CHAPTER III

BUDDHIST MONASTICISM AND EDUCATION SYSTEM IN KOREA, THAILAND AND TIBET
The present chapter deals with the Buddhist monasticism and education system in Tibet, Thailand and Korea - the three countries/regions representing Vajrayana, Hinayana (Theravada) and Mahayana respectively. The process of the spread of Buddhism to these regions, the establishment of institutionalized monastic structure and the education system within its fold will be the main focus of this chapter. Buddhism and its diffusion to other countries from India has been a significant event in the history of the world, especially East Asia, Central Asia and South East Asia. Buddhism flourished in many parts of the world due to institutional patronage which is the focus of this chapter. It attracted many adherents in the past and continues to do so in the present due to pragmatic reasons of providing sustenance and education and its philosophy of love, compassion and brotherhood. Buddhism taught non-violence, compassion and tolerance and hence its dissemination to other parts of India and outside was through peaceful means; it was readily accepted by people outside India voluntarily and not through coercion or force. Conversion through allurement, political power or force was not a part of the Buddhist ideology. It was due to a change of heart that people accepted it. Everywhere the Buddhism tradition influenced and reshaped the host cultures and society. Buddhism is so deeply rooted in East Asia, South East Asia, Sri Lanka, etc. that Indian tradition has been and will continue to be present in their way of life, literature, religion in subtle or obvious forms. “The Buddhist cultures of Asia represent distinct textual traditions. Their canons largely overlap, but they differ from each other in quite an extent both with respect to the texts and their translation strategies. This plurality should not be seen as schism, but rather as an indication of the richness and variety of the development of Buddhadharma in response to the needs of diverse communities, and their
cultural psyche, and of the creativity and diverse insights of Buddhist scholars in Asia.”

It is not possible to totally dissociate the traditional concepts deeply rooted in one’s own culture at different stages of change, modernization and advancement. The concepts of rebirth, the Heaven and Hell, renunciation, entering Buddhahood, salvation, etc. are reminders of the Indian presence in the contemporary times and in the past eras too without any direct reference in the countries where Buddhism spread from India. Buddhism preached by Lord Buddha was essentially a moral code meant for self-purification. With the passage of time, Buddhism was divided into several sects and transformed its basic tenets and became a theistic religion speaking about gods. It developed the paraphernalia of *puja* (worship) which included circumambulating, offering flowers and garlands, lighting lamps, incense, etc. Thus, a ritualistic Buddhism evolved. “The main stream of Buddhist studies tend to divide the discipline according to its linguistic and geographic distribution into three fields, namely, the Pali tradition in Southeast Asia, Chinese Buddhism in East Asia and Tibetan Buddhism in Central Asia. This division is not arbitrary, as it is well known that they correspond respectively to three vehicles of the Buddhist teachings, i.e., the Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. In terms of Buddhist philosophy, however, the Pali tradition is a direct descendent of the Theravada School and the Tibetan tradition commits itself exclusively to the Prasangika Madhyamaka by ranking it the highest truth.”

In Asia, we can see a rich diversity of forms of Buddhism, but the common root is the same which is threefold- practice of taking refuge in the *Triratna* (Triple Gems or Three Jewels), the Four *Seals* of the doctrine and acceptance of the Four Noble

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Truths which we have already discussed in the second chapter. All Buddhists take the first sermon of the Buddha as central to Buddhist teaching. “All Asian traditions read, recite and interpret Dharmachakrapravartana-sutra. We see hence that despite the diversity in forms of practice, canons and doctrinal formulations that might be taken to divide us, we share the most fundamental features of the Buddha’s teachings and realizations.”

For the present study, we have chosen three regions for study regarding the spread of Buddhism outside India and its characteristics - Tibet (in our neighborhood), Thailand (South East Asia) and Korea (East Asia). They also represent the three main streams of Buddhism. Local cultures were not fully modified but contributed to and shaped Buddhism in their own cultural space.

The geographical spread of Buddhism in Asia is depicted in the figure given below; this is only a general representation and does not take into account mixed traditions:

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3 Geshe N. Samten, *op. cit.*, pp.xii-xiii
Top 10 Countries with Highest Proportion of Buddhists

(Source: http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/spread.htm)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>95.00%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tibet</td>
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<td>Laos</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Macau</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>43</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: [www.adherents.com](http://www.adherents.com))

**Top 10 Largest National Buddhist Populations**

- **China**: 102,000,000
- **Japan**: 8,965,000
- **Thailand**: 55,480,000
- **Cambodia**: 9,130,000
- **Vietnam**: 46,690,000
- **Myanmar**: 41,610,000
- **South Korea**: 10,920,000
- **Taiwan**: 9,150,000
- **Sri Lanka**: 12,540,000
- **India**: 7,060,000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Buddhists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>102 000 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>8 965 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>55 480 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>49 690 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>41 610 000</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>12 540 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>9 130 000</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>7 000 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: www.adherents.com)

**Statistics on the Major Branches of Buddhism**

- **Mahayana** (56%): 185,000,000 adherents
- **Theravada** (38%): 124,000,000 adherents
- **Vajrayana (Tibetan)** (6%): 20,000,000 adherents
The estimates of Buddhists worldwide vary between 200-500 million; the general consensus is about 360 million which is about 6% of the world’s population. Thus, Buddhism is the fourth largest religion after Christianity (35%), Islam (19%) and Hinduism (14%). The Buddhists are mainly concentrated in East Asia and Southeast Asia. Buddhism diffused slowly and peacefully from its core in northern India to other parts of India and abroad.

(Tibet's traditional three provinces are shown along with other regional areas.)

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Let’s begin with Tibet. Tibet is now an Autonomous Region of the Republic of China. But Tibet can be taken as a separate entity for study as Tibetans still maintain their separate cultural, religious and political identity and have a close relationship with India. One of the pertinent questions which arise is what is Tibet or Tibetans? The ethnic Tibetans are found in China/Tibet, India (Ladakh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh, northern Uttar Pradesh, Mysore, etc.), Nepal, Bhutan and also other parts of South Asia and the Western countries as refugees. The region inhabited by Tibetans is geopolitically categorized as ‘political’ and ‘ethnographic’. The former refers to the polity which was ruled by His Holiness the Dalai Lamas and is presently the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) under China. The latter refers to the ethnic Tibetan areas of Amdo and Kham that are today part of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces.  

Hugh Richardson has justified this categorization by saying: “In ‘political’ Tibet the Tibetan government has ruled continuously from the earliest times down to 1951. The region beyond that to the north and east [Amdo and Kham]… is its ‘ethnographic’ extension which people of Tibetan race once inhabited exclusively and where they are still in the majority. In that wider area, ‘political’ Tibet exercised jurisdiction only in certain places and at irregular intervals; for the most part, local lay or monastic chiefs were in control of districts of varying size. From the 18th century onwards the region was subject to sporadic Chinese infiltration.”

The study of Tibet led to a search for the lost chapters of Indian history and culture out of the materials available in Tibet, Buddhism being one of them. The materials in Tibetan language have thrown much light on

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many aspects of Indian history and culture which were earlier unknown. The Tibetan translation works from Indian and Chinese texts were codified under two major collections called *Kanjur* (*bka’’gyur*) *Buddhavacana* and *Tanjur* (*bstan ‘gyur*) *Sastra*. The two collections consist of some 4,569 texts. The Indian texts which were translated into Tibetan were originally in Sanskrit, Pali, and Apabhramsa. Likewise, there is a long history of translating Buddhist texts from Chinese into Tibetan since the eighth century AD. From a catalogue of Tibetan Tripitaka (*Idan-dkar-ma dkar-chag*), we know that 24 *Sastras* and 8 treatises were translated from Chinese which included the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra*, the *Lankavatara-sutra*, the *Suvarnaptabhasottama-sutra*, etc. The Buddhist authors in Tibet are classified into four distinct traditions due to their different outlooks:

1. Rnin ma : Belonging to the Padma-sambhava tradition
2. Bka ’rgyud : descending from Naropa and his teachings.
3. Sa-skya : offshoots of the teachings delivered by Birupa (Virupa)
4. Dge lug : in the legacy of the teachings of Atisa Dipankara (Bka gdam

> Dge lugs) and that is reformed by Tson rkha pa.

The Tibetan texts throw light diverse subjects. The subjects are Buddhist logic, philosophy, Sutra, Vinaya, the Tantra, the Medical works, various aspects of arts and many others.

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7 There are 3 sets of *Kanjur* and 2 sets of *Tanjur* collections in Asiatic Society Museum, Kolkata. The former is of 17th century AD, 19th century AD and 1961. The latter is also having two editions. Besides, there are several Sanskrit texts on Buddhism in Tibetan translation of the *Kanjur* collection preserved at the Asiatic Society.

8 Zhihua Yao, *op.cit.*, pp.62-63

9 S.K.Pathak, *op.cit.*, p.146
The Tibetan Buddhist texts are as follows:\(^{10}\):

Tibetan Canon consists of two parts: (1) the bKángjur ("Translation of the Word of the Buddha"), pronounced Kanjur, and (2) the bStan-'gyur ("Translations of the Teachings") pronounced Tanjur. The latter collection contains works attributed to individuals other than the Buddha, hence it is considered only semi-canonical. The first printing of the Kanjur occurred not in Tibet, but in China (Beijing), being completed in 1411. The first Tibetan edition of the canon was at sNar-tang with the Kanjur appearing in 1731, followed by the Tanjur in 1742. Other famous editions of the canon were printed at Derge and Co-ne.

(a) bka’-gyur (Kanjur): Translation of the Word of the Buddha; 98 Volumes (according to the Narthang edition).

5. Sutra: 30 Volumes. 270 texts, 75% of which are Mahayana, 25% Hinayana (prominence and precedence being invariably given to Mahayana sutras).
6. Tantra: 22 Volumes. Contains more than 300 texts.

The Tanjur (bStan-'gyur) is a supplement to the Kanjur. It contains collection of stories, commentaries on the Tantra section of the Kanjur and commentaries on the Sutra section. Some works are related to Abhidharma and Vinaya as well as Madhyamika and Vijnanavada. Some of the works under the Sutra section of the Tanjur are not even Buddhist in character.

\(^{10}\) http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/history/s_tibcanon.htm
They deal with logic, grammar, lexicography, poetry and drama, medicine and chemistry, astrology and divination, painting and biographies of saints. They are necessary aids and accompaniments in the practice of the religion and hence are included in the canon.

(b) **bstan-'gyur** (Tanjur): Translations of the Teachings; 224 Volumes (3626 texts) according to the Beijing edition.

A. Sutras ("Hymns of Praise"): 1 Volume; 64 texts.

B. Commentaries on the Tantras: 86 Volumes; 3055 texts.

C. Commentaries on Sutras; 137 Volumes; 567 texts.

1. Prajnaparamita Commentaries, 16 Volumes.
2. Madhyamika Treatises, 29 Volumes.
3. Yogacara Treatises, 29 Volumes.
4. Abhidharma, 8 Volumes.
5. Miscellaneous Texts, 4 Volumes.
7. Tales and Dramas, 4 Volumes.
8. Technical Treatises, 43 Volumes.

The work on Tibetan Buddhism started during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. W. W. Rockhill (1854-1914) made important material accessible to the scholarly world by his translations from the Tibetan of the *Udanavarga* (London, 1883), followed by the *Life of Buddha*, based on the Tibetan translation of the *Mulasarvastivada-Vinaya* (London, 1884) and the *Bhiksuni- Pratimoksa-sutra* from the same Vinaya text (Paris, 1886). More important contribution was made by Giuseppe Tucci who had undertaken several trips to Tibet and brought back many important texts and materials.
on Tibetan Buddhist literature and art. All these efforts came to an abrupt end in 1959 with the fall of Old Tibet and the consequent cultural revolution and Tibetan studies has now taken a new shape informed largely by modern concerns.\textsuperscript{11}

**Buddhism in Tibet**

The history of Buddhism in Tibet can be traced mostly in terms of its conflict with Bon till its reform and full establishment by the Indian scholar Atisa in the eleventh century AD. Bon- pronounced as Pon was the ancient religion of Tibet and its followers were called Bon-po\textsuperscript{12}. Bon offered resistance to the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. The Tibetans accepted the Tantric Buddhism and by the eleventh century AD, Buddhism was fully established and got assimilated in its socio-cultural matrix.

The account of Tibetan history begins from 7\textsuperscript{th} century AD when King Songtsen Gampo (618-648? A.D) expanded his kingdom and brought unification in Tibet perhaps for the first time. He patronized Buddhism. By the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D, Buddhism spread and gathered momentum during the rule of King Trisong Deutsen. He invited two great Indian Buddhist scholars, Santarakshita (Pema Jungne in Tibetan) and Padmasambava (Guru Rinpoche in Tibetan) to Tibet. The latter founded the oldest school of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma pa school. In the tenth century Atisa, the great Indian scholar from the famous Vikramsila University arrived in Tibet at the invitation of the Tibetan King. This event made possible the second diffusion of Buddhism after Lang Darma had destroyed Buddhism in Tibet in 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. This had the unintended consequences as Dawa Norbu says of letting out the pent up energies of Buddhism that was predominantly

\textsuperscript{12} Alaka Chattopadhyaya, *Atisa and Tibet*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1999(reprint), 1\textsuperscript{st} edition Kolkata 1967, p.165
a Lhasa based religion to the farthest corners of Tibet by unleashing the missionary activity of the monks.\textsuperscript{13}

Buddhism has not been a mere system of belief to the Tibetans; it encompasses their entire culture and civilization and constitutes the very essence of their lives. Goldstein states some subtle facts regarding Buddhism in Tibetan society\textsuperscript{14}. First, Buddhism has played an important role defining morality and the fundamental meaning of existence through its notion of karma, rebirth, and enlightenment. Secondly, Buddhism in its popular dimension dominated the daily life of Tibetans as it incorporated many autochthonous deities and spirits. Monks were consulted during illness and asked to do some sacred divination and acted as a medium to consult god/deities. “Tibetan Buddhism was thus a dominant ideological framework for both day-to-day life and the ultimate questions dealing with the meaning of existence and life.” Thirdly, Buddhism politically provided the \textit{raison d’etre} of the Tibetan state and was the main source of Tibetans’ pride in their culture and country. Tibetans referred to their political system as \textit{chos} nyindre (chos-srid gnyis-’brel), that is, religion and politics joined together. It was generally said in the great monasteries around Lhasa, “[The government is] the ruler who is the patron of the dharma.”\textsuperscript{15} Finally, the Tibetans considered themselves the agents of their own Buddhist civilizing process vis-à-vis the spiritual life of the Mongol and Manchu, including the Manchu emperors of China. Thus, they felt that their society was unique.

Tibet was a religious state with His Holiness the 14\textsuperscript{th} Dalai Lama as its spiritual and temporal head till 1959. Later events led to the flight of His Holiness the Dalai Lama along with almost a lakh of his followers to India.


\textsuperscript{14} Goldstein, op.cit., pp.5-6

\textsuperscript{15} Bstan-pa chos-shyin-gyi mnga’-bdag (in Tibetan), cited in Goldstein, op.cit., p.6
where we see the continuity of religious culture and institutions of old Tibet in exile in a new setting. Tibet is largely centered on the monks and monasteries though there are significant numbers of nunneries in exile with thousands of nuns. The nuns just like the monks take part to preserve Tibet’s culture and Buddhist doctrine in particular. After the Chinese occupation of Tibet, many nuns and monks were forced to flee from Tibet to India to the Himalayan border regions of Kinnaur, Ladakh, Lahaul, Spiti, and Zangskar and join the Tibetan community in exile in India, Nepal and other countries. The areas which are mentioned above form the Tibetan cultural areas. For many of those who arrived in India, education is something new as for majority of them prayer was their life and whole and sole commitment. India granted asylum to His Holiness Dalai Lama and his supporters when they fled from Tibet and entered India through Arunachal Pradesh in the year 1959. The Tibetans in exile settled in various parts of India and got opportunities to re-establish their monasteries and nunneries. The three most important monasteries which were re-established in India are Sera, Drepung and Ganden. This was followed by several other monasteries namely Namdroling monastery, Tashi Lunpo monastery and many others. They were modeled on their parent Tibetan monastery in Tibet. Thus these monasteries or gompas (singular dgon-pa) are known as the daughter monasteries and the mother monasteries were the monasteries of ancient India and they provide a lineal link to the ancient tradition.16

The beginning of Buddhism in Tibet (the Period of Dharma Kings)

According to a Buddhist legend as recorded by the fifth Dalai Lama in History of Tibet, when Lord Buddha was on his deathbed, Avalokitesvara (a Bodhisattva), urged Buddha not to die as he had not visited Tibet and

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16 M N Rajesh, Gompas in Traditional Tibetan Society, Decent Books, Delhi, 2002, p.19
Tibetans are “unprotected by your words. Remain for the sake of these.” Buddha then replied, “The kingdom of snow in the north is, at present, a kingdom of animals only. There is not even the name of human beings there . . . In the future O Bodhisattva, it will be converted by you. At first, having been reincarnated as a bodhisattva, protect the human world of your disciples . . . Then gather them by religion.”17 Thus, Avalokitesvara (Chenrezi in Tibetan) was to have some special connection with Tibet, especially to convert the land of ‘non-human’ beings (Mimayin in Tibetan) and open the vast land to the blessing of dharma. So, as the legend goes Avalokitesvara took the form of a monkey (pha teu) and mated with a demoness (ma dak senmo) leading to the birth of six children. These monkey-demoness children had no liking for either monkey’s food or demon’s food. Therefore, Chenrezi caused self-sprouting barley to grow in a sacred field. It was only after eating that sacred food these six children evolved into the first Tibetans.18 Later these children quarreled among themselves and went out to look for a leader who would settle their differences. They came in contact with Nyathri Tsenpo (the one carried on a stone throne), an emanation of the bodhisattva Sarvanivaranaaviskambhin whom they elected as their leader. This myth symbolizes the most fundamental of Tibetan beliefs and for all the Tibetans, Chenrezi is their progenitor or father and continues to manifest in human form to guide them.

Tibet at that time was having a primitive religion Bon, the local form of shamanism. Buddhism came for the first time to Tibet under the 27th ruler Tho tho ri Nyantsen (after Nyathri Tsenpo), an emanation of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. According to a Tibetan legendary tradition, Buddhist scriptures (among them the Karandavyuha Sutra) and relics (among them

18 Ibid, n.34, p.13
the Cintamani) arrived in southern Tibet during the reign of Lha Tho Tho Ri Nyantsen (fifth century), who was just a local chief in the Yarlung valley. The story goes that the precious casket containing scriptures and artifacts fell from the sky on the roof of the king's palace, but could not be deciphered and there was a prophecy that their meaning would be revealed only after five generations. This tale may have a historical background in the sense that it may have marked the arrival of some Buddhist missionaries to Tibet.

Historically speaking, it was during the rule of the great emperor Songtsen Gampo, 617-650 AD that Buddhism received a boost. He brought about political unification in Tibet and also expanded his empire. Backed by strong military power and a vast empire, he initiated the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. He married a Nepalese princess Bhrikuti Devi (Belsa, green Tara), who bears the name of a goddess, and a Chinese Tang Dynasty Buddhist princess Wencheng Kon Jo (Gyesa, white Tara), who brought with them the statue of Lord Buddha Akshobya (another name for the Buddha of Vajra family) and Sakyamuni. He also built a network of 108 Buddhist temples across regions, including the Jokhang and Ramoche temples to eventually house the Buddha statues brought by his two wives. The number 108 is also significant as its numerical value comes to 9 which is a sacred number in Indian spiritualism. Songtsen Gampo founded the first Buddhist temple. By the second half of the 8th century AD, the king was recognized as an embodiment of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. During Tang Dynasty of China, some Taoist practices and scriptures also spread to Tibet and became incorporated in Tibetan Buddhism. The ruler also sent a group of 17 students to India to learn its languages and through them the Buddhist texts. Among them was Thonmi Sambhota, the most famous student who mastered the languages and Buddhism and returned to Tibet and later
devised the Tibetan alphabet and grammar based on the Indian (Gupta and Brahmi) scripts. Then several important Sanskrit Buddhist texts were translated into Tibetan by Thonmi Sambhota and the beginning of Tibetan literature started. Though Buddhism received a boost during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo, it gained much popularity during the reign of King Trisong Deutsen (755-797 AD). He established Buddhism as the official religion of the state. He felt the need to bring enlightened teachers to his country and hence he invited the two great Indian Buddhist masters, Santarakshita and Padmasambhava, the famous Tantric mystic to Tibet in the 8th century AD. This period was considered one of the most important ones in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. On his arrival in Tibet, Santarakshita bestowed vows, empowerments and teachings but failed to tame the ferocious spirits and demons which were a great obstacle in the completion of the vision of the king. Then, Guru Padmasambhava was invited by the king (following the advice of Santarakshita) to subdue these evil deities with his tantric powers and thus Tantricism was introduced in Tibet. Guru Padmasambhava successfully tamed these evil spirits. He did so but in accordance with the tantric principle of not eliminating negative forces but redirecting them to fuel the journey toward spiritual awakening. With the help of these two great Indian Buddhist masters, the King established Tibet’s first monastery at Samye in Central Tibet. These two masters initiated the first monks and introduced the people to the practice and sutras of Tantric Buddhism. Padmasambhava wrote several important scriptures and also founded the Nyingma School ("the old school") from which other schools of Tibetan Buddhism emerged. Due to his efforts, Buddhism in Tibet amalgamated popular ceremonies and curing rituals for the masses with the study of esoteric doctrines for the monastic elite. It also illustrates

19 Thomas Laird, op.cit., pp.54-57
the syncretism of the earlier Bon and Buddhist religion and the fusion of elements from the two religions. The Yellow Sect, in contrast to competing sects, laid emphasis on monastic discipline and the use of logic and formal debates as way to enlightenment.\textsuperscript{20}

After death of Emperor Trisong Deutsen, his son Muni Tsenpo succeeded to the throne in 790 A.D. An interesting event of his reign was that he initiated the process to bring about equality in Tibet by redistributing wealth throughout his empire. The Tibetan historian Tsepon Shakabpa writes: “Muni tsenpo, in an effort to reduce the great disparity between the rich and the poor, introduced land reform and appointed ministers to supervise the equitable distribution of land and property. When the emperor later inquired as to the fate of his reforms he discovered that “the rich had become richer and the poor, the poorer.” He is said to have tried this reform twice but with no success. Padmasambhava was questioned on these events and told the emperor, ‘our condition in this life is entirely dependent upon the actions of our previous life and nothing can be done to alter the scheme of things’. The influence of Buddhism on Muni Tsenpo was evident in his act of bringing about equality without violence, where he did not kill the rich to succeed in his endeavor. After his death, he was succeeded by his brother (other son of Trisong Deusten) Tride Songzen in 804 A.D. He kept Buddhism alive by inviting the Indian Masters to teach in Tibet, establishing temples and defending Tibet from the Arabs and Chinese invasions.

