

The Value of Pāli Commentaries as Source Material for the Study of Buddhism

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Abstract

There are many sources we must necessarily associate and be thorough with when we engage ourselves in studying Buddhism. The chief source is the '*Tipiṭaka*' which comes in two forms-namely '*Buddha Bhāshita*' or the Buddha's direct preaching and '*Shrāvaka Bhāshita*' the preaching of his disciples. The commentaries which are known as '*Aṭṭvā*' and '*Ṭikā*' written on the above, which clearly explain some areas in detail are also highly respected as very special sources of information by the learned community of both bhikkhūs and laymen. Why is it so? Because they are considered almost equal to the facts stated in Tipiṭaka canons.

Commentaries (*Aṭṭvā*) can be mentioned as the main source of qualitative set of books which can be used to get the clarifications of the meanings, the deep ideas and expressions and concepts of *Tipiṭaka* (*Dhamma*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma*) as well as sources for gathering information regarding the history of Buddhism.

When we pay attention to the value as important sources of information, we come across and article translated

by Prof. Endo, where facts are forwarded according to a very clear division, as,

- i) Value for philological studies and Translations
- ii) Value for Doctrinal and Philosophical studies
- iii) Value for Linguistic studies
- iv) Value for Historical, Geographical, Social and Cultural Studies.

When we consider all these factors, how important the commentaries are as source material for the study of Buddhism becomes quite clear.

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