

The Duties of the Buddhist Order in Myanmar (1752-1819)

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I. Introduction

The Order denotes a group or an assembly of Buddhist monks, those who have dedicated their lives to reach the final liberation called *Nibbāna*. The members of the Buddhist Order have to do the three duties viz. *Pariyatti* – learning the Buddha’s Teachings, *Patipatti* – practicing the Way to *Nibbāna* as given in the Buddha’s Teaching and *Pativeda* – realizing of the Buddha’s Teaching i.e. the attainment of *jahāna*, *magga*, *phala* and *Nibbāna*.

In order to carry out three duties the members of the Order establish centers of Buddhist studies called *Cāsantuik*, where Buddhist Scriptures are taught especially to young monks. According to the list of 11 July 1786, there were ninety-six *Casantuiks* in *Amarapūra*(Ni Toot 1982: 2). In July 1792, there were two hundred and ninety-four centers in twenty-eight towns and villages(Ñāna 1961: 468-9). Most of the *Casantuik* were found in the capital because the monks has to rely on charity and the capital would have the population who could give them free food and lodge. And it goes without saying that the people in the capital could support the growing monk population.

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When a monk became exceptionally clever in the Buddhist studies, he would have more than one monastery in his name. Then, just to please the donors, he had to live in these monasteries in town. For instance, in 1789, *Mon: Ton Charātoau Rhan Ñāna* had to reside five monasteries one after another (Myat Ne 1956: 200). There were *Torakyon*: - forest retreat. It was built a place where a monk can go daily to a village nearby to accept the offerings of food and return to his monastery in time for the meal. In 1812, the monks set up forest recluses - *Torakyon*: as shelters for them allowing a space of either 200 *ta* - 640.08 metres or 300 *ta*- 960.12 metres between each shelter (ROB VII 1988: 68). Thus numerous *Torakyon*:s appeared around Shwebo (Thoung 1968: 6). It seems that most of the monasteries of that period were built with timber, bamboo and thatch. Most of the monasteries were destroyed by fire, war and weather. Anyhow, during the early Konbaung Period, monks lived in teak monasteries and meditate in small abides attach to the monastery.

There were 1983 monks and 2479 novices at *Cāsantuik* of *Amarapūra* in 1786 (Ni Toot 1982: 42). In 1792, there were 2251 monks in *Amarapūra* while 3277 monks and novices lived in twenty-eight provincial areas (Ñāna 1961: 462-3, 468-9). In 1792, *Amarapūra* had 150,000 citizens and 2251 monks. So the ratio was sixty-six laymen to one monk. These monks carried out three main duties of monks. They also expected to perform other responsibilities of *Pariyatti*.

II. *Pariyatti* - Learning the Buddha' s Teachings

Among three duties of monks, *Pariyatti* is most important and to pursue it well, the monks need more copies of the *Pitaka*. When the copies are made, the learned *charātoaus* do the editing themselves. On

30 June 1783, seventeen *charātoaus* became Editors and thirty *charātoaus* as Assistant Editors. On 5 July 1784, twenty Chief Editors, forty Editors and forty Sub-editors were appointed. This Board of Editors met four times in a month at the *Pitaka Tuik*. The Board's duty is to check the legibility of each written word and to find out any mistakes like additions or omissions in the copies. With these *Pitaka*, monks taught and learned the Buddha's Teaching at the *Cāsantuik*. There are three kinds of monks engaged in learning and teaching the *Pitaka*, viz. *cāluik* – student who attend the lectures, *cāchīu* – student who read the selected page of the text and *cākhyā* – the lecturer.

In teaching the *Pitaka*, the most important thing is to have competent teachers. The teachers are also known as learned *charātoaus* who were expert in the *Pitaka*. The learned *charātoaus* are good grammarians and well versed in the *Abhidhāna*, *Cham*; *Kyam*., *Alankāra*. In addition to this they have to use various explanations called *Atthakathā* and *Tīkā*. Most of the learned *charātoaus* were authors of many treatises. These are more or less guides in learning the *Pitaka* and therefore they are the translations of the *Pāli* treatises into Myanma. They tried to write *Nissaya* – word-by-word translation. The students used to learn these *Nissaya*. Moreover, the learned *charātoaus* wrote Grammar, *Vinicchaya*, *Kathā* and *Dīpanī*. Some *charātoaus* believed that the writing of *Nissaya* is for the development of *Sāsanā* and to attain *Nibbāna* and to become an *Arahat* (Vinandasabha 1992: 162). They thought that they were helping others to understand the Buddhist Scriptures and to attain enlightenment. To know how well the teachers could teach the Buddhist scriptures and how well the pupils could understand them, these religious examinations were held.

