CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1. Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism

N. Dutt holds that Mahāyāna developed from the Mahāsaṅghika that was branched off from the Theravāda after the second Buddhist council about 110 years after the Buddha’s death.¹ P.V. Bapat agrees with N.Dutt’s view that the doctrine of Mahāsaṅghikas and their offshoots contain germs from which the Mahāyāna doctrine was developed.² J. Sinh³ states concretely that the beginning of Mahāyāna may be traced to the Mahāsaṅghikas, who coined Bodhisattvavāna that soon became Mahāyāna doctrine. Mahāsaṅghika also hinted at the idea of the Buddha-nature in all living beings and their Buddhology was developed into the Mahāyāna idea of trikāya. Mahāsaṅghika’s idealistic monism is the philosophical foundation of Mahāyāna. The concept of a transcendental Buddha in the Saddharmapuṭṭakāsastra was also inherited from the Lokottaravādin school, a branch of Mahāsaṅghika.

The Date of Mahāyāna

Though most of the scholars agree that Mahāyāna was developed from Mahāsaṅghika, but there is a difference of opinion concerning the date of emergence of Mahāyāna. Hajime Nakamura⁴ states that Mahāyāna Buddhism emerged at the beginning of the Christian era. And Taranatha (Tibetan historian)⁵ places the emergence of Mahāyānism during the reign of Kaniska and his son. And he also states that during the period, Nanda taught the Mahāyāna doctrine in the Anga country and then countless teachers of Mahāyāna such as Avitarka and others appeared in the different places.

Here, a hypothesis is brought out that if Mahāyāna Buddhism emerged during the time of Kaniska, how could Nanda teach Mahāyāna doctrine in Anga country? And on what

¹ NMB, p. 1.
² BYB, p. 105.
³ SIP1, p. 370.
⁴ HIB, p. 100.
⁵ AIB, p. 355.
basis could countless teachers of *Mahāyāna* appear in different places? By these reasons, one can come to conclusion that *Mahāyāna* Buddhism might have emerged before the period of Asoka.

Moreover, Romila Thapar⁶ and P.V. Bapat⁷ assert that in the middle of first century, under the reign of *Han Ming Ti*, Kasyapa Matanga and Chu Fa Lan brought the *Sūtra in Forty Two Sections* (the basic *sūtra* of *Mahāyāna*) to China and translated it at the White Horse temple at Loyang. To Romila Thapar⁸, central Asian oases such as *Yarkand*, *Khotan*, *Kashgar*, *Tashkend*, *Turfan*, *Miran*, *Kuccha*, *Qarashahr* and *Tun huang* became the centres of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism during the time of Kaniska. It is absurd to say that *Mahāyāna* Buddhism emerged during the first century B.C or the first century A.D. If it emerged during the first century B.C or the first century A.D., Kasyapa Matanga and Chu Fa Lan could not bring the *Mahāyāna sūtra* to China during the first century A.D. And the Central Asiatic oases could not be the centres of *Mahāyāna* during the time of Kaniska. Again, Hajime Nakamura⁹ affirms that the *Prajñāparamitā sūtras* were already in existence in primitive form in the second century B.C and *Avataṃsaka sūtra* came to existence before the time of Nāgārjuna, i.e. during the first century A.D.¹⁰ On the contrary, Andrew Skilton¹¹ asserts that *Mahāyāna* Buddhism was prevalent during the time of Asoka. Estimating the value of the third Buddhist council, Andrew Skilton writes: "The third Buddhist council was not the great Buddhist one for it consisted only of the *Theravādin* monks, who belonged to one of conflicting sects even the *Mahāyānists* were not invited."

Parallel with this view, N. Dutt¹² also states that in the second century B.C, the Greek rulers viz. the houses of Euthydemus and Eucratides crossed the *Hindukush* and took possession of *Kabul* and northwestern India. They were followed by Demetrieus and Theodorus, who were supporters of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, as they enshrined the Buddha’s

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⁶ RPHEI, p. 255.
⁷ BYB, p. 110.
⁸ Ibid.
⁹ HIB, p. 164.
¹⁰ Ibid., p. 196.
¹¹ ACB, p. 47.
¹² NMB, p. 3.
relics and erected sanctuaries. Apart from these, two Kharosthi inscriptions\textsuperscript{13} incised at the instance of the Greek chiefs which have been discovered at Swat and Taxila, show that Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a Buddhism had a firm footing in northwestern India and was promoted by the foreign rulers.

The above evidences also hold good with A.K. Warder’s view\textsuperscript{14} that Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a Buddhism, at first, had not any sub-sector though it was present during the third century B.C. Even Asvaghosa, the famous monk of Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a in Andhra country during the first century A.D. did not establish any school of Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a.

Through historical evidences, one can come to conclusion that Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a Buddhism came into existence during the third century B.C and it flourished during the periods of Sakas, Kus\text{"}{\tilde{\text{n}}}as, S\text{"}{\tilde{\text{t}}av\text{"}{\tilde{\text{h}}}anas and especially, it reached its climax during the time of Guptas.

\textbf{The Particular Features of Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a}

The rise of Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a Buddhism effected a significant revolution in Buddhism, both in thought and practice. The term Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a is, literally, the great vehicle or the highest means or the complete doctrine. The new movement is called thus for universal salvation as the kernel of it. It is large enough to carry all beings to the absolute Nirv\text{"}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a or real happiness. It invites all to aspire for the highest goal of the Buddhahood without exception of laity. Its out-look is broad and its aim is infinitely great like the infinite sky. Its capacity can accommodate various religious beliefs and popular practice. Moreover Sanskrit language, which is considered as the divine language of scripture, was used for its writings.\textsuperscript{15}

These special features were the factors that contributed to its growth and popularity. The term H\text{"}{\tilde{n}}ay\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a stands for the small vehicle or the imperfect means. Thus, it is called for its limitations in thought and practice. H\text{"}{\tilde{n}}ay\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}ists have not yet known the essence of the world and man that is always in the state of Nirv\text{"}{\tilde{\text{n}}}a. H\text{"}{\tilde{n}}ay\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}ic doctrine only mentions the phenomenal aspects such as suffering, impermanence and selflessness. Their main goal is the attainment of Arhatship that is equivalent to a Bodhisattva of sixth stage of Mah\text{"}y\text{`}{\tilde{\text{n}}}anism.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} AIB, p. 355.
\textsuperscript{15} JBC, p. 4.
Maitreyanātha and Asanga assert that *Hīnayāna* is a narrow doctrine, narrow in its aim, narrow in its methods and equipments.\(^{16}\) Vasubandhu regards *Hīnayāna* as milk and *Mahāyāna* as the cream of milk. Without embarking on the great vehicle, the ocean of misery can not be crossed.\(^{17}\)

*Hīnayāna*ists regard the Buddha as a historical person, the historical Gautama. Whereas *Mahāyāna*ists regard the Buddha as the transcendental, eternal and absolute, who saves all living beings through his triple body, *dharma*kyā, *sambhogakāya* and *nirmānakāya*. *Mahāyāna*ists believe in an infinite number of Bodhisattvas, who take vow to attain Buddhahood and to liberate all beings. *Mahāyāna*ists emphasize both the life of monk and that of householder. They consider *prajñā* (wisdom), *bhakti* (devotion) and *ānubhoga* (purposeless service) as the means to liberation. *Mahāyāna*ists regard Nirvāṇa as transcendental experience of *sūnyatā* and is a positive state. *Yogācāra* believe in only mind, *ālayavijñāna*, which constructs the conditioned world. According to them, *ālayavijñāna* is real and all objects, which are manifested from *ālayavijñāna*, are unreal. *Madhyamikas* believe in *sūnyatā* or emptiness which is the essence behind the impermanent phenomena and all things are the manifestation of *sūnyatā*.\(^{18}\) Enlightenment, according to *Mahāyāna*, does not mean simply the understanding of the Four Noble Truths in their positive states but the experience of *sūnyatā* or Buddha-nature that constitutes the original enlightenment of all creatures. And the Buddha is not merely the Enlightened One in the old sense but an omniscient. This is why the Buddha’s enlightenment is higher than that of *Arhats*.

*Mahāyāna* is also called *Bodhisattvayāna*, the vehicle of the future Buddhas. The idea of *Bodhisattva* is the hall-mark of *Mahāyāna*.\(^{19}\) In the *Hīnayānic* doctrine, there is only one *Bodhisattva* who was before the Buddha’s enlightenment; while in *Mahāyāna* teachings there are innumerable *Bodhisattvas*, who take vows to become Buddhas in order to save all beings.

