CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The language Sanskrit and its literature are of great importance in Indian culture. Sanskrit literature begins with the Vedas and continues with the Sanskrit Epics of Iron Age India, the golden age of Classical Sanskrit literature. The corpus of Sanskrit literature includes a wide range of rich tradition of poetry and drama as well as philosophical, dharma, scientific and technical texts. Sanskrit continues to be widely used as a ceremonial language for its extensive use in religious literature, primarily in Hinduism and also in the Buddhist ritual practices in the form of hymns and Mantras. Most modern Indian languages have been strongly influenced by or directly derived from Sanskrit. Some Sanskrit literature such as the Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali, Panchatantra and the Upanisads were translated in Arabic and Persian.

The word Kavya refers to the Sanskrit literary style used by Indian court poets which is characterised by abundant usage of figures of speech metaphors, similes and hyperbole to create its emotional effects. The result of which occurs in the form of a short lyrical work, court epic, narrative or dramatic work. So Kavya can be
defined as the complete body of literature. The Mahakavya (great poem) or court epics of the great Indian authors occupy a unique place in the Sanskrit literary tradition. It is a verse genre of the Kavya, the stylized literary work (literature) cultivated in the courts of Indian from the beginning of the first millennium. It has been written both in Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. An epic poem is a lengthy, revered narrative poem about some fictional or non-fictional great or heroic deeds. Epic poems are generally long in size, narrative and describe heroes and their deeds or some pertinent events of a particular culture or time period. The purpose of an epic poem is to create aesthetic effects through the use of beautiful and delicate language handled very skilfully.

Asvaghosa (probably c.80-150 AD), a philosopher and poet considered to be the father of Sanskrit drama, is attributed with first using the word Kavya. It is generally supposed that he flourished during the age of the great Kushan king Kaniska whose date is generally accepted as 78-150 AD. Asvaghosa is undoubtedly, first and foremost a poet of versatile genius- a Buddhist monk, a poet of high calibre, a scholar and a devotee, a poet of deep thought, wonderful novelty and wide outlook. He has expressed in his works the dry philosophical and ethical theories in a very beautiful manner. Asvaghosa is a Brahmin by birth but there is no doubt regarding the fact that after his conversion to Buddhism, by his sincere efforts soon became a true Buddhist theoretically and
practically. He takes upon himself the difficult task of establishing Buddhism in India as well as outside (Tibet, China etc.).

Though Asvaghosa has been credited with a large number of works but out of these only three are taken to be absolutely authentic. These are Buddhacarita, Saundarananda and Sariputraprakarana. The first two are Mahakavyas and the third is a Prakarana. Some other ornate works are also attributed to Asvaghosa and the works are – Sraddhotpadasastra, Vajrasuci, and Sutralamkara etc. But it is a conjecture due to the absence of any solid proof. So, in respect of the authorship of these works controversy arises.

The world-renowned Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa is the first and by far the best work, but unfortunately, the Sanskrit text of these invaluable works is not complete\(^3\). Original Buddhacarita was composed in 28 cantos. The Tibetan and Chinese translation of this epic also mentions the same number of chapters. E.H. Johnston with the help of these Chinese and Tibetan translations prepares one standard textbook cantos of Buddhacarita along with its translation in English. The Sanskrit texts of the poem runs up to the seventeen cantos, out of these last four cantos are professedly the works of a Nepalese Pandit Amritananda.

Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita deals with the biography of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhaphilosphy along with the doctrines of Buddhism in a very attractive style. The work has two
parts; the first part describes the life history of Gautama from his extraordinary birth to his enlightenment. In the second portion we meet with the description of Buddha’s return to Kapilavastu, reunion of the father and son, propagation of his doctrines and the reign of Asoka etc. As Sanskrit text of Buddhacarita comprises only 14 cantos so it can be inferred that the available Sanskrit text is only the first portion of the original work.

1.1 Background of the study:

Buddhist poetry is a genre of literature that forms a part of Buddhist discourse. There are two kinds of Buddhist poetry, one that is attributed to the Buddha himself, which forms a part of “Buddha speech” (Buddhavacana) and the poetry written by Buddhist poets. A typical example of a Buddhist poet is monk Asvaghosa who used his poetic talent and education to compose poetry on various Buddhist themes. Asvaghosa’s two epics Buddhacarita and Saundarananda have a great contribution in the development of literary art in India.

From the evidences we got in the works of Asvaghosa, we can positively say that Asvaghosa was inspired by the two great epics; the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. We have got many references of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in the Buddhacarita. He must have read many texts on grammar, philosophy, poetics, polity, Puranas, drama and the like. He has made a deep study of Bharata’s
Natyasastra as he followed almost all the rules of ‘Natyasastra’ in writing his dramas. The classical rules of metre, grammar and poetics were very strict in his time and he handled them very tactfully throughout his works. Though his representations of Vaidharbhi riti, Upama, alamkara etc. are not equal to these of the great poets like Kalidasa, Magha, Bana, Bhasa etc. yet from the literary point of view his place as a poet is not inferior to them. At the time of these genius poets, the Sanskrit literature reached a developed stage but Asvaghosa flourished in the earliest period of Sanskrit literature. So it can be inferred that Kalidasa and his successor obviously get inspiration from Asvaghosa in their literary activity. Rather we can say that the works of this Buddhist preacher made a bridge between the epics and the ornate Kavya of that period.

In his works literature, religion, philosophy and life are combined together to provide aesthetic delight to the readers in an entertaining way. His aim was also to educate people with the doctrines of Buddha humanity, ethics and Indian culture. Asvaghosa was well acquainted with the different branches of Vedas, Vedangas, Samkhya, Nayaka, Dharmasastra and Buddhist literature including Tripitaka and Jatuka stories etc. Asvaghosa made various references of powerful Vedic Gods, seen in many places of Buddhacarita and Saundarananda. Asvaghosa had a deep knowledge of Indian geography. As Buddhist literature is full of
geographical informations, so he has given many geographical
descriptions in his writings especially in Buddhacarita. The
description of various mountains like Himalaya, Kailasha, Sumeru,
Kanchana and various rivers and trees like Ganga, Niranjana,
Jamuna and trees like Tala, Asoka, Lodhra etc. and descriptions of
traditional seasons shows his skill on the field of geography and
Botany and other medical science. In view of these aforesaid
findings, we can assert Asvaghosa’s literary background and now
we can move on to the background of the present study.

Asvaghosa, a pre-Kalidasian poet has very successfully
depicted in his celebrated masterpiece Buddhacarita- the life
history of Gautama Buddha. The work has made a great influence
on literature, poetics, culture and history of Indian society with its
poetic beauty and literary merit. So it deserves to be critically
studied in respect of literary, biographical and poetical excellence.
In this research work a sincere effort has been made to critically
study the different aspects of the work of Asvaghosa. The
researcher has discussed carefully different sides of Buddhacarita in
six chapters dealing with general introduction, delineation of nature
and love, metres and Alamkaras, socio-political condition, critical
analysis and lastly conclusion with some major findings. Under
these chapters the researcher has tried to make a critical and
thoughtful study as far as possible. There are so many research
works or compositions which have been carried out on Kavyas,
Mahakavyas, dramas, lyrical poems etc. of numerous well known writers like Kalidasa, Bhasa, Magha, Srihansa and the like but only a few study in depth has been taken up on Buddhacarita or Buddhist literature. It will be appropriate if we say that Asvaghosa occupied a unique place amongst the Buddhist poets like Nagarjuna, Aryasura, Vasuvandhu, Kumaralata, Matricheta and others.

Asvaghosa’s different literary works prove that versatile literary merit surpasses all of them. He was successful in earning name & fame and became superior amongst the other Buddhist poets because except the works of Asvaghosa viz., Buddhacarita, Saundarananda and the like, no other Buddhist poets works have become famous till date. But later on, a vast of Indian scholars have shown their disinclination in referring his works including Buddhacarita, in their different compositions, as a result of which people became ignorant about the subject matter and literary excellences of Asvaghosa’s writings.

Hopefully the present study will help the readers to know the life history and doctrines of Lord Buddha in a successful and meaningful way and Buddhacarita receives attention and appreciation of the people from different culture. As we all know that the epic Buddhacarita apart from its literary excellences and preaching of Buddhism, the work has great historical importance also. There are the reasons to become interested in selecting such a topic for the doctoral thesis.
The main features or objectives of this research study are –

1. To examine *Buddhacarita* as a *Mahakavya*.

2. To study the treatment of natural beauty and love in that epic and also the rhetories and prosodies applied there.

3. To study how the prince overcome the lure of worldly happiness and

4. To study socio-cultural condition.

The present study gives an account of Asvaghosa’s skill of composition exalted with words of colourful and suggestive meanings. This study is based on Asvaghosa’s solemn work *Buddhacarita*. The chief authorities for the texts of this epic are E.H.Johnston and E.B.Cowell. The Chinese and Tibetan translation of *Buddhacarita* consists of 28 cantos which are supposed to be a complete and original work of Asvaghosa. The edition of E.H.Johnston runs up to canto-14 verse no.-31 only which is based on original work. The edition of Cowell runs up to canto-17. The excess four cantos are added by Nepalese Pandit and copyist Amritananda being unable to find out the missing portions and he himself admits the fact in the concluding verse of *Buddhacarita* in Cowell’s edition. With his best efforts he thought it is fit to compose the remaining portions with the help of both Chinese and Tibetan editions. E.H.Johnston has composed the remaining cantos (i.e. from 14\textsuperscript{th} to 28\textsuperscript{th}) from Samuel Beal & Weller’s English translations.
of Buddhacarita based on Chinese and Tibetan sources. As the
cantos which have been found after the canto-14(verse-31) in both
the editions of Johnston & Cowell, are not based on the original
Sanskrit text of Buddhacarita since any textual evidences from
these added cantos have not been utilized in this research study
except one or two unavoidable references.

In this work first attempt has been made to find out the exact
date of Asvaghosa, as it is often found in the case of ancient Indian
poets that they leave no reliable information regarding the details
of their date, life and works and so on. The same thing occurs in the
case of Asvaghosa too. The work has tried to give an authentic idea
of the correct date of Asvaghosa. To solve the problem regarding
his exact date, the views of different scholars have been discussed
in this study. In fixing up the poet’s date a careful examination of
historical and literary evidences have been done to convince the
readers.

In ascertaining poet’s date, personal life, his works and activities,
the researcher has consulted many historical works like the works
of A.B. Keith, Macdownell, A.K. Warder, Winternitz etc. Many
anecdotes and fables, legends, literature, traditions and common
beliefs have been examined very sincerely and skilfully to get the
truth about the poet Asvaghosa. Much labour has been done to
perfectly delineate love and alluring treatment of nature
throughout the different cantos. Informations have been collected from various literary sources.

Almost all the cantos of Buddhacarita are full of natural descriptions. In this connection the researcher has carefully studied the works of the other epic writers and some research works and has employed some personal opinion to critically delineate the love and natural beauty. The works under the study refer to Asvaghosa’s success as an epic poet, his style, Alamkaras and metres that have been employed in Buddhacarita.

