CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM A GENERAL STUDY

India is called the land of religions and one among them is Buddhism, it took birth in India in the 6th century B.C. This is the glorious epoch of Buddhism in South India which really marked the efflorescence of culture in every aspects of life.

It may be noted that, before the advent of Buddhism from this period, there were two to three Buddhas (sakyas) also the future Buddhas called Manushi Buddhas. It is there in this tradition. Buddhism’s aim was to fight against the superior Brahmanas. It came to save people from the clutches of all sacrifices and blind beliefs. Although it gained its importance in the parts of Magadha, Pataliputra, Avanti, Bihār, Kosala and many other places.

It could not stay in India, for a longer period, but it spread its roots to south east Asian countries, with popularity and fame. Buddhism was adopted by several rulers in India like Ashoka, Harsha, Kanishka and the Satavahana king Gautamiputra Satakarni etc.

They played a vital role for its spread, growth and progress. They also adopted personally, and practiced, the principles of Buddhism in their day today life. And later taught to their subjects. This religion was very simple and pure, so it attracted to the common people. The language adopted to preach the people was Pali, which was simple,
easy and understandable, ultimately, it contributed towards Pali literature. The fundamental doctrine of Buddhism is that, all human misery is due to ignorance and therefore to dispel or drag out ignorance and became wise is the true secret of human progress and happiness.

Birth of Buddha:

Before the birth of Buddha, there is a popular story recorded in Buddhist literature, that is, the chief lady, One night, Mahamaya, who was a chief queen of Suddhodhana, king of the Sakyas was asleep, beside her lord in the pleasure pavilion, when moonlight blenched the dewy lawns to snow, dreamt a dream, that, she was carried away by the divine Guardians, as they, lifted her from her bed and bore her away to the great mountains and laid her down and heavenly spirits, shining as stars, came about her and bathed her in the pure waters of mountain lake called Anavatapta in the Himalayas, freeing her of all human stain and when this was done, they laid her down again, clothing her in the gold of divine garments and shedding perfumes about her. She saw a lordly elephant, white as sliver, wandering beneath the trees, it was the symbol of royalty and touching her on the right side with his trunk, he appeared to melt into a cloud and pass like a vapour into her womb. Next day, the dream was interpreted to her by wise men, called Asita, the great hermit, whose austerities were pleasing to the Gods, heard of the birth of him who was to save mankind from the torment of rebirth. The Buddha was
born in the Lumbini near Kapilavastu Just 10 KM from the Indo Nepalese border touching district Basti in Uttar Pradesh which was the capital of the Sakyas, where his father was ruling. While, his mother was on the way to her parents home for her confinements. At birth, he stood upright, took seven strides and spoke, “This is may last birth, hence forth, there is no more birth for me.”

The boy was named Siddhartha, at the great ceremony, on the fifth day, from his birth, His Gotra name was Gautama (In Pali Gotama) by which he is commonly referred to in Buddhist literature. The soothsayers prophesied that he would become a universal emperor, with the exception of one, who declared that, the four signs would convince him of the misery of the world, and he would become a universal teacher to prevent this prophecy, coming true, king Suddhodhana, resolved that he should never know the sorrows of the world. He was reared in delightful palace from whose parks every sign of death, disease and misery was removed. He learned all the arts that a prince should learn and excelled as a student.

**Buddha’s Marriage**

He married his cousin Yashodhara, whom he won at a great contest at which he performed feats of strength and skill which put to shame all other contestants, including his envious cousin Devadatta. It seemed to have the desired effect on the prince and both wife and husband lived happily for many years, wrapped in each others affection, king Suddhodhana felt happy to see his son looking
cheerful. He built three pleasure palaces for his son, for the three different seasons of the year.

