CHAPTER-III

PRINCIPAL SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

After the death of the Buddha, Buddhism was divided into many sects because of the conflict of opinions among its followers. The way how the Buddhist schools were separated from the original doctrines of Buddha can be understood from the Second Council of Buddhism. The purpose of holding the Second Council was the distinctions in views in the disciplinary rules among the Buddhist monks, especially between the Vaisali and the Vajian monks, after the demise of the Great Master. The Vajian monks proposed ten points of disciplines against the original disciplines of the Bhikkhus (monks). The ten rules are the following:

(i) Singiloma-kappa (carrying of salt in a horn for future use),
(ii) Dvaṅgula-kappa (taking food after midday),
(iii) Gamāntara-kappa (the practice of going to a neighbouring village and taking a second meal there),
(iv) Avasa-kappa (the observance of the Uposathas in the different places in the same parish),
(v) Anumāti-kappa (asking for a post facto sanction of a deed),
The new ten disciplinary orders of the Vajian monks were the reactions against the ascetic rules of the original doctrines. But the new ten orders were strongly opposed by the orthodox system, especially by the venerable Yasa (thera). Hence, the two parties decided to discuss the matter at the Ahoganga hill in Kashmir. But as the purpose was very hard and subtle the decision could not be arrived. Therefore, they performed another council at Vaisali, including eight members selected by a committee of four from the west (i.e. Yasa's party) and four from the Vajians (East). It was during the reign of king Kalasoka (386 B.C.) of Vaisali. The council was known as the 'Second Buddhist Council'. At that sermon the Vajian monks supported their ten points with a large majority, but they were vehemently condemned by the Vaisalian. After a severe dispute between the two groups the Vaisalian party defeated the Vajian people, condemning the ten points of disciplinary rules as
illegal and immoral. Then at the end of the meeting a decision was settled down that the ten disciplines (rules) of the Vajians were invalid and not permissible. But the conclusion of the council was not accepted by the Vajians. In this way, due to disagreements of views in the Sangha or monastic community there arose two main classes of Buddhism, i.e., the orthodox those who believed into the original teachings of the Buddha and the unorthodox or heterodox those who did not follow the real doctrines of the Buddha. The first classification was known as 'Theravāda' (Pāli) or 'Sthaviravāda' (Sanskrit), and also known as 'Hinayana', (Little vehicle); since they were smaller in number. The second one was called the 'Mahasanghika' or 'Mahayana' (Great vehicle), since they had a larger group. Literally speaking, the term Theravāda (elder order) or Sthaviravāda was different in strict sense from the Mahasanghika or Mahayana also. Even though broadly speaking they were known as Hinayana and Mahayana respectively, the reason for naming these schools was that, though the Vajian monks were defeated at the Council they did not stop to continue their works. Besides, instead of stopping their works, they held another council called the Mahasanghika or Great Assembly. Since then this school was known as the Mahasanghika or Mahayana Buddhism. Thus, it was in the Second Council that Buddhism split into two broad groups (Sanghas). In course of time, the two groups
were again sub-divided into many sects. The school of Theravāda (orthodox) was divided into ten small branches and the Mahasanghika was classified into eight sub-classes. They are the following:

Theravāda (Sthaviravāda):
(i) Haimavatas,
(ii) Sarvāstivāda,
(iii) Vātsiputriya,
(iv) Dharmottariyas,
(v) Bhadrayaniyas,
(vi) Sammitiyas,
(vii) Mahisasakas (or Bahusasakas),
(viii) Dharmayuptikas,
(ix) Survāsakas and
(x) Uṭtarīyas.

