INTRODUCTION

Today India is again appearing on the Buddhist map of the world. Indians are awakening to their Buddhist past. In the second half of the 9th Century thanks, to western and Indian archaeologists and orient lists. Indians began to be surprised at the discovery of the Buddhist legacy. To talk of a “revival of Buddhism” in modern India is right in this sense of the discovery of the Buddhist heritage by Indians. Even today, 199 years after the foundation of the Asiatic Society, 81 years after the foundation of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, 71 years after the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of India, the process of the discovery of Buddhism in India is still going on. There is no doubt about it that much good work has been done in recent decades to disseminate some knowledge about Buddhism among those who care to know or those who can read and write. But the number of those who care to know is small and of those who cannot read or write is very large and much literary and educational work remains to be done in order to give a glimpse of the wonder that was Buddhism in the Indian sub-continent before the Muslim invasions.

HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

Hinduism

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world, following Christianity and Islam. Hinduism stands for the faith and the way of life of most people who live in India. It is unknown where Hinduism was started and by whom. The beliefs of the Hindu's are very different than that of Christian's. Hinduism is based on beliefs in things such as reincarnation, dharma and in three main gods.
No one knows where Hinduism was started or who started it. Their oldest written documents, the Vedas, were first copied into paper in 1000 B.C. they had however existed orally long before that time. Hinduism is thought to have originated from the Vedas. Hinduism has changed greatly since it was first practiced, there are now different sects, also known as denominations, and new beliefs have developed. There are still many things connected between the different sects of Hinduism, their basic believes are what ties them together.

The religion of Hinduism teaches us that each living body, including animals, is filled with an eternal soul. Hindus say that the individual soul was a part of the creator spirit, Brahma or existence from within their own Atman, roughly soul. It is each soul's job and wishes eventually to return to Brahma. It is not possible though because by a soul's sins, and impurities from the world, they are no longer pure and holy to return. Instead, a soul must become pure before returning to Brahma, who is absolutely pure. The process of becoming pure is so hard that no soul can become pure in only one lifetime. The soul is forced to live life after life until it is pure enough to return to Brahma. In Hinduism, attaining the highest life is a process of removing the bodily distractions from life, allowing one to eventually understand the Brahma nature within.

Hinduism teaches that the individual soul of all living bodies, including animals, was part of the creator spirit, Brahma. They believe that each soul’s job and wish is to eventually return to Brahma. No soul can return to Brahma, however until becoming clean of all impurities and sins of the world, they must be holy and pure to return to Brahma. The process of becoming pure enough to return to Brahma is not an easy task; it takes more than one life to cleanse oneself. The soul is forced to live life after life until it
is pure enough to return to Brahma. The Hindus call the cycles of rebirth Samsara or the Wheel of Life. It is called Moksha when a soul is finally cleansed and ready to go back to Brahma. When a soul finally returns to Brahma, it is there for an eternity of contentment and ecstasy.

There are certain things the one must follow in order to be a Hindu, they must believe these things and live by them. The first is a belief in karma which is the result of one's good and bad deeds done in a lifetime. The second is a belief in dharma and Hindu traditions. They must believe in the three main Hindu gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. They must have a belief in reincarnation after death. They must have honor for the sacred Vedas. They must have a belief that if lived a religious life, the Wheel of Life can end and achieve Moksha.

Hindu's worship many gods, but they believe in a single god, Brahma. Everything comes from Brahma, it does not matter who they worship, because ultimately all worship goes to Brahma. Brahma does not punish or reward those for their achievements in life; every soul creates their own rewards and punishments through karma. Karma rules what each soul will be in the next lifetime, it is formed by the persons good and bad deeds in each life; if a person had more good deeds than bad deeds then they have good karma, if they had more bad deeds than good, then they have bad karma.

Dharma is the ultimate balance of all living things; it belongs to everything, including the universe. Every soul is responsible for balancing their own dharma, the areas of dharma to balance are religious, social and within the family. They must keep their promises and remain faithful to religious rituals, while also taking care of their
family. If a soul is unbalanced, then it will affect their karma. To some dharma is considered a tradition, duty and custom, but to Hindu it is spiritually more than that.¹

Buddhism

The term Buddhism is now used to denote the teaching of the Buddha, a historical person who flourished some 25 Centuries ago on the Indian subcontinent. This teaching has been described variously as a religion, a philosophy, a psychological system, an ethico-moral code, a socio-economic blue-print, and so on. No doubt all these aspects could be discerned in different parts of the Buddha's teaching, but the teaching is itself something more than all these combined. The term which Buddhists use to designate the teaching is Dhamma or Dharma.² This term comes from a root term meaning "to uphold", and means the basic law which "upholds" the universe. It is therefore sometimes translated simply as Law or Norm. It conveys some idea of the unity that informs the whole body of the Buddha's teaching. We shall use the words dhamma and Buddhism as synonyms.

How can we relate the major points of this description to Buddhist religious philosophy? First, it is clear that the Buddha taught by skilful means. This is an important philosophical idea central to both Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism. The concept of skilful means (upayakausalya) is: the ability to bring out the spiritual potentialities of different people, by statements or actions which are adjusted to their needs and adapted to their capacity.³

The presentations of celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas within the Mahayana are often seen as expedients that, though ultimately untrue, from the relative standpoint provide a focus for devotion and are given to help practitioners, ultimately leading them
towards salvation and enlightened understanding. The meditation practice under discussion can thus be described within the context of skilful means. It is a skilful means for harnessing the mind’s general business by letting it become preoccupied with the details of the visualization. This draws it from the outside world and its concerns, so that it can calm down of its own accord. The colours and content of the visualization provide interest but at the same time lead to stability. Often one is told to focus on the lower parts of the Buddha’s form or on the lotus or throne if the mind is excited. If one then becomes mentally dull, one is encouraged to focus on the upper parts of the Buddha’s body, for example on the face or between the eyebrows.

A second point to note is that the bodily form of the Buddha is extremely important, particularly as it relates to the Central Buddhist religious doctrine of the three bodies or kayas of the Buddha. In Mahayana Buddhist religious philosophy (which encompasses elements not just of Tibetan, but also of Chinese, Korean and in particular Japanese schools) the distinctions are between the Nirmanakaya, the historical Buddha; the Sambhogakaya, which encompasses the whole range of celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas; and finally the Dharmakaya, which, because of its absolute and formless nature, cannot be conceptualised or indeed visualised. The Dharmakaya is often called the enlightenment body, the state of Buddhahood itself: it is the nature of Mind, or emptiness. These distinctions are often presented in terms of temporal duration: the Dharmakaya is beginningless and endless; the Sambhogakaya has a beginning but is endless, while the Nirmanakaya is temporary. The Buddha Sakyamuni is seen to have possessed all three bodies. These philosophical distinctions also have their individual personal bodily correlates. These are the three centers or ‘gates’, each correlating with one of the three bodies of the Buddha. The first is the head centre (between the eyebrows),
this corresponds to the Nirmanakaya or physical body. The second is the throat centre, which corresponds to the Sambhogakaya and subtle energy flows and speech. And the third is the heart centre which corresponds to the mind or the Dharmakaya. Towards the end of the practice different coloured lights emanating from the three different sources and aspects of the Buddha’s body are visualized as merging with the same three aspects of the practitioner’s body. The focus is on the purification of the bodily elements, and this may be accomplished by means of sound and visualised light.8,9

A key issue is the idea that everything can be viewed as a form of energy, not only reduced to forms of energy, but also transformed from one type or modality of energy to another. Notions of solidity are thus counterbalanced with ideas of change and mutability. The attempt is always to move away from the fixity of the normal mind and its attitude towards the world. This is also reflected in the description of the composition of the body. The Buddha is seen to be physically present but not solid; to be of light and similar to a rainbow, to be luminous but not solid. Tibetans use the term ‘Rainbow Body’ to symbolize enlightenment. This concern with the body of light is of course present in other religious traditions.10 The purpose of this practice is an attempt to undermine our notions of a fixed and rigid self-identity, to show rather that it is changeable, mutable and constantly shifting. The concepts of projection and transformation are central to this discussion:

All phenomena are projections of mind.
Mind itself does not exist
And is empty in its being.
Although empty, it manifests everything without obstruction.
A third, philosophical concern approached experientially in the meditation is the relationship between Samsara, the imperfect world in which we find ourselves with all its suffering, and Nirvana, the perfect state where suffering has ceased to exist. In Buddhist religious thinking this discussion revolves around the relationship between the relative and the absolute worlds. It is often expressed in the clear religious belief which states that Samsara and Nirvana are one. The problem arises from our view of the situation, not from the situation itself. These ideas relate closely to a central feature of Buddhism: that it incorporates a monist religious philosophical structure. As Conze has stated: ‘If all is one and the same, then also the Absolute will be identical with the Relative, the Unconditioned with the Conditioned, Nirvana with Samsara’. Writers involved in Buddhist–Christian dialogue have been deeply aware of this feature of Buddhist religion, and commentators from both sides of the dialogue have discussed the similarity between certain ideas in Buddhism and the occluded, monist side of Christian theology and mystical experience, particularly as expressed in the ideas of Meister Eckhart.11,12

In the form of meditation under discussion, all elements of the individual’s lived experienced field (i.e. Samsara) are visualized as being temporally replaced by elements of a pure land, i.e. Nirvana. Generally it is recommended that the visualization is carried out with the eyes open: The dharma is a method that enables us to go from the state of ordinary being to the state of awakened being.13

Closely connected to the idea of the inseparability of the relative and the absolute worlds is the central philosophical tenet within Mahayana Buddhism of the empty or void nature of all phenomena. This is reinforced in the final stage of the meditation practice: Vajrayana meditations are divided into two phases. The phase of creation during which
one mentally creates the appearance of the deity. The phase of completion during which one dissolves the appearance into emptiness.\textsuperscript{14}

The meditation practice is a skilful means by which one may recognize, or get a taste of, the empty or conditioned nature of all phenomena; that each is nothing in and by itself. As stated above, phenomena include such conditions as physical and mental sickness.

**Comparison between Hinduism and Buddhism**

According to S.Rahdhakrishnan, "Buddhism, in its origin at least is an off shoot of Hinduism". Both Hinduism and Buddhism originated in the Indian subcontinent and share a very long, but rather peculiar and uncomfortable relationship, which in many ways is comparable to that of Judaism and Christianity. The Buddha was born in a Hindu family, just as Christ was born in a Jewish family. Some people still argue that Buddhism was an off shoot of Hinduism and the Buddha was a part of the Hindu pantheon, a view which is not acceptable to many Buddhists. It is however widely accepted that Buddhism gained popularity in India because it released the people from the oppression of tradition and orthodoxy. The teachings of the Buddha created hope and aspiration for those who had otherwise no hope of salvation and freedom of choice in a society that was dominated by caste system, predominance of ritual form of worship and the exclusive status of the privileged classes which the Vedic religion upheld as inviolable and indisputable.

Over 1500 years ago, Hindu tradition accepted the Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu. However, strong rivalry existed between both traditions in the sub-continent for a very long time. The followers of Shiva and the Buddha could hardly stand each other in
the earlier times. There were instances of Buddhist persecution by Hindu rulers, though a great majority followed a policy of religious toleration. Sasank, a ruler from Bengal and contemporary of Harshavardhana vandalized Buddhist monuments and burnt the pipal tree under which the Buddha got enlightenment.

Despite the fundamental differences between both the religions, Hinduism and Buddhism influenced each other in many ways. The Buddhist notion of non-injury and compassion toward all living beings took deep roots in the Indian soil, while Mahayana Buddhism took cue from the traditional Indian methods of devotional worship. Buddhism influenced the growth and development of Indian art and architecture and contributed richly to the practice of breathing and meditation in attaining mindfulness and higher states of consciousness. The Hindu tantra influenced the origin and evolution of Vajrayana Buddhism.

**Similarities in Hinduism and Buddhism:** The following are some of the similarities in these two systems:

- Both Hinduism and Buddhism emphasize the illusory nature of the world and the role of Karma in keeping men bound to this world and the cycle of births and deaths.
- According to the Buddha, desire is the root cause of suffering and removal of desire results in the cessation of suffering. Some of the Hindu texts such as the Upansihads (Isa) and the Bhagavadgita consider doing actions prompted by desire and attachment would lead to bondage and suffering and that performing actions without desiring the fruit of action would result in liberation.
Both religions believe in the concept of karma, transmigration of souls and the cycle of births and deaths for each soul.

Both emphasize compassion and non violence towards all living beings.

Both believe in the existence of several hells and heavens or higher and lower worlds.

Both believe in the existence of gods or deities on different planes.

Both believe in certain spiritual practices like meditation, concentration, cultivation of certain bhavas or states of mind.

Both believe in detachment, renunciation of worldly life as a precondition to enter to spiritual life. Both consider desire as the chief cause of suffering.

The Advaita philosophy of Hinduism is closer to Buddhism in many respects.

Buddhism and Hinduism have their own versions of Tantra.

Both originated and evolved on the Indian soil. The founder of Buddhism was a Hindu who became the Buddha. Buddhism is the greatest gift of India to mankind.

**Differences:** Following are some of the differences in principles and practice of these two religions.

- Hinduism is not founded by any particular prophet. Buddhism was founded by the Buddha.

