

# Examples and Issues of the Usage of the Commentaries:

As a Tool for Creating a Critical Edition of the *Dīghanikāya*

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The commentaries of the Pāli canon are a huge collection of materials providing useful information to scholars in various fields, including Buddhist studies, history, geography, culture, and languages in ancient India. These commentaries are especially significant when it comes to textual criticism of the Pāli canon. Focusing on the *Dīghanikāya* (DN) and its commentary *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* (Sv), this paper will demonstrate the use of the commentaries in editorial work based on forty-five manuscripts from four traditions, Burmese (B), Sinhalese (C), Khom (K), and Tham (T).<sup>1)</sup>

## 1. Commentaries as a Reference Point

The aim of editing the Pāli canon is to restore the original text as accurately as possible. The problem is which version, or particularly which period, of the Pāli canon we should aim for. The Pāli canon has had additions throughout the course of its transmission since the first Buddhist council. As von Hinüber (2015: 378) has pointed out, some additions or interpolations in the Pali canon were already recognized by Buddhaghosa long ago. This is why there is currently no agreement among scholars as to when the Pali canon was formed into the complete set as we have now. Nevertheless, it is very likely that most scholars would agree that the extant Pāli canon came into existence no later than Buddhaghosa's time. As a result, when editing the Pāli canon, the most practical aim is to look for the recension of the Mahāvihāra school used by Buddhaghosa when he composed the commentaries.

## 2. Lemma is What Buddhaghosa Saw

A lemma is one of the most helpful parts of the commentaries. In theory, it contains canonical readings that Buddhaghosa recorded from his manuscripts at the time. However, we

have several editions of the commentaries, B<sup>e</sup>, C<sup>e</sup>, E<sup>e</sup> and S<sup>e</sup>, in which inconsistencies can be found from time to time. The below examples show how a lemma is used.

**Example 1:** In the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* (DN 28), the Buddha responds to Sāriputta who has made a statement of high praise to him.

*ulāra* kho te ayaṃ Sāriputta āsabhī vācā bhāsītā ... (DN (E<sup>e</sup>) III 99; (B<sup>e</sup>) III 82, para. 142)

Sāriputta, this is an **excellent** and dramatic statement spoken by you ...

- *ulāra* (B<sup>11,12,13,15</sup> C<sup>1,4,5</sup> T B<sup>e</sup> C<sup>e</sup> E<sup>e</sup>); *ulārā* (C<sup>2,3</sup>); *ulāro* (B<sup>14</sup>)
- *olāra* (K<sup>12,13,14,15</sup> S<sup>e</sup>); *olāro* (K<sup>16</sup>)

As suggested by CPD, *olāra* is used as a synonym for *ulāra* “large, excellent.” Among our manuscripts, only K manuscripts read *olāra*, where as all the rest of our manuscripts read *ulāra*. However only the latter reading is quoted as a lemma in the Sv of all printed editions including the S<sup>e</sup> which belongs to Khom tradition: *ulāra* ti seṭṭhā (Sv (E<sup>e</sup>) III 878; (B<sup>e</sup>) III 62; (C<sup>e</sup>) II 638; (S<sup>e</sup>) III 101). Therefore, *ulāra* should be adopted here.

### 3. Useful Hints from Commentarial Explanation

**Example 2:** In the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* (DN 14), Khaṇḍa and Tissa are the first two people taught by the Vipassī Buddha. After receiving the teaching, they asked to go for refuge with the Buddha and Dhamma and became the first two monks. Later, a large crowd of 84,000 people came to listen to the teaching from the Vipassī Buddha. They also asked to go for refuge with the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha(?), and then received ordination.

... Khaṇḍo ca ... Tisso ca ... etad avocuṃ: ... ete mayaṃ bhante Bhagavantaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāma, dhammaṃ ca. ... mahājanakāyo caturāsītipāṇasahassāni ... etad avocuṃ: ... ete mayaṃ bhante Bhagavantaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāma, dhammaṃ ca bhikkhusaṅghaṃ ca. (DN (E<sup>e</sup>) II 42 ff.; (B<sup>e</sup>) II 36 ff., para. 78 ff.)

- *bhikkhusaṅghaṃ ca* (B K); *bhikkhusaṅghaṃ ca* (B<sup>e</sup> C<sup>e</sup> S<sup>e</sup>) • omit (C T E<sup>e</sup>)

It is clear from the context that Khaṇḍa and Tissa asked to go for refuge to only the Buddha and Dhamma, excluding *bhikkhusaṅghaṃ*, because without existing monks there couldn't have been a *Saṅgha*. However, after Khaṇḍa and Tissa had become monks, a group of 84,000 people came to ask to go for refuge. Here, should they include *bhikkhusaṅghaṃ* for their refuge or not? All of our witnesses, except C and T manuscripts

and the printed edition E<sup>c</sup>, do include *bhikkhusaṃghaṃ ca*. Here the Sv comes to give us a helpful hint: *Bhagavantam saraṇam gacchāma dhammañ cā ti saṅghassa aparipuṇṇattā ddevācikaṃ eva saraṇam agamaṃsu* (Sv (E<sup>c</sup>) II 474; (B<sup>c</sup>) II 65). The lemma and its explanation indicates that *bhikkhu-saṃghaṃ ca* should be excluded against most of witnesses as the *saṃgha* had not been established yet.