He was virtually a prisoner in the palace, and got out by stealth the things, he saw outside to have seen an old man, a sick man, who was diseased and suffering. Thirdly, he saw a corpse, all of which deeply depressed him because they showed that, there is nothing but sorrow and suffering in the world and death comes to all of us, finally, he saw a religious beggar, an ascetic, who devoted himself to religion. This man looked to be quite composed and serene. This sort of life appeared to him and therefore, he left his palace at night and at the age of 29 to seek mental peace in the homeless life, of an ascetic.

For six years, Gautama sought the solution to the world's ills. One fine morning of Vaisakha Purnima, at the age of 35, he attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya in Bihar under pipal tree. Buddha delivered his first sermon at Saranath. Therefore, for forty-five years, the Buddha went about the country from town to town from village to village, disseminating spiritual illumination for the benefit of suffering humanity. He attained Mahaparinirvana at Kushinagara (now Kasi in Gorakhapur district of UP) in 483 BC at the age of 80.5

Buddha's first Sermon

The Buddha delivered his first sermon at a place called Sarnath near Varanasi, infront of the five lovable disciples, who were equal to him in the forest of Uruvela.
In his sermon, he said a life addicted to pleasure, which is vulgar and worthless, and a life given to self mortification which is painful and equally profitless. Then Buddha understood the four noble truths, Suffering its causes, its cessation, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering, and therefore he said and advocated that to attain salvation, or the path of salvation, that leads to eradication of suffering, higher wisdom and peace of mind is the Noble Eightfold path or the middle path. This path consists of:

1) Right understanding free from superstition and delusion.
2) Right thoughts, high and worthy of the intelligent earnest man (Samma Sankappa)
3) Right Actions Kindly, open, truthful (Samma Vakka)
4) Right Livelihood (Samanajiva)
5) Right understanding (Samma Kammanta)
6) Right mindedness
7) Right concentration (Samma Samadhi)
8) Right effort (Samma vayamma)

Actually, the first sermon of Buddha is known in Buddhist terminology as Dharmachakra pravartana, the turning of the wheel of law, in other words called as beginning of new era based on humanity and the equality. The five disciples who took the advice of Buddha were, Annata Kondana, Bhadiyya, Vappa Mahanama and Assaji

64
popularly known as Panchavaggiya Bhikkus, were the first members of the Sangha founded by the Buddha.

Yasha or Yashodha, was the sixth person to join the Sangha, who was the son of a rich merchant of Varanasi. Among the sakya princes, who became the disciples were Nanda, the son of Suddhodana by Mahaprajapati Devadatta, Buddha's cousin, Ananda, other cousin, Aniruddha, the philosopher, Upali, the barbar, the first lady to join the Sangha. The most interesting feature of whole episode of Buddha's disciples is that, he even made his own son to join him, who was the only son, really it is noted feature. It is a great thing on the part of Buddha's life part. Even he neglected Suddhodhana of all possible male heirs to his kingdom, he complained to the Buddha, saying that, Rahul, being a child should not have been ordained without his consent, hence, later on strict rules were made, before converting to Buddhism, they should take the permission of their parents. Buddha approached the problem of life in a realistic and rational manner. Inspite of the pleasures and Joys that man enjoys in his life, Buddha saw that suffering dominated the scene and also overwhelmed man.

He saw that, his main aim should be to see that all suffering disappeared, so that man may be free from it. Buddha believed in the law of causation. According to him, there can never be any effect without a cause, nor any cause, without its effect hence he set about, therefore, to find out the cause of suffering. He traced it as Trishna in
Sanskrit and Tanha in Pali. This word also means thirst. In fact, all desire is a thirst, it is a feeling of want, it points to an urgent need. Buddha thought that so long as there was a trace of any kind of thirst in the mind of man, the result would be suffering. The end of Trishna is the end of suffering and the dawn of Nirvana the joy that known no want and has no feeling of any need.