Mahasanghikas (or Mahayana):
(i) Mūla-Mahāsanghikas,
(ii) Ekavyavāhārikas,
(iii) Lokottara-Vādins,
(iv) Bahuśrutiyas,
(v) Prajñaptivādins,
(vi) Caityakas (Caityas),
(vii) Purvaśailas and
(viii) Aparaśailas.
The Hinayana Buddhism was called the Southern Buddhism, since it prevailed in Southern countries like Ceylon. This school was also known as Southern school, for the first time it was introduced in the South (Ceylon or Shrilanka) by the Buddhist monk Mahendra, the son of Asoka the Great, in the third century B.C. Then, it was widely spread, in South-east Asia, such as, Thailand, Cambodia, Burma, Magadha and Kosala etc.

On the other hand, the Mahayana Buddhism is called the Northern Buddhism, since it flourished in the North, Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan. This system was developed with the Fourth Council in the first century A.D. during the time of king Kaniska of Kushana dynasty. During the reign of king Kaniska, the Mahayana Buddhism spread with great strength but from the fourth century A.D. it was declined in India.

There are more than eighteen schools in Buddhism. Among them the most important schools are: Theravāda (Sthaviravāda), Mahasanghika (Mahayana), Sarvāstivāda (Hetuvādins) or Vibhajjavādins, Vātsiputriya, Madhyamika (Sunyavada), Sautrantika, Vaibhāsika and Yogācāra (Vijñānavāda). "The Hindu and the Jaina accounts mention only four principal classes of Buddhist schools viz.; (1) the Madhyamika (nihilist); (2) the Yogācāras (subjective
The orthodox writers have noted four principal systems of the Buddhist philosophy, viz. the Vaibhāsika, the Sautrantika, the Yogācāra and the Madhyamika of the four schools, the first two viz. the Vaibhāsika and the Sautrantika belong to the Hinayana sect, and the other two schools, the Yogācāra and the Madhyamika belong to the Mahayana. The Hinayana is ethical and historical while the Mahayana is religious and metaphysical. The gradual spread of Buddhism is thus natural and not mechanical.

Vaibhāsika school:

The Vaibhāsika school arose in the third century after the death of the Buddha. This school originated from the Sarvāstivādin school which was one of the oldest schools of Buddhism (Theravāda). In the words of the Yamakami Sogen, "the Sarvāstivādins originally formed a sect of Vaibhāsikas". The Vaibhāsikas have their origin in the Sarvāstivādin school, which gets its name from sarvam 'all things' and asti, 'exist' hence Sarvāstivādins in Sanskrit "those who believed that all things exist". The Sarvāstivāda school was divided into four divisions and the Vaibhāsika was the third one. According to the Sarvāstivādin books a general Buddhist council was held at...
Kashmir (100 A.D.). The Council was held to settle the disputes among the various classes of the Buddhist monks. At that assembly various manuscripts were collected and composed new commentaries on the three Pitakas, such as, the Vinaya Pitaka, the Abhidhamma Pitaka and the Sutta Pitaka. Those who followed on the Vinaya and the Abhidhamma Pitakas being called the 'Vibhasas' and those who believed in the Sutta Pitaka were known as 'Upadesa'. Afterwords, the followers of the first two Pitakas came to be known as 'Vaibhāsikas' or commentaries. Yasomitra also described thus, the Vaibhāsikas were the followers of the Abhidhamma Mahavibhasasastra or simply Vibhasasastra, a commentary on Abhidharma-jnana-prasthana-sastra of Katyayani. The Vaibhāsikas were so-called because they considered the language of the schools to be absurd and attached themselves to the vibhasa or the commentary on the Abhidhamma. In the words of Yamakami Sogen. "In later times, the so-called Vaibhāsikas came to be identified with the Sarvāstivādins... properly speaking the Sarvāstivādins originally formed a section of the Vaibhāsikas". Dignaga and Dharmakirti were the two chief founders of this school. Dignaga's Pramana Samuccaya and Dharmakirti's Nyaya-bindu were the two most significant authoritative texts of this system. The other great acaryas (founders) were the Bhattarakas, Dharmatrata, Ghosaka, Vasumitra and the Buddhadeva. The Vaibhāsika system fundamentally concerned
with the old school of Theravāda or Sthaviravāda. Like the Sarvāstivādins they accepted the authority of the Abhidhamma and rejected the authority of the Vedas. Hence, they were also known as the representatives of the Sarvāstivādins.

