CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

During long-term history of evolution, human beings have had to fight constantly with natural disasters, with the injustice in society, with the family turmoil, and with their own suffering to survive. Man, therefore, always needs a spiritual and physical consolation. Consequently, religion becomes necessary and important for human life and society because it can provide spiritual relief, philosophy of life and salvation of soul for human beings. Buddhism arose in ancient India and has developed in various parts of the world today, also aims at the same goal, which is, providing happiness for human beings in words of the Buddha:¹

Monks, there is one person whose birth into the world is for welfare of many folk, for the happiness of many folk; who is born out of compassion for the world, for the profit, welfare and happiness of devas and mankind. Who is that one person? It is a Tathāgata who is Arahat, a fully Enlightened One.²

Welfare and happiness brought to mankind by the Buddha are not the material properties, but the spiritual benefits coming from compassion and wisdom which transcend above the ego of things and persons, free from the hindrances of passion and ignorance. This does not mean that Buddhism

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¹ Ekapuggalo, bhikkhave, loke uppañjamāno uppañjati bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānām. Katamo ekapuggalo? Tathāgato arahato sammāsambuddho (A i, 21.)
rejected materialism. Buddhism views materials only as means to achieve happiness and propagate *dharma*. Although necessary, it is dangerous because of its excitability of greed, hatred and ignorance of man.

In the process of spreading *dharma*, Buddhism has been divided into many sects to adapt to the customs and culture of people in the land where it went. The Buddhist schools have compiled different teachings of the Buddha according to their own practices and thoughts. History of Buddhism recorded that during the period of about two hundred years after the Buddha’s *mahāparinirvāṇa*, Buddhism was mainly divided into two main schools, *Sthaviravāda* (Pāli: *Theravāda*, the Elders) and *Mahāsāṅghika* (Great Community). The former was split up to some eleven sects and remains nowadays as *Theravāda*, while the latter was divided into seven sub-sects. The original words of the Buddha, therefore, have been interpreted into different ways in different languages and doctrines by the distinctive Buddhist sects. The ultimate truth that the Buddha attained under the bodhi tree, therefore, was presented sometimes by the language of no-self (*anātman*), sometimes in the language of true-self (*satya-ātman*) as in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. It would be wrong to assume that either ‘no-self’ or ‘Buddha nature’ is the ultimate goal or ideal of Buddhism. No-self, Buddha-nature and all other Buddhist doctrines are only means to achieve happiness like a raft used to cross the river.  

I.2. NATURE AND QUALITIES OF BUDDHA’S TEACHINGS

The Buddha’s style of teaching was generally one of skilful adaptation to the mood and concerns of his hearers, responding to the questions and even the non-verbalized thoughts of his audiences, taking cues from events. By means

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3 P.V. Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1997), 85.

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of a dialogue with his questioners, he gradually moved them towards sharing his own vision of truth. When Brahmins asked him about how to attain union with the god Brahma after death, he did not say that this was impossible, but said that it could be attained by meditative development of deep lovingkindness and compassion, rather than by bloody Vedic sacrifices. He often gave new meanings to old terms, for example calling the *arhat* the 'true brahmin', and using the term *ariya*, equivalent to the Sanskrit term for the 'noble' aryan people, in the sense of spiritually noble, or holy.

The Buddha emphasized self-reliance and the experiential testing of all teachings, including his own. He was well aware of the many conflicting doctrines of his day, a time of intellectual ferment. Rejecting teachings based on authoritative tradition, or mere rational speculation, he emphasized the examination and analysis of actual experience. This is seen in a famous *sūtra* passage where he spoke to the Kalama people, who had had a string of teachers visiting them, speaking in praise of their own teachings and disparaging those of others. In response to their perplexity over what is true or false, the Buddha said that they were right to feel uncertain. They should not accept anything on the grounds of revelation, tradition or report, or because it is a product of mere reasoning, or because it is true from a standpoint, or because of a superficial assessment of the facts, or because it conforms with one's preconceived notions, or because it is authoritative, or because of the prestige of someone's teacher.

