CHAPTER I
Importance and Sources

(A) Importance:
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(A) Sources:
(A) IMPORTANCE:

(I) UTTAR PRADESH IS THE CRADLE OF BUDDHISM:

Uttar pradesh is the state where Buddhism first struck roots. It is still the premier centre for the preservation of its sanctity and relics. From his birth at Lumbini situated at a short distance from Badhni in Siddharth Nagar district to his princely life in Kapilvastu, his turning the ‘first wheel of law’ (Dhamma Chakka Pavattanay) at Sarnath and finally his Mahaparinirvana (the great decease) at Kusinagar, Siddhartha Gautam spent the major part of his life in the state.

The present state of Uttar Pradesh includes the ancient kingdom of Kosala, Kashi, Vatsa, Panchala, Surasena and also the republican territories of Sakyas, Koliyas, Mallas and Bhaggas. It is recorded that three out of the four places of pilgrimage were recommended by the Buddha himself to his disciples just before his decease at Kusinagar, Viz; Lumbini, Sarnath and Kusinagar as sacred places, all in the Uttar Pradesh.1

A pilgrimage by Buddhists is known as Dhammayatra, and Buddhist literature informs us that after the Mahaparinirvana of Buddha his ashes were collected in eight urns and distributed among Ajatsatru, the King of Magadh, Sakyas of Kapilvastu, Licchavis of Vaisali, Allakappas of Buliyas, Koliyas of Ramagrama a Brahmana of Velthadipa, Mallas of Kusinara and Mallas of Pava over which stupas were built. Two other stupas were erected over the ashes by the Moriyas of Pippalivana and the other over the iron pot in which the bone relics were kept for distribution by Dona Brahmana.

Thus all these places where the sacred ashes of Buddha were enshrined or were in any way associated with his disciples becomes places of dhammayatra or sacred sites for pilgrimage. For centuries, Buddhists and non-Buddhists from all over India and abroad from the west to the far east have been coming to these places to undertake the ‘Yatra’ Popularised by Mauryan emperor Ashoka in 3rd century BC. Pilgrims from China, Japan, Korea, Ceylon, Mongolia, Tibet, Burma, Thailand and Indonesia visited the sacred spots, Renowed pilgrims like Hieun Tsang, Fa-Hian, Sung yun, Wou Kung left their travel accounts

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1 The Sunday Times Of India, sept.17, Page 2, 1995.
during the fifth, sixth and the seventh century A.D. which shed a lot of light on the dark period.

The Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hian travelled throughout India between the years 300 to 413 A.D. Another pilgrim Sung-yun travelled up to the Kabul valley in 502 A.D. Of the three Chinese pilgrims, Hieun Tsang spent 15 years in India travelling through vast forest and settlements, collecting Buddhist manuscripts. Maj. General Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893) posted for a long time in India explored the Buddhist monuments of ancient India along with Lt. Maisey and wrote accounts of them.

Other prominent archaeologists included Duncan, col. C. Mackenzie, Maj. Kittoe, Sir John Marshall, M.H. Hargreaves, Dr. Fuhrer, Dayaram Sahni, with the aid of the translated work of the great travellers by devoted persons like M. Stanilas Julien and Hames Legge, who took years to learn Chinese and Sanskrit. The excavations were done by ancient travellers, translators and archaeologists and to them goes the credit for bringing the lost sites and movements to light and enabling the people to have a glimpse of the ancient Buddhist glory.

Some of the important sites in Uttar Pradesh besides the four mentioned are Sravasti, Rama Grama, Devadah, Kosambi, Sankissa, Anuradwaha Pava. At some places the monasteries and stupas are in a state of neglect or left unexcavated due to shortage of funds or mainly because they have been occupied by villagers, under cultivation or temples of god and goddesses built over them. Nevertheless pilgrims still visit them.

