

## II. BUDDHISM IN INDIA

### 1. The Formative Period: 500 - 250 B.C.

- 1.1 Buddha established the monastic order and the lay order, and established the rules:
  - 5 moral precepts: no killing, lying, stealing, illicit sex or alcohol.
- 1.2 First sixty followers: 5 were samanans or ascetics; 55 were merchant laymen. Buddha's son, cousins and other relatives joined. Women were allowed but were subordinate to men.
- 1.3 At first there was no centralized authority. There were 'hermeneutical communities' (sangha) seeking to understand the dharma. There was also great respect for the elders. Over time a whole set of monastic codes were developed regulating monastic life.
- 1.4 In time a fully institutionalized monastic order emerged.
  - monks were to "wander alone", and to depend on the laity for gifts of food, clothing, medicine and temporary housing. Their presence was seen as producing merit and good karma for the society by restraining the laity from evil, exhorting them to good, loving them through kind thoughts, teaching them what they have not heard, correcting and purifying what they have heard, and showing them the way to heaven. They were to eat one meal a day, and allowed to own a food bowl, a razor, a water strainer, a needle, and a staff. These forest dwellers entered a village for food, rest, medicine and teaching lay persons. From mid-June to mid-October they constructed temporary shelters in "rain retreats" in the forest where they studied and meditated.
  - laypeople were to provide the monks with cloths, alms, seats, couches and medicines, and to pay for their teaching.
  - unlike Brahmanism and the Hindu asceticism with their great gulf between religious leaders and laity, Buddhism forged a bond between the two of mutual benefit. Monks brought merit, and lay people supported them.
  - novices were males over eight. After a long training they could be full members after 20. They put on three ochre robes, shaved their heads, said the three jewels and ten precepts.
  - each monk had a preceptor, but no vow of obedience. Each was a free man. Unity was by consensus.
  - committees of the old made important decisions and managed the monasteries.
  - there were assemblies at full and new moons when monks confessed sins and preached while the laity listened.
  - there were daily routines of study and religious exercises plus the work of the monastery. Disciplines included the Four Sublime Moods (sitting crosslegged and thinking of love, piety, joy and serenity). Time given to the seventh path - right recollection or self awareness.
  - monks served the sick and poor.
  - they had a high moral order for the most part.

- 1.5 Women could join as nuns but they were under restrictions:
- they had to spend two years in probation as novices before full ordination.
  - they be ordained by an assembly of monks and nuns.
  - they reside only where monks are found.
  - they honor all monks as their seniors.
  - they accept criticism from monks without the privilege of giving it.
  - married women were not encouraged to renounce households.
  - they must not corrupt the order.

1.6 Stupas or thupas were constructed as mounds where supposedly relics of Buddha are to be found. Such mounds had an old tradition in India.

1.7 There were many rituals: altars, rosaries, gongs, bells, incense, prayer wheels, mantras, thankas, mudras and asanas.

## 2. From Ashoka to the Guptas: 250 B.C. - 300 A.D.

2.1 Buddhism had great support from kings. Especially by the Mauryas, and especially by Ashoka (260-232 B.C.) after a great killing he renounced war and supported Buddhism and sent missionaries to Sri Lanka and Burma. He convened a great council of monks at Pataliputra, his capital.

2.2 The Indo-Greek kingdoms continued the support of Buddhism. So to the Shakas and Kushanas. Kings and merchants build monasteries throughout India at such places as Sarnath, Kushinara, Nalanda in the northeast, Sanchi and Mathura in central India, Peshawar and Taxila in the northwest and Amaravati and Nagarjankonda in the south. The monasteries became centers of learning, business and farming.

Prior to the first century B.C. there were no anthropomorphic portrayals of Buddha. His presence was indicated by an empty space, footprints, a dharma wheel, or a tree of enlightenment.

2.3 Buddhism spread, and fragmented. Consequently several great conferences were called to codify its scriptures and define its orthodox beliefs.

2.31 First great council (477 B.C.): held the year of Buddha's death at Bajagriha, the Magadhan capital of Rajagriha.

- here were defined the Vinaya Pitaka or rules of order.
- here were defined the Sutta Pitaka or sermons of Buddha.
- both in fact were codifications of accretions of folk literature regarding the Buddha.

2.32 Second great council (377 B.C.): held at Vaisali one hundred years after his death.

- here schism took place between the Sthaviravadins or Theravadi or 'Believers in the Teaching of the Elders'; and the Mahasanghikas or 'Members of the Great Community.'
- the split began on minor points but in the end led to major doctrinal differences.

2.33 Third great council (245 B.C.): held at Pataliputra under the patronage of Asoka.



## 2.5 The rise of the Mahayana.

Doctrinal differences emerged regarding the **goal of monastic life**. Some leaders following Buddha's teachings saw it to be attaining **arhatship**. An **arhat** is a "holy one" who has conquered all lust, hatred and dillusion; one who has conquered suffering and rebirth by following the Eightfold Path. These became the Theravada sect - "Way of the Elders".

