



Review Article

BUDDHIST COUNCILS (SANGITI) AND ITS LITERATURE: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

There are two main philosophical sciences in India; atheistic (Charavka, Jain and Bauddha) and theist (*Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaishehika, Purva mimansa* and *Uttar mimansa*). In India, abundant literatures of philosophical sciences are available except Buddhist literature and the reasons are unknown. Buddhist literatures were in Pali language which was a dialect of ancient India and to preserve the invaluable teaching of the Buddha, till dated six Councils (*Shangiti*) were convened out of which three councils were assembled in ancient India. It is said that the knowledge of history of Indian culture is incomplete without the knowledge of Pali literature. Ayurveda is a *Darshanshashtra* (Philosophy) as well as clinical science having the goal of *Moksha*. Every *Darshanshashtra* has its goal to achieve the *Moksha*. *Aastika* and *Nastika darshanshashtras* have their influence on Ayurveda. The purpose of this paper is to know about the Buddhist councils along with at least appellations of the Buddhist literature.

KEYWORDS: Buddhist, Ayurveda, *Darshan*, Councils (*Shangati*), Atharva Veda.

INTRODUCTION

The science of Ayurveda and its basic concepts are based upon the Indian fundamental sciences which are called *Darshan* (a system of philosophy).^[1] Six historical *Dhamma* councils or *Dhamma-shangitis* were organized to a mass and preserve the words of the Buddha. There are two important aspects of the *Dhamma* the theoretical, known as *Pariyatti*; and the practical, applied aspect which is called *Patipatti*. These councils were organized to preserve the *Pariyatti*, or theoretical, aspect of the *Dhamma* in its pristine purity. The councils were necessary to safeguard and accurately preserve the teachings because the words of the Buddha were not committed to writing until the fourth councils, more than 500 years after the Buddha's Mahaparinibbana.^[2]

Historical background

The Buddha suggested two methods to keep the pure *Dhamma* long lived. First, the *Dhamma-vacana* (words of the Buddha) should be preserved in their original form in a well-organized manner. Second, his devoted followers should assemble in concord and collectively recite the *Dhamma*, which the enlightened one had taught through self-realization. After the *Mahaparinibbana* of the Buddha, his five hundred chief disciples assembled under the aegis of Ven. *Maha kassapa*. The entire body of his teaching was divided into three *Pitakas*

(lit.baskets); the *Vinaya pitaka* (the monastic discipline), *Shutta pitaka* (the popular discourses), and *Abhidhamma pitaka* (a compendium of profound teachings elucidating the functioning and interrelationships of mind, mental factors, matter and the phenomenon transcending all these).^[3]

The tradition continued of organizing the historical *Dhamma* Councils, the last of which, the *Chattha-shangayana* (Sixth *Dhamma* Council), took place in Myanmar (Burma) in 1954-56 A.D., while simultaneously the healthy tradition of memorizing the words of the Buddha was also maintained. Just as the Buddha is a historical person rather than a mythical figure, similarly, the *Dhamma-vacana* are composed of his own statements of experience or those of his disciples and not merely flights of imagination of a poet. The neighbouring countries of India have very conscientiously safeguarded this valuable treasure and, therefore not only India, but all of humanity is grateful to them.^[4]

Necessity of the study

There are so many references in Buddhist literature related to Ayurveda. For example, Human anatomical parts have been detailed described in *Visuddhimaggo*, like kidney, heart, *Pitta*, hairs, skin, liver, spleen, brain, lungs, intestines, and stomach etc.

Pitta

Pittanti dve pittani baddhapittanca abaddhapittanca| tattha baddhapittam vannato bahalamadhukatelavannam| abaddhapittam milataakulipupphavannam| santhanato ubhayampi okasasanthanam| disato baddhapittam uparimaya disaya jatam, itaram dvisu disasu jatam| okasato abaddhapittam thapetva kesalomadantanakhanam mamsavinimuttatthananceva thaddhasukkhacam manca udakamiva telabindu avasesasariram byapetva thitam, yamhi kupite akkhini pitakani honti, bhamanti, gattam kampati, kanduyati| baddhapittam hadayapapphasanam antare yakanamamsam nissaya patitthite mahakosatakikosakasadise pittakosake thitam, yamhi kupite satta ummattaka honti, vipallathacitta hirottappam chaddetva akatabbam karonti, abhasitabbam bhasanti, acintitabbam cintenti| paricchedato pittabhagena paricchinnam, ayamassa sabhagaparicchedo| visabhagaparicchedo pana kesasadisoeyeva. [5]