They should assess teachings for themselves by referring to their own experience, also taking note of the opinion of wise people, rejecting unskilful teachings whose practice conduced to harm and suffering, and accepting those that conduced to true benefit and happiness. Only occasionally, for example, before his first sermon, did the Buddha use his authority, but this

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5 A., i, 189
was not to force people to agree with him, but to get them to listen so that they could then gain understanding. He also advised his disciples not to react emotionally when they heard people speaking in blame or praise of him, but to assess calmly the degree to which what was said was true or false.  

The Buddha emphasized that his teachings had a practical purpose, and should not be blindly clung to. He likened the dharma to a raft made by a man seeking to cross from the dangerous hither shore of a river, representing the conditioned world, to the peaceful further shore, representing nirvāṇa. He then rhetorically asked whether such a man, on reaching the other shore, should lift up the raft and carry around with him. He, therefore, said, “Dharma is for crossing over, not for retaining.” That is, a follower should not grasp at Buddhist doctrines and practices, but use them for their intended purpose, and get rid of them when they had fully accomplished their goal. Many ordinary Buddhists, though, do have a strong attachment to Buddhism.

The dharma is one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism in which practitioners of Buddhism seek refuge, or that upon which one relies for his or her lasting happiness. The Three Jewels of Buddhism are the Buddha,

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6 Dīgha Nikāya, Pāli Text Society, i, 3
7 “Monks, as a man going along a highway might see a great stretch of water, the hither bank dangerous and frightening, the further bank secure, not frightening, but if there were not a boat for crossing by or a bridge across for going from the not-beyond to the beyond, this might occur to him: This is a great stretch of water, the hither bank dangerous and frightening, the further bank secure and not frightening, but there is not a boat for crossing by or a bridge across for going from the not-beyond to the beyond. Suppose that I, having collected grass, sticks, branches and foliage, and having tied a raft, depending on that raft, and striving with hands and feet, should cross over safely to the beyond? Then, monks, that man, having collected grass, sticks, branches and foliage, having tied a raft, depending on that raft and striving with his hands and feet, might cross over safely to the beyond. To him, crossed over, gone beyond, this might occur: “Now, this raft has been very useful to me. I, depending on this raft, and striving with my hands and feet, crossed over safely to the beyond”...Even so, monks, is the Parable of the Raft dhamma taught by me for crossing over, not for retaining. You, monks, by understanding the Parable of the Raft, should get rid even of (right) mental objects, all the more of wrong ones.” I.B. Horner (trans.), The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings, Vol.II, 173.
8 “Evameva kho, bhikkhave, kullūpamo mayā dhammo desito nītharaṇāthāya, no gahaṇaṇāthāya. Kullūpamaṃ vo, bhikkhave, dhammaṃ desitaṃ, ājānantehi dhammāpi vo pahātabbā pageva adhammā.” Majjhima-Nikāya, I, 135
meaning the mind’s perfection of enlightenment, the dharma, meaning the teachings and the methods of the Buddha, and the saṅgha, meaning those awakened beings who provide guidance and support to followers of the Buddha. The Teachings of the Buddha have six supreme qualities:9

1. **Svākkhāto** (Sanskrit: Svākhyaṭa “well proclaimed”). The dharma is not a speculative philosophy, but is the universal law found through enlightenment and is preached precisely. Therefore it is excellent in the beginning (sīla - moral principles), excellent in the middle (samādhi - concentration) and excellent in the end (pañña - wisdom).

2. **Sanditthiko** (Sanskrit: Samdṛṣṭika “able to be examined”). The dharma can be tested by practice and therefore, he who follows it will see the result by himself through his own experience.

3. **Akaliko** (Sanskrit: Akālika “immediate”). The dharma is able to bestow timeless and immediate results here and now, for which there is no need to wait until the future or next existence.

4. **Ehipassiko** (Sanskrit: Ehipaceyyika “which you can come and see” — from the phrase ehi, paceya “come, see!”). The dharma welcomes all beings to put it to the test and come and see for themselves.

5. **Opanayiko** (Sanskrit: A vaprāṇayika “leading one close to”). The dharma is capable of being entered upon and therefore it is worthy to be followed as a part of one’s life.

6. **Paccattam veditabbo viññūhi** (Sanskrit: Pratyātmam veditavyo viññaiḥ “To be personally known by the wise”).