The construction of Buddha Marg with generous help provided by the Japanese government connecting the important sites of Kapilvastu, Sravasti, Kusinagar and Lumbini, now enables pilgrims from far and wide to reach the sites easily. A part of the road is still under construction and when completed will form the circuit in U.P.

Texts record the cream of Buddha’s teachings in his discourses delivered at Sarnath (Varanasi) and his last discourses delivered at Kusinagar and Deoria in Uttar Pradesh. His teachings took the lead in opposing orthodox Brahmins and presenting before the people of all castes and strata without dist::

ction. His thoughts were based on revolutionary thoughts, egalitarianism, peace and love.
Buddhism is unique among the major religions. It makes no claim to divine revelations. It is the teaching of a human being who, by his own efforts awoke to the ‘law of life’ within himself and which he saw to be eternally inherent in the universe and as an all-pervading phenomenon. After self-attainment Buddha stated that he had merely awakened to a low existence from the infinite past and that other Buddhas had been enlightened by the same truth before him.

His teachings for deliverance from sufferings in the fertile lands of U.P. and Bihar were based on morality and ethics. There is no God except Morality. His revolutionary meaning of dhamma was love, equality, morality and the fundamental tenets of liberty and fraternity. He rejected the caste system and chaturvarna of Brahmanism and said it was adhamma. This Buddhist doctrines led the father of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to compare Buddha with Karlmarx and his eventual conversion to Buddhism.¹

India is one of the few countries in the world, which has a very ancient culture and civilisation. Buddhism energised the Indian mind with a profusion and variety of new ideas. The Buddhism challenged the caste system and preached non-violence and the message of equality. Some of the Mauryas, the Guptas and later ancient and medeaval rulers patronised it and Buddhism became a world religion with its centre in U.P. and Bihar. It became an instrument of cultural imperialism of India which exist even today in many countries of the world. Alexander fought with Sword and was killed in a conspiracy. Ashoka won hearts and established morality’s supremacy. The end of empires is always imminent. But the empire of the light and love is permanent.

The Buddhism increased the capacity of the assimilation and co-operation of the Indians so much that today they follow more Buddhist ways than the vedic lifestyle.

The survival and continuity of Buddhism is the greatest Jewel in India’s unity in diversity. In 20th century some people of India thought about equality, liberty, fraternity and social justice in connection with all the sections of India like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekanand, Gandhi ji, Dr. Ambedkar and J.L. Nehru. They were greatly impressed by the philosophy of Buddhism. Specially Dr. Ambedkar emberaced Buddhism and contributed to Buddhism in an extra ordinary manner by creating a movement.

¹ The Sunday Times Of India, Lucknow, sept, 17 1905.
In Uttar Pradesh, the Buddhist intellectuals have done a great deal of work during the present century. Thousands of monks, social and political workers, professors and government employees are contributing to social justice taking inspiration from Buddhism. Anagarika Dhammapala, Bhadant Bodhanand, Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan, Bhante Pragyanand, Bhante Gyan Prabhakar, Bhante Gyan Prabhakar, Bhante Jagdish Kasyap, Bhante Kaundinya, Ven. U. Chandramani Maha Thera, Ven. N. Somanananda Nayaka (Sarnath), Ven. M. Sangharatna Thera, Bhante Pragya Prabhakar, Mr. B.P. Maurya, Mr. S.P. Gautam, Prof. A. Lal, Dr. D.S. Ashok, Mr. Reoti Ram, Mr. K.M. Sant, Mr. P.N. Maurya, Mr. Rao Sajivan Nath, Mr. M.S. Sant, Mr. K.D. Kanyal, Mr. R.L. Suman, Mr. B.D. Jatav, Mr. Bhagwan Dass, Mr. Sudhir Ranjan, Mr. Gulab Singh, Mr. K.K. Chaudhary, Mr. D.V.S. Ashok, Dr. Dauji Gupta, Shri Chandra Pal, Shri Devi Dayal, Shri Ram Sahay, Shri S.R. Darapuri, shri G.P. Madan, Shri Motiram Shastri, Shri C.S. Upasak, Shri M.L. Arya, Dr. Ratan Verma, Shri Bindra Prasad, Shri J.N. Aditya have done great social service to the people of U.P. The study of their role, other organisations, and institutions of 20th century is very important from the point of view of Buddhist religion and culture which reveals the great tradition of service to mankind i.e always the most important goal of all studies and research works.

