CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is a religion propounded by Gautama, the Buddha. This religion is known as 'Baudha-dharma'. The term 'Buddhism' itself is a western term. Here Buddha means one who has realised Truths of nature as they really are, or who has got enlightenment (Nirvāṇa). This is the first religion that introduced the missionary system not only in India but also in other parts of the world. The Buddha himself established the missionary system in his lifetime. He preached his doctrine to guide and attain eternal peace from the worldly suffering due to innumerable series of birth and death. The teaching of Gautama Buddha transcended the barriers of caste, creed, race, country or nation. He attempted to conquer the whole Asia with his spiritual power and tried to instill a holy life in every individual being. It was because of his spiritual power of reason that Buddhism could appeal to men and women and became the leading religious thought. After the death of the Great Master, Buddhism became a universal religion, because his principles for peace are universal in nature as they are applicable to all human beings. Further, his teachings avoid the extreme nihilism and extreme asceticism. Buddha said that everyone should not accept any religion blindly.
Before taking the religion one should think deeply and try to understand whether the religion is acceptable or not. Hence, after criticising in details he should take the religion. Buddha himself did not force anybody to take his religion. That is why Buddhism became a famous world religion. It was acceptable equally by the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the monks and the laity, kings and princes, intellectuals and even the ordinary men. Thus Buddhism became a system of faith and reason, an institution of self-culture and social-welfare.

In almost all the fields of human activity, Buddhism gives new models and encouragement. In art and architecture, education language and literature, Yoga and devotion, morals and dialects in tantra and mythology: in short, in all fields of human civilization, it produced tremendous results. The idols or art forms such as making images was first introduced by Mahayana school of Buddhism and later adopted in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. An important aspect of Buddhism in India is its manifestation in art and architecture. The Buddhist art was based on Buddhist ideals and inspired Buddhist literature.

Buddhism had produced an enormous mass of literature in Pāli, Sanskrit and other Vernaculars. Many Buddhist Universities, colleges and monasteries with great teachers had imparted education for several years; the numerous
Buddhist centres of art and pilgrimage all over the country had been a source of education. The religion, ethics, philosophy and devotional mysticism of Buddhism had developed to such heights as to make an enduring impact on the culture and civilization of India.

Though Buddhism seems to have disappeared in India it has survived as a distinct faith even after centuries in certain areas of India, especially in the sub-Himalayan regions of Himachal Pradesh, Gilgit, Assam, Orissa and Northern Bengal. A short of revival of Buddhism started in India during the middle of the nineteenth century with the discovery and publication of Buddhist texts and other antiquities. The process is still going on. Buddhism has been a most powerful matrix of human civilization and culture. It had spread all over the world and became a world famous religion: China, Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka etc. became Buddhist countries. Its profound and unending creativity had been manifested during its long history of over twenty-five centuries.

Buddhism is one of the oldest religious traditions of mankind and is still a major religion of many people of the world. Historians of Indian culture usually refer to Buddhism as a 'heterodox' system. It may be said that Buddhism was 'heterodox' from the Brahmanical standpoint. It is generally believed that Buddhism has been studied in
modern times largely from the Brahmanical or Hindu standpoint. It is also considered that Buddhism originated as a hierarchical 'offshoot' of Brahmanism. Attempts were made to prove that Buddhism emerged out of Brahmanism as a reaction to the Brahmanical supremacy; it was an outcome of Kshatriya challenge to the Brahmana arrogance and cruelty against the animal in Hindu sacrificial Yajna. The Buddha is considered as a 'reformer' of Hinduism and as a maker of modern Hinduism. This view is rooted in some of the Brahmanical Puranas of the Gupta and Post-Gupta periods and accepted that the Buddha was an Avatara or incarnation of the great god Vishnu. The Brahmanical Hinduism of the Smrtis, the Epics and the puranas give a great deal of emphasis to Buddha as the ninth avatara (incarnation) of God. The European Indologists of the nineteenth century and also the contemporary Indian authors accepted this view.

