



THE AWAKENING OF FAITH IN MAHAYANA BUDDHISM ACCORDING TO ASVAGHOSA'S VIEW

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Abstract: In this article, the writer will mention the issue of belief in oneself, belief in the Three Triple Gem, in the process of generating pure faith towards the path of liberation and enlightenment. However, The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana also teaches practitioners how to establish faith in spiritual practice. Faith here is confidence in the ability to break the law and self-grasping and unwavering faith in the Three Jewels. Cultivation here includes first in five virtuous in the six perfection (Paramita).

1. Introduce

Buddha attained enlightenment after declared "*I am the Buddha, the Beings will become*". These words, of course, affirmed the human status as paramount, giving people a true belief in themselves, only by themselves can bring happiness to themselves. In the Treatise on the Wheel of Propositions of Different Schools (Dị Bộ Tông Luân Luận- (異部宗輪論) said that "*All good results are done by people*". Thus, the ability of human consciousness, self-control, and judgment have enhanced humans more than any other species.

In the Kinh Hoa Nghiêm 大方廣佛華嚴經)(sa. *Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭyasūtra*, ja. *daihōkōbutsukegonkyō*), (sa. *avataṃsakasūtra* or *gaṇḍavyūha* sutra, the Buddha teaches that faith is the mother of good merits. Faith is the first foundation for sentient beings from there to direct their whole heart and determination to engage in the line of practice, go direct to the shore of liberation. However, belief is only the means that to achieve freeing, enlightenment, there must be a guide to avoiding going astray. In Thesis The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana, Ma Minh (Asvaghosa)

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gave the belief in the Mahayana *महायान*, a great vehicle capable of transporting sentient beings to the other side.

2. The Author

Sa. Asvaghosa is an Indian poet, thinker, and Mahayana commentator, living between the first and second centuries C.E, is the 12th ancestor of Indian Buddhism, with great merit in the transfer of Theravada Buddhism to Mahayana³. He is regarded, one of the most significant commentaries of Buddhism in general and Mahayana in particular. According to Chinese commentators, His hometown was in Varanasi- *बनारस* (Ba-la-nai) belongs to Central India. He was born in a Brahmin household, His father name is Lur-già, His mother name is Cù Na.

Regarding his name has many different meanings, there are three causes as come after:

1) His birth made the horse to be touched, neighs endlessly, so it be called Asvaghosa (neighs horse).

2) He was playing very well, he often plays Rāstavara very skillfully in order to commend the dharma sound that made the horses appreciate and whinny.

3) Once in the Nhuc Chi country, he wanted to immediately verify that the horses were fast for 6 days until Asvaghosa came to the sermon to provide grass for them to eat. Surprisingly, the horses passionately listened to the Dharma, didn't want to eat grass, and were touched by their emotions many times.

The legend, at that time he was a very talented professor. Before leaving the Buddha's house, he advocated "Immutable Self." However, after being analyzed by the Punyayasas ancestor about the doctrine of non-self in Buddhism, from there, he appreciated and left home to study. After the instruction of Pàrzva ancestor, he became one in four most famous monks at that time, with the name "*four wise suns*", including Deva in East India, Nagarjuna in West India, Kumārajīva (Cuu Ma La Thập) in North India, and He in East India. His translation of products, with the famous work follows:

S. Buddha-carita-kāvya

S. Mahāyāna-bhūmi-guhya-vācā-mūla-śāstra

S. Mahālaṅkāra-sūtra-śāstra

Vajrasuci

Gandistotragatha....

³ Chan Hien Tam translation and interpretation, The waking of faith in Mahayana, "*The Path to Enlightenment*", Ho Chi Minh Manuscript Publications, 2004, p. 24

In addition, it is said that, there are nearly 100 other works that are also believed to be composed by him, but the most famous of which is the mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra (The Awakening of Faith in Mahayana) and is still taught by Mahayana Buddhist countries.

