatissa as a great authority. On one occasion (*Pārājika* 1) there was a great dispute about the insult to a corpse. The question was: What rule should be applied in case the dead body be for the most part decayed (*yebhuyyena khayitam*) or in case the body be for the most part not decayed (*yebhuyyena akkhayitam*). According to the *Vinaya* rules the former case is treated as a *Thullaccaya* crime, while the latter case is considered to be a *Pārājika* offence. There is, however, no rule when the body is half decayed. The question was discussed among 500 priests, including the Elder Upatissa who was asked by all to

¹ *Vinaya-pitaka*, i., p. 42; *S.B.E.*, p. 13, 149.

decide the matter. 'Buddha would have said expressly,' he said, 'if it belonged to the Pārājika offences. As he was reticent on the point, it ought to be included in the lesser crimes'—*i.e.*, Thullaccaya. The story is found both in the Pāli and in the Chinese Samanta-pāsādikā. We can judge from the above that Upatissa held a high position in the Sangha. The following quotation will illustrate his position in the Buddhist school.

"In the Island Tambapaṇṇi there were two Elders under one and the same teacher who had learnt the Vinaya, Upatissa, and Phussadeva by name.

"At the time of a great panic, these two keeping up the Vinayapitaka protected it. Upatissa was superior to the other. Of him there were two pupils, Mahāpaduma and Mahāsumma by name. Mahāsumma heard the Vinayapitaka nine times from his teacher, while Mahāpaduma heard it nine times more by himself, altogether eighteen times. Mahāpaduma was therefore superior to his fellow-disciple. After hearing the Vinaya nine-times Mahāsumma left his teacher and went to the further Gangā. Thereupon Mahāpaduma said: 'Alas, such a Vinaya-holder must be a hero to think of living elsewhere leaving his teacher who is still alive! While one's teacher is alive, one could surely learn the Vinaya and its Atthakathās many times. Without leaving them, and always hearing them, they have to be recited year after year.' Thus at the time of these Vinaya teachers, Upatissa and his pupil Mahāpaduma sat one day among five-hundred chief priests and explained that point in the rules of the first Pārājika."

A learned therā so much esteemed in the sangha would be worthy to be the author of such an important work as the book in question. We should naturally like to know when he flourished. To my great joy, I came across a sentence also in the Samanta-pāsādikā, which sheds some light indirectly on the date of Upatissa. The sentence runs as follows:

"Mahāpadumatthero pi kira Vasabharaṇṇo deviyā roge uppanne ekāya itthiyā āgantvā pucchito na jā-

nāmi ti vatvā evam eva bhikkhūhi saddhim sallapesi. Tam sutvā tassā bhesajjam akamsu. Vūpasante ca roge ti-civarena ca tihi ca kahāpaṇasatehi saddhim bhesajja-cangotakam pūretvā āharitvā therassa pādamūle thapetvā bhante pupphapūjam karothā ti āhamsu. Thero ācariyabhāgo nāma ayan ti kappiyavasena gahāpetvā pupphapūjam akāsi" (Sinhalese 2, p. 257).

"The Venerable Mahāpaduma had a visit of a woman (queen's attendant) and was asked about (a medicine), as the queen of the King Vasabha was ill. 'I do not know,' was his answer, and no more. He went on, however, talking with Bhikkhus (about the matter). Hearing him they made the medicine for her. And when she recovered, they filled the medicine-casket with three robes and a hundred kahāpaṇa coins, and laid it at the feet of the thera, and said, 'Sir, make with this flower-offerings to the Buddha.' The thera, saying 'this would be my teacher's share,' accepted the casket, as it was proper to do, and made flower-offerings with it." The Chinese Samanta-pāsādikā, translated by Sangha-bhadra in A.D. 488, also hands down the same anecdote. Now the King Vasabha of the text is, no doubt, the King of a similar name mentioned in the Dipavaṃsa (22, 1). According to this historical work King Vasabha was a very devout believer in Buddhism. It tells us:

The King Vasabha constructed in the Cetiyaṇabbata Monastery ten Thūpas, a glorious deed by which high reward is to be gained.

In the Issariya Arāma he constructed a delightful Vihāra and a pleasing and delightful Uposatha hall. He also ordered a large kettle-drum to be made for the most excellent Mucela Monastery.¹

An approximate date assigned by Wijesinha to the King Vasabha's coronation was A.D. 66.² Upatissa, whose disciple, Mahāpaduma, cured the disease of the King's consort, must have flourished in the same period, probably some years previous to the others.

