Chapter VIII. Mahayanaism.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Buddhism underwent radical changes, resulting in the emergence of Mahayanaism. As it was a development from the Theravada, the roots of Mahayana can be traced to the Pali canon. The changes were mainly due to the acceptance by the latter of the popular and traditional religious materials and its beliefs and practices developed from the controversies with the Sarvastivadins and Sautrantikas. The result was almost a new religion, nearly as different from Theravada as Christianity from Judaism.

The most important features of the Mahayanaism may be summarised in the following way:

1. A doctrine that the Buddha was not a historical person (rupakaya). There are in fact innumerable and supernatural Buddhas, with one Supreme Buddha, or the Adi Buddha at their head. The Adi Buddha has a glorious divine form (Sambhogakaya); he is the essence of

1. Prof. T. V. R. Nurt calls it the Mahayana Revolution, which affected all the aspects of Buddhism. Metaphysically it was a revolution from radical pluralism to radical absolutism (from dharma to advaya); ethically it was from the ideal of private egotistic salvation to the universal unconditional deliverance of all beings; it was not mere freedom from rebirth and pain (klesavaranana nivritti) but the attainment of perfect Buddhahood by the removal of ignorance (jnanavarana); the change was from the ideal of the arhat to that of Bodhisattva. In the new system universal love (karuna) and intellectual perfection (prajna or sunyata) became identical. Thus, the theoretical and practical reasons coincide. In religion, it was a revolution from what was almost a positivism to an absolute pantheism. The essential unity of all beings became an integral part of spiritual life. Central Philosophy of Buddhism, pp. 5-6.

2. E. Conze, Buddhist Thought in India, p. 203.

3. Ibid.
all beings (Dharmakaya); He assumes at will various forms to deliver beings from delusion and to propagate the Dharma (Nirmanakaya). Thus gradually, the Trikaya Theory was developed.  

(2) A belief in the Bodhisattvas and in the power of human beings to become Bodhisattvas.  

(3) A code of altruistic ethics which teaches that every one must do good in the interests of the whole world and make over to others any merit he may acquire by his virtues; the aim of religious life is to become a Bodhisattva but not an Arhat.  

(4) Habitual worship of images and elaboration of ritual.  

(5) The doctrine of sunyata as the logical explanation of the anatta doctrine, which became the essence of Mahayanism.  

(6) The theory that life is one, and all its manifestations are but relatively real and temporary manifestations of that unity; it follows from this that all parts of the whole are intimately related and any attempt at clear definitive lines of analysis is vain.

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4. T. V. R. Nurti, Central Philosophy of Buddhism, P. 5.  
6. Christmas Humphreys, Buddhism, P. 144.  
7. Story of Buddhism, with Special Reference to South India, P. 125.
Probable Home of Mahayanas

A careful study would reveal that most of the above concepts developed from the beliefs and practices of the Caityaka-Nahasanghika Schools of Andhra. In fact, the Caityaka were the first to conceive the Buddha doctically and in the inscriptions of Andhra, we can trace the different stages in the development of the theistic conception of Buddha.

1. Even as early as the 3rd century B.C., the Bhattiprolu inscriptions held the Buddha as almost Lokottara, whom they stated "Buddha Sarirani mahaniyani sarmane."

2. The apsidal temple inscription from Nagarjunakonda says that the Buddha was handsome to look at, his splendour is that of the newly risen sun and his sight is lovely as that of autumnal moon. Another inscription calls him the Bull among the wise (Mahagani vasabha) and Musk Elephant (Gandha Hasti).

3. Some of the inscriptions from Andhra begin with the word, "siddham". These might be the earliest in time and the word cannot contain an invocation to a deity. It only means "To the perfect one." There are many others which begin with "namo bhagavato", while a few others begin with "siddham namo bhagavato." The use of the word Bhagavato in the latter inscriptions clearly shows that

1. Second casket inscription, Select Inscriptions, I, P. 317
2. Ibid., XX, No. F.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. No. 1.
5. Luders' List Nos. 1235, 1240, 1271, 1286, etc.
Buddha was conceived as Bhagavan. One inscription actually contains the statement "Bhagavato Mahacotiyasa" which means "the Mahacotiya of Bhagavan". An inscription from velpur in Guntur district contains the words "Siddham name bhagavato" and records a gift for "loka sawa hito" which means for the happiness of the entire world.

4. The Indrapalanagara plates begin with the invocation, "Jitam Bhagavato" and says that the Buddha was endowed with all the thirty marks of Mahapurusa. One of such marks is the thousand spoked wheel on the soles of the feet. An inscription from Nagarjunakonda describes the Buddha as "cakra lakhana sukumara sujata caranena", and several Buddhapadas have been discovered at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.

5. The Buddha was held to be omniscient and we come across in inscriptions statements such as: savamuna, Sakalajmya inana samyak sambuddhasya, caturvaisaradya visarada.

6. The inscriptions of Andhra are unequivocal about the superhuman powers of the Buddha. They state that he conquers Mara's hosts of lust, anger, fear, desire, thirst, delusion and hatred (jita kama koda bhaya harisa tarisa moha, desa dapita marabala.