In course of this discussion the views of some genius rhetoricians like Dandin, Ruyyaka, Mammata, Vishwanatha and other poets have been noted as possible. The work is an attempt to bring into light different philosophies of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Samkhya, Yoga and the contemporary religious sects of Asvaghosa’s times those believed in Ahimsa, Anatmavada, Karmas etc. To focus on the socio-political condition as reflected in Buddhacarita, information about the history of social, religious and political traditions have been traced from Vedic to Kautilya and then to Asvaghosa’s times and their relevancy in recent times have also been represented. In the descriptions of monuments, paintings, sculptures etc. many literary and archaeological evidences have been utilized.
There is also a critical appreciation of the poem where Asvaghosa’s success as an epic poet, his style etc. have been discussed elaborately. In a nutshell, the present study entitled with “Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa: A Critical Study” has made sincere attempt at presenting Asvaghosa’s poem from the standpoint of modern research methodology. Hopefully, the work distributed among six chapters will attract the attention and appreciation of the scholars and general readers.

1.2 Dates and works of Asvaghosa:

There are ample evidences in the history of Sanskrit literature which shows that we know nothing certain of the lives of its great figures beyond what they themselves choose to tell us and what is stated in the colophons of their works. The determination of date or period of an epic-poet in historical setting is not an easy task to be performed because it seems to be a problem which can never be solved. Like other Sanskrit poets, Asvaghosa is no exception to this rule as it is a difficult task to determine his date with a fair degree of certainty. In Chinese tradition one catalogue named ‘Cheng Yuan’ refers to a bibliography of Asvaghosa written by an unknown writer and according to Suzuki this catalogue was prepared on the basis of the existed original Sanskrit text of Buddhacarita which is now untraceable. Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing informs us a serial biography of Asvaghosa, written by an Indian monk. He includes the name of Asvaghosa in the list. Kumarajiva translated the legendary life of
Bodhisattva Asvaghosa (Ma-min-phu-sa-kwhan) from Sanskrit to Chinese between 401-409 A.D. Not only in the Chinese but in the Tibetan work ‘Pag-san-zon-zang’ (18th Century) also the legendary life of Asvaghosa the poet, the sage and the philosopher is recorded. From the Tibetan translation of Buddhacarita and the life of Vasubandhu, it is known that Asvaghosa was a dweller of Saketa (Ayodhya).

Besides these Chinese and Tibetan sources we have to depend upon the colophons of his 2nd and 3rd celebrated work Saundarananda and Sariputraprakarana where we wrote that he is the son of Suvarnaksi (his mother) and a dweller of Saketa (Ayodhya). The colophons found in the 18th canto of Saundarananda runs thus:

*Aryasuvarnaksiputrasya Saketakasya Bhikssoracaryabhadanta
Asvaghosasya Mahakavermahavadinah Krtiriyam*

(Saundarananda, Johnson’s edition pg. 142)

In this colophon he refers to himself as a noble and revered person, son of Suvarnaksi and an inhabitant of Saketa. He mentions himself twice as a Buddhist monk by the word ‘Bhiksu’ and ‘Bhadanta’. He possessed the qualities of an Acarya viz, spiritual teacher and Mahakavi. Acarya in the sense his works are mainly concerned with a kind of spiritual knowledge where as Mahakavi in the sense that the very prosaic and dry philosophical topics like the
Buddhist tenants have been couched in such a soft, colourful, emotional and sublime poetical language. Another little ‘Mahavadin’ or a great logician also refers to him, i.e. a speaker or an exponent of great truths.

It strikes that Asvaghosa speaks of himself as a son of Suvarnaksi and mentions his mother’s name only and not his father’s. In Buddhist tradition, women are held in a very high position; they received high respect from all classes of people. The status of women in some cases was even higher than men. Probably for that reason Asvaghosa thought it better to mention his mother’s name to show his deep love and respect for her. Besides that Asvaghosa was a Brahmin by birth and it was usual with Brahmins and Ksatriyas of that time that they were known by their metronymics rather than their patronymics. Presumably for that also he mentioned his mother’s name first.

The similar description of Asvaghosa’s life and parentage is found in the colophon of his another work named ‘Sariputraprakarana’, i.e. *Aryasuvarnaksi putrasya Arya Asvaghosaya*.......etc. thus except these colophons and some Chinese and Tibetan sources we have no other authentic biography and autobiography of Asvaghosa, so without questioning we have to believe the authenticity of the above evidences regarding the parentage of Asvaghosa.
He was called Asvaghosa (a horse neighing) perhaps because horses neighed at his birth or when he preached hungry horses forgot to feed and listened to his sermon with pious delight. But his birth name is still unknown and with regard to his birth place traditions differ. The Chinese tradition refers him as a inhabitant of eastern India. Tibetan historian Taranatha agrees with the same. One of the well-known poet-philosopher Nagarjuna refers him as a man of western India while another Chinese work ‘Shettango’ records him as ‘a man of south India’. Ascetic Yuan Chwang connects him with central India. In the book “Awakening of Faith” Allen Hull Walton speaks that Asvaghosa travelled in central and northern India, while Suzuki in the same book tells that the poet travelled some places in the eastern India and preached Buddhism by defeating the non-Buddhist people with his logic.

But as mentioned earlier in the colophons of his works that he was a dweller of Saketa (Ayodhya) which is situated in central India, so probably he was born there. According to the biography of Asvaghosa translated in to Chinese from Sanskrit by Kumarajiva, Asvaghosa was a wandering Brahmin ascetic who was able to defeat all corners in debate. Once he set a challenge to the Buddhist monks that if they could not beat him in debate then they should stop begging by beating the wood-block which symbolized for informing people to give offerings. Nobody was there who could meet his challenge so the Bhiksus stopped begging. Then there was
an old Bhiksu in the northern India ‘Parsva’ by name who thought that if he could convert Asvaghosa in to Buddhism then he will be a great asset for the propagation of Buddhism. So the learned ‘Parsva’ travelled there and bate the wood-block which signalled to accept the challenge of Asvaghosa. Parsve accepted the challenge in one condition that the looser have to become the disciple of the winner. Asvaghosa agreed thinking that the old Bhiksu would be unable to beat with him and after. Then the elder Parsva asked first a simple question ‘What should we have to do in order to make a peaceable kingdom with long-lived king, abundance and prosperity, plentiful harvests, joy throughout the land and free from evils and calamities?’ To that question Asvaghosa had no reply and as per agreement he became the disciple of Parsva.

Then Parsva taught him and eventually Asvaghosa mastered Buddhist spiritual knowledge. Later on the central kingdom was besieged by the army of Kushana king and they demanded Buddha’s begging bowl, the converted monk Asvaghosa along with 100,000 gold pieces for the tribute of Kanishka. Therefore, Asvaghosa was taken away and Kanishka treated him with great kindness and requested him to preach Dharma in the assembly of Kanishka. Thus everybody was convinced of the worth and the knowledge of Asvaghosa even the hungry horses of the King’s stable were intently listened the teaching of the monk forgetting their food and therefore he gained the name Asvaghosa(Horse cry).
All the Chinese and Tibetan traditions agree with that Asvaghosa was taken by Kanishka to North as a war indemnity and there he became well as the sun of merit and virtue. From this biography we also get the information that Asvaghosa was poet-philosopher in the court of Kanishka.

It is generally supposed in the Chinese, Tibetan and other traditions that Asvaghosa was a Brahmin by birth and a Saiva by faith. Later on after converted into Buddhism he tried to establish a faith with the noble and peaceful ‘Laws of Buddha’ and this difficult task was done by him with his writings. As he was a Brahmin by birth, he had an intimate knowledge of the Vedas, Brahmanical tenants, Hindu scriptures, Epics etc.

After a brief discussion of the various aspects of Asvaghosa’s life, now we can pass on to another complicated problem, i.e. his date. Much confusion arises in determining the date of Asvaghosa as it is difficult to determine his date with a fair degree of certainty. Different scholars gave different opinions regarding his date, hence these opinions need verification to find out his date with such accuracy as it possible. Professor Ludens holds that the remaining parts of the manuscript fragments of Sariputra-prakarana (the 3rd composition of the poet) belong to the region of Kushan Kings probably to the reign of Kanishka. E.M. Johnston in his edition of Buddhacarita has also opined the same.
Kushan King Kanishka who ruled India in the A.D.78-A.D.150, so it is generally supposed that Asvaghosa flourished during the age of Kanishka and his date is about 100A.D. (Upper limit 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B.C., lower limit 1\textsuperscript{st} century A.D.). But Johnston holds that dating on the ground of manuscripts does not always give accurate results but a little chance of error exists in the present case because this manuscript was corrected by M.M. Haraprasad Sastri and which is supposed to be as older as the end of the Kushan era. So, it shows signs of having been long in use before the overwriting took place, so that to impugn the first date means impugning the second one also and it is hardly probable that both should be misleading\textsuperscript{9}. The traditions embodied in the Chinese source associates Asvaghosa both with Kanishka and with the ‘Vibhasa’. ‘Vibhasa’ is said to be the great Sarvastivadin commentary on the Abhidharma and is supposed to be the result of a council held in the reign of Kushan King Kanishka. Further we can say that it is only a suspected view as we know nothing about the exact date of Vibhasa even it is uncertain that whether the poet knows the doctrines of the great commentary. In considering the contemporaneity of Asvaghosa with Kanishka we may cite the reference and compliment of Caraka, the legendary physician of Kanishka in the 1\textsuperscript{st} canto of Buddhacarita\textsuperscript{10}.

On the other hand the informations available in the extant works of Asvaghosa make a grave suspicion that whether they have
been written in the Kushan kingdom or not. For according to Brahmanical literature Kushan dynasty was antagonist to the Brahmanas while in Asvaghosa’s writings Brahmans and their ideas, their institutions are always worded with great respect and also the poet took up many mythological references from the Brahmanical literature.

The literary style of Asvaghosa proves that he lived several centuries before Kalidasa. We may cite some similarities between the works of Kalidasa and Asvaghosa in support of that. Asvaghosa’s description in respect of the atmosphere of the birth of Prince Gautama in Buddhacarita\(^{11}\) is similar to the description of the birth of Raghu in Raghuvamsa\(^{12}\). Similarly in Buddhacarita canto III, Buddha’s passage through the royal streets of his kingdom and was witnessed by the beautiful ladies of the harem reminds us Siva’s entry into ‘Ousadhiprastha’, a scene from Kalidasa’s Kumarasambhavam canto VII. Besides these there are so many references from which it may be said that kalidasa was influenced by Asvaghosa. Kalidasa flourished probably in the 5\(^{th}\) century A.D. hence we may assume that Asvaghosa, his precursor lived in the 1\(^{st}\) century A.D.

In determining the date of Asvaghosa we may consider that in the final canto of Buddhacarita there is a description of Asoka legend. According to Prof. Przyluski ‘Asokavadana’, i.e. a book on the legend of Emperor Asoka, which was composed between 150
and 100 B.C., was obviously known to Asvaghosa. Allowing a certain period for it to obtain recognition, we might set the upper limit at approximately 50 B.C. and can therefore say that our poet flourished between 50 B.C. and 100 A.D., with a preference for the 1st half of the 1st century A.D. One Tibetan historian Sri Taranatha has mentioned Asvaghosa by different names as Matricheta, Pitrcheta, Sura etc.

