Chapter 2

THE SARVĀSTIVĀDA SCHOOL

AND THE ABHIDHARMAKOŚA ŚĀSTRA

2.1 Introduction

Several centuries after passing away of the Buddha, Buddhist communities split into a number of distinct schools. These schools attempted to explain the Buddha’s teachings in various manners and established their own methods to clarify the Buddha’s teachings. Their differing philosophical views resulted in the production of the Abhidharma, the part of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka (that is, the three bodies of teaching of the Buddha) which deals with philosophy in a detailed way.

In his Abhidharma Kośa Śāstra, one of the most famous Abhidharma compositions, Vasubandhu describes the Abhidharma as pure wisdom (prajñā) with its accompanying elements. Wisdom is the discernment of dharma. Wisdom, the object of speculation in the Abhidharma, is then expounded as analytical, systematic understanding of all dharmas. Buddhaghosa, the 5th century Theravāda master, explains that the Abhidharma is the instruction in the absolute nature of things. Many Theravāda schools later produced Abhidharma compositions in order to represent their theoretical understanding of all dharmas. They also attempted to classify their own doctrinal positions. Among these Abhidharmic schools, the Sarvāstivāda school was the most influential in India.

This is attested by the fact that the Abhidharma Kośa, one of the Sarvāstivādins’ texts, has been studied as a basic text for Buddhist scholars and students in many countries such as Tibet, China, Japan and Vietnam. This text has been one of the most thoroughly examined works in the history of Buddhism. Therefore, it is said that:

“The Abhidharmakośa of Vasubandhu (C. 5th century A.D) is a Buddhistic work well-known for its harmonious synthesis of all the great doctrines accepted in general by all the contemporary schools of Buddhism. The text is looked upon as an authoritative treatise of the Vaibhāṣikas (specially the
Vaibhāśikas of Kashmir), but the three other principal schools of Buddhism viz., the Sautrāntikas, the Yogācāras and the Mādhyamikas also are agreeable to accept it in spite of the difference in their sectarian viewpoints. In the Buddhistic circle much importance has been attached to this text because of the fact that it contains not only the fundamental principles of Buddhism, but also gives an exhaustive and systematic exposition of the Abhidharma doctrines of the ancient schools of Buddhism that came into being within a period of eight hundred years after the Mahāparinirvāṇa of Buddha. It is, therefore, quite in the fitness of things that it occupies a place of eminence in the whole range of Buddhistic thought and literature.”

The Sarvāstivāda split from the Sthavira. As the name indicates (sarva asti: everything exists), the Sarvāstivāda school established itself as an independent sect with a distinct philosophical view which had a great impact on the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Sthavira, otherwise known as the Vibhajyavādin, became the Theravāda. Paul Griffiths evaluates the separation of these two schools in the following manner:

“It is certainly true, in any case, that the separation of the Sarvāstivāda from the school which later became the Theravāda was effective from the second century B.C onwards. We know this because the Sūtra and Vinaya literature of the two schools is substantially identical and must have been based on a common original, whereas the Abhidharma literature of the two schools has only identical parallels, and must therefore have developed independently, subsequent to the separation of the schools.”

When we refer to the Abhidharma, we often refer to some version of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, usually the Vaibhāśika and the Abhidharmakośa, if reference is specific. The Sarvāstivāda, like the Theravāda, has seven canonical Abhidharma texts. As Paul Griffits mentions, the resemblance of the two bodies of literature, however, indicates only incidental parallels.

However, as we know, the rise and development of various Buddhist schools or sects is shrouded by mystery due to lack of historical evidence. The Sarvāstivāda school is no exception. In spite of this, there have been scholars such as Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti, E. Conze and N. Dutt who have made progress in clarifying the history of the Sarvāstivāda school. We will make no attempt here to completely review their works, but instead will refer to the sources available which shed light on this school’s the origin and development as well as its treatise, the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra.
2.2 Buddhism and Its Schools

Buddhism is considered as one of the greatest religions in the world, not only in terms of its worldwide existence, but also due to its great and peaceful *Samgha*. During the last twenty-six centuries, the invaluable and noble teachings of the Buddha have been applied in many human societies as moral lessons that have helped people solve all their suffering and attain real happiness. Therefore, it is necessary for us to know about the history as well as the development of Buddhism through general introduction to Buddhism, the origin and development of different Buddhist schools.

2.2.1 General Introduction to Buddhism

Buddhism was founded, in the sixth century B.C., by *Siddattha Gotama*, who became known as the Buddha and spent many years proclaiming his insights into the predicament of the cycle of births and deaths and the route to release into *Nirvāṇa*.

As a secular man in the world, the Buddha prior to become an enlightened person - a Buddha, he was a prince named *Siddhattha*. His father was King *Suddhodana* of *Khattiya* clan, the aristocratic Śākya tribe with its capital at Kapilavastu. His mother, the Queen *Mahāmāyā*, died seven days after the birth of the prince. After that, he was raised and brought up by her younger sister - his aunt, *Mahāprajāpati Gotami*. The prince was born in circa 566 B.C or 563 B.C at the Lumbini Park in Kapilavastu of Northern India, what is now called Nepal.

According to the Discourse of *Nālaka* of *Suttanipata* it is recorded that with the birth of Siddhattha, the Gods were delighted: “*That Boddhisatta, excellent jewel incomparable, has been born in the world of men for (their) benefit and happiness in the village of the Śākyans, in the Lumbimi country. Therefore we are exultant exceedingly happy.*” At that time, there was a prophetic sage named *Asita* who accosted the King *Suddhodana*’s mansion and said: “*This is one, unsurpassed, is supreme among two-legged (men).*” He further added that: “*This young prince will reach the highest point of enlightenment. Seeing what is supremely purified having sympathy for the benefit of the great majority, he will turn the wheel of the doctrine. His holy living will be widely famed.*”

At the age of sixteen, he married *Yasodharā*, the most beautiful girl at time and they had a son, named *Rāhula*. One of the most important events made *Siddhattha* decide to leave the royal household to live a homeless life was that he saw directly static realities of
life. One day the prince went out of the palace to see the outside world. It is said that the first sight, he saw an old man; on the second, he saw a diseased man; on the third, he saw a corpse; and on the fourth, he saw a wandering holy hermit. After seeing these four sights, he realized that the truthful essence of life is suffering, and he decided to leave his throne and become a wandering ascetic monk in search of the truth to cease the suffering. At that time, he was twenty-nine years of age.¹⁰

First, he came to a famous teacher named Ālāka Kālāma. The latter taught him how to attain the meditation of nothingness, the third Arupa Jhana. After a short period of time, he also achieved what Ālāka Kālāma had it.¹¹ However, since he realized that this dharma was not leading to the cessation of suffering and attaining enlightenment, Nibbāna, he abandoned it. Thereafter, he went to another well-known teacher named Uddaka Rāmaputta who taught him how to attain meditation of neither perception nor non-perception. Nevertheless, he also forsook this dharma, because it is not a path that leading to the absolute - a truth or Nibbāna. Finally, when ascetic Siddhattha was not happy with final overcome of the above teaching, he came to Uruvela near Neranjara river, modern Bodh Gayā, six miles south of Gayā town.¹²

Here he spent six years for practicing rigid austerities with five austerities companions.¹³ At the end of that time, he realized that body torture is not the best way to attain enlightenment, and he decided to change his path and started taking food again as it is said “took material nourishment - boiled rice and sour milk.”¹⁴ After having food, the five austerities turned on him in disgust and said: “The recluse Gotama lives in abundance, he is wavering in his striving, he has reverted to a life of abundance.”¹⁵

After taking food again, little by little Siddhattha ascetic formally regained his health and he deeply practised meditation of his own unique middle path, and eventually he attained the Four Trances. Basing on the four meditations, he contemplated deeply and attained three visions of knowledge:

First, he remembered many of his previous lives and their details.

Secondly, he noticed differences in human beings as a result of good or bad Karma in their previous existence.

And finally, he attained the highest knowledge of the destruction of defilement. They are the canker of sense-pleasures, the canker of becoming and the canker of ignorance.

The ‘Fear and Dread’ Sutta¹⁶ describes the three perfect knowledges in which, the
third knowledge, he realized the Four Noble Truths: This is anguish, this is the arising of anguish, this is the stopping of anguish and this is the course leading to the stopping of anguish in the last night of third watch. Siddhattha attained enlightenment under the Boddhi tree and became Buddha when he was thirty-five years old.\textsuperscript{17}

After that the Buddha wanted to preach Dharma for benefit of all human being. He thought about the two of his former teachers - Ālāka Kālāma, Uddaka Rāmaputta, but both of them had passed away by then.\textsuperscript{18} He then decided to go to his former five ascetic companions so as to show them dharma; they were staying in deer park at Isipatana (modern Sarnath) near Benares by that time.

When the Buddha came to Isipatana and met the group of five ascetics. He preached the First Sermon to them, namely: Dhammacakkappavattana. It means “The Wheel of Truth”, “The Exposition of the Establishment of Wisdom”, or “The Kingdom of Righteousness.”\textsuperscript{19} The Discourse on the Analysis of the Truths (Saccavibhangsutta), explains the content of the first sermon as below:

“And what, your reverences, is the ariyan truth of anguish? Birth is anguish and ageing is anguish and dying is anguish; and grief, sorrow, suffering, misery and despair are anguish. And not getting what one desires, that too is anguish. In brief, the five groups of grasping are anguish.

And what, your reverences, is the ariyan truth of the arising of anguish? Whatever craving is connected with again-becoming, accompanied by delight and attachment, finding delight in this and that, namely the craving for sense-pleasures, the craving for becoming, the craving for annihilation-this, your reverences, is called the ariyan truth of the arising of anguish.

And what, your reverences, is the ariyan truth of the stopping of anguish? Whatever is the stopping, with no attachment remaining, of that self-same craving, the relinquishment of it casting aside of it, release from it, independence of it this, your reverences, is called the ariyan truth of the stopping of anguish.

And what your reverences, is the ariyan truth of the course leading to the stopping of anguish? It is this ariyan Eightfold Way itself, that is to say: right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right mode of livelihood, right endeavour, right mindfulness, right concentration.”\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, the Buddha preached the Four Noble Truth: birth, age, decay, death, and the Way leading to cessation of suffering, i.e., the Eightfold Way. It is also called The Middle Way, because these Ways avoid two extremes: self-mortification, self-indulgence and lead to knowledge, insight, enlightenment, and Nibbāna.
After hearing this dharma, the five ascetics attained ‘The Eye of Truth’ (Dhammacakkhu) and became the first disciples of the Buddha. From here onwards Buddhism has The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha or Triple Gem. The Buddha is a man that attained Truth, enlightenment-Nibbāna. The Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha of the Truth including Tipiṭaka: Sutta Piṭaka, Vinaya Piṭaka and Abhidharma Piṭaka. The Sutta contains words of the Buddha to monks, nuns and laypersons and so forth. The Vinaya Piṭaka is prescribed to monks and nuns as injunctions for the Order. The Abhidharma Piṭaka is interpretations of the Sutta and Vinaya with special attention to the classification of ‘Mind’; and Saṅgha is the renunciated members of the Order who follow and practice the Buddha’s teachings so that they can attain enlightenment like the Buddha and preach to the lay disciples again what the Buddha taught for human being in order to attain liberation in present life or in future as well.

Ever since the Gotama Buddha attained enlightenment as has been described above, was teaching the Dharma during forty-five long years for the welfare, happiness for living beings until he passed away at Kusinārā at the age of eighty-years old.\textsuperscript{21} Out of the salient theories of the Dharma, the doctrine of Karma of paramount importance which the author will one after the other introduce in due course.

The Buddha taught a system of ideas that was in stark contrast to the earlier orthodox Vedic tradition, rejecting any reliance on those texts, on the priestly caste (the Brahmīns), and on the orthodox depiction of salvation. The Buddha’s system is supposedly based upon observation, both of the world outside him and of the inner workings of his mental world. Crucially, he could not observe an eternal Ātman. Instead, he reports as his fundamental discovery that all the ingredients observed obey a general principle of “Dependent Co-arising” (Pratītya-samutpāda). Whatever comes into existence is the causal consequence of previous existents. Causal generation has a complex form where a number of such previous existents produce together the new existent. And each and every existent is momentary.

Thus, the Buddhist idea of Causality and Karma is basically theories concerned with the human world. The human experience in the world, for Buddhism, is that of suffering. And the prime focus of the Buddhist causal and Karma theory is the explanation of human suffering, not principally as a social fact but as an existential feature of human life. Fundamentally, this theory is known as the “Theory of Dependent Co-arising” and it asserts that “any object of experience depends for its existence or occurrence on the necessary and sufficient presence of its cause”.\textsuperscript{22}
The principle of Dependent Co-arising is only one part of the truth (*Dharma*) which Buddha is said to have discovered intuitively during his supreme experience of enlightenment. The other aspect of the truth is what is called *Nirvāṇa*. While Dependent Co-arising elucidates the nature of reality and the fundamental relatedness of things, *Nirvāṇa* deals with the absence of empirical reality, the realization of which leads to cessation of the stream of consciousness. At this point it becomes very imperative to point out that the doctrines of “impermanence” (*Anitya*), “no self” (*Anātman*), and human suffering (*Duḥkha*) are the central themes of Buddhism. The doctrine involved here is that, everything in life is in perpetual flux and subject to the changes which occur through the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death. Thus, “all things are only processes, not entities. Identities are nothing but analyzable sequences and independence, an illusion”.23

Therefore, the Buddhist principle of causality and *Karma* is quite fundamental to Buddhist philosophy. It could be used to explain everything in the universe – including the evolution and dissolution of the world process, natural phenomena. It could be applied to psychic processes, moral, social and spiritual behaviour.

