

## **Chapter 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN OF MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM**

#### **4.1. The Traces of Mahāyāna in Early Buddhism**

Mahāyāna Buddhism appeared as a new form of Buddhism around the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE,<sup>307</sup> but its thought has been existed since the time of the Buddha. Therefore, in order to view the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism and find its traces we must go back to Early Buddhism.

##### **4.1.1. The Traces of Mahāyāna in the Pāli Canon**

According to the tradition of Early Buddhism (Theravāda), Pāli Canon is a vast *piṭaka* (basket) that consists of five sets, composed in Pāli language. It is the collections of discourses delivered by the Buddha during forty-five years of his preaching. These represent an inestimable and vivid picture of different phases of life and philosophy of that age. The five Nikāyas include *Dīgha-Nikāya* (DN.: the long discourses), *Majjhima-Nikāya* (MN.: the middle-length discourses), *Samyutta-Nikāya* (SN.: the connected discourses), *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* (AN: the numerical discourses), and *Khuddaka-Nikāya* (KN.: the minor collection). However, there are definite traces that the Buddha had at the back of philosophical outlook of Mahāyāna

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<sup>307</sup> N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 72.

Buddhism in his mind.<sup>308</sup> Through surveying of Pāli Canons of Early Buddhism, I see some traces of Mahāyāna thought as follows:

In the *Mūlapariyāya-sutta*,<sup>309</sup> the basis discourse on Buddhism, the Buddha stated that a person regards earth as earth and establishes a relation with it, e.g., in earth, from earth, my earth, etc. In the same way, he does with the other three elements, i.e., water, fire and air,<sup>310</sup> then different kinds of meditation as meditation and establishes a relation with them as indicated above. Even an *Arhat* regards *nibbāna* as *nibbāna* and thinks that he has attained *nibbāna*. However, the Buddha or the Tathāgata knows earth, water, fire, air, meditation, etc. but he does not establish a relation with them because the Tathāgata is free from all ideas or conceptions while an *Arhat* is not. This is the difference that exists between an *Arhat* and a Buddha. In other words, earth, water, fire, air, meditation etc., are merely worldly phenomena with a fleeting existence and do not exist in unchangeable reality. In the *Kevaddha-sutta*,<sup>311</sup> it is stated that, all the elements and mind or name and form (*nāmarūpa*) are comprehended by an *Arhat* with the help of the law of causation (*Paṭicca-samuppāda*) that they are non-substance, unreal as this is essential for attaining *nibbāna*. This is the very theory of *Śūnyatā* (Emptiness), and *Pratītya-samutpāda* (principle of Dependent Origination) which mentioned in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the *Aggi-vacchagotta-sutta*<sup>312</sup> the Buddha does not give answer to Vacchagotta Paribbājaka's question: "*Sassata loka* or *asassata loka* (the world is eternal or non-eternal); *Antavān loka* or *ananta loka* (the world is limited or limitless) and so forth." But Buddha explained with a simile:

<sup>308</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>309</sup> MN. I, *Sutta* No. 1, *Kathāvatthu*, ix. 2. Cf. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* (ASB), p. 9.

<sup>310</sup> Scientifically earth, water, fire and air can never be separated, earth has watery element and heat; likewise water has earthly element and heat and so on. At the present state of science, an element is a conglomeration of atoms or ions; hence it is also a composite. The Buddha, being omniscient, realized this fact.

<sup>311</sup> DN. I, 222f.

<sup>312</sup> MN. I, *Sutta* No. 72.

“Take for example, a fire burning of a fagot, when the fagot is exhausted and the fire is extinguished, where does the fire go? Likewise, the Tathāgata is composed of *saṃkhāras* (constituents of a worldly being) and when the *saṃkhāras* are eschewed by him, he disappears in the unknown, unknowable, unfathomable (*ananuvejja*), i.e., infinity.” This is also the theory of ‘*Śūnyatā*’ in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the *Alagaddupamā-sutta*<sup>313</sup> the Buddha says that all *dhammas* (things), even all meditational practices of a *bhikkhu* are merely a raft with the help of which and by physical exertion, a person can cross the stream and after reaching the other shore of the stream, he throws away the raft. Likewise, a *bhikkhu*, by means of several ethical and meditational practices, becomes a *sotāpanna*, and after reaching this stage, he gets rid of those practices and strives to attain the highest knowledge, i.e., becomes *sambodhiparāyana*. He gets rid of his notions, good or bad, and then becomes destined to attain *sambodhi*, which is beyond all conceptions. This is the very ‘*upāya-kauśalya*’ (skilful means) as described in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Again, in Early Buddhism, there are examples of the skilful means, including magical feats, in which the Buddha used to help all beings attain insight. Similarly, in the *Jātaka*, the Bodhisattva employed many skilful means often through various stratagems to help others.

In the MN. the Buddha declares that, those who are in the first stage of sanctification (*sotāpannā*) have no chance of retrogression from that stage and they are destined to attain the highest emancipation (*sambodhi*). Further, those who are faithful followers of the *dharma* are also destined to attain *sambodhi*.<sup>314</sup> The Buddha further states in the MN. that those who attain mental freedom and perfect knowledge may by the highest exertion of insight and highest path, devote themselves to the worship of the Tathāgata

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<sup>313</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>314</sup> MN. I, 141-142

and develop belief in him as the teacher of the highest truth are also destined to attain *sambodhi*.<sup>315</sup> The Buddha says that all human beings have capability to attain *sambodhi* by the highest exertion of themselves. This is the very doctrine of ‘Buddha nature’ in Mahāyāna Buddhism (all human beings have Buddha nature and have capability to attain enlightenment – Buddhahood).

In the SN., the *Kaccāyanagottasutta*,<sup>316</sup> the Buddha says to Kaccāyana in reply to his enquiry “What is *sammādiṭṭhī* (right view),” that there are two extreme views: one considering from the standpoint of the origin of the world upholds the view that the world exist; and another considering from the standpoint of the decay of the world upholds the view that the world does not exist. The Tathāgata teaches that the two extreme views should be eschewed and the middle view should be accepted, i.e., neither existent nor non-existent. This is the theory of ‘Middle Way’ in Mahāyāna Buddhism. And this theory, the Buddha mentioned in the *Dhammacakkapavattana-sutta*, the first sermon to five *bhikkhus* at Sarnath.

Again, in the propagation of his teachings, the Buddha advised his disciples should go anywhere for the sake, wealth and happiness for everybody. This mentioned in the SN. that: “Fare ye, *bhikkhus*, let go around where may be for the good of the masses, for the happiness of the masses, for love toward the world, for the advantage, the good, the happiness of gods and human. Do not go to one place together with two people.”<sup>317</sup> This is the ideal of Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Even in the KN., the *Jātaka* (stories of the Buddha’s former lives) give us inspiring examples of the trials and forbearance of the Bodhisattva. In his past lives, the Buddha is as a *Bodhisatta* with full compassion, appeared in both human and animal form

<sup>315</sup> MN. I., 235, q.v. N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 74.

<sup>316</sup> SN. II, p. 17.

<sup>317</sup> SN. I, p. 105 or C.A.F., Rhys Davids, *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, Part I, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, p.132.

in order to save all sentient beings. There are over 500 stories of the Buddha's former lives in the *Jātaka*, each provide a moving and inspiring moral lesson of how the power of good overcomes evil and the importance of integrity over fame and fortune. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Bodhisattva ideal came to be highly extolled. In the *Milindapañha* (p. 420), it is admitted that King Menander became a Hīnayāna monk and even attained *Arhantship*. He discussed with Nāgasena certain topics relating to Mahāyāna thought such as: The conception of Buddha and Bodhisattva; The fourfold problem about the existence of the Tathāgata after death and its inexplicability; Does Buddha accept worship? Is the offering made in the name of the Tathāgata; Does he accept the offering? and so on.<sup>318</sup>

In his research about Mahāyāna, Nalinaksha Dutt also mentions that:<sup>319</sup>

In many of the Buddha's discourses as recorded in the Nikāyas, he referred to the highest truth which he realized under the *Bodhi*-tree, but he also realized that it was not possible for all his disciples, being of different intellectual levels, to comprehend his deepest teaching. He indicated this by a nice simile in the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* of the MN.: "In a lake there are many lotus flowers, some of which have risen much above the water-level, some reached just the level of the water while there are many lotuses which remain within water." By this simile he meant that the Bodhisattvas were like the flowers much above the water-level while the Śrāvakas or Hīnayānists were like the lotuses just on the level of water, and the rest which were within water were the common people.

In addition, the other terms of Mahāyāna also appeared in some *suttas* of Pāli Canon, such as: in the DN. (III. 219) and in the MN. (III. 104, 109 – *Suññatāsutta*) occur the term of 'suññatā' (devoid of all attributes), 'animitta' (devoid of characteristics) and *appaṇihita* (absence of desire for

<sup>318</sup> See: N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 76.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

worldly objects or non-existent). In the SN. II. 267 and the AN. (I. 112) occur the statement that the *Suttantas* delivered by the Tathāgata are deep, supramundane and closely connected with *suññata*. In the DN. (I. 223) we find some stanzas that deal with *vijñānavāda* (idealism). They are as follows:<sup>320</sup>

*Kattha āpo ca paṭhavī tejo vājo na gādhati?*

*Kattha dīghañ ca rassañ ca aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ?*

*Kattha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca asesam uparujjhatī?*

*Tatra veyyākaraṇaṃ bhavati:*

*Viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,*

*Etha āpo ca paṭhavī tejo na gādhati*

*Etha dīghañ ca rassañ ca aṇuṃ thūlaṃ subhāsubhaṃ,*

*Etha nāmañ ca rūpañ ca asesam uparujjhati.*

*Idam avoca Bhagavā. Attamano Kevaddho gahapatiputto bhāsitaṃ abhinandīti.*

Transl.:

Where does the water or earth or fire or air not find a place? Where does the long or short, minute or coarse, good or evil find no place? Where does the name and form (mind and matter) cease totally?

The exposition of the above is as follows: Pure consciousness is signless, infinite and shining like a bright jewel. In this (pure consciousness) water or earth or fire or air does not exist. Here long or short, minute or coarse, good or evil or name and form cease absolutely. This was said by Bhagavā. Kavaddha, the son of householder felt satisfied with the answer.

This is evident in *ālaya-vijñāna* or *Tathāgatagarbha* in the *Vijñānavāda* (one of the two main philosophical schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism that was founded by Asaṅga and Vasubadhu later on.) Moreover, in the *Mahāyānasangraha*, Asaṅga says that in the *Sravakayāna* (Hinayāna),

<sup>320</sup> DN. I. p. 223.

*ālaya-vijñāna* is mentioned by synonyms (*paryāya*) and refers to a passage in the *Ekottaragama* that: “People (*prajā*) like the *ālaya* (*ālayarata*), are fond of the *ālaya* (*ālayarata*), are delighted in the *ālaya* (*ālayasammudita*), are attached to the *ālaya* (*ālayabhirata*). When the *Dharma* is preached for the destruction of the *ālaya*, they wish to listen (*susrusanti*) and lend their ears (*srotram avadadhanti*); they put forth a will for the perfect knowledge (*ajnacittam upasthapayanti*) and follow the path of Truth (*dharmanudharma-pratipanna*). When the Tathāgata appears in the world, this marvellous and extraordinary *Dharma* appears in the world.” Lamotte identifies this *Ekottaragama* passage in the AN. IV as follows:<sup>321</sup>

*Alayarama bhikkhave paja alayarata alayasammudita, sa Tathagatena analaye dhamme desiyamane sussuyati sotam odahati annacittam upattapeti. Tathagatassa bhikkhave arahato sammāsambuddhassa patubhava ayam pathamo acchāriyo abbhuto dhammo patubhavati.*

Thus we may see that although the concept of ‘*ālaya-vijñāna*’ was not as developed as in the later Mahāyāna Schools, the original idea of *ālaya-vijñāna* had already existed in the Pāli Canon of Early Buddhism.

Again, D. T. Suzuki, a philosopher, writes on the method of Buddha Recitation in the Pure Land school of Mahāyāna: “An early form of Buddha Recitation can be found in the Nikāyas of the Pāli Canon. In the Nikāyas, the Buddha advised his disciples to think of him and his virtues as if they saw his body before their eyes, whereby they would be enabled to accumulate merit and attain *nirvāṇa* or be saved from transmigrating in the evil paths.”<sup>322</sup> This is the Pure Land’s thought in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

There are also many texts in the Nikāyas that deal with Mahāyāna thought, but in the sphere of this survey I only bring out some instances as

<sup>321</sup> AN. IV

<sup>322</sup> D.T., Suzuki, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 317.

mentioned above, in order to distinctly show that there were the traces of Mahāyāna in the Pāli Canon of Early Buddhism.

#### 4.1.2. The Traces of Mahāyāna in the Development of Early Buddhism

In the history of Early Buddhism, its spread and development underwent different changes due to external influences such as society, economy, polity, religion, and so on, over the course of time. In order to search for the traces of Mahāyāna in the development of Early Buddhism, I will concentrate on the analysis of the origin of *stūpas* worship and the emergence of Buddha-images to see how they influenced to the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Hirakawa Akira also asserts that “the role of *stūpas* worship in the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism cannot be ignored.”<sup>323</sup>

As mentioned in the chapter 2, after the Buddha’s *nirvāṇa*, Buddhism underwent many changes and developments. With the patronage of King Aśoka, Buddhism developed and reached its apex, but the Buddhist *Saṅgha* became contaminated due to the regal and royal affiliations. Buddhism, therefore, was attacked by the debates with Brahmanical rivals and other heretics.<sup>324</sup> The philosophical system of Theravāda, felt the need to clarify the doctrinal concepts and define them in clear-cut theoretical terms, and analyze the Buddha’s teachings. A system of the relations between the *dhammas* was classified and was combined in the *Abhidharma-piṭaka* and the post-canonical texts.<sup>325</sup>

<sup>323</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 270.

