

# **The Buddha's Words and Electronic Media**

**Dhananjay Chavan**

**Vipassana Research Institute, India**

*Chattha Sangayana and VRI*

*Internet : Pali Tipitaka and commentaries on worldwide web*

*Sanskrit Buddhist texts on CSCD ver. 4*

*How Sixth Council Edition is eminently suitable for electronic media.*

## **Chattha Sangayana (Sixth Council) Edition's usefulness for electronic media :**

One of the biggest difficulties in text inputting projects is that when one wants to convert this data into a user-friendly electronic form, thousands of man-hours of scholars are needed for editing. Thus we see that there are many such projects which end up being mere collection of the texts.

When VRI made the Pali Canon widely available by harnessing the electronic media, it benefited immensely from the work of editing done by Sixth Council. Thus, most of the credit for VRI's work goes to the Sixth Council. After a brief review of VRI's efforts in digitalisation of Pali texts, we shall see how the massive work of editing of about 50000 pages of Pali texts was done during the Sixth Council with remarkable wisdom, consistency and accuracy. The Sixth Council edition stands the test of consistency and accuracy required for software programmes making it one of the finest and most intricately interconnected electronic text of ancient scriptures. It was as if the Sixth Council knew beforehand the rigorous demands placed on data for it to be used easily by software programmers to render it into a lucid inter-linked user-friendly source.

We shall also see how the editors of the Sixth Council have done much more that still needs to be exploited to make it an even more useful source of data. The electronic text places greater demand on the scholars involved in preparation of the text in electronic form.

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Three main phases of VRI's work:

**Print:** Publication of an authentic version of the Pali literature in Devanagiri script. The entire Chattha Sangayana (Sixth Council) edition has now been printed in Devanagiri script for free distribution.

**CD-ROM:** Chattha Sangayana CD containing the most comprehensive collection of Pali texts available in electronic media in the world today.

**Internet:** Pali Tipitaka and other Pali literature on the Internet.

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## Pali Canon

VRI's work focusses on two main areas: translation and publication of the Pali texts, and research into the application of Vipassana in daily life. Pali is the language in which the teachings of the Buddha have been preserved. The Pali sources are the [\*Tipitaka\*](#) (the Pali canon); the sub-commentaries, called the *Atthakatha*, *Tika* and others such as *Anu-tika*, *Madhu-tika*, etc.

From the time of his enlightenment until his *maha-parinibbana* at the age of eighty, the Buddha taught the Dhamma in the villages and towns of the kingdoms and democratic republics of northern India out of overflowing love and compassion,. He delivered tens of thousands of discourses. He declared, "Dhamma is universal. Dhamma is the law of nature." He taught that every person must discover for oneself what is conducive to one's own good and welfare, and the good and welfare of others.

Two thousand five hundred years later, in our own time, the Ganges of Truth is once again flowing out from India to a thirsty world in the form of Pali literature that is made available freely to all.

## From Oral Tradition to Electronic Age

The priceless teachings of the Buddha are preserved in the Pali canon, an extensive, detailed, systematic and analytical record. The Pali canon descends from an august tradition. Within three months after the Buddha's *maha-parinibbana*, a council was convened. It consisted of five hundred learned disciples who had attained the highest state of sainthood, *arahant-phala*. To prevent the Buddha's words from being distorted by ignorant and unscrupulous people, they formed the First Council to preserve the teaching in its pristine purity. Their express purpose was to collect and arrange the Buddha's voluminous teachings, which they organized into what is now commonly known as the *Tipitaka*.

Between the centuries following the first Council and the present day, continuous and consistent efforts have been made to preserve the Buddha's teaching. Periodic councils of

learned monks have been convened to systematically review the *Tipitaka*. The first councils conducted oral reviews. The entire collection was committed to writing for the first time during the Fourth Council, held in Sri Lanka three decades before the Christian Era.

The most recent review, the Sixth Council, or *Chattha Sangayana*, was held in 1954 in Yangon (Rangoon), Myanmar (Burma). Twenty five hundred learned bhikkhus and scholars from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, India and other countries participated. By this time the *Tipitaka* and allied literature had been published in several scripts (including Myanmar, Sinhalese, Roman, Thai, and Cambodian). The Pali Text Society of London, the Buddhist Publication Society of Sri Lanka and many scholars of high repute and dedication in the West and in the East had produced publications containing Buddha's teaching, making a profound contribution to the worldwide awakening to the existence of this rich treasure.

