INTRODUCTION

The sixth century B.C. may be regarded as an important landmark in the history of Indian Culture. This century witnessed the emergence of some new thoughts, ideas and philosophies leading to the establishment of religious groups, among which Buddhism and Jainism were the most noteworthy. In the context of the contemporary Vedic Brahmanical religion, they were basically heterodox in character although they imbibed some elements of the former religion.

Gautama Buddha, the great preacher, established his faith on a strong base at a time when the Vedic religion had been in a dominating position all over India. Although Gautama Buddha's religious ideas were a kind of revolt against the Vedic religion of the period but it did not take a long time for the elites as well as the common men to come under the spell of the new religion called Buddhism.

The fundamental principle of Buddha's teaching are represented by four 'Noble Truths' (āryasatya-s), which are as follows: (i) the world is full of sufferings (dukkha), (ii) thirst, desire and attachment are causes of world's existence (dukkha-samudaya), (iii) these can be stopped by the obstruction of thirst, desire (dukkhanirodha) etc. and (iv) in order to do this one must know the right way (āstāngikamārga, Majhimapatipada). Buddha also laid great emphasis on the theory of dependent origination (Paticca-samuppada) and he held that one who comprehended this theory
could visualise the truth. (*Yo paticcasamuppdam passati so dhamman passati*). This dictum is accepted not only by the Hinayānists but also by the Mahāyānists.¹

Though Buddhism grew up as a strong religious force, many dissensions gradually occurred among its followers even during the lifetime of Gautama Buddha. Devadatta, one of the cousins of Gautama, who is often mentioned in the early Buddhist literature, advocated to the views of Gautama. He persistently contradicted Gautama Buddha in the matter of austerity to be observed by the monks. For example, Devadatta favoured that the monks should compulsorily follow five rules of discipline² and urged Gautama Buddha to ask the monks to strictly adhere to those rules, while the Master held a lenient view about the austere practices to be followed by the monks. Gautama left these practices to the initiative of the monks rather than introducing the rules as an obligatory method.

Moreover, many aristocrats of that age also held quite opposing view regarding the method of religious practices prescribed by the Buddha and their views were akin to the views of Devadatta. Among the opponents of the Buddha, notable were Upānanda and Saḍavārgika. From

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1. Majjhima, I.p.191; Dutt, Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, pp. 51, 208 ff.

2. The five rules of discipline are that the monks:—(i) "should live in the forest, (ii) dress themselves in rags picked up from dust heaps, (iii) subsist solely on doles collected from door to door, (iv) dwell always under a tree and never under a roof, (v) never eat fish or flesh". — BSI, pp. 38-39.
this we can trace that a split occurred in the views of Buddha's teachings, or precisely the method of practices to be observed by the monks.

Soon after the Mahāparinirvāṇa of Gautama Buddha the dissensions became more visible than before. The main reasons for this was that different celebrated monk-scholars held divergent views regarding the teachings of Buddha and they interpreted the Buddha's teachings according to their respective concepts.

After the death of the Buddha, there was no central figure who could be considered to be the head of the Buddhist fraternity and who could command respect or enforce discipline in the Order (Saṅgha) of the Buddhist monks. Buddha did not appoint any person as the head of Buddhist Order and on the contrary said that his dharma itself could be instructor of the Order after his death ("So Dhammo ca Vinaya ca Vomma accayena Sattha", see Dīgha Nikāya P.T.S. ed.: II. p.154). Naturally then different considerations induced the people of the Buddhist faith to form different groups based on either common interest that developed due to living in the particular region, common discipleship of a teacher or because of an inclination towards particular branch of study etc. During the century that followed the death of the Buddha these tendencies of going apart from the central forces of
brotherhood grew among the disciples. A wide gap was separating the sincere disciples of the Buddha from many young monks who had newly joined the Order.

A century after the passing away of the Buddha^, masters came to a head and during the reignal period of king Kālāśoka a large number of Vṛān (Pali, Vajji) monks from the eastern regions of Vaisali began to advocate the ten rules of the Vinaya. But the monks from the western regions such as, Pava, Kausambi and Avanti disapproved these practices. The ten points were interpreted differently by different scholars^2. Since the matters could not be decided in an open meeting, they ultimately left the task

1. According to a Tibetan source 110 years after the Nirvāṇa. See Obermiller, History of Buddhism, p. 91.

2. The ten un-vinayic acts with their interpretations as given in the Pali texts are as follows (see Dutt, Early Monastic Buddhism, II, p. 354).

