From the Sūtra in Forty-two Sections to Humanistic Buddhism —The Impact of Indian Literature on Chinese Civilization

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ABSTRACT

The hypothesis to be examined in this presentation is that the development of Chinese Buddhism as a significant element of Chinese civilization depended basically on how and in what form Indian Buddhist literature was introduced and popularized in China. The discussion leads to the literary background of Humanistic Buddhism as interpreted by Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun of Fo Guang Shan Order. He relies on the widest textual basis to be adopted by any Chinese exponent of Buddhism in that the entire Buddhist literature of all three major traditions is being utilized by him to evolve a practical and pragmatic approach to presenting Buddhism as an effective promoter of social well-being here and now. His comprehensive use of the Pali Canon with equal emphasis on the Mahayana Sūtras renews the impact which Indian literature had exerted on Chinese Buddhism and eventually Chinese civilization.

The Sūtra in Forty-two Sections was most likely the first sample of Indian literature to reach China. Its structure and contents suggest an anthology of verses and passages from popular Buddhist Canonical works which monastics usually committed to memory as readily usable themes for discourse and discussion. The need for such a text must have been felt by early missionaries to China because both Confucianism and Daoism had their foundation in books. The Indian Buddhist attitude of relying on texts to a minimum and concentrating on practice (cf. Dhammapada verses 19-20; 100-102) might have been the reason for the brevity of this anthology, which, though called a Sūtra, does not resemble any other Buddhist Sūtra.

What is further examined is whether this same attitude contributed to the specifically Chinese character of developing Schools of Buddhism <u>*each*</u> *relying for the most part on a very limited quantity of textual material; e.g. Three Treatise, Four Treatise, Abhidharma (Pi-tan), Lotus, Ear Ornament, and Mind-only Schools. The role of translators from India and Central Asia as well as Chinese pilgrims who traveled to India and Sri Lanka is also subjected to scrutiny.*

Introduction

When and how Buddhism was first introduced to China will remain a moot question, engaging scholars in doubt and debate. Only the discovery of concrete, datable archaeological evidence can put an end to controversies resulting from contradictions and anomalies in literary sources. A common element in the various accounts, however, refers to the translation of Buddhist works into Chinese. The advent and development of Buddhism in China is directly linked with the introduction and impact of Indian literature.

Books played a major role in Chinese civilization from at least 1000 BC, if not earlier. *Wu-Ching*, the five Confucian classics, are considered to be the core of this rich literary heritage. When Confucianism became the official creed during the Han period, scholars were appointed to give instruction in each of the five classics (Ikeda, 1986, 27).

In a civilization where books were indispensable to the study of norms and principles of a creed, the Buddhist missionaries must have encountered a significant problem. During the first four or five centuries of Buddhism, the teachings of the Buddha were transmitted orally from generation to generation. We have no evidence of written books embodying these teachings until more recent times. But an enormous literary effort has been made to have these teachings systematically organized and arranged sequentially to facilitate retrieval. The first recorded instance when the Buddhist Canon and its Commentaries were reduced to writing is from Sri Lanka and is dated circa first century BCE (Guruge 1989, 683)

It is not surprising if the earliest Buddhist missionaries to China had to begin their evangelic pursuits by producing one or more books for the use of their converts. Each monk, by tradition and training, retained in his memory a basic body of the teachings of the Buddha in verse and short prose texts to serve as subject matter for sermons and instruction. The first literary efforts of Buddhist missionaries in China would have been to put together in writing such verses and short texts. Such a work would have whetted the appetite for more substantial works.

Once books became available, Buddhist missionaries from Central Asia and India brought books to China and translated them into Chinese. Many Chinese pilgrims to South Asia braved the deserts and snowy peaks to search for books and holy objects. The two-way operation lasted over a millennium beyond the persecution of Buddhists by Emperor Shih-Tsung of the Posterior Chou Dynasty (951-60) to the age of the Northern Sung Dynasty (960-1125) (Ikeda 1986, 26).

The ultimate product is the massive Chinese Tripiṭaka which contains 1440 works in 5586 volumes, divided into three categories as Sūtras, Rules of Discipline (*Vinaya*) and Treatises (*Śāstra*). The purpose of this paper is to trace this literary movement briefly and to examine the latest trend in reverting to Indian Buddhist literature by the exponents of Humanistic Buddhism, notably Master Tai-Xu and Grand Master Hsing Yun.

Origin and Extent of Buddhist Literature

By the time Buddhism was first introduced to China around the first century CE, the Buddhists had developed a vast literature. Almost from the very beginning of the Buddha's career as a founder of a new religion, the preservation of his teachings and recording main events of his life seem to have been a major preoccupation of his disciples, possibly with his encouragement. Comprehensive records were made of his debates, conversations, discourses, and poetic compositions. Most of these records resemble journalistic accounts of newsworthy utterances of the Buddha, rather than formal discourses or philosophical essays. The Buddha's teachings and doctrines are scattered in these accounts. His senior disciples took steps to develop head words and categories under which the doctrines of the Buddha could be extracted and classified in a systematic manner. (see *Saṅgīti* and *Dasuttara Suttas* of Dīghanikāya Nos. 33, 34, and also Hsuang-tsang's *Chi-i-men-tsu-lun*). Further techniques to facilitate retrieval were indexes and abstracts which too were designed very early.

It is reported in Cullavagga V 33 that two Brahman brothers named Yamelutekula requested the permission of the Buddha to have his teachings preserved in Chandas (apparently in Vedic verse similar to the three or four Vedic Saṃhitās). The Buddha preached in the local vernacular of Magadha, These disciples might have thought that translating his teachings into the Vedic idiom would not only facilitate preservation without corruption but also enhance their acceptance by the elite. Very early in Vedic tradition, repeated chanting of the text (*svādhyāya*) was diversified to include several versions[1] of the same text. Although the Buddhist Sangha had developed its own form of *svādhyāya* as *sajjhāyanā* or *sangīti* (serving in later times as *Paritta*), there is no evidence that the Vedic techniques of guaranteeing textual authenticity were used by Buddhists.

Whatever be the purpose for which the disciples intended to recast the Buddha's teachings in a Vedic format, the requested permission was declined. Instead the Buddha enjoined the study of his teachings in one's own language (*sakāya niruttiyā*). Indicative of the Buddha's non-elitist attitude, this injunction resulted in the translation of Buddhist texts into many languages. Fragments of manuscripts and quotes in inscriptions, so far discovered, show that the Buddhist Canon was developed in Sanskrit as well as several Prakirts. The version so far found in an appreciably comprehensive form is the Pali Tripitaka which Emperor Asoka's missionaries took to Sri Lanka after the Third Council. There, too, the commentaries were produced in Sinhala, the vernacular Prakirt of the Island. Fragments of manuscripts have also been discovered in Khotanese and Tocharian languages of Central Asia.

The Buddhist Sangha had devoted immense attention to the preservation, annotation, explanation and interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. In the days of the Buddha, some members of the Sangha chose *Ganthdhura* (vocation of books) in preference to self-transformation and liberation through *Vipassanādhura* (vocation of insight meditation). Among such specialists in literary pursuits, there was a division as *Vinayadhara* and *Dhammadhara* (bearers of rules of discipline and those of the Dhamma). The *Vinayadharas,* led by Upāli, must have played a major role in the codification of the rules of discipline in the descending order of gravity and giving structure for the presentation of such rules in different schools and sects.

It is through the network of *Dhammadharas* that the texts connected with the Buddha came to be arranged according to

> Length as Long and Middle-sized discourses in *Dīgha* and *Majjhima Nikāyas* or *Dīrgha* and *Madhyama Āgamas*[2],
>
> Numerical ordering (*Anguttara Nikāya* or *Ekottarāgama* or *Ekottarikāgama*),
>
> Possibility of grouping according to venue, audience or subject matter (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* or *Saṃyuktāgama*),
>
> Diversity of subject-matter and shortness of texts (*Khuddaka Nikāya* or *Kṣudrakāgama*).

