CHAPTER IV
The birth of Gautama Buddha is an epoch making event in the history of mankind. His deliverance of Four Noble Truths and Eight Fold Path by setting in motion the great Wheel of Law at Sāranāth is still being followed by millions of men of Central Asia, Japan and South-East Asia. Today Buddhism is one of the most important religions of the world. This religion evolved in India and crossed its border by virtue of its spiritual energy. But the irony of history is that such a great religion almost disappeared from the land of its birth. Various underlying causes and circumstances are responsible for the gradual decline of Buddhism in India. However it is difficult to establish as to what was the real cause for which such a popular religion with a large following was unable to captivate the Indian minds in the late medieval period. There is neither inscriptive nor any literary source to trace the reasons that made Buddhism defunct in the Indian Peninsula.

Some eminent scholars like R.C. Mitra\(^1\) and L. M. Joshi\(^2\) are of opinion that Buddhism began to decline from 7th century A.D. The former traced this decline on the basis of the testimony of the Chinese travellers\(^3\) like Fa-hien (399-414 A.D.), Sung-Yun (518 A.D.), Hiuen-Tsang (629-645 A.D.), I-Tsing (671-695 A.D.) and the Korean monk Huei-Ch’ao (726-729 A.D.).
Fa-hien saw that Buddhism was in a flourishing state in many places of India. But it was at the stage of decline in Kanauj, Kapilavastu, Rāmagrāma, Vaisālī and Gayā. Kanauj⁴ had only two monasteries belonging to Hinayāna faith. Kapilavastu⁵ was a deserted place where only ten families of lay people were residing. There was only one monastery at Rāmagrāma⁶ and at Vaisālī⁷ only one vihāra existed and Gayā was also deserted.⁸ Sung-Yun found many temples in Kanauj but no monks and nuns.⁹

Hiuen-Tsang had given a bright picture of Buddhism in India which prevailed in most important places from Kāshmir and Gandhāra to South India and from Sind and Valabhi to Orissa and Bengal.¹⁰ But from a close study of his records it is quite clear that Buddhism showed the signs of decay and it had lost its hold upon the people.¹¹ In the North-Western part of India particularly in Udyāna, Gandhāra, Takṣaśilā and Simhapura, he found the monasteries in a miserable state, mostly either in ruins or deserted. Udyāna was an important centre of Buddhism. It had, 1,444 monasteries and 18,000 monks. But Hiuen-Tsang was unhappy with the decadent condition of Buddhism there. He had written that the monks did not follow the teachings of Buddha properly and practised magical exorcism.¹² In Gandhāra he saw 1,000 monasteries in ruinous state. He wrote that “in Gandhāra there were only a few Buddhists ....... and Buddha’s sacred bowls had vanished”.¹³
From the account of Hiuen-Tsang it is clear that Buddhism was decaying in north-western region of India.

Hiuen-Tsang had given the description of the status of Buddhism in north India. Regarding Kāshmir he wrote that “at present time this kingdom is not much given to the faith and the temples of the heretics are their sole thought”. In Kāshmir the Buddhist monks began to marry from sixth century A.D. and they became corrupt. Hiuen-Tsang further mentioned that 10,000 Buddhists were living in Sind and 100 monasteries were there. But he says that these Buddhists were “worthless persons, as a rule they were indolent and giving to indulgence and debauchery”. The city of Vaiśālī had hundreds of Buddhist establishments, but except three or four all were deserted. In that city several Hindu sects grew and Digāmbara Jainism also prospered. Same was the condition at Śrāvastī also. Vārānasī had 30 monasteries and 3,000 monks used to live there. But simultaneously 100 Deva-temples existed there and 10,000 Śaivas were residing there. Thānesvāra had only three monasteries but there were several hundred Deva-temples. At Mathurā Fa-hien saw 20 monasteries and 3,000 monks used to live in them. Hiuen-Tsang refers to 2,000 monks in his time. In Ahichhatra the Śaiva-Pasupatas were more in number than the Buddhists. There were two monasteries at Prayāga and 100 Deva-temples. Ten Buddhist monasteries existed at Kauśāmbī but all were in ruinous condition.
Hiuen-Tsang saw that Buddhism was in a prosperous state in Magadha. It was possible due to the existence of Nalanda Mahavihāra as a great centre of Buddhism. Here the people were the followers of Mahāyāna Buddhism. 10,000 monks were living at Nalanda during his visit. 26