   1) Sinilona Kappa, or the practice of carrying salt in a horn for use.
   2) Davāṅgula Kappa or the practice of taking food after midday.
   3) Gamantara Kappa or the practice of going to a neighbouring village and taking a second meal on the same day.
   4) Āvāsa Kappa or the observance of the Upothas.
   5) Anumati Kappa or doing an act and obtaining its sanction afterwards.
   6) Acinna Kappa or the use of precedents as authority.
   7) Amathita Kappa or the drinking of milk after meal.
   8) Jalagimpatum or the drinking of fermenting palm juice which is yet toddy.
   9) Adasakam nisidanam or the use of a borderless sheet to sit on.
  10) Jataruparalatam or the acceptance of gold and silver
on to a select committee comprising four members from the warring groups. These groups finally upheld the ten points against the Vṛjī monks, who however did not accept the decision. This resulted in the secession of a large number of monks from the original group and termed themselves as the Mahāsāṅghikas, members of a large group which perhaps claimed superiority in numbers or in its eagerness in reforming the existing state of affairs of the Buddhist organisations and improving upon the conservative attitude of the orthodox group of monks who called themselves Sthāvira-vādins or Theravādins.

During the second and the third centuries after the death of the Buddha, new subdivisions in the Buddhist order gradually came into being. There arose as many as eighteen sects out of the original two groups, Mahāsāṅghikas and Sthāvira-vādins, by the time of Third Council. This Third Council, took place during the reign of Aśoka at Pataliputra. As the records of the Sarvāstivāda of Jalandhar reveals, this council took place at Jalandhar during the reign of Kaniśka, who became a patron of the group, Sthāvira-vādins that spread far and wide in northern India.

While thus various sects were coming into being, there developed another cult, Mahāyānism, in the early centuries of the Christian era. Nāgārjuna and Maitreyanāth had been the earliest exponent of its philosophy.

The Mahāyānists claim that they had received their doctrines and philosophy directly from the Great Master who
communicated the subtler thoughts and deeper ideas of his teachings to a select few, the bodhisattvas, who were aspiring for Buddhahood. This new Mahāyānist doctrinal views led to the deification of the Buddha and at the same time Buddha was identified with the Truth and Reality.

The Bodhisattvas concept of the Mahāyānists initiated the introduction of a number of divinities who were designated as Bodhisattvas, e.g. Mañjusri, Avalokitesvara, Vajrapāni, Samantabhadra etc. The Mahāyānists looked upon these Bodhisattvas as benign gods to be worshipped and in course of time Bodhisattvas were deified and they were given definite anthropomorphic forms and distinguishing marks and signs for the purpose of adoration with elaborate rituals.

In course of time two more sects also grew up. These two sects were known as Sukhavādin and Mahāsukhavādin. Mahāsukhavāda was the origin of the Vajrayāna, which was rich in ideas about iconography.

This Vajrayāna philosophy was one of the important doctrines of the Tantric Buddhism. Other two important doctrines were known as the Kālacakrayāna and the Sahajayāna.

The origin of Vajrayāna as some later authorities held, can be traced to the teaching of the Buddha himself.

1. See IBI, p. 8.
Buddha taught two doctrines during his lifetime, viz., Sravakayana and Pratyekabuddhayana. The Philosophy of the Sravakas was that the followers of this doctrine should hear the religious view from a Buddha. But they should wait for their salvation till the another Buddha would come. But the Sravakas could not help any of its adherents to attain salvation (Nirvana). On the other hand, the Pratyekas could attain Buddhahood (Nirvana) by their own efforts. But they could not assist any one to attain the salvation (Nirvana).

With the growth of the Vajrayana doctrine many changes occurred in the practice of the Buddhist religion. Worshipping of deities became an integral part of this doctrine. The main sources of Vajrayana doctrine and iconography are Sri - Guhyasamajatantra, Sadhanamala, Kriya-Samgraham Bhahiikā Advaya Siddhi and etc. There are many more works which help the historians and the philosophers to trace the development of the Vajrayana doctrine.

The Vajrayana system revolutionized the concept of primitive Buddhism. The Vajrayanists not only put forward the theory of five Dhyani Buddhas and their 'Kulas' or families but also introduced for the first time, the worship of Prajna or Sakti and included a myriad of gods and goddesses and their worship through
the practice of "Mantras, Yantras, Tantras, Mudrās, Mandalas, mystic realizations and psychic exercises of the most suitable".

With the inclusion of a great variety of deities, rites and practices, Vajrayāna could attract a good number of adherents. In the Hinayāna Buddhism, however, the concept of gods and goddesses were absent, and therefore, the adherents of Mahāyāna Buddhism found it convenient to offer their prayer at least to the images of various deities while performing various rituals and religious practices for their material benefit as well as spiritual upliftment. Thus a few centuries were required for the emergence of a regular cult and a system of iconography centering round Gautama Buddha.

