



Postgraduate Dissertation coversheet & feedback form

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English Review of Dissertation

The topic of my dissertation is Research on Filial Piety in the *Sivgalovada Suttanta*. In this review, I will examine my writing process from three perspectives: choosing the topic, the writing process, and the final reflections.

The process of choosing the topic.

First, in the process of choosing the topic, I decided to write about this classic. This idea came from a conversation with my provost of academe, which inspired me. The main reason for choosing this text is that the Buddha provides clear guidance on human relationships, rather than complex theories. I believe this can be a useful guide for people's daily life.

As for how to study this classic, my initial plan was to compare it with a Confucian classic. I chose this approach because Confucian classics provide clear guidance on specific actions, such as how to be a good subject or a filial child. By comparing the two classics, I hoped to find the similarities and methods that Confucianism and Buddhism use to apply their teachings in real life. I believed this could help us better put these

teachings into practice. Therefore, my initial purpose in writing this article was to find practical ways to apply the teachings of the classics through comparison. For the specific comparison, I chose to contrast the five human relationships. Based on this, I looked for another Confucian classic, and the provost's suggestion was the *Disciples' Regulations* (*Dizigu*).

Therefore, The classic I initially chose was the *Disciples' Regulations* (*Dizigu*), and I also looked into existing research on both of these classics. The reason I chose this classic is that it provides many practical examples to guide people's lives, rather than just discussing theory. Therefore, my initial idea was to compare these two classics to examine the guidance provided by Confucianism and Buddhism on the five human relationships. However, as I gradually prepared, I realized that exploring all five relationships might be too much for a 10,000-word article. So, I eventually decided to focus on comparing the guidance on filial piety in both traditions.

However, during my research, my advisor pointed out that these two classics might not be suitable for comparison. I gradually realized this as well, mainly because although the *Disciples' Regulations* contains a lot of content on filial piety, it may not be considered a classic that explains all

five human relationships. It barely mentions the relationship between husband and wife or between ruler and subject. If I were to focus only on filial piety, *the Classic of Filial Piety (Xiaojing)* would be a more representative text. Additionally, neither of these two classics is a key work on filial piety in their respective fields, so comparing them would be quite challenging. Therefore, in the end, I abandoned the comparison between the classics and shifted the focus of my research entirely to the content of the Buddhist text, particularly the part about children showing filial piety to their parents. This became the final topic and direction of my research for this paper.

After confirming the direction of my writing, I began to develop ideas for my research. First, since the word count is very limited, I narrowed the scope of discussion as much as possible and ultimately decided to focus solely on the responsibilities children should fulfill toward their parents. Second, after choosing this topic, I anticipated that my sources might be insufficient because this Buddhist scripture has very few commentaries. To address this, I decided to refer to other translations of the text and compare different versions to refine its meaning. Lastly, I sought a research method that could structure my entire paper. After reading about Swidler's Culture Repertory Theory and considering my aim of emphasizing the practical significance of

classical texts, I decided to use this theory as my research framework to analyze the principles, practices, and symbols within the text.

The above is a record of my experiences during the topic selection process. Next, I will describe some aspects of my research process.

The Writing Process

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, Chengde, who has been the most helpful person throughout my thesis writing process. While working on my paper, I often encountered issues such as logical inconsistencies or insufficient research. My advisor patiently pointed out these problems and guided me on how to improve them.

Whenever I completed a section, I would send it to my advisor, who would carefully review it and provide feedback. The most significant help I received was in refining my research direction. Initially, I planned to compare two classics, but my advisor quickly noticed the challenges in my comparison and suggested that I either focus on similar types of texts or study just one canon. I hadn't realized this issue myself, and it was only because of his guidance that I adjusted my topic and research approach.

1. The main challenges

The first challenge I encountered during the writing process was comparing different versions of this scripture. While selecting the versions, I referred to many other research papers related to this text, which often discussed the issue of multiple translations of the same scripture and analyzed these versions to some extent. Building on this research, I needed to locate the specific passage I was studying in each version, which took a considerable amount of time.

At first, I assumed that since these versions were translations of the same scripture, there wouldn't be significant differences between them. However, to my surprise, the variations were substantial, which left me confused—even though, at this point, I had only examined the Chinese translations. I understood that differences were inevitable due to variations in the cultural backgrounds, time periods, and contexts in which these translations were produced. However, I did not expect the discrepancies to be so extensive. Unfortunately, since the original texts before translation are no longer available, it is impossible to verify the exact basis of these translations.

