

Splitting the Jain and Buddhist Relationship in History With Reference to the *Dâmhâvamsa*

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Introduction

The *Dâmhâvamsa*, a chronicle written in Pali describing the history of left tooth relic of the Buddha, holds an identity among the Pali literature to be a text presented both historical and poetical significances. Regarding the time of its composition, a few trustworthy clues can be found in the book itself. As the 6th stanza of the 1st chapter of the *Dâmhâvamsa* records, it has been composed during the time of queen Lîlâvati. In accordance with that, it is presumable that the text was composed in the Polonnaru era, in 1210 A.C. The author of this book was first Dhammakîrti, known with a royal title “Râjaguru”, a Sinhalese Buddhist monk, who was a pupil of the sub-commentator venerable Sâriputta. Speaking on the source background, it is evident that it followed the historical *Daladâvamsa* existed in the Sinhalese language. However, it is adorned with eye catching language and includes ear pleasing 415 verses.

Jainism, which emerged in India, was a well-known religion, even in the Buddha’s period and Mahâvîra was its last leader. Their teachings were criticized by the Buddha as heathenism in many discourses in the canon. In any case, we are able to reveal certain similarities between these two traditions Jainism and Buddhism, not in doctrinal, but in traditional contexts. According to the canonical literature, it should be noted that the Buddhist criticism towards the other religions were focused on their philosophy and traditions only. Apart from that, the Buddha introduced certain religious concepts and enactments admitted the non-Buddhist traditions for the betterment of his order. Other religions, which pervaded in Buddha’s time were closely associated by the Buddha and made some significant discussions, too, with them. Hence, those vital evidence supports to understand the relationship between Buddhism and non-Buddhist religions in that period and consequently the relationship between Jainism and Buddhism also comes out.

In fact, there are not substantial proofs to infer which kind of relationship between Buddhism and Jainism in the post Buddhist period was existed. Nonetheless, the Pali chronicle literature, written in Sri Lanka, could be a more useful source in order to find out reliable information on the Jains and their philosophy in late period. In this study, especial attention will be paid at the point of the splitting relationship between Jainism and Buddhism in the post Buddhist era with reference to the facts found in the *Dâmhâvamsa* itself.

Evil behaviours of the Niganthâs

The text brings out information on the Niganthas on the tail of the second chapter and at the beginning of the third chapter. Arahant Khema picked up the sacred tooth relic from the Buddha’s pyre

and handed over to the King, whose name was Brahmadata ruled the kingdom of Kâlinga. Before he obtains the relic, he practiced heathen. However, under the instructions of Arahant Khema, he became a Buddhist layman and patronized Buddhism truly. Thenceforth, the sacred tooth relic was patronized by the rulers, who became the Kings in the kingdom. According to the evidences in the source text, the relationship between the Kings and the sacred tooth relic was collapsed at a certain period. Then, the King named Guhasîva, who became the King in KâliEga, by seeing and getting information about the tooth relic, became a Buddhist and patronized to the Buddhism including the tooth relic. As a result of that, the NigaGmhas, who were enraged by this action of the ruler, behaved against the King. In consequence, they were banished by the King.

“The Niganthas who don’t know the selfishness and altruism and always think only their mercenary behave as a witch ignorant from delusion”

“Away from shame and confidence, behave as appalling, cunning, and absurd, away from heaven”

As mentioned earlier, the text further describes them. After banished, they approached to the King PaGdu, who ruled Pâmalîputta.

“The gods, whom should be worshipped by everyone Brahma, Shiva, Vicnu are respected by you too. Nonetheless, the divisional King Guhasîva is away from these gods and respects to the relic of human being and, calumniating the gods”

Accordingly, enraged King Pandu deployed the divisional King Citrayâna to bring Guhasîva and the tooth relic to him. An interesting matter was that the super-natural power of the tooth relic made him also a Buddhist. Yet, the King Guhasîva and his sacred tooth relic were conveyed to the Pâtalîputta by Citrayâna.

Unusual practices from the Niganthâs

According to the facts of the text, they were happy about the gods named Brahma, Siva and Vicnu. Once, they afflicted to the tooth relic by using anvil but the relic went down in the anvil. At this time, they interpreted that the tooth relic was a body part of the Vicnu because the Niganthâs believed the Vicnu. The text convinces further that all the above incidences were occurred in Indian history. Anyhow, a few doubts rose in this regard thusly; were these incidences truly occurred during the reign of the King Guhasîva? Was there any religious conflict between Buddhism and Jainism? Otherwise, was it an author made story? If so, what could be the reason for Dhammakitti’s criticism made their practice as creationism? However, to the historical records, Jainism was divided into two sects presumably in 300 B.C. as *Svetambhara* and *Digambhara* and, in which people wear a white robe was called *Svetambhara* and without dresses was known to be *Digambhara*. Though, the *Dâmhâvamsa* evident that the Niganthas believed creationism and deism, the original Jain teachings do not support such beliefs at all. The unclear point that should be carefully analyzed is why the author presents them as the Niganthas who believe the gods. Particularly, the Jainas, who were originally non-violence practitioners, are appearing in the *Dâmhâvamsa* to be extremist.