In Eastern India also the status of Buddhism was same during the visit of Hiuen-Tsang. At Tāmralipti (Tamluk in Bengal) Fa-hien found 24 Buddhist monasteries. 27 But Hiuen-Tsang saw only ten and I-Tsing found only one or two. 28 Puṇḍravardhana had 20 monasteries and 100 Deva-temples. 29 Samaṭāṭa had 30 monasteries and 100 Deva-temples. 30 Hiuen-Tsang had written with despair that “everywhere that the followers of Brāhmanical faith, outnumbered the Buddhists”. 31 Mañjuśrīmulakalpa also described that the state of Buddhism in Bengal on the eve of the election of King Gopāla (first half of 8th century A.D.) was far from encouraging. 32 The Pāśa rulers of Bengal (8th to 12th centuries A.D.) played prominent role for the development of Buddhism in Eastern India. But during that time the tendency of assimilation of Buddhism with Brāhmanism was already started with the growth of Tāntric Buddhism. 33 “The Buddhist monasteries were falling in ruins and the people were removing the bricks and wood for their own buildings”. 34

212
Hiuen-Tsang found no single monastery in Kāmarupa in Assam and described that the people had no faith in Buddhism. In Oḍra and South Kośala he saw Buddhism in a flourishing condition and the people were highly intelligent, who had keen interest in study. In Koṅgoda and Kaliṅga there were few believers while the Nirgranthas were numerous in the latter region. Hundreds of Deva-temples also existed in these places.

In Western India the non-Buddhists were numerous and Buddhism was going to decline. In Konkan, Maharastra and Gujrat Buddhism lingered and the Buddhists belonged to Sāmmitīya sect. In Ujjain Buddhism was almost extinguished.

In South India at Dhanakaṭaka, Malakuta and Chola kingdoms few Buddhist monks were residing. But the Digāṁbara Jainas and the non-Buddhists were numerous. Nāgārjunikoṇḍa on the bank of the river Krishna was a significant centre of Buddhism. At the time of Hiuen-Tsang’s visit there were more than a hundred Buddhist monasteries and the monks of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna sects were living there. But the rise of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava Āchāryas and the renaissance in Hinduism contributed a lot to the decline of Buddhism in south India.
Thus from the above accounts it is clear that Buddhism was on the verge of disappearance from 7th century A.D. I-Tsing also stated that “the teaching of the Buddha is becoming less prevalent in the world from day to day”.45 Several factors were responsible for the decline of Buddhism in India.

Schism in the Buddhist Saṅgha and disputes among the followers weakened Buddhism. R. C. Mitra writes that “another cause suggested for the gradual enfeeblement and ultimate downfall of Buddhism is internal division leading to its splitting up into numerous factious schools”.46 Buddha himself knew the danger of schism and he denounced it as one of the five deadly sins.47 The monasteries became the heated centres of quarrel among the monks. Fa-hien recorded that the monastery at Pāṭaliputra was closed down for ten years because of its defeat in a debate with the heretics.48 After the Mahāparinirvāṇa of Lord Buddha there was no supreme leader to guide the monks and the Saṅghas. The monks did according to their own will whatever they liked. They interpreted the teachings of Buddha with their own convenience due to which dissension arose in the Buddhist Saṅghas. Hiuen-Tsang writes that “Buddhism is now pure or diluted according to the spiritual insight and mental capacity of the adherents. The tenets of the school keep themselves isolated and controversy runs high, heresies on special schools claim intellectual superiority”.49 Hiuen-Tsang speaks of 18 orthodox schools.50 Fa-hien refers to
96 heretical schools in the Middle Kingdom. I-Tsing gives a list of four schools with their 18 sub-sects, whose doctrines do not accord with one another. But I-Tsing observes that they rest in their own places and do not get themselves embroiled with one another. But Hiuen-Tsang has described that Prajñāgupta, the famous Hinayānic teacher had written 700 slokas against the Great Vehicle. Śāntideva, in his work Bodhicaryavrata attempted to refute Abhidharma systems and the Viṣṇavāda. Chandrakirti opposed the non-Mādhyamika doctrines of Buddhist thought. Śāntarakṣita in his Tattvasaṅgraha wrote against the principles of the Vātsiputriya sect. The disputes between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists are quite natural. But from the above description it is clear that the Buddhists themselves were criticising their own system of thought and doctrines. R.S. Tripathy writes that "such unseemly controversies must have weakened the cause of Buddhism and reacted in favour of Brāhmaṇism, which had been showing signs of revival and vigour since the glorious epoch of the Gupta". Dissension and disunion among the adherents of different sects and sub-sects of Buddhism contributed to the downfall of this great religion.

