

The Influence of Blessing Discourse on Buddhist People and its Contemporary Relevance

Ven Pannasami

Research Scholar, Center for Mahayana Buddhist Studies, International Student Hostel, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, 522510, Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract: This studying aims to make the understanding of the Mangala Sutta and the Poetic Literature of Theravada Buddhist people, Union of Myanmar. It is to explore the background and meaning of the Mangala Sutta, Theravada Buddhist people Poetic Literature and the influence of Mangala Sutta on the daily life of Theravada Buddhist people, union of Myanmar. The article has also shown an understanding of the Mangala Sutta which is a part of Paritta chanting and also deals with Manuscript tradition. It shows the role of traditional poetic writing in the practices and teachings of Theravada Buddhism among the Buddhist people and analyses how draws on and enfold other literature from the Theravāda tradition and the religious context in which such texts are read to an audience. It is concerned with some of the traditional ceremonies commonly celebrated by Theravada Buddhist people in Union of Myanmar and discloses some of the historical background and the expected benefits of Buddhist ceremonies according to the beliefs of Theravāda Buddhist people.

Keywords: Mangala Sutta, Theravāda Paritta, Theravada Buddhist people, Poetic Literature

1. Introduction

Mangala Sutta is one of the most popular Suttas from the Pāli Buddhist Scriptures. 'Mangala' means 'Blessing' and 'Sutta' means 'Discourse'. The Mangala Sutta provides lessons of direct practical application, capable of immediate and fruitful use by people in all walks of life, irrespective of differences of sex or status, race or religion. It is true for everyone and also a part of Paritta chanting. The doctrines from Mangala sutta and Mangala sutta chanting is widely practiced among the difference Buddhists communities in Myanmar. Myanmar (also known as Burma) is an ethnically diverse nation with 135 distinct ethnic groups officially recognized by the Burmese government. It is likely that through the British, and on the basis of Burmese pronunciation. The Buddha, The Enlightened One, appeared in the world for material and spiritual welfare of all beings. The Lord Buddha taught the Dhamma about 45 years after his Enlightenment. He spoke no word that has not purpose or benefits. The following statement *Maṅgala Sutta of Dīgha Nikaya*. It can be considered that why the lord Buddha declared because Deva, this is conducive to the purpose, conducive to Dhamma, the way to embark on the life; it leads to regret, to associate with the wise, not to associate with the fool, to higher mental progress understanding, to freedom from final liberation.

Most of the Theravada Buddhist people believe that chanting *Paritta* (protection) can prevent evil and bring good fortune. They believe in chanting *Paritta* (protection) in traditionally and call it "parit" that means "Great *Paritta*" which is including Mangala Sutta. Apart from Mangala Sutta chanting, *Thevāda* Buddhists peoples use a form of poetic manuscript to convey the teachings of the Buddha. The poetic manuscripts are used for the teaching of even very advanced doctrine and practice capture distinctive, ways of transmitting Dhamma among the *Theravāda* Buddhist people. They are written new manuscripts or copy from the existence old manuscripts by the request of the donors according to the occasions such as the ordination ceremony,

the anniversary of a temple, honorary ceremonies, etc. and there are many doctrines from *Tri-piṭka* including the *MahāMaṅgala sutta*.

Theory of Maṅgala Sutta

The Mangala Sutta means the Discourse of Blessings. This discourse can be found in *Khuddaka Nikāya* in two places: in the *Khuddakapāṭha*, and in the *Sutta Nipāta*. The teachings in this Sutta can easily be understood, appreciated and followed by everyone regardless of their religion. The teachings in the Mangala Sutta are timeless and universal. The views expressed by the Buddha in the Mangala Sutta are a masterpiece of practical wisdom. The principle of the whole teaching of the Buddha is self-reliance. The main point has mentioned in the Mangala Sutta is which the blessings come from own efforts and those efforts have many dimensions: educational, social, economics, psychological and spiritual.

