

Conflict within the Development of Buddhism

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In the Buddhism of India, the first organized body of monks and nuns (the saṃgha) was formed following the first sermon delivered by the founder of this religion, Gautama Buddha (ca. 463-383 B.C.), at a place called Migadāya located in the suburbs of Benares. Though its subsequent development appears to have been peaceful, from philological evidence it is apparent that the Buddhist saṃgha did pass through stages of internal disorder and repeated splits. From this it can be surmised that the history of the Indian Buddhist saṃgha was one characterized by frequent schism. In this paper, I wish to examine this matter and see if it is possible to discern a pattern in the ways the established schools reacted to the new ones. This will be done in as broad a form as possible so that this pattern can be seen in its relationship with the development of Japanese Buddhism in general. Attitudes adopted by established schools towards newly formed sects during the earliest stages of Buddhist development in India will be discussed first.

EARLY INDIAN BUDDHISM

In India, although Buddhism was practiced by laymen (both male and female) as well as by monks and nuns, and although the latter could not have existed without the economic support of the former, there is no doubt that those who guided and governed the Buddhist church both spiritually and ideologically were the monks and nuns. Therefore, we will concentrate on the Buddhist saṃgha and the developments that took place within it.

Evidence of internal conflict. Equality, peace, and internal harmony are said to have been distinctive characteristics of the Buddhist saṃgha (Hirakawa 1964, pp. 11-19). Nevertheless, the available evidence makes it clear that even in the earliest

stages of Buddhist development, disharmony existed within the samgha. Thus, the following incident is narrated in the Mahāvagga section of the Pali language Vinaya texts: “The monks (bhikkhu) of Kosambī were divided into two opposing groups over whether the actions of one of the monks violated their rules of discipline. Though living together, neither group would cooperate with the other, and even Buddha’s efforts to dissuade them from their antagonism were in vain. Finally, when the laymen of Kosambī stopped giving alms to the samgha, the monks, recognizing the error of their ways, made up with each other in the presence of Buddha” (Oldenberg 1964, vol. 1, pp. 337-340).

As the next part of this narration goes on to describe in detail the ways of settling such cases of antagonism between monks, one may take it that disputes of this nature were not uncommon within the samgha, regardless of whether the above-quoted incident actually took place. But this example, while serving to illustrate the antagonistic relationships and irrational hostility which existed between the monks of Kosambī, does not seem to show any major division based on doctrine or principle within the Buddhist samgha.

The Devadatta figure. In early Buddhist scriptures, however, one clear example of such a division may be found in accounts of the attacks made by Devadatta against Buddha and his teachings. In some texts this person is described as the younger brother of one of the wives Buddha took prior to attaining enlightenment, while in others he is the younger or elder brother of Ānanda, a faithful disciple of Buddha. As Ānanda was a cousin of Buddha, it may be believed that Devadatta was either his brother-in-law, cousin, or at least a close relative. It is also recorded that he was thirty years younger than Buddha and, as one of his relatives, was ordained by Buddha himself upon entering the monastic community.¹

1. On the kinship relation between Buddha and Devadatta, see Akanuma 1975, pp. 151-156, and Nakamura 1974, p. 402.

From the Vinaya texts it can be understood that the five rules of discipline advocated by Devadatta constituted the principle cause of antagonism between him and Buddha. In the Pali language Vinaya texts this affair is narrated as follows:

Devadatta first discussed ways of creating division within the saṃgha with a group of four of his fellow monks headed by Kokālika. He then started to press Buddha to adopt the five rules of discipline (*pañca vatthūni*) he had compiled knowing that they would be unacceptable. Upon being rejected, Devadatta went to Rājagṛha publicizing this denial by Buddha and explaining his case to the citizens. As he asserted that he was acting in accordance with his five rules, many of the people praised him for his high moral character. Others, however, condemned him for bringing disunity to the peaceful saṃgha. When Ānanda visited Devadatta in Rājagṛha, Devadatta told him of his intention to hold an independent *uposatha* (a meeting of the saṃgha held every fifteen days). Ānanda reported this to Buddha.