He also believed that, there must be a way for putting an end to this Trishna in one's own mind, and that way, he found out and called it the eight fold Aryan path.9

**Preaching of Buddha:**

Buddha later impressed fifty four disciples, within a period of two months, he got the good response day by day. He decided to teach and preach his teachings along with his disciples. Buddha said "Go ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, for the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of the gods and men."10 It is a truism that, only one in a million tries to find a path to truth, few among those that find a path to truth, & few among the finders, fewer still are those, who are willing and able to show it to others. Buddha took religion to the doors of the people and taught them in their own language. He rose superior to race and sex, caste and creed to the hierarchy and democratized religion by all human beings as equals.
In his eyes, each individual was capable of rising to the highest stage and that too by his own effort. He asked his disciples to "Be a light unto yourself". He may be considered as the first person, who founded the most disciplined and organized monastic order, that proved successful and powerful beyond expectation. Above all, he stood for peace and harmony, both inner and outer and showed the way of compassion and love to humanity.\(^1\)

Buddha went to Uruvela, there he made to stay in sacred fire room. Once the snake tried to bite Buddha but it went futile. Kassapa was famous for his magical powers, along with him, even his two brothers of Kassapa also joined the Sangha. Buddha, along with his new disciples, proceeded to Rajagriha, the capital of king Bimbisara of Magadha. He presented the Bamboo grove to the Buddha and he became his disciple.

At Rajagriha, by name Sanjaya a religious teacher, stayed there, along with his 250 disciples, among them only two were young and energetic by name Sariputta and Moggallana. These disciples were not satisfied with the teachings taught by Sanjaya and henceforth, once Sariputta came across Assaji, impressed by dignified personality, he enquired who is his teacher, he said the great Buddha. Thereby, after reaching to Rajagriha and impressed the preaching's and teachings of Buddha then became his disciple and later Moggallana also, became disciple.\(^2\) (Page no. 3) Buddha denied the existence of permanent soul.
or ego but he believed in the concept of rebirth but it cannot be the same like that of Transmigration of soul as explained in Hinduism.

Buddha and Buddhism believed in the five points, which every human being is made out of them, it consists of mind and matter. According to him as long as there is Kaama force, then there is rebirth. “Reap as you sow” says Buddha. He never believed in luck, but believed in his own efforts. He never believed in the stars, which are going to change his destiny but believed in shaping of his own destiny. On his own efforts. He said, we are the architects of our own fate. Buddha was well aware of the fact, that the institution of religion would spoil hence he tried to perfect the system by itself. It is known as ehi passika Dhamma i.e “come and see religion” The commanding words of advice are as follows.

“So behave that you make yourselves your own island,
Your own refuge, and that you seek no other refuge.
So behave that you rely upon the system, as your own island, as your own refuge and that you seek no other refuge.”

**Early Buddhism**

The early Buddhism laid stress on the two aspects. They are ethical and mental aspects. Buddha was different from his theory and practices. He was of course practical in his approach. He set himself some most important questions. They are;
1) Whether the universe is eternal or non eternal

2) Whether it is finite or infinite

3) Whether the body and the life are the same or different

4) Whether the tathagatha exists after death or does not exist.

5) Whether the tathagatha both exists and does not exist after death.

Whether the tathagata does not exist or not that he does not exist after death. 15

The teachings of Buddha were mainly targetted against the principles of Brahmins, he sought salvation and deliverance by neglecting the useless sacrifices and some others did sacrifices by self mortification, and gave hardships to the body, in the hope of getting the rewards in the future.

Buddha, thought these two aspects as imperfect, incomplete and not conducive to the welfare of man hence, unlike the other religions, the content of which consists of God, Soul, prayers, rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and the self mortification, spiritual progress in Buddhism, actually called as the self purification, it can be achieved by everybody, he may be layman and hence achieved only through leading a moral life through self disciple, self control.

Vimutti is nothing but reaching to height of freedom of the citta or consciousness from trsna. The three paths 1) bodily 2) Mental 3)
concerning speech. Buddha says that when one attains the right knowledge, one will be free from suffering. He further says, the person should see with Prajna or consciousness all the actions and one must also see that all beings are substance less. They do not have any permanent thing called atma, hence it is clear to the world that the watch words of Buddha’s philosophy were Anitya, Dukha and Anatma form.

