INTRODUCTION

In the history of Buddhism and its canonical literature the three Yānas i.e., Hinayana or Sravakayana, Mahayana and Tantrayana are recognised as the three main phases. Among these Hinayana which is ethical and historical, began after the Mahaparinirvana of Buddha. At the first council after the recitation of the whole of Dhamma and Vinaya by the elders and the debate over discipline, Mahakasyapa and others had sought the approval of senior monks over the texts settled at this council as Buddhavacana. But it was not unanimously accepted. The second council held at Vaisali was a great landmark in the history of Buddhism for the origin of schism and the rise of the Mahasanghikas was due to the development at this council. The ecclesiastical differences that came up in the council of Vaisali over Vinaya completed the split in the Sangha. In the following centuries a series of schisms gave rise to new sects. The third council held at Pataliputra during the reign of Asoka, witnessed the refutation of various doctrinal views held by the non-theravadin. There was a general debate over the meaning, significance and conflicts of the traditional Buddhist idea inherent in the earlier doctrines. This milieu probably under the influence of Asoka caused the Sangha to revert to the theravada views with suitable
modifications. Thus emerged the Kathāvatthu Atthakathā which copiously quotes from the Dhamma-Samghani, the Vibhanga and the Patthana which were at that time regarded as authoritative. The name Kathāvatthu, literally means "subjects of discourse." But it can also be rendered as 'the points of controversy.' This work offers the Theravāda arguments and views on the heretical and unorthodox opinions held by various Buddhist sects on the issues of theology, philosophy, cosmology and psychology. Thus this is the first work which presents a cross section of Buddhist thought up to the time of Asoka.

Next in importance and perhaps the last as well in the earlier Theravāda literature is the Milindapañha composed during the first century B.C.

In the Christian era Theravāda was overshadowed by the growing Mahāyāna all over India. Till fifth century A.D. there was no literary work of the Theravādins. It is suggested that the earlier Theravādin works were taken to Ceylon. In Ceylon from 150 A.D. to 350 A.D. literary activity had declined. Even in India, Sanskrit became the major language and the medium of study in all the Buddhist schools. However, the literary activity in Pāli was in evidence during the fifth century A.D. in Ceylon as well as in India. The celebrity of this period was Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa. His principle work Visuddhimagga, according to Ṣīhamoli
There, "The Visuddhimagga, 'The path of purification," is perhaps unique in the literature of the world. It systematically summarizes and interprets the teachings of the Buddha contained in the Pāli Tipitaka, which is now recognized in Europe as the oldest and most authentic record of the Buddha's words. As the principal non-canonical authority of the Theravāda, it forms the hub of a complete and coherent method of exegesis of the Tipitaka, using the 'Abhidhamma Method' as it is called. And it sets out detailed practical instructions for developing purification."

His other works are Samaññaphalaśadikā, a commentary to Vinaya, 2. Samaññaphalaśadikā, a commentary to Dīgha-nikāya, 3. Pāpeñcasūdani, a commentary on Majjhima-nikāya, 4. Sāratthāppakasini, a commentary on Samyutta-nikāya, 5. Paramattahijotikā, a commentary on Khuddakapāṭha and Suttaniyā, 6. Dhammapadatthakathā, a commentary on Dhammapāda, 7. Sammohavinodani, a commentary on Vibhanga and 8. Atthasālinī, a commentary on Dhammasamgani.

The works of Buddhaghosa are a veritable storehouse of information concerning the Theravādin doctrines. Buddhist sects and schools and historical aspects. For an understanding and elucidation of the Theravāda Buddhism, the Visuddhimagga and the Atthakathās are of great importance.
The earlier studies on Buddhaghosa’s works were initiated by the Pāli Text Society, London. They have published in English the *Visuddhimagga* in three volumes which were edited by Pe. Maung Tin in 1922-28. The P.T.S. had published the *Atthakathās* as follows. The *Saṁantapāsādikā* was edited by J. Taka Kasu and was published in two volumes in 1924-27. T.W. Rhys Davids and J.E. Carpenter have edited and published *Suññatavilāsini* in two volumes in 1886-1932. The *Pāpācaśādani* was edited by J.H. Woods and D. Kosambi in 1922. *Sārathapnākāsini* in two volumes was edited by F.L. Woodward in 1924-26. The *Manorathapurāṇi* was edited by Max. Walser in two volumes in 1924-29. The *Paramattbhajotika* was edited by Heúmer Smith in two volumes in 1915-16. The *Dhammapadal Atthakathā* was edited by H.C. Norman in 1909. The *Atthasālinī* was edited by Muller in 1897 and Maung Tin brought out the same in English as "The Expositor" in 1920. The *Kāṭhavatthu Atthakathā* was edited as "points of controversy" by S.Z. Aung and C.A.F. Rhys Davids in 1915. B.C. Law had edited the same work in 1940.