After the death of King Tride Songzen (810 A.D), there was a war of succession between his two sons, Tri Ralpachen and Lang Darma. Lang Darma (elder son) was anti-Buddhist and so did not find favour of Tride Songzen’s powerful chief minister. He helped Tri Ralpachen (younger son)

\textsuperscript{20} G. Tucci, \textit{Religions of Tibet}, Routledge, 2012, pp. 38-148
to succeed to the throne. Tri Ralpachen continued to patronise Buddhism in Tibet inviting the Indian Masters for translating the Buddhist texts into Tibetan. The Tibetan military power also received a strong boost and was at its best during his reign. The loss of throne and anti-Buddhist feeling had never left Lang Darma in a peaceful state of mind. He killed Tri-Ralpachen with the help of two anti-Buddhist ministers in 836 A.D. and took over the throne and started anti-Buddhist activities. Due to the ferocious anti-Buddhist acts of Lang Darma (also called “Bull Darma”), Buddhism suffered a setback. He destroyed the Buddhist texts and sacred scriptures, disrobed the monks and nuns and closed the monasteries. Monastic Buddhism died in central Tibet for almost a century as there was no ordained monkhood. Darma’s reign also marked the end of the unified Tibetan empire. The three Kings Tri Ralpachen, Trisong Deutsen and Songtsen Gampo are considered the three dharma kings and the major patrons of Buddhism in the history of Tibet. This was largely the work of lama historians and this tradition is known as the chos-byung or the religious histories as contrasted with the gyals-rabs or the royal chronicles. Thus the royalty went on a backseat and the monastery came to the forefront.  

**Snadar and the Bon-Buddhist conflict**

As stated earlier, the reign of King Trisong Deutsen witnessed the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. The two great Indian Buddhist masters, Padmasambava and Santarakshita who were invited by him to Tibet established a tradition called ‘Ngagyur Nyingma’ (the ancient tradition of the early translation) in Tibet. It is the oldest Buddhist school in Tibet. Hence this was the period of first diffusion (snadar) of Buddhism in the history of

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Tibet. A debate was held between the Indian and the Chinese Buddhist schools of thought at Samye, which continued for two years in which Indian Masters defeated the Chinese and established the Indian Buddhism as the dominant one in Tibet. King Trisong Deutsen’s support to Buddhism in Tibet, the arrival of the two great Indian Buddhist masters and the founding of the first monastery Samye were important events as far as the establishment of Buddhism was concerned in Tibet.

However, before the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet, most of the Tibetan people practiced Bon religion. The founder of this tradition was Tonpa Shenrab Miwo. When Buddhism began to gain popularity in Tibet, the Buddhist leaders subdued Bon, in their attempts to set up Buddhism as a state religion. The difference was even made between Bonpos and Buddhists, referring to the practitioners of Bon as ‘Bonpo’ and calling members of the other four schools of Buddhism ‘nangpa’ (‘insider’). The 41st ruler of Tibet, Lang Dharma was a staunch supporter of Bon and thus anti-Buddhist. He forced the monks and nuns to leave their monasteries and nunneries and tried his best to destroy Tibetan Buddhism through systematic persecution. Because of Lang Dharma’s persecution, the monastic Buddhism died in Central Tibet for almost a century. Two hundred years of Buddhist civilization was suppressed within few years. Professor Dawa Norbu22 opines that Lang Dharma’s evil thought and force resulted in the collapse of Buddhism in Central Tibet; however his act led to the spread of the same religion all over Tibet which was eventually city centric. Lang Dharma was assassinated in 842 AD during a ceremonial dance performance by an ordinary monk named Lhalung Palgyi Dorje, posing as a performer. His ferocious act also marked an end to the first spread of Buddhism (snadar) in Tibet and the empire in Tibet. The rise of the Tibetan

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22 Dawa Norbu, op.cit., pp.368-34
Empire was an important event and like all other nomadic empires searched for a greater tradition to unify and also provide for administration and thus the three dharma kings embraced Buddhism as it also had great practical value.23

The Second Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (sPhyidar) and role of Atisa

After the death of Lang Darma, there was a gap of almost five decades before Buddhism was revived in Tibet. During the beginning of 10th century AD, there was a king named Yeshe Od (Chan Chub) in western Tibet, who was a descendant of the original Tibetan royal line that had ended in central Tibet in 842 AD. Lha lama yeshe Od (pronounce as Yeshay O) was concerned about the degradation of Buddhism in Tibet and hence he sent 21 young men to India to study Buddhism and Sanskrit. Among them was Rinchen Bzang Po who returned to Tibet and became a famous translator. The return of Rinchen Bzang Po to Tibet from India marks the traditional date for the second spread of Buddhism (sPhyidar) in Tibet. He told Yeshe Od that Muslim invaders were attacking the Buddhist monasteries in India and this would lead to the destruction of Buddhism in the country.24

Yeshe Od heard about the greatest Indian Buddhist master Atisa (known commonly as Jo Bo Rye in Tibet) who was living in the famous Vikramsila University. The former hoped to seek help from the latter to reform Buddhism in Tibet. Through a number of emissaries and emotional pleas, he was able to bring Atisa to Tibet. The story of Atisa is important considering the price paid to bring him to Tibet from Vikramsila University. Yeshe Od sacrificed his life for Buddha dharma. It is believed that Lha

23 Thomas Liard, op.cit., p.32
24 Ibid., p,78
Lama Yeshe Od’s sacrifice moved Atisa and he agreed to visit Tibet though his students in India did not want their teacher to leave. Atisa first arrived in western Tibet at the age of sixty. He addressed the Tibetan lamas as ghosts because of their luxurious outfit. Atisa was able to re-establish the Vinaya, the code of conduct created by the Buddha after years of neglect. Atisa started a Buddhist renaissance, wrote books, gave public teachings and supervised editing the Indian texts in Tibet. Thus, the great Buddhist master helped to revive Buddhism in western Tibet, which had degenerated by that time. He collaborated with Rinchen Bzang Po and worked on the Tibetan translation of Prajnaparamitra literature. He also collaborated in central Tibet with Nagtso Tsultrim Gyalwa on Tibetan translations of many fundamental texts of Madhyamaka (Middle way). One of his famous disciples was Brom Stol Ryal Ba’i Byung Gnas (Dromton Chokyi Jungnay, 1008-1065), who founded Reting, the first monastery of the Bka’gdams (Kadam) sect. Kadam which changed into the dge lug (gelug) or yellow hat sect is the Tibetan sect with which Atisa is closely associated. The spread of Buddhism in Tibet continued and led to the evolution of the Tibetan culture in the following centuries.

Contacts between Tibet and India/ The Indian connection in ancient and early medieval period

Tibet and India had deep-rooted cultural and religious relationship for centuries. Tibet’s oldest religion was Bon; the spread of Buddhism from India to Tibet took place in the 7th and 8th century AD. However, the predominant belief is that “in the 5th century (433 A.D), Santarakshita, the scholar of eastern India presented texts of Dode Zamatog (the sutra designed like a jewel chest) and Pangkong Chagyapa (the sutra of a hundred invocations and prostrations) to Lha Tho Tho Ri Nyantsen, the 28th king of
Tibet.”  

The King was not able to understand the meaning of these texts, hence he kept these texts at a sacred place which he named as “powerful secret” and made regular prostrations and offerings. It is believed that due to this practice, he lived for almost 160 years. It was said that King Lha Tho Tho Ri Nyantsen first introduced Buddhism in Tibet. This in the later century was given a fillip by King Songtsen Gampo, the 33rd ruler of Tibet. He invited many Indian masters to Tibet including Acharya Kusara and Brahman Sangakara and with their help established Buddhism in Tibet. 

The King’s most famous protégé was Thonmi Sambhota. He was sent to India and he mastered Sanskrit. On his return, he formulated the Tibetan script ‘lentsa’ based on Brahmi and Gupta scripts and devised the monasteries on the model of the mahaviharas of eastern India. In the 8th century AD, Buddhism received further boost when the 38th ruler of Tibet Trisong Deusten invited the two great Indian masters Santarakshita (eastern India) and Padmasambhava to Tibet. This was due to the King’s deep trust towards these Indian masters and the culture and religion of India. The first monastery of Tibet named as Samye was built in 749 AD on the model of the great Buddhist vihara at Odantapuri in Bihar with the help of these two great Indian monks, known for their scholarship. The north Indian connection is evident as both these scholars were associated with Nalanda University. Santarakshita was also appointed as the first Abbot of the Samye monastery and remained so for thirteen years till his death in 762 AD. He also wrote two books Vada-Nyayavritti-vipanachitartha and Tattva-Samgraha. Padmasambhava came to Tibet in 747 AD and he was instrumental in introducing the tantric elements in Tibetan Buddhism. He was one of the exponents of Yogacara school of Tantricism and authored

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25 Golden Temple, A Trilingual Booklet, Rzigod Editorial Committee. p.34
26 Ibid., n.16
the book *Samaya Panchasika* which was translated into Tibetan. After the death of Santaraksita, the nihilistic traditions of Buddhist philosophy propagated by some Chinese monks became dominant in Tibet and this was a great challenge to the Tibetan Buddhism. This challenge was ably met by another Indian scholar Kamalasila (an able and distinguished disciple of Santaraksita) from the famous Nalanda University. Kamalasila defeated the Chinese in the debate held between the two and the Indian Buddhist philosophy prevailed over the Chinese. The Indian tradition of debate and discussion on philosophical issues was witnessed in Tibet due to the influence of Indian scholars. The first tradition of Tibet was Nyingma pa started by Guru Padmasambhava. Besides, these three great Indian scholars discussed above, there were many other Indian scholars from Nalanda who went to Tibet. Ghiramati was a master of Sanskrit as well as Tibetan language and hence was suitable for translation work. He translated many Sanskrit works and some Buddhist texts into Tibetan. He was a specialist of Sanskrit Grammar, especially Kalpa system; he introduced many works on Sanskrit grammar into Tibet. Buddhakirti, another scholar was well versed in Tantric Buddhism and Tibetan language and was engaged in Tibet. Besides, there were five other minor scholars of Nalanda who worked in Tibet. They were Kumara Sri, Karnapati, Karna Sri, Suryadhavaja, Sumati Sena and another Kumara Sri- all engaged in translating Sanskrit works into Tibetan.

The connection of Indian scholars and literature in Tibet is much more than that. Tibetans heavily banked upon the works of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, Dignaga and Dharma Kirti, Vasubandhu and Asanga while studying Madhyamika, Logic, Abhidharma and Abhisamayalankara

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28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid., p.578
respectively.\textsuperscript{30} Important contribution was made in Tibet by Guru Padmasambhava and the eight \textit{vidhyadhara}\textsuperscript{31} masters of India while studying the tantric scriptures. The works of many scholars of Nalanda were translated in Tibetan and studied in Tibet. Arya Deva (4\textsuperscript{th} century AD) was one of the earliest scholars of Nalanda. His three works including \textit{Madhyamaka-bhramaghata-nama} were translated into Tibetan and introduced in Tibet. Silabhadra was the President/Head of the Nalanda University during seventh century AD. He was a renowned logician and one of his works \textit{Arya-Buddha-bhumi-vyakhyana} was a part of the Tibetan Tripitaka in its Tibetan translation. Dharmapala’s four works in Sanskrit on Buddhism- \textit{Alambana-pratyaya-dhyana-sastravyakhya}, \textit{Vidyamatra-siddhi-sastra-vyakhya}, \textit{Sata-sastra-vaipulya-vyakhya}, \textit{Vali-tattva-samgraha} were all translated into Tibetan. Another great scholar of Nalanda was Chandragomin who wrote about sixty books on Buddhism which were all translated into Tibetan. These were some of the scholars of Nalanda whose works were translated and studied in Tibet and played an important role in establishing Buddhism as a doctrine in Tibet.

The connection with another great Buddhist centre of learning in north India-Vikramsila University is also worth mentioning. The great Acarya Atisa (also called Acarya Dipankarasrijnana) was from this great monastery, who went and lived as a teacher of Buddhism in Tibet from 1040AD-1053AD and died there at Nethan near Lhasa at the age of 73. A

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Golden Temple}, op.cit., p.35
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Vidhyadhara} (Pali, vijjadharma) meant possessor of magical power; a master of esoteric knowledge. In Indian Buddhist and Hindu sources, a vidhyadhara is shown as a human or supernatural being. In the Mahayana tantric tradition of Bengal, it was synonym for the \textit{Mahasiddha}, a tantric master who attains liberation as an immortal wonder worker. The \textit{mahasiddhas} are considered to be 84 in number. Cf. Patrick A. Prank, ‘Vidyadhara’, \textit{Encyclopedia of Buddhism}, vol.2, pp.878-879. Refer James B Robinson, \textit{Buddha’s Lions, The Lives of the Eightfour Siddhas}, Dharma Publishing, Berkley, California, 1979. It’s an English translation of the Sanskrit text \textit{Chaturasiti Siddha Pravritti} written by Abhayadatta (late 11\textsuperscript{th} or early 12\textsuperscript{th} century AD). This has been translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit and is the most important work on the Siddhas and various siddha tradition in Tibet.
Tibetan monk Nag-tsho who had already studied in India was deputed by the king of Tibet Chan Chub to go to Vikramsila and request Atisa to come to Tibet and take charge of the propagation of Buddhism. It’s worth noting that there was a Tibetan house at the Vikramsila University meant for the Tibetan students where Nag-tsho stayed. There were a number of Tibetan students studying at Vikramsila. It was Atisa’s reformed teaching based upon the Yogacara tradition founded by Maitreya and Asanga which had led to the establishment of the Kadampa school in Tibet. Atisa is credited with purging the Tibetan Buddhism of its corrupt practices and giving it a new look. “…he is a permanent influence in Tibet mainly through his works showing him as the greatest writer on Tibetan Buddhism on which about 200 works are ascribed to him mostly on Vajrayana. He was also a profound scholar in Tibetan, into which he translated twenty-two Sanskrit works.”

Later, the teachings of Atisa and Tsongkhapa fused into a new Kadam order which eventually became Gelug pa school in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century AD. Presently, this order presides over Tibetan Buddhism with the the Dalai Lama as the head. Due to the contributions made by these great Indian masters/ Buddhist scholars, Buddhism reached the land of snows. The cultural and religious relationship between India and Tibet has been very tightly intertwined since the 5\textsuperscript{th} century AD and survives till date.

There were many other scholars attached to Vikramsila University who were connected to Tibet either as writers in Tibetan or whose works were translated in Tibetan or who went to Tibet for the sake of Tibetan Buddhism. First, we will take up those who did not go to Tibet but are connected to Tibet through their works.\textsuperscript{33} Acarya Jnanapada, who is known for developing his own study of \textit{Mantra-Vajracharya} and established a new

\textsuperscript{32} Radha Kumud Mookerji, \textit{op.cit.}, p.591

\textsuperscript{33} For details of scholars connected to Tibet, refer Radha Kumud Mookerji, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.575-578,589-595. There references are also in number of Tibetan sources and the books which they translated in Tibetan.
cult, was a prolific writer on Tantricism. He was the Acarya for ordination at Vikramasila. His nine books on Tantra written in Sanskrit were translated in Tibetan and are preserved in Tibet while the original texts are lost in India. Pandit Jetari, a master of Sutra and Tantra was a ‘gate-keeper’ of the Vikramasila University and teacher of Atisa, who initiated a new beginning in the history of Buddhism in Tibet. Prajnakaramati was also a ‘gate-keeper’ of Vikramasila mahavihara and author of several works. Two of his works were translated into Tibetan. Ratnakara, a student of Jetari, was another ‘gate-keeper’ who was earlier at Odantapuri mahavihara. He authored thirteen books in Sanskrit and some of them were translated in Tibetan. Another scholar was Jnana Sri Mitra, a ‘gate-keeper’ who wrote several books in Sanskrit. He learnt Tibetan and translated his own work Pramana-vinischaya-tika into Tibetan. Vagisvara Kirti, another ‘gate-keeper’ wrote a book Mrityubanchanopadesa in Sanskrit which was studied in Tibet as Atisa recommended it. Vīryasimha was an associate of Atisa and helped in translating some of the important Sanskrit texts like Samsara-manonirnayanikara-nama-samgiti and Kavya-Vakya-Chitta-supratishtha-nama. Abhayakaragupta, a native of Gauda (Bengal), having the title of ‘Arya-Mahapandita’ was a great scholar and writer in Sanskrit (about twenty-six works) as well as a translator into Tibetan (about seven works on Tantric sadhana) in the beginning of the 12th century AD. He was associated with Vikramasila monastery for a long period. Tathagata Rakshita of Orissa was a student and later a teacher at Vikramasila. He earned the titles of ‘Mahapandita’ and ‘Upadhyaya’ as a student. He specialized in Tantra and was a prolific writer on the subject. His Tibetan connection is as a translator of his own works and other writer’s work too. Ratnakirti and Manjusri were other scholars who translated many Buddhist texts into Tibetan at Vikramasila.
Then, there were few scholars connected to Vikramasila who went to Tibet in person for the sake of Buddhism. One of them was Vairochana Rakshita, a disciple of Guru Padmasambhava. He wrote many texts in Sanskrit and translated into Tibetan many Tantric works such as *Vinaya-Sangraha*, *Sukla-vajra-yogini-sadhana* or *Prajna-paramita-hridaya-sadhana*. He later went to Tibet around 750 AD and earned the title of Mahapandita and Mahaacharya. Another scholar was Pandita Ratnavajra, a native of Kashmir, another ‘gate keeper’ who earlier studied Buddhist texts first at Vajrasana (Bodh-Gaya) and then at Vikramsila. He then went back to Kashmir and later travelled to Udyana. Finally, he went to Tibet, mastered the Tibetan language and translated many Buddhist and Tantra works. About fourteen of them are mentioned in Tibetan tradition like *Mahamayasadhana*, *Sri-Heruka-sadhana-nama*, and *Sri-Akshobhya-Vajra sadhana*, etc. Sakya Sri Bhadra, a native of Kashmir left the Vikramasila monastery after its destruction and first went to Jagaddala University in Bengal and then to Tibet with a number of monks and carried out the work of preaching Buddhism for the rest of his life. In a sense the high point of Indian Buddhist achievements was carried onto Tibet at its last stage.\(^3^4\)

Lastly, we make a mention of a native of Tibet who came to Vikramasila as a student to study Sanskrit. He was Dharamakriti who in the beginning translated into Tibetan a great work of Guru Padmasambhava entitled *Samaya Pancha*. He went on to translate many Sanskrit works into Tibetan. The adoption of Indian name by a Tibetan is worth noting.

**THE BUDDHIST SECTS/ORDERS IN TIBET**

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The 13th century to 15th century AD saw the development of distinct sects from various lineages of teaching. Traditionally, these Buddhist sects are divided into two major headings: (i) first- diffusion of Buddhism which is based on tantric practice and (ii) second- which translated the practice text during the second diffusion of Buddhism. The former is referred as old (rnyingma) which included Nyingma pa tradition and the latter is referred as new (sarma) which includes Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug pa.

**Nyingma pa**

The very first tradition founded in Tibet by Santarakshita and Guru Padmasambava is called Nyingma pa tradition which is the oldest Buddhist school in Tibet. The Nyingma pa monks wear red robes and hats, hence are also known as the Red Hat school. This tradition has three main streams of transmission: the distant canonical lineage, kama; the close lineage of spiritual treasures, terma; and the profound pure visions, dagnang. This school is primarily based on the teachings of Guru Padmasambava, who is revered as the “second Buddha”. The Indian connection is very much evident here. The distinctive doctrine of the Nyingma pa school is rdzogchen (“great perfection”), also known as adhi-yoga (extraordinary yoga). It also makes wide use of shamanistic practices and local divinities borrowed from the indigenous, pre-Buddhist Bon religion. The school retains many of the Bon features. Nyingma pa remained largely uninvolved in politics unlike the other three schools and was also the only tradition that did not receive political patronage.  