Now the question arises whether Asvaghosa and Matricheta are the same person or not? If they are different persons then who was the precursor – Matricheta or Asvaghosa? According to Tibetan tradition they are the same person. Some other scholars say that Asvaghosa and Matricheta are different persons and Asvaghosa was the precursor of Matricheta. In Buddhacarita canto XII, verse-115, Asvaghosa writes – “Vyavasayadvitigo............etc”. Now Matricheta in his commentary on “Namasamgiti’ writes – “Vyavasayadvitiyenapraptam padam-anuttaram”. Now the expression “Vyavasayadvitiya’ is common in both the lines and it is a matter of doubt that either Matrichata or Asvaghosa has borrowed the phrase. Yet both the authors were the contemporary of Kusana king Kanishka and all the scholars corroborate this view. Dr. Smith writes in his ‘History of India’- “In literature, the memory of Kanishka is associated with the names of eminent Buddhist writers such as Nagarjuna, Asvaghosa and Vasumitra.”
Another point also gives some indication though of lesser value that Buddhacarita was translated in to Chinese in the 5th century A.D. Hence Asvaghosa lived in the 1st century A.D. Some other evidences are derived from Chinese sources like- Kumarajiva’s Chinese translated work Maha-sutralamkarasstra, Maha- prajnaparamitasstra which places the date of Asvaghosa about three hundred years after the Nirvana of Buddha. In other way ‘The life of Vasubandhu’, in the Chinese translation of Sraddhhotpada- sastra and in the opinion of Hiuen-Tsang Asvaghosa is said to be appeared in the world six hundred years after Nirvana. But according to Samuel Beal, Asvaghosa was the contemporary of Nagarjuna who is supposed to be flourished 400 years after Buddha.

From these conflicting Chinese traditional dates we can make three Asvaghosas of different times. First, Asvaghosa, the writer of Sutralamkara-sastra who lived about three hundred years after the Nirvana of Gautama Buddha. Second one, Bhiksu Asvaghosa or Sthavira Asvaghosa, a Buddhist monk who lived four or five hundred years after Nirvana and the third one is Bodhisattva Asvaghosa, who appeared about six hundred years after Nirvana. If 488-87 B.C. be accepted as the date of Buddha’s Nirvana then the date of Asvaghosa, author of Sutralamkara-sastra and a dweller of western India in the 1st century B.C. The second one, i.e. Sthavira Asvaghosa can be connected with Stavira Parsva or his disciple
Punyayasa, who was a contemporary of Kanishka, the king of Gandhara (north India). Although there is nothing specifically mentioned about his works, it is not difficult to relate him with Asvaghosa, the author of three invaluable works viz. Buddhacarita, Saundarananda and Sariputraprakarana and the son of Suvarnaksi of Saketa (central India).

So, going by the traditional date of Nirvana of Buddha as mentioned above we can place him in the 1st century A.D. The third one, i.e. Bodhisattva Asvaghosa is said to have been placed in the eastern India and flourished after the period of orthodoxy that means in the second or third century A.D. According to Chinese tradition he was a contemporary of a Tukrara King Chan-tan-chi-ni-cha. The Sanskritization of the name is Kusan king Kanishka. Though from the above discussion, it is not clear that whether he was the Bodhisattva or the Sthavira Asvaghosa, who composed the Buddhacarita, yet both the traditions Chinese and Tibetan agree to connect both the Asvaghosas with Brahmanical tradition and suggest his contemporaneity with Kanishka. Hence it will not be wrong if we place him between 1st and 3rd century A.D.

1.3 The works of Asvaghosa:

We can take Asvaghosa definitely as the author of three works – Buddhacarita, Saundarananda and Sariputraprakarana. The first two are the epics and the third one is a nine-act play. The
Buddhacarita was originally composed in 28 cantos and was rendered into Chinese and Tibetan sources. It has two parts and each part is divided into 14 cantos. The work describes Gautama Buddha’s life from his birth, childhood to his Nirvana and the distribution of his doctrines amongst the different claimants. Possibly, Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita was translated into Chinese in the 4th century A.D. and was translated by an Indian priest Dharmaraksha.

According to Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing “Buddhacarita relates the Tathagata’s chief doctrines and work during his life from the period when he was still in the royal palace till his last hour under the avenue of Sala-tree.”15 It shows that all the 28 cantos are preserved in Chinese version. The same book was translated into Tibetan in 7th or 8th century A.D., is supposed to be much closer to the original Sanskrit work than Chinese version. This version too like Chinese version under its 28 cantos records Buddha’s biography from his birth to Nirvana and subsequent divisions of his sacred relics. The Tibetan version was made by Kshitindrabhadra or Mahindrabhadra Matiraja.

E.B.Cowell is considered to be the first editor of the Sanskrit text of Buddhacarita along with English translation (Oxford, 1893). He has prepared his edited volume from the 19th century manuscript and it runs up to the 17th canto. It describes the life history of Buddha up to his enlightenment. The available Sanskrit text of
Buddhacarita was edited by E.H. Johnston (Calcutta, 1935) and it runs up to 14th canto, verse number 31 only. In his English translation of Buddhacarita, Johnston has made use of Chinese and Tibetan translations and a manuscript of 20th century which was discovered by Haraprasad Sastri from Nepal Darbar. Johnston filled up the missing portions with the help of the aforesaid translations. The missing portions are:

1. Canto-I - verse no. 1-7, verse no.18 1st line, verse no.24 last line, verse no. 25-39, verse no. 40 1st, 2nd & 3rd lines.
2. Canto-III – verse no. 55 last line
3. Canto-IX – verse no.20 last line
4. Canto-XII – verse no. 91 1st & 3rd lines.

But Johnston’s edition suddenly ends at canto XIV- verse no.31. Thus unfortunately the available standard text on Buddhacarita comprises up to 13th canto plus some verses of the 14th. Moreover Amritananda, a copyist of Nepal (18th century) made an addition of this invaluable work up to canto XVII. This ‘Pandit’ himself has admitted in the colophon of the 17th canto that in spite of his best effort he fails to find out the remaining missing portions of the Buddhacarita and then he decided to compose the added cantos16. But the remainders (canto XV, XVI & XVII) are supposed to be of dubious origin because the starting portions of the 14th canto have some similarity with the Chinese and the Tibetan versions but after that it has no relation with the two traditions.
However, it is better to complete a work than ends it abruptly and Amritananda has done that honest task and completed the chapters from 14th to 17th. E.B.Cowell in his edited volume of Buddhacarita included the four chapters composed by Amritananda. The epic Buddhacarita decorated with miraculous elements which depict Buddhist doctrines and worshiping of Buddha. Asvaghosa tries to rejoice the heart of the reader with a colourful and meaningful ornate poetry. For that the poet has introduced many beautiful scenes of love and nature, a large number of legendary figures and many mythological stories. The poet has inserted some colourful night scenes and some battle scenes also so that the readers never get annoyed of reading the poem. But his real motive was to propagate the teachings of Lord Buddha in a concise form.

The next work i.e. the Saundarananda Mahakavya with 18 cantos. It is believed to be the second well-known work of Asvaghosa. E.H.Johnston has made an edition to this epic from a Palm-Leaf-Manuscript which was discovered by M.M. Haraprasad Shastri in 1898. Luckily its original full text in Sanskrit has been preserved and the condition of the work is far better that Buddhacarita in terms of textual tradition. The work relates the story of Gautama Buddha but the central theme is the history of the reciprocal love of Sundari and Buddha’s half brother Nanda and also deals with the conversion of Nanda into Buddhism. The epic has
both poetic and philosophical values as the poet has named the kavayā ‘Saundarananda’ by combining both the names i.e. Nanda the step brother of Buddha and Nanda’s wife Sundari. In other sense when the two names combined together indicate perfect or divine beauty (Saundarananda-canto IV, verse-7).

The Mahakavya starts with a beautiful description of the city Kapilavastu. The city was known as Kapilavastu because it was built into the hermitage of Sage Kapila. Asvaghosa describes eulogistically the life and attainment of sage Kapila and the descendent of Ikṣvaku dynasty. The epic describes how some princes of Ikṣvaku race came to the beautiful and peaceful hermitage of Kapila and lead a forest life and afterwards built a city there and begun to rule by common consent. Then in course of time the kingdom passes to the King Suddhodana (father of Gautam Buddha). Thus in canto I of Saundarananda, the story of the foundation of Kapilavastu in minute details displays poet’s knowledge of heroic tales and mythology.

The preceding cantos deal with the praising of the illustrious king Suddhodana and his excellent qualities. Accordingly Siddhartha Gautama and his step brother Nanda were born which was the cause of great joy to all. A very handsome Nanda was very much attracted towards self-indulgence and devoted himself to the sensuous pleasures. In course of time Siddhartha who left the Royal Palace in search of the causes and remedies of worldly sorrows,
returned back to Kapilavastu and converted his father and many pious Sakya into Buddhism. But Nanda who was busy in amorous sports with his voluptuous wife Sundari refused to be initiated by Lord Buddha. Then Buddha who was determined to convert Nanda took the charge of initiate him both externally and internally. As the central theme of the epic is the conversion of Nanda into Buddhism, most of the cantos deal with the instructions and teachings given by Buddha to Nanda.

On seeing Nanda’s strong desire to return to his beautiful amorous wife, Buddha finally took him to the beautiful Mount Himavat in order to convince and console him by pointing out as to how women are often become great obstacles in the path of salvation. In describing the scenery of Himavat mount, India’s paradise, and the lovely and enchanting Apsaras, Asvaghosa shows his poetic skills. After that Buddha showed Nanda the beautiful heavenly Apsara’s and offered him to choose any one of them. The fickle minded and sensuously infatuated Nanda found these heavenly damsels more beautiful than Sundari and at once desired to have them. Seizing the opportunity, Lord Buddha warned him that to win them he must win heaven by hard penance. Then Nanda who had started practicing penance for his selfish desires for the Apsaras at once came to know the truth about the transitoriness of love or passion for women even the joys of heaven. Thus Nanda’s eyes opened and he left the thoughts of the women and
approached Buddha. Nearly four or five cantos discuss the preachings of Buddha to show Nanda the path of enlightenment.

Saundarananda depicts the views of Mahayana and methods about the path of salvation as instructed by his ever helping brother Buddha, Nanda finally attained salvation and gradually gained the higher and higher stages of the true knowledge, freedom malice and reach to the gate of heaven. The epic ends with the spread out of Dharma by Nanda as directed by Buddha who ordered him not to be satisfied within his own liberation but to help others by showing them the path of enlightenment. The epic poetry has no Chinese and Tibetan version till date.

In terms of poetic beauty Saundarananda excels Buddhacarita. The qualities of a fully developed Kavya are present in Saundarananda but not in the Buddhacarita and for that the scholars like A.B.Keith and Winternitz assumes that probably Saundarananda was the first attempt of Asvaghosa. The handling of the words or phrases is more mature in Saundarananda than that of Buddhacarita in the passages like canto IV-verses 1-11 or canto X-verses 8-13. In fact Saundaranda is an honest attempt for those who leads a reckless life of self indulgence and devoted themselves to the worldly passions and enjoyments and become distracted from the path of salvation.
In the words of the poet in the concluding verses, the poet shows the reason for adopting the Kavya style to capture the minds of the reader like the words of beautiful wives and tries to open their eyes and convince them about the great merits of non-attachment, self control and austerity and make them a virtuous one.

The third great work of Asvaghosa is a nine act play named as Sariputraprakarana. As it contains nine acts so the drama is styled as Prakarana. This work too is connected with Buddha because its theme also deals with the teachings of Buddha. The authorship of this play is considered to be authentic as the last act of the play which has been preserved, records the personal details of its author Asvaghosa. The full title of the play is Saradvatiputraprakarana. One professor H.Luders has restored the brief manuscript fragments of the play which has been preserved in a place named Turphan in the central Asia in the year 1911.