There are two types of *Bodhisattva* in the *Mahāyānic* doctrine. The former is the Household *Bodhisattva* and the latter is the Homeless *Bodhisattva*. The Household *Bodhisattva*, who lives in the family, has a duty towards parents, wife, children and society.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) SIP₂, p. 344.
\(^{19}\) JBC, p. 4.
Like Homeless Bodhisattva, he also observes the Bodhisattva precepts and practises ten pÈramitÈs (perfections). Household Bodhisattva is considered as the protector of Buddhism. Though he lives in the worldly family, he always keeps his mind pure and tries to avoid any disturbance from the external objects. He can also attain sainthoods from the joyful stage to immovable stage of Bodhisattva (from the first stage to eighth stage of Bodhisattva).\textsuperscript{20} Homeless Bodhisattva is one, who is dedicating his own life for the happiness of others. He is considered as the keeper of the Buddha’s Dharma. He tries to complete his self-benefit and then to benefit others. He not only teaches the Buddhist teachings to people but he also teaches professions, medicines, arts, literatures, philosophies, psychologies, etc to them. Besides, he also gives gifts to the poor, the needy, the orphans, etc. He also constructs hospitals, schools and other welfare projects. He can attain twelve stages of Bodhisattva. These are PramuditÈ, VimÈla, PrabhÈkarÈ, ArcismatÈ, SudradjayÈ, Abhimukhi, DûramgamÈ, AcalÈ, SÈdhumatÈ, Dharmamega, NirupamÈ, and JÈnnavatÈ. His highest stage is the Buddhahood (JÈnnavatÈ); those who attained Buddhahood, have both wisdom and compassion.

Another particular feature of MahÈyÈna is the harmonization of various religious beliefs. All gods and goddess of Brahmanism like Vi–†u, Siva, LakmÈ, Ganesh, etc appeared as the protectors of the Buddha’s Dharma and they are called Bodhisattvas. In Chinese tradition, goddess Durga is considered as a Bodhisattva and Kali as the Black Face Bodhisattva, who was an incarnation of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

On other hand, the Sakyamuni Buddha is considered as the ninth incarnation of Vi–†u by the PurÈnas.\textsuperscript{21} MahÈyÈna practises the image worship and ritual ceremony; the images of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, gods, goddesses are the objects of worship of MahÈyÈna. Specially, a doctrine of salvation by faith is emphasised and MahÈyÈnists use Spell or Dharnis or Mantra for attaining emancipation. Apart from these, the MahÈyÈnic doctrines such as SÈnyatÈ, Buddha-nature, NirvÈna, DharmakÈya, MaitrÈ, KarunÈ, AhiÈsÈ, etc are found in the Upanisads.

\textsuperscript{20} HBSL, pp. 284-94.
\textsuperscript{21} JBC, p. 8.
Moreover, the absolutic and idealistic ideas of Mahāyāna philosophers soon echoed in the writings of Advaita philosophers belonging to Vedic tradition.22 The kings such as Kusānas, Sātavāhanas, Vakatakas, Guptas, etc patronized for the harmonization of Buddhism and Brahmanism.

The Sects of Mahāyāna Buddhism

Mahāyāna Buddhism is said to exist before the time of Asoka (3rd A.D.), initially it had no any sub-sects.23

Towards the second century A.D., Rahurabhadra founded the Madhyamika school in the Anga country.24 Andrew Skilton25 and L.M. Joshi26 assert that the founder of Madhyamika school was Nēgērjunā, who was born in Vidarbha region of Mahārastra during the second century A.D. After his monastic training at Nēlandē, he lived in Andhra country.

As a matter of fact, Nēgērjunā, who was Rahurabhadra’s disciple, was not a founder of Madhyamika school. He only systematized all sūtras composed by some sects of Mahāsanghika and developed the idea of Madhyamika which was founded by his master.

Madhyamika school was followed by a galaxy of thinkers such as Nēgērjunā I (80-120 A.D.), Nēgērjunā II (or Nēgērbbodhi 2nd A.D.), Īryadeva (2nd A.D.), Buddhapēlita (5th A.D.), Bhavaviveka (5th A.D.), Candrakirti (6th A.D.), Santideva (7th A.D.) and others. In the sixth century A.D., the school was split into two sections, one led by Bhavavika and other by Buddhapēlita.27 The term Madhyamika means the doctrine of Middle path, i.e. the middle between the two extremes of existence and non-existence, permanence and impermanence, infinite and finite, pleasure and pain, etc.28

At first, Mahāyāna Buddhism had the Madhyamika school only. Towards the end of the third century A.D., Maitreyaṇētha, Asanga’s master, founded a new school, Yogācāra

22 Ibid.
23 AIB, p. 355.
24 Ibid., p. 356.
26 JBC, p. 7.
27 Ibid.
28 AIB, p. 363.
school.  

L.M. Joshi\textsuperscript{30} asserts that \textit{Yog\'c\'era} school was founded by Maitreyan\'tha probably in the third century A.D.; but J. Sinh\textsuperscript{31} holds that Maitreyan\'tha founded \textit{Yog\'c\'era} in the fourth century A.D. S. Radhakrishnan\textsuperscript{32} denies both above views and asserts that Asanga and his younger brother Vasubandhu, the teacher of Dinn\'ega, founded \textit{Yog\'c\'era} school in the fifth century A.D.

S. Radhakrishnan’s affirmation appears to go beyond historical evidences because Dinn\'ega flourished in the fifth century A.D.; and Vasubandhu, Asanga’s younger brother, who lived in the fourth century A.D., could not be Dinn\'ega’s master. Dinn\'ega’s master was Vasubandhu II, who lived in \textit{Ayodhy\'E} during the reign of Skandhagupta (456-467 A.D.).\textsuperscript{33} Whereas Vasubandhu I, Asanga’s younger brother, the author of \textit{Abhidharmakosa}, who lived in the beginning of the fourth century A.D. in \textit{Purusapura}, Kaniska’s capital, in \textit{Gandhara} during the reign of Samudragupta (335-380).\textsuperscript{34}

According to A.K. Wander\textsuperscript{35}, Vasubandhu of \textit{Vaibh\'Esika} school, Asanga’s younger brother certainly lived not later than the middle of the fourth century A.D. Hence Maiteyan\'tha founded the \textit{Yog\'c\'era} school in the third century A.D.  

Some Chinese, Tibetan, and Vietnamese scholars have misunderstood that the \textit{Yog\'c\'era} school was founded by \textit{Bodhisattva} Maitreya, the future Buddha, staying in the \textit{Tusita} heaven. They further believe that Vasubandhu used his super-nature power and went to \textit{Tusita} heaven to study the doctrine of \textit{Yog\'c\'era} from \textit{Bodhisattva} Maitreya. In fact, Vasubandhu, Asanga’s younger brother, learned the doctrine of \textit{Yog\'c\'era} from his master Manon\'tha.\textsuperscript{36} Even P.V. Bapat\textsuperscript{37}, in his book 2500 years of Buddhism, affirms hesitatingly that \textit{Bodhisattva} Maitreya and Maitreyan\'tha, who established the \textit{Yog\'c\'era} school in the third century A.D. are one.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[29] JBC, p. 7.
\item[30] Ibid.
\item[31] SIP\textsubscript{2}, p. 376.
\item[32] RIP\textsubscript{1}, p. 624.
\item[33] NMB, p. 39.
\item[34] DAI, p. 97.
\item[35] AIB, p. 424.
\item[36] JBC, p. 7.
\item[37] BYB, p. 108.
\end{footnotes}
The term YogÈcÈra may be derived from the work ‘YogÈcÈra Bûmitra’ which was written by MaitreyanÈtha in the third century A.D. Perhaps, the people of the school practised yoga therefore they were called yogÈcÈris.

YogÈcÈris recognized the reality of external objects, which are constituted by consciousness (vij È Ena) (the seeds of phenomena ² physical and mental), are unreal.

MaitreyanÈtha and Vasubandhu used the term Èlayavij È Ena for two truths ² subjective and objective worlds. The former is basis of individual cognitions or a system of eight consciousnesses (visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, olfactory consciousness, gustatory consciousness, bodily consciousness, manovij È Ena, manas and Èlayavij È Ena). The latter is the cosmic mind that contains all the seeds of material, from which all external objects are constituted.

Most of the scholars misunderstood the term ‘vij È Ena’; therefore they come to conclusion that YogÈcÈra school denied the external objects and reduced them to cognition (vij È Ena).³⁸ YogÈcÈra, in fact, did not deny the external objects. They only declared that the external objects, which are made by vij È Ena (the seeds of phenomena), are impermanent, changing, and perishable. In the work ‘vij È aptimatrat Èridasa sÈstra’ Vasubandhu regards all external objects as the manifestation of Èlayavij È Ena (the cosmic mind). And every external object is made by vij È Ena (the seeds of material).³⁹ The LankÈvatÈra sÈtra⁴⁰, an important work of the YogÈcÈra school, maintains that only the mind or Èlayavij È Ena is permanent while all the external objects, which are manifested from Èlayavij È Ena, are impermanent.