The Gupta rulers were the followers of Brāhmaṇical Hinduism. But they were neither the religious persecutors nor were hostile to the Buddhists. They followed the policy of religious tolerance. But since that time Vaiṣṇavism was steadily rising at the cost of Buddhism. For its survival Buddhism had
to struggle hard against the Brāhmin menace. During their rule Buddhism also did not receive the princely patron of the cadre of Asoka Maurya and Kushāṇa ruler Kanishka. The change in the religious outlook of the Guptas is marked from their inscription which stated that King Samudragupta performed the Āśvamedha sacrifice. With the restoration of the sacrificial form, the worship of different gods and goddesses also began. Under the active royal support Brāhmanism regained its lost strength, vigour and enthusiasm and Buddhism receded to the background. R. C. Majumdar says that “the period of Gupta supremacy was the dividing line between Buddhist ascendancy and decadence”.

It is believed that the decline of Buddhism was due to the persecution of the kings who were the adherents of Brāhmanism. The persecutors were Puṣyamitra Suṅga, the ruler of Magadha, Toramāṇa and Mihirakula, the Huṇa rulers and Śaśāṇka, the ruler of Gauda or Karṇasuvāraṇa. Divyāvadāna, a Buddhist work recorded the tales of persecution by Puṣyamitra Suṅga. It narrated that this king made an attempt to destroy the monastery of Kukkūṭarāma and announced a prize of one hundred dinars on the head of each Buddhist monk. The Tibetan historian Tārāṇāth also described that he had burnt a number of Buddhist monasteries from Madhyadeśa to Jalandhar. But the erection of some important Buddhist monuments at Sāṅchi, Bharhut and some other places during the Suṅga rule was contradictory to the records of Divyāvadāna.

216
and Tārānāth. But as a strong champion of Brāhmanism and a staunch follower of Hinduism Puṣyamitra might have favoured Brāhmanism more than Buddhism. In spite of that during the Suṅga period Buddhism and its Saṅghas continued with its prosperity.

The Huna rulers Toramāṇa and his son Mihirakula were also regarded as the persecutor of the Buddhists. The Huṇas belonged to Central Asia. But after their conquest of India they became Hinduised. Toramāṇa was known to have persecuted the Buddhists who had destroyed the Ghositārāma monastery of Kauśāmbī. Many Indian Buddhists left for China to save their lives from the attack of the Huṇas. Mihirakula, who ruled from the throne of Kāshmir was also similarly condemned. Kalhana, the author of Rājatarangini stated that he was a great enemy of Buddhism and for his atrocities he was like a Yama, the God of Death, to the Buddhists. He was a great persecutor who killed a large number of Buddhists and destroyed many stūpas and vihāras in Kāshmir and Punjab region.

Hiuen-Tsang has accused Saśāṅka as an oppressor who expelled the inmates of a Buddhist monastery at Kuśinagara and threw a relic-stone into the Ganges which contained the foot-prints of Buddha. He is further accused of having uprooted the Bodhi tree at Bodhgayā. He is also said to have attempted to remove an image of Buddha from a temple
situated to the east of the Bodhi tree and replace it by that of a Śiva. Thus from the account of Hiuen-Tsang it is known that Śaśāṅka showed his great hostility towards Buddhism. L. M. Joshi says that “among the ancient Indian princes, the most notable example of anti-Buddhist Brāhmanical fanaticism after Puṣyamitra Suṅga is presented by Śaśāṅka.......”.  

Buddhism, of course suffered enormous persecution at the hands of the Indian rulers who were the adherents of Brāhmanism. But the indigenous rulers were not guilty of religious persecution. They might be the followers of other creeds but were not intolerant of the Buddhists. “In every story of religious persecution in India the motive force was not religious but political. The Buddhist monks took a large share in the political intrigues and received the reward or retribution as their patrons won or lost”.  

The persecution of the Buddhists may be concerned either with religion or with politics but it is a fact that the enormous persecution gave a great blow to the progress of Buddhism in India.

