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ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA.

I

WHILE Indian studies have recently made great advance in various directions, comparatively scant attention has been given to Indian philosophy, especially to the history of its development. No scholars have thus so far come to any definite conclusion as to the lines of progress drawn by the unfoldment of Indian thought; in fact no work has yet come from the Oriental scholars making a general historical survey of the fields of intellectual achievement by the Indians. What we have in this direction is fragmentary and does not extend over the whole ground of Indian philosophy. Our effort therefore should thereafter be concentrated in the systematic treatment of its history in order to see if such could be accomplished for India. This will naturally presuppose a thorough understanding of the Upanishads and the so-called six systems of Indian philosophy, and of the latter I should consider the study of Buddhist thought one of the most important branches of knowledge in India. All impartial critics will agree to this, that not only as a religious system but as a philosophy no Indian schools of thought can claim superiority over Buddhism. Vedanta, meaning the philosophy of the

Upanishads and the Vedantists, can be said to compete with Buddhism as the intellectual production of the Indian mind, but there are some problems of thought in Buddhism which have not been at all touched by Vedanta. And by Buddhism I understand not only the so-called Mahāyāna branch of it but the primitive Buddhism as advocated by the great disciples of Buddha himself. Even in the Hinayāna, its teachings go far deeper than some of the Six Schools. I am not however going to assume any special attitude here towards other systems of thought than Buddhism and pronounce judgment on each of them as to its value as an intellectual attempt to solve the problems of life and the world. The main point is simply to emphasise the significance of Buddhism in the history of Indian thought. For even the adherents of Brahmanism will have to admit the fact that during the period between 400 B. C. and 400 A. D., it was the religion of the Buddha that practically all by itself ruled the Indian minds. Indeed, Buddhism did not cease to be a powerful factor in the moulding of Indian culture, even when other religious teachings grew up strong enough to wrest the honour away from Buddhism. In some sense all the systems of thought were religions to the Indians, and it is difficult to separate religion from philosophy; but there were no philosophical doctrines in India which were so strong as to outweigh Buddhism in their practical importance as moral and religious teachings.

While Buddhism played such a significant rôle in the history of Indian thought and religions, the strange thing was that philosophers of the other Indian schools paid very slight compliments to Buddhism as a subject of study. This is the case even to the present day. Even among Buddhist scholars themselves, the historical side of their religion and philosophy has been more or less neglected. This may be due to the characteristic disregard by the Indians of all forms of history.

But so long as we have taken up the history of Indian Buddhism as the main topic of our study, we cannot remain complacently inactive about this state of affairs.

II

There are facts of great significance by which we are bound to regard the history of Buddhism in India as a thing somewhat apart from its history in China and Japan. The most notable of such facts is that while in Japan and China the Hinayāna school so called of Buddhism had no practical existence except as an object of scholarly interest, this was not the case in India where this school was an actuality, perhaps a threatening actuality to its rival school of Mahāyāna. This distinction between Mahāyāna and Hinayāna in one body of Buddhism, roughly speaking, corresponds to that between the Vibhāsha and the Sautrantika on the one hand and the Yogacarya and the Madhyamika on the other; but in point of fact, when our study goes deeper into the matter, no sharp line of demarcation is found to exist between the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna. When, however, adopting the traditional point of view, we regard the Vibhāsha or Sarvāsthivāda school and the Sautrantika as the Hinayāna branch of Buddhism, we shall have ultimately to take the Sarvāsthivādins as representative of the Hinayāna and regard their philosophical treatises (*Abhidharmas*) and what constitutes the sources of their treatises as belonging to the Hinayāna. Thus in India the Āgamas were considered Hinayāna. If this be the case, that is, the Āgamas were the source of Hinayāna Buddhism, where should we look for those of Mahāyāna? The question demands solution.

And for solution various considerations were made: 1. Against the gathering of the Elders (Sthavira) inside the Cave, that of the Great Council followers (Mahāsaṅghika) outside the Cave, was reported; 2. Along with the compilation

of the Hinayāna sutras at the same place, that of the Mahāyāna texts was thought of having taken place there too; 3. The Mahāyāna texts were collected by Manjusri and Maitreya at Mount Cakravāda. These were not enough, and the result was the ever-increasing production of the Mahāyāna literature. In consequence, the question was now raised as to the genuineness of all these Mahāyāna sutras as personally delivered by the founder of Buddhism.