There is no even a slight reference to the name Mahāvīra in the text. If it was a merely creative composition, what was the intention of the author to connect creationism to the Niganthas? Was it due to the translation of old Sinhalese source? Because, it is difficult to confirm that the *Dāmhāvamsa* was a merely translated work rather than an independent composition, the above suspicion here to be avoided. On the other hand, even in a condition to consider this text as a merely translated work, it is impossible to infer that the author was not fully aware of the original teachings of Jainism to make such misinterpretation. Hence, the less evidences lead not to hang a view that the Nigantha society was transformed up to such deteriorated level in the Polonnaru period.

Niganthas practiced non-violence and rejected the concept of creationism were delineated belittling in the text. Even while the Buddha criticized Nātaputta referring his teaching, there could not be a matter for baseless criticism on the Jains in the *Dāmhāvamsa*. Then, definitely, there would be a different purpose to introduce Niganthas practices mixed with the creationism and defined to be heretics.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to compare the Kālinga dynasty with all other Indic historical sources in authorizing the reliability of the information related to the Niganthas given in the *Dāmhāvamsa*. Yet, the problem here is that none of historical source offers any relevant information about royal clan or the Kings of Guhasīva and Pandu. According to the history of Ceylon, the King Kīrti Sri Meghavarna ascended the throne in the 3rd, 4th century A.C. For the *Dāmhāvamsa*, the king Pandu could be taken in a contemporary King to the King Siri Meghavarna. Nevertheless, one of Chinese sources reveals that the King Meghavarna had a contact with the ruler of Pātaliputta, King Samudraguptha in that era. In addition to that, the statement “lanka” met in the Alahabāt rock inscription written by Samudragupta can also be taken as a considerable proof in terms of the relationship between Smudragupta and Meghavarna.

If it is so, who could be the king mentioned in the texts? The commentators suggest that these were the traditional characters related to the Indian historic stories (porāna katha). In an examining the above viewpoint, I also understand that it could be dependable because it is difficult to find out substantial reference about the aforementioned characters in the historical records. In consequence, a doubt arises on the trustworthiness of the information Niganthas found in the *Dāmhāvamsa* and can be inferred that the dynasty of the King Pandu possibly was a fiction. Moreover, it could be inferred that Dhammakitti thero composed the *Dāmhāvamsa* without a clear knowledge on the culture and the doctrine of the Niganthas. The contrary against the above point is that the traditional acceptance is that he was an extraordinary man And, indeed, he should have obtained even a slightest knowledge regarding the teaching of the Nātaputta. According to that, it can be inferred that there was no any connection between the Niganthas and the sacred tooth relic described in the *Dāmhāvamsa*.

A certain opinion in terms of this point is that this part was written, referring to the source in the Sinhalese language. The 10th verse affirms the above point. My opinion at this point is that this was a misunderstanding. Herein, the author has mentioned that the Sinhalese poets composed a chronicle regarding the tooth relic. If the Sinhalese *Dāmhāvamsa* was a work of an individual writer, the question remains, is why the word “kavīhi” is used in the *Dāmhāvamsa*. Because it is a plural usage, there could be existed a few more works on the tooth relic in the Sinhalese language. The other crucial point is that the *Dāmhāvamsa* does not hold any fact that it was a mere translation. If it was a direct translation, the text should have contained the phrases like “*hītāya parivattṇsi,*” ”*tato ca bhasantaramewa*

himva” found in the commentaries. And, another point is that there is not a possibility to misinterpret the teachings or the culture of the Niganthas if this was a direct translation because from the time of Vammhagâmini Abhaya, Ceylonese was aware of the Jain tradition and the religion.

Also, the Sinhalese were aware of the concept of Shiva, Vicnu and Brahma, respective the places where Anuradhapura, Polonnaru and Kantalâ. Months, namely, Giri, Jotiya and Kumbhanda built their monasteries in Anuradhapura region. And, time the *Dâmhâvamsa* was written, Polonnaru period, appeared multi-cultural society. Therefore, the author was clearly familiar with these varied religious teachings and cultural situations. Extending the above point, further can argue because the author was living in a monastery, which was located nearby the royal palace. Thus, it can be concluded this kind of description came to appear with the full author’s awareness of the Niganthas.

In another aspect, it can be argued that because the *Dâmhâvamsa* was composed after 8 centuries of bringing the tooth relic, it would be improper to admit these Niganthas, described in the text, were not living in India and can be assumed that there was a local background in relation to the criticism of Niganthas in the *Dâmhâvamsa*. Another important point here is that there is no any historical record on Jains later part of Anuradhapura era and in the Polonnaru period. The reason for that could be a corruption of the Niganthas practices in Ceylon with the influences of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma like these Hindu concepts entered into the Buddhist culture as well as to the later literature.

Conclusion

Analyzing the historical and religious facts in terms of this issue, it is possible to trace a few more conclusions for the question why the author of the *Dâmhâvamsa* has criticized the Niganthas mixing up their practices with the Shiva, Vicnu and Brahma. Mainly, it can be concluded that there was a religious culture of Niganthas in Ceylon at the time this text was written and their practices also were corrupted with the teachings of the Vicnu, Shiva and Brahma. Under this circumstance, the author had the same aspect towards the Niganthas like to the Hindus in the contemporary period. Consequently, he mercilessly criticized the Niganthas in his work. Therefore, the conclusion of the research question would be the corrupted Niganthas religious culture and consequence the relationship between Jains and Buddhist was split up since the Buddhists were culturally and religiously attacked.

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