When Buddhism was struggling for its existence against the Brāhmanic menace Harṣavardhan, the ruler of Kanauj appeared as its protector. But his religious bigotry and intolerance led to the decline of Buddhism.
Harṣavardhan was a worshipper of Śiva and Surya (Sun God) from the beginning of his life upto the major part of his reign. Bāṇabhaṭṭa, in his work Harṣacharitā, describes him as a great Śaivite. Harsa, in his Bansakhera and Madhuvan copper plates of 22nd and 25th year of his reign respectively described himself as Parama Mahēśvara or a prime devotee of Lord Śiva and Mahēśvaraiva Sarvasattvānukāmpo i.e. one who like Śiva was full of compassion for all beings. This indicates that Harṣa adopted the religion of his ancestors at least upto 631 A.D. After this period he showed his leaning towards Buddhism. The memory of his deceased brother Rājayavardhan, who was a great devotee of Lord Budhā and his sister Rājyashree, a nun of Sāmmitīya school of Buddhism developed in him a sense of likeness for this religion. His visit to the Ashrama of Divākara Mitra and his religious discussions with Guṇaprabhā, to whom Tārānāth claimed as his preceptor and his meeting with the Buddhist intellectuals, who were the invitees of the Mahāmokshaparishad held at Prayāga once in every five years also had great influence on him. The result was that he constructed a brazen temple of 100 feet height at Nālandā Vihāra and another Buddhist temple at Malwa. Harsa was the author of three dramas viz., Priyadarśīkā, Ratnāvalī and Nāgānanda. The first two which were written in the early part of his reign he offered prayer to Lord Śiva in its benefactory stanzas. But in the last drama the prayer was meant for Lord Buddha. The theme of this drama was also related with Buddhism.
Harsa came in contact with a luminous personality like Hiuen-Tsang in 643 A.D. and subsequently embraced Buddhism. "The scholar developed in Harsa a strong faith in Yogāchāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism almost to the extent of fanaticism. He sowed in his heart the seeds of bigotry and intolerance. This change was complete and tremendous". Immediately after this, Harṣa organised a splendid assembly at Kanauj in 643 A.D. in order to show highest honour to his preceptor Hiuen-Tsang and to give wide publicity of Yogāchāra school. Here for the first time Harṣa's spirit of bigotry and intolerance was exposed. This assembly was attended by twenty tributary kings including King Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarupa, their two hundred ministers, one thousand renowned Buddhist priests, five hundred Brāhmaṇas and followers of other religious sects. A golden image of Buddha of the stature of King Harṣa was installed in a tower. Another smaller statue of three feet in height was carried in a gorgeous procession every day with Harṣa and Bhāskaravarman as the attendants. On the left side of the statue Harṣa stood as Indra holding a canopy and on the right was Bhāskaravarman as Brahmā holding a white chāmara. The intention of this arrangement was to make the Brāhmin gods servient to Buddha. This wounded the sentiments of the Brāhmins who attempted to take the life of Harṣavardhan on the last day of the assembly. But it was detected and the persons involved in it were severely dealt with. The ring-leaders were put to death and the five hundred Brāhmaṇas were banished to the frontiers of India.
In that Kanauj Assembly the Hinayānists were also neglected. When Harṣa came to know their discontent against Hiuen-Tsang he announced that ‘whoever speaks against him, his tongue shall be cut out’.  

After the Assembly of Kanauj was over, Emperor Harṣavardhan proceeded to Prayāga accompanied by the vassal kings to celebrate the quinquennial festival Mahāmokshaparishad. Here Hiuen-Tsang was invited as the chief guest who exhibited the same spirit of sectarianism. The ceremony began with the worship of Buddha on the first day and Sun and Śiva on the subsequent days. Here the Buddhist monks were entertained with lavish gifts and after they were satisfied, the turn of others came to receive the royal charities. Harṣa distributed charities to his people for months together. When the accumulated treasures of the state were exhausted, the king gave away his personal ornaments and dresses and wore a secondhand garment provided by his sister. But while distributing gifts the open partiality that he had shown to the Buddhists injured the sentiments of the Brahmins. The Brahmins were the elite class in the society throughout ancient India. Their contentment and co-operation contributed a lot to the success of administration and consolidation of the empire. Mauryan Emperor Asoka used to follow the policy of toleration and generosity towards the Brahmins which made his rule glorious. He instructed his officers and Mahāmātras to work sincerely for the welfare of
the Brāhmins. Though he was a Buddhist he adopted the title Devanāmpriya or the Beloved of Gods to appease the Brāhmanas. The Gupta rulers, who were the champion of Brāhmanism also followed the policy of toleration towards the Buddhists, which made them succeed in the field of administration. After the Gupta rule the power and prestige of the Brāhmins grew rapidly and they became the predominant class in the society. But it is unfortunate that Harṣavardhan failed to realise the sentiment of the Brāhmins. “The unduly harsh punishment that he gave to the Brāhmin leaders after Kanauj Assembly and the treatment that he showed to the Brāhmin scholars by making them wait to receive the gifts after the turn of the Buddhists in the Prayāga Assembly betrayed a spirit of intolerance which was not only unbecoming of but also unwise on the part of Harṣa. The result was disastrous”.\textsuperscript{103} The five hundred Brāhmins who were banished from the empire were all intellectual people. They took shelter probably in South India which was a powerful stronghold of Brāhmanism. From there they started the intellectual war against the Buddhists under the leadership of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa which reached its climax in 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. during the time of Śaṅkarāchārya. This religious revolution brought the decline of Buddhism in India.\textsuperscript{104}

Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (C.700 A.D.)\textsuperscript{105} was regarded as “the fiercest critic of Buddhism”.\textsuperscript{106} He was a great protagonist of Vedic ritualism, Brāhmanical theology and priestly
superiority. He played important role for the extermination of the Buddhists. The literary works like Śaṅkaravijaya of Ānandagiri and Śaṅkaradigvijaya of Mādhava narrated the tales of persecution of the Buddhists by King Sudhanvan of Ujjain at the instigation of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa.108

Another work Keralotpati also stated that the Buddhists were ousted from Kerala by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa.109 But R. C. Mitra says that “the writings of Kumārila however, savour of no anti-Buddhist frenzy. On the other hand he regarded the Buddhist system of thought as authoritative, because it derives its inspiration from the Upaniṣad, and he further allows it the merit of having curbed extreme attachment to sensuous subjects”.110 Kumārila also admits the validity of the Mahāyānic doctrine of Vijñānavāda in his own philosophy.111 But K. L. Hazra opines that “it was due to the fierce campaign of Kumārila, Buddhism suffered and lost its popularity”.112

Śaṅkarāchārya (C. 780-820 A.D.)113 was a Brāhmin of Kerala.114 He preached the cult of Advaitavāda or Monism. He possessed an extraordinary debating skill. According to tradition he challenged many renowned Buddhist scholars in the debates on the condition that “the vanquished should either adopt the religion of his opponent or forfeit his life and surrender the property of the religious establishments, if he had any”.115 From the tradition it is further known that the victorious march of Śaṅkarāchārya from South to North and the
conversion of many Buddhists into Hinduism was a great blow to the survival of Buddhism in India. Owing to his anti-Buddhist crusade Buddhism met its evil days. "His was the thundering voice, at whose approach as says Tārānāth, Buddhist monasteries began to tremble and the monks began to disperse pell-mell". He played an important role for the extermination of the Buddhists from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. But this legend of bloody crusade against the Buddhists conducted by Śaṅkarāchārya is denied by R. C. Mitra. He told that Buddhism exercised great influence, in the philosophy of Śaṅkara. His doctrine of Māyā or illusion has its close similarity with the Mādhyamika philosophy of the Buddhists. His view of Moksha is associated with the Buddhist Nirvāṇa and his Nirguṇa Brahman corresponds largely with Nāgārjuna’s Śūnya. N. N. Ghosh also did not accept Śaṅkara’s anti-Buddhist crusade on the ground that it is not at all mentioned in the Brāhmanic and Buddhist literature and also in the epigraphical records. The traditions and legends are historically untrue. Śāntarakṣita, a Buddhist philosopher had criticised all the philosophical theories of his contemporaries but told nothing about Śaṅkarāchārya. N. N. Ghosh says that "he was too good a Hindu to preach violence or intolerance or hatred against Buddhism or for the matter of that against any religion". Though Śaṅkarāchārya was not hostile towards Buddhism "he fortified Hinduism against the assault of heretical sects by enrolling missionaries in its defence and organising them into
corporate monastic schools under the central direction of the Grand Abbot of Sringeri. Through his talks and deliberations he successfully focussed the superiority of Hinduism over Buddhism, due to which the intrinsic value of Buddhism diminished.

Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism with its Hinduistic tendencies in ritual and worship and the development of Tāntric Buddhism became another cause of the degeneration of Buddhism. Mahāyānism bestowed divinity to Lord Buddha and also introduced the cult of Bodhisattva. Buddha was regarded as Dharmarāja or ‘King of the World, Puruṣottama or the Best person, Swayambhu or Self-subsistent and Lokapitā or Father of the World. All beings are considered as his children. The Bodhisattvas were conceived as merciful like that of Hindu gods. The figures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas began to worship from the Kushāna period. Rituals and ceremonies found their way into Buddhism which were strictly denied by Lord Buddha. The ethical code of conduct and the Eight Fold Path of early Buddhism disappeared and it was believed that the worship of the image of Buddha only would bring salvation. This great departure from original Buddhism caused disaster for this creed. Dr. R. C. Mitra says that “the increasing manifestation of Hinduistic tendencies in rituals and worship is an unfailing symptom of the weakening of the original impulse of Buddhism”. In course of time the Buddhists invented many gods and goddesses. The common
people found no difference "between the worship of Viṣṇu and Buddha, Śiva and Avalokiteśvara and Tārā and Pārvatī". Further, Buddhism came closer to Hinduism because Sanskrit was adopted as the vehicle of expression by the Mahāyānists. Thus subsequently Buddhism lost its originality and pristine purity. It also lost its identity and merged with Hinduism.