The first datable image of the Buddha belongs to the reign of great Kuṣāṇa ruler Kanīṣka (78–102 A.D.). Before that age the devotees perhaps did not like their master's anthropomorphic representations. Thus whenever they wanted to portray him, they did it by some symbols, e.g. the wheel, the triratna, the throne, the Bodhi tree, the Stūpa and footprints². This is clearly witnessed from the remains of Bharhut, Śāñchi, and Amaravati of the Second Century B.C.

1. Cf. IBI p.12
Anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha does not seem to have emerged in Indian art much before the middle of the first century A.D.¹

With the passage of time Mahāyāna Buddhism included a large variety of deities. In the later times there appeared as it were, "an epidemic of deification"². It may appear to be interesting to note that although the Buddha did not like to be worshiped by the followers of his doctrine, he himself instructed Ānanda to erect at the crossing of the road the stūpas, containing the parts of his corporeal relics. Such stūpas were naturally looked upon by the followers of the Buddha as holy objects for paying reverence to the Buddha. Therefore, those stūpas sowed the seed of the worship of the Master.

In the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna faith, a large number of Brahmanical divinities were also incorporated. As our study would reveal, the gods and goddesses of the Brahmanical pantheon, however, were made subservient to the Buddha and these gods and goddesses were depicted as associates or attendants of the Buddha or the Buddhisattvas and others or as the guardians of the Buddhist religion³.

With the growth of Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna faith a host of deities of various descriptions found their places of reverence in Buddhist temples and monasteries. The diversity

1. Ibid
2. IBI, p. 31
3. HDJBP, p. viii.
of Buddhist icons can be realised from the following groups of deities that enriched the religious art of India from the 2nd - 3rd century A.D., while different schools of art displayed their different characteristics in carving or painting the images. From the Gandhara School to the Pala School the Buddhist icons manifested various forms and features reflecting the imagination and creative faculty of the artists concerned and their skill in the art of image making. The richness of Indian Buddhist (and also Brahmanical) iconography can be well understood from the extent images in India and in the neighbouring countries of the sub-continent.

There are a large number of Buddhist images belonging to the Mathura, Gandhara and Gupta period. The artists of the Mathura School of Art produced in the early centuries of the Christian era the massive Bodhisattva images portraying those as having extraordinary strength and energy.

The Mathura and the Gandhara periods are notable for the sculptural representations of several Buddhist and Brahmanical deities. Buddhist deities belonged to the sculptural repartories of the regions in question, while the Brahmanical deities mostly remained limited to the numismatic pieces of pre-Christian and early Christian eras.

Some of a few prominent Buddhist deities in sculptures belonging to the above mentioned periods were found

1. i) Gandhara School of Art = c.150 B.C. - 450 A.D.  
   ii) Mathura School of Art = c.200 B.C. - 600 A.D.  
   iii) Gupta School of Art = c.320 A.D. - 659 A.D.

2. IS, pp. 60 ff.
in the locations, such as Ahicchatra (Buddha figure), Loriyan Tangai (Buddha figure, dated 318 A.D.), Charsada (Buddha figure, dated 384 A.D.); Skarah Dehri (Hārīti image, dated 399 A.D.), Takt-i-Bahi (Buddha figure, dated c.318 A.D.) etc.¹

The Gupta period (c.300-500 A.D.) is regarded as the golden period not only in the Indian history but also in the history of Indian sculptures and paintings. The sculptures of this period are remarkable for their plastic quality and rhythmic composition.

The Gupta style of sculptures exercised considerable influence on the Chinese sculpture of the T‘ang period (618-960 A.D.) and the Japanese sculpture of the Nara period (645-794 A.D.). The wet-clothing pattern of [Grapery], fullness of form, erectness of body and elegance characterised the innumerable images that were carved in India during this period. Among the host of those images we mention below a few representative specimens of the period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the images</th>
<th>Period/Date</th>
<th>Material used</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Buddha</td>
<td>c. 4th Century A.D.</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>Bodhgaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Buddha</td>
<td>c. 5th Century A.D.</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>Sarnath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Buddha (delivering first sermon)</td>
<td>c. Early 8th Century A.D.</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>Sultangunge³ (Pl. I, Fig.4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² There is no specific mention of the date of the image. It is regarded that this Buddha figure was erected in the year 64 of Maharaja Trīkamāl of uncertain identity. But the paleography of the inscription may ascribe it to the 4th century A.D. see SIS, pp. 144-146.
³ F. M. Asher suggested that this famous bronze statue of the Buddha from Sultangunge should be assigned to the 7th Century - see AIS, pp. 56-58.
Expectedly, however, there appeared certain notable differences in the development of concept about the image and iconography in India on one hand and China and Korea on the other. For instance, the cult of Amitābha did not develop in India to the extent as it did in China and Japan. In the later centuries the cult prescribed some interesting iconographic features of the deity. The description of Amitābha is found in Indian texts but rarely he is well represented in art. Quite fascinating also is the study of five Dhyāni-Buddhas, who are independently represented in China, Korea and Japan. Strangely enough, though the concept of Dhyāni-Buddhas emanated in India, these deities did not find much favour with the Indian sculptors and painters. In other words they were more popular outside India (i.e. in the countries mentioned above), than the land of their origin.