The YogÈcÈra school or vij È navÈda reached its climax during the Gupta age.⁴¹ MaitreyanÈtha (3rd A.D.), Asanga (4th A.D.), Vasubandhu (4th A.D.), Sthiramti (4th A.D.), DharmapÈla (7th A.D.), Sartaraksita (8th A.D.), KarmalasÈla (8th A.D.), etc are exponents of the YogÈcÈra school.

The Texts of MahÈyÈna Buddhism

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³⁸ SIP², p. 376, RIP¹, p. 627, BYB, p. 108, HIB, pp. 253-4.
³⁹ STTMC, pp. 115-6.
⁴⁰ BYB, p. 108.
⁴¹ JBC, p. 7.
Mahêyêna Buddhism possesses an infinite source of sÊtras and sÊstras. The so-called MahÊyêna sÊtras are, in fact, the products of the sects of MahÊsanghika. For example, the concept of transcendental and eternal Buddha in the SaddharmapûÇarîka sÊtra comes from the LokottaravÊda, a branch of MahÊsanghika. Edward Conze asserts that the whole system of PrajÊÈ paramitÊ sÊtras was developed from the PrajÊÈ paramitÊ sÊtra in Prakrit of the PÈrvasailas and Aparasailas, two sects of Mahasanghika.

According to A.K. Warder, most of MahÊyêna sÊtras were firstly composed in the south India. It means that most of MahÊyêna sÊtras were composed in the Andhra country on the Krishna river, near AmaravatÎ and DhÊnyakataka (the modern Dharanikot), then in the west and afterwards in the north. MahÊyênists assert that MahÊyêna sÊtras had been taught by the Sakyamuni Buddha and most of them had been kept in the Dragon world under the earth or the sea. These sÊtras were afterwards brought to NÈlandÊ where Sariputra stayed and later the great university of India was opended.

It is difficult to believe the existence of Dragon world under the earth or the sea because it could not be a historical fact. But the description of the location of the world is not given, one could safely deduct that it probably refers to the area of Andhra where most of the MahÊyêna sÊtras were written.

Again, Andrew Skilton asserts that there two Buddhist council were held at the same time. The first was presided over by Mahakasyapa and the second by Bodhisattva Maçiùri. The first Buddhist council of MahÊyêna took place upon the some archetypal level of the reality at which the MahÊyêna sÊtras themselves have been revealed by the Sakyamuni Buddha were recited but they were not collected into Tipitaka and which only became prominent several centuries after the death of the Buddha. Moreover, he holds that the story of PurÊna at the first Buddhist council suggests one way in which the appearance of MahÊyêna sÊtras may have happened.

42 SIP2, p. 345.
43 EPL, p. 1.
44 AIB, pp. 355-6.
45 ACB, p. 100.
46 AIB, p. 355.
47 Ibid.
48 ACB, p. 100.
Andrew Skilton’s affirmation certainly does not fit with historical fact; because at the first Buddhist council, Buddhism had not any division of sects and certainly the core of Buddhist teachings were recited equally there. The germ of distinction of sects was probably appeared after the first Buddhist council. L.M.Joshi states that after the first Buddhist council closed, there were famous monks, viz. PurÈna and his friends came late and after hearing what were recited again by Ananda, they did not agree with these teachings and they stated that these teachings were not taught from the Buddha’s mouth.49

There are six hundred MahÈyÈna sÈstras found in the original Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese sources.50 According to K.Antonova, the earliest MahÈyÈna texts would appear to have been written as far back as the first century B.C, however a large number dated the first century A.D. Some of the earliest of these writings were the PrajÈ paramitÈ sÈtras, Chinese translations of which appeared as early as the end of the second century A.D. The most popular works of MahÈyÈna Buddhism were the PrajÈ paramitÈ sÈtras. The biggest text of this class is said to be the PrajÈ paramitÈ sÈtra in 100,000 slokas while the smallest is of one sloka only. There are numerous PrajÈ paramitÈ sÈtras but the contents of them could be summed up in one word, to wit, sÈnyatÈ.51

There are nine Vaipulya sÈtras of MahÈyÈna found in Nepal now. These are Lalitavistara, SamÈdhirÈja, LankÈvatÈra, A.,—asÈhasrikÈprajÈparamitÈ, GaÇavyÈha, SaddharmapuÇarlka, DasabhÈmika, SuvaraprabhÈsa and TathÈgataguhyaka.52 Beside these sÈtras, there are the SukhavativyÈha, the Amitayus, the Sûrangama, Avata‰saka, Vimalakirtinede., a, Ksitigarbha, the perfect Enlightenment sÈtras, etc.

All these sÈtras are most important ones of MahÈyÈna Buddhism and they have a close relation with Madhyamika and YogÈcÈra schools. Unlike the suttas of Tipitaka that only mention the basic doctrines of ethics, the MahÈyÈna sÈtras used symbols describing the self-nature of all things that appear to divorce from historical time and place and make the great appeal to the spiritual imagination.

49 JBC, p. 1.
50 ACB, p. 101.
51 JBC, p. 5.
52 Ibid.
Mahāyānists do not see Hīnayāna teaching as a hostile threat to their own beliefs or as an erroneous doctrine. They regard it as a doctrine inadequate for the broad propagation of Buddhist ideas and too individualistic. Asanga, the famous monk of Yogācāra school, drew attention to the limited nature of the Hīnayāna teachings. According to Hīnayānic teachings, man should be preoccupied with salvation for himself alone, the attainment of Nirvāṇa for himself as an individual. Mahāyāna, on the other hand, laid emphasis upon compassion that should be given to all living beings, regardless of their individual characteristics. Mahāyānists regard their teachings as the re-emergence of the true teachings of the Buddha, and they maintain that adherents of Hīnayāna school distorted and stifled the Buddha’s teachings through their egoism and individualism.

The Teachers of Mahāyāna Buddhism

The most famous teachers of Mahāyānism in the period of study are Avitarka, Rahurabhadra, Nēgērjuna I, Nēgērjuna II, Iryadeva, Asvaghosa, Maitreyanētha, Manonētha, Asanga, Vasubandhu I, Vasubandhu II, Dinnēga, etc. Several of them were born in the south India, studied there and afterwards went to the north to teach the new doctrine.

Avitaka was one of the earliest teachers of Mahāyāna Buddhism. He lived in the Anga country in the first century B.C. The Buddhist historian Tēranētha asserts that Avitaka learned Mahāyāna doctrine directly from Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, Maitreyya and other Bodhisattvas. He was contemporary of king Kaniska.53 Avitaka’s disciple was Rahurabhadra.

Rahurabhadra lived at the time of the king Candanapēla of Apērēntaka (who may perhaps be identified with king Kaniska II). He learned Mahāyāna doctrine with Avitaka and other teachers. He established the philosophical school of Mahāyānism, called Madhyamika in 119 CE.54

Nēgērjuna I, who was born in the Vidarbha country in Mahērastra, was a Brahmin. He became a monk at Nēlandē and was taught by Rahurabhadra. According to legend, he came in contact with the Dragons, who were ready to fetch whatever he needed for the world. Finally, the king of Dragon invited him to visit his world; Nēgērjuna accepted the offer but

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53 AIB, p. 355.
54 Ibid., p. 356.
returned back to the earth soon with a sūtra named the Hundred Thousand Perfection of wisdom sūtra, the culminating Mahāyāna sūtra. The followers of the Hīnayāna school alleged that Nēgērjuna himself wrote the sūtra supposed to have been brought by him from the Dragon world. The Dragon world was probably the Andhra country where most of Mahāyāna sūtras were written. It was not under the earth or the sea.

Nēgērjuna was not a founder of Madhyamika school. He only systematized all Mahāyāna sūtras written by the sects of Mahāsanghika and developed the idea of Madhyamika school that was founded by his master.

He taught Mahāyāna teachings at many places in ancient India and constructed many pagodas, viharas and temples there. He came to contact with the Sētavēhana emperor who later became his disciple. His works are Mūlamadhyamikakārikā, Śūnyatāsaptati, Vigrahavyāvartanī, Yuktisāstra, Vaidalyasūtra, Prakarana, Suhrllekha (a letter to a friend). He also wrote some hymns in praise of the Buddha.

The main idea of Nēgērjuna is the doctrine of Śūnyatā (emptiness), the relative and absolute levels of all principles by which he rejected all extreme views such as eternal and non-eternal, infinite and finite, soul different from body and soul identical with body, etc. According to him, suffering does not exist, therefore Nirvāṇa does not exist. He maintains that the Buddha taught the doctrine on the basis of two levels of truth, the concealing and the ultimate.

Towards the end of his life, Nēgērjuna returned to the Sētavēhana domains but to Andhra, not to Maharāstra.