Mahāyānism brought Buddhism very close to the lay people. Both the monks and the householders enjoyed the right to worship the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. The Buddhist temples and monasteries were constructed in large numbers to enshrine the gods which were patronised by the wealthy persons and the kings. They offered lavish gifts to these temples and monasteries in the form of gold, silver and jewels. Many unworthy people preferred monastic life being attracted by this wealth. They found these monasteries as the abode of ease life. Hiuen-Tsang has narrated the behaviour of the monks of Sind and has written that "they were indolent, worthless persons given to debauchery. Though they wore the monastic dress yet killed animals, reared cattle and maintained wives and children". I-Tsing also narrated in the same tone regarding the activities of the priests. He wrote that "it is unseemly for a monastery to have great wealth, granaries full of rotten corn, many servants, male and female, money and treasures hoarded in the treasury without using any of them, while the members are suffering from poverty". He also regretted that the teachings of Buddha being less prevalent in his time and the
discipline was not strictly observed. When unworthy persons began to be admitted in the monasteries as monks and nuns, the tone of moral life in Buddhism deteriorated. In course of time their number increased and they formed majority within the order. They left the life of austerity and began to relax many rules and regulations. They introduced Mantras, Dhāraṇīs, Mudrās, Maṇḍalas and other Tāntric rites into Mahāyānaism. Later on these Tantric rites and rituals played a prominent role in Mahāyāna. This phase of Buddhism was known as Tāntric Buddhism which discarded the philosophical teachings of Buddha and introduced esoteric and secret rites with magical formulae. Many people were attracted towards Vajrayāna due to its mysticism and sorceries. The Vajrayānists thoroughly changed the practices of early Buddhism. The monks exercised great influence upon the people through their psychic power. Their Tāntric and hypnotic powers were regarded as spiritualism by the common mass and became very much popular. This rotten state of Buddhism destroyed the moral and ethical fervour of monastic order.

By 9th century A.D. Vajrayāna was firmly established in India. Even the great University of Nālandā was not free from the influence of its philosophy. The kings were so much influenced by its mystic practices that they patronised the monasteries instead of spending money on the army. They employed tantric priests to protect their kingdoms performing
mystic ceremonies. The coffers of the monasteries possessed more wealth than the treasuries of the Kings.\textsuperscript{137}

In course of time two other offshoots like Kālachakrayāna and Sahajayāna originated from Tantrayāna. The followers of Kālachakrayāna used special mantra-charms, magic circles and also introduced the cult of sacrifice to satisfy their deities.\textsuperscript{138} Lord Buddha had raised his voice against animal sacrifice and championed the cause of non-violence. But the introduction of animal sacrifice by the Buddhists went against the principle of early Buddhism and the common mass lost their faith on this creed.\textsuperscript{139}

By 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. a section of Tāntric Buddhism revolted against the rites and ceremonies of Vajrayāna. It was known as Sahajayāna. The Sahajiās denounced the worshipping of gods and goddesses advocated by Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna. They believed that all such gods and goddesses including Lord Buddha reside in the body of man.\textsuperscript{140} So they professed the principle of satisfying all the needs of the physical body which is the abode of all the deities and without which no Siddhi can be attained.\textsuperscript{141} With this idea of worshipping the physical body, they followed the principle of propitiating human nature with its sex passions and other primitive propensities. It should not, however, be forgotten that the Sahajiās admit the primary importance of sex instinct and primitive desires with a view to sublimating them by a natural Yogic process, rather than to
suppress them by unnatural and undue regulations. So they laid emphasis on sexo-yogic practices and believed that Mahāsukha or the highest state of bliss could be attained by a mystic union of the Śādhaka with the Yoganī. This addition of female element in the Tantra weakened Buddhism. The Buddhist monks, who were the spiritual leaders of the whole community, lost their reputation of good character and other good qualities, which sounded the death knell of Buddhism and its monastic order.

Thus the introduction of the esoteric practices and demonstration of psychic power, worship of hundreds of gods and goddesses in the temples and monasteries and use of wine and women completely changed the old religious principles of Buddhism enunciated by Śākyamuni and it led to the downfall of Buddhism in India including South Kośala.

