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# Relic Worship: A Devotional Institute in Early Buddhism

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The *Mahāparinibbāutta* (hereafter MPS) provides a direct canonical warrant for Buddhist pilgrimage and *stūpa* worship. Pilgrimage and *stūpa* worship convey a new dimension of Buddhist practice quite different from the practice of *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. There is an emotional element in both pilgrimage and *stūpa* worship. Both of them are connected with the physical aspect of the Buddha. They are reminders of events in his life rather than of his teachings themselves.

Some intelligence-oriented monks express anxiety about this cultic movement. These devotional practices were originally regarded as ideal for lay people. Such practices provide a religious opportunity for Buddhists, especially lay people, to express their devotion for the Buddha. In particular relic worship plays a significant role in the formation of Buddhism as a religion. This paper will discuss the origin of relic worship and its nature by focusing on participants in relic worship in early Buddhism.

## I. The Nature and Goal of Relic Worship

The Buddha says in MPS that his *stūpa* must be the same as a *stūpa* of a universal king (*cakkavatti*).<sup>1</sup> We see that the *cakkavatti* becomes the point of reference for the treatment of the Buddha's body after his death. "On the cultic side the Founder came to be presented most commonly and effectively through symbols closely identified with the *Cakkavatti* and to be venerated in the context of rituals immediately bound up with sacral kingship." (Reynolds, 1972:14) As the epithet indicates, he is the one who sets

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<sup>1</sup> DN ii p. 142. It is noteworthy that the sutta (AN i p. 77) lists a Buddha and a universal king as alone worthy of a *stūpa*.

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in motion. In concert with the wheel which he sets in motion, a universal king proceeds to conquer the four continents and rules his kingdom for the welfare of his people in accordance with *Dhamma*.(DN ii:173f ; MN i:172ff) We are immediately reminded of the wheel of *Dhamma* as a link between the Buddha and a universal king. A *cakkavatti* is described as "righteous *Dhamma*-king"(dhammiko *Dhammarājā*). The Buddha declares that it is the *Dhamma* which is king of universal kings. As a universal king relies only on *Dhamma*, reveres *Dhamma*, and provides a lawful protection for people, so the Buddha, relying on *Dhamma* provides a righteous shelter for people. (AN iii : 149)

Pāli literature shows a close parallelism between the universal king and the Buddha; "the two are so closely linked that they almost appear to be one and the same in different roles." (Ling , 1973:145) Ghosal interprets this close resemblance as meaning that a universal king is "the temporal counterpart of the spiritual World-teacher, resembling him not only in his outward bodily form (the so-called thirty-two bodily signs of the superman) and the extraordinary incidents of his birth, death, cremation and commemoration, but also in the jointly unique role as universal benefactors." (Ghosal,1959: 79) As the Buddha teaches *Dhamma* in all regions of the world for the sake of beings, so a universal king governs the whole world for the benefit of people. "Monks, these two persons born into the world are born for the benefit and happiness of many, for the benefit, happiness and welfare of many folk, deities and human beings. What two? A Tathāgata, an arahant, a fully enlightened one, and a universal king." (AN i:76)

The stūpa of the Buddha, exactly like that of a universal king, serves as a memorial. Stūpas act as reminders of the Buddha, who teaches people out of compassion for them in this world. On the statement that the stūpa should be built at a crossroads, Peter Harvey interprets, "This is probably to indicate the openness and universality of the Buddhist teaching, which invites all to come and try its path, and also to radiate loving-kindness to beings in all four directions."(Peter Harvey,1984: 68) In practice, a crossroads is crowded place where people are constantly coming and going. A stūpa at crossroads can easily be visited by many people.

The text shows the role of a stūpa as a memorial monument.