Some among the *Dhammadharas*, like Mahākaccāyana, the grammarian, were engaged in developing commentaries to facilitate the understanding of the doctrines. Yet others, led by Sāriputta and possibly Ānanda, pursued scholastic analysis, synthesis, and reinterpretation of these doctrines and produced such works as *Paṭisambhidāmagga* of the Khuddaka Nikāya and the seven works of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka.* Works of members of the Sangha were accepted as authentic elements of the Buddhist Canon: e.g. several discourses by senior disciples, poetic compositions of monks and nuns (*Thera* and *Therī- Gāthā*); *Kathāvatthu* of Moggaliputta Tissa, the President of the Third Buddhist Council of 3rd century BCE in the Abhidhammapitaka of Southern Buddhism, and the practice in Myanmar to treat as canonical such later works as *Miḷindapañha, Suttasangaha, Nettippakaraṇa* and *Peṭakopadesa.*

The tradition continued after schisms caused the disruption of the Sangha on grounds of either disciplinary issues or doctrinal differences. Voluminous books were produced to present new viewpoints and interpretations. To begin with, however, they were not called Sūtras and were not intended to be canonical. *Mahāvastu-avadāna* on the life of the Buddha is described as the Vinaya Piṭaka of the Lokottarvāda School. *Lalitavistara*, a biography of the Buddha, was a work of significant poetic merit. *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* were remarkable works which presented the emerging Mahāyāna points of view and reflected the continuity of the scholastic and philosophical speculations prevalent in Buddhist circles.

Buddhists had thus produced in several languages, but mainly in Pali and Sanskrit, an enormous literature consisting of

- records of the Buddha's teachings,
- verbal exegesis and commentaries,
- narratives to illustrate, among others, the principal doctrine of Karma,
- historical information, and
- treatises on analysis, synthesis and reinterpretation of the Buddha's teachings.

All these were already in circulation around the time Buddhism was introduced into China. In all likelihood, they were orally transmitted from teacher to pupil. Whether any texts were available in writing by this time it is difficult to establish.

Yet Buddhism was not a religion of the book. How important were books to missionaries? On how much textual material did they rely? The Buddha stressed the importance of practice rather than the excessive study of literature (*Sahita*). He compared scholars who mostly read the texts and thus contributed to their preservation to cowherds who count other's cows but do not enjoy their produce such as milk, curd and whey (Dhammapada 19-20). Thrice in the Dhammapada (verses 100-103) is it emphasized that one word or a single line of a verse or a Dhamma-word which leads to tranquility is worth more than a thousand words.

In this context, it is relevant to recall that the first sixty monks whom the Buddha sent as missionaries had hardly a few weeks of instruction. They barely knew

anything more than what was contained in the first and the second discourses, namely, *Dhammacakkappavattana* and *Anattalakkhaṇa Suttas*. It is recorded that one of these missionaries succeeded in winning over the two principal disciples of the Buddha with just one line: *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetu tathāgato āha* (The Buddha declared the causes of those phenomena which originate from causes).

What early missionaries carried in their memory was a minimum repertoire of sound bytes on which they could base their explanatory discourses.

The Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections Spoken by the Buddha

From all available accounts of the introduction of the Sūtra in Forty-two Sections Spoken by the Buddha or *Fo-shuo-ssu-shih-erh-cheng-ching*, despite contradictions and anachronisms, one fact emerges. It could have been the very first Buddhist document to be produced in Chinese. No sūtra or text with either this name or its form is know to have existed in any Buddhist language. Nor is any reference made to it in any Indian Buddhist texts. Chao Pu-chu describes it as "an excerpt of the Āgamas" (Chao 1960 2) and scholars generally agree that its contents are "mainly Hīnayāna in nature." (Ch'en 1964/73, 35; Zurcher 1959, 30)[3]

As a popular work, the Sūtra had undergone many changes since the original appeared somewhere in the late first or the early second century CE. It had been periodically revised to accommodate later doctrines of different traditions of Buddhism. (Humphreys 1960/79, 98; 100 where Ch'an traces are mentioned; Ch'en 1964/73, 36 refers to Mahāyāna elements out of harmony with the rest of the Sūtra). In spite of later accretions, the character of the original text can be reconstructed from the sources in the Pali Canon or Āgama Sūtras. It is representative of a basic repertoire of a monk which has been committed to memory to be used as the text or quotes in the course of a discourse or discussion. The practice continues mainly in Southern Buddhism wherein at the higher ordination ceremony the candidate is tested on this repertoire consisting primarily of verses from the Dhammapada. It is significant that 28 of the 42 sections of the Sūtra have been traced to the Dhammapada. D. T. Suzuki recognized this nature of the Sūtra when he called his translation "Sermons by a Buddhist Abbot."

As Zurcher points out, the introduction of Buddhism to China must have been a slow and prolonged process. He says,

> It must have infiltrated from the North-West, via the two branches of the continental silk-road which entered Chinese territory at Tunhuang, and from there through the corridor of Kansu to the "region within the Passes" and North China plain, where in Later Han times the capital Loyang was situated. This infiltration must have taken place between the first half of the first century BC—the period of the consolidation of Chinese power in Central Asia—and the middle of the first century A.D., when the existence of Buddhism is attested for the first time in contemporary Chinese sources. (Zurcher 1959, 23)

There is evidence that many foreigners professing Buddhism from Central Asia had settled down in China. Again as Zurcher shows, Buddhism was 'unofficially' represented in China among scattered foreign families, groups and settlements and, even as late as the beginning of the third century, Indian texts in original Sanskrit were in circulation. Chih Chien is said to have realized that, "although the great doctrine was practiced, yet the scriptures were mostly available in 'barbarian' (later Indian) language which nobody could understand." (Ibid. 23-24)

The production of the "Sūtra in Forty-two Sections" in Chinese could have been the work of a Central Asian monk. Its structure and contents suggest an anthology of verses and short passages from popular canonical works. No effort has been made to organize the subject-matter in a logical order. New Chinese converts to Buddhism apparently felt the need for a book of this sort. Both Confucianism and Daoism were based on books. Probhat Kumar Mukherjee sees in the Sūtra the influence of Confucian Analects on "the first Buddhist propagandists who had to select the most essential doctrines of faith for people who had hitherto been educated mostly by Confucians and partly by Laotsians." (Mukherjee 1928, 3) The readership to whom the book had an appeal must have been the Chinese elite who showed interest in Buddhism. Finding words to convey Indian ideas and especially Buddhist concepts must have presented enormous difficulties to the early translators[4]. Hence the need for several revisions and editions by later scholars. In spite of such revisions, the Sūtra is no doubt a remarkable first step in the massive literary task which China undertook to bring the Indian Buddhist literature to the attention of its nationals over at least a millennium.

Illustrative of its style of brevity are Sections 13 and 19 which in the most recent version runs as follows:

13. The Buddha said, There are twenty things which are hard for human beings:

'It is hard to practice charity when one is poor.
'It is hard to study the Way when occupying a position of great authority.
'It is hard to surrender life at the approach of inevitable death.
'It is hard to get an opportunity of reading the sūtras.
'It is hard to be born directly into Buddhist surroundings.
'It is hard to bear lust and desire (without yielding to them).
'It is hard to see something attractive without desiring it.
'It is hard to bear insult without making an angry reply.
'It is hard to have power and not to pay regard to it.
'It is hard to come into contact with things and yet remain unaffected by them.
'It is hard to study widely, and investigate everything thoroughly.
'It is hard to overcome selfishness and sloth.
'It is hard to avoid making light of not having studied (the Way) enough.
'It is hard to keep the mind evenly balanced.
'It is hard to refrain from defining things as being something or not being something.
'It is hard to come into contact with clear perception.
'It is hard to perceive one's own nature and (through such perception) to study the Way.

> 'It is hard to help others towards Enlightenment according to their various needs.
> 'It is hard to see the end (of the Way) without being moved.
> 'It is hard to discard successfully (the shackles that bind us to the wheel of life and death) as opportunities present themselves.'

19. The Buddha said: 'My Doctrine implies thinking of that which is beyond thought, performing that which is beyond performance, speaking of that which is beyond words and practicing that which is beyond practice. Those who can come up to this, progress, while the stupid regress. The Way which can be expressed in words stops short; there is nothing which can be grasped. If you are wrong by so much as the thousandth part of a hair, you will lose (the Way) in a flash.' (Humphreys 1960/79, 98-101)

An equally important part of a monk's repertoire was the life of the Buddha and narratives of the Buddha's previous lives. Whether simultaneously or a short time later a Chinese version of the life of the Buddha was also produced is a matter of conjecture. Samuel Beal who translated *Fo-pan-hing-ching* (Taisho 190) as "The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha" in 1875 was of the opinion that a Dharmagupta version of the Buddha's biography was translated by Chu Fa-lan in the eleventh year of Emperor Ming of Han Dynasty (i.e. 69-70 CE) (Beal 1875-1985, vi). Whether the Dharmaguptakas had a work with the corresponding Sanskrit title of *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra* or *Śākyamuni Buddhacarita* is uncertain. (Warder 1970/1980, 334) It is possible that the Indian work serving as the original was *Lalitavistara* or Asvaghośa's *Buddhacarita*. (Mukherjee 1928, 3). The vast literature which contained this material was transmitted orally until at least the first century BCE and the possibility of bringing books on a white horse all the way from India is most unlikely.