The Buddha was on the other hand an upholder of education for all, Besides, he was more concerned with the use of knowledge, a man is likely to make than with knowledge itself.¹⁶

**Buddhist Councils**

The first Buddhist council was at Rajagriha soon after Buddha’s death under the auspices of king Ajatsatru and an attempt was made to compile the teachings of Buddha. But the attempt did not succeed because it is evident that the scriptures of Buddhism grew by a long process of development over several centuries.

The second council was held at Vaisali about a century after the death of Buddha under the auspices of king Kalasoka. The monks of Vaishali and Pataliputra had accepted certain rules which were declared against the teachings of Buddha by the monks of Kausambi and Avanti.
The council failed to bring about a compromise between the two opposite opinions which led to the first division of Buddhism. Henceforth those who opposed the rules were called the Sthaviravadin and those were in favour of the rules and their further relaxation were called the Mahasanghikas.

The third council was held at Pataliputra during the reign of emperor Ashoka. By that time Buddhists had developed many serious differences among themselves and though labels were yet not assigned the different sects were already there. “The history of Buddhism of the second century after Gautam’s death. Comment R.C.Mazumdar “was no longer the history of a single monastic organization but of a quite a larger number growing independently of one another in different parts India.”

The fourth Buddhist council was held at Kashmir during the reign period of Kanishka. 17

The Branches of Buddhism

The Mahisasaka or Sthaviravadins:

This Mahisasaka sect and its philosophy was preached by Buddha at the beginning. They were in other words called as the Theras. Due to the different opinions, thoughts, principles. They started to follow and gave rise to several branches of Buddhism.

According to Mahisasaka18 sect, they were not subjected to any of the retrogation. They even thought that the gift given by the lay
man to the Buddhist sangha, should be accepted as the meritorious, while the one given to the Buddha alone was not meritorious. This school was supported by Queen of Vanavasi, made a gift of a pillar and a monastery for Mahisasaka monks at Nagarjunakonda.

Hinayana and Mahayana:

Through the Hinayana and Mahayana many sects came into existence. In the beginning, these sects were known as

1) Sravakayan or pratyeka Buddhayana

2) Buddhayana or Tathagatayan or Bodhisathvayana. In the later stage, Pali literature was compared and called as Hinayana and Mahayana, which later on became popular due to the patronage provided to them.

1) Hinayana – The Hinayanists practice various yogas, to remove the Klesavarana, and become arhats. The Hinayanists felt themselves as the highest attainment, according to the Hinayanists Arahathood is any how, lower than the Buddhahood. The attainments of Hinayanist being only pudgala sunyata and arhathood. They are described as Hina (low) yanists. The Hinayanists were the persons of not highly intelligent or intellect but of average intellect. The Hinayanists believed in the past, present and future. The most notable feature of Hinayanists were, they believed in the principles of Buddhism and they considered Buddha as human being. They
believed in the ethical observance and value. Hinayana Buddhist
had believed in the preparation of the Buddha and they started
to give importance to previous births of Buddha and hence they
were called in the Buddhist terminology as the Jataka stories.
There are many Jataka stories, and among them according to
one Jataka story, Gautama was born as a Sumedha Brahmana
and he met Dipankara Buddha, who foretold that Gautama
would become the Buddha. He started moving in that direction.
Birth after birth, he began to perfect himself in the ten parimitas
or the highest excellences. The Hinayanists as provided in the
pali texts, the following four more parimitas, accepted by them.
They are:

1) Pranidhan (resolution)
2) Upaya Kausala (Skill in doing good to others)
3) Bala (Strength or power)
4) Jnana (Knowledge)

Apart from these 5) dana (gift) 6) Sila (moral observance) 7) Ksanti (forebearance) 8) Virya (energy) 9) Dhyana (meditation) 10) Prajna (knowledge)

**Mahayana:** Mahayana is just the much more development of
Hinayana. Klesavarana and Jneyavarana are the truths, which
Mahayanists believed.
These Mahayanists always believed in the removing of both klesavarana and Jneyavarana and were interested in the attainment of the pudgala sunyata and dharma sunyata. This their highest attainment is called as Mahayana.

