

## Edmonton Dhamma School - Upekkha Class - December 02, 2018

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### The Second Buddhist Council

#### Introduction/Historical Background

- At number of occasions after passing (*parinibbāna*) of the Buddha learned monks convened what are called Buddhist Councils to preserve the original teachings of the Buddha from misconceptions and incorrect interpretations. Buddhist Councils are meetings held with the participation of a large number of monks to recite and discuss the teachings that were handed down to them by their teachers to try and clarify what were the original teachings and what were wrong ideas that entered the teachings over the years.
- The first Buddhist Council was held three months from the Buddha's passing (approx. 483 BCE) at the entrance of the *Sattapanni* Cave in the city of *Rajagaha* of the *Magadha* kingdom under the support from King *Ajāsatta*. *Mahā Kassapa* Thero led the process and 500 *Arahants* participated.
- Society changed over the next 100 years and political instability resulted in chaotic situation time to time. Due to internal conflicts, royal support for Buddhism decreased, people moved away from a religious life and learned monks left major cities for countryside. Regional issues and needs resulted in some monks changing certain rules to suit regional/personal needs. This is the setting when King *Kālāshoka* (393-365 BCE) came to rule the *Magadha* kingdom.

#### *Vajjiputtaka* Bikkhus

- The state of *Vajji* and the city of *Veshali* is located on the north side of the river Ganges. All the other major Buddhist centres such as Kosala and *Magadha* kingdom were located on the south side of the river Ganges. Therefore, *Vajji* and *Veshali* were somewhat separated from other areas and somewhat functioned more independently.
- However, during the time of the Buddha, he travelled to these areas and there was a strong Buddhist monastic community as well as a lay community. But since the passing away of the Buddha, the situation became similar to what it was before.
- Around the time of King *Kālāshoka*, monks in this area have agreed to revise some of the rules practiced in the past. The monks who followed these relaxed rules were known as *Vajjiputtaka*.
- When a learned *Arahant* monk named *Yasa* travelled to *Veshali* and saw *Vajjiputtaka* monks are following a relaxed set of rules, he declared they were wrong.

#### Ten disputed points

- Ten rules, known as 'ten disputed points', that Ven. *Yasa* declared to be not in accordance with the original rules laid out by the Buddha were:
  1. Storing salt in a horn, to be mixed with food when needed.
  2. Eating after midday (short period after midday).
  3. Eating once in one village and then going again to a village for alms.
  4. Holding the Uposatha Ceremony separately with monks dwelling in the same locality, without holding a major ceremony for all monks living in the 'major' area.

5. Carrying out official acts when the assembly was incomplete, with the intention to get agreement from others at a later stage.
  6. Following a certain practice because it was done by one's tutor or teacher (without taking consideration whether that practice was in accordance with the Vinaya).
  7. Eating sour milk after one had his midday meal.
  8. Consuming strong drink if it has not been fermented (note that consumption of fermented drinks – i.e. alcohol – is not allowed).
  9. Using a bedding which was not the proper size.
  10. Using gold and silver (i.e. money).
- Ven. Yasa reported these breaches to the highly respected Ven. *Revata*, who advised that a council should be called.
  - Ten disputed points were brought before a council of the most senior monks at the time.
  - The Council passed a verdict against the *Vajjiputtaka* monks and declared their conduct unlawful.
  - The council convened to discuss the 10 disputed points is known as the Second Buddhist Council.
    - It was held in *Vesali*, in the temple named *Valukaramaya*
    - A total of 700 monks participated.
    - King *Kālāshoka* provided support.
  - A total of 700 monks present then reaffirmed the teachings of the Buddha by reciting the Dhamma and Vinaya together.
  - However, the *Vajjian* monks refused to accept this verdict and left to hold a council of their own.
  - This resulted in the Buddhist Order formally splitting into two sects.
    - The liberal *Vajjian* monks became known as the *Mahasanghikas* or the 'Great Community'.
    - The orthodox monks associated with Ven. *Revata* became known as the *Sthavarivadins* or the 'Community of the Elders'.