Bile

There are two kinds of bile: local bile and free bile herein as to colour, the local bile is the colour of thick madhuka oil' the free bile is the colour of faded akuli flowers. As to shape, both are the shape of their location. As to direction, the local bile belongs to the upper direction; the other belongs to both directions. As to location, the free bile spreads, like a drop of oil in water, all over the body except for the fleshless parts of the head hair, body hair, teeth, nails and the hard dry skin. When it is disturbed, the eyes become yellow and twitch, and there is shivering and itching of the body. The local bile is situated near the flesh of the liver between the heart and the lungs. It is to be found in the bile container (gall bladder), which is like a large kosataki (loofah) gourd pip. When it is disturbed, beings go crazy and demented, they throw off conscience and shame and does the undoable, speak the unspeakable, and think the unthinkable. As to delimitation, it is bounded by what appertains to bile. [6]

Description of heart is as follows

Hadayanti hadayamamsam| tam vannato rattapadumapattapitthivannam| santhanato bahirapattani apanetva adhomukham thapitapadumamakulasanthanam| bahi mattham, anto kosatakiphallassa abbhantarasadisam| pannavantanam thokam vikasitam, mandapannanam makuḷitameva| anto cassa punnagatthipattitthanamatto avatako hoti, yattha addhapasatamattam lohitam santhati, yam nissaya manodhatu ca manovinnanadhatu ca vattani| tam panetam ragacaritassa rattam hoti, dosacaritassa kaḷakam, mohacaritassa mamsadhovanauda kasadisam, vitakkacaritassa kullatthayusavannam,

pannacaritassa accham vippasannam anavilam pandaram parisuddham niddhotajatimani viya jutimantam khayati| disato uparimaya disaya jatam| okasato sarirabbhantare dvinnam thnanam majjhe patitthitam| paricchedato hadayam hadayabhagena paricchinnam, ayamassa sabhagaparicchedo| visabhagaparicchedo pana kesasadisoeyeva. [7]

Heart

This is the heart flesh. As to colour, it is the colour of the back of a red-lotus petal. As to shape, it is the shape of a lotus bud with the outer petals removed and turned upside down; it is smooth outside, and inside it is like the interior of a kosataki (loofah gourd). In those who possess understanding it is a little expanded; in those without understanding it is still only a bud. Inside it there is a hollow as the size of a Punnaga seed's bed where half a *Prasata* measure of blood is consciousness element occurs. [8]

In *Triptik, Vinayapitaka* has a chapter called *Bhaisajya Skandhak*, in which the drug and its means of making, *Swedan* and surgery are described in detail.

Many scholars are of opinion that the *Samkhya* and the *Yoga* represent the earliest systematic speculations of India. It is also suggested that Buddhism drew much of its inspiration from them; it may be that there is some truth in such a view, but the systematic *Samkhya* and *Yoga* treatises as we have them had decidedly been written after Buddhism. Moreover it is well-known to every student of Hindu philosophy that a conflict with the Buddhists has largely stimulated philosophic enquiry in most of the systems of Hindu thought. Knowledge of Buddhism is therefore indispensable for a right understanding of the different systems in their mutual relation and opposition to bhuddhism. [9]

Regarding the background of the Indian philosophical sciences, it is said that 'With regard to the relation of Buddhism to the six orthodox systems it seems to me that all we can honestly say is that schools of philosophy handlings down doctrines very similar to those of our six classical or orthodox systems are presupposed by the Buddhist Sutras. [10]

The knowledge of history of Indian culture is incomplete without the knowledge of Pali literature.' The Buddhist Pali canon and its commentaries, as well as a number of extra-canonical texts, are a rich source of information on subjects related to the development of the classical system of Indian medicine. The systematic study and exploitation of this body of texts is therefore of great importance. Surprisingly this field of study has been neglected by both Indian and Western scholars for a long time. In tracing the history of Ayurveda, we have not taken proper advantage of the various materials lying in the

Buddhist literature. Many medical historians have never mentioned this treasure house. The period extending from the birth of Lord Buddha (624 b.c.) up to the origin of Christian era, can be considered as the 'dark age of Ayurveda', during this period, no work worth-mentioning has been composed. The historians consider that the recorded Indian history starts from the days of Buddha. The Indian and Western medical historians have neglected the study of Buddhist literature due to various reasons. [11]

Objectives:

- To know about the Buddhist Councils (shangiti)
- To know the Buddhist literature: an overview.