"The Stūpa is regarded as only a memorial in the canonical text--a memorial of the noblest kind reserved for specified classes of mortals who deserve such commemoration (Thūpāraha: Sans. Stūpāraha). They are not exclusively those pre-eminent in the field of religion: a religious ruler

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(Dhammika *Dhammarājā*) also is among the Thūpārahas." (S. Dutt , 1962:184)

When people in front of the stūpa of the Thatāgata recall that this is the stūpa of the Thatāgata, their mind shall be made calm and happy. The emotion felt in front of the stūpa surely transforms the past tense of honored memory into the present tense of adoration. The same is applied to stūpas of Pacceka-Buddhas, disciples of a Thatāgata and a universal king. (DN ii: 142) "The relics may be venerated simply as memorials of the sainted dead, serving, like images, as points of attachment for the reverence and devotion of the pious..... The treasuring of relics as memorials or souvenirs of the dead is a natural exhibition of emotion....." (Vincent A. Smith,1918: 659) Pilgrims to stūpas brought home with them an appropriate memento. Through venerating relics of the Buddha, one can recollect the person of the Buddha and his teachings. "Firstly, they act as reminders of a Buddha or saint: of their spiritual qualities, their teachings, and the fact that they have actually lived on this earth. This, in turn, shows that it is possible for a human being to become a Buddha or saint." (Peter Harvey,1984: 68)

Like the goal of pilgrimage, the goal of relic worship is to be born in heaven. The Pāli version explains how people get benefits from stūpa worship. A stūpa of the Buddha reminds people of his qualities. Since they have their minds made calm and happy (*cittam pasādeti*) by stūpa worship, they will be reborn in heaven.(DN ii:142) The state of mind (*cittapasāda*) which results from stūpa veneration is "a tranquil and blissful state of mind, induced by contemplation of the memory of a person of supreme holiness or greatness".(S. Dutt ,1962:184) The word *pasāda* indicates emotion as much as belief, a calm and happy confidence. "Calm and happiness are themselves 'profitable', 'skilful' states of mind, little steps along the path to *nibbāna*." (Gombrich,1988: 119) It is not suggested that when visitors offer worship to the stūpa , all sorts of boons, spiritual or secular, are expected. Stūpa worship does not lead directly to realization of *nibbāna*. All the versions agree that relics should be respected, as they represent the Buddha in his absence; but it is wrong to expect to attain arahantship just by worshipping them. Relic worship is to generate faith in the Buddha and his teachings. This faith in turn enables practitioners to lead a moral life, and then to be born in heaven in the next life. However, it is the true understanding of the Buddha's teaching that leads to arahantship.

The monks' reservations about the stūpa cult may lie in opposition to cult of the living Buddha. When the Buddha was lying down, a cosmic veneration of the Buddha was made with heavenly flowers, heavenly

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sandal-wood powder and heavenly music. Then the Buddha rejects this universal veneration, and instead urges the practising of *Dhamma*. (DN ii :137 f) This passage clearly shows a reaction against the cult. "Just as in relation to the cult of the Buddha after his passing, so here in relation to the cult of the Buddha while yet alive, the cult of the saint occupies a relatively lower position in the hierarchy of spiritual activities of the monastic." (Ray, 1994: 361) Commenting on the passage on relic worship in MPS, the Milindapañha concludes that worship of the relics of the Buddha is inferior to meditation. (Mil i:179)

## II. The Origin of Relic Worship and Participants

The following conversation between the Buddha and Ānanda in MPS is often quoted as supporting the view that monastics are not allowed to participate in worshipping the stūpa.<sup>2</sup> When Ānanda asks, "What should we do, sir, regarding the body of the Thatāgata?" the Buddha replies,

"Do not trouble yourselves (tumhe), Ānanda, with worship of the body (sarīra-pūjā) of the Thatāgata. You should strive for the true goal (sadattha).... There are wise warriors (khattiya-panditā), wise brahmins, and wise householders (gahapati-panditā) who have faith (abhippasannā) in the Thatāgata; they will worship the body of the Thatāgata." (DN ii: 141)

Here "we" refers to the monastic Order; lay people such as warriors, brahmins and householders are mentioned in contrast with the Order of monks. Apparently this passage seems to suggest that sarīra-pūjā is deemed inappropriate for the members of the Order, specially for monks like Ānanda who have not yet attained arahantship. Monks are advised to strive for the highest goal, not to worship the body of the Buddha. Buddhaghosa defines the true goal (sadattha) as the highest goal, namely arahantship<sup>3</sup>; he bears in mind that relic worship does not lead directly to attaining Nibbāna.