After this period, Buddhism was gradually assimilated by Hinduism. But this view is rejected by the recent researches. According to the great Buddhist Scholar Professor G.C. Pande: It has been held by many older writers that Buddhism arose out of this anti-ritualistic tendency within the religion of Brahmanas. We have, however, tried to show that the anti-ritualistic tendency within the Vedic fold is itself due to the impact of an asceticism which antedates the Vedas. Buddhism represents a continuation of this Pre-Vedic stream, though deeply
influenced by Vedic thought. Professor Pande's view is that though Buddhism was deeply influenced by Vedic thought it needs further analysis. According to Pande, Buddha's teachings must not be regarded either as the simple continuation of the Upanisadic ideas, or just as a reaction to them. The Buddha derived his ideas from both the Brahmanical as well as from Sramanic traditions and he finally joined them together into an original synthesis through the force of his spiritual experience. Thus the Buddhist philosophy is to be regarded at once as a rational commentary on Buddhist moral and spiritual experience, as also a new phase in the development of the Vedic tradition of thought.

The hypothesis that the older Upanisads are earlier than the Buddha is usually taken for granted. But A.B. Keith has observed, "It is wholly impossible to make out any case for dating the oldest, even of the extant Upanisads beyond the sixth century B.C. and the acceptance of an earlier date must rest merely on individual fancy." On the other hand, R.E. Hume and Stcherbatsky have shown that "Evidences of Buddhist influences are not wanting" in the older Upanisads. According to them, the earliest Upanisads, therefore, should be assigned to sixth and fifth centuries before Christ. The ascetic thought of the Buddha has been traced to the Yoga practices of Pre-Vedic India which are paved by ascetic sculpture of the Indus Valley Civilization.
through the non-Vedic ascetic occasionally mentioned in the Vedic Samhitas and the Brahmanas texts. To the same non-Vedic and Pre-Aryan religious tradition, the ideals of early Jainism and the early Sankhya-Yoga, have been traced. The traditions preserved in Jaina, Buddhist and Sankhya-Yoga texts concerning ascetics in the Pre-Buddhist India, were probably of non-Vedic and non-Aryan origin.

The aim of Buddhism is to remove the suffering of all creative beings. So in order to remove suffering everybody should attain Nirvāṇa. According to Buddha one who attains enlightenment is free from all miseries in his life. It avoids two extreme views, i.e., the pleasure of senses and the indulgence of self-mortification. Thus for the eradication of suffering, he prescribed three types of noble ways; Sila (conduct), Samādhi, (concentration) and Pañña (knowledge). They are related with the Eight-Fold-Path, which are included in last Fourth Noble Truth. The Eight-Fold-Path are: right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. This is the Noble Path because of which Buddha could attain his Nirvāṇa. Then Pratītyasamutpāda, Ksanikavada, Anātmavāda, Nirvāṇa, etc. all are included in the Four Noble Truths. Briefly speaking, all the basic essential and principal doctrines of Buddhism are involved in the Four-Noble Truths and others are dependent on these four Truths. According to
Buddha the Eight-Fold-Path is the only noble Truth, that leads to the cessation of suffering and completely destroys the chance of rebirth. According to him rebirth is due to craving which is caused by ignorance. Thus ignorance is the root cause of all suffering. If one is not born he will not possess suffering. All the basic and original sources of Buddhist philosophy can be understood with the help of the Three-fold canon called the Tipitaka (three baskets) namely, Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka and Abhidhamma Pitaka respectively. Because all the teachings of Buddha are involved in these three canons. There were no written copies during the lifetime of the Great Master. It was collected after the death of the Great Master by his intimate disciples namely - Ānanda, Upāli and Mahākassapa. They were known as 'Theravādins', because they were the foremost people who collected and preserved the teachings of the Buddha for the future generations. The term 'Theravādins' indicates the eldest orders or teachings of the Buddhist monks. After them the teachings of the Buddha had been gradually preserved and produced by many Buddhist monks and scholars. According to the Ceylonese tradition, next to the Tipitaka collection by the three disciples, it was first introduced to writing at Ceylon by Mahendra in the third century B.C. during the reign of king Vattagamini of Ceylon. It was written in Pāli. The Emperor Asoka sent Mahendra with his sister Sanghamitra to Ceylon to spread Buddhism. There Mahendra established monastery and
converted many men and women into Buddhism. After that Buddhism was spread in many places.