<sup>324</sup> V. P., Varma, *Early Buddhism and its Origins*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003, p. 432.

<sup>325</sup> See Ronkin, Noa, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: the Making of a Philosophical Tradition*, USA: Routledge, 2005, p. 28. The *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* comprises seven treatises: the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the *Vibhaṅga*, the *Kathāvatthu*, the *Dhātukathā*, the *Puggalapaññatti*, the *Yamaka* and the *Paṭṭhāna*. According to the Theravāda tradition, the Buddha conceived the *Abhidhamma* in the fourth of the seven weeks spent after the Great Enlightenment at the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree. See Nyanaponika, *Abhidhamma Studies: Buddhist Explorations of Consciousness and Time*, 1949, USA: Wisdom Publications, 1998, p. 2. Furthermore, Buddhaghosa argued that, the Buddha while preaching the *Dhamma* to his mother in the heaven gave the outlines of the *Abhidhamma* and afterwards preached to Sāriputa, who taught these to five hundred monks. This

It seems that the Buddhist scholars in that period (the age of *Abhidharma*) attached special importance to knowledge (the basic philosophies and the thoughts of all Buddhist schools) but did not attach importance to emotional elements such as faith and devotion. Whereas, in this age, the society was stable, the economy developed, so the mass of the people had tendency to tilt towards spiritual life. They began to believe in the cult, worship, praying and salvation from Buddha's power. In the beginning, the worship of Buddhist followers was symbols, mounds and *stūpas* which were built at places related to the Buddha's life. After that, due to devotion of the King and Buddhists, the *stūpas* were erected everywhere in order to commemorate and hold ashes and relics of the Buddha. Peter Harvey also said: Aśoka erected shrines, memorial pillars and *stūpas* throughout India. On one hand it meant propagation of Buddhist thought, and on the other hand, popularization of the cult of devotion at *stūpas*.<sup>326</sup>

Anything related to the Buddha's life such as Bodhi-tree,<sup>327</sup> Dharma Wheel, and *stūpas* were symbols of the veneration of Buddhist adherent in that time. Events in the sculptures also became more explicit in representing episodes of the Buddha's life and teachings. These took the form of votive tablets or friezes, usually in relation to the decoration of *stūpas*. Then these faiths and devotions became a complement to the wisdom-orientation expressed in the works of *Abhidharma*. Peter Harvey admitted that, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, a few schools added these details to their canons of teachings.<sup>328</sup> Akira Hirakawa also said: "Although *stūpa* worship is not mentioned in the Pāli *Vinaya*, it is found in *Caturvargika-vinaya* of the

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*Abhidhamma* thus was rehearsed in the first two Buddhist Councils and again in the third, in which Moggaliputta Tissa simply enlarged that into *Kathāvatthu*. See Vidyabhusana, Satis Chandra, *A History of Indian Logic*, 1920, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006, p. 234.

<sup>326</sup> Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, pp. 75-7.

<sup>327</sup> Bodhi-tree or Enlightenment-tree is the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. K. G. Goswami says that "In this period (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE), the Bodhi-tree also was illustrated as a symbol of worship by the pilgrims." See P. Mittal, Mahendra (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 307.

<sup>328</sup> Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 83.

Dharmaguptika, *Pañcavargika-vinaya* of the Mahīśāsaka, *Daśabhāṇavāra-vinaya* of the Sarvastivādin, *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* and *Mahāsaṅghika-vinaya*. This leads us to consider the possibility of *stūpa* worship existed in Nikāya Buddhism.”<sup>329</sup> This is the very basis for the development of *stūpa* worship and sculptural art of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.<sup>330</sup>

Initially, the matter of *stūpa* worship did not exist in Early Buddhism and also was not responsible for the clergy. Because, according to the conception of the *Triratna* (three-treasures), which sharply distinguishes among the Buddha, *Dharma*, and *Śaṅgha*; if the Buddha was to be included in the *Śaṅgha*, the basic doctrine of Buddhism would fall apart. Since, the *stūpas* which represent the Buddha would be included in the first of the *Triratna*. From this standpoint it is unthinkable that *stūpa* worship was part of Buddhist *Śaṅgha*. For this reason, even in cases of the existence of *stūpa* worship, the properties of the *stūpa* and that of the *Śaṅgha* were considered different from each other. For example, the *Mahāsaṅghika-vinaya* states that: “The land of the *Śaṅgha* and the land of the *stūpa* must not encroach upon each other.”<sup>331</sup> The *Śaṅgha* was not permitted to consume or use the property owned by the *stūpa*, and at the same time the *stūpas* could not be renovated or fixed by using materials owned by the *Śaṅgha*.<sup>332</sup> The *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya-vibhāṣā* also states that “a *stūpa* must not be erected on the land of the *Caturdiśa-Śaṅgha*, with the exception that it is permitted upon the approval of the whole membership of *Śaṅgha*.” The *Daśabhāṇavāra-vinaya*<sup>333</sup> makes it clear that “the properties belonging to the *Śaṅgha* and that belonging to the *stūpa* should not be mixed or diverted

<sup>329</sup> Paul, Williams (Ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. III, 2005, p. 209.

<sup>330</sup> According to Peter Harvey, the best-preserved ancient Buddhist *stūpa*, dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE in its present form, is at Sāñcī in central India. It was built over one dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE by Aśoka.

<sup>331</sup> Ma Ha Tang Ky Luat 33, T. 22, No.1425: 498a.

<sup>332</sup> Ma Ha Tang Ky Luat 3, T. 22, No.1425: 251c.

<sup>333</sup> Thap Tung Luat 48, T. 23, No. 1435: 352b.

for each other's use. The *stūpa* property must not be given to or divided among the *Caturdiśa-Saṅgha*.”

Moreover, in Early Buddhism, the Buddha was not viewed as a superhuman being, he was not considered be capable of acting as a savior, but he was regarded as a teacher of the *Dharma*. Rather, he was praised because he had successfully accomplished that which was very difficult to accomplish.<sup>334</sup> Because Early Buddhism holds that, anybody, who practises the Buddha's *Dharma*, would be released from suffering, so they focused on the *Dharma* rather than on the Buddha. Therefore, they emphasized monastic life, rigid adherence to the precepts and do not attach special importance to *stūpa* worship and pray at the *stūpas*. However, the laity was unable to strictly observe the precepts or to devote much time to the meditation like the clergy, and thus they could not put the Buddha's teachings into practice in the traditional ways. Consequently, they had to refuge on power and salvation of the Buddha. While the clergy emphasized the Buddha's teachings, the laity emphasized the role of the Buddha for salvation. Thus, *stūpa* worship was current among the laity only.

In the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*<sup>335</sup> of the DN., Ananda asks the Buddha, “How should we handle the Tathāgata's *sarīra*?” The Buddha replies, “O Ananda, be not concerned with the worship of the Tathāgata's *sarīra*. You must strive for the highest good (*sadattha*).” And the Buddha continues: “There are wise men (*paṇḍita*) among the Khattiya, Brāhmaṇa, and Gahapati who have faith in the Tathāgata, and they will take care of the Tathāgata's *sarīra*.” This passage expresses the idea that the *śarīrapūjā*, the worship of relics, is the concern of the laity and not the *Bhikṣu Saṅgha*. We have no evidence to say that the Buddha actually made this statement, but it would

<sup>334</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 270.

<sup>335</sup> DN., *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, Vol. II, p. 141; Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part II, London: 1910, p. 154.

not be wrong to say that the *bhikṣus* of Early Buddhist *Saṅgha*, who transmitted this *sutta*, approved of this idea because the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* was compiled based upon the traditions of the early *Saṅgha*, and transmitted by the Nikāya Buddhists.

It is difficult to believe that the *bhikṣus* who revered this *sutta* would actively participate in the worship of the *stūpas*. According to the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*<sup>336</sup> those who actually worshipped the relics and performed the Buddha's funeral were the people of the Mallā.<sup>337</sup> Akira Hirakawa holds that, the contents of the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* generally agree with that of the Sanskrit and the five Chinese translations. Therefore, it would not be wrong to conclude that those who cremated the Buddha's body and erected *stūpas* were followers among the laity. If this is accepted, then we must also accept the fact that those who administered and maintained the traditions of *stūpa* worship were also lay followers.<sup>338</sup> Actually after the Buddha passed, his remains were cremated, and the relics were divided into eight parts which were distributed among the eight kingdoms of Middle-India. They built a total eight *śarīra-stūpa*, and two more were erected by those who received the remaining ashes and the vase containing the remains, making ten *stūpas* in Middle-India. It is believed that the *śarīra* vase excavated in Piprahwā is the relic of the *śarīra-stūpa* worshipped by the Śākya peoples of this period.<sup>339</sup> Thus, from the very beginning, the *stūpas* were protected and maintained by the laymen.

After this period, the development of *stūpa* worship is unclear, but at the time of King Aśoka, it was fully in practice. We find evidences of this practice in Aśoka's rock edicts bearing sentences like: "The repairing was

<sup>336</sup> DN., *Ibid.*, p. 159; Rhys Davids, *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>337</sup> At the Buddha's funeral, the people of the Mallā in Kusināra employed music, dance, flowers and incense to honor, revere and respect the corpse of the Buddha before it was cremated. These are described by details in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (DN., Vol. II, p. 159). And this form of religious service was inherited by the *stūpa* worshippers of the later ages.

<sup>338</sup> See: Paul, Williams (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. III, 2005, p. 213.

<sup>339</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993.

made upon the *stūpa* of Konagamana Buddha.”<sup>340</sup> Hsuan-tsang reports of seeing this rock edict in the southeast of Kapilavastu and notes that the *stūpa* of Kanakamuni Buddha<sup>341</sup> and Krakucchanda Buddha<sup>342</sup> existed nearby. From these evidences they show that at the time of Aśoka, the *stūpas* of the past Buddhas had been erected and worshipped. However, at this stage the *stūpas* was no longer a cemetery or a memorial for the dead, but carried a definite connotation of religion. Thus, there is emergence of the faith in the Buddha through the medium of the *stūpas*. This faith ultimately developed into a religious belief that was practised by the Buddhists at that time. It is more natural to see the beginnings of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the faith and worship of the *stūpas*.

According to the legends of King Aśoka, he opened the eight *stūpas* which were erected at the time of Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, and then he divided the relics and built 84,000 *stūpas*. Although this may be an exaggeration, it cannot be denied that Aśoka built many *stūpas*. In the *Ta-t'ang-si-yu-ki*, Hsuan-tsang reports that, he saw many *stūpas* built by Aśoka. The faith in *stūpas* must have made a huge advance with the conversion of Aśoka as the pivot point.<sup>343</sup> Along with the popularity of *stūpa* worship among the laity, the Nikāya Saṅgha probably was forced to adopt this practice in order to keep the followers tied to the *Saṅgha*, at the same time to express *bhikṣus'* adoration towards the Buddha. For that reason, *stūpa* worship was not mentioned in the Pāli *Vinaya-piṭaka*, but it was found in the other *vinayas*. Hirakawa also says in this respect that:<sup>344</sup>

The Theravāda *vinaya* does not mention *stūpas* even though *stūpas* have been built within the confines of Theravāda monasteries for centuries.

<sup>340</sup> Ta T'ang Si Yu Ki 6, T. 51, No. 2087: 901b.

<sup>341</sup> Kanakamuni is the fifth Buddha of the seven past Buddhas.

<sup>342</sup> Krakucchanda is the fourth Buddha of the seven past Buddhas.

<sup>343</sup> Samuel Beal, *Si yu ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, (Translated from the Chinese of Huen Tsiang A.D. 629) London: Trubner & Co Ludgate Hill, 1884, pp. 87-90.

<sup>344</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 271-2.

Apparently, Theravāda monks began making offerings at *stūpas* only after the other *vinayas* had been compiled. In contrast, the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsaṅghika *vinayas* (T. 1435 & 1425) mention Buddha images, indicating that the compilation of these two *vinayas* was probably completed later than the Pāli Vinaya.

With the development of *stūpa* worship as an institution there gradually arose a distinction in rank and duties between the worshipper and the administrator of the *stūpas*. This meant that the worshipper made his offerings; the duty of the administrator increased and soon turned him into a professional who devoted his whole time to his task. They must have taken care of the worshippers and in some cases acted as their guides. As means of increasing the number of worshippers, they must have also stressed the merits of *stūpa* worship and the greatness of the Buddha as a saviour. There is a deep appeal in preaching the Buddha's powers of salvation to people who are unable to undertake the orthodox disciplines.<sup>345</sup> When such a development occurred over a few centuries, it showed that a new doctrine of salvation was developed. Akira Hirakawa brings out a great possibility in this regard and says that:<sup>346</sup>

The original form of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, such as, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, and *Buddhāvataṃsaka* took shape in such a religious atmosphere. The *stūpa* worship itself cannot be called Mahāyāna Buddhism, but the first step in this direction was taken in the transformation from the *stūpa* worship to *Bodhisattva-yāna*.