The Vaibhāsika school recognises perception and conception as the two instruments of the sources of knowledge. According to them, the knowledge which is given by perception is definite true knowledge, while the knowledge supplied by conception is imaginary and indefinite. The distinction between the two concepts is that the former gives us true knowledge while the later does not give true knowledge. A distinctive doctrine of the Vaibhāsika is that in perception the mind knows its objects directly. What we called perception according to them results from the mind's direct contact with their objects through the sense-organs. According to the orthodox writers, the Vaibhāsika holds that what is directly perceived is only our own idea which acquires the form of the object (Sakara-jnana). Inasmuch as, the diversity of forms in our ideas could only be caused by external objects, their existence is inferred from that diversity. They maintain that in perception the form of the object and that of our consciousness are the same. However, it has an existence of its own and the validity (pramana) of our
consciousness lies in this identity which becomes the validifying instrument of cognition and which is at the same time not different from cognition.

The Vaibhāsikas agree with the Sautrantika view that both the mental and non-mental are real. This school also believes that both the things and ideas are real. They do not make any distinction between a natural and a transcendental sphere, hence they do not hold that what is ultimately the most real is to be transcendent. Everything that exists is equally real, including the past and the future. What is given in perception points to an external world of existence, indeed the mental image is a copy of the external object.

According to them, the so-called inference is based upon perception. They hold that illusion arises when the form so produced is only an artifact or baseless. Illusion is not the mistaking of one object for another, but perceiving a form that does not belong to any object.

The Vaibhāsika school developed their philosophy on atomistic view that all objects are composed of four elements viz. earth, water, fire and air. They assume that water which is cool, fire which is warm and air which is mobile. The Vaibhāsikas maintain that an atom has six sides
making up an indivisible unit. According to Vasubandhu, the atom (paramanu) is the smallest particle of matter. According to the Vaibhāsikas the elements that make up the atoms can be considered in three aspects, viz. thing (earth), nature (solidity) and function (cohesion). Then the composition of the four elements depend upon two sorts of energy i.e. active and potential. For example: "When there is a blazing fire, heat predominates as the active energy; when there is a rushing flood, moisture is seen to be active energy". This system maintains that external objects are objects resulting from the combination of the ultimate atoms according to their capacity.

The Vaibhāsika school recognised the conditional (samskrta) and unconditional (asamskrta) order of dhammas. They stressed that the conditional order make one to understand and realise the phenomenal existence of sorrow. According to them the conditioned being (individual) can be transformed into the unconditional Nirvāna with the help of the doctrines disclosed by the Buddha himself. The conditioned order consist of physical phenomena, consciousness, mental states etc. On the other hand, the unconditional order consists of the following:

(i) nirvāna (ultimate cessation reached through the spiritual path),
(ii) aprati sankhya-nirodha (cessation brought about by the absence of the conditioning factors) and lastly (iii) ākāsa (space) which does impede, whose essence lies offering obstacle.

They believe Nirvāṇa as an entity (dhamma) which remains after the destruction of consciousness. They say "Nirvāṇa to be something real (vastu); the Vaibhāṣika did not maintain that Nirvāṇa was a kind of paradise, but the annihilation of all life (nirodha) the essence of Nirvāṇa was a reality (Nirodha-Satya-Vastu) i.e. a materialistic lifeless reality". They do not conceive Nirvāṇa as a kind of ideal state but only the extinction of the life. Hence they consider the essence of Nirvāṇa as a materialistic lifeless reality.

This school has provided two aspects of existence, viz.

(i) transient and phenomenal,

(ii) eternal and absolute.

The phenomenal aspect may be analysed into matter, mind and forces, while the eternal into space and Nirvāṇa. Then the phenomenal life has been divided into two sets of elements such as:
(i) the one representing their everlasting nature (dharmasvabhava),
(ii) the other representing their momentary manifestations in actual life (dharmalaksana).