This is what the monk Nāgasena understands.

"For this, Great King, is not the work of the sons of the Conqueror, namely: worship (pūjā). Thoroughly understanding the compounded;

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<sup>2</sup> For the references, see Schopen (1991, 199 fn 7).

<sup>3</sup> DA ii p. 583. Buddhaghosa defines *sadattha* as one's own good at DhA iii p. 160.

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concentrating the mind; realizing the establishment of mindfulness; taking hold of the most excellent foundations; destroying the defilements; pursuing the true goal--this is what is to be done by sons of the Conqueror. It is by the remainder of deities and men that worship is to be performed." (Mil i: 178)

Relic worship is recommended not for true practitioners such as monks but the others such as deities and ordinary lay people. "This passage thus suggests that whereas śarīra-pūjā is recommended without reservation as part of the laity's religious life, the same cannot be said to in relation to the religious life of the monastic as such." (Ray, 1994 : 359)

Schopen argues that this prohibition of sarīra-pūjā is applied not to monastics in general but specifically to Ānanda. He further argues that the key technical term sarīra-pūjā in this passage does not refer to "cult actively directed towards relic or reliquaries," but to "funeral ceremonies" which took place between the time of death and the cremation and the construction of a stūpa.(Schopen, 1991:189) In his opinion, sarīra-pūjā has nothing to with stūpa-worship, but is just a funeral arrangement before the cremation. Schopen supports his assumptions by reading the Sanskrit version of MPS where Kassapa performs what Ānanda is earlier told not to be concerned with. The text goes on to say that Kassapa was a monk of the highest standing, one of only four Mahāsthaviras alive at the time.(Sk:428 49 16) According to Schopen's interpretation, Kassapa is highly qualified to participate in the monastic funeral know as sarīra-pūjā, while Ānanda as a learner does not have the senior status required of one who performs sarīra-pūjā. As to the passage that Kassapa as one of only four Mahāsthaviras involved himself in what Ānanda was counselled not to, Schopen interprets that "participation in that part of monastic funerals known as sarīra-pūjā was--in at least important funerals--the prerogative of advanced, high status monks." (Schopen, 1991:195)

However, MPS clearly states that laypeople such as warriors, brahmins and householders are expected to take an active part in sarīra-pūjā.(DN ii : 141) The other versions of MPS agree with the Pāli version in that they all exclude monks. The Sanskrit version (358, 35) and two Chinese versions (Po 169b1; Un 186c17) put brāhmana first and then gahapati. Yo (20a24) just mentions faithful laymen without dividing them. Fa (199 c 25) lists brāhmana, khattiya and gahapati. Those versions are unanimous in contrasting monks with laypeople. Lay people are described as worshipping the Buddha with various offerings. Interestingly, three Chinese versions record that a poor old women sheds tears on the feet of the Buddha. Seeing

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other people offering flowers and perfumes, she becomes sad at the thought that she has nothing to offer. This self-pity at her poverty makes her shed her tears which drop on the feet of the Buddha.<sup>4</sup> One Chinese version states that Ānanda arranges for nuns and laywomen to worship the body of the Buddha first because he thinks they are weak.(Fa:206c27) This version says that all Buddhists, whether monastics or laypeople, worship the Buddha before his cremation. In fact, worshipping the body of the Buddha (sarīra-pūjā) is not a "prerogative of advanced, high status monks", as Schopen argues.