- Hinduism believes in the efficacy and supremacy of the Vedas. The Buddhist does not believe in the Vedas or for that matter any Hindu scripture.

- Buddhism does not believe in the existence of souls as well in the first cause, whom we generally call God. Hinduism believes in the existence of Atman, that is the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Creator.
Hinduism accepts the Buddha as an incarnation of Mahavishnu, one of the gods of Hindu trinity. The Buddhist does not accept any Hindu god either as equivalent or superior to the Buddha.

The original Buddhism as taught by the Buddha is known as Theravada Buddhism or Hinayana Buddhism. Followers of this do not worship images of the Buddha nor believe in the Bodhisattvas. The Mahayana sect considers the Buddha as the Supreme Soul or the Highest Being, akin to the Brahman of Hinduism and worships him in the form of images and icons.

The Buddhists consider the world to be full of sorrow and regard ending the sorrow as the chief aim of human life. The Hindus consider that there are four chief aims (arthas) in life which every being should pursue. They are dharma (religious duty), artha (wealth or material possessions), kama (desires and passions) and moksha (salvation.)

Hindus also believe in the four ashramas or stages in life. This is not followed in Buddhism. People can join the Order any time depending upon their spiritual preparedness.

Buddhists organize themselves into a monastic Order (Sangha) and the monks live in groups. Hinduism is basically a religion of the individual.

Buddhism believes in the concept of Bodhisattvas. Hinduism does not believe in it.

Buddhism acknowledges the existence of some gods and goddesses of Hindu pantheon, but gives them a rather subordinate status.

Refuge in the Buddha, the Sangha and Dhamma are the three cardinal requirements on the eightfold. Hinduism offers many choices to its followers on the path of self-realization.
Although both religions believe in karma and rebirth, they differ in the manner in which they operate and impact the existence of individual beings.

Of the two religions Hinduism is older perhaps by at least a millennium or two. Some Buddhist may argue that the Buddha that we know historically as born in the sixth century B.C. in the Indian subcontinent was but one in the line of many Buddhas that preceded him and would follow him. Such a belief may enjoy some validation and approval in the metaphysical realm of enlightened monks, just as the Hindus believe in the existence and continuation of Sanatana dharma, (popularly known as Hinduism) through endless cycles of creation and dissolution of worlds spanning across a time frame of millions of years. However available evidence does not confirm the theory that Buddhism existed as a religion prior to the birth of the Buddha. In case of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, we have evidence that he was the last in the long line of 24 Jain Thirthankaras, but in case of Buddhism we do not have such confirmation.

**Buddha’s Attitude towards Hindus**

Prior to his enlightenment, the Buddha was brought up in a traditional Hindu family. Before finding his own path, he went to Hindu gurus to find an answer to the problem of suffering. He followed the meditation techniques and ascetic practices as prescribed by the Hindu scriptures and followed by the Hindu yogis of his time. It is said that after becoming the Buddha, he showed special consideration to the higher caste Hindus especially the Brahmins (priests) and Kshatriyas (warriors). He exhorted his disciples to treat especially Brahmins with respect and consideration because of their spiritual bent of mind and inner progress achieved during their previous births. It is said that certain categories of Brahmins had free access to the Buddha and that some of the
Brahmin ascetics were admitted into the monastic discipline without being subjected to the rigors of probation which was otherwise compulsory for all classes of people. The Buddha converted many Brahmins to Buddhism and considers their involvement a sure sign of progress and popularity of his fledgling movement. Much later, we find a similar echo of sentiment in the inscriptions of King Ashoka where he exhorted the people of his empire to show due respect to the Brahmins.

EARLY BUDDHISM AND EARLY BRĀHMAISM

At the time when Buddhism flourished in India, Brāhmanism was the major religion who adored Brahmā as their supreme God. At this time the term ‘Hinduism’ has not been known and used yet. The salient features of Brāhmanism were:

- The earliest traces of the origin of Brāhmanism were found in the systematic arrangement of hymns of the Rg-veda. They believed on the Brahman, the cosmic principle which was regarded as being infinite, unchangeable, eternal, absolute reality on which all that exists depends.

- Brāhmanism emphasised its belief on sacrifice (yajña, karma) whereas one’s whole life was regarded as a sacrifice. Sacrifice was the means for obtaining power over this and other worlds. Sacrifice existed from eternity and proceeded from the Supreme Being (Prajāpati or Brahmā) along with the Traividyā (three-fold sacred science), i.e., the Rik or verses, the Sāmans or chants and the Yajus or sacrificial formulas

- The cosmological and cosmogonical theories found in Brāhmanism were also found in the Vedas, Brāhmaas and Upanisads. They believed that the world was created by the gods. During the period of the Brāhma as the idea of the divine creation gained its ground and Prajāpati was regarded as the supreme
creator. The Upanisads recognised Brahman or Ātman as the first principle from which everything else originated.

- The Rig-veda did not develop the doctrine about life after death. It was believed that after death one dwelt in heaven with Yama. Meanwhile the brāhmanas believed that the dead would take the path of returning to the earth (pitr-yāna) or of going to the heaven (deva- yāna).

- Besides sacrifices, Brāhmanism performed various forms of religious worships known as pūjā. They worshipped deities, sacred objects, trees, holy places, serpents (nāgas) and other supernatural beings.

- Ethics and morality did not find an important place in Brāhmanism.

- The varnāś rama-dharmā was an essential feature of Brāhmanism. They believed that the lifespan of individual was divided into four stages (catur āś rama).

**The ideal in Buddhism, Brāhmanism and Upanisad:** The Buddhist ideal was the attainment of tranquility (upasama), the deathless state (amata) state of peace (santi) and supreme bliss (parama-sukha) by the extinction of defilement (āsava) such as desire, ignorance and craving. Early Brāhmanism aimed at obtaining material gain through sacrifice, while the Upanisadic doctrine aimed at the attainment of liberation through realisation of the identity of Ātman and Brahman. Asceticism was considered to be of great importance to attain this ideal.15

**The Buddha lived in the society where Brāhmanism dominated in India:** Richard Gombrich believed that the Buddha lived at about the end of what is called the Vedic period of Indian history.16 He explained the Vedic Civilisation as follows: The
word ‘Vedic’ derives from Sanskrit veda, meaning ‘knowledge’ and refers to this case to sacred knowledge, knowledge about ultimate matter. In fact the Sanskrit term for Vedic literature is śruti, what has been ‘heard’. The texts have been ‘heard’ by inspired sages. Ultimately they are not composed, by gods or human beings, but exist eternally, whether anyone is aware of them or not. Śruti is eternally true and infallible; it tells men what to do. In early Vedic society there were four main social statutes: priests, rulers, ordinary free people and slaves. Later, most social status in India became ascribed by birth. The priests mostly represented by the Brahmans (Brāhmanas) are the class of men whose duty and function it is to preserve śruti. Since it was the prerogative of brāhmanas to learn and interpret, all authority (on ultimate matters) rested with them. In early Indian history the measure of orthodoxy was whether one accepted śruti and whether one accepted the authority (in ideological matters) of the brāhmanas. Heterodox thinkers like the Buddha were rejecting both the Vedas as the depository of final truth and the position of the brāhmanas as arbiters of truth.

The Buddha criticised the concept of Brahma-world. In Brahmanimantaniika Sutta, Baka the Brahmā claimed that Brahmā-world was permanent, everlasting and eternal; this was total and was not subject to pass away. Brahmā - world was where one was neither born nor ages nor dies nor passes away nor reappears, and beyond this there was no escape. Brāhmanism treated Baka the Brahmā as the Great Brahmā, the Overlord, the Untranscended, of Infallible Vision, Wielder of Mastery, Lord Maker and Creator, Most High Providence, Master and Father of those that are and ever can be.

The Buddha criticised Baka the Brahmā that he held a wrong view and lapsed in to ignorance in that he said of the impermanent that it was permanent, of the transient that
it was everlasting, of the non-eternal that it was eternal, of the incomplete that it was total. Brahmā realms pertained only to the first jhāna. The Buddha showed that Baka the Brahmā had never seen three other bodies in Brahmā world: the body called Streaming Radiance (pertaining in second jhāna); Refulgent Glory (third jhāna) and Great Fruit (fourth jhāna).

This sutta demonstrated that the goal of Brāhmaṇism, that was the union with the Brahmā, was surrounded by the ignorance since it pertained to first jhāna only. The final liberation according to the Buddha was only able to be achieved at the fourth jhāna.

**Differences between early Buddhism and early Brahmanism:** The term Hinduism’ is not known at the time of the Buddha but many people practiced some kind of what is called Brahmanism. Lal Mani Joshi has written two excellent essays comparing the ideological struggle between Brahmanism and Buddhism in the early days in India. He defined that early Brahmanism was the Vedic religion and thoughts as a whole and not just Upanisadic Brahmanism. His papers identified some main differences between early Buddhism and early Brahmanism. The differences became intensified as Buddhism started to flourish and to attract many local people.

**BUDDHIST IDEAS IN INDIA**

As it developed in India, Buddhism was a rational evolution emerging from the context of Hindu (Vedantist) religion-philosophy. On the religious level, Buddhism accepted the Vedic posture that sense-based life is suffering and must be transcended to experience a higher state of realization, one’s “own true nature,” as it is frequently referred to in scriptures of both traditions. It differed from Hinduism, however, on a
number of important points, some religious (use of rites, moral precepts, definition of God), and some philosophical.

Despite the highly charged emotionality of much that we associate with Hinduism (colourful festivals, charismatic fakirs and gurus, ecstasies and spectacular mortifications), a rational process of abstract thought, articulated by philosophers within the Vedic context, underpins this rich and ancient tradition. Brahman, the essence of being, is synonymous with atman, the inner light or "god-within." Men and women are suppressed in the material world of Samsara and destined to journey through an eternity of rebirths via the law of karma unless they can achieve samadhi (enlightenment). One who would transcend the world of pain, pleasure and distraction to experience total identity with the Absolute must follow a rational program of meditation, austerities and good works. Within the tradition, there was ample room for redefinition of ideas, debate and the development of schools of thought as well as the emergence of individual thinkers such as Patanjali and Shankara.

As Hinduism became enmeshed with the cultural life of India, however, even its most esoteric protagonists became distracted from its original concepts and their subsequent development, according to some critics of the time. Ritual de-evolved into magic shows, and austerities undertaken to remove distractions from the spiritual and intellectual quest became in themselves distractions, as renunciants became fixated on states of discomfort and starvation. It was during a period of calm reflection away from these mortifications that the monk Gautama Siddhartha became flooded with insight and developed a less colourful, but more intellectual approach to the pursuit of truth which we call Buddhism.
One of the most appealing premises of Buddhism to Western thinkers is its emphasis on individual exploration, deliberation, debate and practice. According to the Buddha himself, enlightenment (however we choose to interpret it whether a high state of understanding or a genuine mystical experience of ultimate reality) cannot be reached by a team effort. Ultimately, it is one man or woman working alone who can uncover the path to truth. Buddha reportedly said, "Accept my words only after you have examined them for yourselves; do not accept them simply because of the reverence you have for me." It was just this emphasis on individual action and practical rewards in the here and now which greatly appealed to many Chinese once the philosophy crossed their borders. This idiosyncratic quality was developed in China (where it became the Mahayana school) far beyond the direction it took in Southern climates (the Theravada school).

The philosophy of Buddhism developed in various forms in India in accordance with certain basic tenets, most notably the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. The Four Noble Truths are as follows:

- That suffering exists.
- There is a cause to suffering.
- Suffering can cease.
- There is a path which leads to permanent cessation of suffering.

It is interesting to note an important distinction. Buddhism holds that life is suffering, not evil, such as some of the Hindu pundits of the time proclaimed. Suzuki claimed that Mahayana Buddhism (the variety which was accepted in China) was the "first teaching in India that contradicted the doctrine of Nirvana as conceived by other Hindu thinkers. The Nirvana of the Hindu yogis was a complete annihilation of being, for
they thought that existence is evil, and evil is misery, and the only way to escape misery is to destroy the root of existence, which is nothing less than the total cessation of human desires and activities in Nirvanic unconsciousness." This is a point of view antithetical to Chinese thought. It is also a point of view which betrays Suzuki's own bias against Hindu thought; Paramahansa Yogananda, for example, a highly regarded yogi of the 20th Century, said existence was not evil, but the play or game of God. This view is sustained in the Vedas and Bhagavad Gita, seminal texts of Hinduism. While undoubtedly some schools of Hindu thought advocated cessation of thought and lethal mortifications to escape from an evil world, others believed that human life is the greatest possible blessing because it is only through this level of incarnation that one can rise to an understanding and experience of Ultimate Reality, or what Plato would call the Good.

