Chapter -I

INTRODUCTION

The 6th century BCE witnessed in India “Man’s marvelous capacity for creating Gods, the stubborn impulse to polytheism had free scope. Gods and Ghosts, with power to injure and annoy as well as to bless and glorify, governed the life of the people.”

According to Oldenberg, hundreds of years before the Buddha’s time, movements were in progress in Indian thought, which prepared the way for Buddhism and cannot therefore be separated from the sketch of the latter. Through the help of literature, we get to know about the conditions of the time, which produced the Buddha there was no vast empire in India, but small tribes or clans were trying to settle down. Several dialects were in vogue, though Sanskrit was considered a sacred language. The Vedas had by then attained supremacy. The laws codified by Manu were in force. The 62 philosophical systems were also not fully developed by this time.

Many heretical sects appeared including the Jains; the ascetics, ones which were independent of Brahmanism; those who renounced the world; Ajivikas, who practiced self-mortification, the materialists or hedonists; the scepters etc.

The age of migrations and settlement was over, and the territorial element had attained preponderance over the tribal in the organization of the state. From its very inception, the development and growth of civilization has been accompanied by recurrent waves of disillusion with power and material wealth. Around 6th c. BCE, there came a wave which swept through the whole of Asia including China, Greek islands, Asia Minor, which mobilized the resources against the contemporary power structure. In all, it was an age of speculative chaos, full of inconstant theologies and vague wrangling.

The Buddha understood the futility of studying the metaphysics, as he saw minute differences in all the ideologies that were prevalent during that period. There seemed anarchy in the thought process. Thus, the Buddha did not pay any attention towards the explanation of metaphysical questions. And thus the Buddhist metaphysics that we come across is a later interpolation. Rightly, in the words of S. Radhakrishnan, “Buddhism is essentially psychology, logic and ethic, and not metaphysics.”
By the time the Buddha appeared on the scene, the Upanishads were not much read by the masses and thus its teachings became a source of superstitions, as Lalitvistara describes the state of India during that period: “while at Uruvela, Sakya called to mind all the different forms of penances which people in his time were in the habit of submitting to and which they thought raised the mind above all carnality. ‘Here’ he thought, ‘am I born in the Jambudvipa among people who have no prospect of intellectual redemption, crowded by tirthikas, or revealers of the truth with diverse wishes, and at a time when their faculties are wriggling in the grasp of the crocodile of their carnal wants. These were people who advocated tapas to bend the gods to their will.’ ....”

The reaction arose in the rice growing areas, in the form of Buddhism. Buddhism, however, spread only in those countries which, at some point of time, had a cult of serpents and dragons, and never went in those countries which had the tradition of killing dragons and who blame serpents for the ills of mankind.

Buddhism is followed in India for the last 2500 years and during this period it has undergone profound and radical changes. History of Buddhism, according to Conze, can be divided into four periods: first is the old Buddhism, which correspond the Hinayana; second is marked by the rise of the Mahayana; third is the rise of Tantra and Ch’an. These three periods constitutes the period of initial 1000 years. The rest of 1000 years can be taken together as the fourth period.

The first period was confined to India alone, concerning with the psychological question. It is concerned with psychological analysis by which self-control is sought. In the second period, it started conquering Eastern Asia and started to be influenced by other cultures. It dealt with the ontological questions. It turned towards the nature of true reality and the realization in oneself of that true nature of things is held to be decisive for salvation. In the third period creative centres of Buddhist thought were established outside India, especially in China. It dealt with the cosmic question. It sees adjustment and harmony with the cosmic order, and it uses magical and occult methods to achieve it.

Soteriologically, they differ in the sense that, in the first period, the ideal saint is an Arhat, who will not be born again in this world; in the second period, the ideal saint is the Bodhisattva, who ultimately will become an omniscient Buddha; and in the third period, it is a Siddha, who is able to manipulate the cosmic forces, both inside and outside himself.
Other religions too, might have undergone such astonishing changes but Buddhism differs from them in the sense that the innovation of each new period or phase was supported by a new set of canonical literature, which, however, compiled many years after the death of the Buddha, are declared to be the word of the Buddha himself. The literature of the first period was the *Tripitaka*, which was supplemented by *Mahayana sutras* in the second period and, by *Tantras* in the third period.14

### Conditions for the Rise of Buddhism

#### Political Condition

When Buddhism arose, there was no one superior power in India. The Political system during the 6th century BCE was of two kinds: Monarchical kingdoms and; republican territories called the *gana-Sanghas*,15 with either complete or modified independence. Sixteen such *gana-Sanghas* are mentioned in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, which refers to these as the *mahajanapadas*.17 Out of these sixteen, the largest was the Vajjians. These *gana-Sanghas* rose as a reaction to the growing influence of the monarchical states and were constantly at war with each other to protect their own distinct identity.18

From the 6th c. BCE onwards, the political condition of the country was one of the disquiet characterized by external depredation from the *janapadas* and the kingdoms and those must have been occasions for frequent bloodshed. This was a tremendously shocking situation and sensitive souls must have felt a desire to get out of it.19

Before the Buddhism came into existence, the Punjab and the middle country had been the main centre of cultural activity. But, when Buddhism arose, Magadha and Kosala gained prominence. Thus, a European Indologist, R. Fick intended towards the lesser influence of *brahmins* in eastern India, because of which Buddhism and Jainism flourished in this region.20

Out of the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* four were more important which include, the kingdom of Magadha with its capital at Rajgriha ruled first by Bimbisara and later by Ajatshatru; the kingdom of Kosala with its capital at Sravasti ruled first by Pasenadi and later by Vidudabha; the kingdom of Vatsa with its capital at Kosambi ruled first by Udena and later by Parantapa; and the kingdom of Avanti with its capital at Ujjaina ruled by Pradyota.21 These kingdoms also formed matrimonial
alliances among themselves and due to these alliances they were at war from time to time.22

Due to the political expansion, there arose the need of an efficient bureaucracy which was realized for the first time, by Bimbisara. And in such an environment, politics was unhampered by moral restraint as is evident from Ajatshatru’s patricide.23 This period also witnessed the imperialistic tendencies. It is evident from the imperial policies of Ajatshatru and Vidudabha, who wished to destroy all the free states.24

Thus it can be said that, politically, it was an age of territorial empire building with the tendency towards imperialism without giving much importance to moral values.

Economic Conditions

This period is characterized by the extension in economy through the expansion of agriculture. This expansion of agriculture was due to the extensive use of iron in clearing jungles and in bringing more and more land under cultivation. It was also extensively used by the masses. This increasing use of iron is corroborated by the archeological evidence.25 This expansion of agriculture was characterized by the cultivation of rice on large scale, as the environment of the area completely suited to rice cultivation with the security of water supply all through the year from the river Ganga. This led to increase in fertility rate and thus increase in general population. And according to Buddhist literature this increase in population is a sign of development and prosperity.26 The expansion of agriculture might have led to some surplus production. This surplus production gave rise to trade and trade in turn led to the rise of cities and due to this the rise of a full-fledged class society where taxes, tributes, tithes and gifts in cash and kind were available for collection by the religious and political authorities of the state.27

Thus the period also corresponds with the second urbanization in India. Archaeological excavations reveal several historical sites related to Buddhist tradition in the Gangetic basin. Interestingly, many of them confirm the use of NBP Ware.28 The Mahaparinibbana Sutra mentions six mahanagaras, which were inhabited by many prosperous merchants. And these include Champa, Rajagriha, Shravasti, Saket, Kosambi and Banaras,29 the capitals of at least the sixteen mahajanapadas were essentially towns or cities.
There is a frequent mention in the Buddhist literature about the existence of the towns which were fortified and had gates for entry and exit, which were also protected. As a consequence of rise in trade, money economy also emerged, like karshapana or kahapana is derived from the root words krish (to cultivate), and pana (to trade) to exchange, barter or bargain. Thus with the expansion in trade and money economy, greater specialization took place. And this further, led to the formation of corporate groups, known by the terms like, Sangha, gana, shreni and puga. There are some other parameters also of an expanding economy. These are trade, interest and debts. There was more specialization and development in metallurgy, construction, textiles of cotton and silk, leather work, pottery, ivory work and wood work. Besides, there were some 25 widely pursued specialized professions.