The *Nava Nalanda Mahavihara* at Nalanda had published all the *Atthakathās* of Buddhaghosa under the *Nava Nalanda Mahavihara series* in 1964.

The *Visuddhimagga* was edited again by D. Kosambi for the Harvard oriental series in 1950. Bhikkhu Nyāñemoli Thera
had brought out another edition of *Visuddhimagga* in 1956 in Ceylon.

Besides these, the Ceylonese works like the last chapter of *Mahāvamsa* known as *Gulavamsa* rendered by Dhammakitti (13th century A.D.) was edited and translated by W. Geiger in 1953. The *Śāsana-vamsa* written by Pannaswami in 1861 was edited by M.H. Bode for P.T.S. in 1897. The *Gandhavamsa* written by Nandapanna was edited by M.H. Bode for P.T.S. in 1896. Finally the *Saddhama Sangha* written by Siddhattha in 14th century was edited by N. Suddhananda for J.P.T.S. in 1890. These works are useful in reconstructing the life history of Buddhaghosa.

The Burmese works *Buddhagbosuppatti* of Mahāmaṅgala was edited and translated by James Gray in 1894, and the *Mālālamkāravattthu* was written in 1773 and was translated by Bishop P. Bigandet as 'Life and Legend of Gopālāma' in 1858.

The works of Rhys Davids, B.C. Law, D. Kosambi, S. Dutt and N. Dutt deal with Buddhaghosa.

B.C. Law had written a brief sketch regarding the life history and philosophy of Buddhaghosa in his book entitled "The Life and Works of Buddhaghosa" in 1923. In the history of Pāli Literature published in 1940, B.C. Law had dealt with the works of Buddhaghosa.
D. Kosambi had dealt briefly with the life of Buddha-
gosa in his introduction to *Visuddhimagga*.

Sukumar Dutt gave a detailed account of the controver-
sies over the Buddhagbosa's birth place but left the issue
undecided. The doctrinal views of the Theravādins, as pre-
sented by Buddhagbosa, are compared and contrasted with the
Mahāyāna doctrines by N. Dutt in his works.

The present thesis is mainly based on the works of
Buddhagbosa. In this study, the canonical literature is
consulted to amplify and present a coherent account on the
historical and philosophical aspects of Buddhism. Non-
canonical literature is also of great aid in reconstructing
the life history of Buddhagbosa. Archaeological evidences
are also utilised for explaining the historical aspects of
Buddhism. The aim of this thesis is to present a critical
survey of Buddhagbosa's life, works, philosophy and cultural
aspects. The present study is divided into seven chapters.

The first chapter treats the life history of Buddha-
gbosa. The accounts of Buddhagbosa's life as given in the
Mahāvamsa, Buddhagbosupattī, Sāsanaśāsana, Gandhavamsa and
Sadhabhama Saṅgha are presented in the first section. Aspects
of Buddhagbosa's life, age, nativity, caste, his early educa-
tion, visit to Ceylon and last days are discussed in the
second section.
The second chapter examines the contemporaries and successors of Buddhaghosa namely Buddhabuddhada, Buddhasiri, Jotipāla, Buddhāmitta, Dhammapāla, Upasena, Mahānāma and Cula-Buddhabuddhada.

The third chapter deals with the origin and development of Buddhaghosa's commentaries with special emphasis on the Root and the six landmarks in the evolution of Buddhist commentaries.

The fourth chapter reviews briefly Buddhaghosa's writings.

The fifth chapter attempts to study the variegated aspects like geography of South India, its Flora and Fauna, the political conditions, an accounts of coins and measurements of the time, the religious practices and his knowledge of Anatomy etc, as described by Buddhaghosa in his works. The data on these aspects are drawn mainly from the Visuddhimagga, Semaṇṭapāsādika and Sughaṅgala Vilāsini.

The sixth chapter is sub-divided into two sections. Section-A describes the origin and development of the Buddhist sects and schools. The development of the Andhaka schools as described by Buddhaghosa and the main doctrinal aspects of the Buddhist sects and schools are reviewed on the basis of Kathavattu Atthakathā and Visuddhimagga.
Section-B studies the contributions of Buddhagbosa to Buddhist philosophy. Many points of Buddha Dharma and important terms of Buddhist doctrines explained by Buddhagbosa are subjected to detailed study with particular reference to Visuddhimagga.

The seventh chapter presents a summary of the conclusions arrived at in the above study.
REFERENCES


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