Suzuki believed that unlike other Hindu teachers, Buddha did not teach that Nirvana (complete awareness) could be achieved through the complete cessation of existence as we commonly know it. The way to conquer suffering and attain Nirvana is outlined in the Eightfold Path, which holds that one must develop "right" understanding, thought or motives, speech, action, means of livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration. These concepts are abstract enough to inspire many contrasting canons of philosophical speculation within southern schools of Buddhism and yet specific enough to promote (at the very least) a certain level of ethical commitments or behaviour in anyone who claimed to follow the Buddha's way. Underlying these precepts are injunctions to mindfulness and compassion which adds warmth through personalization and concern for others, making the Path more than a cold "laundry list" of required commandments. Although the Eightfold Path was introduced as a radical departure from Hindu ethics, it is not really so different from the eight kriyas of orthodox Hindu thought:
yama, non-injury to others, trustfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-covetousness; niyama, purity of body and mind, contentment, self-discipline, self-study and devotion; asana, right posture; pranayama, control of the breath and subtle life currents; pratyahara, withdrawal of senses from external objects; dharana, keeping the mind focused on a thought or object; dhyana, meditation; and samadhi, super conscious experience. Only the hatha yoga admonitions on right posture and breath are not among the precepts of the Eightfold Path; and yet both play an important role in Buddhist practices of all schools.

Saddhatissa states that Buddhism has been described in three short axioms, cease to do evil, learn to do good, purify your own mind. These axioms and the Eightfold Path may have set the moral parameters for Buddhism, but clearly do not constitute Buddhist practice or philosophy just as the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule do not constitute Christianity.

These suggestions for "better living through Buddhism" provide a context in which true reflection the essence of Buddhism and its consequences, whatever they may be, can occur. To use a simile which appears throughout Buddhist literature, when a man points to the heavens, we should not mistake his finger for the moon. Chinese thinkers, with their suspicion of generalizations and rigid religious dogma, were especially attracted to the idea that the doctrine (Dharma) and rules of conduct were not in themselves the end, but rather practical guides to help individuals achieve their highest potential.

Partly because of resistance in staunchly Hindu India, Buddhism began to spread northward into China in the centuries immediately following Buddha's death. It certainly
was not met with open arms, but managed to find a niche in southern China by the first and second century by gradually adapting itself to Chinese attitudes and customs. The earthy Chinese were especially suspect of any philosophy emanating from a country whose prevailing philosophy of life was diametrically opposed to their idea of common sense (e.g. one which taught mortification in this life, happiness in the next). Nonetheless, if the Chinese had had opportunity to really observe their Indian neighbours, with their rich family life, colourful feasts and piquant cuisine, they would have realized that India had no shortage of joie de vie either.

Had the Chinese represented a united front, with a peaceful political climate and consistency in religion, ideas and culture, Buddhism may have had a more difficult time making itself known. However, during the Han and T'ang dynasties (approximately 250 to 600 C.E.), Buddhist ideas benefited from an unequal state of instability and uncertainty, just the sort of environment which welcomes a point of view which admits that life is tough and that there is a way to overcome it, at least on a personal level. With the proliferation of short-lived states, disillusionment with Confucianism, widespread anarchy and invasions by non-Chinese in the north, Buddhism made major inroads into China, provided it adapted itself along the way. It was an immigration which included the appearance in the sixth century of the 28th Ch'an patriarch, Bodhidharma, (Ch'an became Zen when transported to Japan) and in thousands of less well-remembered monks who, without overt proselytizing, communicated an alternative way of living and thinking to men and women looking for a new answer to ancient concerns.

**BUDDHIST INFLUENCE ON INDIAN LITERATURE**

"Buddha's teachings like his heart was all-expanding and all-embracing, so it has survived his body and swept across the face of the earth" - Mahatma Gandhi. 19 Buddhist
influence on Indian literature is interestingly not the only facet that needs a critical
describing in the pan Indian context; curiously enough, though not much noticeable to the
naked common eye, Buddhism has had its origination and roots established in India since
even unrecorded and pre-recorded times. It becomes thus quite a foregone conclusion and
that too a prestigious one at that Buddhism is sure to impress upon and influence every
Indian life since precisely that period and perhaps, still running to great guns. Gautama
Buddha, prior to becoming a man that one acknowledges now, was 'Siddhartha', the
prince to King Suddhodana - chief of the Shakya nation. Just as Rome, it is known was
not built in a day, likewise, Siddhartha did take his time to become Gautama Buddha,
universally acknowledged as the founding spiritual preacher of Buddhism. Quite
evidently, Buddhism being accomplished under such a man who had shunned riches to
stay contented in rugs demands and does indeed own umpteen legends and lore associated
with the birth of Buddhist influence upon the then Indian quintessential life. And
Buddha's time period, though not quite certain (20th Century historians are of the view
that Buddha had resided from c. 563 B.C.E to 483 B.C.E), does hold sufficient proof that
written literature in India had arrived by his times, hence answering for his disciples'
passionate attempts to record Gautama Buddha's sayings and talks and his later thoughts
in a perfect textual format. And needless to mention, every Indian life was touched
forever by such written Buddhist literature in India, influencing every individual in his
path to redemption. Such lofty and towering precepts does indeed call for a more intense
peep into the authoritarian Buddhist influence upon Indian literature at large - a topic of
fervent research still under literary historians and researchers. Buddhist influence on
Indian literature did indeed begin during Gautama's life-time and a little later itself, and
not as supposed, much later during the proper flowering of Indian literature from the
Vedic Age.
Buddhism has made unforgettable contribution and influence upon Indian life, its spiritualism and opinion and sentiment. That Buddha's word of mouth has had exercised its potential influence on the essence and quintessential culture of India over the centuries, is indeed undeniable and it is also attested that the literatures in the major languages of India have received inspiration in some way or the other from Buddha and his teachings in their literary and philosophical treatment. The interrelationship of 'Buddhism' with a particular literature and how it has reacted towards Buddhism and Buddhist principles in the different periods of Indian history is what makes every sort of literary work interesting and captivating. Buddha's words were picked up and lapped in the society by every commoner as reflected in the literary words, thus once more stressing upon the fact that Buddhist influence on Indian literature has been too much prized to ever let it go by the drain. So much so was this Buddhist influence that Indian literature gave rise to a particular 'band' of writers, composers and thought-leaders in the umpteen regional languages inspired for a lifetime.

It has always been an acknowledged criterion that religion has long had exerted a tough and potent influence on Indian literary writings. The major religions under this header have been Hinduism, Jainism, Islam and of course, Buddhism. Throughout the history of Indian literature, particular religious creeds and teachings have had been successful to form common threads. The emergence of the popular religions Buddhism and Jainism during the 6th Century B.C. had given rise to literature in Pali language and in the several dialects of Sanskrit acknowledged as Prakrit (standing for "natural language"). Meanwhile, Tamil a Dravidian language, had emerged as the most authoritative language in the south. Productive and copious literary traditions had later emerged in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam which are all modern languages that had germinated
from Old Tamil and its dialects. And the master and key guiding factor here is the presence of all these languages in the most initial Buddhist influence upon Indian literature. It is today a much known aspect that Buddha had always rejected Sanskrit to lay emphasis upon Pali as his language of propagation and preaching. Hence, Buddhist influence and Buddhism in Indian literature very much begins and ends in Pali during its primary stage, which later had developed into the other south Indian languages just described above.

A much profounder understanding of Buddhist influence upon Indian literature can be visible once one is enlightened about the very basis of Buddhism - the Buddhist scriptures. Buddhist scriptures and other texts truly have existed in an immense variety. Different schools of Buddhism presently stress moseying levels of value on learning these various texts. Some schools are known to revere particular texts as religious objects in themselves, whereas, others take a more 'scholastic' approach. Unlike various other religions, Buddhism does not possess any single central text that is ubiquitously pertained to by all traditions. However, some scholars and historians do refer to the Vinaya Pitaka and the first four Nikayas of the Sutta Pitaka as the 'common core' of all Buddhist customs. The followers of Theravada Buddhism take the scriptures acknowledged as the Pali Canon as most determinate and authoritative, whereas, the followers of Mahayana Buddhism, establish their faith and philosophy primarily upon the Mahayana Sutras and their very own vinaya. These delineated scriptures and doctrinal philosophies do itself come under the immeasurable canopy of Indian literature, without which the present solid scenario would never have been feasible.

Thus, the major religious texts of Buddhism were amassed in three collections known as the Tipitaka (standing for "three baskets"). The Tipitaka, penned in the Pali
language, incorporates the teachings of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. And herein can be mentioned the most significant context of Buddhist influence on Indian literature, which has forever been a magnificent book of admiration for all ages, especially children as bed-time stories. The most important of the Tipitaka texts comprises the Jatakas (stories and legends of the births of Buddha), which immortalises 547 stories of Buddha's former births. In the Jataka tales, Buddha recounts exactly how he was reborn in the form of animals, human beings and nature deities, as he had endeavoured towards enlightenment and, eventually, towards emancipation from the cycle of rebirths. This emancipation is recognised as the aspiration and ultimate goal for all Buddhists. The Jatakas and the principal narratives and philosophical texts of early Buddhism in due course had circularised together with Buddhism to Sri Lanka, China, Japan and the countries of Southeast Asia, including Thailand and Vietnam. Thus, even if leaving behind the other solemn and religious doctrines, the Jatakas have truly had exerted its Buddhist influence on Indian literature, which perhaps needs no introduction for the contemporary generation.

The immense literature of Buddhism in India (much like Hindu or Jain literature) was not a literature however of revelation and authority. The essays based upon social ethics and moral responsibilities, its treatises on philosophy and science, its art and poetry were but 'pointers' to a path of wisdom. Such a unique governance of Buddhist influence on Indian literature had lent the religion both its flexibility and adaptability. Owning to its non-hegemonic character and humanist appeal, Buddhism in Indian literature was adopted without coercion and force by the vast populace. And the most stellar instance of a social adaptation and acceptance of Buddhist literature in the Indian context was Tamil literature, since its inception during the 1st Century A.D. under Mauryan Emperor Ashoka
the Great. It is acknowledged by historians that there had existed several Buddhist centres in Tamil Nadu back then. The most popular amongst them were situated in Kanchipuram, Pattinam, Madurai, Nagapattinam, Buddhakudi, Uraiyoor, Thanjavoor, Vanchi and Potikai. It is undoubtedly comprehended that there indeed did exist a lot of Buddhist settlements in Tamil Nadu, which would suggest a firm existence and popularity of the religion.

Tamil language in its most ancient inception of Buddhism was a prestigious and esteemed harbinger of a fine Buddhist influence on Indian literature. The earliest literary works in Tamil like Silappadikaram, Manimekalai and Kundalakesi bear ample information about the place and position of Buddhism in Tamil Nadu, besides explaining in clear terms the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Bimbisara Gathi is a Buddhist work, which was however complete lost; Siddhartattohai and Tiruppatikam are both based on Buddhist doctrines. Virasoliyam is a Tamil grammatical treatise by an anonymous Buddhist. The invocation poems of all these works provide materials to know something about Buddhist religion. Next to Tamil language invoking Buddhist influence to forever immortalize Indian literature, Telugu comes as the secondary Dravidian option to have been charmed by this specific religion in spiritual terms.

Andhra Pradesh has had patronised Buddhism extensively and there exists ample evidence in their land to testify this point beyond doubt. There can be witnessed a rich crop of Buddhist literature during modern period in Andhra Pradesh in the form of Kavyas, Khand Kavyas (short poems), plays and novels. The legendary twin poets Tirupati Venkata Kavulu, who are acclaimed as the forerunners of modern poetry in Telugu, have compiled the life of Buddha as Buddha Charita in verse form. They have
demonstrated superb skill in the narration of the story, in the portrayal of the characters in
the picturesque delineations and in picturing variegated feelings, moods and sentiments in
the composition of this Kavya. Tirupati Venkata Kavulu's pupils, Pingali and Katuri
Kavulu, following the footsteps of their illustrious teachers had penned Saundaranandam,
a short and sweet kavyam, portraying the story of Bodhisatva. A more detailed account of
the life of Buddha was vividly portrayed in Pindiprolu Vasanta Kumari Devi's work
Samagamam. The story was narrated in the form of memoirs recalled by Yasodhara Devi
in this work. Prasadaroya Kulpati and Panduranga have jointly produced the work Karuna
Sindhu. Then again, Dasaradhi had given life to a Kavya named Mahabodhi. This
poem interestingly incorporates a few Jataka tales of Buddha. Giddaluri Venkateswarlu
had authored the life of Buddha under the caption Dharma Gita, reminiscent of Bhagavad
Gita. Viplava Jyoti is a master work of Kurra Venkala Subha Rao. Buddhist influence on
Indian literature truly has been immemorial and in much modern times, has indeed
beguiled Bengali writers too.

Bengali literature and its Buddhist influence in the Indian literary context, was
begun well during the ancient to early medieval age, when the rulers of Pala or the
Chandra dynasties had served as staunch Buddhists, propagating Buddhism in a most
sensational manner. Bengali language had originated in the hands of Buddhist monks and
Siddhacharyas from the crust of Prakrit. The first ever songs and lyrics in Bengali
language were composed by these Siddhacharyas during the reign of Pala kings in ancient
Bangladesh from 8th to 12-13th Centuries. Bengali language writers and thinkers of the
modern times owe a great deal to Buddhist philosophy. The greatest thinker and reformer
of early 19th Century in India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) had founded the
Brahmo Samaj in 1828, to reclaim orthodox traditional religion of the Hindus. A great
student of Vedanta philosophical system, Ram Mohan Roy was a true idealist in every sense. Quite naturally, he was significantly influenced by Buddhistic teachings and differed from traditional Hinduism and had criticised the 'dogmatic' caste system of the Hindu community.