Nēgērjuna II was Nēgērjuna’s prominent disciple. He was called simply Nēga. Avoiding misunderstanding to Nēgērjuna I, some called him Nēgēbodhi or Nēgēhvaya, or Tathāgatabhadra. He is known as the author of the commentaries on some Mahāyāna sūtras, i.e the commentary on the Twenty Five Thousand Perfection of Wisdom sūtra

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55 Ibid., p. 358.
56 Ibid., p. 357.
57 Ibid., p. 363.
58 Ibid., p. 356.
59 Ibid., p. 369.
(Mahâprajñâparamitâ Sûtra). This treatise is called the Sûtra of Great perfection of wisdom (the Mahâprajñâparamitâ Sûtra), which exists only in a Chinese version. And his second work known as the commentary on Madhyamika Sûtra, is called Dvâda-, advarasûtra, found in Chinese Tripitaka.  

Like Nâgârjuna I, he quoted texts from the Early Tipitaka and interpreted them in the Madhyamika sense in order to establish the correctness of his views. According to him, the Buddha reveals the ultimate level of truth in the Mahâyâna Sûtras while the Tipitaka texts which appear to speak of the concealing level of truth.

¶ryadeva, who continued the tradition of Madhyamika, was also Nâgârjuna’s disciple. He came originally from Ceylon and stood close to Nâgârjuna in doctrine; specially he placed the idea of Bodhisattva in the foreground, presenting Buddhism as the way of Bodhisattva. It is said that Nâgârjuna did not mention the Bodhisattva practice and the aim of Budhhahood in his works, he only spoke of extinction (Nirvâna) and the Middle way.

Two known works of ¶ryadeva are Catuhsataka and Satasûtra.  

The former deals with the way of Bodhisattva, it may be regarded as a supplement to Mûlamadhyamikakârikâ and the latter deals with the Samkhya, Jaina, Lokâyata, etc. He did not only criticize particular doctrines of the Early Buddhist schools, but also criticized the fundamental notions of the two great Brahmical philosophical schools, the Samkhya and Vaisesika. The former holds that an effect is identical with its cause and the latter that it is different from its cause. Apart from that, he attacked Jaina, Lokâyata and two theistic schools, the Vaisnavas and Saivas.

Asvaghosa, who flourished at the time of king Kaniska about 100 A.D., was a Brahmin converted to Buddhism. His famous works are the Mahâyâna Sraddhotpa-sûtra and Buddhacarita.  

The Mahâyâna Sraddhotpa-sûtra was compiled in Sanskrit about the first century A.D. It was translated into Chinese by Paramârtha in 554 A.D. and by Siksânanda in 700 A.D. Suzuki translated into English under the title ‘The Awakening Faith of Mahâyâna’. His doctrine is Tathatâ or suchness, the ultimate reality. It is an unconditioned noumenon, the fundamental essence of the whole universe and living beings.

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60 Ibid.  
61 HIB, pp. 244-5.  
62 AIB, p. 368.  
63 SIP 2, p. 376.
Without it one can not attain Buddhahood. It is said that Asvaghosa belonged to Early Mahāyāna. He did not belong to Madhyamika or Yogācāra school.

Maitreyanātha was the founder of the Yogācāra school.\(^{64}\) According to L.M. Joshi, it probably flourished in the third century A.D., but as per J. Sinhā, it flourished in the fourth century A.D. Yogācāra school reached its climax during the Gupta age. Asanga was his disciple; his works and the time of his death are not known. His school is called Yogācāra or ViśṇuVaśya. The former relates to the practice of Yoga and the latter to the idealistic outlook (consciousness only). Maitreyanātha is assimilated to Bodhisattva Maitreya in Tusita heaven, who will become a Buddha in this world after Sakyamuni Buddha. And Vasubandhu is assumed to learn the doctrine of ViśṇuVaśya from Bodhisattva Maitreya. It is a misunderstanding. Vasubandhu, in fact, learned the Viśṇu doctrine from his master, named Manonātha. He did not learn the doctrine from Bodhisattva Maitreya.\(^{65}\)

Asanga was born in 310 A.D. and died in 390 A.D. in Purusapura, Kaniska’s capital in Gandhara.\(^{66}\) He was a famous philosopher of Yogācāra school. According to Tibetan Buddhist tradition, Asanga was born in the time of king Buddhapaksa and lived under his successor Gambhīrapaksa, afterwards traveling from East to Ayodhyā and lived for 12 years at Nālandā and died at Rajagaha.\(^{67}\) He wrote Mahāyāna-saṃgraha, Dharmadhammatāvibhāga, Madhyālavibhāga, Abhidharmasamuccaya, Mahāyāna sūtra-lankā, Yogācāra-bhāṣyā, Abhidharmasamuccaya, Mahāyāna sūtra-lankā, Yogācāra-bhāṣyā. Apart from these works, he wrote a minor work in verse to summarize the contents of Vajracchedika sūtra, named Vajracchedikāvyākhyā. Some scholars state that some of these works were really written by Maitreyanātha, Asanga’s master.\(^{68}\)

According to Asanga, only Mahāyāna sūtras contain the deepest teachings of the Buddha, the conduct of Buddhahood. His main doctrine is consciousness only. In the Abhidharmasamuccaya, he gives a list of principles total one hundred items, of which the Ėlaya or home-consciousness is a container of all seeds of purity as well as impurity, and

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\(^{64}\) JBC, p. 7.
\(^{65}\) Ibid.
\(^{66}\) HIB, p. 264.
\(^{67}\) AIB, p. 414.
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
impregnated with traces of manas, and the other consciousness are functions of Êlaya. The way of Bodhisattva is also mentioned in the MahÊyÊna sÊtra-lankÊra including the thought of enlightenment. Asanga maintains that the ultimate reality is neither existing nor not existing.69

**Vasubandhu** is said to have lived about the last quarter of the fourth century A.D.70 But S. Radhakrishnan71 assigns him to the later part of the fifth century A.D.; J. SinhÊ72 asserts that Vasubanhu lived in the first half of the fifth century A.D. and L.M. Joshi73 thinks that Vasubandhu lived in 300 A.D.

A.K. Warder74 holds that Vasubandhu, Asanga’s younger brother, the author of Abhidharmakosa, certainly lived not later than about the middle of the fourth century A.D. In fact, Vasubandhu was born in 320 A.D. and died in 400 A.D. in Purusapura (Kaniska’s capital) in Gandhara. He is distinguished for his profound learning and preservation of thought. In the later part of his life, he was converted to MahÊyÊna by his old brother Asanga. His works are ViŠ,.atikÊ, TriŠ,.ikÊ, Karmasiddhiprakaraša, Ta-Cheng pai fa ming men lun, Paçi-caskandhaparakarana, Fo hsing lun, TrivabhÊvanirde,.a, Pratitya,.amut PÊdavyÊkhyÊ, etc.75 Beside these sÊstras, he wrote some commentaries on the SaddharmapušÇarïka sÊtra, the Sukhavativyha sÊtra, the DasabhÊmika sÊtra, etc.76 Vasubandhu is said to have written four logical works: VÊdavidhi, VÊdavidhÊna, VÊdakausala, and TarkasÊtra.77 Vasubandhu was patronized by king Samudragupta (320-380 A.D.).78

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69 Ibid., p. 415.
70 HIB, p. 268.
71 RIP1, p. 624.
72 SIP2, p. 376.
73 JBC, p. 7.
74 AIB, p. 424.
75 HIB, pp. 269-71.
76 Ibid., pp. 271-3.
77 Ibid.
78 DAI, p. 97.
According to A.K. Warder\textsuperscript{79}, there were two Vasubandhus during the time of Gupta. The former was Vasubandhu I, Asanga’s younger brother, the author of \textit{Abhidharmakosa} and the latter Vasubandhu II, \textit{DinnÈga’s} master.

Vasubandhu II (455-530 A.D.), who lived in \textit{AyodhyÈ}, was patronized by king Skandagupta (456-467).\textsuperscript{80} Vasubandhu II’s works are not known, perhaps his works are identified with that of Vasubandhu I.

\textbf{DinnÈga or DignÈga} was Vasubandhu II’s pupil.\textsuperscript{81} According to TaranÈtha\textsuperscript{82}, DinnÈga was born in the \textit{Pallava} country at a place called \textit{SiŠhavaktra} near \textit{KÊçi}. After becoming a Buddhist monk, he joined a community of \textit{VatsÎputriya} school but he did not agree with the doctrine of the school. Accordingly he left them and met Vasubandhu II and studied with him in \textit{AyodhyÈ}. He lived about the end of the fifth century A.D. He was a father of Indian logic.\textsuperscript{83} He inaugurated a new school of Critical philosophy and the Buddhist doctrines were reoriented after him. His chief works are \textit{PramÈnasamuccaya}, \textit{¼lambanapaririksÈ}, \textit{TrikÈlapariksÈ}, and \textit{NyÈyamukha}.\textsuperscript{84} He lived mostly in \textit{Kalinga} (modern \textit{Orissa}) and afterwards he visited university of \textit{NÈlandÈ}, there he established his new doctrine of the Theory of knowledge, leaving behind a tradition of teachers to perpetuate it.