Mahayana philosophy actually meant to those, who could achieve Buddha-hood or superior intellect. One of the great Mahayana philosophers by name Asanga says that without realizing oneself, if one preaches to others one is guilty of hypocrisy. He further says that Mahayanists should not attain Buddha-hood, only he himself but should make others to attain Buddha-hood. Mahayanists also followed moral or the ethical observance and value. They have understood the behaviour of the mind and other constituents of being and cosmological analysis. They maintained and practiced meditation very strictly and observed the disciplinary rules minutely. The noted features of the Mahayanists is that new and fresh interpretations were added and the old philosophy was renewed and believed in the Dharma Sunyata.

One more noted features of Mahayanists is that they believed in Buddhism and its concept of a Bodhisattva. It is presumed that, Bodhisattva concept was accepted by Hinayanists. Mahayanists always followed only six parimitas. They are dana (gift), Sila (Moral observance), Ksanti (forbearance), Virya (Energy), dyana (meditation), Prajna (knowledge). The names of Bodhisattvas are taken in Mahayana, they are Saddharma Pundarika, Sukhavatuyulla some
other Bodhisattvas were Avalokitesvara, Vajrapani, Bhaisaiya Raja and Samantabhadra. The Mahayanists believed that the Buddha was not born in this world later on one more school got the prominent role.

Vajrayana Tantric School:

When days passed, the moral values started devaluating in the life of human beings. Then they started to follow magic spells as protective measures. These became the rituals of a section of the Mahasanghika Buddhists. This is what later on came to be known as the Vajrayana Buddhists. They were depended on Guhya samaja, Manjusri Mulakalapa, Jnanasiddhi of Indragupti, was the great person for the spread of Vajrayana.

Manjusri mulakalpa: It is one of the texts of Vajrayanists, which explains about the various types of rituals, followed by the Vajrayanists as the Mudras (finger and body poses) Mandalas (Mystic diagrams) Mantras, Kriyas (rites) caryas (duties of an officiating priest in worship, Sila (observance of moral precepts Vrata (Vows) Saucacara (Cleanliness in acts) niyama (religious observance) homa (oblations, offering) Japa and dyana (meditation)

Guhya Samaja: It is also one of the texts belonging to vajrayanists, which deals two types of yogas, which every members of Vajrayanists have to be performed. 1) Ordinary second is due 2) Anuttara yoga: It is the tantric forms of meditations. It explains even about the five Skandas and also the impurities like raga, dvesa, moha
are personified as so many Buddhas, issuing from the original tathagata called Bodhicitta vajra tathagata. Vajra is said to be main and significant ornament of the vajrayanists. Buddhism was influenced by some of the later developed sub sects called sakta cult and the natha pantha then in the later stage included in the tantric cult. The vajrayanists believed in truth and reality. The right knowledge of the non existence of worldly objects would lead to enlightenment. According to Vajrayanists, vajra takes the form of kaya vak citta vajra and preaches vajrajanism. They have conducted many discourses on religion and philosophy of vajrayana. The vajrayana has accepted the yogacara concept of the three bodies of the Buddha. The concept of the sameness or co-existence that is knowledge of co-existence has caused the greatest harm to the cause of vajrayana Buddhism in particular and also assumed as affected Buddhism in general. To avoid the danger of moral and physical degradation, preceptor must be spiritually as advanced as the Bodhisattva. The vajrayanists were clearly instructed that before performing the meditational practices (higher or lower) he was to learn the mudras, mandalas, kriyas and caryas from their gurus. These were not strictly observed by the vajrayanists, which has resulted in the religious degradation as such immoral activities were practiced in the name of religion.21
**Declination of Buddhism:**

It is unfortunate and the strange phenomena of the world that, while a very large number of the people of the world follow Buddhism as a religion, it would have almost completely disappeared from India in the land of its birth. Decline began after the 6th C AD when Iti Singh, the Chinese traveler came to India in the 7th century AD he found Buddhism in a state of decline in all places, excepting Bihar, Bengal and Orissa.