**Kagyu pa**

The Kagyu pa (also spelt bka-brgyud) sect was founded by the great Siddha Tilopa (988 AD-1069AD). Tilopa was a holder of the entire teaching

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of the various classes of tantra which can be divided into two types of lineage: a direct sambhogakaya lineage and an extensive nirmanakaya lineage. Also known as oral transmission school, Tilopa received the oral instructions on the yoga of dream (rmi-lam, svapna) from Indrabhuti, on the yoga of tummo (gtum-mo) from Tsaryapa, on the yoga of transference of consciousness (pho-ba) and on the yoga of the intermediate state (bar-do) from Sukhasiddhi. Therefore, Tilopa received the four special transmissions and having mastered these teaching, he passed them on to his main disciple Naropa (1016-1100) who passed them on to Marpa (1012-1097) the translator. Marpa, having mastered the same instructions have spread them in Tibet and passed on to his main disciple Milarepa (1052-1135), who had further passed them on to Gampopa, who was a great scholar as well as an accomplished meditate.

The central teaching of Kagyu pa tradition is the “greatest seal” (mahamudra), which is a realization of emptiness, freedom from samsara (world) and the inseparability of these two. This school was the first school to use reincarnation with ‘Karmapa’ (the head of the Kagyu tradition) as the first lama to be recognized as the reincarnated lama. The Kagyu School held power in Tibet for many years before the Gelug pa school took power with the fifth Dalai Lama as the head.

Sakya pa

The Sakya pa meaning ‘grey earth’, this tradition originated in the 11th century AD and was closely connected with one of the ‘holy families’ of Tibet, the Khon family. The leadership in this tradition is hereditary and not based on reincarnation of leaders. The Sakya monastery was founded in 1073 by abbot from Khon family. These abbots were devoted to the
transmission of a cycle of Vajrayana teachings called ‘path and goal’ (lamdre), the systemization of Tantric teachings and Buddhist logic. In the annals of Sakya tradition, the five great masters known as ‘gongma nga’ (the five exalted ones) hold a special place. Of these five, the fourth gongma, popularly known as Sakya Pandit (1182-1251) was the most famous of all. His knowledge and scholastic fame spread in areas like Mongolia and China, from where he received invitations from the imperial court. He with his nephew Chogyal Phakpa (1235-1280) visited Mongolia and together they impressed the then Mongolian ruler Kublai Khan by their knowledge. Further during his time, the Sakya tradition reached its political zenith, introducing Mahayana Buddhism into China and Mongolia. The Mongolian ruler Kublai Khan, in devotion, offered the thirteen mariachis of Tibet to Chogyal Phakpa, and hence Tibet was united under a joint spiritual and political authority. The five masters- known to the Tibetans as Jetsun Gongma Nga are regarded as the real founder of the Sakya tradition.

**Gelug pa**

The rise of Gelug pa also symbolizes the victory of monastic Buddhism over shamanic Buddhism. Gelug pa (spelt as dge-lug-pa or gelukpa, meaning ‘school of the virtuous’) known as Yellow Hat School is the youngest and the largest of the Tibetan Buddhist schools. Gelug pa tradition evolved into a fully independent school of Tibetan Buddhism towards the end of the 14th century A.D. It was founded by Tsongkhapa who fully adhered to the rules of ‘Vinaya’. He imposed strict monastic discipline, restored celibacy; restricted alcohol and meat, set up a higher standard of learning for monks. While respecting the Vajrayana tradition of esotericism that was prevalent in Tibet, he allowed tantric and magical rites only in moderation. Practices are centered on achieving concentration through
meditation and arousing the bodhisattva within. Highlighting Tsongkhapa’s link with Atisa, the Indian scholar, His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama has said, “Lama Tsongkhapa followed Atisa’s tradition. Like Atisa, he helped bring back a strict obedience to the code of conduct for monks, to restore respect for the Vinaya.” The teachings of Atisa and Tsongkhapa fused into new Kadam order which eventually became Gelug pa order. The three main Gelugpa monasteries were established namely Gaden, Drepung and Sera. Gaden was founded by Tsongkhapa himself in 1409 and Drepung and Sera by his disciples in 1416 and 1419 respectively. Gendun Drup was one of the Tsongkhapa’s leading disciples (also his nephew) who founded Tashi Lunpo in 1445 in Shigatse. He was recognized as the first Dalai Lama in his lifetime. On his death bed when one of his disciples asked Gendun Drup whether he would go to the pure land of the Buddha, Gendun Drup straightly expressed his wish to be reborn in a place where there exist sufferings and problems, to make the path free from all sufferings. Thus, the system of reincarnation continues. This school further held a strong political leadership of Tibet since His Holiness Dalai Lama became the head of the state with the help of the Mongol leader Gushri Khan in 1642 AD.

Gendun Drup was succeeded by Gendun Gyatso and then by Sonam Gyatso, who was recognized the third reincarnation of Gendun Drup. Sonam Gyatso who was a brilliant scholar visited Mongolia and in 1578 converted the leading prince Altan. Thus, Altan Khan gave Sonan Gyatso the title of Dalai meaning ocean. The title was later used for the predecessors of Sonam Gyatso too. After Gelugpa order took over the religious supremacy of the country with Dalai Lama as religious head of the country, the Mongol king Gurshi Khan continued to assume the title of king.

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36 Thomas Liard, *The Story of Tibet; Conversation with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama*, 2006, p.125
37 H.E. Richardson, *Tibet and its History*, 1962, p.41
of Tibet, and all the Dalai Lama’s authorities were under Gurshi Khan. This reflects the Central Asian concept of priest-patron relationship when in return for the spiritual support of the religious power (by priest), temporal support of the lay power was given by the king. However, after the death of Gursi Khan in 1655 (during His Holiness the 5th Dalai Lama’s rule), his successors showed least interest in governing Tibet. This was seen as ample opportunity for Tibet to hold the power completely. And the great fifth Dalai Lama, a man of great determination, took all power in his hands. He is also known for his great work which is known by different titles - *The Song of the Queen of Spring* or *A History of Tibet.* His reign marks the final establishment of the Dalai Lama as the religious head of the country and the continuation of the tradition of the Dalai Lama. The rise of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama and the establishment of religious state was an important event in Tibet.

His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama received asylum in India (1959) and in the course of time many of his subjects joined him in exile in India. Today there are an estimated 150,000 Tibetans living in exile. Other than India, Canada, Switzerland, England and U.S are some other countries where we see many Tibetan refugees. The three most important monasteries which were re-established in India are Sera, Drepung and Ganden. This was followed by several other monasteries namely Namdroling monastery, Tashi Lunpo monastery etc. Such re-establishment of monasteries and nunneries had given enough opportunity for the Tibetans in general and monks and nuns in particular to resume their religious practices. Today, we see Tibetan monasteries and nunneries, libraries,

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38 Thomas Liard, *The Story of Tibet; Conversation with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama*, 2006, p.
40 Thomas Liard, *op.cit.* ,n.59, p.342.
schools, college (under construction), herbal medical clinic (*men-tsee-khang*) and cultural institute (Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts) all over India and Nepal.

**The Socio- Economic Profile of Pre-modern Tibet with particular reference to Buddhism**

Tibetan society is united by its common culture and languages with a union of ethnic groups. The society had a strong monastic influence at all levels. With the emergence of religious order (holding power and authority), Tibetan monasteries became the chief centers of political, economic and military power. The monasteries controlled all the resources in pre-modern Tibet, hence its wealth consisted of lands, herds of livestock, money and barley; land had the greatest importance in the productivity and returns and also had the largest share in the above items. How did monasteries possess land? It was through the donations either by individual households to the monastic estates or by families which did not have heirs to continue the family line. Often, they even presented their livestock to the monastery. Another source of land and property was through the religious belief of the people. Some parents on getting their child cured of grave illness presented their property. At the political level, it was King Tri Ralpachen who started the practice of land donation to monasteries.41

Another productive asset of the monastery was the herds which included yak, sheep and dzo. They provided gompas with butter, an indispensable ingredient in the preparation of tea used to moisten tsampa (staple diet of Tibet). Like land, cattle were also presented to the monasteries. Thus, donations were the major source of revenue for the monastery just like the early Buddhist sangha of India which depended

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41 M.N. Rajesh, *Gompas in Traditional Tibetan Society*, n.54. p.124
solely on the laity’s support. Thus, monasteries played a central role in
Tibetan society.

Tibet had many traditional classes like aristocratic families (*gerpas*),
central government, gompas and individual lamas (the last two been
grouped) who owned the large estates and managed the resources. Then
there were categories of peasants and also Tibetan Muslims. The Tibetan
social formation showed a high degree of division. The household was the
basic unit and its importance is clearly evident as all property did not belong
to the head of the family but to the household. The taxing authority
considered household as the accounting unit for taxation and not the
family.\footnote{Bell, Charles,*The People of Tibet*, 1991, p.84.}

Overlapping with the term monk (also called *gedun*, meaning “in
search of virtue”) is that of lama, which is usually understood to mean
religious teacher. Lama implies a teacher of religion and not all monks or
nuns are lamas. All monks and nuns who dealt primarily with the
management of affairs, the crafts, or the professions which provide a service
different from that of teaching the doctrine are not to be called lamas. The
lamas as teachers of religion and performers of religious ceremonies had a
great impact on Tibetan society. Apart from incarnates, these lamas may
hold Geshe (the highest academic and theological degree). Apart from their
general activities, many of them functioned as family lamas. \footnote{M.N. Rajesh,*Gompas in the traditional Tibetan society*, p.}

All the lamas were constantly active in society. For instance, all
incarnate lamas travelled widely and wherever they went; they were active
in giving blessings, teaching and performing ceremonies. Other lamas who
were not reincarnated performed the same works in their home areas and

\footnote{Bell, Charles,*The People of Tibet*, 1991, p.84.}
\footnote{M.N. Rajesh,*Gompas in the traditional Tibetan society*, p.}
whenever they travelled. Some of the monks would stay with wealthy families in the towns or on country estates and take charge of the family temple or family shrine. These monks were called ‘konnyer’, meaning “steward of the three jewels”. Apart from caring for the temple, they were expected to perform all necessary religious ceremonies and would also give advice. Less wealthy families, who could not afford a permanent resident monk, were regularly visited by a specific monk to look after their rituals. Such monks are called ‘choney’. Monks and nuns were invited not only for rituals but for prayers on all occasions, the reading of scriptures which was a regular part of a family’s life, without which members of the family would feel deprived of spiritual sustenance. For Tibetans, this particular service performed by the monks was an essential part of their life. The role of monk in general and of lamas in particular was thus that of spiritual guide, psychological counsellor and teacher in every way."\(^{44}\)

In Tibetan Buddhism, a Tulku is the reincarnation of a lama or other spiritually significant figure. The most famous example is the Dalai Lama, who is the reincarnation of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Believers claim that he has existed in 14 incarnations since 1391. The first recognized tulku in Tibet was the Karmapa (or more precisely, the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1024-1283). The Karmapa, head of the Karma Kagyu school of Buddhism, is in his 17th incarnation.\(^{45}\)

Françoise Pommaret, a Tibetologist estimates that there are roughly 500 Tulkus found across Tibet, Bhutan, Northern India, Nepal, Mongolia, and the south-west provinces of China. Female Tulkus have been known to occur but are exceedingly rare. Lineages of Tulkus may be interlinked — for example the Panchen Lama traditionally recognizes the new incarnation

\(^{44}\) Ibid., n. 27  
\(^{45}\) http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Tulku/id/578643
of the Dalai Lama and vice versa. In other cases there is no such relationship, but in all cases the potential candidate is vetted by respected lamas, who often use tests such as checking if the child can recognize people or artifacts from his previous life or answer questions only knowable by his former self. As a Tulku, he can even have the perfect conscience about his death. A Tulku will leave a prediction letter or a word describing where they will be reborn. Prophecies, which may date forward or backwards many generations, also play a role.\textsuperscript{46} Anis, otherwise called nuns is women who have taken special vows committing themselves to religious life. They will be discussed in the next chapter dealing with women within Buddhist monasticism.

**The traditional Monastery (Gompa) in Tibet**

_Gompa_ (dgon-pa in singular) or the Buddhist monastery or the _vihara_ is important in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. _Gompa_ as an institution have performed several functions that enabled the continuity of Buddhism and institutionalized the theory of Buddhism. The emergence of _gompa_ is marked in the seventh century AD when the first monastery was established at Samye on the pattern of the Indian monastery at Odantapuri (Bihar) with the assistance from two great Indian scholars Santarakshita and Padmasambhava who came to Tibet for the propagation of Buddhism. The Indian connection is very much evident both in terms of the general layout and planning of the monastery and the expert guidance of the Indian scholars in establishing the monastery. The construction of monasteries gained momentum during the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet which saw an increase in the number of _gompas_ and spread of monasticism on a large scale. _Gompas_ were closely linked to society and people through their contribution in the field of education, medicine, astrology, astronomy, etc.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid n.29
The gompas established in Tibet were on the models of the great Indian monastic universities. Thus, monastic model adopted was based on the multi-functional Buddhist centers of learning from India. This had two advantages for the Tibetan Buddhist organization-first, they inherited an evolved monastic structure from India and hence did not have to go through a process of evolution of the sangha; secondly, Tibet had a group of its own monks who had studied in Indian monasteries and were well acquainted with the management of big educational centers.

The regional or local affiliation within the Tibetan monasteries is a remarkable and a marked feature. The monasteries were scattered all over Tibet including the three big monasteries located around Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. The three large monasteries are Bras spungs, Serwa and Dga’ldan and it is generally said ‘Bras spung has a monk count of 7,700, Serwa 5,500 and Dga’ldan 3,300.’ There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the number of gompas in pre-modern Tibet. As per the details provided by the famous scholar S.C.Das on the basis of the official register at Lhasa, the number of Gelugpa gompas was about 1026 with 491,292 monks which were distributed in different parts of Tibet. The number of monasteries of all sects may have varied from 2500 to 3500. Generally, the big monasteries were located in high agricultural productive areas.

The monasteries in Tibet comprised several monastic colleges which in turn contained smaller institutional units or regional sections which were based on a person’s native province like Gtsangpa khang tshan, Kong po khang tshan, Har gdong, etc. These regional sections were further divided into smallest unit, the local section which is based on a person’s home town,

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valley, etc. “Historically natives of particular areas have tended to enter into particular monastic colleges and thus form regional groupings which have become quite rigid.” Bras spungs has four colleges, Serwa three colleges and Dga’ldan has two. The three colleges of Serwa are Byes, Smad and a Tantra college. The first two are meant for the study of philosophy while the Tantra College was exclusively meant for the study of the tantra. These monasteries had living quarters for the monks and totally followed the Vinaya rule of the sangha for the conduct of the monks. There are two ways to enter the monastic centers- one meant for the laity who wants to become a monk and the other for the already ordained monk who come from other places. Thus, there were the new students and the old continuing students. The minimum age for entry to the monastic order was seven but we have references to people entering monkhood even at the age of forty. The general age for entry was seven to eleven. In Tibet, the doors of the gompa were open to all sections of the society except the blacksmiths and the butchers for they followed professions which promoted violence indirectly and directly respectively. When a laity wanted to enter monastic life, he had to find a teacher within the gompa, who was ready to take his responsibility. “Usually it was a close relative in the monastery, mostly uncles who undertook to sponsor the boy. This was so as each village had its own gompa, which in turn affiliated to a mother gompa. It was logical that the recruit would go to the gompa to which his village was associated as this gompa had many socio-economic links with the village.” As discussed above, the local and regional linkages in Tibetan monastic system was a marked feature. There was hardly any family in Tibet whose members were not monks. It was not necessary to take the vow of a bhiksu or sramana.

49 M.N.Rajesh, op.cit., pp.64-65
immediately, but one has to cut his hair except for a few strands ‘hair tuft’ and change his clothes to that of the monk, etc. The ‘hair tuft’ was later cut by the preceptor of the college accompanied by prayer which marked the entrance into the monastic life. People with certain physical defects like a cripple, a blind man, a dumb, mentally challenged, etc. were not allowed to become monks. This was as per the ancient monastic rules prevalent in India too. The name and parentage of the boy was asked by the preceptor and it was a way to check the boy’s speech as well as mind. The first stage was a preparatory school; the boy was assigned to a teacher or elder to teach and there were no fixed classes. The boy’s lineage was declared in front of the gathering of the monks and on the approval of the senior or elder monks (dg-u-chas) the boy was admitted as a student probationer (da-pa). Then, he moved towards a novice monk (getsul) and finally an ordained monk (gelong).

The curriculum of studies was well defined. The formal education began with the Tibetan language, that is, reading and writing. It was followed by the memorization of the manuals of worship like the sacred books of Padmasambhava, which were concise and held in high esteem.\footnote{L.A.Wadell, \textit{Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1974, pp.173-177.} The manuals were supposed to be recited as per the concerned monastery’s tradition. After completing these courses, one was allowed into the philosophy classes. Another method of teaching was through maxims and proverbs which was prevalent in India during the age of the Buddha.\footnote{Vinaya texts, \textit{The Mahavagga}, V.1.16} The initial study lasted for two to three years and the person was fully accustomed to the monastic environment. For a continuing monk coming from the other monastery, he was allowed to attend the classes on philosophy but approval was required to forgo the initial classes as he had.
already completed the initial studies at his previous monastery. The pupil was also required to serve the senior monks by doing menial works for them.

After one had memorized the Buddhist scriptures, the next stage was that of the novice. This required an elaborate process. The pupil was taken by the tutor to the head monk (*Spyi-rgan*) for permission to admit. The agreement was confirmed with a silk scarf (*lhas-rdsas*) and a token amount of money. Then, the pupil along with the tutor approached the abbot (*khenpo*) of the school for registration in which he wanted to enroll and study. Here also they had to make an offering of a silk scarf and a silver coin. The giving of money, although nominal, was a marked feature of the Tibetan monasteries. After the approval of the abbot, the boy was asked certain questions to ascertain his willingness to join the monastery, his medical fitness and his inclination towards the Buddhist teachings and he not being a debtor or a slave. It cannot be denied that many parents sent their sons to monasteries due to customary and socio-economic reasons; the pre-modern Tibetan society was imbued with a high sense of religiosity.\(^{52}\)

Next, the pupil was asked questions on the Buddhist texts which he had learnt and also to recite. The successful candidates were then admitted as a novice monk (*da-pa*) and their heads were shaved. The novice was required to study and to perform certain assigned duties.