If these two works were the earliest Buddhist texts to be produced in Chinese, their complementarity suggests the comprehensive approach of Buddhist missionaries to the introduction of Buddhism to new converts. Together these two works serve as a summary of the Buddha's teachings with special emphasis on ethics and mental development and an inspiring account of the founder's life. In such an approach there was no room for debate, or dissension or the elaboration of religious, philosophical and disciplinary issues which, in the first five centuries of Buddhism in India, had brought into existence many schools and sects. That was not the case when in later times the Indian books which came to be translated had a particular bias and eventually the works of the Mahāyāna tradition predominated.

Early Translators of Indian Buddhist Works

The earliest to come to China and translate Buddhist works were monks from Parthia, Indo-Scythia, Sogdiana and Kushana (Chao Pu-chu 1960, 4; Ikeda 1986, 24; Zurcher 1959, 32). The local versions of Indian Buddhist works in these regions were in cognate Indo-European languages, preserving much of the style, the terminology and the structure of the originals in Pali and Sanskrit.

An Shih-kao (Āryakāla) of the royal family of Parthia came to China and spent more than twenty years translating such works of early Buddhism as the *Sūtra of*

the Four Noble Truths, the *Sūtra of the Eightfold Path* and the *Sūtra of the Turning of the Wheel of the Dharma* (Ikeda 1986, 25) Of the 176 books he is said to have translated, 95 are mentioned in Khai-yuen-lu's catalogue with the note that only 54 were extant in 730 CE. But 55 of his works are found in the Ming-Tripiṭaka (Mukherjee 1928, 5). Lokakṣema or Lokarakṣa or Lokashin (an Indo-Scythian) is known to have been one of An Shih-kao's collaborators. He is said to have translated a dozen works of which four works are significant *Tao-hsing (po-jo) ching* – Taisho 224 (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*); *Pan-chou sang-mei ching* – Taisho 417, 418 – *Pratyutpannabuddha-sammukhavāsthitasamādhisūtra; Ajātaśatrukṛtyavinodana* (Taisho 626); and *Drumakinnaraparipṛcchā* (Taisho 624). With these works Lokakṣema (*Chih Lou-chia-ch'ien*) is "commonly credited with the introduction of Mahāyāna Buddhism into China." (Zurcher 1959, 25; Banerjee 1977, 10).

Parts of *Madhyamāgama* and *Saṃyuktagāma* were translated by Cha Yao (probably a Yueh-chi) around 180 CE. Khang Man-siang was a monk from Tibet who is accredited with the translation of six books between 194 and 197 CE and among them is *Nidānasūtra* from *Saṃyuktagāma* (Nanjio No. 733). What all these works establish is the co-existence in China of both early Buddhism and Mahāyāna in the second century.

Their early translations were, as assessed by Zurcher, "generally of the poorest quality" but "highly interesting,"

> "from a literary point of view, since they constitute a new and foreign element in Chinese literature, the stylistic features of which strongly deviated from and often even conflicted with the Chinese norms of literary composition;" and

> "from a linguistic point of view, since the majority of these translations teem with vernacular expressions and syntactical structures which, if studied closely...would yield much interesting information on the Northern Chinese spoken language of the second century" (Zurcher 1959, 34)

Chao Pu-chu, on the other hand, states:

> As translation work was in its infancy, conditions were limited and translation was not carried out in a planned and systematic way[5]. Few of the works were full translations and no fixed style of translation could be established. But they carried out the task of opening up the field in a distinguished manner, founded a position for Buddhism among Chinese people, and enlarged its influence." (Chao Pu-chu 1960, 4)

From Central Asian Scholars to Direct Contact with India

During the period of the Three Kingdoms, the foremost translators were Indo-Scythian Chih Ch'ien, Sogdian K'ang Seng-hui, the Indian masters Vighna or Wei-ch'i-nan and Chu Chiang-yen of the state of Wu, and Indian Dharmakāla and Sogdian Kang Seng-k'ai or Sanghavarman of the State of Wei.

Chih Ch'ien is rated the only important translator in Southern China before the late fourth century. His works included *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* (Taisho 474) which "in China has ever since been among the most highly venerated works of the Canon" and had been translated into Chinese seven times by the seventh century CE (Zurcher 1959, 50). He was also the first to translate *Sukhāvatīvyūha* as *A-mi-t'o ching* (Taisho 362) which was a crucial text for the Amitabha/Amitayus cult. He is also credited with the first Chinese hymns to be sung to music: *Tsan p'u-sa lien-chufan-pai* (Ibid. 50-51). Zurcher observes that Chih Chien's translations were very free and his mastery of the Chinese language and the elegance of his style had been noted:

> The urge to present the doctrine to the literate public in a more palatable form[6] is also manifested by his revision of existing translations. Thus he wrote a "streamlined" version of Lokakṣema's *Śūrangamasamādhisūtra*, a new translation of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* translated before by Lokaksema, an enlarged edition of Vighna's Dharmapada [i.e. *Fa-chu ching or Udānavarga* attributed to Dharmatrāta], a new redaction of K'ang Meng-hsiang's *Hsiu-hsing pen-ch'i ching*, and perhaps also a more elegant version of the Sūtra in Forty Two Sections (Ibid. 50).

K'ang Seng-hui, hailing from the far south close to present day Hanoi, Vietnam, was apparently an influential Buddhist activist "who lived a strong and eventful life" in an era of persecution more than a translator (Ikeda 1986, 29). His *Liou-tu-chi Ching* (Taisho 152) deals with the six *pāramitās* as practised by Bodhisattvas according to Mahāyāna tradition. More importantly his contribution to the continuation of the "Dhyāna" School founded by An Shih-kao with links to early Buddhism is characterized by his commentaries to *An pan shou-i ching* (Taisho 102) dealing with *Ānāpānasmṛti, Yin-ch'ih-ju ching* (Taisho 1694).

Among the few active figures in the State of Wei, the most notable was the Indian Dharmakāla (T'an-ko-chia-lo) whose main concern appeared to have been the lapses in monastic discipline. He produced *Seng-ch'i chieh-pen*, based on the *Prātimokṣa* of the Mahāsanghikas. Sanghavarman (K'ang Seng-k'ai) translated the *Karmavācanā* of the Dharmaguptakas.

The overall impact of Indian Buddhist literature during the period of Three Kingdoms is best explained by Daisaku Ikeda who says:

> As a result of the ardent efforts of these Buddhist believers who braved the dangers of the road and traveled to China from the second century onward, the foreign faith began to take root in Chinese soil and spread among the population. By the time of the Three Kingdoms period, a new cultural era was dawning in the long history of the Chinese people...
>
> The Three Kingdoms period was a time of great political and social turmoil, and it would appear that the hearts and minds of the common people were thirsty for some kind of spiritual aid. They were in a mood to be receptive to the teachings of the imported faith. We must understand this fact if we are to understand why Buddhism made such rapid advances among the people of the period. We must also take cognizance of the activities of the monk-translators and the number of persons who as a result of their labors were won over to the

Buddhist faith if we are to rightly judge the basic forces that were at work in shaping the history and cultural development of the time (Ikeda 1986, 30-31).

The period which followed under the Western Chin and subsequent emperors was noted for the expansion of the Chinese diplomatic and cultural relations to not only the western corners of Central Asia (e.g. present day Pakistan and Afghanistan) but also to Southeast Asia. Up to this time the translation of Indian literature was mostly in the hands of Central Asian Buddhists whether they were residents in China or visitors. Only a few Indians were involved. Dealing with the itineraries of Buddhist missionaries, Soshin Kuwayama states:

> In the light of the Chinese Buddhist history, the 4th~5th centuries clearly form a watershed of the monks' movements. In the first three centuries of our era, the Buddhist monks who are believed to be of Central Asian origins (from Parthia, Samarkand, Yue-zhi and Qyzil), eighteen in number are twice as many as those of Indian origins and, yet, on the other hand, the Central Asians suddenly became reduced in number from the 4th century onward in striking contrast with an enormous swell of Indians. In parallel with such a trend, Chinese pilgrims who reached India, ninety-six in number, also show a great difference from those before the 4th century. The tendency implies that the Buddhist interchanges between China and India had burst upon the scene during the 4th ~ 5th centuries (Kuwayama 1987, 705).