1. Ibid. P.
2. J. A. H. C., I, No. 2, P. 64.
3. Infra, Appendix III.
4. E.I., XX, Apsidal Temple Inscription, No. F.
5. In the Madras Court Museum there are several sculptures from Amaravati depicting the Buddhapadas. They are with H-s. 167, 168, 169, 178. In No. 91, the feet of the Buddha are worshipped by women. The feet in No. 108 contains the Astamangalas.
7. E.I., XX, No. 6, P. 17.
The Mahasanghikas held that Sakyamuni was self-born (upapaduka) as Bodhisattvas cannot have kama; but they had (alabhisathanikirddhi) the power of appearing in any form and anywhere. Further, the Buddha possessed the ten great powers. The second Apsidal Temple inscription from Nagarjunakonda describes the Buddha as Dasabalamahabala.

The Indrapalana plates contain certain Buddhist terms whose significance can be understood only through the Mahayana texts and thereby give us conclusive evidence about the prevalence of Mahayanaism in a developed state in Andhra by the middle of the 5th century A.D. They are: (i) Caturvaisaradya visarada (ii) Astadasavenuka Buddha Dharma (iii) Tri Yamas. (A) According to the Mahayanists, one has to pass through ten stages (dasa bhumi) before he becomes a Bodhisattva. In the eighth stage (asala) he acquires four confidences or Vaisaradayas. They are: (i) He knows that he has attained perfect Enlightenment and understands all principles and phenomena (dharma); (ii) He knows that he has destroyed all the asayas (intoxicants); (iii) He knows that the obstacles to the higher life which he has described really constitute serious hindrances; (iv) He knows...

1. E. L., XX, Apsidal Temple Inscription, No. F.
3. According to the Majjhimanikaya, the ten powers are:
   1. Knowledge of what is possible and what is impossible;
   2. Knowledge of the fruition of actions, past, present and future;
   3. Knowledge of the objectives of all paths;
   4. Knowledge of the many and varied elements of the world;
   5. Knowledge of the varied individual intentions;
   6. Knowledge of the faculties of all beings;
   7. Knowledge of the purity and impurity and growth of the trances (samadhi) concentration and attainments;
   8. Knowledge of the numberless former existences (Purvanivasan yettu);
   9. The divine eye that can see the beings passing away and being reborn according to their karma;
   10. Capacity to destroy the asayas.
that the way which he teaches for the cessation of pain and evil (duhkha) really leads to that goal. These ten stages and the Bodhisattva doctrine are fully stated in the Dasaabhuminasutra which is held to have belonged to the Mahasanghikas.\(^1\) (B) The avenika dharmas are special or extraordinary dharmas which distinguish the Buddha from the ordinary mortals. These are not found in the said canon and in the early Sanskrit texts. They are therefore to be assigned to the 3rd century A.D.\(^2\)

"This triple formula of the balas, vaisaradyas and avenika dharmas constitute the stock definition of a Buddha\(^3\) in later times.\(^4\)

(G) The Mahayana Texts frequently refer to the Triyana.\(^5\) They are (i) Srawakayana, (ii) Pratyeka Buddhaya and (iii) Buddhaya. The last mentioned is identical with Mahayana.

7. It was from one of the ten powers, i.e., from the eighth power that the Jataka stories emanated. That the Jataka tales were very popular among the Andhras is proved by the large number of sculptures representing the Jatakas that have been recovered from the Andhra Stupas.\(^6\) One of the Nagarjunakonda inscriptions\(^7\) refers to the story of Velama. It compares the generosity of Mahatalawari Chatisiri to that of Velanika.\(^8\)

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1. E. J. Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought, P. 209.
3. Ibid.
5. Vide Infra, Appendix IV.
7. Velama is a traditional figure noted for his generosity in the Buddhist literature.
8. A. M. Sastry, An Outline of Early Buddhism, P. 28, 1.3
Again, the Bodhisattva ideal of helping the entire mankind to nirvana was developed side by side with the Jataka stories. In inscriptions, the Buddha is described as having been inspired by the idea of the happiness and welfare of entire mankind (sāvalcācitamahita-saṃsāra-dharma1); as one having compassion for all sentient beings (sāpasattanākampasa2) the Indrapalanagara plates have for Buddhism the aim of removing the poverty and misery of all beings.3 One cannot fail to see in these statements the concept of Mahakarunika-Sthitapihitasa who postpones nirvana until the entire humanity is helped. At Nagarjunakonda, we find sculptures representing Bodhisattva in the Trayatrimsa heaven4, and Pratyeka Buddhas with superhuman powers5.

9. The theistic conception of the Buddha culminated in the theory of Dharma-dhatu. The Ayaka pillar inscriptions of Nagarjunakonda contain the statement dhatuvara-priyamahita.6 Commenting on this De La Valle Poussin observes that Dhatuvara may mean Dharma-dhatu and the latter was a kind of Buddhist Brahman for the followers of Mahayana7. This makes it clear that the Buddhists, responsible for the inscription were Mahasanghkikas, believing in the doctrine of Nirmanakaya, to which the Mahayanists added the Sambhoga and Dharma Kayas8.