Kassapa's sarīra-pūjā, I think, is an attempt to justify Kassapa's succeeding the Buddha. According to Sk (428 49 14), Ti (Rockhill : 144), and Mu (401b15), when Kassapa arrives at the place of the cremation at Kusināra, he opens the iron coffin, removes the corpse of the Buddha from its wrappings, and pays his respects to the Buddha. Then he wraps the corpse in cloth afresh. This account is peculiar, for we do not immediately see why Kassapa makes such efforts to unravel and then re-wrap the corpse. This process may be understood best when we compare it with what happened after the death of King Daśaratha in the Rāmāyana. The corpse of the king was kept in a vat of oil for seven days until his heir, Bharata, came. When Bharata arrived, he performed the obsequies for his father. Waldschmidt interprets that Kassapa performed an analogous procedure for the corpse of the Buddha. (Waldschmidt : 1944-48, 344 f) As Bharata, the heir, conducts the funeral ceremony, so Kassapa, as an heir of the Buddha, is made to play the same role in succeeding the Buddha.

All these three versions belong to one and the same school, namely the Mūlasarvāstivādin. This is the school which most explicitly states that Kassapa is a successor to the Buddha; "in the Mūlasarvāstivādin *vinaya*, the Buddha explicitly confirms Mahākāśyapa as his legitimate successor." (Ray, 1994 : 108) These versions seem to be very much concerned to justify Kassapa's succeeding the Buddha, as the other versions omit the above peculiar account of Kassapa's re-shrouding. Two Chinese versions (Yo : 28c21 ; Un : 189b28) show that the tradition of justifying Kassapa as a legitimate heir to the Buddha has gone through some difficulty.<sup>5</sup> According

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<sup>4</sup> Fa (206c27); Un (189c5); Yo (29a1). Ānanda is charged for this incident at the council.

<sup>5</sup> According to Przyluski (1926-8, 303), the tradition placing Kassapa at the head of the Order is later; the earlier tradition places Aññāta-Koṇḍañña at the head (cited by Ray, 1994, 118). Since the Buddha refuses to appoint his successor, monastics try to

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to these two versions, when Kassapa arrives at the funeral pyre, he asks for Ānanda's permission to see the body of the Buddha. Ānanda refuses his request by saying that all the preparation has been done, so it is difficult to open the coffin again. However, Kassapa repeats his request up to a third time. Ānanda refuses in the same way even a third time. In these versions, Ānanda is seen as playing an authoritative role in the funeral arrangements. At any rate, Schopen's argument that sarīra-pūjā was a privilege of advanced monks is not correct; the Mūlasarvāstivādin versions of Kassapa's sarīra-pūjā is to be understood as a justification of Kassapa's succession to the Buddha, not as a monastic ritual performed only by advanced monks. Kassapa's intrusion was "presumably a deliberate fabrication of those who later could not allow that the supposed organiser of the sacred canon, assuming there was such an early canon, was not also present at the funeral ceremony in a primary position of importance." (Snellgrove, 1973: 409)

Schopen holds that the injunction concerning the treatment of the body of the Buddha after his passing away is only concerned with funeral arrangements before the cremation. So he wants to say that this injunction allows monks to participate in stūpa worship. However, in MPS, there is no description of monks worshipping relics; laypeople alone are described as performing all the preparations from the shrouding to the building of stūpas. Soon after the Buddha attained parinibbāna, Anuruddha asks Ānanda to inform the Mallas of the Buddha's parinibbāna. The Mallas go to the sāla grove where the Buddha is lying. They pay homage to the body of the Buddha for six days. On the seventh day, they carry it to Makutabandhana in accordance with the intention of the deities. Then they ask Ānanda how to deal with the body of the Buddha. Ānanda repeats what the Buddha has told him. The Mallas do as told. The brahmin Dona settles dispute over relics between Mallas and seven kings. It is most striking that even when the dispute over the division of the relics is taking place, not a single monk is involved, but a brahmin tries to resolve it. They have stūpas built at their own cities and have festivities in honour of the stūpas. By contrast, monks went to Rājagaha to have *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* recited at the council there, according to some Chinese versions which go on to narrate the council. (Mu : 402c5 ; Fa : 207c10 ; Un : 190c19) This account shows that in earlier days relic worship played no significant role among monks. Although we may interpret that MPS "does not prohibit the worship of stūpas by

