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*An Analytical Study of the Forty Subjects
of Samatha Meditation in Theravāda*

Buddhism

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to analyze in detail the forty subjects of *Samatha* meditation in *Theravāda* Buddhism. Although we do not find such a definite number of subjects recommended for *Samatha* meditation in the *Pāli* discourses, these are scattered throughout the canon. Commentators, especially Ven. *Buddhaghosa* have successfully taken an attempt to systematize the methods of meditation under *Samatha* and *Vipassanā* in the *Visuddhimagga*.

Under the method of *Samatha* meditation Ven. *Buddhaghosa* has recommended forty subjects in accordance with the nature of different characters.

It is a well-known fact that the human mind is very complex consequently, we need various methods to train the mind in order to suit different mental levels.

In order to accomplish the above mentioned task we have planned the research under five headings:

The first chapter clarifies the early Buddhist context of the practice of meditation and it provides a background to the main research.

Based on the findings in the first chapter we have made an attempt to explain the origin and development of the two methods as a result of historical evolution in the second chapter.

The third chapter explains the background of the forty subjects of *Samatha* meditation. There is a long description regarding the preparatory activities for *Samatha* meditation in the commentaries especially in the *Visuddhimagga*.

Introduction

The fourth chapter is an attempt to analyze the relevant details with reference to the early Buddhist discourses.

The fourth and fifth chapters being the main subject of our research, analyses present the forty subjects of *Samatha* meditation in relation to the five aggregates which in turn represent the Buddhist concept of personality. This is a new finding in our research and our conclusion in this regard was that the majority of the forty subjects are directly or indirectly related to the aggregate of feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*) in the concept of five aggregates.

The five aggregates represent the personality and without reference to this, the mere analysis of the subjects becomes useless. So, we feel that our comparative analysis of the forty subjects and the five aggregates in the fourth and the fifth chapters together with the final conclusion will be a considerable contribution to the field of Buddhist psychology and psychiatry.