

A MILESTONE IN PALI TEXT SOCIETY WORK

BY THE EDITOR.

WE have come this year to another milestone in the Society's annals—that is, the completion of our editions of the seven books of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and of the three books of the Commentary thereon ascribed, in the Pali recension which we find in the palmleaf MSS., to Buddhaghosa. All of these are first (roman letter) editions, and their history dates almost from the start of the Society. In the first *Journal* (1882) we find that three of the seven books had been already put in hand and, in the second *Journal*, one of the Commentaries. Of those three one text was brought out in 1883, and one, albeit with a change of editors, in 1885. The Commentary, it is true, was postponed till 1914, the Commentary first published making its appearance (fire at the printers' had partly destroyed the MS.!) in 1897. This year we complete our edition of the seventh, or so-called Great Book of the Paṭṭhāna, and the Commentary on the second book, Vibhanga, the voluminous Sammoha-Vinodanī, “She who disperses bewilderment”—admirable title for an exegetical Baedeker such as the Commentaries were. Below is the inscription on our milestone :

ABHIDHAMMA PIṬAKA.

<i>Date of Issue.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Text.</i>	<i>Editor.</i>
1883	...	4. Puggala-Paññatti.	Richard Morris.
1885	...	1. Dhamma-Sangaṇi.	Edward Müller.
1892	...	3. Dhātu-Kathā.	Edmund Gooneratne.
1894-5	...	5. Kathā-Vatthu.	Arnold C. Taylor.
1904	...	2. Vibhanga.	Mrs. Rhys Davids.
1906, 1921-3	...	7. Paṭṭhāna.	Mrs. Rhys Davids.
1911, 1913	...	6. Yamaka.	Mrs. Rhys Davids.

COMMENTARIES.

<i>Date of Issue.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Text.</i>	<i>Editor.</i>
1889	...	3. Pañcappakaraṇ' Attha-kathā.	J. P. Minayeff.
1892	...	3. Pañcappakaraṇ' Attha-kathā (Dhātukathā).	Edmund Gooneratne.
1897	...	1. Atthasālinī.	Edward Müller.
1912	...	6. Pañcappakaraṇ' Attha-kathā (Yamaka).	Mrs. Rhys Davids.
1914	...	4. Pañcappakaraṇ' Attha-kathā (Puggala-Paññatti).	Mrs. Rhys Davids and Georg Landsberg.
1921-3	...	7. Pañcappakaraṇ' Attha-kathā (Paṭṭhānā).	Mrs. Rhys Davids.
1923	...	2. Sammoha-Vinodani.	A.P. Buddhadatta and Miss A. M. Dibben.

TRANSLATIONS.

- [1900. Of the Dhamma-Sangaṇi, by Mrs. Rhys Davids, published by the Royal Asiatic Society, second edition, 1923.]
1915. Of the Kathā-Vatthu (Points of Controversy), by S. Z. Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids.
- 1920-1. Of the Commentary: Atthasālinī, *The Expositor*, by P. Maung Tin.
- 1923-4. Of the Puggala-Paññatti, *Designation of Human Types*, by Bimala C. Law.

All then is now done, unless it be judged well (a) to make more translations, (b) edit any Ṭikās. Whatever may be decided about (b) it is not in this Society's original programme to publish editions of these. Of (a) it might be worth while to publish translations of the Commentary on the Vibhanga and on the Kathāvatthu. It is true that our *Points of Controversy* gives the gist of the latter. The former is a voluminous work, longer by 100 pages than its predecessor *The Expositor*, but in no way a repetition, and, in so far as it illustrates further the half-erudite, half-childlike, *historically* wholly uncritical mind of its day, is quite interesting. Besides these, the first pages, the Paccaya Niddesa, of the Paṭṭhāna, are worth presenting in English.

If we discount the many topics of clerical controversy discussed with much crude inconclusive dialectic in the Kathāvattu (together with the irruption of that dialectic itself), we can say that the analysis of causation into the twenty-four passages or modes of relation, considered as causal, is the most outstanding and significant contribution to anything approaching an epistemology in the whole Abhidhamma Piṭaka. The only other matter to put beside it in constructive value is the analysis of sense in the Rūpa-kaṇḍa of the Dhammasaṅgani. We may look in vain for any other contributions in these seven books of a like positive nature.

Indeed, as to the rest of the Paṭṭhāna, the whole of the Yamaka, of the Dhātukathā, and a good deal of the Vibhanga, we, as looking back from our new world, may well marvel that it was ever held worth while to compile them. I have not said this hastily, but as one who has spent a long slice of one life-span in the work of revealing the contents of this Piṭaka. I should be too glad to learn that the time was not wasted. But the venerable Ledi's apologia¹ did not convert me.

