

Religions and Politics III

Siddharta Gautama (d. 483 B.C.E.) in the Pali Majjhima Nikaya (first century C.E.)

In all the beauty of my early prime with a wealth of coal-black hair untouched by grey -despite the wishes of my parents, who wept and lamented - I cut off my hair and beard, donned the yellow robe and went out from home to homelessness.... Bear always in mind what it is that I have elucidated, and what it is that I have not elucidated. And what have I not elucidated? I have not elucidated that the world is eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is not eternal; I have not elucidated that the world is finite; I have not elucidated that the world is infinite; I have not elucidated that the soul and the body are identical; I have not elucidated that the arhat exists after death; I have not elucidated that the arhat does not exist after death; I have not elucidated that the arhat both exists and does not exist after death; I have not elucidated that the arhat neither exists nor does not exist after death. And why have I not elucidated them? Because this profits not, nor has to do with the fundamentals of religion. For this reason I have not elucidated this. And what have I elucidated? Misery have I elucidated; the origin of misery have I elucidated; the cessation of misery have I elucidated; and the path leading to the cessation of misery have I elucidated. Why have I elucidated this? Because this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion, and tends to absence of passion, to knowledge, supreme wisdom, and nirvana.

Ashokan Edicts (262-232 B.C.E.)

Dharma is good. But what does Dharma consist of? It consists of few sins and many good deeds, of kindness, liberality, truthfulness and purity.... One should obey one's father and mother. One should respect the supreme value and sacredness of life. One should speak the truth. One should practice these virtues of Dharma.... My officials of all ranks - high, low, and intermediate - act in accordance with the precepts of my instruction.... For these are the rules: to govern according to Dharma, to administer justice according to Dharma, to advance peoples's happiness according to Dharma, and to protect them according to Dharma.

Ashoka, apoken of and speaking in the Ashokavadana (second century C.E.)

Buddha: A hundred years after my death there will be an emperor named Ashoka in Pataliputra. He will rule one of the four continents and adorn Jambudvipa with my relics, building eighty four thousand stupas for the welfare of

people. He will have them honored by gods and men. His fame will be widespread.

Ashoka: I distributed his reliquaries and beautified the earth everywhere with mountain-like stupas of many colors, with lofty banners and jeweled parasols. My son, myself, my house, my wives, the whole earth, even the royal treasure - there is nothing whatsoever that I have not given up for the teaching of the Dharma King.

Buddhaghosa's account from the Pali Aganna Sutta (c. 430 C.E.):

When stealing, reproof, lying, and violence had sprung up among them, they came together and said, "What if we elect some one of us, who shall get angry with him who merits anger and reproof, and banish him who merits banishment? He was called the Great Elected One, Lord of Fields, and King.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 9.124

In order to avoid doing harm to beings they undertake the precepts of virtue. They practice renunciation for the purpose of perfecting their virtue. They cleanse their understanding for the purpose of non-confusion of what is good and bad for beings. They constantly arouse energy, having beings' welfare and happiness at heart. When they have acquired heroic fortitude through supreme energy, they become patient with beings' many kinds of faults.

Pali Jataka 276 (perhaps fifth century C.E.)

Beneath the mild sway of a righteous king
Like shade from sun-stroke sheltering,
His subjects may all dwell in peace,
Rejoicing in their wealth's increase.

Pancaraksha Sutra (fifteenth century C.E.)

Brahmadatta proclaimed, "My dear subjects! It is my duty to safeguard the country and countrymen. You need not be afraid of anything. I will do all that is needed." After saying this, King Brahmadatta bathed and cleansed himself with many kinds of sweet-smelling waters. Purified in body, speech, and mind, the king appended the amulets of the Pratisara dharani to his crown and armor, then went alone to meet the enemy. The men in the army of the enemy kings retreated and ran away in panic.