1. Japan received Buddhism through Korea from China. There were deep-rooted cultural and spiritual collaborations between India and China during the time of the Han Dynasty - see Kalidas Nag, Discovery of Asia, p. 433. But Buddhism was officially recognised in China by 70 B.C., and by the fourth century A.D. Buddhism became part and parcel of the Chinese life. Korean people accepted Buddhism as the quintessence of Chinese civilisation. Later, Japan received Buddhism from the Korean people due to a close political contact - JB, p. 10; HDJB, p. 1.

2. The Sukhāvatī Vyuha mentions the name of Amitābha Buddha for the first time. This text was translated into Chinese sometimes between A.D. 148 and 170 and a later copy of this text was brought to Japan. In course of time this Sutra became one of the important canonical texts of both Jodo and the Shinshū sects - BSJ, pp. 185. Also see Sukhāvatīvyūha, pp. 1, 23, 32. Max Muller, Sukhāvatīvyūha, pp. III & IV.
Along with Amitābha (Amida Nyorai in Japan) other four Dhyāni-Buddhas Aksobhya, Vairocana, Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava, who were respectively called Ashuku Nyorai, Birushana or Rushana Bustu, Fuku-Jō-Jū Nyorai and Hōshō Nyorai in Japanese were variously represented in Japanese, Chinese and Korean sculptures and paintings. Compared to the other idealised Buddhas in Japan Ashuku Nyorai is seemingly less popular in Japan. Even the laity in Japan is acquainted with the figures of these idealised Dhyāni-Buddhas.

A few other idealised Buddhas in Japan are, Jōkō Nyorai (Dīpārkara), Hōtō Nyorai (Ratnaketu), Kaifukeō Nyorai (Divya-Dundubhi Meghanirghoṣa) etc. The images of Shaka Nyorai or Sākyamuni Buddha, i.e. historical Buddha, however, can be found in abundance in the temples of Japan.

Highly interesting are perhaps a group of fierce-looking deities, who are widely represented in sculptures and paintings. These deities are carved and portrayed in a highly realistic manner. The wrath of these deities are vividly portrayed denoting sculptors' or painters' high skill in the art of image making. Almost all of these fierce-looking deities have their counterparts in India, but the representations of these deities in sculptures and paintings are few and far between in India. The terrific-looking deities with angry disposition are known in Japan as Myō-ō. These deities are Fudō-Myō-ō (Koṭo), Ge-sau-ke-Myō-ō (Trilokayavijaya), Gundari-Myō-ō, Aizen-Myō-ō (Rāgarājā).

1. HDJBP., p. 151.
It may, however, be mentioned here that there are many Myō-ō figures which are not fierce-looking. Kujakū-Myō-ō (Mahāmāyūrī Vidyārāja) is an example of the Myō-ō figure which is not portrayed as fierce-looking.

One would be simply astonished to see the existence of a large number of deities both Buddhist and Brahmanical, in the temples and museums of Japan. The sculptural representations and painted figures of the saints or the deified personages are also varied in number. Some of these personages are Ragora Sonja (Rāhula), Nāgasena Sonja (Nāgasena) Bindobharadvaja Sonja (Pindolabharadraja), Nakora Sonja (Nokula), Badara Sonja (Bhadra), Jubaka Sonja (Jīvaka), Daikasho (Mahākāśyapa), Furuno (Purpa), Ubari (Upāli) Sariputsu (Sāriputra), Mokuenren (Moudgalayaṇa) Yuima (Vimalakirti), Daruma (Boddhidhamma), Baramon Sonja or Bodaisena (Bodhisena), Muchaku (Asangag) and others. Not only the above personages of India but also the religious personages of China and Japan were also represented in Japanese paintings and sculptures.