The word "Mangala" means "blessing", "auspicious sign" or "good omen". In ancient India, people wanted to know what constituted a real blessing that makes life happy for them. This issue was even raised among deities (devas) in the heavenly planes. For twelve years the deities argued, debated and discussed about it. Some referred "blessing" as what is pleasurable to the senses-things that are pleasing to the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body. However, no satisfactory answer could be obtained. Then devas of Tavatimsa heavenly realm approached Sakka, the leader of the devas, for his views. Sakka advised the devas to consult the Buddha. Thus in the middle of the night, a certain deity with his surpassing splendour, came to visit the Buddha at the monastery of Anāthapindika in Jeta's Grove near Sāvathī. He asked the Buddha for the true meaning of "blessing". In response, the Buddha delivered a discourse known as Mangala Sutta, in which thirty-eight highest blessings were enumerated. Mangala Sutta is customarily chanted for blessings on auspicious occasions. Besides, these thirty-eight blessings are ethical and spiritual in nature,

providing a step-by-step training on the journey of life. It contains Buddha's advice and guidance for the 'novice' of life, and ultimately leads one to liberation from suffering.

The Thirty-Eight Great Blessings

According to the introduction stanza of the Mangala Sutta, which was added to the original text after the Buddha, there are 38 blessings. They are (1) not to associate with the fool, (2) to associate with the wise, (3) to honour those worthy to honour, (4) to reside in a suitable place, (5) to have done preparation (meritorious actions, good deeds) in the past, (6) to set oneself in the right course, (7) to have a good education, (8) to have knowledge of arts, science and vocations and be proficient at work, (9) to follow a code of discipline, (10) to practice pleasant speech, (11) to support father and mother, (12) to cherish wife and children, (13) to be engaged in unconflicting (peaceful occupation), (14) to be charitable, (15) to be righteous in conduct, (16) to help one's relatives and friends, (17) to do social services, (18) to loathe evil, (19) abstain from evil, (20) to refrain from intoxicants, (21) to be mindful in the *Dhammas*, (22) to have reverence, (23) to be humble, (24) to be content, (25) to be grateful, (26) to listen to the *Dhamma* on due occasions, (27) to be patient, (28) to listen to advice, (29) to associate with monks, (30) to have *Dhamma* discussions on due occasions, (31) to practice self-restraint, (32) to live according to the Noble Eight-Fold Path, (33) to understand the Four Noble Truths, (34) to attain the realization of *Nibbāna*, (35) the mind unshaken by the whims of fortune, (36) to be free from sorrow, (37) to be free from defilements, (38) to have lasting peace and security.

Theravāda Buddhist peoples use a form of poetic literature to convey Buddhist teachings in an interesting. These poetic texts are read in the context of religious or social activity on variety of occasions. The texts are called *kavyā* in Burmese Language means 'great writing/text'. *Kavyā* is also known as '*Lankāra*', 'the text of great poetry', on account of its illustriousness and complexity. The term '*lankāra*' for Burmese poetic works is probably derived from the Sanskrit or *Pāli* word '*alankāra*', literally meaning 'decoration' or 'ornamentation'.

The influence of the Maṅgala Sutta on Daily life of Theravadas Buddhist People

The life of Buddhist people in Union of Myanmar reveals the importance of Buddhism. Buddhist people preserved Theravāda Buddhism for over two thousand years. As most of the children studied from monasteries, the doctrines from the Mangala Sutta reflected to their life. Some doctrines from the Mangala Sutta which we can see clearly in Buddhist societies are supporting mother and father, cherishing wife and children, engaging in unconflicting (peaceful occupation), helping one's relatives, loathe evil, refraining from intoxicants, conducting social services and accompany with monks. They also practice according to almost the whole doctrines from the Mangala Sutta which are taught by religious teachers especially monks. Theravāda Buddhist monks play a significant role in preserving religious festivals and people believe in *kamma* (action) and rebirth. They trust that today action will produce future results, so they perform different ways of making merit.

Theravāda Buddhist people believe in *Kamma* and its result that is taught in Buddhism such as "Doing good will experience life's bounty; Doing evil will suffer misfortune or Doing good begets good and Doing evil be gets evil". Theravāda Buddhist people are afraid of the bad results of bad action since they hold the belief that the fruit of unwholesome action will visit them as the Buddha stated that man's merits and sins one owns and these will follow the doer like one's shadow.