Religious examination was divided into three categories, viz. (1) written examination on three *Pitakas*, (2) oral examination on the *Vinaya* and (3) oral examination on three *Pitakas*. Religious

examination was held every year in June and July (up to the full moon of *Wāso*). *Mahādan Wan* collected the list of name, age and *cāwa* – years of learning of candidates who wanted to sit in the examination. The curricula of novice and monk are well defined. The rules of examination for the candidates were laid down. Boys above fifteen years of age and former novices are not eligible to sit in these examinations. An examiner should not ask leading questions. A candidate should repeat what he had said when asked, other wise he is not to say a word more. The *Vinaya* oral examination is testing the candidate's knowledge of it and the difficulties he has to keep it. The courses of learning it were also defined. Especially, the elder recited *Ubhatovibanga*. The elder who passed this examination were qualified to be a *Nissaya Ācariya* and *Upajjhaya Ācariya* – one constant guide and teacher. According to the *Vinaya pitaka*, *Mahavagga*, a *Nissaya Acariya* must have spent ten or more years in the Order, could recite *Ubhatovibanga*, could conduct monastic deeds, important and slight, could observe the *Khandhakavatta* and could instruct the insight meditation. So *Patum Man:* held this kind of examination.

In 1790, *Patum Man:*, urged the *Tuikup Charātoaus* – Chiefs in the monastery in the city, and *Guin:up Charātoaus* – Local Monk Leaders far from the villages to study the *Vinaya* text by-heart to become *Upajjhaya* and *Nissaya* teachers. There were fifty-six monks, who passed the *Vibhanga* on 5 July 1792(Ni Toot 1982: 19). Twenty-two of them living in the city and twenty were the irvisitors. After reciting the *Ubhato Vibhanga*, the *charātoaus* had to propose themselves in the presence of the *charātoaus* at the *Sudhammā* rest house (lecture hall) which text they would learn. Then they had to recite it. In that examination the monks could recite the three *Pitaka* or any *Nikāya* out of five *Nikāyas*. In 1792 fifty-six monks could recite five *Nikāya* (Ñāna 1961: 432-3).

Those who sit for the examination were the preceptors and

Gaing-up Charātoaus from the villages. Only *Hanlan: Charātoau U Ketu* could recite the five *Vinaya* treatises ‘as fast as a good horse is running’. *Vinaya* is very important to all the monks, the king wanted the monks to learn the *Vinaya* by heart. Nevertheless, the number of monks who could do so remains little.

The results of the examinations were given in order of merit, and among equals priority is given in consideration of

(a) how many *cāwa* – lectures, that a candidate had attended

(b) how many *Pālito*’- main texts (not commentaries) that he had studied and

(c) in which status that his teacher was placed among all other teachers.

The candidates were given dress, gold bangles, gold ring, gold ear ornaments, umbrella made of silk, fan, litter, cup for pickled tea, and attendants in uniforms. The monk-to-be were given nether garment, gold salwe, red turban, gold ear ornament, gold bangles, gold rings, umbrella made of silk, cup for pickled tea, water jar, gold spittoon, fan, litter, betel cup, attendants, monthly rice, fish paste, salt, chili, dried fish and onion. All members of the family of new novices and monks are exempted doing any corvee like others common folks. A set of *Kathina* robe and four other requisities are also given to them at the end of every Buddhist Lent. As the *Pitaka* used to give more than designated by king, the king ordered that no one should give them anything more. If the one ignored the order he would be punished (ROB IV 1985: 114-117). Expecting to receive the rewards, the numbers of candidate who want to sit for the examination were increased. In 1782, there were thirty-eight candidates and in 1791-1792 it was increased to 3,249 (Ni Toot 1982: 21). But in 1806 there were eighteen candidates to sit for the low grade of religious examination. As the examinations were too crowded some people stated calling them as “boxing matches”. The monk must