Other than the newly established cities, there were also settlements like gana, nigama and nagara. Gana is a rural settlement equated with the village, the nagara, a town, usually fortified and apart from the mahanagaras, it was the largest settlement unit, and the nigama is a unit between the gama and nagara. These cities, nagaras and gamas were connected together by the trade routes which were called as vanippattas and the caravan traffic came into existence.

Towards the end of the Vedic age, the era of money economy and iron had dawned. This led to the rise in urban centers and thus, the development in trade. The development in trade in turn gave rise to a class of rich merchants and organization of crafts into guilds made their appearance.

The organizations of traders as well as artisans, known as guilds or shrenis, were important part of the urban settlements. These find mentions in the Jatakas, and they were more than eighteen in number. Some of them are: the workers in wood, metal, stone, weavers, leather workers, potters, ivory workers, dyers, jewellers, painters, sailors, garland makers, etc.

“Besides, agriculturalists and handicraftsman, there were merchants who carried their goods either up and down the great rivers or along the coasts in boats; or right across country in carts traveling in caravans. There were taxes and had to pay octroi duties at each different country entered; and a heavy item in the cost was the hire of volunteer police who led themselves out in bands to protect caravans against robbers on the way.”
The barter system was now replaced by money economy, but the former continued. Use of half and quarter kahapanas was in vogue. There is no evidence of silver coins and the gold coins might have been used later on and their use is doubtful, as these were not even discovered.47

Social Conditions

The economy became complex with the rise of use of money, trading activities and the emergence of guilds. This had an impact on the caste system. Society became more stratified and the class distinctions became broader e.g. the brahmin of Eknala, Kashibharadvaja were described as using 500 ploughs and on the other hand, there existed peasant proprietors, who were involved in subsistence farming.48 And this in turn also gave rise to the institution of hired labourers on a larger scale. Buddhist texts frequently mentioned the dasas, kammakaras, bhritakas and porisas,49 who were engaged mostly in the household works and also helped in agriculture. There were also wage labourers, as is evident from the term vaitanika, which appears in Panini’s Ashadhyayi for the first time.50

Another term dalidda51 also finds its mention quite frequently in the Buddhist literature, which describes a class of extremely poor people, without enough resources even for their subsistence (starving people).52 On the other hand there were people, who lived luxuriously53, having servants, who work for them.54

The dasa kammakaras were placed lowest in the society i.e hethimadisa, while the samana-brahmins were given the highest status in the society with the class of gahapati acting as the connecting link between the two.55

The samana-brahmin was placed highest in society, even though, he did not play any part in production or any kind of economic activity his involvement, if any, was only superficial, while the dasa kammakara, who were the actual producers were kept at the bottom of society. Thus the value system of the society could be judged.56

The expansion of economy led to the growth of urbanization, which in turn gave rise to several new occupations. These occupations along with the inter-varna marriages and the assimilation of the tribals into the society, led to the proliferation of a number of castes.57 The tribals got absorbed in the Brahmanical society because their areas were encroached due to high fertility and the society provided them with the economic security which otherwise was not open to them. Tribes became a part of
larger cultural unit. And this tribal absorption was conceptualized in the theory of varnasamkara.  

The expanding economy had created a demand for specialization and certain new occupations to come into existence. Thus specific specialization became the monopoly of certain group of people in society. And this led to the hereditary occupations, and the unit of these was kula or kinship ties. Hence, N.N. Wagle stated that the Buddhist society was kinship-based rather than caste based as castes were not fully evolved by that time. The Buddha himself recognized the strength of kinship ties and due to these ties he even relaxed many of the Vinaya rules, like the bhikkhus were given permission to have contacts with their kin groups. Women were allowed in the Sangha, when females of the Buddha’s kin group have made repetitive requests whose case was pleaded by one more of Buddha’s kinsman, Ananda.

**Position of women**

The status of women was subordinate to men and their identity centered round the men and the family. They were treated like slaves and were expected to obey their husbands. They were controlled and regulated by various bodies like the king, the Sangha, the shreni or puga. The Buddha, though reluctantly allowed women in the Sangha on the request of Ananda. But, according to the Buddha, the women were incapable of being either the tathagata or cakravarti.

Polygamy was prevalent at that time, and the term for a co-wife was sapatni. Even the Buddha at one time, said that it is difficult for a man with one wife, ugly and poor to join the Sangha, than for a rich man with many wives. Not only polygamy was prevalent, but the wife also can have a customary divorce and even remarry, for example one out of 4 wives of Ugga gahapati, and Brahmana, Mahagovinda, who also allowed that to his forty wives.

Widow, however, does not necessarily remarry, and after the death of the husband the wife does not inherit his property. There are references to unchaste women and even the involvement of monks for abortion is recorded in the Vinaya. Thus the position of women in times of Buddha can be said to be a mixed one, as they enjoyed many of the rights given to men but excluding the right to inherit the property. And the role of the monk, as mentioned above was not worthy of reverence.
Religious Conditions

The age of the Buddha was an age of renunciation. This age could be distinguished by the rise of a number of new sects in the Ganga valley. This age could be identified with a wide range of ideologies. They spanned from annihilationism (Ucchedavada) to eternalism (Sarvatavada), from fatalism (Ajivakas) to materialism (Carvakas). The Buddhist texts as well as the Jain texts mentions as many as 62 new heretical sects that appeared in this period.

As it is said, India is familiar with hermits, thinkers and philosophers since ages, but according to Rhys Davids “the intellectual movement before the rise of Buddhism was in large measure a lay movement, not a priestly one.” The only thing that distinguishes this period was the rise of paribbajakas or the samanas on a large scale. These samanas were different from the earlier sages, who, after fulfilling their duties as householder (grihastha), retire into the jungle with their wives. The samanas on the other hand, renounced their home, and broke all bonds with their kins and lived on alms. The samanas acted as the asocial beings as opposed to the people who lived in society. This difference of social and asocial is highlighted in the Mahavagga, where the Buddha was blamed as the destroyer of homes by the people of Magadha.

As mentioned above, there were abound 62 sects which arose during the 6th - 5th c. BCE. Buddhism, with the establishment of monasteries, made the lay adherents to depend on them on a greater scale. As a result of this, there arose a competition among the new sects as well as between the new sects and the brahmins. The differences were ideological while competition was for patronage.

The samanism replaced the idea of God by that of kamma with the popularity of kamma as the deciding factor in one’s rebirth, the concept of moksha as the final aim of life was devised and added to the doctrine of trivarga which led to the emergence of the doctrine of chaturvarga or purushartha.

Thus, the common features of all the samana sects including Buddhism and Jainism can be summarized as follows:
1. They challenged the authority of Vedas.
2. They did not pay any attention to the castes and age of the person, who wanted admission in the Sangha.
3. They had their separate ethical norms.
4. They lived a life of an ascetic to liberate themselves from the bonding of the world.

