CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

I.1. Significance and Relevance of the Topic

Buddhism originated in India over 2,500 years ago. It seems that in India there were two main streams of Mahāyāna during the dawn of this tradition. One developed from the Bodhisattva ideal which was held by lay people, and originated in North India. The sūtras\(^1\) of this stream advocated the career of Buddha and Bodhisattvas as the central idea. On the other hand, another stream developed the philosophical aspects of this tradition with Prajñāpāramitāsūtras in South India. Although they had difference in tendency, both of these streams observed the vow of Bodhisattva – to seek enlightenment and to save mankind, as the central core of their doctrine.

In contrast to the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna’s conception of Nirvāṇa and the way of realization included not only negative but also positive elements. From this, there were more balanced tradition developed the distinctively Mahāyāna doctrine – common to all its schools. That Enlightenment (Bodhi) consists not in Wisdom merely, but in the inseparability of Prajñā or Wisdom and karuṇā or Compassion. We can say that Buddhism is the nature of the acquisition of two words: Karuṇā (compassion) and Prajñā (wisdom). The union of these two was termed

\(^1\) Avatamsaka sūtra (the Gandhavyūha sūtra and the Daśabhūmika sūtra, etc.), Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra, vimalakīrtinirdesa sūtra, etc.
bodhicitta, or Enlightenment-Mind, to the arising (utpāda) of which the Mahāyānists attached unprecedented importance.

Compassion (S: Karuṇā) is one of the four qualities of character significant to a human being who has attained freedom of heart in the four sentiments, viz., mettā, karuṇā, muditā and upekkhā. Compassion (karuṇā) is defined as ‘pity and sympathy that arises in good’. It is defined in another context as ‘the desire of removing bane and sorrow of one’s follow men.’ Compassion represents not only the positive but also the dynamic aspect of enlightenment. Wisdom (Prajñā) is the highest pāramitā (perfection) in the six pāramitās². Wisdom counters ignorance, and enables, including our ability to get along well with others. This wisdom is not that which is gained through intense study and analysis of many diverse subjects. That would be seeking wisdom from external sources. By means of wisdom, in the limited sense of insight into the unreality of the self, one could, the Mahāyānists conceded, attain the peace and Nirvāṇa.

But this one-sidedly transcendental state of personal emancipation from around of the birth and death was not enough, but, as they maintained, the highest goal was supreme enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. This was attainable by transcendental wisdom that is to say, by insight not only into the egolessness but also into the substantiality of all things (dharmas) and the consequent unreality of the distinction between Nirvāṇa and Samsāra. By his attainment of this non-discriminating Wisdom, the Bodhisattva, instead of remaining like the Hīnayāna ‘Arhat’ immersed in the quiescent state of Nirvāṇa, liberates a purely transcendental force, the dynamic aspect of wisdom,

² The six Pāramitās: Dāna (giving), Śīla (ethical behavior), Kṣānti (patience), Vīrya (endeavor of effort), Dhyāna (contemplation or meditation), and Prajñā (wisdom).
by means of which he is able, even after attaining Supreme Enlightenment, to live and act in the universe for benefit of all sentient beings.³

The main purpose of practising the Mahāyāna is to attain Buddhahood to benefit all living beings. To accomplish this aim, we must first generate *bodhicitta* (*Bodhicittopāda*). Generation of *bodhicitta* usually starts with the Sanskrit phrase: ‘Anuttarāyaṃ samyaksambodhau cittam upādam’ which means ‘to have a mind raised to supreme enlightenment’ or ‘to cherish the desire for supreme enlightenment.’ *Bodhicittopāda* means the arising of the thought of awakening. This arising of *bodhicitta* is thus a kind of conversion experience that leads to a transformed outlook on the world.

In Mahāyāna tradition, the term *bodhicitta* is not only one of the most important terms, but also a practical method of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* through *Cittopāda* (arising of enlightened mind). *Bodhicitta* is a Sanskrit compound composed of the words *bodhi* and *citta*. The feminine verbal noun *bodhi* usually means, in the Buddhist context, the state of being Buddha, or the quality in virtue of which one is Buddha. In general, this term means perception, comprehension, knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment, and awakening. *Citta* means mind, thought, attention, etc. Consequently, *bodhicitta* means ‘thought of enlightenment,’ ‘mind of enlightenment,’ ‘will of enlightenment,’ ‘mind turned to enlightenment,’ ‘awakening mind,’ or ‘desire for awakening.’ … *Bodhicitta* is the attitude that is based on the great compassion wishing to remove the suffering of all others, and the recognition that, to be of greatest benefit to both oneself and others, it is ideal to attain

enlightenment. The Mahāyānist engages in all practices with this motivation.