In fact, this century has seen the revival of Buddhism in Indian society.

Why Religion Is Important Even Today:

Some intellectuals as well as their ordinary followers and commoners propagate that religion is obsolete today. We, the human beings of 20th century need no religion. Certainly they are right when they criticise the negative aspect of priestdom polluted with expensive rituals and conservatism. They are more right when they include female infanticide, Sati Pratha, caste system, untouchability and human sacrifices in religion. Religion should not exist even for a single moment if it is to protect the distinction in the name of religion, colour, region and sex. We should destroy all religions if they provide refuge to violence in the form of communalism. We should never support the idea of religion if it is to provide a base for disbelief in science and rationalism in the name of God, Soul, Fate and Rebirth. But to a great extent, it is the religion only which can provide training of morality from our birth to death. If every individual begins to experiment to find out a moral order, every body
may have to waste 50 years of his age. So we need a discipline, which is beneficial to more and more people, which instills the values of kindness, compassion, love, co-operation and service to human beings. How a boy or a girl is to be named? How the brother and sister will behave with each other? How the parents will bring up their scions? How the scions will respond to their parents in old age? What is the value of thankfulness? How the human culture has evolved? These are the questions, which no other discipline can instill in a human being. We can live with science but how beautifully and peacefully we live, is not answered by science. Only morality separates us from animals and it is the religion, only which is the vehicle of morality, doubtless some (religions) vehicles have been hijacked by the monopolistic priests but they have served humanity in their own manner, when they were followed in their original forms. Science can teach us that a patient of tuberculosis should be kept away from healthy persons, but religion finds our some possibility of the treatment of a member of the family without keeping him away from healthy family members as far as it is possible. Science makes man the master of universe but religion makes man subordinate to society so that a healthy member and healthy society may go ahead.

Buddhism in its original form is rationalism and totally scientific. It does not uphold the idea of God, Soul and Fate. It provides equality of opportunity or right to seek the state of bliss or Nirvana to every human being without the distinction of any type. Therefore Buddhism is very important to free mankind from the shackles of exploitation (Dukkha) of every kind.

(B) SOURCES

Coming to modern Indian languages, we find that the sacred scriptures were translated by various savants. The real help to the masses, however, came from the literature written in simple and intelligible languages. The pioneer in this field was Rahul Sankrityayan (1893-1963) the giant intellectual and creator of enormous Buddhist literature (about 175 books and pamphlets) in Hindi, the National Language of India.¹

Among the modern scholars, the most eminent ones are Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan and Ven. D. Dharmarakshita, Ven. Nandabansa Mahasthavir has given us a number of books.

¹ Buddhism in Modern India Page 105, D.C. Ahir.

The writings and speeches by various publications in many forms have revolutionised the Buddhist literature. There are many publications which have emerged only to publish the work of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and they have been very successful in establishing themselves.

Development of Buddhism in U.P. by Nalinaksha Dutt and K.D. Bajpai is a good Historical Study.

The biographies of Lord Buddha by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, by Devamitta Dharmapal, J. Vijaytunga, S.L. Bhatia, Akshaya Kumar Devi, Shakuntala Masani, R.R. Diwakar, N. Gangulee are very important books for research work.

The most important source of study in 20th century is field work, district-wise survey and interviews of Buddhist monks and Buddhist upasaks are very essential to produce live picture.

Newspapers like Times Of India (Lucknow Edition) and Rashtriya Sahara, Dainik Jagaran, AmarUjala have been very helpful in providing articles regarding Buddhist places in Uttar Pradesh.