CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL AND DOCTRINIAL BACKGROUND

OF BUDDHISM

II.1. The Origin 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.

In the beginning of the book: Buddha and Bodhisattva - A Hindu View, Prof. Arun Kumar Biswas said: Gautama Buddha’s story as well as the Jātaka stories, related to his previous births as Bodhisattva, are of eternal values-earthly and divine at the same time. All these stories are organic part of a single great saga – describing the journey of an inquisitive and compassionate soul through successive births, suffering on many counts, learning from each experience, struggling to find the truths regarding the cause and annihilation of ‘suffering’, and ultimately showing the path towards alleviation of misery, for the entire mankind to follow.

77 Arun Kumar Biswas, Buddha and Bodhisattva _ A Hindu View, Cosmo Publication, First Published, New Delhi, 18987: p. 3.
More twenty-five hundred years ago, the coming of the Buddha was an epoch-making event in the history of Indian civilization and culture. He was the first historical figure to make a profound impression on the Indian mind, to change thought process of all India. So great was his influence that even though Buddhism no longer exists as an organized religious institution in India, his massage and personality are still a living reality in the life of India and will long continue to be a source of strength. Indeed, it was the Buddha’s role to ‘recast’ and revitalize for mankind a way of life which can be applied universally, regardless of time or place or prevailing culture.

II.1.1. The Birth of the Buddha

The Buddha, who is the founder of the Buddhist religion, is called Buddha Shākyamuni. In general, Buddha means ‘Awakened One’, someone who has awakened from sleep of ignorance and sees things as they really are. ‘Shākya’ is the name of the royal family into which he was born, and ‘Muni’ means ‘Above one’.

Buddha Shākyamuni was born as a royal prince in 624 B.C.E.8 in place called Lumbini, which was originally in northern India but is now a part of Nepal. His father’s name was king Shuddhodana, who was the ruler of the kingdom of the Shākya with his capital at Kapilavasthu, which was situated in a rich irrigated plain between the Nepalese foothills and the river Roshini or Rapti. His mother’s name was Queen Māyā Devi.

8 In 1956, the Buddhist world celebrated the 2,500 th anniversary of the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa. Assuming a life span of eighty years, that would give us 624-544 B.C.E. as the dates of the Buddha’s life.
According to the Nidānakathā,⁹ one night, queen Māyā Devi dreamt that a white elephant descended from heaven and entered her side. This was a very auspicious symbol suggesting that this was no ordinary child. Soothsayers were consulted as to the dream and confirmed that the child would be either a great religious teacher, or a mighty king known as a Cakravartin (‘world-ruler’). The tradition in India was for a pregnant woman to return to her relatives to give birth, and as the time drew nigh Māyā set out from Kapilavasthu, the Shākyan capital, to return home. Her journey was interrupted for the child arrived on the way and was born in a delightful grove at a remote spot called Lumbini. The texts report that the queen was birth standing up holding on to the branch of a Sal tree, and that the baby was born from her side without pain.

King Shuddhodana named the young baby is Siddhārtha (Pāli. Siddhāttha) (it means wish-fulfilling); because the king wanted his son, Siddhārtha fulfilled the long cherished wish of the barren royal family and because at the time of his birth phenomenal blessings and prosperity had come to the Shākya kingdom.

Seven days after he was born in the beautiful garden of Lumbini, his mother, Queen Māhā Māyā died, leaving him under the care of her sister, Mahāpajapati Gotami. As was the vogue in those days, on the sixth day after his birth, Brahman astrological experts were called to forecast his future, and it is said that they prophesied that the child was destined to become either a Universal monarch or an omniscient Buddha. The experts predicted that if the child witnessed the four signs

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⁹ The Nidanakathā (Introductory Tale), second or third century C.E. This test forms the introduction to the Jākata, a collection of popular stories about the Buddha’s previous lives.
of ill, old age, sickness, death, or a recluse – he would renounce the worldly life and become homeless monk.

The king was, of course, anxious that him upbringing of the prince should be in keeping with the highest tradition of the regal abundance, pleasure, and magnificence, and that he should be sheltered from seeing any of the four ills of life. Thus as, the young prince grew up in the various branches of learning, and since, he was exceptionally intelligent, he soon mastered the different arts and sciences in the highest traditions of his time. In addition to an aptness for knowledge he also manifested qualities rare and noble. He was extremely tender and kindly toward all beings and also tended to become contemplative and was often serious-mind.

When *Siddhārtha* was sixteen, his father feared that he might become dissatisfied with the world. He gave him in marriage to a young maiden who was his cousin, *Yasodharā*, the princess of king *Saprabuddha*.

Once prince *Siddhārtha* went into the capital of his father’s kingdom to see how the people lived. During these visits he came in contact with many old people and sick people, and on one occasion he saw a corpse. These encounters left a deep impression on his mind and led him to realize that all living beings without exception have to experience the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and death. He understood the law of reincarnation he also realized that they experience these sufferings not just once, but again and again, in life without cessation. Seeing how all living beings are trapped in this vicious circle of suffering he felt deep compassion for them, and he developed a sincere wish to free all of them from their suffering.
II.1.2. The Great Renunciation and Attaining Enlightenment

Growing up in luxury and surrounded by an attentive family, prince Siddhārtha was shielded from everything that could disturb his mind and make him think of renouncing the world. At the age of 29, Siddhārtha became the father of a little boy, who was called Rahula, a bond; for he thought that the bondage of his life in the palace would soon grow too strong.

On the trips, the prince encountered a ‘Śramaṇa’, a religious mendicant dressed in an orange robe. Chhandaka, the charioteer explained that this man had renounced the world and all earthly passions in order to discover the supreme truth, prince Siddhārtha was now convinced that bodily pleasures has to be renounced, and the ascetic’s life was the only convictable life.

When the Prince came back to the kingdom, he went to his king father and said that: “I wish to retire to a peaceful place in the forest where I can engage in deep meditation and attained enlightenment. I shall be able to repay the kindness of all living beings and especially the great kindness that you have showed me. Therefore I request for your permission to leave the palace.” When the king heard this, he was shocked, and he refused to grant his permission.

The king Shuddhodana tried all means to prevent his son from leaving the palace. In the hope that the prince might change his mind, he surrounded him with a retinue of beautiful women, dancers, singers and musicians, who day and night used their charms to please him, and in case the prince might attempt a secret escape he posted guards around the palace walls.
The father, noticing his son’s darkening mood, promised to give him everything he wanted, in order to make him happy. Meeting his father, prince Siddhārtha laid these four requests before him: eternal youth, not followed by old age; unchanging beauty and health; unimpeded by sickness; and eternal life without death. When his father told him that it was impossible for him to grant him these wishes, he reduced his wish list to just one item: To be assured that he would not be reborn after leaving this present body. The king could not grant him this wish, either.

On the full moon night of the month of May, the Prince made up his mind to retire from the world to seek for mankind the ultimate deliverance. During that night, the women in his palace fell asleep, he was filled with disgust by sight of the sleeping women in his harem, drooling, disheveled, and snoring, and turning away from his wife and his child, Rahula. With Chhandaka, the charioteer, and his favourite horse Kanthaka, he started on his great renunciation.

The prince Siddhārtha crossed the river Anoma, took Chhandaka’s sharp sword, severed with it long hair lock and jeweled crest, and cast them into the river water. He asked Chhandaka to go back to Kapilavasthu and tell his relatives that he may return again, only after the attainment of Nirvāṇa. According to Buddhist legend, the horse Kanthaka realized that it may not see prince Siddhārtha again and died out of grief. Chhandaka, the charioteer went and turned back, while the Prince put on a hermit’s dress for his onward journey. In later Buddhist art the ‘Great Departure’ became a favourite topic. The most moving images show his servant returning with Kanthaka, Siddhārtha’s horse the saddle empty.
Prince *Siddhārtha* left the land of native *Shākyas* and went to the mango groves of *Anupiya* in the *Malla* kingdom and he proceeded to the kingdom of *Magadha*, a country which extended along the Ganges valley, making his way to the capital city, *Rājagriha* (Modern Rajgir, some sixty miles west of Patna). There, one day as he was going for alms, king *Bimbisāra* noticed his noble bearing and was so attracted to him that he begged to him give up the hard life of a recluse, even promising half of kingdom and his daughter’s hand if he would accept. But such offers did not appear to the future *Siddhārtha* who had sacrificed all worldly magnificence to alter of renunciation for the sake of truth; he declined with the promise that when he attained supreme enlightenment he will return and preach the truth to the king.