After the death of the Buddha, some differences arose in Buddhist monastic communities; the first schism was that between the *Mahāsaṅghika* and the *Sthavira*. The former, the *Mahāsaṅghika* (meaning ‘great groupists’) were characterized as rather lax in their discipline, and the later, the *Sthaviras* (meaning ‘elders’) prided themselves on their seniority and orthodoxy. The *Mahāsaṅghika* developed as *Mahāyāna* Buddhism in the second period. The *Sthavira* became the *Theravāda*. Each of these two groups experienced further sub-divisions; ultimately resulting in the traditional eighteen or twenty schools of thought came into existence. And tensions developed into doctrinal disputes around the time of King *Aśoka*. According to traditional accounts, King *Aśoka* sent Buddhist missionaries to various regions of India and Ceylon. As a result, many Buddhist monastic communities were established in disparate areas. From the edicts of *Aśoka* we know of the various Buddhist missions he sent to far-off countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. It is to a large extent due to these missionary activities that Buddhism became the ruling religion of a large part of mindkind.
2.2.2 The Origin of Different Schools

There were dissensions in the Samgha at the time of the Buddha. Though they did not last long and were resolved by the Buddha, they were still the germs of arising schools later. So, it is necessary for us to learn about this at the time of the Buddha.

a. At the time of the Buddha

During the life time of Gotama Buddha himself there were indications of the existence of some who would not accept his leadership or obey his instructions. The first dissension occurred in a monastery at Kauśāmbi, where a monk committed a breach of discipline. First he regarded it as a breach (āpāṭṭi), while others regarded it as a non-breach (anāpāṭṭi). After some time, however, the situation suffered a reverse change; the former began to regard it as a non-breach for he committed it through ignorance of the Law, while the latter regarded it as a breach. The monks attached undue gravity to the offence and punished him by excommunication or ukkhepāna. The accused, on the other hand, ascribed the breach to his ignorance, which did not make him liable to such a severe punishment. The justifiability of the cause won him several supporters, who tried to have his penalty set aside. This caused a division not only among the monks but also among the laity, which ultimately led to the Buddha’s mediation. At first some monks even refused to accept the mediation of their Master, and although the dissension did not last long owing to the presence of the Buddha, who removed the doubts of both the parties by his lucid exposition of the Vinaya, yet it indicates the presence of the germs of dissensions, which bore fruits of far-reaching consequences in later times.24

The second division was brought about by the Buddha’s cousin, Devadatta, who, out of jealousy for the Buddha, conspired with Ajātaśatru and made attempts on his life. He also tried to create division in the Saṅgha by demanding the introduction of stricter conditions of life for the monks. He advocated that the monks should:

1. Live all their life in the forest;
2. Subsist solely on doles collected out-doors (piṇḍapāṭṭika), and the acceptance of an invitation should be regarded as a breach;
3. Dress themselves in rags picked out of the dust-heaps (pāmsukūlika), and the use of the robes (chvara) given by the lay-followers should be regarded as a breach;
4. Dwell always under the trees (rukkha-mūla) and never under a roof; and

5. Never eat fish or meat.\textsuperscript{25}

The Buddha refused to make the observance of these rules obligatory upon all the monks, as in his view it would be more conducive to their welfare to make these rules optional. Devadatta took this opportunity to create a division in the Saṅgha and with his five hundred followers broke from the Order. It seems that this secession of Devadatta from the Order gave rise to a sect, which existed up to the fourth century A.D., and a remnant of which was still to be found in three Saṅghārāmas of Karṇasuvannā in the seventh century A.D. These two instances of division in the Order during the Buddha's life-time show that the Buddhist Brotherhood could not keep itself intact in spite of his impressive personality and his efforts to prevent the division from finding its way into the Saṅgha.

These dissentient tendencies became stronger with the death of the Buddha, who, left no one to replace him as the supreme authority and told his personal attendant Ānanda that the Dharma and the Vinaya would be the supreme authority in future.\textsuperscript{26} Different Buddhist Councils were held from time to time to settle the disputes that arose among monks after the demise of Buddha with regard to the interpretation of the principles of the Dharma and Vinaya. These led to the origin of as many as twenty schools or more within a few hundred years of the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, all claiming to have preserved, his original teachings.

b. The First Buddhist Council

The First Council was held at Saptaparni cave in Rājagṛha in the second month of the first rainy season, about 90 days after the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha and was supported by King Ajātasattu. It is accepted by critical scholarship that the First Council settled the Dharma and the Vinaya and there is no ground for the view that the Abhidharma formed part of the canon adopted at the First Council. It is held that Mahākassapa presided over the assembly in which Upāli and Ānanda took an important part. There was seldom dissension over doctrinal matters but the Council was necessitated by the pious determination of the disciples of the Lord to preserve the purity of his teaching.

It is asserted in the Cullavagga that Mahākassapa was not present at the Mahāparinirvāṇa of the Buddha at Kushinagara. While he was proceeding from Pāvā to Kushinagara with a large retinue, the news of the decease of the Master was brought to him
by a naked ascetic of the Ājīvika sect. It is recorded that a Thera called Subhadra, who had joined the Order in old age (Vuḍḍhapabbajita), on hearing of the Buddha’s demise said, “they were well-freed from the Great Ascetic and could now do or not do as they liked;” and exhorted the monks, who were lamenting for their Master, to refrain from expressing grief.  

This irreverent remark filled the Venerable Mahākassapa with alarm for the future safety and purity of the Dharma preached by the Master. This remark of Subhadra was a clear indication of the necessity of convening a Council for the fulfillment of this noble objective.

It may be observed in this connection that Subhadra was not the only person to have such thoughts. There were many others who felt that with the passing of the Master the Dharma, he had taught, would disappear. The account in the Tibetan Dulva and also that of Yuan Chwang refer to this general feeling of doubt and consternation as having been the motive for the convocation of the First Council.

There is general agreement that the number of the monks selected was five hundred. “The procedure followed at the Council was a simple one. With the permission of the Saṅgha, the Venerable Mahākassapa asked questions on the Vinaya of the Venerable Upāli. All these questions related to the four Pārājikās, the matter, the occasion, the individual concerned, the principal rule, the amended rule as well as to the question as to who would be guilty and who innocent of these Pārājikās. In this way the Vinaya text was agreed upon at the Council.

The turn of Ānanda came next. The subject matter of the Sūtra-piṭaka, in all the five Nikāyas, was formulated as questions for Ānanda who gave appropriate answers. These questions followed the lines adopted in those on the Vinaya - the occasion of the sermons and the person or persons with reference to whom they were given. The answers given by Ānanda settled the corpus of Sūtra-piṭaka.”

We know that Ānanda told the Council that before his departure into Nirvāṇa the Buddha had instructed him that if the Saṅgha so wished, it could abrogate the minor rules. Ānanda had however, forgotten to ask the Master what these minor rules were, and as Mahākassapa pointed out that the people would say that the Buddha had laid a code which was followed by the monks so long as the former was alive and discarded as soon as he expired, the Council decided to retain the Vinaya intact.
Thus the proceedings of the First Council achieved the settlement of the Vinaya under the leadership of Upāli and the settlement of the texts of the Dharma under the leadership of Ānanda. However Prof. Oldenberg is sceptical about the historical authenticity of the First Council. The irreverent remark of Subhadra is also found in the Mahāparinibbana-sutta, but there is not the slightest allusion to the holding of the Council. This doubt based on omission is at best an argumentum ex silentio. The unanimous tradition among all the schools of Buddhism cannot therefore be brushed aside as a pious fabrication. In spite of the minor discrepancies there is a substantial core of agreement regarding the convention of the First Council, which was a logical and ecclesiastical necessity. It was natural that the creed of the Order should be determined in a systematic way after the passing of the Master. Fortunately, Prof. Oldenberg appears to plough a lonely furrow. Scholars, both Eastern and Western, are all united in their rejection of this scepticism.

**c. The Second Buddhist Council**

The Ceylonese Chronicles place the Council at Vaisali in the tenth year of the Śaiśunaga king Kālāśoka, a century after the passing away of the Buddha. The reason for convening the Second Council is stated to lie in the following ten indulgences (Dasavatthuni) which the Vaiśālian monks had permitted themselves, but were condemned by Yaśas, the son of Kākaṇḍaka and other Western and Southern monks:

1. Siṅgiloṇakappa, or the custom of putting salt in a horn vessel, in order to season unsalted foods, when received, which is contrary to pāchittiya 38, prohibiting the storage of food.

2. Dvaṅgulakappa, or the custom of taking mid-day meal, even after the prescribed time, as long as the sun’s shadow had not passed the meridian by more than two fingers’ breadth. This is against pāchittiya 37.

3. Gāmantarakappa, or the practice of going into some other village after meal, and there eating again, if invited, which is opposed to pāchittiya 35.

4. Āvāsakappa, or the practice of holding Uposatha-feast separately by the monks dwelling in the same parish, which contravenes the Vinaya rules of-residence in a parish.
5. *Anumatikappa*, or carrying out official acts by an incomplete assembly on the supposition that the consent of the absent monks would be obtained afterwards.

6. *Achinnakappa*, or the practice of doing something because of the preceptor’s practice.

7. *Amathitakappa*, or taking butter-milk even after meal-time, which is against *pāchittiya* 35 forbidding over-eating.

8. *Jalogikappa*, or drinking toddy, which is opposed to *pāchittiya* 51 prohibiting the use of intoxicants.

9. *Adasakam nisidanaṁ*, or the use of mats which are not of prescribed size, if they were without fringe, which contravenes *pāchittiya* 89.

10. *Jātarūparajataṁ*, or accepting gold and silver which is against the rule 18 of the *Nissaggyapāchittiya*.31

According to the orthodox monks these ten points were opposed to the rules of *Vinaya*. The monks from the Western regions like *Pāvā*, *Kausamī* and *Avanti* disapproved these practices and brought this matter before the meeting of 700 monks under the presidency of *Revata*. These ten points for discussion were interpreted differently by different scholars. As it could not be decided in an open meeting the matter came to sub-committee of which four members represented each side. Matter was decided against the *Vajjian* monks who did not accept the verdict. Thus a very large body of monks seceded from original group and styled themselves as the *Mahāsāṁghikas* (members of great group) which claimed superiority in numbers or in its keenness in reforming the existing state of affairs and improving upon the conservative attitude exhibited by the orthodox group of monks who came to be called *Sthaviravādins* or *Theravādins* from *Sthavira* or *Thera* which in *Pāli* means old or senior.

Both the Southern and the Northern traditions agree on the point that the Ten Practices of the *Vajjian* monks were the starting point of the great movement which in due course divided the Original *Saṅgha* into two principal schools - *Theravāda* and *Mahāsāṅghika*; these were further sub-divided into numerous sects and sub-sects. In regard to the details, however, there is some discrepancy between different traditions. In the Tibetan tradition only the last four practices agree with those preserved in the Southern tradition.32 Yuan Chwang also mentions the ten points but, differing from the *Pāli* tradition, states that the *Vajjian*
monks renounced all their deviations from the orthodox rules of discipline and followed those
that were approved by the Second Council. Together with Bhavya, Vasumitra, Vinītadeva and
Tārānātha he traces the origin of the Mahāsaṅghika school to the five points enunciated by
Mahādeva, which are as follows:

1. An Arhat may commit a sin by unconscious temptations.
2. One may be an Arhat and not know it.
3. An Arhat may have doubts on matters of doctrine.
4. One cannot attain Arhathood without the help of a preceptor.
5. The noble ways may begin by a shout, i.e. one meditating seriously on
   religion may make such an exclamation as ‘How sad! How sad! and by so
doing attain progress towards the perfection - the path is attained by an
exclamation of astonishment.33

In short, once the unity and solidarity of the Buddhist Saṅgha was broken, there set in
the process of further sub-divisions. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries after the death of
Buddha with the result of different Councils which led to different interpretations of the same
rule of Vinaya and Dharma as much as twenty schools appeared from two main subdivisions
each school claiming to have preserved original teachings of the master.

d. The Third Buddhist Council

The Third Council was held at Pātaliputra under the patronage of the celebrated Buddhist
monarch, Priyadarśi Aśoka who was won over to the Buddhist faith within a few years of his
accession to the throne. The adoption of the faith by Aśoka ushered a new era in the fortunes
of Buddhism. His lavish patronage and well-planned strenuous missionary activity
transformed what was so far a regional sect into an international religion.

We learn from the Pāli tradition that in order to enjoy his generous largesse, heretics
were in a large number attracted towards the Buddhist Order, with their own doctrines and
precepts, which they propagated in the name of the Buddha. The true believers could not
prevent them on account of their large number from preaching their false doctrines. The
Upōsatha and the Pavāranā ceremonies also could not be held for seven years. In order to
settle the dispute and to bring about a situation in which the Upōsatha could be performed,
Aśoka dispatched a minister to the Saṅgha. However, he misunderstood the emperor’s
intention and beheaded several monks, who were true believers of the doctrine. On hearing of this news, Aśoka was much grieved, and he sent for Moggaliputta Tissa, the great Thera of that time, who declared that Aśoka was not responsible for the offence. Under him an assembly was convened at Aśokārāma, in the 18th regnal year of Aśoka (256 B. C.) or 236 years after the Buddha’s death. The Bhikkhus were one by one asked as to what the teachings of the Buddha were. Those who sided with Vibhajyavāda were allowed to remain, and those with views contrary to it were driven out after being clad in white robes. Then the Upōsatha could be performed. In this very assembly Moggaliputta Tissa is said to have compiled the Kathāvattkuppakaraṇa refuting the doctrines that were, according to him, contrary to the teachings of the Buddha-Theravāda. Thus ended the Third Council in which a thousand Bhikkhus took part.

Although the only source from which our knowledge regarding the Third Council is derived is the Ceylonese Chronicles, yet there is no reason to doubt its historicity, which receives partial confirmation from some inscriptions. One of the momentous results of this Council was the despatch of missionaries to the different countries of the world for the propagation of the Saddhamma such as in Kashmir and Gandhāra, Mahisha-maṇḍala, Vanavāsī, Aparāntaka, Mahārāsha, Yavana country, Suvarṇabhūmi, Himavanta region and Lāṅkā. Mahinda, the son of Aśoka, and Saṅghamitrā, his daughter, were charged with missionary work in the island of Ceylon. We have already mentioned the singular success of this mission in that island. From the edicts of Aśoka we know of the various Buddhist missions he sent to far-off countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. It is to a large extent due to these missionary activities that Buddhism became the ruling religion of a large part of mankind. The Dīpavaṁsa (VIII. 10) gives the names of the five missionaries sent to the Himalayan region as Kassapagota, Majjhima, Duṁdubhissara, Sahadeva and Mūlakadeva. Two of these missionaries, Kassapagota and Majjhima, are referred to in the short inscriptions engraved on the caskets containing their bodily relics discovered from the Stūpas at Sanchi and Sonari. Kassapagota is styled ‘Saca-Hema- vatāchariya’, i. e. teacher of the whole community of the Haṁmavatas. The Haṁmavata Schools of Theravāda obviously originated in the Himalayan region under the inspiring guidance of the missionaries sent there by the Third Council, especially Kassapagota. The name of the third missionary Duṁdubhissara also appears as Dudubhisara in a relic-casket label from Sonari Stūpa No. 2. As this Council is not mentioned in the Northern tradition, it seems certain that it was attended by the Theravādins alone.
In short, at the time of Aśoka several schools were existing but the Buddhism in vogue was Theravāda though Mahāsaṅghikas also had influence. During his time the Third Council was held. It is said that monks other than Theravādins had to leave Magadha and went to Kāshmir-Gandhāra. They occupied a prominent place there and later on came to be known as the Sarvāstivādins. An account of the flight of the Theravādins from Magadha to Kāshmir is recorded in Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāstra and Hiuen tsang’s records of the Western Land.