The Theravādins maintain that Buddha used Magadhi dialect as the medium of his teaching and that the Pāli language is the same as Magādhi used by the Buddha. Thus the Theravādins claim that the Pāli Pitakas are earlier than all other versions of Buddhavacana. Now, it has been translated in many languages, such as, Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, English by Eastern and Western Scholars. Although the Buddhist texts are translated in many languages, the main stock systematised of Buddhist literature is contained in Pāli, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese. Thus the Pāli Tipitaka are the earliest and most complete collection of the Buddhist sacred literature.

The Buddhist literature can be divided into two-Hinayana and Mahayana. This again sub-divided into as many according to sub-sects of both the two schools.

The Three Pitakas are not the three collections of books but collections of many books. Out of the five books of the Vinaya Pitaka, the Patimokha is the most ancient and important book. The text seems to be the earliest manuscript of disciplinary rules compiled for the guidance of monks and nuns. The Patimokha consists of two parts, namely - the Bikhu-patimokha and the Bikhuni-patimokha for
the monks and nuns. In addition to these, the Mahavagga and Cullavagga are also very important books of the Vinaya Pitaka. These two texts are the sources of early monastic Buddhism. The Sutta Pitaka also consisted of fifteen books. Among them the Dhammapada is the most famous sacred text which is recited daily by all pious Buddhist monks. And the Abhidhamma Pitaka contains seven texts. The famous book of this Pitaka is Kathavatthu. Unfortunately, the canonical collections of early Buddhist sects other than the Theravāda are for the most part not available. The Theravāda is the only school which has preserved its canons. For the Sarvāstivāda school almost the entire canon was lost. But now, it has been collected from the Chinese translations. The Tibetan and Chinese translations of Tipitaka, and their central Asian fragments, however, prove that the Sarvāstivādins literature existed at one time. The texts like the 'Mahavastu' the 'Gandhari' Dhammapada the original Udanavarga in Sanskrit, and numerous other fragments of Sanskrit Pitakas were discovered in Gilgit and Central Asia. Besides these there are other non-canonical Pāli literatures. They are very important. They are the Milinda-panha of Nāgasena (100 B.C.), Vimutti-magga of Upatissa (100 B.C. or 100 A.D.). Now the original forms were lost but extant in the Chinese versions. Many parts of the Mulasarvāstivāda Vinaya Pitaka in Sanskrit were discovered in Gilgit which had been published. In the seventh century of the Christian era Hiuen Tsang found in India five
editions of the Vinaya Pitaka belonging to Dharmagupta, Mahisasaka, Kasyapiya Sarvāstivāda and Mahasanghika schools.

The origins of the Mahayana suttas have been dated in the second and first centuries before Christ and most of these suttas had been translated into Chinese between 100 A.D. and 400 A.D. The literature of the Mahayana is quite extensive and varied and much of it has been lost for ever. Whatever is available is in Buddhist Sanskrit which is a mixed language. The literature can be divided into two classes: Suttas or texts attributed to the Buddha and traditionally believed to report the original Buddhavacana; and the Sastras or treatises by the Buddhist sages and authors. The Sastras include commentaries on the original suttas as well as original works.

The fundamental doctrines and practices of the Mahayana are expounded in what is called the 'nine texts' or the major Mahayana Suttas. The following are the important texts of the Mahayana literature:

All these texts, except the ninth, are available in original Sanskrit and have been published. There are five biographies of the Buddha, namely -(i) the Lalitavistara of the Sarvastivadins, (ii) the Mahavastu of the Mahasanghikas (Lokottaravadins), (iii) the Buddhacharita, (iv) the Nidanakatha and (v) the Abhiniskramanasutra.