Another thing that is also important to note here is that, at that time, Buddhist followers used to worship the Buddha through symbols and *stūpas*, without a Buddha-image in human form. The history records that, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, although India had a long sculptural tradition and a mastery of rich iconography, the Buddha was never represented in human

<sup>345</sup> Paul, Williams (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. III, 2005, pp. 214-5.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

form, but only through Buddhist symbolism.<sup>347</sup> After that, due to the absence of the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, there arose a need for representation of him in human form to act as a more personalized focus of devotion.<sup>348</sup> Therefore Buddha-images came into existence. The archaeological study shows anthropomorphic representations of the Buddha which started to emerge from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE in the northern India. And Buddha-images seem to have been first produced within the Kaniṣka's dynasty in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE in north-west India. This occurred at about the same time in Gandhāra (a western region in which the images were influenced by Hellenistic Greek art) and in Mathurā (centre of northern India). This period was also one in which the change in mood was affecting all Indian religions, leading to the portrayal of the founder of Jainism, and the major gods of Hinduism, as focuses of *bhakti*, or warm 'loving devotion.' Peter Harvey put his remarks thus: "In Buddhism, this change had led to the compositions of more thorough sacred biographies of the Buddha, and contributed to the origin of Mahāyāna Buddhism."<sup>349</sup>

In short, the *stūpa* worship had a dimension in society as well as religion. It began immediately after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. And through the support of its adherents, *stūpa* worship gradually began to flourish. Nakamura also remarks that: "with the spread of Buddhist faith, they came to erect huge *stūpas*, complying with the spiritual demand on the part of common believers."<sup>350</sup> In Early Buddhism, *stūpa* worship did not exist. But at the time of Nikāya Buddhism<sup>351</sup> it was popularised among the laity. Therefore, Nikāya Saṅgha adopted this practice in order to keep the followers tied to the *Saṅgha*. That is the reason why *stūpa* worship was not

<sup>347</sup> Vashishth, Suraj, *A Handbook of Buddhism: Art, architecture, literature and philosophy*, Cyber Tech Publications, 2009, p. 23.

<sup>348</sup> Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 80.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>350</sup> H., Nakamura, *op. cit.*, 2007, p. 96.

<sup>351</sup> The term "Nikāya Buddhism" refers to monastic Buddhism after the initial schism into the Mahāsaṅghika and Sthaviravāda schools.

mentioned in the Pāli Vinaya, but it was found in the works of *Abhidharma* and other *vinayas*. These facts show that, in the process of Buddhist propagation and development, to satisfy spiritual needs of community, Buddhism had to add some principles and practices according to the need of social circumstances. Then the faith and the element of *bhakti* were declared as grounds of a religious life and played a significant role in the emergence of Mahāyāna doctrine as well as the development of art of Mahāyāna Buddhism later. It is important to consider that, Mahāyāna doctrine developed in the trend of salvation by faith, and the concept of faith in Mahāyāna literature was introduced due to emotional and devotional attitude.

## **4.2. The Motivations for the Mahāyāna Movement**

The motivations for the Mahāyāna movement were very complex. It is a question that has caused many controversies among scholars. Nevertheless, in the scope of this thesis I do not dare to deny or criticize any hypothesis, but only collect trustful viewpoints in order to bring out reasonable and logical knowledge to help people who want to understand the origin of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Through a process of the survey and analysis, it leads me to conclude that the motivations for the Mahāyāna movement are deviation in the monastic disciplines, variations in doctrine, skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*), and social factors, such as, polity, economy and religion.

### **4.2.1. Deviation in the Monastic Disciplines**

The earliest motivation which caused movement of Early Buddhism is the deviation in the monastic disciplines of progressive monks after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. As mentioned in the second chapter, after the Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, fissiparous tendencies in the Buddhist *Saṅgha* began to rise. A group of the Vajjiputtaka monks, (the mass of the young monks) had progressive tendency. They held the view that the *Saṅgha* needed to change

some minor rules to suit the social circumstances at that time. Therefore, they adopted ten new practices which violated the precepts (*vinaya*), while the Orthodox monks (who were known as the conservative monks) were opposed to this viewpoint. In fact, before entering into *nirvāṇa*, the Buddha told Ānanda that: “the monastic disciplines could abolish minor rules if it saw fit.”<sup>352</sup> However, Ānanda was so sad at the time that he did not ask which rules they were. Thus, the leader of the *Saṅgha*, Ven. Mahākāssapa, adjudicated that rules should be best left unchanged.

Based on this event, the progressive monks advocated the idea of reconstructing the monastic disciplines in accordance with their specific circumstances and needs. As a result, they proposed the ten practices as follows:<sup>353</sup>

- (1) Carrying salt in an animal horn – violated a rule against the storing of food.
- (2) Taking food when the shadow on the sundial is two fingers past noon – violated a rule against eating after noon.
- (3) After eating, travelling to another village to eat another meal the same day – violated a rule against overeating.
- (4) Holding several fortnightly assemblies within the same boundaries (*sīmā*) – violated procedures requiring all monks within the *sīmā* to attend the same fortnightly assembly.
- (5) Confirming an ecclesiastical act in an incomplete assembly and obtaining approval from absent monks afterward – violated the rules of procedure at monastic meetings.

<sup>352</sup> *Ākaṅkhamāno ānanda saṅgho mamaccayena khuddānukhuddakāni sikkhāpadāni samūhanatu*, DN. II, p. 154. Rhys Davids, T. W. (tr.), *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. II, 1910, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007, p. 171; & Vin. II, p. 286. Horner, I. B. (trans.), *The Book of the Discipline*, Vol. V, London: Luzac & Company, 1963, p. 398.

<sup>353</sup> *Mahāvamsa*, IV, pp. 9-11. Geiger, Wilhelm, *The Mahāvamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, 1912, Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2011, p. 19. cf. Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 80.

- (6) Citing habitual practice as the authority for violations of monastic procedures – violated the rules of procedure.
- (7) Drinking milk whey after meals – violated the rule against eating special food when one was not sick.
- (8) Drinking unfermented wine – violated the rule against drinking intoxicating beverages.
- (9) Using a mat with fringes – violated the rule concerning the measurements of rugs.
- (10) Accepting gold and silver – violated the rule prohibiting monks from receiving gold and silver.

All of these practices were banned in the full sets of precepts of the *Saṅgha*. Because observing the full precepts would have required special efforts by the monks, the advocates of the ten practices were attempting to liberalize the monastic practice and principle. Therefore, these ten practices would not be accepted by the Orthodox monks. However, progressive monks refused to accept their ruling. As a result, a dispute arose between a conservative group who advocated a strict interpretation of the precepts, and a more liberal group who wished to permit certain exceptions to the observance of the precepts. This is the initial cause that led to the schism in the Buddhist *Saṅgha*.<sup>354</sup> The *vinayas* of various schools<sup>355</sup> and other sources (Northern and Southern Buddhist tradition) also assert the controversy over the ten points of practice (ten un-*vinayic* acts) occurred a century after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, and this controversy was considered as the cause of the basic schism.<sup>356</sup>

Due to this historical event, some scholars come to contend that the Mahāyāna originated from sectarian viewpoints on the topic of the monastic rules. Paul Williams, in his comparative examination of all the *vinaya*

<sup>354</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 80-1.

<sup>355</sup> It is the *Vinayas* of the Theravāda, Sarvāstivādin, Mahīśāsaka, and Dharmaguptaka schools.

<sup>356</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 82.

traditions of Buddhism, is completely against such a view, he remarks: “All these *vinayas* are *vinayas* which evolved over the centuries, and this is important that they have absolutely nothing to do with issues of Mahāyāna versus non-Mahāyāna.” He (1989) contends that Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks could live without discord in the same monastery, so long as they held the same code.<sup>357</sup> And we are told that there in the same monasteries existed together Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna monks who all practiced the same *vinaya*. I-tsing, a Chinese pilgrim, recorded that: “In India, around the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, the adherents of Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna both practice the same *vinaya*.”<sup>358</sup> Again, it is verified that there was no separate monastic rules for Mahāyāna monks so far.<sup>359</sup> Thus, it can be safely said that, Mahāyāna could not emerge as a result of the monastic rules.

Furthermore, we should remember that, the “ten un-*vinayic* acts” is the initial cause that led to division of Buddhism into two schools (Mahāsaṅghika and Sthaviravāda), but it is not the cause that led to the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In other words, the deviation in the monastic disciplines of progressive monks after the Buddha’s *nirvāṇa* is one of the motivations for the Mahāyāna movement.

#### 4.2.2. Variations in Doctrine

The second motivation for the Mahāyāna movement is variations in doctrine. These variations were openly introduced after the initial schism of the Buddhist *Saṅgha*. The Sthaviravāda (conservative group) hold the view

<sup>357</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 100.

<sup>358</sup> Cf. Edward, Conze, *op. cit.*, 1999, p. 122; & J., Takakusu (tr.), *op. cit.*, 1998, p. 14.

<sup>359</sup> We should not confuse the monastic rules with the Bodhisattva rules, both of which are prevailing simultaneously in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is necessary for us to distinguish the two kinds of Bodhisattvas concerning form from the other two concerning spirituality. The former two are monk-bodhisattva and lay-bodhisattva; and the latter two are the never-receding bodhisattva and the training Bodhisattva. In formal life, a lay bodhisattva, even though he/she is an advanced or a training Bodhisattva, ought to respect a monk as part of the Triple Gem (*triratna*).

that the new doctrines of the Mahāsaṅghika (progressive group) were opposite to the spirit of the original teachings of the Buddha. But the Mahāsaṅghikas attempted to advocate their opinions in accordance with progressive and liberal mind.

According to the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* (Chinese: *I-pu-tsung lun lun*),<sup>360</sup> the cause led to the variation in doctrine was five viewpoints of Mahādeva monk that relates to the nature of an *Arhat*. It is pointed out in the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* that, more than one hundred years after the Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, Mahādeva subjectively proposed the five viewpoints of doctrine that have added to the controversy surrounding the initial schism. They are:<sup>361</sup>

- (1) *Arhat* may have impure discharge due to sexual temptation.
- (2) *Arhat* may have a residue of ignorance.
- (3) *Arhat* may have doubts.
- (4) *Arhat* may attain enlightenment through the help of others.
- (5) The path is attained with an exclamatory remark.

These 'Five points' of doctrine and 'Four stages' of the path to attain *Arhatship* had been brought up to controvert at the Third Buddhist Council as the counter-arguments around *Arhatship*, and were composed in the *Kathāvatthu*.<sup>362</sup> According to this work, the Theravādins emphatically deny all of these arguments and counter-arguments. The Theravādins relate the argument that, the *Arhats* are enlightened Ones, who possess both *kṣayajñāna* (the knowledge that they have no more *kleśas*) and

<sup>360</sup> T. 49, No. 2031: 15a18-21. See Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 108.

<sup>361</sup> Q.v. Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 82.

<sup>362</sup> *Kathāvatthu*, II, pp. 1-6. Aung, S. Z. & C. A. F. Rhys Davids (tr.); *Points of Controversy or Subjects of Discourse: Being a Translation of the Kathāvatthu from Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, 1915, London: PTS, 1979, pp. 111-24. Of these five points of doctrine, the first four are primarily concerned with the implications of the qualities attainable by an *Arhat* and the rest one is concerned with that of the Four-staged Path that is referred to in the *Kathāvatthu* as the controversies of Articulate Utterance and Inducing by Saying "Sorrow!"

*anutapādajñāna* (the knowledge that they will have no more rebirths). The *Arhats* therefore cannot have a fall from *Arhatship*.

Further, in Pāli works of Theravāda literature, the term ‘*Arhatship*’ is used to refer to the stage of final liberation from the round of existence.<sup>363</sup> The SN. elaborates that, there is no difference between the Buddhas and the *Arhats* in their liberation (*vimutti*).<sup>364</sup> The Buddhas are superior to the *Arhats* because Buddhas are promulgators of *Dharma* while the *Arhats* are only the followers of *Dharma*.<sup>365</sup> Incidentally, the Theravādins held the view that Gautama Buddha was the sole Buddha and the *Arhats* stood for the social reform, teaching goodness, amity, the simple life, the abolition of sacrificial and other slaughter, and of the barriers of rank and caste.<sup>366</sup>

In spite of refutations, the Mahāyānists pursue patiently the act to advocate their arguments. Then a series of works was composed with the intention of turning against opinions of Theravādins. For example, the *Mahāvastu*, one of the Saṅskrit works of Early Mahāyāna literature, relates an argument that the Buddhas are *sarvākārajñā*, who possess a complete and detailed knowledge of everything, while the *Arhats* can at the most have sectional knowledge.<sup>367</sup>

Thus, the controversy of first doctrine in Early Buddhism was the transcendent nature of Buddha. The Sthaviravādins (conservative group) hold that, there was only one Supreme Buddha and that was Gautama Buddha. And only he attains perfection (Buddhahood), everybody could not

<sup>363</sup> MN. I, pp. 4, 23, 40, 167. Horner, I. B. (tr.), *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, Vol. I, 1954, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004, pp. 6, 29, 50-1, 211.

<sup>364</sup> SN. III, pp. 73-4. Woodward, F. L. (tr.), *The Book of the Kindred Saying*, Vol. III, 1925, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005, p. 64-5.