It can be said that the Theravāda and the Sarvāstivāda attained sufficient importance during the days of Aśoka and Kaniṣka. Both of them are of outstanding importance for the history of Buddhism in India and abroad. Adherents of the schools could produce a vast literature and with the royal patronage brought the Buddhism to the forefront of Indian religions. The geographical distribution of the schools also throws light on their development. The Sarvāstivādins were chiefly confined to Northern India their chief seat being Kashmir and the Theravādins to Magadha and Kosala. Dr. N. Datta says, “The Sarvāstivāda had its sphere of activity in Northern India extending from Kāshmir to Mathura and was responsible for the propagation of Hīnayāna Buddhism in Central Asia from where it was earned to China.”

### 2.2.3 The Development of Buddhist Schools

There are differences about the number of schools among Buddhist traditions. So, it is necessary for us to discuss the different traditions of the development of Buddhist schools here.

#### a. Different Traditions of the Development of Buddhist Schools

Both the Southern and the Northern traditions mention several schools, most of which are stated to have arisen in the second century after the Buddha’s death. Their standard number is eighteen, but many more are referred to and the Ceylonese Chronicles supply the list and a brief account of the rise of the seventeen Buddhist schools from the Theravāda. According to the Mahāvaṁsa the origin of the different sects may be shown in a tabular form thus: served in the Bstanhgyur, which contains the work of Bhavya, Vasumitra and Vinītadeva. Bhavya first distinguishes the first two schools: (I) the Sthaviravāda and (II) the Mahāsaṅghika.
The Sthaviravāda school gradually divided itself into twelve fractions which are as follows: (1) The Sthavira proper, also known as the Haimavata, (2) the Sarvāstivādīna (3) the Vaibhājyavādīna, (4) the Hetuvīḍḍa or Mudunṭaka or Marunṭaka, (5) Vāṭsīpurīya, (6) the Dharmottariya, (7) the Bhadrāyanīya, (8) the Sammatiya, which is also known as Avantaka or Kurukullaka, (9) the Mahiśāsaka, (10) the Dharma-guptakā, (11) the Saddharmavarṣakā or Suvarṣakā or Kāśyapīya, and (12) the Uttarīya or the Saṅkrāntivādīna.

The Mahāsāṅghika school was gradually divided into eight fractions: (1) the Mahāsāṅghika proper, (2) the Ekavyahārika, (3) the Lokottaravādīna, (4) the Bahuśrutīya, (5) the Prajñaptivādinā (Pradhnapartivādīna), (6) the Tchaityika, (7) the Pūrvaśasaila, and (8) the Avaraśaila.37

Two main groups as said above split into twenty sects as Yuan Chwang’s translation of Vasumitra’s book indicates the emergence of schools approximately a century after the death of Buddha. Mahāsāṅghika was divided into 9 more schools: (1) Ekavyahārikas, (2) Lokottaravādīns, (3) Kukkutiya, (4) Bahuśrutīyas, (5) Prajñaptivādins, (6) Mūla-Mahāsāṅghikas, (7) Caitya-Sailas, (8) Apara-Sailas, and (9) Uttara-Sailas; Sthaviravādin’s split up into two main schools, Haimavata and Sarvāstivādīna, in third century and then at the end of third and in fourth century 9 more schools were sprang up: (1) Vāṭsīputrīyas, (2) Dharmottariyas, (3) Bhadrāyanīkas, (4) Sammatiyan, (5) Sannagārikas, (6) the Mahiśāsakas, (7) Dharma-guptas, (8) Kāśyapīyas also called Śrāvakas, (9) Sautrāntikas.

Some other versions of Vasumitra’s work do not agree with the above and we find difference in the development of schools.38

According to Mahāyāna scriptures in Chinese twenty schools were developed as follows:

Sthaviravāda (上座部) was split into 11 sects. These were: Sarvāstivādin (説一切有部), Haimavata (雪山部), Vatsīputrīya (揲子部), Dharmottara (法上部), Bhadravānīya (賢胄部), Sammatiyan (正量部), Gunnērīka (密林山部), Mahīśasaka (化地部), Dharmagupta (法蔵部), Kāśyapīya (飲光部), Sautrāntika (經量部).

Mahāsāṅghika (大衆部) was split into 9 sects. There were: Ekavyahārika (一説部), Lokottaravādin (説出世部), Gokulika (鶏胤部), Bahuśrutīya (多聞部), Prajñaptivāda (説仮部), Caityka (制多山部), Aparaśaila (西山住部), and Uttaraśaila (北山住部).39
Hindu and Jaina philosophical works mention only four schools from two main branches *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna* namely the former is divided into *Vaibhāṣika* and *Sautrāntika* and later into *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra*. In Buddhist tradition the *Vaibhāṣikas* were so called on account of their dependence on *Vibhāṣā* (Commentary on the *Abhidharma*). They attached themselves exclusively to the *Abhidharmapiṭaka* and refused to accept the authority of the *Sūtrapiṭaka* and *Vinayapiṭaka*, as *Sautrāntikas* for recognizing the *Sūtras*, the *Mādhyamikas* for laying emphasis on *Madhyamā Pratipadā* only as authoritative, The *Yogācāra* were known as the *Vijñānavādins* on account of their holding *Vijñāna* as ultimate reality. *Vaibhāṣika* school was at first known as the *Sarvāstivāda*, The *Vaibhāṣikas* were considered to be continuators of the earlier *Sarvāstivādins*. “In later times the so-called *Vaibhāṣikas* came to be identified with the *Sarvāstivādins*, the two names became interchangeable although properly speaking the *Sarvāstivādins* originally formed a section of the *Vaibhāṣika*.”

According to Ceylonese tradition Buddhism was divided into two primitive schools. *Theravāda* and *Mahāsaṃghika* while according to *Bhikshuvara Sagraprčcha* and records of I-tsing there were four original schools (1) *Ārya-Mūlasarvāstivāda*, (2) *Ārya-Mahāsaṃghika*, (3) *Ārya-Sammitiya* and (4) *Ārya-Sthavira*.

Traditions differ with regard to origin and development of schools but history tells us that except *Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* all disappeared shortly after their appearance. These schools have their adherents in large numbers.

**b. The Account of the Different Schools**

It is not possible to give an account of all the different schools. Only a few important ones among these will therefore be considered as follows:

**The Sthaviravāda School**

The *Sthaviravāda* School is the most orthodox school of Buddhism. The earliest available teaching of the Buddha to be found in *Pāli* literature belongs to this school which admits the human character of the Buddha and he is often represented as having human foibles, though he is recognized as possessing certain superhuman qualities. The life of an *Arhat* is the ideal of the followers of this school, a life where all (future) birth is at an end, where the holy life is
fully achieved, where all that had to be done has been done, and there is no more return to worldly life.

Following this school we are taught to abstain from all kinds of evil, to accumulate all that is good and to purify our mind. These things can be accomplished by the practice of what are called Śīla, Samādhi, and Prajñā. Moreover, we are also taught the Four Noble Truths and the Law of Dependent Co-arising, which tries to explain the phenomenon of life by showing the interrelation of causal relation. Karma, the actions of an individual, regulates all life, and the whole universe is bound by it, so that Karma is like the axle of a rolling chariot.

According to this school all worldly phenomena are subject to three characteristics: Anitya (impermanent); Duhkha (sufferings); and Ānatma (no-self). All compound things are made up of two elements: Nāma (the non-material part) and Rūpa (the material part). They are further described as consisting of nothing but five constituent groups (skandhas), namely, Rūpa (the material quality), and four non-material qualities - sensation (Vedanā), perception (Samjñā), mental formatives (Samskāra), and lastly consciousness (Vijñāna). These elements are also classified into twelve organs and objects of sense (Āyatana) and eighteen Dhātus. The twelve sense (Āyatana) consist of the six internal organs of sense - the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind corresponding six objects of sense, namely, material objects, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles and those things that can be apprehended only by the mind (dharmayatana). The eighteen Dhātus include six consciousnesses and twelve Āyatana i.e. eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness.

Thus, this school has a pluralistic conception of the constituent elements of the universe. The number of the constituents increases gradually from two to five, then to twelve, and finally to eighteen. This number increases still further in the case of other schools. According to Pāli sources, at the Council of Pāṭaliputra, the teachings of this school were certified to be those of the Vibhajyavāda school.

The Mahīśāsaka School

According to Pāli sources, this school branched off from the Sthaviravāda school and gave rise to the Sarvāstivāda school while Vasumitra tells that this school was derived from the Sarvāstivāda school. Like the Theravāda, the earlier Mahīśāsaka school believed in the simultaneous comprehension of truths and thought that the past and the future did not exist,
while the present and the nine Asaṃskṛta Dharmas did. These nine Asaṃskṛta Dharmas were “(1) Pratīsaṅkhya-Nirodha, cessation through knowledge; (2) Apratīsaṅkhya-Nirodha, cessation without knowledge, i.e. through the natural cessation of the causes; (3) Ākāśa, space; (4) Āneñjatā, immovability; (5) Kuśala-dharma-tathatā; (6) Akuśala-dharma-tathatā, and (7) Avyakṛtā-dharma-tathatā, that is, suchness of the dharmas that are meritorious, unmeritorious and neither the one nor the other; (8) Mārgaringa-tathatā; and (9) Pratītya-samutpāda-tathatā, or suchness of the factors of the Path and suchness of the Law of Dependent Co-arising. The last corresponds to that in the list of the Mahāsāṅghikas.”

The Mahīśāsakas also believed that “the Arhats were not subject to retrogression. However, they held that those who were in the first stage, srotāpaññas, were subject to such retrogression. No deva or god could lead a holy life, nor a heretic attain miraculous powers. There was no antarā-bhāva, or interim existence between this life and the next. The Sangha included the Buddha and therefore charities given to the former were more meritorious than those given to the Buddha only. Of the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood were not to be considered real factors since they were not mental actions. These were therefore to be excluded from the factors of the Noble Path.”

Like the Sarvāstivāda school, they believed in the existence of the past, the future and Antarā-Bhāva, and held that the Skandhas, the Āyatanas and the Dhātus always existed in the form of seeds.

The Haimavata School

The very name suggests that the Haimavata school was originally located in the Himalayan regions. In his book on the Eighteen Sects, Vasumitra calls the Haimavatas the inheritors of the Sthaviravādins, but Bhavya and Vinītadeva look upon this school as a branch of the Mahāsaṅghikas. The Haimavatas believed that the Bodhisattvas had no special eminence, the gods could not live the holy life of Brahmacharya and heretics could not have miraculous powers.
The Dharmaguptika School

The Dharmaguptika school broke away from the Mahīśāsaka school. This school proffered gifts to the Buddha and greatly revered the Stūpas of the Buddha as is clear from their rules of the Vinaya. Like the Mahīśāsakas, they believed that an Arhat was free from passion and heretics could not gain supernatural powers. This school was popular in Central Asia and China, and had its own Sūtra, Vinaya and Abhidharma literature.

The Kāśyapiya School

According to the Ceylonese chronicles this school branched off from the Sarvāstivāda school before the time of Aśoka while the Tibetan tradition informs us that the school derived from its founder Kaiyapa.\textsuperscript{44} The Kāśyapiyas differed on minor points from the Sarvāstivādins and the Dharmaguptikas and were closer to the Sthaviravādins. Therefore, they are also called the Sthavariyas. The Kāśyapiyas believed that “the past which has borne fruit ceases to exist, but that which has not yet ripened continues to exist, thus partially modifying the position of the Sarvāstivādins, for whom the past also exists like the present. The Kāśyapiyas are sometimes represented as having effected a compromise between the Sarvāstivādins and the Vibhajyavādins and also claim a Tripiṭaka of their own.”\textsuperscript{45}

The Sautrāntika School

According to Pāli sources the school of the Sankrantivada school is derived from the Kāśyapiya school and the Sautrāntikas school from that of the Sankrantivada school, while according to Vasumitra the two are identical. This school believed in sankranti or the transmigration of a substance from one life to another. Among the five skandhas of an individual, this school believed that there is only one subtle skandha which transmigrates, as against the whole of the pudgala of the Sammitīyas. This subtle skandha according to the Kāśyapiya school is the real pudgala. The latter is the same as the subtle consciousness which permeates the whole body according to the Mahāsaṅghikas, and is identical with the ālaya-vijñāna of the Yogācārins. It is possible that this school borrowed its doctrine of subtle consciousness from the Mahāsaṅghikas and lent it to the Yogācāra school. It also believed that every man had in him the potentiality of becoming a Buddha, a doctrine of the Mahāyānists. On account of such views his school is considered to be a bridge between the Śrāvakayāna often, though not justifiably, called the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.”\textsuperscript{46}
The Mahāsaṅghika School

The Mahāsaṅghikas were the earliest seceders, and the forerunners of the Mahāyāna. This had a complete canon of their own which they divided into five parts, viz. the Sūtra, the Vinaya, the Abhidharma, the Dharaṇis and Miscellaneous. The Vinaya of the Mahāsaṅghikas is the same as that compiled at Mahākassapa’s Council. The original work of the Mahāsaṅghika sect available to us is the Mahāvastu, which is written partly in Sanskrit and partly in Prakrit or mixed Indian dialect allied to Sanskrit. The work was probably composed between the 2nd century B.C. and the 4th century A.D.

During the second century after the Buddha’s passing away, the Mahāsaṅghika school was split up into Ekayāvāhārika, Lokottaravāda, Kukkuṇika (Gokulika), Bahuṣrutīya and Prajñaptivāda and shortly afterwards appeared the Śaila schools. The general doctrines of the Mahāsaṅghikas with all their branches are contained in the Kathavatthu, the Mahāvastu and the works of Vasumitra, Bhavya and Vinītadeva. The Bahuṣrutīyas and the Caityakas were later offshoots of the Mahāsaṅghika school and differed somewhat from the original Mahāsaṅghikas in their views.

