Using Buddhist Critical Thinking Skills – An Assessment of the Journal Articles and Additional Matters from Research in the Field of Critical Thinking

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As the manager of the IABU, I have certain responsibilities, which fall under our vision, mission and goals:

IABU Vision:
- Motivate future generations to gain and apply profound understanding of the Buddhadhamma in every aspect of life
- Raise the quality of scholarly work within Buddhist Studies and across other academic endeavors
- Contribute to meeting the challenges that face human society world-wide

IABU Mission:
- Support and collaborate with members to ensure humanity can benefit from the richness and variety of the multi-dimensional Buddhist traditions
- Provide a framework towards better understanding diverse policies and activities
- Collaborate in administration, teaching, research and outreach
- Recognize each other’s qualifications

IABU Goals:
- Propagate the Buddhadhamma through collaborative academic channels
- Eliminate Buddhist sectarian, national, and institutional barriers
- Raise the academic standards throughout the Buddhist world
- Maximize academic potentials and abilities

When I review articles as the general editor for our conference publications or journal articles, I must continually reflect upon our aims, in the sense of the vision, mission and goals of the association, and must strive to work for Buddhism to the highest of my abilities. I have been, primarily, in this position since 2007 – editing perhaps almost 500 different articles over this time, for acceptance in the Buddhist world. Many of our conference publications and journals are available on the United Nations Day of Vesak conference website.¹

Recently, I was teaching a course on Selected Topics in Buddhist Texts, and the topic I selected to lecture on was Buddhist critical or analytical thinking skills, as developed in the Nettippakaranam, since I have had many students throughout the years who seem to avoid using them when writing their major assignments; and as I operate under the vision, mission and goals of IABU, it was a necessary opportunity. A student can sure criticize a teacher they dislike or find boring, but they seldom scrutinize the value of the Dhamma to any intellectual degree. I would think that the value of the information is more important than the delivery of the information – in the sense that this is a university and not a theater-performance. Imagine my dismay and reaction, when in the final of eight lectures, a graduate-school student challenged me: “Why do we have to know this?” I wanted to leave the lecture room silently in shock – but my computer was still plugged in, and it would take several minutes to shut it down and pack it up into my backpack. Instead, his ignorant outburst triggered a rise in my stress-level, and I was baffled by the dearth in his comprehension-level, and the need to shoot the messenger. Clearly I was wasting my time with this student, who was starving for attention. Let me

‘screen-capture’ the first paragraph of the translator’s introduction to the Nettippakaranam2:

**TRANSLATOR’S INTRODUCTION**

1. THE GUIDE

The book here translated—as it stands, it was perhaps composed more than two thousand years ago—sets forth a method intended for the guidance of those who already know intellectually the Buddha’s teaching and want to explain his utterances. It is not a commentary but a guide for commentators: it deals with scaffolding, not with architecture. Its name, *Nettippakaranam*, means ‘guide-treatise’, but the translation has been called, more simply, the Guide.

If a student doesn’t already know the Buddha’s teachings before trying to earn a master-degree in Buddhist studies, then he/she may be unqualified to be a student in the classroom. This is not the time to learn new things. If a student is not learning these ideas in his/her undergraduate training, then the school-system might be failing. It is my perception that this text would be the perfect book for a graduate student of Buddhist studies to read and examine - if they were a graduate-school student of Buddhist Studies. Is this a correct presumption? Apparently, I am an idiot for thinking that the text should be read and is appropriate for graduate-level students, attempting to earn a master’s-degree in Buddhist studies.

I was trying to guide students in learning how to further interpret the Buddha’s terminology, through an assignment using the sixteen haras defined in the text through a different randomly selected vocabulary word—a different one for each student to prevent plagiarism. A certain monastic paying for courses in the Graduate School’s program, obviously never did the reading of the text—never got beyond the first sentence of the first paragraph of the first page of the prime text that I was using for the course, and through a few of his peers thought it would be easier to protest against me and the assignment for doing something innovative, rather than trying to engage into a meaningful analysis. Therefore, the miserable lesson learned from teaching MCU Graduate School monks, is that they were ungrateful for innovative Dhamma-lessons. Critical thinking also urges our association to make faculties and departments more aware of what we are trying to accomplish as an association, so that their exposed weaknesses can be healed. We need to be more proactive with our functioning objectives—education is the key to improvements. If departments are not online with our aims, the situation will only remain the same.