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establish the heir after his death. This task is not done without difficulty, and takes time.

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monastics, it is nevertheless true that the text does not portray stūpa worship as standing at the centre of their religious life".(Ray,1994:359)

The Milindapañha makes a contribution to this matter of participants in stūpa worship. Milinda poses a dilemma by putting the injunction in MPS, "Do not you, Ānanda, be occupied with honouring the Thatāgata's bodily remains," against the passage in the Vimānavatthu 82. v. 8 "Venerate that relic of him who is to be venerated; By doing so you will go from here to heaven." In response to Milinda's dilemma, Nāgasena solves this dilemma by saying that the injunction in MPS is not applied to everyone but to the Conqueror's sons (jinaputta) only. Who is jinaputta? Schopen tries to distinguish a bhikkhu from a jinaputta. The jinaputta "does not designate membership in a particular group but conformity to an ideal notion of what the religiosity of a follower of the Buddha--whether that follower be a layman or a monk-- ought to be". (Schopen, 1991 : 197) But, as Rhys Davids rightly points out, the sons of the Conqueror are "the monks of the Order".(Rhys Davids, 1889 : 246 fn) At the end of the dialogue, Nāgasena identifies the jinaputta as monks of the Order when he says,

"If the Thatāgata had not said this, then monks would have taken his bowl and robe and would have occupied themselves with worship of the Buddha through them."(Mil i: 179)

Nāgasena holds that sarīra-pūjā is suitable for lay people while monks should practise meditation.

"It seems that for a long time after stūpa-worship had received canonical sanction and been accepted as a rite and institution of the religion, the monkish mind was averse to it... " <sup>6</sup>

In sum, even though the admonition delivered to Ānanda could be understood as less than an explicit prohibition on monastic participation in the stūpa cult, it is evident that it is not encouraged for monks, but laypeople have a leading role. Ray classifies the participants in the stūpa cult as laypeople, monastics and forest dwellers.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Dutt (1962, 183). S. Dutt supposes that stūpa worship originates from the lay people, but later on it was accepted, and canonised by the Order. The passage in MPS "undoubtedly belongs to a time when to this kind of worship, having already become a widespread popular practice, the monks desired to impart the canonical sanction" (1962, 184).



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"Virtually every text dealing with the stūpa depicts the laity as centrally concerned with stūpa worship." (Ray, 1994 : 337)

"Although in early Buddhism it appears that all types of Buddhists participated in the stūpa cult, there clearly came a time within Pāli Buddhism at least when stūpa worship was viewed as a specifically lay preoccupation." (Ray, 1994 : 351)

Since the Theravādin tradition, which is most conservative, sticks to the views taken of stūpas in MPS, the Pāli Vinaya has no rules concerning stūpas. Unlike the Vinayas of the other schools, the Theravāda Vinaya has no discussion of the construction and the cult of the stūpa. The Pāli tradition apparently did not include such a section, as the compilers of the ancient Pāli canon were governed by a tradition according to which the construction and worship of a stūpa was the concern of laymen, and not of monks. Therefore, there was felt to be no need for a particular stūpa-section to be included in the Khandhaka-section of the Pāli Vinaya.

