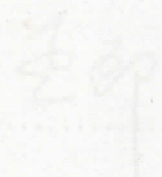


Statement of the Student:

Mahāyāna Elements in Theravāda Tradition

[A Study of *Mahāyāna* Influence in Sri Lankan Buddhism]

27/7/2011



Ven. Yan Yin

Supervisor's Recommendation:

This thesis was prepared by Ven. Yan Yin under my supervision and I recommend this as suitable to be considered for the conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

This research was undertaken in order to clarify *Mahāyāna* elements and its influence in Sri Lankan *Theravāda* tradition. This area of research has been taken randomly by some scholars such as Ven. Moratuwe Sasanaratana *Thera* (in Sinhalese), Prof. D. J. Kalupahana and other foreign scholars etc. According to our present knowledge it has not been exhaustively studied in modern research works. So we have taken this aspect in a broader perspective covering philosophical, cultural and religious areas with reference to *Pāli*, Sanskrit, Sinhala and Chinese sources. No doubt this research has contributed much to the existing knowledge of the field.

Without a prior knowledge of the Indian background of the emergence of *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* one cannot discern the main differences and similarities of both the traditions. So we have given a brief account of the Indian religious background up to the second Buddhist council in order to clarify various reasons for the emergence of *Theravāda* and the basic *Mahāyāna* tradition called *Mahāsaṅghika*.

The second chapter deals with the expansion of Buddhist sects after the second Buddhist council until the third council. And it also explains how the *Theravāda* tradition was introduced to Sri Lanka in the third century B.C. by the missionary group headed by Ven. *Mahinda Thera*. Through this one can understand the nature of Buddhism introduced to Sri Lanka.

The *Mahāyānic* elements crept into the Sri Lankan society throughout the history. So the third chapter was devoted to explain in brief the main incidents of *Mahāyāna* influence in Sri Lankan history with passing comments on the development and expansion of *Mahāyāna* in India at the time.

In addition to the Indian and Sri Lankan background of the two Buddhist traditions, one should have a good knowledge of the main features of *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* in order to understand *Mahāyāna* elements in *Theravāda*. Therefore the fourth

chapter deals with the main teachings of *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* in the developed form.

The first analysis of the main theme of the research comes in the fifth chapter. Here we have made an attempt to elucidate philosophical, cultural, religious and other evidences in Sri Lankan *Theravāda* tradition related to *Mahāyānic* teachings.

The conclusion includes a summary of the foregoing chapters and the general conclusions that could be arrived at through this research. Our final conclusion is that the two traditions evolved from the same sources and underwent radical changes due to various causes and conditions in the history and finally the followers of both the traditions became one in ritualistic aspect though there are some differences in philosophical analysis.