Among the most notable Hindu writers to have ushered in a brilliant Buddhist influence on Indian literature through Bengali, are Rajendra Lal Mitra (1822-91), Ramda Sen (1845-81), Satyendranath Tagore (1842-1923), Krishna Kumar Mitra (1851-1935), Rajanikanta Gupta (1849-1900), Bijoychadra Majumdar (1861-1942), Sharat Chandra Das (1849-1971), Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1921), Chandra Ghose (1844-1922) and Girish Ghosh (1844-1922).

Rajendra Lal Mitra's outstanding books on Buddhism include - An Introduction to the Lalitavistara (1877), Buddha Gaya the Hermitage of Sakyamuni (1878) and the Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal (1882). Akshay Kumar Datta (1820-86), a great prose-writer and thinker and editor of the legendary monthly "Tattabodhini", had dedicated a chapter in his brilliant book Bharatbarshio Upashak Sampraday (The Worshipers of Indian sub-continent) to Buddhist philosophy. Haraprashat Shastri, the celebrated figure in the field of ancient Bengali language and Buddhist culture, had discovered some oldest mystic songs of Buddhist monks from Nepal, recognised as Charyacharjabinishchaya. The most spectacular playwright of Bengali literature, Girish Chandra Ghose had published his Buddhadeva-Charita (1887), depicting the life of Gautama Buddha. One of the greatest Bengali novelists and thinkers, Bankim Chandra Chattapadhay (1838-94) is known to have paid glorious tributes to Buddha in his treatise Samya (Equality), (1879). Bankim Chandra had accounted the Buddha as the 'greatest
liberal humanist and democrat who liberated the oppressed common man from the curse of caste-system of the Vedic period'.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-84), a leader of Bharatbarshio Brahmo Samaj, was profoundly inspired by the liberal humanism of the Buddhistic thoughts. Quite significantly, the rational and humanistic facets of the teachings of the Buddha and Buddhist culture had attracted Nobel-laureate and legend Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Contributions of Buddhist rulers and Buddhism to Indian Civilisation and the function of Buddhist philosophy and culture in art, literature and intellectual life of India were quite poignantly retrieved by Rabindranath Tagore in his poems, plays, essays, travelogues, treatises and lectures. Buddhism did indeed accentuate a great impact in the thoughts and reflections of the poet. Hence, a fact time and time exerts upon the domain of 'Indianite' literature that Gautama Buddha and his Buddhism could never have been ignored or shovelled away from literary pursuits or master works by noted authors. It is an absolute thought of wonder and appreciation that Buddhist influence on Indian literature was and has been tremendous, never to be erased under the room of veneration and respect.

**CONTRIBUTION OF BUDDHISM TO INDIA**

The contribution which Buddhism made to the cultural advancement of India is indeed is notable. The part played by the viharas and sangha was unique in this regard. In this chapter, the research scholar made an attempt to describe some of its important aspects, such as educational system, artistic development, political and social ideas acquired by the people of India.
Art and Architecture

Even if we judge him only by his posthumous effects on the civilization of India, Sakyamuni Buddha was certainly the greatest man to have been born in India, and the contribution of his teachings towards Indian history and culture was perhaps greater than that of Brahmanism. Before becoming a major faith and a Civilising force in the world, Buddhism had been a mighty stream of thought and a tremendous fountain-head of human culture in its homeland. Ignorance or neglect of the available Buddhist literature is not the only shortcoming of the “traditional” approach. The fact that the knowledge of Indian archaeology is confined to a handful of scholars is another factor which has prevented most of us from viewing Buddhism in its entirety. Mortimer Wheeler observes that “Archaeologically at least we cannot treat Buddhism merely as a heresy against a prevailing and fundamental Brahmanical orthodoxy.”

For, in spite of the ravages of time and destruction by Indian and foreign fanatics, Buddhism is still speaking vividly and majestically through its thousands of inscriptions, about one thousand rock-cut sanctuaries and monasteries, thousands of ruined stupas and monastic establishments and an incalculable number of icons, sculptures, paintings and emblems, that it prevailed universally among the classes and masses of India for over fifteen centuries after the age of the Buddha, and that its ideas of compassion, peace, love, benevolence, rationalism, spiritualism and renunciation had formed the core of the superstructure of ancient Indian thought and culture. What is proved by Buddhist archaeology is affirmed by Buddhist philosophy and literature also. Not only the numerical strength and volume of Buddhist texts extant in Pali, Buddhist Sanskrit, classical Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsa, or preserved in South and South-East Asian, Tibetan, Chinese, Japanese and Central Asian languages and scripts, but also the variety, modernity, depth and subtlety of Buddhist literature and philosophy lead us to conclude that the religion and philosophy of Buddhist
texts had captivated the Indic world. According to Swami Vivekananda, Buddhism had at one time “nearly swallowed up two-thirds of the population” of India.

Buddhism in the Theravada tradition has been a two fold movement, the Buddhism of monks and nuns or ascetic Buddhism, and the Buddhism of the laymen and laywomen (upasaka, upasika) or popular and social Buddhism. Along with the way to Nirvana, there was the way to ’good rebirth’. In the Brahmajalasutta, the Patimokkha, and the Visuddhimagga, all worldly arts and crafts are described as unworthy of those who seek ultimate liberation. Prohibition of participation by monks and nuns in dances, songs, instrumental music, shows of entertainment and use of articles of personal beautification is the burden of the 7th and 8th Sikkhapadas. The case was different in popular Buddhism or upasaka-dhamma. The Mahaparinibbanasutta narrates how the nobles and the commoners, both men as well as women, of the Malla clan, honoured the body of the Tathagata by dancing and singing in accompaniment with instrumental music, with garlands and perfumes. Similar artistic activities full of ceremonial dignity and aesthetic sense are reported in the Lalitavistara and the Buddhacarita to have been performed by men and women of Kapilavastu at the birth of the Bodhisattva Siddhartha.

The growth of Buddhist fine arts was due largely to the educational, religious, and devotional needs of the Buddhists. The supremely perfect and supernal personality of the Buddha (sarvanga sundaram or sarvkaravaropeta) was the greatest attraction for artists and poets and the supreme object of devout contemplation for monks and mystics; hence the growth of Buddhology, Buddhist iconology, sculpture and painting. With the emergence of Mahayana, the Buddha image became the central plank of popular Buddhism and it was manufactured in a thousand plastic forms. Manufacturing religious
icons and emblems was viewed as a pious deed. So was excavating viharas in live rocks and erecting shrines and stupas. The Pali Apadanas as well as the Sanskrit Avadanas eminently display the popular enthusiasm for adoration (puja) of emblems such as the wheel, bowl, foot-print, the bodhi-tree and other items connected with the Master’s earthly existence. From about the beginning of the Christian era images of the Buddha began to come into existence and revolutionised rituals of worship not only in Buddhism but also in Brahmanism. In place of sacrificial rituals, temple rituals now became popular. The style of the Buddhist stupa seems to have inspired the style of Brahmanical temples, especially those with a sikhara. It may be suggested that the early Buddhist practise of raising stupas or sacred reliquary mounds perhaps reflected, inter alia, a sense of time and historicity. The Vedic Aryans lacked this sense and hence in Brahmanism the tradition of building stupas did not develop. The Mahabharata and the Puranas considered the practise of venerating stupas or caityas (called edukas) as a mark of the Dark Age (kaliyuga). However, later on the practise was adopted by those sects of the Brahmanical tradition which were most influenced by later Buddhism, viz. Śaivaite, Vedanta and Gorakhpant.

Of all the joys, that of Dhamma, dhammapiti, was supreme. The Buddha had said that “the gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts.” This was the teaching of Emperor Asoka too.²¹ The gifts of Dhamma included all that was conducive to nobler and higher life including the knowledge of doctrines, articles of faith and devotion, scriptures, icons, symbols and all the other means of growing in piety or expressing compassion and liberality. In this way, Buddhism became the source of manifold artistic and literary activities reflecting the creative and aesthetic genius of its teachers and followers.
With the passage of time old inhibitions receded into the background; moreover, the theory of perfection in expedient means (upayakaushalya paramita) naturally required and encouraged proficiency in various arts and sciences. The Bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana left no difference between bhikshus and upasakas. The art and literature of Buddhism was produced through the donations not only of upasakas and upasikas but also of monks and nuns. For instance there are 827 Brahmi inscriptions on the monuments of Sañchi alone. Among the donors are mentioned the names of over two hundred monks and nuns; the rest are lay followers. Similar is the case at a number of other Centers of Buddhist art and culture. Hsuan Tsang has noted the names of a number of monks who established monasteries, built shrines and erected images. In this connection mention may be made of Jayasena of Yashyavana-Vihara, an upasaka but a great teacher and author of Buddhist shastras. The Nalanda stone inscription of Malada describes the monks of the University of Nalanda as “reputed experts in true scriptures and the arts.”

The community monks became, in the course of time, community teachers of society, and they have left a permanent influence on the country people who esteem any tawny-clad person not only for his austere dress but also for his supposed proficiency in solving secular problems, such as knowledge of medicine for example. King Dutthagamani of Sri Lanka is reported to have said that “the very sight of monks is auspicious and conducive to our protection.” The “ sharers” of alms (Bhikkhus), before whom kings and nobles bowed, had been the cultural leaders and religious teachers of society and a source of inspiration for the masses for several centuries before the sacking of Nalanda Mahavihara by Bukhtyar Khilji.
The great mass of Buddhist art and literature, so rich, varied and deeply inspiring in both form and content, was inspired by the beauty and the norms of the Dhamma. This Dhamma itself was conceived of as a blessing in the beginning, a blessing in the middle and a blessing in the end. It is to be noted that the Buddhist seers make a distinction between the pursuit of abstract beauty which they found through the spotless spiritual eye of the Dhamma, and the delights of its ephemeral beauty. All, that is holy and utterly well and is conducive to the attainment of the supreme goal, is indeed beautiful. This is the spiritual dimension of aesthetics.

We need hardly mention that the earliest and the best painting of ancient India is the Buddhist painting; that the best sculpture of the golden days of ancient Indian culture is the Buddhist sculpture; that the earliest historical sculpture of India is also the Buddhist sculpture. In the field of architecture too, Buddhism was the pioneer source of inspiration. In both structural and rock-cut architecture of ancient India, Buddhist examples had provided a permanent legacy in planning, technique and style. The earliest historical buildings in brick are the ruins of Buddhist monasteries; the earliest man-made rock-cut halls are the viharas of Buddhists and Ajivaka monks excavated under the orders of a Buddhist emperor. Last but not least the earliest and the best free standing monolithic pillars with beautiful capitals of animal figures were inspired by Buddhism and conceived by a Buddhist genius. All subsequent examples of kirtistambhas and dhva jastambhas have been influenced by Asokan latas. Indian palaeography and epigraphy owe a great deal to the original and pioneer inspiration of Buddhism and its lithic records. The earliest historical inscriptions of India are the Buddhist inscriptions. The dharmalipi of Asoka became the mother of all subsequent varieties of Brahmi and its derivative Indian scripts.
Polity

Buddhism has contributed significantly to the development of the forms and institution of civil government, including the ideals of kingship, in ancient India. Sakyamuni was a teacher also of the principles of righteous government, individual freedom and the rule of law. The seven conditions of stability of a republican body which he suggested to the Magadhan diplomat, Vassakara, are words of social wisdom still relevant to our contemporary political life.

The influence of Buddhism on ancient Indian political theory and administrative organisation could be understood in the light of

(i) Buddhist speculations concerning the origin of state and government,
(ii) the Buddhist organisation of the Bhikkhu-Samgha and its impact on democratic states of ancient India,
(iii) the influence of the Buddha’s teachings on kings, queens, and their vassals and ministers and
(iv) certain concepts and institutions, concerning political life, which were inspired by Buddhist teaching.

With regard to the first point, the Buddhist theory of the origin of state and government as related in the Aggañnasutta\(^26\) is of democratic import. A similar version in the Santiparvan of the Mahabharata seems to have been modelled after the Buddhist theory. The fact that many ancient Indian kings and authors of political thought, felt that the king owes his authority to his subjects may have been suggested by the legend concerning Mahajanasmmita, the first traditional king. The Arthashastra of Kautilya, the Junaghr Rock Inscription of Rudradaman I, the Mahabharata, the Mañjusrimulakalpa and the
Rajatarangini suggest that the tradition of the election of kings was continued till the 12th Century C.E. in some parts of India.\(^{27}\)

With respect to the second point it is a well-known fact that the organization and administration of the Buddhist Samgha was based on democratic ideas and that the democratic traditions of early Buddhist republics\(^{28}\) were continued till as late as the time of Samudragupta (4th Century C.E), who seems to have wiped out the republican states in his time. But the tradition survived in paura-janapada assemblies and also in village-administration, and has come down to our own era in the form of gramo-pancayatas.