At that time, *Alāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputra* were staying near *Vaishāli* and *Rājagriha*. They were widely renowned as teachers in *Brahminic* or *Vedantic* Scriptures. *Siddhārtha* at first joined the company of *Alāra Kālāma*. *Alāra Kālāma* showed him a meditational technique which allowed him to enter a profound state of trance. This state, attained through yogic concentration, was known as the ‘sphere of nothingness’ and was one in which the mind transcended all thought producing a sensation of deep spiritual peace. *Siddhārtha* was an able student and quickly master this practice. So impressed was his teacher that offered to make his student joint leader of the group. *Siddhārtha* declined, since he left that he still had not achieved the goal he sought.

Taking leave of *Alāra Kālāma*, *Siddhārtha* came to study with *Uddaka Rāmaputra*, a teacher of yoga, and once again excelled as a student. Now, he was able to attain an even loftier state of entrance enigmatically known as the ‘sphere of neither perception-nor-non-perception’. In this state consciousness becomes so subtle that mind of
the Uddaka Rāmaputra was so impressed that he offered to change the places with his student and make Siddhārtha his master, but Siddhārtha turned down this offered for the same reasons as before. The problem, as he saw it, was that while the experience of these mystical state was good and valuable as far as it went, it was only a temporary escape from life’s problems, while a person could abide for hours or perhaps days in such a state, enjoying sensations of bliss and deep spiritual peace, the fundamental problems of suffering, old age and death remained unresolved.

Then, prince Siddhārtha left Rājagriha and entered the forest of Uruvella near Gayā. There he met five mendicants (Kuandinna, Basha, Bhadrika, Mahāmānā and Aśvajit). These five monks were indulging in austere and hard spiritual practices, and Siddhārtha joined them in even more arduous austerities. The Prince turned his attention to an alternative form of spiritual practice, one well established in India, based on subjugating the body by sheer force of will. The belief was that by gaining control over the body one could gain control over all appetites and thereby free oneself from desire. By becoming free of desire no new karma would be produced, and so rebirth in samsāra would come to an end: The Buddha began by undertaking exercises in breath-control and attempting to suspend the process awareness. However, this simply resulted in painful headaches and stomach pains, and the Buddha abandoned the technique. Next he turned his attention to his intake of food, and reduced this so minute amount, just a spoonful of bean soup a day. Soon he became painfully thin ‘with his ribs standing out like the rafter of a tumbledown shack’ and was barely to maintain the seated meditation posture without falling over. His hair began to fall out and, close to death, he decided this second technique was also a
failure and abandoned it. The Buddha realized that he had taken the path of austerities to its limit: ‘whatever recluses (Śramaṇas) or Brahmīn in the past have experienced painful, agonizing and intense sensations as the result of their exertions.’ He tells us ‘this has been the limit; no-one has gone further that I have.’

Unfortunately, the path had turned out to be a dead-end, and the Prince now cast around in his mind wondering if there might be another way to reach enlightenment. Reflecting on his experience this for he may well have contrasted the two earlier phases of his life: as a young man he had enjoyed material comfort and luxury. But this had left him frustrated and unfulfilled. In the second phase, as a Śramaṇa in the forest, he had gone to the other extreme and deprived himself of all comforts, pulsing his mind and body to their limits in the hope of a spiritual breakthrough that never came.

He therefore declared his six-year experiment with self-mortification at an end, and adopted a more balanced and moderate lifestyle that avoided extremes of all kinds and steered a ‘middle way’ between over-indulgence and extreme self-denial.

Inspired by this new approach the Prince recalled an incident from his childhood when he had spontaneously entered a state of trance known as the ‘first dhyāna’. This was a level of trance lower than those he had attained with his two teachers, but which seemed to him to hold greater promise, perhaps because it did not involve the suppression of the intellectual faculties but instead honed them to a new sharpness. At this moment the realization came to him ‘that is the path to enlightenment’. Extremely frail in body due to the austere practices, he

10 Charler S. Preblish and Damien Keown, Introducing Buddhism, First Published in New York, 2006: p. 35 (from M. J. 246).
almost met death when he went to take bath in the river Nairajanā. A lady Sujāta by name, saved him by offering rice milk, after that he began to eat nourishing food; the five companions, who previous had admired his asceticism, ready to become his disciples as soon as he had accomplished his aim, now departed, convinced the Siddhārtha had given up the ideal of renunciation.

The Prince now took care to eat nourishing food which was provided by the sweet dish of rice milk, accepting a bundle of grass from a grass cutter, he spread it under an Aśvattha tree, later to called the Bodhi tree, and sat down in meditation with resolution: “Skin, sinew and bone may wither away, my flesh and blood may dry up in my body, but without attaining complete enlightenment I shall not leave this seat.”

Undeterred, the Prince returned to the practice of meditation, this time in more structured program that involved him in passing through the four different dhyānas or level of trance. One particular night when seated under the Aśvattha tree, he entered the fourth state of trance, when his mind was most concentrated and purified. In this state he obtained three kinds of ‘true knowledge’\(^1\). In the first watch of the night he obtained the power to see back into his past lives and to recall them in all their detail.

In the second watch, he attained the ability to see not only just his own lives, but also the decease and arising of other beings in accordance with their good and bad \(karma\). In the third watch of the night he attained knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, namely: “This is the

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\(^{12}\) Three-fold knowledge (*Tisrovidyā*): 1. Remembrance of previous lives (*Pubbenivāsāmāsati-jānām*); 2. Divine eye (*Cutupapataāṇa*); 3. Clips all afflictions, definitely reincarnation (*Āsavak-śayaāṇa*);
origin of suffering... This is the cause of suffering... This is the cessation of suffering ... This is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.”

He knew then that all his spiritual defilements (assava) such as sensual desire and ignorance had been rooted out and destroyed and that he had achieved his goal. He realized that for him “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, I have done what needed to be done and rebirth is at an end.”

On the night of his enlightenment, the accounts relate how an effort to prevent the Buddha achieving enlightenment, Māra approached the seated Buddha with his ‘army’ of evil forces such as greed, hatred, delusion, hunger and thirst, tiredness and fear and doubt, hoping to break his resolve. When the Buddha did not flinch Māra adopted an alternative strategy and sent his beautiful daughters – Delight (Rāti), Discontent (Aratī) and Craving (Tṛṣṇā) – in an attempt to seduce the Buddha and deflect him from his purpose. When the Buddha proved immune to their charms, Māra called his daughters and unleashed a barrage of terrible storms and fearful sights, but none of this made any impression on the Buddha. The Buddha then reached out touched the earth with right hand, calling upon the earth goddess to bear witness to his enlightenment. This gesture (mudrā) known as the ‘earth-touching gesture’ (bhūmi-sparśa-mudrā) or the ‘conquest of Māra’ (Māra-vijaya) is one of a number of classic poses that were later incorporated into the stylistic repertoire of Buddhist art.

When the Buddha made this gesture the earth trembled, and Māra toppled from his great war elephant and his forces fled in disarray. The Buddha was now the ‘Enlightened One’, and his victory was complete.

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14 Ibid., p. 36 (from M. J. 249).
This victory was achieved while the sun was yet above the horizon. Thus at the age of 35 years, he attained the Perfect Enlightenment, the prince Siddhārtha became the Buddha.