**Example 3:** In the *Lohicca-sutta* (DN 12), two different names are given to a barber by manuscript traditions.

‘*eveṃ bhante*’ *ti kho Bhesiko nahāpito Lohiccassa bhāhmaṇassa paṭissutvā yena Bhagavā ten’ upasaṃkami.* (DN (E<sup>c</sup>) I 225; (B<sup>c</sup>) I 215, para. 505)

- *Bhesiko* (C E<sup>c</sup>)                      • *Bhesikā* (C<sup>c</sup>)
- *Rosikā* (B<sup>2,3,4</sup> K<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> B<sup>c</sup>); *Rosika* (B<sup>1</sup> T); *Rosiko* (B<sup>5</sup> S<sup>c</sup>); *Rositā* (K<sup>5</sup>)

In general, all C manuscripts read *Bhesiko* whereas SEA manuscripts read *Rosikā*. There are two problems here, at the beginning and the end of the barber’s name. The first problem at the beginning of the name, *Bhe-/Ro-*, is rather straightforward. It is likely to have been caused by confusion over the letter *Ro-* in Mon, Burmese, and Khom scripts for the letter *Bhe-* in Sinhalese script. In addition, based on the equivalent name *Bheṣajī(n)* found in the Sanskrit fragment (SHT X 3830), it is reasonable to conclude that the name should begin with *Bhe-*. For the second problem at the end of the name, should the gender of his name be masculine or feminine? The Sv comes to our aid here: *Bhesikaṃ nahāpitan āmantesi ti Bhesikā ti evaṃ itthiliṇḍgavasena laddhanāmaṃ nahāpitaṃ āmantesi.* (Sv (E<sup>c</sup>) II 395; (B<sup>c</sup>) II 327). “*Bhesikaṃ nahāpitan āmantesi*: he addressed a barber who had obtained the name ‘*Bhesikā*’ in the feminine gender.” As a result, even though only the printed edition C<sup>c</sup> has it, *Bhesikā* is correct and should be adopted here.

#### 4. Old Variants at Buddhaghosa’s time

It has been known among scholars that variant readings in the Pāli canon have been found even at Buddhaghosa’s time. In the Sv, a variant reading is given in forty-nine different places which are indicated by a phrase ‘... *ti (pi)ivā pāṭho*’ or ‘(*keci*) ... *ti (pi) paṭhanti*’ (Horner 1979; von Hinüber 2015: 366–371). One of them is shown in the next example.

**Example 4:** In the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* (DN 2), there is a simile of the divine eye as follows:

*seyyathā pi mahārāja majjhe siṅghātake pāsādo, tattha cakkhumā puriso ṭhito passeyya manusse gehaṃ pavisante pi nikkhamante pi rathiyā vīthiṃ sañcarante pi majjhe pi siṅghātake nisinne.* (DN (E<sup>e</sup>) I 83; (B<sup>e</sup>) I 78, para. 247)

Great king, just as there was a mansion at the central square. A man with good eyesight standing there might see humans entering and leaving a house, **travelling along a road and street**, and sitting at the central square.

- *vīthiṃ sañcarante* (B<sup>e</sup>); *vithiṃ sañcarante* (S<sup>e</sup>) • *vithiyaṃ sañcarante* (B<sup>1</sup>)
- *vīthi sañcarante* (C<sup>2,3,4,5</sup> E<sup>e</sup>); *vīthi sañcarante* (C<sup>1</sup>); *vithi sañcarante* (B<sup>5</sup> K<sup>3,4,5</sup> T)
- *rathi sañcarante* (B<sup>2,3</sup>); *rathin sañcarante* (B<sup>4</sup>); *rathiya sañcarante* (K<sup>1</sup>)
- *vītisañcarante* (C<sup>e</sup>) • omit (K<sup>2</sup>)

We have a wide range of variants here. Two printed edition, B<sup>e</sup> and S<sup>e</sup>, read *v(ī|i)thiṃ sañcarante* by having *vīthiṃ* in the accusative case, but no manuscript supports this reading. Most manuscripts, C, T, B<sup>5</sup> and K<sup>3,4,5</sup>, read *v(ī|i)thi sañcarante*, which presents difficulties in grammatical explanation. The oldest Burmese manuscript, B1, reads *vithiyaṃ sañcarante* whereas the rest of manuscripts, B<sup>2,3,4</sup> K<sup>1</sup>, read *rathi(ṃ) sañcarante*, but there is no support from the commentaries. However, a unique reading *vītisañcarante* is given in our last witness, the printed edition C<sup>e</sup>. Here, the lemma in the Sv shows that the word is problematic and its variants already existed even in Buddhaghosa's time.