Buddhist Council's (Shangiti) [12]

The First Dhamma Council

The first Dhamma Council was organized at Rajagaha (Rajgir) under the patronage of king ajatasattu (544 bh.ch.). All words (teachings) of the Buddha were collected for the first time in this council and Ven. Mahakassapa theras presided over the council. Ven. Upali recited the Vinaya and Ven. Ananda recited the Dhamma. Five hundred fully enlightened, Arahant-monks participated and the council continued for seven months. In this way, the first collection of the Vinaya and Dhamma took place.

The Second Dhamma

This Council was convened 100 years after the first one at Valukarama in Vesali under the patronage of King Kalasoka. Total seven hundred monks were participated and Ve. Revata Thera presided. A major disagreement related to the Vinaya rules had arisen and the council was convened specifically to settle it. The words of the Buddha were again recited and approved by all the participants.

The third Dhamma Council

It was convened in 326 b.c. at Asokarama at Pataliputta (Patna) under the patronage of King Dhammasoka (known as king Asoka). It was presided over by Thera Moggaliputtatissa and 1,000 monks well-versed in Buddha-vacana (Buddha's teachings) participated for nine months. There Moggaliputta Tissa condemned certain heretical views, established the pure Dhamma and compiled a text called Kathavatthu, which came to be accepted as an integral part of the Abhidhammapitaka. After this council, King Asoka sent nine missions of Dhamma dutas (Dhamma messengers) to far off countries for the propagation of Dhamma.

The Fourth Dhamma Council

It was convened in Sri Lanka in 29 B.C. during the reign of King Vattagamini. It was presided over by Mahathera Rakkahita and 500 monks participated. The entire Tipitaka was recited and committed to writing for the first time.

The Fifth Dhamma Council

It took place at Mandalay, in Myanmar in 1871 A.D. under the patronage of the King Min Don Min. It was presided over respectively by Maha Thera Jhagarabhivamsa, Maha Thera Narindabhidhaja, and Maha Thera Sera Sumangala Sami. Two thousand four hundred monks participated in it. The recitation and the inscription of the Tipitaka onto marble slabs continued for five months.

The Sixth council

This was convened in May, 1954 at Yangon (Rangoon) in Myanmar. Two thousand five hundred learned monks from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Kampuchea, India, etc., took part in it. The Tipitaka and its allied literatures were again examined and their authentic version printed in the Burmese scripts. The work of the council was completed on the full moon day of Vesakha, the auspicious occasion of the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha's Mahaparinibbana. These six historical councils-the first three in India, the fourth in Sri Lanka, and the fifth and sixth in Myanmar-served the invaluable purpose of helping to maintain the purity of the teaching, which continues to survive and flourish even today.

Printed publications of the Palitipitaka and Atthakatha are available in various scripts, such as Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, Khampuchean, Roman, etc., the Tipitaka and some volumes of the Atthakatha were published for the first time in Devanagari in the middle of the twentieth century by Navanalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda, in India. But the entire collection of Atthakatha and Tika are not available in Devanagari Script.

Buddhist literature [13]

The division of the Tipitaka according to the Chatha-shangayana (Sixth council) is as follows:

i. Tipitaka

a. Vinaya-pitaka

1. Parajika
2. Pacittiya
3. Mahavagga
4. Chulavagga
5. Parivara

b. Sutta-pitaka

1. Digha-nikaya
2. Majjhima-nikaya
3. Samyutta-nikaya
4. Anguttara-nikaya
5. Khuddaka-nikaya

The books under the *Khuddaka-nikaya* are: *Khuddakapatha*, *Dhammapada*, *Udana*, *Itivuttaka*,

Shuttanipata, Vimanavatthu, Petavatthu, theragatha, therigatha, Apadana, Buddhavamsa, Chariyapitaka, Jataka, Mahanidessa, Chulanidessa, Phatisambhidamagga, Nettippakarana, Phetakopadesa and Milindapanha.