3. Awakening the Faith in Mahayana in Buddhism

3.1. Explain Title

First we can Interpretation the Awakening of Faith in Mahayana Buddhism (Mahāyāna Śraddhotpāda Śāstra 大乘起信論 or Śraddhotpāda Śāstra) is an important treatise written to give a condensed and comprehensive introduction to Mahayana philosophy. In the original Sanskrit title.

*Mahāyāna*⁴ means *great Vehicle*, only for a large carriage, capable of carrying many practitioners simultaneously to the verge of ultimate enlightenment (the ultimate Nirvana). Mahayana is seen as the vast thought and way to transform, save beings of a Bodhisattva or great on the foundation of vast compassion and wisdom beyond all the categories and limits of common language, concept. Mahayana is also contained in two aspects, the doctrine, the method to transform, and the aim of the method. Precisely because of the vast purpose and way, so the Mahayana advocates the help of all human beings in all areas and of course, all faculties. Depending on each case, Mahayana can meet all. Therefore, Mahayana is the vehicle of selflessness, Non-self and tirelessly engaged to serve the community. Mahayana is often established on great compassion for beings and immense wisdom in transformation.

The word "*The Wakening of faith*" is the literal translated of the Sanskrit word śraddhotpāda. "Pāda" in this circumstance also means "*to establish,*" "*to build,*" or "*foundation.*" "Śraddha" literally means "*belief.*" "*initiating faith,*" could therefore be translated as "*establishing trust,*" or "*building trust,*" or more figuratively, it could be translated as Suzuki and Timothy Richard did as "*awakening faith*" (the awakening of faith) in the English translation. But, awakening faith, establishing belief, or building trust here is not building faith in a divine God outside to be able to bless and bring disaster to people but to belief. Believe in the mysterious sublime teachings, faith in the three jewels and belief in the possibility of becoming a Buddha, believe in one's own absolute purity of mind.

Talking about Mahayana beliefs, Ven.Tri Quang agreed with Cao Huu Dinh, saying that: "*The Mahayana arousing of faith doesn't mean much that arousing faith with the Mahayana, it means generating faith in the Mahayana: Faith in the Great Mind.*"⁵. And the Venerable Master explained that the Mahayana faith is found on the physical body of the mind, which is different from ordinary religious beliefs.

⁴Maha: Big, Great, Yana: Vehicle

⁵ Thich Tri Quang translation, *The waking of faith*, Ho Chi Minh Publication, 1995, P. 29

Mahayana faith is believing in the physical body of the mind. That mind is great, It brings great beings to the great position. It is self-belief not like God-religious faith or self-consciousness. Belief in the Buddha, the One who realizes about the mind reveals that mind, and holds it together so that others can also believe and realize that Mind, trust in the Buddha -like that, and the Buddha is believed in this way, is also an expression of virtue. Mahayana belief that nothing can compare⁶.

3.2. Faith Concepts

To believe (croire, to believe), follow by dictionary, means: 1. To be true. 2. Put all your hopes on someone or something. From there are compound words such as: to rely on, to trust, to have faith, to confidence in, to belief, to love. To trust (avoir confiance en, to trust on) means: to believe in something or an individual with certainty, on basis.

Believe comes from the old German word Liebe, it's means to love. Therefore, in apocalyptic religions, believing in God also means loving God. As Blaise Pascal said: "Faith is like this: God feels with the heart, not with the mind (*Voilà ce que c'est que la foi: Dieu sensible au coeur, non à la raison*)". The goal of faith is beyond human reason, is supernatural in nature, and cannot be explained by science. One can only believe or not believe, but faith cannot be justified or denied.

Thus, we see that are variety of faith, with different intensities, with different contributions of reason. It could say that in the belief there is both reason and faith, in devotion faith is superior to reason, but in superstition and fanaticism, there is nor longer reason, especially in fanaticism the force of blind faith. Blindness makes people lose their minds, lose their self-control, and easily cause violence. Most religious wars, ideological wars, and racial wars are also caused by fanaticism⁷.