II.1.3. The Buddha’s Preaching of Doctrine

After spending seven weeks at Gayā, near the Bodhi tree, the Buddha set forth toward Banāres where his five former disciples had been living. At the Deer park, in Banāres, modern Sārnāth. In the famous sermon in the Deer park, at Banāres, the Buddha propounded a famous scripture called ‘Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dharma’ (Dharmacakra – Pravartana – Sūtra). This relatively short text contains the essence of the Buddhist doctrine, and begins by speaking of the ‘Middle way’ the Buddha had found between the extremes of self indulgence and harsh austerity. It then makes reference to the Four Noble Truths he had perceived on the night of his enlightenment: the truth of suffering, the truth of the arising of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the path that leads to suffering, which is the noble eight fold path. The noble eight fold path consists of right views, right thoughts, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

At Banāres, Yasa, the son of a wealthy merchant, visited him which a mind trouble by excessive sexual desire. The Buddha having consoled him then preached the noble doctrine. In the short while, Yasa understood the import of the truth of the Middle path and became a monk and before long was an Arhat. This something spectacular and soon creator as stir among the people of Banāres who flocked around this new, wonderful genius. The wealthy father of Yasa and his many wives became the first and principal lay followers of the Master. The
conversion of Yasa also brought all his former companions, fifty four young men of distinguished families, into the new brotherhood. They too became monks and by great soon became Arhats.

Thus in a short while there was a brotherhood of sixty holy Saints with the Buddha at the head. The Master exhorted them to preach the new religion of truth: “In all quarter of the world, for the benefit of many, for the welfare of mankind, out of compassion for the world.”

The Buddha set out for Uruvella. At Uruvella, the Buddha met the Jatilas, also as Agnihotris or fire-worshipers. They were Brahmin hermits with matted hair, worshipping the fire and keeping a fire-dragon or serpent. In three Kassapa brothers, Uruvella Kassapa (later known as Mahākassapa), Nadi Kassapa and Gayā Kassapa the first one was known in the country as an authority on religion. The Buddha stayed one night in the fire-worshipping room and tamed the serpent. Uruvella Kassapa did not at first accept that the Buddha was as holy as he claimed to be. As a matter of fact, he was envious that his popularity many wane on account of the Buddha’s presence at Uruvella. The Lord read his mind and said: “You do not accept the true because envy dwells in thy heart. Is envy holiness? Envy is the last remnant of self that has remained in thy mind.” At last Kassapa gave up his animosity and envy disappeared from his mind. About 1000 Jatilas led by the three Kassapas bowed to the Buddha, who took them to the nearby mountain Gayarirsha and delivered his this sermon (Adiptaparyāya) on Fire:

“Everything, O Jatilas, is burning is on fire – the eyes, the senses and the thoughts. They are burning with the fire of lust, ignorance, hatred and glamour. As long as the fire finds

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16 Ibid., p. 19.
inflammable things upon which it can feed, so long will it burn, and there will be birth and death decay, grief, lamentation, suffering, despair and sorrow. Understand the four noble truths, walk in the eight fold path of holiness, be delivered from the selfishness and attained the blessed state of Nirvāṇa.”

Followed by nearly thousand disciples, the Buddha proceeded to Rājagriha to keep his promise earlier made to the Magadha king Bimbisāra, that he would revisit him after enlightenment. King Bimbisāra was amazed to see Kassapa in the Buddha’s company and enquired who had made the other one disciple; Kassapa replied, abandoning all his vanity, that he had given up fire-worshipping, to follow the Buddha golden path of Nirvāṇa: “The Blessed Lord is my Master, and I am the disciple.”

King Bimbisāra and many people of his kingdom adopted Buddhism, Bimbisāra donated ‘Venuvana’ (bamboo grove), which was not too far from Rājagriha, for a Buddhist monastery, so that he could come regularly and met his Master, the Buddha.

At that time, there were two young Brahmins: Śāriputra and Moggalana, living in Rājagriha. They were not satisfied with their teacher, Sanjavi Bairathputra’s religious doctrine, and met Aśvajit, one of the earliest disciples of the Buddha. Aśvajit told them what he had learned of the Buddha’s spiritual message. Śāriputra and Moggalana were encouraged to meet the Buddha, and when they did, they were immediately by the Master as the Agraśāvakas or the forerunners amongst his disciples. It is said that they attained Arhat in a very short time through intense spiritual efforts.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 22.
The Buddha’s father, Shuddhodana had been sending messengers requesting his son to visit Kapilavasthu, his birth place. It was on Falguna Purinama (full moon) that the Buddha departed from Rājagriha for Kapilavasthu. At here, his cousins (or Shākya princes), Ānanda, Aniruddha, Devadatta as well as Upali, the royal barber, who later became famous as Vinayapitaka, joined the Buddhist Order.

On the return from Kapilavasthu, the Buddha stayed at Shitavana near Rājagriha where he met the famous donor merchant Anāthapindaka (the patron of the orphans and monks) earlier known as Sudatta. This merchant belonged to Sharavasti and was staying at that time with a friend at Rājagriha. He was deeply moved the Buddha’s message. Anāthapindaka invited the Buddha to visit Sharavasti, the capital of Kosala, overflowing with riches and abundance. The Buddha agreed, and Anāthapindaka left post-haste with Śāriputra for making suitable arrangements for the Buddha and huge number of his monk followers.

Extremely rich that he was, Anāthapindaka purchased a big plot of land with trees near Sharavasti from its owner Jetakumar at huge cost. With Śāriputra’s direct supervision, he built a monastery, a big prayer hall, the Buddha’s residential hut in the centre (Gandha kutir), monk’s quarters all around, ponds, etc., in the Jetavana. He also constructed resting houses in between Rājagriha and Sharavasti to be used during the sojourn of the Buddha and his followers. Jetavana was dedicated to the Buddhist Order with great devotion and celebration.

Prasenjit, the king of Kosala Empire, whose sister had married king Bimbisāra, also became the Buddha’s disciple. Apart from Anāthapindaka and Prasenjit, the Buddhist monastery received patronage from another person – Viśākhā, wife of a wealthy merchant at
Sharavasti. Due to the tremendous financial patronage of such wealthy and devoted followers, Sharavasti became the most important place for the Buddhist monastic life. It was from this place that many ladies such as Utpalvarnā, Patāchārā joined the Buddhist Order as nuns. Sharavasti became the Buddha’s most important headquarter.

At Vaishāli, through praying of Mahāpajapati, Yasodharā and 500 women of Shākya clan, the Buddha had agreed and ordained for them, became the nuns. And for the first time in the history of the world, an order of nuns was established.

When the Buddha 54 years old, and staying at Sharavasti. The humble disciple and his cousin-brother, Ānanda was chosen for this honorable duty; which he discharged till the Buddha’s Nirvāṇa, a quarter century later. During this period, Ānanda was the chief custodian of the Buddha’s uttered thoughts and messages. The Buddha brought to his fold, spiritual aspirants from diverse walks of life – not only Brahmins, warriors, merchants, princes, etc., but also many low caste people and even murderous dacoits like Angulimala and courtesans like Amrapali.

On a typical evening, October or Kārtika full moon to be precise, Bimbisāra’s son Ajātaśatu, who had murdered his father and opposed the Buddha, changed his mind at the advice of Jivaka, the court-physician. The king ordered elephants to be prepared and the royal procession moved burning torches on that moonlit night the gate of Rājagriha to Jivaka’s mango grove, where the Buddha delighted the king with his famous discourse “On the fruits of asceticism.” After that, the king Ajātaśatu ultimately followed his father Bimbisara’s footsteps in embracing Buddhism.
II.1.4. The *Nirvāṇa* of the Buddha

At the age of 80, in *Vaishali*, the Buddha said Ven. Ānanda and his disciples that after three months; He will enter *Nirvāṇa* in *Kushinarga* of *Malla* clan, under *Sala* trees. The Buddha set out for *Kushinarga*. At here, the Buddha took his bath in the river *Kakuttha* and proceeded to *Sala* grove (named *Upavatana*) of *Mallas* on the further side of river *Hiranyavati*. Here he wanted to take his final rest. Ānanda spread a couch with his head to the north between twin *Sala* trees and the Buddha laid himself down on his right side, with one leg resting on the other, mindful and self-possessed.

The Buddha then asked Ānanda to call the lay disciples from *Kushinagar* so that the young and old *Mallas* could see their Master for the last time. The Buddha blessed his disciples by saying that even the most backward of his disciples was not likely to suffer from ignorance, and exhorted them with the parting advice: “*Decay is inherent in all component things, work out your salvation with diligence.*” Uttering these last words, the Buddha then passed through several levels of meditative trance from the fourth *dhyāna* and entered *Nirvāṇa*.

