The Abhidharma which is a 'ripe fruit of the Buddha-knowledge', constitutes the rationalistic wing of Buddhism. Its proper understanding enables one to disentangle the tangle of the entire psycho-ethical system of Buddhism. But it is so profound, so deep and so subtle that it gave rise to innumerable controversies regarding its system in different periods of the development of Buddhistic thought as a result of which a good number of Abhidharma treatises, their commentaries and sub-commentaries, their manuals and compendiums were composed both in Sanskrit and Pali. Of them the Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu occupies an important place in the history of Buddhism and the Buddhist Literature as it contains the fundamental doctrines of the Buddha and as it serves as an introduction to or a forerunner of Mahāyāna Buddhism. A thorough and critical study of the Abhidharmakośa in the light of the existing religious condition under which it was produced, its subject-matter, its deviation from the orthodox teachings of the Buddha and its similarities and dissimilarities with the other Abhidharma texts is therefore a necessity and a long desideratum. Many scholars have
already attempted to give a bird's eye-view of the subject. But no systematic and integral study of the subject has so far been made. An attempt has therefore been made to give a thorough and critical study of the subject.

The present thesis contains five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to a detailed treatment of the history of the origin and development of the Abhidharma doctrine and philosophy. It also deals with the history of the compilation of the Abhidharma treatises in Pali and Sanskrit, and thereby the formation of the Abhidharmapiṭaka. It further discusses critically the date and chronology of the fundamental Abhidharma treatises forming the Abhidharmapiṭaka of the Sthaviravādins (Theravādins) and the Sarvāstivādins. Besides, some light has been thrown on the period of commentaries and manuals when the Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu and numerous commentaries, sub-commentaries, manuals and compendiums of the Abhidharma treatises were compiled by a galaxy of distinguished Buddhist scholars.

The second chapter gives a survey of the principal Sanskrit Abhidharma treatises. As the Sanskrit originals
of most of the treatises are lost and as the translations from Chinese and Tibetan of many of them have not yet been done, only secondary sources have been utilised in some of the cases. Nevertheless a faithful attempt has been made to give a systematic and informative survey of the treatises.

The third chapter deals with a thorough and critical study of the Abhidharmakośa-śāstra in regard to its position in the history of Buddhism, history of its study and culture in different Buddhist countries in all the periods, its author, its date of compilation, its language and style.

The fourth chapter analyses the contents of all the chapters of the Abhidharmakośa.

The fifth, the concluding, chapter is devoted to the interpretation of the technical and philosophical terms occurring in the Abhidharmakośa and the other Abhidharma treatises.

It is not possible to record my gratefulness to all the Buddhist scholars whose works have been utilised here. However, I cannot but mention the names of the

Lastly, I acknowledge my deepest debt of gratitude to my Reverend teacher Dr. Anukul Chandra Banerjee, M.A., LL.B., Ph.D., Professor and Head of the Department of Pali and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, University of Calcutta, President, Board of Secondary Education, West Bengal, under whose valuable guidance I have completed my work.

Government Sanskrit College, 1, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta - 12.

SUKOMAL CHAUDHURI

The 30th January, 1970.