That these contacts extended as far as Sri Lanka are attested by the record that Emperor Hsiao-wu's reputation as a *dharmarāja* had reached the Island and a Buddha statue was sent as a gift by the Siṃhala king. A few years later Fa-Hsien who traveled to India in 399 CE reached Sri Lanka in 412 and spent two years at Abhayagiri of Anuradhapura. It is there that he found the Sanskrit text of *Mi-sha-sai lu* (*Mahiśāsakavinaya* – Taisho 1421) (Zurcher 1959, 152)[7]

Stability of Buddhism and Preoccupation with Monastic Rules of Discipline

Three hundred years of sporadic and, for the most part, geographically restricted Buddhist literary activity contributed directly to the stability which Buddhism attained in China in the fourth century. Official permission for the Chinese to enter the Buddhist Sangha symbolized this stability. Tao-an (312-385) was the leading light in the founding of the Chinese Buddhist Sangha. He sent his disciples as missionaries to spread the religion in various parts of China. He saw the importance of compiling a catalogue of all translations of Buddhist Sūtras from Han Dynasty to 374. This pioneering catalogue *Tsung-li chung-ching mu-lu* or simply *An-lu* or An's Catalogue provided the titles, names of translators and dates of translation along with lists of *Shih-i* (names of translators lost) and of *I-ching-lu* (spurious sūtras). He also concentrated on Prajñā-sūtras and spearheaded a special exegetical school called the School of Nonbeing. He was also associated with the Maitreya Bodhisattva Cult. His others literary works included the translation of *Pinai-yeh-lu* (based on one portion of Sarvāstivāda Vinaya). His preoccupation with Vinaya rules for the Sangha is to be seen from the statement, "It is said that there are five hundred Vinaya rules, but I do

not know why they are not complete here. The introduction of these rules is the most pressing business at hand."(Chen 1964/73, 94-99)

Tao-an's search for Vinaya rules motivated Fa-hsien to undertake the long and arduous tour over Pamirs to India and Sri Lanka to gather Vinaya texts from 399 to 413 CE. It is also said that inviting Kumārajīva to China was another of Tao-an's ideas. (Ibid. 99-100; Zurcher 1959, 184-204; Chaou Pu-chu 1960, 4-5)

The efforts of Tao-an were greatly supplemented by the arrival of Kashmiri and Gandhāra monks who brought texts of the Sarvāstivāda School. Among them Sanghabuṭi translated *Abhidharmavibhāṣā* and Dharmanandin did *Madhyamāgama*, and *Ekottarāgama*. Sanghadeva produced *Abhidharmahṛdaya* and *Jñānaprasthāna*. Sanghabhadra is credited with rendering of *Sudarśanavinayavibhāṣā*. As regards this phase in the introduction of Indian literature to China, Zurcher writes:

> The period 380-385 was characterized by the influx of foreign missionaries and the translation of several important scriptures. Some of these foreigners came directly from Kashmir, the stronghold of the Sarvāstivāda school of Hīnayāna Buddhism. The vast scholastic systematizations in the field of Abhidharma for which this school was famous were still unknown in China; among the first missionaries who opened this literature to the Chinese we find the Abhidharma specialists Sanghadeva and Sanghabhadra who arrived at Ch'angan around 381 AD. Others, coming from the Buddhist kingdoms of Central Asia, were the Vinaya master T'an-mo-shih (Dharmādhi) from "the Western Region", the Agama specialist Dharmanandin from Tukhara, the Ābhidharmika Kumārabodhi who had been the *purohita* of Mi-ti, king of Turfan, and who in 382 was sent to Ch'angan as a member of a tribute mission to the court. Most of these masters knew no or little Chinese when they arrived: they merely recited the Sanskrit text of the scriptures which they knew by heart or of which they possessed manuscripts, and several of the versions made in this way in the first years by the Chinese translation team had to be revised and corrected afterwards. It was, as far as we know, for the first time that the main work of translation was not done by a more or less sinicized foreigner, but by a Chinese polyglot. The man who for many years was the central figure in this team was Chu Fo-nien a monk from Liangchou whose family had been living in this frontier region for generations, and who thereby and by his travels had become well-versed in Sanskrit and in several Central Asian languages. In the field of exegesis his capacities are said to have been mediocre, but his knowledge of foreign languages—extremely rare among the Chinese clergy at all times—made him invaluable. Practically all translations of this period were actually made him, the foreign missionaries mainly acting as informants "producing" (i.e. reciting or writing out) the original texts. In view of the great problems connected with the translation of these difficult and extremely technical scholastic scriptures, and in view of the size of his oeuvre—more than two hundred *chuan*—Chu Fo-nien may certainly be regarded as one of the great early translators, a worthy precursor of Kumārajīva whose arrival in 402 AD he probably still lived to see. (Zurcher 1959, 202)

A statement attributed to the Buddha is that *Vinaya* or rules of discipline constituted the life of the Buddhist Faith (*Vinayo sāsanassa āyu*). Tao-an's initiative in which Fa-hsien and later I-ching scoured South and Southeast Asia for Vinaya texts

made China the greatest repository of many different traditions of Buddhist rules of discipline: e.g.

Dharmagupta Vinaya – 67 volumes
Sarvāstivāda Vinaya – 157 volumes
Daśādhyāya Vinaya – 61 volumes
Mahiśāsaka Vinaya – 30 volumes
Mahāsanghika Vinaya – 40 volumes

In addition to these Chinese translations of Indian originals, about 500 volumes contain *Karmans* and *Prātimokṣa* and over 500 volumes had been produced by later Chinese scholars on Vinaya rules (Chao Pu-chu 1960, 7). The thoroughness of the search is exemplified by the fact that the Sri Lankan Vinaya Commentary by Buddhaghosa, namely *Samantapāsādikā* (*San-chien lu p'i-p'o-sha* – Taisho 1462 translated by Sanghabhadra in 488/89 CE) is also among them.

A further outcome of Tao-an's efforts was in all likehood the creation of the *Bhikkhuṇī-sāsana* (Order of Nuns) in China. He had stated, "As long as the four congregations are not complete, there is something lacking on the work of conversion." (Chen 1964/73, 99). Could it be that Fa-hsien's sojourn in Sri Lanka was the immediate cause for the two daring trips which nineteen Sinhala Bhikkhuṇīs took in 429 and 433 to establish an order of properly ordained Bhikkhuṇīs under the leadership of Devasārā? (Tsai 1994, 53-54; 86) The record of the two missions in *Pi-ch'iu-ni Ch'uan* does not suggest it. But it could not have been a mere coincidence.

Consolidation of Chinese Buddhist Literature— Kumārajīva, Guṇavarman, Paramārtha and Hsuang-Tsang

The fifth century dawned with the arrival of Kumārajīva (350-413) in Ch'ang-an. He was born in Kucha as the son of an Indian Brahman father and a Kucha princess. Entering the Sangha with his mother at the age of seven, Kumārajīva studied sacred texts in Kashmir under Bandhudatta, an eminent scholar of the region. Kumārajīva had established a reputation for his scholarship. Hence was he invited by Tao-an. A close friendship based on mutual admiration developed with Hui-yuan[8] (344-416). Kumārajīva began with Sarvāstivadin school but his admiration for Mahāyāna developed in Kashgar. This change he expressed in terms of a person who did not recognize gold and, therefore, considered stone to be a wonderful object. (Chen 1964/73, 82).

In Ch'ang-an Kumārajīva had, as Chao Pu-chu, pinpoints, "an advantage which his predecessors never enjoyed, support from the government" (Chao Pu-chu 1960, 7). He translated over 400 volumes which "are not only a Buddhist treasury, they are a priceless legacy of literature" (Ibid. 7-8). It is also noted that "to this date his translations are considered to be one of the best specimens of Chinese style." (Mukherjee 1928, 17-18) Ikeda calls him the "unparalleled monk-translator" and concludes that "Kumārajīva's translations mark a pinnacle in the history of the Chinese-translation of Buddhist works and continue to shine with undimmed luster even today" (Ikeda 1976/86, 33-55).

Kumārajīva translated a wide range of Buddhist texts, introducing thus to China some of the most important works of Indian Buddhist literature hitherto unknown or inadequately known and appreciated. Among them the most significant was *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, which, as Lotus Sūtra, had and continue to have the most far-reaching impact on Buddhism of East Asia. Similarly his translation of smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha* gave a fillip to Pure Land Buddhism based on devotionalism to Amitabha Buddha. Kumārajīva also wrote biographies of Aśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. He followed with the translation of Aśvaghoṣa's *Sutrālankāra*,[9] Nāgārjuna's works expounding the Mādhyamika philosophy, and Āryadeva's *Śataśāstra*.

Kumārajīva also commenced the translation of *Brahmajālasūtra* (entirely different in content from its name-sake in the Dīghanikāya of Southern Buddhism). It has been considered in China as "the chief code of law of the Mahāyāna schools." (Mukherjee 1928, 20). He rendered *Vajrachedikā* or Diamond Sūtra for the first time in Chinese. He also translated *Pañcaviṃśati Prajñāpāramitā* (already translated twice), *Daśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (translated thrice) and *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* of Nāgārjuna. Kumārajīva also translated a shorter version of *Sūrangamasamādhisūtra* and *Sarvāstivāda Prātimokṣa*.

