

## Chapter I

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF INDIA**

The present chapter has been framed to understand the rise and spread of Buddhism in India and consequently in South-East Asia. It deals with a specific period of the Buddha's life by relating its past and future till the Mahāpariniravāna, (Death) of the Buddha. To be born to become Buddha was a great and rare event in the world. Many take birth and they die as simple human beings. Why Gotama Buddha achieved Buddha hood? Was there any need of special time situation, society's demand or geographical conditions? These hypothetical questions are very important to answer. Hence, as a background chapter we have planned to frame a geographical and historical situation.

The history of India, like that of the other countries, has been affected by its geography. Therefore, it is necessary to study some of the major physical features.

India is situated on the side of South Asia and it has an area of 32, 87,263 sq. km.<sup>1</sup> The area extends from Himalayas to the tropical forest of the south. As per the information, it is the "Seventh largest country in the world."<sup>2</sup> The great Himalayas in the north and the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea bound the country to the East, West and south respectively. India has a common border with Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Northwest, China, Bhutan and Nepal to the North, Burma (Myanmar) to the East and Bangladesh to the East of West Bengal. To the South, Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow channel of sea formed by the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.<sup>3</sup>

Geographically, India occupies a position of great advantage. It lies in the center of the eastern hemisphere and forms the central peninsula of Southern Asia. Its sea position is well adopted for trade with lands around the Indian Ocean. No country has been favoured more by nature than India in providing it with well-marked natural boundaries. The waters of the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean wash India on three sides on the east, west and

---

<sup>1</sup> Government of India, Published in 2003. "Land and People", p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Khushwant Singh, India an Introduction, Vision Books, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> O.H.K. Spate, India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography, p.743.

south respectively. The country, India, is cut off by a huge mountain-wall from the Chinese Turkestan and Tibet on its north; northwest and northeast.<sup>4</sup> Along with the climatic variations that can be marked from the majestic heights of the Himalayas to the Lowlands imperceptibly merging to the sea, and from the hills of Assam to the waterless desert of Sindh, India has been favoured with a luxuriant variety of flora and fauna. The major physical feature of India comprises four regions: The great mountain zone, Plains of the Ganges and the Indus, the desert region and the southern peninsula.<sup>5</sup>

## **1.2. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF INDIA**

The sixth century was an important landmark in the history of the religion of India. Brahmanism was the leading religion of the country up to this period, and it was the Brahmin priests took the leading roles in most of the religious ceremonies. Then, the general population used to worship the Yaksas, Gandharvas, the Vriksas, Devatas, and the Nagas, etc. The rise of Buddhism in the sixth

---

<sup>4</sup> O.H.K. Spate, & A.T.M. Learmonth, India and Pakistan Land, People and Economy, p.4.

<sup>5</sup> Dudley L Stamp, India, Pakistan Ceylon and Burma, p. 195

century BC marked the end of the predominance of the Brahmanic period.<sup>6</sup>

India is well known as the land of spirituality and philosophy. Since ancient time Hinduism developed in India with four Vedas. Later Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism came up. Islam came to India from Central Asia.

India's religion can be divided into two groups: Indian origins and non-Indian origins. Among these religions Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism are non-Indian origins. They came from outside. The followers of these different religions arrived in India at different times.

In India, religion plays an important role in the lives of people. India is a composite entity of people of different religions living together in peace and harmony. The main religions are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. The majority of the people in India are Hindus. In India the lives of the people are often entirely controlled by the dictates of their religion. It determines their upbringing, education, customs and habits, diet,

---

<sup>6</sup> Kanai Lal Hazra, *History of Theravada Buddhism in South-East Asia*, P.9.

occupations, dwelling-place, type of home and, in fact, their whole social environment. Hence, religions in India also are referred as cultures.<sup>7</sup>

Before the advent Hinduism in India, there existed another religion in India called Brahmanism and its followers were called Brahmin.

