

CHAPTER - 2

CHAPTER-2

BUDDHISM - A SHORT SKETCH OF ITS PRINCIPAL DOCTRINE AND TENETS

Prayer :

" May all beings have happiness and causes of happiness;
May all beings be away of sorrow and causes of sorrow;
May all never be separate from the sacred happiness that is
sorrowless;
May all leave attachment to dear ones and aversion to others;
And live believing in the equalness of all that lives. "

(Kagyudpa Tradition)

2.1. The Buddha - The Teacher :

The well-known image of Lord Buddha is of a meditating sage, sitting on padmasana, expounding religion in mudras of hands, closed eyes, sublime bliss shining on face, absorbed and withdrawn, lost in the joy of his inner meditation. But 'Buddha', as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan stated, 'is a man, not God, a teacher, not a saviour'¹. He was very much concerned with the sorrows of human beings, not only of his own country, but of the whole mankind. His compassion for humanity inspired him to enter into their lives, to search for the causes of their sorrows, to heal their troubles and agony. His message, thus, expresses the way to achieve the welfare of the humanity, for the good of many - "Bahujana Sukhaya, Bahujana Hitaya". The discipline of devotion and the way of universal service developed among the Buddhists on the basis of that compassion for humanity. "All forms of Buddhism, however, agree that the Buddha was the founder, that he strove and attained transcendental wisdom as he sat under the Bodhi tree, that he pointed a way

from the world of suffering to a beyond, the undying, and those who follow the path for liberation may also cross to the wisdom beyond"².

The teachings of Lord Buddha may be divided into two parts :

(i) Philosophical, and (ii) Moral. The two groups are inter-woven in such a way that the one part can not be understood properly without a knowledge of the other. Hence, a conception of both the aspects of his teachings, is necessary to understand the essence of Buddhism.

2.2. Philosophical Aspect :

"The fundamental principle of the Buddha's philosophy is the theory of causation or Dependent Origination"³. In this theory, the life cycle or the continuous existence of human beings is compared to a wheel of causes and effects. Ignorance is the root of all actions, then in their turn come consciousness, phenomenon (Nama-Rupa), the six senses, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, birth and suffering. Hence, to destroy the last effect, i.e. to get rid of suffering, the primary cause, i.e. ignorance, must be destroyed first"⁴.

The mental process growing out of ignorance is the cause of rebirth again and again in this world of sorrows. Because, when a living being dies, at that very moment, the new mental process of phenomenon which has arisen as a result of the coming into contact with the previous mental process with an object of thought, carries on the successive sequence of mental process. The successive sequence of mental process, at the time of death, will not be broken and will continue till next birth. "Thus, so long as this successive sequence of mental process is

unbroken, and continues on and on, there will be rebirth again and again in those planes of existence, where the successive sequence of mental process has led. There are according to the teaching of the Buddha, thirtyone planes of existence in which the successive sequence of mental process can cause rebirth"⁵. Rebirth in these planes of existence is regarded in Pali as 'Samsara'⁶. The essence of Lord Buddha's teaching is "the emancipation of beings from the ills of Samsara"⁷.

2.3. Four Noble Truths :

According to the Buddha, all living beings are subject to rebirth, decay, disease and death. Buddha's philosophy was based on the four noble truths, which he realized in his meditation. "The first truth to which the Buddha awakened on the night of the full moon of May was the truth of suffering (dukkha)"⁸. Suffering for what ? There are physical and mental sickness, pains, grief and sorrow due to loss of, or separation from that which some one loves. The suffering comes through impermanence of all phenomena, "including every thing that a man can call his self; body and mind, sensations, perceptions and feelings are impermanent and subject to change"⁹. Worldly pleasure and happiness, on the other hand, are transitory. So worldly pleasure and happiness also cause only sorrow to the living creatures, because it is not permanent, and it is worse than never having them.

When there is dukkha, there must be a cause of it. "The chain of inter-dependent links that binds men to the wheel of suffering is called paticcasamuppāda. This is a cycle of causation; Buddhism posits

no first cause but a series of interconnected links in a (vicious) circle from which there is no apparent escape"¹⁰. The second noble truth is the truth of cause of suffering. To determine the cause of suffering, it can briefly be said that craving or ignorance is the root cause.