The *Chattha Sangayana* made a through review of the *Tipitaka*, its *Atthakathas*, *Tikas*, *Anu-Tikas* and other commentarial literature. A remarkable uniformity and consistency was found in all versions. The Council performed an impressive task, finishing its work on the full moon day of May 1956 (the 2,500th anniversary of the birth of the Buddha) with the completion of an authentic version of the Master's teaching.

From this brief historical outline, it is evident that a consistent effort, spanning more than twenty-four centuries, has been made to preserve the original words of the Buddha, a continuity of effort unparalleled in human history. VRI is committed to uphold this effort. VRI is equipped well to do so due to electronic revolution.

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## First Effort in India using Old Technology

The Government of India after the *Chattha Sangayana* took the decision to publish the entire Pali literature in Devanagiri script. This task was entrusted to Nalanda Mahavihara, at the Nalanda Institute. The work of publishing the *Tipitaka* was undertaken in earnest, and the efforts of many eminent scholars culminated in the publication of the work in Devanagiri. This was done entirely using traditional letter press. The work slowed down, and today the complete set of *Tipitaka* volumes is out of print. Even isolated volumes were not available.

## VRI starts using Electronic Technology

VRI undertook the task of publishing the entire Pali canon and allied commentarial literature without any financial assistance from the Government of India. VRI has taken the *Chattha Sangayana* version in Myanmar script as the authentic, authoritative version. The entire Pali Canon along with its commentarial literature was entered into computers using a simple word processor. Then programmes were developed to convert this text into print version. Programmes included those for selection of indices, index-entries, footnote entries etc. for text in Devanagari script.

Pali scholars from India and other countries, including many learned *bhikkhus* and research scholars in Myanmar, are assisting in this work. The work product has provided an authentic version of the Tipitaka and allied literature in Devanagari script in printed book form.

## The Making of the Chattha Sangayana CD-ROM

The entire Pali *Tipitaka* in Devanagari script which has been produced by VRI has also been digitally encoded and is being published on a CD-ROM (Compact Disk-Read Only Memory). Digital encoding of this information and its use with search engines open up vast possibilities for research scholars. Information retrieval software will enable the assembly of comprehensive indices of relevant words and terms.

The CD-ROM produced by VRI also contains custom developed computer software, which automatically converts the Devanagari script Pali into either Roman script Pali or Myanmar script Pali as the reader prefers. This will be of great value to people everywhere interested in the original words of the Buddha.

## Version 4 of Chattha Sangayana CD

The fourth version of CSCD will contain for the first time Sanskrit Buddhist texts. Most of these texts out of print or are not available in electronic form. These include:

### **Nava Dharma**

1. Lalitavistara
2. Samadhirajasutra
3. Lankavatarasutra
4. Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita Alokavyakhyasahita
5. Gandavyuhasutra

6. Saddharmapundarikasutra
7. Dashabhumikasutra
8. Suvarnaprabhasasutra
9. Tathagataguhyakam

#### **Madhyamikamate**

10. Madhyamakashastram Nagarjunyam, Acaryacandrakirtiviracitaya  
Prasannapadakhyavyakhyaya sanvalitam
11. Shikshasamuccaya Shantidevaviracitaha
12. Bodhicaryavatara Shantidevaviracitaha Prajnakaramativiracitaya Pancikakhyavyakhyaya

#### **Yogacaramate**

13. Sutralankara Acaryasangaviracitaya

#### **Vinayaha**

- 14.-15. Mahavastu-Lokottaravadinam vinayaha
16. Mulasarvastivadinam vinayaha (Gilgit Mss.)