Eventually, he returned back to \textit{Kalinga} where he is said to have written his final work, \textit{PramÈnasamuccaya}. He died in \textit{Kalinga} during the sixth century A.D.\textsuperscript{85}

2. Thought of MahÈyÈna Buddhism

In the field of relative truth (\textit{Samvrtisatya}), \textit{MahÈyÈnists} seemingly recognize the \textit{HÎnayÈna} doctrine of phenomenal aspect. They agree that the universe has been created by four material elements, viz. earth, water, fire, and wind. These elements are impermanent, changing and selfless. Man is very complex. Besides his physical body, he has a mental factor

\textsuperscript{79} AIB, p. 424.
\textsuperscript{80} NMB, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{81} AIB, p. 425.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} JBC, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} AIB, pp. 425-40.
including feeling, perception, mental function and consciousness. These mental elements are also transitory, painful, and sorrowful.

In the Heart sÊtra, when Bodhisattva AvalokiteÊvara has the profound practice of prajÑÇ paramitÇ sÊtra, he investigates and perceives that five aggregates (skandhas) are always changing, thus securing his deliverance from all distresses and sufferings. According to the sÊtra, the so-called body is subjected to birth, oldage, sickness and death. Mind is also disturbed by sorrow, grief, suffering, and lamentation. In short, one’s body and mind are always changing and perishing. By non-attaching to the aggregative body and mind, one is freed from sufferings.

The Vajracchedika or Diamond cutter sÊtra maintains that all conditioned things are impermanent and selfless (mÇyÇ). From the big things like sky, clouds, rivers, and mountains to the small ones as the ants, mosquitoes, and other insects are subjected to the law of causality. That is to say, they are in the state of becoming, arising, changing and passing away. Even one’s house, fame, wealth, beauty are transitory and non-eternal like a dream or an illusion. The sÊtra has a stanza as follows:

> All conditioned things are like a dream,
> Like an illusion, a bubble and a shadow,
> Like dew and lightning,
> Thus should you meditate upon them.  

The Vimalakirtinirdesa sÊtra also asserts that this body is inert like the earth, selfless like water, lifeless like fire, impersonal like wind and non-substantial like space.

This body as well as things in the universe are not permanent and there is nothing in the world that exists as self. Everything is no-self and non-eternal. It is desire (tanhÇ) that caused suffering since one always desires what is impermanent, changeable, and perishable. It is impermanence of the object of desire that causes disappointment and regret. All pleasures are also transient. And when knowledge is attained, suffering comes to an end.

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86 SBS, p. 134.
87 Ibid., p. 132.
88 RHV, p. 22.
In *Mahāvagga* (the sutta of *Theravāda*), the Buddha gives his disciples a discourse on fire to indicate the ceaseless flux of becoming called the world.

\[
\text{šWorlds on worlds are rolling ever,}
\]
\[
\text{From creation to decay,}
\]
\[
\text{Like the bubbles on a sea,}
\]
\[
\text{Sparking, bursting, borne away.}\]

A similar instance of fire is given in the *Saddharmapuṭṭṭha śāstra*. There a rotten and burning house is used to symbolize the impermanence and danger of the triple world including one’s elemental body. The śāstra describes in detail a rotten and burning house in which the buildings were in decay, the fences and walls corrupt, the bases of the pillars rotten, the beams and ridge poles tilting and slanted. All of a sudden fire broke out at the same time from all sides of the house and the house began to burn. At that time, the father was outside but his children were absorbed in play, did not know what has happened, the father realizes that his children are in imminent danger of destruction and calls them to come out but they ignore his appeals and go on playing. They are not frightened or afraid of, they do not wish to come out. They do not know what is the fire, what is the house, and what will be lost, etc.

In this paragraph, the ruining and burning house symbolized the triple world that is impermanent and always to be burnt by the fire of decay and destruction. The building was in decay, fences and walls corrupt, the base of the pillars rotten, the beams and ridge poles tilting and slanted stand for one’s physical body and mind that are non-eternal. That is to say, the human body fundamentally is handsome, powerful, beautiful gradually becomes subject to old age, sickness, and death. His face becomes gaunt, skin wrinkled, hair white, ears deaf, eyes dull, joints painful, limbs tremble uncontrollably. Sometimes eating and drinking are not digestible. Breath-in and breath-out are not continual. Blood is gradually dry, sputum and saliva run out, etc. And the fire of desire, hatred, ignorance, sorrow, grief, suffering and lamentation always burn his mind.

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89 RIP1, p. 368.
90 SLFS, pp. 56-60.
The Buddha also had the elemental body but he knew how to get out of these sufferings. Whereas, all living beings are tied firmly to attachments of self and self-belongings therefore they can not escape from the worldly disturbances. Out of compassion, the Buddha uses the doctrine of three vehicles, i.e. *Sravakayāna*, *Pratyeka-buddhayāna* and *Bodhisattvayāna* to save them from the burning house. Having brought them to the safety, the Buddha gives them the great vehicle or *Buddhayāna*.

All Buddhists, *Hīnayānist* and *Mahāyānist*, believe in the empirical world that is governed by the law of cause and effect. The *Vaibhāsikas* and *Sautrāntikas* maintain that the atoms, which are seemingly eternal, contain impermanent element. *Yogācāra* recognize the reality of external objects, which are created by material, that then are not eternal. And only *Ālayavijñāna* or cosmic mind is eternal; all things, which are manifested from *Ālayavijñāna*, are non-eternal as a dream, illusion, and hallucination and there are no objects to exist beyond *Ālayavijñāna*.⁹¹

In the field of absolute truth (*paramārtha satya*), *Hīnayāna* appears to have not yet mentioned essence or noumenon of all things. *Mahāyāna* assume that though all conditioned things are impermanent and destructible, their real nature exists forever. The real-nature or noumenon of all things is called by many names in *Mahāyāna* doctrines such as ‘thusness’ in the *Avataśaka sūtra*; ‘śūnyatā’ in the *prajñāparamitā sūtra*; ‘self-nature of Amitābha’ in the *Sukhāvatīvyūha sūtra*; ‘Buddha-knowledge’ in the *Saddarmapuṣṭa-carīka sūtra*; ‘Dharmakīya’ in the *Lankāvatāra sūtra*; ‘Absolute Nirvāṇa’ in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, etc.

Although the names of the Absolute are many, its nature is only one. Nīgāṇṭhara I, the soul of *Madhyamika* school, describes the Absolute by means of eightfold negations as follows:

- śIt is neither origination nor cessation,
- Neither permanence nor impermanence,
- Neither unity nor diversity,

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⁹¹ SIP₂, p. 394.
Neither coming in nor going-out.\textsuperscript{92}

The self-nature or Absolute is the foundation of all existences. It is free from dualism and imperfection. The pairs of opposite categories such as origination and cessation, permanence and impermanence, unity and diversity, coming-in and going-out belong to dualism and imperfection. Self-nature or sūnyatā that is beyond these opposite categories. It is beyond empirical existence, non-existence and both. It is the same in all positive and negative beings; it is beyond samsāra and nirvāṇa. It is free from sin; oldage; sickness; death; hunger, and thirst. It is the subject that persists throughout the changes of external objects. It is the subtle reality that nothing can destroy. Death does not touch it nor vice dissolves it. The Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra says that the Absolute is free from craving, from evils, from fear and it embraces all.\textsuperscript{93} Real permanence, real joy, real self, and real calm are its characteristics. It is a self-existent and self-complete entity and there is nothing outside it to exist; from which all things are sprung. It is the person that sees, not the objects seen.\textsuperscript{94}

The Heart Sūtra asserts that sūnyatā or self-nature of all things is not created, not annihilated, not pure, not impure, not increasing, and not decreasing. Therefore, in the sūnyatā there is no form (rūpa), no reception (vedanā), no conception (sanjnā), no mental function (sankhāra), and no consciousness (vijñāna); there is no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. There is no Four Noble Truths, no wisdom, and also no attainment of Nirvāṇa.\textsuperscript{95}

As above, the Absolute is beyond the phenomenal concepts such as the creation and annihilation, purity and impurity even wisdom and Nirvāṇa are also not found in the absolute. The absolute nature of all things is non-nature and non-nature is their real-nature.\textsuperscript{96}

Buddha, Bodhisattva, Nirvāṇa, saṃsāra, soul and no-soul are only the imaginations of thought. The Absolute lies between two extremes of existence and non-existence, permanence and impermanence, soul and no-soul, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. The Absolute or sūnyatā is also called the absolute Nirvāṇa or true-mind which is inherence of all living beings from the time

\textsuperscript{92} KBC, p. 84.
\textsuperscript{93} RIP\textsuperscript{1}, p. 152.
\textsuperscript{94} RPU, p. 502.
\textsuperscript{95} SBS, pp. 134-5.
\textsuperscript{96} AIB, p. 351.
without beginning. It is neither lost nor acquired, neither positive nor negative; it is total extinction of all relations to positive and negative beings. If it is positive, it is a product which is subjected to decay and death. If it is absolute negation of suffering and birth, then it is non-eternal. So there is no difference between *saśśeṇa* and *Nirvēṇa*. All phenomena completely cease in it, all knowledge of phenomena cease in it and becoming extinct in it.

