



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF)

VOLUME - 14 | ISSUE - 11 | AUGUST - 2025



GROWTH OF THERAVAD BUDDHIST SECTS IN MYANMAR

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ABSTRACT:

This article mainly focuses on the concept of Theravada Buddhist monastic, growth with new sects in Myanmar, and started their learning at monastic education under the management of Buddhist monks. Buddhism in ancient India has been studied well both by our countrymen as well as by the foreigners from various points of view. Buddhism has given a rich cultural heritage to India as it was its birth place despite the fact that it is no longer a popular and living religious tradition as it is in the case of the countries like China, Japan, Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Sri Lanka etc., After the buddha passed away in Buddhist Council come out come out



separate and different Nikāyas. In Myanmar different Nikāyas were formed from 12th century to 1980s and because of strict and definite rules and regulations laid down by Ministry of Religious Affairs led by both monks and layman, at the present time, any new Buddhist Nikāyas are not allowed to run separately. The main study of aim and objective of this topic is to become more development than that of Buddhist new Nikāyas in Myanmar

KEYWORDS: New Nikāya, Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana.

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Myanmar (Burma) is full of religious beliefs, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Supernaturalism, Spirit worship, etc. like other country. However, other followers are less in number than who trust in Buddhism. Strictly speaking, it can, however, be said that the country is one of the countries in which *Theravāda* Buddhism is found and strongly rooted because in total, ninety percent people believe in Buddhism and follow the teachings of the Buddha. Buddhism also had been up and down in the history of this country. Regarding to the doctrines of the Buddha, Buddhism was at the top depending on Kings and States in Myanmar. Kings and States give supports to this religion and deserved one among learned-monks was elected by the Kings to be appointed Supreme Patriarch of *Saṅgha* in the history of this country. Being appointed Supreme Patriarch without rules and regulations, it causes to come out separate and different *Nikāyas* or sect at that time. Different *Nikāyas* were formed in the

history of the country from 12th century to 1980s and because of strict and definite rules and regulations laid down by Ministry of Religious Affairs led by both monks and layman, at the present time, any new Buddhist *Nikāyas* are not allowed to run separately.

DEMISSION OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM

The *Dhamma* or teachings were preached by the Buddha for the benefit and happiness of gods and men for forty-five years till the *Mahāparinibbāna*. After a very successful ministry of forty-five years, the Buddha, as very ordinary human being, could not succumb to the inexorable law of change and finally passed away in his eighty years, exhorting his disciples to regard his doctrines, which were preached for forty-five years, as their teacher. Nevertheless, the teachings of the Buddha were not in systematical and order at that time. It appears that even during the time of the Buddha, there were people who did not accept his authority. His cousin, *Devadatta*, out of jealousy on the Buddha connived with King *Ajātasattu* to get his authority and made several attempts to assassinate the Buddha. To create division in Buddhist *Saṅghā* or monks, attempts were made by demanding strict conditions of life for Buddhist monks, such as living throughout the year under the trees in the forest, abstaining from meat and fish and refusing all invitations to alms-food and robe from faithful devoted followers. There were also monks like *Upananda*, *Channa*, *Mettiya-Bhummajaka* or *Chabbaggiya*¹ who would take the earliest opportunity to transgress the *Vinaya* rules. There is besides tendency among some people to oppose a rule simply because a rule has been laid down. Some like to live a life of ease and comfort and consequently all restriction on individual freedom are looked at askance. For example, *Subhadda*, on hearing of the death of the Buddha, gave a sigh of relief saying that Buddha would now no longer have to admonish by "do this, do not do that".² The senior monks including *Mahākassapa*, after the *Mahāparinibbāna*, managed the teachings of the Buddha to be systematic and order by having held the first Buddhist Council. Within hundred years from the First Buddhist Council, which was held for seven months and supported by King *Ajātasattu* at *Rājagaha*, any Buddhist sects could not be found out at the *Majjhimadesa* (Modern India) where Buddhism was born and rooted. There was, however, disagreement among monks about *Vinaya* rules before Second Buddhist Council. The *Vajjian* monks practiced ten improper ways against *Vinaya* rules. It seems that the monks tried to transgress the *Vinaya* rules;