The first two noble truths are sometimes criticised by other thinkers as the pessimistic approach towards life. Because, according to Buddha, existence is full of suffering and all sufferings have causes. But the third and the fourth noble truths do not leave us in the darkness of pessimism. "Just like a good doctor before administering the remedy, the Buddha, the great spiritual doctor, tried to find the ultimate cause of worldly suffering, not only the suffering of human beings but that of all animate creatures"¹¹. If there is a cause, it must be ended and there must be a remedy. Buddha maintained that by eradication of the cause of suffering, a state of non-arising of suffering can be achieved. "This state, the state of non-arising of dukkha, is called Nibbana"¹². The third noble truth, thus, assures that there is a remedy and the remedy is Nirvana.

Now the vital questions arise, what is this Nirvana, and how can this Nirvana be attained? The Buddha, the great teacher, did not advise his disciples by preaching vague and hazy doctrine, he showed the path as to how to achieve that goal. Yes, there is a way — "It is not a negative condition but a positive, unconditioned state realized by mind"¹³. The fourth noble truth shows that path — the noble eight-fold path. "These are not consecutive steps. The eight factors are

interdependent and must be perfected simultaneously, the fulfilment of one factor being unlikely without at least the partial development of the other"¹⁴. These eight factors are, a) right understanding or views, b) right thought or motives, c) right speech, d) right action, e) right means of livelihood, f) right effort, g) right mindfulness, and h) right concentration¹⁵.

To sum up, "the remedy against sufferings as revealed to Siddhartha Goutama on the night of enlightenment was presented in the first sermon in the form of Four Noble Truths (Chattvari Aryasatyani). These are : (i) that mundane existence is full of misery (dukkha); (ii) that cravings, etc. are the causes of mundane existence (Samudaya); (iii) that mundane existence can be terminated (nirodha) by destruction of cravings; and (iv) that there is a path (marga) for destruction of cravings etc."¹⁶. And the path is the above-mentioned Eight-Fold Path.

2.4. Eight-Fold Way — The Middle Path :

That Eight-Fold Path is called the Middle Path by which the wayfarers can pass through easily by avoiding two extremes. "He neither follows the path of self-mortification nor that of self-indulgence"¹⁷. These two doctrines of two extremes were propounded by two Hindu religious groups of that time. The followers of self-mortification practice believed in a transcendental self or soul bound in a material body and to release the true self from that body severe tortures like fast or living abhorrent lives were one of the necessary means. The other doctrine was propounded by Chārvāka, similar to 'Hedonism' which emphasised on the worldly pleasure as the ultimate end of the self.

Buddha rejected both the practices. He denied the practice of self-mortification as it might be painful, ignoble and harmful for self-realization of human beings. On the other hand, self-indulgence leads the human beings towards cravings. In fact, the former surely retards one's spiritual progress whereas the latter weakens one's intellect. According to Buddha for leading a pure life both the extremes should be avoided. The sermon given by Him is known as the "Dhamma-Cakkapparattana Sutta", i.e. "Discourse on setting in motion the wheel of Doctrine"¹⁸.

"The Buddha laid exclusive stress on personal endeavour, that is, on man's own striving for escape from suffering and ruled out the prospects of God's Grace and Divine Dispensation. He accepted the Law of Karma (action) but denied the existence for Karaka (actor) like Brahmanic atman. The 'being' which undergoes births and rebirths in the Buddha's doctrine, is not the same as the 'eternal being' of the Brahmanical doctrine. Everything is transitory and everything is in a flux. 'Sarvam Anityam Sarvam Sunyam' "¹⁹.

Secondly the Buddha refused to answer all the questions regarding origins and ends of existence. "He described these as undetermined issues (avyakritavastuni). These were - (1) whether the universe is eternal or not; (2) whether the universe is finite or not; (3) whether life is identical with the body or not; and (4) whether the Tathagata (a released person) exists after death or not"²⁰.