The Mahāsaṅghikas, like the Theravādins, accepted the cardinal principles of Buddhism such as the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the non-existence of the soul, the theory of Karma, the theory of Pratītya samutpāda, the thirty-seven Bodhipakṣiya-dharmas, and the gradual stages of spiritual advancement. Both Mahāsaṅghika and Theravāda accepted that “the Buddhas are Lokottara (supramundane); they have no Sāsrava Dharmas (defiled elements); their bodies, their length of life and their powers are unlimited; they neither sleep nor dream; they are self-possessed and always in a state of Samādhi (meditation); they do not preach by name; they understand everything in a moment (Ekāksañika-Citta); until they attain Parinirvāna, the Buddhas possess Kṣayajñāna (knowledge of decay) and Anutpadajñāna (knowledge of non-origination). In short, everything concerning the Buddhas is transcendental.” The Mahāsaṅghika conception of the Buddhas contributed to the growth of the later Trikāya theory in Mahāyāna and gave rise to the conception of the Bodhisattvas. According to them, the Bodhisattvas are also supramundane, and do not pass through the four embryonic stages of ordinary beings. They enter their mother’s wombs in the form of white elephants and come out of the wombs on the right side. They never experience feelings of lust (Kāma), malevolence (Vyāpāda) or injury (Vihiṃsā). For the benefit of all classes of sentient beings, they are born of their own free will in any form of existence they choose. We can see that all these conceptions led to the
The deification of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This school also maintains that “Arhats also have frailties; that they can be taught by others; that they still have a degree of ignorance, and a degree of doubt; and that they can acquire knowledge only with the help of others. Thus, Arhatthood is not the final stage of sanctification.”

The Bahuśrutīya School

The Bahuśrutīya school is later branch of the Mahāsaṅghikas. It owes its origin to a teacher who was very learned in Buddhist lore (Bahuśrutīa). This school believed that “the teachings of the Buddha concerning Anityatā (impermanence), Duḥkhā (suffering), Šūnya (the absence of all attributes), Anātman (the non-existence of the soul), and Nirvāṇa (the final bliss) were Lokottara (transcendental), since they led to emancipation. His other teachings were Laukika (mundane).” And they also accepted the five propositions of Mahādeva as their views. From this conception the Bahuśrutīyas may be regarded as the precursors of the later Mahāyāna teachers.

The Bahuśrutīyas are often described as ‘a bridge between the orthodox and the Mahāyāna school’, as they tried to combine the teachings of both. Like the followers of the orthodox schools, he believed in the plurality of the universe which, according to him, contained eighty-four elements. Like the Mahāyānists, he maintained that there were two kinds of truth - conventional (saṃvṛti) and absolute (paramārtha). He believed in the theory of Buddha-kāya as well as of Dharma-kāya, which he explains as consisting of good conduct (Śīla), concentration (Samādhi), insight (Prajñā), deliverance (Vimukti) and knowledge of and insight into deliverance (Vimukti Jñāna-Darśana). Although he did not recognize the absolute transcendental nature of the Buddha, he still believed in the special powers of the Buddha, such as the ten powers (Daśa Balāṇi) and the four kinds of confidence (Vaiśāradya) which are admitted even by the Sthaviravādins. He believed that only the present was real, while the past and the future had no existence.

The Caityavāda School

The Caityavāda school originated with the teacher Mahādeva towards the close of the second century after the passing away of the Buddha. Mahādeva was a learned and diligent ascetic who received his ordination in the Mahāsaṅghika Saṅgha. He professed the five points of the Mahāsaṅghikas, and started a new Saṅgha. Since he dwelt on the mountain
where there was a *Caitya*, the name *Caityaka* was given to his adherents. Furthermore, this name is also mentioned in the *Amarāvati* and *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* inscriptions. It may be noted here that *Caityavāda* was the source of the Śaila schools.

Generally speaking, the *Caityavāda* school shared the fundamental doctrines of the original *Mahāsaṅghika* school, but differed somewhat from *Mahāsaṅghika* in their views. Specially, the doctrines attributed to the *Caityavāda* school are as follows:

(i). One can acquire great merit by the creation, decoration, and worship of *Caityas*; even a circumambulation of *Caityas* engenders merit.

(ii). Offerings of flowers, garlands and scents to *Caityas* are likewise meritorious.

(iii). By making gifts one can acquire religious merit, and can also transfer such merit to one’s friends and relatives for their happiness - a conception quite unknown in primitive Buddhism but, common in Mahāyānism. These articles of faith made Buddhism popular among the laity.

(iv). The Buddhas are free from attachment, ill-will and delusion (*jita-raga-dosa-moha*), and possessed of finer elements (*dhātuvara-parigahita*). They are superior to *Arhats* by virtue of the acquisition of ten powers (*balas*).

(v). A person having *samyak-drṣṭi* (the right view) is not free from hatred (*dveṣa*) and, as such, not free from the danger of committing the sin of murder.

(vi). *Nirvāṇa* is positive, faultless state (*amatādhātu*).  

**The Mādhyamika School**

The *Mādhyamika* school is said to have originated with the teacher, Ārya Nāgārjuna (2nd century A.D.) who was followed by a galaxy of *Mādhyamika* thinkers, such as Āryadeva (3rd century), Buddhapālita (5th century), Bhāvaviveka (5th century), Candrakīrti (6th century) and Śantideva (7th century). The term *Mādhyamika* was so called because it emphasis on *madhyamā-pratipat* (the middle view). Nāgārjuna wrote a number of works of which the *Mādhyamika-kārikā* is regarded as his masterpiece. It presents in a systematic manner the philosophy of the *Mādhyamika* school. It teaches that *Sūnyatā* (the indescribable absolute) is the absolute. There is no difference between *Samsāra* (phenomenal world) and *Nirvāṇa* or *Sūnyatā* (reality). The *Mādhyamika* view holds *Sūnyatā* to be the central idea of its philosophy and is therefore designated the *Sūnyavāda*.  

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The Mādhyamika was divided into two schools of thought towards the beginning of the 5th century A.D. They are: the Prāsaṅgika school and the Svatāntra school. “The Prāsaṅgika school uses the method of *reductio ad absurdum* to establish its thesis, while the Svatāntra school employs independent reasoning. The former was founded by Buddhapālita and the latter by Bhāvaviveka.” The Mādhyamika philosophy spread in China and Japan. T’ien-t’ai and San-lun sects of China advocated the doctrine of Sūnyatā and were thus a continuation of the Indian Mādhyamika system. The Sanron sect in Japan also followed this system.

**The Yogācāra School**

The Yogācāra school is an important branch of the Mahāyāna, and was founded by Maitreyā, or Maitreyānatha (3rd century A.D.). The teachers of this school were Asaṅga (4th century), Vasubandhu (4th century), Sthiramiti (5th century), Dinnāga (5th century), Dharmapāla (7th century), Dharmakīrti (7th century), Śāntarakṣita (8th century) and Kamalaśīla (8th century) who continued the work of the founder by their writings and raised the school to a high level. The school reached the acme of its power and influence in the days of Asaṅga and his brother, Vasubandhu. The appellation Yogācāra was given by Asaṅga because it emphasized the practice of Yogā (meditation) as the most effective method for the attainment of the highest truth (Bodhi). All the ten stages of spiritual progress (daśabhumi) of Bodhisattvahood had to be passed through before Bodhi could be attained. The term Vijñānavāda was used by Vasubandhu on account of the fact that it holds Vijñāptimātra (nothing but consciousness) to be the ultimate reality. The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, an important work of this school, maintains that only the mind (Cittamātra) is real, while external objects are not. Vasubandhu’s Vijñāptimātraitā-siddhi is the basic work of this system. It repudiates all belief in the reality of the objective world, maintaining that Citta (Cittamātra) or vijñāna (Vijñānamātra) is the only reality, while the Ālayavijñāna contains the seeds of phenomena, both subjective and objective.

The Yogācāra recognizes three degrees of knowledge: parikalpita (illusory), paratantra (empirical), and parinīspanna (absolute). Parikalpita is the false attribution of an imaginary idea to an object produced by its cause and conditions. It exists only in one’s imagination and does not correspond to reality. Paratantra is the knowledge of an object produced by its cause and conditions. This is relative knowledge and serves the practical
purposes of life. *Parinîspanna* is the highest truth or *tathāta*, the absolute. *Parikalpita* and *paratantra* correspond to *saṃvrṭi- satya* (relative truth), and *parinîspanna* to *paramārtha- satya* (highest truth) of the *Mādhyamika* system. Thus the *Yogācāra* has three varieties of knowledge for two of the *Mādhyamika*.

The *Yogācāra* differs from the *Mādhyamika* only in that it attributes qualities to reality. The former holds that reality is pure consciousness (*Vijñānamatra*) while the latter believes it is Šūnyatā.54

### 2.3 The Sarvāstivāda School

The *Sarvāstivāda* school was one of the so-called Eighteen Schools of early Buddhism. The term *Sarvāstivāda* is also used to designate the body of doctrine and literature associated with this community. The *Sarvāstivāda* was the only school besides the *Theravāda* that was known to have had a complete canon of their own in Sanskrit in three divisions: *Sūtra*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidharma*. This body of literature is an important source for the study of the so-called *Hīnayāna* schools, eclipsed in this respect only by that of the *Theravāda* tradition. In order to understand the *Sarvāstivāda* school clearly, we will present general history, the explanation of the name and the *Abhidharma* literature of this school in turn.

#### 2.3.1 General History

In the history of the secession of schools the *Sarvāstivāda* branched off from the *Theravāda*, the most orthodox school of Buddhism. The *Dīpavaṁsa* records that the *Sarvāstivāda* branched off from the *Mahīśāsaka*, a branch of orthodox group, the *Theravāda*. It was also known as the *Vaibhāṣika* on account of its relying on the *Vibhāṣā* (commentaries) - the fundamental works of the *Sarvāstivāda* school and specially the *Mahāvibhāṣāstra*, an encyclopaedia of Buddhist philosophy. Yamakami Sogen writes that:

"In later times the so-called *Vaibhāṣikas* came to be identified with the *Sarvāstivādins*; and the two names became mutually interchangeable although, properly speaking, the *Sarvāstivādins* originally formed a section of the *Vaibhāṣikas*."55

There is, however, a tradition that the *Sarvāstivāda* school was divided into seven sects *Mūlasarvāstivāda*, *Kāśyapīya*, *Mahīśāsaka*, *Dharmagupta*, *Bahuṣrutīya*, *Tāmraśāṭiya* and *Vibhajjavāda*. 

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The Sanskrit tradition speaks of King Aśoka’s support to the Sarvāstivāda school towards the later part of his life. Aśoka, apprehending that the Theravāda school might be supplanted by the new sects which had seceded from it, convened a Council under the guidance of Moggaliputta Tissa, the leader of the orthodox school (Theravāda). The monks, who subscribed to the views of the Theravāda, were recognised as orthodox and the rest as unorthodox. The unorthodox monks left Magadha and went to Kashmir-Gandhāra. They occupied a conspicuous position there and subsequently came to be known as Sarvāstivādins. The Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāstra and Hiuen-tsang’s Records of the Western World furnish us with an account of the flight of the Theravādins from Magadha to Kashmir. From them we also learn that the monks who fled to Kashmir from Magadha were no other than Sarvāstivādins and, through their activities, Kashmir became the centre of Buddhist philosophical studies in Northern India.

The Sarvāstivādins also claimed king Kaniṣka as their great patron. He was as great a patron of Buddhism as king Aśoka and his name is familiar to the Buddhists as that of Aśoka. He used to read Buddhist scriptures with a monk but was much puzzled at the conflicting interpretations of the different sects. He convened a Council to reconcile the varying opinions of the different sects and ‘To restore Buddhism to eminence and to have the Tripiṭaka explained according to the tenets of the various schools’. Monks of different sects participated in the Council - the Sarvāstivādins, of course, forming the majority. Monks assembled there settled the texts of the Canonical literature and also composed extensive commentaries on the Sūtra, Vinaya and Abhidharma texts. They are known as the Upadeśaśāstra, Vinayavibhāṣāstra and Abhidharmavibhāṣāstra respectively. It is said that the texts were engraved on copper-plates and deposited inside a tope. These plates have, however, not yet been traced. Thus the main object of the Council was to prepare commentaries on the Canons with a view to reconciling the varying interpretations of the different sects. It also bears witness to the literary and religious activities of the Sarvāstivāda school and is of great value from the point of view of the history of religion and literature.

The Sarvāstivāda group of schools shows features identical to those of Theravādins. Its Canon is essentially the same as Pāli Canon. Initially it was in a form of Prākrit and when written down, was partly into Sanskrit. It is from the finding of manuscripts and also from the quotations in the different Buddhist Sanskrit texts such as Lalitavistara, Divyāvadāna, etc., it appears that the Sarvāstivādins divided their Canon like the Theravādins into three Piṭakas. However, in the Sarvāstivāda Canon the ‘Āgamas’ had replaced the ‘Nikāyas’ of Theravādin.
Though the Canon of the Sarvāstivādins was written in Sanskrit but the texts such as the Prātimokṣaśūtra, the Lalitavistara and other fragments of Āgamas shows that the language of the Sarvāstivāda Canon did not conform to the rules of the Sanskrit grammar and hence Senart chose to call this language of the Canon as Mixed Sanskrit, while it was described as Gāthā dialect by R.L. Mitra though M. Winternitz has his reservations regarding the term Gāthā dialect.

The belief that all things exist, sarvam asti, advocated by this school perhaps goes back to the Samyutta-nikāya where the expression, sabbham atthi, occurs. It is this belief that has given the school its name. Like the Sthaviravādins, the Sarvāstivādins were the realists among the Buddhists. They believed that it was not only the things in the present that existed, but also the things in the past and future which were in continuity with the present. Like the Vātsīputrīyas, the Sammitīyas and some of the Mahāsaṅghikas, they revolted against the dominance of the Arhats who had attained a position of unsurpassed eminence among the Sthaviravādins. They maintained that an Arhat was subject to fall or retrogression, while, curiously enough, they maintained at the same time that a srotāpanna, or an individual in the first stage, was not liable to such retrogression. They also said that a continuous flow of mind might amount to concentration (samādhi) of mind. This school, like the Sthaviravādins, denied the transcendent powers ascribed to the Buddha and the Bodhisattva by the Mahasaṅghikas. It was their faith that holy life was possible for gods and that even heretics could have supernatural powers. They believed in antara-bhava, an interim existence between this life and the next. They maintained that the Bodhisattvas were still ordinary people (prthag-jana) and that even the Arhats were not free from the effects of past actions and still had something to learn.