Among the sculptural and painted representations of the prominent Japanese religious leaders there are the figures of Shōtoku-Taishi, Kūkai or Kōbō Daishi, Saichō or Dengyō-Daishi, Hōnen, Shinran, Nichiren, Dōsho, Gyōki, Ryoken, Enchin, Kūya, Koben and many others.

The Chinese religious personages have also been
represented in sculptures and paintings in Japan. The noteworthy religious leaders of China are: Ichigyo, Keika, Eshi, Chigi, Kanjo, Tannen, Kichizo, Genzo, Kiki, Hozo, Ganjin, Donran, Eka, Eno, Futaishi and others. Thus a rich heritage of the art of portraiture also can be found in Japan.

We also find that many among those icons that originated in India, are either forgotten in India or are worshipped on rare occasions. To elaborate further, we may cite Indra as one of the examples of those deities who were included in Buddhist Pantheon in India itself and subsequently found their way to Japan along with Buddhist religion. The worship of Indra (Taishaku-ten in Japanese) is rarely done in India. But in Japan the worship of this deity is wide spread as is evident from a fair number of his figures which are placed beside the images of the Buddha Šākyamuni on the dais in the temples. Similarly, Brahmā (Bon-ten) who is by no means popular in India now-a-days, receives homage from a large number of Japanese Buddhist. Among the Brahmanical gods and goddesses who are revered greatly in Japan, are, besides Indra and Brahmā (Taishaku-ten and Bon-ten), Agni (Ka-ten), Yama (Emma-ten) Vāyu (Hū-ten), Varuṇa (Sui-ten), Maheśvara (Makeishura-ten), Īśāna (Isana-ten), Pṛthivī (Ji-ten), Sūrya (Nit-ten), Candra (Gaṭ-ten), Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa (Naraen-ten), Gaṇeśa (Sho-ten), Kūmār-Kārttikeya (Kumara-ten or Ida-ten), Sarasvatī (Benzai-ten) and Lakṣmi (Kichijō-ten). In India Varuṇa, Vāyu, Agni, Pṛthivī, Sūrya and Candra are not as popular as they are in Japan. Although images of these deities in different forms
can be seen as either attendant deities or among the group of various other deities in the temples.

If we look at China which provided Japan with the concept of Buddhist iconography, we shall see that the above mentioned deities were also variously represented in the Chinese temples. The best example of the Chinese iconographic concepts are delineated in the famous text called "Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka". This celebrated text may be regarded as an invaluable document that provides the best guideline of Buddhist iconography and its ancillary details not only in China itself but also in Japan and Korea.

The Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka acquaints us with the forms and features of the innumerable Buddhist deities and their respective mudrās. The Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka contains the doctrines and tenets of Buddhism and this work also mentions the forms of various Tantric rituals that were found in China around the 8th Century A.D., the Yantras, Mantras, Mandalas and other relevant formulae (Dharani) etc.

We had, however, an opportunity of collecting various data from this celebrated Tripitaka and we have conveniently used those in some of the following Chapters. We have observed quite a few interesting iconographic features related to various deities. As for example, the Tripitaka acquaints us with the

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six-headed Brahmā, the painted image of whom are used in the Saddharmapundarikā Sūtra rite. Such six-headed Brahmā is unheard of in India. The Tripitaka also provides us with information on Viṣṇu-Nārāyana (Naraen-ten) who may have three heads comprising a human head and heads of an elephant and a boar or a tiger. This deity may also have three human heads.

We have already mentioned earlier that what Korea received was the quintessence of Chinese Buddhism. The Buddhist ideas in Korea were deeply tinged by the Chinese ideas and therefore the Korean Buddhist iconography developed directly from the Chinese Buddhist iconographic ideas. In the second chapter of our present work we have shown the interesting features of Korean Buddhist iconography which has many things in common with the Buddhist concept and iconographic ideas of China.

We have discussed about various Buddhist deities, such as, Amitābha, Śākyamuni, Maitreya and other Bodhisattvas in the following chapter on Korea.

The process of development of Buddhist iconography outside India indeed provides an immense scope for study.

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When compared to the Indian Buddhist (and also Brahmanical) iconography we shall see that many aspects in the forms and features of the Buddhist icons have been broadly retained in China, Korea and Japan. On the other hand, we shall also observe that a great deviation has taken place in giving the shape and form of a large number of deities. In the Buddhist pantheon of Japan there are also some such deities or demi-gods or malevolent beings included liberally and those deities were given anthropomorphic forms that reflect in many cases a rich imagination of the sculptors or painters and their skill of delineation or depiction.