When I set out to create this special edition of the 4th Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Universities (JIABU), on the theme of Buddhist critical or analytical thinking skills, I envisioned that the scholars participating would have read the volume of work that I attached with the call for papers. I produced a research document on the theme of Buddhist critical thinking skills that drew out the material from the Tipitaka pertaining to analytical thinking, which was a reaction from a journal edited by Dr. Soraj Hongladorom of Chulalongkorn University. It was the very same text that I taught to the ungrateful class, as mentioned above. It was my vision to have Buddhist scholars react in such a way as to contribute new innovations to the field of critical thinking, not to protest and remain doing the time-wasting tiresome endeavors. Dr. Soraj

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is an academic composing scholarly endeavors, and my work builds upon his work, and he himself returns to contribute something to this volume. In a sense, this is a useful collaboration – but I wanted more, in the sense of intellectual depth, from others in the Buddhist academic world. I wanted to be taught something new by superior scholars.

One scholar in this journal referenced that work, and it is my gut-instinct that despite 1853 downloads or reviews of my text, most of everyone in this volume never utilized any of my proper research in a way in which I thought they would have or should have. Does this mean that almost everyone found nothing of value in it, nothing in it was important to build upon – or does it mean that no one was capable of using anything in the text? To some extent, I became disappointed over the dearth of scholars approaching the material that I spent a few years documenting into a funded research project. Was it a failed endeavor or did people neglect to grasp the material? The few students who turned in the final assignment neglected to turn in a proper assignment. This is my enduring inquiry. Regardless of the opinions, the evidence is contained within the reference section of these individual articles.

Review of “Buddhist Critical Thinking Skills”:

There are two assertions that need to be made: the first is that the Buddha called himself an analyst (vibhajjavadana), and the second assertion is that he suggested that people become masters of the courses of thoughts (vasī-vitakkapariyāyapathesu). This is a seldom-discussed issue in Buddhism, and it may be apparent that people choose to become meditation masters rather than becoming dhamma-masters. I’ll briefly summarize the major parts of my text mentioned above, where the following items are discussed (and, please see the complete-project to witness how these issues are presented), represented here in brevity:

- A portion of the Vibhanga’s Patisambhidavibhanga illustrates the criteria of analytical insights: into the consequence, origin philology and knowledge of whatever is being investigated for the purpose of inquiry. This is important to show, because there are layers of information built onto what we may see, and we have to scrutinize the various components of what it is that we are examining, from a variety of perspectives. As said, the sixteen haras also serve this function in great depth.
- I designed a chart illustrating what Marx and Engels presented in terms of how religious and secular institutions use each other or are against each other, for social-control of the masses. This is present to illustrate what might be operating against Buddhism, in terms of critical thinking: it is important to know what the antagonist might be pondering, and why?
- I try to discuss how Habermas is useful, in his discussions pertaining to communicative action – where reasoning and argumentation are discussed to bring elements of validity into some discussion.
- I discuss the importance of the Nettippakaranam, which should be a fundamental Buddhist textbook in our modern Buddhist universities, where even in the introduction to the text, it details why the text is important and even further: one can ascertain why a student in a Buddhist graduate-school program should learn the contents of the text and be able to work with the contents. There are sixteen modes of conveying an element of discussion, allowing a student to engage into hermeneutical endeavors or drawing out special elements of the idea under examination. If any student aspires to become a teacher, this text should be mandatory to read and consider.

Available here: http://www.academia.edu/2344610/Buddhist_Critical_Thinking_Skills - revised 17 January 2013 - accessed on 10 March 2014, receiving 1853 views or downloads to this date.
I move deeper into the introduction, discussing various aspects of Dhamma and covering the Yodhajiva Sutta, the Kesaputta Sutta, and other details towards illustrating hermeneutical tools for Buddhists to implement into their studies.

In the second chapter of the text, I cover discourses that relate to morality, yet useful, for illustrating episodes of critical thinking, when in the presence of another person.

In the third chapter of the text, I cover discourses that relate to higher forms of exercising mentality, beginning from an Upanishad, and evolving the dialogue into proto-abhidhammic material that is found in the early Buddhist discourses.

In the fourth chapter of the text, I cover discourses that relate to training in higher wisdom. Higher wisdom is not critical thinking, but higher wisdom can stimulate critical thinking.