*dibbacakkhūpamāyaṃ vīthiṃ sañcarante ti aparāparam sañcarante.* *vīthiṃ carante ti pi pātho.*

(Sv (Be) I 220; (Se) I 330)

*dibba-cakkhu-upamāyaṃ vītisañcarante<sup>2</sup> ti aparāparam carante.<sup>3</sup> vīdisañcarante ti pi pātho.*

(Sv (Ee) I 224)

The Sv gives us even more variants — *vīthiṃ sañcarante*, *vīthiṃ carante*, *vītisañcarante*, and *vīdisañcarante*. At this point, *vītisañcarante* 'moving past each other' seems to be a good reading. Because the problem could be solved if we see *vīti-* as a verbal prefix and read it as a single verb, *vītiñcarante*. In addition, when focusing on the commentarial explanation '*aparāparam (sañ)carante*,' two more cases of the same explanation have been found, and they apply a lemma of one single verb as follows: *saṃsarantī ti aparāparam sañcarantī.* (Sv (E<sup>e</sup>) I 105); *anucaṇkamante ti aparāparam caṇkamante/sañcarante.* (Ps (E<sup>e</sup>) II 323).

## 5. Conclusion

As shown in the above examples, the commentaries are a practical and useful tool for those who are editing the Pāli canon. However, they are sometimes not very helpful when a lemma becomes inconsistent across different printed editions, e.g. *muddhābhisitto/muddhāvasitto* in the *Cakkavatti-sutta* (DN 26). Furthermore, we also need to use the commentaries with caution, taking into account other aspects such as context, manuscript reading, parallels, philological points, and so forth. All in all, using commentaries in editing the Pāli canon is a way to approach, appreciate, and re-examine the commentaries with new eyes.

### Notes

1) Burmese manuscripts for DN I — B<sup>1</sup> (1679), B<sup>2</sup> (1768), B<sup>3</sup> (1774), B<sup>4</sup> (1792), B<sup>5</sup> (1806); for DN II — B<sup>6</sup> (1773), B<sup>7</sup> (1832), B<sup>8</sup> (1836), B<sup>9</sup> (1839), B<sup>10</sup> (1882); for DN III — B<sup>11</sup> (1784), B<sup>12</sup> (1795), B<sup>13</sup> (1832), B<sup>14</sup> (1842), B<sup>15</sup> (1883). Sinhalese manuscripts for DN I-III — C<sup>1</sup> (1744), C<sup>2</sup> (1783), C<sup>3</sup> (1832), C<sup>4</sup> (1855), C<sup>5</sup> (unknown). Khom manuscripts for DN I — K<sup>1</sup> (1777), K<sup>2</sup> (1783–1809), K<sup>3</sup> (1824–1851), K<sup>4</sup> (1851–1868), K<sup>5</sup> (unknown), K<sup>6</sup> (removed); for DN II — K<sup>7</sup> (before 1767), K<sup>8</sup> (1781), K<sup>9</sup> and K<sup>10</sup> (1824–1851), K<sup>11</sup> (unknown); for DN III — K<sup>12</sup> (1807), K<sup>13</sup> (1824–1851), K<sup>14</sup> (1851–1868), K<sup>14</sup> and K<sup>15</sup> (unknown). Tham manuscripts for DN I — T<sup>1</sup> (1598), T<sup>2</sup> (1822), T<sup>3</sup> and T<sup>4</sup> (1836), T<sup>5</sup> (unknown); for DN II — T<sup>6</sup> (1836); for DN III — T<sup>7</sup> (1820), T<sup>8</sup> (1825), T<sup>9</sup> and T<sup>10</sup> (1836).

2) E<sup>c</sup> gives more variants in the critical apparatus as follows: S<sup>se</sup> vīti-saṃcaranto; S<sup>h</sup> vītisaṃcarante; S<sup>i</sup> vīthi-saṃcarante, and so. S<sup>d</sup> corrected from vītisaṃc°; B<sup>m</sup> rathim saṃcarante.

3) E<sup>c</sup> gives more variants in the critical apparatus: S<sup>e</sup> omits; S<sup>se</sup> vīthi-saṃcarante; B<sup>m</sup> vithi sañc°.

### Abbreviations

B	Burmese script manuscript	K	Khom script manuscript
B <sup>e</sup>	Burmese edition – Chaṭṭhasaṅgīti	P <sup>s</sup>	Papañcasūdanī (Commentary on Majjhimanikāya)
C	Sinhalese script manuscript	T	Tham script manuscript
C <sup>e</sup>	Sinhalese edition – Buddhajanti editon or Simon Hewavitarne Beduest edition	S <sup>e</sup>	Thai edition – Syāmaratṭha edition
CPD	Critical Pāli Dictionary	SEA	Southeast Asia
E <sup>e</sup>	European edition – PTS	SHT	Sanskrit handschriften aus den Turfanfunden

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