Merit in Buddhism – concept and adaptation in ritual Buddhism

Posted on

According to Buddhism, the path to attaining Nibbana is described as the path of gradual cultivation. Moral actions generate merit, which facilitates entry into the path of cultivation. With the growth of Ritual Buddhism the aim and purpose of the moral life becomes the accumulation of merit. The accumulation of merit and the donation of merit to gods are important themes in ritual Buddhism, which are not found in the Pali canonical texts.

M M J Marasinghe, in his new book ‘Merit in Buddhism’ discusses the concept and adaptation in ritual Buddhism. He traces its historical development from the time it was taken over by Buddhism in the 6th Century BC. Merit has been used to describe the result of conscious, deliberate moral action. The path of merit is not a final goal that an individual can aspire for, but a springboard to enter the path.

He was Professor and Head, Department of Pali and Buddhist studies and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.