<sup>365</sup> SN. III, pp. 65-6. Woodward, F. L. (tr.), *The Book of the Kindred Saying*, Vol. III, 1925, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005, pp. 57-8. Cp. N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 1978, p. 103.

<sup>366</sup> Rhys Davids, T. W., “Arahant.” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I, James Hastings (ed.), New York: Charles Books, 1968, p. 123. Q.v. Pio, Edwina, *Buddhist Psychology: A Modern Perspective*, Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1988, p. 119.

<sup>367</sup> Q.v. N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 1978, p. 103.

achieve this stage. Therefore, the highest aspiration that they could achieve is *Arhantship*.<sup>368</sup>

The Mahāsaṅghikas (progressive group) is opposed to this opinion. Their view is based on the Pāli literature of Earliest Buddhism,<sup>369</sup> so they maintain that Buddha's nature was transcendent and free from all earthly limitations; he was a supramundane One; his birth and life could not really be like that of ordinary human;<sup>370</sup> he was said to have thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks of a superman; therefore the birth of the Buddha on earth was a wondrous event with the definite purpose of liberating sentient beings; etc. Consequently, they developed the concept of "supramundane-nature of the Buddha" based on his superhuman qualities. N. Dutt says that: "the Mahāsaṅghika held semi-Mahāyāna views, paving the way for the advent of Mahāyānism. They conceived the Buddha as superhuman and even super-divine. Their conceptions of Buddha's *kāya* were vague and were in a nascent form."<sup>371</sup> And this concept, later on became a part of the doctrine of *Trikāya*, one of the basic doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism (See chapter 3).

We have already seen that the Mahāsaṅghika held a progressive view. They advocated the exalting about superiority status of the Buddha with the lowering status of an *Arhant*. They deprecated the *Arhant* ideal and offered a new interpretation of the path to attain goal. Moreover, they absolutely believe in stories about past lives of the Buddha recorded in *Jātakas*. They hold that the Buddha's embodiment was only *upāya-kauśalya* (skilful means) following the ways of the world in order to save living beings;<sup>372</sup> really, he achieved all the perfections in his previous existences as a

<sup>368</sup> See D. T., Suzuki, *op. cit.*, 2007, p. 286f.

<sup>369</sup> T. 2: 28b12; AN. II, 37; *Samyuktāgama* III, 140 record that: "Although the *Tathagata* was born in the world and abided in the world, he was not defiled by the worldly *dharmas*".

<sup>370</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 18.

<sup>371</sup> N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 1978, p. 82.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Bodhisattva. So, they believe that anybody who follows his practical way can also attain enlightenment similarly. In the *Mahāvastu*, there is a mention of a path that consists of ten steps for a Bodhisattva to follow. Hence, they start to formate and develop the concept of Bodhisattva, which replaces the concept of *Arhant* before. This is a fundamental point of departure from which Mahāyāna developed its Bodhisattva doctrine. This is the second variation to the doctrine between two schools, Mahāsaṅghika and Sthaviravāda.

Another doctrinal variation between the two schools is the theory of *Tathāgatagarbha* (Matrix of the Perfect One). The Mahāsaṅghika schools attached special importance to this theory for the essence of their own doctrine.

As mentioned before, the followers of Mahāsaṅghika schools were faithful and absolutely believed in whatever was said by the Buddha, or more precisely, whatever was taught in the *Nikāya*. Therefore, their doctrine was based more on faith than on reason. Their faith in Buddhism was the confidence in the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha* and it was considered as the determination to advance towards perfection. They believed in the practical way of the Buddha, i.e. the Bodhisattva path. They think that the Buddha spent innumerable lives for practice of Bodhisattva path, and then attained perfect enlightenment (Buddhahood). If we follow his practical way, we can also attain enlightenment similarly. Hence, they opine that everyone is capable to attain perfect enlightenment, due to have ready nature of a Buddha inside. Based on this idea, the Mahāsaṅghikas bring out theory of *Tathāgatagarbha*,<sup>373</sup> a new concept that far differs from Sthaviravādin doctrine. The term '*Tathāgatagarbha*' implies the meaning that the nature of a Buddha potential resides within all living beings.<sup>374</sup> Later

<sup>373</sup> The explaining of theory of *Tathāgatagarbha*, see: the chapter third (section 3) of this thesis.

<sup>374</sup> See Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 114.

on, the Mahāyāna holds on this theory of the Mahāsaṅghika and states that “all living beings have ready nature of a Buddha,” or “all living beings have Buddha nature.” This theory became the doctrine of Buddha nature, one of the important doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Thus, the new doctrines were openly introduced in Mahāsaṅghika schools as a movement to fight against the reservations of orthodox doctrine of Early Buddhism. The appearance of these new doctrines was regarded as one of the motivations for the Mahāyāna movement, and it was the very ground for the rise of Mahāyāna doctrine later on. A. K. Anand also asserts that the Mahāyānists incorporated most of the views of the Mahāsaṅghika in their teachings and developed them further.<sup>375</sup> Bibhuti Baruah also opines thus “if we compare the Mahāsaṅghika doctrines with those of the Mahāyāna a bit carefully, we see that both sets of doctrines are closely connected with each other.”<sup>376</sup> Consequently, the Mahāyāna movement was naturally compelled to emphasize the importance of new characteristics and opposite towards Theravāda or Nikāya Buddhism in accordance with progressive and liberal-mind. Therefore, when Mahāyāna Buddhism emerged, they claimed their doctrine to be superior in comparison with that of Theravāda, but both are in favour of the final goal, i.e., the realization to attain to enlightenment.

We now see that, between Theravāda Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism there are differences in their concepts of doctrine, but the differences are slight and not appreciable. The Mahāyāna doctrine was a natural outgrowth of Early Buddhist doctrine, so the differences between them certainly do not lie in the nature, in the meaning, in the functions, or in the objects of doctrine, but in the modes of explaining such qualities and the objects of doctrine. Today, many Buddhists, especially Westerners, tend to

<sup>375</sup> See A. Kumar, Anand, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 94.

<sup>376</sup> See Baruah, Bibhuti, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 78.

see both Theravāda and Mahāyāna approaches as not being contradictory or in opposition but rather as complimentary to each other. Mahāyāna is often seen as an expansion or commentary on the Theravādin teachings.

#### 4.2.3. Skill in Means (*Upāya-kauśalya*)

The third motivation for the Mahāyāna movement is *upāya-kauśalya* (skill in means). The word *upāya-kauśalya* consists of two parts, *upāya* (means) and *kauśalya* (skill), both of which come strictly together for any gainfully applicable functions of Buddhism. *Upāya-kauśalya* occupies a forceful position in Mahāyāna thought so that many Buddhist scholars contend that the concept of *upāya* or *upāya-kauśalya* would be just the Mahāyānists' initiative.<sup>377</sup> It is convinced that the very spirit of *upāya-kauśalya* has paved the way for the Mahāyānists freely to have done and do the best for Buddhist intention.

Most of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* tend to show that the Buddha's words and teachings are infinite and equivalent to all various languages of all sentient beings. Many examples in various *sūtras* probably intend to give the readers such a view. With the viewpoint unstopping at all languages, one could not cling to some events of certain canonical texts to determine the origin and motivation of Mahāyāna Buddhism. To get a proper proposition of the Mahāyāna existence, it is necessary to perceive the key position of Mahāyāna thought which is illustrated through the simile of 'the finger that indicates the moon,' saying: "The teachings of the *sūtras* are like the finger that points to the moon."<sup>378</sup> Consequently, the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, including

<sup>377</sup> That the term *upāya-kauśalya* appeared earliest as a theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism can be found in the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra* whose composition may date from the first century B.C. (cf. in MN. Tatz 1994, p. 1), and in *The Lotus Sūtra*, whose composition "dates from before the second century C.E.," in which the earliest part is the chapter on "Skill in Means" (cf. in P. Groner 1998, p. 283).

<sup>378</sup> In the *Yuanjue jing* (*The Sūtra of Complete Enlightenment*), tr. & commented by Ch'an Master Sheng-yen (Shambhala 1999) as *Complete Enlightenment*, p. 38. This simile also appears in *The*

the ones promoting the laity, are typically involved in the two realities, viz. visible things and the ultimate Truth (or supreme enlightenment).

In fact, Buddhism has given rise to many texts that are not meant to upset its readers, but to help them respect all relative truths and realize the real truth behind all readings. Many Mahāyāna scholars comment that languages and rituals are obstacles to the Truth. Mahāyāna presents plenty of various *sūtras* with innumerable different aspects of spiritual training. Furthermore, it is also important to note that Mahāyāna doctrines and its movements emerged in needs of religious practices that were suitable to both social circumstances and people's abilities. It appears that Mahāyāna does not want to be called "Developed Buddhism" in contrast to "Original Buddhism" because its doctrine and thought are believed to convey the Buddha's unique intention, namely, liberation for an individual and others from suffering. Some scholars opine that Mahāyāna canons accurately reveal the thought that the Buddha really wanted to express. While the Pāli canons conserve genuinely the Buddha's words, the Mahāyāna *sūtras* hold his deep thought that was realized out of his words. As the Truth which the Buddha sought to show for his disciples is beyond words and languages, the Mahāyāna literature obviously tries to reveal it.

However, what seems puzzling is that Mahāyāna on one hand goes beyond Early Buddhism, but on the other it is not implicated in heretical thought. It is a matter of surprise for me to find that there is nothing in Buddhism other than the "thought of skill in means" (*upāya-kauśalya*), the unique mission of which is for the sake of all living beings. Corless suggests "Buddhist teaching is called skillful means or skill in means. That is, the teaching is a tool, and it must be applied appropriately."<sup>379</sup> The *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* says: "The Buddhas benevolently rescue all living beings,

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*Lankavatara Sutra*, translated by D.T., Suzuki, SMC Publishing Inc. Taipei, 1991, pp. 168-9, and in *The Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, tr. by Charles Luk, 2001, p. 31.

<sup>379</sup> Roger J. Corless, *The Vision of Buddhism*, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1989, p. 217.

compassionately liberate all living beings, their great benevolence and compassion universally aiding all: however, great benevolence and great compassion rest on great skill in means.<sup>380</sup>

The establishment of Mahāyāna was absolutely based on the thought of *upāya-kauśalya*, but was not a heresy. It can be said that the thought of *upāya-kauśalya* was introduced by the early Mahāyānists and this thought itself maintained the Buddha's teaching intact. Through the *upāya-kauśalya*, Buddhist texts included all kinds of Buddhist practice that may be carried out accurately in any case. Therefore, *upāya-kauśalya* is the joint point which is not only considered as the thread linking all Buddhist schools of thought, but also plays a very important role in understanding and applying the Buddha's teachings.

The *upāya-kauśalya* tends to guide the Mahāyānists to motivations for creating possible practices, which might be composed in the form of a *sūtra*, including the Bodhisattva path, the religious movements for lay Buddhists, worship of the *stūpas*, and so on. The term Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) conveys that it is able to take more and more sentient beings out of suffering. The Mahāyāna teaching is of the universal quality and it focuses mainly on religious practices for the mass of people through various functions or movements.<sup>381</sup> Numerous ways of approaching people as such

<sup>380</sup> *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, Cleary, Thomas, 1993, Vol. II, p. 290.

<sup>381</sup> We can find such faith from the *Avataṃsakasūtra* as follows:

“Faith is the basis of the Path, the mother of virtues,  
Nourishing and growing all good ways,  
Cutting away the net of doubt, freeing from the torrent of passion,  
Revealing the unsurpassed road of ultimate peace” (*Avataṃsakasūtra*, Cleary, Thomas, 1985, Vol. I, p. 331).

As a result, in the same text, the worship of images of the Buddhas is proposed as the first stage of the Path to the Enlightenment, about which the story of the retribution is given, “At that juncture, I (Prashantarutasagaravati) was the daughter (of the king and queen) who was directed by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra to repair a ruined image of the Buddha on a lotus. That became a determining factor for me towards the supreme perfect enlightenment. At that time I originally aroused the determination for enlightenment” (T. 10: 753b 8-11; cf. in Cleary, Thomas, 1985, Vol. III, p. 201).

are considered skilful means (*upāya-kauśalya*). Michael Pye rightly observes “Buddhism taking a form of skilful means, and nothing else.”<sup>382</sup> In this view, unnecessary are all the arguments mentioned above in favour of the emergence of Mahāyāna. There are no words of the canonical texts other than communications, even if all their focus is to attempt at illuminating the ultimate Truth whose innermost sense could be hardly exposed on the surface of words. Consequently, it is reasonable to say that the history of Mahāyāna is the process of evolution and development on the *upāya-kauśalya*, for nothing can be exhaustively spoken. As said by the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* that the “Buddha turns the wheel of teaching without verbal explanation, because of knowing that all things are inexpressible.”<sup>383</sup>

The Mahāyānists may primarily have been concerned with ontology and held the principles of existence for the purpose of a comprehensive theory of religious practice which is applicable to the mass of people. Therefore, the simplification of miscellaneous teachings as seen in the Nikāyas can be recognized through the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. While the Pāli Nikāyas are known as the collections of the Buddha’s words taught during his forty-five-year missionary career, the Mahāyāna *sūtras* are a system of thoughts and religious practices. The Mahāyāna brings out criticism of the Theravāda doctrine and says that the true *Dharma* of the Buddha, in reality, is beyond words. It contends that the Buddhas expounded no doctrines and they are merely stated out of the human mind. In doing so, a new notion for this thought might have come to exist, i.e., the *upāya-kauśalya*. Therefore, the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism is only an *upāya* of communication for the sake of all living beings. In other words, the *upāya-kauśalya* is regarded as one of the motivations for the Mahāyāna movement.