It goes without saying that the Buddhist Sutras and Vināyas now transmitted in Pali as well as in the Chinese translations of the Āgamas and the Vināya texts are not the records of the Buddha's own direct preachings. In some of these Āgamas, (by which for convenience sake I wish to understand all those Pali texts and the Chinese Āgamas proper and Vināyas,) we may doubtless find some of the Buddha's personal teachings as his disciples learned while he was still on earth, but as all those literary productions are later compilations, many discrepancies and personal notes and errors of memory are sure to have found their way into the texts themselves; besides, each school must have endeavoured to emphasise such points in the Buddha's teachings as to satisfy its special needs. Therefore, if we want to know what was really primitive or original in Buddhism as held by the founder and his immediate circles, a strict scientific textual criticism of the Āgamas will be a necessary preliminary. Along with this, we must have definite knowledge as to the life of the Buddha, the fundamental tenets of his doctrine, and the attitudes and doings of his personal disciples. When all these things are thoroughly investigated, we may be able to construct what was most primitive in Buddhism, and the outcome may not be necessarily identical with the doctrines contained in the Āgamas.

How did such elements as did not originally belong to Buddhism get into the Āgamas? While we cannot deny the

influence on Buddhism of the other Indian systems of thought that have been growing up along with the former, we must admit the development in its own body of many germinal ideas tentatively indicated by the Master himself. When the track of this development is historically inquired into in detail, we shall be able to find the connecting links between the primitive Buddhism and its Hinayānistic representatives. Strictly speaking, the Āgamas are not thus to be considered purely Hinayāna, but at the same time they by no means stand for the primitive Buddhism. When this argument is pushed to its own conclusion, we may say that the Āgamas are not the direct teachings of Buddha just as much as the Mahāyāna texts are not, as insisted on by some critics. The historical study of Buddhism therefore will not be complete until we can definitely separate what is old in the Āgamas from what is not. When this separation is effected, is it possible for us to say that the more ancient elements in the Āgamas are what we understand as Hinayanistic? My answer is not affirmative, for in the Āgamas we can certainly trace such thought as does not constitute Hinayāna Buddhism.

As regard the Mahāyāna scriptures, they are numerous and of various kinds and claim to have recorded the Buddha's own preaching. But as reference is often made in some of the Mahāyāna sutras to other Buddhist sutras, the latter must be regarded as having already existed prior to the former,— which means that they were not all compiled simultaneously. Even from the common sense point of view, nobody will ever think of the possibility of so many different sutras of Mahāyāna Buddhism being compiled all at once in a certain specialised period of history. It will be necessary therefore to have a well-defined principle by which the time of their production and their chronological order may be settled. When were certain Mahāyāna texts known to be in existence? When this all-important question is solved, we can know something

about the time of their production. Works of the noted Buddhist philosophers whose age is more or less definitely known will serve as the guiding post in the chronology of the various Mahāyāna sutras; of course not quite definitely but at least approximately, so that we can say that certain sutras were not compiled any later than the time of such scholars who made use of those sutras in their own writings. For instance, in the works of Nāgārjuna reference is made to such sutras as the *Prajñāpāramitā*, *Pundarikā*, *Gandavyūha*, and *Daśabhūmika*,—this fact points to the earlier existence of these important Mahāyāna books. But as the *Prajñāpāramitā* is not a simple text but a general name comprising in it many divisions and books, we have to be cautious not to make a too sweeping statement about it. Of the many *Prajñāpāramitās* Nāgārjuna gives special prominence to what is known to us as the *Smaller* and the *Larger Prajñāpāramitās*, and other considerations point to the prior production of the *Smaller*. As to the *Pundarikā* it was not probably the same text as we have at present that was made use of by Nāgārjuna. It must have been an older form of it. It is doubtful whether Nāgārjuna was acquainted with the Kegon now in circulation in Japan and China, which contains more books than the *Daśabhūmika* and the *Gandavyūha*.

While we can thus surmise to a certain extent what was the original form of the Mahāyāna texts, we must remember that they are written down in a special style of their own; for there is something characteristic of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the way the tenets are expounded and the events described in these sutras. When these tenets and statements alone are considered quite apart from the Mahāyāna style of the texts, we can construct a general scheme of thought common to all the Mahāyāna sutras, which may fairly be considered the essentials of Mahāyāna Buddhism prior to Nāgārjuna. Let us compare these essentials thus

abstracted with the fundamental ideas of Buddhism known as primitive, and we will find that they are essentially in agreement.

The same thing can be said of the Mahāyāna sutras quoted by the philosophers later than Nāgārjuna and not belonging to his school. These considerations make us bold to declare that Mahāyāna Buddhism is that form of primitive Buddhism whose fundamental ideas were elaborated in a form and style peculiarly known as Mahāyānistic, and therefore that primitive Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism differ only in name and are identical in spirit; this does not of course ignore the history of development which was undergone by the Mahāyāna as is well detected in its peculiar style of exposition or in its characteristically Mahāyānistic way of presenting thought. On the other hand, when the spirit of the Hinayāna school is laid bare, we may find reasons enough to consider it as not strictly belonging to the orthodox branch of development in the history of Buddhism.