1. *Sirīgiloṇakappa*, the practice of carrying salt in a horn. It is contrary to *pācittiya*³ 38th which prohibits the storage of food.
2. *Dvaṅgulakappa*, the practice of taking meals when the shadow is two fingers broad. It is against *pācittiya* 37th which forbids the taking of food after noon.
3. *Gāmantrakappa*, having a second meal on the same day. It is opposed to *pācittiya* 35th which forbids over-eating.
4. *Āvāsakappa*, the observance of the *Upasatha* ceremonies in various places in the same parish. It contravenes the *Mahāvagga* rules of residence in a *Sīmā*.
5. *Anumatikappa*, obtaining sanction for a deed after it is done. It also amounts to a breach of monastic discipline.
6. *Āciṇṇakappa*, using customary practices as precedents. It also belongs to the above category.
7. *Amathitakappa*, the drinking of buttermilk after meals. It is in contravention of *pācittiya* 35th which prohibits over-eating.
8. *Jalogiṃ-pātuṃ*, the drinking of toddy. It is opposed to *pācittiya* 51st which forbids the drinking of intoxicants.

¹ It means a group of six monks.

² 4 P.V. Bapat, 2500 Years of Buddhism, Leh-Ladakh, Himalaya: Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, 1996, p. 97.

³ It's one of the seven kinds of offences that had been laid down by the Buddha for the monk.

9. *Adasakaṁ-nisidanam*, using a rug which has no fringe. It is country to *pācittiya* 89th which prohibits the use of borderless sheets.
10. *Jātarūparajataṁ*, the acceptance of gold and silver which is forbidden by rule 18th of *Nissaggiya Pācittiya*.⁴

Great Buddhist Council and Growth of Theravada Nikāyas

The *Dīpavaṁsa* mentions that the monks of *Vesālī* held another Buddhist Council which was attended by ten thousand monks while holding Second Buddhist Council. It was called the Great Council (*Mahāsaṅgīti*). After Second Buddhist Council, which was held for eight months and supported by King *Kālasoka* at *Vesālī*, 18 Buddhist sects emerged from original Buddhist sect at the *Majjhimadesa* before Third Buddhist Council. It does not mean to come out immediately after it. It seems to emerge from gradually. Some of them were against the rules or disciplines and teachings of the Buddha and doctrines or ideas which were created by them were preached having mixed with authentic doctrines of the Buddha. It was preface to hold third Buddhist Council. Just before the Council, monks, who preached and taught false doctrines against the *Buddha-Dharma*, were removed from the Order by Venerable *Moggaliputtatissa* with the co-operation of King Asoka. The Council was held for nine months, supported by King Asoka and nine missionaries were dispatched to the outside places of *Majjhimadesa* after the council. There is no doubt that there were many Buddhist sects in *Majjhimadesa* after third Buddhist Council. In order to concord with diversity of various Buddhist sects, 4th Buddhist Council in support of king *Kaniska* of *Kushan* Empire was held. However, that council was not acknowledged by *Theravāda* Buddhist Order. The great Emperor Asoka organized, according to the tradition preserved in the Ceylon Chronicles, a group of missionaries to preach the Buddha's teachings in India and abroad. Even his son, *Thera Mahinda*, was sent to *Larīkādīpa* or Ceylon together with four others and the admonishments of the Buddha were preached to King *Devānaṁpiyatissa* and his attendants. The King and the people of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) were deeply moved by the teachings of Buddha and they accepted Buddhism. Buddhism was quickly spread in Ceylon. Millions of Sinhalese embraced Buddhism and thousands entered to the *Saṅgha* and adopted the life of monk. Monasteries were erected on all sides and rich endowments were made for their preservation.⁵