After the cremation fire of the Buddha is extinguished, the relics of him are divided into eight shares: The first share was given to the Mallas of *Kushinagar*. The second share was given to the *Mallas of Papa*. The third share was given to the *Bulakas of Clakapā*. The fourth share was given to the *Kraudyas of Rāmagrāma*. The fifth share was given to the bramins of *Viṣṇudvīpa*. The sixth share was given to the *Liechavis of Vaishali*. The seventh share was given to the *Shākya of Kapilavasthu*. And the eighth share was given to *Varsākāra*, the prime
minister of Magadha, whose king, Ajātaśatu, son of Vaidehi. All the eight Relics shares were erected 8 stūpas for the bodily relics of the Blessed One, surmounted it with umbrellas, flags, and banners, instituted a festival in its honor, and paid homage to it, worshipping and venerating it with perfumes, garlands, flowers, incense and music.

As we have known, under the period of the Buddha, Buddhism has reached nearly everywhere in India, some of the important places of his time are Lumbini, where the Buddha was born, now belonging to Nepal; Kapilavasthu, which was situated in a rich irrigated plain between the Nepalese foothills and the river Rohini or Rapti; Rajagriha (modern Rajgir in Patna district of Bihar) the capital of the powerful state of Magadha, Pataliputra (modern Patna); Vaishali (Basash near Hajipur in Muzaffarpue district of Bihar), Uruvella or Bodhgaya (where the Buddha attained enlightenment or supreme wisdom), six miles south of Gayā. Sarnath or Rishipatan close to Varanasi where the Buddha preached his spiritual message for the first time, Kushinagar or Kusinara (Kusia in Gorakhpur district, U.P. 35 miles east of the Gorakhpur city) where the Buddha left his mortal body in his eightieth years: Kaushambi (modern Kosham on the Jamuna, 30 miles north-west of Allahabad, where Udayan of the Vatsya kingdom used to rule; Saket (at present Ayodhya on the Saju river in Faizabad district, U.P.); Champa (at present Bhagalpur), Sankashya (Sankisha-Basantapur, Etah district, U.P.), Nala-gram (Nalanda or Bargaon near Rajgir), and so on.

Several centuries after the Buddha’s Nirvāṇa, from India, Buddhism was preached too many countries outside in India on two ways, south and north. To the south as countries: Ceylon (Srilanka), Thailand, Burma (Myanmar), Laos, Cambodia, etc… To the north, as countries such as: Nepal, China, Taiwan, Mongolia, Vietnam, Korea,
Japan, Tibet, etc… and nowadays, Buddhism is preached to all over the world.

II.2. The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism

When the Shākyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, there were two thought arose in his mind\(^\text{19}\): One, to keep his knowledge to himself and to pass into the bliss of Nirvāṇa; the other, prompted by compassion for other beings, to remain in the world to make the benefit of his wisdom upon all. These two ways mark the difference between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, for, while Hīnayāna does not by any means ignore compassion for others, nevertheless it stresses individual enlightenment. Mahāyāna, on the other hand, while not neglecting wisdom, nevertheless tresses compassion to such a marked degree that it overshadows the Hīnayāna in this aspect of Buddhism.

According to Buddhist history, Buddhism, which originated in the teaching of Shākyamuni Buddha, may be divided into four parts:

- Primitive Buddhism – the period from the beginning of the Buddha’s teaching to 100 years after his Nirvāṇa.

- Hīnayāna Buddhism – the development of the different schools from 100 years after the Buddha’s death to 100 AD.

- Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism – Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna flourishing together. A new epoch Buddhism, 106 – 300 AD., Buddhism is unified by Nāgārjuna.

- The predominance of the Mahāyāna, AD. 300 – 500.

The rise of the *Mahāyāna* during the early centuries is considered as a veritable revolution\(^{20}\), in the thought and practice of Buddhism. With its rise, both the aims of Buddhist religious practice and the means of achieving those aims underwent a radical change.

*Mahāyānism* was no doubt a breakaway religion, but it was not altogether a new religion. Its roots are to be traced to the very life and teachings of the Buddha. Immediately after the *Sambodhi*, for several weeks the Buddha thought to keep his knowledge for himself, as the common people could not understand and practice it\(^{21}\). But after some contemplation, and with the intervention of *Sahampati Brahma*, he decided to share his enlightenment with the suffering mankind\(^{22}\). It is in this deep concern of the Buddha for the mankind and his desire to save them by removing their ignorance (*avidyā*), which is the root of sorrow and suffering, we can see the beginning of *Mahāyānism*. After this resolve the Buddha started on his missionary career.\(^{23}\)

The Buddha was teacher of extraordinary patience and capacity. He devised his teachings to suit the intellectual levels and mental capacities of each whom he taught.

According to the *Saṃyuttanikāya*\(^{24}\), the Buddha has classified people into different grades according to its fertility. According to him, people are of three different categories – excellent, mediocre and dull, and taught in such a way that each of them could understand and practice his teachings. To the common people his teachings were only a code of morals intended for self – improvement and for promoting

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\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 86.


\(^{24}\) Edward Conze (ed.), *Buddhist Texts through the Ages*, New York, 1954: p. 34.
harmonious social life. They were satisfied with them. Such teachings are known as *Vyakta Upadeśa* or exoteric teachings which constitute the original or the basic teachings of the Buddha\(^{25}\). To the highly intellectual persons who could understand deeper things, he taught very intricate subjects suitable issues of philosophy. The people with their higher intellectual qualities could go deep into the ontological perception of the Buddha and develop his teachings\(^{26}\), which were expounded and elaborated through the writings and commentaries of great luminaries like Ācarya Nāgārjuna, Āryadēva, Dignāga, Bhāvaviveka, Asaṅga, and Dharmakirti over a long period of time. The result was the rise and development of *Mahāyāna*\(^{27}\). Therefore *Mahāyāna* was only a developed form of Buddhism, having its roots in the very teachings of the Buddha. Edward Conze rightly remarks: “Buddhism throughout its history has the unity of an organism, in that; each development has taken place in continuity from the previous one. There is in Buddhism no innovation, but what seems so is in fact an adaption of pre-existing ideas.”\(^{28}\)

Nor the emergence of *Mahāyāna* system was sudden. It developed doctrine by doctrine through centuries taking into its fold not only the doctrinal developments but also the changing situations in the religious and socio-economic condition in the land. Further it is not “a single vehicle but rather a train comprising many carriages of different classes.”\(^{29}\) As Buddhism expanded geographically it had to reconcile with the local cults, adopting some of their principles and practices, as a result of which the original code of disciplines and practices, as a result

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\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., pp. 159-189.


of which the original code of disciples had to be enlarged and modified.\textsuperscript{30}

Further by about the second century B.C.E, there were remarkable changes in the religious life in the land. By that time, Buddhism made rapid progress because of the patronage it received from the great monarch \textit{Aśoka Maurya}\textsuperscript{31}. From being a local cult Buddhism developed into a national or an international religion.\textsuperscript{32} Alarmed at the popularity of Buddhism, \textit{Brāhmanism} reconciled or popularized with \textit{Bhagavatism} in order to check the growth and popularity of Buddhism.\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Brāhmanism} became less ritualistic and more devotional and attracted even foreignness like the \textit{Indo – Bactrians and Schythians} into its fold\textsuperscript{34}. The neo-\textit{Brāhmanical} system posed a serious threat to Buddhism. After \textit{Aśoka}’s death, Buddhism lost royal patronage.\textsuperscript{35} The successors of \textit{Mauryas}, the \textit{Śungas} in the north and the \textit{Sātavāhanas} in the south were stout champions of \textit{Brāhmanism} with learning towards \textit{Bhāgavatism}. Buddhism had to depend on more and more the patronage of the rich \textit{Śresthi and Gahapati} classes. Thus Buddhism had to face several challenges from the orthodox system with its emphasis on self – centered asceticism (attainment of their own enlightenment) was not equal to meet them.

