

Tipitaka journey

[Previously published in fb180427 Piya Tan]

The story behind how my Tipitaka Library needs to be told. In 1971 when I flew by Thai Airways to Wat Srales, Bangkok, for my monastic training I met my first Thai sponsor, Khun Udomsakdi KOMALARJUN during the flight.

Then, in 1972, Khun Banchong SOWAPRUX (through the recommendation of Mr LAU Hwee Tiang, Henry, of Singapore) was my ordination sponsor when I was ordained by HE Somdet Phra Vanarat (Poon Puṇṇasiri) (just before he became the 17th Supreme Patriarch of the Thai Buddhist Order). Both Khun Udomsakdi and Khun Banchong sponsored the English translations of the Vinaya and the Suttas.

Penang

In 1983, when I was conducting the 5th National Dharma Assembly (PERDANA 5) in Penang, the Committee of the PENANG BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION magnanimously made copies of their very old collection of Pali texts for my Library. This included most of the Sutta Piṭaka and the Vinaya.

Their collection was decades old and very brittle. In fact, after the photocopying, the brittle pages and binding simply fell apart. They were given a new incarnation—these volumes are still used by me today in the Sutta Discovery (SD) translation work. Sadhu!

South Asian Tipitaka

Over the years, kind supporters from Malaysia, Singapore, Canada, Australia and elsewhere have sponsored various new Tipitaka volumes and related works as the need arose. Whatever was missing from my Library, I am able to look them up in the Chaṭṭha Sangīti CD (CSCD) of the Vipassana Research Institute (Myanmar) which is very comprehensive, versatile and easy to use.

I am also fortunate to have obtained soft copies of the Royal Siamese Tipitaka of Thailand, the Buddha Jayanti Tipitaka of Sri Lanka, and the whole set of the Burmese 6th Council Tipitaka.

Commentaries

Recently, almost all the volumes missing from my Tipitaka Library—especially the Pali Commentaries—have been kindly donated by Phra Maha Sakda HEMTHEP, currently studying languages at the University of Gent, Belgium.

Benefits of the SD series

With all these scriptural and research tools at my disposal, I have been able to work on perhaps the most comprehensive commentarial translation of the suttas in our time. There's nothing glamorous about the SD project: it is a labour of love for those who want to better understand and live the suttas.

The SD series began as study notes for sutta classes over 16 years ago but grew and became more refined over the years. It is 16 and I am 69: we both are still growing (it was started in 2002). The purpose of the SD series is to provide the scholar and seeker, as far as possible, with:

- (1) references to all the latest studies on the suttas or related subjects,
- (2) related teachings by Buddhist masters, especially in meditation, of our times,
- (3) the teachings of the historical Buddha from the suttas and commentaries,
- (4) clarify early Buddhist teachings in the light of current global learning,
- (5) new insight (better understanding) of Dhamma teachings from personal experience, and
- (6) how such teachings can inspire us to mentally cultivate, and
- (7) inspire us to aspire for streamwinning in this life itself.

Spiritual truth

Although the SD series works to maintain a high scholarly standard (for the benefit of the scholars), it is helpful to understand that the SD series is not a scholarly endeavour. It is a SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOUR. While academics work with "professional truth" (how they objectively "see" the world), the SD series is a quest for SPIRITUAL TRUTH AND BEAUTY.

"Spiritual truth" here refers to a growing understanding of the suttas and related teachings, and how this helps us understand the world better: the world as it is, and WHY it is so. "Spiritual beauty" means that "what we see is NOT what we get," because they are other ways of perception. We can and must train ourselves to see and sense better--above all, to experience our mind free of the limits and prison of the senses--thus to see beauty in our lives, and so be truly happy.

Streamwinning

All these wonderful teachings are now available freely to you. You only need to study just one (S 25.1)¹ or a few easy suttas, and go from there to free yourself to live the BEAUTY and TRUTH of the historical Buddha's teachings.

Streamwinning or the subhuman states (now and later)—the choice is obvious.

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¹ <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/16.7-Anicca-Cakkhu-S-s25.1-piya.pdf>