2.5. Moral Aspect of Buddha's Teaching :

Morality, as the second section of the Buddha's teaching, is not incidental but is an essential part of his doctrine. "Here was a doctrine

which was more a code of ethics than a religion in the regular sense. Even the philosophy behind this code of ethics was not so much an exploration into ultimate reality as a statement of facts in the manner of Science"²¹. Without the practice of Morality, the exercise on mental concentration is as impossible as making an ornament without melting the gold. So to practice Morality is the first step towards the path of Salvation. "The Buddhist Scriptures give frequent warnings regarding the extreme danger of attempting to experience state of mental concentration without thorough grounding in the practice of the Morality"²². So any teachings, which do not insist on practice of the moralities are considered to be fraught with disaster. According to Buddhist thought, the ultimate standard of right conduct relates to the supramundane or 'Lokuttara' state and the connection between the moralities of everyday life and this 'Lokuttara' state is one which is entirely covered by the Buddha's teaching²³. "The Buddha was more insistent on the people comprehending the Law of Causation than on anything else — one who realizes the pratitya - Samutpada realizes the truth; one who sees the Truth sees the Buddha"²⁴.

At the same time, if the moralities are to be kept to increasing degrees, "then cultivation of 'Samadhi' and 'Panna' are essential; the dictum of 'Sonadanda' enclosed by Buddha, to the effect that morality is washed round with wisdom and wisdom with morality, that these two together constitute the heights of the world, is incontrovertible. What cannot be maintained is that either morality or wisdom should exist independently of each other"²⁵.

To acquire wisdom one should put it into practice and one should understand what he hears or reads. To quote Dhammapada, it may be realized that :

" Yoga ve Jayati bhuri ayoga bhurishankhaya
Etam dvedhapatham natva bhavaya vibhavayaca
Tathattanam niveseyya yatha bhuri pavadhati "

— " Indeed, wisdom springs from meditation. In the absence of meditation wisdom declines, knowing these two apposite ways of advancement and decline, one may conduct oneself in such a way that wisdom develops"²⁶.

Hence, cultivation of mind is the only way to achieve the eternal truth. "Vigilance is the way leading to deathless state whereas negligence may be the road to death". This was the essence of the teachings of Lord Buddha.

" Sabba papassa akaranam kusalassa upassampada
Sacittapariyodapanam etam Buddhana sasanam"

— To refrain from all evils, to accumulate good and to purify one's own mind is the teaching of the Buddhas²⁷.

2.6.1. The Social Dimension of Buddhism :

If the doctrine of Buddha is accepted as "more a code of ethics than a religion", its relation to society or social aspects of its theme can not in any way be set aside. Buddha's religion can be said to be a way of life consisting of purity of thinking, speaking and action. This way of life should be followed not only by an individual in a single remote corner, far away from the society, but within a

community of those who follow the way of the Buddha. As Trevor Ling has pointed out, "at the heart of Buddhism there is a community, the Sangha, the order of monks, which is one and the same throughout the world"²⁸. Buddha's teaching was not concerned with the private salvation of the individual soul only, but for the welfare of the whole mankind even for the whole sentient beings. By eliminating the social aspects of Buddhism, it will be an incomplete knowledge of that discipline. "The teaching of the Buddha was not concerned with the private destiny of the individual, but with something much wider, the whole realm of sentient being, the whole of consciousness. This inevitably entailed a concern with social and political matters, and these receive a large share of attention in the teaching of the Buddha as it is represented in the Pali text"²⁹.