Among the religions originated in India, Buddhism emerged in India in the six-century before Christ. Today, less than 1% of India's population is Buddhists. Today Buddhism has more followers in the East and South-East Asian countries. Indians who accepted Buddhist philosophy spread it not only within the Indian sub-continent but also the kingdoms east and Southeast Asia.

### **1.3. Brief History of the Buddha**

The Buddha introduced his religion in 6<sup>th</sup> century. In this context, it is critical to glance briefly at the life of the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. On the full moon day of May, in the year 623 B.C, there was born at the Lumbini Park in Kapilavatthu on the

---

<sup>7</sup> P.N. Chopra, B.N. Puri, M.N. Das, A social, Cultural and Economic History of India, Vol. III, p.77.

Indian borders of present Nepal, a noble prince named Siddhartha Gotama, who was destined to be the greatest teacher in the world.

Buddhism is one of the greatest religions that India gave to the world. Gotama Buddha, the founder of this atheistic, highly moral religion, preached in the Ganges Valley. Although discarded, it permeated Indian thinking and is in the process of being regenerated in the Land of its birth as Neo-Buddhism. A prince called Siddhartha Gotama who belonged to an aristocratic family founded Buddhism. He gave up his wealth and tried to find enlightenment. When he got it he was known as the "Buddha" or "enlightened one." Buddhism is based on the law of impermanence (*Anicca*), or "everything changes (*Sankhāra*)" the other basic principle of Buddhism is the belief that nothing occurs due to the pure change, but occurs by the fate or "Karma", and law of dependent Co-arising (*Pticcasamuppāda*). Buddhism rests upon four noble Truths. According to Buddha's theory life is a long suffering. Suffering is universal that means every one suffers since one got five aggregates (*Khandhā*).<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> F.L. Woodward, C.A.F. Rhys David, *Samyutta Nikāya*, (tran), Vol. 5, p. 421.

#### 1.4. Theravāda and Mahāyāna Sects

There are two main schools in Buddhism, Mahāyāna and Theravāda. The former Buddhists believe that the right path of a follower will lead to the redemption of all human beings. The later believe that each person is responsible for his own fate.<sup>9</sup> Along with these doctrines there are other Buddhist Beliefs like Zen Buddhism from Japan and the Hindu Tantric Buddhism from Tibet. Zen Buddhism is a mixture of Buddhism as it arrived from India to Japan and original Japanese beliefs.<sup>10</sup> The Hindus Tantric Buddhism is a mixture of Indian Buddhism and original Tibetan beliefs that existed among the Tibetans before the arrival of Buddhism in Tibet.<sup>11</sup> Buddhism has spread outside India and accepted in China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Laos and other parts of Asia. But Buddhism never became a separate religion in India.

By the end of the 6th century B.C., totally 62 religious sects existed in India.<sup>12</sup> There were several causes for the origin of these sects. Tensions were generated by the division of the society on caste

---

<sup>9</sup> K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe*, (sixth edition) p. 59.

<sup>10</sup> Bulcsu Siklos, *Buddhism in Japan*, p. 772-776.

<sup>11</sup> Emil Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, pp. 48-56.

<sup>12</sup> T.W. Rhys Davids, *DighaNikaya*, (tran), Vol-I, p.34.

(Varöa) basis: the Kshatriyas, and sometimes Vaisyas (Vessa in pāli), disputed the Brahmana supremacy. Significantly the founders of the new religions were Kshatriyas. The new religions were against slaughtering animals, which were practiced by the Brahmins. The Vaisyas certainly supported Buddhism and Jainism extensively. Also, there was a growing dislike amongst some people for the heightened materialistic life, and they hankered after simple, indeed, ascetic life. The new religions responded to their urge. In this way the new sect, in the name of Buddhism emerged in India in 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. under whose guidance and teaching almost entire India came under one-religion. This was possible only because of the Buddha and his teachings.

Theravāda (Thera - Elders and Vāda - word or Doctrine in Pāli). The doctrine of the elders is the name of the Theravāda sect that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pāli canon or Tipitaka, which scholars generally accept as the oldest record of the Buddhist teachings.