1. E. I., XX, No. F., P. 22.
2. Ibid., No. C 3, P. 17.
4. Nagarjunakonda, 1932, P. 11, Pl. X., B.
5. Ibid., P. 12, Pl. V., 2.
8. Kalinaksha Dutt, "The Doctrine of Kaya, etc.

\[\text{References}\]

1. E. I., XX, No. F., P. 22.
2. Ibid., No. C 3, P. 17.
4. Nagarjunakonda, 1932, P. 11, Pl. X., B.
5. Ibid., P. 12, Pl. V., 2.
8. Kalinaksha Dutt, "The Doctrine of Kaya, etc."

\[\text{Notes}\]

1. sāvalcācitamahita-saṃsāra-dharma
2. sāpasattanākampasa
3. Dhatuvara-priyamahita
4. Trayatrimsa heaven
5. Pratyeka Buddhas with superhuman powers
6. Dharma-dhatu
7. Mahasanghkikas
8. Nirmanakaya
10. At Nagarjunakonda, a pious donor called the Buddha as the God of my religion (sva matalya dovasya) while another called him "the leader of the law of the Three worlds and as one honoured by the Lord of Gods". (toloka dhamma dhurovahasa and ceveraja sakatasas).

11. The natural corollary of such a theistic conception was the development of image-worship. In the early sculptures of Andhra, the Buddha was represented by one of the following: Buddha, Dhooc, Dharmanakra, Thrones, Stupas and Buddha-pedas and etc. Gradually these symbols came to be replaced by the image of the Buddha. Standing Buddhas in the preaching post, Dharmanakra-pravartana, and Harsadharsana were the most popular poses of the Buddha that were very popular with the Andhra sculptors. Huge statues of standing Buddha came to be erected at the cardinal places of the Vihara or of the Caitya. At Nagarjunakonda were discovered a few images of the Buddha on lotuses, which is highly significant. The Bhatsamhrita says: Pedmapavistah pitava jagato bhavati Buddha. That means that like the Father of the Universe, creator Brahma, the Buddha is to be seated on lotus. This Pratibhaksa laksana makes it clear that the Buddha was actually conceived as the "essence of all Being" (Dharmanathu) and a cosmic function has been assigned to Him; He was the Adi Buddha, sending the
Bodhisattvas into the world. The Buddha was made the Supreme Lord of the Universe.

12. The Gathasaptasati makes reference to the installation of the images of the Buddha and the development of the sentiment of Bhakti and the idea of self-surrender among the Buddhists. From the excavations of Nagarjunakonda we learn that the images of the Buddha were not merely installed but were actually consecrated. At Amaravati are discovered a few bronze images of the Buddha, assignable to the 5th or the 6th century A.D. T. N. Ramachandran thinks that they were intended for the private worship of the most important abbot of the Vihara of the place, a necessity which might have arisen owing to a variety of reasons such as the development of Bhakti movement among the Buddhists. The Indrapalanagara plates record a gift to a Vihara for dipa, dhupa, gandha, puspa, etc. and it clearly shows that in the Vihara a regular worship of the Buddha was conducted.

On the strength of such an overwhelming evidence, it may be concluded that Mahayanaism was a natural development from the Caityaka-Mahasanghika ideas and practices obtained in the Ksara valley. It is generally believed that the Fourth Buddhist Council that met in the reign of the Kushan emperor Kanishka, gave shape to the Mahayana doctrines and propagated them. But, Thomas remarks that there is no

1. Gathasaptasati, IV, 8.
reason for the supposition that the Mahayanists had anything to do with the Fourth Council. The story of the Council and the Council itself, if ever it existed belonged to the Sarvastivadins and the Mahayana must have already been growing by that time and as the Mahayana existed at the time of the composition of the Sarvastivadin texts, we find the Mahayana doctrine in them. On the other hand, it is too well-known that Acarya Nagarjuna of the 2nd century A. D. was responsible for the systematisation of the Mahayana doctrines and it was from his time that the term Mahayana became popular. Most of the traditions are unanimous in associating Nagarjuna with Sriparvata and Dhanyakataka. It is for this reason that Dhanyakataka-Nagarjunakonda region became as sacred to the Mahayanas all over the world as Buddha Gaya to the Theravadins.

Views of Sahu & Sukumara Dutt: But Messrs. N. K. Sahu and Sukumara Dutt hold views different from the above. On the basis of a statement found in the History of Lama Taranatha of Tibet, Sahu argues that Orissa was the birthplace of Mahayanaism. Taranatha wrote that Nanduera visited king Chandragupta of Odissa and delivered to him a Sacred Book, which the learned scholar takes to be Prajnaparamita. He then rushes to the conclusion that Odissa which is no other

4. Vide Infra P. 145.
5. N. K. Sahu, Buddhism in Orissa.
6. It was in the Prajnaparamita that the most important aspect of Mahayanaism namely the concept of Sunyata was developed. There are several redactions of the Paramita, such as Satasahasrika, Pancavimsatisahasrika and Asatasahasrika. The last mentioned is the most important and was produced in the 1st century B. C.
than Crissa was the birthplace of Prajnaparamita and hence of Mahayanism. He further argues that the Andhra Buddhists were staunch Mahasanghikas and were strict in matters of doctrine. They might have contributed to the Buddhistological studies and speculations. But such conservatives cannot be given credit for so radical doctrines as sunyata and advaya advaidhikara, advocated by the Prajnaparamita. On the other hand, Sukumara Jutt holds the view that there is neither inscriptive nor sculptural evidence to the existence of Mahayanism at Nagarjunakonda, and Amaravati became a seat of Mahayana studies only in the 7th century A.D.