### **III. Accommodation of the Stūpas into Monasteries**

As the list of ten stūpas and the revised list of stūpas in MPS show, stūpas were built in cities, not within monasteries, as the Buddha instructs. It is noteworthy that the first verse lists the initial ten stūpas, while the second list provides an update, specifying that seven of the eight portions remain in India and one has moved to Rāmagāma, where Nāgas worship, and adds the locations of the Buddha's four eye-teeth, which are not mentioned in the first list. The new list interestingly shows that the relic cult extends to include not only human habitations, but the celestial realms above and the domains of the Nāgas below. "These two relic lists bear witness to an expanding textual tradition that has recorded and thereby authenticated the dispersion of relics as new devotional centres have arisen claiming to possess relics of the Buddha". (Trainor, 1990 : 162)

The first list enumerates the ten stūpas and concludes with the following words: "This was how it used to be." Buddhaghosa says that those words were added at the third council, i. e., in the time of Asoka. (DA ii : 611) It can be interpreted that the first stūpas remained unchanged until the third council. According to Buddhaghosa, the second list was spoken by the

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monks in Sri Lanka.<sup>7</sup> This remark means that some time after the third council there came a change in the locations of the first stūpas. Thomas is sure that the second list was composed after Asoka's time, as the reference to Gandhāra in this list shows; it was only in Asoka's time that missions were being sent there.(Thomas, 1949 : 159) As far as the two lists show, stūpas remained outside monasteries at least before Asoka's time.

Since the stūpas were located outside monasteries, it would have been difficult for monks to take charge of them. Rather, lay people such as kings, and other rich devotees must have taken care of them. As MPS records, kings in India were actively involved in building stūpas.

Buddhaghosa explains how the ten stūpas built in cities came into the monasteries. When the ten stūpas had been built in the cities, Kassapa foresaw danger to the relics, and asked Ajātasattu to have them all enshrined together. The elder, seeing no danger to the relics at Rāmagāma, did not bring them. He brought the relics from the other cities and placed them in a region south-east of Rājagaha. The king had the relics enshrined there underground. Nobody knew that the relics of the Buddha were being enshrined. Kassapa had letters incised on a plaque: "Asoka will have these relics distributed widely." As time passed, the elder passed away, and the king and those men involved in enshrining the relics passed away too. The relics remained unnoticed at Rājagaha until King Asoka came to power. After the king had had 84, 000 monasteries built, he asked the Order of monks where he could obtain relics. Hearing that they did not know, he had a cetiya at Rājagaha broken open, but when he found no relics there he had it restored to its former condition. The same thing happened at Vesāli, Allakappa, *Pāva* and Kusinārā, but only the cetiya at Rāmagāma was not allowed by the Nāgas to be broken open. When he returned to Rājagaha, he finally found the place where the relics were enshrined. In the relic chamber, the king found the plaque on which Kassapa had had the prediction of Asoka inscribed. Leaving some relics for worshipping in that place, he took all the others and deposited them in the 84, 000 monasteries.(DA ii : 611- 615)

The first thing which attracts our attention is a mention of the danger to the relics. Buddhaghosa does not specify what sort of danger there was. However, he gives a clue. Ajātasattu took his share of the relics and,

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<sup>7</sup> DA ii p. 615. However, the Sanskrit version and the Tibetan and Chinese versions have this list. If Buddhaghosa is correct, the Northern tradition borrows the list from Sri Lanka. Thomas (1949, 159) gives a different interpretation: "It may be that the Ceylon elders add it to the Pāli canon, but they did not compose....."

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recollecting the Buddha's virtues, inaugurated a great ceremony in his honour lasting seven years, seven months and seven days.

"Thus while they were coming along with the relics, seven years and seven months and seven days were spent. Eighty-six thousand people with wrong views contaminated their minds and got reborn in hell by complaining: 'Since the parinibāna of the ascetic Gotama, we have been forcibly oppressed by the festivities for the holy object. All our work is spoilt'." (DA ii : 610)

This comment shows that there was an anti-stūpa trend even during Kassapa's time. The Petavatthu commentary confirms that a large number of people are against stūpa-worship. (PvA : 212) Stūpas built in cities were exposed to attack from people with wrong views.