The final cause which led to its disappearance from India was the whole sale destruction of the monasteries and the Buddhist monks brought about by the Muslim conquerors. The decline of vitality of the sangha lay in the spirit of renunciation, self discipline, broad mindedness, liberality, service and sacrifice for the many. When all these, above stated characteristics weakened, it caused for the defamation of the Buddhism and its declination. When kings, nobles, Merchants and the common people contributed their share towards the maintenance of these institutions, these made the Buddhist organizations strong and prosperous. When they became strong the monks in course of time became used to an easy life, devoted primarily to academic persuits and religious celebrations.

Again, the members of the sangha, started decreasing to carry on the organization hence with destruction of the Sangha, the Buddhists were left without leaders and Buddhism did not recover. In
1193 a general of Qutubuddin seized the capital of Bihar with a mere handful of men and massacred all the monks living in its monasteries. Similarly, these conqueror destroyed the religious places of the Buddhists at Sarnath and other places.

Buddhism was concentrated in the great monasteries and when these were destroyed, there remained nothing outside them, capable of withstanding either the violence of the muslims or the assimilating influence of the Brahmans. Hence Buddhism suffered for more from these invasions than Hinduism.

Another important factor in the decline of Buddhism in India was the strong opposition from the orthodox Hindu traditionalists. When the Buddhists lacked strong leadership then it adopted many of weak points surrounded, then it caused for the destruction and the declination of Buddhism.

**Literature:**

The Divyavadana describes that on the death of Bindusara, when the throne of pataliputra was lying vacant, Ashoka seized the throne of pataliputra. In this war of succession, against his elder brother, Ashoka got the help of the entire ministry of Bindusara of Khallataka (Prime ministers) and five hundred other ministers. The Chinese traveller, I-tsing in his account, mentions that the Buddha himself even foretold of the great kingdom of Ashoka. The Buddha, while explaining king Bimbisara's dream of a piece of cloth and a gold
stick both divided into eighteen fragments, told the king that his teaching would be divided into eighteen schools more than a hundred years after his nirvana, when there will arise a king named Ashoka, who will rule over the whole of Jambudvipa. The Divyavadana states that the Buddha prophesied about Ashoka as a righteous king. Who would erect 84,000 Dharmarajikas to enshrine his bodily relics. It says further that, Ashoka as a king would be ruling from sea to sea “without oppression, without enforcing penalties, without the force of arms. But according to the Dhamma and customary law” and later in life “giving up his empire, he would shear off his hair and beard, done the yellow robe, go from home into homelessness and ultimately attain to the status of a pratyeka Buddha.

The Ceylon chronicles give us two different stories relating to the account of his conquest of the throne. According to the first one, Ashoka had killed ninety nine brothers, born of different mothers before he ascended the throne of the Mauryan empire, V.A. Smith did not agree with the Ceylon legends and he never accepted the credibility of the account that Ashoka slew his ninety nine brothers because it was quite certain that Ashoka’s brothers and sisters were alive in the 17th or 18th year of his reign, whose households were, objects of his anxious care.

The Mahavamsa, describes Ashoka after murdering his eldest brother, Ashoka became the emperor of the Mauryan dynasty. Divyavadana states that Bindusara on his deathbed asked his eldest

79
son Susima to accept the charge of the administration of the kingdom and for this reason, he told his minister to arrange a ceremony to appoint him. But his minister asked Ashoka to capture the throne in place of Susima. Ashoka accepted their proposal “by successfully calling upon the gods to give him the diadem if it was by right but the Divyanandhana, also says in another place that he killed his enemies to occupy the throne of the kingdom. Ashoka ascended the throne in 273 BC in but his coronation (Abhisheka) took place after four years i.e. in 269 B.C. According to C.J. Shah Ashoka was a politically a Quaker, and was a worthily person for the post of a religious teacher than of an emperor.