The story of the prakarana deals with the incidents which cause the conversion of the two chief male disciples of Lord Buddha and they are – Sariputra and Maudgalyayana by Buddha. The two friends Sariputra and Maudgalyayana were born and brought up in two leading Brahmin families. They studied together and spent a luxurious life together. They were well skilled in all sects of science and arts. But soon the two friends realised that the earthly enjoyments are in vain and they became reluctant in worldly affairs.
So they became monk and begun to practice penance under the guidance of a wandering hermit Sanjaya. But not being fully satisfied with Samkhya-yoga system of thought, they seek for another way of thought and accidentally had an interview with Asvajit, a Bhiksu and one of the fine disciples of Lord Buddha.

Then they two were greatly inspired and impressed on hearing enthralling principles of Lord Buddha from the mouth of Asvajit and claimed to Buddha to be a religious teacher of them. But being a Brahmin sons how could they accept the discipleship of a Kshatriya like Buddha? Sariputra rebutted these objections raised by his Vidusaka by reminding him the fact that the medicine cures the sick though it is given by a person of lower caste to the person of higher caste. Hence Sariputra along with his friend Maudgalyayana went to Buddha who receives them joyfully and foretells that they were destined to become the highest in knowledge and chief among his disciples. Finally they become the followers of Lord Buddha. The play ends with a verse of praise of the two new disciples of Buddha uttered by himself.

This prakarana has its correspondence to the classical rules of drama and dramaturgy as laid down in the Bharata’s *Natyashastra*. Being a prakarana it has nine acts; the main hero Sariputra belongs to a Brahmin family and by nature very noble and calm; the presence of Vidusaka who speaks Prakrit and so on. But in one point only we find a violation of the rule of *Natyashastra* and that is
according to the rule, at the end of a Prakarana there should be a benediction uttered by the hero himself but in the drama this benediction was spoken by Lord Buddha and not by the hero. Probably Asvaghosa thought it to be ridicule to put the ‘Bharatavakya’ that means the utterance of a benediction in the mouth of Sariputra (though nominally the hero) leaving the great one (Buddha) in the position of listener without responding. This shows that Asvaghosa did not slavishly follow the regular form of concluding a play rather he prefers to change it in the case of need.

As natural with such a great fame of scholarship Asvaghosa has been credited with a large number of works but there is controversy regarding the authorship of these works. According to some scholars like I-Tsing(671-695 A.D) our poet Asvaghosa was the composer of Sutralamkara. It is a work made up of pious tales for the preaching of Buddhist faith. In 1908 Edward Huber published a French translation of this work. Huber has translated it from the Chinese version made by Kumarajiva at about A.D 405. Some Chinese authors assigned the work ‘Sutralamkara’ to Asvaghosa including the Chinese translator Kumarajiva. But the fragments of a manuscript of this work were found in Turfan (central Asia) with the original Sanskrit and it was identified by Prof. H. Luders.

From this fragments of the Sanskrit text it has revealed that the work was really written by Kumaralata instead of Asvaghosa and its original Sanskrit title is ‘Kalpanamanditika’ or
‘Kalpanalamkritika; Kumaralata was supposed to be a junior contemporary of Asvaghosa because in Kalpanamanditika (sutralamkara) Kanishka’s reign seems to be referred as in the past. So in the opinion of some eminent scholars the work which had been composed after the death of Kanishka could not be the work of Asvaghosa who is considered to be a contemporary of Kanishka because at that time Asvaghosa was either very old or expired. In other sense this may be explained that either Kanishka died before him or there was an earlier Kanishka.

Thus in respect of the authorship of the work controversy arises and humorous scholars opined that Asvaghosa was the original composer of the work with spiritual lessons and later on it is redecorated by Kumaralata. However the Sutralamkara or Kalpanamanditika is collection of moral legends after the manner of the Jatakas and Avadanas and are written both in prose and verses. Through the pious tales the poet exhibits himself as a passionate and worshiper of Buddhist faith. The collection is made up of many attractive even pathetic tales but the main theme carries the devotion to Buddhist doctrines.

Some stories are based on old lores as the story of Dirghayus (prince live-long) and that of king Sivi. Some stories with moral instructions are also present in the Tripitaka, for instance the tale no. 38, which has been introduced for easily understanding the spiritual lessons. The legends deal with the strange results of
worshiping of Buddha which is more of the side of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. For example the story of a sinner who never in his life did any noble task but one day being frightened by the attack of a tiger he uttered the salutation “Homage to the Buddha”, is granted entrance to the order and straight way proceeds to sainthood. Some scholars also hold the view that Mahayana-Sraddhotpada is another famous work of Asvaghosa. It is a text book of the Buddhist which consists of early doctrines of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. The original Sanskrit version of the work has been lost but it has two Chinese translations made by two Buddhist missionaries namely Paramartha and Shikshananda. Paramartha translated it in 557 A.D. and Shikshananda in 695-700A.D. Both the versions are based on older Sanskrit text with some references and interpretations of scholars. ‘The Awakening of Faith’ is an English translation of Timothy Richard(1907) from Paramartha’s Chinese version. Another English translation from the same version has been made by Wai Tao by the name ‘The Buddhist Bible’ in 1936. From Shikshananda’s Chinese translations, Teitaro Suzuki made his English translation (1900) by the name ‘Asvaghosa’s Discourse on the Awakening of the Faith in the Mahayana’.

Regarding the authorship of ‘Mahayana-Sraddhotpada Sastra’ historians and philosophers cherish different views while Teitaro
Suzuki, Timothy Richard, H.P. Sastri and others are agree in ascertaining the authorship of Asvaghosa but other prominent scholars like Prof. Takakusu, Winternitz etc. denied Asvaghosa’s authorship. Those who refused Asvaghosa’s authorship of Sradhhotpada Sastra on the ground that the philosophical thought that present in his two epics viz, Buddhacarita and Saundarananda are different from the principles that present in Sradhhotpada Sastra. For instance in his two epics he talks about non existence of soul while Sradhhotpada Sastra mentions the presence of soul.

But Prof. Suzuki in his book quoted the words of Asvaghosa to clear the confusion of the opponents and the words are – “For the purpose of awakening in all being a pure faith in the Mahayana, of destroying their doubts and attachment to false doctrines and of affording them an uninterrupted inheritance of Buddha-seeds, I write this discourse.”\(^{19}\) This work in the form of a short treatise provides a comprehensive summary of the fundamental doctrines of Mahayana faith. It mentions the way that how one can transcend from his finite life full cravings and infatuations and participate in the life of infinite remaining in the midst of the phenomenal order. The work also shows the methods and techniques that will help the follower in awakening and developing his faith. The poet has also explained the advantages of the practice of Mahayana faith.

Another work known to us wholly or partly in Sanskrit has also been sometimes attributed to Asvaghosa and that is Vajrasuci.
It records a serious and bitter attack on the Brahmanical caste system. The Vajrasuci or Diamond needle also reveals poets deep knowledge of Brahmanical religious literature. As Asvaghosa was a learned Brahmin before his conversion to Buddhism, he has quoted in this work so many references from the Vedas, Epics, Law book of Manu etc. and based on these he puts many arguments against caste system.

Vajrasuci is a small treatise of 37 verses opposing caste system and defines the qualities of a true Brahmin by defending the equality of all classes of people, i.e. “As men are equal as regards joy and sorrow, life, intellect, functions of trade, behaviour, death and birth, fear and sexual love; there is indeed no distinction between Brahmins and other castes.” W.H.Hodgson published the first English translation of the work (1829). In 1949, for the first time Indian publisher Viswabharati published its English edition. But there are some objections assignin this work to Asvaghosa. For Vajrasuci shows no trace of Asvaghosa’s style or mentality because Asvaghosa’s works are mainly devoted to the preachings of Buddha’s doctrines in a peaceful manner whereas Vajrasuci refutes very cuttingly the Brahmanical caste system.

The Chinese pilgrim I-Tsing had also excluded Vajrasuci from the corpus of Asvaghosa’s works. The Chinese translation of this work which took place between 973 to 981 A.D. ascribed it to a man named Dharmakirti. Besides these works a lyrical poem known
as ‘Gandi-Stotra-Gatha’ have also been attributed to Asvaghosa. It contains in 29 stanzas (mostly in Sragdhara metre) some excellent songs in the praise of Lord Buddha and the monastery gong. The work displays poet’s great metrical skill and his ability to understand the power of music. It is an attempt to describe in words the religious message carried to the hearts of men by the sounds produced by beating a long strip of wood with a short club.

In those days a musical instrument called ‘Gandi’ were found in the Buddhist temples. It is a long, symmetrically shaped piece of wood from which beautiful musical sounds were produced when beaten with a heavy thick stick. ‘Gandi-Stotra-Gatha’ is a beautiful poem with much metrical and literary subtlety where various ‘Rasas’ are conveyed phonetically. A.Von Stael-Holstein editor of the Chinese version of ‘Gandi-Stotra-Gatha’ has tried to renovate the work in the Sanskrit original. The style of the poem bears resemblance to that of Asvaghosa so it is worthy of Asvaghosa both in form and contents.

Some more works which Tibetan historian Taranatha attributed to Asvaghosa are

1. *Sata-Pancasataka-Nama-Stotra*

2. *Mahakala-Tantra-Rudra-Kolpa-Maha-Smasana-Nama-Tika*

3. *Vajrayana-Mulpatti-Samgraha*
4. Sthulapatti
5. Manidvipa-Mahakarunika-Panca-Deva-Stotra
6. Guru-Pancasika
7. Dasa-Akusala-Karma-Patha-Nirdesa
8. Soka-Vinodana
9. Astaksana-Katha
10. Vajira-Sattva-Prasnottara-Acharya-Srighosa

We came to know the names of some other works of Asvaghosa from the catalogue of T. Suzuki and Bunyiu Nanjio composed from Chinese Tripitaka and these are:

1. Fifty verses on the rules of serving a master
2. Mahayana-Bhumiguhyavakamula
3. Dasadushtakarmamarga sutra

However except the three most prominent and authentic works of Asvaghosa viz., Buddhacarita, Saundarananda and Sariputraprakarana we can exactly still neither accept nor reject the authenticity of the above mentioned works. So besides the data and materials gathered from some scattered manuscript fragments we have not enough evidence to prove the validity of the authorship of the aforesaid works. Thus we have ultimately to rely upon the three works which are definitely known as Asvaghosa’s for all discussions concerning his as a man, a poet and a teacher.22
1.4 Studies conducted on Buddhacarita:

Buddhacarita, a wonderful creation of mastermind Asvaghosa is well deserved for a systematic study. There are some scholars who have contributed a lot to the study of this subject from different sources viz. Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan. Their studies based on different points of view like descriptive, analytic, critical etc. Among the pioneers we must mention the mane of Samuel Beal who published an English translation of the Buddhacarita from the Chinese edition in 1883. In 1893 E.B. Cowell published the 1st edition of Sanskrit text of Buddhacarita. E.H. Johnston’s English version of Buddhacarita is an attempt where he has very carefully and faithfully discussed Buddha’s religious views, his biography, Indian philosophical thoughts as well as Asvaghosa’s writing style and talent in the introductory part. There are also some great British, Japanese, German, French, Italian, Russian, Indologist who have supplied energy for further study on Buddhacarita through their valuable works. The mane of the authors and the titles of their works are not perfectly known to us yet we can mention some of them like Windisch- author of ‘Mara and Buddha’ (1895), Schrader- author of ‘Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita’ (1930), Wohlgemuth-author of ‘Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita’(1916), E.W. Hopkins- author of ‘Buddhacarita’.