The theory of Sahu rests on very weak foundations:

1. The Tibetan historian on whom Sahu relies states that Manjusri visited the king of Odissa and handed over to him a Book, but does not mention the name or the nature of the Book. It is therefore open to question whether it was Prajnaparamita. In fact, there is difference of opinion between the Sautrantikas and the Tantrikas regarding the nature of that Book. The former think that the Book was Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita and the latter hold that it was Tattva Sangraha. Therefore, Sahu's theory is based upon the questionable identification of the Book, presented to the king of Odissa with Prajnaparamita.

Further, Taranatha says that Manjusri visited Crissa and handed over the Book to her king and left the place. From this account it

is clear that Orissa is not the birthplace of the Book or the Paramita, but it was only a place to which it migrated.

On the other hand, there is a strong Tibetan tradition that the Purvasailla and Aparasaila Schools had a Paramita in Sanskrit. That the Andhra Buddhists were conversant with the system of six Paramitas (sat Paramitas) has been proved by the Indrapalanaagara plates of the 8th century A. D., which describe the Buddha as Sadabhihja, i.e., one who achieved the six perfections.

2. The Gandavyuha of about the 3rd century A. D. informs that Manjusri lived in a monastery at Dhanyakataka and converted a large number of Nagas and others of that place into Buddhism. It further mentions that a certain Sudhana visited a number of places which were seats of Bodhisattva practices. Most of them are in South India and the most important of them was Dhanyakataka, where Sudhana met Manjusri in order to learn from him Samantabhadra Bodhisattvacharya. From these accounts the following points become clear:

1. Manjusri lived for a long time in Andhra and Dhanyakataka was the centre of his activities;

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1. Nalinaksha Dutt, Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, P. 40.
2. The Amarakosa explains the term as: satsu dana silla ksanti virya dhyana prajnasu abhijna adyam jnanam asya iti (Bombay ed., 1944).
3. E. J. Thomas, History of Buddhist Thought, P. 205.
5. Ibid.
2) Dhanyakataka and other places in Andhra, probably under the influence of Manjusri, became seats of Bodhisattva practices.

3) It is not improbable that Manjusri took the Paramitas to Cdivisa king from Andhradesa itself.

3. Sahu says that the Mahasanghikas of Andhra were rigidly doctrinal and were averse to change. This is against all known facts of history. It is noted above that the Cittiyakas or the Andhakas were the first to rebel against rigid orthodoxy. They introduced changes from time to time, making allowances to popular sentiments, with a view to make Buddhism more attractive and popular. Sukumara Dutt admits that the Andhra Buddhists were in favour of compromise between the old and the new modes of worship. Even Sahu acknowledges the rich Andhaka contributions to the theistic concept of the Buddha and to the Buddhistological speculations. The argument that the Andhakas cannot be given credit for the doctrines of Sunyata and Advaya loses force against the Gandavyuha's account of Andhradesa, as a land of Bodhisattva worship. Transfer of merit and postponement of one's own nirvana for the sake of humanity are the central principles of the theory of Bodhisattva.

1. Vide Supra, PP. 114-115.
2. Sukumara Dutt, op. cit., P. 137.
3. Among the early Pallavas (of the 4th century A.D.) there was a prince by name Budhyankura, son of Buddhavarman (British Museum plates of Carudviji, E.I., VIII, PP. 143-146.

According to the Mahayanists, Budhyankura is another name of Sumedha who was born as Gandama Buddha. The name of the Pallava prince shows the popularity of the Bodhisattva doctrine in Andhra by about the 4th century. De La Vallee Poussin, "Bodhisattva", E.I.E., II, PP. 739-53.
Such noble self-abnegation would be possible only: (i) when the radial pluralism of the Theravada is discarded and unity underlying the discrete ultimate entities has been realised, i.e., when it is realised that life is one and its manifestations are but relatively real and temporary (advaya vada); and (ii) when the ideal of private egocentric salvation is given up in preference to that of universal unconditional deliverance of all beings. "Universal love (Karuna) and intellectual perfection (prajña or sunyāta) are identical. The theoretical and practical reasons coincide."¹ The inscriptions of Andhra advocate only such a universal love and the removal of the poverty and misery of all the worlds, as noted in the last chapter.² These attitudes and ideals cannot be attributed to anything else than to the doctrines of sunyāta and advaya.

4. A passage in the Paramitas says that the Mahayana teaching will originate in the South, pass to the eastern country and prosper in the north.³ This makes it quite probable that Mahayanasim was developed in the Mahasanghika viharas of the Kṛṣṇa valley, migrated to Orissa and prospered in the North Indian centres like Nalanda.

5. Edward Conze, on the basis of the researches of E. Lamotte (Sur la formation du Mahayana in Asiatic, 1954, p. 336, No. 49) and the Tibetan Grubthāṅ, concludes that the two famous monasteries of the

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¹ T. V. R. Murti, op. cit., P. G.
³ Nalinaksha Dutt, Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, P. 43
Mahasanghikas, the Purvasailas and Aparasailas on the Kena river had a Prajñāparamita in Prakrit; they spoke of Dharmadhatu in the same sense as the Prajñāparamita, and their Buddhology prepared that of the Prajñāparamita; the doctrines that the Kathavatthu attributes to the Andhakas are so much akin to the Mahayana doctrines that the latter may well have developed from them.