The Mahavamsa refers to Ashoka’s conversion to Buddhism. Nigrodha samanera, who was the posthumus son of his eldest half brother Sumana. The Mahavamsa describes one day, he saw his nephew Nyagrodha from window of his palace. He came and preached him the Appamada Vagga or the principle of action as the essential point of the Good faith.

According to the Buddha, appamad is the single term which sums up his whole teaching. The word implies acting energetically exerting oneself strenuously, striving mindfully and with self confidence.

The Samanta pasadika throws the light on the patronage offered to Nigrodha and the Buddhist sangha by the emperor Ashoka. He spent 5,00,000 gold pieces daily for the religion of the Buddha,
out of 5,00,000 he gave 1,00,000 gold to nigrodha to spend for religious purpose, he then gave 1,00,000 gold pieces for the offering of perfumes and flowers at the Buddha's shrines. He granted 1,00,000 gold pieces for the preaching and development of the religion of the Buddha, he gave 1,00,000 gold pieces for the comforts of Buddhist monks he gave another 1,00,000 gold pieces to spend for medicines for the sick monks, Besides, these gifts, he offered set of robes, three items daily to Nigrodha who gave them to other monks of the Buddhist Sangha.  

According to the Pali, Chronicles, Nigrodha the wise Novice, played an important role for Ashoka’s conversion to Buddhism.

Dr. Mookerji says, in Mahavamsa and the samantapadasika it is stated, that Ashoka was a worshipper of non Buddhist religion. “In the meantime, he met Nigrodha, the Buddhist Sramana, who preached to him the Appamada vagga, Ashoka visited the Buddhist sangha and invited several Buddhist monks to come to the palace, under the leadership of moggaliputa Tissa, Thus, he was at first a follower of individual teacher, Nigrodha, but afterwards he became the follower of the sangha.

The Divyavadana says that under the influence of the Buddhist monk Balapandita or Samudra, Ashoka became a follower of Buddhism.

According to the Ceylonese Chroniclers (Theravada tradition) he was first converted to Buddhism by Nigrodha and later came under the influence of Maggaliputa Tissa, the head of Buddhist sangha.
The Divyavadana mentions that, when Ashoka became an ordinary upasaka, he announced that he had taken refuges in the Buddha and the Dhamma. He even declared that, he was ready to give up everything children, home, wives, and wealth for the kingdom of righteousness.

The Mahavamsa\textsuperscript{37} states that Ashoka once arranged an assembly of the community of Bhikkhus with its full members in the Ashokadharma.

\textbf{Monuments}

Ashoka were built stupas in Kapis(Kafiristhan Nagar) Jalabad, and udyana in the North Western frontier province (east Afghanistan). The Chinese traveller\textsuperscript{38} also noticed his stupas near Tamralipti(Tamluk) and Karnasuvarna(modern Burdwan and murshidabad districts) in west Bengal, in pundravardhana (North Bengal) and in Samatata (Bangaladesha, thus all these edicts and stupas found at various places indicate the vastness of Ashokas empire. It is no doubt difficult to rule so vast an empire.

A Nepalese tradition\textsuperscript{39} records, that Ashoka, under the guidance of his spiritual teacher, upagupta, went on his pilgrimage to Nepal where a place, known as the city of patan which was situated about two miles, south east of modern Khatamndu was founded by him. There he built one stupa at the heart of city and at the cardinal points on its perimeter, he erected four stupas existing still to this day. It is
said that his daughter Carumati, who married a Nepalese Kshatriya named Devapala also paid her visit to Nepal with him, but she did not come back with her father. She and her husband, Devapala founded a city known as the city of Devapala or Devapatana near Pasupati and spent their days there. She is said to have constructed a monastery to the north of Deopalan in her old age and she is a female recluse used to live there till her last day.