The conclusion to the text summarizes each chapter and brings in some other material to support some claims or suggestions made within, such as the importance of self-scrutiny; and examining the concept of progress through the sixteen modes of conveying – since every discourse within the text seems to suggest that some sort of progress is needed to advance from a lower worldly stage into a better or higher realm; then I provide a final conclusion and suggest that the path in critical or analytical thinking should lead someone towards greater progress.

Previewing, “Advanced Analytical Assessment of Buddhist Critical Thinking Skills and Additional Philosophical Concerns or Perspectives for the Field of Critical Thinking”:

I am engaged into a second volume – a completely new version and perspective of another funded research project that advances over the above mentioned research. Although it remains incomplete, the following material is what is discussed thusfar in that project. Prior to my involvement in Buddhist studies, I was a intelligence analyst in the United States Air Force – for many years I tried to leave my past behind and forget about the years as a sort of a spy and decided to merge my experience as a communications-analyst and academic philosophy-doctor. In this advancement upon my earlier funded effort, I begin by taking a look at what exactly is: intelligence, an analyst, and analysis – using material complied from thirty-seven full texts available on the CIA’s website.

I equate a lot of what Buddhists do towards what an intelligence analyst or a “spy” must do. A Buddhist is responsible for contemplating matters that are occurring internally in the mind and body, as well as what is occurring externally as a sort of stimuli which may have some influence over the individual’s response-pattern. A greater comprehension of neurosciences and psychoanalysis would benefit the Buddhist, so one would know that is really occurring within the brain or being. Both the Buddhist and the Analyst are collecting information: intelligence data, and are analyzing this data for a purpose, formulating knowledge towards the development of experienced-wisdom. When the Buddhist or the analyst, or for simplicity: when analysis is performed by either, then it is likely that they can comprehend occurrences in the minds of others. The use of one’s abhinna performs a similar function: when subjected to similar circumstances, given a certain type of variables afflicting the person subjected to the scrutiny or the one scrutinizing the phenomena, a certain calculated reaction is expected, and responses can

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4 I believe that I may be the first professor to have students examine something, such as a selected verse from the Dhammapada or a key-vocabulary word and have that idea scrutinized through each of the sixteen modes of conveying, as suggested in the Nettippakaranam. I have my undergraduates perform this exercise and I have my graduate-students perform the exercise. Many have trouble adequately performing the sixteen interpretations.

5 For instance, a review of some occasional papers can be found here: https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers or here: https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence - last accessed on 26 June 2013
be predicted to a high degree of accuracy. When the analyst (either person: the Buddhist or the ‘spy’) is engaged into data-collection or inquiry, they are gaining access to the intelligence data (thoughts or capabilities of others) that will need to be subjected to data-processing procedures – in Buddhism this is also done through such popular training-systems like vipassana-mediation.

There is also the burden of cognitive dissonance. Any thought is cognition. If you think that this article or a lecture by me is boring, you have cognized or made a determination that the article is boring and you may even formulate a dislike for this information, and discontinue reading it. If you have the knowledge that this ink on this paper is black, this is the cognition of black ink on white paper. Someone may like this article, and cognitive irrelevance could form. For cognitive irrelevance to be shown: there is no relation between liking or disliking this article and that the ink is black – the two thoughts are irrelevant to each other. Cognitive dissonance is best illustrated in: some person thinks this article is boring, and another person thinks that the article is interesting. There are two distinct perceptions or the same object. Since there is an obvious polarity in the opinions: dissonance increases as the degree of discrepancy among cognitions increase. Further, to better cognize dissonance, there are four points that should be illustrated:

- Dissonance increases as the degree of discrepancy among cognition increases
- Dissonance increases as the number of discrepant cognitions increases
- Dissonance is inversely proportional to the number of consonant cognitions held by an individual
- The relative weight of the consonance or dissonance may be adjusted by their importance in the individual’s mindset.