Bhiksu Sangharakshita also comes to the same conclusion. He says, "Geographically, the Astasahasrika probably came from a spot between the Godavari and Kena near Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the Andhra country. It deals with the doctrine of emptiness."

Thus the arguments of Sahu in favour of Orissa as against Andhra as the birthplace of Mahayanaism are not valid.

Same is the case with the view of Sukumara Dutt. He says that there is no trace of Mahayanaism in the sculptures and inscriptions of Nagarjunakonda and "it was only four centuries later, near the end of the third decade of the 7th century (on Yuan Chwang's evidence) Amaravati became a centre of Mahayanist studies." A critical examination would reveal that this view is not correct.

1. Mahayanaism did not spring into existence overnight. It was a development, doctrine by doctrine, from the earlier Canon.

References:
4. E. Conze, Buddhist Thought in India, P. 201.
it is "not a single vehicle but rather a train comprising many carriages of different classes." The inscriptional and sculptural evidence, that has been detailed in the above pages, clearly points to the steady development of Buddhist ideas and practices, making compromises and conciliations, with a realistic eye on the religious needs and sentiments of the people. The fundamental principles of Mahayanaism—Sunyata and advaya, the theory of Bodhisattva, the concept of Adi Buddha and image worship—all are found at Nagarjunakonda. The Manjusrimulakalpa, a Mahayana Text, describes Dhanyakataka and Sriparpvata as great centres of Buddhist practices.

2. Sunkumara Dutt seems to be under the impression that Sriparpvata became a centre of Buddhism in the time of Ikavak Virapurisattva but not earlier and therefore the association between Sriparpvata and Nagarjuna cannot be accepted. But the following reasons make this view untenable: (i) The Tibetan and Chinese accounts on which Messrs Sahu and Sunkumara Dutt base their theories respectively inform us that Nagarjuna was responsible for the stone railing of the Amaravati stupa and for the Mahavasitya of Sriparpvata. It is not proper to accept the foreign evidence in one case and to doubt its veracity in another. (ii) In the recent excavations at Nagarjunakonda, an inscription of Sri Vijaya Satarkarni was discovered. Sri Vijaya was the successor of Sri Yajna, who is believed to be the patron of Nagarjuna. The inscription therefore lends support to the tradition which associates Nagarjuna with Sriparpvata. Nalinaksha Dutt rightly observes that

"It appears that the South may claim credit for being not only the birthplace of Mahayana itself but also of the noted figures (Nagarjuna and Aryadeva) who were instrumental in making Mahayana what it was in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.C."

3. Sukumara Dutt admits that Yuan Chwang studied the Mahayana Texts at Dhanyakataka. The pilgrim studied for considerable time at Nalanda and resorted to Dhanyakataka as if to complete his studies. To attract the attention of a foreign scholar of the stature of Yuan Chwang, Dhanyakataka should have been a place of considerable repute. Further, Yuan Chwang remarked that by the time of his visit, Dhanyakataka was on the decline.

The views of Sukumara Dutt are therefore cannot be accepted. Mahayana originated in Andhra through the principles and practices of the Caityaka-Mahasanghika Schools and became popular owing to the efforts of Asaryas Nagarjuna and Aryadeva.

1. Nalinaksha Dutt, Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, P. 43.
2. 2500 years of Buddhism, P. 271.
Acarya Nagarjuna occupies a unique place in the evolution of Buddhist thought and practices. One writer describes him as "the Aristotle of Buddhist lore, the Christ of Madhyamika and the St. Paul of Mahayana, a magical name baffling the most brainy in their intellectual power and moral force". Thomas Watters calls him the wonder and mystery of later Buddhism. Indeed, every thing about Nagarjuna remains a mystery -- his identity, date and place of birth -- remaining subjects of keen controversies.

Some scholars believe that Acarya Nagarjuna was a Brahmin, born somewhere in Vidarbha and quote Xuan Chwang in their support. But the Lankavataramsutra states that he was a native of Vedali in Daksinapatha. Vedali is taken to be a village in Andhra and among the Brahmins of Andhra there are still some with the family name Vedula. It is a known fact that most of the family names in Andhra are place names. According to the tradition recorded in the Blue Annals, Nagarjuna was born at a place east of Sriparvata and west of Sri Sthana. The latter word was a shortened form of Sri Dhanyakataka, which is also called in literature as more Sri Dhanya.

The general consensus of opinion among scholars is that the Acarya lived during the Satavahana period. But different scholars give him different dates and make him the contemporary of Hala, the...
Kavivatsala, Gautamiputra the Ekabrahmana and Gautaiputra Yajnasri. Some historians believe in the contemporaneity of Kanishka and Nagarjuna, but many others doubt it. In the hierarchy of Buddhist patriarchs, Nagarjuna is the fifteenth whereas Asvaghosa, the contemporary of Kanishka is the thirteenth. In the Fourth Buddhist Council, held in the time of Kanishka, Mahayana Buddhism was not represented. It was Nagarjuna who systematised and popularised Mahayanaism. These points make it clear that Nagarjuna flourished two or three generations after Kanishka and Asvaghosa. Yuan Chwang calls the patron of Nagarjuna as Yin Cheng and gives the impression that he ruled over a vast empire that included even Central India. This account answers well the case of Yajnasri.