5. They could renounce the world anytime, after the attainment of adulthood.\textsuperscript{79}

The age of the Buddha could be identified with the rise of various doctrines, which stood in opposition to each other like the most discussed problem is of Kammanvada and Kiriyavada with their opposites Akammavada and Akiriyavada. Both the Jainas and Buddhists claim to be the believers in Kammanvada and Kiriyavada.\textsuperscript{80}

Alongwith Akiriyavada, Ucchedavada was also criticized by Buddhists and Jains.\textsuperscript{81} Among the philosophies of the period Kalavada could also be referred to, which finds its mention in Atharvaveda as well as Mahabharata.\textsuperscript{82}

The philosophers present during the time of the Buddha, as mentioned in the Brahmjala sutta of Dighanikaya. There are eighteen views related to the past arise out of ignorance of past\textsuperscript{83} are as follows

1. Four kinds of Sassatavada (eternalists).\textsuperscript{84}

2. Four ways of Ekachchasassatavada (semi-eternalists).\textsuperscript{85}

3. Four ways of Antanantika (extensionists), who set forth the infinite and finiteness of the world.\textsuperscript{86}

4. Four ways of eel-wriggling, where there is discussion about whether the other world exists or not.\textsuperscript{87}

5. Two ways of Adhikka-Samuppanika (Fortuitous Originists)\textsuperscript{88}

Other than these, the rest 44 more ways related to the question as to what happens to the soul and whose speculations are concerned with the future.\textsuperscript{89}

6. Sixteen ways of Sannivada (believes in conscious existence of soul after death).\textsuperscript{90}

7. Eight ways of Asannivada (believes in unconscious soul after death).\textsuperscript{91}

8. Eight ways in which, it is maintained that soul after death is neither conscious nor unconscious.\textsuperscript{92}

9. Seven ways of Uchhehedavada (Soul is completely annihilated).\textsuperscript{93}

10. Five kinds believed in the opinion that, "whatsoever the soul, in full enjoyment and possession of the five pleasures of sense, indulges all its functions, then the soul has attained in this visible world, to the highest Nibbana."\textsuperscript{94}
This age was also marked by the worship of the Yakshas. The term Yaksha was a popular synonym for Devata, and this represents a continuation of pre-Aryan religion. Yakshas were the spirits (demi-gods) often attached to the trees and granted boons of especially progeny and wealth. Some of them gradually got assimilated in Brahmanic as well as the Buddhist pantheons, like Kuvera and Vajrapani. Later on these influenced the development of Indian iconography and Tantric rituals.

Besides these, people also used to worship some lowly beings like the shades of the departed, evil spirits and animals like elephant, horse, cow, dog and crow. The Jatilas were also there. These are the Brahmanical recluses, who lived in forests in groups preaching asceticism. They were also called as Aggika Jatalikas. They believed in action and in will, thus were kammavadins and kiriyavadins. The idea of heaven and hell also developed during this period and it might have played an important or significant part in the popular eschatology.

Such was the religious conditions of the time of the Buddha. There were the rise of samana sects and around 62 new philosophical doctrines come up. It could thus be called an age of philosophical speculations, general awareness and intellectual ferment, where much emphasis was laid on morality and ethics.

**Background to the Origin of Philosophy**

V.P. Varma argues that “from the philosophical stand point, original Buddhism is neither absolutism nor illusionism”. Jacobi says that Buddhism is an outcome of antecedent Jain theory. However, A. Weber identifies the Buddha as the same as Kapila and equate Buddhism with the Sankhya. On the other hand, Oldenberg and Keith opine that the Sankhya had indirectly influenced Buddhism not directly and thus the impact is not complete and is superficial.

G. C. Pande, however, denies any influence of Sankhya and Jainism on Buddhism, but he agrees that it appears to have the influence of the Upanishads. Further, it is also said that the influence of Yoga can be seen more definitely on Buddhism. Besides Yoga, Senart has tried to emphasize the effect of the Vishnu-Krishna cult on Buddhism. According to P.V. Bapat, Buddhism had the influence of the Vedas and the Upanishads. On the other hand, T.W. Rhys Davids maintains that the Buddhist ideology is original.
Buddhist and Jain mendicancy, which supports the renunciation of family life in one’s youth is quite different from the Brahmanical ideal of vanaprastha and sanyasa, which means adoption of asceticism after the fulfillment of all the family and societal obligations mentioned in the Brahmanas. However, in the Upanishads especially the Mundakopnishada, the Jaina and the Buddhist forms of asceticism were held high. But, if overall picture of things is seen, it appears more probable that the germs of the Buddhist and Jain asceticism lie in the pre-Aryan, non brahmanical cult of “muni” rather than in the sanyasa ashrama, which is a later development.

In the Brahmanas, it is mentioned that by performing sacrifice in a proper way, it leads to a higher and blessed life after death. Further, it is said that the sacrificer is reborn and lives a happy life of long duration in the company of gods, but this does not signify the transmigration of soul as it requires a continuous conscious entity which is different from the physical self i.e. soul or vijnana (consciousness). On the other hand, they had a very obscure or vague idea of soul which is not completely different from the body and they did not consider it to be immortal. Over and above, they refer only to kamma, as the potency of the sacrificial fire. Thus, it is difficult to ascertain the sudden appearance of the theory of transmigration of soul in its final form in the Upanishads.

A striking feature of this period was the polytheistic pantheon. A number of gods evolved representing natural phenomenon, and these nature gods and goddesses were worshipped and invoked. But, with so many gods and goddesses, there was a decline in the intellect and more and more attention was shifted towards monotheism and monism. However, with the emergence of so many deities, a number of rituals and sacrifices evolved, which enhanced the importance of the priestly class, and made them class conscious. But this led to the dissatisfaction among the various thinkers. And this philosophical consciousness and growth of rational gave awareness to people to shift more towards monotheism. Thus, the only way left to the priests was making the performances of rituals symbolic and gave it the name of upasana.

This was the background which gave birth to the Buddha. The superiority of brahmins was also taken a back, and there was the rise of kshatriya learned philosophers like Ajatshatru of Kashi, Pravahana Jaivali of Panchala, Ashvapati of Kaikeya, all of whom even instructed the learned brahmins. It was an age of liberal thought where even women like Gargi and Maitreyi were taking interest in
philosophical discussions. Mahavir Jain and Gautama Buddha too belong to the kshatriya varna, who undermined the Brahmanical customs, ritualism and caste.

The theory of kamma and transmigration was becoming popular. It finds its first mention, not in the Vedas or Brahmanas but in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad\(^\text{26}\) and then in Chhandogya,\(^\text{127}\) Aitreyya,\(^\text{128}\) Katha,\(^\text{129}\) Isa,\(^\text{130}\) Prasna\(^\text{131}\) and Mundaka\(^\text{132}\). The theory thus, makes futile all the forms of worship and rituals, because, it supports the idea that a man through his kamma alone can himself construct his future, thus, making the existence of God insignificant.

So, the theory has been filtered down from the pre-Vedic, non-Brahmanic times. Thus the origin of Buddhism might be traced from the Harappan period due to the presence of recluses, as is evident from the motif on the seal, where a man is sitting in the yogic posture, surrounded by the beasts; and the burial practices followed by them by keeping household articles and the articles of daily use with the dead in the graves.