\textsuperscript{34} R. C. Majumdar and Pusalkar (ed.), \textit{the Age of Imperial Unity}, Bombay, 1968: p. 98.
\textsuperscript{35} The Buddhist tradition is not complementary to Pushyamitra and describes him as cruel persecutor of Buddhism. He is said to have destroyed monasteries and killed monks in course of his march to Sakala, where he declared a prize of one hundred gold coins on the head of each monk. Cf. \textit{Indian Historical Quarterly}, Vol. XXII, p. 88.
Therefore Acāryas like Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva with special eye on the realities and needs of the station tried to reform Buddhism and the result was the development of Mahāyānism.36

It is difficult to trace the origin of the words Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. In the second Samgiti held at Vaishali, the Sangha was split up into the Theravāda and Mahāsāṅghika schools37. Some scholars think that the schism took place on the issue of Dasa Vatthunī38, the ten (novel) practices adopted by the Vajjian monks. But according to others the split was cause by the famous five points of Mahādeva39. The ten practices were purely disciplinary whereas the five points of Mahādeva were doctrinal.

In the second council, after a long discussion the Vajjian practices were rejected as opposed to the Vinaya by the president, Sabbakāmi.40 Those who support the president came to be known as the Sīhaviravādin or Theravādins.41 Those who supported the Vajjian monks were expelled from the Sangha.42 The later summoned their own council which was attended by 10000 monks.43 Because of the large number comprising of their Sangha, they called themselves as Mahāsāṅghikas.44

In the early Buddhist literature we come across words like Ēkayāna and Dviyāna, Bodhisattvayāna and Śrāvakayāna, Buddhayāna and Arhatayāna.45 The first systems in these three groups were held superior to the second ones. Ēkayāna means unique yāna whereas

37 N. Dutt, *Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 379.
40 Cūḷavagga, Pali Text Society, Vol. XII, p. 11.
41 P. V. Bapat (ed.), *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Delhi, 1960: p. 100.
42 Ibid., p. 90.
43 Ibid., p. 100.
Dviyāna means only secondly yāna. Bodhisattvayāna is always superior to Śrāvakayāna and aims of Buddhahood are naturally much higher than Arhathood. Therefore Dviyāna, Śrāvakayāna and Arhatayāna were used by the Mahāsāṅghikas to denote the Theravāda in order to castigate it as an inferior system. Finally they coined the words Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna.

In book, Opening the Heart of Cosmos, Ven. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh explains: Original Buddhism (also called source Buddhism) comprises the teachings given during the lifetime of the historical Buddha Shākyamuni. This was the first Buddhism. Original Buddhism was a time of unified Buddhism, there was just one Sūtra collection and one Vinaya collection. Then came schools Buddhism, which developed about 150 years after the Buddha’s lifetime, when the early Buddhist Sangha split into two schools – the Theravāda (way of the Elders), which was conservative in nature and the Mahāsāṅghikavāda (the way of the Majority), which was more progressive. As time went on, these two schools further divided. The records speak of eighteen schools but we know that at one time there were more, as many as twenty five or twenty six schools, each with its own Sūtra and Vinaya collection.

The Mahāyāna way of study and practice arose from the Mahāsāṅghika (Majority) school. When that study and practice were sufficiently ripe, the sūtras of Mahāyāna began to appear. Thus we could say that the formation of Buddhism took place in three stages: 1. Original Buddhism, 2. Schools’ Buddhism, and 3. Mahāyāna Buddhism;

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46 Ibid., pp. 124-125.
48 The Sūtra and Vinaya collections are known as the Sūtra Pitaka (Basket of Sermons or Talks of the Buddha) and Vinaya Pitaka (Basket of Mindfulness Trainings). For more on the early development of Buddhism and the doctrinal schisms between the various schools, see Edward Conze, Buddhist thought in India (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967).
When Mahāyāna Buddhism began to develop, Mahāyāna practitioners called the schools which did not belong to Mahāyāna (Great vehicle), “Hīnayāna” (Little Vehicle).

The highest spiritual ideal of Hīnayāna is the Arhat (Worthy One) who through his own effort and practice attains liberation. The monastic Sangha was focused only on personal salvation, thinking about Nirvāṇa only in individual terms. The Mahāyāna put forth the ideal of Bodhisattva (bodhi ‘wisdom, enlightenment’, sattva ‘beings’ who shares the fruits of his or her practice with all other beings. The Bodhisattva is someone who upon attaining enlightenment, vows to forgo entering Nirvāṇa until all other sentient beings down to the very last blade of grass – are else liberated. This insight was very profound Buddhism expressed in Mahāyāna terms engaged, quite positive and very beautiful.

The Theravāda school taught that there was only one Bodhisattva, the past lives of historical person Siddhārtha Gautama, who became the Buddha. According to the Hīnayāna the best some us could do was to become an Arhat and that only after many lifetimes of practice. Unable to dedicate themselves to the kind of austere practices required of monastic, lay Buddhists began to focus only on providing support to the monastic Sangha in order to gain merit that would help them to a favorable rebirth. People did not believe that they could become a Buddha so they did not feel the need to practice in order to become a Buddha.

The Mahāyāna thinkers saw the great danger of this. Among the early Mahāyāna philosophers were many intelligent laypeople as well as a number of monastic who saw that there was a risk that Buddhism would die as a living tradition if the monastics of Sangha did not open
up to the world. Noting that the Buddha mentions the existence of other Buddhas in early sūtras, they concluded that if there are many Buddhas there must also be many Bodhisattvas. In the Mahāyāna sūtras, Śāriputra is predicted to attain Buddhahood. The significance of this that every disciple of the Buddha, the original Sangha of Shrāvakas (“World – hearers” those who directly heard the Buddha’s teaching), also has the capacity to become a Buddha. What was possible for Siddhārtha, and for Śāriputra and the other Shrāvakas, is also possible for each of us.

Nevertheless, Hīnayāṇa continued to flourish in India side by side with Mahāyāṇa. Both traditions had renowned colleges and monasteries and often Hīnayānists and Mahāyānists lived under the same root. Both Hīnayāṇa and Mahāyāṇa missionaries went out to propagate Buddhism all over Asia. While Hīnayāṇa became the predominant form of Buddhism in South and South Asia, Mahāyāṇa spread mainly in North and East Asia and proliferated into a great number of schools in Tibet, China, Vietnam and Japan.

It should be clear that these philosophical differences did not produce a split in the Sangha: adherents of the Madhyamaka or the Yogācāra schools continued to be ordained in the same monastic tradition as the adherents of the ‘old school’. Throughout the followers of the Mahāyāṇa accepted the Vinaya of the Hīnayānists and did not produce new monastic codes some would insist that Mahāyāṇa expressed less a difference in doctrine than in attitude while Hīnayānists supposedly strove to perfect (only) themselves and to attain Arahattā,

49 This does not mean that Mahāyānist ideas did not also find reception in those countries. As Walpola Rahula (History of Buddhism in Ceylon) writer, during the ninth and tenth centuries some major Srilanka monasteries were under Mahāyānist administration (pp. 134 f.). He also attributes the widespread worship of Buddha images in Srilanka to Mahāyānists influence. Mahāyāṇa influence has always been strong in Vietnam.
Mahāyānists cultivated universal compassion for all suffering beings and were to strive towards complete Buddhahood.

The first great Buddhist writer to use the word Mahāyāna was Aśvaghosa, who is believed to have live at the court of emperor Kanishka\(^5\). In his works, Buddhacarita, the word Mahāyāna occurs four times, but it was used not to donate a separate system of religion and philosophy. It was used only in the sense of the law of perfect Buddha; however, in the writing of Aśvaghosa, especially in his Buddhacarita, there is indication of traditions from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna. In this work, Aśvaghosa explains the theory of *atman* and said that this is the *Mahāyāna*, the instrument of the law of the perfect Buddha.

It is universally agreed that Acārya Nāgārjuna has systematized and propagated Mahāyāna Buddhism. In his commentaries on *Prajñāpāramitā*, Acārya Nāgārjuna says that Śrāvakayāna: was for the individual salvation, whereas the Mahāyāna was for the benefit of the entire mankind\(^5\).