It is noticeable that Buddhaghosa's version shows the close link between kingship and relic worship. It is kings who had the original eight stūpas built in their kingdoms. The relics were regarded as the property of kings. Relic worship is used politically to justify and consolidate rulership of a king. Kings, by securing the relics in their kingdom could easily govern Buddhists who have great devotion to the Buddha. (Rahula, 1956 : 75 f) That is why each king claims the relics and nearly goes to war. King Ajātasattu is described as the most devoted among the first possessors of the relics; he brings the relics and makes offerings in such a way that he brings the Buddha alive. He spends sufficient money for depositing the relics. Likewise King Asoka makes great efforts to find the relics and spends a huge amount of money in building stūpas in the monasteries.

In Buddhaghosa's story, the two kings Ajātasattu and Asoka play an outstanding role in worshipping the relics. These two kings were the most powerful monarchs in their times. The Buddhist tradition shows some parallels between the two kings. The tradition has it that Ajātasattu sponsored the first council, while Asoka supported the third council. Both kings were cruel before their conversion to Buddhism. Buddhaghosa's narration leads us to surmise that the two most powerful kings in India played a major role in treating the relics. By contrast monks are not described as worshipping the relics. Only Kassapa is treated as a mentor of the king who has the stūpa built. The king is both enshriner of relics and material benefactor of relic worship, and this is a fundamental source of his

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political legitimacy.<sup>8</sup>

If Buddhaghosa's version is any indication, it was during Asoka's reign that many stūpas were constructed here and there in his empire for ceremonial worship and stūpa worship spread as a popular institution. It is noteworthy that when King Asoka set out to look for relics, he was accompanied by the four assemblies of monks, nuns, laymen and lay women. This may indicate monastics' active involvement in relic worship by the time of Asoka. Stūpa worship became prevalent among all Buddhists, both laymen and monks. MPS discourages monks from worshipping stūpas, but by Asoka's time the distinction between monks and laypeople regarding stūpa worship was disappearing. It was by Asoka that stūpas were built within the monasteries for the first time; it became the practice in every monastery to have a stūpa installed in the prayer hall. As the relics were housed in stūpas within monasteries, the stūpa cult became a part of monks' daily life.

At the end of Buddhaghosa's story, Asoka, having installed the relics in 84,000 monasteries, asks monks,

"Sir, am I an heir to the teaching of the Buddha?" "Great king, who are you an heir to? You are an outsider to the teaching." "Sir, I have spent ninety-six crores and had eighty-four thousand monasteries built. If I am not an heir, who is an heir?" "Great king, you are just called one who offers requisites; but if one has one's sons and daughters go forth, one is called an heir to the teaching." (DA ii : 615)

This dialogue confirms that monks are the real legitimate heirs to the Buddha; however lavishly lay people make offerings to stūpas, they are just material providers. Monks who practise *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* are legitimate successors to the Buddha, since the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* are the essence of the Buddha, not his physical remains.

At least, in the earliest days, the stūpa cult and the monastic order seem to have developed separately. That monks kept a distance from the stūpa cult is also found in ancient Sri Lanka. The king *Devānampiyatissa* had the first stūpa of Sri Lanka built in the city. He caused it to be worshipped with gifts of many jewels and so forth; the women of the royal household, the nobles, ministers, townspeople and all the country folk brought their

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<sup>8</sup> Trainor (1990, 74 ff) studies this aspect in Sri Lankan context. The possession of the two relics, namely, Tooth relic and Alms-bowl, was considered essential for a prince who wished to be the recognised king of Ceylon (Rahula, 1956, 74).