Buddhism in Ceylon faced to vicissitude, sometime it was in progressing condition due to favor of Kings and States and because of having no support of Kings and States, it was in decreasing some time. Depending on Kings who gave patronage to Buddhism, during the long journey there were many Buddhist *Nikāyas*, such as *Mahāvihāravāsī Nikāya*, *Abhayagirivāsī Nikāya*, *Sāgaliya Nikāya* and *Jetavanavāsī Nikāya* in the country. The other *Nikāyas* exception *Mahāvihāravāsī Nikāya*, however, seems to disappear because, due to be in opposition to *Theravāda* tradition, the other *Nikāyas* were driven off. Nowadays, three Buddhist *Nikāyas*, namely, *Siam Nikāya*, *Amarapura Nikāya* and *Ramañña Nikāya* are living in there. In Thailand and Cambodia, the Sangha was divided into two main *Nikāyas*, the *Mahānikāya* and the *Dhammayuttikanikāya*, descendent from the *Rāmañña* sect of lower Burma. The latter is considered to be stricter in discipline. In Cambodia, the difference is restricted mainly to the pronouncing of *pāḷi* words and to very minor rules of conduct.⁶

Buddhist Nikāyas in Myanmar

Nikāya is a *pāḷi* word meaning "volume". *Nikāya* means a group, a sect, a collection, a multitude, a class, an order, an association, a fraternity, a congregation, a house, or dwelling.⁷ After atin and yone *Nikāyas* previous kings, In Burma, *Nikāyas* or *Sangha* have emerged conservatively according to the

⁴ Cūlavagga Pāḷi, Dīgha Nikāya, Yangon: Department of Religious Affairs, 2004, p. 491.

⁵ P.V. Bapat, 2500 Years of Buddhism, op. cit., 1996, p. 85.

⁶ Ibid.P.138

⁷ Dictionary of Pāḷi & Myanmar, Yangon: Department of Religious Affairs, 2000, p. 639.

Buddhist *Vinayas* and hierarchy with in the *Nikāya*.⁸ Plenty of different Buddhist *Nikāyas* had been in and out the country because there were no definite rules laid down by the Governors or Kings as to the religion but because of strict rules promulgated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs nowadays, there are nine Buddhist *Nikāyas* in Myanmar, namely, such as,

Sudhammā Nikāya, Shwegyin Nikāya, Mūl Dwara Nikāya, Mahā Dwara Nikāya, Anaukchaung Dwara Nikāya, Veḷuvana Nikāya, Hngettwin Nikāya, Gaṇḍavimutti Nikāya and Mahāyin or Dhammayutti Nikāya.

Thudhamma Nikāya, which is the oldest and largest one numerically permits the use of umbrella and sandal, the chewing of betel nuts or betel-leaves, smoking and the use of fans at the time of the recitation of the Paritta (protective-hymns). Shwegyin Nikāya does not permit above mentioned in the afternoon, nor does it favour smoking. The Dwara Nikāya uses the expressions of Kāya-dvāra, Vacī-dvāra and Maṇo-dvāra instead of Kāya-kamma, Vacī-kamma and Maṇo-kamma.⁹ This is general difference between them and no difference in the teachings of the Buddha. No matter how monks belong to any Nikāya, two or three activities such as learning the teachings of the Buddha (pariyatti), taking meditation (paripatti) and making service, the social work has to be done. Of the three, the former is mandatory for monk who enters into the Buddhist order since young. The last two, however, depend on their wishes and situations.

CONCLUSION

It is conformed that there are nine Buddhist *Nikāyas* that are running according to the *Vinaya* rules laid down and wearing robe allowed by the Buddha. In case of it, are the *Nikāyas* not totally the same to each other about monastic rules, monastic tradition, different activities, etc.? For one who does not know it at all. It intends to mention the history of Buddhist *Nikāyas* in Myanmar, to study the role of these *Nikāyas*, to do research why these *Nikāyas* are separately running as their own identity, to show the value of *Theravāda* Buddhism in Myanmar, and to understand how Burmese Buddhist monks follow the *Vinaya* rules and doctrines preached by the Buddha indifferently although there are nine *Nikāyas* and to study monastic life.

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⁹ P.V. Bapat, 2500 Years of Buddhism, Lek-Ladakh, Himalaya: Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre, 1996, p. 167.