c. Abhidhamma-pitaka

1. Dhammasangani
2. Vibhanga
3. Dhatukaha
4. Puggalapannatt
5. Kathavatthu
6. Yamaka
7. Patthana

ii. Atthakatha literature

a. Vinaya-phitaka-atthakatha (shamanatapasadika)

1. Parajika-atthakatha
2. Pacittiya - atthakatha
3. Mahavagga-atthakatha
4. Chulavagga-atthakatha
5. Parivara-atthakatha
6. Patimokkha-atthakatha (kankhavitarani)

b. Sutta-pitaka-atthakatha

1. Digha-nikaya-atthakatha (shumangalavilasini)
2. Majjhima-nikaya-atthakatha (papancasudani)
3. Samyutta-nikaya-atthakatha (sharathhappakasini)
4. Anguttara-nikaya-atthakatha (manorathapurani)

The commentaries on the Khuddaka-nikaya are as follows:

1. Khuddakapatha-atthakatha (paramatthajotika)
2. Dhammapada-atthakatha
3. Udana-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
4. Itivuttaka-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
5. Suttanipata-atthakatha (paramatthajotika)
6. Vimanavatthu-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
7. Petavatthu-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
8. Theragatha-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
9. Therigatha-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
10. Apadana-atthakatha (visuddhajanavilasini)
11. Buddhavamsa-atthakatha (madhuratthavilasini)
12. Chariyapitaka-atthakatha (paramatthadipani)
13. Jataka-atthakatha
14. Mahanidessa-atthakatha (shaddhammappajotika)
15. Chulanidessa-aatthakatha (shaddhammappajotika)
16. Patisambhidamagga-atthakatha (shaddhammappakasini)

17. Nettippakarana-atthakatha

18. Petakopadesa-atthakatha

19. Milindapanha-atthakatha

c. Abhidhamma-Pitaka-atthakatha

1. Dhammasangani-atthakatha (Atthasalini)
2. Vibhanga-atthakatha (Shammohavinodani)
3. Pancappakarana-atthakatha (Atthakatha on dhatukatha, Uggalapannatti, Khathavatthu, Yamaka and Pattahana).

iii. Tika literature

a. Vinaya-phitaka-tika

1. Vajirabuddhi-tika
2. Saratthadipani-tika
3. Vimativinodani-tika
4. Vinayalankara-tika
5. Kankhavitarani-phurana-tika
6. Kankhavitarani-abhinava-tika

b. Sutta-phitaka-tika

1. Digha-nikaya-tika (linatthappakasana)
2. Digha-nikaya-tika-shilakkahandhavagga-abhinava-tika (shadhuvilasini)
3. Majjhima-nikaya-tika (linatthappakasana)
4. Samyutta-nikaya-tika (linatthappakasana)
5. Anguttara-nikaya-tika (sharaththamanjusa)
6. Nettippakarana-tika (linatthavannana)
7. Nettivibhavini-tika

c. Abhidhamma-phitaka-tika

1. Dhammasangani-mula-tika
2. Dhammasangani-anu-tika
3. Vibhanga-mula-tika
4. Vibhanga-anu-tika
5. Pancappakarana-mula-tika
6. Pancappakarana-anu-tika

Discussion

Buddhist literature is very much important to know ancient India in historical, philosophical, religious, linguistic aspects. The basic principles of traditional systems of Indian medicines are dependent on the philosophical sciences such as Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshik, Purva Miamansa, Uttar Mimansa, Charvaka, Jain and Bauddha. It is also important to know their mutual influence and relevance in view of the modern era. Buddhist literature is in Pali language which is also known as Magadhi and Jain literature is in Ardha Magadhi language.

Dr. G. J. Meulenbeld said the Buddhist Pali canon and its commentaries, as well as a number of extra-canonical texts, are a rich source of information on subjects related to the development of the classical system of Indian medicine. The systematic

study and exploitation of this body of texts is therefore of great importance. The Buddhist literature is found to be a store-house of many extinct and alluded Ayurvedic principles. This has been an untapped source of information hitherto.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

It is the need of time to do critical evaluation of Buddhist literature which is neglected since long and also necessary to know the Pali language then only we will be in a position to understand Buddhist literature in its true sense.

The influence of the Buddha's contribution is not confined to Indian thought; the deep impact of his teaching is also visible in the spiritual thought and literature of the rest of the world. Therefore, the Buddha's teachings have a special significance for the human race even today.

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