

The 3 BUDDHIST COUNCILS (SANGAYANA)

The 1st Buddhist Council

Venerable Mahakassapa

- Venerable Mahakassapa (the 3rd chief disciple of the Buddha) and his followers had received news of the Buddha's death.
- A bhikkhu named Subhadda told the monks to refrain from grieving because they would now be free to do what they like.
- Venerable Mahakassapa was concerned for the future of the Dhamma, its safety and purity.
- Venerable Mahakassapa was determined to firmly establish the Holy Truth, as taught by the Buddha. He felt it necessary to convene a Council for this purpose.
- Venerable Mahakassapa's suggestion to hold a Council to recite the Dhamma and Vinaya was unanimously approved by all the monks.
- Venerable Mahakassapa selected 499 Arahants for the Council.

Ananda *→ personal assistant to the Buddha* *Relative*

- Ananda was initially omitted because he had not attained Arahantship:
 - But the inclusion of Ananda was important because he had learnt the Dhamma and the Vinaya from the Buddha himself.
- Ananda was eventually accepted by Venerable Mahakassapa as a Council member, making a total of 500 Arahants:
 - Ananda had attained Arahantship on the eve of the Council.

King Ajatasattu

- King Ajatasattu was informed of the intention of the Sangha, and he made all the necessary arrangements for them to assemble at the entrance of the Sattapanni Cave in Rajagaha.

- The 1st Buddhist Council was held 3 months after the Buddha's Parinibbana. *2000*

Council Proceedings

- The rules of the Vinaya (discipline) were recited by Venerable Upali, the foremost disciplinarian.
- The Suttas (discourses) were recited by Venerable Ananda.
- Venerable Mahakassapa had questioned Upali and Ananda on the Vinaya and Suttas:
 - Both were settled and recited with the full approval of the Council.

The 2nd Buddhist Council

Ten Points

- The 2nd Buddhist Council was held at Vesali 100 years after the Buddha's Parinibbana.
- At that time, monks of the Vajji clan were practising the following Ten Points:
 1. Singilonakappa: the practice of carrying salt in a horn. This is against pacittiya (the monastic code) 38 which forbids the storage of food.
 2. Dvangulakappa: the practice of taking food even after the prescribed time (i.e. noon), as long as the sun's shadow had not passed the meridian by more than two fingers' breadth. This is against pacittiya 37 which forbids the taking of food after midday.
 3. Gamantarakappa: the practice of going to another village and taking a second meal there on the same day. This is against pacittiya 35 which forbids over-eating.
 4. Avasakappa: the practice of performing the Uposatta ceremony in different places in the case of a large sima (parish). This is against the Mahavaga rules of residence in a parish (sima). *observing the 8 precepts*
 5. Anumatikappa: the practice of performing any Vinaya ceremony first and then seeking the consent of the absent Bhikkhus. This amounts to a breach of

monastic discipline.

6. Acinnakappa: the practice of using customary practices in favour of the Vinaya. This also amounts to a breach of monastic discipline.
7. Amathitakappa: the practice of drinking butter milk even after meals. This is against pacittiya 35 which forbids over-eating.
8. Jalagikappa: the practice of drinking toddy (wine). This is against pacittiya 51 which forbids the drinking of intoxicants.
9. Adasaka-nisidanakappa: the practice of using a rug which has no fringe. This is against pacittiya 89 which forbids the use of borderless sheets.
10. Jatarupadikappa: the practice of accepting gold and silver. This is against rule 18 of the Nissaggiya-pacittiya.

Settling the Dispute

- Venerable Yasa sought to declare the Ten Points illegal. This was resisted by the Vajjian monks.
- At the suggestion of Venerable Revata, the monks proceeded to Vesali in order to settle the dispute.
- 700 monks were selected for a Council, which lasted 8 months.

Council Proceedings

- Venerable Sabbakami was the presiding Thera.
- The Ten Points were declared unlawful.

The Aftermath

- In rejecting the decision of the 2nd Buddhist Council, the Vajjian monks convened another Council on their own which they called Maha Sangiti or Great Council.
- This was the first recorded secession of the Sangha.
- The breakaway group was subsequently known as the Mahasanghikas sect, and is believed to be the forerunner of the Mahayana School of Buddhism.

The 3rd Buddhist Council

King Asoka

- King Asoka, once a ruthless warrior, had converted to Buddhism and reformed.
- Under King Asoka's patronage, Buddhism prospered.

The Heretics

- Unfortunately, many heretics of other religious sects were attracted by King Asoka's patronage and other material prospects to enter the Sangha.
- There, they continued to adhere to their old faiths and practices and preached their doctrines as the doctrines of the Buddha.
- Soon, the number of heretics and false monks became far larger than those of the true believers.

Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa

- This caused great distress to Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa.
- King Asoka then invited the Venerable to protect the Dhamma.
- The Venerable took the opportunity to hold the 3rd Council.

Council Proceedings

- The 3rd Buddhist Council was held in Pataliputra in the 18th year of King Asoka's reign, about 236 years after the Buddha's Parinibbana.
- 1000 Arahants participated in the Council.
- Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa was the presiding Thera:
 - He was responsible for the compilation of the Kathavatthu-Pakarana (Points of Controversy), the 5th book of the Abhidhamma Pitaka.
- The heretical doctrines were thoroughly examined and refuted.