Nagarjuna is said to have recovered the Mahayana texts, Avatamsaka, Prajnaparamita and Saddharmapundarika from Nagaloka. It may be recalled that the Mouth of the Krsna was called Nagaloka in the native as well as foreign literature and the Salla Schools of the Krsna Valley were credited with the Prajnaparamita.

Nagarjuna made Sriparvata the centre of his religious and philosophical activities. His patron, Satavahana caused a Mahacalita and

3. B.S. Upadhyaya in 2600 years of Buddhism, P. 222.
9. Story of Buddhism, P. 118.
10. See Chapter I, Section on Land and People.
11. See Section on the Probable Home of Mahayana.
Mahavihara built for his. It is noted above that Sriparvata became a centre of Buddhism in the time of the later Satavahanas. Taranaatha has recorded the tradition that Nagarjuna built the stone railing around the Mahacaitya of Dhanyakataka.

Nagarjuna is one of the greatest dialecticians, the world has ever seen. Still he had a realistic eye to understand the condition and requirements of Buddhism in his time. He appears to have examined the existing literature and systematised the Buddhist philosophy and gave it a set of religious practices which breathed a new life into Buddhism, and enabled it to withstand for some time the shocks of other religions.

More than twenty works are attributed to Nagarjuna, of which the most important are: Prajnaparamitasastratika, Madhyamikakarika, Dasabhumivibhasasutra, and Suhrllekha. The last one which means "Letter to a friend" was addressed to his patron and I'tsing, the Chinese traveller said that the time of his visit (A.D. = 700), he saw children committing it to memory and adults making a life-long study of it.

According to the Kathasaritsagara, Nagarjuna was murdered by the crown prince, probably of the Satavahana dynasty. This account has

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1. K. Rama Rao, op. cit.
2. Vide Supra, P. 35.
4. Nagarjuna mentions 107 sutras or sastras in his Prajnaparamita Sastra and 84 in his Dasabhumivibhasasutra. This shows not only his scholarship but also the fact that the Mahayana literature was in existence during his time.
6. C.V. Krishna Rao, op. cit.
been repeated by Xuan Chwang. It is not improbable that Nagarjuna lost his life in a Brahmanical upsurge that convulsed the Satavahana empire in its last stages.

Aryadeva

Nagarjuna was succeeded in the patriarchate by Aryadeva, who is known by different names as Deva, Kanadeva and Nilastra. Aryadeva too was a South Indian and more probably an Andhra. Xuan Chwang gives an interesting account of Aryadeva’s interview with Nagarjuna. It is not unlikely that Nagarjuna trained Aryadeva as his successor.

Aryadeva is recognised as one of the foremost thinkers of the Madhyamika School. The authorship of a large number of philosophical works such as Catusoataka, Satasrastra and Aksharasatashtra is attributed to him. Dharmatreta, another great writer is supposed to be Aryadeva’s disciple and Vasubandhu is said to have composed commentary on Aryadeva’s Satasrastra, along with his teacher Nagarjuna, Aryadeva is held in very high esteem in China and Japan.

There is a strong tradition that Aryadeva toured the country, holding polemical discussions with the professors of Mahayana and

1. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, op. cit.
3. S. Seal, I, A, IX, pp. 149-149.
8. 2500 years of Buddhism, pp. 409, 410, 425.
10. Ibid.
those of other religions. Finally he was murdered by a Brahmin youth whose teacher had been vanquished in debate by him.  

Buddhism in Practice.

Lay Buddhists.

The age of Nagarjuna-Aryadeva was the hay-day in the history of Andhra Buddhism. It is not possible at present to ascertain the actual size of the Buddhist section in the population, but it was undoubtedly considerable. Numerous Buddhist ksetras all over Andhra flourished, and merchants, artisans and ladies were the chief patrons of the Buddhist institutions. Majority of the Buddhist tirthas were centred in the coastal Andhra, more particularly in the Krishna valley, probably because the mercantile community was strong and prosperous in that region, which was a big centre for foreign trade. Curiously we do not come across gifts made by Brahmins to the Buddhist church and rarely we find the names of castes in the inscriptions. The cosmopolitan spirit encouraged by Buddhism is best revealed by the record of Vadhika, a cobbler at Maravati.

Kumarilabhattacharya might be right when he said in his lantravartika that Buddhism appealed to those who were outside the pale of the three Vedas who mostly comprised the fourth or the low caste.

1. Winternitz, History of Indian Literature, II, I, 357.
2. Vide Supra Chapter VI.
3. One such instance is that of Salihumaya where on a postery place is found an inscription Bahamanasa which means Brahmanasaya and is believed to be a gift made by a Brahmin. R. Subrahmanya, Salihumaya, P. 44, No. 3 c.
4. Vide supra, Chapter VI.
5. P. V. Kane, History of Ucharmastra, V, 11, P. 996.
Most of the gifts recorded at the Buddhist Tirthas were made by Upasakas and Upasikas, the lay followers of Buddhism. They probably adopted the Astamangara and led a pious life. They were expected to follow the six rites: (1) to utter the Three Sarnas, (2) to listen to religious discourses, (3) to observe the eight Silas, (4) to offer robes to monks, especially at the end of the rainy season, (5) to visit holy places and (6) to worship the stupa.