Bodhicitta is the essence of all the precious teachings of Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha emphasized on the essential importance of bodhicitta in all the Sūtras and Tantras, and He spoke many times about bodhicitta, as a means of transformation. Negativity can be transformed by bodhicitta, suffering can be transformed by bodhicitta, and ignorance and all three poisons (greed, hatred and ignorance) can be transformed by bodhicitta. So, there is no more virtuous and powerful mind than bodhicitta. For the accomplishment of one’s own ultimate purpose and for the welfare of the other living beings there is nothing superior to bodhicitta. The awakening mind is the unsurpassable way to collect merit. To purify obstacles, bodhicitta is supreme. For protection from interference, bodhicitta is supreme. It is the unique, all encompassing method. Every kind of ordinary and supra-mundane power can be accomplished through bodhicitta. Thus, it is absolutely precious.

The Buddha taught numerous techniques for liberation in his teachings. According to some Mahāyāna texts, these profound and effective techniques that the Buddha and all great masters always emphasized are given only to those who have bodhicitta. The profound teachings cannot be taught to those who do not have bodhicitta because bodhicitta is the foundation. Bodhicitta is considered as central theme. When we have bodhicitta, any sacred method is good and effective. When we do not have bodhicitta, the methods become useless and of no benefit. In Avataṃsaka Sūtra, the Lord Buddha taught: “There are ten
kinds of demons’ action: cultivating roots of goodness while forgetting the aspiration for enlightenment (bodhicitta), etc.”

The great Bodhisattva Śāntideva also said in his work, Bodhicaryāvatāra: “If you churn the 84000 teachings of the Buddha, their essence is bodhicitta.” By churning milk we get butter, which is the very essence of milk. In the same way, if we examine and churn all the 84000 teachings of the Buddha, their very essence is the practice of bodhicitta. Therefore, it is extremely important for us to generate bodhicitta, to practise bodhicitta and to achieve the highest goal of supreme enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Moreover, in this modern society, human beings face high inflation and unemployment; we have an energy crisis, a crisis in health care, pollution and other environmental disaster, a rising wave of violence and crime, and so on. We are living in a globally interconnected world, in which biological, psychological, social and environmental phenomena are all interdependent. And in the present day we find ourselves in a state of profound, world-wide crisis. It is a complex, multi-dimensional crisis whose facets touch every aspect of our lives—our health and livelihood, the quality of our environment and our social relationships, our economy, technology, and politics. Or in other expression, we can be able to say that in this era humanity is primarily faced with problems such as war, increasing population,

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5 Ribur Rinpoche, How to Generate Bodhicitta, Amitābha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, 1999: p. 3.
degrading the environment, collapsing the morals, exchanging the West and East thoughts, for running fast to modern world.

We know that the main purpose of practising the Mahāyāna is to attain Buddhahood to benefit all living beings. To accomplish this aim, we must first generate bodhicitta (bodhicittapāda). Bodhicitta is the attitude that is based on the great compassion wishing to remove the suffering of all others, and the recognition that, to be of greatest benefit to both oneself and others, it is ideal to attain enlightenment. With such a thought or attitude, bodhicitta has much significance in the world as well as in the modern society, especially in ethical and social aspects. Bodhicitta helps us to minimize the crisis over, building a moral life, peace for ourselves and for everyone. It will be to create a peaceful world for all human beings.

I.2. Survey of Researches

I.2.1. Earlier Works Related to Bodhicitta

The studies which have been previously conducted Bodhicitta usually focus their elaboration on philosophical deliberation about certain themes more or less relative to “bodhicitta” in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The dissertation on the concept bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism covers a rather good dimension, describing various aspects of bodhicitta, namely, the meaning of bodhicitta; bodhicitta as depicted in Mahāyāna sūtras; types of bodhicitta; generation of bodhicitta; methods of generation of bodhicitta, Bhūtatathatā; Dharmakāya, significance of bodhicitta in modern society and so on. While dealing with the concept of bodhicitta, there are few scholars who have attempted to study these
subjects. We quote here some important and significant works on the concept of *bodhicitta*:


I.2.2. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Works referred above

Most of the works on the aspects of bodhicitta as presented is fairly complete. However, still more or less these studies are of general type and a complete and indepth study on the concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism has not been done yet. Moreover, no considerable attempt has been made so far to study the variants on the basis of the commentaries, especially significance of bodhicitta in the modern society.