**The Buddha**

When we start from the Upanishads to early Buddhism, we pass from the works of many minds to the considered creed of a single individual, who in 6\(^{th}\) c. BCE, had set the ideals of spiritual detachment, lofty idealism, mobility of life and love for humanity and his name was the Buddha, the enlightened one. He was born in c. 567 BCE at Lumbini (Rumindei, now in Nepal) and was given the name Siddharth. His father’s name was Shuddodhan, who was the chief of the Sakya clan. His mother was Mahamaya. But his mother died when he was only seven days old and he was brought up by his step-mother Mahaprajapati Gautami, who was also his mother’s sister. He is said to have married his cousin Yashodhara, and had a son Rahula.\(^\text{133}\)

Disappointed, by the mundane sphere of life and death, he became conscious of multitudes of human life. And when he saw the four signs as it is said, i.e. aged man, sick man, a corpse followed by the grieving acquaintances and lastly an ascetic, his delicate mind started to have the impression that the life is suffering. “And all that was fixed in him was shaken and he trembled at life.”\(^\text{134}\)

Disenchanted with the worldly things, he chose the life of a wandering ascetic (paribbajaka). He renounced his house-hold life, his wife and only son for the realization of the truth, and to get rid of the miseries of birth, old age, sickness and death.\(^\text{135}\)
Thus, at the age of 29, he left his home. He wore yellow robes, wandered and begged for his food. He tried to satisfy his spiritual quest through philosophic thought but did not get any success. Then he joined five ascetics and performed penance with them in the jungles of Uruvela. But, here too he failed to gain any solace. With performing so many bodily austerities and fasting, he became so weak and decrepit that one day he fainted. And he left those ascetics, and had food. After regaining his bodily strength, he sat in meditation.136

After six years of a disciplined ascetic life, he came to know of the futility of performing bodily austerities. “With a body purified by abstinence, a mind refined by humility and a heart attained by solitude, he sought wisdom in wilderness.”137 He sat in meditation under the bodhi-tree. Legends say that Mara tried to dissuade Gautama, but he remained steadfast to his purpose and was determined, “Never form his seat will I stir until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom.”138 After seven weeks, he became the Buddha, the enlightened one. He preached the gospel of four Aryan truths and eight-fold path first to his five ascetic companions and set in motion the “wheel of law”, “Dharmachakra pravartana” in Sarnath.139

The Dhamma

The word Dhamma probably has more meanings than any other word in the entire vocabulary of Buddhism and Brahmanism. It is the second of the tri-ratnas or the three refuges. It has been variously translated as law, truth, doctrine, teaching, norm and true idea, all of which express some aspect of its total significance. Thus the Dhamma can be summarized as is defined in the sutras, in the following words: the Dhamma is well taught; it belongs to the lord, not to any other teacher; its results, when it is put into practice, are visible in this very life; it is timeless; it invites the enquirer to come and see personally what it is like; it is progressive, leading from lower to higher states of existence, and it is to be understood by the wise each one for himself. (Svakkato bhagyata dhammo sanditthiko akatiko opanaiiko paccattam vedilabbho vinukti).140

The Four Aryan Truths

The world is transitory; there are no essences in it and in particular no essential ‘soul’ within the existing individual that is a subject of rebirth; and because it is transitory, it is full of sorrow in the sense that even joys turn into sorrow as they vanish.141
The Dhamma comprised various principles and doctrines which the Buddha taught to the world, that he has gained from his spiritual experience. According to the Buddha, the three characteristics of the world are *annica* (impermanence), *anatta* (non-soul), and *dukkha* (sorrow) the Four Aryan Truths relate to the suffering in this world (*Dukkhavada*) are:

1. That there is suffering (*Dukkha*).
2) That it has a cause (*Samudaya*).
3) That it can be suppressed (*Nirodha*).
4) That there is a way to accomplish it (*Marga*).

"The concept of suffering is an expression of the incongruities and contradictions, frustrations and unhappiness that meet an individual if he is sensitive enough and cares to share his experiences."143

The first noble truth laid emphasis on pain (*Dukkha*). According to this, life is suffering like “birth is painful, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, union with the unpleasant is painful; painful is the separation from the pleasant, and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief the five aggregates, i.e. body, feeling, perception, will and reason, which spring from attachment, are painful.”144 From this, it seems that Buddhism is pessimism. But it is not so, because Buddhism preach that there is bliss, beyond this physical world145 and it cannot be pessimism as it merely states the obvious, i.e. "the conditioned life of eternal happiness is a contradiction in terms."146

The confusion is because the word *dukkha* has no exact translation in English, which could explain the real aspect of the word. The usual translation “suffering” is too strong, which gives the impression that life, according to Buddhism, is nothing but pain. The Buddha does not deny happiness in life, although this too is seen as part of *dukkha* because of its impermanence.147 However, whether the Buddha appears or not in the world, it remains a fact that all karmic formations are impermanent (*anicca*), all karmic formations are subject to suffering (*Dukkha*) and all that exists is non-absolute (*anatta*).148

The Buddha then said that there is a cause to this suffering that he explained in the theory of the Dependent Origination or conditioned co-producedness called the
pratityasamutpada. It says that everything in this world has a cause attached to it. “Verily it is the craving thirst or desire that causes the renewal of becoming, that is accompanied by the sensual delights, and seeks satisfaction, now here, now there- that is to say the craving for the gratification of the senses or the craving for prosperity. “Desires cause suffering since we desire what is impermanent, changeable and perishable.”

This could be explained with the theory of Dependent Origination which is a sort of vicious circle i.e. “from ignorance springs the sanskaras (conformations), from the sanskaras springs consciousness, from consciousness sprung name and form, from name and form spring the six provinces (six senses i.e. eye, ear, nose, tongue, body or touch and mind), from the six provinces springs contact, from contact springs sensation, from sensation springs thirst (desire), from thirst springs attachment, from attachment springs becoming, from becoming springs birth, from birth springs old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. Such is the origin of whole mass of suffering.

The third Aryan truth is about the suppression of suffering. And it can be done by destruction of ignorance, which consists in the complete absence of lust. With that the sanskaras are destroyed; by the destruction of sanskaras, consciousness is destroyed; by the destruction of consciousness, name and form are destroyed; by the destruction of name and form six provinces are destroyed, by the destruction of six provinces, contact is destroyed; by the destruction of contact, sensation is destroyed; by the destruction of sensation, thirst is destroyed; by the destruction of thirst, attachment is destroyed; by the destruction of attachment, becoming is destroyed; by the destruction of becoming, birth is destroyed; by the destruction of birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair are destroyed. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.

This is how it explains the third Aryan truth of nirodha i.e. how the accumulation of pudgala (the concept of personhood) is stopped. This whole phenomenon is summarized in Dhammapada as: “the whole world is in flames and it is burning due to ignorance.”

The fourth Noble truth is the Arya Ashtangika Marga, the eight fold Path by following which accumulation of pudgala or karmic formation can be stopped and one can attain Nibbana (salvation). It consists of disciplined from of life with non attachment to any living or material entity. It leads to the cessation of suffering. It consists of right view (samyak drishti), right aspiration (samyaka sankalpa), right
speech (samyaka vak), right action (samyaka kamma), right living (samyaka ajeev),
right action (samyaka vijnana), right recollection (samyak smriti), and right
meditation (samyaka samadhi).153

Right view means adherence to Buddhist doctrine; right aspiration means
having a positive outlook free from lust, ill-will and cruelty; Right speech means
speaking what is true and; right action means upholding the Panchshila, five
precepts. It is a set of five moral rules, common to almost all schools of Buddhism.
These are (a) not to kill or injure any living being, (b) not to take what has not been
given, (c) to avoid misconduct on sensual matters, (d) to abstain from false speech and
(c) not to take intoxicants; right livelihood means pursuing professions that does not
harm anyone, physically or mentally; right effort means directing the mind towards
religions goals; right mind recollection means being aware of what one is doing,
thinking and feeling; and right meditation means focus the mind. These eight paths
are clarified into skandhas (3 groups), of which 1-2 are ascribed to insight (prajna), 3-
5 to morality (shila) and 6-8 to meditation (samadhi).154 This is the path that leads
from sansara to Nibbana.155

Soul

It is said that the Buddha delivered his second sermon to his five ascetic
companions, on the non-existence of soul.156 The question, whether there exists a soul
(self) or whether there does not exist a soul (non-self) i.e. the doctrine of anatta, is
variously interpreted by scholars.