¹ Oldenberg's *Dīpavaṃsa*, xxii., p. 216.

² See his *Mahāvaṃsa*, p. 4.

The following is the *paramparā* of eminent theras in Ceylon, from Mahinda down to Sīva:¹

Mahinda-Ariṭṭha — Tissadatta — Kālasumana —
 Dighanāmaka — Dighasumana — Kālasumana —
 Nāgattthera — Buddharakkhita — Tissa — Deva —
 Sumana—Cūlanāga — Dhammapāli(ta) — Khema Upa-
 tissa — Phussadeva — Sumana — Pupphanāma (Phus-
 sanāma) — Mahāsīva — Upāli — Mahānāga — Abhaya
 (Sahāyo) — Tissa — Pupphanāma — Cūlābhaya —
 Tissa — Cūladeva — Sīva.

Mahinda, son of Asoka, arrived in Ceylon about 244. B.C. The *Samanta-pāsādikā* mentions the date of Mahinda's arrival at Ceylon to be the 236th year after the Buddha's death, which occurred most probably in about 480 B.C., as usually estimated. Siva, who stands at the bottom of the line, is probably much anterior to Buddhaghosa (c. 420), the author of the *Samanta-pāsādikā*. Upatissa being the fifteenth in order stands almost in the middle of the lineage, and if we assign twenty years to each, it will bring us down to the first century A.D. This is about the time of the King Vasabha (A.D. 66-109). Similar calculation applied to the remaining thirteen theras, however, brings us down to A.D. 260 only, about the time of the King Mahāsena (A.D. 277-303), when the *Dīpavaṃsa* was compiled.² Judging from the fame of Upatissa above quoted we shall probably be right in identifying him with the Upatissa of the *paramparā* just given.

4. *The Samanta-pāsādikā and Visuddhi-magga.*

The *Samanta-pāsādikā* thrice refers to the *Visuddhi-magga*, especially when it dwells on jhāna or the *kammattḥānas*. For instance:

¹ The Sinhalese text of S.P. I. p. 28; the *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 5, p. 3. This line is given in Takakusu's "Pāli Chrestomathy," p. 120. The Chinese S.P. omits Phussadeva, Sumana, Pupphanāma, Mahāsīva, Upāli, Mahānāga, Tissa, Pupphanāma, Cūlābhaya and Tissa in this *paramparā*.

² Oldenberg. *Dīpavaṃsa*, p. 9.

(1) . . . tesam bhāvanānayo Visuddhi-magge vuttanayen' eva veditabbo, idha pana vuccamāne atibhariyam vinaya-nidānaṃ hoti (Sinhalese, 1, p. 70).

(2) . . . atthikehi pana Visuddhi-magge vuttanayena gahetabbam (Sinhalese, 1, p. 77).

(3) . . . ayam ettha sankhepo, vitthārato pana sila-visodhanakathaṃ paḷibodhupacchedakathañ ca icchan-tena Visuddhi-maggato gahetabbo (Sinhalese, 2, p. 236).

In the Chinese *Samanta-pāsādikā* the word *Visuddhi-magga* is translated into 'The Way to Calm,' or 'The Way to Purity'; sometimes cited with the general name 'Abhidharma-vibhāṣā.' This last title³ indicates that it was considered to be a commentary on the Abhidharma, and the quotation itself shows that the *Visuddhi-magga* was compiled before the *Samanta-pāsādikā*.

5. *The Visuddhi-magga and the Vimutti-magga.*

The Chinese title 'Ciê-to-tāo (lun)' means 'The Way to Deliverance', and corresponds with the Pāli *Vimutti-magga*. Both *Visuddhi* ('Purity') and *Vimutti* ('Deliverance') denote *Nirvāṇa* or Arhatship and resemble each other in sound. Judging from the contents of the two works, the name *Vimutti-magga* must be regarded to be original and more appropriate than *Visuddhi-magga*. The contents are arranged according to the subject-matters that are propounded therein, —namely, *Sila*, *Jhāna*, *Paññā*, and *Vimutti*. The last is sometimes styled *Anuttara-Vimutti*, as it is the highest aim of the Buddhist culture.¹ In *Upatissa* the Chapter 12 (1 and 2) is devoted to *Anuttara-Vimutti*, while in *Buddhaghosa*, the part he calls *Visuddhi-niddesa*, the five Chapters 18-22, seems to point to the *Vimutti* question. These portions differ widely, and *Buddhaghosa* perhaps thought it best to rewrite them altogether. Further, it is these *Visuddhi* sections that suggested to him the alteration of the title *Vimutti* to *Visuddhi*.