They believed in nairatmya, the absence of any permanent substance in an individual, though they admitted the permanent reality of all things. Like the Sthaviravādins, they believed in the plurality of elements in the universe. According to them, there were seventy-five elements, seventy-two of them sāṃskṛta, compounded, and three asaṃskṛta, uncompounded, which were ākāśa or space, pratisaṃkhya-nirodha, or cessation through knowledge, and apratisaṃkhya-nirodha, or cessation, not through knowledge, but through the natural process of the absence of required conditions. The seventy-two sāṃskṛta dharmaś were divided into four groups: rūpa, or matter which was held to be of eleven kinds, including one called avijñapti-rūpa, unmanifested action in the form of a mental impress; citta, mind, forty-six mental concomitants (citta-saṃprayukta dharmaś) and fourteen
which were not connected with mind (cittaviprayukta), the last being a new class of forces which were not classed as mental or material, although they could not be active without a mental or material basis. These seventy-five elements were linked together by causal relations, six of which were dominant (hetu) and four subsidiary (pratyaya).61

The Sarvāstivāda school was the most widely extended group of schools in India. It was the school that continued to flourish widely-long after the Theravāda school had been cut off from its Indian home. It had also to bear the brunt of battle against the Mahāyāna school. Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika system, made the main target of attack of the Sarvāstivāda view in propounding his subtle philosophy of Śūnyatā. It flourished in Northern India stretching from Kashmir to Mathura. It was the school which was mainly responsible for the propagation of Buddhist doctrines in Central Asia whence they were subsequently preached in China. A few inscriptions (2nd - 4th century A.D.) as also the Travel-accounts of Chinese pilgrims, such as Fa-hien, Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing testify to the wide popularity of this school all over Northern India and outside India. Thus it is seen that it held the most important position in popularity, expansion and philosophical views in the schools of Buddhist thought.

2.3.2 The Explanation of the Name of the School

The term Sarvāstivāda, Sarva (all) + asti (exist) + Vāda (doctrine) means all exists. In other words, it is a doctrine advocating that all, external and internal, things are real.62 Thus Sarvāstivādin means one who upholds the doctrine that all things exist. According to Winternitz’s view, the literal meaning of Sarvāstivāda is that everything exists permanently.63 It is often rendered in English as “Realists”. Realism in the Buddhist Philosophy maintains that “the substance of all things has a permanent existence throughout the three divisions of time, the present, the past, and the future.”64 This term, as understood, in the Buddhist Philosophy, conveys a sense different from its ordinary one, as usually found in the English Philosophy. It is used as opposed to Idealism and Nominalism65.

The earlier Chinese term to designate the school is invariably 萨婆多 [sa-p’o-to], M.C. [sat-ba-ta], term used by Fa-hsien (399-414), Paramārtha (499-569) and sometimes by Hsuan-tsang (629-645) and I-ching (635-713). This term most likely is a transliteration of ‘sa (-rvāsti-) vāda’. Junjiro Takakusu explains 萨婆多 as rendering the Pāli ‘sabbathi (vāda)’. This is little convincing, since 萨婆多 is the common translation of ‘-vāda’, and 多 [to] is...
difficult to be interpreted as transliterating ‘-ti-’. Also a hypothesis of a double use of the syllable 婆 i.e. for both [ba] and [vā] in ‘sabba(-thi)-vāda’ is not completely satisfactory, since this would leave [thi] untranslated. It is also possible that 萨婆多 stands for ‘sarva(-astivā)-da’, or is, in fact, a rendering of a Prākrit term, a Prākrit used in Mathurā, a Sarvāstivāda place of origin. We also find the Chinese terms 一切有部 and 說一切有部 to render the Sanskrit ‘Sarvāstivāda’. These terms mean ‘the school that proclaims the existence of everything’.

The Sarvāstivāda is represented by Vasubandhu as defining their position as follows: “Those who hold ‘all exists’ – the past, the present and the future – belong to the Sarvāstivāda”.

There were differences of opinion among the Sarvāstivāda teachers on the interpretation of the existence of the objects in regard to the past, present and future. Prominent among those exponents were Dharmatrāta, Ghoṣaka, Vasumitra and Buddhadeva. The Sarvāstivāda, originated from the Theravāda. It had, therefore, a fair agreement with the Theravāda in regard to the doctrinal matters. Like the Theravāda, it believed in the plurality of elements in the universe. According to it, there were seventy five elements, seventy two of them were divided into rūpa, citta, cittasaṃpprayuktadharma and cittaviprayuktadharma, while asaṁskṛtadharma were ākāśa, pratisaṅkhyaṇirodha and apratisaṅkhyaṇirodha. Lastly, like the Theravāda, it believed in doctrine of Karma and Nirvāṇa, a state to be attained by transcendental knowledge through the giving up of lusters (kleśa).

2.3.3 The Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma Literature

The differing philosophical views of the Buddhist schools resulted in the production of Abhidharma which are the repository of all Buddhist teachings and provide the theoretical foundation for all Buddhist doctrines. Among those Abhidharma schools, the Sarvāstivāda - Vaibhāṣika school was the most influential and prolific in India. This school was the only school besides Theravāda that was known to have had a complete Abhidharma canon, based upon central text, the Jñānapraṣṭhāna and its six subsidiary treatises called the Pādasāstra. The Abhidharma literature of the Sarvāstivāda school can be presented as follows:
a. Abhidharma Literature

The word *Abhidharma* is firstly known as the third collection of the Buddhist canonical books, it is also a name for the specific method in which all special teaching of the Buddha are set forth in those books, not only highest issue thereof but also the literature connected with it. The *Abhidharma*, that expounds the word of the Buddha in terms of an ethical realism is a philosophy with an essentially religious basis. In *Mahāyānasūtralankāra*, *Abhidharma* is considered to be as the special matters of all the Buddha’s teaching which are best understood. In the *Abhidharmakośa*, having referred to the word of ‘*abhidharma*’, Vasubandhu notes that *Abhidharma* means the pure wisdom (*prajñā*) with its following that is unsullied wisdom which analyzes factors (*dharmapravicaya*). Hence, it can be said that the *dharma* presented in *Abhidharma* surpasses those composed in the *Sūtras* because the various classifications of the elements of existence are listed haphazardly in the *Sūtras* while the *Abhidharma* mentions them with their definitive forms. Thus, the *Sūtras* are preached from the standpoint of conventional truth according to the specific world circumstances, but the *Abhidharma* deals with the absolute truth, and is concerned with the analysis of mind and matter (*nāma- rūpapariccheda*).

The characteristics of the *Abhidharma* are distinguished from those of the other two *Piṭakas* as follows:

“The *Sūtra*-Piṭaka is the emanation (niṣyanda) of the Buddha’s power (bala) for none can refute the doctrines therein.

*The Vinaya*-Piṭaka is the emanation of great compassion (mahākaruṇā), for it advocates morality (śīla) for the salvation of those in the unfortunate planes of existence (durgati).

*The Abhidharma is the emanation of fearlessness, for it properly establishes the true characteristics of dharma-s, answering questions and ascertaining fearlessly.”

The growth of *Abhidharma* studies and their subsequent incorporation into books can be divided roughly, into three phases:

1. the first covers the period of original or primitive Buddhism and goes back to the time of the Buddha himself.
2. the second is the period during which *Abhidharma* became an independent collection, detached from the two other collections: *Sūtra* and *Vinaya*.
3. the third is the period of the compilation of the fundamental texts of the
Abhidharma and may be assigned chronologically to extend from the beginning of the first century, this time roughly coincides with the period of the differentiation of the Buddhist schools.

But the Abhidharma texts were the first major extension of the scope of Buddhist literature to take place in India and the approach to legitimization was taken by the Buddhist masters adumbrates that adopted later by the Mahāyāna school. Three major concerns were apparent in their attempts to establish the authenticity of their new books:

1. Firstly, to prove that the Buddha himself had personally taught the Abhidharma;

2. Secondly, to prove that it had been formally transmitted to eminent disciples of the Buddha by whom it was then collected; and

3. Thirdly, to prove that the Abhidharma works had in fact been recited and codified at the time of the putative first council. In this wise, both Theravādin and Sarvāstivādin attempted to justify the inclusion of their Abhidharmas as part of the canon.

According to the Theravāda tradition, Śāriputra transmitted the Abhidharma to the disciples. All of the seven canonical Abhidharma texts are said to be by the Buddha, the first Ābhidhammika. The Buddha first taught it to the Gods in the Thirty-three (tāva-timśa)-Heaven; and it was studied and transmitted through Śāriputra by a succession of teachers.72

For the Sarvāstivādins, the Abhidharma consisted of a variety of teachings of the Buddha scattered throughout the canon, which were systematized by the elders to whom these treatises were attributed. The Vaibhāsikās maintain that:

"The Abhidharmapiṭaka, which deals with the nature and the characteristics of elements and belongs to the Upadesa class, was preached by the Buddha to his disciples and remains scattered here and there. Just as Dharmatrāta compiled several Udānās of the Master in the work Udānavargīya, similarly, the Elders Kātyāyanīputra and others collected the Abhidharma together in these Sāstras."73

It is very interesting to know that the fortuitous similarity between the name of Kātyāyanīputra the Elder mentioned in Yasomitra’s quote who was considered to be the author of their central Abhidharma book, the Jñānaprasthāna and that of the Buddha’s serious disciple, Mahākātyāyana, who participated in the Council at Rajagaha, allowed the Sarvāstivādins to say further that the Jñānaprasthāna, compiled from various teachings of the Buddha, was sanctioned as his own words by the Buddha himself during his own
lifetime. Moreover, the *Sarvāstivādins* also said finally that this *Abhidharmapiṭaka* was recited by Ānanda during the first council.

Actually, the *Sarvāstivāda* was the only school besides the *Theravāda* that was known to have had a complete *Abhidharma* canon, based upon central text, the *Jñānaprasthāna* and its six subsidiary treatises called the *Pādasāstra*. A great commentary to the *Jñānaprasthāna* was known as the *Mahāvibhāsa*. According to Takakusu, the text *Vibhāsa* was compiled on *Kātyāyanīputra’s* work probably in the second century A.D. The meaning of *Vibhāsa* is an extensive annotation of various opinions. The title *Vibhāsa* indicates that many opinions of that time were gathered and criticized in detail that some opinional ones were selected and recorded. The main object of the *Vibhāsa* commentary was to transmit the correct exposition of the *Abhidharma* school which have since then come to be called the *Vaibhāsika* school. Then there appeared a compendium of the *Abhidharma* doctrine called the *Abhidharma-hṛdaya* written by Dharmottara, who belonged to the *Gandhāra* branch. A commentary on it called *Samyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya* was compiled by Dharmatrāta, a student of Dharmottara. This work became the fundamental text of the *Gandhāra* branch. The *Abhidharma* literature of the *Sarvāstivāda* school can be presented as following part.

**b. Seven Abhidharma Texts of the Sarvāstivāda School**

From the Chinese and Tibetan translations as also from the manuscript fragments discovered in Central Asia, Nepal and Gilgit (Pakistan) and from the quotations found in the *Lalitavistara*, *Mahāvastu*, *Divyavadāna*, *Abhidharmakośa*, *Mādhyamakavṛtti* and such other works, it appears that the *Sarvāstivādins* had a Canon of their own in Sanskrit (Buddhist Sanskrit) in three divisions - *Sūtra*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidharma*. But a complete copy of this Canon is still a desideratum - some of them existing in manuscript fragments and others beyond recall.

Manuscript fragments of the *Sūtra* and *Vinaya* literature of this school are now available in original Sanskrit, but unfortunately, no fragment of any of the *Abhidharma* texts in Sanskrit, excepting a small fragment of the *Saṃgītīparyāya* has as yet been discovered. Until the discovery of the original Sanskrit works, the Chinese translations are the only source of our information. *Yaśomitra’s Sphuṭārthābhidarmakośavyākhyā* and the French translation
with introduction and notes of the *Abhidharmakośa* by Louis de La Vallee Poussin also supplement greatly our knowledge of the *Abhidharma* of this school.

The *Sūtrapiṭaka* of the *Sarvāstivādins* had four divisions: *Dīrghāgama*, *Madhyamāgama*, *Samyuktāgama* and *Ekottarāgama* corresponding to the four *Pāli* *Nikāyas*, viz., *Dīghanikāya*, *Majjimanikāya*, *Saṃyuttanikāya* and *Aṅguttaranikāya*. The *Sarvāstivādins* had no fifth *Āgama* answering to the *Pāli* *Khuddakanikāya*. But the texts such as the *Sūtranipāta*, *Udāna*, *Dharmapada*, *Sthaviragāthā*, *Therīgāthā*, *Vimānavatību* and *Buddhavamsa* were subsequently collected and designated as the *Kṣudrakāgama*. The *Sūtra* *piṭaka* of the *Sarvāstivādins* had four divisions: *Dīrghāgama*, *Madhyamāgama*, *Saṃyuktāgama* and *Ekottarāgama* corresponding to the four *Pāli* *Nikāyas*, viz., *Dīghanikāya*, *Majjimanikāya*, *Saṃyuttanikāya* and *Aṅguttaranikāya*. The *Sarvāstivādins* had no fifth *Āgama* answering to the *Pāli* *Khuddakanikāya*. But the texts such as the *Sūtranipāta*, *Udāna*, *Dharmapada*, *Sthaviragāthā*, *Therīgāthā*, *Vimānavatību* and *Buddhavamsa* were subsequently collected and designated as the *Kṣudrakāgama*. The Chinese *Dīrghāgāma* contains thirty *sūtras* as against thirty four of the *Pāli* *Dīghanikāya*. But the order of arrangement of the *Sūtras* differs in the two versions. The manuscript fragments of the *Saṃgītisūtra* and *Ājānātīyasūtra* of the *Dīrghāgama* have been discovered in Eastern Turkestan. The *Madhayamāgama* contains two hundred and twenty two *Sūtras* as against one hundred and fifty two of the *Pāli* text, and nineteen of them are wanting in the Chinese version. The fragments of the *Upāli Sūtra*, and *Śuka Sūtra* of the *Madhyamāgama* have also been discovered in Eastern Turkestan. The *Saṃyuktāgama* is divided into fifty chapters as against five *Saṃyuttas* or *Vaggas* of the *Pāli* text. The fragments of the *Pravāraṇāsūtra*, *Candropamasūtra* and *Saktisūtra* of the *Saṃyuktāgama* have further been discovered in Eastern Turkestan. The *Ekottarāgama* contains fifty two chapters while the *Aṅguttaranikāya* contains eleven *Nipātas* containing hundred and sixty nine chapters. There is noticeable disagreement between the *Sūtras* of *Ekottarāgama* and *Aṅguttaranikāya*. This is probable because many *sūtras* of the *Ekottarāgama* have been included in the *Madhyamāgama* and *Saṃyuktāgama*. The *Ekottarāgama* is thus much shorter than the *Pāli* *Aṅguttaranikāya*. Anesaki, who has compared the four *Āgamas* of the *Sarvāstivādins* with the corresponding *Pāli* *Nikāyas*, observes that materials of both are much the same but the arrangement is different.