On the day of the *uposatha*, Devadatta asked the assembled monks to signify their agreement with the adoption of his five rules of discipline by each taking a *salākā* (a counting stick used in voting). Five hundred monks of the Vajji tribe from Vesālī took the *salākā* and left for Gayāsīsa to follow Devadatta. Acting on the instruction of Buddha, two of the elders, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, went to Gayāsīsa to urge the five hundred monks to return to his group. Unfortunately, one of the monks who remained behind found out about their destination and, believing that the two elders were going to Gayāsīsa in order to join Devadatta, went in tears to inform Buddha of their departure. Buddha then had to inform him of the truth. Devadatta welcomed Sāriputta and Moggallāna warmly and had them take seats of honor. After completing his sermon, Devadatta invited Sāriputta to preach to the assembled monks while he, complaining of a pain in his back, lay down and very soon fell into a deep sleep. Sāriputta then

persuaded the five hundred monks to leave Devadatta, return with him to Buddha, and undergo the formalities necessary for rejoining the saṃgha. Devadatta, becoming aware of this even though still in a deep sleep, vomited hot blood (Oldenberg 1964, vol. 2, pp. 196-201; Taishō no. 1421, p. 164a; no. 1428, p. 594b; no. 1435, p. 24a; no. 1450, p. 202c).

This is a brief outline of the story of Devadatta's antagonism to Buddha as it appears in the Pali texts. But what were these five rules of discipline advocated by Devadatta? In the Pali Vinaya texts they are recorded as follows:

1. Let monks dwell in forests for as long as they live. Those who approach villages and towns will be guilty of a breach of discipline.
2. Let monks eat only food given to them in the form of alms for as long as they live. Those who take pleasure in accepting invitations (into people's homes) will be guilty of a breach of discipline.
3. Let monks dress only in discarded rags for as long as they live. Those who prefer clothes in the manner of people such as householders will be guilty of a breach of discipline.
4. Let the monks live and meditate at the foot of trees for as long as they live. Those who approach any form of enclosed shelter will be guilty of a breach of discipline.
5. Let monks abstain from eating fish for as long as they live. Those who eat fish will be guilty of a breach of discipline (Oldenberg 1964, vol. 3, p. 171; vol. 2, p. 197). These five rules of discipline differ considerably with each Vinaya text (cf. Nakamura 1974, pp. 425-449; Hirakawa 1964, pp. 476-477; Iwamoto 1978, pp. 161-178; Sato 1972, pp. 779-797), though why this variation should exist is difficult to understand. It is of great significance, however, that upon comparison with the four precepts (*cattāro nissāyā*), especially as laid down in the "Shi song lü" (Taishō Tripiṭaka, no. 1435) and the "Si fen lü" (Taishō Tripiṭaka no. 1428) followed by Buddhist monks, the

points at which they differ are in fact very few. This, however, has already been pointed out by a prominent scholar (Hirakawa 1964, pp. 473-479).

These four precepts were taught to a novice upon his application to enter the saṃgha by the Karmakāraka ("preceptor") in order to make him aware of the basic principles by which he would be living. Although they differ with every Vinaya text, the following is the form in which they appear in the Pali edition:

1. To rely on that food which is received in the form of alms
2. To rely on clothing made from discarded rags
3. To rely on the shelter given by trees for sleeping and sitting
4. To rely on medicine decocted from herbs (*pūtimuttabhesajja*) (Oldenberg 1964, vol. 1, pp. 95-96; Taishō no. 1421, p. 120b; no. 1428, p. 815c; no. 1435, p. 156c; no. 1425, p. 413c; no. 1453, p. 458a).

Of these four precepts, it is only the fourth that differs from Devadatta's rules of discipline. The main difference between the four precepts which show what was to be relied upon and the five rules of discipline of Devadatta is that in the former, even though they were strictly enforced, a certain amount of flexibility was made possible by the adoption of "extra allowances" (*atireka-lābha*), whereas with the latter there was no room for any form of deviation whatsoever. The attitude of Buddha himself was that exceptions were to be allowed in special and extreme cases. It was probably disagreement over whether such variations were to be permitted that was the main cause of antagonism between these two leaders (Hirakawa 1964, p. 476). The doctrine of Devadatta was, in this respect, far more ascetic than that of Buddha (Nakamura 1974, pp. 430-435; Hirakawa 1964, p. 476).