4. Belief According to World People's View

The faith of people depends on religion, tradition, ideals and also depends on each national territory. Faith from the perspective of the Christian community is conviction in the being of God, the creator of the cosmos, and trust in the redemptive grace of Christ, the Son of the living and dead God for the sins of humanity, although some differences can still be search in the different ideologies of the Christian community.

However, determining the right beliefs according to the empirical perception of the earth is not a simple matter. For instance, we all believe in the validity of modern scientific knowledge. But modern science itself is not what we believe it to be. Scientific principles and theories that were once believed to be truth do not guarantee their permanent validity.

For example, the General Theory of the Relativity of Albert Einstein is now considered incomplete enough to explain cosmic phenomena, so physicist Stephen Hawking had to combine the

⁶ Ibid, pp.31

⁷ Trinh Nguyen Phuc, Faith in Buddhism, <http://chimviet.free.fr/thoidai/nguyenphuoc/tnpl060.htm>

theory of mechanics. Quantum science (Mecanique quantique) to open up a new perspective for science to take the universe... In contrast, the beliefs we call human beliefs and religions are very close and real to ordinary people. has existed for generations. There are man who become fanatics about some theory that once manipulated the world, only to find out that, it's just a utopian theory, a thousand times more magical than faith, the belief that God created everything until today science has denied this false view, belief in it has also changed a lot in the Christian community itself. This is not to say that the writer intentionally rejects modern scientific civilization or opposes the view of God, but only to show us that the essential of life, the mind and the empirical mind are similar, is not entirely true, impermanent, mutable and misleading.

5. Generating Mahāyāna Beliefs According to Asvaghosa's Perspective

To generate true faith in the Mahayana is to believing in the current laws of the world, such as believing in cause and effect, believing that everything is following to the rule of dependent origination and not-self. Generating faith in the Mahayana according to Ma Minh's concept is to belief in the nomarly mind of every living being, to believe in the Buddha, in the Dharma, in the Sangha.

5.1. Belief in the normal Mind of Beings

To trust in the normal mind of human beings is to believe that you and the Buddha are one, only because of ignorance that covers the body of Buddha and the body of beings. Believing feels such as sadness, joy, anger, hate, and the notions and prejudices we are carrying are delusions that have no real reality, only through practice, that luminous emptiness is the true mind. Believe that you have the ability to re-enter with that pure eternal mind by means that the Buddha was taught through the sutras. Believing 'Three worlds only mind, all things mind only' etc...⁸

5.2. Believe in Buddha

In the treatise, it is stated that: "Believe in the Buddha has immeasurable merit, meditators often have to think, approach, respect, and make offerings to generate good roots and pray for omniscience."⁹ The reason why it is necessary to believe in the Buddha, to be close to and respectfully make offerings is because the Buddha is always full of three aspects: perfect wisdom, perfect virtue, and unobstructed form. With full virtue, the Buddha became an example of spiritual practice for all beings to follow. With perfect wisdom, the Buddha converted many people to awaken to deliverance from suffering of live - death and towards the true Mahayana. The Buddha declared liberation, which every human being can achieve by himself in his or her life in the universal without the help of God or any gods. His Holiness emphasized teachings such as self-confidence, purity, courtesy, enlightenment, peace and love

⁸ Chan Hien Tam translation and interpretation, The waking of faith in Mahayana, "*The Path to Enlightenment*", Ho Chi Minh Manuscript Publications, 2004, p. 24

⁹ Ven. Thich Thien Hoa, Ibid, p. 405

for humanity. He also emphasized the need for knowledge, for without wisdom, the inner psychic could not enter into his life. [*EliotProfessor, "Buddhism and Hinduism"*].