The details of the course of study may have varied from institution to institution depending upon their area of study but the duration was the same - twelve years. We will take the Serwa-byes College\(^{53}\) as a case study although the curriculum in the colleges of the three monastic centers of

\(^{52}\) M N Rajesh, *op.cit.*, p.127

\(^{53}\) It is mainly based on Geshe Lhundup Sopa’s *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*, *op.cit.* and some other secondary sources.
Lhasa was more or less the same. There were 16 classes in general and the
main five subjects of study were Logic, the Prajnaparamita, the
Madhyamika, the Vinaya, and the Abhidharma. ‘These five central subjects
or quintessential are main categories of classification through which Tibetan
scholarship has sought to deal systematically with this vast body of Indian
Buddhist philosophical tradition.’ They were studied one after the other in a
sequence. Besides, there are three classes (bsdud grwa) - the elementary,
intermediate and highest. The bsdud grwa was arrangement of the way of
reasoning which was introductory to looking at the logical texts. In the
Tibetan monastic system of education, perhaps only the Cittamata or
Yogacara is absent as a separate subject. Although there was no separate
classes in Yogacara but it was studied in connection with logic and also
Prajnaparamita on which many important Indian commentaries were
composed from the Yogacara point of view. For example, in Serwa byes
College there was no separate class for logic (i.e. above and beyond the
three classes utilizing the bsdud grwa). But every year at the Ljangs winter
session, the students from the three monasteries of Lhasa assembled to study
the logical texts only for almost one and a half month. The logic which was
studied included the traditional aspects like syllogism, fallacies, eristic, etc.
but was fundamentally an epistemology or investigation of right cognition
itself. The logical texts being studied included the Pramanasuccaya, etc. of
Dignaga, the seven treatises of Dharmakirti along with their commentaries
both Indian and Tibetan, the important being the Yig cha, which was
exclusive to each of the monastic centers. Thus, Indian scholars and their
works found a prominent place in The Tibetan monastic education. The
methods of discussion of Buddhist philosophy as given in the monastic
textbooks are three- refutation, establishment and response. Refutation
meant refutation of the theories of other scholars, establishment meant
establishing one’s own theory, and response was answering objections raised by others to one’s own theory.\textsuperscript{54}

The main texts for class on \textit{Prajnaparamita} were the \textit{Abhisamayalamkara}, composed by Maiterya. There are twenty commentaries written by Indian scholars and different commentaries and sub-commentaries written by Tibetan scholars on this text. In addition, to these commentaries, one studies \textit{The Twenty Works Pertaining to Maitreya} and the Tibetan \textit{Yig chas. The Twenty Works Pertaining to Maitreya} includes the five books of the Maitreyanātha, Asanga’s five treatises on levels and his two compendia, plus the eight \textit{prarakara} of Vasubandhu. These are as stated below:

- The Five Books of Maiterya
  1. Mahāyāna Sūtrālambkāra Kārika
  2. Madhyānta-vibhanga
  3. Dharma-dharmatā-vibhanga
  4. Mahāyanottaratantra-śastra
  5. Abhisamayālambkāra
- Asanga’s Five Treatises on Level
  1. Yogacaryā-bhūmi
  2. Yogacaryā-bhūmi-nirnaya-samgraha
  3. Yogacaryā-bhūmau vastu-samgraha
  4. Yogacaryā-bhūmau paryāya-samgraha
  5. Yogacaryā-bhūmau vivarana-samgraha
- Asanga’s Two Compendia
  1. Mahayana-samgraha
  2. Abhidharma-samuccaya

\textsuperscript{54} Geshe Lhundup Sopa, \textit{op.cit.}, p.31
• The Eight Prakarana of Vasubandhu
  1. Sūtrālamkāra-bhāsyā
  2. Madhyānta-vibhanga tika
  3. Dharma-dharmatā-vibhanga-vṛtti
  4. Trimśaka-karika
  5. Pañcakandha-prakarana
  6. Vyākhyā-yuki
  7. Karma-siddhi-prakarana

In the classes on the Madhyamika, one mainly studied the “The Six Logical Works of the Mādhyamika” composed by the Indian master Nāgārjuna, in which he deals principally with the demonstration of the Buddhist theory of emptiness (śunyatā), i.e. denial of the categories of existence and non-existence etc. as viewed by various systems of Indian realism, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. In the Mādhyamika-kārikas or Prajñamulā and in the Vāidalaya-sūtra, he subjects to criticism the conclusions and reasons of the various realist systems in order to establish his own position of no-realism. The other works which were studied included that of Aryadeva, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, and Candrakīrti’s Madhyamakavatara and its auto-commentary and the Yig chas written by Tibetan scholars. In the study of Vinaya texts which deal with the discipline of the monastic order, the emphasis was on Pratimokshasutra and the Caturagama and the commentaries on them, in particular the Agamamula of Gunaprabha and its auto-commentary as well as the Tibetan Yig chas on these. In Abhidharma, the main text was the Abhidharmakosa written by Vasubandhu along with its auto-commentary. Then, there were some commentaries written by the Indian scholars.55

55 M N Rajesh, op.cit., pp.45,73
After the completion of the three bsdud grwa classes in three years, followed by that of five Prajnaparamita classes (five years), two Madhyamika classes (two years in class, i.e. four years), two Vinaya classes and two Abhidharma classes (years same as Madhyamika classes), one moved on to bka’ram class. Here, one had to take a long and important examination. This examination led to the award of the much coveted title or rank of four higher or lower Geshe, which depended upon a student’s level of knowledge. Thus, the next higher degree was that of Geshe. It was started by the Sakya sect and was referred as ka-chi (four subjects) or ka-ju (ten subjects). The best students obtained lha ram pa, next being tshogs ram pa followed by the ranks of rigs ram pa and gling gseb. The first and second title holders moved on to the highest class of lha ram while the third and fourth title holders remained in the bka’ram class as they obtained lower Geshe level. The award of Geshe was not easy as one had to wait for Geshe disputation (the General Debate on a topic given by the college study supervisor- lama shung leg-pa). Depending on the size of the class, there were a varying number of years. The two lower Geshe arranged their disputations in their own monasteries. For the two higher levels Geshe, the disputation was arranged in Lhasa where the candidates of all the three monasteries near Lhasa gathered. The most important topic of debate was on valid cognition. The disputation of lha ram pa (the first level Geshe) was arranged during the smon lam festival\textsuperscript{56} held in the first Tibetan month for twenty one days at Lhasa. Similarly, tshogs ram pa (the second level Geshe) arranged their disputation during the tshogs mchods festival held in the second Tibetan month for ten days in Lhasa. The Tibetan government assigned a numerical order of merit like first, second, third and so on to the

\textsuperscript{56} The smon lam festival is linked to Lord Buddha as it celebrates Buddha’s victory in power of magical creation over the six teachers of the extremists and was held during Buddha’s lifetime for 15 days. In Tibet, the great Tsong kha pa established it in conformity with the custom of the Nalanda University. The Indian connection is very much evident here also. Refer Geshe Lhundup Sopa, \textit{op.c it.}, p.36
candidates depending on the candidate’s performance during disputation. Thus, the role of Tibetan government in the final award of the Geshe degree (first and second levels) is evident as temporal and sacred and intertwined in the Tibet context as stated by Goldstein.

It’s interesting to point some other non-academic aspects of the process of the award of the degree of Geshe. The whole affair was a pompous one. If Dalai Lama was at Lhasa, then he personally presided over the function. It was a costly affair as the candidate had to give gifts and meals to his whole college and other officials. The Geshe degree was originally established in the Gelug pa sect and during the period of the fifth Dalai Lama, the degree was initially awarded to some senior monks. The thirteenth Dalai Lama on a tour to Mongolia was impressed by the debating skills of the monks and instituted reforms regarding the award of Geshe degree. Only those candidates who were well accomplished in educational and debating skills were henceforth awarded the Geshe degree.57 M.N. Rajesh writes that there was an advanced degree of Rab Jam-pa above the lha ram pa equivalent to the Doctor of Theology. This degree was more expensive and the whole doctrine, the Buddhist monastic order and religion were the topics of debate in public disputation. The holder of this degree was entitled to don a special hat which was a status symbol. Further, he could teach Buddhist law in public and was eligible for the highest posts in monasteries except those posts which were reserved for the incarnate lamas.58

The possessors of the highest Geshe degree had the option to study at the two Tantric Colleges, Gyuto or Gyumey, to gain full knowledge on tantra as esoteric elements were always prominent in Tibetan Buddhism.

57 ‘The Geshe Degree’, n.20,p.104
58 M.N. Rajesh, op.cit., pp.72-73
The two colleges laid much importance on yoga and meditation. Many rituals and aids were used and the ultimate aim was to attain unity of individual self with the infinite (universal self). The Dalai Lama personally selected the teachers in these Tantra Colleges from its products. The period of study at the Tantra College was six years if one was a bskyed rim pa and one year if one was a Geshe. Regarding the study, one mainly practiced meditation on the tantras related to the Mandala rites of the Guhyasamaja, Sambhara, and Yamantaka. These three were the principal tantras studied and practiced by the Dge lugs pa sect. The texts were also explained and one continuously heard, contemplated, pondered and practiced the tantric works. Then there were separate sessions whereas the concerned mandala was constructed and the command over the recitation of the concerned text was verified. It started with the Yamantaka session at Lhasa and then the Guhyasamaja and Sambhara sessions took place. The main texts composed by Indian and Tibetan scholars along with their commentaries on the three tantras were listened and practiced during individual sessions. Within a year, two Geshes were selected as the reciters of the Guhyasamaja tika. These two among the individual tika-reciters had to be ready for an examination on whatever recitation check the preceptor does. At the end of a year, each student obtained the completion of a major system. The higher Geshes who enroll in the tantra college is required to take an examination in sutra and tantra and depending on the examination, he was conferred the lead tika-recitership. They had to also undergo disputation on tantra in the college itself. They later obtained the status of lead lama. The lead lama had a greater responsibility in terms of conducting examinations, enforcing the rules, performing the rituals of the tantra college. He was just below the preceptor of the tantra college. After

59 The Blue Annals, Part I, tr. George N. Roerich, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1949, pp.118-119
60 Geshe Lhundup Sopa, op.c it., n.3, p.50
remaining the lead lama for three years, one becomes the preceptor of the Tantra College. The term of the preceptor was of three years. The preceptor of the Upper Tantra College went on to obtain the dharma-mastership of Shar rtse, while the preceptor of the Lower Tantra College obtained the dharma-mastership of Byang rtse. The Dga’ Idan throne was adorned by both in turn for seven years. They taught dharma to the gathering of ’Bras spungs, Serwa, and Dga’ Idan daily at the smon ldan and Tshog mchod festivals. The summer retreat was held at all the three major monasteries – one near Lhasa and the two Tantra Colleges but the time period differed between the two.

The fact is that all persons in the Tantra College were not Geshes. There were two sets of people- developing stage practitioners and perfection stage practitioners. The Geshes entered the latter stage while others entered the former stage. “A developing stage practitioner needs to memorize many tantric texts, the mandala rites, etc. of Sambhara, Guhyasamaja, and Yamantaka. They study a multitude of things, the observance of the Pratimoksa, Bodhisattava, and Tantra vows, the outlines (of the mandalas), the colored stone powder, and the performance of rituals and they must take an examination (on these).” The perfection stage practitioners are not required to take an examination on their command over the mandala rites etc. and “upon finishing the requisites of the developing stage, they practice the threefold study, examination, and meditation on the inner yoga of the perfecting stage of the illusory body, the clear light, etc. and meditation on the veins, breath, and semen.”

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61 The incumbent of the D’ga Idan throne represents the Lord Tsong kha pa, the master of the Dge lugs pa teaching and is one of the highest religious leaders in Tibet.
62 Geshe Lhundup Sopa, op. cit., p. 55
63 Ibid.
The religious education in the Geluga pa School has been discussed above but the education in other schools and non-religious education was also there. The Nyingma pa School focused on the magical rites, Tantric and Yogic exercises called *rDzogs-chen*. They had a non-celibate monasticism. They also had a system of meditational retreats on the mountains after the initial teachings of Tibetan language and basic texts. The Kagyu pa School used the *hathayogic* techniques of breath control and exercises leading to Buddhahood. They were greatly influenced by Indian *siddhas* like Tilopa and Naropa. The Kadam pa School too followed the meditative techniques called *Vipasyana* and *Samatha*. We will deal in detail on the meditative techniques in a separate chapter as it was a part of the monastic system of attaining higher level of knowledge as well as consciousness. Thus, it occupied a prominent place in the higher levels of education. In Korea, too, the monks were allowed to enter the meditation chambers only after they had finished the preliminary study of the Buddhist texts.  

Debate and discussion were important aspects of the Tibetan Buddhist education and its no exaggeration that they borrowed it from the Indian monastic system. The debates used to take place in the courtyards of the monastery and were a daily affair. There was provision of public debates too which used to be held in certain gardens and places in the monastery called *chottra*, which meant *dharma* schools. The final goal was to achieve wisdom, compassion and finally Buddhahood. This can be achieved through listening, thinking and meditating on the Buddhist doctrine. As discussed earlier, the higher degree of Geshe was conferred only after a debate on the philosophical aspect of Buddhism.

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65 Vinaya texts, The Cullavagga I.16.1—it states that the *bhikkus* constantly debated and clarified their doubts regarding discipline and practices with the Buddha.
The big monasteries had a three-tier organization - the University Board (La-chi), the college (Dra Tshang) and dormitory or residential quarters (Khamstsen). The college was the most important organization under a khenpo and enjoyed considerable autonomy, especially in syllabus and teaching procedure. But the majority of works on gompas highlight the curriculum as rigid and dreary. There were a hierarchy of officials besides the Khenpo (the Abbot), Assistant Abbot like the Lob-pon (the Professor or ordained monk who proclaimed the law and regulated conduct), C’ag-dso (treasurer or cashier), Ge-ko (in charge of law and order) and so on.

There was a system of examination to check the level of the knowledge. The first examination was held in the first year and the next in the second or third year. The examination was meant to fathom one’s knowledge and memorization of the scriptures and lasted for three days and was held in public. Generally, the students were able to clear the examination in the second attempt while failure in the third attempt led to expulsion from the monastery. Thus, a fully ordained monk (gelong) completed twelve years of education. The curriculum and the course duration was more or less as follows: Perfection of wisdom (Prajnaparamita, phar-yin) five years, Middle View (Madhyamika, dbuma) two years, Discipline (Vinaya, Dul-ba) one year, Knowledge (Abhidharma, mzod) two years and Valid Cognition (Pramana, tshadma) which was studied.

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68 For details of officials, refer M.N. Rajesh, pp.82-83

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intermittently throughout the course.  

There were collected topics (godus-gra) which were studied for a year.

The system of knowledge in Tibet followed the Indian pattern and it was organized into five major and five minor subjects. The five major subjects were: Technology (Silpa-sastra, Bzo-rig-pa), Medicine (Cikista-sastra, Gso-ba-rig-pa), Grammar (Sabda-sastra, Rgrai-rig-pa), Logic (Pramana-sastra, Tshod-ma-rig-pa), and Religion (Dharma-sastra, Nang-don-rig-pa) while the five minor subjects were Poetics (Kavya-sastra, Snran dngags), Metrics (Chanda-sastra, Sdeb sbyor), Lexicon (Abhidhana-sastra, Mngon brojd), Dramatics (Natya-sastra, Zlos gor), and Astrology (Jyotisa-sastra, Zlos gor Rtsis).  

The curriculum of studies was there but certain gompas were famous for some specialized studies like Chakpori for medicine and Narthang for printing. One important aspect of the monasteries was that majority of the monks were students, but some of them who were unable to carry on intensive studies were engaged in various works of the monasteries like icon painters, image makers, musicians, secretaries, bursars, etc.  

An important fact in all the monastic orders was the giving into the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) and the Six Perceptions (giving, ethical conduct, patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom) which were part of the monastic order as the basic tenets of Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

One of the crowning achievements of Tibet was the development of Indian Buddhism to finesse with royal patronage and that led to a massive literary production of texts and commentaries. Among the major similarities

70 M. N. Rajesh, op.cit., p.70
71 Geshe Lhundup Sopa, op.cit., p.15
are the continuity of the Indian learning systems particularly in medicine, logic and above all the Buddhist philosophy. One specific aspect that disappeared in India was the tradition of debate or *vada* that continued in Tibet. Other notable achievements were the rise of large scale monastic complexes. Tibet evolved as the stronghold of Tantric Buddhism. The scholars from Nalanda and Vikramsila played a major role in the diffusion of Buddhism from north India to Tibet. The region of Bengal and Bihar was a major centre of Tantric cult and they may have influenced the Buddhist Tantric tradition in north India and indirectly in Tibet. This aspect needs more exploration and historical investigation.

The indigenous religion of Tibet—*Bon* also influenced Tibetan Buddhism as it incorporated certain elements like the cult of spirits, etc. within its fold. Anthropological studies of tribal societies in general show their belief in spirits, supernatural beings, etc. and elaborate rituals linked to them. The western scholars have termed Tibetan religion as Lamaism, ‘a comprehensive term covering indigenous Bon religion and Buddhist doctrine and practices.’ They also preserved many Indian texts in translations from Pali and Sanskrit which were lost in India.

**II: Korea-The Hermit Kingdom**
Korea, called the ‘hermit kingdom’ in the past was hardly taken note of while discussing East Asian history, as the focus was mainly on China and Japan. Korea figured only as a co-actor. But recent studies in East Asia have accorded Korea a separate entity. The diffusion of Buddhism to Korea from India via China in the initial phase is a historical fact. In fact, the connection between India and Korea in the ancient period was mainly through Buddhism. The Korean religion has much in common with the Chinese religion- Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism and native Shamanism. Christianity also gained ground after its introduction in Korea in late 17th century AD. Presently, about one-fourth of the population is Christians. Daoism is related to indigenous Shamanic folk religion and has two main sects, Heavenly Masters Sect and Perfect Truth

Sect. It has been practiced in Korea since seventh century and majority follows the former one. Buddhism was also prominent in Korea during the Silla period and will be discussed below in detail. Some new religious movements arose in Korea in the early 20th century during the Japanese colonial period. Korea is now divided into North (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, capital Pyongyang) and South (Republic of Korea, capital Seoul) along the 38th parallel after the end of the Second World War in 1945. In North Korea, people follow Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity and syncretic Chondogyo sect (Religion of the Heavenly Way) while in South Korea Christians, Buddhists, Confucians and others are 49%, 47%, 3% and 1% respectively.  

**Buddhism in Korea: The Transmission**

Buddhism played an important role in the formation of Korean thought and culture. Buddhism officially travelled to Korea from China in the late fourth century AD and its main stream has been the Mahayana tradition. It depended on Buddhist **sutras** in Chinese character. But with the passage of time, Korean Buddhism developed learning from the Indian and Chinese Buddhism and evolved its own interpretation of Buddhism which is Korean in essence. The Korean Buddhism is also referred as “Hoetong” Buddhism, meaning “all encompassing” Buddhism. The various traditions are harmoniously integrated into a single whole. No tradition is considered superior or inferior to another. Hoetong Buddhism closely follows the philosophy of Avamtsaka Sutra – “… the harmony of one and the whole, the connection of self and the universe, and the coming together of diversity and uniqueness.”

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73 please find a more reliable reference
In order to have a glimpse of Korean Buddhism, we have to peep into its history. During the 4th century AD, the Korean peninsula was politically divided into three kingdoms: Koguryo (Goguryo) in the north, Paekche (Baekje) in the south west and Silla in the south east. Buddhism first arrived in the northern kingdom of Koguryo through a Chinese Buddhist monk Sundo (Shundo in Chinese). He was sent by King Bugyun of Ch’ in dynasty of Junjin, located in north China in the sixth month of 372 AD. Buddhism was readily accepted by the royal family of Koguryo and the people. Many Buddhist monks from Korea travelled to China to seek Buddhist teachings and texts. Buddhism then gradually spread to Paekche and finally to Silla. The Indian connection is evident in the case of the propagation of Buddhism in Paekche. Buddhism was transmitted to Paekche by an Indian monk Malananda/Marananta (Kumarnandin)75 in the ninth month of 384 AD and was happily accepted by the king and his family. He arrived in Paekche by ship through Eastern China via the Yangtse River and was welcomed by King Chimryu and stayed in his palace. During his stay, he constructed a Buddhist monastery in the capital city of Hansan. He was successful in initiating ten Buddhist monks in Paekche. Thus, Buddhism was readily accepted by the royal families of Koguryo and Paekche. The subjects followed suit in accepting Buddhism. It is generally believed that the first Buddhist missionary to reach Silla in the mid-4th or early 5th century AD was a monk named Ado (Mukhoja or Hokhoja) who arrived from Koguryo. The common people in Silla accepted Buddhism in the beginning but it had to face stiff resistance from the aristocracy and did not gain royal favor either. It was after the martyrdom of Ich’adon, a prominent court official during the reign of King Pophung/ Bupheung (514 AD-540 AD) in the year 527AD that Buddhism was accepted by the royal family and

aristocracy and was officially recognized. The next ruler King Chinhung/Jinheung, the twenty-fourth ruler of Silla dynasty, promoted the growth of Buddhism and towards the end of his rule, he himself became a monk. Thus, in Silla, we find that people’s acceptance followed by the martyrdom of Ich’adon led to royal acceptance and patronage of Buddhism. King Chinhung played a vital role in the propagation of Buddhism in the kingdom of Silla during his rule of about thirty-seven years (540 AD-576 AD). He is credited with the construction of Heungryunsa Buddhist temple, allowing his people to join the Buddhist sangha. The Indian connection is evident in the construction of a sixty feet steel statue triad of Lord Buddha in the Hwangryongsa temple, which is one of the three national treasures of Silla kingdom. The steel used in the making of the statue came from India during the reign of King Asoka, the famous Indian ruler of the Mauryan dynasty who is credited with missionary activities for the spread of Buddhism outside India. This is based on a legend and needs historical veracity. The period of the two rulers, that is, King Asoka of India (269 BC-232 BC) and King Chinhung/Jinheung (540 AD-576 AD) of Korea do not coincide. The fact is that Buddhism propagated by Asoka was Hinayana while the Korean Buddhism is the Mahayana form having Hinayana elements interspersed in it. “It has reformulated Zen, Lamaism of Tibet and Mongolia, Tantrayana (Vajrayana), etc. to suit Korean indigenous culture.” The patronage to Buddhism continued even after King Chinhung and some of the kings were devout Buddhists and adopted Buddhist names for themselves and their family members. Many people became monks and went to China to study Buddhism. Many of them were believed to have been taught by the famous Chinese traveler Xuan zang, who studied at the famous university of

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76 Yong-Kil Cho, ‘Indo-Korean Contacts Through Buddhism in Early Times’ in S.R.Bhatt (edited) Buddhist Thought and Culture In India and Korea, Indian Council for Philosophical Research, New Delhi, 2003, p.40
77 S.R.Bhatt, ‘Origin and spread of Buddhism in India’ in S.R.Bhatt (edited), op.cit., p.15
Nalanda in India. Silla conquered the other two kingdoms in 668 AD and Buddhism became the main rallying point or the central cultural force uniting the whole of Korean peninsula. Buddhism prospered and expanded academically and culturally during this Unified Silla Period (668 AD- 935 AD).