C.W. Gurner in his book ‘Some Textual Notes on Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita’ follow the Sanskrit text used by Cowell and Beal and
also give alternative suggestion for different words used by them. Besides these studies there are also some modern works on Buddhacarita such as – ‘The Buddhacarita: a modern sequel’. In this modern sequel author and Buddhist priest Tai Sheridan has introduced the seven line stanzas to imbue it with delight and lyricism but without changing the original storyline and images. This poetic version of Buddhacarita though differs from the literal translations of the original work till it brings joy to the modern readers.

‘Buddhacarita: In the praise of Buddha’s acts’ translated by Willemen Charles. It is complete biography of Sakyamuni from his birth after his Parinirvana. It describes the miraculous birth of Gautama Buddha, his spiritual journey, his teachings and conversion of disciples and followers.

‘The Life of Buddha as Legend and History’ by Edward J. Thomas is an work which attempts to set forth that has never yet been presented in a western forum by utilizing the recorded information and oldest documents. This piece of work is distinguished from the earliest accounts but this does not touch the fundamental questions.

The study ‘Buddha: His Life, His Doctrines, His Order’ is an English translated version by William Honey from a German work of Dr. Hermann Oldenberg. In this work author has changed the
legendary elements of Buddhist tradition and has given a reliable substance of facts concerning Buddha’s life, he has also examined the original teachings of Buddha.

The work ‘Before He Was Buddha: The Life of Siddhartha’ by H.Saddhatissa describes the earlier royal life of Gautama where the condition of a doting father and all the rejoices and worries about his beloved son Gautama. It is a biographical profile which reveals strength and politeness of the character of Buddha. The author describes Siddhartha’s spiritual path from his life as an ascetic to his experience of enlightenment under Bodhi tree. ‘Gotama Buddha:

A Biography Based on The Most Reliable Texts’ is originally a Japanese work of Hajime Nakamura and translated into English by Gaynor Sekimori. It is a vivid historical and chronological account of the life of Buddha beginning with social condition of India at the time of Buddha’s Birth and then the thorough analysis of the stages of his life, the myth and the history.

‘The Buddha: The Story of An Awakened Life’ by David Kherdian. Probably it is the first attempt which combine the elements of history, legend and teachings of Buddha into a narrative deals with all the experiences of Buddha’s life from his youth to his renunciation and from awakening to his preachings.
'The Way of Siddharta: A Life of The Budha’ by David J. Kalupahara and Indrani Kalupahara. The work delineates the story of the early life of Gautama, his enlightenment, his teachings etc.

Among the Indian scholars who have contributed and have dealt with the study are K.M.Joglekar who had made a translation entitled with ‘Buddhacarittra: Cantos I to V’. V.V.Sovani-author of ‘Buddhacaritam by Shri Shri Asvaghosa’, Sukumar Sen-author of ‘Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa’, ‘Asvaghosapranita Buddhacarita: Ek Adhyayana’ by Sanjay Kumar Tiwari. ‘Buddhacaritam Cantos I to V’ by N.S.Lokur, The Buddhacarita of Asvaghosa by G.R.Nandargikar, Asvaghosasya Buddhacaritam by Padeya Jagannatha Prasad, Buddhacarita by Madhava Sastri Bhandari. At present Buddhacarita a Sanskrit text along with hindi commentary of Mahant Sri Ramchandradas Sastri is also a standard available work. ‘Mahavkavi-Asvaghosena Rachitam’ is a Bengali text along with Sanskrit versions and commentaries by Dr. Jayashree Chattopadhya. Shri Surya Narayan Choudhury has made a Hindi translation of Buddhacarita and basing on his Hindi verses Mahant Shri Ramchandradas Sastri filled up the gap in the existing text book of Buddhacarita by writing seven verses of canto-I and some verses to complete the 15th canto.

A modern research work on Buddhacarita is ‘Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita: A Study’ by Nripsendra Nath Sharma. Besides these studies there are also some critical compositions on the works of
Asvaghosa where in the biographical and philosophical aspects of Gautama Buddha have been discussed. These works deal with the details of the life, activities, literary style and achievements of Asvaghosa containing many references from his most celebrated work Buddhacarita. For instance ‘Asvaghosa’ by Roma Choudhury, ‘Asvaghosa and His Times’ by Sarla Khosla, ‘Asvaghosa As a Poet and a Dramatist: A Critical Study’ by Samir Kumar Dutta, ‘Asvaghosa: A Critical Study of His Authentic Kavyas’ by Viswanath Bhattacharjee, ‘Asvaghosa’ by Bimala Churnlaw and so on.

Now the studies carried out on Buddhacarita by both western as well as Indian scholars have been presented as far as possible. From these above mentioned studies of various authors it can be pointed out that most of the studies cover only the biographical and philosophical aspects of Buddhacarita and only a few work of the proposed nature i.e. critical one has come to our notice. The present work has described adequately the literary, poetical, socio-cultural and political aspects of the epic. The proposed critical study not only provides the social, political and religious history of that time but records its links with Arthasastra of Kautilya.

1.5 Classification of Kavya:

The term Kavya means literature as a form of art. Kavya is composed by ‘Kavi’s, so the word Kavya in its widest sense connotes all that is the work of a poet. In that sense Kavya or
poetry is the subject of classical Sanskrit literature and it not only means ‘metrical compositions’ but signifies any literary peace which is highly sentimental. In the oldest known dictionary of Amarasimha, the word Kavi or poet is defined by a set of synonyms as a person who is learned, wise, able to judge what is right and wrong, clever in sciences and arts, endowed with knowledge, intelligent, deeply vast, steady in character, sensible, an adept, foresighted and farsighted etc.

There were Kavis in earlier ages like Amara, Achala, Abhinanda etc. who are either completely forgotten or imperfectly known to us as mere names in the anthologies as there works have all been destroyed by the destructive forces of nature. The poet whose works are now extent are- Kalidasa, Bharavi, Magha, Asvaghosa, Sriharsha, Banavatta, Bhasa and others. Before entering into the detailed study of the classification of Sanskrit Kavya it is necessary to become acquainted with the definition of Kavya given by India’s famous theorists and rhetoricians Bharata – the composer of ‘Natyasastra’ (a treatise on the principles on dramatic presentations) is considered to be the earliest known systematiser of artistic production. He defines the requisites of a good poetry from the stand point of audiences who are deeply immersed into the action of the play are – “It should be composed of delicate and sweet words, free from difficult meaning and expression, logical,
easy to understand, represent various emotions and observes dramatic unities.”

Bhamaha in his ‘Kavyalamkara’ defines poetry as a combination of word and sense with equal importance viz, *Sabdarthau sahitau kavyam* (Kavyalamkara, I/16). Dandin follows Bhamah to some extent as his opinion runs thus – words characterised by an acceptable or pleasant sense constitute the body of a poetry – “*Sariram-tavad istartha-vyavachinnapadavali*” (Kavyadarsha, I/10). Rudrata also like his predecessors i.e. Bhamaha and Dandin defines that the combination of sound and sense (meaning) constitutes the essential elements of poetry viz, “*Nanusabdarthau Kavyam*” (Kavyalamkara, XI/1). Mammata in his unique work ‘Kavyapprakasha’ gives the well known definition of poetry which runs thus – “*Tadadosau sabdarthau sagunavanalamkrlipunah kvapi*” – that means the word and sense (meaning) free from blemishes, endowed with poetic embellishment and also sometimes devoid of poetic figures constitute poetry.

Mammata’s this definition of poetry had gone through a bitter criticism and among the critics the mane of Viswanatha as one of the powerful write on the topic may be mentioned. In his criticism Viswanatha attacked each and every word occurring in Mammata’s definition and maintained an extreme view. He emphasize on Rasa as only criterion and the sumum-bonum in
poetry. According to Viswanatha Kaviraja a sentence the soul of which is poetic sentiment i.e. Rasa constitute poetry. Again a sentence can be defined as a combination of words possessing competency, expectancy and proximity. Another rhetorician Kuntaka opines that word and sense in unison, arranged in a combination, shining with strikingness of expression effected by the peculiar skill of the poet and causing delight to the connoisseur of poetic art.

Thus from the above definitions of poetry given by these different poeticians it has come down to us that some poetician give equal emphasis on Sabda and Artha while some others give more importance to Sabda again some other give more emphasis to Artha. In this way poetry has been defined by different rhetoricians in different ways. In the context of defining poetry in Sanskrit we come across various classifications or divisions of poetry. Sanskrit rhetorician has classified different kinds of literary pieces into two main categories viz, Drsya or Preksya that is to say (poetry that can be seen) and Sravya means the poetry that can only be heard or chanted. All the varieties of dramatic compositions come under Drsya category and the everything else can be described as Sravya. Thus Sravya Kavya is again sub divided into three categories as regards its form that is as it is written in verse or in prose or in mixed verse and prose. Metrical composition that means
compositions in verse form are the usual manner or pattern of Sravya Kavya.

Basing on their length they generally divided into two classes and these are – Mahakavya (great poems) like Raghuvamsa, Kumarasambhavam etc. and Khanda Kavya or Laghu Kavya i.e. poetry of the minor form includes all small lyrical poetry such as Meghaduta, Bhaminivilasa etc. Khanda Kavya attracted more attention of the readers because it is short in size and requires less time and energy to read. But Mahakavyas though long in size yet in dignity of style and depth of thought is by far the best literary expression in Sanskrit literature. Compositions in the form of prose are not abundant in Sanskrit literature though they are divided into two classes and these are – Katha (compositions based on fictive story), e.g. Kadambari of Banabhatta and Akhyayika (compositions based on true story), e.g. Harshacarita.

The 3rd category is or Misra Kavya that means the composition which is the combination of both prose and verse are classed as Champu Kavya, e.g. Uttaramacaritam, Bharatachampu etc.

The Natakas are considered to be the most popular form of Drisya Kavya. According to some learned person like Abhinavagupta, Bhavabhuti etc. that the drama is the highest form
of Kavya. Dandin placed Nataka in the class of “Mixed Kavya’ as he says – “Misrani natakadini” (Kavyadarsha, I/31).

Now the classification of poetry in Sanskrit made by various poetician from various stand point have been presented here. Firstly, Dandin has made the division into Gadya, Padya and Misra. Then again he divided Padya into Sargavanda (Mahavayas or great poem), Muktaka (composed of single verse), Kulaka (compilation of five Slokas), Koso () and Sangata (compilation of unconnected verses). Under Gadya he speaks of Katha and Akhyayika as c.f.

**Apadah Padasantano gadyamakhyayikakathe iti tasya pra bhedau dvau**

Then he divided Misra (mixed) Kavya into Nataka and other varieties of plays. Dandin also classified Kavya in to Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsa.

Rudrata in his Kavyalamkara(Ch.2,V-31) has made a division of kavya into Sanskrit, Prakrit, Magadha, Pisacha, Surasena and Apabhramsa. Bhamaha divided poetry from different points of view. Firstly into two classes i.e. Gadya and Padya and then into three Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsa then again into four classes i.e. Vrttadevadicaritasalsi, Utpadyastu, Kalasraya and Sastrasraya and again into five – Sargavanadha, Abhineyartha, Akhyayika, Katha and Anibaddha. Vamana classified poetry into Gadya and Padya, again he divided Gadya into - vrttagandhi (resembling verse),
Churna (all words possessing harse sounds) and Utkalikapraya (a churnakam abounding a long grammatical compounds) and Padya into Anivaddha (unconnected), Nivadhha (connected) and declares that drama (Nataka) is superior among the complete works as c.f.