Amongst these works mentioned above, the endeavor made by Ven. Śāntideva, F. Brassard, L. Gyatso and others are of great importance and are worth mentioning. The work of Ven. Śāntideva is very famous in Buddhism. It contains ten chapters: chapter 1, Precious human body; chapter 2, Confession; chapter 3, Taking bodhicitta vows; chapter 4, Behaviour; chapter 5, Mindfulness; chapter 6, Patience; chapter 7, Diligence; chapter 8, Meditation; chapter 9, Wisdom; chapter 10, Dedication. Although this is very famous in Buddhism, it only mentions about aspects of bodhicitta, but it does not mention about the concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna sūtras and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The introduction and the exhaustive notes of F. Brassard are an important contribution to the Buddhist Mahāyāna tradition, bodhicitta. The book surveys the various interpretations of the concept of bodhicitta, analyzes its possible functions in the context of the spiritual path of the aspirant to enlightenment, and discusses an understanding of bodhicitta in the context of the Śāntideva’s Bodhicharyāvatāra. However, this work does not mention much about the concept of
bodhicitta in Mahāyāna sūtras, such as, Avataṃsaka-sūtra, Daśabhūmika-sūtra, etc.

*Bodhicitta: Cultivating the Compassionate Mind of Enlightenment* edited by L. Gyatso is also worth mentioning. He describes the classical methods for developing the mind of enlightenment and based on his experience as a mediator and a teacher, examines a wide range of obstacles to its development. However, it just gives a general picture like others. A deep analysis and appraisal about the concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism have not been conducted yet.

Therefore, There is a need to undertake a study on bodhicitta which is useful and will open a new way to those who want to research on the concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism and its application in the life of the Buddhist practice and social life.

I.3. Scope and Methodology of Research

I.3.1. Scope and Sources of the Work

The scope of this research will be mainly the concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism, with reference to the concepts like the citta, the bodhi, bodhicitta, Mahāyāna, etc. The research will treat the concept in a greater detail about its various characteristics and functions. The materials which will be used for my research are confined to Pāli, Sanskrit, and Chinese literature.

In the investigation, we will try to give a full scale picture of the concept of bodhicitta which may serve as helpful and trustworthy sources, namely, Avataṃsaka-sūtra (*The Flower Ornament Scripture*), Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra (*The Lotus Sūtra*), Prajñāpāramitā
In addition to all these primary works some other important sources are:


- Taisho Tripitaka, CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka, Normalized version, CBETA T09, “大方广佛华严经卷42, 大正新修大藏經 T09n 0278.

- *Kumārajīva*, (trans.) 妙法莲華經 T10n279
I.3.2. Research Methodology

- Collecting data concerning the concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna thoughts and related problems from various primary sources of Sanskrit, Pāli, and Chinese literature.

- Interpreting the data and making comparison of the similarities and differences.

- The study and analysis will be both synchronic and diachronic i.e. the analysis will try to show the historical development of the concepts and its changes if any within the system in different period of time; attempt will be made to make a comparison of a concept with different systems in a given period of time which will make a diachronic study.

- Each and every statement will be authenticated by making proper references.

I.3.3. Outlines of the Topic

The thesis, An Analytical Study of the Concept of Bodhicitta [With Special Reference to Mahāyāna Buddhism], has been presented in seven chapters: namely, the Introduction, Historical and doctrinal background of Buddhism, Place of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Concept of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna sūtras, the Concept of bodhi in Mahāyāna Buddhism, Significance of bodhicitta in modern society and conclusion.

In the Introduction, which is the first chapter of the thesis, the main themes in this section are presented like (1) Significance and relevance of the topic, (2) Survey of researches (formers works related
to bodhicitta with their strengths and weaknesses), (3) Scope and methodology of research (scope and source of the topic, research methodology, outlines of the topics).