We are all not going to have the same opinion from the same given set of materials to examine. Mindsets are molded as new information presents itself or is discovered. As an analyst is confronted with additional information or new circumstances, the reaction or response could vary, and as someone becomes more experienced, each experience builds upon past experiences, new information or the development of keener insights or wisdom can be produced – mindsets are transformed. An analyst also proceeds in a more higher-level, scientific manner rather than using personal feelings or emotions to guide their responses – however difficult that this endeavor becomes. Analysts, and certainly Buddhist monks, should have active self-awareness and make proper active analytical assessments of the development of the phenomena or the object of scrutiny. This analysis deciphers between the basic questions that even children are aware of: who, what, when, where, why, how, and so forth, according to the scenario that someone is facing. One problem may be that students of Buddhism are less equipped with learning how to apply their data or Dhamma-sets to real world situations, therefore they rely on a master for a number of years until enlightenment is attained. Buddhist and analysts need to know how to apply the proper method to the scenario, weigh all the variables involved in the processes and be able to adequately synthesize and communicate the results. This intelligence data comes from, as far as a Buddhist is concern, the functions associated with the mind – the organ that faces difficulties when forced to engage into complex issues: perceptions, memory, information processing, and consciousness. Towards improving our minds, under the rubric of critical or analytical thinking, we may go beyond just acquiring knowledge or the types of thoughts one is taught or trained to have, and move beyond the actual functioning of the

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For example, see the discussion here: [http://www.ithaca.edu/faculty/stephens/cdback.html](http://www.ithaca.edu/faculty/stephens/cdback.html) – accessed on 26 June 2013, where these four points and the discussion on cognitive dissonance are presented.
mind – we may need some moments, real quality and peaceful time (this is mediation and meditation), to assess the intelligence data against sophisticated and even deceptive ideas.

Although the research-project remains incomplete, I aspire to research and discover ways in which our intelligence-information or knowledge gathered can be used more effectively and through our analytical-processes, perhaps towards generating better wisdom.

**Review and Analysis of the Articles in this Volume:**

The current journal begins with the leading article by Dr. Soraj Hongladarom, who contributed the article: *Learning and Interdependence: Towards a Buddhism-inspired Theory of Learning* – dealing with deconstructing cultural boundaries, while comparing the merits of critical thinking in Eastern and Western constructed cultures. Several years ago, Soraj edited an influential journal on critical thinking skills, which directly influenced my own work, and the construction of this present journal on the theme of Buddhist critical thinking skills. It is known that there are many philosophical systems of thought that entertain critical inquiry or analysis, but within my efforts, the focus is on Buddhist methods and logic systems, the assumed inherent tradition of the people around South, Southeast and East Asia, and as my own previous work asserts: these are all found inside of the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Professor Soraj looks at the research shown by several scholars that shows how each system has some respectful role in a proper context. One culture, which has a history of growth and adaptation within itself, cannot be continually tied up with a single set learning theory or system; the key to a strong culture would be to possess multiple methodologies and use the proper method for the proper circumstance, as they do when facing some threat. Students must, absolutely, learn to think for themselves. There is ample evidence that some culture can be a modern culture and not succumb to Westernization or Globalization.

My instincts suggest that he is not looking at some singular issue, and he is being proper to look at larger perspectives when taking a theoretical look at how people are learning, and in ways that people acquire their information through institutionalized learning facilities. Dr. Soraj discusses that procedures are needed or certain learning theories should be emphasized, but these not mentioned. There is no mentioning of specific processes and how they work or could be measured, in this theoretical output that aims to deconstruct cultural boundaries. Systemized learning is mentioned when discussing ancient historical periods, and the implication is that there is no modern school educating younger generations in these methods, means or manners. I tried, but a student-protest prohibited any attempt. Additionally, the responsible department-head acquiesced to the whims of the students. The point here is not the disrespect that the department or students directed towards the teacher, rather the point is that the attempt was made to regenerate age-old Buddhist wisdom – too many people seem to have difficulties when faced with change and revolt against this improved methods for change.

Jacob Buganga’s contribution supports and defines the role that general critical thinking plays as an instrumental process that creates benefits for the well-being of people. When difficult tasks are faced, people must be aware of cognitive processes. Since our youth, we have all been taught basic question words: who, which, what, when,