He was an inspiration to his contemporaries. Among them was Buddhayaśas who translated *Dīrghāgama* and the Vinaya works of Dharmagupta School. The influx of missionaries from Central Asia and India continued in the fifth century (e.g. Buddhajīva, Guṇavarman, Sanghavaman and Guṇabhadra).

Buddhajīva translated some works of Mahiśāsaka schools while Guṇavarman coming to China via India, Sri Lanka and Java rendered into Chinese the Vinaya texts pertaining to nuns in Dharmagupta school and completed *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdayaśāstra*. Sanghavarman translated the index (mātṛkā) to Sarvāstivāda Vinaya (*Sa-po-to-pu phi-ni moto-lo-chia*), and Nāgārjuna's *Suhṛllekhā*. Guṇabhadra's contribution included the translations of the early Buddhist *Saṃyuktāgama*, the Yogācara work on Mind-only philosophy *Lankāvatārasūtra*, Vaśumitra's *Abhidharma-prakaraṇapāda* and the Pali work *Miḷiñdapañha* as *Na-sien ki-yu-ching*. Though this last work is no longer extant, its appearance in China at this time in indicative of the flow of Indian literary works via Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia (Cf. Fa-hsien's role). Bodhidharma or Tam came to China in 520 from South India. Though he made no direct contribution to literature, he founded the Ch'an school.

Paramārtha or Guṇarata or Chen-ti, the Indian Buddhist scholar, who at the invitation of Empress Wu (502-549) came to China via Fu-nan (Cambodia), brought with him a large shipment of Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures. He translated as many as a hundred volumes and has distinguished himself as the promoter of Dharmalakṣaṇa school in China. Paramārtha was a specialist on Abhidharma. Five of his works still extant are on Abhidharma. His most important work, according to Mukherjee, was the translation of Aśvaghosa's *Śraddhotpādaśāstra* (Mukherjee 1928, 32). Apart from translating parts of the commentary on Asanga's *Mahāyānasamparigrahaśāstra*, Paramārtha concentrated on rendering into Chinese a remarkable collection of the works of Vaśubandhu: Among them are *Nirvāṇasūtrapūrvabhūtot-*

pannābhūtagāthāśāstra (*Nieh-pan ching p'an-yu-chin-wu-chieh lun*), Śāstra of the Buddha's last teaching (Nanjio 1209), *Buddhagotraśāstra*, *Vijñaptimātrasiddhi*, *Madhyāntavibhangasūtra*, and *Tarkaśāstra*. (Mukherjee 1928, 33) Paramārtha "performed the very important task of introducing the idealistic teachings of the Indian masters Asanga and Vaśubandhu to the Chinese Buddhist world" (Ch'en 1964/73, 135). His efforts, among others, set Hsuang-tsang on his journey to India, which eventually resulted in the founding of the Fa-hsiang or Idealistic School, also known as Yogācāra, Dharmalakṣaṇa, Vijñanavāda, Vijñaptimātra, Cittamātra, Mind-only or Consciousness-only School.

Two significant aspects of China's exposure to Indian literature are to be noted around the time of Empress Wu. The empress was fascinated by the life and career of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka and tried to emulate him with decrees forbidding animal sacrifice, expounding Buddhist ethics and constructing monasteries. So devoted she was to Buddhism that she issued a decree in 504 to the effect that Lao-tzu, the Duke of Chou and Confucius were disciples of the Buddha. (Zurcher 1959, 317-318). Empress Wu is also said to have emulated Aśoka in synchronizing the dedication ceremonies of the monasteries that she built.

The other was the belief that China formed a part of Aśoka's empire and one nineteenth of the 80,000(*sic*) monasteries built by Aśoka was on Chinese soil. Actually, reports are found on architectural components and Buddha's relics "discovered" in as many as nine "archaeological excavations" of Aśokan monasteries in China. (Zurcher 1959, 277-280; Guruge 1993, 382-385) [10].

The momentum set by the contacts which China had established with South and Southern Asia prompted Hsuang-tsang (603-664) to undertake his tour to India in 629. In an amply described and documented stay in India during which he was a student and subsequently a professor of Nalanda Buddhist University, he is said to have brought many books and sacred objects. The books, alone, carried on the backs of twenty-two horses, consisted of

124 Mahāyāna sūtras
15 Sarvāstivāda (*Shang-tso pu*) books
15 Sammitīya works
20 Mahiśāsaka works
17 Kāśyapīya works
42 Dharmagupta works
67 Sarvāstivāda (*Shwo i-tsie yeu-pu*) works
657 others (Edkins 1893, 118-119)

His most impressive translation is that of *Mahāprājnāpāramitā* (200,000 quatrains in 600 fascicles) which took him four years. Hsuang-tsang "most faithfully followed the Sanskrit text and translated 120 volumes entire, in all their wearisome re-iteration of metaphysical paradoxes" without omitting repetitions and superfluities, which Kumārajīva left out. (Edkins 1893, 120)[11] In nineteen years dedicated to translation, he completed 740 works in 1335 volumes. It is remarkable that, he translated Abhidharma works of different schools and almost the entirety of

Sarvāstivāda literature. Among them were Katyāyanīputra's *Jñānaprasthāna* (translated also by Sanghadeva in 383). *Sangīti-paryāya* (*Chi-i-men-tsu-lun* = Sangītisutta of Southern Buddhist Dīghanikāya), and *Abhidharmakoṣa* of Vaśubandhu of the Vaibhāṣika school. Hsuang-tsang gained his reputation as the founder of the Yogācāra in China by translating four books of Asanga and seven out of thirty-six works of his brother Vaśubandhu, the cofounder of the School.

Hsuang-tsang, a native Chinese with extensive as well as intensive knowledge of Buddhism in the land of its origin, proved to be the most comprehensive and reliable interpreter of Indian Buddhist literature in Chinese. The style he adopted and the faithfulness to original texts he insisted upon set the model for all future translations for the next half millennium.

From Multi-Sectarian Many Books to Reliance on Fewer Scriptures

Already in India with the rise of the Mahāyāna tradition, schools of Buddhism were known to concentrate on selected works as their main scriptures. Vaibhāṣikas depended on Vibhāṣās or commentaries and Sautrāntikas emphasized the Sūtras. As Mahayana Sūtras evolved as a newer form of Buddhist scriptures, nine came to recognized as *Vaipulya* Sūtras (i.e. the greatest or most important < *vipula* – great) They are:

- *Aṣṭasāsrikā Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of wisdom in 8000 verses)
- *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus of the Good Doctrine)
- *Lalitavistara* (Description of Grace—A Biography of the Buddha)
- *Lankāvatāra* (Revelation of the Doctrine in Lanka)
- *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (Splendour of Gold)
- *Avataṃsaka*, including *Gaṇḍavyūha* (Flower Garland or Ear Ornament)
- *Tathāgataguhyaka* (Mystery of the Thus-gone)
- *Samādhirāja* (King of Meditation)
- *Dásabhūmiśvara* (Lord of ten Spheres)

Mādhyamika and Yogācāra schools resorted to the writings of their founders, namely Nāgārjuna, Asanga and Vaśubandhu. Only the early Buddhist schools like Sarvāstivāda and Theravāda had a comprehensive body of scriptures in their voluminous Tripiṭakas, comprising *Vinaya*, *Sūtra* (i.e. *Āgamas* or *Nikāyas*) and *Abhidharma*.

This vast literature of India trickled into China first via Central Asia and then directly from India as well as Sri Lanka, Java and Cambodia. Buddhist communities, avid for any knowledge of Buddhism they could gather, translated every work whether from the memory of missionaries or manuscripts which became steadily available. There was no ideological or doctrinal barriers to favour the works of any Buddhist tradition, schools or sects. With the massive influx of books as with Fa-hsien, Paramārtha, Hsuang-tsang and I-ching, there must have been a serious problem for the Chinese Buddhists at a time when their religion had overcome its initial obstacles and

become a popular and indispensable element in Chinese life and culture. How could they cope with the enormous volume of blatantly conflicting, contradictory and paradoxical statements, all purporting to be Buddhist teachings? A choice had to be made. A process of simplification was inevitable.