The meaning of Theravāda is the recitation of the words or the opinions and the decisions of the Buddha by the elderly monks. Dipavamsa says, "The Buddha's teachings of Pāli language kept by

the Thera Kassapa etc. are called Theravāda"<sup>13</sup> Saratthadipani states, "Pāli canon or Tipitaka recorded at the first and second Buddhist council is defined as Theravāda" and the same definition is given in Vimatitikā.<sup>14</sup>

Theravāda Buddhists follow the orthodox religious traditions that had prevailed in India two thousand five hundred years ago. They perform their religious services in the Pāli language. They also expect to attain the final goal by becoming a supreme enlightened Buddha, Pacceka Buddha, or Arahant (Arahanta). The majority of them strive to attain the Arahantship.

#### **1.4.1 Different names of Theravāda**

Theravāda Buddhism goes by many names. The Buddha himself called the religion he founded *Dhamma, Vinaya* (The Doctrine and the Disciplinary Code), referring to the two fundamental aspects of the system of ethical and spiritual training he taught. Owing to its historical dominance in Southern Asia, Theravāda is also known as 'Southern Buddhism', in contrast to Northern Buddhism, which migrated northwards from India to

---

<sup>13</sup> Nanda Thein Zan, Theravada and its record, p. 13

<sup>14</sup> Thera, Coli mahākassapa. Vimatitikā, I, p. 30

Tibet, China, Japan and Korea. Theravāda is, sometimes, identified as 'Hinayāna' in contrast to 'Mahāyāna', which is usually a synonym for the expression of Northern Buddhism.

The use of Hinayāna, as a pejorative, has its origins in the early schisms within the monastic community that ultimately led to emergence of what would later become Mahāyāna. W. Rahulā clarifies this concept "We must not confuse Hinayāna with Mahāyāna because the terms are not synonymous. Theravāda Buddhism went to Sri Lanka during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C when there was no Mahāyāna at all. Hinayāna sect developed in India and had an existence independent from the form of Buddhism existing in Sri Lanka. Today there is no Hinayāna sect in existence anywhere in the world."<sup>15</sup>

The period of Theravāda: Theravāda (The doctrine of elders) was the original and only the tradition from the earliest times to the time of the Second Great Council when Mahāsaṅghika School, a precursor of Mahāyāna was formed. Dorothy C. Donath says that; "The Theravādins, who adhered closely to the original sources fixed in the reign of King Asoka together with the Buddha's word as

---

<sup>15</sup> W. Rahula, *Gems of Buddhist Wisdom*, p, 457

recorded there during the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. Here, the emphasis was placed on knowledge, i.e. on the esoteric, pragmatic, ethical and philosophical view."<sup>16</sup>

B.C. Law states that, "The Theras who held the first council and had (thereby) brought great blessing to the world, having lived their allotted span of life, entered all into *Nibbāna*."<sup>17</sup>

Charles S. Prebish says that, "The name of the school, Theravāda in Pāli, corresponds exactly to the Sanskrit Sthaviravāda, the name of one of the two great schools separating at the time of the great schism around 346 B.C., and this small but significant detail has caused scholars more than a fair share of confusion."<sup>18</sup>

He continues, "By the time of the council held by Asoka around 250 B.C., the Sthavira school had split itself into primarily four groups: the Vatsiputriya, Sammitiyas, the Sarvastivadis and the Vibhajjavādins. In the course of time (perhaps 100 years) the Vibhajjavādin school splintered into two primary schools: the Mahisāsakas and the Theravādins"<sup>19</sup> Charles S. Prebish's opinion

---

<sup>16</sup> Dorothy. C. Buddhism for the West, p, 50

<sup>17</sup> Bimala Churm Law, A Manual of Buddhist Historical Traditions, p, 39

<sup>18</sup> Charles. S. Prebish , Buddhism a modern perspective, p, 3

does not correspond to the Pāli canon. It is authorized by Theravādins.