Philosophically, Mahāyāna stands on a higher plane than Hīnayāna, Nāgārjuna says in the same work that Śrāvakayānā believed in the *Śunya*ta of individual entity (*Pudgala*śūnyatā) but Buddhayaṇa asserts the *Śunya*ta not only of individual entity but even cosmic existence (*Sarvam* Šūnyam)\(^5\). In the *Avatamsaka sūtra*, quoted by Kimura, Nāgārjuna says: “All people in the Mahāyāna can accomplish ‘Sarvajnamarga’ without any hindrance

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\(^5\) Kanishka was a king of the Kushana Empire in South Asia. He was famous for his military, political and spiritual achievements, and along with Aśoka and Harshavardhana is considered to be the greatest king by Buddhists. He had a vast empire, it extended from Oxus in the East to Varanasi in the West, and from Kashmir in the North to the coast of Gujarat including Malwa in the South. Kanishka is mostly remembered for convening the fourth great Buddhist council in Kashmir, which marked the beginning of Mahāyāna Buddhism.


\(^5\) Ibid.
and all people can arrive at the realm of bliss by that Sarvajñānayāna.\textsuperscript{53} The Ratnāvalī of Nāgārjuna describes Mahāyāna as possessing very merit and absolute good alone is dear to it, because it does not take into consideration what is good for oneself.

Āryadēva, the disciple and successor of Nāgārjuna compares Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. He tries to prove the worthless of the former and extols the superiority of the latter. At one place he says: “The people of the small vehicle (Hīnayāna) are afraid of death at every step, their achievement of victory in war lies indeed very far off; while the men of great vehicle (Mahāyāna) are clad with amour of mercy, they are intent on saying the world and are fully equipped with the bow and arrows of sympathy and morality.\textsuperscript{54}

While the above philosophers established the greatness of Mahāyāna, Asaṅga strongly criticized Hīnayāna and declared the superiority of Mahāyāna. He says that in all the five aspects of religious belief and practice Mahāyāna is superior to Hīnayāna: in aspiration, in teaching, in the way of livehood and in the period of exertion. In all these aspects Hīnayāna is very narrow, while Mahāyāna is noble and higher. The Hīnayāna aspires for individual salvation which it thinks possible in three births and the monopoly only ascetic way of life. On the other hand, Mahāyāna aspires for the acquisition of merit as well as wisdom, which was possible even for virtuous upāsaka and with which he strives indefinitely till the entire mankind is saved.\textsuperscript{55} Vasubandhu, the brother of Asaṅga in his Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra śastra compares Hīnayāna to milk and Mahāyāna to cream.\textsuperscript{56} According to all these

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 143.  
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., pp. 166-167.  
philosophers, the Buddha preached that all beings possessed the nature of Buddha.

From around 300 CE there emerged in some parts of India – in Bengal and Assam in the east and in the district of Uddiyana in the west – a new form of Buddhism, which has been termed ‘Tantric’. The word Tantra originally meant ‘loom’ or ‘thread’, but was soon understood as a technical term implying magic and secret rites. Tantra, which did not remain restricted to Buddhism but extended too many forms of Hinduism, did not arise suddenly. It resulted from the growth of magical beliefs and ritual practices in popular religion, and from ideas in some circles of mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhism. What some consider a ‘third vehicle’, calling it the ‘Vajrayāna’ or ‘Diamond vehicle’, others would hold to be a special form of Mahāyāna. As with Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna is not easy to establish, especially since frequently a Buddhist might be ordained in a Hīnayāna tradition, follow a Mahāyāna philosophical school, and practice certain rituals of Vajrayāna.

The use of miracle to spread the Dharma and the defeat of opponents by means of magic became quite commonplace features in the biographies of Buddhist teachers who established Buddhism in India, Tibet, and China, such as Nāgārjuna (C. 100 -60 CE), Śāntideva (eighth century CE), Śāntaraksita, Bodhidharma, Atiśa, and especially the legendary Padmasambhava.

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57 Klaus K. Klostermair, Op. Cit. See chapter 9, on Tantric Buddhism, pp. 190-199.
58 The Interpretation of Tantra as ‘thread’ is understood to refer to the tradition of teachers and disciples through which these (secret) teachings were transmitted.
II.3. Characteristics of Enlightenment in Buddhism

The Buddhist life aims at attaining enlightenment, technically known as ‘Bodhi’. In this aim Hinayānists and Mahāyānists are at one, but with the former there are no conscious efforts to impart the bliss of enlightenment to all other follow-beings – if necessary, unconditionally. Enlightenment is used an English equivalent for Bodhi which comes from ‘Budh’, the root also of Buddha – the enlightened One. Budh means primarily ‘to know’, ‘to be aware of’ or ‘to be awakened to’, and ‘awakening’ instead of ‘enlightenment’ may be a better term for that Bodhi which the Buddha attained under the Bodhi-tree. The Buddha was awakened to the truth of Suchness, Tathatā, and saw Reality as it is in itself, Yathābhutam. This awakening emancipated Prince Siddhārtha, son of king Shuddhodana, from the bondage of ignorance and despotism of karma, and he became the Buddha. The term ‘ignorance’, therefore, means not to be awakened to the ultimate meaning of life and this not – being – awakened leads to the whirlpool of birth and death where karma wields its power.

That the realization of supreme enlightenment (anuttara-samyakasambodhi) is the end of the Buddhist life, Mahāyāna and Hinayāna, is a well known fact to all Buddhist students; for what constitutes Buddha-hood is the enlightenment itself, which the Buddha attained under the Bodhi-tree by the river Nairaṅjanā about twenty-five

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59 By this we mean the doctrine of Tariki (other-power) developed in the thirteen century. According to this doctrine, first taught by Shinran (1173-1262), we are too sinful to deliver ourselves from the heavy burden of ignorance and karma by our own efforts, moral and intellectual. The power of faith is needed-faith in so called Original Vows of Amitābha Buddha. All that is needed on our part is to rely absolutely upon the omnipotence of Amitābha’s spiritual power. He has accomplished in his past lives everything that is required for our deliverance. And what is now demanded of ourselves up unconditionally to the ‘other-power’ which is Amitābha’s love for us.
centuries ago. All the teachings of Buddhism which are taught in the
East at present uniformly find their source of inspiration in this truth
which is at once historical and metaphysical. If not for this
enlightenment there would be no Buddhas, no Buddhism, no Śrāvakas,
o Pratyekabuddhas, no Arhats, no Bodhisattvas. Enlightenment is the
basis of all Buddhist philosophy as well as all Buddhist activity, moral
and spiritual.

The early Buddhists sought enlightenment for their own sakes for
their own spiritual welfare, and evidently had no thought for others and
for the world at large. Even when they thought of them, they required of
each individual Buddhist to make his own effort for salvation – that is,
for enlightenment, because according to them, ignorance which prevents
them from getting enlightened and karma which keeps them bound to
transmigration are based on the notion of individual realities.

It was otherwise with the Mahāyānists. Their wish for
enlightenment was first of all for the sake of world. Just because they
desired the enlightenment and emancipation of the entire world they
strove first to enlighten themselves to emancipate themselves, to make
themselves free from the bondage of all the karma – and the knowledge
– hindrances. Being thus prepared they could go out into the world and
proclaim the Buddha – dharma to their fellow – beings.

The Buddhist life is an open war on bondage, slavery and
attachment of all kinds. But emancipation is not the state of mere
negation, for this is merely another form of attachment with an equally
binding force. Emancipation is enlightenment whereby dualism or
relativity is illumined to its fuller significance. This is achieved by
means of Prajñā, hence the important role to be played by it in the entire
scheme of the Buddhist life.
Emancipation is thus effected by an intuitive awakening, without which there will not have Buddhist life. The Threefold discipline (Siksha), recommended by Mahāyāna as well as Hīnayāna as constituting the Buddhist life, is meant to lead us to awakening or enlightenment, as we have seen, the last of the three is Prajñā, showing that is Prajñā which is the efficient cause of enlightenment. Morality (Vinaya), controlling the life of the brotherhood, is meant to train the mind and body so that conditions will be prepared for the final awakening of Prajñā. But according to the Mahāyānists morality alone is not enough. The inner mind must be trained and matured for Prajñā by Dhyāna discipline, for the former lies deeply buried under a heavy load of discursive understanding.