The Lalitavistara is an important biography of the Buddha composed about 100 B.C. It is the most systematic of the biographies of the Buddha. It is one of the sacred texts of the Mahayanist and it calls itself Vaipulya sutra.

The Mahavastu is one of the important books of Mahayana Buddhist literature. Mahavastu literally means 'a great thing'. It is considered a book on Vinaya Pitaka belonging to the Lokottaravadins a branch of the Mahasanghikas. Though the Mahavastu is a Hinayana text, it contained many of the feature of the Mahayanist. It contains an account of Buddha's births. Besides, several knotty points of Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy are treated in it. It consists of a very little rules of the Vinaya. The book indicates to be an important study from the point of view of literature and linguistics as well. The actual biography of Buddha is to be found in the second volume of the Mahavastu and corresponds to the 'Intermediate Epoch' of the Nidanakatha.
The **Buddhacharita** is composed by Asvaghosa. It is a Mahakavya. It is also written about the life story of the Buddha. In the Buddhacharita, Asvaghosa's philosophy gives more emphasis to the Hinayana.

The **Nidanakatha** is the only biography of Gautama Buddha in Pāli which forms the introduction of the Tathaka commentary. The biography consists of three divisions, namely - (i) the Distant Epoch, (ii) the Intermediate Epoch and (iii) the Proximate Epoch. The first one deals with the existence of the Bodhisattva form the time of Dipaṅkara Buddha up to his birth as a Tusita god. The second one contains the account of the Bodhisattva's descent from the Tusita heaven to his final emancipation of Bodh Gaya. And the last one discusses about the early missionary career of the Buddha up to the time of his meeting with Anathapindika and Visakha at Savathi.

The **Abhinuskramana Sutra** is the work of the Dharmaguptas. It was extent only in Chinese translation, but now it is translated into English by Beal under the title of the Romantic Legend of Sakya Buddha.

The **Saddharmapundarika** is one of the earliest texts of Mahayana Buddhism. It is composed partly in prose and partly in Verse. The date of its composition should be
placed a little after that of the Mahavastu and the Lalitavistara, about the first century A.D. The texts represent the period of transition from Hinayana to Mahayana Buddhism. The large part of the book is devoted to prove that Hinayana Buddhism was preached by the Buddha, for the benefit of people of lower intelligence and modest aims, to whom the whole truth was not divulged. The book is divided into seven chapters. It is the most celebrated sutta of Mahayanism which exists in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and Japanese versions and has been translated into French, English and Hindi.

The earliest Mahayana suttas are the Prajnaparamita Suttas. There are many Prajnaparamitasuttas: among them the largest is Satasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutta and the smallest is the Prajnaparamita Hridayasutta. Among them the most famous texts are the Astadasasahasrika prajnaparamita and the Vajrachedika prajnaparamita. Besides the Prajnaparamita texts and the Navadharmaśas there are numerous other Mahayana suttas preserved in Tibetan and Chinese translations. The Mahayana philosophers and authors produced an enormous mass of literature. The following names with their works can be mentioned:

Nagarjuna:

Nagarjuna was the founder of Madhyamika school of Buddhism. He was born in a brahmin family in the South, now
Acarya Nagarjuna produced a lot of unequal works in all areas of Buddhist philosophy and religion. Among his works the most important are the Mulamadhyamika, the Sunyatasaptati, the Yuktisastika and the Vigrahavyavartani. The first three are predominantly expositions of the Madhyamika philosophy. In them Nagarjuna systematically criticises the independent reality of all entities and concepts through a variety of analytical and critical arguments. The last one is a valuable work which defends the Madhyamika philosophy against the objections advanced by realists. In this text, the area of epistemology and logic are also discussed. In addition to these, the Vaidalyasutra the Prakarana and the Ratnāvali are devoted to the refutation of the charges levelled by the realist logicians against the Madhyamika. The Ratnāvali, the Suhrilekha and the Sutrasamuccaya are devoted Nagarjuna's attention to the exposition of the practical application of Buddhist philosophy in religious discipline.

