PREFACE

Buddhism which had its origin in mainland of India penetrated into different regions of South-East Asia during the period of 1st century AD. The most interesting aspect of dissemination of Buddhism in South-East Asia was the course of interaction with the local cults and various cultural groups as well. The interaction in most of the cases led to assimilation of local cults with Buddhism and a consequent emergence of quite a different kind of Buddhist ideas and principles which were unique in nature and spirit. The subject matter of my research work is 'Buddhism and its Cultural Influence on South-East Asia'.

I preferred Burma (Myanmar), Siam (Thailand), Cambodia (Kamboja), Laos, Campa (Vietnam), Malay and Republic of Indonesia (Sumatra, Java, Bali, Borneo, Celebes) as the arena for research.

As a matter of fact in discussing the penetration and influence of Buddhism in South-East Asian countries, I found in various cases that it faced hazardous political disturbances and in some respects it has gone through the dark confusion. I felt some difficulty in finding all the essential elements. But, the strenuous and thorough study of ancient indigenous and foreign literature, the history of political evidences, the comments of the scholars, description of the Foreign Travellers; the discussion of journals; the epigraphical, archaeological and sculptural evidences etc. have enabled me to discuss about the penetration, popularisation and development of Buddhism in the South-East Asian countries.

The present dissertation entitled 'Buddhism and its Cultural Influence on South-East Asia' comprises five chapters. The social condition of the society before the origin of Buddhism, causes of the origin of Buddhism and sources are mentioned in chapter-I. The total extension of the South-East Asia; location, extension and physical features of the South-East Asian countries (which are included in the present research work) are mentioned in chapter-II.

The penetration, propagation and development of Buddhism in the South-East Asian countries happened in different processes like maritime trade, missionaries' activities, patronisation of rulers etc. which are dealt with in chapter-III. Various architectural and sculptural evidences, use of materials, stucco decoration, painting works, icons, inscriptions etc. are mentioned in the part-(i) of chapter-IV; development of Pali literature and its influences are described in the part-(ii) of chapter-IV and different types of socio-cultural activities, like monastic education, community activities; some social customs; different types of ceremonial activities, literary arts etc. are dealt with in the part-(iii) of chapter-IV.

By thorough analysis I find some noble qualities in the Buddhism. These qualities and the inherent power have enabled Buddhism to establish equality and brotherhood among the people of the South-Eastern countries and by the power of adaptability it has adapted itself in any social circumstances which are mentioned in chapter-V.

The present work could not have been carried out without the help of numerous scholars whose valuable contributions have been utilised, wherever necessary. I have indicated my indebtedness to them in the text, in the list of literature (bibliography).

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