Taken all in all, Buddhism recognised as primitive is neither Hinayāna nor Mahāyāna in the strict sense of these terms; it is rather the common source of both branches of Buddhism, though with the strongest proclivity, as far as its spirit goes, towards the main current of the Mahāyāna.

III

The period of primitive Buddhism may be reckoned as between the death of the Buddha as taken place in 485 B.C. and circa A. D. 450. But this was by no means the age of Buddhist solidarity, for even in the life-time of the Buddha there were enough germs in his Brotherhood for future schism; and when the Second Convocation took place about 380 years after the Nirvana, the schism showed itself as the Elders and the Great Council. This process of division went on, and when under Aśoka the Third Convocation took place, there had

already been several branches of Buddhism. The origin of the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is traceable in the formal differentiation of the Elders and the Great Council, both of which, we have good reason to think, had transmitted the Āgamas in a form not yet gone through the sectarian elaboration. These old Agamas, however, since then, suffered more or less modifications.

At the time of the Third Convocation, the Āgamas of the Elders were put in a fixed form. Their attitude from the beginning was conservative, and the preservation of the texts was their chief concern, which they assiduously collected, and whose teachings they endeavoured to practise. The texts were collected, classified, and expounded according to their light. As they were thus chiefly engaged in the codification of the sutras, they had no thought of producing new sutras, their philosophical aspirations were satisfied with writing up commentaries or discursive expositions of the main tenets. What is known as Hīnayānic in the Elders is this part of their activity as writers of commentaries, in which are traceable the Hīnayānistic tendencies of their Buddhism.

Advocates of the Great Council were on the contrary liberal and progressive in their general attitude towards the Sutra literature, they were not welcomed by the Elders ever since the days of the Second Convocation. They were not in fact literal or formal transmitters of the scriptures, they were not inclined to follow or observe literally what was presented in them, they put more emphasis on the spirit of the Master. Their expository writings also evinced this liberalism. Therefore, they produced nothing corresponding to the Abhidharma literature of the Elders. Out of these liberals came the first Mahāyānists. When the elder scholiasts began to write the Abhidharma-pitaka probably in the middle of the second century before Christ, thought to be designated

as Mahāyānistic was stirred among the other Buddhists, and the first period of Mahāyāna literature set in. While it is difficult to prove the existence of Mahāyāna texts before the second century B. C., parts of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* were in all probability already compiled. That the *Smaller Prajñāpāramitā* had been in existence in the first century B. C. is attested by the records of the Chinese Buddhists, in which mention is made of the first Chinese translation of this Mahāyāna text. The production of the *Pundarika*, *Gandavyūha*, *Daśabhūmika*, and other sutras must have taken place after this, but prior to Nāgārjuna.

I hardly think it probable, after a general survey of Buddhist activity down to the beginning of the Christian Era, to trace any Mahāyāna work antecedent to the second century B. C. How shall we then treat the numerous important Mahāyāna sutras now in our possession? This is a weighty question with students of the Mahāyāna. Hitherto, Buddhist historians were not concerned with the investigation of the conditions which made possible the production of the Mahāyāna sutras, for it was taken for granted that they were all directly delivered by the Buddha himself. The historians described how the Elders and the Great Council came to be differentiated in the body of primitive Buddhism, and then jumped, without making any connective statement, to the discussion of the Madhyamika school of Nāgārjuna and Deva as representing a branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which was followed by the Yogacarya school of Āsanga and Vasubandhu, and the controversy between Dharmapala and Bhavaviveka concerning the question of Being and Non-being, and another controversy between Śīlabhadra and Jñānaprabha over the chronological order of the three doctrines of Buddhism. These have so far almost summed up the dogmatic history of Indian Buddhism, and the question of the Mahāyāna sutras was altogether omitted. But the age of general silence

concerning this question is now past, we must go ahead and inquire into the circumstances whereby the Mahāyāna texts were made possible to see the light; for no one of sound judgment will regard them as directly coming from the mouth of the Buddha. Unfortunately, as the text-criticism of these sutras had not yet made any notable progress as to enable us to trace step by step the steady systematic unfolding of the Mahāyāna thought in India, we shall at present have to be satisfied with more or less provisional remarks concerning the various questions touched above.