Others criticized this as a selfish pursuit, and that one should follow Buddha's example and become a **bodhisattva**. This meant, for them, one striving for enlightenment, but who strives for the welfare of others by being willing to be reborn in a series of lives, and by sharing their merit with others as a force of compassion for the world. They could attain nirvana, but they refuse it for the sake of releasing others from suffering. These became known as the Mahayanists. In their support their "discovered" new Sutras or higher teachings of Buddha.

### 2.51 Theravada:

2.511 Pali cannon established in first 3 great councils, but put in writing in Sri Lanka by King Vattagamani (89-77 B.C.).

- Vinaya Pitaka (conduct): rules of order for monks.
- Sutta Pitaka (sermons): 5 parts. Later additions include the Jatakas.
- Abhidhamma Pitaka (metaphysics):

2.512 Basically psychological.

- Universe is full of Dukka (sorrow, dissatisfaction). It is transient (anicca) and soulless (anatta). Humans are a compound of five psychosomatic elements: body, feelings, perceptions, states of mind and awareness. These vary from minute to minute. The old man is not the same as the baby 70 years earlier. Each moment vanishes and a new one emerges. Buddhism knows no being, only becoming. The universe is a continuous flux.

2.513 No immortal soul. The universe and individual are soulless. In transmigration, nothing passes from one life to another. The new only picks up the chain of events and becoming.

- gods are soulless. The Brahman of the Upanishads is an illusion.
- gods are not supernatural, nor can they help humans.
- transmigration is like one flame starting another and then going out.

2.514 Eliminate this by giving up craving. Craving due to belief in individuality and permanence of the ego. Out of ignorance rises imagination, thence self-consciousness, thence name and form (corporeal existence), thence the six senses (the sixth is thought), thence contact, thence feeling, thence craving, thence attachment, thence becoming, thence rebirth, thence all the manifold ills that flesh is heir to.

The solution is the middle road between self-indulgence and asceticism achieved by the Eight Fold Path.

2.515 Cosmology: Four great Mahakalpas: 1) humans decline and all is destroyed by the highest heaven; 2) quiescence, 3) evolution begins: good karma in highest heavens declines and beings come down to world as forms. Humans are like fairies, 4) continued decline.

- 2.524 Early masters emerged who articulated the new interpretations:
- Asvaghos (Chinese Mai-ming): converted Brahmin who wrote Buddha Charita Kavya (life of Buddha), and the Awakening Faith - a synthesis of Mahayana beliefs.
  - Nagarjuna (200a.d.) founded Madhyamika ("Middle Way").
  - Vasubandhu (disciple of Nagarjuna) emerged as Avalokateswara who with Amitabha and "Mightiest One" became the trinity of Pure Land.
  - Asanga and Vasubandhu (brothers - 400 a.d.) - founded Yogacara ("Practice of Yoga").

2.525 Two schools emerged in Mahayana:

2.5251 Madhyamika (Intermediate school): middle between realism of the Theravada (Sarvastivadins) and Yogacara.

- the cosmic flux is unreal, so consciousness, samsara and nirvana are unreal. In the end all is unreal, hence one and the same. The only reality is Emptiness or Vod (Sunyata).

2.5252 Yogacara (Way of Union): thorough-going idealism. The world is build by consciousness and is only a dream. The only reality is "Suchness" (tathata), the raw material of phenomena.

2.53 Sometimes the relationship between the two is seen as that of hub and spokes on a wheel.

- Theravada emphasizes the humanty of the Buddha; Mahayana the Buddha-nature of humanity.
- Theravada stresses a moral life and high-principled behavior as a road to Buddhahood; Mahayana inclines to an intuitive widsom to achieve the realization that one already possesses the Buddha nature - this must only be 'recovered' or uncovered.

Zimmer refers to Theravada as the Little Ferryboat (individuals alone must steer the difficult strait of release on their own. He refers to Mahayana as the Large Ferryboat that strives to accomodate everyone.

### 3. Final Flowering and Decline:

3.1 The Guptas were Hindus but patronized Brahmanism, and build a great monastary at Nalanda.

3.2 By 600 a.d. there were an estimated 115,000 Theravada monks in 2000 monasteries, and 120,000 Mahayanist monks in 2,500 monestaries.

3.3 Relic worship grew rapidly: different monasteries had Buddha's begging bowl, shadow, tooth, flatbone of his skull, sandalwood staff, robe and tooth-pick.

3.4 Mahayanists overcame the followers of Hinayana by the 7th century and ruled Indian Buddhism until the 12th century. Great seminaries and training centers were developed in north and south-central India. In the 8th century a monk from the Nalanda monastary went to Tibet as a missionaries.