#### **Mahayanasutrasangraha**

17. Pratamaha Khandaha – Suvikrantavikramiprajnaparamita, Vajracchedika, Shalistmbasutram,  
Sukhavativyuhaha, Karandvyuhaha, Pratityasamutpadasutram,  
Bhaishajyaguruvaidyuprabhasutram, Rasthrapalparipriccha, Arthavinishrvayasutram,  
Ratnagunasancayaha
18. Dvitiyaha Khanda - Aryamanjushri mulakalpaha

#### **Avdanasangrahaha**

19. Avadanashatakam
20. Divyavadanam
21. Jatakamala (Bodhisattvavadanmala) Subhashitaratnakarandakakatha ca, Aryashurviracita
- 22.-23. Avadanakalpalata Kshemendravrachita

#### **Prakirnanagrantha**

24. Mahayanastotrasangrahaha
25. Ashraghoshagranthaha – Buddhacaritam, Saundaranandam

The texts will have page references to various editions published so far including the one published by Darbhanga Institute of Indological Research.

A Pali-Sanskrit-Myanmar dictionary and a Pali-Thai dictionary will also be included.

## **Pali Tipitaka – Web Version**

VRI has put the Tipitaka and allied Pali literature on the worldwide web. It is available at [www.tipitaka.org](http://www.tipitaka.org) and [www.vri.dhamma.org](http://www.vri.dhamma.org).

On the opening screen of the home page, click "Pali Tipitaka" to view the Pali texts. Before you can view the Pali Tipitaka texts, you must download and install the Pali fonts as instructed on the home page.

### **The List of Volumes**

The first screen shows four buttons viz. Vinayapitaka, Suttapitaka, Abhidhammapitaka & Others. On clicking any of these buttons, a list volumes under each of the pitakas is displayed in the lower portion of the screen.

If you see junk characters in the list of volumes, it is possible that you have not installed the special font, 'VriRomanPali DD'.

On clicking on any of the volume names, the appropriate volume will open. In this page, there are three parts provided.

### **The Volume page**

In the first part, you will find the buttons: Home, Select volume, Table of contents & Help. "Home" will take you back to the Home page of the site. "Select Volume" button will take you back to the list of volumes page. "Table of Contents" button will open the table of contents for this volume in the third part of this page. "Help" button will open this operating manual for reference in a new window.

The second part (Table of Contents) displays the name of the volume, chapter name & section number that is being currently viewed. On clicking the Chapter List Box, you will have a list of chapters for this volume. You can select any of the chapters to view. The chapter selected will be displayed in the third part of the screen. Similarly, the Section List Box displays the section numbers available for the current chapter in this volume. You can move to any section in the current chapter by selecting one of the section numbers. Each chapter has been divided into small sections for faster download time.

The third part in the screen is the actual volume page. When you first select a volume, the first page of the volume is displayed in this part of the screen. On every page, you have two buttons viz. Previous Section & Next Section, both on the top & the bottom of the page. Using these buttons, you can move onto the previous or next sections in the volume. When you move to the previous or next sections, the chapter name and the section number of the current page will be appropriately displayed in the second part of the screen.

At any point, you can use the buttons in the first part of the screen for Home, Select volume, Table of contents or Help.

### **Table of contents**

This displays the main chapter headings or the sub-sections within a chapter. The sub-sections are indented appropriately. A single indentation represents a sub-section of a chapter whereas a double indentation represents a sub-sub-section. Alongside each entry in the table of contents, the section number where this entry can be found, is also displayed. Besides, the VRI & PTS page numbers can be seen against each entry in the table.

In some books, however, VRI or PTS or both the page numbers may not be available. In such cases, the columns will not be displayed and a message is displayed on the top of the Table of contents that the appropriate page number is not available for this volume.

You can open any of the chapter or sub-section by clicking on the name in the table of contents.

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## **Sixth Council (Chattha Sangayana) Edition of Tipitaka and Computerization**

In the EBTI meetings so far the discussion has involved two significant issues :

1. Technical difficulties in computerisation of ancient texts. This problem is all the more serious where complex Han characters are involved.
2. Data input and editing of the texts so that they are useful source material for scholars.

The First Council was convened to prevent the Buddha's words from being distorted by ignorant and unscrupulous people, to preserve the teaching in its pristine purity. Between the centuries following the first Council and the present day, consistent efforts have been made to

preserve the Buddha's teaching. Periodic councils of learned monks have been convened to systematically review the *Tipitaka*. The most recent review, the Sixth Council, was held in 1954 in Yangon, Myanmar. Its edition of the voluminous literature renders itself extremely well for electronic media, software programmes for search operations, linking of Canonical texts with commentaries etc. Pali literature is arguably the most ancient authentic Buddhist literature available today.