The dharma can be perfectly realized only by the noble disciples (Aryans) who have matured and enlightened enough in supreme wisdom. Knowing these attributes, Buddhists believe that they will attain the greatest

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9 KN Tiwary, *Buddhist Beliefs and Practices* (New Delhi: MD Publications Pvt Ltd, 2010), 43
peace and happiness through the practice of the dharma. Each person is, therefore, fully responsible for himself to put it in the real practice. Here, the Buddha is compared to an experienced and skilful doctor, and the dharma to proper medicine. However, efficient the doctor or wonderful the medicine may be, the patients cannot be cured unless they take the medicine properly. So the practice of the dharma is the only way to attain the final deliverance of nirvāṇa. These teachings ranged from understanding karma (cause and effect) and developing good impressions in one’s mind, to reach full enlightenment by recognizing the nature of mind. During forty five years, the Buddha preached about eighty four thousands sūtras in which eighty two thousands sūtras were delivered by the Buddha and others were delivered by his disciples and he approved them. The different methods to enlightenment were mentioned in several discourses by the Lord (Buddha), however, the Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta and the Aṣṭsāhasrika- Prajñāpāramitā - Sūtra take a prominent position about this topic among Buddhist sūtras.

I.3. ABOUT THE TOPIC

After the Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Buddha, Buddhism was divided into many schools and sects. Each of the schools puts stress on some sūtras which are used as the guiding light for their practice only. This leads to some confusion and controversy for later Buddhist followers.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to attempt to study, to make comparison of the ways to enlightenment as depicted in the Mahāsatipatṭhāna Sutta and the Aṣṭsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā which present the tenets of the Theravāda and Mahāyāna respectively. Based on these sūtras and other scriptures, the work will elucidate that the Buddha’s teachings have the same taste, the taste of liberation, the taste of enlightenment. However, each discourse has a different nature and quality depending on the characteristics
of nature of the hearers. For this reason, the topic entitled "The Ways to Enlightenment as Depicted in the Aṣṭasāhasrika -Prajñāpāramitā -Sūtra and the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta : A Comparative study" has been taken up here.

I.3.1. The Extent of Existing Studies on the Topic

Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and Aṣṭasāhasrika -Prajñāpāramitā -Sūtra are two important sūtras in Buddhist literature. While the first one is the heart tenet of the Theravāda school, the second reflects all the philosophy of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. These have been studied by many scholars till today. Let us look into some important and significant works among them such as:

*Studies on Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā

-Linnart Mall's "The Studies in the Aṣṭasāhasrika- Prajñāpāramitā -Sūtra and other Essays" (2003) is rich from the point of view of modern research. He analyses the doctrine of Prajñāpāramitā or transcendental wisdom. It is based on Tibetan exegetical literature which is considered by learned Tibetan tradition to be the most important as a summary of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras and as the text containing the special theory of the marga or the path to the attainment of nirvāṇa according to the Mahāyānistic standpoint. A considerable part of this book is devoted to the study of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā. This text marks a breakthrough in Buddhism, since it provides an explanation for the emergence of the written texts, which gradually replaced the previously predominant oral tradition. The analysis of the text is based on the key terms of the sūtra: dharma, bodhisattva and prajñāpāramitā.

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Lex Hixon’s “Mother of the Buddhas: Meditation on the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra” (1993) is the “contemplative expansion” of forty passages from the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra in 8000 lines. It is English translation in contemplative expansion form which yields a text of devotional beauty that is poetic and uplifting. Through dramatic conversations between the Buddha and his disciples like Śāriputra, Subhūti, and Ananda, the bodhisattva path to enlightenment is revealed. This book features a foreword by renowned American Buddhist scholar Dr Robert A.F. Thurman on the historical background of the radical Mahāyāna teachings on the nature of the reality.

- Lewis Lancaster’s “Prajñāpāramitā and related systems: Studies in honor of Edward Conze” (1977) is one of Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series. Lewis Lancaster is an editor of this work. It spends one full chapter on the Aṣṭasāhasrika-Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra about its position in the development of early Mahāyāna. The remaining paths of the book study the sūtras belonging to prajñāpāramitā literature.