An Amaravati inscription describes an Upasika by name Paha as one who has crossed the eight conditions of worldly life. Another inscription mentions "anugamika dana", a gift whose merit would follow the donor, probably to the other world or to the next life. Such a rigid individualism was given up as Mahayana developed. The Mahayanasists cultivated a noble selfless social outlook and shared a readiness to share the merit of their gifts and other pious deeds with their relations or with the rest of mankind. Upasika Bodhisiri made gifts to several monastic establishments, belonging to different sects. It seems reasonable to assume that the sectarianism which developed in the Buddhist Church did not affect the lay followers, but was confined to the Sramanas or monks.

Vihara

There were many monastic establishments of the Buddhists in

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3. The Eight Silas are: (1) non-killing (2) non-stealing (3) refraining from sexual enjoyment (4) truthfulness (5) refraining from intoxicants (6) one meal a day (7) avoiding places of uncleanness (8) sleeping on low beds. Ibid.
5. These conditions are: 1. gain; 2. loss; 3. respect; 4. contempt; 5. good luck; 6. bad luck; 7. praise; 8. blame.
7. Burgess, op. cit.
8. Vide Supra Ch. VI.
Andhra. They were originally called asramas and were probably intended as vassavas, residences during the rainy season. In one of the Bhattiprolu inscriptions we find the word asrama, and the Tirras at Salihundam, as known from an inscribed pottery piece, was called Kattaharama. Gradually the word asrama was given up in preference to the word Vihara. The names of some of the Viharas in Andhra are known to us. At Nagarjunakonda were the Kulahavihara and Sihalavihara and the one at Indrapalanagara was called Mahadevivihara. The newly discovered Bhusrutiya establishment at Kesara-alli contained Malavesivihara.

The Viharas were no doubt built where there was a perennial source of water, but the general belief that they were removed from crowded busy cities is not correct. The great Buddhist centres of Amaravati, Bhattiprolu, Salihundam, Sripurva and Nandapur were either imperial cities, or centres of industry or situated near big cities. The inscriptive statement 'imam vihara savajatani yuts'...

1. N. Sarkar, Studies in the early Buddhist Architecture of India, P. 2. There are panda Asramas in Andhra which are generally believed to have been Buddhist monasteries originally. Amaravati, it may be surmised, as the corrupt form of Arasvati. The village Durus may be the corrupt form of Bhuddharasa and Sanghamara was probably corrupted into Sankaran.
2. Sukumara Dutt, E, E, H, P. 102.
3. Luders' List No. 1336.
6. E. I., XX, P. 22.
7. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
about the Bahusrutiya monastery at Nagarjunakonda may be applied to all the others. It means the Vihara was equipped with all the requirements of a monastery. The Viharas were maintained by the generous gifts made by pious pilgrims and lay followers. It is strange that we rarely find grants of land or other permanent endowments to the Viharas. Two of such are recorded by the Indrapalamagarā and Kattucaruvu grants. The former was intended for the equipment of daily worship, for furniture and food requirements of the monks for white washing and repairs.

"Each monastic establishment", in the words of Ramachandran, "was complete in itself and contained as the unit a Vihara for the monks to dwell, an apsidal chaitya or two for prayers and a circular stupa for worship and circumambulation. On plan, the Vihara was a rectangular courtyard enclosed by a brick wall. In the centre was a stone-paved hall with a roof supported by stone pillars. All round the enclosure abutting the outer walls was a row of cells for the monks often with a verandah in front. Some of the cells were used as store rooms, a few as shrines and there was usually one large room which served as a refectory." However, at Nagarjunakonda were observed differences between one monastic site and the other and they were traced to the ideological differences between the sects that occupied them. The

1. Appendix XIII.
2. C. F. L. A. F. O. M., Ch. XIX.
3. Nagarjunakonda, 1938, P.G.
4. S. Basu, Studies in Early Buddhist architecture of India, P. 73.
Mahavihara which belonged to the Aparamahavanasingariyas had only one Caityagrha, added very late. Some Viharas had two Caityagrhas. In some cases both those grhas were intended for Caityas; in a few Viharas in one of the two Caityagrhas, images of the Buddha were installed. In some Viharas are found votive stupas and in others they were absent. In some Viharas, the Caityagrha is given more prominence than the Stupa. Many stupas are provided with Ayaka Vedikas and others are not.

Despite the ideological differences, it is significant that many sects lived in the same locality as at Sriparvata. We have seen above that different branches of the Theravadin and of the Mahasanghikas had their monasteries in the Nagarjunakonda valley. Sectarian differences, which moulded the set up of a Vihara might have prevented different sects to live in the same Vihara. But the relations between one sect and the other appear to be very peaceful and friendly. We find in inscriptions the term "caturdisam aryasangham," which means that the members of arya Sangha from the four quarters, and it may imply that the Buddhists of all sects had a feeling of oneness as followers of Gautama Buddha. Further, there

1. Ibid. P. 81.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Nagarjunakonda 1939, Pl. II B.
6. Ibid. P. 82
7. Ibid.
8. Kattupurwum grant, C.P.I.A.G.H., Ch. XIX.
   Ballabhika Dutt, Early Monastic Buddhism, I, P. 317.
is scope to suppose that if it became necessary, monks of different
sects lived in the same Vihara, at least temporarily. The Katru-
ceruvu grant specifically mentions that it was intended for the monks
of all the four quarters. Further, it is reasonable to assume that
peaceful doctrinal and disciplinary discussions and exchange of ideas
took place between the sects, one influencing the other. To such
influence can be attributed the gradual changes we see in the monastic
establishments of the Aparasailas and the Dahsurutiyas in the Nagarjuna-
konda valley.