The *Vinayapiṭaka* of the *Sarvāstivāda* school contains the following four divisions: *Vinayavibhaṅga*, *Vinayavastu*, *Vinayakṣudrakavastu*, and *Vinaya-uttarāgrantha*.

The original Sanskrit text of the *Sarvāstivādins* is lost and we have to depend on the Chinese translation for our information, in Chinese, there are four divisions as mentioned above. This order of arrangement is almost identical with that of the *Theravāda* school. This shows that the *Sarvāstivādins* adopted the same general arrangement as the *Theravādins*. The *Vinayavibhaṅga* corresponds to the *Suttavibhaṅga*, the *Vinayavastu* to the *Khandakas*, i.e., the
Mahāvagga and portions of Cullavagga, the Vinayakṣudrakavastu and Vinayauttararāgrantha to the Cullavagga and the Parivārapāḍha respectively.

The discovery of the manuscript fragments of the Prātimokṣaśāstra, Bhikṣunīprātimokṣaśāstra as also other texts in Eastern Turkestan and Nepal has proved the existence of the Sanskrit Vinaya texts similar to the Pāli ones. A large number of Vinaya fragments discovered at Gilgit (Pakistan) have also added knowledge to the stock of our Vinaya literature. The fragments of the Vinaya discovered there contain the Vinayavastu, Prātimokṣaśāstra, Karmaśāstra and the like. Some of the texts have already been published and others await publication. Further the manuscript fragments of the Vinayaśāstra, Prātimokṣaśāstra, Vinayasūtraṭīkā, Prātimokṣaśāstraṭīkā, Bhikṣupraṇā, Šrāmaneraṭīkā, Upasampadājñapti and others, copies of which are available in the K.P. Jayaswal Institute, Patna, have been brought down from Tibet Rahul Sankrityayana.

Among other Theravāda schools, the Sarvāstivāda developed characteristic philosophical ideas in its Abhidharma literature. When we refer to the Abhidharma, we often refer to some version of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, usually the Vaibhāṣika, if reference is specific. The Sarvāstivāda, like the Theravāda, has seven canonical Abhidharma texts. The seven canonical Sarvāstivāda texts are: (i) Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra; (ii) Prakaraṇapāda; (iii) Vijñānakāya; (iv) Dharmaskandha; (v) Prajñāptiśāstra; (vi) Dātukāya and (vii) Saṃgītiparyāya.

The Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra is attributed to Ārya Kātyāyanīputra. In the Kośa it is stated that the actual author of the work was Buddha but the arrangement of chapters and topics were made by Kātyāyanīputra and so its authorship is attributed to him. It was translated twice into Chinese, by Gotama Saṃghadeva of Kashmir and Chu Fo-nien, in the 4th century A.D., and by Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th century. It is divided into eight sections.

The Prakaraṇapāda is attributed to Sthavira Vasumitra, who, according to the Chinese tradition, composed it in a monastery at Puṣkalāvatī. It was translated into Chinese by Guṇabhadra and Bodhiyaśas of Central India (435-443 A.D.) and also by Hiuen-Tsang (659 A.D.). The work is divided into eight chapters.

The Vijñānakāya is attributed to Devasarmā, who, according to Hiuen-Tsang, compiled it at Viśoka near Sravasti, about a century after Buddha’s death. It was translated into Chinese by Hiuen-Tsang (649 A.D.). It is divided into six chapters.

The Dharmaskandha is attributed to Śāriputra. It was translated into Chinese by Hiuen-Tsang (659 A.D.). In the colophon of the Chinese translation this text is described as
“the most important of the Abhidharma works, and the fountain-head of the Sarvāstivāda system.” This book, it seems, appealed to the Chinese not for its subtlety and depth of philosophical discussions as for its comprehensiveness outlining the general course of spiritual training prescribed for a Buddhist monk. This work can also be paralleled to the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa.

The Dhātukāya is attributed to Pūrṇa in the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, and to Vasumitra by the Chinese writers. It was translated into Chinese by Hiuen-Tsang (663 A. D.). The object of the treatise is to enumerate the dharmas, considered as ‘reals’ by the Sarvāstivādins.

The Prajñāptiśāstra is attributed to Maudgalyāyana. It was translated into Chinese at a very late date (1004-1055 A. D.) by Dharmapala of Magadhā. The Chinese text is incomplete. In the Tibetan version this treatise is divided into three parts, viz. Lokaprajñāpti, Kāraṇaprajñāpti and Karmaprajñāpti. In the Lokaprajñāpti the cosmological ideas of the Buddhists are given, in the Kāraṇaprajñāpti the characteristics that make a Bodhisattva are discussed, while in the Karmaprajñāpti there are enumeration and classification of different kinds of deeds.

The Saṃgītiparyāya is attributed to Mahākausṭhila by Yasomitra and Bu-ston and to Śāriputra by the Chinese writers. It was translated into Chinese by Hiuen-Tsang (660-663 A. D.). This text was compiled, according to the introductory remarks, immediately after Buddha’s death to avert disputes among the disciples regarding the Buddhist teachings and disciplinary rules. The scene of this text is laid at Pāvā, where dissensions among the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputtas started after the death of their teacher. It arranges the dharmas, both doctrinal and disciplinary, numerically in the Ekottra style, i.e., gradually increasing the number of dharmas from one to ten. The contents of this text agree to a large extent with those of the Saṃgītī and Dasuttara suttontas of the Dīghanikāya.

Of them, the Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra occupies the most prominent place. The great doctrinal house of this school is built upon the Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra. The greatest contribution of the Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra is its systematization of the scheme of six causes into what becomes one of the cardinal doctrines of the Sarvāstivādins: efficient cause, simultaneous cause, connected cause, homogeneous cause, cause recurring in every instance, and retributory cause, which are not found anywhere in the Āgama and in earlier the Abhidharma texts.80 This doctrine seems to have been adopted by Kātyāyanīputra in order to account for the law of cause - effect that pertains between the various stages of the path which
were his major concern in the Jñānaprasthāna. From the text of the Mahāvibhāsā, there
seems to have been considerable controversy among the early Vaibhasikas on the point
whether to accept these six causes as an authentic of the Buddha, but it was Kātyāyanīputra
who brought to the forefront of Sarvāstivādin aetiological investigations.

In his Sphuṭārthabhidharmakośavyākhyā, Yaśomitra has compared the Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra to the body of a being and the other six to its legs. It is thus the principal text of the Sarvāstivāda school, others are supplements to it. But the seven Abhidharma texts of the Theravāda school are all independent works, there being no interdependence between them.

It is extremely difficult to fix a date for any of these texts at the present time. About
the chronology of these texts, Junjiro Takakusu states in the following manner:

“The seven Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivāda do not represent one and the same period of Buddhist philosophy, nor do they agree with one another as regards the expositions of categories and nomenclatures in which these books abound. They must have come into existence one after another, in the course of several centuries before they began to be recognized as a body of literature.”

E. Frauwallner, Taiken Kimura and others, without giving the actual date for the
composition of the texts, classify three periods in the evolution of the Sarvāstivāda
Abhidharma texts. The first is the period of the composition the Saṅgītiparyāya and the
Dharmaskandha, which were composed immediately after the composition of the Nikāya and Āgama. The second is the period of the composition of various commentaries including the Vijñānakāya, the Prakaraṇapāda, the Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra and its commentary, the Mahāvibhāṣā and so on. The third is the composition of the works which systematized the Sarvāstivāda doctrines and represented the final stage in the evolution of the Sarvāstivāda school. The Abhidharmakośa is the most well-known and influential text in this last period.

Thus, the Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra, which falls in the second category, was the first
work that expounded the specific view of philosophy of the school. It was probably composed
around the first century BC. Some commentaries were produced by many scholars in Gandhara and Kashmir. The Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra, a systematic work, had a great influence
on later texts. The Jñānaprasthāna-sūtra, like the other six texts, is extant only in Chinese.
c. Development of Sarvāstivāda Texts

Besides these seven recognized texts of the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharmapiṭaka, there were a few other digests and commentaries dealing with the topics of the Abhidharma.

The other works are briefly discussed below:

i. *Abhidharmakośakārikā* - By Vasubandhu, an eminent Scholar of Fourth Century A.D. The work is mainly written from the point of view of Kashmir Vibhāsā School. There are two translations in Chinese of this work; one of them is by Paramārtha and the other by Huien Tsang.

ii. *AbhidharmakośaBhāṣya* - By Vasubandhu.

iii. *Sphuṭārthābhidharmakośavyākhyā* - By Yaśomitra. It is a commentary on the Bhāṣya by Vasubandhu on his Kośa. The Vyākhyā is very valuable for philosophical discussions and well-written psychological materials. The commentary gives us references to the different teachers like Vasumitra, Saṃghabhadra, Dharmatrāta, Vasubandhu, Śrīlāta and others.

iv. *Abhidharmanyāyānusāra* - By Saṃghabhadra. This work was written by this old teacher of Kashmir Vibhasa School as a criticism of Vasubandhu’s Kārikā

v. *Abhidharmasamayaprādīpikā* - By Saṃghabhadra.

vi. *AbhidharmakośaSatikā Lakṣaṇānusārinī* - by Puṇyavardhana.

vii. *Abhidharmakośavṛtti Marmapradīpa* - by Dīgnāga.

viii. *Abhidharmakośatikā Aupāyikī* - By Śāntisthiradeva.

ix. *Sārasamuccaya Nāma Abhidharamāvatāra* - by unknown author. Its Tibetan translation was made by Jinamitra and Dānaśīla.

x. *Abhidharamāvatāra Prakaraṇa Nāma* - by Sugandhara.

xi. *Abhidharmāmṛtarasasāstra* - By Ghoṣa.

xii. *Abhidharmahṛdaya Śāstra* -By Dharmottara.

xiii. *Abhidharmahṛdaya Śāstra* - By Upaśānta.

xiv. *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdayaśāstra* - it is attributed to Dharmatrāta. It is a commentary on Abhidharmahṛdaya- śāstra.
Śārīputrābhidharmaśāstra - Author is unknown. Chinese translation of the text was made by Dharmagupta and Dharmayaśa.

The above texts are discussed in detail in the introduction of Abhidharmakośa by Śrī Rāhula Sāmkritiyāyana and in the Sarvāstivāda Literature by Dr. A.C. Banerjee. The former mentions 4 more texts which are not mentioned by the latter. These are:

i. Abhidkarmakośabhasyaṭīkā by Sthirmati.

ii. Lokaprajñāpti Abhidharmaśāstra by Anonymouls.

iii. Abhidharmapraveśa by Sugandhara by Skandhila.

iv. Lakṣaṇānusāra by Guṇamati.

2.4 The Abhidharmakośa Śāstra

The Abhidharmakośa Śāstra which was composed by Vasubandhu is a manual or a compendium of the Abhidharma treaties and is a repository of the principal Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivādins. So, in order to understand the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra, we have to know about the life of Vasubandhu first.

2.4.1 The Life of Vasubandhu

Vasubandhu is believed to be the author of the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra and many Mahāyāna-Vijñānavāda teachings like his brother Asaṅga. He was first ordained in the Theravāda Sarvāstivāda school but later converted to the Mahāyāna. However, it is suggested that there were two Vasubandhu and hence two different dates. Thus, we now face with the question of when Vasubandhu lived and with the problem of how many Vasubandhu there were in the history of Indian philosophy. Therefore, it is necessary for us to learn about the early life, conversion to Mahāyāna as well as dates of Vasubandhu when we study his life.
a. Early life of Vasubandhu

Vasubandhu was an eminent Indian Buddhist teacher and one of the most prominent figures in the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India. His name can be found in any history of Buddhism or of India in the Gupta period. Said to be a younger brother of the great Mahāyāna teacher Asaṅga, Vasubandhu was first ordained in the Theravāda Sarvāstivāda school but later converted to the Mahāyāna. Like his brother Asaṅga, Vasubandhu became a great exponent of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda teachings. He is believed to be the author of the Abhidharmakośa and many Mahāyāna treatises. Various problems continue to vex historians concerning the biography of Vasubandhu.

The details of Vasubandhu’s life are known from several biographies available in Chinese and Tibetan, the earliest of which is the Chinese rendering of the life of Vasubandhu by Paramātha (499-569), one of the main exponents of the Yogācāra doctrine in China, who composed Bosoupandou fashi zhuan (Biography of Vasubandhu). It is preserved in the Chinese Tripiṭaka and is the only complete biography. Apparently, there was an account by Kumārajīva but it did not survive. Apart from this, fragmentary information is found in various Chinese sources the most important of which are the writings of the great Chinese translator Xuanzang (600-664). Various histories of Buddhism written by Tibetan historians also give accounts of Vasubandhu’s life. The earliest Tibetan biography available is that of Bu-ston (1290-1364). In addition, there are several references to Vasubandhu in the works of Xuanzang, Bāṇa-bhattachā, Vāmana, and other writers.

But Chinese and Tibetan sources alike disagree with the Biography of Master Vasubandhu in many places. Moreover, two or three persons in Buddhist history bear the same name. According to some texts, Vasubandhu is the twenty-first patriarch in the transmission of the Buddha’s Dharma; elsewhere, Puguang (one of the direct disciples of Xuanzang) refers to an “ancient Vasubandhu” who belonged to the Sarvāstivāda school; and both Puguang and Yaśomitra, a commentator on the Abhidharmakośa, refer to a third, known as Sthavira-Vasubandhu. The identification of and relationship between these three persons is still unclear. We shall attempt to reconstruct the main outlines of Vasubandhu’s life, relying most heavily on Paramārtha, and supplying dates for the main events, so that the dating of Vasubandhu presented here can be put to the test. Some of this material is, no doubt, legendary, but nonetheless interesting as it throws light on how Vasubandhu was viewed by later generations.
Vasubandhu was born at Puruṣapura (identified with modern Peshawar, capital of North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan) in the state of Gāndhāra. According to Tāranātha, Vasubandhu was born one year after his older brother Asaṅga became a Buddhist monk. His father was a Brahmin Kauśika. According to Bosoupandou jashi zhuan, his mother’s name was Viriñci. But the Tibetan historian Bu-ston and later Tāranātha mention the name of the mother of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as Prasanaśīlā.