With the form body, the Buddha came and went freely, independent of geographical space, and physical time, nor attached to the real thing. So in the Vajra Sutras, the Buddha said:

*(If you see me by form,
Ask ego for the sound
He practices evil
Inability to see the Tathagata"*

Three important virtues represent all the good and other virtues of the World-Honored One through ten noble titles, commonly known as the crosses: Tathagata, Sacrifice, Righteous Knowledge, and Wisdom Happiness, Good Oath, World Understanding, Unsurpassed Master, Master of Manners, Heavenly Sphinx, Buddha, World-Honored One. In the Discourse on the Wheel of Life, the Mahasanghikas also praised the Buddha as having "unlimited majesty, unlimited life span, unlimited form and body and the Blessed One's body is immaculate".annot see the Tathagata)¹⁰.

With such greatness of the Buddha, Sri Rama Chandra Bharati, an Indian poet, also explained very meaningfully about taking refuge in the Buddha as follows:

*"I rely on You not for profit
Not out of dread of Him, or wanting to be famous
Not like hail from the sun transported
Do not expect to gain extensive knowledge
But it's the energy of love that doesn't separate
In his place, his incomparable sight spans
Let me safely cross the sea of Samsara
I am regarded to The Buddha, I would like to be your follower."*

Believing in Buddhism is also believing in our ability to become a Gautama Buddha, our ability to become enlightened and freeing from all our own suffering. We are also Buddhas, but unrealized Buddhas. Although not accomplished yet, but there be all the time awareness in us, the capacity for enlightenment. If you have the method and determination, we will definitely become righteous to attain the final enlightenment like the Buddha. To do this, the first job, we must believe that the Buddha Gautama is the One who has realized and achieved the great virtues with the ten, ten powers ... then we must believe that we will also achieve like him. With such faith, we will have enough energy and faith to go straight on the path of liberation.

¹⁰ Nguyen Tuan translation, *The Wheel of Propositions of Different Schools*, manuscript publications 2008, pp. 22

Only the Buddha was the first person in human history to declare that suffering or happiness is man-made without the help of any God Thus, turning on to the Buddha is the good way to bring beings out of suffering in this present life and the next.

4.3. Dharma believes

To believe in Dharma is to believe in the Buddha's Doctrine, in the treatise said: "Believing in the Dharma of Buddha has great benefits; Practitioners often have to practice the perfections."¹¹ The Buddha has a fully enlightened being, worthy of being the refuge of sentient beings, so his teachings are the real truth, the line of transformation, the way of love and wisdom. In the Samyutta Nikāya, the Buddha said: "This is the Dharma well taught by the Blessed One, practical in the present, with immediate results, coming to be realize, capable of going upward, appreciate by the wise for themselves."¹²

In the Samyutta Nikaya Vol.V, the Tathagata, who understands the feature of all dharmas, speaks skillfully about the wonderful and wonderful dharmas as follows:

"Until then, Bhikkhus, I have not had the noesis of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the method leading to its cessation. Until then, Bhikkhus... I have not yet declared that I have attained Unsurpassed Perfect Enlightenment. And until then, bhikkhus, have I had the knowledge of distress, the reason of suffering, the discontinuation of suffering, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. Until then, bhikkhus... I declare that I have attained unsurpassed enlightenment."

In the Mahayana scriptures, the Dharma is the truth, the dharma-nature, and transcends all our ordinary thoughts, so sometimes that 'dharma' is expressed through the Eight Realms, the Center Way: *"There is neither birth nor death, neither permanence nor cessation, neither one nor another, neither coming nor going."*

Or dharma is the law of dependent origination:

"Because this exists, that exists.

Because this does not, then that does not.

Because this is born, that time is born.

Thank to this passing away, that time will pass away"

The doctrine is predestined. Because of Dependent Of Origination, formless. Formless, but appearing innumerable generals. This is the true nature of dharmas, beyond the eight conventional categories of birth-death, permanent - cessation, the other and coming and going...

That is the true law. Due to the true dharma, the Flower Adornment Sutra says that *'single-mind understands the Three Realms,'* *"in a bingle thought, it also merges the Three Realms"*. All- time and

¹¹ Ven.Thich Thien Hoa, Ibid, p 405.