With regard to the third point, namely the influence of the Buddha’s teachings on ancient Indian kings, queens and their ministers, there is a mass of evidence in the form of literary, epigraphic and foreign records and a modest volume could be written on this subject alone. It is impossible here even to mention the mere names of all the kings, queens, nobles, and ministers of ancient India, who were Buddhists or were influenced by Buddhism. Among the kings who were Buddhist by faith, we may include Bimbisara, Ajatashatru, Pushakarasarin of Gandhara, Kalashoka, Emperor Asoka, Dasharatha Maurya, Brhadratha Maurya, Menander, the Greek king, Kanishka I, the Kushana king, one of the Satavahanas, either Simuka or his son Krshna, Buddhagupta, Tathagatagupta, Narasimhagupta, Baladitya of the Gupta dynasty, Purnavarman of Magadha, Rajabhata of Bengal, Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana of Thanesvara, Dhruvasena or Dhruvabhata of Malava, Siladitya I, Dhammaditya of Malava, Meghavahana of Kashmir, Subhakaradeva of Orissa, almost all the rulers of the Candra dynasty, Khadga dynasty, Bhadra dynasty and the Bhaumakara dynasty of Bengal and Orissa, Gopala and Dharmapala and some other kings of the Pala dynasty. This list is by no means
comprehensive. Many of these kings were paramopasaka or paramasaugata, i.e. devout Buddhists. With the ignoble exception of about ten kings, who persecuted Buddhism in their kingdoms, as a rule most of the kings of ancient India had sympathy and respect for Buddhism and patronized the monks and their establishments. The same is true of most of the queens and ministers whose patronage of Buddhism is known either through literature or through inscriptions or through foreign records.

It appears that India owes to Asoka the idea of a welfare state as well as the idea of a secular state, secular in the sense not of a state without any religion but in the sense that political administration of a state should be free, as far as possible, from sectarian principles and must respect the truly religious sentiments of different votaries that dwell in a particular state. Both these ideas are suggested by the inscriptions of Asoka. Asokan ideals of kingship were directly responsible for the growth of the idea of a welfare state free from the exclusive influence of a particular church. The idea of dharmavijaya or conquest by righteousness practiced and propagated by Asoka was inspired by Buddhist morality. This grand concept remained an ideal for many kings who came after Asoka. It does not seem to have been merely an imperial boast of Asoka when he declared that he had gained a righteous victory by silencing the war-drums (bheri-ghosha) and by beating the drums of righteousness (dharma-ghosha) throughout his empire and along its frontiers.

The author of the Chinese Hou Hanshu also noted that the people of India “practice the religion of the Buddha, it has become a habit with them not to kill and not to fight.” Along with this concept of conquest through righteousness, Buddhism gave us the concept of an inoffensive sacrifice by kings, a yajña entirely free from himsa and
full of charity and kindness. This concept was practised by Emperor Asoka and King Mehavahana of Kashmir. In the Ñanaghata cave inscription of Naganika we hear of this non-violent sacrifice called anarabhaniyo yaño.

Lastly, we may mention that ancient Indian political theory owes to Buddhism such institutions as that of dharmamahamatra, dharmasamaja, dharmaduta, such royal epithets as Siladitya, Vinayaditya, Dharmaditya, Paramasaugata, Paramopasakae etc. and to Buddhist social thought such historical examples as kingship of Brahmanas, sudras or of vaisyas. In early Brahmanical texts only a Kshatriya could be a ruler. In about the 2nd Century B.C.E this rule was changed and it was declared that even a Brahmana could be a ruler. This change in the duties of a Brahmana was possibly suggested by the concrete example of Pushyamitra Sunga, the Brahmana general of the last Maurya king who, having murdered his sovereign, made himself king of the decaying Maurya empire. Among the Brahmana families which ruled over small areas in different periods of ancient Indian history mention may be made of the Sungas, Kanvas, Kadambas, Vakatakas, and Satavahanas.

Education

When the Buddha had founded at Varanasi the ideal samgha consisting of sixty worthies (arahats) he commanded them in the following words: “Walk, monks, on your tour for the blessing of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the blessing, the happiness of devas and men. Monks, teach Dhamma which is a blessing in the beginning, a blessing in the middle, a blessing in the end.” We quote this passage from the Mahavagga to recall that Buddhism was, from the very beginning, a missionary movement founded on compassion, determined spiritually
to transform the world of humanity and to awaken it morally, intellectually and spiritually. Who can say how many millions of human beings had been awakened morally, intellectually and spiritually by the message of Buddhism in the course of its long history? We can only imagine that an immeasurable multitude of creatures must have been awakened in India alone. Buddhist monastic colleges and universities of ancient India threw open their doors to all those who wished to know, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or country.

This universal attitude and catholic spirit of Buddhist culture and its educational centers earned a great international reputation for India and attracted students and scholars from far-off countries. The same cannot be said of the Brahmanical system of education and its institutions. It is therefore quite proper to attribute to the influence of Buddhism the rise of organized public educational institutions in ancient India. The influence of Buddhist monastic and educational institutions on the growth and propagation of Indian culture can scarcely be overestimated. It was through Buddhism that Indian art, literature, thought and morals were transmitted throughout the length and breadth of Asia during the first millennium of the Christian era. In India it was after the Buddhist model of an organised institution of monks that Samkara-Carya established advaita seats (pitas) with an ordained and regulated community of Śaiva-Vedantika monks. There is no evidence of Brahmanical monasteries before the time of Samkara (Cir. 900 C.E). Charles Eliot is right when he observes that “the monastic institutions of India seem due to Buddhism.” “Samkara perceived the advantage of the cenobitic life for organising religion and founded a number of maths or colleges. Subsequent religious leaders imitated him.”34 One of the Centres founded by Samkara was located in Puri or Jagannathpuri in Orissa. According to Swami Vivekananda, a leading modern teacher of
Samkara’s school, “the temple of Jagannath is an old Buddhistic temple. We took this and others over and re-Hinduised them. We shall have to do many things like that yet.”

**Language & Literature**

Buddhist contribution to Indian languages and literature was matched only by the richness and variety of the Buddhist religion and philosophy. The development of Pali and its literature was wholly due to Buddhism. or its great historical, cultural and literary value, scholars are well aware. But Pali was not the only area which contributed to the flowering of the Buddhist tradition. The vast amount of Pali texts, canonical and non-canonical, is the contribution of only one major branch, doubtless one of the most ancient and orthodox branches of Buddhism. Several other schools of Buddhism cultivated varieties of Buddhist Sanskrit and varieties of Buddhist Prakrit. The Buddhist intellectuals of ancient India contributed not only to what is now called Buddhist Sanskrit and its varieties but also to what is called Paninian or Classical Sanskrit. Thus while we have the Avadanas and Mahayanasutra in a Sanskrit peculiar to the Buddhist tradition, we also have such texts as the Madhyamakashastra, the Jatakanala and the Tattvasamgraha, to mention only three out of numerous texts, in classical Sanskrit. The Sanskrit of the Buddhist tantras and sadhanas presents yet another category of language. Then the language of the epigraphs of Asoka is a kind of Prakrit, by no means uniform in all versions of the major rock edicts, quite different from the language of what has been called the Gandhari Dharmapada. The Buddha’s injunction to his disciples to learn the sacred word in their own languages (Sakaya-Niruttiya) was fully carried out by the faithful Buddhists.
The Pali authors were the first to write hagiographies and traditional historical narratives. Some sections of the Mahavagga and the Cullavagga contain the earliest examples of what may be called Buddhist historical literature. The Buddhavamsa presents us with the oldest hagiographies of the Buddhist tradition. Parallel developments of legendary biographies and hagiographies of mythical heroes and sages can be seen in the Mahabharata and the Jaina Kalpasutra. The Jatakas and the Apadanas (Sanskrit: Avadanas) remained a constant source of inspiration to future poets and religious authors who wrote in Sanskrit. Kshemendra (10th Century), for example, was first a Śaiva and later on he became a Bhagavata; he was inspired by Buddhist subjects and legends. He wrote the Bodhisattvavadana kalpalata in beautiful verse wherein he collected one hundred and eight avadanas. Whether it is in the Vetalapañcavimsatika or the Dasakumararita of Dandin (7th Century) or the Kathasaritasagara of Somadeva (11th Century), the Buddhist fables and stories, in spite of changes due to transmission in different versions, retained their psychological appeal, to the learned as well as to the simple folk. The didactic material of the Puranas and the Dharmashastras contains much that can ultimately be traced to Buddhist moral teachings. This is especially true of the Mahabharata. The beginnings of epic poetry, particularly of dramatic poetry, can possibly be traced to Buddhist akhyana poetry. The numerous dramatic narrations in the form of dialogues in Pali verse or in verse mixed with prose present us with the earliest forms of Buddhist akhyanas or so-called “ballads.”

The contribution of Buddhism to the psychological literature of ancient India has perhaps never been equalled in the literature of Brahmanical yoga. The psychological advances made by the Abhidhamma schools of Buddhist thought deserve detailed study in the light of contemporary psychology developed in the west. The problems of Abhidhamma psychology have hardly been studied yet in relation to the psychology of
Tantrika yoga and the Siddha culture. A study of devotional meditation (bhakti-yoga), of its techniques and terminology as revealed in the Hindi literature of mediaeval saint-poets, is likely to throw important light on the transmission and transformation of the classical Buddhist system of dhyana.

It is well known that the first dramatist in the history of Sanskrit literature was a Buddhist poet, Asvaghosha (1\textsuperscript{st} Century C.E). Fragments of three dramas in Sanskrit, including the fragments of the Sariputraprakarana, a drama by Asvaghosha, have come to light from Central Asian Buddhist ruins. Asvaghosha was the forerunner of classical Sanskrit dramatists like Bhasa and Kalidasa. Winternitz states that “the finished form of the epics together with the perfect technique of the dramas of Asvaghosha proves that they were composed only on some long-standing models. By itself it appears improbable that a thoroughly Buddhist poet should be the first to have composed in this style.”\textsuperscript{36} This is rather strange to read and no reason is given for assuming that it is improbable for “a thoroughly Buddhist poet” to be the pioneer in ornate style of kavya and the perfect technique of dramaturgy. On the other hand, there are no models extant which can be said to have influenced Asvaghosha in the techniques of the Sanskrit drama. At another place the same scholar is obliged to say that “Asvaghosha, however, is the first Indian poet, who is actually known to us as an author of dramas.”\textsuperscript{37} Although Valmiki is traditionally considered the 'first poet' in Sanskrit, the extant Ramayana attributed to his authorship is of composite character and uncertain date. No such uncertainty attaches to Aryasura (4\textsuperscript{th} Century C.E) and his authorship of the Jatakamala and other works. He has been described as “the forerunner of the poets of classical, chaste and ornate Sanskrit.” In Santideva’s Bodhicaryavatara we find “the loftiest flights of religious poetry.” Buston’s statement that there were one hundred commentaries on this text, out of which only eight
were translated into Tibetan,\textsuperscript{38} gives an idea of the extent to which the Buddhist ideals were capable of inspiring men of letters.

Buddhist poets were pioneers also in the composition of hymns of praise (stotra, stava, stuti) in Sanskrit. The Prajñaparamitastuti may or may not be the work of Nagarjuna (Circa 100 C.E.), but he certainly composed the Catuhstava. The earliest specimen of a hymn is possibly the Buddhansmriti section of the Mahavastu, a canonical text of the Mahasamghika school. The greatest writer of Buddhist hymns was however Matrceta (Circa 100 C.E.). The following works ascribed to him, are preserved in the Tibetan bstan-h gyur: Varnarhavarna-stotra (also called Catuhsataka), Triratnamangala-stotra, Samyaksambuddhalaksana-stotra, Ekottarika-stotra, Sugata-pañcatrimsa-stotra, Triratna-stotra, Satapañcasatkanama-stotra, Aryataradevi-stotra, Sarvarhasiddhi-nama-stotra-raja, Matrceta-giti and Aryatara-stotra. Asvaghosha, perhaps a contemporary of Matrceta, composed the Gandi-stotra-gatha. Misraka-stava of Dignaga, Suprabhatastotra of King Harsha and Sragdhara-stotra of Sarvajñamitra. All these texts are of immense value from the standpoint of religious poetry. The Bhakti-sataka of Ramacandra Bharati was perhaps the last hymn in praise of the Buddha composed in Sanskrit by an Indian Buddhist poet.

One of the latest contributions made by the Buddhists to the literature of India was in the form of do has or gitis (songs) composed by Buddhist siddhas (adepts in Tantrika culture) in Apabhramsha. This language seems to have been the mother of several modern Indian languages including Hindi, Oriya and Bengali. The terms and concepts of Buddhism were transmitted by the siddhas through the medium of their Apabhramsha
poems to mediaeval lore of saint-poets. Unfortunately only a small portion of the siddha literature has survived to this day.

Finally, mention may be made in passing of the contributions of Buddhist writers to Sanskrit grammar and lexicography. A Buddhist scholar named Sarvavarman wrote the Katantra, in which he tried to build a new system of Sanskrit grammar. He possibly lived in or about the 2nd Century C.E. In the eighth century a commentary was written on Katantra by one Durgasimha. The Buddhist scholar, Candragomin, (Circa 500 C.E) wrote the Candravyakarana with an auto-commentary (vritti) on it. It became the standard grammatical treatise in most Buddhist countries of Asia. Bruno Liebich’s researches have shown that an extensive literature developed around the Candravyakarana. Another early grammarian was Indragomin, possibly a Buddhist scholar, who wrote the Aindravyakarana. The text was once famous in Buddhist Nepal, but it has not come down to us. The Buddhist logician Jinendrabodhi wrote the Kasika-Vivarana-pañjika also known as Nyasa, a commentary on the Kasika of Jayaditya and Vamana. Not less than three Buddhist grammarians of Sanskrit seem to have flourished in the eleventh century. Saranadeva wrote a work called Durghata-vritti in which he simplified the difficult points in the Ashtadhyayi of Panini. It is said that the text of the Durghata-vritti was revised by his teacher Sarvarakshita Maitreyarakshita wrote the Tantrapradipa, a critical commentary on the Nyasa. This author also wrote another grammatical work called the Dhatupradipa.