The persistent advice of the Buddha (e.g. Dhammapada 19,20,100-102) was to learn only a little—just even a single stanza—and practice accordingly rather than merely to master literature without making use of it. Whether this advice was heeded or even noted and recognized in China, we have no way to know. But the development of Buddhism in China took almost a sudden turn in this direction. The net result was the division of Buddhism to a series of schools or sects concentrating on a limited number of scriptures during what Chao Pu-chu calls "the golden age of Buddhism" (Sui and T'ang periods from the end of the sixth century to the middle of the ninth century). These are:

> *San-lun* (Triśāstra or three treatises) school based on Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika philosophy as expounded in *Mahaprajñāpāramitāsūtra*.
> *Ssu-Lun* (Four treatises) school by adding *Mādhyamikaśāstra, Śataśāstra* and *Dvādaśanikāya*.
> *Wei-shih* (Consciousness—or Mind-only) school corresponding to Vijñānavada or Yogācāra School, known also as *Fa-hsiang* or Dharmalakṣaṇa School, based on *Sandhinirmocanasūtra*, *Yogācārabhūmi-sūtra*, and *Vijñaptimātrasiddhiśāstra*.
> *T'ien-Tai* school found by Chi-i (538-597) with *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* as the basic scripture, besides the founder's 'three great works': *Fa-hua-wen-chic*, *Fa-hua hsuan-i*, and *Mo-ho chih-kuan*.
> *Hua-yen* (Avataṃsaka or Flower Garland or Ear Ornament) School founded by Tu-shum (557-640) and Fa-tsang (634-712), based on *Avataṃsakasūtra*.
> *Ching-tu* (*Sukhāvatī* or Pure Land) School based on *Sukhhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*.
> *Ch'an* (Dyāna or Meditation) School, not based on a particular set of scriptures although the earliest texts to be translated by An Shih-kao and others were on meditation, yoga practice and *dhyāna*. It subscribes to the Mādhyamika philosophy. Most widely used scripture among Ch'an adherents is the Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch. At the early stages the school treasured *Lankāvatārasūtra*, but Diamond Sūtra became more popular among later Ch'an practitioners.
> *Vinaya* School founded by Tao-hsuan—a contemporary of Hsuang-tsang—is based on the *Caturvarga Vinaya* of the Dharmagupta School.
> *Chii-she* (Abhidharmakoṣa) School for the exclusive study of *Abhidharmakoṣaśāstra*.
> *Satyasiddhi* School based on *Satyasiddhisūtra*.

Chao Pu-chu also speaks of different schools based on *Mahāyānasamparigrahaśāstra*, *Daśabhūmiśāstra* and *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, which existed at one time and, being short-lived, were either lost in oblivion or absorbed into other schools (Chao Pu-chu 1960, 16-17).

The tendency appears to have been a mixed blessing. A vast literature of commentaries, exegetical and philosophical analysis and interpretation, and independent treatises has arisen in each school around its chosen text or texts. This prolific literary activity contributed to the enrichment of Chinese intellectual life and the flowering of her creative ingenuity. On the contrary, China became a vast repository of unread and unused literature. Most works were not read because the language had become archaic and unintelligible.

The effort taken in earlier times to re-translate the more important texts every few centuries to be relevant to the changing readership ceased when Buddhism was on the decline after the twelfth century. Yet there has been two major benefits:

> *First*, the entire literature was transmitted with Buddhism to Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Tibet and has been preserved and augmented. Tibet, of course, supplemented the Chinese legacy with the translation of additional works of Indian Buddhist origin from Pali and Sanskrit. Tibet had access to Indian literature both in originals from India and in translations from China. Consequently, Mongolia too became a repository of this enlarged collection.[12]
>
> *Second*, the availability of the vast body of Chinese translations in so many different versions, conveniently presented in the Taisho edition of the Chinese *Tripiṭaka*, has been a boon to modern scholarship.

Equally important is the direct contribution, this vast and varied literature makes to the revitalization and re-interpretation of Buddhism in modern times, especially by Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun. We shall return to him in due course.

Impact of Indian Buddhist Literature on Chinese Culture and Civilization

Nearly a thousand years of intensive literary activity in translating, explaining and interpreting the Indian Buddhist literature had a significant impact on Chinese culture and literature. This impact has been felt in different fronts: religious, philosophical and spiritual domain, language and literature as well as in art and architecture, astronomy, mathematics, and logic.

In the religious philosophical and spiritual domain, Buddhism rose from a little known "barbarian" intrusion to a formidable intellectual and spiritual force. As Ikeda argues:

> A foreign religion introduced from abroad, it probably first attracted attention among the courtiers and members of the aristocracy chiefly because of its exotic flavour. With time it spread to the members of the gentry class and then to the populace as a whole. Gradually extending its influence throughout the entire range of Chinese society, it developed until it had evolved into a distinctly Chinese type of religion with its own institutions and practices (Ikeda 1986, 167-168).

Buddhism manifested itself in two main aspects: First, with Confucianism and Daoism, it formed a principal strand in Chinese religious, philosophical and spiritual thought. Their cross-fertilization over two millennia in which Buddhism played a dynamic, catalytic role, has brought into existence a typically Chinese mentality, outlook or genius contributing to tremendous achievements in fields of science, technology, architecture and arts. It is no exaggeration to say that Buddhism has been the foundation of the value system which is the hallmark of Chinese culture. Again, as Ikeda says,

> It [Buddhism] ceased to be a creed imported from India and Central Asia, and became a body of beliefs expressive of the faith and inner spiritual being of the Chinese people as a whole (Ibid. 168).

Indian Buddhist literature had a direct impact on the evolution of the Chinese language. Buddhism brought with it a new vocabulary and early translation had to look for the nearest possible word from Confucianism and Daoism. This search prompted and facilitated the tendency to seek parallel or comparable concepts in Buddhism and these national religions. This method, called *Ko-i*, is attributed to Tao-an. It elucidated Buddhist terms, notably numerical categories, with the help of notions extracted from traditional philosophy particularly for the benefit of lay scholars (Zurcher 1950, 12). But it was abandoned as translators either borrowed and Sinisized Pali and Sanskrit terms or evolved a more appropriate vocabulary for the exposition of Buddhism. Kenneth Chen explains that these new terms gradually found their way into the Chinese vocabulary and have been fully accepted. He divides them into two categories:

> The first comprises those which are translations of Buddhist concepts. Examples of these are *k'uhai*, sea of misery; *hsi-t'ien*, the Western Paradise; *wu-ming*, ignorance; *chung-shen*, sentient beings; *yin-yuang*, karma[13]; *ch'u-chia*, leaving the household life.
>
> The second category comprises those terms which are transliterations of Sanskrit words. Examples are *ch'ano*, an instant; from *kṣaṇa*; *t'a*, pagoda, from *thūpa* which is a Pali word; *p'usa*, from *bodhisattva*; *lohan* from *Arhat* or *Arhan*; *moli*, jasmine, from *mallikā*; *seng*, monk, from *Sangha*. (Chen 1964/73, 478)

The influence of the Sanskrit alphabet is traced in the practice of *fan-ch'ieh* (wherein two characters are used to indicate the pronunciation of the third character) and *tzu-mu* (wherein thirty phonetic radicals are divided as in Sanskrit into five categories as labials, languals, gutturals, dentals and glottals. The inclusion of Sanskrit texts in Chinese translations in the form of mystic *Dharaṇis* is being utilized to unravel

the evolution of pronunciation of Chinese characters. Further the comparison of Chinese translations with the original Sanskrit text has provided valuable data to reconstruct the Chinese pronunciation of the T'ang Dynasty. (Ibid. 479-80)

As regard the style, translators had to grapple with the dilemma whether "to makes a free, polished and shortened version adapted to the taste of the Chinese public or a faithful, literal, repetitious and therefore unreadable" version. (Zurcher 1959, 203) Rules attributed to Tao-an elaborate where one could deviate from the original and where the Sanskrit text had to be faithfully rendered. (Ibid.) As already noted, Kumārajīva's eminence as a translator emanated from his readable style whereas Hsuang-tsang's reputation as a reliable expositor rests on his faithful renderings. There is no doubt that the experimentation of style by translators of Indian Buddhist works had a lasting effect on Chinese writing. Mao tun, the President of the All-China Literary and Translation Workers' Conference in 1954, reported, "Translation work in China has a long history and a glorious tradition. The scrupulous and scientific methods established by our ancestors in translating Buddhist scriptures and their excellent achievements are worthy of our pride and good examples to us." (quoted in Chao Pu-chu 1960, 10).

It is in the domain of creative literature that the impact of Indian works was specially significant. As Kenneth Chen analyzes,

> Taoist literature displayed imaginative powers as in some passages of *Chuang-tzu*. Confucian literature seemed to have repressed or neglected this aspect. The "dominant Confucian literature was, on the whole, formal, narrow, restricted, practical and having little to do with mythology. It...was strong in the recording of historical facts, but weak in telling a tale. Along came the translation of the Mahāyāna Sūtras, wherein Indians allowed their imagination untrammeled freedom with fanciful descriptions of the glories of heaven and torments of hell, of world systems as numerous as the sands of Ganges, of time and space incomprehensible to the human mind. Exposed to such types of unbridled imaginative literature, the Chinese began to give freedom to their imagination again."