The notion of the community life is inherent in the teachings of the Buddha. The community, from the institutional point of view, comprises two groups, one for the noble order of the monks and the other for the lay believers. The first one is 'Sangha', - the Buddhist monks take refuge to 'Sangha' not just as a mere chanting of mantra, but they accept the monastic life wherein the 'Dharma' is preserved, taught and practised as a discipline. "The sequence of the Three Jewels follows the chronological sequence of the emergence of the Three. While enlightenment (SKT. Bodhi/Tib. Byang-Chub) witnessed an almost simultaneous origination of the Buddha and the Dharma, the Sangha was certainly a later phenomenon in terms of history"³⁰. However, as history records, it was realized later that the Sangha was as important as the Dharma at the time of Nirvana. "While the Buddha (after Nirvana) and the Dharma

were transcendental and the refuge in the Sangha evoked faith per excellence. The Sangha under favourable circumstances could be the 'single refuge' in matters spiritual as well as temporal"³¹. The Buddha and the Dharma have no direct relation or immediate effect on the secular life of the human society. But the mission of the Sangha is extendable to the benefit of the mankind and also to the welfare of the human society,- as it is said, for the greatest good of the greatest number.

Hence, the two main objectives of the Buddhist Sangha are seen to be : first, the constant cultivation of mind and of insights concerning the Truth by purifying body, mind and soul; and second, easy accessibility to the people by which ethical and spiritual values of Buddhism are to be transmitted to the surrounding society. Another characteristic of monastic life will emphasise on the ideal of following the 'middle path' between the two extremes. "In this case the middle path would consist of an avoidance of the snares of worldly life on the one hand, and of the extreme rigours of eremitical existence on the other"³². It is in the monastic life or in the community of Monastery where discipline can be strictly maintained, exercises of meditation can be developed, the doctrine can be perfectly taught and understood, and at the same time, sharing of love, affection and brotherhood among the fellow monks will help them to come out from own self, from self centred narrow circle of ego - "for the profit of the many, for the bliss of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of devas and mankind"³³. So this Order, where the process of meditation carried on by more than one individual or a group, will

create a state of realization in each individual "a consciousness of multiplicity of sense objects and desires, and that it will lead to state where all are sharing in the same consciousness of joy and equanimity, which is infinite and the same for all"³⁴. By that process, when all imperfections and impurities are destroyed, that refined state only brings the fusion.

2.6.2. The Relation Between the Communities of the Monks and the Communities of the Laymen :

Whether the monk communities will be completely detached from the lay society or there will be just a thin link of recipients and of bestowers for collection of essential commodities ? The common people are not excluded from the concept of multitude, they have an important part in the Buddhist scheme. "Indeed, between them and the Sangha there exists an important relationship, not of reciprocity exactly, but of complimentaries"³⁵. Six sets of duties were enumerated for the common people and out of these six certain duties were mentioned exclusively to be performed to the Sangha as well as to the monks, such as warm welcome and hospitality should be given to the monks providing them with their material requirements. In return, the members of the Order should act as the instructors to the people at large and radiate the values of life by imparting clear knowledge of right and wrong. That was the social concept, laid down by Lord Buddha, a concrete method too, by which a society could be raised to a righteous state dispensing peace and happiness to its members. As Rhys Davids exclaimed, "how happy would have been the village or the clan on the banks of the

Ganges, where the people were full of kindly spirit of fellow feeling, the noble spirit of justice, which breaths through these naive and simple sayings"³⁶.

2.7.1. Political Dimension of Buddhism :

If the smallest principality of a country, that is a village or town, can reach the stage of being a righteous place by this way, why can it be not enlarged to a bigger society, a kingdom vis-a-vis the kingdom of the whole world ? Here lies the concept of 'Universal Monarchy' of Buddhism. Once Buddha addressing the Almsmen said, "Brethren, during such time as kings are unrighteous either ministers and officers also become unrighteous. The ministers and officers, brethren, being unrighteous, the Brahmins and house-holders also become unrighteous. The Brahmins and house-holders, brethren, being unrighteous town-folk and villagers become unrighteous"³⁷. On the other hand, when kings are righteous, then his ministers and officers also become righteous, and the effect of this righteousness on the top level will come down upto the lowest level of the town-folk and villagers in its due course. Because the tendency of the human society is to follow the lead of the chief, - if he walks crookedly others too walk crookedly. The whole realm suffers when the head of the society as well as the king goes wrong. But "if he who's reckoned chief walks righteously, the other lines aright. The whole realm lead happy lives when kings are good"³⁸. So the question that arises here is : what is the relation between Buddhism and Politics ?