#### **1.4.2 The Influence of Theravāda Buddhism in India**

Buddhism is a world religion and which was born and aroused in India with the life of Lord Buddha. Gautama Buddha was born as Prince Siddhartha in a royal family. At an early age, he left his family in search of real meaning of life. Then, he spent his life in meditation and asceticism and finally attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Gaya.

Buddha agreed to the doctrine of Karma and reincarnation of Hinduism but he refused to consider the other doctrines like Moksha, Atma and Paramatma. He gave stress for the in-equalization of caste systems in the religion.

The religion flourished all over South Asia during the reign of Ashoka in the period of 274 - 232 B.C. Until 320 A.D., Buddhism fairly spread all over the India mainly in Himalayan regions. But with the arrival of Gupta Dynasty, the influence of Buddhism declined in its own land of origin. Then, Hinduism became the

---

<sup>19</sup> Charles. S. Prebish , Buddhism a modern perspective, p, 39.

mainstream religion in India. However, Buddhism has great impact in India and in its people. Places like Ladakh, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh houses a considerable strength of followers of Buddhism.

Buddhism has been reviving, in India, around 1891. Promotional activities of Maha Bodhi Gaya led by Anagarika Dharmapala expanded to India for promotion of the religion in India. Due to conversion of religion by many Indian intellectual like B.R. Ambedkar, the migration of Buddhist Tibetan exiles, Buddhism has again flourished in India. Mass conversion of Hindu Dalit marks spread of Buddhism besides the intense impact of Buddhism in India in past century.

### **1.5. The Rise, Spread, and Decline of Buddhism In India**

A chance discovery of the ancient structures and scriptures, disclosed the fact that there existed an elite ideology and philosophy in the name of Buddha in Pāli language Ever since the establishment of the Asiatic society and other bodies to have a close observation on Buddhist philosophy, a keen interest has been paid by scholars all over the world on the great Buddha.

The study about civilization in the past has motivated the governments all over the world to set up archaeological department.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to western and Indian archaeologists and orientalists, Indians began to be surprised at the discovery of the Buddhist legacy. To talk about the “revival of Buddhism,” in modern India, is right in this sense of the discovery of the Buddhist heritage by Indians. Even today, 199 years after the foundation of the Asiatic Society, 81 years after the foundation of the Maha Bodhi Society of India, 71 years after the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of India, the process of the discovery of Buddhism in India is still going on. The government also took upon itself the task of renovating sacred Buddhist monuments and making the Buddhist centres of religion and culture accessible to pilgrims and tourists. The government publishes an important portion of Buddhist literature in 1956 in Pāli and Sanskrit. A few learned institutions have been financed to promote Buddhist Studies and this branch of study is now recognised in its own right. Facilities for pursuing studies and research in Pāli, Tibetan, Buddhist Sanskrit and art and archaeology of Buddhism, have been created by some Universities in India.

Following a great heritage of '*Dhamma*' India has ever been a symbol of spiritual centre for scholars all over the world, especially in the central and south East Asia. India continues to be respected as the holy land of the Dharma by all devout Buddhists the world over. Even in India the awareness of India's Buddhist past and its cultural contacts with other Asian peoples attracted them towards studies on Buddhist ideology. There is, however, no organization on an all-India level or any other kind of liaison among the different sections of the Buddhist population. There seems to be, for example, no contact between professional Buddhist scholars and the Buddhist masses of modern India.

The organization of monastic life is practically non-existent; the *Bhiksu-sangha*, it seems, is nobody's concern. Of all the sections of the Indian people, Buddhists are the poorest. There is a clear dearth of Buddhist monks in the country. Educated and trained bhikkhus (monks), versed in Dharma lore, are greatly needed. But there are no material resources, no Buddhist schools, no good monasteries or temples or funds or rich donors to maintain and take care of Buddhist monks. In most parts of the country it is difficult to come

across a bhikkhu. The lonely families of lay Buddhists have to carry on their religious activities often without the presence of monks.