learn the Teaching of the Buddha to know it and to practice it. The examination was held to test how well the students understand the Buddhist Scriptures. The examination became more important to all students. If the monk learning it for an examination, he would be an opportunist, seeking praise and reward. He would not be able to teach the wisdom to others because he do not know it properly himself. He just crams it for examination. It hink that examination does not help much the Buddhistic Studies. The Buddhist missions were sent to remote places with the intension of propagation of *Pariyatti*. Training monks on Buddhist missionary work was introduced. *Mahādan Wan* made the list of places where the Buddhist missions would be sent. Each provincial officer had to arrange the trip of the monks either from the capital city to his place or vice versa. Then he had to build a monastery and an ordination hall in his station. At the end of Buddhist Lent a new batch of monks from the capital city would come to take the place of the old batch. There has been no evidence of sending any Buddhist missions to remote areas from the time of *Alon: man: tarā:* to that of *Cañkū: Man: Patum Man:* sent many Buddhist monks to forty-two towns such as Bamao, Beik, Dawei, Danyawady of Rakhine, Kalay, Kaungton, Kengtung, Kengyon, Lecha, Mogaung, Momeik, Mo-ne, Naungshwe, Pathein, Thaugthut, Theinni and Thibaw (Pugam Rhwecaññ:khon Inscription, Reverse, line 13-14). Two hundred and forty-six monks were sent together with fifty-six sets of *Pitaka* to fifty-six remote towns and villages. The aim was high. The missionaries had to try and establish well the Religion at the place where they went. It is said that they tried to spread the Teachings of the Buddha. But I think that the monks were used by the king as to inquire any news of rebellion or disobedience among the governors and official at remote areas.

III. *Patipatti* – Practicing the Buddha’s Teaching

The monks actually performed the activities necessary for practicing the way to *Nibbāna* as given in the Buddha’s Teachings. In *Pārājika* of the *Vinaya*, it is stated that

Terasa dhutagunā, cuddasa khandhaka vattāni, dveasīti mahā vattāni, silasamādhī vipassanā ti ayam patipatti saddhammo nāma (*Vinaya Pitaka, Parajika Attakathā* 1967: 190-191) Practicing the thirteen *dhutanga*, observing fourteen *khandhaka vatta*, and eighty-two *Mahāvatta*, observing the precepts and meditating *samatha*, *vippasana* are *Patipatti* – practicing the Buddha’s Teachings.

Dhutanga means austere practices pursued by a monk to shed defiling passions. There are thirteen *dhutanga*. Most of the monk could not practice all *Dhutanga*. The monks practiced one or more of the thirteen kinds of austere practices to dispel evil and remove hindrances to spiritual progress. The more important ones are dwelling in a forest, taking only food one receives in the *alamsround*, wearing robes made out of rags collected from a dust heap, and confining oneself to the use of only three robes.

In early Konbaung Period, *Krakswankhan: Charatoau Rhan Pāsamsa* (1693-1775) and *Rhan Sīlācāra* left behind the grand monasteries given to them by the king and practiced *Araññakanga dhutan* – taking up residence in a rustic monastery situated at least a thousand yards from the nearest village (Myat Ne 1956: 212). *Rhan Pāsamsa* also practiced *Pindapatikanga dhutan* – subsisting only on food received as offerings (Sirisobhana 1974: 206). *Man: rwā Charātoau Rhan Jāgara* (1723-1804) kept *Pattapindikanga* – eating only what is in one’s bowl (Sirisobhana 1974: 225), and *Ticīvarikanga*

– using a set of the three robes only(Vinandasabha 1992: 110). *Rhan Munindaghosa* and *Rhan Gambhisāra* went to Sagaing Hills and meditated. Moreover there were monks who lived in accordance with the way given in *Anagatabhaya Suttanta*. They lived in forest and practiced the Teachings of the Buddha. *Patum Man*: built for each of them a *Torakyon*: - a monastery built at a place that could be part of a forest. As a matter of fact some of the monks failed to practice do their duty properly and the people do not understand what they are expected to do. Moreover, observing the *vatta* is a part of practicing the *Patipatti*. The monks must keep fourteen *khandhaka vatta*, eighty-two *mahāvatta* – conducts for monks and novices. In practicing the *Patipatti*, observing the *sīla* – precepts is important. There are two kinds of *sīla*; *gantha sīla* – moral precept for man and *pabbajita sīla* – moral precept for monks. *Pabbajita sīla* is also known as *Catuparisuddhi sīla* – the four group of moral precepts for the monks. It is necessary to observe these strictly, without incurring any blemish on oneself. The four purity of morality for monk are *patimokkha samvarasīla* – observance of the 227 disciplinary rules, *indriyasamvarasīla* –control of the sense-faculties, *ajivaparisuddhisīla* – obtaining a living in a way befitting a *bhikkhu* (abstain eight *kuladusaka* and twenty-one *anesana*), *paccayasannissitasīla* contemplating on the use of the four material requisites. It seems that the monk in early Konbaung Period would try to observe the *Pabbajita sīla*. The monks also practiced *samatha* – meditational exercise to attain tranquility. They also perceived *vipassanā* – meditation to attain the right path and fruition by viewing physical and mental phenomena in the light of their three characteristics, viz. impermanence, suffering and non-self (*anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*). In that period, the learned *charātoaus* themselves were trying to propagate *Pariyatti* while residing at the monasteries but they seemed to be weak in practicing it. Anyhow there might be monks who not only learned but also practiced the Teachings of the Buddha.