The discovery of Ashoka's several inscribed pillars, stone sculptures and the descriptions of his visit to Nepal in legends signify that, the emperor Ashoka undertook his pilgrimage and made an extensive pious tour in Nepal. From the above context we conclude that possibly, he visited Nepal with Upagupta and founded the city of Patan and for the propagation of Buddhism, he built several stupas. Ashoka has been described in his legends as a zealous builder of stupas and viharas all over his empire. After knowing from Moggaliputa Tissa, that Dharma has 84,000 sections, he constructed as equal number of stupas and viharas in his kingdom and he built the Ashokarama in Pataliputra. There is a tradition that Ashoka seized the Buddha's relics by opening the original stupas in which they were enshrined and he redistributed them amongst his own 84,000 stupas which he erected all over the country from Kapir to Orissa.

The Chinese pilgrim Huen Tsang who visited India in the first quarter of the seventh century AD, states that in India and even
beyond its northern borders, he saw almost all the ancient stupas of Asokaraja. But Ashoka's edicts do not say anything about the erection of 84,000 Stupas by the emperor. It is said that Ashoka built the great stupa of Sanchi. His legends also record the creation of a life size figure of the Buddha with the help of Mahakala, the Naga King. Ashoka's great patronage to Buddhism can be clearly estimated from his vigorous religious activities. The erection of several thousands Buddhist monuments by him in his empire to enshrine the Buddha's relics, establishment of pillar and edicts by him in the Buddhist sacred places to mark his visit and the daily practice of worship offered by him at the stone of the Buddha's foot prints at Pataliputra as mentioned by Huen Tsang. throw favourable atmosphere for the progress of Buddhism in his kingdom.

From the Chinese records, we know that Ashoka played an important role in the introduction of Buddhism in Kashmir, Huen Tsang the Chinese traveller in his account writes that Ashoka sent Buddhist monks to Kashmir to popularize Buddhism there. He also constructed monasteries at that place.

Kalhana in his Rajatarangini, describes that Ashoka not only built a beautiful city named Srinagar but also covered Suskaletra and Vitisra with many stupas and one of his stupas was so high that its pinnacle could not be seen. Apart from the monks and nuns, the devotees, upasakas, who gave rich endowments to the monasteries and stupas and helped to maintain them. The monasteries were built
at Taxila, Nalanda, Valabhi and Nagarjunakonda and these later turned into renowned academic universities providing courses of study in the humanities and the medical science.

Many monastic cities were excavated by the Archaeological Department and mention may be made particularly of Mathura, Sravasti, Rajgir, Sarnath, Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati. The Magnificent cave temples and monstries at Ajanta, Karla, Nasik, pitalkhora, Bhaja and kondane should also be noted.
Foot Notes:


3. Ibid., p. 1.

4. Basham A. L. 1967 *The wonder that was India*, p. 258, New Delhi.

5. Ibid., pp. 258-264.


8. Ibid., p. 4.


10. Ibid., p. 2.


16. Ibid., p. pp 11-12.


24. Ibid., p 234.


29. M.V.V., 20 Dv. VI, pp. 21-22.
30. EHI, p. 164.
32. Dvy, pp. 372-373.
33. Dvy, p. 234.
34. Dvy, pp. 340, 387.
35. JNI, p. 133.
36. M.V., ch. XV.
37. Ibid., ch XV : AR pp. 41 & 45.
38. BIA, p. 61.
39. AHIS, p. 250, KS II 7;8.
40. SPI, p. 52.
41. ppms II, 931.
42. AR, p. 108, fn 3.
44. ACHI, pp. 31-32.
45. MVV, 270, AR, p. 198.
46. LBB, p. 95, AVD pp. XLIX ff.
47. A.C. Banerjee, 1957, Sarvastivada Literature, p. 79, Calcutta,