The Vaibhāsika school can be divided into four principal sub-sects which bore the names of four of Buddha's disciples. Rahula, Kāsyapa, Kātyāyana and Upāli. They established their schools by instructing their own individual disciples, but all the doctrines were one common. They believe the Buddha as an ordinary human being and has the quality of high intuitive powers. They make a distinction between the inner world of ideas and the outer world of objects. Concerning the relation between the perceptual consciousness and its objects, the Vaibhāsika and the Sautrantika systems differ in their views. On denying the Vaibhāsika view the Sautrantika school developed their philosophy that objects are inferred but not perceived.

Sautrantika School:

The Sautrantika school originated from the fourth council during the reign of king Kaniska. Like the Vaibhāsikas, the Sautrantikas split from the Sarvāstivādins. According to Vasumitra (before 100 A.D.) the Sautrantika branched off from the Sarvāstivāda some
three hundred years after the Buddha's death. According to the Pāli sources the school of the Sankranti-vādins is derived from the Kāsyapiyas and the school of the Sautrantikas from that of the Sankranti-vādins, while according to Vasumitra the two are identical. The Sautrantikas got their name because of their reliance on and adherence to the Sutta Pitaka. Yasomitra also says, those who accept Suttas, not Sastras as authority are called 'Sautrantika'. The word 'Sautrantika' is derived from 'Sutranta' i.e. the original text.

According to the Chinese tradition, the first teacher of the school was Kumaralata or Kumaralabha, a contemporary of Nagarjuna, Asvaghosa and Aryadeva, Uttaradharma and Srilabdha. Yasomitra also was considered as the chief exponent of this system. The followers of this school were the opponents to the Vaibhāsikas, they did not consider Abhidhamma as the authoritative texts. According to them, these texts were treatises of human inspiration and were liable to error. Inspite of agreeing the Abhidhamma texts, they declared Sutta or Sutrantas to be the original doctrine and dialogue of the Buddha. They refused the authority of the Vinaya and the Abhidhamma Pitakas. The Sautrantikas also refused the philosophy of both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda school and followed only the original doctrines of the Pāli canon.
Though the Sautrantikas denied the authority of the Abhidhamma of both the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda schools, they believed the theory of atomism (paramanuvāda) and momentariness (Ksanikavāda) of these two schools. While agreeing with the theory of momentariness, they affirmed the Abhidhamma doctrine of the dhammas that the world was in a constant and ceaseless state of flux. Regarding this state of flux they argued that neither matter nor mind was involved in perception. They were connected and co-ordinated with each other in order to have direct perception. Thus the Sautrantikas held that neither mind nor matter is 'real' in the permanent. The orderly flux and regular change of the dhammas are the apparent permanence that forms the basis of cognition of the world. They are also opposed to the principal doctrine of the Sarvāstivāda that everything exists in the three periods of time. They admit that past and future are unreal and conceive only the present existence as the real existence. Further, they did not believe the Vaibhāsika view that the mind perceived objects directly. On the contrary, they stressed that the object should be apart from consciousness.

Having denied of the Vaibhāsika view they hold that external objects could be presumed with the help of our experience in the sense that their knowledge was based on experience. Because, according to them there were no means
of directly apprehending objects. The external object was the presentation of the object in idea that we perceived, not the object itself. That consciousness appeared as external object would be absurd, if the external object did not exist. That means experiences of external objects would not arise if there were no outer things. Hence they concluded that there would be an extra-mental reality, which was apart from the external world consciousness and the object. As the objects were momentary they could not be presented at the time of their perception. That means that just when we believed that the object had been perceived, at that moment the object passed away in the object series. However, before it had vanished it left an impression in the mind. It was the impression that we perceived the image of the external thing and not the object itself. The impression could be inferred from their conformity in the cognition. Thus the objects were inferred but not perceived. According to the later orthodox writers Sautrantika held the theory of representationism which postulates that external objects are not directly perceived but are only inferred.