In Orissa the growing popularity of Śaivism from 9th century A.D. and the lack of royal patronage brought the fall of Buddhism. The early Bhauma rulers were the Buddhists but the later rulers like Subhākaradeva III and IV and Queen Daṇḍi Mahādevi were devout worshippers of Siva. They built a large number of Śiva temples in Orissa and popularised Śaivism. For that reason Vajrayāna Buddhism and its offshoot Sahajayāna failed to receive the royal patronage. Further, Śaivism reached the highest watermark of popularity in the Somavamśi period. It was after Bālārjuna that all his successors became champions of Śaivism and assumed the title
They used the symbol Bull as emblem on their seals. A large number of Śaivāchāryas visited Orissa from far-off places. They were Pramatha, Sadāśiva, Sandhyāśīva and others, who preached the philosophy of the cults like Lakulīśa, Pāśupata and Mattamayura. Āchārya Gaganāśīva was a great exponent of the Mattamayura cult in South Kośalā. Having received the patronage of King Janamejaya, he built the Somes'Vara temple at Rānīpur-Jharīāl. The Somavamśīs were more inclined towards Śaivism after shifting their capital to the coastal Orissa and Buddhism gradually lost the privilege of royal patronage. In course of time the Buddhist vihāras of Orissa lost their importance and many Buddhist Siddhāchāryas and philosophers like Sarahapā, Kānhupā, Lūipā, Śāntipā and others, finding no prospects of Buddhism in Orissa left for Bengal one after another and took shelter in the court of the Pāla rulers. From there they went towards Nālandā and Vikramśīlā.

The internecine conflict among the different groups of people specially among the Hindus and the Buddhists became another cause that led to the decadence of Buddhism. The Buddhists were described by the Hindus as naked who were devoid of three Vedas, which are the real garments of men. They were further condemned as Pāṇḍa and Mlechha. Similar attacks have been made by the Buddhists against the other communities. In the Tattvasaṅgraha and the commentary on the Dohākoṣa by Sarorūhavajra, the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and
the vedic rituals are openly criticized. In the Buddhist Sadhanāmālā the Hindu deities are insulted. Here the severed head of Brahmā is carried by Māricī and the heads of Śiva and Gourī are trampled by Trailokyavijaya. Further Prasannatārā holds Brahmā and Rudra between two legs and tramples on Indra and Upendra. There is also an image of Lokesvara in Nālandā Museum trampling upon Śiva and Pārvatī. "This sadly testifies to the deviation of the Buddhist Church from the pristine charity of the Buddha, who counsels to meet hostility with forbearance. Intolerance has the tendency to foster a corresponding reaction from the oppressed." Many Buddhist images were stolen by the intolerant Hindus and were either destroyed or converted into vedic gods. In Orissa the huge Śiva liṅga, now enshrined in the Bhāskaresvara temple at Bhubaneswara seems to be the remnant of an Aśokan pillar destroyed by the Śaivas into a phallic emblem. In South Kosāla we possess two examples that the Buddhist shrines took over and refurbished by the Hindus. These are the temples at Narsinghnāth and Kosalesvara.

The invasion of the Muslims and their persecution became another cause of the decline of Buddhism. N. N. Ghosh writes that "The chief cause of the disappearance of Buddhism was the prevalence of Vajrayāna which sapped its foundation by destroying all its moral strength. The secondary or contributory cause was the invasion of the Turks which gave a final blow which the morally and ethically weakened structure of
Buddhism could not withstand". By the end of twelfth century A.D. Muhammad Bhaktyar, a general of Qutbuddin Aibak attacked the Odantapuri monastery in Bihar which was an important centre of Buddhism of that time. He captured that monastery, killed the inmates and plundered the treasury. He also invaded the Nālandā University, burnt its library and broke the image of Goddess Tārā which possessed great magic power. R. C. Mitra writes that “the monasteries had been the nerve centres of Buddhism, and with their collapse, communal life was unhinged and abruptly terminated”. The Turks were the iconoclasts who remained satiated with the destruction of the images worshipped by the idolaters. Their other motive was to obtain wealth. So far that they plundered the monasteries. The Turks did not spare the Hindu temples also. But those were soon reconstructed by the Brāhmaṇa teachers who were highly respected by the people for their good character and moral principles. The common mass extended their whole hearted co-operation for that work. Whereas the Buddhist monks failed to do that because they had no reputation of good character. They were only respected because of the supernatural power they possessed through their Tāntric practices. But the people lost that faith in them when they were not able to protect the monasteries from the invaders by their supernatural power. Their immoral practices were exposed. They were forced to leave the country and took shelter in Nepal and Tibet. Their retreat sounded the death knell of their faith in the country. R. C. Mitra says that “even Buddhism
survived the Moslem conquest and eked out perhaps a precarious existence for a few centuries beyond, in Bengal, Orissa and some corners in the Deccan.169 But the followers became leaderless and without guide they became helpless.170 Within one or two centuries some of them returned to their old Brāhmanic faith and others being suffered social tyranny by the higher castes accepted Islam.171 About 14th century A.D. Buddhism disappeared from the Middle country including South Kosāla and few years after that it vanished from India.