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7 For instance, take the criticism of Noam Chomsky towards Slavoj Zizek, here: [http://www.openculture.com/2013/06/noam_chomsky_slams_zizek_and_lacan_empty_posturing.html](http://www.openculture.com/2013/06/noam_chomsky_slams_zizek_and_lacan_empty_posturing.html) - where he is not interested in theory and claims Slavoj Zizek is only posturing, the phone call is also here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWRqPbwvYS0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWRqPbwvYS0) – both accessed on 30 June 2013, the point of illustrating this is not to criticize my elder scholarly colleague, rather the point is to show that some people don’t merely believe in philosophy and theory, but believe in praxis or practical applications – the transference of some idea into a real world situation.
where, why and how - we should bring these basic ideas into our lives and meditation endeavors by attaining to higher knowledge and wisdom. Our thinking often varies and fluctuates depending on our moods. When we meditate, we are finally given the time to ascertain and tend to our troubled consciousness – bringing about the development of clarity, enabling us to better assess our afflictions. Vipassana provides decision-making framework for such self-scrutiny and it is available during our every breath. Through analytical scrutiny or critical thinking, minute characteristics can be examined, yet such methods are not even limited to Buddhism. Taking the time to think about issues is also inherent to many tribes, evidence to support this is inherently found in the language of tribes in Uganda. Buganga’s discussion illuminates the role and value of critical thinking in Buddhism and within other traditions. It’s evident that vipassana-meditation is: a form of mindfulness, which in itself implies a tradition of scrutinizing the occurrences within the mind and body; a form of critical analysis of the momentarily existing conventional-self during the instance of pondering. Critical thinking is also beneficial towards predicting outcomes – and in a tradition like Buddhism, abhiññās are considered important tools to develop. Buganga additionally asserts that critical thinking skills are an integral part of Buddhist values and coping mechanisms towards constructed social-realms and the natural environment. He concludes his endeavor by urging contemplatives to ponder if critical-thinking really is vipassana meditation or insight meditation.

The article by Helen Rosen challenges us to consider not just psychotherapy, but how meditation actually creates changes in our personalities: treating depression and other disorders. Dr. Rosen is not just speaking from reading articles about the subject and preaching the standard themes, she is actually prescribing meditation for her patients and measuring results, inasmuch as the later effects can be measured or ascertained. Vipassana meditation, as we all know, is designed for people to determine the truer stage of their mental states by taking notice of the arising, presence and dissipation of such temporary states. She turns to the necessity to explore or engage into self-criticism when undertaking vipassana meditation. Her case studies demonstrate that some changes occur over longer periods of time if patients neglect the daily meditations. Most of these changes involve taking time out for breathing exercises – she stresses behavioral modification and not taking on some intellectualized theory.

Ronald Nakasone discusses the idea of dharma-gates, which are a conceptual overlay that provides insight and the opportunity to participate in the contemplation of the reality of dhammas. This system of knowing and thinking establishes criteria for critical or analytical thinking. There are a list of ten criteria within the dharma-gate system. He discusses shifting our center of awareness, allowing us to see the perspective of others and timeless alternate impressions – opinions and positions that are not our own, but valid within other mindsets, or from recognized authority. We should know that there may be special and relational structures or alternatives in ideas that we have not adequately assessed. We should additionally consider that the Buddha was only a guide for someone to become Enlightened, and imparted the Dhamma as authority, following his passing; and Prof. Nakasone concludes with suggesting what was known yesterday, can be confusing even today.

Prof. Ulrich Duchrow begins by saying there is a global decisive point challenging everyone and that the solutions might not be Buddhist. We can agree to disagree but what if the existing policy-makers are so removed from Buddhism that a partially influenced decision through Buddhism may never become a possibility? They think critically, but their methods and aims have little to do with any input from Buddhist ideology. He emphasizes that interreligious dialogue is very important for comprehending how ideas are traded between cultures. Further, if there is any unifying trend from discussions pertaining to the Axial Age (economic and technological responses to the
ancient advancing localized developments) - this was a common stage in many civilizations around the same time, perhaps owing to the greater mobility of humans. Soldiers and mercenaries had to be paid, and around this time: slave-mining for precious metals became an industrious endeavor – class exploitation has ancient roots. The idea of private property was another innovation, which lead to heightened structural greed and the accumulation of commodities. While Prof. Ulrich Duchrow is illustrating elements of Western European societies, we may also reflect upon parallel developments in Asian nations – embracing a common connection between cultures. Different nations adapted to the new conditions differently, and the great spiritual or philosophical traditions emerged as deviant reaction to these changing circumstances – away from the older social-beliefs now seemingly obseolate. Professor Duchrow suggests that the laws found in Deuteronomy are the first known social laws; however this seems to ignore the ancient Sumerian codes (Code of Urukagina or Ur-Nammu) and those developed in ancient Egypt (Ma’at) and India (Manusmrti). Ancient societies around the world had developed legal codes and further, forms of economic discipline - it is certainly not a unique invention. The various global traditions do have a lot in common: the outright opposition to this devastating capitalistic civilization that is engulfing the planet. All of the liberational theologies or ideologies oppose the development of capitalism, as their traditions are built upon satisfying the needs or eliminating the suffering of individuals for a collective moral civilization.