- Edward Conze’s “The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary” (1994) is an English translation of Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā. It is a literal, word by word translation of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra which is tiresome to read, and practically unintelligible to anyone who does not have the Sanskrit original before him. If ever there was a case where the letter kills the spirit, it is here. The sūtra itself was meant to be memorized, the translation is meant to be read. Lengthy repetitions, stereotyped phrases, and the piling up of synonyms were of great assistance to memory, but they irritate and distract the modern reader, and

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obscure from him the meaning of the text. This translation aims at bringing out the meaning of the sūtra, often with the aid of Haribhadra’s commentary, and it keeps as close to the text as is compatible with intelligibility.

*Studies on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta or Satipaṭṭhāna

-S. N. Goenka’s “Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta: The Great Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness” (2006)¹⁴ is a revised edition of the text in Roman-script Pāli with translation into English for the use of participants in a meditation course on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as taught by S.N.Goenka.

-R.M.L.Gethin’s “The Buddhist Path to Awakening” draws exhaustively on a wide range of sources both primary and secondary, and in particular on the Pāli texts. Rupert Gethin offers a comprehensive study of “the thirty-seven conditions that contribute to awakening”, a classic set of Buddhist teachings which takes us from the four contemplations that establish mindfulness to a full realization of the noble eightfold path. He examines these conditions both individually and collectively, revealing how early Buddhist thinkers understood the process of spiritual practice by which our ordinary consciousness can be transformed into the ‘awakened’ consciousness characterized by the wisdom and compassion of a Buddha. Sensitive and conscientious, this study not only provides fascinating new insights into the textual sources that govern the Buddhist religious life, but also illustrates some of the forces and concerns that influenced the development of Buddhist thought. Featuring many passages from the primary texts, along with full notes and an extensive bibliography, this book is appreciated by scholars and students alike.

- Analayo’s “Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization” (2003) helps fill what has long been a glaring gap in the scholarship on Early Buddhism, offering us a detailed textual study of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the foundational Buddhist discourse on meditation practice. With painstaking thoroughness, Ven. Analayo marshals the sūtras of the Pāli canon, works of modern scholarship, and the teachings of present-day meditation masters to make the rich implications of this text, so concise in the original, clear to contemporary students of the dharma. Unlike more popular books on the subject, he is not out to establish the exclusive validity of one particular system of meditation as against others; his aim, rather, is to explore the sūtra as a wide-ranging and multi-faceted source of guidance which allows for alternative interpretations and approaches to practice. His analysis combines the detached objectivity of an academic scholar with the engaged concern of the practitioner for whom meditation is a way of life rather than just a subject of study. The book should prove to be of value both to scholars of Early Buddhism and to serious meditators alike. Ideally, it will encourage in both types of reader the same wholesome synthesis of scholarship and practice that underlies the author’s own treatment of his subject.

I.3. 2. Scope of the Research

Study on the methods to enlightenment in Buddhism is a task which cannot be carried out without the important texts, teachings, practices and historical movements of Buddhism. This thesis is an attempt to give a comparative analysis of ways to enlightenment as depicted in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā in different systems of Buddhist

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thought (Theravāda and Mahāyāna). We have no intention of re-writing or fully focusing the history of Buddhist thought in detail. We aim at analyzing the similarities and the differences of the ways to enlightenment in different systems of Buddhist philosophy. This study is mainly based upon the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Aṣṭsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Buddhist texts belonging to Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist literature respectively, in which the different ways to enlightenment are depicted in the relationship with the arhat path and bodhisattva path that will provide us a complete view of Buddhist thought. In addition, the thesis also refers to the Pāli, Sanskrit and Chinese sources and the writings of some impressive scholars published in various books and journals approaching the study.

1.4. METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

To do this, we have chronologically, epistemologically and philosophically examined, analyzed and criticized the fundamental issues in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Aṣṭsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā that are concerned with the methods to enlightenment. Besides, the comparative method is also involved in this study to highlight the resemblance and difference between the arhat path and bodhisattva path relating to the ways to enlightenment. Thus, based on the original sources of Buddhist scriptures as well as other related secondary sources, the main research methodology of analytical and critical study in comparative light will be applied in the study.