According to these two Tibetan historians, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were half-brothers; Asaṅga’s father being a Kṣatriya, and Vasubandhu’s a Brāhmaṇa. Vasubandhu also had a younger brother called Viriñcivatsa. Vasubandhu’s father was a court priest, and according to Tāranātha was an authority on the Vedas. In all probability, he officiated at the court of the Śaka princes of the Śilada clan, who at that time ruled from Puruṣapura. During his formative years, Vasubandhu may have been introduced by his father not only to the Brahmanical tradition but also to the postulates of classical Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, both of which had influence on his logical thought.

The name “Vasubandhu”, which he never changed even upon entering the Buddhist priesthood, may perhaps tell us something about the character of its bearer. It means “the Kinsman of Abundance”, in particular the abundance of the Earth, and his retention of this name, in view of his genuine concern for the well-being of others, as well as his love of metaphors from teeming plant-life, rushing streams, and rippling lakes, is probably not entirely coincidental.

As a young student, he amazed his teachers with his brilliance and ready wit. According to Paramārtha, Vasubandhu’s teacher was called Buddhamitra. At Vasubandhu’s time the dominant Buddhist school in Gāndhāra was the Vaibhāṣika (also called Sarvāstivāda). Vasubandhu entered the Sarvāstivāda order, and studied primarily the scholastic system of the Vaibhāṣikas. Initially, he was quite impressed with the Mahāvibhāṣa. In time, however, Vasubandhu began to have grave doubts about the validity and relevance of Vaibhāṣika metaphysics. At this time, perhaps through the brilliant teacher Manoratha, he came into contact with the theories of the Sautrāntikas, the group of Buddhists who wished to reject everything that was not the express word of the Buddha, and who held the elaborate constructions of Vibhāṣa up to ridicule. That there was a strong Sautrāntika tradition in Puruṣapura is likely in view of the fact that it was the birthplace of a maverick philosopher of the second century, Dharmatrāta. In fact, the most orthodox Vaibhāṣika seat of learning was not in Gāndhāra, but in Kashmir, whose masters looked
down upon the Gāndhārans as quasi-heretics. Therefore, according to Xuanzang’s pupil Puguang, Vasubandhu decided to go to Kashmir disguised as a lunatic to investigate the Vaibhāṣika teachings more deeply. Vasubandhu studied in Kashmir with different teachers for four years, probably from about 342 to 346, then came back to Puruṣapura\(^95\) and began to prepare for an enormous project *Abhidharmakośa* (The Treasury of *Abhidharma*).

**b. Conversion to Mahāyāna**

In the years directly following the composition of the *Abhidharmakośa*, Vasubandhu seems to have spent much time in travelling from place to place. Finally, after having spent some time at Sākala/ Sāgala (modern Sialkot in Pakistan), he shifted along with his teachers Buddhamitra and Manoratha to Ayodhyā (now located in Uttar Pradesh, northern India), a city far removed from Kashmir.\(^96\)

According to Bosoupandou fashi zhuan, Vasubandhu, now proud of the fame he had acquired, clung faithfully to the *Theravāda* doctrine in which he was well-versed and, having no faith in Mahāyāna, denied that it was the teaching of the Buddha. Vasubandhu had, up to this time, but little regard for the *Yogācāra* treatises of his elder brother. He had perhaps seen the voluminous *Yogācārabhūmi* compiled by Asaṅga, which may have simply repelled him by its bulk. According to Bu-ston, he is reported to have said, “Alas, Asaṅga, residing in the forest, has practiced meditation for twelve years. Without having attained anything by this meditation, he has founded a system, so difficult and burdensome, that it can be carried only by an elephant.”\(^97\) Asaṅga heard about this attitude of his brother and feared that Vasubandhu would use his great intellectual gifts to undermine Mahāyāna. By feigning illness he was able to summon his younger brother to Puruṣapura, where he lived.

However, Xuanzang differs with some of these details and the place provided by Paramārtha regarding Vasubandhu’s conversion. According to Xiyu yi, the conversion of Vasubandhu took place at Ayodhyā.\(^98\) At the rendezvous, Vasubandhu asked Asaṅga to explain the Mahāyāna teaching to him, whereupon he immediately realized the supremacy of Mahāyāna thought. According to Paramārtha, Bu-ston and Xuanzang, Asaṅga sent two of his students with Mahāyāna texts, Akṣayamati-nirdeśa-sūtra and Daśabhumika-sūtra, to Vasubandhu. The evening they arrived, they recited the *Akṣayamati-nirdeśa-sūtra*. In this *Sūtra*, a creature from the higher plane teaches the terrestrial denizens about the absence of own-being, the absence of existing and ceasing, and the absence of any detriment or
excellence, in all events and “personalities”. This sūtra seems to have greatly appealed to the critical mind of Vasubandhu. He told Asaṅga’s students that he thought the logical principles of Mahāyāna were well-founded, but that it seemed to have no practice. The next morning, Asaṅga’s student recited the Daśabhūmika-sūtra, which relates to the path of the Bodhisattva, who remains active in the world for the removal of suffering. Hearing this text, Vasubandhu realized that the Mahāyāna had a well-founded practice, too.99

After that, Vasubandhu went to visit Asaṅga in Puruṣapura. After further study, we are told, the depth of his realization came to equal that of his brother. Deeply ashamed of his former abuse of the Mahāyāna, Vasubandhu wanted to cut out his tongue, but refrained from doing so when Asaṅga told him to use it for the cause of Mahāyāna. Vasubandhu regarded the study of the enormous Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñā-pāramitā-sūtra as of utmost importance.

In view of the fact that they were the texts that converted him to Mahāyāna, Vasubandhu’s commentaries on the Aṅkṣayamati-nirdeśa-sūtra and the Daśabhūmika-sūtra may have been his earliest Mahāyāna works. These were followed by a series of commentaries on other Mahāyāna sūtras and treatises, including the Avataṃsaka-sūtra, Nirvāṇa-sūtra, Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra, and Srīmālādevī-sūtra. He himself composed a treatise on Vijñaptimātra (cognition only) theory and commented on the Mahāyānasamgraha, Triratna-gotra, Amṛta-mukha, and other Mahāyāna treatises.

According to the Tibetan biographers, his favorite Sūtra was either the Aṣṭasāhasrika-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra or the Aṣṭasāhasrikā. Considering that these texts reveal the most profound insights into Mahāyāna thinking, it is not surprising that Vasubandhu liked them. Since the output of Vasubandhu’s Mahāyāna works is huge, he was in all probability writing new treatises every year. So he could have been a very famous Mahāyāna master by the year 360.

The year 376 brings Candragupta II, Vikramaditya, to the throne of the Gupta Empire. As famous for his liberal patronage of learning and arts, as for his successful maintenance of the empire, his reign marks one of the high points in the classical Indian period. And Ayodhya, where Vasubandhu again took up his abode, became for a while the Emperor’s capital-in-residence. It may have been shortly after this date that a great debate occurred, which was to stick in the minds of the Buddhist biographers.
The King himself was often the judge at these debates, and loss to an opponent could have serious consequences. One of the most stirring descriptions of such a debate is found in the account of Paramārtha, where he describes how the Sāṅkhya philosopher Vindhyavāsīn challenged the Buddhist masters of Ayodhyā, “traveling to other countries”, and only Buddhāmitra was left to defend the Dharma. Buddhāmitra was defeated, and had to undergo the humiliating and painful punishment of being beaten on the back by the Sāṅkhya master in front of the entire assembly.

When Vasubandhu later returned, he was enraged when he heard of the incident. He subsequently succeeded in trouncing the Sāṅkhya, both in debate and in a treatise, Paramārthasaptati. Candragupta II rewarded him with 300,000 pieces of gold for his victory over the Sāṅkhya. These Vasubandhu employed for building three monasteries, one for the Mahāyānists, another for his old colleagues the Sarvāstivādins, and the third for the nuns. Refutations of the Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya theories had been presented by Vasubandhu already in the Kośa, but it was from this point onward that Vasubandhu was regarded as a philosopher whose views could not be lightly challenged.

Around the year 383, at his eighth birthday, the crown prince Govindagupta Bālāditya was placed by the Emperor under the tutelage of Vasubandhu. The Empress Dhruvadevī also went to Vasubandhu to receive instruction. It is tempting to speculate on the effect of Vasubandhu’s tutorship on his royal students. He may have done much to alleviate the conditions of the thousands subject to the Guptas. He is known to have founded many hospitals, rest houses, and schools. That his compassion was not theoretical but practical can also be seen by the accounts, which tell us of his helping quench the great fire that broke out in Rājagṛha, and his doing the utmost to help stop the epidemic in Janāntapura.

In some Tibetan accounts, Vasubandhu is associated with the University of Nālandā. This may or may not be anachronism. He is known to have passed his technique of no-prop meditation on to his old associate Manoratha.

In his old age, Vasubandhu seems to have taken up the wandering life again. Some of his last works are known to have been written in Sākala and in Kauśāmbī. Around the year 391, the consecration of Govindagupta as “Young King” took place. He and his mother begged Vasubandhu to settle down in Ayodhyā and accept life-long royal support. Vasubandhu accepted the offer. The master was creative even at his advanced age, and more
than a match for Vasurata, the prince’s grammarian brother-in-law, in his favorite sport of debate. With the sums of money he received as remuneration for his debating victories, he built several rest houses, monasteries, and hospitals in Ayodhyā, Gāndhāra, and Kashmir. But primarily, as Xuanzang tells us, Vasubandhu was going farther with his contemplative exercises. Debate was to him mainly an Upāya: if it could lead to no one’s interest in Mahāyāna, he would not engage in it.

Thus, when Samghabhadra, who had written his two great treatises, one of which is a furious denunciation of the Kośa-bhāṣya, challenged Vasubandhu to defend the Kośa’s statements, and was invited to come to court for a debate by the jealous Vasurata, Vasubandhu told his pupils that he could see no good reason for such a debate, but diplomatically sent the official answer that Samghabhadra would, indeed, be hard to defeat. He probably knew from his student days that Samghabhadra would not be convinced by anything, and, besides, the Kośa itself was probably no longer very important to him at the time. Thus, the debate never took place, but we can almost see the forms it might have taken, by comparing the Kośa, the Abhidharma-nyāyānusāra of Samghabhadra, and the Discussion for the Demonstration of Action included here.

Vasubandhu did not long survive Samghabhadra. In the eightieth year of his life, c. 396, he died. Tradition is unanimous in saying that he died at eighty, but there are various versions as to the place of his death. Paramārtha says that he died in Ayodhyā, but Bu-ston may be correct when he says that he died in the Northern frontier countries, which he calls “Nepal”. For Xuanzang corroborates the information that Vasubandhu was in the northern frontier at the time of Samghabhadra’s challenge to debate, which according to all tradition was one of the last events in Vasubandhu’s life. He says that Vasubandhu was at that time in Sākala, where the “Teaching of the Three Own-Beings”, possibly Vasubandhu’s last work, was written.

Bu-ston gives an interesting detail about this last journey of the master. He says that while Vasubandhu was in the North, he went to visit a monk named Handu. Handu was inebriated, and carrying an immense pot of wine on his shoulder. Vasubandhu upon seeing this cried, “Alas! The Doctrine will go to ruin”, recited the Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī in reverse order, and died. According to Tāranātha, however, Vasubandhu was prompted to recite the dhāraṇī in reverse order when he saw a monk ploughing in his monastic robes. Such is the account of his life, filled with prodigious activity, which can be reconstructed from the copious data of his biographers.
c. Date of Vasubandhu

So much controversy has surrounded the time of Vasubandhu, we now face with not only the question of when Vasubandhu lived, with the problem of how many Vasubandhus there were in the history of Indian philosophy, but also the problem of the date of *Abhidharmakośa.* According to *Paramārtha,* Vasubandhu lived 900 years after the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. At another place, *Paramārtha* also mentions the figure of 1100. *Xuanzang* and his disciples respectively mention that Vasubandhu lived 1000 and 900 years after the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. Now though it is generally believed that the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha took place within few years of 400 B.C, some scholars are still hesitant to accept this date. This has led to different scholars proposing different dates for Vasubandhu. Noul Pari and Shio Benkyoo give as Vasubandhu’s dates the years 270 to 350 A.D. Stefan Anacker proposes his date as 316-396 A.D. Ui Hakuju places him in the fourth century (320-400 A.D). Takakusu Junjirō and Kimura Taiken give 420 to 500, Wogihara Unrai gives 390 to 470A.D. Hikata Ryushoo gives 400 to 480 A.D and Le Manh That gives 315 to 395. Erich Frauwallner suggests that there were two Vasubandhus and hence two different dates. According to him, Vasubandhu - the elder lived between about 320 and 380 A.D and Vasubandhu - the younger between around 400 and 480 A.D. However, this hypothesis of two Vasubandhus is no longer tenable in the light of current scholarship as many of the early Chinese documents used by Frauwallner are of spurious nature and thus, their testimony cannot be accepted.

These problems had already been resolved by Péri and have subsequently been thoroughly explained by Le Manh That, as resting on different calculation for the date of the Buddha’s *Nirvāṇa* accepted at various times by Chinese tradition. By following all that is contained in Chinese tradition regarding the matter, both Péri and Le Manh That arrive at the fourth century A.D. for Vasubandhu’s approximate time.

Their conclusion seems obvious when one considers that *Kumārajīva* (344-413) knew and translated the works of Vasubandhu, which fact has in turn been the subject of vast and thoroughly sterile investigations as to the authenticity of these ascriptions, whether the “*K’ ai-che Vasu*” given by *Kumārajīva* as the author of the *Śataśāstra-bhāṣya* can in fact, be taken as “Vasubandhu”, and so on. Actually, as Péri has already shown, this work in one portion has the complete name, and “*K’ ai-che Vasu*” is also the only name given to the great master Vasubandhu in the colophon of the *Mahāyānasamgraha-bhāṣya,* as well as elsewhere in Chinese sources.
From the Chinese side, we also find that Kumārajīva is said to have written a biography of Vasubandhu (unfortunately lost today) in the year 409, and that Hui-yuan (344-416) quotes a verse of Vasubandhu’s Vimśatikā. It should be noted that the Bodhisattva-bhūmi of Vasubandhu’s older brother Asaṅga was already translated into Chinese in the years 414-421.

According to Anacker, there is no necessity of going against any tradition whatever. Taking into account the possibility that Vasubandhu may have lived beyond his pupil Govindagupta’s consecration as “Young King”, we may arrive at an arbitrary but plausible date, 316-396 for Vasubandhu. This should be taken as no more than a hypothesis, but it is at least one, which will please all lovers of traditional history. It also places Vasubandhu in one of the most brilliant courts. Among countless other eminent men who may be mentioned as his contemporaries, the great Kālidāsa, the lexicographer Amarasimha, and the Mīmāṃsā philosopher Śabara were in all probability at the same court that invited Vasubandhu to his most famous debates, and to his most famous tutoring position. Whether his pupil Govindagupta ever fully ascended the throne is doubtful, though there are allusions in Subandhu to troublesome times after the death of Candragupta II, so perhaps a struggle between Govindagupta and his brother Kumāragupta I, in which the later emerged victorious, is to be assumed. On the other hand, Govindagupta may have pre-deceased his father.