¹ The introductory verse in *Upatissa* gives four divisions (see below).

The Chinese text agrees roughly (in some places very closely) with the Visuddhi-magga. It will be interesting to see how Buddhaghosa's work is related with Upatissa's work.

A comparative table of contents in both texts.

<i>Pāli.</i>	Sīla.	<i>Chinese.</i>
1. Silaniddeso - - -	Chap. 1. Introduction— Chap. 2. Classification.	
2. Dhutanganiddeso -	Chap. 3. Tou t'o (<i>Dhuta</i>).	
	Jhāna.	
3. Kammatthānaggahaniddeso	Chap. 4. Classification of Jhāna— Chap. 5. Seeking after good friends (<i>kalyāṇamitta</i>)— Chap. 6. Classification of Action (<i>Cariya</i>). Chap. 7. Classification of Kammatthāna.	
4. Pathavīkaṣiṇaniddeso -	Chap. 8. Basis of Action 1. A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 2.	
5. Sesakaṣiṇaniddeso -	A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 2.	
6. Asubhakammatthānaniddeso	A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 3.	
7. Cha anussatiniddeso -	A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 3.	
8. Anussati-kammatthānaniddeso	Chap. 8. Basis of Action 4.	
(The Pāli includes six <i>anussati</i> 's (recollections) in Chap. 7, and four <i>anussati</i> 's (or <i>sati</i>) in Chap. 8, while the Chinese combines them in Chap. 8 of it as ten recollections.)		
9. Brahmavihāraniddeso -	A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 5.	

10. Āruppaniddeso - - A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 2.
 11. Samādhiniddeso - - A part of Chap. 8. Basis of Action 5.
 12. Iddhividhāniddeso - The forepart of Chap. 9. Five Supernatural Powers.
 13. Abhiññāniddeso - - The rest of Chap. 9. Five Supernatural Powers.
 14. Khandhaniddeso - A part of Chap. 9. Five Means of Success 1.
 15. Āyatanadhātuniddeso - A part of Chap. 11. Five Means of Success 1.
 16. Indriyasaccaniddeso - A part of Chap. 11. Five Means of Success 1.

Paññā.

17. Paññābhūminiddeso - A part of Chap. 11. Five Means of Success 1.

Vimutti.

18. Ditthivisuddhiniddeso A part of Chap. 11. Five Means of Success 2.
 No corresponding nid- Chap. 12. Classification of
 deso in Pāli Truth 1, 2.
 19. Kankhāvitaraṇavisuddhiniddeso
 20. Maggāmaggaññānadassanavisuddhiniddeso } No corre-
 21. Paṭipadāññānadassanavisuddhiniddeso } sponding
 22. Ñānadassanavisuddhiniddeso } Chapters
 in Chinese.
 23. Paññābhāvanānisam- Chap. 10. Classification of
 saniddeso - - Wisdom.

The above is a comparison of Chapters with Chapters. I should like to point out the difference somewhat in detail of the contents of the two works.

The gāthā cited at the outset is different in both texts.

The Pāli gāthā runs as follows:

“Sīle patitthāya naro sapañño, cittaṃ paññaṃ ca
bhāvayāma

ātāpī nipako bhikkhu, so imaṃ vijāṭaye jaṭaṃ.”

“If a wise man firm in moral practice, cultivating
thought and wisdom, be an ardent and prudent mendicant,
he may disentangle the knots (of evil passions).”

This gāthā is found in Saṃyutta-nikāya I, 3, 3; Chinese
22 (3 30^a). The Chinese gāthā, on the other hand, is:

“Sīla, samādhi, paññā and anuttara-vimutti. He
became enlightened as to these dhammas one after
another, he the famous (*yassasī*) Gotama.”

In the Visuddhi-magga there is quite a lengthy explanation
as to where the Buddha spoke the gāthā, while in the Vimutti-
magga no such explanatory note is found.