<sup>382</sup> Michael, Pye, *Skilful Means: A Concept in Mahāyāna Buddhism*, (1978) London and New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 127.

<sup>383</sup> T. 10: 275c19-20; see Cleary, Thomas, 1993, Vol. II, p. 324.

#### 4.2.4. Social Factors

In the process of the Mahāyāna movement, besides internal factors, it was also influenced by external factors such as, polity, economy and religion of contemporary Indian society.

As mentioned in the second chapter, after the Buddha's time, India was compounded with considerable forces of polity, economy as well as religion, especially from the Mauryan dynasty (the 4<sup>th</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) to Kuśāṇa period (the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE). It can be said that, this was the time that India enjoyed an era of social harmony as well as religious transformation, and had great influences on the spread and development of Buddhism in India and abroad.

According to the survey of some scholars, Buddhism had significant changes during the reign of Aśoka in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Lal Mani Joshi says that “Buddhism now emerged as a distinct religion with great potentialities for growth and expansion; while the imperial patronage had a permanent influence on the *Saṅgha* life; the latter Buddhism began to grow as an institution of faith and culture; the laity also came to play an important part in the life of the doctrine and its development.”<sup>384</sup> Peter Harvey also admitted that under the reign of Aśoka, Buddhism developed and reached its apex and became a ‘world religion.’<sup>385</sup>

Further, in this period, India enjoyed the social harmony with a stable political system and developed economy. The social leader was a Buddhist king and he used *Dharma* to rule his subjects, so the mass of his people followed Buddhism. Buddhism, therefore, was received with so much favors and patronage from kings, royal families and rich Buddhist merchants. This caused Buddhism to develop and underwent some new movements. V. P.

<sup>384</sup> See: Lal Mani, Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhistis Culture of India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977, p. 2.

<sup>385</sup> See: Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 75.

Varma also asserts the same thing thus: “A religious movement can be supported by the economic leaders. A good financial basis does constitute a dominant source of strength to any religious movement.”<sup>386</sup> And this also is one of the reasons why Buddhism was hated by Brahmanism. This occurred because, while Brahmanism was thoroughly integrated into Indian society as a whole, Buddhism showed an increasing tendency to withdraw and isolate Brahmanism from the general populace<sup>387</sup> through Aśoka’s policies of discontinuing caste and sacrificial ritualism by a meaningless slaughter of large number of animals.<sup>388</sup>

As mentioned before that, though in this period Buddhism developed and spread widely, nevertheless, the Buddhist *Saṅgha* became contaminated. The monastic rules were not closely observed, religious practice was neglected and disputes arose in the *Saṅgha*. Therefore, Buddhism was criticized and attacked by the debates with Brahmanical rivals and other heretics.<sup>389</sup> Theravāda (orthodox) philosophical system, therefore, required to clarify the doctrinal concepts and define them in clear-cut theoretical terms. A system of the relations between the *dharma*s was classified and was combined in the *Abhidharma-piṭaka*. It seems that the Buddhist scholars in that period attached special importance to knowledge and thoughts of all Buddhist schools, but did not pay any heed to emotional elements such as faith and devotion. Consequently, the devoted laity initiated the *stūpa* worship in order to make a refuge for spiritual life. And this initiation became one of motivations for the Mahāyāna movement.

After the death of Aśoka, Buddhism underwent a period of persecution under the rule of Puśyamitra, a Brahmana king of Śuṅga dynasty. Brahmanism began to regain power and fruition in this period due

<sup>386</sup> V. P., Varma, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 337.

<sup>387</sup> See: Baruah, Bibhuti, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 66.

<sup>388</sup> See: A. Kumar, Anand, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 83.

<sup>389</sup> V. P., Varma, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 432.

to the support of king Puśyamitra. Many historians assert that the king Puśyamitra did much harm to Buddhism. He declared awards for the murder of a Buddhist monk when he reached Sialkot after the defeat of Menander; He razed *stūpas* and *vihāras* which built by Aśoka; He put the price of 100 *dinaras* for the head of a Buddhist monk, etc.<sup>390</sup> Consequently, Buddhism became weak in the Central-India. But, prominent monks in the Central-India partly went to abroad to spread the Buddha's teaching. That is the reason why outside the Central-India Buddhism is still flourishing. One may find evidences of this from the sculptures of Buddhist schools, huge *stūpas* at Sañci, Amarāvati, Bodhgaya, Sarnath and other places in the Śuṅga period (185 – 75 BCE).<sup>391</sup>

After this period, India underwent repeated invasions by foreigners from the north-west, such as, the Bactrian Greeks; the Sakas (in 90 BCE); then the appearance of king Kharavela in the Kalinga's dynasty in south-east of India (around the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). These foreigners crossed the Hindukush and took possession of Kabul and north-western India. They enshrined Buddha's relics and erected sanctuaries. N. Dutt admits that two *kharoṣṭhi* inscriptions incised at the instance of the Greek chiefs have been discovered at Swat and Taxilā, they show that Mahāyāna Buddhism had a firm footing in North-western India and was appreciated by the foreign rulers.<sup>392</sup> It can be said that the invasions of the foreigners was one of the influential elements for the Mahāyāna movement.

Until Kuśāṇa period, Buddhism continued to flourish again by the patronage of the Buddhist king, Kaniṣka. N. Dutt remarks that: "In the reign of Kaniṣka, Buddhism once more came to the forefront of Indian religions

<sup>390</sup> The *Divyāvadāna*, See: A. L., Thakur (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1974, p. 845; & A. Kumar, Anand, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 96.

<sup>391</sup> See: A. Kumar, Anand, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 77; & Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 56; & *Buddhism in the Śuṅga period* by K. G. Goswami, See: M. P., Mittal (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2002, pp. 301-12.

<sup>392</sup> N., Dutt, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 3.

and recovered its lost popularity.”<sup>393</sup> And this period witnessed the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as the making of images of the Buddha with sharp features by the Indo-Greek sculptors.<sup>394</sup>

It can be said that the historical background of the Mahāyāna movement was a political disturbance and turmoil in the northern India. Due to the result of this disturbance, Buddhism fell into a considerable period of deprivation of much of its supports or subjected to outright persecution. During this period, so to say, the trend toward disunity continued, and Buddhism broke apart into eighteen or twenty different sects, which wrangled continuously with one another. I also agree with Andrew Skilton’s view that says: “It seems likely that the insecurity and uncertainty of this period of polity may have contributed to the emergence of the new religious form that was characterised as the Mahāyāna.”<sup>395</sup> A. K. Anand says that about the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Buddhism underwent a distinct change towards Mahāyāna. The conceptions of Maitreya, the future Buddha, and of Amitabha, the eternal Buddha, were engrafted on the existing form of the religion, converting it gradually to a devotional one.<sup>396</sup>

In short, the flourishing or decline of any organization is based on internal factors. Therefore, social factors, especially the economic development, the invasions by foreigners and political disturbance were regarded as one of the motivations that contributed for the Mahāyāna movement. In fact, internal factors, here are the sowers of dissension and bringing about disruption within the Buddhist *Saṅgha*. This is certainly true of groups founded upon philosophical principles for internal factionalism and their egoism. This occurs because the members of two groups are so engrossed in the struggle to maintain dominance and combat rival factions

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<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>395</sup> See: Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 95.

<sup>396</sup> A. Kumar, Anand, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 94.

that they forget ideological principles. And as a result, they cease to function effectively even within the group and receive proper dissemination outside. It is deplorable to see Buddhism fall victim to sectarianism resulting from the egoism of its practitioners.<sup>397</sup>

### 4.3. The Sources and the Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism

#### 4.3.1. The Role of the Laity in the Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism

In the process of the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, besides motivations as mentioned above, the role of the laity<sup>398</sup> is very important. Naturally, I admit the existence of the clergy and eminent philosophers such as Ashvaghosha, Nāgārjuna who had great contributions towards the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. But I think the laity's role should be given priority. Because the activities of the laity are one of causes that make Mahāyāna emerge and survive in the early time. In this connection, Hirakawa rightly observes that:<sup>399</sup>

Early Mahāyāna Buddhism did not depend upon the monastic Orders of Nikāya Buddhism to survive. It stressed on the origins of the movement and the role of the lay Bodhisattva in its texts....<sup>400</sup> The precepts specifically for the monastic Bodhisattva seem to have not existed in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the older Mahāyāna texts the precepts mentioned are laity's precepts.

This shows that in Early Mahāyāna the lay Bodhisattva was to play an important role. In Mahāyāna tradition, there are two types of Bodhisattvas, lay and monastic Bodhisattva. The monastic Bodhisattva (*pravrajita*

<sup>397</sup> See: Baruah, Bibhuti, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 67.

<sup>398</sup> The laity or "laypeople" is a general term that refers to Buddhists (*Upāsakā* and *Upāsikā*) who live in a great family in Buddhism and practise Buddhism at home.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3, 308.

<sup>400</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, pp. 259, 310.

*Bodhisattva*) was the clergy who practiced religious austerities and lived a celibate life. The lay Bodhisattva (*grhastha Bodhisattva*) was the laity who followed Buddhism, but did not live in the monasteries. He could practise Buddhism at home and may get married. He could observe his own precepts and had obligations towards the clergy.

Some people hold that the origin of Mahāyāna can be traced to the revolt of the laity. One of such thinkers is the late Etienne Lamotte. In one of his last articles, Etienne Lamotte summed up this view thus:<sup>401</sup>

During the first five centuries of its history, Buddhism progressed considerably. Nevertheless, it had to face both external and internal difficulties because of the divergent tendencies which formed the heart of the community. Some monks questioned the authenticity of the early scriptures and claimed to add new texts to them; others leaned towards a more lax interpretation of the rules governing their life; the scholastic treatises, continuously increasing in number, became more and more discrepant; finally, and above all the laity, considering the monks' privileges to be excessive, tried to win equal religious rights for themselves.

It shows that the laity was instrumental in the formation of Mahāyāna. This view has often been asserted by Japanese scholars.<sup>402</sup> An important case and widely accepted for considerable influence of the laity to the rise of Mahāyāna was published in an article by Akira Hirakawa (1963). Hirakawa's main point appears that, Mahāyāna grew up among an identifiable order of Bodhisattvas; composed of lay and monastic members of equal status; centred on the *stūpas*, relic mounds, and relic shrine worship. The *stūpas* were administered by the laity, and the relic mounds were as eventually identified with the Buddha himself. These became the

<sup>401</sup> Bechert and Gombrich, 1984, p. 90.

<sup>402</sup> Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 95.

Buddha-cult and the importance of the Buddha in the Mahāyāna.<sup>403</sup> According to Hirakawa, these *stūpas* were quite separate and in certain rivalry with the monastic orders of the monks. Thus we find the development of a new religious form centred on Bodhisattvas and Buddha, showing some hostilities to the conduct and aspirations of the monasteries, particularly in respect to the definitely inferior status given to the laity in monastic Buddhism.

Moreover, a number of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras* stressed the importance of the laity. In the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, the layman Vimalakīrti is portrayed as an advanced Bodhisattva with a developed knowledge of philosophy, admonishing and correcting a number of the monastic leaders who were the Buddha's disciples. In another *sūtra*, the *Bhadramāyākāravākyākaraṇa-sūtra*, it is said that Bodhisattvas are people who truly renounced, not those (like monk) who merely renounce the household life. While another *sūtra* teaches that Bodhisattvas of correct understanding have no need to renounce the worldly life and become monks.<sup>404</sup> In addition, almost all Mahāyāna texts mention on lay-devotees in the new trend of progressive thought, and the relative roles between the monastic and lay practitioner. This led some ideas to believe that the emergence of Mahāyāna originated from the lay movement. Andrew Skilton rightly says that "though there were the movement evident among the early schools, the new movement put less stress upon membership of the monastic community. This is suggested by the frequency with lay people, sometimes women, is shown with high attainments, and reaches its apogee."<sup>405</sup> It seems that the spiritual attainment is not defined or restricted to formal positions and roles within the monastic *Śaṅgha*. However, modern scholars have

<sup>403</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 20.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>405</sup> Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 94-5.

shown that although the new texts are more open to lay people, they were still composed by monks. For example, although the new texts commend the actions of wise lay Bodhisattvas, they are still being urged to ordain and leave the lay life behind.<sup>406</sup> Since, they conclude that, Mahāyāna was not only started by laymen, but the innovation in Mahāyāna is always associated with monks.<sup>407</sup>

Actually, when progressive tendency was applied to Nikāya Saṅgha, their attitudes became more liberal toward monastic tradition. Their faiths began to move following altruistic aspect. This movement primarily involved lay-devotees (*Upāsakā* and *Upāsikā*) of the Buddhist community. This allowed the laity to have a greater voice with regard to the concept of Buddhism. For religiosity, the laity seeks to shelter in the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha*. It was an act of faith which was the major constituent of the attitude called *bhakti* (devotion).<sup>408</sup> This is the reason why the *stūpa* worship became popular among the laity at that time.