¹² Samyutta Nikaya volume I, translation by Thich Minh Chau, "Samyutta saka"

space are gathered into one relationship, participating in the moment of pure awakening, full of awareness in our mind. One is all and all is one.

Just like believing in Buddha's treasure, believing in Dharma is believing in the power of dharmas that will lead us to the lane of peace in present life and the future . And it is belief that will illuminate our belief in the Mahayana that is always firm, unmistakable, and unerring. By believing in the Dharma, we are putting our faith in certain principles, the most objective and true laws in this universe. Therefore, in the process of cultivation, generating faith, if we cannot rely on the Dharma, we cannot rely on anything for our faith to be fully accomplished.

4.4. Sangha believes

The monastics are those who aspire to go out the worldly home, go out from the house of darkness, ignorance, and afflictions. The Sangha is a group of people who vow to live a holy and mindful life like the Buddha, vowing to honor the Buddha's teachings and bring the best Way to life. In his treatise, The Asvaghosa taught : "Believe that the Sangha is a true practitioner, self-benefiting and self-benefiting, and practitioners often prefer to be close to Bodhisattvas to seek to learn the true conduct"¹³. Want to know if Buddhism is prosperous or poor? Depends on the Sangha. Therefore, people who propagate must lead an exemplary life. In the Samyutta Sakka (11.3), it is defined that: "The Sangha, the follower of the Blessed One, the virtuous ones, the direct conducts, the virtuous ones, the righteous ones; including four pairs, and eight saints; are worthy of respect, worthy of closeness, worthy of oblation, worthy of admiration; is the most precious blessed field in the world."¹⁴

(Supatipanno bhagavato sàvakasangho ujupatipanno bhagavato sàvakasangho nàyapatipanno bhagavato sàvakasangho sàmìcipatipanno bhagavato sàvakasangho yadidam cattàri purisayugàni atthapurisapuggalà esa bhagavato sàvakasangho àhuneyyo pàhuneyyo dakkhineyyo anjalikaraniyo anuttaram punnakkhetam lokassàti).

In addition, the Sangha are also those who vow to live followed to the six harmonious Dharma. These six harmonious dharmas are like oil applied to a machine, making the Sangha's Buddha work flow smoothly. Those six harmonious are:

- 1) *Sincerity and kindness of action*: The body lives in harmony in one place with other spiritual companions.
- 2) *Sincerity of speech*: A mouth speaking in harmony, not arguing, loud, many words, only speaking the truth.
- 3) *Sincerity and sympathy of spirit*: Thoughts of Harmony and Joy with fellow initiates.

¹³ Thich Thien Hoa, Popular Buddhism, Ho Chi Minh Buddhist Association, Publication, 2005, pp. 455-456

¹⁴ Samyutta Nikaya volume. I, translation by Thich Minh Chau," Samyutta Sakka"

4) *Following the same pure precepts*: Follow the Buddha's forbidden laws to cultivate the form and mind in harmony with everyone, cheerfully remind each other to keep the precepts pure.

5) *Having the right views*: Having a genuine and authentic apprehension of the spiritual path, clarify it to fellow practitioners to hear and understand.

6) *Equal sharing of common property*: Gifts such as net wealth, food, clothing, medicine, books, blankets, etc. of the donor are equally divided in harmony and felicity.

In a time when there was no Buddha, the monks were also the representatives of the Buddha, teaching beings on his behalf. They are the Eldest of the Tathagata, representing the Buddha so that we have a place to turn to. It's about the. In terms of logic, the Sangha is the purity, harmony, and softness, the ideal of a liberated life. So we:

With Regarded to the Sangha the great teacher

On behalf of the Buddha to delivering the Dharma

Depending on helping the needlessness

Bring the boat of wisdom to guide sentient beings.

