
Inter-commentarial Discrepancies & Theravada Confraternity: A Critical Scrutiny on *assāsa* & *passāsa* Exegesis in Pali Commentaries

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As the Pali commentators vehemently insist, at the very outset of the Atthakathas, the Theravada tradition is endowed pristine judgments and uncontroversial exegeses regarding the word of the Buddha. Even though those commentators claim in this manner, some topsy-turvy exegeses can be obviously seen in some Pali commentaries. So also, though the Theravada tradition itself claims about its uniformity and uncontroversial nature, Pali commentarial accounts reveal the fact that some subdivisions of this tradition held different opinions about some concepts and some of them have offered diverse interpretations for some terms existing in the Pali canon.

According to the modern and common usage, *assāsa* means 'inhalation' and *passāsa* means 'exhalation.' *assāsa* and *passāsa* appear in Sanskrit, respectively as *āshvāsa* and *prashvāsa*. Monier Williams and V.S. Apte render *āshvāsa* as 'taking breath' and 'recovering breath' respectively. Interestingly, Monier Williams again renders *prashvāsa* as 'inhale.' Pali-English dictionary also translates the first term as 'exhale' while the second term as 'inhale.'

When we examine Pali exegetical literature, it is manifest that there was an identical connotation for these terms among Sutta-commentarial tradition and Vinaya-commentarial tradition. That is to say, these two Buddhist masters had totally opposite idea about the meaning of these two terms. As venerable Buddhaghosa records in the *Visuddhimagga*, *assāsa* is the wind issuing out; *passāsa* is the wind entering in" is said in the Vinaya Commentaries. But in the *Suttanta* Commentaries it is given in the opposite Sense. This shows that the early connotations of these two terms uses among the Vinaya commentarial tradition were quite different; debatable thus it is of worth exploring.

This paper, critically discusses the more archaic and accurate meanings of *assāsa* and *passāsa* attempting to reach a reliable conclusion for the emergence of such a discrepancy scanning all available source materials related to the academic Buddhist studies such as Pali canonical accounts, Commentarial exegeses, Sub-commentarial (*Tika*) occurrences, Vedic and Upanishad texts, Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit sources, Sanskrit/ Pali lexicons will also examined when necessary.

Keywords: Theravada Confraternity, Vinaya Commentary, Visuddhimagga, Venerable Buddhaghosa