Fragments of a manuscript in eight leaves of a synonym cal dictionary in Sanskrit were purchased by F. Weber at Leh in Ladakh. The author of this dictionary is believed to have been a Buddhist scholar and these fragments are supposed to be the oldest fragments of any dictionary in Sanskrit known so far. Another Sanskrit dictionary which seems to
have originated in Buddhist literary circles was the Utpalini compiled by Vyadi. The existence of this dictionary is known from quotations from it in some later commentaries. Vyadi may or may not have been a Buddhist by faith but he seems to have drawn largely on Buddhist literary sources. The most famous and earliest extant dictionary is the Namalinganusasana, better known as Amarakosa by Amarasimha who possibly flourished in the 6th Century C.E. He was a Buddhist though he did not pay any special attention to Buddhist vocabulary in his dictionary. It is said that there are as many as 50 known commentaries on the Amarakosha.

Mention may be made in this connection of three important Buddhist Sanskrit texts which are well known lexicographical collections of technical Buddhist terms. The first is the Dharmasamgraha attributed to Nagarjuna; it contains valuable lists of technical terms and important names collected under one hundred and forty headings. The other text is the Arthaviniscaya-sutra which resembles the Dharmasamgraha to a great extent but contains also explanations of technical terms of Buddhist religion and philosophy. The third is the famous Mahavyutpatti, a bilingual (Sanskrit-Tibetan) encyclopaedic lexicon of Buddhist proper names and technical terms. It was prepared jointly by Indian and Tibetan scholars in Tibet early in the 9th Century.

The last Buddhist dictionary writer to be mentioned was Purushottamadeva (circa 12th Century). As a supplement to the Amarakosa he wrote the Trikandasesa. The Amarakosha is divided into three parts hence its secondary title “Trikandi.” Purushottamadeva follows this arrangement in his work which “contains rare names of the Buddha and many words that are peculiar to Buddhist Sanskrit.” Another dictionary by this author is called the Haravali.
Before leaving this section we want to mention an interesting work by a great Buddhist poet and abbot of the Jagaddala-Vihara (District Malda). This is an anthology of Subhasitas selected from the works of 227 authors and containing in all 1739 verses and called the Subhashitaratnakosha. Its author was Vidyakara who made the anthology in the eleventh century. Among other things this remarkable work proves that Dharmakirti, the Buddhist logician (7th Century), was also a great poet. The anthology reveals the existence of a large number of Buddhist poets whose works are now lost for ever.40

Social Life

Many modern scholars maintain that Buddhism is a monastic religion, an ascetic movement, and not a social movement. I have criticised this view elsewhere41 and pointed out that monasticism is only one aspect of Buddhist religious tradition and we should not mistake one part for the whole. I also hold the view that word samgha does not mean merely 'the order of monks'. The community of monks is only a part of the samgha, not the whole of it. Samgha has to be understood to mean the entire community of those human beings who take refuge (sarana) in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Samgha. Samgha is the all embracing universal society of humans wedded to the doctrine and method taught by the Sage of the Sakyas. This universal samgha includes men as well as women, ascetics as well as householders. In Buddhist words, bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, and updsikris, all these are members of the samgha. Samgha is the third member of the holy triad of the Buddhist tradition. In this spiritual sense samgha includes all kinds of enlightened beings, viz. the perfectly Awakened Ones, (samyaksambuddhas), the individually Awakened Ones (pratyekabuddhas), the Worthy Ones (arahats), the
Bodhisattvas as well as those holy beings who are in different stages of purification (visuddhi).

This spiritual and ideal samgha is the true refuge sought by the faithful disciples of the Buddha. There is however no denying the fact that in practical life the Buddhists do make distinctions between ascetic members and lay members of the samgha; for instance, they use the word bhikshu-samgha in contradistinction to upasaka-samgha, and bhikshuni-samgha to distinguish it from bhikshu-samgha. In some old texts we find the bodhisattvagana contrasted with the sravaka-samgha. Likewise in the contemporary situation we refer to the samghas or communities of different places and countries, for example the samgha of Sri Lanka, the samgha of Bangladesh or the Nepalese samgha and so on. Sometimes in one and the same country are found samghas based on geographical separation, sectarian affiliation etc. But these narrow and restricted meanings of the word samgha should not be allowed to obscure our vision of the ariya-samgha, the society of the enlightened beings, which is our ideal; nor should we lose sight of the universal society of human beings who are all united through their common dislike of suffering and common quest of happiness.

To say that Buddhism is a monkish or monastic religion is not true. Even in the Theravada tradition this has never been wholly true. The Theravada tradition did not envisage such an inseparable connection between the path of purity and the path of social life, as for example, was the case in the Brahmanical tradition through the scheme of Varnasrama-dharma. In the Theravada Buddhist view the joys of a homeless life of those who take the ochre robe are declared to be superior to the joys of married and
household life. It would however be erroneous to suppose that Buddhism neglected the social life altogether.

There are many discourses preserved in the Pali suttas which contain principles and practises to be observed by those who live in society. A division of the Majjhima Nikaya is called gahapativagga. The Mangalasutta that we recite daily is nothing short of a summary of sociologically oriented soteriology. It may be recalled here that a comprehensive picture of the social perspective of Theravada Buddhism may be gleaned from the Ambathasutta, the Sigalovadasutta, the Kandarakasutta, the Atthakanagarasutta, the Upalisutta, the Ghatikarasutta and the Mahakammavibhangasutta. Another authentic picture of the social ethics of early Buddhism is documented in the rock edicts of Emperor Asoka.

It is true that the Pali texts make a clear distinction between ascetic and lay members of the samgha. This is as it should be in so far as their ends and means are concerned. Spiritual ends and means differ from social ends and means. Those who aspire to ultimate Freedom (vimutti) from samsara are certainly superior to and different from those who aspire to rebirth in happy or heavenly abodes. The career of ascetics (sramanas) is therefore subtle, difficult and extraordinary. The vast majority of lay members follow a less subtle, less difficult and ordinary way of life. But this way of life is guided by the teachings of the Buddha and of Buddhist sages. The relationship that has existed between the ascetic and social members of the samgha through the ages clearly establishes the fact that those who interpret Theravada Buddhism as ascetic and anti-social are mistaken.
The monks were never supposed to remain indifferent to human beings and their sufferings, the dhamma-vinaya was not meant only for those who had gone forth from home-life. Sakyamuni was a perfectly Awakened One and therefore a world teacher. He was not a teacher of monks only, he was the teacher not only of all human beings, monks as well as the laity, but also of divine beings, sattha deva-manussanam. He is renowned as the 'torch-bearer of mankind' (ukkadharo manussanam). He was “born for the good and happiness of humanity” (manussa-loka-hita-sukhaya jato). The beginnings of the Buddhist movement lay in the Buddha’s keen concern for the freedom and happiness of human beings living in the world. There would have been no Buddhism had he withheld his great compassion (mahakaruna), which was one of the corner-stones of the Buddhist movement. And compassion is a social emotion, a human virtue. It has to be practised in the world of beings.

A movement which moves society is a social movement. And Buddhism has definitely moved society wherever it spread in the course of its long history. For thousands of years it has moved men and woman to a higher life, to noble truths and deeper principles; it has inspired races and peoples and nations to develop art and literature, morals and manners, science and philosophy, and to build patterns of civilization and forces of peace. The history of Buddhist civilization has been the result of Buddhist social ideas and ideals which are not all ascetic or monastic.

Recently, Melford E. Spiro has advanced the view that there are three systems of Theravada Buddhism, viz., ‘nibbanic Buddhism’, ‘kammatic Buddhism’ and ‘apotropaic Buddhism’. By the first system he means Buddhism of those who aspire directly to Nirvana; by the second system he understands Buddhism as practised by those who aspire
to a favourable rebirth and happy states in heaven. The third ‘system’, according to him, is ‘concerned with man’s worldly welfare: the curing of illness, protection from demons, and the prevention of droughts and so on.’ This view is based on his study of Buddhist communities in Burma during the days of U Nu. His standpoint is anthropological and “reductionist.” We may observe in passing that these so-called three systems are three facets of one system Théravada Buddhism. They are interrelated. Those who aim at Nirvana, do not, perhaps cannot, remain indifferent to the welfare of those who aim at a favourable rebirth. Contrariwise those who follow the so-called aromatic religious life treat those who aspire to Nirvana as the proper “field of merit.” The worldly welfare of human beings cannot be divorced from transcendental concerns, either of the monks or of the laity, so that tasks such as curing illness, overcoming droughts and famines etc. are common concerns of all grades of Buddhists. Even the Buddha is known to have discussed the problems of life with kings, ministers, generals, traders, craftsmen, priests and all kinds of householders. As A. K. Warder remarks, “there is a general underlying assumption that beyond the immediate aim of individual peace of mind, or more probably in essential connection with it, lies the objective of the happiness of the whole of human society and the still higher objective of the happiness of all living beings.”

It may be pointed out that the lay Buddhist also contributed significantly to the growth of Buddhist ideas and practices. The rise of the powerful schools of the Mahasanghikas and Sarvastivadins resulted in important secularizing developments. These were matched in the Théravada tradition by the popularity of the Apadanas and Jatakas. At the same time stupa architecture and related sculpture presented a fresh area of concrete religious activity in which monks as well as the laity joined. Another area of social life in which this co-operation was meaningfully employed was that of the
The Buddhist community of caste-less and class-less monks exerted important influence on Indian society in general. The Brahmanical leaders and authors were obliged to introduce the ascetic life as the fourth stage (samyasa-asrama) in the theory of asramas. The provision of vikalpa or option to embrace samyasa or monastic life even without going through all the preceding three stages was made possibly due to the popularity of pravrajya or "going forth" in Jaina and Buddhist circles of Indian society. The tenet of redeeming one’s debt to one’s fathers (pitrs) by producing sons was however never given up by the Brahmanical tradition.

A fundamental tenet of Buddhist socio-moral ideology was that all beings are bound by their karma. It is the deeds of a person which determine his or her fortunes in this and the next life. The doctrine recognised the freedom of every person to select a way of life suitable to his or her equipment. In other words it is one’s inner worth and moral excellence, purity of life and nobility of character, control of mind and the senses and an insight into the real nature of things, in short, progress in the triple, training of sila, samadhi, and prajña which determine one’s superiority over others. No distinction of birth or caste, colour or sex, was of any value so far as one’s higher or holier life and its ways and means were concerned. This was a revolutionary doctrine from the standpoint of the Brahmanical tradition which zealously guarded the legend of the divine origin of castes and their duties.
Buddhism made profound impact on Indian social life in several ways. Its leaders and teachers continuously criticised the theory of castes and ridiculed the false claims to superiority based on birth (jati) and colour (varna). On the other hand, Buddhism opened the doors to higher religious life and the highest goal for all those who sought them, including the members of the lower strata of society. Although Buddhism was not concerned with the abolition of castes, it did oppose the caste-system and repeatedly taught the evils of castes. Another aspect of Buddhist social contribution was towards the emancipation of women from social inhibitions. Buddhism, along with Jainism but unlike Brahmanism, gave equality of opportunity in religious culture to women. Some of the female members of the earliest ascetic order known to history were the Buddhist There is whose religious poetry has come down to us in the Therigatha.

Another aspect of Buddhist contribution in ancient India lay in the area of social harmony and racial integration on a national scale. It was through Buddhist influence and teaching of social harmony and tolerance that foreign invaders such as the Greeks, Sakas, Pahlavas, Kushanas and Hunas who came to India and settled here, in the course of centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era, were assimilated by Indian society. This was a permanent contribution to social integration and national growth and it could not have been so easily accomplished in a strictly Brahmanical scheme of social gradation without the wholesome effects of the Buddhist disregard for varna-organisation and respect for the liberty of the individual. We are of the view that had Buddhism been a living force at the time of the Turkish invasions, the problems of Hindu-Muslim communal discord in mediaeval and modern India would not have taken such a strong turn as they did. Because of the revival of the traditional Brahmanical social scheme, reinforced with fresh religious injunctions, and because of the decline of
Buddhism in India after the 10th Century C.E, the mass of early mediaeval Islamic followers in India could not be assimilated and digested by Indian society. Arnold J. Toynbee has rightly remarked that “If either Buddhism or Jainism had succeeded in captivating the Indic World, caste might have been got rid of. As it turned out, however, the role of universal church in the last chapter of the Indic decline and fall was played by Hinduism, a parvenu archaistic syncretism of things new and old; and one of the old things to which Hinduism gave a new lease of life was caste.”

