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and Mahayana Texts, c. Fifth Century BCE to Thirteenth
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ABSTRACT

Pāli Canon is considered to have been put to writing after Buddhism had become sectarian. It is considered to be the work of the school of *Theravādins*. The works of *Mahāyāna* schools are generally considered to be of later origin. However, the lineage of Mahayana ideas can be traced back to the Pāli Canon. This in no way overlooks the changes that indeed had appeared in the development of ideas from the initial stage of Buddhism to the formation of texts in later stage of its history, whether Mahāyāna or Theravāda. On closer examination of the history of early Buddhism, one notices that the early schisms in the Buddhist Order were not the result of doctrinal differences but were created as a result of differences over discipline rules. This study looks at various reasons which might have caused these differences to study why underlying doctrines of divergent groups within Buddhism remained common. These changes in different Buddhist groups might have been caused by adaptation of Buddhist groups in different geo-political areas with different religious backgrounds. The Buddhist Canon was transmitted orally for more than two centuries. *Bhāṅakas*, who were supposed to carry the scripture orally, might have interpreted the texts differently, thereby adding to the

reasons for the rise of later schisms. The study of commonalities between the texts of the split off groups suggests there was an ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas between them. These commonalities have been studied through comparing three texts of different traditions with texts of other traditions, all traced back to the Pāli Canon. First the text is studied in its historical context then the commonalities discussed. The first text discussed is Saundarananda Kāvya by Aśvaghōṣa, belonging perhaps to first century CE. Where and when this text might have been created; what the author's school leanings might have been are some of the points studied through the epigraphic, contemporary textual, paleographic and internal source of Saundarananda. Thereafter, it's commonalities with Pāli Canon and Pāli Canon's commentaries are analyzed. Another Mahāyāna text of seventh century, *Śikṣāsamuccaya* by *Śāntideva* is studied likewise. The third text studied in this Ph.D. thesis is a Pāli text of thirteenth century CE, *Saddhammopāyana* which is compared to an anterior Mahāyāna text of sixth century, *Śiṣyalekha*. Pāli Canon is shown to be a source book, not only of the Theravāda but of Mahāyāna too. Such work on finding commonalities between divergent groups seems to have been pioneered in the early twentieth century. This kind of literature is still scanty in the face of enormous Buddhist literature yet unexplored through the perspective of commonalities. This thesis is a small contribution in this direction. It involves historical, textual analysis and comparative literature methods.

Key words: Pāli, Canon, Mahāyāna, *sūtra* and Theravāda