HĪNAYĀNA AND MAHĀYĀNA

A BROAD OUTLINE

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About a century after Buddha’s Mahāparinirvāṇa, dissension arose among the monks regarding his actual words and their interpretation. This controversy led to the origin and growth of more than eighteen schools of thought, all claiming to have preserved Buddha’s teachings. They took up the cause of Buddhism with great zeal and endeavoured hard to popularise it in the territo ries in and outside India. ExCouze observes, “The first five centuries of Buddhist history saw the development of a number of schools, or sects, which are traditionally counted as eighteen. The historical traditions about them are uncertain, contradictory, and confused.” Andrè Bareau has, however, discussed chronologically the origin of these different schools. Lamotte has also dealt with the geographical distribution of the different schools on the basis of the inscriptions.

The first dissension was created by the monks of Vaśaṅgi through their breach of the rules of discipline as laid down in the Vinaya-piṭaka. The Cullavagga and the Čeylonese chronicles record that the Second Buddhist Council was held at Vaśaṅgi just a century after the passing away of Buddha to examine the validity of the ten practices (dana vattiṃ) indulged in by the Vajjī monks. The works of Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinidatta, extant in Tibetan and Chinese translations provide us with a quite different account. According to them the Council is said to have been convened, because of the differences of opinion among the monks in regard to the five dogmas propounded by Mahādeva a man of great learning and wisdom.

Traditions differ in regard to the cause of convening of the Second Council. But all the accounts record unanimously that a schism occurred about a century after the Mahāparinirvāṇa of Buddha, due to the efforts of a few monks for a relaxation of the vigour of conduct current at the time; the orthodox monks were not ready to allow that. The orthodox points of view prevailed and the monks opposed to them were expelled from the Sangha. They were not, however, disappointed. They gained strength gradually and convened shortly another Council in which ten thousands monks participated. In the history of Buddhism it is known as Mahāsanghika (Great Council). The monks who joined the Council later on were called the Mallasāghikas, while the orthodox monks were distinguished as the Theravādins. Thus occurred the first schism which divided the early-Buddhist Sarvāgha into
two primitive schools - the Theravada and the Mahayana. Under the guidance of this Council such schools have been formed. But it is not only that the schism was followed by a series of schisms, and in course of time several sub-sects branched off from these two sects. The Theravada was split up into ten sub-sects and the Mahayana into seven. These sects were in turn divided into sub-sects, and further division continued to take place. But these different sects could not maintain their individual existences for long. Most of them either disappeared or merged with other sects shortly after their origin, only four schools survived. The four schools that could outline and expand their own field of influence were the Vaibhashika, Samkhya, Maitrayanika and Yogacara. In course of time these four schools, however, coalesced together gradually and four philosophical views were formulated into two schools - Pali and Mahayana.

Buddhism today has two main sets well-known as Hinayana and Mahayana. The former prevails in Ceylon, Srilanka, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand (Siem), Cambodia and other countries. The latter is Tibet, Nepal, China, Japan, and others. The epistle of the Hinayana has been given to the Theravada Buddhism by the Mahayana. The Theravada never call themselves Hinayana. Asanga's Sulatalettera mentions the points of difference between the Hinayana and Mahayana and indicates that it attempts to show the inferiority of the Hinayanas an essential calibre and their workness to comprehend the truth.

The Pali canon (Cuttaka) forms the base of the Hinayana while Mahayana has such three-fold division of the canon. Of the numerous Mahayana works, nine books 'so-called Nine Dharmas', which are held in great reverence are the most important works of the Mahayana school, as they trace the origin and development of Mahayana as also point out its fundamental teachings.

The ideal of Mahayana is Buddhahood while that of Hinayana is Arhatship. The Hinayanaists want their own Nibbana first as they do not care for others, while the Mahayanaists do not care for their own Nibbana - they strive hard for the emancipation of all beings. Their principal objective is to make beings attain Nibbana in life. Mahayana has further inaugurated the concept of Bodhisattva which is its another ethical ideal. Bodhisattva means a being who is on the way to Buddhahood (enlightenment) but has not yet obtained it. In order to remove the sufferings of the world a Bodhisattva desires that he should stay as long as the sky and the world exist. He further declares that he will alone experience all the worldly miseries and, let all the beings of the world enjoy happiness owing to the meritorious deeds done by him as a Bodhisattva.