The Buddhist message of social equality and communal harmony had left a deep impression on the mind of the Indian people which continued after the transformation of the classical Buddhist movement. A number of instances in the myths and stories of the Mahabharata reveal that moral and intellectual attainments carried greater prestige than mere birth in a Brahmana family. The Bhagavadgita, while stating the theory of the divine origin of four castes (IV. 13) nevertheless teaches that the wise people are impartial towards a learned and disciplined Brahmana, the cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste (V. 18). The task of fighting the evils of casteism and untouchability was continued by the Buddhist siddhas, the adepts in Tantrika culture, during the early mediaeval centuries. A large number of these siddhas came from lower caste families, but their greatness was assured by their success (siddhi) in esoteric culture (sadhana). This mission of social reform was then resumed by the saint-poets of the bhakti movement throughout the middle Ages. Though these saint-poets (sants) were generally speaking within the fold of the Brahmanical Hindu religious tradition, yet they revolted freely against many fundamental dogmas and authentic customs of traditional Brahmanism. Their social and moral teachings were more in keeping with Buddhism than with Brahmanism.
All of them disregarded the rules of the varna-asrama-dharma scheme and attacked social distinctions based on birth and profession. Many of them were born in Sudra families. They became exalted through their pure character, sincere devotion and magnanimity. The saints of Karnataka and Maharashtra, viz., Basavesvara, Jnanesvara, Namadeva, Ramadasa, Tukarama and Ekanatha, were all against casteism and ritualism. Likewise the saint-poets (sants) of North India, viz. Caitanya, Ramanada, Kabirdasa, Ravidasa, Guru Nanak, Dhanna, Sena, Pipa, Dadu and the Muslim Sufis, were equally strong critics of the Brahmanical scheme of castes and rituals. The social reforms initiated by the Buddhists and continued by mediaeval saint-poets were finally legalised and accomplished (at least in theory) by the government of the Indian Republic in 1949.

INFLUENCE OF BODHISATTVA ON INDIAN PHILOSOPHERS

Perhaps no other classical philosophical tradition, East or West, offers a more complex and counter-intuitive account of mind and mental phenomena than Buddhism. While Buddhists share with other Indian philosophers the view that the domain of the mental encompasses a set of interrelated faculties and processes, they do not associate mental phenomena with the activity of a substantial, independent, and enduring self or agent. Rather, Buddhist theories of mind center on the doctrine of not-self (Pāli anatta, Skt. anātma), which postulates that human beings are reducible to the physical and psychological constituents and processes which comprise them.

Indian Buddhist analyses of the mind span a period of some fifteen centuries, from the earliest discourses of the Buddha (Ca. 450 B.C.E.) to the systematic developments of late Mahāyāna Buddhism (500–1000 C.E.). Although philosophical accounts of mind emerge only within the Abhidharma scholastic traditions (roughly 150 B.C.E. to 450
C.E.), their roots are found in the Buddha's teachings of the not-self doctrine. At the same time, these accounts parallel similar theoretical developments within the Brahmanical traditions, with which they share a common philosophical vocabulary (and a general view of mental processes as hierarchical and discrete).

The Mahatma and the Bodhisattva

A critic might say that the most significant difference between the Buddha and Gandhi was that the Buddha was a world-denying ascetic and that Gandhi was not. The following passage sums up this view very nicely:

Outwardly it would be hard to conceive of two individuals more different. On the one hand is the tranquil Buddha who walks serenely and calmly across the pages of history, or traditionally sits peacefully on a lotus with a gentle smile of infinitive compassion. On the other hand is the Mahatma, speed and energy in every movement, laughing and sorrowing in his ceaseless endeavour to help mankind with the problems of human life.45

Gandhi must have heard similar comments, because he formulated this own firm response: "The Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the adversary's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. He was for intensely direct action."46 Who is correct? The truth as usual lies somewhere in between. Although he did frequently confront Brahmin priests (the scriptures report that they were almost always converted), it can hardly be said that the Buddha destroyed the Vedic priesthood. (It continues to have great power even today.) Furthermore, although Buddhism and Jainism can take much credit for the reduction of animal sacrifice, it still continues today as an integral part of
Goddess worship in Northeast India and Nepal. And even Gandhi admits that because of India's own weaknesses, the Buddha's, as well as the Jains', message of universal tolerance and non-violence failed miserably. (Much blame, according to Gandhi, must be laid at the feet of Shankara for his "unspeakable cruelty in banishing Buddhism from India." 47 Finally, Gandhi is making the Buddha more of a political activist than he ever was. Gandhi should take sole credit for his own brilliant synthesis of religion and political action. As one commentator has said, "One cannot picture the Buddha training his disciples to face lathi charges as did the Mahatma." 48

A growing scholarly consensus now recognizes that the Buddha was less ascetic and less world-denying than his disciples and the early schools that followed him. For example, as opposed to most Indian philosophy, the Buddha recognized the body as a necessary constituent of human identity, rather than something to be negated in the spiritual life. 49 Gandhi appears to join other traditions Cartesian and as well as Jain and Vedantist which maintain that the body has nothing to do with true personal identity. It was his disciples who kept asking for more behavioural restrictions, and this difference is summed aptly in the Buddha's observation that sometimes he ate a full bowl of food while his monks only ate only a half bow. 50 Despite Buddhism's somatic selfhood and a later doctrine of universal Buddha-essence, its strong ascetic traditions did not allow Buddhist practice to be as body or world affirming as it could have been. The influence of Chinese naturalism especially on Zen Buddhism and the Buddhist-Christian dialogue have turned contemporary Buddhism much more in this direction.

The spiritual transformation of the entire world is the goal of most schools of Mahayana Buddhism. As opposed to the ascetic ideal of early Buddhism, where the
emphasis was on personal liberation, the focus in Mahayana schools is on universal
salvation. The vow of the Bodhisattva should be well known to those who know
Buddhism: the Bodhisattva, even though she is free of karmic debt, vows not to enter
Nirvana until all sentient beings enter before her. The Bodhisattva's extra sacrifice caused
some perceptive Buddhists to ask whether that made Bodhisattvas superior to the Buddha
himself, who of course did not wait for the others. The Bodhisattva ideal and the
comprehensive range of universal salvation makes it relevant to contemporary debates
about animal rights and the protection of the environment.

Gandhi constantly emphasized that his focus was universal this-worldly salvation
and not individual spiritual liberation, "I have no use for them (love and non-violence) as
a means of individual liberation." As with Latin American liberation theology, Gandhi's
soteriology maintained that God assumes a preferred option for the poor and the
oppressed; indeed, Gandhi sometimes speaks of God existing in suffering humanity and
not in heaven, "God is found more often in the lowliest of his creatures than in the high
and mighty." Does this, then, make Gandhi "the Bodhisattva of the twentieth century,"
as Ramjee Singh has so boldly suggested? The answer must be negative if we insist on
early formulations of the Bodhisattva concept. Using the innovative idea of Nichiren
Buddhism that all of us become Bodhisattvas by virtue of our service to humanity, then
Singh's claim is closer to the mark.

On the face of it Gandhi's self-suffering does appear to be similar to Shantideva's
view of the Passion of the Bodhisattva: By my own self all the mass of others' pain has
been assumed. I have the courage in all misfortunes belonging to all worlds to experience
every abode of pain. I resolve to abide in each single state of misfortune through
numberless future ages, for the salvation of all creatures. I for the good of all creatures would experience all the mass of pain and unhappiness in my own body.\textsuperscript{54}

Gandhi does claim to have suffered his fasts were long and many for the good of all (sarvodaya); and he did declare that in his next life he wanted to be reborn an untouchable;\textsuperscript{55} but this still does not constitute anything like the soteriology that we find in Buddhism and Christianity. Gandhi obviously did not claim to have taken away the sins of the world as Buddhist and Christians claim their saviours do.

Following the idea of penance as self-purification, Gandhi may be more like the Bodhisattva, who, although sinless, nonetheless "thinks of himself as a sinner and of others as oceans of virtue"?\textsuperscript{56} But just as we cannot believe Gandhi guilty of the crises for which he fasted, we certainly cannot believe, nor of course could he, that he was sinless. Not even his most ardent followers have claimed that Gandhi had the redemptive powers of a saviour. Revealing his strong Vaishnava background, Gandhi once declared that he wanted to tear open his heart for the poor just as the monkey god Hanuman did to show his devotion to Rama, but he said that he did not have the power to perfect such absolute loyalty.\textsuperscript{57} Finally, it must be observed that Gandhi practiced self-suffering in order to change other people's behaviour, whereas the Passion of Christ and the Bodhisattva is conceived of as totally unconditional, expecting nothing in return for their grace and compassion. Gandhi realized the danger in making his self-suffering conditional on the actions of others: it might very well violate the principle that he had learned so well from the Bhagavadgita, namely, we must not act with regard to the fruit of our actions.\textsuperscript{58}
We must again place all aspects of Gandhi an religion in its proper political context. The more appropriate comparison would be Gandhi and Emperor Ashoka, who through political means attempted to establish a nonviolent society in 3rd Century B.C.E India. Gandhi called his fasting a "fiery weapon" and that we must fight the "fire" of violence with the "fire" of our own self-sacrifice.\(^{59}\) "It was," as Madan Gandhi says, "a potent weapon to convert the evil doer, i.e., to make him conscious of the spiritual kinship with the victim."\(^{60}\) It was, as I said above, an effective means to shame Gandhi's opponents into mending their ways. Joan Bondurant describes it as the "willingness to suffer in oneself to win the respect of an opponent."\(^{61}\) For Gandhi himself it had the effect of establishing his absolute seriousness, sincerity, and fearlessness. For those close to him especially his wife and his sons it was a test of love "tough love" as it is now called. "The only way love punishers," as Gandhi once said, "is by self-suffering."\(^{62}\) The coercive effect of Gandhi's fasts has been widely discussed and accepted by many scholars. We are now quite distant from the Suffering Servants of Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism.

**Rabindranath Tagore and Buddhist Culture**

**Buddhism in Tagore’s Work:** Examples of Tagore’s devotion to Buddhist culture is found through his various works. In his critical appreciation of the Dhammapada he says: “As the preceptor of the Geeta has endowed in it Indian thought with a precise religious shape, so in the Dhammapada a picture of the mental make-up of India has been delineated.” He further says in this connection: Materials of different shades of Indian thought and culture are confined in Buddhist literature and due to the lack of intimacy with them the entire history of India remains unfulfilled. Being convinced of it, cannot a
few youths of our country dedicate themselves for the restoration of the Buddhist heritage and make it a mission in life.

At that time Tagore introduced Buddhism as a special course of study for the students of Shantiniketan. To widen the knowledge of Buddhism he deputed Prof. Nitai Benode Goswami to go to Ceylon, the bastion of Buddhism, The Centre of Buddhist studies augmented by Tagore at Shantiniketan is today one of the greatest symposiums of Buddhist culture.

Apart from Indians, there are today a good many scholars from Ceylon, Cambodia, Thailand, Japan, China etc. deeply interested in Buddhism. To quote Thomson, “He Rabindranath Tagore is almost more Buddhist than he is in sympathy with many forms of Hinduism that are most popular in his native Bengal.”

On the occasion of the consecration of the Mulagandha Kuti Vihara at Sarnath, where the Buddha preached his first sermon, Tagore’s poem on the Buddha reads:

Bring to this country once again the blessed name
Which made the land of thy birth sacred to all distant lands?
Let thy great awakening under the Bodhi-tree be fulfilled.
Sweeping away the veil of unreason and let, at the end of an oblivious night,
Freshly blossom out in India thy remembrance!⁶³

Never did words reveal themselves better as are expressed in these lines. The message of love of the Lord Buddha in a world which is wild with “the delirium of hatred” cannot but be quoted:

All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine.
Oh, thou of boundless life,
save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope.

Let love’s lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey

Open its petals in thy light.

O Serene, O Free

in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness

wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.\textsuperscript{64}

On 8\textsuperscript{th} May, 1935, the Buddha Purnima Day, in his presidential homage to the

Blessed One, Tagore says:

“On this full-moon day of Vaisaka I have come to join in the birthday celebrations of the Lord Buddha, and to bow my head in reverence to him whom I regard in my inmost being as the greatest man ever born on this earth. This is no formal demonstration of adoration on my part, befitting the occasion. I offer him here, today the homage I have offered him again and again in the deep privacy of my soul.”\textsuperscript{65}

\textbf{Greater India:} Lord Buddha liberated mankind from the different forms of ritualism and superstitions and destroyed racial barriers between man and man. Here his reasoning, message of compassion, and ideal of nonviolence, won over all. He made vehement objection to outward conventionalism:

\textit{Kim te ja\texttilde{}ahi dummedha, kith te ajin\texttilde{}s\texttilde{}iyy\texttilde{}a}

\textit{abhantaram te gahanam b\texttilde{}hiram parunajjasi.}

\textit{O thou witless man, what avails thy matted hair and deerskin? Within all is darkness in thee, while outwardly thou cleanest thyself.}\textsuperscript{66}
On the other hand Lord Buddha proclaimed the gospel of an immeasurable love for all beings:

Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā

How broad is this address of good-will. How deep is this love!

Māta yathā niyam puttam

āyusā ekaputtam anurakkhe

evam pi sabba bhūtesu

mānasam bhāvaye aparimānam

Just as with her own life

a mother shields from hurt

her own, her only child,

Let all-embracing thoughts

for all that lives be thine.