Damien Keown in the Dictionary of Buddhism defines anatman/anatta as the
key Buddhist doctrine that both the individual and objects are devoid of any
unchanging, eternal, or autonomous substratum. It is one of the three marks
(lakshana) or attributes of all compounded phenomena (the other two being anitya
and dukkha.)157

Rhys Davids says that “there can be no individuality without putting together,
there can be no putting together, no confection, without a becoming; there can be no
becoming without a becoming different; and there can be no becoming different
without a dissolution, a passing away, which sooner or later will be inevitably
complete.”158
Mrs. Rhys Davids says “we find ‘the self’, not only taken for granted, but referred to in lofty terms as a more in the man than either the body, the mind ways or the ‘just himself’. We find ‘self’ called a great self co-existing with a little self.”

Radhakrishnan says that the “Buddha clearly tells us what the self is not, though he does not give any clear account of what it is. Thus, it is wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddha.”

The Buddha said “the body is not the eternal soul, for it tends towards destruction nor do feeling, perception, disposition and intelligence together constitute the eternal soul, for, were it so, it would not be the case that consciousness likewise tend towards destruction.” He further said that the constituents of entire personality of man are all transitory and are source of suffering. And there is nothing permanent and blissful in it. Permanence and bliss are only imaginary entities. He, on the other hand, had clearly declared that “all elements are soulless.”

However, he is silent about the atman as mentioned in Upanishads. He neither affirms nor denies its existences. Mrs. Rhys Davids, considered the Upanishadic and Buddhist points of view, regarding soul, as similar. She finds it illogical to interpret the same Indian Word ‘atta’ in different aspects during the same period i.e. 6th century BCE.

She further says that, “we find ‘the self’ not only taken for granted, but referred to in lofty terms as a more in the man than either the body, the mind ways or the just himself. We find ‘self called a great self co-existing with a little self.”

Grimm says that the question of true essence of ‘I’ can be answered in two ways either directly or indirectly, i.e. “by determining what I am not; and what I am. What I am not, can be determined with certainly but as to what I am can raise doubts. Thus the Buddha preferred the indirect way.” This theory of presence of two selves is also supported by Ananda K, Coomaraswamy and I.B. Horner and also by S.Radhakrishnan.

Discarding the validity of the conceit of the ‘I’ or the ‘self’ in any possible shape or form, the Buddha says that “any kind of corporeality whatever, whether past future or present, whether internal or external, whether gross or subtle, inferior or superior, whether far or near- all corporeality must with objective knowledge be regarded as “this is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself (similarly with regards to
other aggregates) Further, it is said that, “whatever is seen, heard, reflected, known, attained, inquired and mentally contemplated- that also is to be viewed as ‘this is not mine this is not I, this is not myself.’ Thus the self, separates from the five aggregates is misunderstood by scholars.

The Buddha again and again had reiterated that if there would have been any permanence, eternal, changeless entity existed there would have been no need of living a life of purity, for complete eradication of suffering. According to V. P. Varma, Buddhism is a unique philosophy in the sense that it does not subscribe to any permanent entity called ‘soul’. No other religion, Aryan or Semitic, has dispensed with the soul. If the Tripitaka is followed, there is no doubt that anatta means the radical denial of the ‘soul’. The overwhelming silence about and even the occasional denial of the Upanishadic conception of the soul are almost conclusive to prove that the Buddha did not subscribe to any soul- empirical or transcedental.

God

In Buddhism, there is no place for the ideal of God neither in theological, teleological nor metaphysical sense. “God, whether he is conceived as a personal creator and controller, a moral governor and dispenser of justice, or as an indwelling principle in men known as the self, is unacceptable to Buddhism.”

Buddhism, as such is an atheistic religion. It gives more importance to kamma than anything else. However, it believes in many supernatural beings like deva, most of whom were adopted from Hinduism. The Buddha maintained a deep silence regarding some fundamental metaphysical concepts e.g. “is the world beginningless or has it a beginning, is it finite or is it infinite.” The Buddha might not have answered such questions and considered them as futile. According to the Buddha, a God who can neither adapt nor alter, neither produces nor modifies is no God at all. The suffering of the world is intelligible only on the hypothesis of kamma. Further, he said that the perfect freedom is only to be found in perfect renunciations.

Scholars like A. B. Keith and de la Vallee Poussin, interpret Buddha’s silence as his ignorance about the metaphysics. But Stecherbatsky is of the view that fundamental reality cannot be explained in terms of the discursive intellect.
other hand, Buddha thought that "the very effort of the intellect to confine truth to a simple 'either-or' to extremes is bound to prove futile, the truth lies in the middle path. And it cannot be described in terms of the human language."180

The Buddha merely says: "Despite all search I have not found any God. But in this search for God I have found the way to deliverance. Whether there really is a God or no-of that I cannot say anything; of that I do not need to say anything; but comprehending. The true nature of life, I have discovered that salvation is possible without God, altogether apart from God."181

Thus, it can be said that there is no-self in the form of any physically identifiable object. It is only the kamma which is the sole entity which is to be observed when rebirth takes place.

**Kamma and Transmigration (Doctrine of Moral determinism)**

An intercommunication of soles of pre-Vedic, non-Brahmanical cultures with the Vedic ideals led to the development of new ideas which were incorporated in the Upanishads like kamma, transmigration of soul and asceticism. These ideals eventually became more popular and superior over the brahmanical modes of worship.182

The concept of ‘kamma’ as expounded in Indian thought stressed the notion of justice based on individual retribution but it was not usually expanded to imply the scientific notion of universal uniformity and cosmic causality.183 The general meaning of kamma is action. At a little comprehensive level it means the object behind the action and its repercussions.184

Thus, the Buddha explained kamma, in the sense of the “immediate, psychological, subjective actor in the immediate present, the emphasis on the motive and the consequence of the action, thus was a peculiar contribution of Buddhist philosophy.185

It is said, in the Shatpatha Brahmana, that man makes a world for himself as a result of his actions and after that he is born into that very world.186 Upanishads call kamma as a set of tools which act as the connecting link between will and the concrete achievement of the willed consequences. Hence the cause of rebirth is not kamma but desires.187
In Hinduism, the theory of *kamma* and rebirth is connected and legitimized by the existence of a soul. But the Buddha followed the doctrine of no soul (*anatta*) thus, there is nothing in Buddhism which persists and could maintain continuity till the final attainment of salvation.188

Thus, Buddhist salvation is to understand that the forms are compound structures, which are subject to decay, and that nothing is transmitted but an impulse dependent on the activities of past. It is a man’s character, and not himself, that goes on.189

Nagarjuna in his commentary on *prajnaparamita* sutra says: “the tathagata sometimes taught that the *atman* exists, and at other times he taught that the *atman* does not exist. When he preached that the *atman* exists and it is to be the receiver of misery or happiness in the successive lives as the reward of its own *kamma*, his object was to save men from falling into the heresy of nihilism (*uucchadavada*). When he taught that there is no *atman* in the sense of a creator or a perceiver or an absolutely free agent, apart from the conventional name given to the aggregate of the five *skandhas*, his object was to save men from falling into the opposite heresy of eternalism (*sasvartvada*). The two doctrines were preached by the Buddha for two very different objects. He taught the existence of *atman* when he wanted to impart to his hearers the conventional doctrine; he taught the doctrine of an *atman* when he wanted to impart to them the transcendental doctrine.”190

**Rebirth**

Thus, the Buddhists preach that *kamma* lead to rebirth, but without the transmigration of soul as the soul is a non-entity in Buddhism, and that there is nothing permanent in this world (*aniccaya*); nothing has originated and nothing is perished; nothing is taking birth and nobody is annihilated. If this is so then what is it, which is being reborn, where rebirth is taking place? The Buddha had said that everything is this world is in constant flux. Things are only changing their focus and it is the energy which is transforming.