The Threefold discipline, however, pertains to the individual, and though suitable for the Arhat will not suffice for the Bodhisattva. Individual emancipation is very desirable indeed, but it is too ego-centered, for all religious – minded people would wish the merit which accrues from such emancipation to be extended towards all beings and shared with them. This was the reason why the Mahāyānists were not satisfied with the Sangha institution but aspired to put into practice the decision of the Buddha to come out of his Samādhi and postpone his entering Nirvāṇa. The Mahāyānists read here the moving of the great loving heart of the Buddha.

The Buddhist doctrine of vow or prayer (Pranidhana) is of great importance in the Mahāyāna system of teaching, and is closely associated with the idea of Bodhisattva-hood. The Bodhisattva’s vow is not merely a strong wish to have a thing accomplished; it is an expression of the will innate in each of us which manifests itself when we realize that we are because of what others are. Since this will is part
of our being, the Bodhisattva’s vow is more than his personal with given utterance, for it moves his deepest life-impulse, Mahākaruṇā. Herein lays the source of the teaching of Pure land, for we read: “what is the Buddha’s mind? It is no other than the great loving heat”. The doctrine of the Pure land reaches its culmination when emancipation through enlightenment develops into salvation by faith alone.

Mahāyāna Buddhism thus holds to its followers various ways of progressing on the way to enlightenment or salvation, by emphasizing:

- The way of the Moral life – practicing the Eightfold noble path.
- The way of contemplation or meditation, as in Zen which aim at obtaining immediate insight into Truth.
- The way of practice, as in Shingon, which combine the disciplinary way with meditation, and adds practices of devotion and knowledge.
- The way of belief or faith in the Grace of a Buddha, such as Amitābha or Akṣobhya, whereby the devotee wins salvation by faith in the Grace and Love of Another.

The general formula of the doctrine occur a number of times in the Pāli Canon, where it is repeated in a set form of words that appears to have been recognized from earliest times as a standard expression of the Buddha’s insight. We quote this formula in Pāli not only because of its intrinsic sacredness, but also in order that the reader may be afforded an opportunity of acquiring merit by reading and reciting it in the original language:

‘Imasmiṃ sati, idaṃ hoti, imass' uppādā, idaṃ uppjjati; imasmim asati, idaṃ na hoti; imassa nirodhā, idaṃ nirujjhati.’
(This being, that becomes, from the arising of this that arises; this not becoming, that does not become; from the ceasing of this, that ceases.)\textsuperscript{60}

The Mahāyāna ideal differs from the Hīnayāna. The love – phase of religious life is more emphasized here than its rationalism. In other that his follow – beings may increase or grow stronger in their spiritual power, the Bodhisattva wishes to extend towards them whatever merit he has acquired by his moral life. Although he is morally ready for it, he will even postpone his own enlightenment.\textsuperscript{61} He does this because he knows that there are yet many suffering beings that he feels he ought to wake up to enlightenment.

However strong the chain of individual karma may be the Bodhisattva's whole – soul endeavor is to break it in pieces. For by this he can achieve the grand scheme of universal enlightenment and the salvation of entire humankind.\textsuperscript{62}

II. 4. Bodhicitta and Its Importance in Mahāyāna Buddhism

Bodhicitta is a common technical term in Buddhist Sanskrit literature. In the Mahāyāna tradition, bodhicitta is closely related to the spiritual

\textsuperscript{60} Majjhima Nikāya, II. 32, Saṃyutta Nikāya, II. 28, etc.,

\textsuperscript{61} This doctrine is known as the doctrine of Upāya (Skilful means) and of Parināmana (turning over). The Upāya is born of Prajñā and Karuṇā, and connotes a more general idea than Parināmana. The Parināmana is characteristic of Mahāyāna. Literally it means to turn the result of one’s own merit over to somebody else. It goes directly against the individualistic idea of karma and also against the moral law of causation as ordinarily understood. For, the Parināmana is impossible so long as one is confined to a dualistic world being (astitva) and non-being (nāstitva). By means of Prajñā and Karuṇā the latter is transcended and the Parināmana is made to work out its mission.

The Parināmana works in two directions. The Prajñāpāramitā refers to one of these directions when it makes the Bodhisattva give up all his stock of merit towards the realization of universal enlightenment (Sambodhi or Sarvajñatā). This we may call the upward moving of Parināmana. The other one is form the Buddha or Sarvajñatā to all beings. The power that constitutes Buddhahood emanates, as it were, from its body and is transferred on to all beings, and the latter are helped thereby to quit their life of ignorance and compassion.

\textsuperscript{62} See B. L. Suzuki's Nōgaku, in which she tells how the spirit of the butterfly, or of snow, or of the banana-plant, attained Buddhahood.
practice of the Buddhist aspirant to enlightenment. *Bodhicitta* is Sanskrit compound of the words *bodhi* and *citta*.

In the Buddhist texts, the term *bodhi* usually means the state of being Buddha, or the quality in virtue of which one is Buddha. In general, this term is translated as: perception, comprehension, knowledge or wisdom. To modern translations, it means either enlightenment or awakening.⁶³

*Citta* means mind, thought, attention and also desire or similar to the English word mind, as in the expression “to keep in mind” and “she changed her mind.”⁶⁴

Therefore *bodhicitta* means ‘thought of enlightenment,’ ‘mind of enlightenment,’ ‘will of enlightenment,’ ‘mind turned to enlightenment,’ ‘awakening mind,’ or ‘desire for awakening.’

Attainment of supreme Buddhahood part, the Rising of the thought of enlightenment is the most important event that can occur in the life of a human being. As by the discovery of a priceless jewel a poor man becomes immensely rich, so with the Rising of the thought of enlightenment the devotee is transformed into a *Bodhisattva*. The path of the *Bodhisattva* being for the *Mahāyāna* the supreme archetype of spiritual paths whatever, the rising of the thought of enlightenment, by means of which that path is entered upon, may be regarded as corresponding to what on a lower level of experience appears as the phenomenon of religious conversion. Hence on the day on which this thought arises in his mind the devotee rejoices that his birth has become

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fruitful, his human life is a blessing; that he has been born into the race of the enlightened One and is now their son.

The term *citta*, being derived from the root *Cit*, meaning ‘to perceive, to form an idea in the mind, etc.,’ should be interpreted as ‘thought, idea.’ The compound *bodhi-citta* therefore means the thought or idea of Supreme enlightenment. Its denotation is not metaphysical but psychological.

To cherish the desire for enlightenment is no ordinary event in the life of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist, for this is the definite step he takes towards the goal as distinguished from the life of the so-called *Hīnayāna* follower. Enlightenment is not mere personal affair which does not concern the community at large; its background is laid in the universe itself. When I am enlightened, the whole *Dharmadhātu* is enlightened, in fact the reason of my enlightenment is the reason of the *Dharmadhātu* the two are most intimately bound up with each other. Therefore, that we have been able to conceive a great longing for enlightenment means that the entire would wish to be liberated from ignorance and evil passion. This is the meaning of the following statement made by Ven. *Sāgaramēgha*, one of the teachers whom *Sudhana* visited in his long spiritual pilgrimage:65 *It is indeed well for you that you have already awakened the desire for enlightenment, this is impossibility for those who have not accumulated enough stock of merit in their past lives.* ‘A stock of merit’ so called has value only when it concerns the welfare of the world generally. Unless a man is able to survey the entire field of relationships in which he stands – that is unless his ‘merit’ (*Kuśala*) is

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not real ‘merit’, and no accumulation of such will result in the awakening of the desire for enlightenment.

Since the desire for enlightenment is composed of all these attributes as here described, the *Bodhisattva* is capable of producing the following results at the moment this desire asserts itself in the depths of his being:

- He passes beyond the stage of an ordinary being;
- He enters into the rank of *Bodhisattva*hood,
- He is born in the family of *Tathāgatas*,
- He is irreproachable and faultless in his family honour,
- He stands away all worldly courses,
- He enters into a supra-worldly life,
- He is established in things belonging to *Bodhisattva*-hood,
- He abides in the above of the *Bodhisattva*,
- He is impartially ushered into the *Tathāgata* – groups of the past, present, and future,
- He is ultimately destined for supreme enlightenment.