IV

So far as one can formulate in the present stage of study any theory as regards the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, I would propose to indicate the following line as a most plausible guide to the study of the Mahāyāna.

In the first period of Mahāyānist movement, there is no doubt that Nāgārjuna, Deva, and Rahula were the three chief writers. But as they all claimed the scriptural basis for their systems of thought, it would be necessary to study the sutras themselves in order to see what were the main teachings advocated in them. This can be done as we know what sutras are referred to in the works of these early Mahāyāna philosophers. Besides these, we can find out from the Chinese and Tibetan sources what other sutras had been in existence prior to those writers. When the teachings of the sutras thus singled out of the present Tripitaka are placed side by side with the ideas propounded by the philosophers, we may know what constituted the precedents of the latter and how they historically grew up to be what they are.

The second period opens up with Maitreya, Āsanga and Vasubandhu. Historically Maitreya has been considered a mythical figure created by Āsanga, as the latter makes him

a Bodhisattva abiding in Tusita Heaven, who came on earth with the especial purpose of teaching Āsanga. But as I elsewhere demonstrated the historicity of Maitreya, I should regard him as the real founder of the Yogacarya school of Mahāyāna Buddhism and as the real author of the *Yogācaryabhūmi* and other works. When the teachings of the sutras alluded to in these philosophical works are examined and compared with the philosophers' own ideas, we shall be able to know what were the ruling notions of the second period in the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India.

Mahāyāna Buddhism in its first awakening stage wielded its destructive weapon over all the opposing systems, in which were included the Hinayāna school as well as the so-called six systems of Indian philosophy. The attack must have been severely felt by the opponents, for the latter made it quite a point to advance counter arguments either in their sacred books themselves or in their commentaries. While they tried to refute the Manāyānistic arguments, they were not loathe to make use of them when found convenient. Thus began the period of inter-relationship between Buddhism and other forms of thought. While we are unable to trace any outside influence over the development in the first period of Mahāyāna Buddhism, we cannot make the same statement concerning its second period. Perhaps because it partly grew out of the Hinayāna school affected by other philosophical systems, there are some tendencies in it which are ascribable to influence from outside.

The first period lasted till about 300 A. D. and the second till about 400 A. D. After this comes the third period when the Madhyamika school of the first period and the Yogacarya of the second find each its champion advocates and even engage in controversy. This period seems to have gone over till the middle of the seventh century. The Mahāyāna sutras evidently produced in this period show an

eclectic attitude towards the two rival systems of Mahāyāna, even attempting reconciliation. Generally speaking, the philosophers rather than the sutras formed the main current of thought and unprecedented intellectual and scholarly activity was displayed when Mahāyāna Buddhism must be said to have reached its culmination. Both the Madhyamika and the Yogacarya however followed up the original line of thought as indicated by their founders. As the Hinayāna school was shifted from the original epistemological standpoint of Buddhism into the ontological one, so the later Mahāyāna thinkers almost abandoned the epistemological discussion of the earlier Madhyamika and Yogacarya and were principally concerned with the ontological aspect of the chief issues of the school. And at the same time the intrusion of the outside thought became evident. All this seems to have taken place from the sixth century onward.

The fourth period beginning in the middle of the seventh century is mainly the continuation of the preceding period, with the growth of the mystic Mantra school of Buddhism. To study this period, therefore, it will be necessary to inquire into the sources of the Mantra scriptures and see how their ideas evolved and what form of ritualism was observed. There is a large mixture in this of foreign elements and even of popular superstitions. In India however one finds almost no speculative writings in support of this mysticism, whose ideas are mainly expounded in the sutra literature. The philosophy of Buddhism thus in this period was that of the Madhyamika and that of the Yogācarya. In the beginning, the monastery of Nalanda (那蘭陀) was the headquarters of all these branches of Buddhism, where scholars were assiduously engaged in the study of the various forms of Buddhist philosophy. Towards the middle of the ninth century, mysticism flourished mainly at Vikramasila (毘柯羅摩尸羅寺) and finally grew so powerful as to outrival other schools whose centres were now at

Nalanda and Udandapuri (烏巔頭寺). This meant the death of Buddhism, for it could not stand any longer under the too heavy burden of heterodoxy and superstition. When in 1203 all these centres of Buddhist thought and scholarship were destroyed, Buddhism ceased to exist as religion as far as its form went, though its spiritual and intellectual influence is still felt by the Indians, among whom it had enjoyed a life of 1733 years since the enlightenment of its Master in 530 B. C.

The above is merely an abstract pointing the way in which a history of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India may be outlined. To fill it up with concrete and definite statements will be the work of Japanese Buddhist scholars.

HARUJU UYI