Let us examine how the Sixth Council edition made it ideal for conversion into electronic format and created an easily accessible resource material of this extensive literature.

### **Mark-up language and Hypertext:**

The Second EBTI Meeting in Japan deliberated on Mark-up languages and on the hypertext. The scholarly community working with ancient scriptures is quite delighted about hypertext and mark-up languages. The black and white lifeless text that they were used to has suddenly come to life.

However, mark-up language and hypertext requires more careful editing and more work on the text. It puts great demand on the editors. This is all the more arduous when one is dealing with the huge volume of text such as Pali Canon and its commentaries.

Hypertext is a form of non-linear writing, which branches or performs on request. Because of this capacity, hypertext supports non-sequential reading in a way that plain written text does not. By branching we mean following a connected concept/idea/context and then continuing the reading sequence from that instance, or returning to the original point of disengagement. The function of the hypertext is to link data in a meaningful manner so as to lead the reader to references and explanations that make it easy for him to understand the original text. This is very important in ancient scriptures where one has to keep referring to commentaries to understand the original texts.

The tradition of the commentaries in South Asia, of which commentaries on the Tipitaka are the most ancient, follow an approach that is similar to much like hypertext. An important function of the commentaries is to give a chunk of information on a related concept from the Canon.

A word or a phrase or a verse in the original text is commented upon in the sequence in



which it occurs in the original text. Just as there is tremendous internal consistency within the Pali Canon as to the content, there is also consistency as to the form. This consistency continues in the commentaries.

Let us take the famous words “THUS HAVE I HEARD”

*Evam me sutam—*

One commentary (Digha Nikaya Atthakatha) explains these words as :

*Atthato pana **evam**-saddo tava upamupadesa-sampahamsanagarahana-vacana-sampatiggahaka ranidassanavadharanadi-anekatthappabhedo. Tathahesa— “evam jatena maccena, kattabbam kusalam bahun”ti (dha. pa. 53) evamadisū upamayam agato. “Evam te abhikkamitabbam, evam te patikkamitabbam”ti-adisu (a. ni. 4.122) upadese. “Evametam bhagava, evametam sugata”ti-a disu (a. ni. 3.66) sampahamsane. “Evamevam panayam vasali yasmim va tasmim va tassa mundakassa samanakassa vānam bhasati”ti-adisu (sam. ni. 1.187) garahane. “Evam, bhanteti kho te bhikkhu bhagavato paccassosun”ti-adisu (ma. ni. 1.1) vacanasampatiggahe. “Evam bya kho aham, bhante, bhagavata dhammam desitam ajanami”ti-adisu (ma. ni. 1.398) akare. “Ehi tvam, manavaka, yena samano anando tenupasankama, upasankamitva mama vacanena samanam anandam appabadham appatankam lahutthanam balam phasuviharam puccha. “Subho manavo todeyyaputto bhavantam anandam appabadham appatankam lahutthanam balam phasuviharam pucchati”ti. “Evanca vadehi, sadhu kira bhavam anando yena subhassa manavassa todeyyapu tassa nivesanam, tenupasankamatu anukampam upadaya”ti-adisu (di. ni. 1.445) nidassane. “Tam kim mannatha, kalama, ime dhamma kusala va akusala vati? Akusala, bhante. Savajja va anavajja vati? Savajja, bhante. Vinnugarahita va vinnuppasattha vati? Vinnugarahita, bhante. Samatta samadinna ahitaya dukkhaya samvattanti no va, katham vo ettha hotiti? Samatta, bhante, samadinna ahitaya dukkhaya samvattanti, evam no ettha hoti”ti-adisu (a. ni. 3.66) avadharane. Svayamidha akaranidassanavadharanesu datthabbo.*

and so on

The words from Canon that are commented upon have been set in bold face.