As with the preceding example of the monks of Kosambī, the many attempts made by Devadatta to harm Buddha and

split up the saṃgha during Buddha's lifetime are narrated in Buddhist scriptures as actual events. It is impossible, however, to judge if all of these were, in reality, historical facts. According to the detailed research of Professor Hirakawa, even in the oldest part of the Vinaya texts, that is, in the Pāṭimokkha (the name given to a Vinaya text code of precepts for the control of monks, the literal meaning of this term being "individual release"), there are accounts of disunity within the saṃgha. Therefore, this organization was not only in existence before the Pāṭimokkha was compiled, but subversive elements were also being encountered within the saṃgha from time to time (Hirakawa 1960, pp. 419-420; 1964, p. 58). Though most of the accounts of Devadatta's crimes against Buddha and the saṃgha may be regarded as having been composed and included in the Vinaya texts during the course of their compilation,² it is almost certain that they describe actual cases of separatist and antagonistic movements against the authority of the Buddhist saṃgha. Therefore, by making a careful study of these accounts it is possible to establish a definite pattern in the attitudes taken by the established authority towards any new, opposing schools of thought. By using examples which were attributed to Devadatta, I should now like to discuss this pattern.

The pattern of saṃgha reaction. Even though they may not be based on historical fact, the Buddhist records of the five rules of discipline advocated by Devadatta were to form an important part in the accounts of disunity within the saṃgha as contained in the Vinaya texts. Nevertheless, in spite of their serious nature, Devadatta himself is often portrayed in these records as something of a clown. For example, although he broke away from Buddha and left for Gayāsīsa with the five

2. Fa zian (340?-420) witnessed a party following Devadatta's teaching (Taishō no. 2085, p. 861a). Xuan chang (602 or 600-664) also refers to the existence of people who were followers of Devadatta (Taishō no. 2087, p. 928a).

hundred monks who had accepted his five rules of discipline, these monks were easily won back again by a simple trick that Buddha, Sāriputta, and Moggallāna played on Devadatta while he was sleeping. Thus he is given the attributes of a fool, attributes that appear frequently in the Vinaya texts.

As the Chinese version of the Saṃghabheda section of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya* contains some of the most representative stories about Devadatta, I should now like to give some examples from this text:

1. Devadatta was given some knowledge of the supernatural by Shi li jia xie (probably Dasábala kāśyapa; cf. Edgerton 1953, p. 262), but because he became so proud of his new ability he lost it immediately. Therefore, he was never aware of his loss (Taishō no. 1450, p. 168b).
2. When Buddha became ill, Jivaka, a physician, offered him *su* (probably yogurt) to take. Devadatta, mimicking Buddha, took some too. Immediately after eating it, Devadatta developed a terrible stomachache which Buddha, out of pity, cured. But Devadatta told everyone that he had recovered through his own efforts (Taishō no. 1450, p. 174b).
3. In order to receive a donation from Ajātasattu, the king of Magadha, Devadatta decided to make his body golden like Buddha's. To achieve this he hired a goldsmith, but almost died from agony during the operation (Taishō no. 1450, p. 191b).
4. Devadatta told everyone that he wanted to have the symbols of the sacred wheels on the soles of his feet. An artist was summoned who then tried to make the marks with a hot iron (Taishō no. 1450, p. 191c).
5. Devadatta had wagons built from which stones were to be shot at Buddha in an attempt to kill him. The five hundred men that he had lying in wait to do this slipped away from their positions, however, and went to listen to Buddha's teaching. Upon their return they lied to Devadatta, telling

- him that they had killed Buddha, and then fled (Taishō no. 1450, p. 192b; cf. Oldenberg 1964, vol. 2, pp. 193-194).
6. Devadatta tried to violate Yaśodharā, but Gopika found him and threw him in a pond. He was left screaming to himself (Taishō no. 1450, p. 149b; cf. Bagchi 1970, pp. 190-191).
 7. Devadatta approached Buddha with his finger nails smeared with poison in an attempt to kill him. But breaking his nails, Devadatta poisoned himself instead. He died in agony and went straight to the Avīci hell (Taishō no. 1450, p. 150a; cf. Bagchi 1970, pp. 191-192).