The best of Korean art, architecture and sculpture took shape during the Unified Silla period- all associated with Buddhism and Buddhist themes. The main temples, pagodas, statues of Lord Buddha were built depicting the great Buddhist heritage of Korea.78

There existed a small, separate kingdom called Gaya (or Garak/Karak) in Kimhae area of southern Korea from 1st to 6th centuries AD. The Indian connection is traced here through Buddhism. There exists a stone pagoda in the Hogyesa temple in Kimhae, the capital of Gaya kingdom. The materials used to make the pagoda were believed to have been brought by sea to Korea by an Indian princess from Ayodhya. This legend finds mention in the medieval Korean text Samguk Yusa,79 written by Ilyon (1206-1289); this text deals with the history of the three kingdoms of ancient Korea. This incident is said to have taken place in 48 AD when Queen Suro or Huh-Wang-Ok traveled from the kingdom of ‘Ayuta’ (Ayodhya) to Korea through sea-route to marry King Suro, the first ruler of Gaya. This was as per the divine dreams of her father. She was accompanied by her brother Po-ok and twenty-two Buddhist monks.80 She is believed to have carried with her a statue of Lord Buddha and materials to build a stone pagoda.
pagoda as mentioned earlier and also some Buddhist literature. It is said that people of Korea did not have any knowledge about Buddhism before that and this episode points to the close cultural relations between India and Korea since the ancient period. The pagoda carried by the queen was relocated in the Wanghusa temple built by King Chilji in 452 AD. The queen had ten sons and two daughters. Two of her sons were named Huh after their mother’s family name and the rest were named Kims after King Kim Suro. Today, over seven million Koreans trace their origin to the descendants of King Suro and Queen Huh. In the present day South Korea, Kimhae Kims and Kimhae Huhs trace their origins to this ancient royal family of Gaya having an Indian princess as their mother. Queen Huh’s tomb is still present in the Gyeongsang (south) province of Korea. This Indo-Korean connection was researched by Prof. Kim byung-mo, sponsored by Korean Broadcasting System. “The motif of the two fish on the doors of all the temples of Ayodhya, as well as on the door of the tomb of King Kim Suro in Kimhae city in Korea is a point which Prof. Kim emphasizes in his documentary to illustrate the credibility of the story.”

After the fall of Silla, the Koryo dynasty came to power in Korea and ruled from 935 AD to 1392 AD. Buddhism continued to thrive and receive royal patronage. Buddhist shrines and temples were constructed throughout Korea. This phase saw the dominance of rituals and it also witnessed reaction against the dominance of rituals by a certain section of monks. One of them was Master Ui-chon (1055 AD -1101 AD), the son of King Munjong (1047 AD -1083 AD). He went to China for studying Buddhism and is said to have collected about 4000 volumes of Buddhist texts. It is obvious that many of the texts must have had an Indian origin. The Korean

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81 Yong-Kil Cho, op.cit., p.39.
82 http://www.hvk.org/articles/0502/100.html
83 N. M. Pankaj, op.cit; p.5
version of the Buddhist Tripitaka was written from these texts. It is worth noting that South Korea celebrated the 1,000th anniversary of the "Palman Daejanggyeong," or "Tripitaka Koreana," one of the oldest and most comprehensive collections of Buddhist scriptures in Chinese characters, through a 45-day Buddhist cultural festival in 2011 in the South Gyeongsang Province.\(^8^4\)

Buddhism gradually declined after the downfall of the Koryo dynasty and the coming of the new Choson dynasty (1392 AD- 1910 AD). The Choson rulers patronized Neo-Confucianism. They also established a new capital for which an ancient place ‘Hanyang’ was selected and it was renamed as ‘Seoul’ which means ‘capital’ in Korean and was probably derived from the ancient Indian town of Sravasti. Sravasti became ‘Sarobol’ in Chinese and finally ‘Seoul’ in Korean.\(^8^5\) Sorobol or Sorabul meant ‘eastern city’.\(^8^6\) If this is true, then the naming of the capital of Korea was influenced by an Indian place which was closely associated with Lord Buddha. Japan annexed Korea in the year 1910 and the Choson dynasty came to an end. Japan favored Buddhism and after the liberation in 1945, the Korean Buddhism was once again revived. Almost half the population of Korea is Buddhist and even if they are not Buddhist, they adhere to the Buddhist view of life and after life. “Buddhism has been in Korea for well over 1,600 years and through that long history, it has achieved a deep religious tradition and created a unique culture. Owing to its comprehensive culture-rich characteristics, Buddhism in Korea played an important role not only as a religion but also as an embryo of the Korean cultural phenomenon.

\(^{84}\) http://americanbuddhist.net/general/thought/history/past?page=3


The influence of Buddhism on Korean thought and culture was so extensive that it can be said that we cannot think of Korean thought without reference to Buddhism which is in reality the very foundation of Korean thought and culture.” 87

Korean Monks in India and Indian Monks in Korea: The Pursuit of Learning

India as the land of origin of Buddhism attracted students from outside India. The Buddhist monasteries (viharas) established to house the monks gradually evolved as centers of education and Taxila, Nalanda, Vikramshila, Odantapuri, Jagadala, etc. were the major centers of Buddhist education. As Buddhism went to Korea from China, many of the Korean monks went to China to study as it was geographically close to Korea and historically speaking Korea was a vassal state of China., But some of the Koreans came to India to have the first hand knowledge of Buddhism. Likewise, as the contact increased Indian scholars also went to Korea to satiate the thirst of the Koreans for knowledge on Buddhism. Some of the Indians first went to China and from there to Korea. This coming of the scholars from both the countries led to cultural and religious interaction between Korea and India. The Korean vocabulary absorbed many Sanskrit words and concepts such as Narak, Bhikuni, Stupa, Indra and Nidana. 88 One interesting aspect regarding the Korean monks who came to India is that majority of them stayed back and died in India. “Travel for religious training, missionary propagation, and devotional pilgrimage has been an integral part of Buddhism since its very inception.” 89 The Indian monk Bodhidharma (Talma in Korean) went to China about 520 AD and died

87 Yong-Kil Cho, op.cit., p. 35.
88 http://www.hvk.org/articles/0502/100.html
before 534 AD. The Korean folklore treasures the stories related to Bodhidharma who brought Son doctrine of Buddhism to China.\textsuperscript{90} The reason may be that this monk did not visit Korea but may have influenced many Koreans who came to China to study Buddhism. Dhyanabhadra (Chigong in Korean) was a high caste monk from north India who first went to China at the age of 19. Further, he visited Korea in 1328 at the invitation of King Ch’ungsuk who had met him in Beijing. Probably the King was impressed by his depth of knowledge and command over Buddhism that he invited him to visit Korea so that the monks there can benefit from his knowledge of Buddhist texts and scriptures. He stayed for some time in Diamond Mountains and then proceeded to Hoeam-sa at Yangju and then returned to China. Many Korean monks visited him in China. After his return to China, he was visited by the Korean monks Hyegun and Muhak who were greatly influenced by him. It is said that he was instrumental in the development of Son Buddhism in Korea.\textsuperscript{91}

Many foreign monks visited India in search of original Buddhist texts as well as to gain knowledge about Buddhism in detail. The main areas of visit were places associated with Lord Buddha and the centers of Buddhist learning like Nalanda, Vikramasila, etc. The Korean monks were also interested in furthering their knowledge on Buddhism and visited India. This has not been well documented. Many Korean Buddhist monks traveled to China in order to study Buddhism in the late Three Kingdoms Period, especially in the late 6th century AD. The monk Banya (562–613?) is said to have studied under the Tiantai master Zhiyi and Gyeomic of Paekche (Baekje) and travelled to India to learn Sanskrit and study Vinaya Pitaka. Monks of the period brought back numerous scriptures from abroad and

\textsuperscript{90} Keith Pratt & Richard Rutt, \textit{op.cit.}, p.26
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, p.46
conducted missionary activity throughout Korea and Japan.\(^\text{92}\) Master Gyeomic was perhaps the only Paekche (Baekje) monk who visited India and its record is still there. He travelled to India by sea perhaps in the year 526 AD (?). He studied Sanskrit for five years and then went back to Paekche with an Indian monk Pei-da-duo who was an authority on *Tripitakas*, the Buddhist texts.\(^\text{93}\) Among the Koguryo monks, Master Hyun-yu was the only one to have visited India. He first went to China to study Buddhism and then proceeded to India along with his teacher, Master Seung-chul. He then went to Sri Lanka and died there. In the Silla kingdom, a number of monks went to India to study Buddhism under Indian monks. Among them were Hye-up, Hyun-tae, Gu-bon, Hyun-kyuk, Hyelyun and Hyunlyu. All of them stayed back in India except Hyuntae who returned to T’ang.\(^\text{94}\) But the most famous among the unified Silla Korean monks was Hye Ch’o. *Haedong Kosung-jon* (Lives of Eminent Korean Monks) is a Korean text, a collection of Buddhist Biographies compiled by a monk Kakhun in 1215. Only two books (kwon) remains from this collection. “The first contains lives from the first generations of Korean Buddhism: Sundo, Mongmyong, Uiyon and Tamsi of Koguryo; Malananda of Paekche; and Ado, Popkong (King Pophung) and Pobun (King Chinhung) of Silla. The second book, mostly quoting from other works, deals with 6\(^{th}\)- and 7\(^{th}\)-century monks of Silla who studied in China, some of whom also went to India: Kaktok, Chimyong, Won’gwang, Anham, Arinabalma, Hyeop, Hyeryun, Hyon’gak, Hyonyu, and Hyonadaebom.”\(^\text{95}\)

Hye Ch’o (c. 704-780 AD), a Buddhist monk visited India and other parts of Asia from 724 AD to 727AD. He has left a vivid account of India

\(^{92}\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_Buddhism
\(^{93}\) Yong-Kil Cho, *op.cit*; p.41
\(^{94}\) *Ibid.*, p.42
and elsewhere in his travelogue named *Wang o Ch’onch’ukkuk chon* (Memoirs of a Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India). This travelogue has been extensively studied by the scholars, especially from the west. This manuscript was studied by Prof. Lewis R. Lancaster of the University of California, USA.\(^6\) Hye Ch’o was born around 700 AD in Korea. His manuscript was discovered with other historical documents from the caves of Dunhuang in 1900 AD. Dunhuang is a small town in Gansu province of Central China at the edge of the Gobi desert. The famous “Silk Road” passed through this geographical location and was a centre of silk trade. Hye Ch’o’s manuscript was written in classical Chinese as most of the Korean writings at that time were written in Chinese. The Korean alphabet Han’gul was developed much later in the mid 15\(^{th}\) century AD.\(^7\) The manuscript is not complete as both its beginning and end are missing. Hye Ch’o starts his journey from China where he may have been studying Tantric Buddhism. He went on a pilgrimage of holy places associated with Lord Buddha. He visited Vaishali, Kusinagara, Sarnath and Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya. He also gives a description of “the local legal systems, the elephants possessed by the local rulers, clothing, foods, the local economy, and whether and how Buddhism is practiced.”\(^8\) The travelogue of Hye Ch’o is a store of information and is a valuable historical source for South Asia and East Asia during the 8\(^{th}\) century AD. Hye Ch’o returned back and lived in China and later died there. In China, he collaborated with the famous Indian tantric master Amoghavraj (Bukong in Chinese, 705-774AD) and perhaps Vajrabodhi (Jin’gangzhi in Chinese, 671AD-741AD) in translating the esoteric Buddhist material into Chinese.

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\(^6\) Radhakrishna Chaudhary, ‘The University Of Vikramsila: A Radiating Centre of Culture’ in *Ancient Bihar* Her Contribution to Religion and Civilisation, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna, July 1984,p.87 (fn.22)

\(^7\) The phonetic theory which was involved in Hangul was from Ming studies such as *Hongwu zhengyun*, which owed much to Sanskrit phonetics. See Keith Pratt & Richard Rutt, *op.cit.*, p.158

\(^8\) [http://orias.berkeley.edu/Summer2005/Summer2005Summaries.htm#Fremery](http://orias.berkeley.edu/Summer2005/Summer2005Summaries.htm#Fremery)
Nalanda was a famous university in the ancient and medieval period and it attracted pupils and scholars from Korea, Japan, China, Tibet, Indonesia, Persia and Turkey. Nalanda as an international center of Buddhist learning had a great reputation and attracted pilgrim-students from China, Tibet and Korea. Yijing compiled the biographies of some 56 monks who visited India in mid-seventh century AD and seven of them were Koreans and rest were Chinese. Majority of them came to Nalanda for study. There may have been many other unnamed foreign scholars including Koreans who must have studied in Nalanda. The scholars of Nalanda were also invited to other countries like Sri Lanka, China, Tibet, Java and Korea for the specific work of translation. They went there and were engaged in translating the Buddhist texts in foreign languages, establishing monasteries or simply for royal consultation.

The Korean scholars at Nalanda mentioned by Yijing were Aryavarma, Hwui Yeih, etc. Aryavarma left Changan in 638 AD and came to Nalanda for study. He studied the Vinaya pitaka and Abhidhamma pitaka and copied many of the Sutras. He died at Nalanda at the age of seventy. The name is worth noting as Indian names are being adopted by some of the foreign Buddhist monks and scholars. Another Korean Hwei Yeih came to Nalanda in 638 AD. He was a Doctor of Law and stayed in Nalanda for a longer duration and he too died in Nalanda at the age of 60. He wrote some Sanskrit works which were preserved at Nalanda and Yijing came across these works of Hwei Hi when he was handling some Chinese texts at Nalanda. Another monk Hwui-Ta came to India from Kungehow through

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101 http://www.indiasite.com/bihar/nalanda.html
sea route and stayed at Nalanda for almost ten years.\textsuperscript{102} The name probably seems to be a Korean name.

Yijing refers to a Korean traveler Hwui Lun or Li who was a native of Sin-Ko (Korea). Hwui Lun came to India in the latter half of the seventh century AD. He was a scholar of Buddhist doctrines and wrote on the religious scenario of India. He wrote that a King named sun-army (Adityasena) built a new temple by the side of the old temple (Mahabodhi temple near Bodh Gaya in Bihar). He also mentions another temple called Tchina (China) temple which as per the tradition was meant for the use of Chinese monks.\textsuperscript{103} Another scholar mentioned by Yijing was Prajnavarman,\textsuperscript{104} who became a monk while he was in Korea, his native place. He proceeded to Fukien in China and then went to Changan. The Chinese King asked a Chinese monk to accompany him to India. He visited a number of Buddhist monasteries and his purpose of visit was to pay respect to the relics of Buddha in India. Here, the Indian name adopted by the Korean monk is worth noting. “The seventh century was the height of the Buddhist age in China, and it was the Indian religion, rather than Confucianism, that appealed most to the Koreans of this period. Coming with the prestige of Chinese civilization behind it and in the optimistic Mahayana form it had developed in China, it appeared to the Koreans to offer greater protective power and richer promise of both worldly and spiritual rewards than did the native cults.”\textsuperscript{105}

\textbf{Characteristics of Korean Buddhism}

\textsuperscript{102} Radha Kumud Mookerji, \textit{Ancient Indian Education}, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1998 (reprint), pp.579-580
\textsuperscript{103} Mitali Chatterji, \textit{Education in Ancient India}, D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 1999, p.215
\textsuperscript{104} Sukumar Dutt, \textit{Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India}, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 2008 (reprint), p.312. The details of the monks by I-tsing can be referred in Takakusu’s tr. \textit{A Record of the Buddhist Religion.}
\textsuperscript{105} John K. Fairbank, \textit{op.cit.}, p.288
The Buddhist literature from India had travelled to China and then found its way to Korea during the Unified Silla period and was studied there. The Buddhist texts like Avatamsaka Sutra and the Lotus Sutra were studied and were popular among the Koreans. Likewise, the Mahayana concept of Bodhisattvas (Lord Buddha in his previous birth) found acceptance and bodhisattvas like Amitabha (the Buddha of Light) and Avalokitesvara (the Buddha of Compassion) were worshipped by the common Koreans. Ch’an school was introduced from China to Korea and this added a new chapter to Korean Buddhism. This school was called Son in Korea and Zen in Japan. The main focus was on meditation or Dhyana and direct experience rather than on studying the religious texts. Nine different branches of Son Buddhism arose in Korea and they were referred as the Nine Mountains of Son.

Korean monk scholars Won-hyo (617-688 AD) and Chin-nul (12th century AD) have contributed the most in the development of Korean Buddhism. Won-hyo harmonized the diverse tendencies in Buddhism (theory as well as practice) of his time. He is credited with the development of dominant Korean Buddhist thought referred as Beopseong, Hoetong (Korean) Buddhism and later as Jungdo (Middle Way). His theory of ‘One Mind and two Gates’ is considered to be a great exposition on the relationship between One and Many throughout the history of Asian Buddhism. He occupies an exalted position in the history of Seon Buddhism and he was able to synthesise the Seon and Hua-yen doctrines by incorporating the Hua-yen doctrines as a supporting the intellectual basis for the practice of Seon.

The most distinctive feature of Korean Buddhism is the pursuit of harmony and unification which is witnessed throughout its development. It
“has pursued the perfect overcoming of any philosophical confrontation between the different ideas and schools of Korean Buddhism and the harmonization of theory and practice. For this reason, Korean Buddhism is often referred to as ‘Tong-bul-kyo’, which means ‘whole Buddhist harmonization’. In this aspect, the contribution of Won-hyo is considered to be the earliest and most important. His theory of hua-jaeng ‘the harmonization of disputes’ is ‘characterized by a syncretic tendency whereby all the different sects and doctrines in Buddhist schools are harmonized in one.’ Taking Pratiyasamutpadavada as the basis, Won-hyo emphasized that Dharmadhatu is one, and all dharmas are its manifestations. He cited Avatamsaka-sutra, ‘One is all, and all is one; one is in all, all is in one.’ He followed the Buddha and put forth his views in the common language. As a follower of Mahayana, he focused on the Bodhisattva Amitabha and resorted to singing and dancing chanting the name of Amitabha and popularizing it among the people.

Won-hyo’s friend Uisang (625-702 AD) wrote an abstract of the Avatamsaka-sutra, stating “Within one, there are many. Within many one is evident. Within one particle of dust, the entire universe exists. Likewise, within every particle of dust, the universe abides.”

There are many other traits of Korean Buddhism. Geo-lyong Lee writes that the Korean Buddhism established its own identity and had its own distinctive features. The characteristics are- generosity of accepting

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106 Geo –lyong Lee, ‘Korea’s Contribution for the Development of Buddhist Philosophy in Asia- With Special Reference to Won-hyo’s Tong-bul-kyo and Seon Thought’ in Pabitrakumar Roy (ed.) Buddhism, World Culture and Human Values, CIHTS, Sarnath, Varanasi, pp.51-52
107 Korean Buddhism, Korean Buddhist Order Association, Bulkwang Publishing, South Korea, p.41
indigenous culture, protecting the nation and the people, pursuit of harmonization.\textsuperscript{108}

The main sect or order in Korea is Chogye. The name Chogye, comes from the mountain in China on which Hui’ñeng (638-713 AD), the Sixth Patriarch lived. The name “Chogye” was probably brought back from China by Master Toui in about 820 AD. It is an order whose main focus is on meditation, originating from the Chan teaching of China. Slowly, many different Zen sects evolved in Korea. Master T’aego (1301-82) a great monk, returned from China in 1346 AD. Then, he united all the Zen sects and called the resulting order “Chogye.” It was only after the Korean liberation from the Japanese occupation in 1945, referred to as the era of purification that Korean Buddhism once again began to flourish. The Chogye Order emphasizes meditation which is considered by most Buddhists to be the best way to attain enlightenment. The most venerated texts are: the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, and the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, the Avatamsaka Sutra, and stories of ancient Zen Masters. This Order consists of about 12,000 ordained members in the present times. Besides, there are 8.1 million active registered lay members (1997).

There are many other Buddhist sects in Korea. Although they share identical philosophy, the teachings of the Buddha, they differ in the area on which they lay stress and in the choice of the principle text. All the Mahayana sects incorporate tantric influences into their teaching. The second largest sect, T’aego, has mostly married monks. The Hwaom, Chonghwa and Wonhyo sects lay emphasis on the Flower Garland Sutra, Avatamsaka Sutra. The Pophwa, Purip and Ilsung, among others,

concentrate on the Lotus Sutra. The Pure Land Sect venerates the Lotus Sutra and Pomun is the only all women Buddhist sect in the world.

Most of the Korean Buddhist sects were founded after the liberation from the Japanese in 1945. Since then Korean Buddhism has been changing rapidly: programmes have been more diversified and education has been emphasized. In the area of education many temples now have kindergartens or other schools attached to them. This is interesting because traditionally, in most Buddhist countries young children learned to read and write as monks. One Buddhist University, Dongguk, has campuses in Seoul and Kyongju and there is a special university for monks and nuns called Sangha University in Korea.

The Monastic Life

Let us consider the life of bhikkus and bhikkunis in Korea. One remarkable point regarding the monastic life in Korea is that the life-styles of monks and nuns are almost identical. The monastic life starts with formal renunciation followed by admission in the Buddhist sangha. The generic term for the Buddhist monastic order is the sangha; the literal translation of this word is used in all Buddhist countries. Anyone who wishes to be ordained in the main Buddhist monastic order, Chogye, should have completed high school and be normally healthy in order to endure the rigours of the training. The main aim of ordination by a man or a woman is to attain enlightenment as well as to help other living beings. The method used to accomplish this work is careful training and ardent practice for as long as possible—even the whole life. Communal living, meditation, religious practice, the study of texts and listening to the words of great monks and nuns all form part of this way of life.
On entering the monastery for the first time, the severing of worldly relations was symbolically marked by the shaving of hair and beard and donning grey or brown clothes. There is an exception to the rule for the women as they do not shave their heads at first as this being a trial period, they would face difficulty in returning home, if they so chose. Traditionally, shaving of the hair is renunciation of rank, as well as a way to reduce vanity and to be hygienic. During this period, the aspirant learnt chanting, did chores around the monastery and cared for the senior monks. The monk was supposed to learn the teachings of the Buddha and the spiritual path ahead. For this he relied on the ancient texts and the commentaries written through the ages. Hence, texts were of great importance in Korean Buddhism.