Aryadeva:

Aryadeva (approximately 150 A.D.) was the disciple of Nagarjuna. According to Taranatha, after the death of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva assumed the responsibility for preserving and furthering the doctrine. He constructed twenty-four monasteries and made all of them centres of the
Mahayana. His most important literary production is the Catuhsataka. This work expounds the doctrine of insubstantiality. It contains sixteen chapters. The first half is concerned with the religious discipline advocated by the Madhyamika system, while the second deals with the refutation of opposing philosophical doctrines. Aryadeva wrote a commentary on the Madhyamikasasra and composed the Catuhsataka and the Aksarasataka. The other important works of Aryadeva according to Bu-ston are: the Hastvalaprakarana, the Skhalitapramathanayuktihetusiddhi, the Jnanasarasamuccaya and so on. Aryadeva in his works, devoted more attention to the criticism of heterodox philosophical system, especially the Sankhya and the Vaisesika. Aryadeva maintained that the Madhyamika system could be systematically and successfully applied to the doctrines of the heterodox schools.

With the advent of the two masters Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka, the Madhyamika system was divided into Prasaṅgika and Svātantrika schools. The division of these two schools is the result of the different interpretation of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. They may be mentioned as the important exponents of the Sunyavada doctrines. They both belonged to the fifth century A.D.

Buddhapalita:

Buddhapalita is considered as the founder of the Prasaṅgika Madhyamika School. He hold that the essence of
the Madhyamika philosophy could only be revealed through arguments and absurdum (Prasangavaka). He learned all the original works of Nagarjuna under the master Samgharaksita. The only famous work of Buddhapalita is the Mulamadhyamakavrtti, the commentary which he wrote on the Mulamadhyamika karika of Nagarjuna. Though its original form is lost, it is preserved in Tibetan translation.

Bhavaviveka:

He was the founder of Svātantrika Madhyamika school. He was the younger contemporary of Buddhapalita. According to Taranatha he was born in the south in a Kshatriya family. He studied the work of Buddhapalita. He learned Tipitaka, many Mahayana suttas and the work of Nagarjuna. Taranatha says that his views were spread more extensively than those of Buddhapalita. Bhavaviveka composed many works. Among the most important works is his commentary on Nagarjuna’s Mulamadhyamakakarika entitled the Prajnapradipa. He also wrote the Madhyamakavatārapadipa, the Madhyamakapratītyasamutpāda, the Karatalaratna, the Madhyamakahṛdaya-karika and wrote a commentary called the Tarkajvala on the Madhyamakahṛdaya. The Tarkajvala contains detailed expositions of the doctrines of the Sankhya the Vaisesa and the Vedanta.

Dignaga:

He was the founder of Buddhist logic and known as the father of Medieval Nyaya as a whole. He lived in the
beginning of the fifth century A.D. At first he was a Hinayanist of the Vātsiputriya and later converted into Mahayanism. According to Tibetan tradition he was the pupil of Vasubandhu. Dignaga propounded hundred books on 'Buddhist logic' which means a system of logic and epistemology, originated in the field of Buddhist philosophy. It covers within its scope the study of pure sensation, conceptual construction, inference, including syllogism, validity of cognition, and the art of conducting philosophic disputations in public.

His important works are: *Pramanasamuccaya*, *Alambanapariksa*, *Prajna-paramitapindartha*, *Hetucakradamaru*, *Nyaya-pravesa*, *Pramanasastranayaprasesa*. Dignaga criticized some of the theories of Vatsayana in his *Nyaya bhasya*. Thus Dignaga had a good link between the Buddhist and the orthodox Nyaya systems of India.