The conservative schools put emphasis upon *Arhatship*. They focus on the *Dharma*, emphasize on monasticism and rigid adherence to the precepts. They hold that enlightenment was only for the clergy (*Saṅgha*), and only the clergy are the people who are capable to attain *nirvāṇa*, because they can attain the fourth fruition i.e. the Holy One (s. *Arahat*), whereas the laity only attain the third fruitions i.e. the Non-Returner (s. *Anagamin*). So the duty of laity is to support the clergy in the hope of a more favorable rebirth.<sup>409</sup>

<sup>406</sup> See: Paul Harrison, "Searching for the Origins of the Mahāyāna," *Eastern Buddhist*, 1995, pp. 48-69.

<sup>407</sup> See: Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 95-6.

<sup>408</sup> B. G., Gokhale, "Bhakti in Early Buddhism." in *Tradition and Modernity in Bhakti Movements*, Jayant Lele (ed.), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981, p. 16.

<sup>409</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 270.

On the contrary, the progressive schools place emphasis upon Buddhahood. They hold that the goal of a Buddhist is not to become an *Arhat*, but a *Boddhisattva* who attains enlightenment but refuses to take the final step to *niṣvāna*, choosing instead to be reborn again to help others achieve enlightenment. And the enlightenment achieved by the Buddha was regarded as identical to that of his disciples (including the clergy and the laity). Because they believe that enlightenment is possible for anyone to attain. Therefore, they encourage the laity along with clergy to become Bodhisattvas without distinguishing between man and women. It was evidenced clearly that, in the Buddha's time, there were women (including nuns and lay-women) who attained enlightenment as the men.<sup>410</sup>

Moreover, the progressive schools believe that before the Buddha achieved enlightenment he spent innumerable lives to practise the acts of Bodhisattva. He was always a Bodhisattva, and was often a lay person, or sometimes even an animal, always out of compassion and acting to develop the path to attain supreme Buddhahood. This is recorded in *Jātaka* of the KN. Such Buddhahood became supreme over *Arhatship*. Therefore, attaining Buddhahood and becoming a *Boddhisattva* became the new religious goal which was advocated for all Buddhist practitioners.<sup>411</sup>

Based on this view, the status of the laity was raised in Nikāya Buddhism. They had freedom to follow their faith. They were taken care and allowed to satisfy spiritual needs by the clergy. They were taught higher precepts which *Upāsakā* and *Upāsikā* had received before. But, on the contrary, they also had duties towards the clergy; they were the chief supporter of wealth and economy towards the clergy's life. Due to of this reciprocal support, a new form of Buddhism came into existence. Andrew

<sup>410</sup> This evidence is recoded in the *Therīgāthā* of the KN.

<sup>411</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 25.

Skilton puts forth his view in this regard thus: “By this time (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) Buddhism had become a rather more static phenomenon than the early community at the time of the Buddha and was patronized by kings, especially foreign invaders who wished to find support against the Brahmanical orthodoxy of Indian society.”<sup>412</sup> The growth of monastic life and its increasing complexity led to greater separation between the life of the clergy and the laity. Since, the clergy would have already been protected by the precepts with their respective ordination. Hirakawa also asserts that, Mahāyānists, specifically monastic Bodhisattvas, formed their own orders, which were organised in a fashion similar to that of the orders of Nikāya Buddhism.<sup>413</sup> This shows that, probably these precepts became the precepts of monastic Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism later on.

Moreover, it is possible that the appearance of the laity in such positive light in the new *sūtras* (not belong to *Tripiṭaka*) as an implicit criticism of the progressive thought towards the conservative thought in Nikāya Buddhism. The transformation of the laity may also have been intended as metaphors for the potency of spiritual ideals that promoted in the new scriptures. With that idea, the laity was regarded as the potential Bodhisattvas, and teachings for lay Bodhisattvas played a prominent role in the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*; whereas the monastic Bodhisattva assumed prominent positions until Mahāyāna developed into a clearly school. In this matter Andrew Skilton asserts:<sup>414</sup>

Though the earliest passages of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtras* lack certain key of the Mahāyāna terms, and those of the *Vajracchedikā* and the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* do not mention the Bodhisattva ideal, but these earliest texts indicate three areas

<sup>412</sup> See: Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 96.

<sup>413</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 310.

<sup>414</sup> Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, pp. 93-4.

which were characteristic concerns of the early Mahāyānists, i.e., the doctrinal position and the practices of the *Abhidharma* schools; the changing status of the Buddha; and the relevance of laity status to spiritual attainment, each of these being responses to the trends of development evident among the early schools.

Though there is not much evident to say that the emergence of Mahāyāna was an attempt by the laity to obtain equal status with the clergy, nevertheless we can say that, in its growth, Mahāyāna had a form of religiosity that prepared to give validity and doctrinal orthodoxy to religious practices and concerns, such as, *stūpa* worship and devotion. The establishment of *stūpas* and the accumulation of property around them enabled groups of religious specialists to live near the *stūpas*. These people formed orders and began developing doctrines that concern to the Buddha's powers for salvation. Many Mahāyāna texts indicated the central role of these orders in the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In some other Mahāyāna texts, a Bodhisattva group (*Bodhisattvagaṇa*) is mentioned as existing separately from the order of monks of the Nikāya Buddhism. The *Bodhisattvagaṇa* probably had its origins in the groups of people who practiced at *stūpas*.<sup>415</sup> This shows that, the transformation of the laity in Nikāya Buddhism is one of the causes to create new canons and a new religious form which was named Mahāyāna. Paul Williams holds the view that “these innovations are seen among inferiors, no concern with the monks and this growing respectability already existed in the pre-Mahāyāna tradition.”<sup>416</sup>

Thus the new religious form is more progressive than Nikāya Buddhism, which not only believes in the practical superiority of new doctrines, but also believes in spiritual capability of the laity, and even

<sup>415</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 274.

<sup>416</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 1989, pp. 24-5.

females can be spiritually equal like monks, simply by following the Bodhisattva path. It seems that, this innovation, especially the role of the laity in Nikāya Buddhism, had immensely contributed to the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

#### **4.3.2. Nikāya Buddhism and the Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism**

As mentioned before, Nikāya Buddhism was often referred to all Buddhist schools after the initial schism at the Second Council at Vaiśālī. In the formation of Mahāyāna, Nikāya Buddhism also had notable contributions. I undoubtedly support earlier scholars's findings in this regard that say that, the opinions and conceptions which were presented in Nikāya Buddhism made significant contributions to the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism. These opinions were also served as a base for different scriptures as well as doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism to emerge later on.

Many modern scholars have maintained that Mahāyāna developed from Mahāsaṅghika School. However, Mahāsaṅghika still continued to exist long after Mahāyāna arose. Therefore, the emergence of Mahāyāna cannot be explained simply as the transformation of Mahāsaṅghikas, but the Mahāyāna doctrines and practices actually influenced Mahāsaṅghika and early schools of Early Buddhism. N. Dutt finds some Mahāyāna traces in regard to the conception of Bodhisattva, the practice of *Pāramitā* and the goal of Buddhahood in the doctrines of the Mahāsaṅghikas, Sarvāstivādins, and their offshoots. In fact, besides similarities between Mahāsaṅghika doctrines and Mahāyāna doctrines (as discussed in chapter 3), the teachings of the Sarvāstivādin, Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka, and Theravāda School were also incorporated into Mahāyāna Buddhism. Hirakawa holds that the relation between Nikāya Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism is clearly not a simple one. Beside the texts of the Sarvāstivāda School, such as, the

*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (attributed to Nāgārjuna) and the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, Mahāyāna literature also adopted the twelve fold classification of the Buddhist scriptures which were used by the Sarvāstivāda, Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka School.<sup>417</sup> Thus it is apparent that authors of Mahāyāna scriptures used to study Hīnayāna doctrines, or probably they were former members of the schools of Nikāya Buddhism.

For example, Vasumitra was a member of Sarvāstivāda School. He seems to be an unbiased scholar. He accurately collected and summarized the teachings of other schools. He summarized Mahāsaṅghika doctrines in his work, *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* (T. 2031)<sup>418</sup>, and grouped together the doctrines of four schools (the Mahāsaṅghika, Lokottaravādin, Ekavyavahārika, and Kaukuṭika) of Mahāsaṅghika lineage and noted that the four schools taught that “the Buddhas, the World-honored Ones, are all supermundane. All the Tathāgatas are without impure *dharma*.”<sup>419</sup> This opinion differs from that of Sarvāstivāda School, but is close to Mahāyāna teachings. The four schools also upheld the doctrine that “The Buddha can expound all the teachings with a single utterance”<sup>420</sup>. And this doctrine was also referred to in a well-known passage in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra* of Mahāyāna scriptures.

Vasumitra also noted that these schools uphold the opinion that “the *rūpa-kāya* (form-body) of the Tathāgata is limitless. The divine power of the Tathāgata is also limitless. The lifetimes of the Buddha are limitless. The Buddha never tires to teach the sentient beings and also to awaken pure faith

<sup>417</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 260.

<sup>418</sup> According to Hirakawa, for *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*, see Higata and Kimura, *Ketsujūshi Bunpashī kō*, A Japanese translation of the Tibetan version of the text can be found in Teramoto, *Chibettogo bunpō*.

<sup>419</sup> T. 49: 15b.

<sup>420</sup> *Loc. cit.*

within them.”<sup>421</sup> These teachings are close to Mahāyāna ideas about the *Sam̐bhogakāya* (Body of bliss) of the Buddha and can be used as an evidence of the close relationship of these schools with Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Besides, Vasumitra also described the doctrines concerning Bodhisattvas maintained by the schools of the Mahāsaṅghika lineage, “no Bodhisattvas have any thoughts of greed, anger, or doing harm to others. In order to benefit sentient beings, Bodhisattvas are born into inferior states through their own wishes.”<sup>422</sup> The opinion that Bodhisattva can consciously choose where they will be born is similar to Mahāyāna teachings but differs significantly from the Sarvāstivādin opinion that birth is determined only by *karma*.<sup>423</sup> Though the early schools of Buddhism recognize the Bodhisattva ideal, they taught that it is a heroic path for only the very few. Therefore, it is better to follow the shorter path to *Arhatship* and *Nirvāṇa*, rather than the long and arduous path to attain Buddhahood. But, in the course of time, Buddhist literature tended to exalt the status of the Buddha. It seems that, there was an interest in the *Saṅgha* to explore the opinion of the Bodhisattva.

Again, the Mahāsaṅghika maintained that “the original nature of the mind is pure, it becomes impure when it is affected by adventitious defiliments.”<sup>424</sup> This teaching is important in Mahāyāna Buddhism. It was also maintained by other groups within Nikāya Buddhism and advocated by the discriminators and appeared in the Pāli *suttas*. Although this doctrine was not unique to the Mahāsaṅghika School, Mahāsaṅghika’s views of the Buddha were certainly close to those found in Mahāyāna Buddhism and provide evidence of a deep tie between the thought of the two groups.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> T. 49: 15b-c.

<sup>422</sup> T. 49: 15c.

<sup>423</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 262.

<sup>424</sup> T. 49: 15c.

<sup>425</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 262.

The second source that has made significant contributions to the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism is the biographical literature of the Buddha. This literature composed by laymen who, perhaps, belonged to “the vehicle that praised the Buddha.” Though the literature such as the *Jātakas*, *Avadanas* and other texts describing the life of Buddha originated from Nikāya Buddhism, they developed in ways that transcended the existing sectarian lines and contributed to the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

One of the extant biographies of the Buddha is the *Mahāvastu* produced by Lokottaravādin, a branch of Mahāsaṅghika School. The *Mahāvastu*<sup>426</sup> describes ten stages that a future Buddha would pass through on his way to attain Buddhahood. Mahāyāna texts such as the *Shih-ti-ching* (T. 287, *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*) contain similar teachings on the ten stages that have often been cited as an evidence indicating that Mahāyāna Buddhism arose from Mahāsaṅghika School. However, Hirakawa observes that, the *Mahāvastu* and similar literature concerning the Buddha’s life transcended sectarian lines. He writes:

To stress the importance of faith in the Buddha, poets (such as Aśvagoṣa, Mātṛceta) fervently praised him and used literary expressions that transcended sectarian doctrinal considerations. Buddhist poets wrote their works with purposes different from those of scholars who were concerned with doctrinal issues. For example, the term “vehicle of those who praise the Buddha” appears in Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (T.9:9c); but a corresponding term does not appear in the Sanskrit versions of the *sūtra*; Or at the end of the *Fo-pen-hsing-chi-ching* (T. 190, *Abhiṇiṣkramaṇasūtra*), a text of Dharmaguptaka School, it is noted that the very same biography is called the *Ta-shih* (*Mahāvastu*) by the Mahāsaṅghika

<sup>426</sup> The *Mahāvastu* was published by É. Senart from 1882 to 1897. J. J. Jones published an English translation from 1949 to 1956. Since 1963, R. Basak has issued three volumes of the text (*Mahāvastu Avadāna*). For further information about research, publications, and translations of this work, see: Yamada, *Bongo Butten no shobunken*, p. 66.