As best examples of how well the Chinese learnt the art of story-telling from Indian literature, he cites *Hsi-yui-chi* and *Feng-shen-chuan* (Chen 1917/73, 477)

Chao Pu-chu assesses the contribution of Indian Buddhist literature on Chinese literature in the following terms.

> Buddhism has introduced to Chinese literature entirely new things—new horizons, new literary genres and new ways of expression and rhetorical devices. Aśvaghoṣa's minstrelsy has brought us an excellent example of epic-writing. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, the *Sūtra of One Hundred Parables* and other works lent inspiration to the novels of the Tsin and Tang dynasties. The thought of *Prajñā* has left traces in the poetical works of Tao Yuang-ming, Wang Wei, Pai Chu-yi and Su Shih (Su Tung-po). The popular ballads introduced in ancient times for the preaching of Buddhism gave rise to a special form of literature, the spiritual tales, which were in fact scriptures in laymen's language. The scriptural tales excavated in the Tunhuang

caves were all popular works of literature in those days, written in an easy flowing style and exceedingly rich in imagination. From these works, the origins of early stories, novels, operas and other forms of vernacular literature can be traced. In addition, there exists another special genre of literary writing arising from the conversations and the minutes of religious instructions of reverend priests, namely, the *Analects*. Following this simple and free style of writing, the Confucian scholars of the Sung and Ming dynasties produced various "records' in which they expressed their thought. In short, Buddhism has found rich and colourful expression in the field of Chinese literature. (Chao Pu-chu 1960, 20-22)

Humanistic Buddhism

Alternating imperial patronage and persecution, and the rapid compartmentalization into schools and sects with isolated monasteries sapped the creative energy of the Buddhists in the ensuing centuries. Chinese scholars no longer went in search of literature from the rest of the Buddhist world. Nor were any major translation projects undertaken after the eleventh century. Buddhist scholarship was increasingly confined to the interpretation of the few books or sūtras which each school had chosen for itself. There was, of course, an effort to legitimize these different texts as authentic teachings of the Buddha: the theory posited by the T'ien-tai School, and hence referred to by some as "T'ien-tai Syncretism," was that the Buddha taught the various texts at various times of his life in the following manner:

Avataṃsaka (Flower Garland or Ear Ornament) – first 21 days
Āgamasūtras (Pre-Mahāyāna Canon) – 12 years
Vaipulyasūtras (major Mahāyāna texts) – 8 years
Prajñā-sūtras (Wisdom texts) – 22 years
Saddharmapuṇḍarīka (Lotus sūtra) – 8 years
Nirvāṇa-sūtra – last day

But whether such an approach actually promoted the study of cross-school scriptures is not established. The T'ien-tai School, however, restricted itself to the Lotus and Nirvāṇa Sūtras. If at all, the recognition of such an extensive body of scriptures with equal authenticity could have had a positive impact on their preservation, earlier through manuscript copying and later through block printing.

Ming and Chin Dynasties (1368-1911) saw a steady and marked decline of Buddhism. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the state policy of distancing monks from the laity was quite stringent. Laws like the following had come into being:

"Two monks might keep their hermitage in the same high mountain for meditation, but not more than three or four." (Ke Yenliang, 1976 165-166)

"The abbots or wandering monks who make friends with officials are to be severly punished." (Ibid. 177)

The result, as described by Darui Long, was as follows:

> Monks were either meditating in the mountains or depending on the donations of lay people. Isolated as they were, the only social function was to perform funeral services. Consequently, Buddhism was criticized for its insignificant contribution to the welfare of society. (Long 2000, 56)

Perhaps, it was not a new problem as far as Chinese Buddhism was concerned. Even as far back as the seventh century, the sixth patriarch of the Ch'an School, Hui-Neng (638-713) had to agitate to bring Buddhism from isolation to home:

> Buddhism is in the world.
> It is not realized apart from the world.
> If you want to put this into practice, you can do it at home.
> It does not depend on being in a monastery. (Cleary 1998, 28-29)

If it was then a concern of the Ch'an school with its total commitment to meditation, it had later become a universal problem affecting Chinese Buddhists in general. Apparently, a movement to reform Buddhism went hand in hand with the liberation of China from devastating foreign dominance and internal dissension. Master Tai-Xu (1889-1947) was a remarkable product of this movement. In fact, he became its prime mover.

In an article entitled "Instructions to the Chinese Revolutionary Monks", he presented in 1928 the concept of "*rensheng fojiao*" (human life Buddhism). His simple but forceful message was threefold:

- get rid of superstitions;
- change the living style of being confined to monasteries and offering service to the ghosts and the dead and serve the living people; and
- build a Sangha more in keeping within modern social needs and propagate Buddhism for human life.

In all his writings and speeches he urged that Buddhism should subscribe directly to the improvement of life. His visits to Southern Buddhist countries—especially Sri Lanka and Thailand—convinced him that Buddhism was already playing an active role in society (Guruge 2001, 27-28).

Tai-Xu's message had a major impact in China. For instance Chao Pu-chu as President of the Buddhist Association of China once gave as his formula for developing good traditions in Chinese Buddhism the following guidelines:

> - I think we should promote the thinking of Humanistic Buddhism in our doctrines.
> - We should promote Humanistic Buddhism which will help us to complete the tasks in the new historical period. (quoted in Long 2000, 66)

Grand Master Hsing Yun and the Renewed Impact of Indian Literature

In July 1946 a young monk of nineteen years sat in the audience when Master Ta-Xu expounded his views on Humanistic Buddhism. That was Grand Master Hsing Yun, the 48th Patriarch of the Lin-chi Ch'an tradition and the founder of Fo Quang Shan Buddhist Order. Recalling this meeting with Tai-Xu, he worte:

> "Venerable Tai-Xu excitedly called on us, saying, 'We must establish the characteristics of Humanistic Buddhism.'" (Universal Gate Magazine March 1999).

To the young, fertile, and vigorous mind of Hsing Yun, Tai Xu's call for a humanistic form of Buddhism had a wider meaning. He embarked on study and investigation. His search was for the inner essence of Buddhism in its diverse manifestations. How actually can Buddhism serve humanity? What contents in the Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings highlight service to humankind? Where should one look for exemplars and guidance in evolving a form of humanistic Buddhism? The search had to be on his own. The inspirer of the new line of investigation, namely Master Tai Xu, died just a year after the memorable meeting of 1946. As a result, Grand Master Hsing Yun's research and contemplation, though inspired initially by Master Tai Xu's enthusiasm, had to be based on his own devices. In it the young scholar-activist had some significant advantages.

Their major difference has been in outlook, intellectual emphasis and mode of action. Master Tai Xu saw weaknesses in Chinese Buddhism vis-à-vis modern science, education and development. As regards the mode of action, Master Tai Xu was an agitator in building public opinion.

In contrast to Master Tai Xu, Grand Master Hsing Yun developed his strategy around learning and scholarship, research and contemplation, systematic planning and deliberate but cautious activism. He chose to appeal to the intellect of the people rather than to their emotions. He acquired knowledge for himself but readily shared it with others using every available opportunity and modality.

Grand Master Hsing Yun's intellectual commitment has no boundaries. He has a message for the scholar and the activist; the passive contemplator and the aggressive agitator; the self-effacing monastic and the most worldly seeker of pleasure. Millions of adherents to his teachings on all continents of the world look up to his guidance. He is their acknowledged leader, mentor, guide and friend. The power of his message and the universality of intellectual approach has earned him respect and influence far beyond the reaches of Buddhist traditions. No Buddhist leader of modern times has risen to such heights of popular acceptance *solely* by dint of his own personal effort and achievements. (Richard Kimball 2000 and 2001, Darui Long 2000, and Guruge 2001)

In the process, Grand Master Hsing Yun developed, in his interpretation of Humanistic Buddhism, a comprehensive approach to the study and the use of the Indian Buddhist literature. The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order was founded by him

combining two major Buddhist traditions of China. The first was the Ch'an tradition which dominated Chinese Buddhist thought and practice from the time of An Shih-kao, the pioneering translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese, with significant contributions of Bodhidharma and Hui-neng the sixth patriarch. Ch'an retains the principles of self-transformation thorough moral purity (*Śīla*), meditation (*Samādhi*) and the eventual realization of wisdom (*Prajñā*). It is strictly in conformity with the concept of *Tze-li* (better known by the Japanese term *Jiriki).* Ch'an (Sanskrit *Dhyāna,* Pali *Jhāna,* Korean *Son,* and Japanese *Zen*) appeals to the intellectually oriented seeker. The second tradition was the popular, simplified form of devotionalism of the Pure Land School, based on venerating the cosmic Buddha, Amitabha/Amitayus, as expounded in *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra.* The concept behind it is *t'a-li* which entails assistance or grace of others in gaining liberation. (Japanese *Tariki*). The combination of these two approaches of self effort and grace in one religious order makes Humanistic Buddhism closer to the ideal of universal Buddhism.