That said, this challenge also had an unexpected benefit: it enriched my research. Initially, I planned to focus solely on analyzing five key aspects,

but after discovering the differences in meaning across versions, I was able to compare and supplement them with one another. This not only helped me determine a more precise interpretation but also allowed me to explore how these meanings could be practically applied.

However, when I compared these meanings, I found that although all translations referred to the same five aspects, only the first point was translated similarity, while the other four varied to some extent. To conduct a more comprehensive study, I also examined existing English translations of this scripture and discovered that they differed significantly from the Chinese versions. Interestingly, there was little variation among the English translations themselves—they were mostly consistent.

I delved deeper into this and found that the English versions were all translated from Pali. Fortunately, I was able to locate the original Pali version as well. However, since I do not have the ability to study Pali, I did not include an analysis of the Pali text in my paper. At that time, I still couldn't understand why the Chinese translations differed so much from each other and even more from the English translations.

Later, I consulted our dean, Ven. Shengmiao, who explained that most Chinese translations were based on Sanskrit, which accounted for the significant differences. Unfortunately, the Sanskrit version of this scripture is no longer available, making it impossible to verify the relationship between the Sanskrit and Pali texts. This remains a regret in my research.

After clarifying these reasons, I stopped dwelling on the discrepancies. Although the translations varied, they were still based on the same scripture. I decided to use these differences as complementary perspectives in my analysis. Completing this comparative process became the content of Section 1 in Chapter 2 of my paper. This was also the biggest challenge I encountered during my research process. Fortunately, with the help of my two mentors, I was able to complete this part of the study.

2. The working pattern

My thesis writing process was relatively smooth, as I maintained a consistent writing pace. According to my plan, I spent nearly a month collecting and organizing research materials. This process went fairly well, though some texts were difficult to find. Fortunately, modern online

search tools are quite powerful, and my university library has an extensive collection. I was especially surprised to find an English translation of *The Sivgalovada Suttanta* in the library, even though it was published in the last century.

After organizing my materials, I completed the first chapter in about a week. However, as I mentioned earlier, I had to change my research topic and direction midway. After finishing Chapter 1, I realized that this scripture was not suitable for comparison with Standards for Being a *Good Disciple (Dizigui)*. As a result, I had to abandon a large portion of what I had already written. I ended up deleting nearly half of the content and rewriting Chapter 1, which took me another week.

Despite the setback, this shift in focus turned out to be beneficial. While I could no longer conduct a comparative study, I was able to concentrate entirely on analyzing this particular passage of the scripture. This gave me more space to explore its meaning in depth. I carefully read every translation, analyzing each word and phrase in detail, while also consulting relevant books and dictionaries. This process greatly deepened my understanding of the text, and my findings from this stage are reflected in Section 1 of Chapter 2 of my thesis.

After organizing and summarizing the information I collected, I distilled it into six key theoretical concepts: the ability to survive, care for parents' health, care for parents' mind, keeping sincerity, inheriting tradition, and filial piety after parents pass away. Once I established these concepts, I began working on Chapter 3, which explores how to transform these ideas into practice.

The initial draft of this chapter took me a little over a week to complete. However, after discussing it with my advisor, I realized there were still many issues that needed to be addressed. As a result, I spent nearly three more weeks revising and refining the content. After completing Chapter 3, the next step was to consolidate my findings and develop a conclusion. This process went relatively smoothly.

However, even after finishing the full draft, there were still some issues that needed correction, which required additional time. These included adjustments to charts and fixing certain research errors. Fortunately, none of these were major obstacles, and I was able to resolve them successfully, leading to the completion of my thesis.

Overall, the writing process went relatively well. Although I had to revise my work multiple times, each revision helped me learn valuable skills, such as information retrieval, improving logical coherence, and

maintaining rigorous writing standards. I am deeply grateful for this experience and for the guidance of my advisor.

3. Oral test and revision

After completing my first draft, I began preparing for my oral presentation and thesis defense. This process went relatively smoothly, and the examiners pointed out some issues in my paper, which I later revised and adjusted accordingly.