1.5. PLAN OF THE STUDY

This thesis is an attempt to investigate and criticize the philosophical and religious thought of the methods to enlightenment as depicted in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and the Aṣṭsāhasrika-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra. In so doing, we have mentioned the following principle themes:

1. Introduction
2. History of Pāli Buddhist literature and the origin and main doctrine of Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta
3. History of Sanskrit Buddhist literature and the origin and main doctrine of Aṣṭsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā
4. The method to get enlightenment in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta
5. The method to get enlightenment in the Aṣṭsāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā
6. The four stages of arhathood in Theravāda and ten stages of bodhisattvahood in Mahāyana tradition
7. The similarities and differences between the arhat path and bodhisattva path, and conclusion

Structurally, therefore, including the introduction and conclusion, the thesis consists of seven chapters in accordance with the above seven main themes respectively.

Chapter I: Introduction
This is a brief plan that serves as an opening to the entire thesis containing the general introduction and the nature and qualities of the Buddha’s teachings. This part also refers to the clarification of the topic, including the object of the study and other previous studies relating to the topic. Besides, scope and method of research are mentioned. Finally, the plan of the study including chapters is also sketched here.

Chapter II: The Origin and the Main Doctrine in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta
Chapter Two comprises two main parts. The first is history of Pāli Buddhist literature and the origin of Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta including the introduction of history of Pāli Buddhist literature, and the origin and position of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta in Pāli literature. The second is the main doctrine in Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta. This part will discuss the four noble
truths which are the noble truth of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

Chapter III: The Origin and the Main Doctrine in the \textit{Aśṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā}

In this chapter the history of Buddhist Sanskrit literature and the origin of the \textit{Aśṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā} will be discussed in detail. And it also deals with the origin and development of the doctrine of \textit{boddhisattva}, and the nature of \textit{boddhisattva} depicted in the \textit{Aśṭasāhasrika- prajñāpāramitā - sūtra}.

Chapter IV: The Method to Get Enlightenment in the \textit{Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta}.

This is one of two main chapters of this thesis. The chapter consists of two parts. The first is the structure of the \textit{Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta} and the background and applicants who can practice the method as depicted in this \textit{Sutta}. The second part deals with the method to get enlightenment in the \textit{Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta}. In this part, four methods of practicing mediation which are depicted in \textit{Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta} will be discussed in detail.

Chapter V: The Method to Get Enlightenment in the \textit{Aśṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā}.

This is one of the key chapters of the topic, divided into two major parts. The first part analyzes the first five perfections or \textit{pāramitās}; dāna pāramitā, sīla pāramitā, kṣānti pāramitā, viśva pāramitā, and dyāna pāramitā. The concept of the first five perfections or \textit{pāramitās} will be discussed here according to \textit{Mahāyāna} tradition. The second part presents the concept \textit{prajñā pāramitā} or perfection of wisdom which is the main theme of the \textit{Aśṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā}. The first part is the definition of \textit{prajñā pāramitā}. Then, the next part deals with the classification and nature of \textit{prajñā pāramitā}. This chapter will go further with the matters like how a \textit{bodhisattva}
stands in and trains in prajñā pāramitā and how a bodhisattva practices the bodhisattva path with his perfect wisdom and skill in means.

Chapter VI: The Four Stages of Arhathood in Theravāda and Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood in Mahāyāna tradition

Chapter six contains two parts. The first part of the chapter, “four stages of an arhat”, analyzes and discusses the fruits that an arhat will go through from one stage to others. They are the stage of sotāpanna, the stage of sakadāgāmin, the stage of anagāmin, and the stage of arhat. The second part of the chapter deals with ten stages of a bodhisattva which presents the process that a bodhisattva goes through and the fruits that he receives. Ten stages of a bodhisattva will be discussed in detail according to Mahāyāna tradition.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

Chapter seven will be presented in two parts. The first part is a summary of what have been presented, highlights some important issues related to the ways to enlightenment which are depicted in the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta and in the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā. Then, it points out the similarities and differences between the arhat path and bodhisattva path. Finally, the conclusion will be presented.