In China, the texts were carved on strips of bamboo, silk, stone and on wood but there seems to have been a tendency of preserving the texts in one place only. It was in Korea that printing really developed. The first example of a printed “book” in the world is a Buddhist text consisting of 12 separate sheets of wood-blocks, struck together to form a scroll, dating between 706 and 751 AD. Over 80,000 wood-blocks were completed in 1251 AD and comprise the entire collection of Buddhist texts and are kept at Haein-sa Temple, near Taegu. These blocks are truly marvelous because of the evenness of the carving and the fact that there is not a single mistake in the whole collection. Books were in great demand as the study of scriptures was emphasized. Beautiful covers were created for the books. In Korea, embossed mulberry paper were often dyed and sometimes oiled. The designs used were mostly traditional ones like water chestnuts, regarded as a good luck charm for preventing the burning down of their homes – and of
the books. The other popular symbols were swastika\textsuperscript{109}, lotuses, thunder clouds, tortoise shells, bats and the Korean word for good luck.

After about one year, it was decided whether or not the candidate was suitable for monastic life and, if so, he chose a teacher – or they chose each other. The aspirant was given ordination and took the first set of basic training rules: the ten precepts which constituted the going forth. The teacher took care of the disciple, now called a sami, (samini for women), materially and spiritually. The disciple, in turn, served the teacher.

Next, the young monk was sent to one of the Monks’ Colleges. There were special institutions where the sami (or samini, separately) studied the texts more deeply, learnt Chinese characters, chanting and all the talents required for a fully ordained monk or nun of the Buddhist community. With the passage of time, there are a large number of more modern subjects available for study in the modern times. Some of them are English, Psychology, techniques for teaching the young and the old. The most important lessons are in the art of communal living. As all the members of the same batch stay together in one large room for four years, they learn to live harmoniously. After five years, if the teacher finds the novice fit, then he or she is sent for the second and final ordination and becomes a bhikku (bhikkuni for women) or a full member of the monastic community of sangha. The ceremony is preceded by five days of extra training and lecturers.

During late Silla period, Seon Buddhism developed in Korea. It led greater emphasis on meditation to fathom one’s inner nature. Meditation was considered more important than the study of scriptures or worship

\textsuperscript{109} Swastika was a symbol of peace and good luck in Asia. Its earliest appearance can be traced to Indus Valley Civilization in India. Swastika may possibly be a link between India and the East Asian countries.
Based on devotion. Chi-nul (1158-1210 AD) played an important role in establishing this thought in Korea. His writings in the 12th century influenced the Korean Buddhism the most. He placed the study of scriptures as complementary to meditation. He established collaboration between Kyo (scholarship) and Seon (meditation) at a time when Korean Buddhism was torn on sectarian lines between these two dominant factions.\textsuperscript{110} The impact was seen in the monastic education of that period and continued later on too. Seon is the central point of the Jogye, the largest order of the Korean Buddhism in the present times. “The current system of monastic education in Korea is notably influenced by Chi-nul’s ideas. After completing initial training as novices, Korean monks usually study at the Sutra Hall; only upon completing the basic sutra study course, they are allowed to go to the Meditation Hall. This procedure of training has been dominant in Korea until recently; one must first learn intellectually what enlightenment is, and then practice what one has learned.”\textsuperscript{111} Beside meditation, chanting of mantras, study of Buddhist scriptures and prayer are also important aspects of Korean Buddhism. The learning of scriptures and then going to the practical training through meditation was a part of the Buddhist system of education in India and elsewhere. First, one had to learn the theory through scriptures and the practical aspect of meditation followed. Meditation was a part and parcel of the Buddhist monastic system in India and also in other countries.

Richard D. McBride II talks about two models of Buddhist education in the Early Koguryo/ Goryeo kingdom (918-1392 AD) in Korea:

\textsuperscript{110} Korean Buddhism, op.cit., p.42
\textsuperscript{111} Geo–lyong Lee, ‘Korea’s Contribution for the Development of Buddhist Philosophy in Asia- With Special Reference to Won-hyo’s Tong-bul-kyo and Seon Thought’ in Pabitrakumar Roy (ed.) Buddhism, World Culture and Human Values, CIHTS, Sarnath, Varanasi, p.57
1. Education through “mental and verbal examination” as reflected in Zen/Seon/Chan Buddhist literature. This was the widely followed approach.

2. The less followed approach was to view the “influence of civil service examination and Confucian curriculum” on Buddhist monastic education. 112

The first approach definitely points to meditation (the art of learning through silence) and study of scriptures as discussed above. Uicheon (1055-1101 AD) was the royal Korean monk and his writings on education and curriculum still survive today. The study of texts can be seen in Korea since the late Silla period and continued in the Goryeo period. The monks studied the relevant Buddhist texts and then lectured on them.

The second approach needs further exploration. The Chinese connection becomes quite evident as we all know that Chinese civil service examination was an important aspect of Chinese polity and influence of Confucius was beyond China, especially in the neighboring areas. The role of state in monitoring Buddhist monastic education through state controlled examination is evident in China since 8th century AD. Selective monastic examinations were introduced in 705 AD during the rule of Tang dynasty. 113 The monastic examinations were conducted by the Ministry of Rites. The selection of monks and nuns through examination served two purposes: (1) it regulated or restricted the number of monks and nuns within the Chinese Buddhist monasteries, (2) it established certain ‘standards’ for selection so

112 Richard D McBride II, Uicheon and Monastic Education and Curriculum in Early Goryeo, in Robert M Gimello, et.al., The State, Religion and Thinkers in Korean Buddhism, Humanities Korea Buddhism Series 2, Dongguk University Press, South Korea, April 2014, p. 61
113 The Chinese ruler who introduced this was King Zhongzong (705-710 AD) and gradually it emerged as one of the basic features of Tang Buddhism in China.
that a certain level of competency was maintained.\textsuperscript{114} This also proves the state’s control over organized religious order like Buddhism and Daoism in China.

Initially, the system of examination involved recitation of 500 pages of Buddhist sutras and those who passed it became qualified to become monks. Later on, King Daizong (762-779 AD) introduced examination in three fields—(1) scriptures, (2) monastic discipline, and (3) intellectual treatises. Further, King Jingzong introduced a new rule under which a man had to recite 150 pages and a woman 100 pages of scriptures to become a monk or nun respectively.\textsuperscript{115} By thirties of the 10\textsuperscript{th} century, the tests concentrated on five aspects:

1. Lecturing on the sutras (\textit{jianging})

2. Meditative absorption (\textit{chanding})

3. Memorization of a text (\textit{chinian})

4. Composition of a piece of literature (\textit{wenzhang})

5. Intellectual discussion of a passage (\textit{yilun}).\textsuperscript{116}

By mid 10\textsuperscript{th} century, the men aspirants had to recite 100 pages or read aloud 500 pages of Buddhist scriptures while for women it was 70 and 300 pages respectively. As the state controlled the examination, it was conducted by government officials and not the monks. The men and women who qualified the tests then approached the monastery of their choice for formal ordination. The ordination was followed by tonsure. “… the granting

\textsuperscript{114} Richard D McBride II, op.cit., p.66
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p.67
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid
of an ordination certificate was official state business, and tonsure was a monastic affair.”

Korea was influenced by Chinese civil service examination system. It was adopted by king Gwangjong (949-975AD) in 958 AD during Goryeo period. The examination consisted of three different categories meant for different civil services post: (1) a composition examination (*jesul eop*), (2) a Classics examination (*myeonggyeong*), and (3) a miscellaneous examination (*jap eop*). In China, the civil service examination was offered in two tracks- memorization and composition. The system of examination for entering the organized Buddhist monasteries in Korea must have originated during the Goryeo period itself taking a cue from the Chinese system. Richard D McBride II is of the opinion that they may be traced back to undocumented practices of the late Silla period. There are some inscriptive and literary sources which throw light on the examination and recruitment of Seon monks who are referred to “as lofty as the Himalayas”. The name and rank of successful candidates were displayed just like the civil servants in the capital city. The examination has been referred as “selection of monks” (*seungseon*) or “great selection” (*daeseon*) in the sources of Goryeo; the modern scholars have referred it as “monastic examinations”. According to Sem Vermeersch, the examination was held for all major Buddhist traditions like the Seon, Cheontae, Hwaeom and also

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117 Ibid, p.68  
118 Ibid, p.65  
119 Ibid, p.72  
121 Richard D McBride II, *op.cit.*, p.72
as a general examination.\textsuperscript{122} Thus, it included the doctrinal school as well as the meditation school. In Korea, the monks appeared for the examination conducted by their own school (jongseon) and the successful candidates further appeared for the regular monastic examination (daeseon). The successful candidates got the title of daedeok/ bhandaka in Sanskrit meaning the dharma rank of great virtue. The monastic ranks after this were:

1. \textit{Daedeok daesa}, great master

2. \textit{Jung daesa}, twofold great master


After that, the two highest ranks in the doctrinal school were

1. \textit{Sujwa}, Dean

2. \textit{Seungtong}, Samgha overseer.

The two highest ranks in the meditation school were:

1. \textit{Seonsa}, Seon master

2. \textit{Daeseonsa}, great Seon masters

As stated by Vermeersch, the full name of the doctrinal examination, 
\textit{ogyo daeseon} (“great selection of the five schools) is mentioned only once\textsuperscript{123} in the sources available for the Goryeo period. The five schools as interpreted by Richard D McBride II are five teachings (ogyo) and not five schools and they are: (1) the Hinayana (soseung), (2) the initial teachings of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[123]{Funerary Stele Inscription of Jeonghyeon (Hyeso Guksa, 972-1054 AD), it states that he took the examination at Mireuksa. Refer Richard D McBride II,\textit{op.cit.}, p.73}
\end{footnotes}
the Mahayana (*daeseung sigyo*), (3) the final teachings of the Mahayana (*daeseung jonggyo*), (4) the sudden teaching (*don'gyo*), and (5) the perfect teaching (*won’gyo*).\footnote{Richard D McBride II, *op.cit.*, p.73}

A pertinent question which arises is what texts or Buddhist scriptures were studied or were part of the curriculum in Goryeo period? We don’t have any evidence from the Goryeo period but statues (the National Code) of early Joseon period (1392-1910) and the funerary stele inscriptions of eminent monks of late Silla period and early Goryeo period do throw light on this aspect. According to the statutes, the selection examination was held every three year for Seon and Gyo schools to select thirty candidates for each school. The examination of the Seon School was based on texts like Transmission of the Lamp (*Chuandeng lu*) and Selected Odes of the Seon Tradition (*Seonmun yeomsung*), compiled by monk Jin’gak Hyesim (1178-1234) which is lost now.\footnote{Ibid., pp.73-74., n.29, pp.99-100} The examination of Gyo School was based on two texts- the *Avatamasakasutra* and *Dasabhumikasutrasastra*. There may have been some more texts probably in the syllabus of the examination. The funerary inscriptions of eminent monks\footnote{Jeoljung (826-900 AD), a famous monk of late Silla period studied the *Avatamasakasutra*. Other monks who studied the same text were Haengjeok (832-916 AD), Yeeom (862-930 AD), Gaecheong (854-930). Refer Richard D McBride II,*op.cit.*, p.74, n.31,32,33,34, pp.100-101} corroborate the study of *Avatamasakasutra* by them and it must have been an important text of curriculum in Korea in ancient times. There are also references to monks who were familiar with the texts of Yogacara tradition, or studied Vinaya texts. The sources point out to the fact that the two major texts that were studied and lectured upon were *Avatamasakasutra* and the Yogacara literature. Subjects beyond Buddhism were also studied as one can discern from the areas studied by Uicheon during 11th century.
“From the doctrinal teachings and meditative visualization of Xianshou to the sudden and gradual [teachings] and the sutras, vinaya, treatises, compositions, and the commentaries of the Mahayana and Hinayana, there was nothing that he did not delve into and, furthermore, in his spare time, since he exerted himself in learning outside [of Buddhism], his knowledge and experience were vast- from the writings of Confucius and Laozi to the philosophers, histories, and compiled records and theories of the hundred schools.  

Thus, we see that many traditions (Huayan, Tintai, Vinaya, Chan, Weishi, etc), history, philosophy, etc were also studied and this may have been in earlier centuries too. Further, Uicheon studied Sanskrit along with Indian monks Tianjixiang and Shaode who were his friends. Thus, Indian monks were in touch with the Korean monks. Some of the other texts that Uicheon recommended for study were Lankavatara Sutra, Awakening of the Faith in the Mahayana, Diamond Sutra. “Thus, although Uicheon certainly had a greater interest in Buddhist literature and scholarly endeavor, many monks had studied the Avatamasakasutra and other sutras and intellectual treatises.”

The funerary inscriptions of certain monks do refer to their affiliation to Yogacara School or study of its material. The funerary inscription of Uicheon throws light on the examination courses, etc:

In sinsa, the first year of the Qiantong reign period [1101], [State Preceptor] Daegak [Uicheon] first recommended those who excelled in the area of “expanding general [themes] and recording scholarly works” (goenggang chohak). He chose one hundred scholars of superior learning and seated them in Bongeunsa. They were tested/examined in one hundred twenty rolls of the

127 Richard D McBride II, op.cit., p.76, n.53  
128 Ibid, p.77  
129 Ibid
sutrās and treatises of the core teaching [of the Cheontae tradition?] and passed/ selected Hyeollyang and forty odd individuals. [The examination] was on equal footing along with Jogye, Hwaeom, Yuga, and Gwebeom, which have been greatly popular from the outset of the previous dynasty. In the world they were called the four great examination courses (sa dae eop). After the passing of [State Preceptor] Daegok, [members of] the foregoing five approaches [to Dharma], each in their order, returne d to the shelter of their home mountain monasteries. Only the disciples of the State Preceptor had no one and nowhere to rely upon.130

Richard D McBride II on the basis of inscriptions opined that there were four great Buddhist examination courses in the Goryeo period – Jogye eop(course on Seon material), Hwaeom eop (course on the Avatamsakasutra), Yuga eop (course on the Yogacarabhumisutra), and Gwebeom eop (course on monastic standards). This was in use before Cheontae or Lotus Sutra examination course was introduced. Gwebeom literally means “models, patterns or standards (models for monastic behavior?), is a common Sinitic Buddhist translation of the term acarya.”131 Richard further opines that “it was an exam that qualified the individual to become an acarya.”132 An acarya in the Mahayana Buddhism of East Asia was a ritual specialist and was “involved with teaching and training of new monks, education in the monastic precepts and the monastic lifestyle, and the process of reading and explicating Buddhist sutras.”133 In East Asian Mahayana tradition, there are five kinds of Acaryas134:

1. The mendicant acarya or acarya – one who has left the householder way of life, one who was one’s master when one received the ordination of the ten precepts, thus he was an acarya of the ten precepts (sipgye asari).

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130 Ibid, pp.78-79, n.60,61. Bongeunsa was the votive temple of Goryeo king Taejo (918-943AD).
131 Ibid, p.79
132 The term acarya was in vogue in Brahmanical system of education in India and was appropriated by Buddhists to mean a ritual specialist.
133 Ibid
134 Ibid, n.65, p.104
2. The full precept acarya (sugye asari) - one was the master of karma when one received the full precepts. He is also referred as karma acarya (galma asari).

3. The instructor acarya (gyosu asari) – one who was one’s master of solemnity when one received the full precepts. He was also referred as dignified acarya (wiui asari).

4. The acarya of receiving sutras (sugyeong asari) – one who teaches the methods of reading the sutras and their meaning.

5. The acarya for reliance and cessation (uiji asari) – one who leads the daily lives of the bhiksus (monks).

There was a sixth category of acarya found in India and Central Asia. They are referred as kundika acarya and were master of abhiseka or consecration (gwanjeongs).  

**The Monastic Curriculum**

The monastic curriculum during the Goryeo period had certain political factors. The state patronized Buddhism on one hand and on the other hand tried to regulate the monastic order through its examination system of recruiting monks and nuns and maintain the sanctity of the monastic order. The monk scholars (Uicheon being one of them) played an important role in developing the curriculum first by preparing the students for the examination which mainly consisted of Buddhist scriptures and the commentaries on them.

The life and work of Uicheon provides ample evidence regarding the popular texts being studied then. Uicheon’s “Preface to the Corrected Edition of the Simple Course on the Vijnaptimatratasiddhasastra” (Ganjeong Seong yusinnon dangwa seo) was considered to be a useful text in preparing for the examination on Yogacara materials. This was a popular text and used in the Chinese Buddhism on a regular basis and was also in
vogue in Korea; Uicheon himself had heard lectures on this text in China. *Avatamasakasutra, Awakening of Faith*[^135], other sutras were other texts recommended by Uicheon and him himself lectured on them.

Uicheon’s view on approach to monastic education in Goryeo is stated below:

You should know this. If you do not learn the *Abhidharmakosabhasya* you will not know the intellectual theories of the Hinayana. If you do not learn the *Vijnaptimatratasiddisastra*, how will you be able to see the core teachings of the initial teaching [of the Mahayana]? If you do not learn the *Awakening of Faith*, how will you be able to clearly understand the profound meaning of the final teaching and the sudden teaching? If you do not study the *Avatamasakasutra*, it will be difficult for you to enter the approach of perfect interfusion…[^136]

The emphasis was on the text of both the Vehicles – Hinayana and Mahayana for a better understanding of Buddhism. Thus, Uicheon advised everyone to engage in concurrent learning of the various teachings. He mentioned about final teaching and sudden teaching which shows the Chinese influence on Korean Buddhism. The final teaching is the third of the five teachings of the Huayan/ Hua-yen tradition (Flower Garland School, a Mahayana school of Chinese Buddhism was based on the text *Avatamasakasutra*, Flower Garland Sutra and later spread to Korea in Silla period and then to Japan through a Korean monk named Shinjo[Simsang in Korean] in 740 AD).[^137] The ‘sudden teaching’ is the fourth of the five teachings of Huayan School and follows Buddhist texts like *Vimalakritinirdesasutra*. The texts associated with the final teaching and

[^135]: *Awakening of Faith*, a Mahayana treatise attributed to Asvaghosa(ca.100-160 CE) and translated into Chinese by Paramarth(499-569 AD). The commentaries written on this text by Wonhyo and Fazang were also popular texts in Korea.


[^137]: *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.v. Flower Garland school, p.207
sudden teaching passed on from China to Korea and was an important part of the Buddhist curriculum.

Lecture mode of teaching by eminent monks prepared the monks for examination to move up in the monastic order. Texts of both Hinayana and Mahayana were to be studied for a complete and holistic knowledge. Without understanding the former, one cannot comprehend the latter. Uicheon was of this view and he asked his students to study both the traditions. His life and time clearly show that he himself studied and lectured on various Buddhist texts including Vinaya texts, although he primarily lectured on the *Avatamsakasutra*. He is credited with the composition of poems too. “The complex combination of the doctrinal learning of multiple intellectual traditions, visualization and meditation procedures, and devotional practices described by Uicheon is indicative of the pluralistic ritual and religious atmosphere he would have encountered in Chinese monasteries in south China, especially ones like Guoqing Monastery, the namesake of Gukcheongsa.”

Copying of the Buddhist texts in neat and clear handwriting was an important affair in most of the established monasteries in ancient and early medieval India, China, Korea, etc. Uicheon in a letter to Jingyuan, his Chinese mentor requests him to send “clean and neat handwritten copies [of these works]” which included *Great Sutra [Avatamasakasutra]*, a new annotated edition of *Lotus Sutra* and a Chinese text named *Curricular Text* in six volumes. Uicheon’s catalog contains more than twenty works of

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139 Ibid., p.87, fn106, p.115
140 Uicheon’s catalog survived the Mongol attack of Korea in 1231AD although his *Canon of Doctrinal Teachings* in woodblocks were burnt. The catalog lists 1010 titles in 4740 rolls. 158 out of 1010 titles (15.64%) are curricular texts. Refer Richard D McBride II, *op.cit.*, p.90 and Appendix, pp.118-119
The catalog consists of 158 curricular texts out of the total of 1010 texts. The curricular texts consist of 110 Sutras, 12 Vinaya and 36 Intellectual treatises which were used in monastic education of Korea around late 11th century AD and may be some of the texts being used in earlier period too. Some 146 titles from the total of 1010 texts are said to “extracts” or “notes” which were also used in curriculum. The analysis of the 158 curricular texts clearly points to the Chinese influence on Korean monastic education. The sutras, vinaya texts and other intellectual treatises were the three main components used for Buddhist examination in China during Tang period (618-906 AD); Budhism reached its zenith during this period in China. So, we are able to discern a plethora of texts being used in Korea during the Goryeo period. They formed a part of the Buddhist curriculum at large monasteries that had emerged as educational centers both in China and Korea. In Korea, the most important text in the curriculum was *Avatamsakasutra* as “twenty-three curricular texts were composed for the *Avatamsakasutra* and associated commentarial material. Jingyuan was the author or editor of no less than five such educational works.”

Chanting the sutras, practicing meditation were important activities within a monastery.

Richard D McBride II is of the opinion that although Uicheon was deeply influenced by Chinese Buddhism, the Korean Buddhism – the monastic education and curriculum must have differed from China due to “fundamental differences in the rules and statutes that regulated the Buddhist church”. The Korean Buddhism did have influence of Uicheon and his hero Wonhyo; there must have been the influence of local factors and traditions as Buddhism had the unique ability of assimilating local religious cults and traditions within it.

