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Introduction

In 623 B.C, Siddhattha Gotama was born. He achieved the supreme status of the Buddha at the age of 35. He left the luxurious life as a prince in such of the truth and attained Nibbāna in 543 B.C, at the age of 80. During His lifetime of 45 years, the Fully Enlightened One, the Buddha, He incessantly went on tour teaching Sutta, Abhidhamma and Vinaya to all men and gods. During the 45 years of his lifetime, the Lord Buddha visited the northeastern part of India known as the Middle Region (Majjhimadesa).

Sutta forms the guiding light for daily practice. Abhidhamma contains Buddhist philosophy and psychology. Vinaya includes the principles, laws and disciplines for monastic life.

Long after the Lord Buddha left our world, the Dhamma, Sutta, Abhidhamma - and Vinaya still exist as a guidance for mankind. As long as we have them, we can be assured that we still have our Lord Buddha with us. The Lord Buddha taught what was right and wrong for the benefit of all mankind.

To prevent our sorrow and misery and to attain peace and tranquility, he taught the practice of Dhamma i.e. Sutta. Vinaya was taught for discipline and the tranquil co-existence of fellow human beings and to promote the level of penetrative wisdom into the ultimate reality he taught us Abhidhamma.

The above three major teachings are collectively known as "The Three Piṭakas". Thus, the Piṭakas have become our teacher, our mentor and the Lord Buddha himself. In fact, they are likened to the invisible presence of our Lord Buddha. Therefore, those who hold the Lord Buddha in high esteem need

to be well versed with the three Piṭakas.

Three months after the Parinibbāna (demise) of the Buddha, the First Council was held in Rājagaha. The convention was attended by 500 supreme monks who had attained Paṭisambhidāñāṇa. Ashin Mahā Kassapa was the leader. He expounded on three major points as follows:

- (1) Those teachings (Dhamma and Vinaya) that the Lord Buddha had not taught should not be offered by monks.
- (2) Those teachings (Dhamma and Vinaya) that the Lord Buddha had taught should not be deleted, added nor edited by monks.
- (3) Those teachings (Dhamma and Vinaya) that the Lord Buddha had taught should be followed by monks.

Thus, the knowledge, belief and practice that strictly followed the Dhamma and Vinaya of the Lord Buddha became known as Theravada, which means school or teaching of the elders.

The Second Council was held in 100 B.E. in Vesāli and was attended by seven hundred monks. The leaders were Sabbakāmi Thera and Yasa Thera.

The Third Council took place in 236 B.E. in Pātaliputta and was attended by one thousand monks. The leader was Tissa Thera.

The first, second and third conventions were held in India and were attended by Indian monks only, who were all Arahats.

The Fourth convention was held in Sri-Lanka in 540 B.E. and was attended by five hundred monks. Dhammarakkhita was the leader. The difference between the previous conventions and

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this convention was that the monks had put the Tipiṭaka in writing on palm leaves.

In 2400 B.E. the Fifth ceremony was held in Mandalay in Myanmar, was attended by 2400 monks, and led by Jāgara Thera. The outstanding fact was that there was no Saṅgāyanā for 2000 years between the Fourth and Fifth Councils. During the Fifth convention the three Piṭakas were written on marble slabs. It filled 729 marble slabs, each measuring six feet into four feet.

The Fourth Convention was conducted by Sri-Lankan monks only, and the Fifth one was conducted by Myanmar monks only. The peculiar feature of the Sixth Convention was that the learned monks from five Theravāda countries and even from some Mahāyāna countries unanimously participated in this Convention.

Most of the present day literature that attempts to explain the Buddha's teachings are merely the interpretation of various authors and therefore they are secondary sources to the profound teaching. It is a great loss for those who have not really tasted the genuine essence of "Authentic Teaching".

Therefore, the Sitagū International Buddhist Academy has made its effort to Romanize and translate the Authentic Three Piṭakas of the Sixth Convention and disseminated them worldwide for the benefit of those who really want to know the essence of the Dhamma.

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti.

May the knowledge, belief and practice of the truth shine forth in every corner of our world.

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