"*sabbapāpassa akaraṇam kusalassa upasādāsacitta pariyo dapanam etaṃ buddhāna sāsanam*"

According to the Dhammapada, we can summarize as follows: 'discard all that is immoral, what should not be done Take in what is moral by sorting out 'san'. Do this by controlling one's own thoughts (Mind'. That is the doctrine of the Buddha's teaching.

"*Manō pubbangamā dhamma manō setthā manōmayā*

manasāc padutthēna bhāsati vā karoti vā cakkamva vahato padam. tatōnam dukkhamanvēti."

"*Manō pubbangamā dhamma manō setthā manōmayā manasā cē pasannēna bhāsati vā karoti vā tatonam Sukhamanvēti chāyāva anapāyani*"

These verses encompass the critical idea in Buddha Dhamma: That mind is at the forefront. This whole world is made of the mind and has the mind as the basis for everything.

- Mind is, of course, the mind. *Dhammā* are the energies that the mind generates (via *javana* power.) *Dhammā* means "to bear" meaning "everything arises due to *Dhammā*."
- Those *dhammā* then give rise to everything (all phenomena) in this world –whether living or inert.
- *Pubbangama* (*pubba + anga*) means what comes first. The first line (in both verses) says the mind creates all *dhammā* that give rise to everything in this world. The second line says, everything is prepared (*settā*) and is a manifestation of the mind (*manomayā*).
- The mind creates those *Dhammā* with thoughts (*saṅkhāra*.) That requires a lengthy explanation that can go to profound levels: '*Buddha Dhamma*-A scientific' and worldview of the Buddha'.
- Depending on whether one speaks (*bhāsati*) and acts (*karoti*) with a defiled (*padutta*) or a pleasant (*pasanna*) mind, those *dhammā* that are generated by the mind lead to (*tatonam*) suffering (*dukkhamanvēti*), or happiness (*sukhamanvēti*).
- In the case of a defiled mind (acting with *lobha*, *dosa*, *moha*), suffering will follow just as a wheel of a cart follows the footsteps of the ox pulling it (*cakkamva vahato padam*).
- In the case of a pleasant, moral mind (acting with *alobha*, *adosa*, *amoha*), happiness will follow one just as one's shadow follows oneself (*chāyāva anapāyani*).

Reciting and Reading the Paritta

Paritta in Pāli, and paritraṇa in Sanskrit mean principally protection. Paritta suttas describe certain suttas or discourses by the Buddha and regarded as affording protection. This protection is to be obtained by reciting or listening to the Paritta suttas. According to the Pāli dictionary, the word “paritta” means protection. Paritta was collected from texts like the Khuddakapāṭha, the Aṅguttara-Nikāya.

The collection of Paritta is, to this day, more widely known by the monks and the laity of Myanmar, Ceylon, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia than any other Pāli books, is generally used in times of danger of sickness, both individual and national. According to Myanmar tradition, the five or nine monks recite the *Paritta* and make the holy-water at the Buddha's houses on the special occasions such as *Vijata maṅgala*- Ceremony of the Birthday, *Nāmakarana maṅgala* ceremony of the named, *Avaha vivahaMaṅgala*- ceremony of the wedding, *Kesacchedana maṅgala*- ceremony of the hair cutting, *Dolhakarāḷa maṅgala*-taking Cardel celebration, *Tambuhara maṅgala* take a battle celebration, *Ravindu dassana maṅgala* seeing moon and sun celebration, *Kesabandana maṅgala*-ceremony of the tonsure, *Kaṇhavijjhana maṅgala*- Ceremony of the ear boring, *Pabbajja maṅgala*- Ceremony of the Novice ordination/enter into the state of a novice, *Buddhābhiseka-Maṅgala*, (*Anekajāti saṃsāra*), and a celebration about new house, ordination, etc. The *Maṅgala sutta* is one of them containing a *Paritta*- ceremony and the most important.