School and various other names by the Sarvāstivādin, Kāśyapīya and Mahīśāsaka school, thus indicating that these schools shared a common biography of the Buddha.<sup>427</sup>

Biographies of the Buddha probably developed out of *vinaya* literature. In the beginning of the *Mahāvastu* there is a statement that the *Mahāvastu* was originally included in the Lokottaravādin *vinaya*. However, the title of the biography, *Mahāvastu*, corresponds to the first chapter (*Mahākhandhaka*) of the *Mahāvagga* portion of the Pāli Vinaya. The terms ‘*vastu*,’ ‘*vagga*’ and ‘*khandhaka*’ all were used with the meaning of ‘chapter’ or ‘division.’ Moreover, a biography of the Buddha is found at the beginning of the Pāli *Mahākhandhaka*. E. Windish has demonstrated that, in fact, parts of the *Mahāvastu* correspond to sections of the *Mahākhandhaka*. As the biography of the Buddha expanded, it was separated from the *vinaya* and assumed the form of the *Mahāvastu*. This indicates that the biography’s origins were in the *vinaya*.<sup>428</sup>

The biographies also include a number of similar events. The first is the prediction by Dīpankara Buddha that, the future Śākyamuni would, in fact, be successful in his quest for Buddhahood. The stories begin by noting that the future Śākyamuni Buddha was a young Brahman at that time. According to some versions, the young man was watching Dīpankara Buddha approach in a religious procession when he realized that a mud puddle lay in Dīpankara’s path. The young man quickly unfastened his long hair and spread it over the mud puddle, so that Dīpankara’s feet would not be soiled. Dīpankara then predicted that the young man would eventually attain enlightenment, and the future Śākyamuni responded by vowing that he

<sup>427</sup> T. 3:932a, q.v. Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 263.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.

indeed would attain it. Apparently, such stories of Dīpankara's prediction were widely prevalent among the biographers of the Buddha.

Prediction of Buddhahood is an important element in Mahāyāna thought. Dīpankara's prediction of Śākyamuni's Buddhahood is mentioned often in Mahāyāna scriptures. Eventually, questions were asked about the religious practices the future Śākyamuni Buddha had performed before he had received Dīpankara's prediction. According to these scriptures, after he received Dīpankara's prediction, the future Buddha practised the six *pāramitās*. Expositions of the six *pāramitās* were first developed by the authors of biographies of the Buddha to characterize the special practices of a future Buddha. The authors of the biographies of the Buddha thus devised the six *pāramitās* to describe the unique practices that would lead to Buddhahood. And this list of six *pāramitās* was incorporated into Mahāyāna scriptures.

These thinkers were also concerned with the stages of practice through which a Bodhisattva passed on his way to Buddhahood. In some biographies, the following fixed phrase appears: "He had attained the tenth stage; only one more life remained before he would attain Buddhahood; He was nearing omniscience."<sup>429</sup> The ten stages are explained in detail only in the *Mahāvastu*. However, other biographies often contain the phrase "he had attained the tenth stage," though these biographies do not contain detailed explanations of the ten stages. The authors thus widely believed that a Bodhisattva passed through ten stages and finally reached a position from which he would be reborn and attain Buddhahood in his next life. These doctrines concern the ten stages that were later utilized in Mahāyāna scriptures.

Additional important points concerning biographies of the Buddha could be raised, but the above discussion should demonstrate the special

<sup>429</sup> See: Kuo-ch'u hsien-tsai yin-kuo ching, T. 3: 623a.

characteristics of this genre of Buddhist literature. Many of the doctrines found in this literature later appeared in Mahāyāna scriptures. For example, the story of how the future Śākyamuni Buddha descended from Tuṣita heaven, assumed the form of a white elephant, and entered the womb of Māyā Queen probably was developed by these biographers, as was list of the eight key events in the Buddha's life (descent from Tuṣita heaven, entering his mother's womb, birth, leaving lay life, defeating the demons that represent the defilements, attaining enlightenment, preaching and death).<sup>430</sup>

Many similarities between biographies of the Buddha and Mahāyāna scriptures can be indicated. However, the fundamental differences between the two types of literature must not be overlooked. Biographies of the Buddha investigated the background of an individual who was already recognized as a Buddha. The Bodhisattva discussed in these biographies had already received a prediction of his eventual Buddhahood and therefore was assured of success in his religious quest. In contrast, the Bodhisattva, portrayed in many Mahāyāna scriptures, was only an individual who aspired to attain enlightenment. He had not received a prediction that he would eventually attain enlightenment. His final enlightenment was not assured and even backslid in his practice. He was the ordinary man as a Bodhisattva. Thus, a practitioner of Mahāyāna Buddhism considered himself as a Bodhisattva, who is practising to attain Buddhahood. This is the fundamental differences between the two types of literature.

#### **4.3.3. The Emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism**

As mentioned before, after the second Buddhist Council (376 BCE) to the beginning of era, Buddhism split into many different schools. Each school holds that its interpretation was original and sought to undermine the other

<sup>430</sup> Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 267.

school. This gave rise to a great movement. This was really a phase of transition that was remarkable in Buddhist history. Andrew Skilton shows light on this issue and says:<sup>431</sup>

In the beginning of the era, teachings criticizing aspects of the early Buddhist schools, and introducing their own new doctrines began to appear. From the modern perspective it is impossible to know the exact context for these developments, other than that they were embodied in new *sūtras* which not belong to the *Tripiṭaka* of the Early Buddhism. The new movement came in the long term to identify itself as the Mahāyāna.

In fact, during this time, King Kaniṣka was perplexed by the various sectarian interpretations of Buddha's teachings, so he invited the learned Bodhisattvas, such as Vasumitra, Aśhvagoṣha, and the monks of all schools to assemble Buddhist canon in order to unify various thoughts of the eighteen Buddhist sects in correct meaning of the Buddha's words. It is the fourth Buddhist Council that was held at Kashmir in 100 CE.<sup>432</sup> The Buddhist Scholars believe that, in this council, Kaniṣka made a significant change in the language of the Buddhist canon, i.e. converting earlier Prakrit versions into Sanskrit language without losing the significance of integrity of the canon. This event has a particular significance because Sanskrit was the official holy language of Brahmanism in India, and was also being used by other thinkers (regardless of their specific religious or philosophical allegiance), to gain access to Buddhist ideas and practices. For this reason, all major scholars of Mahāyāna in India wrote their commentaries and treatises in Sanskrit.

<sup>431</sup> See: Skilton, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 93.

<sup>432</sup> There is two the Fourth Buddhist Council, one was held in Sri Lanka in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. In this council the Buddhist canons were wrote down by Pāli language, called Pāli Canon (The *Tipitaka* and its commentaries were originally brought to Sri Lanka by the missionaries and monk Mahinda of the Third Buddhist Council). One was held in Kashmir around the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. In this council the Buddhist canons were wrote down by Sanskrit language, called *Āgamas* Canon.

And this council could be regarded as a momentous turning-point that prepared the ground for the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Historically, most Buddhist scholars unanimously accept that the date of the composition of the Mahāyāna's major scriptures is between 100 BCE and 200 CE. Thus, they guess the emergence of Mahāyāna movements to be earlier than this date, probably several hundred years after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*.<sup>433</sup> Moreover, the earliest date for the existence of Mahāyāna *sūtras* is the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE when a number of them were translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema. Nevertheless, there are still some arguments about the origins and emergence of Mahāyāna, by which the Mahāyānists had overcome all the earlier ideological schools.

According to Edward Conze and Peter Harvey, the origin of Mahāyāna is not associated with any named individual, nor was it uniquely linked to any early school. It may well have arisen at around the same time in the South, North-West and East of India. It had three main ingredients: The first, the adoption of the Bodhisattva path that various early schools had outlined. The second, a new cosmology arising from visualization practices devoutly directed at the Buddha as a glorified, transcendent being. And the third, a new perspective on *Abhidharma* which had derived from insight into the nature of phenomena (Emptiness). These developed a new orientation to Early Buddhist teachings and an upsurge of novel interpretation, whose gradual systematization established Mahāyāna as a movement with an identity of its own.<sup>434</sup>

<sup>433</sup> Peter Harvey suggests that this movement “arose some time between 150 BCE and 100 CE” (Harvey, 2005, p. 89); R. Kimura proposes that it “has been developed in the period between the time of King Aśoka and that of Nāgārjuna (roughly the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE)” (Kimura, 1978, p. 8); N. Dutt says, “Buddhism entered into its semi-Mahāyāna stage very early, if not at the time of Aśoka, at any rate, soon after him” (N., Dutt, 1998, p. 254), however, “The traces of Mahāyānism are found even in the Pāli Sutta Piṭaka” (N., Dutt, 2003, p. 1).

<sup>434</sup> See: Edward, Conze, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 50; & Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, pp. 89-90.

However, Hirakawa thinks that, Mahāyāna was formed from three sources: The first source is the doctrines of Nikāya Buddhism; the second source is the biographical literature of the Buddha; and the third source is *stūpa* worship.<sup>435</sup> But in fact, these three sources included all Peter Harvey's ideas. Other scholars also found out the influences of earlier Buddhist schools upon the origin of the Mahāyāna. For example, Andrew Rawlinson claims that the Mahāyāna used various sources in order to flesh out its teachings, such as: Re-interpretations of Nikāyas; Speculations of description from more progressive schools (the Mahāsaṅghika schools); Re-assessment of traditional techniques, e.g. *Abhidharma* practices; Inclusion of non-exclusive practices, e.g. *Paramitās*, *stūpa* worships; And even acceptance of foreign influences; etc.<sup>436</sup>

In addition to this, evidence which is accepted by recent scholars is the view that, the spirit capability to attain enlightenment of the laity and the clergy is similar. Many scholars believe that this idea originated from Nikāya Buddhism and it is one of elements that contributed to the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

As mentioned above, Mahāyāna has dignified the laity's status with a focus on the practice of Bodhisattva that they could follow. Following some Mahāyāna texts such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*, *Śrīmālā-sūtra*, etc., scholars find that, these *sūtras* promote the role of the laity who pays attention to the cult of erecting and worshipping the *stūpas* and images. So they assume that Mahāyāna was initiated and developed by laymen,<sup>437</sup> and it is primarily a religion of laymen, as asserted by B. L. Suzuki.<sup>438</sup>

<sup>435</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 260.

<sup>436</sup> Rawlinson, Andrew, *op. cit.*, 1983, pp. 163-70.

<sup>437</sup> Kajiyama Yūichi says, "The immediate social context for the emergence of Mahāyāna is the practice of *stūpa worship*" (Kajiyama 1995, p. 142). Likewise, according to Etienne Lamotte in his article (Bechert and Gombrich 1984, p. 90), the origins of the Mahāyāna derived from "the

Furthermore, the fact that the Mahāyāna *sūtras* are mainly taught to Bodhisattvas, including monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, expresses somehow a disparaging attitude to the Hearers (*śrāvakas*), who lead the austere monastic life for the goal of *Arhantship*. Thus, did Mahāyāna occur as a heresy (*vaitulyavāda*), as the Theravādins named it?

We know that the Buddha usually expounds the *Dharma* rooted in his particular audience. His teachings, preserved in the texts, should be understood properly and they should be considered the means (*upāya*) of communication for the sake of various human beings. The above criticism, therefore, is partial and does not express a whole vision of Buddhist thought. In addition, the archaeological study done by Gregory Schopen furnishes us with important data to deal with this problem. He remarks that the term ‘Mahāyāna’ came to be used in inscriptions as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, while the literary evidence of Mahāyāna took place much earlier, the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. Thus, the interval between literary and inscriptional evidences is about five centuries. In this matter, some ideas hold that the early Mahāyāna might have occurred merely within certain scholarly extent as a dynamic trend of thought, but not yet in the form of an organized movement of activities. Schopen says that “what we now call Mahāyāna did not begin to emerge as a separate and independent school until the fourth century.”<sup>439</sup> According to him, there is no widespread association of the laity regarding the origins or growth of Mahāyāna. Lopez, with his convincing explanation regarding the social situation of Mahāyāna, remarks thus: “Mahāyāna began as a number of local reactions against the

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divergent tendencies which formed at the heart of the community.” Finally, he stresses that “and above all, the laity, considering the monks’ privileges to be excessive, tried to win equal religious rights for themselves” (Paul Williams 2001, p. 20).

<sup>438</sup> B. L., Suzuki, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981, p. 78.

<sup>439</sup> G., Schopen, *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005, p. 239.

monastic establishment, reactions in which certain monks and nuns joined with the laity to produce new texts that offered a different vision, a different ideal and a different aspiration.”<sup>440</sup> The scientific evidence by Schopen, in contrast, indicates that the monks played an important role in the establishment of early Mahāyāna. In Williams’ opinion, the clergy in India had no time to initiate religious change, and the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, thus, must have been written by monks. He writes: “The Mahāyāna *sūtras* were clearly the products of monks, albeit monks whose vision of the *Dharma* embraced the aspirations of the laity, and who used lay figures in the *sūtras* to embody a critique of other monks seen as elitist or perhaps ultra-conservative.”<sup>441</sup>

Thus, the reason that some of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* were written by the laity belittles the status of monks. The Japanese scholar, Daisaku Ikeda also agrees with this opinion, he writes: “Enlightened members of the monastic community, dissatisfied with the attitude and practices of conservative monks, so they joined forces the more spirited and imaginative leaders among the laity in a co-operative venture to carry out reforms and the result was Mahāyānism.”<sup>442</sup> Thus, there are some opinions which certify that Mahāyāna Buddhism arose under direct influence and involvement of laymen.<sup>443</sup> Nevertheless, it is in the close relationship between the clergy and the laity’s patronage, and certainly it concern with the spiritual welfare of social community as possible.