The common theme in all these stories, including that of his five rules of discipline, is that Devadatta invariably attempts to approach Buddha (or one of his relatives) with the intention of harming him, but his attacks always fail and result in nothing but suffering and bitter experience for himself. In contrast to the character of Buddha, Devadatta, in these stories, is always exposed to the ridicule of the public and made to look a fool. In this way Buddhist ideology always portrays Devadatta as someone of inferior value. When the position represented by Buddha himself is taken as the main authority in the saṃgha, it is Devadatta who stands for the opposing school of thought and is portrayed as weak and evil.

Devadatta, though completely conversant with Buddha's position, urges him to adopt his five rules of discipline knowing full well that they were unacceptable. In this manner he puts himself in direct confrontation with the policies of Buddha who is taken as representing the main authority of the saṃgha. But Buddha, not wishing to defeat him completely until he is sure that it is impossible for him to attack again, puts up with Devadatta's repeated persecution. Once Devadatta falls, the saṃgha becomes peaceful again and contradictions disappear. So it is possible to say that the saṃgha reveals its own disharmony through the medium of Devadatta and,

having done this, returns once more to a state of tranquility. The character of Devadatta as described in the Vinaya texts is now quite clear. In a word, he is to be regarded as a jester and scapegoat for the Buddhist saṃgha.

According to the Vinaya texts, after Añña-Kondañña was ordained and became the first monk under Buddha at Migadāya, many people from all walks of life were initiated into Buddhism, for example, Yasa, the son of a wealthy man; many brahmins headed by Urvelakassapa; disciples of the skeptic thinker Sañjaya Belaṭṭiputta, who were introduced by Sāriputta and Moggallāna; and others. It has been pointed out that even in the earliest stages of Buddhism, in such a gathering of so many various types of people, there must have been present within the saṃgha unsuitable or undesirable elements that would have attempted to disrupt the harmony of the group as a whole (Nakamura 1974, pp. 360-375).

It is highly probable that human-relationship problems existed within the saṃgha and would often have been the source of unrest and agitation. It would have been up to the main authority, which was Buddha himself while he lived, to decide whether to create unity among the monks either by advocating peace or by punishing those who would not conform. These methods, however, would not be effective for the solution of a complicated contradiction such as was posed by Devadatta's five rules of discipline with their doctrinal and theoretical backing. Such a situation indicates a turning point in the history of the Buddhist saṃgha: the disintegration of one value system and the coming into existence of another.

If Devadatta was indeed a historical figure contemporary with Buddha and if it is really true that he tried to split the saṃgha, it is conceivable that the main body of the saṃgha, led by Buddha, found it necessary to utilize him as a scapegoat, ridding the saṃgha of its contradictions by imputing the insoluble problems of the community to him. But most of the Vinaya text accounts of the evil done by Devadatta use

the name "Devadatta" not as a reference to an actual person but as a symbol for whatever threatens the existence or harmony of the samgha.

JAPANESE BUDDHISM

Kamakura period conditions and the new sects. The same pattern may be seen in the history of Japanese Buddhism. The clearest examples come from the Kamakura period (1185-1333) when a number of new sects sprang up.

The period from the end of Heian up until the beginning of the Kamakura period was one of great social unrest. Firstly, there was the gradual weakening of the authority of the Imperial court and nobility of the Heian period (794-1185), accompanied by a steady buildup in the political and economic strength of the warrior class. The system of government was ready for change. Wars, beginning with the Hōgen rebellion of 1156 and the Heiji rebellion of 1159, occurred in rapid succession, bringing confusion and chaos to the people. Secondly, the frequent occurrence of natural disasters, such as plagues, great fires, and earthquakes, made life in the capital and its environs insecure. The lives led by monks of the established sects were so demoralized that they committed crimes not only against Buddhist disciples but also against ordinary laymen.

Under these conditions, two pessimistic forms of ideology became prevalent. One was that of the transiency of existence (*mujōkan shisō*), the other that based on the theory of the decline and extinction of Buddhism in this world (*mappō shisō*).