Gregory Ryhor Haurylau’s learned position is one in support of critical thinking skills and their application as a device needed to assist in better meditations – however he takes this approach from his life experience and extensive meditation efforts. He asserts that merely examining suttas will lead to an intellectual-disaster unless the gained insights can be applied during meditation: some professors of Buddhism or Buddhist studies may be full of words, but do little in terms of meditation – and this is a big problem. Analytical thinking is a critical portion of Buddhist meditations, and more effort should go into bringing awareness into this aspect of the Buddhadhamma.

Saw Yee Mon contributes very thoughtful words through expressing ‘how’ we go about scrutinizing our various or random thoughts, and the ability to transform our conventions into something ultimately more reliable. She does not assert that the practice of analysis is necessarily Buddhist, as thinking is a valuable aspect within human-cultures; rather: it’s the fostering of, within some cultures, to actually place emphasis on scrutinizing stimuli. Again, one does not need to be a Buddhist to analyze things, although Buddhist meditation and mental-endeavors do suggest to exercise the mind in such a way – and it is the way for Buddhists to achieve final liberation: Nibbana.

Supriya Rai works through some problematic scholarship that illustrates difficulties in some meditation procedures and distinguish between aspects of transitioning from one state to another. After suggesting that there are two primary systems of mediation: the calming of the mind and the analytical processes that occur or are utilized in vipassana meditation. She points out instances in the problematic meditation scholarship: manual-writing authors are disconnected from gurus, and seldom penetrate into the deeper realms of expert contemplatives – they turn to texts like the Visuddhimagga for their valued commentary. Many people know that the Visuddhimagga, as a great and revered text, is still filled with some inconsistencies. She raises the question over the controversy in determining exactly what criteria determines the first jhāna, and some controversy over the arupa-jhanas; she raises the dilemma over looking at a meditator striking at an object with thought versus an applied thought, and how these thoughts may be determined in formless or supramundane attainments. She further suggests that the problems may lie in the original sources no longer available to modern scholars, since the time of Buddhaghosa – modern scholars still perpetuate these
lines, while the meditative-traditions assert their alternative and perhaps more accurate assessment of the scrutinized-idea.

There might be some sensitivities involved with discussing Buddhist Jatakas, as they are said to be collections of the Buddha’s past life stories. There is no available modern scientific understanding towards determining the truth of these old-world tales. Bhagyashree Bavare scrutinizes several jataka stories that she determines are actually one story, but because they have been examined from different aspects, certain elements have changed within the stories. She discusses favorable and undesirable faith in respect to kamma. She asserts that Buddhist doctrine states: desire, greed, lust, and cravings are the causes of why humans perform the actions or volitions that they engage into, which is responsible for their subsequent fate. She asserts that there is a cause and a resultant effect. The therefore goes into a literary analysis of two stories: one appears in the Jataka and another in the Avadānas. She assembles a few of the 547 Jatakas to make a singular coherent, full story – the particular story about Mittavinda as the Bodhisattva, who happens to be either some world-renown teacher, a celestial-spirit, or fantastically: the King of the Gods, in these stories.