Chandrakirti (700 A.D.):

Chandrakirti was another exponent of the Madhyamika system. He severely criticised the method of argument of Bhavaviveka. He followed the method of argument of Buddhapalita in his approach to the Madhyamika philosophy. However, the quantity and quality of his literary works are of greater importance than those of Buddhapalita. His contributions to the philosophical literature of the
Madhyamika system are the *Mulamadhyamikavrtti-prasanapadana*, a commentary on the *Mulamadhyamaka-karika* of Nagarjuna and the *Madhyamakavatara*, an independent work on the Madhyamika system. He also contributed an autocommentary on the *Madhyamakavatara*, the commentaries on the *Yuktisastika sunyatasaptati* of Nagarjuna and on the *Catuhsataka* of Aryadeva. Chandrakirti also gave comment on the worth of the logical innovations introduced by Dignaga. Moreover, he wrote a number of works on Tantra among which the most important is the *Pradipauddyotana*, a commentary on the Guhyasamaja-tantra.

Santideva:

He was considered as the last great exponent of the prasaṅgika Madhyamika school. He perhaps lived a half century later than Chandrakirti. He composed the works of the highest value concerning the spiritual discipline of the Madhyamika. His important contribution to the Madhyamika school are the *Sutrasamuccaya*, the *Siksasamuccaya* and the *Bodhicaryavatara*. The last two are the most important works. The *Siksasamuccaya* is a summary of excerpts from Mahayana Suttas which illustrate the practical religious discipline of the Madhyamika. On the other hand, the *Bodhicaryavatara* is a work of creation of the enlightenment thought (bodhicitta). The *Sutrasamuccaya* is an abridged exposition of the contents of the *Siksasamuccaya*. 
Dharmakirti (700 A.D.)

He was the greatest Buddhist logician. He was a successor of Dignaga. He learned logic from Isvarasena who was among Dignaga's pupils, Rahul Sankrityayan had done a signal service not only to Buddhism but to Indian logic by editing Dharmakirti's works. The original form of the text has been discovered in Tibet. The other important works of Dharmakirti are the Pramanavartika, the Nyayabindu, the Hetubindu, the Santamantarasiddhi, the Pramanaviniscaya, the Vadamaya and the Sambandhapariksa. His writing style could hold the highest mark in epistemological speculation by later Buddhism.

Asanga (4th century A.D.):

Asanga was a pupil of Maitreyanatha who was the founder of Vijñānavāda school. Asanga contributed a great number of books. Among the works the following can be mentioned: the Abhidharmasamuccaya, the Mahayanasamparigraha, the Prakarana-aryadeva, the Yogacarabhumi-sastra, the Mahayana-samparigraha and the Prakarana aryavaca. The last two are very important from the ethical and doctrinal points of view. The Yogācāra bhumi-sastra in its original Sanskrit form has been discovered by Rahul Sankrityayan, who divided it into seven bhumis and describes in detail the path of discipline according to the Yogācāra school.
Thus the Mahayana schools provided Buddhism with all the necessary elements of a religious tradition: worship, gods, theology, devotion, mysticism, active altruism and a varied profound metaphysics. The importance given by the Madhyamika and the Yogācāra schools to the Buddhist culture and philosophy led to the development in Buddhism.

The development of Buddhist philosophy falls into three stages: original Buddhism, Hinayana and Mahayana. The division of Buddhism into Hinayana and Mahayana is common enough. But the original Buddhism ought to be treated separately and regarded as the common matrix of both Hinayana and Mahayana. By the original Buddhism is meant the teachings of the Buddha himself, as they can be found out from the canonical texts through critical analysis. The teachings of the Buddha have been elaborated and interpreted by the various sects and schools in different views. According to Ceylonese tradition, original Buddhism was divided into two primitive schools, Theravāda and Mahasanghika. Further, the Chinese tradition also maintains that Theravāda and Mahasanghika are the two principal schools. Among the Theravāda schools the Sarvāstivāda is the principal school. The two schools are separated from the Hinayana.

According to dissension among the Buddhist monks Buddhism was divided into as many as eighteen sub-sects.
The classification was started from the second Buddhist Council. The division was Hinayana and Mahayana. Then gradually a number of Buddhist schools sprang up. Broadly speaking, there were eighteen principal schools in Buddhism. But it is not possible to mention all the schools in this short time. Hence, I have selected only those principal and most popular schools. Then I have treated how Buddhism was developed and spread all over the world in the next II and III chapters.
References:


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.