When the Vaibhāsika recognised seventy-five categories of dhammas, the Sautrantikas recognised only forty-three number of dhammas. They distributed their forty-three dhammas among the five skandhas (aggregates) as follows:
(i) rūpa-four primary and four derivative forms,
(ii) vedanā-pleasure, pain and what is indefferently,
(iii) samjñā-five sense-organs and mind,
(iv) vijñāna-consciousness corresponding to the six under samjñā and
(v) saṃskāras-ten good ones and ten bad ones. The elements that made up all things were of one nature only and that principle transmigrated from one life to another.

They stressed that the skandhas (elements) in their subtle form were destroyed forever only in nirvāṇa. Even though, all the things were destructible in nirvāṇa, they had no duration, for every instant without any effective cause. An individual also is made up of these five elements. In this way, a composite thing disappears and is consequently replaced by a new one. To this system, Nirvāṇa is the absolute end of all manifestations and the end of passion of life (Klesa-Tanmanoh Kseyah) without any positive counterpart. They argued that the self is a long series (samtana) of the phenomenal elements, each member of which existed only for a moment. This self of phenomenal series is autonomous.

The school of Sautrantika refuses the Vaibhāṣīka's concept of Nirvāṇa. In the above discussion of the
Vaibhāsika school we have discussed that Nirvāṇa is an unconditional order of dhammas. But this view is contrary to the Sautrantika's. To the Sautrantikas Nirvāṇa is beyond the empirical process and cannot be treated with the particulars. They conceived that Nirvāṇa is the absence of all dhammas i.e. beyond both the conditional and unconditional order of dhammas, of the Vaibhāsikas. In fact, Nirvāṇa has been described by the Sautrantikas as the disappearances (vyantibhava), decay (ksaya), destruction (nirodha), appeasement (vyupasama), detachment (viroga) and non-production of sorrow. Briefly speaking, to this system, Nirvāṇa is the complete ceasing to be and mere non-existence of the skandhas (dhammas). To them, the so-called unconditional order Nirvāṇa etc. are not dhammas. In this way, the Sautrantika's views are quite different from the Vaibhāsika's in many respects. The fundamental difference between the two schools is that the Vaibhāsika relies on commentaries (Vibhasasastra etc.), while the Sautrantika took his inspiration only from the original Buddha-Suttas. Later on, the Mahayana schools have developed their views and philosophies in different ways.

Madhyamika School:

The Madhyamika system is the development of the original doctrines of the Buddha. This school is concerned about the nature of the absolute truth and the ultimate
nature of reality. According to them, from the absolute standpoint the universe is completely non-existence and from the relative standpoint they accepted the Sarvāstivādins categories. They consider neither the reality nor the non-reality of the world, but merely of relativity. Thus the Madhyamika philosophy is founded upon interpretation of the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of interdependent origination.

This system is expounded by Acarya Nagarjuna in the second century A.D. The term Madhyamika is derived from the 'madhyama' means 'middle' which comes from the middle path of the teachings of Buddha. This school is also known as 'Sunyavada' because according to this school Sunya (voidness) is the ultimate reality. The followers of this school are: Aryadeva (3rd century), Buddhapalita (5th century A.D.), Bhavaviveka (5th century A.D.), Chandrakīrti (6th century A.D.) and Santideva (7th century A.D.).

The Madhyamika school of Buddhism started its works from the 'silence' of the Buddha on the metaphysical problems. It can be said that Nagarjuna's Madhyamika-Karika represents the systematic manner of the philosophy of this school. In the Madhyamika Karika Nagarjuna sets out to explain causation and to explore Sunya and Nirvāṇa in the process. And in the work, the author seeks to devastation the
two principal realist schools of Buddhism, viz. the Sarvāstivāda and the Sautrantika schools and along the way to take a crack at the Samkhyaśas, the Jainas the materialist and a host of other philosophers. Thus, the Madhyamika School of philosophy is developed by Nagarjuna and later on by his followers in the following three stages:

(i) the first is the systematic formulation of the Madhyamika philosophy by Nagarjuna and Aryadeva.
(ii) the second is the division of Prasāṅgika and Śvātantrika school,
(iii) the last and the third one is the reaffirmation of the Prasangika school.