2.4.2 The Origin and Development of the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra

The Abhidharmakośa, the work of Vasubandhu is a manual or a compendium of the Abhidharma treatises and is a repository of the principal Abhidharma works of the Sarvāstivādins. It has systematized and given a definite form to the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma Pīṭaka. There is no denying the fact that the Abhidharmakośa occupies an eminent position in the history of Buddhist thought and literature. It is a treasury of the fundamental doctrines of Buddhism and contains the fullest and systematic exposition of the Abhidharma doctrines of the ancient Buddhist schools that grew within about eight hundred years after the Buddha’s Mahāparinirvāṇa. Further the Abhidharmakośa also occupies an important place in the development of Mahāyāna thought and principles. There is very close relation between the Abhidharmakośa system and the Vijnaptimātra philosophy, one of the two main philosophical systems of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore, very rightly observes that a thorough mastery of the Abhidharmakośa is the only door of entrance to the philosophy.
of the Mahāyāna. So, it is necessary for us to learn about the origin and development of the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra here.

a. The Origin of the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra

As we know, after having returned to his native place (346), Vasubandhu began to prepare for an enormous project that had been in his mind for some time. At this time he was unattached to any particular order, and lived in a small private house in the center of Puruṣapura. Vasubandhu supported himself by lecturing on Buddhism before the general public, which presumably remunerated him with gifts. According to tradition, during the day he would lecture on Vaibhāṣika doctrine and in the evening distill the day’s lectures into a verse. When collected together over six hundred plus verses (kārikās), which gave a thorough summary of the entire system, he constituted this work the Abhidharmakośa (Treasury of Abhidharma). According to Paramārtha, Vasubandhu composed it in Ayodhyā, then the capital of the Gupta dynasty, but according to Xuanzang, it was composed in the suburbs of Puruṣapura.

The Abhidharmakośa is the highest achievement of Buddhist scholasticism of the Sarvāstivāda school. It is a kind of Summa Buddhica, being a new and more systematic exposition of the teachings of the school. Vasubandhu declared openly his dependence on the earlier Abhidharma treatises. He specified his own doctrinal standpoint as for the most part being in an agreement with the Kāśmīra Vaibhāṣika school. Besides, Vasubandhu also elaborated upon causal theories, cosmology, practices of meditation, theories of perception, karma, rebirth, and the characteristics of an Enlightened Being in this text.

As the Abhidharmakośa was an eloquent summary of the purport of the Mahāvibhāṣa, the Kashmir Sarvāstivādins are reported to have rejoiced to see in it all their doctrines so well propounded. According to tradition, they requested Vasubandhu to write a prose commentary (bhāṣya) on it. However it seems that after having written the Abhidharmakośa, Vasubandhu began to have second thoughts about the Vaibhāṣika teachings. As a consequence, it is said, Vasubandhu prepared the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya. But as it contained a thoroughgoing critique of Vaibhāṣika dogmatics from a Sautrāntika viewpoint, the Kashmir Sarvāstivādins soon realized, to their great disappointment, that the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya in fact refuted many Sarvāstivāda theories and upheld the doctrines of the Sautrāntika school. One major point that created bad blood between the
Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas was concerning the status and nature of the dharmas. The Vaibhāṣikas held that the dharmas exist in the past and future as well as the present. On the other hand, the Sautrāntikas held the view that they are discrete, particular moments only existing at the present moment in which they discharge causal efficacy. The Vaibhāṣikas wrote several treatises attempting to refute Vasubandhu’s critiques.

b. The Development of the Abhidharmakośa Śāstra

The Abhidharmakośa, one of the main works written as a critical study of the doctrine of the Sarvāstivāda school by the great Buddhist master, Vasubandhu, during the earlier period of his life when he had not yet embraced Mahāyāna Buddhism, is known as a book of intelligence or a manual the Abhidharma treatises like the Jñānaprasthāna constituted. Not only it has been composed the basic or main source which the Abhidharma treatises like the Jñānaprasthāna constituted; but also the Abhidharmakośa seems to be an encyclopaedia of the essential contents of the Abhidharma Śāstra. Though it is written mostly from the point of view of the Vaibhāsika of Kasmir, it is an authoritative text for all schools of Buddhist thought.

The Abhidharmakośa consists of nine chapters, made up of a series of verses, the kārikās, and a prose commentary, or bhāṣya, to explain them. Both the Abhidharmakośa-kārikā and the Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya together popularly go by the name of the Abhidharmakośa or Abhidharmakośa Śāstra. The Abhidharmakośa and its commentary are composed of the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Dhātunirdeśa – contains a treatment of the dhātus showing the nature of the substance of all things. It consists of forty-four kārikās


Chapter 3: Lokanirdeśa – contains a treatment of the Loka considered as the outcome of Śāśrava or Saṃsāra. It contains ninety-nine kārikās.

Chapter 4: Karmanirdeśa – contains a treatment of Karma, considered as the causes of the Śāśrava or Saṃsāra. It contains one hundred and thirty-one kārikās.

Chapter 5: Anuśayanirdeśa – contains a treatment of the Anuśayas or ‘latent evils’ considered as a condition (pratyaya) of the Śāśrava or Saṃsāra. It contains sixty-nine
Chapter 6: *Pudgalamārganirdeśa* – contains a treatment of Arhatship considered as an effect of *Anāsrava* or *Nirvāṇa*. It contains eighty-three kārikās.

Chapter 7: *Jñānanirdeśa* – contains a treatment of knowledge (*prajñā*), considered as the cause (*hetu*) of *Anāsrava* or *Nirvāṇa*. It contains sixty-one kārikās.

Chapter 8: *Samādhinirdeśa* – contains a treatment of *Samādhi* or *Dhyāna* considered as a condition of *Anāsrava* or *Nirvāṇa*. It contains thirty-nine kārikās.

Chapter 9: *Pudgalapratisādeśa* – contains a refutation of Ātman theories of the Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika and the Vātsīputrīya schools. It is in prose.\(^\text{113}\)

The last of these, possibly a later addition to the text, discusses the problem of anātman, refuting the theories of the self held by the Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and Vātsīputrīya schools. The other eight chapters may be described as falling into three sections.

The first section is an exposition of the term ‘dharma’. It consists of the initial two chapters of the text, the first of these analyzing the nature and structure of form, and dividing all elements into the categories ‘defiled’ (*sāśrāva*) and ‘undefiled’ (*anāśrāva*). The second chapter deals with inner causality and the mental faculties (*indriya*).

The second section, composed of Chapters III-V, is concerned with *samsāra*, and the reasons beings are subject to continuous rebirth. More specifically, Chapter III is concerned with how the world is made out of the various defiled forms. Chapter IV deals with *karma*. And Chapter V treats the emotions and latent evils that keep the actions going on.

The third section, Chapter VI-VIII, is concerned with the path which leads beings out of *samsāra* into enlightenment. Chapter VI describes the way in which the defilements may be removed. Chapter VII gives a detailed account of knowledge (*prajñā*), and the Chapter VIII is on meditation.

Thus, we can say, the *Abhidharmakośa* covers the fundamental principles of Buddhist philosophy in general as a result of which even today it is an indispensable book not only to the Buddhists but also to the students of philosophy in general as well as comparative world religions.

Unfortunately, the Sanskrit originals of both the *Abhidharmakośa-kārikā* and *bhāṣya* were long lost in India, the land of their origin. However, two versions of the *Abhidharmakośa-śāstra* exist in Chinese Tripitaka, one translated in the sixth century by...
Paramārtha, the other in the seventh by Hsuan-tsang. A translation of the Kārikā by Hsuan-tsang is also to be found in the Chinese Tripiṭaka. Paramārtha attributes both the commentary and the verses to Vasubandhu. Furthermore, the Tibetan Tangyur contains one version each of the Šāstra and the Kārikā. Finally, we may note that, in 1934 and 1936, Sanskrit versions of the Abhidharmakośa-kārikā and bhāṣya were discovered in Tibetan monasteries.114

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed the origin and development of the Sarvāstivāda School as well as the Abhidharmakośa Šāstra. We found that the existence of the Sarvāstivāda School can be seen in Indian history from the time of the Buddhist Council held during King Aśoka’s reign (240 B.C.) down to the time of I-ting’s travel in India (671-695 A.D.). In the Kathāvatthu Controversy compiled in the time of King Aśoka, Sarvāstivāda seems to have occupied a strong position among the disputing parties. The principal seat of this school was in Kashmir where its doctrine was taught in its purity and it was finally developed into an elaborate system known as the Vaibhāṣika.

In time another branch of the Vaibhāṣikas was established in Gāndhāra and it seems to have differed from that of Kashmir in its opinion to some extent, for both were often cited side by side in some texts in use.

The geographical extent of this school was much greater than that of any other school as it was found in all India, its Northern frontier, Persia, Central Asia, and also to the South in Sumatra, Java, Cochin-China and all of China.

The Sarvāstivāda School was closely related to the orthodox Theravāda School, from which it was first separated probably before the Council of Aśoka. The idea that all things exist may go back even to the time of the Buddha himself, for the word ‘sabban atthi’ (all things exist) is found already in the Samyuttanikāya.

The principal Abhidharma text of this school was Kātyāyanīputra’s Jñāna-prasthāna (Source of Knowledge), otherwise called the Aṣṭa-grantha (Eight Books), probably compiled as early as 200 B.C. The subsequent works of the school seem to have been a special exegesis on the subject-matter contained in it. At least six pādas (‘Legs’), as they are designated, have come down to us.
Then probably in the second century A.D. whether before or after the Buddhist Council of King Kaniska’s reign, we cannot tell - a great and minute commentary named Vibhāṣā Śāstra was compiled on Kātyāyanīputra’s work. The word ‘vibhāṣā’ means an extensive annotation or various opinions, and this title indicates that many opinions of the time were and criticized in detail and that some optional ones were selected and recorded. The chief object of the Vibhāṣā commentary was to transmit the correct exposition of the Abhidharma School which has since then come to be called the Vaibhāṣika School.

Then there appeared a compendium of the Abhidharma doctrine called Abhidharma-hṛdaya (‘heart of the Higher Dharmas,’ translated into Chinese in 391 A.D.) by Dharmottara who belonged to the Gāndharā branch. A commentary on it called Samyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya was written by Dхarmatrata, a pupil of Dharmottara. This work became the fundamental text of the Gāndharā branch and subsequently of the Chinese Abhidharma School.115

In writing the Abhidharmakośa, Vasubandhu seems to have followed the work of his predecessor, Dхarmatrata, called Samyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya, and this, again, is a commentary on Dharmottara’s Abhidharma-hṛdaya. A careful comparison of the three works will indicate that Vasubandhu had before him his predecessor’s works, or else such questions as discussed in these works must have been common topics of the school. The first eight chapters of the work explain special facts or elements of matter and mind, while the ninth and last chapter elucidates the general basic principle of selflessness that should be followed by all Buddhist schools. Especially the ninth chapter seems to originate from Vasubandhu’s own idea, for there is no trace of this subject in the other books.

Though the Kośa thus resembles the Hṛdaya in subject-matter, there is no indication that the former is indebted to the latter in forming opinions, for Vasubandhu was very free and thorough in his thinking, and he did not hesitate to take the tenets of any school other than his own when he found excellent reasoning in them.

When Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakośa was made public in Gāndhāra, it met with rigorous opposition from within and from without his school. Yet the final victory seems to have been on his side, for his work enjoyed popularity in India; it was taught widely and several annotations of it were made in Nālandā, Valabhī and elsewhere. It was translated into Tibetan by Jinamitra and into Chinese first by Paramārtha of Valabhī during 563-567 A.D. and later by Hiuen-tsang who studied at Nālandā University during 651-654 A.D. In China
especially serious studies were made, and at least seven elaborate commentaries, each amounting to more than twenty or thirty Chinese volumes, were written on it.\textsuperscript{116}

Thus, the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} attained the status of a primary textbook to be studied by all students of the tradition in the Northern Buddhist countries, including Tibet, China, Vietnam, Japan, and Indonesia. As pointed out above, the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} pictures the Buddhist Path to Enlightenment. We can say, the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} is a prominent contribution of Vasubandhu to the \textit{Sarvāstivāda} school among 500 works in \textit{Theravāda} tradition. The merits of the work are obvious, and the fact of its only partial preservation in Sanskrit has hampered greatly Buddhist studies. Its covers the whole field of ontology, psychology, cosmology, the doctrine of salvation and of the saints, and a vast proportion of its matter is common to all Buddhist belief. Hence it formed the text-book of Buddhist generally after Vasubandhu’s death, whether they followed the \textit{Theravāda} or the \textit{Mahāyāna}, while it contains incidentally much evidence on the early Sanskrit Canon. It is rightly said that the \textit{Abhidharmakośa} is the door for entrance to the philosophy of \textit{Theravāda} and consequently also to that of the \textit{Mahāyāna}. 

\textsuperscript{116}
Notes and References


3 Ibid.


5 DN. II, pp. 7-11.


8 Sn. II, p. 78.

9 Sn. II, p. 79.

10 DN. II, p. 167.

11 MN. I, p. 208.


13 The names of his five austerities companions: Annata-Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji.

14 MN. I, p. 301.

15 MN. I, p. 302.

16 MN. I, pp. 27-29.


20 MN. III, pp. 295-298.


23 Ibid., p. 723.


27 Ibid., p. 45.


29 Ibid., pp. 33-34.

30 Ibid., p. 36


32 Ibid., p. 50.


43 Ibid., p. 88.


46 Ibid., pp. 91-92.

47 Ibid., p. 96.

48 Ibid., p. 96.

49 Ibid., p. 96.

50 Ibid., p. 98.

51 Ibid., p. 98.

52 Ibid., p. 99.

53 Ibid., p. 102.

54 Ibid., p. 104.


56 It is now extant in Chinese.

57 These Śāstras are preserved in Chinese translations only – originals are lost.


Ibid., p. 226.


Ibid., p. 112.


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89 ER, 9526.
93 Ibid., p. 14.
98 ER, 9526.
100 Ibid., p. 20.
101 Ibid., p. 21.
102 Ibid., p. 22.
105 ER, 9256.
107 Ibid., p. 35.
108 Ibid., p. 37.
116 Ibid., pp. 60-61.