It was in the midst of these social and intellectual conditions that a Buddhism of the common people came into being, a Buddhism characterized by its realistic outlook and its freedom from the aristocratic Buddhism that had previously held sway. New sects of this type include, as is well known, the Jōdo sect founded by Hōnen (1133-1212), the Jōdo Shin

sect founded by Shinran (1173-1262), the Jishū sect founded by Ippen (1239-1289), the Nichiren sect founded by Nichiren (1222-1282), the Rinzai Zen sect founded by Eisai (1141-1215), and the Sōtō Zen sect founded by Dōgen (1200-1253).

Hōnen. The most controversial point of Hōnen's teachings was that it was by the invocation of the name of Amitābha Buddha, rather than meditation upon Buddha himself, that a believer was to seek rebirth in Jōdo, the Pure Land. His teachings appealed to the people of those days, and he soon gained many devotees in the Imperial court and among the warrior classes. It is said that even monks who had belonged to established sects were converted to his group. Hōnen frequently suffered, however, terrible persecution at the hands of some of the established sects. Enryakuji temple of Mt. Hiei sent to the Imperial court a letter saying in part:

"The practice of the invocation of Amitābha Buddha's name won a large number of followers among the people of the T'ang dynasty in China [618-907]. After this practice had become widespread, China was subjected to a succession of foreign invasions, wars, and persecution of Buddhism under Wu Zong (840-846). This was a result of the people's belief in Pure Land Buddhism. Following the spread of the repeated invocation of Amitābha Buddha as the sole form of practice in our country, many troubles have occurred here too. Voices invoking Amitābha Buddha are invoking national ruin" (Nichiren 1259).

In this way, the priests of Enryakuji temple requested the Imperial court to prohibit this doctrine and banish the people who practiced it.

The priests of Kōfukuji temple in Nara criticized the doctrine of invocation of Amitābha Buddha, putting forward nine major points in order to have Hōnen and his disciples punished. The basis of their criticism was that his doctrine contained many faults and lacked uniformity. In their letter to the

Imperial court they not only criticized this faith, but also put forward the view that the practice of invocation was an act related to evil spirits.

Because of these complaints Hōnen was exiled to Tosa on the island of Shikoku in 1207. This oppression continued not only throughout Hōnen's lifetime, but also occurred more than ten times following his death. According to Professor Tamura, the main reasons for this oppression were the violation of Buddhist precepts by followers of this way, and the popularity (and allegedly evil consequences) of invoking Amitābha Buddha at six fixed hours of the day and night (Tamura 1976, pp. 57-92).³

Nichiren. Throughout his life Nichiren was to suffer repeated persecution. When he presented his 1260 treatise *Risshō ankoku ron* to Saimyōji Nyūdō, severely criticizing those who devoted themselves to invoking the name of Amitābha Buddha, followers of the Amitābha sect, both priests and laymen, attacked Nichiren in his hermitage at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura. Nichiren narrowly escaped, although injured, when they burnt this hermitage later in 1260. Exiled to Izu in 1261, he returned to his home absolved from punishment, but was to be wounded in an attack by followers of the invocation of Amitābha Buddha led by Tōjō Kagenobu in 1264. In 1271 he was exiled to Sado Island following a complaint by Gyōbin, an advocate of the invocation of Amitābha Buddha. In 1274 he was absolved from his punishment after spending more than two years on the island. Nichiren's life was a series of successive hardships. During his lifetime Japan was not only afflicted by natural disasters such as earthquakes, crop failures, and plagues, but was also threatened by the two Mongolian invasions of 1274 and 1281. The main targets of his criticism, however, were the Zen and Pure Land traditions.

3. An account of Shinran will be omitted from this paper, for, as he was a disciple of Hōnen, his story is almost the same.

What impelled him seems to have been his self-confidence. He said:

“I, Nichiren, am the first and foremost to practice the ideals of the *Lotus sutra* in Japan” (Nichiren 1264).

“Let me serve as a post supporting Japan; let me act as the core of Japan; let me be a great ship bearing the Japanese to safety” (Nichiren 1272).

His spirit of self-sacrifice may be illustrated by the following quotation: “The sufferings of all living beings are those of myself – Nichiren” (Nichiren 1280).