She neglects to fully utilize the other related Jataka stories (#381, as a Migālopa; and # 427, as Supatta) about the same unruly-bhikkhu, who in other jatakas, existed previously as a high flying vulture that was killed in a high black-winded storm – flying so high he was ‘blown into atoms’. This mentioning of the vultures does little to add to the story of Mittavindaka, but deepens the characterization of one Losaka Tissa. In the utilized stories, Mittavindaka’s stories are very inconsistent. First, he is identified as being an elder-bhikkhu Losaka Tissa, and has a headstrong or domineering attitude. The Buddha tells the story of this monk in Kosala and in Jetavana. The Buddha tells the story in different ways, perhaps forgetting certain details: in one version of the story he seeks to be hired on an ocean-going ship, so that he can earn some money; and in another version of the story he actually owns the ship and aspires to do business utilizing the vessel. When the ship is out deep into the ocean, seven days into the voyage, it comes to a halt owing to some problem. The crew of the ship decide to pick-lots, to determine who must be tossed overboard. One story says lots where picked three times, and in another story lots were picked seven times – it may be of no significant matter, but Mittavindaka is the loser, multiple times – it must be his kammic-fate to be let off the boat. The boats must have been of some large size, because Mittavindaka is given a raft, so as to not be a victim of drowning – but after days alone in the sea, he begins to have delusions, or illusions of sea-nymphs of various descriptions, according to the various stories, and obviously dies – but the stories suggest that he experienced divine bliss. The various stories eventually have Mittavindaka reemerged into Ussada Hell, a beautiful city of torment. The Bodhisatta was on a religious-mission in the miserable-realm and happened upon Mittavindaka, who inquired to the future-Buddha, in some words as to why he is suffering in hell. Mittavindaka was forced to wear razor-wheel headgear which would slowly crush his skull. Meanwhile the Buddha answers his questions, and after the episode, the Buddha reappears into his unspecified Deva-realm, as the King of the Gods.

Bhagyashree has the troubled-bhikkhu, or as named in the story: Maitrakanyaka, as being identified as ‘the Bodhisattva’ – but perhaps he is not “The Bodhisattva”, which could be assumed to be the Buddha Gotama. She duly notes that the stories have been elaborated upon, since the transmission of the stories have continued along to the point that our modern scholars have collected and presented.

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8 E.B. Cowell (ed.): The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, translated from the Pāli by various hands (Oxford: Pāli Text Society, 2005)
The inconsistencies in the presentation of the Jatakas themselves, highlight that there was adaptations made, likely to fit the different audiences present at the story. The Buddha himself, gave the story in different locations, and forgot minor elements or changed them, as he determined.

**Conclusion:**

After setting the framework for the perspective of the author through the vision, mission and goals of the IABU, and how his own research supports the general structure of those emerging to become better scholars within the IABU – the endeavor emphasizes a Buddhist text that also fulfills our aims to create better scholars and teachers. The Nettippakaranam is such a text, that all of our scholars and students within our association of Buddhist universities should read. Taking the attitude that questions the necessity of the text, illustrates that one may not be intellectually ready to become a teacher of Buddhism, and thus, perhaps not ready or able to be a suitable graduate-student. Then, the determination was made to issue summarizations of the material brought out that pertained towards Buddhist critical thinking or analytical skills – from two projects that the author is involved in. This was presented prior to the article-reviews in this journal collection, hoping that some of the author’s training in the topic of Buddhist critical thinking skills could be put to use, productively, for the sake of our IABU audience.

Of course we know Asians can be critical thinkers, so there is no reason to debate the topic – even people trained in the most rigid systems are known to be skillful, so there is really nothing to debate here. The question really is: does the political system or religious system allow for free and analytical thinking? The answer might be to the contrary, nevertheless, for some people, remaining silent in such a system is an exercise in critical thinking: “What can I say, so that I don’t get in trouble?” – might be the beginning of such a long line of inquiry. Cultural boundaries are one of the inhibiting factors towards a liberated culture. We can push towards exploring more boundaries. We have a few papers present that assert that critical thinking is a major factor of vipassana meditation, and other papers that claim that critical thinking or analytical/intellectual endeavors are counterproductive in the case of psychotherapy or behavioral modification – rectifying the dilemma over these two opinions may take more work in a future article, and it would be well worth the academic-pursuit for someone to complete that project. We also know that there are many items set up as conceptual framework for us to operate from when pursuing something through the perspective of Dhamma, for our societies. Through the Dhamma-gate system we can shift our perspectives which can give us keen insights into the nature of phenomena. Some philosophical systems have been set up with devious aims, as shown in my work: the chart based on Marx’s thought pertains to the aims of religions and governments – each seeking to control the other. Humans, since ancient times, have set out to dominate societies - even deifying leading figures that were determined to have some measurable amount of success. Important canonical texts and other great works, despite their errors or speculations, are indeed valuable to determine how critical thinking is involved in the literary-characters presented or in the compilation of the texts produced for us to study. When we use critical thinking, we reflect upon these texts and the reality that we are conscious of, at that moment, to make sense of this during our attempts to exercise and gain Buddhist wisdom.