Some scholars say that Buddhism neither declined in India nor was eradicated from its motherland. But gradually and quietly it lost itself in Vaiśṇavism and Śaivism and other religious faiths of Hinduism. C. Elliot says, “Yet in reviewing the disappearance of Buddhism from India we must remember that it was absorbed not expelled”.172 Gradually Buddhism merged with Hinduism which accepted many elements of the religion of the Buddha.

It is known that Mahayāna and Tantrayāna Buddhism admitted many ideas from Hinduism. This ‘give and take’ policy of these two religions did not help Buddhism but it lost its identity with Hinduism. L. M. Joshi writes that “the Tantra practices harmonised the two systems so completely that Buddhism’s independent existence might have appeared needless or even impossible”.173 Like wise R. C. Mitra says that “the Tantras constitute a conspicuous land-mark in the history
of Buddhism, for they were to alter the shape of Buddhism beyond recognition and further narrow down the gulf that still separate the Buddhists from the Hindus”. Both Hinduism and Buddhism owing to their tolerant and liberal attitude adopted the thoughts and doctrines from each other. In the orthodox Hindu Tantras there are references to Mahāyāna deities like Kurukullā, Paṇḍarā, Tārā etc. Buddhist deities like Chāmuṇḍā, Vāsūlī, Tārā and Kṣetrapāla found places in Hindu iconography. In the Buddhist sādhanā of Vajrayoginī, this goddess is found with severed head on her hand. The Hindus accepted this concepton of the Buddhists and introduced it in the image of Chinnamastā one among the Daśa Mahavidyā. The Buddhist deities Kālī and Bhadrakālī were also introduced into the Hindu pantheon and were accepted as the Hindu goddesses. The deities Charchikā and Mahākāla were worshipped by both the Hindu and the Buddhists. R. C. Mitra says, that “the figure of Viṣṇu in meditative pose, and those of Lokesvara Viṣṇu and of Dhyānī Śiva also appear to be originally Buddhist in conception”.

Similarly the Buddhists also accepted many Hindu elements. The Hindu goddess Sarasvatī was accepted as the Buddhist goddess, the female counterpart of Mañjuśrī, the Buddhist god of learning. Kuvera, the Hindu god of wealth was worshipped by the Buddhists in the names of Kuvera and Jambhala. Hāritī, the concert of Jambhala was worshipped as the goddess of wealth and also as the protectress of infants like
the Hindu goddess Śaṣṭhīdevī. The Hindu god Indra, the wielder of the Thunderbolt was transformed into Buddhist pantheon to Vajradhara. The Buddhists also incorporated Dharmarāja Yama as Dharmapāla in their pantheon. Similarly the Buddhist Marici whose chariot was drawn by seven boars reminds us about the Sun god with chariot drawn by seven horses.

Thus in course of time Buddhism lost its individuality and independent outlook and was accommodated with Hinduism. Buddha was accepted as an avatara of Viṣṇu in Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda. The Hindus believe that Lord Viṣṇu assumes different forms to accomplish different purpose for the good of mankind. The Buddha was accepted as an avatāra by the Hindus who purified their religion of the numerous abuses which had crept into it. Today the Vaiṣṇavas worship Lord Jagannāth as Baudhāvatāra. An inscription of 10th-11th century A.D. discovered from the Mahādev temple near Titilagarh in western Orissa says that this temple was erected by a Śaiva Āchārya named Gaganaśiva of Mattamayura school. This temple contained the images of Someśvaraśiva, Kārtikeya, Lakṣmī and Siddheśvara i.e. Buddha. This Buddha figure was sculptured on the door-jamb of the entrance of the temple. R. C. Mitra says, “It is an indication that the process of accommodating Buddha in the Hindu pantheon and of his worship as a god had been already in vogue in Orissa, as elsewhere in India”. Buddhism perished in India but its spirit...
yet survives and its sacred places are still available in ruined form in different parts of this country.
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