The Buddhist tradition recognized the freedom of faith and offered equality of opportunity in matters of religious culture to men and women without regard to their caste, colour or social status. Buddhism emphasized a practical and empirical approach and generally supported a rational outlook towards life and its problems. It did not enforce any dogma or credo on its votaries.

The supreme goal had been announced for one and all, the doctrine (*dhamma*) and the method (*vinaya*) had been expounded by the torch-bearer of humanity out of supreme compassion for the living beings.

Universality in the salient advocates feature of Buddhism since is co-extensive with the whole of humanity. It is not a religion of a particular race or chosen people but it is an ideology. Its holy books and its noble practices are open to people of all lands. Buddhism aimed at the enlightenment of all the beings, black or white, rich or poor but human beings of all sorts. Its teachings are universal and not relative to a particular geographical area or

country. Although it originated in India, it soon made the world its home. The Buddha had directed his pupils to spread the doctrine of pure conduct and higher life in all directions.

King Asoka is remembered even today for his commitment in spreading of Buddhism in South Asia. It is well known that three Buddhist Councils, held in India, contributed much to the spread of Buddhism throughout India and in other countries. In particular, the third council convened by King Asoka delegated various Arahats with the task of leading missions to selected lands. Both in the time of the Buddha and in subsequent times, Buddhist monks went about from village to village spreading the word of the Master.

Of the beginning Buddhism started its campaign in the right way and spread its wings by winning over the hearts of the people by telling the great ideals of the Buddha. As a result of this they went out to each and every village and city of South India and propagated the Buddha *Dhamma*, building monasteries and erecting centres of Buddhist learning. Some of the monks residing in the monasteries became skilled medical practitioners. They provided free medical services and free education in the monastery premises, and preached *Jātaka* tales, the life of the Buddha, read *Suttas* from the

Buddhist scriptures, and thus increased the knowledge of the *Dhamma* by explaining and clarifying what the people could not understand. With the help of kings and rich men they maintained alms-halls for the benefit of the blind, deaf and maimed. Thus, on account of their social services and devoted work in the propagation of the *Dhamma*, Buddhism spread rapidly in South India.

Buddhism, which flourished in South India from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, began to decline gradually from about the 7<sup>th</sup> century for several reasons. The Ajivaka religion was left behind in this struggle. Only the Buddhist, Jain and the Vedic religions were left to contend. Now Buddhism had to contest with two rival faiths which were envious of its popularity and planned to destroy it. The Buddhist position was undermined by the combined efforts of these two rival faiths. Buddhism itself split into several sects.

Further, the Buddhist monks gave up the social and welfare work which had brought them popularity. The non-participation in social activities is one of the reasons why Buddhism started losing its hold on people and having no patronage from the kings. They became self-centred and deteriorated from their high principles. Hence, they lost the support of the kings and influential men. Thus,

a weakened *Sangha* found itself unable to withstand the combined onslaught of the two rival faiths. With the decline of Buddhism in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries Jainism gained ascendancy. At this time, the Vedic religion was not influential in South India. With the upsurge of Jainism, the Jains concentrated their attack on Buddhism.

Countries adopting a secular type human existence affect the growth of religions which have little following:

Today, the government of the India is wedded to a secular policy so that the votaries of different faiths are free to pursue and promote all that is best in their respective faiths. But even under a secular government the position of Buddhism remains the weakest, for its followers are among the poorest and most disorganized. The vast majority of neo-Buddhists are, by and large, illiterate and ignorant about the real nature and the significance of Buddhism. Only by sustained and stupendous efforts one can overcome these weaknesses.

### **1.6. Statement of Research Problem**

This thesis deals with four basic areas of the ultimate realities of elements (*dhātu*) of Theravāda Buddhism, in an attempt to collect

and appraise the relevant material found in the Pāli canon, generally regarded as the Buddha's sacred word.

There are some who believe that Buddhism is so lofty and sublime a system that it cannot be practiced by ordinary men and women in this our common place. They also maintain that one has to retire from a day-to-day work and adopt the life of a monk in a monastery or to some quiet place to live the life of an ascetic, if one desires to be a true Buddhist.