2.7.2. Buddhist Doctrine and Political Theories :

During Buddha's time there were two types of government - Monarchical and Republican, which prevailed in the northern region of India, as it is presumed by the historians. But Buddha was not concerned about either by the types of government or of any of the political theories. His point was that the government or the king must uphold the moral and spiritual law and should provide a political as well as social organization for its citizen within which both monks and the laity or the common people can live in accordance with the Dharma, can lead a righteous life and ultimately can attain nirvana.³⁹ The Buddha realized that the social and political stability was a necessary condition for the success of social and moral reconstruction of a country. The Buddha's recommendations for the republican government were that the Assembly should be held frequently and should aim at unanimity in its proceedings, that the republic should conform to the custom authorised by tradition. Conformity to the traditions means that it would be well to follow the old traditions of the society which was better governed, more moral and much happy and peaceful⁴⁰.

The recommendations recorded for the kings or monarchies were rather different in character. There was no question of unanimity, but "the policy of conciliation recommended to King/^{of} Great Realm" was intended to produce a similar harmony⁴¹.

2.7.3. Buddhism and the State :

Regarding the relation between the State and Buddhism it was expected that even in a non-Buddhist State, the followers of Buddhism

should have the right to practise and propagate its tenets. But Buddhism had no means to enforce, among its adherents, uniformity of actions in the affairs of secular life, nor had the surety of fulfilment of the expected freedom for the practice and propagation of its tenets, unless there was a guarantee of social stability under the leadership of a strong and benevolent ruler. Thus, "a really enlightened monarchy, sympathetic to Buddhism, might have the further important, positive function of providing those conditions and of helping to create those attitudes among the people which would facilitate the wide-spread acceptance of Buddhist prescription"⁴². As history reveals, during his life time, the Buddha was closely associated with the royal courts of his day. The Kings of Koshala and Magadha became not only his supporters or patrons but also his true disciples practising the eight-fold morality in their own lives. "In a predominantly Buddhist State, Buddhism would, naturally, expect official recognition as the state religion"⁴³. By the patronage of the Government, the citizen would have complete freedom to practice and propagate its tenets. There should be a healthy cooperation between the Government and the laity to uplift Dharma. "Buddhism has no means of enforcing among its adherents uniformity of action in the affairs of secular life"⁴⁴. It needs only mutual understanding and cooperation among the people and the Government that can help effectively the implementation and propagation of the Dharma.

In a democratic state, State is the people and the Government is only the agent through which the will of the people is carried out. If the citizens of the State support and follow Buddhism in their collective

capacity, the Government will be their agent to implement that collective will. This mutual endeavour on the part of the lay people and the Government to live the social and political life in accordance with Dharma, can only be the basis of a perfect righteous State⁴⁵.

2.7.4. The Relation of the Government to the Sangha :

The relation of the Sangha and Government may be same as that of an individual and the monk. Just as a monk indicates to a lay devotee the path of the righteousness, the Sangha may play the same role of 'guide friend and philosopher' to the Government. It is the duty of the Sangha to direct and guide the Government on the propagation as well as application of the Dharma to the socio-political life of the nation. "Monks should not meddle in politics", - this reservation is not correct in this connection. "The Sangha must also be able to draw attention to and freely criticise deviations from the Dharma on the part of the Government, the people and the political leaders"⁴⁶. Unless the Dharma is established in the national life, it will lose its effect on the society and to the domestic life.

Any individual monk, however, should not have any relation to the Government unless it is sanctioned by the Sangha. An individual monk is not allowed to accept any office in the Government except through the Sangha. It is the Sangha, not an individual monk who should have any role in the politics of a State. The monk representative must enter in the secular activities through Sangha. The Sangha, as an institution, will stand as the safeguard in the way of degenerated and demoralised politics⁴⁷.