(Excerpt from Petal of Thought, Nuns group, Rain Retreat school of Pho da pagoda, Binh Thanh district, 1997)

5. The significance of Faith in Buddhism

The grandness of faith is to wakening Buddha- nature in the mind. Believing that one's own mind has the ability to turning on a Buddhahood, to have suchness. All human beings have enough wisdom, as well the Buddha, just due to of their awareness following to the ceiling, so the whole wiseness and virtue are blocked by ignorance and afflictions, and they going on to unlearned and defilements, which results in retribution, die in depression. Therefore, it is needed to take recourse in the house of Buddhism, that is to pay respects to the Blessed One, to follow in the footsteps of a real father, to listen to and uphold the Dharma, and then to strive for spiritual practice Dharma. Thanks to that, the achievement of each method of learning, eliminating the false mind entering Nirvana. *“As for this Chan Nhu samadhi (meditation) practice, there are no signs to see, no signs to gain, and the ability to make the defilements thin and thin; Until the instant of samadhi, the practitioner will not entertain. If a cultivator does not practice the true Dharma like this samadhi, he wouldn't be able to enter the Tathagata's breed.”*¹⁵ Those who rely on the Three Jewels to find themselves a peaceful life in their own mind to have firm faith in the Mahayana will keep going to be like the Buddha. *“If there is a person who has not doubted or scorned the Mahayana dharma of the Tathagata, but still has a heart of right faith and wishes to enter the Mahayana, should accept, uphold, think, and practice according to this essay, that person will be enlightened.”*¹⁶ Supreme Bodhi. If anyone hears of this Mahayana dharma and has no doubts in his mind,

¹⁵ Thich Thien Hoa, Popular Buddhism, Vol. III, Ho Chi Minh Buddhist Association Publication, 2005, p. 474

¹⁶ Sdd, tr 385

he shall be prophesied by the Buddhas and will decide to be like the Buddha." On the contrary, if beings who do not trust in the Mahayana Dharma will be cut off like the Buddha, they shall not be able to see the Three Gem for thousands of kalpas and thousands of lives: *"If any living being slanders or disbelieves in this treatise, then sentient beings will That will be great retribution, going through countless lifetimes of suffering. Therefore, sentient beings must believe that they should not slander this argument, because it is harmful to themselves and others, and to take away the species of the Three Jewels."*¹⁷ All Buddhas rely on this Mahayana Dharma to achieve the unsurpassed Bodhi path. The Bodhisattvas gain access to Buddha wisdom through this dharma. *"All Buddhas have attained Nirvana through this Mahayana dharma; Bodhisattvas also through this Mahayana practice gain access to the Buddha's knowledge. Bodhisattvas of the precede, present, and next life have all followed this Mahayana dharma and have achieved pure faith. Therefore, beings must study diligently."*¹⁸

6. Conclusion

Through the belief established through the three main objects of Buddham, Dharmam, and Sangham, it is clearly that grandness of faith, on the one hand, appears as the central source of transition in with the two. Two sides from Enlightenment to Enter, from Entering back to Enlightenment, from another point of view, represents the recognition of the true nature of all things, which is what Asvaghosa calls the consciousness of a new knowingness - The consciousness is realizes the true nature, to return from there to me, my own being. Therefore, the most necessary thing for Buddhists is to believe in themselves, to believe in their self-realization, and at the same instant to belief in Three Jewels. Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is considered an initiation ritual for all Buddhists, and it isn't out of that spirit: relying on the Buddha-Dharma-Sangha is to put consent to the path, those who have gone before and guides. In that spirit of trust, faith does not go versus reason, and also plays an important role on the right path to liberation by providing the energy necessary for diligent practice. Without trust to attract and motivate, people will stagnate, slack off, and sometimes back down in the face of difficulties and challenges. It can be said that trust and reason complement each other in a balanced way in Buddhism. After all, it's all about believing in yourself. Believing in the Three Gem, being devoted to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is actually believing in oneself, in one's true self-nature, and the mental process of practicing to generate pure faith is just to achieve Buddha-nature. in me, achieve the true essence of each person and nothing else.

¹⁷ Sdd, tr 486

¹⁸ Ibid, pp.486 - 487

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