The basic of practice is learning and the result of practice is insight, fruition and perfect peace, *Magga*, *Phala* and *Nibbāna*. This result or fruition can be attained only through practice.

IV. *Pativeda* – Realizing of the Buddha’s Teaching

The members of the Buddhist Order have incisive perception of Buddha’s Teachings – *Pativeda*. Through practicing, the monks could attain the path-consciousness and fruitional consciousness and destined to realize *Nibbāna*. We notice that *Tonlelum: Charatoau Rhan Medhāvī* (1728-1806), *Rhan Munindaghosa* and *Rhan Gambhīsāra* have penetrative insight into the Four Noble Truths. *Rhan Medāvī* wrote many *Rhubhway* – Manual that based on his meditational experience. His works show that he deeply realized the *Satipattana* – unremitting application of mindfulness and *Anapanassati* – contemplation of exhalations and inhalations in one’s respiratory process with unceasing mindfulness (Htay Hlaing 1993: 112-119). *Rhan Munindaghosa* was also known as *Jhānalābhī* – one who has attained the way of mental absorption (*jhāna*). It is thought that the monks who have incisive perception of Buddha’s Teachings were rare in this period. In *būtārocana Sikkhāpada*– rule of speaking of a condition of further men¹⁾ shows that Whatever monk should speak of a condition of further men to one who is not ordained – if it is a fact, there is an offence of expiation (Horner 1940: 211).

It seems that the *Charātoaus* did not want to say if they have incisive perception. So it is difficult to say that one who has gained the fruitional consciousness.

¹⁾ condition of further men means: musing, freedom, concentration, attainment, knowledge and insight, making the Way to become, realization of the fruits, destruction of the corruptions, delight in solitude for the mind devoid of the hindrances.

V. Conclusion

The monks of Myanmar from the year 1752 to 1819 lived in the monasteries to study and to practice the Teachings of the Buddha. In the aspect of teaching, the most important thing is to have competent teachers. The teachers must be expert in Buddhist Scriptures. They wrote *Nissaya* to know the *Pitaka* well. The students used to learn these *Nissaya*. To test the student's abilities religious examinations were held. The examinations became more important to all students. If the monk is learning the Buddhist Scriptures for an examination, he would be an opportunist, seeking praise and reward. He would not be able to teach the wisdom to others because he do not know it properly himself. Some *charātoaus* said that the examinations were like 'boxing matches'. In the aspect of practicing, the monks must keep the precepts, observe rules of conducts for monks and practice *dhutanga*. The monks could observe the precepts and conducts for monks at least. But they could not practice all *dhutanga*. We found that some monks practiced one or two of thirteen kinds of austere practices. We notice that some monks lived in forest and practice *samahta* and *vipassanā*. The result of practice is the attainment of *Magga*, *Phala* and *Nibbāna*. The monks who have incisive perception of Buddha's Teachings were rare in that period. It can be assumed that the monks who attained *Nibbāna* could not reveal their attainment because of the *Būtārocana Sikkhāpada*. Anyhow, in early Konbaung Period most of the monks tried to do the *Pariyatti*, *Patipatti* and *Pativeda* and abode by the *Vinaya*.

Key Words : The Buddha's Teaching, duties, Pariyatti, Patipatti, Pativeda

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<국문초록>

미얀마 승단의 계율 (1752-1819년)

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불교 종단에 속한 사람들은 세 가지 지켜야 할 계율이 있다. 즉, 붓다의 가르침을 배우고(Pariyatti), 붓다의 가르침대로 열반으로 가는 길을 수행하고(Patipatti), 붓다의 가르침, 즉 자하나(jahana, 제거함), 막가(magga, 道), 팔라(phala, 果), 님바나(Nibbana, 열반)의 완수를 실현하는 것(Pativeda)이다. 초기 콩바웅(Konbaung) 시대의 승려들은 붓다의 가르침을 공부하고, 실행하기 위해 승원에서 살았다. 더 나아가 반드시 계율을 지켜야 했으며 승려가 행할 규칙을 지켜야 했다. 이 글은 붓다의 가르침을 배우고 연구하는 방법, 열반으로 가는 방법을 실현하는 방법, 그리고 실행의 결과와 붓다의 가르침을 실현한 승려들에 대해 고찰하였다.

주제어 : 붓다의 가르침, 계율, 빠리앗띠, 빠띠뻬띠, 빠띠베다