2.8. Concept of Universal Monarchy :

Another aspect, as it has been pointed out by D.D.Kosambi, was that, "Buddhism owned its initial success precisely to its fulfilment of a great social need. Society in the Gangetic Basin of the 6th Century B.C. was not organized into peaceful villages producing most for themselves. The much thinner population was divided into a set of warring semi-tribal principalities and some tribes not yet on the level of agrarian production with the plough. Vedic Brahminism and tribal cults were fit only for the pastoral tribe at war with all neighbours. The Vedic animal sacrifices were far too onerous for a developing agrarian economy. The thin pre-Mauryan settlement required trade in metals, salt and cloth over long distances, which could not be conducted without the protection of a powerful state. The passage from a group of tribes to a universal society, therefore, needed a new social philosophy"⁴⁸. According to Kosambi that was the reason for the rise of the concept of the universal monarchy and the religion of the universal society in parallel in Magadha at about same time. That is why an effort, in Kosambi's view, was made to compromise by making the Buddha an avatara of Hindu God Vishnu after his nirvana, with an intention that the formal Buddhism inevitably fade away.

It is true that Buddha's philosophy, his teachings and his moral ethics, became a religion not only to a particular school, but to the whole world, and he himself was carved into wooden or stone idols and was placed in those monasteries to be worshipped with rituals. "But there is no reason to believe that Gautama was conscious of this, or

that he intended, either at the beginning or at the end of his career, to be the founder of a religion"⁴⁹. The Buddha was not a religious teacher rather he should be regarded as a social reformer. The reordering of human consciousness and the reordering of human society, these two complementary objects were the principal concern of Buddha's teaching. And to promote or to spread this ideal, an enlightened ruler or a righteous king could have been a great instrument for maintaining the social stability. Thus, to quote from U.N. Ghosal, "the most important contribution of the early Buddhist canonists to the store of our ancient thoughts consists in their 'total' application of the principle of righteousness to the branches of the King's internal and foreign administration"⁵⁰.

The Buddha's idea was to construct a perfect ancient society, restored after the abolition of war and violence, caused by the operation of causal laws concerning attachment, desire and so on. The new society of happy beings would emerge through the exercise of pervading the whole universe with one's mind charged with benevolence, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. It would be a happy society not because of its innocent growth but because of a conscious practice of moral progress. Hence, there must be ^a code of ethics to be followed by its all members, - laymen, king and monks together. "The most important feature of this society was that it was classless"⁵¹. The claim of the Brahmins about class and caste by birth proved to be baseless and it was maintained that all beings are equal before the moral law, e.g., good conduct will lead to a good destiny. And if a happy society is to be restored, the 'Pancha-Sila' consisting of the

essential moral principles must prevail. It is the duty of a ruler to preserve and to teach these principles of good conduct among his subjects with the demonstration of his own conduct. The king who follows these principles is supposed to have conquered the whole earth without the use of force, "he will conquer by justice (dharma), without the sword"⁵².

A developing Indian society of the 6th Century B.C., which started its relation with and expanded to overseas countries and beyond the snowcapped Himalayas, had an urgent requirement of a practical and progressive set of ethical principles both for internal and external socio-political changes. The Buddha's teachings fulfilled that need by laying down the principles of interrelationship among the Sangha, the king and the mass of the people. "This triangular relationship, Sangha, king and people, provides the basic structure of Buddhist civilization. The introduction of Buddhism into a country meant, therefore, the attempt to establish this structure, and Buddhist civilization may be said to exist where this structure can be found"⁵³.

2.9. Implementation of Buddhism in the Political Process :

"The first fusion of Buddhism and political action came during the reign of Asoka Maurya, who lived from 264 to 227 B.C."⁵⁴. He was the first ruler, who first applied Buddhist doctrine to political rule. It is said that he built hundreds of monasteries and 80,000 stupas. More than 6,400 Buddhist monks lived under his royal patronage. To propagate the faith, a series of edicts were carved on the rocks and those edicts

were read aloud to public. Under his patronage, the Buddhist monks travelled to Cylon, and as far as Syria, Macedonia and Egypt spreading the Buddhist doctrine. "It was under his reign that the ethical ideals of Buddhism as state religion were joined to the Brahman-Hindu God-King tradition"⁵⁵.