The basic teaching of *Avatāśaka sētra* aims at the theory of *Dharmadhētu* that maintains that all principles in the universe arose simultaneously and all are *sūnyatē* (emptiness). The emptiness has two aspects, viz. the static aspect as essence or noumenon, and the dynamic aspect as phenomenon. All phenomena embrace noumenon in them, one thing in all things and all things in one thing. In other words, noumenon is present in all things and all things are the manifestations of it. To explain this theory, in 704 C.E, Fa Tsang, who was a master of *Hua Yen* school in China, wrote an essay on the golden lion. In the essay, gold is the symbol of noumenon or self-nature or *sūnyatē* while the lion is the symbol of phenomenon or individual self. *Sūnyatē* or self-nature has no form of its own, it may assume any form that conditions assign to it. To illustrate the interpenetration and mutual identification of all things or phenomena, Fa Tsang wrote that the various organs of the lion take in the body of lion by means of gold, so that any one organ is identified with any other organ. Thus gold in each organ of lion is found in the whole lion. It is to say, there is one permanent entity in all impermanent things, it is one and it is known by intuitive wisdom.97

Nēgērjuna uses the word ‘*sūnyatē*’ for both, relative truth and absolute truth. All things are relative but they are grounded in the Absolute. The relative is the way to the absolute that can not be obtained without the help of the relative.

The *Saddarmaputṛśerva sētra*, chapter second, asserts that the self-nature of all principles exists in ten suchness, that is, appearance as suchness, nature as suchness, substances as suchness, power, activity, primary cause, environmental cause, effect, reward and retribution as suchness and the equality of these nine factors as suchness.98 These ten suchness represent the eternal existence of self-nature or *sūnyatē*. It lies beyond any thinking and discussion. It is itself in any time and space though all principles always change.

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97 KBC, p. 317.
98 SILS, p. 22.
The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, the basic *sūtra* of *Yogācāra* school, asserts that there is nothing eternal in the universe, except the *tathāgatagarbha* or cosmic mind. Other existences such as matter, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea are only the manifestations of the cosmic mind. Man’s mental factor includes eight consciousness, viz. Ālaya or home-consciousness, *manas*, *manovijñāna* and five consciousnesses of sense organ. When five consciousness of sense organs (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and bodily consciousness) contact the external objects, *manas* associates with *manovijñāna* to make the roaring waves over Ālaya ocean. In other words, the imagination of various consciousness originates through the traces (*vēsana*), that have accumulated in Ālaya from the time without beginning. When these traces are to be stirred up by the combination of *manas* and *manovijñāna* (mental consciousness), Ālaya or home-consciousness is now polluted. When *manas* is purified, the *manovijñāna* and five consciousnesses of sense organs are also pure. It is Ālaya or home-consciousness are now the *tathāgatagarbha* or embryo of the Absolute that is also called *Dharmakūya*. In the pure nature of Ālayavijñāna there is nothing to remove, to cultivate or to attain. And in the Absolute, there is no Buddhahood or *Nirvāṇa* that can be attained because it is always in the state of *nirvāṇa*. Understanding this idea, Vietnamese Ch’an master Thien Lao wrote a verse as follows:

śGreen bamboos and yellow flowers are not other objects,  
While clouds and bright moon reveal the complete suchness.ś

As above, all things in the universe are fundamentally beautiful and pure but by impure mind and *karma*, one sees them as impure. In reality, green bamboos, yellow flowers, white cloud and bright moon are the manifestations of the Absolute or *Dharmakūya*.  

One day, Hui neng, the sixth patriarch of Chinese Ch’an school was suddenly enlightened and he realized that there is nothing that exists outside the self-nature or *Dharmakūya*. Then he said to his master that:

śWho would have expected that the self-nature is fundamentally pure and clean?  
Who would have expected that the self-nature is fundamentally beyond birth and death?  
Who would have expected that the self-nature is fundamentally complete in itself?ś

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99 TTSVN, p. 60.
Who would have expected that the self-nature is fundamentally immutable?
Who would have expected that the self-nature is fundamentally created all things?¹⁰⁰

In brief, by discovering self-nature or noumena of all things, Mahêyêna positively contributes its monism to the human civilization as well as Indian culture. The noumenal doctrine of Mahêyêna is the supplement to the Hînayêna phenomenal doctrines since five pÉli NikÊyas and four Samskrit gamas only mention the phenomenal aspects of all principles that are always impermanent, suffering, and selflessness. Even HînayÊnic NirvÊna also belongs to the relative truth because it comes from cultivation and ethical life. Whereas MahÊyÊna NirvÊna is the self-nature or sînyatÊ of all living beings and it can not be attained by any effort of man. It is inherent; if a man recognizes it and to live upto it, his liberation will come naturally. Without MahÊyÊna doctrine, Buddhism would have been a dead body and it would have not been considered as foresight of science; its contribution to the civilization of humankind is not much because a perfect doctrine must include both relative and absolute or phenomenal and noumenal doctrines.

3. The Practice of MahÊyÊna Buddhism

The main practice of MahÊyÊanism is that of ten perfections (pÊramitas), i.e. Generosity (dÊna), morality (sîla), patience (ksÊnti), energy (viriya), concentration (dhyÊna), wisdom (prajêÈ), device (upÊya), vow (pnamidhÊna), power (bêla) and intuition (jêÈna).

The word ‘pÊramitê’ has been translated as the transcendental virtue, perfect virtue, or highest perfection.¹⁰¹ Wanting to step on the road to the Buddhahood, a Bodhisattva should practise these ten perfections (pÊramitê) simultaneously or gradually one by one.

(1) Perfection of Generosity or DÊna PÊramitê

The word ‘DÊna’ literally means ‘giving’, ‘generosity’, ‘charity’, etc. A Bodhisattva cultivates charity; firstly he bestows gifts upon his parents and relatives, then he helps the needy, the poor, the sick, the afflicted and the helpless. He sympathizes with one’s sufferings

¹⁰⁰ SBS, p. 358.
¹⁰¹ HBSL, p. 168.
and helps him enthusiastically. Santideva\textsuperscript{102} teaches that a monk should even share his scanty alms with the poor. A Bodhisattva gives all that he has such as his wealth, food, beverages, medicine, couches, seats, garden, horses, silver, gold, cloths, etc. but he should not give anything that may be used to inflict injury on other living beings. He should not refrain from supplying others with the means of gratifying their sensual appetites and passions. He should not give away poisons, weapons, intoxicating liquor and nets for the capture of animals. He should not give anybody the instrument for suicide or self-torture. Besides giving gifts to the needy, he constructs hospitals, schools and practising other welfare projects.

In \textit{Fo Shuo Te Fu Tien jing}, translated by Fa li and Fa Hu in the western Chin dynasty in China, the Buddha teaches seven types of welfare activities that constitute the field of compassion. These seven types of activities are: (1) construction of towers (stūpas), monastic halls and pavilions; (2) establishment of fruit gardens, bathing houses, hospitals, schools and planting trees at the proper places; (3) dispensing medicine for the sick people; (4) construction of sturdy boats to ferry people; (5) construction of bridge; (6) digging of wells along well travelled roads; (7) construction of toilets for the convenience of the public.\textsuperscript{103}

In the \textit{Hīnayāna} doctrine, the Buddha and monks are considered as the ideal fields of merit for a devotee offering gifts to and storing up merits for the future. In \textit{Mahāyāna} sūtras, the situation is just reverse. Instead of the laity making offerings to monks and monasteries, now it is monks and monasteries offering gifts to people who are the fields of merit of compassion.

Beside giving wealth and material objects, a Bodhisattva uses the device to teach the Buddhist teachings to others in order to withdraw them from the worldly sufferings. He also teaches them professions, medicines, arts, literature, philosophy and others to the needy; helping them to live a happy life in the world.

When a Bodhisattva gives food to others, he wishes them to have a long life, beauty, happiness, wisdom and attaining the highest happiness, \textit{Nirvāṇa}. When he gives drink to the thirsty beings, he wishes that the drink does not only quench one’s material thirst but also

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{103} KTB, pp. 296-8.
reduce their thirst of passion. He renounces the world and family in order to open great love towards all. He renounces his wife and children to become a master of the world and renouncing his kingdom to inherit the kingdom of righteousness. Thus the altruistic attitude of a *Bodhisattva* is service without reward. The final purpose of a *Bodhisattva* is the attainment of the Buddhahood but he never forgets the practice of giving.