They try to establish a middle and moderate philosophical concept between the extreme affirmation and the extreme negation. Though the Madhyamika school adopted the concept of the middle path of Buddha, there is a difference between the two systems. According to Buddha, the middle path is neither self-indulgence nor self-mortification, that means there is a way between these two concepts. The avoidance of these two views brings enlightenment and leads to Nirvāṇa. While the doctrine of the middle path of the Madhyamika philosophy is the non-acceptance of the two extreme views of existence and non-existence, that is, eternal indescribable in character.
The Madhyamika school interpretes Sunyata from the viewpoint of Pratityasamutpada (theory of dependent origination). The term 'Sunya' is the word used by Nagarjuna to designate the conditioned character of the world. They give more emphasis to Sunyata because Sunyata is the central idea of this philosophy. They try to prove the whole phenomenal world with the help of the theory of pratityasamutpada. They maintain that all the experience of the phenomenal world is under constant illusion and voidness. They consider that behind this phenomenal world there is a reality which is indescribable and being devoid of this phenomenal character. According to this school this is called 'Sunyata'. This indescribable (Sunya) nature of things are deduced from the dependent character of things.

The truth of interdependent causation means that things exist interdependently and relatively to each other. Nagarjuna describes in the Mula-madhyamika-karika on the Madhyamika, "we declare that whatever is interdependently originated is emptiness (sunyata). It is conceptual designation of the relativity of existence and is indeed the middle path". Dr. Radhakrishnan also writes, "By sunyata, therefore, the Madhyamika does not mean absolute non-being but being". Further this school stresses that no-element can exist which does not participate in interdependence. Therefore, no element which is not of the emptiness can exist.
Nagarjuna maintains that every dhamma (truth) is relative (sunya) and causally conditioned by a particular time and place. But if the dhamma (truth) is relative then it is not absolute and not ultimately real or unconditioned. And if the dhamma (truth) is not absolute then it is empty like as all existences are, because they are caused and conditioned in space and time. Nagarjuna says that everything is empty of reality and there is no absolute and final ultimate truth. It implies that if all is sunya or relative then nothing can be finally and absolutely real. This relativity describes to the world changing process, moments and any other worlds beyond.

The Madhyamika system admits that a thing is a combination of dhammas following one another in unbroken succession. Like that, an individual is also a composition of dhammas. They say that, neither individual selves nor material objects could be held to be ultimately real; the real is the absolute. They consider self as well as not self to be equally unreal. Nagarjuna holds that the world of existence and Nirvāṇa are identical, though they are looked upon as different by the common man. To them the real must be Absolute.

In the beginning of the fifth century A.D. Madhyamika school has been divided into two classes viz.;
(i) the Prasangika school,
(ii) the Svatantrika school.

The Prasangika school was founded by Buddhapalita and the Svatantrika by Bhavaviveka, the former explaining about the negative dialectics of Nagarjuna and the second one stressing the positive character of Nagarjuna's teaching. The Buddhapalita (c.A.D.470-540) maintains that truth can only be shown through dialectical demolition of all theories. Bhavaviveka (c.490-570) on the other hand says that it is possible to establish ultimate truth in a positive way. Chandrakirti and Santideva also supported the Buddhapalita's concept. Chandrakirti presented two books called Prasannapada and Madhyamikavatara. In his Prasannapada Chandrakirti gives an excellent commentary on Nagarjuna's Karika and Madhyamikavatara deals with the whole doctrine of Mahayana and Madhyamika school. Santideva also wrote three books namely,Siksasamuccaya,Sutrasamuccaya and Bodhicharyavatara. The first is a summary of Mahayana teaching while the last is a noble poem in praise of the ideal of Mahayana and the life of the Bodhisattva.