For political administration to be carried out with proper justice in the provincial towns, Asoka appointed the officials, designated as 'Mahamatras'. Asoka had a very wide empire, and the number of the Mahamatras appointed must have been a big one. To maintain direct touch with these officials, there was a Parishad. "As regards the reforms he introduced in his government, one thing to which Asoka paid special attention and to which he was particularly sensitive was the administration of justice"⁵⁶. To ensure the administration of justice, Asoka created another class of officials, known as the Dharma-Mahamatras, and specified their duties. "As the Dhamma of Asoka was directed towards the generation and development of not only the material but also the spiritual good of the people, the duties of the Dharma-Mahamatras also fell under these two heads"⁵⁷.

"The third Buddhist Council, traditionally held during Asoka's reign, seems to be historical, as also his sending out missionaries to all neighbouring countries; Ceylon, Central Asia, and probably China. The Pali Buddhist Canon in its oldest extant form was supposedly compiled just after the death of the Buddha, but is most likely to have been given its present content in or about Asoka's time"⁵⁸. Asoka's edicts were much deeper than his personal liking for Buddhism. They

indicate a totally changed basic policy on the part of the State. His first indication was based on public works which would give no profit or no return to the State. Hospitals were built throughout the empire, both for men and the beast, with free medical attendance at the state expense. Rest Houses were erected for the pilgrims, shady groves, fruit orchards, wells were made on all major trade routes. "This agrees precisely with the duties of the benevolent 'Chakrabortin' emperor which are mentioned in the Buddhist discourse"⁵⁹.

For charitable works and pious deeds, Asoka never neglected administrative business. He used to receive and consider official reports at all times, during other works and "even at dinner table, in the inner apartments (harem), in bed, the toilet, on parade inspection, in the royal park, or anywhere else shall the reports of the condition of the people"⁶⁰ be brought to him. The King himself used to make tour all over his domain in every five months for inspection personally. The Dharma-Mahamatras and other senior officials were likewise ordered to tour entire territory under their jurisdiction. Equity was the principle beyond formal codified law and common laws upon which both law and justice were based. "The Asokan edicts clearly provide the first constitutional checks against the crown, the first Bill of Rights for the citizen. This was made clear by the special instruction to officials that the edicts were to be read out and carefully explained to large public gatherings at least three times a year"⁶¹. In short, it can be said that Asoka's edicts urged men to "yield obedience to the law of piety"⁶².

The relation of Buddhism to practical politics was, thus, demonstrated by Asoka the Maurya. The combination of the political and religious administration has, therefore, a long historical tradition. The Buddhist monks helped the Kings in their administration as the advisers by interpreting Dharma, the Universal Law of Conduct. As Richard A. Gard has noted, Buddhism played a strong role in developing a system of rule throughout most of Asia. The Sangha, the community of monks, laid the foundations for current political institutions in Asia and with their religious pilgrimages to other Buddhist countries, established an early form of diplomacy⁶³. According to him, Buddhism has an important contribution in Asian political life which has developed a spiritual justification for kingship and a structure of social welfare education and village administration that centre around the Buddhist monasteries⁶⁴.

A new attitude towards subjects and a new function of the State were developed since the reign of Asoka, that was, the reconciliation of classes. "The special tool for this conciliatory action was precisely the 'Universal Dhamma' in a new sense. King and citizen found common meeting ground in freshly developed religion"⁶⁵. The people, the Order of the Sangha and the King, that triangle forces of Buddhist revolution, functioned during Asoka's reign. At least the experiment had been made. Though it was shattered after the death of Asoka, but the possibility that once again a Buddhist King would re-erect the Buddhist State also remained⁶⁶. And that possibility proved to be true again in the Land of the Roof of the World, Tibet.

To conclude, it may be said that Buddhism and politics meet at two levels — theory and practice. Buddhism, in reality, has no explicit body of social and political theories comparable to its psychology or morality or meta-physics. A Buddhist political theory can be deduced primarily from basic Buddhism, from 'Dhamma'. Secondly, it can be deduced from the general orientation of scriptures which stands in the world of the conditioned in a limited and qualified way, - it is of Samsara⁶⁷.