**Buddhist Humanism:** Buddhism has restored human rights to the deprived, to those who were trampled under feet by the so called high-ups of society.

This humanism is what deeply impressed Tagore, who is himself a great exponent of humanity. Today the world is very much injured with violence: humanity is narrow-minded. So the poet implores the Buddha to wipe “all dark stains” from the heart of this earth:

Man’s heart is anguished with the fever of unrest,

With the poison of self-seeking,

With a thirst that knows no end.
Countries far and wide flaunt on their 
Foreheads the blood-red mark of hatred. 
Touch them with thy right hand, 
make them one in spirit, 
bring harmony into their lives, 
bring rhythm of beauty.

A deep and expansive analytical exposition of the glory of the Buddha Dhamma and Buddhist culture by Tagore is an invaluable treasure in Bengali literature and, as a matter of fact, in any literature of the world.

Tagore has once again deeply ingrained within us the impact of the Buddha Dhamma and Buddhist culture, which pervaded the length and breadth of India as the sun pervades the earth and every grain upon it.

Relevance of Dr. Ambedkar’s Revival of Buddhism and Propogate Dhamma

Religion and Dhamma: In his “The Buddha and His Dhamma”, Dr. Ambedkar has tried to make a distinction between religion and Dhamma. According to him, the word "religion" is an ambiguous word with more than one meaning. This is so because religion has passed through many ages and the conception of religion, too, has changed accordingly. At early stage, religion was identified with magic. In the second stage, religion came to be identified with beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, prayers and sacrifices. In the third stage, God and soul entered religion. Dr. Ambedkar says religion means "belief in God, belief in soul, worship of God, curing of the erring soul, propitiating God by prayers, ceremonies, sacrifices, etc."
According to Dr. Ambedkar, the Buddha calls Dhamma differs fundamentally from what is called religion. Religion, it is said, is personal and one must keep it to oneself. One must not let it play its part in public life. Contrary to this Dhamma is social. Dhamma is righteousness, which means right relations between human beings in all spheres of life. If a person is living alone, he or she does not need Dhamma. However, when there are two persons living in relation to each other, they must find a place for Dhamma, whether they like it or not. In other words, society, maintains Dr. Ambedkar, cannot sustain itself without Dhamma. Society has to choose one of the three alternatives. Society may choose not to have any Dhamma, as an instrument of government. This means society chooses the road to anarchy. Secondly, society may choose the police, that is, dictatorship as an instrument of government. Thirdly, society may choose Dhamma plus the magistrate wherever people fail to observe the Dhamma, as an instrument of government. In anarchy and dictatorship, liberty is lost. Liberty can survive only if we accept the third alternative. Therefore, concludes Ambedkar, those who want liberty must accept Dhamma. According to Buddha, Dhamma consists of Prajna (understanding or wisdom) and Karuna (love). Thus, says Ambedkar, the definition of Dhamma, according to the Buddha, is different from the definition of religion.

**Relevance in Modern Times:** It is said that, the teaching of all the Buddhas are 'Akalika' or 'timeless'. That is there are certain aspects of Buddhism which are applicable to all times. I would list a very few one of them.

First of these would be the recognition of the responsibility of the individual. the Buddha is one of the most remarkable religious teachers who emancipated man from all bonds - bonds of supernatural ties, a God-head, a creation, sin of any other characteristic inherited from anyone else (rather than what you yourself have done). So when the
Buddha says that each person is his own master, he promulgates a principle whose applicability becomes stronger as man begins to get more and more confidence in the control of himself and the environment. So if, today, with scientific and technological development, man feels that he has come to a point where his own intellect makes him superior to anybody else or allows him able to solve any problem that he has, whether physical or ethical or political or whatever, would not the principle that man is the master of himself that he has to be responsible to himself because whatever he does he inherits become one of the most important ways of looking at himself.

So this fundamental approach to making man free from all bondages, spiritual and other wise, is one of those very important doctrines of Buddhism that have contributed to its timelessness. As we advance, as greater progress is made by man, there will be the greater need for him to assert that he is the master of himself. The more he asserts himself to be the master of himself, the more is he reiterating the Buddha's own statement: “Atta hi attano natho” you are your own master.

Then comes another equally important doctrine. The doctrine of open-mindedness the liberty of thinking. Buddhism not only frees us from a God-head or super natural tie but also liberates mankind from dogma. Let us visualize the time when the Buddha was preaching. It was a time when various religious teachings were in ferment and India of the 6th Century B.C. was one of the most interesting places to be. Religious teachers propounding various types of doctrines were vying with each other to have more and more converts. Besides these new teachings, there were religious systems that were deep rooted. In all these religious systems, the theory was: "We have found a way." "This is the correct path." "You come, you will be saved. Into their midst comes the Buddha who
says: "Do not believe what your book says. Do not believe what your teachers would say. Do not believe what your tradition says. Do not take anything merely because it comes to you with the authority of somebody else. Make it a personal experience. Think for yourself. Be convinced. And once you are convinced act accordingly." Now this was a very refreshing manner in which man was given one of the greatest freedoms that he is fighting for, the freedom to think for himself.

These are few of important revolutionary thoughts and teachings in Buddhism are still relevant today and will be in future too.

**Propagation of Dhamma:** Soon after Dr. Ambedkar's conversion ceremony, a lot of ceremonies for conversion followed. Still today, a lot of them are happening. But most of them today are carried out by politicians specifically for political intensions, rather than to give the people proper knowledge of why they are converting. Almost all of them not remain there to further guide the people. This makes people very much confused, about what to do next. Subsequently, along with many other reasons, they fall back to the old religion they are following, with their traditional gods replaced by Buddha, rest remains the same. So after the conversion, good teachers are needed in order to guide people. There is always an increasing demand of humble and learned teachers for the spread of Dhamma.

After beginning to practice Dhamma oneself diligently, one can begin to encourage others to practice. Today there is great need of teachers for teaching the Dhamma in various creative ways to people. Dr. Ambedkar recommended in his book Buddha and his Dhamma that, there must be a new kind of Sangha. Under this Shangha,
there will be not just the learned monks, but also it should comprise highly learned lay people. All of them would be scholar enough to present Dhamma in a very humble and sympathetic way.

So there also arises need for such learning centers, where the Dhamma is taught in theory as well as in practice to monks and lay people alike. Local Buddha Vihars can be a very small scale learning centers to the people who live nearby. In those small centers, there should be Dhamma talks, from time to time, held by learned scholars on various aspects of Dhamma, where a large number of people can attend. Recent big developments are there, with the starting of learning centers like ‘Naglok’ near Nagpur. Media in various forms like print, electronic, audio visual are also and always an effective way to help propagation of Dhamma. Lot of work today is being done by the media, specially the channel “Lord Buddha TV” in this direction.

Another important aspect of Buddha's teachings is meditation. Meditations in Buddhism are of many types and names (Sati, Samadhi, Samata, Vipassana, Metta etc.). As truly described in Dr. Ambedkar's The Buddha and His Dhamma, Dhamma to many people is only meditation, and is only the teaching of Buddha, but this is not so. In reality, they are all just tools to further strengthen practice of Dhamma (to become righteous) in little more depth. But these cannot be taken as the final teaching of Buddha. Every individual has a liberty of choice to follow a certain way to apply those teachings in his life. Because the ultimate goal for Buddhism is to free people from all the bondages setbacks sorrows of life and have Liberty, Equality and Fraternity in Society.
Buddhist Scholar Acharya Narendradeva

R.Venkataraman, Ex-President of India said that the Acharya had the mind of a true Marxist, the conscience of a true Gandhian and the heart of a true Buddhist.

We do not know many people who were Buddhists by profession or conviction. Buddhist philosophy has influenced the people all over the world since the ancient times to the present day. The people from the lowest to the highest levels irrespective of caste, colour and creed are influenced by Buddhism. It has a special appeal to the intellectuals. Therefore, it is called an intellectual religion. The universal appeal of Buddhism is understandable because all the people are victims of suffering. People want to get liberation from suffering. The Buddha has not only said that the human beings suffer due to birth, he has also said that there is a way to get rid of suffering. This message of the Buddha and many other teachings has attracted people towards Buddhism. Acharya Narendradeva was one of the great admires of the Buddha. Learned in Indian history, culture, Sanskrit and Buddhism, he was a great personality gifted with noble qualities such as fearlessness, sacrifice, charity and spotless character. He was, therefore, called a Bodhisattva, a being who suspends his own Nirvana for helping millions of others to attain Nirvana.

Acharya Narendradeva was born on 31st October, 1889, in a very prosperous and enlightened Brahmin family of Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh, India. His father Babu Baldev Prasad was not only a great lawyer but a very prominent figure in social life. He was also a true embodiment of the old heritage of Indian culture imbued with simple living and high thinking.
Acharya Narendradeva grew up in an Indian traditional religious atmosphere in his childhood. He had read the epic Ramayana written by Tulsidass, the Mahabharat, Bhagavad Gita, Amarkosa and Laghukaumudi etc. He had a brilliant academic career throughout his student life. His qualities of fearlessness, sense of sacrifice, commitment to truthful life made him a revolutionary figure in his political life. Brought up in a religious atmosphere, he was naturally attracted to Buddhism. He was much influenced by the ethical values of Buddhism, especially the concept of Shila, prajna, suffering, etc. He was very fond of reading Bodhicharyavatar written by Arya Shantideva, particularly a line which says that when entire world is tormented by suffering, what is the use of attaining sapless Nirvana, salvation? He acquired knowledge of pali literature, He read the Tripitaka, the original texts of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. He virtually lived the life of a saint, abstaining from defilements of the body and mind, sacrificing his own life for the sake of the people, society and nation. While he was Chancellor of the Lucknow University and Benares University he donated half of his salary to the poor students of the university.

He did his graduation from the Muir Central College, Allahabad, with Sanskrit, Ideology and Ancient Indian History as his subject. Narendradeva was a serious student of Buddhist philosophy. He broke away from the orthodoxy of Hinduism which gave religious sanction to caste system and untouchability.

While unveiling the statue of Acharya Narendradeva, President of India, R. Venkataraman said, "The Acharya had the mind of a true Marxist, the conscience of a true Gandhian and the heart of a true Buddhist." Narendradeve was deeply influenced by Karl Marx and Lenin and called himself a Marxist.
Narendradeva was greatly attracted by the personality of the Buddha and Buddhist philosophy. It was Narebdradeva who was responsible for Jawaharlal's leaning towards the Buddhist faith and the introduction of Buddhism in the congress party guidelines and among Congressmen. Sri Prakasa, antimate friend of Narendradeva, wrote "I remember Jawaharlal telling me once," Prasada, you know I am not a religious man, but if one religion attracts me, it is Buddhism, Nehru always carried the Buddha's portrait in a leather case which was kept open by his beside wherever he went". He was an erudite scholar, a keen observer of history and great analyst of the dynamics of society." He was above all, a gentleman par excellence, a jewel of a man, a prince among politicians". A writer has rightly said that to be with Acharya Narendradeva was to be in the company of a Book of knowledge. It was, therefore, no surprise that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who wrote The Discovery of India in the Ahmadnagar Fort prison during 1942 Quit India Movement, candidly admitted that book because he had with him in the two encyclopaedias Acharya Narendradeva and Maulana Abdul KalamAzad.69

Narendradeva was a socialist leader. If Gandhi was the father of Indian nation, Narendradeva was the father of Indian socialism. He did not accept Marxism as a doctrine and its regimented philosophy. His deep conviction in the equality of man had made him a socialist in word and in deep. His belief in modern and scientific orientation of the past and his readiness to learn from the contemporary experiences in various countries of the world enabled him to bring about a synthesis between Marxism and Buddhism. He lived the life of a fighter as well as saint.

He was not a politician in the ordinary sense. He was a great idealist who never sacrificed his principles for the sake of expediency and never ran after power at the cost of faith and belief in his cause.
His great work was Budha Dharma and Darshan, Buddhism and its philosophy. He spent more than a decade writing this book. This was published a few hours before his death. This work was an excellent treatise on Buddhist philosophy. He had also made a valuable contribution to Buddhist studies by translating into Hindi and English Abhidharmakosh of Sarvastivada originally written by Acharya Vasubandhu, the 4th Century great Buddhist philosopher. At the eleventh hour of his life, he was compiling a glossary of Buddhist terminology, but could not complete.

Acharya Narendra Deva was man of sacrifice, a seeker of truth and a fighter for liberation from all sorts of defilements. When he went to China as a member of the first cultural mission sponsored by the Government of India, he had just an ordinary pair of black shoes and not even another pair of chappals or slippers with him. Yet when he went to a distant place for a short while he used to carry with him some very old Buddhist texts and other books and notes which were very dear to him.

Great Indian leader Jayaprakash, Narayan rightly said about him, we owe a debt of gratitude to Acharya Narendra Deva a debt to his unique personality, his civility and affection, to his intellectual contributions, his leadership, and above all, to his innocent, selfless, intensely humane character, his renunciation and sacrifice. H.L. Singh is a writer and researcher. He has worked as translator and editor. He has written several books. A brief encyclopaedia of Buddhism in Nepal, Nepal in Records, Modern Interpretation of Buddhism, is important ones.
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