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offerings. (Mhv xvii 21 ff) Herein there is no account of monks' involvement in worshipping the stūpa. Even though there was already a monastery such as the Mahāvihāra, the king had the stūpa constructed in the city, not within the monastery. This practice follows the injunction to build stūpas at a cross-roads in MPS. Likewise the earliest stūpas after the first stūpa in Sri Lanka were built outside monasteries.

Buddhaghosa's account of the process of monasticization of stūpas is confirmed by modern scholars. Firstly, Hirakawa believes that this process is stamped on the Chinese translation. In the earlier translation, the Chinese term for stūpa indicates only a stūpa, while a different term is used for monastery (vihāra), because the translators understood these as different and separate entities. In later translations, however, the term originally indicating a stūpa is now used to refer to both stūpa and vihāra, which suggests that the later translators see both stūpa and vihāra as parts of the same institution. (Hirakawa, 1963 : 89-91) Secondly, the same process is found in archaeological evidence. Schopen shows that in the early rock-cut caves of western India, stūpa and monastic complex are found at the same site, but they are distinct structures and physically separate from one another. In later times, "some movement towards a different arrangement" attempts to place the two structures in a tighter intimacy. The stūpa may be moved into the centre of the residential courtyard. (Schopen, 1991 : 200 ff)

Even if we cannot take without reservation Buddhaghosa's version, it is most likely that as stūpa worship continued to flourish, stūpas came to be constructed within monastic compounds. "Yet even after Stūpas came to be affiliated with sects in this way, alms given to the stūpa still had to be used for the stūpa alone and could not be used freely by the monks." (Hirakawa, 1987 : 94) The monastic rules which distinguish the property of a stūpa from that of the *saṅgha* reflect the original disconnection between stūpa and monastery. (Ray, 1994 : 351) Even today, we can see the tensions between stūpa and monastery in Theravāda Buddhism. Sadler explores this tension in a Burmese context. "The separation of pagoda grounds from the monastic grounds is very striking here. The pagoda, the source of dathana (the grace-giving encounter with the holy) and the object of lay (devotional) religion, is placed outside the monastic compound." (Sadler, 1970 : 284)

#### IV. Conclusion

As we have discussed, originally relic worship is entrusted to lay people,

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but later on is participated in by monks. In theory it is impossible to state that devotional practice is suitable for lay people only while meditation is for monks. In reality, it is easy for lay people to practise devotional acts while monks can more easily find time for meditation. Since MPS tends to treat the parinibbāna in terms of his absence, the cult of the Buddha cannot take the same position as the learning of *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*. As the Buddha is regarded as not available here in this world, and thus incapable of being prayed to, or responding to his devotees, relic worship is understood to function as a reminder of the Buddha's life and his career.

Modern elite monks hold that there are two distinct levels of Buddhism: "on the one hand, the Buddhism of laity, bound up with darśan (seeing) and stūpa; and, on the other, the Buddhism of the monastic *saṅgha*, based on the *vinaya*."(Ray, 1994 : 351-2) This tension echoes a conventional dichotomy between two lifestyles (lay and monastic) and the two religious goals (heaven and nibbāna). Originally relic worship enables lay people to express their devotion to the Buddha after his death; Later on monks join this emotional practice even though there are still monks who do not attach great importance to the practice. In short, relic worship is one of the earliest institutions of Buddhism as a religion.

## Abbreviations

AN	Anguttara Nikāya
DA	Dīghanikāya Commentary
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
Fa	A Chinese Version of MPS (TD vol. 1)
Mhv	Mahāvāṣa
Mil	Milindapanha
MPS	Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
Mu	A Chinese version of MPS (TD vol. 24)
PvA	Petavatthu Commentary
Sk	Sanskrit Version of MPS (ed. by Waldschmidt)
Ti	Tibetan Version of MPS (ed. by Rockhill)
TD	Taisho Shinsu Daizokyo (ed. by Takakusu, J. and Watanabe, K.)
Un	A Chinese Version of MPS (TD vol. 1)
Yo	A Chinese Version of MPS (TD vol. 1).

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