Each of the two traditions has had their special scriptures and the Grand Master could have confined himself to the study and propagation of a limited bibliography. His contribution to the renewal of the impact of the Indian Buddhist literature on Chinese culture and religion rests on the fact that he did not do so. He has opened to the Chinese readership, to begin with, and eventually to a wider audience in the world the abundantly rich Chinese literary heritage, preserved in the translations of well nigh two hundred monks and scholars. In his determination to reflect the words of the historical Buddha—Śākyamuni Gautama, he relies heavily on the original Indian Buddhist literature.

He began with the known. That included the entire Buddhist literature in Chinese, in which the Mahāyāna sūtras were predominant. He studied the traditions of his own school, writing masterful commentaries on the *Platform Sūtra of Hui Neng* and the *Amitābha Sūtra*. He grasped the essence of Ch'an and reached his own conclusions on Pure Land as present to be actualized in this very life. He explored through the *Diamond Sūtra* the way to become a Bodhisattva and perfected his understanding of wisdom and emptiness. He grasped the significance of the six Pāramitās as a foundation of Buddhist ethics. He analyzed *Mahaprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* for its crucial teachings on the perfection of wisdom, and found in *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* a perennial appeal to righteousness. In *Yogācārabhūmisūtra* and *Karmavibhangasūtra*, he found the essence of Buddhist morality.

From these, he proceeded to the Āgama Sūtras to read and understand Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings to human beings. He became as well-versed in the *Ekottarāgama*, the *Saṃyuktāgama* and many sūtras of the *Dīrghāgama* as in *Mahāyāna sūtras.*

The wider his reading and study, the more profound was his appreciation of Buddhism as an enormously rich and varied philosophical heritage of humanity. In this books and speeches, he would quote from all traditions: from *Dhammapada* and *Sigalovādasutta,* from *Upāsakaśīla* and *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* in the same breath as he cited the *Sūtra in Forty-two Sections* and *Five-Part Vinaya.* Expounding the importance of benefiting from the diversity of Buddhist traditions—especially from

their literary masterpieces—Grand Master Hsing Yun blazed a new trail. He has thus become the symbol of unity for all Buddhist traditions or as he, himself says, "I preach eight or even more schools of Buddhism."

His books and speeches demonstrate the unity of Buddhist concepts and ideals. This unity becomes clearer as Grand Master Hsing Yun marshals most skillfully the wide array of diverse Buddhist scriptures to highlight the humanistic foundation of the Buddha's unique Path of Deliverance.

His recent publications in English such as *Being Good, Only a Great Rain, Lotus in a Stream*, and *Describing the Indescribable* show how deeply he delved into the Indian Buddhist literature in Chinese. The list of works he cites in support, explanation, and augmentation of his interpretations is impressive. It includes:

- *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus),
- *Avataṃsaka* (Flower Garland or Ear Ornament),
- *Sūrangamasamādhi,*
- *Sukhāvatīvyūha,*
- *Maharatnakūṭa,*
- *Prajñāpāramitāśāstra,*
- *Mahāyānaśraddhotpāda,*
- *Abhiniṣkramaṇa,*
- *Mahāprajñāpāramitā,*
- *Abhidharmakoṣa,*
- *Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra,*
- *Daśabhūmika,*
- *Śāriputra-abhidharmaśāstra,*
- *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa,*
- *Lankāvatāra,*
- *Mahāparinirvāṇa,*
- *Nirvāna,*
- *Vajracchedikā*
- *Prajñāpāramitā,*
- *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna,*
- *Vijñaptimātrasiddhiśāstra,*
- *Mahāsannipāta,*
- *Samādhi,*
- *Samantabhadrotsahanaparivartaśāstra,*
- *Suratapariprcchāśāstra,*
- *Pavaradevapariprcchāśāstra,*
- *Viseṣacintabrahmapariprcchā,*
- *Kuśalamūlasangrahaśāstra,*
- *Upāsakaśīla,*
- *Satyasiddhiśāstra,*
- *Yogācārabhūmi,*
- *Bodhisattvabhūmi,*

- *Mahāyānasamparigraha,*
- *Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣayavikurvaṇanirdeśa,*
- *Adbhutadharma,*
- *Abhidharmasangītiparyāyapada,*
- *Dharmapadāvadāna,*
- *Mahāyānasūtralankāraśāstra,* and
- the *Vinaya* of all traditions.

By bringing this vast array of Indian literature, accessible through Chinese, to an expanding audience of Chinese and English as well as Spanish readers, Grand Master Hsing Yun has won their admiration for the intellectual sophistication and comprehensiveness of the Chinese civilization.

Conclusion

Two main conclusions emerge from this discussion:

(1) The Indian Buddhist literature has had an extensive impact on Chinese culture and civilization spiritually and linguistically and the cross-fertilization between Indian and Chinese intellectual heritages brought into existence in China significant developments in Buddhism, on the one hand, and the unique Chinese way of life, on the other.

(2) After two millennia of interaction, Indian Buddhist literature in Chinese has begun to have an impact on Buddhist thought and practice in the world as a whole due to the initiative of Grand Master Hsing Yun.

To enable further benefits to accrue from this remarkable cultural admixture, a major task has to be accomplished by scholars. The Chinese Buddhist literature, daunting as it is on account of its sheer volume, is still largely inaccessible to the world. It has to be translated to world languages. The current effort of Japanese and US scholars (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai English Tripitaka Project through Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, Berkeley, California, USA) has to be supplemented by a massive international venture if the magnificent treasure house of Chinese literature of Indian Buddhist origin is to reach scholars and the general public expeditiously. In the meantime, much can be done through analytical and descriptive studies by scholars who have the language and research skills.

Notes

[1] Each line of a hymn was memorized in several alternative word arrangements: e.g. AB C DEF (original text); A B C D E F (word text), AB BC CD DE EF (step text), AB BA AB BC CD etc, (woven text), AB BA ABC CBA ABC BC etc. (dense text). The original text could be reconstructed from each of these word arrangements. (Guruge, 1995, 1273-1274)

[2] While the word for the major divisions was *Nikāya* in the Pali Canon, it was *Āgama* in the Sarvāstivāda Canon in Sanskrit. *Āgamasūtra* is a term coined to describe the discourses in that Canon and to distinguish them from *Mahāyānasūtras*.

[3] Scholars agree that the various versions of the account on the origin of this work are nothing more than pious legends with or without a nucleus of historical fact. Some, however, reject every account as "a piece of fiction, propagandistic story full of anachronisms, which seems to have originated in Buddhist circles in the third century AD, to be further developed in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries and to reach its definitive form at the end of the fifth century" (Zurcher 1959, 22).

[4] Believed to be two Indian monks Mātanga Kāśyapa and Chu Fa-lan (Dharmaratna, Dharmarakṣa or Dharmāraṇya) as per legends on the dream of Emperor Ming of Han Dynasty.

[5] Conditions were different from the time Zhu Fa-hu (Dharmarakṣa 239-316) translated the Lotus Sūtra in the company of Chinese and Non-Chinese disciples, court officials, editors, correctors and copyists dictating over 3 weeks to two Chinese assistants to be re-read after two years by two non-Chinese and submitted again for examination by the Chinese laity (Robert 1997, 16).

[6] See an exchange of views on this issue between Chih Ch'ien and Vighna in Zurcher 1959, 48.

[7] Zurcher contends that no official relations existed before 395/405 between China and Sri Lanka. Since Mahinda Werake has traced references to Sino – Sri Lanka relations in *Han Shu* (1-6 CE) and *Hou Han Shu* and *Tung-kuan han-chi* (131CE) (Werake 1990, 221).

[8] Eighteen letters of Hui-yian with Kumārajīva's answers are preserved in *Ta-sheng ta i-chang*. (Chen 1964/73, 106)

[9] Its Sanskrit original is no longer extant.

[10] For the main works on Aśoka in Chinese, see Przyluski 1923, 106 and Guruge 1993, 357-358

[11] Some scholars, for example Lewis R. Lancaster, are of the opinion that such variations need not be attributed to the translators as some texts could have reached China in different recensions at different times.

[12] At the Conference on Oriental Studies, convened by Peking University in Beijing from May 16-19, 2001, several Mogolian scholars dealt with Indian literary works in Sanskrit (e.g. Dandin's Kāvyādarśa) which had gone to Mongolia via Tibet.

[13] *Yin-yuang* is now used widely in the sense of *cause* and *conditions*.

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