_Sandarbhesu dasarupakam sreyah_ (Kavyalammara sutra 1.3.30).

Hemachandra in the 8th chapter of Kavyanushasana divides Kavya into Preksy Drama or Drsya and Sravya and then divided Drsya into Padya and Geya and then he divided Sravya into Mahakavya, Akhyayiaka, Katha, Champu and Avibaddha. Again he divided Kavya under Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsa and Gramyapbhramsa. It gives the varieties of Katha i.e. Parikatha, Khandakatha, Sakalakatha and Upakatha.

Viswanatha also has divided poetry into Drsya and Sravya, then he divides Sravya into Gadya and Padya and again Padya into Muktakam, Yugmakam, Sandanitakam, Kalapakam and Kulakam. He divides Padya also into Mahakavya, Khandakavya and Kosokavya. Agnipurana mentions five varieties of Kavya viz, Akhyayika, Katha, Khandakatha, Parikatha and Kathalika. “Akhyayika Katha Khandakatha Parikatha tatha Kathaliketi manyate gadyakavyam ca panchadha”.

Mammata divides poetry into three varieties as regards their power of suggestive sense and these are – Uttamakavtam (a piece of poetic work where suggestive sense is more charming then
expressed meaning), Madhyamakavya (Where suggestive sense is less striking than expressed sense) and Adhama kavya (a poetic composition endowed with both Guna and Alamkara but devoid of suggestive sense).

Sanskrit poetry can also be divided into three groups as regards the difficulty in understanding their meaning. These are Drakshapakam, Kadalipakam and Narikelapakam. Drakshapakam means the poetry which is easy to understand like eating a grape (fruit) which has no outer cover, Kadalipakam means the poetry like the plantain fruit i.e. the poetries which are not so difficult to understand but requires only to remove the outer cover. The third variety of poetry i.e. the Narikelapakam refers to the poetries like the coconut fruit that means the poetries with two covers, the first one is a thick fibrous cover then a hard shell and then appears the understandable portion. For instance the works of Banabhatta, Bharavi etc. as there is a saying that ‘Bharaverarthgauravam’ means it is difficult to understand the word meaning of Bharavi’s works.

1.6 Summary of the contents of Buddhacarita:

As we know that Maharsi Valmiki also known as Adikavi, wrote Ramayana mahakavya and immortalised Rama then Vedavyasa who wrote Mahabharata and preached the moral sayings of Lord Krishna. Like these epic poets Asvaghosa also with his background of Indian history, Mythology, culture etc. wrote
Buddhacarita, a rare and outstanding epic by flight of his poetic imagination, worshiped Buddha and propagated his doctrines. Asvaghosa, the philosopher poet is considered India’s greatest poet before Kalidasa and the father of Sanskrit drama. He popularised the style of Sanskrit poetry known as kavya. Asvaghosa was a true worshiper of virtue and beauty and he proved it in his literal compositions. His Buddhacarita starts with the conception of Buddha and then after narrating his royal life, flight, his search for salvation and enlightenment the epic ends with an account of the fight for the relics of Buddha, the 1st council and the reign of Ashoka. But the main theme and the purpose of the epic is the subject of salvation.

He puts sweet into bitter medicine and makes a sugar coated quinine pills and composed and prepared a special gown to the dull and uninteresting principles of salvation. It has been stated earlier that Buddhacarita’s original text is divided into two parts and each part consists of fourteen cantos. Here the summarised form of each canto has been presented where upto canto XIV, that means only the 1st part of the work has been prepared from original Sanskrit text and the subsequent cantos up to 28th canto are prepared on the basis of the studies carried out by E.B.Cowell, E.H. Johnston. Hence due to the absence of any textual evidences these portions have been presented in a very nutshell form so as to arrive as near as Asvaghosa’s original work. From the subsequent cantos (15-28)
we get an idea of Buddha’s mission, his principles, his propagation and lastly his Mahaparinirvana which is sufficient for us of communication Asvaghosa’s intensions to us with precision. Now a brief study of the cantos as follows:

**Canto I:**

The 1st canto describes the extraordinary birth of Siddhartha. The name of the canto is ‘Bhagabat-prasuti’. This canto starts with the eulogy of Sakya dynasty and of Suddhodana and his Queen Mahamaya. Buddha was not born in normal way like others since he came out from his mother’s left side without causing any pain to her. He was born in the forest of Lumbini on the day of Pusya nakshatra. After his birth with his lustre and splendour he appeared like a young sun as he was born for the welfare of the world.

The moment of his birth was an event of great rejoice, the heart of the king and the queen were overwhelmed with joy and even the great sage Asita also arrived at the palace to greet the royal baby. When Asita beholds the new born son he becomes happy on seeing all the auspicious signs and assures king Suddhodana that one day his son will become an enlightened one and will rescue the whole world from sufferings. One hearing about the future of his beloved son the king became very happy and glad but side by side became very anxious with the thought that his son will follow the path of sainthood. The 1st canto ends
with the return of the king to Kapilavastu where he donated a hundred cows to the Brahmins for the prosperity of his son and performed the birth ceremony of his son and freed the prisoners.

**Canto II:**

In the 2\textsuperscript{nd} canto the prosperity and progress of the kingdom of Suddhodana in all matters has been described vividly. The birth of Gautama was caused to happen great growth and improvement of king Suddhodana. He obtained many treasures of wealth like gold, gems and other valuable objects\textsuperscript{31}. His kingdom became devoid of thieves, wicked persons, wrong doers, liars and cruel\textsuperscript{32}. In the kingdom the crops grew without any labour, there were many milking cows, there used to be seasonal rainfall, people were free from any kind of disease and danger and were as happy as in the paradise\textsuperscript{33}. The husbands did not transgress against wife nor wife against husbands. In his realm many gardens, temples, hermitages, wells, waterfalls, lotus ponds, groves etc. were constructed for the use of pious and virtuous subjects.

In this way the auspicious prophesies of the sages came to be true and religion waked up in full glory and courage. Therefore the prince was named as Sarvarthasiddha (having gained all objects) but after a few days queen Maya passed away and Siddhartha was brought up by his maternal aunt Gautami. Then the royal child
gradually grew up and became a full fledged prince possess with excellent qualities and dignity.

In course of time Siddhartha had been initiated but father Suddhodana was always afraid of sage Asita’s prophecy about the future goal of his son so to keep him busy in the worldly pleasures and bind him with the chain of household affairs he married him with beautiful Yasodhara. Even Siddhartha was not permitted to go out from the royal place alone so that he could not see anything that might disturb his mind. In course of time he was blessed with a pretty son and the child was named Rahula (rahum lati yah sa, one who killed Rahu). After the birth of Rahula, Suddodhana expressed his cheerfulness by performing many fold religious deeds as he did at the time of Siddhartha’s birth on the hope that affection for his son (Rahula) will desist Siddhartha from going to the forest. Here ends the 2nd canto. Entitled with ‘Antapuravihara’

**Canto III:**

The 3rd canto deals with the mental anxiety of Siddhartha. One day prince Siddhartha who was imprisoned in the royal palace wanted to go outside to see the forest with soft grass, trees resounding with the calls of Kokilas and with lotus ponds. All possible steps were taken by the king so that the prince’s mind would not get disturbed thereby. When the prince proceeded through street on a golden chariot, gods created the illusion of an
old man in order to encourage the prince to leave his house. The sight of an old man agitated his mind and he asked the charioteer about that old man. The charioteer told that was called old age which was the murderer of beauty, vigour, destroyer of memory, pleasure and the cause of sorrow. After crossing the childhood and youth, the same man reached old age\textsuperscript{35}. He returned home but the fear of old age prevailed in his mind.

He went out another day, the same gods created a man with body affected by disease and the prince saw him. On asking the charioteer about the abnormal man the charioteer replied that, that is called disease, all men are attacked by a disease. Hearing that truth the prince became sorry and returned home. To change the state of his mind the king then directed another excursion outside. When the prince was going through the streets, same gods created a lifeless man, the charioteer told that, that is the last condition for all creatures. Destruction comes inevitably to all whether he is low, middle or high degree. The prince became very sad, then at the command of his father, he was carried off by force to Padmasanda grove. The mane of the canto is ‘Samvegotpatti’.

\textbf{Canto IV:}

The name of this canto is ‘Strivighatana’. In the Padmasanda grove the prince attracted attention of beautiful women. Udayin, purohita’s son said to the women that with their beauty they can
easily attract the prince towards them. The women were determined to captivate the mind of the prince but in vain. Then Udayin, who was expert in worldly conduct, and who was appointed by the king to be the prince’s companion, explained to the prince that love is the part and parcel for human beings. Prince replied that if the triad of old age, disease and death did not exist, he would have got pleasure in these earthly things. On hearing the unusual nature of his son, the king found no means to restrain him from his purpose.

*Canto V:*

Taking the permission of his father, the prince in search of spiritual peace, went out mounting on horse Kanthaka. The prince sat down at the root of a Jambu tree and meditated there in order to rescue the helpless people from the law of old age, disease and death. At that time a monk, invisible to others, appear before him suddenly. He introduced himself as a monk, being afraid of death and old age, left his domestic life to seek the path of salvation and embrace the life of a monk. The prince at once decided to follow the same path. He went back home to seek his father’s permission to embrace the life of a monk.

Naturally, the King become impatient and asked his son to change his intensions as he is too young to practise dharma, and should do house holder’s duty. The king then tried to tempt him
with worldly enjoyments and arranges for beautiful ladies to allure him to worldly life. But the prince remained calm and unperturbed and decided to leave the palace\(^37\). One night, the prince left Kapilavastu accompanied by his faithful horse-boy Chandaka, in order to practise austerities by his trusty, fast moving horse Kanthaka. The name of this canto is ‘Abhiniskramana’.

**Canto VI:**

On sun-rise, the prince arrived at the hermitage of sage Bhargava and bids farewell to Chandaka. He asked Chandaka to inform his father that he had entered the penance grove to put an end to the birth and death. But Chandaka did not want to leave him in the forest. The prince then spoke to him with a beautiful philosophical discourse, telling him about the transitoriness of human life. To symbolise his total abdication from the royal throne, he took off his royal dress and put on a dress fit for a hermit\(^38\). Weeping and lamenting Chandaka and Kathaka returned to the city reluctantly. The name of this canto is ‘Chandakanivartana’.

**Canto VII:**

The mane of this canto is ‘Tapobanapravesha’. The prince entered the hermitage as an ordinary hermit. He at once attract the attention of all including farmers, Brahmans, birds, beasts etc. because of the beauty and brilliance of his body. Deer gave up grazing and ran to him. Peacocks spread out their tails and cried out
in joy. They accord him a most loving welcome. By taking to the sages he understood that their aim was to attain paradise and not Moksa or salvation. He was not satisfied; he decided to leave to place in search of higher kind of knowledge so as to release men from re-birth. Then one of the ascetics directed the prince to go to Vindhayakastha, the dwelling place of the sage Arada. Sage Arada would be able to teach him the actual object of penance. Then the prince showing the ascetic due respect, went on his way.