141 Ibid, p.92
**The Buddhist Schools or Sects**

A number of Buddhist schools developed during the early period of Korean Buddhism such as the Samnon. It focused on the Mādhyamika tradition of India and its major texts were Mūlamadhyamaka-kārika, Dvādaśamukha-śastra, Baenon etc. This school initially gained popularity in Goguryo and Baekje kingdoms of Korea. The Gyeyul (Vinaya in Sanskrit) focused on the study and implementation of moral discipline (śīla) initially started in Baekje. The Yeolban (Nirvāṇa in Sanskrit), was based on the themes of the Mahāparinivāṇa-sūtra. Later on, the Weonyung came from outside and was known as the Hwaeom tradition in Korea. It laid stress on the actualization of the metaphysics of interpenetration based on the Avatamsaka-sūtra, and was established as a long-lasting tradition in Korean Buddhism.

Shamanism was the indigenous belief practiced in Korea before the arrival of Buddhism. Korean Buddhism has been long intertwined with a strong shamanistic tradition of spirituality for the common base, and the powerful Seon tradition as a major Buddhist practice having a strong sangha base. The early Korean Buddhism has been evidently blended with the indigenous Shamanism.

During the Unified Silla period, Buddhist thought reached its peak as the integrating paradigm and ideology, producing such eminent Korean monks such as Weonhyo (617-686), Uisang (625-702), Wonch’uk (613-696) and Jajang (7th century). Weonhyo’s commentaries played an important role in shaping the thought of famous Chinese philosopher Fazang while Wonch’uk’s commentary on the Samadhinirmocanasutra influenced the Tibetan Buddhism. Jajang’s role was vital in getting
Buddhism adopted as a national religion. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Korean sangha, the monastic order within the Geyal Buddhist tradition. The main schools of study during the Unified Silla period were Weonyung, Yusik (*Weishi* in Chinese, consciousness-only, Yogācāra), Jeongto (Pure Land), and the indigenous Korean Beopseong (Dharma-nature) school. Weonhyo taught the “Pure Land” practice of *yeombul* (visualizing the Buddha) which is quite popular and had a deep impact on Korean Buddhist thought. His work attempted a synthesis of seemingly divergent strands of Indian and Chinese Buddhist doctrines. Weonhyo’s friend Uisang went to Changan (the capital of T’ang China) and studied under Huayan patriarchs, Zhiyan (600-668) and Fazang (643-712) and returned after twenty year. His work contributed to Hwaeom which had a great doctrinal influence on Korean Buddhism.

Many Korean Buddhist scholars and monks devoted most of their time and energy towards the resolution of sectarian debates and apparent doctrinal inconsistencies through the three kingdom period, so that they produced Buddhism with new characteristics. Tongbulgyo emerged as a holistic interpretation of the prior Buddhist doctrines, so termed by its most important exponent Weonhyo.

Pure Land became extremely popular in Korean among the common people. It was a major topic of inquiry for many of Korea’s scholar-monks. Uisang after his return from China became quite influential with the royal powerl. He sowed the seed of Hwaeom in the consciousness of Korean Buddhist. The construction of numerous Buddhist temples facilitated the establishment of Buddhism in Korea. The period of political stability in the Silla period provided the aristocracy an opportunity to engage themselves in
scholarly inquiry. This in a way helped Uisang’s endeavour to establish Buddhism.

During the later Silla period, the scripture based Buddhism faced a decline in intellectual vitality. There was importation and development of Chinese Ch’an Buddhism (Seon in Korea) which led greater stress on meditation. It developed during the sixth and seventh centuries, and later reached Korea. It marked a tension between the new meditational schools and the old scripture based schools, latter being referred as gyo, meaning “learning” or “study”. Many Korean Buddhists studied Ch’an in China, and after returning established their own schools in various monasteries located in the mountains. Initially, the number of these schools used to be nine, and Korean Seon was called the Nine Mountain schools at that time. The established doctrinal schools vehemently opposed it but gradually Seon gained acceptance as the true transmitter of enlightenment which is beyond teaching, and not founded in scriptures or texts. It directly points towards the original mind and one can achieve the Buddhahood by discerning one’s own nature.

During the period of growth of Seon, the Hwaeom School of study of scriptures continued to thrive throughout Goryeo period, along with the legacy of Uisang and Weonhyo. The work of Gyunnyeo (923-973) prepared the ground for reconciliation of Hwaeom and Seon. Another important advocate of Seon and Gyo unity was Uicheon (1055-1101). He later travelled to China, and on return, actively promulgated the Chentae teaching, which was soon recognized as another Seon school. This period came to be described as the period of “five doctrinal and two meditational

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143 Ibid., p.119
schools”. The prominent figure of Seon in Goryeo period was Jinul (1152-1210), who clearly advocated the intrinsic unity and similarities between the Seon and Gyo School. All these schools found mention in Korean historical records. Towards the end of the Goryeo period, Seon became dominant both among the ruling class and society. Thus, during this period, Seon thoroughly became a “religion of the state,” receiving extensive support and privileges from the ruling dynasty.144

The first woodblock editions of the Tripitaka called the Tripitaka Koreana were made during Goryeo period. The first edition was completed during 1210 to 1231, and the second one during 1214 to 1259. The first edition was destroyed in a fire during the Mongol invasion in 1232, but the second edition is still in existence at Haeinsa in Gyeongsang province. This edition of the Tripitaka was of high quality, and served as the standard version of the Tripitaka in entire East Asia for almost 700 years. In Jinul’s period, Buddhism got amalgmated by certain popular tendencies like fortune-telling, offering prayers, and performing rituals for fulfillment of peoples’ secular desires. Such aberrations needed corrections and rectifications and were prominent issues for Buddhist leaders of that period. Jinul started a new movement in the Korean Seon tradition, named “samādhi and prajñā society” with an aim to establish a ‘new community of disciplined, pure-minded practitioners, deep in the mountains’. He fulfilled this mission by founding the Seonggwangsa monastery at Mt. Jogye. Jinul’s works are characterized by a thorough analysis and reformulation of the methodologies of Seon study and practice. Jinul incorporated the Gwanhwa method of meditation from Dahui, a Chinese master (1089-1163). This is

144 Ibid., p.120
the main method of meditation taught in Korean Seon even in the present times. Jinul’s movement was rather a “revival of the Sangha disciplines”\textsuperscript{145}.

With the establishment of the Joseon dynasty (1392 A.D), a Neo-Confucian movement having anti-Buddhist inclination became important. Buddhism was suppressed for the next 500 years. The number of Buddhist monasteries reduced to mere thirty-six. A number of restrictions on membership in the Sangha were installed, and Buddhist monks and nuns were driven to the mountains, and forbidden to mix with society. Joseon Buddhism which preached “the five doctrinal and two meditational” school system of the Goryeo, was then first condensed into two schools: Seon and Gyo. And eventually, these were further reduced to the single school of Seon.\textsuperscript{146}

The Joseon Seon did not deviate much in character and there are teaching records of the sharp, stick wielding, confrontational, shouting classical “Ch’ an in Chinese” atmosphere, blended with a rigorous study of seminal \textit{sūtras} and \textit{śastras}, the common writings on Hwaeom-related texts, and the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment, \textit{Surangama-sūtra}, Diamond Sūtra (\textit{Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sutra}). During the Joseon period, the Jogye order instituted a set curriculum of scriptural study, including the above-mentioned works, along with other shorter selections from eminent Korean monks such as Jinul, etc.\textsuperscript{147}

Let’s have a glimpse of the lifestyle of Seon monks of the late Goryeo and Joseon periods. The study began with Confucian and Daoist studies. Wandering through the mountain monasteries in nature, they were initiated to the Gong’an/ Gwanhwa meditation, a vital component of Seon practice.

\textsuperscript{145} \textit{Ibid.}, p.121.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Ibid.}, p.122.
\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.122-123
This Gwanhwa meditation approach was “all Gong’an are contained in one” and therefore it was, and still is, quite common for the practitioners to remain with one Hwadu (seon question) during his whole meditational career, most often of Zhaozhou’s (778-897) “nothingness.” Buddhism during the three centuries, from the time of Seosan Hyujeong (1520-1604 AD), a renowned Seon master and writer, up to the Japanese incursion into Korea in the late nineteenth century, remained fairly consistent with the above mentioned model. During the final two centuries, there was a revival of Pure Land (Amitabha) faith.

The Joseon dynasty ended in 1910 when the Japanese annexed Korea and they tried to “Japanize” Korean Buddhism by incorporating different Japanese sects. They compelled celibate Korean Sangha members to marry like their counterparts in Japan by passing regulations favoring married priests.\textsuperscript{148} Buddhism began to lose followers to the Christian missionaries who were able to capitalize on theses weakness.\textsuperscript{149}

The Seon School in the contemporary times is led by the dominant Jogye/Chogye order, and practices disciplined traditional Seon practice at a number of major mountain monasteries in Korea. There are a number of highly regarded masters to guide and act as teachers. Thus, the contemporary Seon practice is not far removed in content from the original practice of Jinul, who introduced a combination of the study of selected Buddhist texts and Gwanhwa Meditation.

Chogye was Korea’s main sect. Its name was derived from the mountain in China on which the Sixth Patriarch, Hui’neng (638-713AD) lived. It is an order which stresses meditation, originating from the Chan

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p.124.
\textsuperscript{149} Dr Frank M. Tedesco’s article ‘Korean Buddhism at the Crossroads’ (Interview), Malaysia, 2001. Cited in ibid, p.125
teaching of China. Slowly, many different Zen sects were formed in Korea. Master T’aego (1301-82AD) a great monk, returned from China in 1346. After that he united all the Zen sects and called the order “Chogye.” It was only after liberation from the Japanese in 1945, that Korean Buddhism once again began to flourish. The Chogye Order emphasizes meditation which is considered by most Buddhists to be the best way to attain enlightenment. The most venerated texts are: the Heart Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, and the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, the Avatamsaka Sutra, and stories of ancient Zen Masters.

There are many other Buddhist sects in Korea. Although they share identical philosophy, they differ in the area of focus and importance and the choice of principle text. All are Mahayana sects and some incorporate tantric influences into their teaching. The second largest sect, T’aego, has mostly married monks. The Hwaom, Chonghwa and Wonhyo sects all stress on the Flower Garland Sutra, Avatamsaka. The Pophwa, Purip and Ilsung, among others, concentrate on the Lotus Sutra. The Pure Land Sect venerates the Lotus Sutra. Pomun is the only all women Buddhist sect in the world found in Korea which is a very interesting fact as far as the history of nuns and nunneries in the Buddhist countries is concerned.150

Most of the Korean Buddhists sects were founded after the liberation from the Japanese in 1945. Since then Korean Buddhism has been changing rapidly: programs have been more diversified and education has been emphasized. In the area of education many temples now have kindergartens or other schools attached to them. This is interesting because traditionally, in most Buddhist countries young children learned to read and write through

the monks. One Buddhist University, Dongguk, has campuses in Seoul and Kyongju and there is a special university for monks and nuns called Sangha University.

**CURRICULUM**

The Korean Sangha life is markedly itinerant; while each monk has a “home” monastery, he regularly travels to various mountain Buddhist sites, and stays as long as he wishes, studying and teaching in the monastery which is housing him.

An investigation into recent Korean Sangha and its educational curriculum including 15 traditional Sangha educational curricula and modern departmental Buddhist university curriculum is summarized in the following table and it will give us an insight into the course of study. The earlier period may have laid emphasis on the Buddhist texts but the modern curriculum includes the study of other foreign languages like English, Japanese and of course Chinese in the first year itself. Chinese was a must in earlier period also as Korean Buddhism is Chinese scripture based and all major doctrines of the Mahayana Buddhism were introduced into Korea by Chinese and Indian teachers and were studied by the Korean monks in full earnest. Secondly, the study of computers in the first year is also in keeping with contemporary requirements. It’s heartening to note that a country like Korea has fully developed its Korean language software and is widely used by them. An analysis of the course definitely points to the Chinese and Indian connection in terms of the subjects of study as well as the Korean Buddhism.

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Among the 15 traditional Sangha educations, only two educational sanghas in the 2nd year have the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka-kārikā, and the others are all about the Seon tradition. As evident from the table above, the curriculum lays too much focus on the Seon tradition within the four year system of study.

Yon-Chul Choi talks about a methodological terminology ‘Deconstruction and Reconstruction’ for studying the Korean Buddhism critically, taking a cue from David J. Kalupahana, who summarizes the

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method of deconstruction and reconstruction adopted in the history of Buddhism: ‘First, the method adopted by the Buddha where mysterious entities are denied after a careful philosophical analysis followed by a more constructive process explained in terms of the principle of dependence. There is an abundance of positive doctrines all of which are couched in non-paradoxical straightforward language. When we come to the second stage, represented by the *Vajracchedikā*, negations are highlighted, with the positive doctrines formulated in more paradoxical forms. The third stage is represented by Nāgārjuna who follows the negative method of deconstruction throughout his treatise.’\(^{153}\)

**Conclusion**

Korean Buddhism, heavily influenced by Chinese Buddhism due geographical proximity, managed to carve an niche of its own with passage of time. The Mahayana tradition travelled from China to Korea with its evercompassing concept of Bodhisttava. It also incorporated the indigenous Shamaniasm within Buddhism and emphasized harmonization of thoughts of different sets leading to a consensus called “Hoetong” Buddhism standing for “all encompassing Buddhism”. The Buddhist education laid stressed on meditation and study of scriptures. The influence of civil service exam and Confucian curriculum was in Goreyo as discussed Richard D McBride II. This was a little tradition only. The Korean Buddhism accorded an equal status to women. They were offered full ordination. The monastic curriculum for men and women were same. All women sangha still survives in Korea. The Indian connection is evident in the form of use of Swastika, recitation of mantras, etc.. The common mantras are ‘*Om mani

"padme hume' and 'Om amogha vairocna mahamudra manipadma jvala pravarttya hum'. The recitation of the Sanskrit syllables is worth noting.

III: THAILAND

Thailand is located in the center of mainland of South East Asia. It was officially called Siam until 1939 and again from 1945 to 1948. The final official proclamation changing the name to Thailand was made on May 11, 1949. The 17th century literature used ‘Siam’ either for Ayudhya, the then capital or the whole empire. With the transfer of capital to Bangkok in 1782, Siam became the name for the whole country.\textsuperscript{154} “The original name Siam, however, is an ancient one; it occurs in Chinese annals, in

Sanskrit literature and in Ceylonese chronicles, -- in fact in all references to the country, ancient or modern, prior to 1947, -- and is still preferred by Siamese scholars.”  

It is bounded by the Gulf of Thailand (Gulf of Siam) on one side, and surrounded by Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Malaysia, it gives a look ‘like the shadowy outline of the shrunken face and trunk of an elephant’. The Mons were the original inhabitants of Siam. “Thailand had been part of the Funan Empire, centered on the lower Mekong valley and with a culture derived from India, which flourished from the first to sixth centuries A.D.” The Indian connection dates back to the ancient period in terms of cultural and trade relations. Thailand had important cultural and political connections with almost all her neighbors. The influence of Mon culture and Theravada Buddhism is prominent in Thailand. In South East Asia, the Indian influence since ancient period was in the form of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. They were associated with the royal cult of the god-king (deva-raja) but had little popular appeal. But by 11th and 12th centuries, the common people of Thailand and its neighboring countries like Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar were deeply influenced by the Theravada Buddhism. They had already absorbed the concepts like karma and rebirth. “The Thais absorbed this cultural heritage, creating in turn their own distinctive civilization, a product of Indianized concepts of king and state, Theravada Buddhism, and indigenous beliefs, customs, and social organization. This remarkable synthesis of externally derived and indigenous spiritual, political, and social ideas and activities was characteristics of the Ayuthaya dynasties that followed (mid-14th to

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155 Sukumar Dutt, *Buddhism in East Asia*, p.71
Buddhism in Thailand

Buddhism originated in India and it’s obvious that Thai Buddhists have some special connection with the land of origin. Buddhism is the state religion as more than 90 percent of Thai population is Buddhist. His Majesty the King of Thailand, according to the Constitution of the Kingdom, is to be a Buddhist. Buddhists from various countries including Thailand visit Buddhist sacred places in India.

The Buddhist orders (temples, etc.) have not changed in the last 10-20 years. The life in the Wat is still very strict and there is no rule or regulation being dropped during the last 10-20 years. Thai monks still study and practice the whole disciplinary and doctrinal principles of Buddhism as in the ancient period. There are different Buddhist school and sects in Thailand. The two main sects, Dharmayut and Mahanikaya, belong to the Theravada Buddhism and follow the conservative way of the study and practice of the disciplinary and doctrinal tenets. Both sects in Thailand pay respect to each other and have the same Supreme Council of Ecclesiastical Administration presided over by His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch who may be appointed by His Majesty the King of Thailand. The Supreme Patriarch may belong to any sect as the case may be. There is no difference between Thai monks living in the country side and in the city. Monks both in the country side and in the city live under the same discipline and way of life. The difference may be that monks in the city have more advantageous instruments than those in the country side. In Thailand monks still observe the Patimokkha recitation on Uposatha day twice a month. This is according

158 Ibid., p.18
to the disciplinary rules. Thailand is the country which tries to preserve monks’ rules and regulations intact as far as possible.

The traditional system of education in Thailand was inspired by three basic philosophies of Thai life. The first is dedication to Theravada Buddhism with its focus on moral excellence, generosity, and moderation. Secondly, veneration for the King is a marked feature. Finally, the loyalty towards the family was equally important.\textsuperscript{159}

Buddhism in Thailand is largely of the Theravada school as almost 95% of Thailand's population is Buddhist of this sect; Buddhism in this country is also integrated with the folk beliefs as well as Chinese religions due to the large Thai-Chinese population. Buddhist temples in Thailand are characterized by tall golden stupas, and the Buddhist architecture of Thailand is similar to that in other Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia and Laos, with which Thailand shares cultural and historical heritage.

Theravada Buddhism was made the state religion with the establishment of the Thai kingdom of Sukhothai in the thirteenth century A.D. According to Pali tradition, around 228 BC king Asoka of India sent some monks to Thailand headed by Sona and Uttara to Suvarnabhumi or Suvannabhumi with some sacred Buddhist texts after the Third Buddhist Council. There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the identification of Suvarnabhumi but it is presumed that it included some parts of present day Thailand. Some scholars are of the opinion that Siam received Buddhism much later.

\textsuperscript{159} The New Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 18 Micropedia, 15\textsuperscript{th} edition 1974, 2007(reprint), p.88
K. Kusalaya\textsuperscript{160} writes that Buddhism in Siam reached in four phases:

1. Hinayana or Theravada School (Southern School)
2. Mahayana or Northern Buddhism
3. Burma Buddhism
4. Ceylon Buddhism

The evidence of the first phase is supported by the archaeological evidences found at Nakon Pathom\textsuperscript{161} (south Siam) where Dhamma-chakras, Buddha foot-prints and inscriptions in Pali are found engraved on rocks. They stood for the depiction of the Buddha in symbols in the Hinayana tradition as existed in India too. Thus, Buddhism may have entered Siam in and around 500 BE (1\textsuperscript{st} century BC/AD) or as some say around 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC. The second phase was marked by the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism in India and its spread to other parts of Asia like Indonesia, Cambodia, Pegu (Lower Burma/Myanmar) and Dvaravati (Nakom Pathom).

Parts of south Siam at that time was under Sri Vijaya of Sumatra who patronized Buddhism. This was around 7\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The third phase began with 1600 BE (11\textsuperscript{th} century AD) when king Anurudha (Anawratha) was ruling over Burma/Myanmar. He was a powerful ruler and controlled Siam too. He patronized Hiinyana as it was prevalent in Burma but it underwent some changes and acquired a new look somewhat different from the original doctrine. This came to be known as Burma Buddhism at a later


stage. The fourth phase was during the reign of king Parakramabahu of Ceylon/Sri Lanka around 1696 BE (12th-13th century AD). He was a great patron of Buddhism and diffusion to neighboring countries was a marked event of his reign. Monks from Burma/Myanmar, Pegu (now in Burma/Myanmar), Kambuja, Lanna (north Siam), and Lanchang (Laos) all came to Ceylon/Sri Lanka for acquiring the knowledge of Dhamma. Siam also sent monks and obtained upasampada vidhi (ordination rites) from Ceylon/Sri Lanka which came to be known as Lankavamsa around 1800BE (1300 AD). The Siamese monks returning from Ceylon received royal favor of the king.

The details of the history of Buddhism in Thailand from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century are not clear, due to the fact that few historical records or religious texts survived the Burmese destruction of Ayutthaya, the capital, in 1767 AD. S.J. Tambiah162, however, has suggested a general pattern for that era, at least with respect to the relations between Buddhism and the sangha on the one hand and the king on the other hand. In Thailand, the king was thought of as patron and protector of the religion (sasana) and the Buddhist order (sangha), while sasana and the sangha were in turn considered the treasures of the polity and the signs of its legitimacy. Nation, religion and throne are the three important institutions in Thailand.163

Chief characteristics of the Thai kingdoms and principalities in the pre-1800 period were the tendency to expand and contract, problems of succession, and the changing scope of the king's authority. In effect, some Thai kings had greater power over larger territories, others less, and this had

its own implications over the control over the sangha. A king who successfully expanded his power exercised greater control over the sangha and this in turn was coupled with greater support and patronage of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In contrast, if the king was weak, the protection and supervision of the sangha suffered and the sangha declined. This fluctuating pattern appears to have continued until the emergence of the Chakkri Dynasty in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The Thai royal family has had a long association with Buddhism and some like Rama V donned the robe of a monk before ascending the throne. An important aspect of Thai Buddhism is that most Thais, including the king are expected to undergo the tonsure ceremony (shave the head), put on the yellow robe and spend sometime in a monastery as a neophyte monk. The king may enter a monastery but is not crowned by the Buddhist Patriarch. The Thai kingship, introduced by the Brahmans of India, still retains many of the original Hindu traditions. The Indian influence from 5th -13th centuries beginning with Brahmanism followed by two forms of Buddhism, Mahayana and Hinayana (Theravada) led to a merger of diverse traditions in the religion of Thailand. The same is seen in the idea of kingship and of course religion.