There is no like as the transmigration of soul in Buddhism or no entity which provides the passage from one life to another life, with death. The physical self is dissolved and the psychical life ends. It is not the dead who come to rebirth but another, as there is no soul to migrate. It is the character that continues.191 Buddhism
does not explain the mechanism through which the kamma is transferred to next life. It simply assumes it.192

“The decisive element is generally looked upon as the last thought which becomes the essences of the moral and intellectual life of the drying man. It is the force which remains as a desire for new life as death occurs…. Since life is a combination of five skandhas, if the separated elements do not come together, there would be no life. There must be a force at work which tends to recombine the scattered elements. Under the pressure of this force of attraction called upadana or changing to existence a new combination results. Kamma can do nothing without it. Kamma is an informing principle waiting for its material.”193

**Nibbana**

Nibbana is the central tenet of Buddhism, yet there are no clear explanations about it in the Pali literature. Every religion, in clear terms, talks about what happens to an individual after death. But Buddhism does not.194

Nibbana is the summum bonum of a Buddhist. What is moksha to the brahmin, the Tao to the Chinese mystic, Fana to the Sufi. Eternal Life to the followers of Christ, that is Nibbana to the Buddhist.195

Nibbana, according to Dahlke means “freedom from desire”, or “The leaving”; or “the becoming extinguished.”196 According to Radhakrishnan, the word Nibbana literally means “blowing out” or “cooling”. Blowing out suggests extinction, however, cooling suggests not complete annihilation, but only the drying out of hot passions.197

According to Coomaraswamy, Nibbana had been wrongly interpreted by the western scholars i.e. it could be attained after death.198 But truth lies somewhere else. He says that “Nibbana is a state to be realized here and now, and is recorded to have been attained by the Buddha at the beginning of his ministry, and by innumerable Arahats and his disciplos”.199

According to Rhys Davids, Nibbana means “The going out”, “the becoming extinct,” not of soul but craving (tanha) and lust, hatred and illusion.200 According to Dahlke, Nibbana has a negative connotation.201 Oldenberg also says that it is annihilation.”202
Kern stated that practically Nibbana means a happy death without fear of rebirth. According to him, it could be attained only after death as in case of the Buddha (PariNibbana).\textsuperscript{203} Nibbana, according to Damien known is extinguishing of flame, first by blowing it out and then by smothering it or cutting off the supply of fuel to a fire. He further describes it of two kinds, one is moral or spiritual transformation that occurs during one is alive (upadisesa-Nibbana) and second in after death after which there is no remainder (a upadisesa –Nibbana or pariNibbana), which means the end of rebirth, (and not annihilation)\textsuperscript{204}

Stcherbatsky has explained two kinds of Nibbana, one is a Nibbana in one’s life time, being an annihilation with some residue, and a final Nibbana, which is complete annihilation without any residue.\textsuperscript{205}

These two kinds of Nibbana are said to be prevalent in Europe from the time of Childers (an Irish, 1870-1922). Of these two, only second type of Nibbana is considered real and final.\textsuperscript{206}

According to Stcherbatsky, a Nibbana in which even purified elements themselves are absent is termed as the final Nibbana, a Nibbana without any residue of personal feeling. It, according to him can be compared to a destroyed town, which, after all the criminals are killed, has itself also been annihilated, which could be summarized in the following words:

The body has collapsed,
Ideas gone, all feelings vanished,
All energies quiescent,
And consciousness itself extinct.

And this could be attained through extinction of all elements of life.\textsuperscript{207}

As described in Milindapanho, Nibbana is “profound like an ocean, lofty like a mountain peak, sweet like honey.”\textsuperscript{208}

According to V. P. Varma, from the point of view of origin, Nibbana has three meanings. First two are the naturalistic interpretation, which is ‘cooling’ of craving and passion and the stillness created by the absence of air i.e. by Panini, “Nirvano avate”\textsuperscript{209}, the third meaning is the ‘extinction’ of lust, hatred and infatuation, false beliefs, passions and torments, or the extinction of the psycho-physical complex.\textsuperscript{210}
On the other hand, F. C. Schrader holds that in an age of great speculative ferment, the silence of the Buddha with regard to Nibbana was pragmatic.\textsuperscript{211}

V. P. Varma has argued that the foundation of Nibbana should be traced in the tradition of philosophical and ethical enquiry and not in the decline of political and economic prosperity.\textsuperscript{212} He further says that there are four possible interpretations of the concept of Nibbana; (a) at the primary level Nibbana means extinction of pain and sorrow; (b) at a more philosophical level it means extinction of the empirical phenomena; (c) another meaning is the absolute extinction or total nihil; (d) it is the implication of the being of an absolute real.\textsuperscript{213}

The Buddhist nun Dhammadinna, while instructing Visakha said, with the approval of the Buddha, that "Nibbana is the kernel of the holy life, and it is its purpose and its goal."\textsuperscript{214}

A passage from the Sutta Nipata observes thus: just as the flame of a lamp struck by a gust of wind disappears and cannot be traced, so also does a perfect saint freed from name and form, disappear without leaving any trace.\textsuperscript{215}

According to Rhys Davids and W. Stede, Nibbana is purely and solely an ethical state.\textsuperscript{216}

There are more than one interpretation of the term Nibbana, which has led to unending debates among the Buddhist scholars. Still it can be stated on the basis of some controversial passages in Buddhist literature that it could be obtained both, during or after life.

The Sangha

The central basic institution unit of Buddhism is the Sangha, which include people, who have renounced the world in reach of truth,\textsuperscript{217} and it is the earliest surviving religion, which has given itself an institutional basis.\textsuperscript{21} It became one of the main reasons for its spread and popularity.\textsuperscript{219}

In the pre-Buddhist period, there are common areas of residence for all the samanas, either in open parks\textsuperscript{220} or common halls. These were made available by the members of royal family or by the resident community as a whole like the kutagarashalas.\textsuperscript{221} Many features of Buddhist monasticism were also in practice from earlier times, like vassavasa, the uposatha, many eleemosynary and domiciliary rules etc.\textsuperscript{222}
The Buddhist monastic institution has evolved as a result of gradual process, which grew under the pressure of its surrounding sociological environment and its own inner principle of evolution. These not only have religious importance but also have a cultural importance. “These monasteries were not just convents; their purpose was not introvert; they functioned as cultural centres, gathering into themselves the rich and varied intellectual life of the period.” Amaravati, Nalanda, Odantapura, Vikramshila and Jagaddala were all monastic universities each fully equipped, having well maintained libraries, schools of studies, lecture halls, professors and students flocking from all over Asia.