The biggest issue they raised was my use of methodology. Initially, I chose Swidler's Culture Repertory Theory as my research framework. However, the examiners noted that this methodology was not clearly reflected in my paper. After my defense, I revisited related research and realized that this theory could not actually serve as a research method. However, it could still be used as a guiding framework for my study.

As a result, I adjusted my paper by redefining the objectives of Chapters 2 and 3—Chapter 2 focused on structuring the theoretical framework, while Chapter 3 outlined specific methods for applying the ideas in practice. The revision process was quite rushed, but I managed to make the necessary changes in time.

Other modifications were relatively minor and easier to implement. I acknowledged the examiners' feedback and made the necessary

corrections. Although the process was brief, it was intense, and I successfully completed the final adjustments.

The final reflections

Overall, throughout the writing process of this thesis, I have learned a great deal. Although I encountered many challenges along the way, there is no denying that this experience has significantly enhanced my skills. However, even after completing my paper, I still feel that there are many areas that could be improved.

The first area for improvement is my handling of different translations. When I discovered the differences among various versions, I realized that many factors contributed to these discrepancies. If I had the opportunity to continue this research, I could further compare other Buddhist scriptures translated during the same period and study the habits of the translators. This might provide deeper insights into why certain translation choices were made. However, due to time and space limitations, I was unable to explore this aspect in depth.

The second area concerns the practical application of theory. While writing my paper, I referred to many classical texts, a significant portion of which were Confucian rather than Buddhist. The reason for incorporating Confucian sources was that some Buddhist concepts, such

as reincarnation, might not be easily accepted by non-Buddhists. To make the discussion more accessible, I supplemented my analysis with Confucian texts. However, this approach could lead to misunderstandings about the coherence of my research. Since I chose to study a Buddhist scripture, I hope to refine my future research by relying more exclusively on theories within the Buddhist tradition.

The third limitation is that my research scope was somewhat narrow. Initially, I planned to conduct a comparative study, but due to the differences in content, I ultimately focused solely on one scripture. Since I had already gathered preliminary research materials, I decided to deepen my study of this particular text instead. However, this still resulted in a relatively limited scope. During my research, my advisor mentioned a work called *Xiaolun* (Discourse on Filial Piety), which, although not a Buddhist scripture, was written by a Buddhist monk and discusses the concept of filial piety. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to include a comparative analysis of this text. If I had been able to do so, my research might have yielded even more valuable findings.

Throughout the writing process, I believe my greatest strength was my ability to thoroughly search for classical texts and extract the relevant content I needed. For instance, while writing my thesis, I often needed to find examples to support my arguments. During these

times, I was able to effectively use keyword searches to locate the necessary passages in Buddhist scriptures. After identifying these sources, I would cross-reference them with related published works, ensuring their accuracy before incorporating them into my paper. This approach allowed my thesis to be well-supported by a rich collection of primary sources. However, this strength also highlighted one of my weaknesses: the insufficient use of secondary sources. Due to my language limitations, I could only reference Chinese and English literature. Additionally, my proficiency in English is not strong enough, which made reading and analyzing English-language sources a slow process. As a result, my citations from secondary literature were relatively limited. This is an area I need to improve in the future.

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Finally, after completing this paper, what I found most gratifying was gaining a deeper appreciation for the importance of filial piety. I have always believed that academic research is not just about finding answers—it should also contribute to society and help people improve their lives or solve their problems. However, the foundation for this is that the researcher must first benefit from their own work.

Throughout the writing process, I continuously discovered the significance of filial piety and actively sought to apply it in my own life, experiencing firsthand how these principles could bring positive changes. Undoubtedly, I found these teachings to be incredibly valuable. In the future, if I have the opportunity to conduct similar research, I would consider incorporating experimental elements. I would like to introduce these concepts to participants and gather their feedback to determine whether these ideas genuinely help

people in their daily lives. I believe this would be an important addition to my next study.

Looking back on my entire writing process, I feel truly grateful to have had this opportunity in my life to conduct research on a topic that genuinely interests me. Throughout this journey, I was able to continuously explore my own ideas, test their validity, and receive invaluable support from those around me. It was a process of identifying challenges and working through them, which ultimately helped me grow and improve my abilities.

I am also deeply thankful to my advisor, my university, and everyone who has supported me along the way. I hope that this research can contribute to solving some issues and provide meaningful insights to others. Looking ahead, I aspire to maintain this spirit of inquiry—to keep identifying problems, seeking solutions, and learning from each experience.