Though the two works resemble each other in form, inas-
much as both divide the Contents according to Sīla, Jhāna,
Paññā, and Vimutti, yet they differ greatly in the way of
explanation, the arrangement of materials, etc., those portions
which are curtailed in one being given fully in the other, or
vice versa. But so much seems certain that the author of the
Visuddhi-magga had Upatissa's Vimutti-magga before him.
Some interesting episodes inserted by Buddhaghosa are not
found in Upatissa's work. In Chapter 2 we notice that both
agree exceedingly well, yet they differ in the order of the four
self-restraints (*catusaṃvara-sīla*). Upatissa gives Pātimok-
kha-s. Ājīva-s, Indriya-s, and Paccaya-s, while Buddhaghosa
mentions Indriya-s before Ājīva-s. The latter, while explain-
ing the Indriya-saṃvara-Sīla, gives an interesting example of
Mahātissa's skill in meditation.

When Mahātissa¹ was going to Anurādhapura for a begging
round he met with a lovely woman in a beautiful attire, who
was returning to her mother leaving her husband. She was
nervous and excited and laughed loud showing her teeth at
the sight of the thera. Thereupon the latter obtained the

¹ Mahātissa is not in the list of Theras above given. There are two
Tissas and one Upatissa in the list.

idea of impurity on contemplating her teeth as a relic of her dead body (Asubha meditation by an exercise of the mind to see living being as a dead body) and reached Arhatship. Her husband pursuing her came across the thera, whom he asked if he had seen a woman. The thera said: "I did not see any woman nor man either. But I saw a set of human bones running away."

This story is entirely unknown to Upatissa's text. In Chapter 3 the explanation of the 13 dhutas agree with each other. Chapter 6 indicates a difference in the division of *cariyā*. Upatissa gives 14 *cariyā*'s, while Buddhaghosa propounds 6 *cariyā*'s, taking the first 6 of the 14, and adds that some set forth 14 *cariyā*'s, putting with them 4 tendencies (*rāgādīni*) and 8 tendencies (*sāddhādīni*). In all probability Buddhaghosa has before his eyes Upatissa's text, which has 14 *cariyā*'s. In Chapter 11 both agree for the most parts, but in one section (*dhātu-upāya*) Upatissa gives 18 *dhātu*'s against Buddhaghosa's 22 *indriya*'s, the two sets having in common the 6 senses only.

The above will serve, I hope, to show roughly how the two texts differ from each other. The difference in each case can be accounted for in one way or another, on the ground of rearrangement, interpolation, or curtailment. On the whole the description of the Chinese is much simpler than that of the Pāli. Buddhaghosa seems to be responsible for all such revisions. Besides being translated by Sangha-pāla, who himself as well as his master seems to have been a Mahāyānist, the Chinese work might have been in some points influenced by the Mahāyāna doctrine. In one part Upatissa brings in Bodhi-satta, Mahāsatta, and Paññāpāramitā.¹ I think some other Mahāyānistic tints can be detected in the text.

5. Concluding Summary.

Upatissa, a learned thera, compiled in the first century A.D. the Vimutti-magga, a text which served for a long while as an encyclopædia of Buddhist learning. The text, while being handed down in several Buddhist centres, obtained some local

¹ These terms, however, are not distinctly Mahāyānistic.

or sectarian tints. It was brought to China either by Guṇabhadra of Mid-India A.D. 435, or by Sangha-pāla of Cambodja A.D. 505 or before, and was translated A.D. 595 by the latter, who is a pupil of the former. It might have originated in Ceylon, where the teacher landed on his way to China, or in Mid-India, or even in Cambodja (Siamese territory). Meanwhile Buddhaghosa arrived in Ceylon *c.* A.D. 420, and began his compilation of the commentaries on all Buddhist literature. Most of his works seem to be a translation from earlier Sinhalese commentaries with a free revision and with many additions. The Visuddhi-magga, which hitherto has been considered to be entirely his own work, is in reality a revised version of Upatissa's Vimutti-magga. Buddhaghosa's Visuddhi-magga must have been compiled before the commentary on the Vinaya,—*i.e.*, the Samanta-pāsādikā, which was translated into Chinese A.D. 488—and as it is quoted in the latter as an Abhidharma-vibhāṣā, it must have been considered to be an exegesis of Abhidhamma. The Vimutti-magga, as its contents show, is an Abhidhamma exegesis, serving as a compendium of that portion of the Buddhist literature. In short, the Visuddhi-magga and the Vimutti-magga are one and the same work appearing in different attires.

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