(2) **Perfection of Morality or Sīla Pēramitē**

*Sīla* is said to be the foundation of ethics. It is compared with a flawless gem, crystal or lapis lazuli. *Sīla* is still more precious than gold and silver. Without observation of *Sīla* (precept), a *Bodhisattva* can not advance in the spiritual cultivation and hardly attains freedom from bondages. Precept adorns a *Bodhisattva* like a beautiful silk garment and the fragrance of morality spreads far and wide. The function of *Sīla* is the purification of six sense organs and leading him to the attainment of meditation and wisdom.

A *Bodhisattva*, who practises *Sīla*, examines himself and discovers his own faults and shortcoming. He does not care for worldly honour or gain of any kind.

Five precepts are commonly for monk and layman. These are: No killing any being, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no telling lie, no using intoxicant.

Abstention from killing beings corresponds to *ahiśśē*. A *Bodhisattva* does not hate any living being, and can not use weapon of any kind to kill them even in thought, because he knows living beings have strong desire to live and fear death. He cultivates *karunē* and *metē*. *Ahiśśē* (non-violence) is indeed the highest virtue. If anybody practises *ahiśśē*, war never comes to the world and everyone will live in peace and happiness. War has its germ in hatred, avarice, cruelty and selfishness and the glory of victorious man is stained with blood.

A *Bodhisattva* abstains from taking the life of any being. He also condemns and shuns the barbarous custom of war among the states and leaders of the countries in the world. A virtuous president or king tries his best to avoid war, as he knows that the so-called duty of the warrior caste is based on cruelty and unrighteousness. *Mahāyānists* also extended to the scope

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104 HBSL, p. 194.
of this precept to the relations between human being and animals as an animal is also a living being who will become a Buddha in the future.

The idea of Buddha-nature to animals is found in the Saddharmapuṣṭaṃkarīka sūtra on which Mahāyānists teach that it is a sin to eat meat. They abrogate the Hīnayāna rule that allows monk to eat meat if meat is not especially cooked for him. The Lankāvatāra sūtra devotes a long chapter to this subject and several arguments are adduced in favour of vegetarianism. It is possible that an animal may really be one’s relative, who was reborn in the state of woe.

A Bodhisattva abstains from theft. It is to say that abstention from taking what is not given. He is contented with his possessions and does not covet those of other people. He respects the rights of property in things that belong to others. He does not steal even a leaf or a blade of grass as he knows if one loses possessions, one will be suffering.

A Bodhisattva abstains from sexual misconduct. A household Bodhisattva is contented with his wife and does not cast longing eyes on the wives of other men or entices them with his sweet sounds or seduces them with money and passion, as he knows that his seducing actions will destroy easily the family happiness of others. He does not harbour even a lustful thought with regard to other married women. It is true in case of female Household Bodhisattva, too. She only loves his husband without lustful intercourse with an other man, as she knows the happiness of the children comes from her happiness of wife and husband. If she is adulterous with an other man, the bad influence will come to her children and the happiness will never come to them. Adultery is like a poison that mars and destroys human life. A Homeless Bodhisattva should live with a pure life without wife. He never thinks about sex-intercourse with any lady. His own goal is the liberation from karma and rebirth, so a virtuous life is necessary to him. The Saddharmapuṣṭaṃkarīka sūtra teaches that a Homeless Bodhisattva should take care of himself from woman. He should not expound the law to a woman with a desire for her. He should not wish to look at her body. When he enters into the house of others, he should not talk with a little girl or an unmarried woman or a widow. If he

106 SSLS, pp. 368-71.
107 SLFS, p. 191.
tries to look at her body or talks to her, he may fall in love with her; his virtuous life will be cut off and the Buddhahood never comes to him.

A Bodhisattva abstains from telling lie; he speaks the truth and nothing but the truth, and he does so at the proper time. His actions are in harmony with his words. What he hears here, he does not repeat elsewhere to raise a quarrel against the people here. What he hears elsewhere, he does not repeat here to raise a quarrel against the people there. He lives as a binder of those who are divided, encourages those who are friends, a lover of peace. He only speaks the words that make for peace. He does not tell a lie even in joking; he does not tell a lie even in a dream or in the attainment of spiritual states. Truthfulness is the highest spiritual evolution, it is great and prevails against all the powers of evil.

Sometimes he must tell a lie for liberation of others from danger and death or for some other good purpose. In this case, his telling lie is not sinful, as it is a means used for compassion. In the Saddharmapuṣṭaṃkāśītra, an illustration is given. Once upon a time an old man lived in a house with his children, one day fire broke out. The children were engrossed in playing and did not notice the fire. The father, who was outside realizing that his children were in imminent danger of destruction, called them to come out. Since they ignored his appeal and kept on playing, he resolved to have recourse to a stratagem.

Knowing that his children were inordinately fond of play-things of various kinds, he again called them to come out of the house but this time he promised to give them goat-carts, deer-carts and bullock-carts. On hearing these words, they all came rushing and tumbling out of the burning house. Having brought them to safety, the father bestowed upon them, in response to their demands, not the three different kinds of carts actually promised, but bullock carts only.

In promising one thing and giving another thing, the father was not guilty for falsehood, for he had from the beginning determined to salve his children by means of an expedient.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., pp. 55-9.
A Bodhisattva abstains from intoxicants that consist of opium, drug, heroin, alcohol that lead man to intoxication and addiction. Such an intoxicated man can not master himself in his actions, speech and thinking. His heritage, property, career, and family happiness will certainly be crumbled by his pleasures. Sometimes he can be a case of lost human dignity by his intoxication and he can act like an animal. He can also kill people, robbing other’s belongings, raping women and telling lie for his dark purpose. All evil actions do not come from outside but from his ignorance.

In present time, many people are punished with death penalty or life-sentence for doing business of heroin or drug. Alcohol and drug are more dangerous than poisons. These poisonous things not only kill one’s body but they also kill his soul. Tobacco is also a dangerous thing that harms one’s health. Cancer, pulmonary, and other sickness come from smoking. The Buddha’s disciple not only abstains from these poisonous things but he also teaches others the harmful effect of pursuing intoxication and addiction and withdrawing the need of these dangers.

(3) Perfection of Patience or Kṣaṇi Pṛamitā

Patience or kṣaṇi is always described as the opposite of anger, hatred, malice, repugnance. It is defined as freedom from anger and excitement and as the habit of enduring and pardoning injuries and insults.¹⁰⁹

A Bodhisattva, who cultivates the perfection of patience, forgives others for all kinds of injury, insult, abuse and censure even if his body is destroyed and cut off into a hundred pieces with swords and spears, he does not allow an anger thought against his cruel persecutors. He forgives all without exception, his friend and his enemies and those who are neither. Being reviled, he reviles not again, being beaten he beats not again, being annoyed he annoys not again. He also exhibits the virtue of patience by enduring hunger and thirst, cold and heat and also all the severity and inclemency of wind and weather. He lives happy even in places infested with fleas, gnats, serpents and other such obnoxious and dangerous insects and reptiles. He experiences pleasures even when he is subjected to the most excruciating pain, torture, and mutilation, because he sends out loved thoughts and wishes to all living beings.

¹⁰⁹ HBSL, p. 209.
He works hard day and night to purify his mind from all evils and he does not yield to indolence and lassitude. The *Bodhisattva SadéparibhÉta* (Never Despising *Bodhisattva*), in the *SaddharmapuÇàrika sÉtra*, symbolizes the practice of patience.\(^{110}\)

In the time of Buddha Bhi„magarjitasvararÈjan, *Bodhisattva SadéparibhÉta* often did not read or recite sÉtras. He only bowed to monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. When he saw them in distance, he went to them on purpose, bowed to them and praised them, saying: "I do not despise you because you will be able to become Buddhas». When he had said this, the people struck him with a stick or a piece of wood or a piece of tile or stone. He ran away to a distance, and said in a loud voice from afar, "I do not despise you, you will be able to become Buddhas». Because he always said this, he was calling Never Despising *Bodhisattva* by the arrogant monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

Being beaten, he beats not again, being abused he abuses not again; he tries to declare the truth, Ñeverybody will be able to become Buddha».\(^{110}\)

(4) *Perfection of Energy or Virya PÈramitÈ*

*Virya* means energy in the pursuit of the good, vigour in well doing or effort for the good. Enlightenment depends entirely on energy. Where there is energy, there is enlightenment.

There are two kinds of energy, that is, the energy of preparation and initiative and the energy of practice and activity.

In the moral development, a *Bodhisattva* resolutely combats all the great and small sins and vices that may drag him down. He employs a suitable antidote to every dangerous fault and weakness; he dispels hatred by the cultivation of love, counteracts sensuality by the meditation on impurity. He does not yield to despair, as he knows that all living beings can become Buddhas.

In learning, a *Bodhisattva* not only knows Buddhist doctrine well but he also tries to learn sciences, arts, medicines, psychology, philosophy, logic, etc. Thus he gets good liberal

\(^{110}\) SLFS, p. 260.
education. The accomplishments help a Bodhisattva in his work of converting people to Buddhism, healing the sick, and conferring material benefits on all.