Nagarjuna's Madhyama-Karika attempted to refute the following four theories of causation:

(i) Self-causation which maintains that the cause and the effect are identical (Satkaryavada held by Sarvastivada).
(ii) External causation which maintains that the cause and the effect are different (Asatkāryāvāda held by Sautrantika).

(iii) Both self-causation and external causation which maintain that the effect can be both the same as well as different from its cause (held by Jainism).

(iv) Neither self-causation nor external causation which maintains that things are produced by chance (held by Materialism and Skepticism).

Nagarjuna also maintains that if all the truth is sunya and relative, then there is no higher truth which can lead to the attainment of Nirvāna. Hence, in his Madhyamika-Karikā he stresses that the truth can lead to Nirvāna. It deals with two kinds of truth viz:

(i) Sāmvrṭi satya (empirical or conventional truth).
(ii) Paramārtha Satya (higher or transcendental truth).

The former describes the world is only an appearance and illusion. While the latter is the realisation that worldly things are non-existent like an illusion. 'Sāmvrṭi Satya' (empirical truth) refers as a means and 'Paramārtha Satya' (transcendental truth) as an end. Hence Paramārtha Satya is not attainable without the Sāmvrṭi Satya. Because the Supreme truth cannot be grasped by reason. It can be realised only by means of intuitive knowledge. Hence
'according to this school the world is neither real nor unreal; it is merely relativity. The real is only one and non-dual (advaya) which is Supra-relational and therefore beyond reason. It is self-evident and self-existent quiescent and non-multiple, since it is transcendental and uncharacterishable. Nagarjuna says that those who do not know the distinction between the absolute and relative truths they do not know the core teaching of the Buddha.

Vijñānavāda or Yogācāra school:

The Yogācāra is another branch of Mahayana Buddhism. It is generally accepted that Maitreyanatha (3rd century) is the foremost founder of this school. The two brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu are also the early exponents of this system. Asanga is the disciple of Maitreyanatha and he systematised and developed his teacher's views. Afterwards, his younger brother Vasubandhu develops his brother's philosophy more scientifically. Formerly, the two brothers were Hinayanist (Vaibhāsika), later on they converted into Mahayana system. The other chief exponents of this school are: Dignaga (5th century A.D.), Dharmapala (7th century A.D.), Santaraksita (8th century A.D.) and Kamalasila (8th century A.D.) respectively. They continue the work which was done by the former founder and raised the school to a high level. Their philosophy is influenced by the work of Vasubandhu.
The Yogācāra school, which advocates the theory of subjective idealism, drew inspiration from the Lankavatara-Sutra of the nine Mahayana Suttas called Dhamma. The Lankavatara-Sutra maintains that objects are not real. It is founded by Asanga and Vasubandhu.

The name 'Yogācāra' is so called because according to this system the absolute truth can be attained only with the practice of Yoga. Another name of this school is 'Vijñānavāda', because they maintain that all objects in the universe are merely the manifestation of our vijñānas or consciousness. The term 'Yogācāra' means the practice or way of Yoga, while Vijñānavāda indicates the view that consciousness alone is real. The name 'Yogācāra' is given by Asanga and the term 'Vijñānavāda' by Vasubandhu. But commonly both the two terms are used synonymously. "The Yogācāra brings out the practical side of philosophy, while Vijñānavāda brings out its speculative features". The fundamental characteristics of this school can be considered of the following:

(i) Vijñāna is the only reality and the external world does not exist,
(ii) Two kinds of vijñāna, alayavijñāna and pravṛtti-vijñana,
(iii) Anadi-vasana (impressions following from the time immemorial),
(iv) Three kinds of reality viz. parinispanna, paratantra and parikalapita.