Ceremony of Paritta chanting for New House warming

In new house warming ceremony, Theravāda Buddhist people usually hold *Paritta* (verses of protection) chanting and listening to poetic texts for the inauguration of a new house, or household blessing for good health and prosperity. Without performing religious rites first, the new house is looked as if it is not yet completed. Before the celebration day, the house owner invites. New house owners are very happy to have chance to make merit for their new house and are confident that they will have a happy life in their new house. In new house warming ceremony, the people prefer to listen *Paritta* chanting especially the *Mangala Sutta* (discourse on blessing), *Ratana Sutta* (jewel discourse), and *Karaniyametta Sutta* (discourse on loving-kindness). They hope that *Paritta* chanting can help them free from danger and disturbance that befalls on them.

Marriage Ceremony

Buddhist monks are also involved in wedding ceremony in Union of Myanmar. Theravāda Buddhist people get advice for the wedding day from monks. Monks are also play an important roll for Buddhist people wedding ceremony. Monks are usually invited to bless the bride and bridegroom on wedding day. It is the custom of Theravāda Buddhists in Union of Myanmar for they have faith in Buddhism and *Paritta* chanting especially the *Mangala Sutta*. Religious rite is, however, regarded as one of the parts of married ceremony to fulfill the couple happy lives.

Naming Ceremony

When a baby is born it receives a warm welcome in a Theravāda Buddhist people home. The Theravāda buddhist families believe that a baby brings more gladness into their family. Having named, the grandmothers have the first hair of the child, leaving a clump at the top of the head and saying that it protects the top of the head which is still thin. In shaving the first hair, it is customary for the parents to make an offering to the spirits. For instance, the child's name may be changed or the parents may pretend that the child is lost or stolen, if there is no body to torment, the spirits will certainly be deceived and leave the house.

2. Conclusion

This article made an attempt to offer an overview about the influence of the *Mangala Sutta* on aspects of Myanmar cultures. As the *Mangala Sutta* provides lessons of direct practical application, capable of immediate and fruitful use by people in all walks of life, irrespective of differences of sex or status, race or religion, it also studies the concept of the *Mangala Sutta* to understand more. The *Mangala sutta* has exerted a great influence on every aspect of Theravāda Buddhist people's life. Theravāda Buddhist people understand the *Dhamma* spiritually, culturally and morally as the *Mangala Sutta* chanting and listening to the poetic manuscript is the tradition of them. While many of manuscript texts are based on commentaries to the canon, some of the texts do not seem to be found in other Theravada Buddhist countries.

While it cannot know without further study how closely other manuscript relate to the canon and commentaries in this way, it is not unusual, particularly in cases where doctrine and soteriological practices are the focus of the text. In addition to composing in highly complex systems of poetry and offering explanations of their own, they transform the text through tales of exemplification directly relevant to the audience, making the text interesting with entertaining, even scatological and erotic comments (even if these are ultimately in the context of showing the dangers of erotic obsession), or animal stories. The resulting texts are then of great length, so a further feature is the way in which the text is broken up to allow temple sleepers to take a break, and for the reader in public performances to change the tone to mark the stages of passage. They have a unique form of literature that reflects Buddhism history and is an integral part of Buddhist ritual and religious practice. It can be clearly seen that Theravāda Buddhist people came into contact with Buddhism for very long time if we consider and analyze their traditions and culture.

References

- [1] Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto), Dictionary of Buddhism. p. 195-196. Jotika, Khur-Yearn. *The Poetic Dhamma of Zao Amat Long's Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta and The Place of Traditional Literature in Shan Theravada Buddhism*. A Doctorial Thesis to the University of London, 2012

- [2] Religious Background in Burma (Between 13th and 16th AD), A Doctoral Thesis to the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, 2010.
- [3] Ven. Sengindra Suvannasiri. *A Study of the Influence of Buddhism on the Life of Shan People in Eastern Shan Nyaung kan sayadaw, Mangalatta Dipanī*
- [4] *Kyaw Hhtut, U, A Guide to Maṅgala sutta*. Trans. by Daw Mya Tin, Department of the promotion and Propagation of the Sāsana, Yangon Myanar, 1994
- [5] Khp.25 , (Ministry of Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 1961)
- [6] Sn.24 (Ministry of Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 1961)
- [7] Dhammapada verses.183 (Ministry of Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 1994)
- [8] Dhammpada verse 1.2 (Ministry of Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 1994)
- [9] D.B.J. Vol.2. p-186. (Ministry of Religious Affairs Press, Yangon, Myanmar, 1961)