When he thus takes his abode in these teachings, he is said to have gained the first stage of a *Bodhisattva* known as Joy (*pramuditā*), because he is now immovable in his faith.

The raising of the *bodhicitta* is not an event of one day, for it requires a long preparation, not one life but of many lives. The *citta* will remain dormant in those souls where there is no stock of merit ever accumulated. Moral merit must be stored up in order to germinate tater into the great overshadowing tree of the *bodhicitta*. The doctrine of *karma* may not be a very scientific statement as long as we are all

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historical beings we cannot escape the *karma* that preceded us, whatever this may mean. Wherever there is the notion of time, there is a continuity of *karma*. When this is admitted, the *bodhicitta* could grow from the soil where no nourishing stock of goodness had ever been secured.

According to *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, in *Dharmakāya*, wisdom and compassion, far from being contraries, are inseparable, the static and dynamic aspects of one supreme Reality. That thought in which the devotee, rising for an instant to the level of the *Dharmakāya*, for the first time brings together, not by way of merely external juxtaposition, but by the realization of their essential non-duality, the termed the thought of enlightenment is produced by the fusion of two trends, so greatly does wisdom and compassion as independent realities, that between the thought of enlightenment and its supposed components these seems to be an absolute discontinuity. Therefore Šāntideva compares the production of the thought of enlightenment to the finding of a jewel on a dunghill by a blind man! Yet when he desires to give expression to the thought of enlightenment, the devotee or *Bodhisattva*, as he may now be called – cannot do otherwise than treat it as continuous with wisdom and compassion and speak of it as though it were simply a combination or conjunction of these two trends, we therefore find Šāntideva declaring:⁶⁷

As the Buddha of yore accepted the thought of *Bodhi* and regularly the discipline of the *Bodhisattva*, even so I too produce (in my mind) this thought of *Bodhi* for the good of the world, and I will follow that discipline in due order.

⁶⁷ *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, III, Verses: 22-23.
The other unbounded benefits of bodhicitta, which was beyond the mind’s ability to calculate and were explained by the Buddha’s great regent Maitreya, the Loving protector, who in the fullness of his wisdom set them forth, with the help of two hundred and thirty examples, to the son of a wealthy merchant, the youthful Bodhisattva Sudhana. They are all to be found in the Gandhavyūha chapter of the Avataṃsaka sūtra. Since Śāntideva has referred us to this text, here is the relevant passage. The Gandhavyūha says: In the presence of the noble Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva Sudhana generated the mind of enlightenment, whereupon Mañjuśrī instructed him and sent him to the monk Meghashi. One by one, Sudhana attended one hundred and ten spiritual masters and each of them taught him single aspect of the practice of the Bodhisattvas. Finally, he came again into the presence of the venerable Bodhisattva Maitreya, who was living on the southern land on the shore of the sea. Maitreya spoke to his attendants and said:

Consider now great perfection of his thought!
Sudhana (the son of one so well-endowed with wealth)
Comes seeking now the Bodhisattva deeds.
He, the wise and learned, has now come to me
Did you journey well, O you in whom
Compassion and a gentle love have sprung?
Did you journey well, who are so peaceful to behold?
Accomplishing such hardships, are you not fatigued?
Approach, be welcome, you whose mind is pure!

Comforted and encouraged by these words, Sudhana gave an account of what he had experienced and requested Maitreya to speak

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about the deed of *Bodhisattvas*. In reply, *Maitreya* told him to look into his palace, the name of which was: ‘*Essence Adorned by the Ornaments of Vairochana*’. *Sudhana* went to palace, and at each of its windows he saw one of the ways in which the venerable *Maitreya* had himself trained in the deeds of the *Bodhisattvas*, giving away his head and limbs. So it was that *Sudhana* learned all the *Bodhisattva* deeds and took the perfectly to heart.

The protector *Maitreya* taught to him the benefit of *bodhicitta* at great length: ‘*O son of my lineage, bodhicitta is like a seed, from which the qualities of the Buddhas grow. It is like a field the earth, which is the foundation of entire universe…. Son of my lineage! These are the limitless qualities and benefits of bodhicitta and even then there are more!*’

Mentioning about importance of *bodhicitta*, His Holiness *Kyabje Ling Rinpoche* said that: Merely holding in mind the thought: ‘I must attain enlightenment for the sake of benefitting others’ without first cultivating the prerequisite causes, stages and basic foundations of this thought will not give birth to the *bodhicitta*. For this reason the venerable *Atiśa* once asked: ‘Do you anyone with *bodhicitta* not born from meditation on love and compassion?’ What benefits arise through having generated *bodhicitta*? If we know what qualities good food has

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69 Ibid., p. 50.  
70 Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, the senior tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is the 97th holder of the Garden throne and thus head of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He was ordained by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, to whom his predecessor had also been tutor. This teaching was given at Tushita Mahāyāna Meditation Centre on November 14th, 1979.  
71 *Atiśa* (AD 982–1054) was a famous Indian Buddhist Teacher, and the author of *Lamp for the Path*, the first text on *Lamrim* (*the stages of the path to enlightenment*). He was Abbot of the great Buddhist monastery of *Vikramashila* at a time when *Mahāyāna* Buddhism was flourishing in India. He was later invited to Tibet, and his arrival there led to the re-establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.
we will attempt to obtain, prepare and seat it. Similarly, when we hear of the efficacy of the bodhicitta, we shall seek to learn the methods and practices by which it is generated.

The great sages of lesser vehicle possess innumerable wondrous qualities, yet someone who has developed merely the initial stages of the bodhicitta surpasses them in terms of his nature. This is likened to the baby son of universal monarch who, although only an infant possessing no qualities of knowledge or power, is granted a higher status than any scholar or minister in the empire. In terms of conventional benefits, all happiness and goodness that exists is a product of bodhicitta. The Buddhas are born from the Bodhisattvas, but the Bodhisattvas are born from the bodhicitta. As the result of the birth of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, great waves of enlightened energy spread throughout the universe, influencing sentient beings to create positive karma. This positive karma in turn brings them much benefit and happiness. On the one hand, the mighty stream of enlightened and enlightening energy issues from the wisdom body of the Buddhas, but as the Buddhas are born from Bodhisattvas and Bodhisattvas from the bodhicitta, the ultimate source of the universal reservoir of goodness and happiness is the bodhicitta itself.

Taking about importance of bodhicitta, His Holiness the Fourteen Dalai Lama XIV of Tibet is usually said that, the precious awakening mind of bodhicitta, which cherishes others sentient beings instead of oneself, is the trunk of the Bodhisattva’s practice – the path of the Great vehicle. It is the base and foundation of all the activities of an awakening Warrior, a Bodhisattva – activities which are, for ordinary
beings, even difficult to rejoice in. This awakening mind transforms all one’s wholesome actions into a catalyst for the attainment of Buddhahood. This is an ultimate state of mind that will enable us to accomplish our own welfare as well as that of all other sentient beings. For these reasons the great beings and saints keep this altruistic mind of bodhicitta as their essential practice.

No matter what spiritual practice we do as Mahāyāna Buddhists, they all begin with going for refuge in the Three Race and supreme jewels and the activation of the awakening mind. This means not merely repeating the words, but integrating their meaning into our mind. Thinking about the implication behind the prayers is what brings the best result. This is very important.

The Buddha taught numerous techniques for liberation in his teachings, the teachings on method are profound and effective, and the Buddha and all great masters always emphasized, in every Mahāyāna instruction text, that the teachings should only be given to those who have bodhicitta. The profound teachings cannot be taught to those who do not have bodhicitta, because bodhicitta is the foundation. It is the heart. When we have bodhicitta, any sacred method is good and effective. When we do not have bodhicitta, the methods are useless and of no benefit. In Avatamsaka Sūtra, the Lord Buddha taught: “There are ten kinds of demons’ action: cultivating roots of goodness while forgetting the aspiration for enlightenment (bodhicitta), etc.”

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The great Bodhisattva Śāntideva said in his work, *Bodhicaryāvatāra*: 73 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*, practice *bodhicitta* and to achieve the highest goal was supreme Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

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