Have we, who have taken forty-one years in laying these many volumes on library shelves, any sheaves to show that may serve, first the historian of science and of religion, and then, through him, the average educated masses? We have left him with plenty of problems, but, as the founder used to say, "we have deepened their significance." Let me try to make a brief and quite provisional summary.

Taking the problem of the order in which these seven books came to be compiled and made canonical, why on earth was the book usually called the latest made the fifth and not the seventh? Is not the simple solution this: that at the Council of Patna there were no such six books as we now have (*plus* the so-called latest, the fifth) to be included; that there was still only that Mātikā, referred to in the Vinaya as co-ordinate with Vinaya and Dhamma, the "heads of discourse," preserved in the first pages of the

¹ See *Yamaka*, II., pp. 220 *f.*; *J.P.T.S.*, 1914, pp. 115 *f.*

Dhammasaṅgaṇi?¹ It is true that the Kathāvatthu refers to two or three of the twenty-four paccayas. But just when it would have served the orthodox apologist to cite the Paṭṭhāna (since it, too, was, if in a modified degree, held to be Buddhavacana), no such citation is given. And more: where points calling for citation, in support, from the Dhammasaṅgaṇi occur, this work is also not referred to. Hence I incline to think it possible that the Council of Patna had an Abhidhamma Mātikā, but that it had no more a seven-book Abhidhamma Piṭaka than had the two earlier Councils of Rājagaha and Vesāli. That the three Councils—three at least—were held as recorded I see no reason to doubt.² *Why* should such accounts be fictitious? But we may well be accepting too uncritically the commentarial account of the Patna Council.

Not for me is it to try to solve the problem. But a comparative study of the internal evidence to be got out of these texts may widen and deepen its significance.

Further, we can now better mark, with them as an intermediary stage, the growth in the older Buddhism of the cult of words and of wordiness, the growth of a rudimentary logic of division and definition, the growth of co-ordination and subsumption in term-concepts (*paññatti*), and the discovery or the specialization of terms for concepts. On this I have dwelt more than once as our work was progressing.³ Here I will only instance such new appearances as the division *cittacetāsikā dhammā* for the clumsy old pentad of the five Khandhas—a system which later on that division entirely routed;⁴ the specialization of *hetu* under the wider induction of *paccaya*⁵ (these terms were used as alternatives in the Suttas); the evolution of introspective analysis (we may compare the rudimentary catalogue in

¹ See text, pp. 1 f.; translated only in the second edition of the translation.

² For a sceptical view, cf. R. O. Franke's discussion, *J.P.T.S.*, 1907.

³ See *Bud. Psy. Ethics* and preface to *Vibhanga*.

⁴ Cf. *Dhs.*, § 1022, with the *Compendium*, pp. 1 f.

⁵ In *Dhs.* and *Paṭṭhāna*.

the Anupada-Sutta of the Majjhima with those in the Dhamma-Sangani); and the appearance of the term *bhavanga* for the continuum or flux of *actual* life and *potential* mental activity.¹

More significant are these books in the growth of the church of the Theras than we have perhaps realized, and more sinister. It is a different growth from the flamboyant metaphysics of Mahayānism, but it is no less effective in smothering up for us the very reason why, and for what, that church first came into existence. In Mahayāna the cult of words begat a metaphysic of Absolutism, in the Theravāda the cult of words begat some psychology and a logic. In both the founder as a real man, and his real gospel, were practically lost sight of.

For the chief outcome of these years of work on the Abhidhamma is perhaps just this—and it does deepen the significance of the problems confronting the historian of Buddhism—the necessity of distinguishing, far more acutely than has yet been done, between these two factors in Theravāda Buddhism—the work and message of the living friend of his fellow-men, Gotama, and the overwhelmingly monastic teaching of his order, his church. In the Abhidhamma the founder has become a shadow, an echo, a most unreal concept, a term, a word. His central message, turned long before into an eightfold formula, is cut up and slashed about, with all the life-sap gone out of it.

We need not quarrel with our Ābhidhammikas on that account, nor hold them worse perhaps than the man in orders who, so frequently in this country, teaches his school classes in a purely “secular” way. With the spread of “the Dhamma” from Asoka’s time, and its annexation of so much of the culture of that and succeeding centuries, the Ābhidhammikas became necessarily to some extent secularized schoolmasters, teaching a somewhat narrow, crabbed curriculum. Much the same thing went on in Europe in Christendom.

¹ *Paṭṭhāna*, p. 34, etc. Occurring once in an Anguttara Category, it is paraphrased in the Commentary as *attabhāvo*.

But we do need to be ever profiting by increase in materials, such as these texts afford, to sharpen and clarify our historical perspective. We need to be ever recalling Aquinas's word *Distinguo*. We need to be ever sceptical when the uncritical glibly quote the "Buddhavacana," saying, the Buddha said this and that, even when the passage bears sure finger-marks of the cloistered editing compiler, filling out with set phrase and church formula the fragmentary, but living natural sentences which alone have survived oblivion.