Some scholars have also presented Buddhism as a teaching emphasizing on personal salvation alone without any regard for social welfare. Thus, Buddhism according to them has ignored service to the needy in any measure, hence is devoid of any social dimension whatsoever.

### **1.7. Objectives of the Study**

1. To investigate whether the teachings of Buddha, two thousand and five hundred years old, still have any relevance to the present day society.
2. To probe the ultimate realities of the elements mentioned in the Theravāda texts.

3. To find the relevance between *Abhidhamma* and the ultimate realities.
4. To study the correlation between physical and spiritual properties and the concept of soul.
5. To project the elements as the essential and fundamental themes of meditation.
6. To emphasize the fact that knowledge of elements could help one understand the Buddha philosophy thoroughly.

### **1.8 Review of Literature**

Review of literature is the guideline to any research work acts as the base for the study on which the researcher takes the lead to pursue his study. Besides being an indispensable part of any academic study, Review of literature provides a comprehensive view of the works already done on the present topic in hand. Any idea, perception, judgment and critical analysis of the works on the research topic already found in the books and on the sources are taken into account and depending on the abundance or scarce material source the researcher can proceed with his research work with more confidence and authority. Review of literature acts as a guide to the researcher by showing the direction through which the researcher can pursue his studies avoiding the already exhausted

areas relevant to the study. In the present study the researcher records the views of certain Buddhist scholars on the philosophy of Buddhism in general. The review could not include more number of books and journals which can support the present topic of study since they are not available in Pāli language in large number.

There are number of books and dissertation, which have appeared in Pāli, Myanmar and English, dealing with the Ultimate Realities of Element. Most of the studies are available on the general aspects of Ultimate Realities of Element, but not of its religious and philosophical significances.

With regard to Theravāda, P.V. Bapat says, that: “The earliest available teaching of the Buddha to be found in Pāli tradition belongs to the school of Theravādins, who may be called the most orthodox school of Buddhism. This school admits the human character of the Buddha and he is often represented as having human fable though he is recognized as possessing certain human qualities”<sup>20</sup> For many centuries, Theravāda has been the predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.

---

<sup>20</sup> P.V. Bapat , 2500 Years of Buddhism, p, 89

K. Sri Dhammānanda says, “The terms Hinayāna and Mahāyāna are not known in the Theravāda Pāli literature. They are not found in the Pāli canon or in the commentaries on the Tipitaka”<sup>21</sup> Today, however, scholars of every Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) persuasion often use the term Hinayāna without pejorative intent.

*Four element meditations*, by venerable Ledi Sayadaw, explains the characteristics of ultimate realities of four elements called earth element, Cohesion-element, Heat-element and Motion-element.

*The book of Analysis*, by Ashin Thittila, analyses the ultimate realities of element according to the discourses.

*Abhidhammatta Sangaha* by Venerable Anuruddha shows the ultimate realities in many ways such as aggregate, base, element and so on in *Sabbasangaha*.

*Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* by Bhikkhu Bodhi explains the ultimate realities of Element called (Dhātu) with their own intrinsic natures.

---

<sup>21</sup> K. Sri. Dhammananda, *Gems of Buddhist Wisdom*, p. 457.

Ven Narada expresses, in his book named *A manual of Abhidhamma*, undoubtedly *Abhidhamma* is extremely helpful to comprehend fully the word of the Buddha and realize Nibbana, as it presents a key to open the door of reality.

*Concerning the ultimate realities of element, Maha Rahulovada Sutta and Anadhapiindika sutta* are discussed in the book named, *The Middle Length Discourse of the Buddha*, very well.

*The book of Pairs*, the second book of *Abhidahmma* by U. Narada, expresses the ultimate realities of eighteen elements: how many are good; how many are bad; how many neither-nor-bad... how many cause of bewailing; how many without cause of bewailing.