The Sangha can be said to be a federal organization of bhikkhus, and that the political system of gana-Sanghas (the tribal states) was the model for the bhikkhu-Sangha. According to Damien Keown Sangha means a group or collection, a Buddhist community, especially those who have been ordained as monks (bhikkhu) and nuns (bhikkhuni) and it also sometimes include the lay followers (upasaka & upasikas).

For H. Kern the germs of monachism can be traced from the institution of the four ashramas which support the renunciations towards the end of life. As of some 108 Upanishads, seventeen deal with Sanyasa or renunciation.

Earlier the Buddhist monks were wanderers, but after some time they realized that during rains the countryside gets flooded, the rivers swell, narrow streams become unfordable and tracks washed away. Thus, the wanderers of all religions decided to settle down during this season, under different terms like the Buddhists call it vassavasa (rainy-season retreat), the Jainas call it Pajjusana and the brahmins Dhruvashila.

Gradually this vassavasa came to be the whole year phenomenon, i.e. now the monks had a permanent residence, together giving rise to the institution of Sangha. The vassavasa commenced from the full moon day of Asadha or Shravana month and continued for next three months, when the monks had to stay at one place in congregation, depending on the alms of the laity of the surrounding area. Thus, vassavasa became a connecting link between the monks and the lay followers.

It was clear that Buddha was the unopposed leader of the Sangha during his life time. There was no question of nominating a successor after his death. Instead the
Vinaya was to be the only guide of the Sangha. Sangha consisted – and ideally still consists of those of the Buddha’s followers who, having renounced the household life, devoted the whole of their time and all their energies to the realization of Nibbana.

Like the Dhamma, the Sangha also have passed through various stages of development. At first, during the early lifetime of the founder, the Sakyaputta Shrmanas, as they were called, remained outwardly indistinguishable from the other religious fraternities of the time. What, in fact, set them apart is the special Dhamma that they professed. They, too, were of eleemosynary and eremitical habit, assembled twice a month on the days of the full moon and new moon, were of fixed residence during the rains and so on.

“The second period of development may have started before the Parinibbana. The eligibility condition is the faith in Triratnas i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The lay followers were required to follow the panchshila (five precepts) and the bhikkhus and bhikkhunis were required to follow patimokkha code of over 200 rules, the recitation of which replaced the original chanting of Dhamma stanzas at the fortnightly assemblies.

These rules of behaviour in Sangha, known as Vinaya, which the bhikkus and bhikkhunis had to abide by, were not compiled until hundred years after the death of Buddha. They were in the process of development. In the episode of Subbadda, however, the Buddha seemed to have accorded strictness to those rules e.g. a list of four acts not to be done by a bhikkhu, were formulated, probably, by the Buddha called the Parajika Dhamma. Its rules were very strict. These recommend refrain from: (a) sexual intercourse; (b) serious theft; (c) murder and (d) falsely claiming to have attained supernatural powers. The defaulter would be banished from the Sangha for the rest of his life.

Finally, the Sangha became coenobitical, whereupon the primitive undivided bhikkhu-Sangha of the four quarters split up into a number of virtually autonomous local communities, and the patimokkha had to be supplemented by the skandhakas or complete institutes of coenobitical monasticism. All these developments occurred within the space of around two centuries.

After renunciation the bhikkhu became a part of new society, which was bound by the uniform set of disciplinary rules. They, then shared a relationship among
themselves only. And they were dependent on the lay community for their daily needs. Thus the Buddha encouraged a healthy relationship between the lay society and the Sangha.\textsuperscript{241}

The economic structure of the Sangha in the beginning was quite simple. It was based on individual begging and the occasional gifts of merchants, traders and guilds.\textsuperscript{242} After accepting the Veluvana vihara from Bimbisara, the Buddha declared thus, “I allow you bhikkhus to receive the donation of an arama.”\textsuperscript{243} With this the Sangha started accepting grants and gradually became rich in land and wealth. It later on served as a reason of corruption in the Sanghas and further led to the alienation of bhikkhus from the laity.\textsuperscript{244}

\textit{Bhikkuni Sangha}

Paralleled to the bhikkhu-Sangha, the bhikkhuni Sangha also developed.\textsuperscript{245} Admission to women was granted into the Sangha, though reluctantly, by the Buddha on the repeated requests of Mahaprajapati Gautami, whose case was further pleaded by Buddha’s kin Ananda before him.\textsuperscript{246}

But here too, they were assigned a subordinate position. They had to follow eight moral codes (\textit{attha-guru dhamma}) in addition to those accepted by the monks. These eight codes were:

1. A nun must bow reverentially before every monk, irrespective of her seniority.
2. A nun cannot go into retreat where there is no monk.
3. Every fortnight a nun should go to the community of monks for the confession as well as to receive instruction.
4. The ceremonies of ordination and of the end of the rainy season retreat, and confession must be repeated before the community of monks.
5. A nun who has been guilty of a grave offence must submit herself to a fortnightly discipline of penance before both sides of the order.
6. Ordination is to be applied for from both sides of the Order only when they have lived for a probationary period of two years in the six rules. The six rules include: not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to take intoxicants and not to eat at forbidden hours.
7. Under no circumstances is a nun to revile or scold a monk.
8. The path of speech against the monks was closed to the nuns.\textsuperscript{247}
Thus, showing clearly the subordination to which the nuns were subjected. A nun’s regulations consists in principle of 500 articles, double those of monks, but in practice their number varied between 290 and 355 depending upon the school. However, these rules seem to be the later interpolations as in Buddhism, it could be seen that, first there is the violation of rules and then the formation of the regulations to stop it.

The Patimokkha rules of Vinaya Pitaka, was a list of 227 rules of conduct to be observed by a bhikkhu. A section of Patimokkha, called the Sekhiya Dhamma consists of 75 rules of etiquette which were to be observed by bhikkhus and almost all deal with the bhikkhu’s interaction with the laity. The opposition between the bhikkhu and the gihi is repeatedly stated in this section of the rules and, interestingly, the laity themselves expected the separation to be maintained.

The word Sangha signified later on not only the whole body of Buddhist bhikkus but a particular convent congregation residing at one of the causes of development of Buddhist sects.

**Popularity and Spread of Buddhism**

Buddhism, with its doctrines of compassion and love spread far and wide, with its logical outlook towards the world problems and an impartial attitude, it became very popular among the masses. Even the rulers adopted it as their personal religion and preached it through missionary activities. At present, Buddhism is being followed in most of the countries, or to say, it finds its adherents all over the World.

According to tradition, Bimbisara and Ajatsatru met the Buddha after his enlightenment and became his followers. Bimbisara, even gave Veluvana (near Rajagriha) park to the Buddha and his followers, as gift. During Ajatshatru’s rule, the First Council of Buddhism was convened at Rajgriha, during the rain retreat, just after the death of Buddha. At this Council Upali (one of the Chief disciples of the Buddha) repeated the Vinaya Pitaka i.e. disciplinary rules of the order; Ananda (another disciple) repeated the Sutta Pitaka (Sermon of the Buddha on the Doctrine of ethics). Besides, Ananda and Upali, other disciples of the Buddha also contributed to the whole collection.

The Second Council is said to have taken place, hundred years after the Buddha’s Parinibbana, at Vaishali. It was under the Presidentship of Sabbakami and
under the patronage of king Kala Ashoka. In this Council the followers of the Buddha were divided into two groups, on account of monastic disciplinary rules i.e. Das vatthuni, including the management of money on their discretion. The Council was attended by 700 monks. There appeared two factions of Buddhism, the orthodox Sthaviravadins or the believers in the teachings of elders, and the Mahasanghikas or the members of the great community.