Life in the Vihara: The inscriptions do not furnish us with a
detailed picture of the life in the Viharas. However, it may be
assumed that it conformed to the texts. Each Vihara appears to have
been headed by an Acarya or Elder Monk, who was a master of the canon
and an expert in teaching. In addition, we come across certain digni-
taries like Navakarmika, Vinadhara and Dharmakathika. The Kava-
karmika was the superintendent of repairs of new constrictions con-
ected with the Vihara. From the Kattuceruvu grant we learn that
he was in charge also of the gifts made to the Vihara. The Vinadhara
was the master of the Vinaya Texts and discussed its laws. The
Dharmakathika was the professional instructor of Dharma.

2. Vide supra, PP. 121-122.
3. R.F. Chanda, Some unpublished Amaravati Inscriptions, E.A., AV,
   No. 40.
4. Ibid., Nos. 5, 31, 40.
6. Sukumara Dutt, Early Buddhist Monachism, PP. 155-156.
7. Kattuceruvu grant, op. cit.
9. Ibid.
Especially two of the grants to the Buddhist Church the 
Nagarjunakonda inscription of Vijaya Satakarni and the Indrapalan-
agara plates were recorded on Vaisakha Purnima or the Buddha 
Purnima.\textsuperscript{1} This leads to the supposition that at least from the 
beginning of the 3rd century A.D., the Buddhists in Andhra 
observed the Buddha Purnima. As Mahayanism developed, it seems 
worship in the Vihara became regular and the Indrapalanagara 
grant, as observed above, made provision for Dhupa, Biya, Gandha 
and Puspa, which were evidently necessary for worship. From the 
Ratnavali\textsuperscript{2} of Nagarjuna we learn that there were functions like 
Devadarna, celebrated in the Vihara. In course of these cele-
brations, the images of the Buddha were taken in procession in 
the streets of the town. The bronze images of the Buddha found 
at Amaravati were probably intended for such celebrations.

Learning and Scholarship

It is not unreasonable to suppose that such a stronghold 
of Buddhism like Andhra contributed much to its doctrine and 
discipline, but it is unfortunate that no positive evidence is

\textsuperscript{1} E.I., XXXVI, P. 273 and App. III, line 13.

\textsuperscript{2} Dharmadhikarayecanyo purvaraja pravartitah 
Dovadronyadayastapi pravartyantam yathasthitah, IV, 19.

This sicks is translated as "Let all other religious duties such 
as processions, etc., established by former kings continue as 
they are". Giuseppe Tucci, The Ratnavali of Nagarjuna", 
available to assess the quality or the quantity of their service.
The Buddhapada inscription from Nagarjunakonda tells us that the
monks or nuns were highly learned. They were experts in deter-
miming the implications of the nine-fold teachings of the Buddha
and they knew by heart the traditions of the four classes of the
Buddhist monks. The Vinaya and Abhidhamma pitakas and the Digha
Majjhima Nikayas were very popular with the Andhra Buddhists.
Nalinaksha Dutt remarks "Until the discovery of the inscriptions
at Nagarjunakonda, we had not come across any epigraphic record
especially naming the Nikayas." Yuan Chwang gives testimony
to the mastery of the Amaravati Acaryas over the Abhidhamma.
It is already noted that the Prajneparamita literature developed
among the Sailla Schools in Andhra. The services of Acarya Nagar-
Juna and of Aryadeva to the Buddhist philosophy and religion
are already noted.

Besides the religious and philosophical studies, the Acaryas
were interested in branches of secular learning, such as logic,

polity and grammar. The Ratnavali, whose authorship is attributed to Acarya Nagarjuna deals with many aspects of administration. He prescribes the qualifications of a minister\(^1\); urges the king to be kind and sympathetic to the prisoners\(^2\); look after the needs of the poor, sick and infirm\(^3\); urges the king to abolish capital punishment\(^4\). In short, Nagarjuna conceives a state just on the lines of a welfare state.

In an inscription from Nagarjunakonda\(^5\) that can be dated round about A.D. 450, a Dharma Kathika is described: He is well-behaved, of strong flawless clean and spotless conduct and character, had toiled hard in the subjects of logic, polity and grammar, his creed is one which took in traditional doctrine, scripture, initiation, treatise or explanation and every thing enjoined to be acted in a customary manner, who possessed such very desirable qualities as skill in speech or eloquence, in devotion, in oral tradition and a virtuous conduct, who was a highly skilled exponent or speaker of Dharma, who was best among those propounders well-versed in "fixing or settling a horoscope" and when the yellow flag or order furnished amply." Such was the character and scholarship of the Buddhist Acaryas in general.

\(^1\) Ratnavali, IV, 23.
\(^2\) Ibid, 25.
\(^3\) Ibid, 20.
\(^4\) Ibid, 37.
\(^5\) Nagarjunakonda, 1939, P. 28.