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Editorial Preface

Handbook of Abhidhamma Studies is a series of lectures given by the late Venerable U Sīlānanda on the subject of Abhidhamma. Actually the talks originated from courses he offered to American students on the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha*. This book, *Handbook of Abhidhamma Studies*, is designed to supplement the study of the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha*.

The *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha* is a small book that was probably written by an Indian monk named Ācariya Anuruddha in about the twelfth century. That small book provides an introduction to subjects taught in the Abhidhamma texts of the Tipiṭaka. Actually in order to understand the Abhidhamma texts in the Pāli Canon, it is essential that the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha* be thoroughly mastered.

Burmese monks in particular first memorize this book and then pursue extended studies of it with their teachers. The late Venerable U Sīlānanda followed this course of training. The result was that he had a thorough and precise knowledge of this small book, as well as the Abhidhamma texts in the Tipiṭaka, the Commentaries, and the Sub-commentaries.

When Venerable U Sīlānanda came to the United States, he taught courses on the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha*. In these courses he often gave detailed explanations of the subjects found in that book for the benefit of his students. These explanations are very helpful as sometimes the information given in the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha* is quite terse and not easy for the uninitiated to understand.

I began to study this book about one year before Sayādaw arrived in the United States. Therefore, I very much appreciated what a great difference his explanations made in my understanding. It occurred to me that it would be very helpful for others interested in this subject to have access to these lectures in the written form. Therefore, I decided to transcribe these talks. The talks have been as accurately transcribed as possible. Sayādaw was very precise, organized and meticulous in his presentation. It has been my hope to emulate his fine example in these transcriptions.

Nonetheless, it is possible that some mistakes or errors have escaped notice. Hopefully they are very minor. Abhidhamma is a very challenging and deep subject, sometimes quite precise and subtle. Whatever mistakes are found I apologize to the readers for those and I accept fully the demerit that comes from such lack of skillfulness. At the same time I hope that much merit may result from sharing the great knowledge that my teacher had on this important subject with others.

As the transcriber, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to all Dhamma teachers as well as friends for their tireless work for the Buddha-Sāsana. First of all, I wish to express my gratitude to many Dhamma teachers who have explained very patiently, over the course of many years, many aspects of the Buddha's teachings. They include the late Venerable Sayādaw U Silānanda, Venerable Beellin Sayādaw, Venerable U Jotalankara, Venerable Ashin U Osadha, Venerable U Jātila, Venerable U Kosalla, Venerable U Ghosita, Venerable U Garudhamma, Venerable U Kavinda, Bhante Gunaratana, Bhikkhu U Nandisena. Most especially I am indebted to Venerable Ashin U Dhammapiya. Not only has he explained with precision and thoroughness the Buddha's teachings, he also conceived the idea of publishing these series of Abhidhamma lectures to enable many more people to gain greater clarity of understanding of the Abhidhamma.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu! To all these meritorious deeds!

Finally I wish to express my gratitude to the people of Malaysia and Singapore. I am especially grateful to Brother Chew How Ting, Brother Lim Mong Seng and Sister Pauline Chong of Singapore and Malaysia who helped me edit these talks. Their patience and kindness have been immeasurable. While the late Venerable Sayādaw U Silānanda visited there and taught there, they were always very supportive to him. Sayādaw's visits to Malaysia and Singapore were so brief that he could not cover every chapter in the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha* with his students there. Each course he taught in the United States lasted about a year. Over the years he taught many courses to many audiences, sometimes primarily to Burmese Americans, or to European Americans, or to Vietnamese Americans.

We are fortunate that the Vietnamese American community requested Venerable U Silānanda to teach the course again in 1994-1995. This was after the most recent edition of the *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha*, edited by Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, had been published. The Tu Quang Temple in San Francisco was kind enough to host this series of talks which were well-attended by devotees of both the Theravāda and Mahāyāna traditions.

We are grateful to Sayādaw for his great compassion. We are grateful to all the devotees who supported Sayādaw in so many ways so that he could share so much Dhamma wisdom with us. Now devotees in Malaysia have graciously offered to publish this series of talks.

May Dhamma wisdom continue to grow and flourish in the world!

Sarah Marks, USA.

Editor's Note

As editor of this work, I am aware that foreign words are usually put in italics. However, it is allowable to capitalize words that communicate important information in philosophical concepts. Most of the Pāḷi words in this manuscript are very significant terms in the Buddha's teachings and constitute a firm base for the reader to build a correct understanding of Buddhism. Sayādaw U Silānanda has expertly defined most of these words in his presentation. A great many of these Pāḷi words refer to Paramattha Dhammas (ultimate realities) which are so essential for our understanding and experience of the Dhamma. Therefore, I purposefully capitalized these Pāḷi words because they are key philosophical concepts in Buddhism. The presentation done in this manner is to also encourage the reader's attention. In addition terms in English referring to the Supramundane and important doctrines have been capitalized out of respect.

Sarah Marks, USA.