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The life of Vacissara, the author of the text

Chatterjee Nandita*

Bidhan Pally, P.O + P.S. Madhyamgram
E-mail: atanu.bhattacharyay@unilever.com

ABSTRACT

‘Thupavamsa’ is a collection of imaginary and true incident about the Buddhist Stupa. The episodes have been taken from some Buddhist Puranas wherein the architecture of beautiful Buddhist Thupa has been delineated. The author of the book Vaccissara besides reporting the friendship between India and Srilanka, gives a full account of the Buddhas who came to this world for the salvation of mankind.

KEY-WORDS : Vacissara, Thupa, Thupavamsa, Vacissara, Sariputta, Sariputta, Buddhanaga.

***Corresponding author**

Dr Nandita Chatterjee

C/O Ananda Prakash Chatterjee

Bidhan Pally, P.O + P.S. Madhyamgram

E-mail – bhimsttc@gmail.com, atanu.bhattacharyay@unilever.com

INTRODUCTION

'Thupavamsa', first written in Prakrit, is a collection of some imaginary and true incident regarding the Buddhist Stupa. The first part of the book covers the description of the episodes of twenty four Buddhists from the old Puranas and the second part covers the incidents of Ceylon. Here it is explained the meaning of 'Thupa' with a detailed account of the Buddhas who appeared in this earth for the salvation of mankind.

Thupavamsa is a collection of a combination of some imaginary and true incident regarding the Buddhist Stupa. The episodes have been taken from some of those Buddhist puranas. The old 'Thupavamsa' was written in Magadhi Prakrit. At present this book is lost. That book was translated in ceylonese language and was preserved in Ceylon. So the book in the old Magadhi Prakrit was written in India undoubtedly. The book is divided in two parts, the content of the six chapters of the first part covers, the description of the different Buddhist Stupas established in India. The story of the stupas founded by Mourya King Asoka is related also here. To describe the stories of the Stupas the writer presents the episodes of twenty-four Buddhist from other old Buddhist Puranas.

The second part of the book 'Thupavamsa' (7th to 16th chapters) covers the incidents of Ceylon. It covers the entrance of the Buddhist religion, the establishment of 'Thupa' by the king Dutthagamani Abhaya and onwards. A vivid description of the art of Buddhist Thupas can be found. The Buddhist Thupa is a great contribution in Indian Sculpture. The writer relates an untold event (story) of the art of making Thupa which is very informative. ⁴

There is an urgent necessity of translating this Mahayani Prakrit book in Bengali written on 1180 A.D. The Puranas were written in the religion of the Brahmins. The Buddhist Bhikkhus also wrote 'The Buddhist Purana' on the incidents and stories of Buddha. The 'Thupavamsa' is a proof of it. Descriptions of worship, devotion, huge amount of offerings, how the splendour of kings entered the poor would get simple food with rice only at the royal festival have been included vividly in this book. ⁵

We find descriptions of friendship between the two countries (India and Srilanka) from Ancient times which has never been found between China and India. There is a description of the origin of Plan of Buddhist Stupa (Thupa) in it. There is a history of the entrance of Buddhism in Ceylon. It's not only an old history, but this old book is valuable also as a document of old history. This book, written in the thirteenth century A.D. by Thera Vacissara can be found both in Pali and Ceylonese languages. The Thupavamsa to all intents and purposes is meant to be an account of the Mahathupa as one can gather from the Proem of the work and from the Commentary - like explanation given in the paragraph following it.

The author has very well explained the meaning of Thupa and then gives a detailed account of the Buddhas who appeared in this earth for the Salvation of mankind. The literary activities of the six pupils of Sariputta, viz. Sangharakkhita, Buddhanaga, Sumarigala, Vacissara, Dhammakitti and Medhankara are fully discussed by Malalasekera (PLC Chap. X). Wickrena Singhe (Op. Cit P. XVI) lumps together the work of two or more authors by the name of vacissara and attributes all of them to sariputta's pupil.

CONCLUSION

Thera Vacissara was a senior contemporary of the great scholar Sariputta of Poloma ruva. Though the writer told that the book was a collection of different episodes yet we find her his own contribution. The author sums up the life of the Buddha in a masterly way. He gives a detailed description of the topes which were constructed over the bodily relics of the Buddha with their later history. There is a history of the entrance of Buddhism in Ceylon. It is not only on old story, but this book is valuable also as a document of old history. 'Thupavamsa', written in the thirteenth century A.D. by Vacissara can be found both in Pali and Ceylonese languages.

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