In altruistic activity, a Bodhisattva reflects carefully before he embarks on an enterprise but he carries all his works to a successful issue. He does not leave it half-done and he is not daunted and discouraged by difficulties and dangers. He does not lose hope on account of the stupidity and wickless of the people.

A Bodhisattva finds happiness in his works. He works with an impartial spirit that will cause him happiness. For him, work is happiness and happiness is work. Generally he works for happiness of others.

(5) Perfection of Concentration or Dhyāna Pāramitā

Dhyāna is translated as meditation, trance, ecstasy, contemplation, etc. Meditation is one-pointedness of mind, it is concentration of the mind on one subject to the entire exclusion of all else.

In the basic doctrine of Mahāyāna, a Bodhisattva, who begins to practise dhyāna, must give up family life and ordinary social intercourse, and retire to a secluded spot in the forest. He must live as a celibate hermit and recluse. He thinks that life in the home is narrow and full of hindrances while a monk’s life is like the open air; it is difficult to lead the pure and holy spiritual life as a house-holder.

When the subject has been chosen, he sits cross-legged with the body erect, the right foot is placed on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh; the right hand is placed on the left hand, the neck straightened and the nose is in a perpendicular line with the naval. The tongue should rest on the upper palate. The belt should be loosened and clothes neatly adjusted and the eyes be closed. He begins to gain one-pointedness of the mind and to control any unwholesome thought at its very inception. By this doing, his bad and harmful thoughts are gradually destroyed, and the good virtues such as love, kindness, compassion, joyfulness,

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111 HBSL, p. 220.
and equanimity appear.\textsuperscript{112} By the uninterrupted practice of meditation, he can attain four states of meditation.\textsuperscript{113}

In the first state, a Bodhisattva after freedom from sensual pleasures and evil demeritorious states of mind, attains and abides in the first dhy\ñena which arises from seclusion and which is associated with the pleasure of joy and accompanied by reflection and investigation. When he attained this state of dhy\ñena, if he dies in this world, he can be reborn in three realms of the first dhy\ñena of R\ëpaloka. These are: (1) the realm of Brahm\ëś’s retinue (Brahm\ëś p\ërisajja), (2) the realm of Brahm\ëś’s ministers, and (3) the realm of the great Brahm\ës.

In the second state, with the cessation of reflection and investigation, he, serene at heart, concentrates his mind on one point, attains and abides in the second dhy\ñena which is associated with the pleasure of joy, and arises from rapt concentration in the absence of reflection and investigation. When he completes the second dhy\ñena, if he dies here, he can be reborn in three realms of the second dhy\ñena of R\ëpaloka. These are (1) the realm of the Minor Luster (parittÈbhha), (2) the realm of Infinite Luster (AppamÈnabhha), (3) the realm of the Radiant Brahmas (ÈbhassarÈ).

In the third state, having renounced the attachment to joy, he remains equable, mindful and self-possessed, experiences in his body the pleasure that the Noble Ones describe as “living in equanimity, mindfulness and happiness”. He attains and abides in the third dhy\ñena which is devoid of joy. After completing the state of dhy\ñena, and dies here, he can be reborn in the three realms of the third dhy\ñena of R\ëpaloka. These are (1) the realms of the Brahm\ës of Minor Aura (paritta subha), (2) the realm of the Brahm\ës of Infinite Aura (AppamÈnasubha), (3) the realm of the Brahm\ës of Steady Aura (subhakinha).

In the fourth state, on account of the abandonment of pain and pleasure and the previous disappearance of elation and dejection, he attains and abides in the fourth dhy\ñena, which is neither painful nor pleasant, and which is absolutely pure through equanimity and mindfulness. After completing this state of dhy\ñena, if he dies here, he can be reborn in the three realms of fourth dhy\ñena. These are (1) the realm of the Brahm\ës of Great Reward

\textsuperscript{112} NBT, p. 308.
\textsuperscript{113} HBSL, p. 230.
(Vehapphala), (2) the realm of Mindless Beings (Asaṅgasatta), and (3) the pure abodes which are further subdivided into five, viz (1) the durable realm (Aviha), (2) the serene realm (Atappa), (3) the beautiful realm (Sudassa), (4) the clear sighted realm (Sudassi), and (5) the highest realm (Akanittha).

After attaining four states of dhyāna, he continues to cultivate and develop wisdom, then he attains six kinds of supernatural powers, three kinds of wisdom, four stages of Hīnayāna saints, and abides in the previous stages of Bodhisattva. It is to say that he attains Sotapana, Sakadāgāmi, Anāgāmi and Arhatship that corresponds with the immovable stage of Bodhisattva.116 He then continues to cultivate four highest stages of Mahāyāna, viz. Sādhumāti, Dharmamegha, Nirupama, and Jñānavati.117

But in the highest sūtras of Mahāyāna such as Vimalakirtinidesa sūtra, Saddharmapuṭṭa sūtra, Prajñāparamitā sūtra, etc, one, who practises meditation, need not retire to the forest or any place of solitude. He can practise meditation in his work at a market, in a shop, in family or in a company, etc. In walking, standing, lying and sitting, he can practise meditation. It should be understood that solitude is within one’s mind. If his mind is not settled, even a quiet forest would not be a congenial place. But if his mind is settled, even the central place of a busy town may be congenial.

(6) Perfection of Wisdom or Prajñāparamitā

Prajñā is translated wisdom or insight or intuition or spiritual enlightenment. The opposite of prajñā (wisdom) is often given as avidyā (ignorance). There are three kinds of wisdom in Hīnayāna teachings: Heard wisdom, intellectual wisdom, and experimental wisdom.118

Heard wisdom (sutta mayā paññā) is that which depends on hearing the teaching from another people or reading books. This is not his wisdom but he decides to adopt as his own.

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114 MN1, pp. 92-3, DN1, p. 276.
115 AN1, pp. 229-35.
116 HBSL, p. 290.
117 Ibid., pp. 290-1.
118 Ibid., p. 236.
Intellectual wisdom (citta man\(\text{\textasciitilde}t\)a pa\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\)ā) is that which arises after reading books or listening to sermons he considers or examines it whether it is really rational, beneficial he accepts it as true. But it is also not his own insight. It is only an intellectualization of the wisdom he has heard.

Experimental wisdom (bhāvanā citta pa\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\)ā) is that which arises out of his own experiences, out of self-realization of truth. This is the wisdom that he lives or real wisdom that brings about a change in his life.

According to Mahāyānists, three kinds of wisdom mentioned above belong to relative wisdom, which leads to the attainment of Arhatship or the immovable stage of Bodhisattva (the eighth stage of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva), stops the rebirth in this world. Buddhahood can not be attained by these kinds of wisdom.

In the highest sūtras of Mahāyāna, four kinds of wisdom are mentioned. These are the perfecting wisdom, the profound observing wisdom, the wisdom of equality and the great mirror wisdom.\(^{119}\)

When the desire is rooted out of one’s mind, his five consciousnesses of sense organs (hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, touching consciousnesses) are transmitted into the perfecting wisdom, his sixth consciousness (manovi\(\text{\textasciitilde}t\)a or mental consciousness) into the profound observing wisdom, his seventh consciousness (manas) into the wisdom of equality and his eighth consciousness (Ālayavi\(\text{\textasciitilde}t\)a) into the great mirror wisdom. When one’s mind is covered by the veil of ignorance, it gives rise to wrong thinking by which he gets sufferings. But once the veil of ignorance is removed, happiness (nirvānā) is obtained immediately.

(7) Perfection of Skillfulness or Upāya pīrami\(\text{\textasciitilde}t\)a

Upāya may be explained as expedient or skillful means, or wisdom in the choice and adoption of the means for converting others or helping them. It is specially related to a Bodhisattva’s work as a preacher of Dharma or a teacher of all subjects of study. A Bodhisattva always adopts his teaching to the capacity of the audience. He is like a physician,

\(^{119}\) LCZ\(\text{\textasciitilde}t\), p. 65.
who prescribes different remedies for different diseases and different persons. The Saddharmapuṣṭaśastra Āśāśastra emphasizes the perfection of Upāya and gives many stories relating to it. The Āśāśastra says that Gautama Buddha really attained enlightenment many aeons ago and lives forever. Out of compassion, he pretends to be born as a man and attained Bodhi under the tree. He did so in order to help humankind to liberate from sufferings. This is his upāya kausalya.\(^\text{120}\) The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara assumes thirty-two different forms in order to preach to different congregations. This is his upāya.\(^\text{121}\)

Three remaining perfections, viz. perfection of vow, that of power and that of intuition are already discussed in the nine perfections above.

Apart from these, there are two other methods of practice of Mahāyāna that were popular in India, central Asia, China, and in the countries of south-east Asia as well. These are the recitation of Amitābha Buddha’s name and the utterances of Dharanis. Both these are considered as the methods of meditation.

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\(^{120}\) SLFS, pp. 219-21.
\(^{121}\) Ibid., pp. 289-90.