Now let us look at the sub-commentary:

*Ettavata ca brahmajalassa sadharanato bahiranidanam dassetva idani abbhantaranidanam samvannetum “**tattha evan**”ti-adi vuttam. atha va chahi akarehi samvannana katabba samba*

*ndhato padato padavibhagato padatthato anuyogato pariharato cati. tattha sambandho nama desanasambandho. yam lokiya “ummugghato”ti vadanti. so pana paliya nidanapalivasena, nida napaliya pana sangitivasena veditabboti pathamamahasangitim dassentena nidanapaliya samba ndhassa dassitatta padadivasena samvannanam karonto “**evanti nipatapadan**”ti-adimaha. “meti-a dini”ti ettha antara-sadda-ca-saddanam nipatapadabhavo, vattabbo, na va vattabbo tesam naya ggahanena gahitatta, tadavasitthanam apati-saddanam adi-saddena sanghanato. “padavibhago” ti padanam viseso, na pana padaviggaho. atha va padani ca padavibhago ca padavibhago, pada viggaho ca padavibhago ca padavibhagoti va ekasesavasena padapadaviggahapi padavibhaga saddena vuttati veditabbam. tattha padaviggaho “bhikkhunam sangho”ti-adibhedesu padesu datthabbo.*

Here the words in Canon that are commented upon are set in bold face within quotes and the words in commentary that are commented upon are set in bold face without quotes. This work of mark-up by the council is tailor-made for mark-up languages. This is how the entire literature of about 50000 pages is arranged. The paragraph numbers make it even more specific for hyperlinks.

As one can see in the text of the commentary, the Canonical sources of the references of the commentary are given. Since these are unique to that particular paragraph, again it is easy to go to the particular reference.

### **Context Specific Search : Commentaries as repositories of Context Specific Searches of important words and phrases**

One drawback of computer-aided search is that it does not differentiate between differing contexts even if it allows one to use long strings and other specifications to search for something. Thus one is often left with huge data to sift through. Though context specific search is available in CSCD, the commentarial style has not been yet exploited to make a search operation that will arrange searched data in order of its probable usefulness. Here again the work of editors of the Councils is commendable as we see in the example below. There are literally thousands of such references that have been painstakingly gleaned and made available to us.

Whenever there is a commentary on any important reference from the Canon, the relevant sources in the Canon have been quoted. Thus the Commentaries act as a repository of context specific searches with explanations on each search finding.

Let us look at an excerpt from one of the commentaries on Dhamma (Dharma)

*Idani kusala dhammati-adinam matikapadanam ayamanupubbapadavannana– ‘kusala’-saddo tava arogya-anavajjachekasukhavipakesu dissati. Ayanhi “kacci nu bhoto kusalam, kacci bhoto anamayan”ti-adisu (ja. 1.15.146; 2.20.129) arogye dissati. “Katamo pana, bhante, kayasamacaro kusalo? Yo kho, maharaja, kayasamacaro anavajjo”ti (ma. ni. 2.361) ca, “aparam pana, bhante, etadanuttariyam yatha bhagava dhammam deseti kusalesu dhammesu”ti (di. ni. 3.145) ca evamadisū anavajje. “Kusalo tvam rathassa angapaccanganam” (ma. ni. 2.87), “kusala naccagitassa sikkhita caturitthiyo”ti-adisu (ja. 2.22.94) cheke. “Kusalanam, bhikkhave, dhammanam samadanahetu” (di. ni. 3.80), “kusalassa kammaṣṣa katatta upacitatta”ti-adisu (dha. sa. 431) sukhavipake. Svayamidha arogyepi anavajjepi sukhavipakepi vattati. Dhammasaddo panayam pariyatti-hetuguna-nissattanijjivatadisū dissati. Ayanhi “dhammam pariyapunati suttam geyyan”ti-adisu (a. ni. 4.102) pariyattiyam dissati. “Hetumhi nanam dhammapatisambhida”ti-adisu (vibha. 720) hetumhi.*

*“Na hi dhammo adhammo ca, ubho samavipakino;*

*adhammo nirayam neti, dhammo papeti suggatin”ti. (theraga. 304; ja. 1.15.386)–*

*Adisu gune. “Tasmim kho pana samaye dhamma honti” (dha. sa. 121), “dhammesudhammanupassi viharati”ti-adisu (di. ni. 2.373) nissattanijjivatayam. Svayamidhapi nissattanijjivatayameva vattati.*