The ideal he followed throughout his life was to bear all sufferings in order to work for the salvation of all living beings. It is this doctrine of self-sacrifice for the benefit of all living beings that distinguishes his teachings from the fundamental ideals advocated by Hōnen and his followers. His sect, however, like Hōnen’s, suffered persecution at the hands of some of the established Buddhist sects of that period (Tsuji 1970, pp. 372-373).

Eisai. Persecution of the Rinzai Zen sect, founded by Eisai, was first advocated by priests of Enryakuji temple. According to the *Gengōshakusho*, a person by the name of Ryōben from Hakosaki in Hakata, being envious of Eisai’s fame, laid a complaint before the Imperial court in 1194 and so incited the priests of Enryakuji temple. Eisai was duly summoned for interrogation the following year. He claimed that there was a close affinity between Zen and the ideals of Saichō (767-822), founder of the Tendai sect, further maintaining that if the doctrines of his sect were judged objectionable, the Zen tradition too would have to be judged objectionable (Kokan-shiren 1321). About this time, a typhoon swept over the provinces around Kyoto, and a song (which may or may not have originated with the established sects) had it that the winds were caused by the billowing sleeves of Eisai’s disciples. The song apparently caused an uproar among the citizens of

Kyoto. It is reported that when this news reached the Imperial court (1205), Eisai and his disciples narrowly escaped immediate banishment from the capital (Kokanshiren 1321). Eisai listed the criticisms that had been leveled against him by Enryakuji temple and rebutted them in his treatise *Kōzen gokoku ron* (Taga 1974, pp. 99-109).

The Enryakuji temple pattern of reaction. Many of these founders of the sects that appeared in the Kamakura period had, at some stage, studied at Enryakuji temple and later, for some reason, left it. Hōnen, Shinran, Eisai, Nichiren, and Dōgen were among those who had done so. Thus, though they struck off on their own, they must all have been considerably influenced by the teachings handed down at this temple.

It is highly interesting, therefore, that with the exception of a handful of critical established sects, nearly all the objections directed at them came from Enryakuji temple. Its criticisms, that is to say, bear all the marks of deliberate attacks aimed at former colleagues who, having gone their own ways, were now regarded as heretics.

In support of this view, one may mention, first, the internal secularization of Enryakuji temple, the corruption and academic decline that took place there. During this period, Mt. Hiei was dominated by armed bands of warrior-monks, and things were already out of control. The leadership of the temple was so caught up in the bitter and complex struggle between followers of Ennin (794-864) and Enchin (814-891) that little time remained for academic pursuits.

In diverting people's attention from the internal struggles at Mt. Hiei as well as from the previously mentioned rebellions, insurrections, and general social unrest, and in throwing the blame for these problems somewhere else, Hōnen, Nichiren, Eisai, and the others seem to have played a scapegoat role of major importance.

The fact, moreover, that Hōnen and his followers were per-

secuted by state authorities at the instigation of Enryakuji and Kōfukuji temples suggests to Professor Tamura that the older sects, the ones that taught enlightenment through self-endeavor and were closely tied to state power, were terrified by this growing movement for enlightenment through invocation that found its supporters among the lower class people who had long been oppressed by the state. He sees the Amitābha-invocation movement as playing a critical role in the internal collapse of the old system of state government (Tamura 1976, pp. 85-87).

In addition, a reading of Enryakuji and Kōfukuji documents shows that the priests of both temples held that the Amitābha-invocation Buddhism of Hōnen and his followers not only jeopardized the existence of the established sects but also gave rise to the disturbances in society at large. Such assertions, however, may be taken as evidence of the internal inconsistency and corruption into which the established Buddhism of that day, keeping pace with the collapse of state government, had fallen. They make it abundantly clear that the efforts of the established sects to put the new movement in such a bad light that Hōnen and his followers would be exiled were intended to eliminate contradictions and restore the former state of affairs. The same pattern seems to obtain in the case of Eisai. Nichiren differs from the rest in that he, of his own accord, played himself up as a sacrificial victim.

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1435 *Shi song lü* 十誦律
1450 *Gen ben shuo yi gie you bu pi nai ye po seng shi*
根本說一切有部毘奈耶破僧事
1453 *Gen ben shuo yi gie you bu bo yi jie mo*
根本說一切有部百一羯磨
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