The second chapter is devoted to the exposition of the Historical and doctrinal background of Buddhism. The founder of Buddhism is the Buddha Shākyamuni and Buddhism began with the history of the Buddha Shākyamuni. The Shākyamuni is known as Gautama Buddha. Bodhicitta is one of the most basic doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Bodhicitta is a Sanskrit compound composed of the words bodhi and citta. Bodhi means Enlightenment or Awakening, which is very importance in Buddhism. Because in Buddhism, the goal of the spiritual practice of its aspirant is bodhi or enlightenment, therefore, in this chapter we had presented characteristics of enlightenment in Buddhism and importance of it in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

As one of the most important doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhicitta has a central place in Buddhism. In the chapter III, the place of bodhicitta in Mahāyāna Buddhism, is discussed. The basic characteristics of Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as: altruism, karuṇā, muditā and upekkhā, pāramitā, and upāyakauśalya etc. are presented here. When surveying of Mahāyāna Buddhism, we have to know the meaning of Bodhisattva. So, in this chapter, the meaning of Bodhisattva, Bodhisattvayāna, Bodhisattva’s vows and career etc. are discussed. As a prominent teaching, bodhicitta is praised by many famous Mahāyāna masters like Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Śāntideva, Tibetan masters: Atiśa (980-1055), Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), Chinese masters Shih-hsien Tsing-an (釋實賢) (1657-1733), etc.

In the centre of the thesis, the chapter IV and V: the concept of bodhicitta and in Mahāyāna sūtras and Buddhism is studied. Bodhicitta
is ‘thought of enlightenment’, ‘mind of enlightenment’, ‘will of enlightenment’, ‘mind turned to enlightenment’, ‘awakening mind’, or ‘desire for awakening’. Therefore, person, who practices in Buddhist doctrine, has to have bodhicitta; if he does not have bodhicitta he will not attain his purpose. Avataṃsaka sūtra said that: “忘失菩提心, 修諸善根 是為摩業” (To neglect the bodhicitta mind when practising good deeds that is the action of demons.) As a central philosophy of Buddhism, bodhicitta is depicted in all most all of Mahāyāna sūtras with metaphors and similes, which are exciting. Such as: the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra (the Devadatta chapter, Expedient means chapter, Simile and parable chapter); the Prajñāpāramitā sūtra, the Diamond sūtra (Vajracchedika sūtra); the Avatamsaka literature (the Gandhavyūha-sūtra and the Daśabhūmika sūtra.)

The main purpose of practising the Mahāyāna is to attain Buddhahood to benefit all living beings. To accomplish this aim, firstly, we must generate bodhicitta; to generate bodhicitta, we should know the methods of it. There are two main methods to generate bodhicitta:

1. The seven-point cause and effect transmission (Firstly, developing equanimity, and then: (a) perceiving all beings as mother, (b) remembering kindness, (c) repaying kindness, (d) great love, (e) great compassion, (g) pure superior intention, and (h) bodhicitta).
2. Equalizing and exchanging oneself with others (this method consists of five points: (a) Equalizing oneself with others, (b) the advantages of changing self with others, (c) the disadvantages of

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6 Taisho Tripitaka, CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka, Śikṣānanda, (trans.), Normalized version, CBETA T09 No 278, “大方廣佛華嚴經” 卷42, 大正新修大藏經. T09n 0278, T09n 0278 – P066 3a 14 (00).
not changing, (d) the ability to exchange self with others, and (e) Taking and giving).

Moreover, as the important doctrine in cultivation to attain enlightenment, bodhicitta is applied and practised in many Buddhist schools, especially Mahāyāna schools, such as Meditation school, Tantric school, Pure land school, etc.

Bodhicitta is the attitude that is based on the great compassion wishing to remove the suffering of all others. With such a thought or attitude, bodhicitta has much significance in the world as well as in the modern society, especially in the crises. Therefore, in the chapter VI, Significance of bodhicitta in modern society will be presented. The contents of this chapter consist of four main parts: Mahāyāna’s approaches to the modern crisis, compassion in modern society, philosophical aspect of bodhicitta and ethical and social aspects of bodhicitta.

And the last chapter is Conclusion. In this chapter, we have given our observations in the form of concluding remarks. We have presented our evaluation of the concept of bodhicitta, and give suggestions and proposals for a modern view of bodhicitta.