*Vacanattho panettha– kucchite papake dhamme salayanti calayanti kampenti viddhamsentiti kusala. Kucchitena va akarena sayantiti kusa. Te akusalasankhate kuse lunanti chindantiti kusala. Kucchitanam va sanato tanukaranato osanakaranato nanam kusam nama. Tena kusena latabbati kusala; gahetabba pavattetabhati attho. Yatha va kusa ubhayabhagagam hatthappadesam lunanti, evamimepi uppannanuppannabhavena ubhayabhagagam kilesapakkham lunanti.*

*Tasma kusa viya lunantitipi kusala. Attano pana sabhavam dharentiti dhamma. Dhariyanti vapaccayehi, dhariyanti va yathasabhavatoti dhamma.*

*-Dhammasangani*

*Atthakatha*

Here the commentator has given references from various sources. The Council editors have included references of the Canonical sources. If one were to search for Dhammati in the Canon in the CSCD, one would find 200 occurrences in 21 books of Canon. Now to go to each place and find whether a definition of Dhamma is given there and to collect these definitions would be an arduous task. The work of the commentators has obviated the need for this. The work of the editors has further made it possible to know where the commentator is quoting from the

Canon and where he is giving his own definition.

Indices in Sixth Council : Though one may easily search occurrences in the text in a computer, one does not know exactly which occurrence to go to. For example the word *Vijja* (knowledge) appears 399 times in 36 books. Even if one has a fast computer, it is not easy to go to all these places to look for occurrences that are relevant. In Sixth Council edition, only one page reference for *Vijja* is given in *Majjhima Nikaya* so that one goes only to the page where the Buddha defines *Vijja*.

The Sixth Council edition has indices in all books that give only relevant page numbers. VRI will compile all the indices together in the future version of CSCD so that an user may go directly to a significant occurrence.

### **Titles, Volume numbers and Chapter numbers**

Texts have been given titles, volume numbers and chapter numbers that are systematic. It would have been easy to give in to the temptation of using more ornate titles that were used by commentators but the Council kept the more descriptive titles such as *Digha Nikaya Atthakatha* etc. It followed a simple method of paragraph numbering which took care of the variations in page numbers in different prints. The paragraph numbers and verse numbers are uniform for the particular Canonical text, its commentary and sub-commentary.

### **Modern Critical Apparatus**

The editors of the Sixth Council have shown remarkable consistency and simplicity of footnotes for variant readings and Pali abbreviations for references. This makes the job of programmers extremely easy once the data has been accurately entered into the computer.

The editors of the Sixth Council observed the same simplicity and consistency in punctuation. One important issue is the use of quotation marks in the Suttas because of the didactic nature of the narration that involves mostly dialogues.

Thus we see that all the credit for VRI's success in making the Pali texts so widely and freely available goes to the editors of the Sixth Council. Without their meticulous editing work VRI's Pali projects would have been nearly impossible to complete. One cannot even imagine the amount of scholarship and editing that would have been required if only the individual unedited texts were available. However, the most important feature of the Sixth Council edition is that it is the most authentic source of Pali Tipitaka and its commentaries.

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85. Theragathapali
86. Therigathapali
87. Apadanapali-1
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89. buddhavamsapali
90. Cariyapitakapali
91. jatakapali-1
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93. Mahaniddesapali
94. Culaniddesapali
95. Patisambhidamaggapali
96. Milindapanhapali
97. Nettippakaranapali
98. Petakopadesapali
99. Khuddakapatha-atthakatha
100. Dhammapada-atthakatha
101. Udana-atthakatha
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121. Patisambhidamagga-atthakatha
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123. Nettippakarana-tika
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127. Dhatukathapali
128. Puggalapannattipali
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145. Pancappakarana-anutika
146. Abhidhammavatara-namarupapariccheda-paramatthavinicchaya-saccasankhepa
147. tika-co-pali (abhidhammatthasangaha)
148. Abhidhammavatara-purana-abhinava-tika
149. Mohavicchedani (abhidhammatikapali)

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### **1. Visuddhimagga**

150. Visuddhimagga-1
151. Visuddhimagga-2
152. Visuddhimagga-mahatika-1
153. Visuddhimagga-mahatika-2
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181. Padarupasiddhi
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