In the Third Council too, numerous doctrinal differences appeared. It was held under the patronage of Ashoka at Patliputra. In this Council, many heretics were expelled and the foundation of Sthaviravadins as the orthodox school was upheld. Here, it is said that the last section of Pali literature, i.e. Kathavatthu of Abhidhamma Pitaka, which deals with the psychology and metaphysics, was compiled. Whatever might have been the position of Buddhism during the Buddha’s life time, two hundred years later, it was an altogether distinct religion during the time of Ashoka. He classified the religions in his kingdom into five sections i.e. the Buddhist Sangha, the brahmins, the Ajivikas, the Nirgranthas (Jains) and “other Sects.”

From a mere philosophy, Buddhism became a religion as it borrowed a lot from the existing traditions and popular beliefs of the time. By Ashoka’s period the whole of India was adorned by the Buddhist monuments like chaityas, stupas, viharas and some sacred spots. These also included the sacred tree, small groves of trees, tumuli and such places where the ashes of chiefs were buried. According to tradition, Buddha’s ashes were divided in 8 parts and on them stupas were constructed by the recipients. Other stupas were constructed on the ashes of locally revered monks and ascetics. Ashoka, however, unearthed the ashes of the Buddha and further divided them and built stupas all over India.

After Buddha’s death, most of the monks left the practice of Paribbajaka and they settled permanently on the outskirts of the settlements. As the time passed, these monasteries or viharas grew in size and popularity.

Buddhist upasakas raised the Buddha almost to divinity, even during his lifetime. After his demise, he was worshipped in his symbols like the stupa (Parinibbana) and the bodhi tree (enlightenment).

Buddhism spread far and wide with the efforts of Ashoka. He himself undertook the task of popularizing the doctrine of the Buddha. He appointed the
Dhamma-mahamatras\textsuperscript{265} (religious officers) to guide people towards a just and moral life. He tried to put an end to the bad samajas\textsuperscript{266} or the schismatic factors, and constructed stupas in every nook and corner of his empire. He gave huge donations to the Sangha, and convened the Third Buddhist Council under the presidentship of Thera Tissa. This Council sent missionaries to different countries in different directions. These included the Yavanas (Ionian-Greeks), Gandhara, Kashmir and the Himalayan regions; Aparantaka (west India), Vanvasi and Mysore (south India), Sri Lanka and Suvarnabhumi (Malaya and Sumatra). To Sri Lanka, Ashoka sent his son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra.\textsuperscript{267} He also sent missionaries to the kingdoms of Antiochus II (Antiyoko), king of Syria, Ptolemy (Turamaya) of Egypt, Antigonus (Antakini) of Macedonia, Alexander (Aliksunder) of Epirus (North Greece), and Magas of Cyrene (North Africa). The names of Yavanas, Kambojas, Pandyas, Cholas, Andhras, Pulindas etc are also mentioned in this context.\textsuperscript{268}

“Of all the religious remains of between 200 BCE and 200 CE, so far discovered in India those of Buddhism outnumbered those of Brahmanism, Hinduism and Jainism together.”\textsuperscript{269} According to legends, after the Mauryans, Pushyamitra Shunga persecuted Buddhists yet the doctrine continued to grow. The old stupas were enlarged and beautified with carved railings, terraces and gateways. People from all the classes like kings, princes, merchants, craftsmen made liberal donations to the Sangha, which were recorded in the inscriptions.\textsuperscript{270}

**Post-Ashokan Period**

After the Greeks, Sakas and Kushanas became great patrons of Buddhism. According to Chinese tradition, under the patronage of Kushana ruler Kanishka (1-2 CCE), a Fourth Buddhist Council was convened in Kashmir. Here the Sarvastivadin doctrines were codified in the form of the Mahavibhasha. Thus forming the basis for the division of Buddhism into the Hinayana (Thervada) and Mahayana.\textsuperscript{271} However, there is a debate over the number of Councils. According to the Sri Lankan sources these were only three (excluding the Council under the patronage of Kanishka), while Chinese testimony suggests four such Councils.

Eventually, Mahayana became popular in most parts of India, as it suited to the needs of the time. On the other hand, Hinayana became popular in Sri Lanka, and from here it reached Burma (Myanmar), Thailand and other parts of South-East Asia.
where it became a national religion. *Mahayana*, however, itself divided into various other schools and carried by Indian monks to China and from there to Japan. *Mahayana* dominated the Indian religious tradition till the period of the Guptas. Afterwards during Hieun-Tsang’s visit in 7th century *Hinayana* was almost extinct from India remaining only in the parts of western India.272

A third fraction “*Vajrayana*” (the Vehicle of Thunderbolt), also arose in East India in the 8th c. CE which grew rapidly in the areas of Bengal and Bihar. It was this form of Buddhism which was modified and was finally established in Tibet in the 11th c. CE due to the Buddhist mission sent to Tibet by the *Vajrayana* Monastery of Vikramshila in Bihar.273

Buddhist expansion in Ashoka’s reign led to the development of various sects which are usually considered as eighteen274 by this time, the Greeks of the North-West were also ready to adopt Buddhism, as is evident from the Sinkot inscription of Menander and as well as the *Milindapanho*. The Greeks also evolved their own style of Buddhist art i.e. the Indo-Greek, which flourished mostly in Punjab and other parts of the N.W India,275 and it was called the Gandhara Art.

Buddhism was a flourishing religion even during the Guptas. They were the followers of *Bhagwat* sect yet their inscriptions record liberal grants of private donors in the regions of Kausambi, Sanchi, Bodh Gaya and Mathura. Many seals, images and manuscripts, that have been found during excavations prove that *Hinayana* was a quite popular sect especially its sub sects like the *Sarvastivadins* and *Sammitiyas*,276 Buddhism was neither related to any specific language nor with any specific area. As the *Majjhima Nikaya* states that for a religion, it is necessary to preach in a language that is comprehensible to the people of the area. Thus the Buddha preached in the language of the people, showing a kind of language tolerance.277

Further, the Buddha formed his *Sangha* on the democratic basis yet did not discard the monarchical system of government. Rather he supported strong political power, and thus, he made the royal patronage an easy task. Buddhism supported anything which preaches *ahimsa*. Thus, the merchants, traders, craftsmen and highly skilled masses also supported and patronized Buddhism. It is presumed, from the votive inscriptions that it was mainly these people who, some centuries later got constructed the great *stupas* and cave monasteries.278
According to Pali Chronicles, there were numerous *brahmins* who renounced their brahminhood and became the followers of the Buddha. Over 40% of leading monks and nuns belonged to the *brahmin* caste. B. G. Gokhale, also have shown that in a group of 332 Buddhist elite, found scattered in *Theragatha*, *Therigatha* and *Paramartha-dipani*, a commentary on the *Dhammapada*, belonging to the period from c.500-250 BCE, the composition of elite group was (a) pre-dominantly urban in character out of which 70% were from urban areas and 20% belonged to rural areas. 

(b) The *brahmin* formed the largest single group, the *vaishyas*, the second, the *kshatriyas* third and the *sudras* fourth. There were only 21 *sudras* out of 328, whose caste is known (c) Wealthy *brahmins* were less in number than the ordinary *brahmins*. (d) The reason of conversion could be formulated as the personality of the Buddha, influence of lay followers, personal difficulties and intellectual conviction.

Buddhism succeeded well as it was a religion that preaches love and compassion to all living beings. It addressed the problems of the downtrodden, the lowly and poor. It established an order which was easy to follow without any out worldly rituals and costly ceremonies and above all giving peace to the intellect.
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