The objective of the present thesis is to throw light on this vital aspect in the perspective of Sikkim, - how far this Buddhist political structure existed or is still continuing to exist in this tiny hilly country, in its socio-political process. But before we come to Sikkim, we have to make a journey to Tibetan snowy plateau, the parent land of Sikkim, in order to understand its historical background of inheritance of the Buddhist civilization and Buddhist school.

2.10. Schools of Buddhism :

"The Buddhist exponents and commentators can be grouped into four classes : (1) the direct realists (Vaibhasika), (2) the critical realists (Sautantrika), (3) the absolutists (Sunyavadi or Madhyamika), and (4) the idealists (Vijnanavadi or Yogachara)"⁶⁸.

"The first two groups upheld the reality of the world while the other two groups rejected such notions. The first two belonged to the tradition known as Sarvastivada (Theravada) while the other two belonged to the tradition known as Mahayana"⁶⁹.

Buddhism was split, at the very beginning, into two groups, the Mahayana or the great vehicle and the Hinayana or the small vehicle. "The lines of distinction between the two groups are not very clear except that Mahayana is more broad based and admits all and sundry to its ranks, its literature is in Sanskrit and it looks upon Bodisattva as its ideal, that is to say, a Mahayani is not satisfied with his own salvation but works for the salvation of other's too. Hinayana, on the other hand, is more orthodox and insists that one should work for one's own salvation only. Its literature is all in Pali"⁷⁰.

Theravada Buddhism is continuous with the Buddhism of the early followers. Theravadins emphasise on the necessity of the renunciation of the world and pursue the path of self-conquest. They are not concerned as how many others are following such step. "Its spiritual ideal is symbolized by the 'arahat' - the individual who in self-sufficient homelessness has overcome the power of tanha, thrown aside the fetters which bind him to the cycle of birth and death, and has thus gained the unutterable peace of Nirvana"⁷¹. Secondly, to the Theravadin Buddhists, the great master, the Buddha primarily is a man who left behind all worldly interests, purged himself of all attachments and devoted himself pioneering the way of escape from the sufferings occurred from the transitory forms of existence. Whether he told the truth to his disciples or not, does not matter to them. The great master remains the same. Because he "cut out from the roots of the illusion which defiles, which sows repeated existence, which breeds pains, which produces life, old age and death"⁷².

Among the early Mahayana Sutras, the most influential are the Diamond Sutra, the Lankavatara Sutra, the Lotus of the Perfect Law, the Surangama Sutra, the Sukhavati-Vyuhū Sutra, and the Awakening of Faith. According to Mahayana conception, Buddha appears as transcendent at the centre of existence and turns the wheel of the doctrine. The most important fact is that, Buddha is not thought as identical with the historic Goutama who had lived two thousand years ago. That individual was also the incarnation of a transcendent cosmic reality, the Buddha-nature, which is working for the salvation of all sentient beings in all ages, in all times, in the innumerable world\$. "Amitabha is one celestial exemplification of Buddhahood, thus conceived"⁷³. To Mahayani Buddhists, Buddha and Bodhisattva is one, who after the attainment of Nirvana refuses to enter to it and out of devoted love to those remain behind shares with others the way to eternal happiness that he himself has found. The conception of Bodhisattva which could be translated as 'Being of Wisdom', was first used to describe a previous incarnation of Buddha. "For innumerable lives before his birth as the Buddha, the Bodhisattva did many deeds of self-sacrifice and compassion as he perfected himself in wisdom and virtue"⁷⁴.

The idea of Tantra as continuity was associated with the Buddhist philosophy since this early Indian Mahayana School. From that association the Yogacara School of Buddhism emerged. The School of Yogacara was so named because its philosophy applied Yoga, harnessing to work on oneself. The Yogacara Buddhism is not a single system, rather, embraces a number of distinct philosophical trends. "They are lumped

together under this title in virtue of the main tenet which they hold in common; the idea that all the three worlds (the world of sensuousness, the world of form, the world of formlessness) are cittamātra, mind only"⁷⁵. In fact, Tibet, the Land of Lamaist Polity, was first introduced with this Yogacara School of Buddhism.

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