**Canto VIII:**

Meanwhile Chandaka returned home with Kanthaka, absolutely dejected. Kapilavastu was empty like the sky without the sun. The entire city plunged into grief on hearing this sudden sad news. Women, out of grief threw off their ornaments, they cried bitterly. Later on they understood that the prince fled away from the palace by the superhuman power. But the inconsolable Yasodhara accused Chandaka of duplicity and stupidity. Chandaka tried to explain her that the whole thing had been ordained by the gods themselves, otherwise how could the palace gates open by themselves, how could the horse ran so fast, how could the dark night was so much illuminated, how could a hermit suddenly supplied the garments of a hermit to the prince etc. But Yasodhara was not convinced. Chief Queen Gautami weeping very much fell on the ground. Suddhodana also hearing his son’s firm resolve fell
down on the ground and swooned out of grief. The name of this canto is ‘Antahpuravilapa’.

**Canto IX:**

The name of this canto is ‘Kumaranvesana’. The minister and the Purohita, ordered by the king, set out to the forest in search of the prince. They arrived at the hermitage of Bhargava where they are told that the prince left that place in search of sage Arada. Thereupon they started to the hermitage of Arada and found the prince sitting on the road at the foot of a tree. But in spite of their vivid description of the states of mind of the King, Yasodhara and his son Rahula as well as the entire city and earnest request to return, the prince remained unmoved⁴¹. He was absolutely firm on his previous resolution to find out the causes of human sufferings due to Birth-growth-decay-death. The minister and the Purohita understanding his firm resolve came back to the city with deepest grief.

**Canto X:**

This canto’s name is ‘Srenyabhigamana’. Crossing the river Ganga, Siddhartha went to Rajagrha where people followed him with joy. Knowing that Gautama came to his country, Srenya, the King of Magadha approached him with amazement and asked about his well being. Srenya gave him a long discourse on the absolute necessity of enjoying life during youth, as according to
Scriptures Dharma-Artha-Kama-Moksa are successive in nature and none can be totally skipped or ignored. He told that the hands of the prince are for protecting the subjects and not taking alms given by others. The King gracefully offered him half his kingdom. In this way, the king of Magadha tried to divert the prince from his aim. But the prince was stable.

Canto XI:

After hearing the words of the king of Magadha, Siddhartha said that he was afraid of the danger of the old age and death, he undertook the path of dharma in order to get salvation. He also gave the King a long discourse on Kama, Yajna, Rajatva, Svarga (worldly enjoyment, sacrifice, kingship, heavens) all of which are non-eternal and thus fully opposed to the one and only one end of life i.e. Moksa or salvation. The prince cited some examples of passions which are harmful to human beings. Because of the passions, no man can be happy in the world. The prince told the king that he wanted to meet sage Arada who taught salvation. The king blessed him for success. The mane of this canto is ‘Kamavigarhana’.

Canto XII:

The name of this canto is ‘Aradadarhsana’. The prince arrived at the hermitage of Arada. Arada was aware about Siddhartha. The sage with due respect welcomed him and told him that he was fit to
realize the highest dharma. The prince was highly impressed with Arada and asked him whether he would be able to release mankind from old age, death and disease. Then Arada described a prevalent form of Samkhyayoga teaching in different ways. But the prince was not satisfied by the doctrines on sage Arada. He then went to Udraka’s hermitage, but found Udraka’s doctrine unsatisfactory. He then left for Gaya where he met five monks who came forward to serve him. Thereafter the prince, sitting at the root of a pipal tree on the bank of Niranjana river, underwent severe penances for six years, taking only a grain of rice, a grain of mustard seed and a berry. As a result his body and mind became emaciated and incapable of realising higher truths of life. Here he realised the ‘Middle path’ of Buddhism, which is neither a path of absolute asceticism, nor that of absolute physical enjoyment. When he came out of his seat of meditation, he happened to meet Goparaja’s daughter Nandabala, to feed him with Payasa. Soon he became fully refreshed and rejuvenated and continued his meditation to attain enlightenment.

**Canto XIII:**

The name of this canto is ‘Maravijaya’. When Gautama was meditating under the banyan tree, Mara, the god of love trembled out of fear. Mara was the greatest enemy of ‘Sad-Dharma’ (religion of truth). He had three sons- Vibharma (error), Harsa (worldly pleasure) and Darpa (pride) and three daughters – Rati (physical
enjoyment), Priti (worldly attachments) and Trsa (thirst for worldly life). Accompanied by his children, Mara went near the prince and tried his best to tempt him away from the path of salvation but in vain. So, he was cast down with grief and wrath. Then a divine voice from the skies asked Mara not to disturb the sage and directed him to go in peace. Thus defeated, Mara left the place crestfallen and there fell a rain of sweet smelling flowers.

_Canto XIV:_

After conquering Mara by his steadiness, Siddhartha engaged his mind to the task of attaining knowledge of ultimate truth. At first he remembered his succession of his previous births. He understood that sufferings arises from mutual anxiety and from subjection to others. He also understood that contact is the source of sensation. Contact comes from six organ of sense. The six organ of sense are the result of existence. From existence comes birth, from birth comes disease, death. He realised that samskaras comes from avidya as cause. He thought again of Jara and Marana and felt that knowledge, insight, wisdom have emerged within him. He knew the fact and the nature of pain and also the way that leads to such sensation. Thus he acquired the three-fold knowledge and attained supreme and perfect enlightenment. The gods showered flowers on him in recognition of his enlightenment. Here original text of Buddhacarita ends abruptly. Next cantos under discussion had been taken from Chinese & Tibetan translations.
**Canto XV:**

One day a sage asked Buddha about his Guru. Buddha in reply told that he was his own master, he didn’t have any guru. In order to preach his doctrines, he set out to the city of Varanasi. He wanted to help all people get rid of their sufferings by his self-attained way of Nirvana. Birth, old-age, disease and death are the causes of sufferings of men. Separations from the desired, failure to achieve something are also causes of human sufferings. He preached the real truth of life among his followers. According to him, in order to release the self from suffering one should recognize the cause of sufferings and should find a way to come out of it. The cause of birth is the sin like greed. If one is free from this sin, he didn’t have to take birth, no disease, no old-age. The sages like Kaundinya and a hundred deities got the pure insight. The Yaksas who lived on the mountain, the gods, all understood that the wheel of law has been well-turned by the Tathagata Buddha for the welfare of the society and of the people. There come the showers of flowers from the cloudless sky.

**Canto XVI:**

Then Buddha, surrounded by his disciples, started preaching salvation. A person named Yashas got converted along with his friends by Buddha. Buddha told his disciples to engage themselves for the propagation of their thoughts to the benefit of the people.
He then proceeded to Gaya and converted Kasyapa. He then preached the doctrines of salvation to the three brothers of Kasyapya’s and their followers. Then Buddha with his followers went to Rajagraha to meet Bimbisara, the king of Magadha. Bimbiasara welcome him with great honour and sat on the grass. The inhabitant of Magadha along with the King and also gods in the heaven learned from Buddha how to get rid of the chain of rebirth.

*Canto XVII:*

King Bimbisara (Srenya) arranged a peaceful cottage for Buddha to live in. Some great disciples got converted to Buddhism. First to mention is Asvajit. Upatisya, on hearing about the kindness and doctrines of Buddha from Asvajit, felt the completeness of the doctrines of Buddha and got converted. Maudaglayan followed Upatisya. Both achieved salvation in due time. A Brahmin of the Kasyapa clan was also converted to Buddhism giving up wealth and the beautiful wife. He was able to realise the true aim of life and able to get rid of the darkness of ignorance. Along with his three disciples Buddha was shining like bright moon in a full-moon night.

*Canto XVIII:*

One night, Sudatta from the country of Koshal, who was a rich man and had the habit of giving wealth to the poor, come to meet Buddha. Buddha told him that the world is full of sufferings. Not only men, even gods suffer from sorrows. As long as a man is in the
bindings of the worldly affairs, he is bound to suffer. So, try to break the bindings and follow the path of salvation to overcome the chain of birth, old age, disease and death. Sudatta was attracted by the doctrines of Buddha and accepted them. He was so much pleased with the preaching of Buddha that he expressed his desire to make a monastery for Buddha in his place Sravasti. Buddha was highly satisfied with his resolution. He said that those who gave shelter to the honest and devoted persons, they cause benefit to the world. Buddha accepted the gesture and decided to dwell in the mighty Jetvan Vihar.

_Canto XIX:

This canto deals with the description of the father and the son. Learning the good news from a reliable source that Buddha is staying in a place near their kingdom, the Purohit & the minister informed this to the king Suddhodana. Pleased Suddhodana wanted to meet his son. He got down from his chariot and saw Buddha surrounded by his disciples. He was confused whether to welcome Buddha as his son or as a hermit. The king started crying saying that the man who had the capacity to take control of the whole world with his powers, is now living on the alms from the people. At the behaviour of his father, Buddha understood that his father still consider him as his son. Buddha then flew up in the sky and touched the chariot of the sun with his hands. He walked in the sky. He transformed his single body into many bodies and then from
many bodies into a single one, walked on water, crossed mountains with ease. There comes rain from one part of his body and the other part was shining like a sun.

In this way, he was able to produce delight in the mind of the King. From the sky he addressed the king that he should give up sorrow for his son. Realizing the real truth, the king disliked the kingdom and handed over his kingdom to his fathers. He wanted to take path of his son. Many princes like Ananda, Nanda, Aniruddha and Upananda etc. left their family in search of the real truth. Yashodhara who was plunged in grief remained with patients. Seeing his son Rahula, Buddha felt no attachment towards him. After obtaining alms, he returned to Nyagrodha grove.

**Canto XX:**

Buddha felt the love and affection for the people of Kapilavastu. Thereafter along with his many followers went to the Koshal country of the King Prasenjit. The Buddha arrived at the beautiful Jetavana which was full of blooming Asoka trees, singing birds etc. Following the rituals, Sudatta dedicated the Jetavana Vihara to the Buddha. King Prasenjit was willing to see Tathagata who arrived at that placed and told because of the visit of Tathagata, the country has become pure and holy, it was possible only because of the good fortune of the people of Kosala. Looking at Prasenjit Buddha understood that he was a passionate king, he
advised the king to rule his country according to the law. Man should not enjoy the fruit of actions without obeying the law as the things in the world are transitory. Like four big mountains could crush the earth, similarly birth, old age, disease, death – these four could put the helpless world towards destruction. The king returned to Sravasti in a calm and happy mind.

**Canto XXI:**

After converting his mother, gods in heaven, the Buddha returned to the earth and converted Jyotiska, Jeevak, Sur, Srone, Angada and also the Gandhar king Puskara. Then the sage went to Bipula Mountain and converted Yaksa and Himavat. Thus he converted many kings, princes and queens. In this way he preached his doctrines and converted Asuras, Gods and Yaksas and also cruel Angulimaal. But his path was not always smooth. Devadatta tried to cause harm to him by throwing a stone at him but the stone instead broken in to pieces. Then he put a mad elephant on Buddha’s path. But except Ananda, all his disciples fled out of fear. But Buddha was able to control the elephant. Like a water-bearing cloud, the elephant fell on the feet of the Buddha to honour him. On seeing how Buddha controlled the mad elephant, king Ajatasatru was very impressed.

**Canto XXII:**
The Buddha then went to Pataliputra from Rajagriha. Varshakar, the minister of Magadha, to honour the Buddha made a gate called ‘Gautama Dwar’. He then went to Vaishalī where he met the courtesan Amrapali. One day Buddha went to Amrapali in Licchavi grove. Amrapali came in front of the Buddha in a plain white dress and without makeup. That was the power of the Buddha who attracted the mind of the people rather than their external beauty. Tathagata then told Amrapali that dependence on others is the cause of all sufferings. Self-dependence gives pleasure. But all the women in our world are dependent on others and that is why women suffer more. Amrapali was very much impressed with the advice of the Lord. She accepted the doctrines from the Buddha to become free from passions.