With the development of Bodhisattva (thought of enlightenment) the practice of the six paramitas, the fulfillment of which is the path by which the Bodhisattva is enjoined upon. As the Bodhisattva practices the paramitas, his mind rises higher and higher in path of spiritual progress and ultimately becomes a Buddha. The Hinayana also recognizes stages of the attainment of true knowledge. But the two schools differ in their conception of the highest truth. According to the Hinayana it is the path of the Buddha (non-existence of soul) while according to the Mahayana it is both Nibbana and the path of the Buddha (non-existence of soul as also of all things of the world. The two schools differ in their conception of the highest truth. According to the Hinayana it is the path of the Buddha (non-existence of soul) while according to the Mahayana it is both Nibbana and the path of the Buddha (non-existence of soul as also of all things of the world. Another distinguishing feature of Mahayana is its conception of the human body. Each Buddha has three bodies: (i) Nirmanakaya, (ii) Samkhyaakaya and (iii) Dharmakaya. Nirmanakaya is the subtle body of the Buddha. Samkhyaakaya is the subtle body of the Buddha. Shakyamuni is the human body of the Buddha. Shakyamuni is the human body of the Buddha.
Buddha, Dhammakāya is the body made pure by the practice of the Boddhisattvās and other dharmāt that make a Buddha. It is not a body at all in it is simply the "folds", ākhyātā. It can be equated with atihātā, atiṣāgrahāga and dhammādāna.

According to the Hinayāna the world is in a state of flux but is not uncreated. But the Mahāyāna maintains the flux and reality are two contradictory terms and therefore the world is the creation of the mind. In M. Vīpasīyāhaṃ Buddha Vamanadāna has like wise pointedly shown the advocates of Hinayāna labour under misconceptions, complete eradication of which is the main object of those of the Mahāyāna.

Mahāyāna further lays emphasis on the practice of the four Brahmavihāras, viz., maitri (friendliness), Karuna (compassion), mudgā (sympathetic joy) and upekkhā (equanimity). Through their practice one attains purity of heart, and it is these Brahmavihāras which made Buddhism also very popular.

Lastly, Mahāyāna is metaphysical and speculative while in Hinayāna there is no such ground for speculation. Both the sects, however, agree in the fundamentals of Buddhism, viz., the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the non-existence of the soul, the gradual stages of the spiritual advancement and the doctrine of Karma. The two are closely related to each other, hence the study of one entails the study of the other.

REFERENCES
1. Edward Conze, Buddhist Thought in India, p. 179.
3. Historic du Buddhisme indien, p. 578
4. "They are":

(i) Singhālakṣaṇa - the practice of carrying gold in a horn, i.e., storing articles of food.
(ii) Dhānḍālakṣaṇa - the practice of taking meals when the shadows are two fingers broad, i.e., taking meals after midday.
(iii) Cāntavatāhāra - the practice of going to an adjacent village and taking meals for the second time.
(iv) A-sāthā - the observance of the Upaniṣad ceremonies in various places in the same year.
(v) Alambatā - doing deeds and obtaining its sanction after wards.
(vi) A-mulākhā - the customary practice as precedent.
(vii) A-mulākhā - drinking of bitter water after meals.
(viii) Jāpiṣṭham - breaking of today.
(ix) Aśākṣukā - use of a rag without a fringe.
(x) Cāntavatāhāra - accumulation of gold and silver.

5.

(i) An Arhat may commit a sin under unconscious temptation.
(ii) On may be an Arhat and not know, i.e.,
(iii) An Arhat may have doubt on matters of doctrine.
(iv) One cannot attain Arhatship without the aid of a teacher.
(v) The noble ways may begin by a shoot, that is, one meditating seriously in meditation may make such an exclamation as "How and! How sad!" and by so doing make progress towards perfection - the path is attained by an eradication of intoxication.

6.

Amarāya sāhityapūraṃ sarasa jātakāh-ūśhā
tasamāna ca cṛḍitāyā ākaṃ dharmā-śuddham
Yātikāgā jātakā dharmā-śuddham sarasa jātakāh-ūśhā
Buddhasiṣevabhūr jātakāh sarasa jātakāh-ūśhā kalpa

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