### III. BUDDHISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

1. Origin and Spread of Southeast Asian Buddhism.
  - 1.1 King Asokh Maurya ruled north India from 264-227 B.C. His conversion to Buddhism ranks in importance for the orient with the conversion of Constantine the Great. It began the spread of Buddhism across Asia and led the development of Buddhism as a state religion and the guilding of Buddhist-based civilizations (Schecter 1967).
    - Under his rule missionaries were sent to Sri Lanka and Burma where the kings adopted it and it became the state religion in the 3rd century B.C.
    - Later it spread south to Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Indonesia where it became an ideology of power from which kings derived their authority.
  - 1.2 In 1181 - 1215 King Jayavarman VII ruled much of southeast Asia from Angkor Thom (wat), one of the most elaborate of all Buddhist temple complexes ever constructed.
2. Character of Southeast Asian Buddhism.
  - 2.1 After its arrival, Buddhism adapted to the local folk religions and in the villages it was largely animistic in nature (Gustafson 1971). More orthodox forms of buddhism were found in the wats and later in the cities.
    - Although local Buddhism was largely syncretistic in nature, it provided the political structure that held S.E.Asia together (Schecter).
  - 2.2 Orthodox Buddhism underwent a revitalization in both Mahayana and Theravada forms due to two causes: a) the rise of nationalism and the identification of Buddhism with it, and b) the interest of European orientalist such as Max Muller who studied Buddhism and translated its texts.
3. Current confrontation of Buddhism and Marxism. The spread of Maoism, the rise of militant Buddhism in vietnam, and the blend of Marxist/Maoist socialism and totalitarianism confuse and cloud political and economic lines in the Buddhist social order. The confrontation between the two has taken different courses of action in different parts of S.E.Asia.
  - 3.1 Issues between them:
    - 3.11 Areas of agreement.
      - both deny the existence of God or the existence of the "soul".
      - both stress community ownership whether by the sangha or by the commune.
      - both seek to "rationalize" differences that exist such as the use of violence.
      - both reject the creation theory and implications of a universal god.
      - both see human initiative as the basis for a better world.
      - both see progress in human history in the long run.
    - 3.12 Areas of disagreement.
      - Buddhism is concerned with inner unity, Marxism with a better external world. Buddhism is anti-materialistic, and believes that man is a slave of his environment.
      - Marxism has taken a strong antireligious stance and has vowed to stamp out all religions including Buddhism.

- Buddhism teaches that "man determines his own destiny" and rejects the Marxist idea of the determination of the state over humans. Buddhism predicts a "liberty" that cannot be granted in a Marxist state. The two also differ in their concept of state.
- Buddhism rejects violence and revolution as a way to achieve its goals, and Marxism espouses them. Buddhism teaches a gradual, evolutionary overpowering of greed, hatred and selfishness and is incompatible with a communist form of totalitarianism that reduces humans to the lowest level of their existence and robs them of human dignity. In this regard Buddhism honors and preserves life versus Marxist contempt for human life individually.
- Buddhism tolerates diversity, Marxism is intolerant of it.
- Buddhism argues that Marxist theory deals with mundane affairs while Buddhism is concerned with more important issues of spiritual satisfaction and liberation from the mundane (U Ba Swe).
- Marxism's antireligious stance has led it to vow to stamp out all religions including Buddhism.
- Buddhism teaches that man determines his own destiny (Karma) and rejects the determination of state over man. Buddhism emphasizes individual personality and responsibility while Marxism sees the individual as a functionary in the social organization for purposes of material productivity.
- Buddhism teaches a gradual human transcendence over greed, hatred and selfishness which conflicts with Marxist assumptions that humans will always act thus.
- Buddhism tolerates many ways while Marxism is often intolerant of other systems.
- the Buddhist concept of the state is opposed to the Marxist concept of the state. Buddhism rejects the use of hatred as a weapon in the political struggle, and stresses the arhat or nonattached one. It seeks to harmonize the needs of different classes and to work towards a leveling of the inequalities among the classes by emphasizing love, kindness, and sympathy for all living things (Benz).

### 3.2 Burmese Buddhist Socialism is Distinct from Marxism - a Special Case.

- Burma supports socialism but opposes Marxist Communist ideology.
- Revitalized resurged Buddhism has been strongest in Burma, more than in other SE Asian countries.
- Burma has organized active resistance of Marxist communism into Burma. "Buddhism is the precise antithesis of materialism... For whereas materialism maintains that the mind is only a by-product of matter, Buddhist philosophy shows beyond dispute that it is the mind which precedes the material formulations and shapes them according to its won nature and tendencies (U Chan Htoon, 16th Congress of the International Society for Religious Freedom, 1958).
- Vijayavardhana says that the "Buddhist bulwark against communism has been weakened at a decisive point." He does not want the younger generation of Burmese to face a choice between the two. He says Buddhism will encounter opposition in countries with theistic religions and capitalistic economic systems. He says Buddhism has no quarrel with communism, and argues that the ideal

of Buddhism as well as that of communism can be attained only when man's nature is raised to a high level. He suggests the following points of contact:

- \* mutuality of relationship consisting of equality of humans and nations; and humanitarian, universalist, intellectualist rationalist nature of both systems; and a pacifistic methodology.
  - \* mutuality in philosophical and moral base consisting of their communal interests, and the noble ideas of humanism.
  - \* common structure of community.
- He tries to point out that they must complement one another.