In the 19th century, the sangha, like the kingdom, became steadily more centralized and hierarchical in nature and its links to the state more institutionalized with the coming to power in 1851 of King Mongkut. He had been a monk himself for twenty-seven years and abbot of an important monastery. He was a distinguished scholar of Pali Buddhist scripture. The immigration of a number of monks from Burma during this period

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164 Michael Watts, op.cit. p. xviii
165 Ibid., p.xix
166 Buddha is shown attended by Hindu gods like Brahma, Visnu and Indra in the Thai Buddhist temples. During funeral ceremonies, the Thai Buddhists celebrate the power of Lord Siva.
introduced rigorous discipline, characteristic of the Mon sangha of Burma. Due to the influence of the Mon and his own understanding of the Tipitaka, Mongkut began a reform movement that later became the basis for the Dhammayuttika sect. It emphasized that canonical regulations were to be followed not mechanically but in spirit. This rigorous discipline was adopted in its entirety by only a small minority of monasteries and monks. The other sect, Mahanikaya was somewhat influenced by Mongkut's reforms and had a less exacting discipline than the Dhammayuttika order, and comprised about 95 percent of all monks in 1970 and probably about the same percentage in the late 1980s. Mongkut was in a position to regularize and tighten the relations between monarchy and sangha at a time when the monarchy was expanding its control over the country in general and developing the kind of bureaucracy necessary for such control. The administrative and sangha reforms that Mongkut started were continued by his successor. In 1902 King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910) made the new sangha hierarchy formal and permanent through the Sangha Law of 1902, which remains the foundation of sangha administration in modern Thailand.

Three major forces, as far as religion is concerned, have influenced the development of Buddhism in Thailand. They are Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism and the indigenous folk religion. The maximum influence is that of the Theravada school of Buddhism, diffused from Sri Lanka. The scriptures are written in Pāli, using either of the two scripts- the modern Thai or the older Khom and Tham. Pāli is also the language of religious liturgy; most Thais hardly comprehend this ancient language. The monastic code (*Patimokkha*) followed by Thai monks is taken from the Pāli Theravada tradition. The second major influence on Thai Buddhism is that of the Hindu beliefs which have come from Cambodia during the Sukhothai
period. The influence of the Vedic Hinduism is tremendous. It has greatly influenced the Thai institution of kingship in the ancient period, just as it did in Cambodia. It played an important role in the making of laws for Thai society and religion. The third influence has been that of the folk religion in ways to propitiate the local spirits called phi. The difference between Thai Buddhism and folk religious practices is rarely visible in rural locales unlike the urban settings. The spiritual power derived from the observance of Buddhist precepts and rituals is employed in attempting to appease local nature spirits. Many restrictions observed by rural Buddhist monks are derived not from the orthodox Vinaya, but from taboos derived from the practice of folk magic. Astrology, numerology, and the creation of talismans and charms also play a prominent role in Buddhism as practiced by the average Thai.167

Mahayana Buddhism gradually got eclipsed in Thailand but certain features like appearance of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in some Thai religious architecture, and the belief that the King is a bodhisattva depict the influence of Mahayana concepts. The other bodhisattva popular in Thai religion is Maitreya as his images are found in the Buddhist temples and on amulets too. In modern times, Mahayana influences have increased due to the presence of Chinese immigrants in Thailand. While some Chinese have "converted" to Thai-style Theravada Buddhism, many still maintain their own separate temples in the East Asian Mahayana tradition. The growing popularity of the goddess Kuan Yin in Thailand (a form of bodhisattva Avalokitesvara) may be attributed to the Chinese Mahayanist influence in Thailand.168

Thailand inherited a strong Southeast Asian tradition of Buddhist kingship where the legitimacy of the state is closely associated with the protection and support for Buddhist institutions. This connection has become more visible in modern times with Buddhist institutions and clergy being recipient of special benefits by the government, and also being subjected to limited government supervision. Besides, the ecclesiastic leadership of the sangha, a separate ministry supervises Buddhist temples and monks in Thailand.\textsuperscript{169}

**Ordination and sects**

In Thailand, joining the monastic order was for learning and training and one could leave it after a short or medium duration and join the family life. This tradition still continues in Thailand. Most monks in Thailand began their careers by serving as *dek wat* (literally, ‘child [ren] of the wat’). *Dek wat* are traditionally not less than eight years in age, and do minor housework around the temple. The primary reason for becoming a *dek wat* was to gain basic education in reading and writing and the memorization of the scriptures chanted during rituals. The village temples served as the primary form of education for most Thai boys before the creation of state-run primary schools in Thailand. The service in a temple as a *dek wat* was a must for attaining higher education; this was the only learning available to most Thai peasants. Since the creation of a government-run educational apparatus in Thailand, the number of children living as *dek wat* has declined significantly.

After serving (four years or more) as a *dek wat*, a future monk ordains as a novice (*samana* in Pāli, or *samanen* but often shortened to *nen* in Thai).

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Novices follow the Ten Precepts, as do monks, but are not formally required to follow the full range of monastic rules found in the *Patimokkha* (Buddhist monastic code). Novices often are in closer contact with their families, spending more time in the homes of their parents than monks. Novices do not participate in the recitation of the monastic code (and the confessions of violations) that take place on the *uposatha* days. Novices technically do not eat with the monks in their temple, but this only amounts to a gap in seating, rather than the separation observed between monks and the laity.

Young men do not live as novices for longer than one or two years. They become eligible to receive *upasampada*, the higher ordination that establishes them as a full *bhikkhu* at the age of twenty. A novice is technically sponsored by his parents in his ordination, but in practice in villages the entire village participates by providing the robes, alms bowl, and other requisites that will be required by the monk in his monastic life.

Temporary ordination is found among Thai Buddhists. Most young men traditionally ordain for a single rainy season (*vassa, phansa* in Thai). Those who remain monks beyond their first *vassa* typically remain monks for one to three years, officiating at religious ceremonies in surrounding villages and possibly receiving further education in reading and writing (possibly including the Kham or Tham scripts traditionally used in recording religious texts). After this, most young monks marry and start a family. This temporary ordination is considered beneficial. Boys who have undergone ordination are considered suitable partners for marriage. The knowledge gained and religious training received in monastery is useful in family life. Besides, a period as a monk is a prerequisite for many positions within the village hierarchy. Most village elders or headmen were once
monks, as were most traditional doctors, spirit priests, and some astrologers and fortune tellers.\textsuperscript{170}

Monks who do not return to lay life specialize in either scholarship or meditation. Those who specialize in scholarship travel to regional education centers to begin further instruction in the Pāli language and the scriptures, and may then continue on to the major monastic universities located in Bangkok. The route of scholarship is also taken by monks who desire to rise in the ecclesiastic hierarchy, as promotions within the government-run system is contingent on passing examinations in Pāli and Dhamma studies. The rules of conduct of a monk are based on the Patimokkha (consisting of 227 rules or injunctions) and are very strict. These rules are not applicable for a novice.\textsuperscript{171}

Monks who specialize in meditation seek out a known master in the meditation tradition, under whom they study for a number of years.\textsuperscript{172} The years are not specified perhaps due to the tradition of temporary monkhood and it ranged from small, medium to long period of three years or even more. 'Meditation monks' are greatly revered in Thai society as possessing great virtue and as potential sources of supernatural powers. Ironically, monks of the Thai Forest Tradition often find themselves struggling to find time and privacy to meditate due to enthusiastic supporters seeking their blessings and attention.

The Buddhist Sects within Thailand are mainly two. Dhammayuttika nikaya, meaning "those that strictly adhere to the law or monastic discipline", that is, scriptures is an important order of Theravada Buddhism

\footnotetext{170}{Ibd.} \footnotetext{171}{http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/58121/9/09_chapter%204.pdf. Retrieved on 21-12-2016. Chapter 4, Buddhasasana: The Religious System of Thai Buddhism} \footnotetext{172}{Refer fn 405.}
monks. It was founded in the 19th century by King Mongkut (Rama IV). The King was dissatisfied with the ways and methods of the forest-dwelling monks and hence he initiated a reform movement that later emerged as a separate sect. The primacy was given to learning rather than to the meditation (vipassana) or ascetic practices. The monks of this sect wear their robes across both shoulders and are strict in observing the Vinaya rules as compared to the unreformed Mahanikaya sect. Since then, the sangha in Thailand consisted of the Mahanikaya, the older sect and Dhammayuta/Thammayuta, the reformed sect. During the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), two separate universities were established for the two sects. The University for the Monks of Dhammayuta/Thammayuta sect is based in Wat Bavornnives/Bavorniwes while the University for the Monks of Mahanikaya sect is based in Wat Mahathat.

Later, in the late 20th century, some sects were founded in Thailand. The Dhammakāya Movement started in the 1970s. It was criticized to be a cult of personality rather than a legitimate Buddhist movement, and was investigated by Thai government in the 1990s but it continues to expand. Its consumerist views are frowned upon by some, while others see the material wealth as simply as a blessing to be accepted. A new denomination was established in 1975. Phra Bodhirak leads this black-robed Santi Asoke reformist group after declaring its separation from the Ecclesiastical Council (Sangha). They ordain both monks and nuns. Some monks practice astrology, palmistry, and spirit exorcism. There are also some other orders like Samnak Paw Sawan (the abode of Heavenly

Father) and Hooppha Sawan (the Religious Land) which they claim as Buddhist but are not recognized by the Thai sangha.

**Monastic Education**

Monasteries were important centers of basic education till 1921, that is, before the introduction of the modern education and compulsory primary education. Although, the Ministry of Education was established in Thailand way back in 1887, the vibrant role of the monasteries in education continued till 1921. Buddhism since its inception and as state religion received both the support of royalty and the wealthy laity and imparted education to the laity as per the Pali Theravada tradition. The construction plan of the wats (Thai Buddhist temples or monasteries) included the *bot*, the hall meant for the ordination of the monks; the *viharas*, the place meant for preaching; the stupa, place to house the relics; the *sala*, the resting place. It also comprised a library, a gallery and a belfry. Thus, monasteries were well equipped with schools, libraries, assembly places, festival venues, and recreation facilities. The Wat Phra Chettuphon (famous as Wat Pho) has a library containing a large collection of medical books. The Thai monks did not have any relationship with politics or any materialistic preoccupation and solely engaged in learning and religious training. During the Sukhothai period, the Kings saw themselves as protectors of the sangha and rarely interfered in the monastic affairs. Buddhism was essentially an ethical code for majority of the Thais, including the monks. The learned senior monks acted as teachers while the senior and experienced monks looked after the administration of the monastery. These monk-teachers of monasteries also had a social obligation as far as religious and moral teachings of the

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176 The study of medical science has been a part of the Buddhist monastic system and we find ample evidence in Indian monasteries like Nalanda and Vikramśila. Likewise, the Tibetan monastic system also evolved its Tibetan medicine system. This aspect of Buddhist education seems to be present in Thailand too.
community were concerned. Thus, they were looked upon as ‘spiritual guide/preceptor’ of the community. There was a reciprocal relationship between the laity and the monks as the laity took care of the material needs of the monks in return for the spiritual guidance.

There is also the system of resident students under capable monks. The boys are taught the basics of reading and writing Thai and Pali, simple mathematics and Buddhist norms and thoughts. The students serve their teachers by doing simple daily chores like cleaning, etc. The evidence regarding education is meager for the Sukhothai (13th -15th centuries) and Ayuthaya periods as the records were lost and destroyed due to the Burmese attack and capture in 1767. But we have the inscriptive evidence of Buddhist monasteries from 1292-1361 AD and some educational records of Sukhothai and Ayuthaya periods followed by the Thonburi-Bangkok era which point that the education was entirely in monastic hands until 1868.177

The reign of King Rama II (1809-1854AD) saw the revival of Pali teaching with emphasis on grammar. In the twentieth century, since 1911, the study of Dhamma is done at three levels- primary, secondary and advanced. The study at each level consists of four subjects – (a) Essay on Dhamma, (b) Rules and Norms of Vinaya, (c) Topics in Dhamma, and (d) History of Buddhism.

The language and literature both constitute a vital segment of the process of education. There are many local chronicles for the study of the religious history of Thailand which are generally referred as the tamnān178 “stories, legends” connected with the localities, principalities of northern

177 For details refer, Prachaka Saisang, *The Impact of Buddhism on Higher Education in Thailand*, University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1981

Siam (Thailand) and with the predecessors of the several Buddhist kingdoms of Sukhothai, Lānnā Thai (Chiangmai) and Ayudhyā. They seem to have been written by the Buddhist monks. They can be classified in three groups: first, the tamnān of the distant past in extreme northern Siam; second the universal histories written in Pali and Thai in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and third, the monumental tamnān of Buddhist images, relics and institutions. Thus, the monks were active as part of the educational activity in writing local chronicles in both Pali and Thai. Pali is still the main language of religious education in monasteries. The study of Pali is very conspicuous in the Thai tradition. The Tripitaka is available in 45 volumes while Traibhum is a shorter Thai compilation of Theravada texts dating from the 14th century AD. We don’t have any concrete evidence regarding the Buddhist literature when Buddhism entered Thailand first time. A Buddhist text which was introduced in Thailand, perhaps from India was Milindapanho. Earlier, the texts existed in oral form and were codified for the first time in Sri Lanka. Perhaps many works were introduced in Thailand at that time. Presently, there are 52 commentaries on Buddhist texts including Samantapasadika (commentary on Vinaya Pitaka), Sumangalavilasini (commentary on Sutta Pitaka’s Digha-Nikaya), and Atthalasalini (commentary on Abhidhamma Pitaka’s Dhammasangini). Besides, there are other important Buddhist scriptures: Nettipakarana, Petakopadesa, Visuddhimagga, Vimuttimagga, Abhidhammavatara, Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa. They are well known to laity as well as monks. Through the Pali studies of Buddhist texts and their commentaries in Pali or the language of the concerned country, we see a continuation of the ancient Buddhist education system of India in other countries of Buddhist diffusion.

179 Michael Watts, op.cit. p. xxii
180 Dr. Phramaha Somjin Sammapada, op. cit., p.85.
It was the Sukhothai period that witnessed the coming of many Buddhist literary works from other countries. The period of King Ramkhamhaeng and King Lithai are important. King Lithai wrote a book on Buddhism *Traibhumikatha* (the Verses of the Three Worlds) in Thai language in the year 1345 AD; it is considered to be ‘the single most influential text written by a Thai person’. He was the first Thai king to be ordained as a monk and he tried to explain aspects of the Abhidhamma in his book. The exchange of monks for better learning and understanding of Buddhism between Thailand and Sri Lanka was a marked feature. The monks in Thailand were well versed in one, two, four or five volumes of Vinaya Pitaka, some in forty, one hundred or more *suttas* of Sutta Pitaka and some in ten or more *bhanavara* in Abhidhamma Pitaka. This is known to us from a Thai text called Tao Srichulalak.\(^{181}\) However, the Pali studies during the Sukhothai and Lanna periods were not systematized into curriculum of study, grade of study and examination. This came up during the reign of King Narayana (1656-1688 AD) of the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767AD). The examination was oral (*mukhapatha*) and the three grades\(^{182}\) were as follows:

(a) Grade I (*Pariantri*) - students who finished translating the Sutta Pitaka

(b) Grade II- (*Pariantho*) - students who finished translating the Vinaya Pitaka

(c) Grade III- (*Parian-ek*) - students who finished translating the Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma Pitaka.

\(^{181}\) *Ibid.*, p.86

\(^{182}\) The pattern of grades discussed here are based on the article of Dr. Phramaha Somjin Sammapada, ‘A Historical Look at Pali Studies in Thailand’, Buddhism and Ethics Symposium Volume, pp.86-88.
The method of Pali studies since then has continued with some minor changes. During the reign of King Rama II (1809-1824), the grade of study was divided into nine grades (Pali I-IX) on the advice of the Supreme Patriarch Mi of Wat Ratchabuarana. The teachers were called *rajapandita*. The Wat Phra Sirattanasatsadaram controlled all the activities related to teaching and examination. The grade structure was reorganized during the rule of King Rama VI (1910-1925) keeping the nine grades intact. The new grades were:

(a) Grade I-III: Pariandhamtri (Pariandham I)
(b) Grade IV-VI: Pariandhamtho (Pariandham II)
(c) Grade VII-IX: Pariandham-ek (Pariandham III)

Besides, a new religious education was started for Dhamma Study (Nakdham) and here also the pattern of grading was three:

(a) Grade I (Nakdhamtri)
(b) Grade II (Nakdhamtho)
(c) Grade III (Nakdham-ek)

Each grade of the Dhamma Study (Nakdham) is a must for the grades of Pali studies. Thus, both the studies - Dhamma and Pali have been interlinked. The requirements are as follows:

(a) Grade I (Nakdhamtri) as the prerequisite for Pali Studies I-III
(b) Grade II (Nakdhamtho) as the prerequisite for Pali Studies IV-VI
(c) Grade III (Nakdham-ek) as the prerequisite for Pali Studies VII-IX

In the year 1927, during the reign of King Rama VII, the changes took place in the examination system as it shifted from oral to written. The curriculum
of Pali Studies (Grade I-IX) was also fixed in which as earlier focused on translation of Buddhist texts. The curriculum was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pāli No.</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Text-books</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pāli I-III</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Dhammapāda Commentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli IV</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Mangalatthadipani, Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli V</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Saratthasangaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli VI</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Mangalatthadipani, Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli VII</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Vinaya Commentary – Samantapasadika Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli VIII</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Visuddhimagga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli IX</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Saratthadipani (Vinaya sub-commentary)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A slight change in curriculum took place during the reign of the present King Bhumipol Adulyadej (Rama IX) in the year 1964. New subjects were added at the levels of grade IV-IX.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pāli No.</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Text-books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pāli I-II</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai Pāli Grammar</td>
<td>Pāli Grammar books 1-4 Dhammapāda Commentary Parts 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli III</td>
<td>Translate Pāli into Thai Thai Composition Pāli Grammar Method of Letter Writing</td>
<td>Dhammapāda Commentary Parts 5-8 Dhammapāda Commentary Parts 5-8 Pāli Grammar books 1-4 General regulation of secretariat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli IV</td>
<td>Translate Thai into Pāli Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Dhammapāda Commentary Part 1 Mangalatthadipani Part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli V</td>
<td>Translate Thai into Pāli Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Dhammapāda Commentary Parts 2-4 Mangalatthadipani Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli VI</td>
<td>Translate Thai into Pāli Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Dhammapāda Commentary Parts 5-8 Vinaya Commentary – Samantapasadika Parts 3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli VII</td>
<td>Translate Thai into Pāli Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Mangalatthadipani Part 1 Vinaya Commentary – Samantapasadika Parts 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli VIII</td>
<td>Prosody (Poetry) Translate Thai into Pāli Translate Pāli into Thai</td>
<td>Writing Pāli verses from passages fixed by Royal Pāli Section. (Examinees do three kinds of six prosodies) Samantapasadika Part 1 Vishuddhimagga Parts 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāli IX</td>
<td>Translate Thai into Pāli</td>
<td>Writing Pāli prose from passages fixed by Royal Pāli section.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The stress is on quality of product and not the quantity and hence the highest Pali Grade IX are awarded to only the most deserving and in some years there are no monks or novice passing this highest level examination. The passing percentage is not high as high standard of knowledge is to be maintained. Thus, the tradition of studying Pali, the language of the Hinayana texts or the language in which Buddha himself preached and taught is well preserved in Thailand. But one prerequisite for the Pali studies was a command over the language of the land, that is, Thai. One must have command over reading, writing and speaking Thai. The process of assessment of Pali is known as the Royal Pali Examination under the king. Since ancient times, the kings of Thailand carried out this work but the present Chakri dynasty has delegated this work to government officials. Presently, the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) considers the Pali studies as an ‘ethical’ aspect of Buddhist education and takes it very seriously.

The monastic code (*Patimokkha*) followed by Thai monks is taken from the Pāli Theravada. Regarding the ordination of nuns in Thailand, there is historical evidence for the same. But the practice of nun’s ordination has faded into oblivion in Thailand. A few Thai women have been fully ordained in Taiwan and the community of lay nuns called *mae chii* is prevalent in Thailand. We will discuss about this in the next chapter.

**Conclusion**

The Indian connection dates back to ancient times- cultural and trade relation. The education system of Thailand is heavily influenced by
Theravada Buddhism focusing on morality, generosity, and moderation. Buddhism is like a ‘sasan’. Political association is a marked feature of Thai Buddhism. Veneration of king is a marked feature of Thai Buddhism. The king played an important role in establishing Buddhism as a state religion in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. This continues in the present times with the Thai king playing a pivotal role. The king may also go for temporary monkhood. Temporary monkhood is a unique feature of Thai Buddhism which is not seen in Korea and Tibet. Thailand believes in the more patriarchal society and thus the women are not allowed entry within the sangha. The study of Pali text and its translation is a major part of the curriculum.