*The book of A Buddhist Manual of psychological Ethics*, by Rhys Davids, explains the characteristic of element of cakkhu as: the characteristic of visual awareness is being aware of a visible object by dependence upon the sense of sight; the function is the taking as object merely the visible form; the manifestation is the state of confronting the visible object; the proximate cause is the disappearance of the inoperative element of mind with regard to visible object.

*The Buddha and his Teachings* by Nārada thera expresses the Buddha-Dhamma as a moral and philosophical system which expounds a unique path of Enlightenment, and is not subject to be studied from a mere academic standpoint. The Doctrine is certainly to be studied, more to be practiced and above all to be realized by oneself.

*Buddhism and Society*, by Melford Spiro, show the rituals of Buddhist people and their belief; by helping to others they will lead to their ultimate goal as well.

Sri Dhammananda, portrays the spiritual needs of the people and the development of their own mental purity in the book *What the Buddhist Believe*.

Ultimate realities are primarily explained theoretically in *abhidhamma*. In so doing, one may not separate the essence of *abhidhamma* and the essence of meditation. One will see in both the *abhidhamma* and the *suttanta* the way to put into practice. Although meditation is not really the primary scope of this thesis, some sections try to elucidate some relevant points about meditation, quoting from *Suttanta* as well as *Abhidhamma*.

The Buddha's teaching is, indeed, meant not only for monks in monasteries, but also ordinary men and women living at home with their families. Moreover, Buddhism, emerged two thousand and five hundreds years ago, is still alive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and applicable at any time and place. This study explores extensively on the inner workings on Theravāda Buddhism which has proved to be still viable teaching values even in this modern era.

### **1.9. Research Design and Methodology**

This study is based on the relevant materials found in Theravada Buddhism and one fit to be included for practice in modern world. With regard to theoretical and practical frameworks, authentic Pāli sources and other secondary materials are also used extensively in this research.

The Element of meditation is one of the many meditation methods which the Buddha has shown that can discipline or develop our mind so as to attain *Nibbāna*. To begin with some theoretical knowledge of *bhāvanā* is helpful and is also important. It works as a map to the practice. In this thesis, an attempt has been made to explain this element theoretically which could be an important knowledge for those who want to know about it. The

Element can be the object for meditation practice, for *samatha* and *vipassanā* as well.

### **1.10. Significance of this Study**

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature. The investigator approaches the ultimate realities of Elements (*dhātu*) mentioned in Theravāda Buddhist texts relevant to the topic of the thesis title. Moreover, the study mentions, in some ways, the tradition and practice of the people in Theravāda Buddhist countries like Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand and its dominant religious influence of Buddhism over the modern day lives of the people.

### **1.11. Chapterization**

The present work has been classified into five chapters:

The *first chapter* "Introduction" describes the Theravāda Buddhism. This chapter has a brief note about the development of Buddhism in India during the Buddha and after the demise of the Buddha.

The *second chapter* "Theravāda Conception of Ultimate Realities (*Dhātu*)" discuss the fundamental descriptions, the

definitions of the *dhātu*, different elements enumerated in the text, and the 18 elements and their common and specific characteristics.

The *third chapter* “Ultimate Realities (*Dhātu*) of Abhidhamma Perceptive and Buddha Discourses” deals with the *Abhidhamma* aspect of the ultimate realities of elements and examines all the elements dividing them into three groups; mind element, mind-consciousness elements, five-consciousness elements; its description found in Conditional Relation and Yamaka, (the book of analysis) and discusses the *Suttanta* point of view of the elements; matter, consciousness, sensation, ignorance, roots, etc.

The *fourth chapter* “Discussions of Ultimate Realities (*Dhātu*) from Suttas and Practical Point of View” gives some relevant discourses connected with elements, mainly illustrating with the examples from the lives of “the noble persons” the contemporaries of Buddha and discusses the practical point of view providing some notable aspects of the elements: the relation of elements and medicine, the attraction of elements, the element as the cause of dream, and the explanation of element by the science etc.

The *last chapter* gives the “Summary and Conclusion” of the study along with suggestion for further research.