The Yogācāra philosophy seems to have started with the objection of the Sautrantika view that there is no extra mental reality. Hence, the idea that there is no extra-mental reality is the central thesis of this school. They give objection against the Sautrantika view that objects cannot be directly known. According to them, if the object is not directly known, why should we postulate its existence? They maintain that if we do not presume the existence of external objects nothing becomes unintelligible. They admit that what the mind knows is its own idea and not object, for according to them the mind does not know the relation between the idea and the object. The Yogācārins believe that the concept of self-consciousness as the absolute, and all objects, in the universe are merely the manifestation of human consciousness. According to Asanga the external world is an illusion, only thought exists. All individual intellectual products are also mere phenomena, products of the alayavijñāna, the existence of intellectual impressions and forms in each individual, which is the sole foundation of the false belief in the existence of a self. To the Yogācāras mind creates its own objects.
The Yogācāra school denies the existence of the plurality of elements. They contend that reality can be considered into the following two kinds viz. (i) alayavijnāna, (ii) pravṛttivijnāna. Asanga declares that "alayavijnāna is a store-consciousness in which the seeds (bija) of all future ideas and the traces of all past deeds are stored up. It is not absolute. It belongs to the phenomenal part of existence, because all the results of Karma are stored therein". Vasubandhu's Vijnaptimatrata-siddhi refuses the idea of reality of the objective world, emphasizing that Vijnāna (consciousness) is the only reality. While alayavijnāna contains the seeds of phenomena both subjective and objective. According to Vasubandhu, alayavijnāna is constantly changing stream of consciousness with the realisation of Buddhahood.

The Vijnānavādins contend that the ultimate reality is consciousness only. It can be known in nirmāna which is beyond misery. It is the pure consciousness without any determinate state. To them this reality is the Mahatma or Mahan Atman i.e., one who becomes Buddha and obtained enlightenment.

The Yogācārins maintain that mind is a relative existence that the dhammas are the stages of the minds unfolding. Agreeing with the Sarvāstivādins views, the
Yogācārins divided all things in the universe into two groups.

(i) Asamśkrta dhamma (incomposite) and
(ii) Samśkrta dhamma (composite).

The Asamśkrta (incomposite) dhammas are in six numbers. viz.,

(i) Akasa which is limitless, free from all changes,
(ii) Pratisankhyanirodha which is the cessation of all kinds of sorrows; attained through the power and pleasure,
(iii) Samjñāvedananirodha is that where,
(iv) Vedanā (feeling),
(v) Samjñā (perception) do not act, and lastly
(vi) Tathata which is the transcendental truth of everything.

The Samśkrta (composite) dhammas are in three namely,

(i) Citta (mind),
(ii) Rūpa (phenomenal),
(iii) Bhāva (noumenal).

Asanga says that this world is merely the projection of one's mind which alone has a real existence (vijñāptimatrata). Things we see about as are in reality, non-existent. They are merely an illusion. The Yogācārin
admits that the misapprehension exists as much as the truth exists. But this misapprehension can be realised by the perfect man as unreal. In this way, an individual's ideas are also unreal, since they are merged in the unique reality (parinispätta). This is called their unreality in the absolute sense (paramartha nihsvabhāvata). They declare the absolute is immanent in the phenomenal world, neither different nor non-different. It is a pure consciousness. They maintain that one can obtain the highest stage of truth after passing through all the ten stages of spiritual progress (daśa bhūmi) of Bodhisattvahood.

Among the Mahayanist the Yogācārins alone possessed a definite cosmological system. They consider the opinions of the Hinayanist and the Mahayanist upon the phenomenology and ontology. After considering their opinions at last the Yogācārin reverted the ontological view points to the phenomenological position. The Alaya phenomenology is really a development and supplementary of the Sarvāstivādin school. It has been developed and completed by Asanga and Silabhadra. In this way, the Yogācāra school takes a very great part in the development of Buddhist philosophy. It takes the best elements of both the Hinayana and the Mahayana philosophy.
References:

3. Ibid. p.584.
5. P.N. Sastri: Critique of Indian Realism, Agra University, 1964, p.51.
7. Ibid.
10. Ibid. p.163.
16. Ibid. p.108.