Canto XXIII:

Understanding the intensions of the Buddha, Amrapali returned to the town. Licchavis came to meet the Buddha. The sage instructed them. He told, every person should do his duty according to the law of dharma. Those who want to achieve salvation without following the law of dharma are like a bird without wings. According to him passions are as deadly as fire. Water can put-off fire but even a lake full of water cannot put off the fire of passion. From passion develops expecitions, which in turn give rise to thirst. Thirst is the cause of all sorrows. He felt sorry for the Licchavis. They were very glad at his instructions and invited him to visit
them. The Buddha told them that he would instruct Amrapali first. On the morning, Amrapali entertained the sage. Tathagata then returned to Vaishali and set down at the root of a tree. Mara suddenly came to that site and reminded him about the time of Nirvana. The sage promised to enter Nirvana within three months. By the power of Yoga, he gave up his bodily life and begun to live by the spiritual power. When he gave up the bodily life the whole creation got imbalanced and there were earthquake, thunderbolt etc.

*Canto XXIV:*

Ananda trembled out of fear when he felt the earthquake and asked the Lord Buddha about the cause of the earthquake. The great seer then told him that he would be in the world for three more months only and after that he would accept Nirvana. Hearing that Ananda was aggrieved. The Buddha told him not to sorrow for him. He would be always with them in their thoughts as Tathagata. Those who know that bodily life is worthless, they don’t have any attraction for it. Listening to the news that the Buddha’s Nirvana is nearing, Licchavis came to meet him, the sage preached them. He told them that nobody is immortal, all greats like Vasistha, Atri, Mandhata etc. also had to leave the world, it is the law of nature. So, he would also have to leave. Knowing the final decision of their Lord, the returned to their palaces with sorrowful hearts.
Canto XXV:

When the Buddha was ready for Nirvana, the city of Vaishali was under the darkness. Out of sorrow, the ever-shining city was looking like a widow, nobody cooked food at their homes, nobody had food. Tathgata then went to take the greetings from the Mallas, he had his last meal at the house of Chunda. He then ordered his disciple, Ananda to prepare his bed in between two Sala twin trees and told him that he would take Nirvana at the later part of night. Sad Ananda obeyed the order of his master. The Buddha then told his disciples that those who would follow his doctrines would attain salvation. Even though he would not be with them, but those who would follow his path with devotion, would be able to see him.

Canto XXVI:

A Brahmin named Subhadra, knowing the time of the Buddha’s Nirvana, wanted to meet him to learn the path of Moksa. Ananda did not allow him to meet the Buddha. But Lord Buddha insisted to meet the Brahmin and preached him. Till the first half of the night he instructed his disciples. He told addiction is the cause of miseries and advised his followers to give up addiction. He then told that the time for his Nirvana had arrived and nobody should cry for him – which was his last wish. At this all the Gandharvas,
Nagrajas, Yakshas were crying. Only the soldiers of Mara were happy.

**Canto XXVII:**

At the Nirvana of Lord Buddha one heavenly person told the God that like flow of water puts off fire, similarly the flow of time had put an end to the fire like Buddha whose knowledge was like a flame. After his Nirvana, the Mallas prepare the place for cremation of his body on the other side of the river Hiranyabati. They put fire to his body. The fire had burnt his flesh, hair, organs but was unable to burn his bones. Mallas washed his bones carefully and kept it in a golden ‘Kalasha’ as a remembrance. To them it was precious then jewels.

**Canto XXVIII:**

Mallas were praying the remaining of the Buddha’s body with all respect. But the kings of the neighbouring seven countries sent their ambassadors to the Mallas requesting for the remaining of the Buddha. Mallas decided not to give the remaining to anyone and if required they were ready for war. Then Drona, Brahmin, made the seven kings understand that war was not a solution and it was also against the teachings of Lord Buddha. Drona then came to Mallas and told them that if they give some part of the remaining of the Buddha, then they can avoid war. Mallas agreed and divided the bones of the Buddha in eight different parts. They kept one part
with them and distributed the remaining parts among the seven kings. They made ‘Stupa’s over the remains. Drona took the Kalasha, made stupa over it. People of the Pisal community took the ashes and made stupas over it. Like this ten Stupas were made. Later on Maurya kings took the remaining of the Buddha from the stupas and made eighty thousand stupas in total.
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5. Asvaghosa and his times, by Sarla Khosla, pg. 1
6. Ibid, pg. -2
7. Ibid, pg. – 3
8. Asvaghosa, by B.C.Law
10. vālmīkinādaśca sasarja padyaṁ jagraṁtha yanna cyavano mahārṣīḥ |
    cikitsitaṁ yacca cakāra nātriḥ paścāttadātreyasṛjagāda || (1.43)
11. vātā vavhu sparṇasukhā manoīṇā divyāni vāśāṃsyavapātayaṁtaḥ |
    sūryaḥ sa evābhayadhikām cakāse jayvāla saumyārciranirito 'gniḥ || (1.22)
12. Disah prasedurmaruta vavhu sukha pradaksinarcirhaviraghradade|
    Vabhuva sarvam subhasamśi tatkshanam bhavo hi lokabhyuyadayadrisam|| |
    (Raghuvamsa, canto III, sl 14)
13. Buddhacarita by Johnston, pg.- XVII
14. vyavasāyadvitiyo 'tha śāḍvalāstīṛṇabhūtalam |
    so 'śvatthamūlaṁ prayanau bodhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ || (12.115)
15. Asvaghosa and his times by Sarla Khosla , pg. 12.
16. Sarvantisya tau labdha ba caturvarga ca nirmitam . (Sacred books of the east vol.
    XLIV, pg. XI)
17. Prayenalokya lokam visayatiparam mokshat pralihatam |
    Kavyavayajena tatvam kathamiha moya moksham paramiti (Saundarananda,
    canto.XVIII,sl 64)
19. Awakening of faith, by T.Suzuki, pg. 48
20. Sukha duhkkhajivitavuddhivyapara vyawaharamaranotpatti |
    Bhayaṁaṁtunoparahasamataya nastaiva vīseso brahmaṇadīnam (Vajrasuci,sl34)
22. Asvaghosa by B.C.Law, pg-11

23. Fo Sho Hing Tsang King SBE, vol. XIX.

24. Mrdu lalita padadhyam guda sabdartra hinam Janapada sukhah vodhyam yuktimnrtyayoja
   Vahuktra rasanargam sandhi sandhana yuktam
   Sabhavati subha kavyam nataka proksakanam (Natyastra, CH.XVI.118)

25. Vakyam rasatmakam kavyam
   Vakyam syad yogyata kanksa satti yuktah padoccayah
   (Sahityadarpana, p. 23)

26. Sabdarthau sahitau vakra kavi vyapara saline
   Vandhe vyavasthitau kavyam tadvid ahladakarini
   (Vakroktijivita, ch.I.7)

27. Padyam gadyanca misranca tattri
   dhaiva vyavasthitam
   padyam catuspadi tacca vrttamjatiriti dvvidha
   (Kavyadarsha, ch.I,sl 2)

28. Muktakam kulakam kosa samghata iti tadrsah
   Sargabandhanga rupa
   tvadanuktah padyavistarah (Ibid. I.13)

29. Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita by N.N.Sharma, pg.2

30. duḥkharvanavādyādhivikārṇapaḥnarāṣṭaramgāṁmaranogravegāt
   uttāraiyāṣṭayamahāyaṃmārttaṁ jagajīnāmahāplavena || (1.70)

31. dhanasya ratnasya ca tasya kṛtātṛtaśayaiva ca kārīcanasya
   tadā hi naikātmānindhīnavāpi manorathasyāpyatibhārabhūtān || 2.2

32. nāṣe vadho bārīdhuṣu nāpyadātā naivāvratā nāṃrīko na hīṃsraḥ
    āśiītadā kāścana tasya rājye rājho yayāteriva nāhuṣasya || 2.11

33. muktaśca durbhikṣabhāyāmayaebhyo hṛṣṭo janaḥ svargamīvabhireme
    patniṁ pativā mahiṣi patiṁ vā parasparam na vyabhiratūṣca || 2.13

34. tataḥ kadācinmrduśādvālānti pumṣkikōlloṇṇāditapādapāṇi
    śuṣrāva padmākaramamāditaṁ śite nibaddhāṁ sa kānanāṁ || 3.1

35. pitaṁ hyanenaṁ payaḥ śiśute kālena bhūyaḥ parimṛstumurvyaṁ
    kramaṇa bhūtvā ca yuvā vapuṣmān kramaṇa tenaiva jārāmupetaḥ || 3.31

36. tadbravīṁ suḥrbhūtvā taruṇasya vaṇuṣmatāṁ
    idāṁ na pratirūpaṁ te striṣvadākṣinyamīḍṛṣām || 4.66

37. paramairapi divyatūryakalpaḥ sa tu tairnaiva ratīṁ yayau na hṛṣam
    paramārthasukhamāya tasya sadhorabhiniścikramiśā yato na reme || 5.46

38. pāreṇa hāreṇa tataḥ sa vanyāṁ jagrāha vāsa 'ṁśukamutsasaraṇa
    vyāḍhastu divyaṁ vapureva bibhrat tacchuklamādāya divam jagāma || 6.63
39. tataḥ sa tairāśramibhiryathāvadabhyaarcitaścopanimāntritaśca | pratyarcayāṁ
dharmabhṛto babhūva svareṇa bhādrāṁbudharopamena || 7.9

40. varaṁ manuṣyasya vicakaṣo ripurna mitramaprājñamayogapeśalam |
suḥṛdbruṇa hyavipaścitā tvayā kṛtah kulasyāsyā mahānupaplavaḥ || 8.35

41. avaimi bhāvaṁ tanayaprasaktarā viśeṣato yo mayi bhūmipasya |
jānannapi vyādhijāraśīpadbhyaḥ bhītastvagatā svajanaṁ tyajāmi || 9.31

42. tatasumya rājyaṁ yadi paitṛkaṁ tvaṁ snehātpiturnecchasi vikramaṇa |
na ca kṣamaṁ marṣayiturī matīste bhūktvārdhamāsamadviṣayasya śīghram || 10.25

43. jñeyā vipatkāminī kāmasampatsidheṣu kāmeṣu madam hyupaiti |
madādākāryam kurute na kāryaṁ yena kṣato durgatimabhupaiti || 11.21

44. annakāleṣu caikaikaiḥ sakolatilataṁḍulaiḥ |
apārāpārasaṁsārapāraṁ prepurapārayat || (12.96)

45. bhūtaṁ tataḥ kīrṇcidadṛṣyayūpaṁ viśiṣṭarūpaṁ gaganasthameva |
dṛṣṭvārṣaye drugdhamavairarūpaṁ māraṁ babhāše mahatā svareṇa || 13.56

46. Canto XIV, Asvaghosa’s Buddhacarita by N.N.Sharma, pg. 18

***Note: In these references, the verses from Buddhacarita are mentioned only as the canto no & verse no., book name i.e. Buddhacarita by Asvaghosa is not mentioned. So, all references without book name readily suggest that they are from Buddhacarita by Asvaghosa. References from the sources other than thses are mentioned along with their bookname.