One the other hand, Williams’s survey shows that Mahāyāna could not have differed from non-Mahāyāna in appearance of Indian monks; there was no so-called Mahāyāna movement at its initiation. In addition, the fact that the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna monks stayed together in the monasteries,

<sup>440</sup> Donald S., Lopez, *The Story of Buddhism: A concise guide to its history and teachings*, New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002, p. 69.

<sup>441</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 1989, p. 23.

<sup>442</sup> Ikeda, Daisaku, *Buddhism in the first Millenium*, Tokyo: Kodenasha International, 1977, p. 84.

<sup>443</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 270.

as recorded by I-tsing (a Chinese pilgrim in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE), signifies that there was no conflict of any sort between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna at that time.

The foregoing discussions show that the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism was not originally associated with just one school but was a gradual renovation of thoughts and concepts of many schools in Nikāya Buddhism. Heinrich Dumoulin writes: “Traces of Mahāyāna teachings appear already in the oldest Buddhist scriptures. Contemporary scholarship is inclined to view the transition of Mahāyāna as a gradual process that hardly noticed by people at the time.”<sup>444</sup> And Mahāyāna Buddhism has multiplicity of sources. We cannot say that Mahāyāna originated from the Mahāsaṅghika schools, or from the doctrines of Nikāya Buddhism, or among certain laity, or the *stūpa* worship, or certain *Abhidhamists*, or certain rebel monks, actually, all of these had their own contributions. The contribution of each group interacted dynamically and resulted in the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In other words, Mahāyāna is possibly the consequence of adaptation and development of Buddhism after a long period of time. Fujita Kōtatsu, in his study of early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, asserts that “the emergence of Mahāyāna Buddhism from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, however, it most likely had developed gradually for a long time before that.”<sup>445</sup> Paul Williams also asserts: “Though the term ‘Mahāyāna’ does not appear in the inscriptions of Early Buddhism, this does not mean that Mahāyāna Buddhists were non-existent at that time (before of the Christian era).”<sup>446</sup> To deal further with this matter, let us take to the R.F. Gombrich’s

<sup>444</sup> Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, Vol. 1, India and China Macmillan, 1994, p. 28.

<sup>445</sup> J. H. F., Michael Solomon & Richard Karl Payne (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1996, p. 9.

<sup>446</sup> Paul, Williams (ed.), *op. cit.*, 2005, Vol. III, p. 212.

opinion on Buddhism which is suggested well not only to the westerner but also all those who seek to learn Buddhism, he writes:<sup>447</sup>

It is important for western readers, used to a culture in which doctrine is the diacritic between religious bodies and heresy, the cause for expulsion, to appreciate that in India orthodoxy is less important than orthopraxy, doing the right thing, and that this has been true even of so intellectual a religion as Buddhism. Thus Mahāyāna, for example, is not a sect, but a current of opinion which cuts across sects as properly defined.

#### **4.4. Some New Concepts in the Mahāyāna Movement**

##### **4.4.1. The Concept of *Bhakti***

The term *bhakti* (Pāli: *bhatti*) or faith is recommended as the most effective path to reach God in most of the canonical texts of Pre-Buddhist Indian philosophical systems. It is prescribed for those who are unable to get knowledge required for liberation. It is believed that, God has all auspicious qualities; through devotion, one can cultivate such qualities in oneself.

In Buddhism, *bhakti* is regarded as one of the components of the religious movement, and its development was primarily involved to the laity of the Buddhist community from its very inception.<sup>448</sup>

In Early Buddhism, *bhakti* is not used for the sense of faith in the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha*. It is frequently used in the later works of the Pāli literature, such as the KN. and the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* in the sense of devotion, service, or affection to the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha*.<sup>449</sup> In other words, in Early Buddhism, *bhakti* is the way through

<sup>447</sup> R. F., Gombrich, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 112.

<sup>448</sup> B. G., Gokhale, *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 16.

<sup>449</sup> See V. V. S., Saibaba, *Faith and Devotion in Theravāda Buddhism*, Delhi: D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 2005, p. 167.

which the devotees show their faith in the Three Jewels.<sup>450</sup> The Buddha accepted the *bhakti* as a primary practical means of believing clansman. Furthermore, the reverence to the relics of the Buddha was originally practiced for calm and peaceful mind. This action, in itself, is a good deed and being as such it must result in good *karma*. The same result might be attained by pious pilgrimages to the four places that are associated with the four great events in the Buddha's life. The four places are (1) the place at which the Buddha was born, (2) the place at which the Buddha attained the supreme enlightenment, (3) the place at which the Buddha performed first turning of the Dharma Wheel, and (4) the place at which the Buddha finally passed away. This practice is justified as the Buddha's direction for *bhakti*.<sup>451</sup> The Buddha has stated the importance of *bhakti* in order to accommodate for the practical purpose of people who have ordinary intelligences. Thus, the *bhakti* had become an "integral part of Early Buddhism as a religion of the laity."<sup>452</sup>

Thereafter, in the period of Nikāya Buddhism, the Buddha himself was acknowledged as the supreme object of *bhakti* for the both monastic and lay communities.<sup>453</sup> The acceptance of the Buddha's embodiment into an object of faith as the *mahāpurisa* was an act of the *bhakti* movement in the religious milieu in which Mahāyāna Buddhism arose and developed.<sup>454</sup>

<sup>450</sup> See: B. G., Gokhale, *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 16.

<sup>451</sup> Hinder not yourselves, Ānanda, by honouring the remains of the Tathāgata. Be zealous, I beseech you, Ānanda, in your own behalf! Devote yourselves to your own good! Be earnest, be zealous, be intent on your own good! There are wise men, Ānanda, among the nobles, among the brahmins, among the heads of houses, who are firm believers in the Tathāgata; and they will do due honour to the remains of the Tathāgata, DN. II, p. 140; T. W. Rhys Davids (tr.), *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Vol. 2, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007, pp. 153-4.

<sup>452</sup> See B. G., Gokhale, *New Light on Early Buddhism*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1994, p. 77.

<sup>453</sup> See R. F., Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*, USA: Routledge, 2006, p. 120ff; Sukumar Dutt assumes that there is co-existence in Buddhism of two cults, namely, Buddha cult and *Bhagavā* or *Bhakti* cult; see: S., Dutt, *The Buddha and Five After Centuries*, Calcutta: Shishu Sahitya Samsad, 1978, p. 206.

<sup>454</sup> Gokhale asserted that, "... the religious milieu in which Buddhism arose and developed was a world peopled by various kinds of god, godlings, *yakshas*, *nagas*, *asuras*. There are constant

The Mahāyānists believe that, the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha* are the three supreme jewels. The Buddha is the embodiment of wisdom and compassion, the *Dharma* is the great vehicle that gives them the opportunity to develop their Buddha nature, and the *Saṅgha* is the example of successful practitioners who protect all living beings and lead them toward enlightenment. So, they hold that, the worship of the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha* can make up their mind the great resolve of instruction to all sentient beings (*bodhicitta*). Furthermore, to fortify their faith in the doctrine of *Ekayāna*, they need to have a deep comprehension of the excellent qualities of the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Saṅgha*. Such comprehensive of qualities is necessary to perform the act of *bhakti*.

Accordingly, the Mahāyānists cultivate their faith in the Three Jewels through performing the acts of religious devotion (*bhakti*). The *bhakti* can be performed in various ways, such as, taking refuge in the Three Jewels by practising of *Ti-saraṇa* (Threefold Refuge), making offerings to the Buddha, the *Dharma* and the *Saṅgha*, ritual worship of *Cetiya* (*stūpa*) and *Dhātu* (holy relics), worship of the Deities and the Bodhisattvas, honouring, copying, preserving, reciting, revering the teachings of the Buddha and expounding the profound meaning of them for the sake of others, and so on.<sup>455</sup> The Mahāyāna scriptures as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* and *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra* have elaborated the importance of *bhakti*. In the *Śikṣā-samuccaya*, Śāntideva quotes the *Sāgaramati-paripṛcchā-sūtra* to say that, performing the act of *bhakti* for the Buddha is the results in the development of three folds of thought; namely, (1) the enlightenment thought, (2) the profound thought, and (3) the great

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references to these divine and semi-divine beings. They were the Brahmas (Sahampati and Sanankumara), gods of the various abodes (*Tusita*, *Nimmanarati*, and *parinimmavasavatti*) of Sakka-Indra and of *devatas*. All of these become a part of the developing Buddhist religion,” see: B. G., Gokhale, *op. cit.*, 1981, p. 17.

<sup>455</sup> See: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, *et al.*, (tr.), *The Lotus Sutra*, USA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2007, p. 161; & Edward, Conze (tr.), *op. cit.*, 1990, pp. 327, 363; cf. Cecil Bendall & W. H. D. Rouse, trans., *Śikṣāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine Compiled by Śāntideva*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, p. 270.

pitiful thought.<sup>456</sup> Śāntideva also quotes *Ratnamegha* to give special emphasis to the ten acts of *bhakti* that are frequently performed by the Mahāyānists. These ten acts are: (1) to manufacture an image of the Buddha, (2) to rebuild up a decayed shrine, (3) to give perfume and ointment to the shrine of the Buddha, (4) to give scented water to the images of the Buddha, (5) to sweep and anoint the shrine of the Buddha, (6) personal attendance on parents, (7) personal attendance on teachers and instructors, (8) personal attendance on companions in the holy life, (9) all that with a heart disinterested and free from any thought of gain, and (10) the dedication of the merit from all this with the intense mind: “By result of this meritorious action let all beings be born unstained by the impurity of matrix.”<sup>457</sup>

It is more obvious in Mahāyāna literature, where the act of *bhakti* reached its pinnacle. For example, it has been stated in the *Meditation on Buddha Amitāyus Sūtra* that faith in the salvific power of the Pure Land and the Amitābha Buddha’s grace are the root of goodness. According to this *Sūtra*, those who resolve to reborn in that land have to have perfect faith in the Amitābha Buddha. The process of bringing forth a resolve to have the perfect faith needs training in three folds of thought, namely, (1) the upright thought meaning having right view of Suchness (*tathatā*), (2) the profound thought meaning rejoicing to study everything that is good and to practice it; and (3) the great compassionate thought meaning desiring to deliver all living beings from their sorrow.<sup>458</sup> These three folds of thought are considered as the three

<sup>456</sup> 一者發菩提心無有退轉。二者於諸正法而能攝持。三者於眾生所發起大悲。Q.v. T. 32, No. 1636: 134b22-23; Cecil Bendall & W. H. D. Rouse (tr.), *Śikṣāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine Compiled by Śāntideva*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, p. 279.

<sup>457</sup> Q.v. T. 32, No. 1636: 134b25-c2; Cecil Bendall & W. H. D. Rouse (tr.), *Śikṣāsamuccaya: A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine Compiled by Śāntideva*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, pp. 279-80.

<sup>458</sup> 佛告阿難及韋提希。凡生西方有九品人。上品上生者。若有眾生願生彼國者。發三種心即便往生。何等為三。一者至誠心。二者深心。三者迴向發願心。具三心者必生彼國。T. 12, No. 0365: 344c9-13; J. Takakusu (tr.), *Meditation*

concrete consequences of faith, which occur in every Buddhist sect and tradition as a resolve to entry into *nirvāṇa*.<sup>459</sup> In other words, the threefold thought is the embodiment of the Noble Eightfold Path or the volition in the training of *Śīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Prajñā*.

Thus, it can be said that *bhakti* is one of the prerequisite components of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is declared as the very ground of a religious life and has played the vital role in the emergence of the Mahāyāna doctrines on one hand; and on the other, it is the effective aspect of faith (*śraddhā*) that created an armour of Bodhisattvas to accomplish the six perfections (*ṣaṭ-pāramitā*).

#### 4.4.2. The Concept of *Bodhicitta*

*Bodhicitta* is one of the new concepts in the Mahāyāna movement. It is considered as the guideline on the insight into the spiritual path of the religious practitioners.

The term '*Bodhicitta*' is a Sanskrit compound '*bodhi*' (awakening or enlightenment) and '*citta*' (mind). *Bodhicitta* may be translated as 'mind of awakening' or 'mind of enlightenment' or 'aspiration towards enlightenment.' It is the mind which includes thought, action, feeling and speech totally dedicated to others and aspires to achieve perfect enlightenment (Buddhahood) for the benefit of all sentient beings. It involves a motivation to help others awaken their mind and replace their suffering by true happiness. In other words, *bodhicitta* is the prime motivation for all actions of a Bodhisattva. Therefore, it refers to the mind of Bodhisattvas. Due to this *bodhicitta*, Bodhisattva may postpone Buddhahood and stay in *saṃsāra* and do benefit infinite to all sentient beings. Consequently, *bodhicitta* is a necessary

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on *Buddha Amitāyus*, SBE, (ed.) Max Müller, Vol. 49, Part II, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2005, p. 188.

<sup>459</sup> See T. 32, No. 1666: 580c7-8; T. 32, No. 1667: 589a16-7; Timothy Richard (tr.), *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna Doctrine*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 2008, p. 29.

element for anybody who aspires to attain perfect enlightenment, especially, for the practice of Bodhisattva.

The Encyclopedia of Buddhism explains the term ‘*bodhicitta*’ as follows: “In its most common denotation the term ‘*bodhicitta*’ refers to the resolution to attain *bodhi* (awakening) in order to liberate all living beings, which defines and motivates the Bodhisattva’s vow.”<sup>460</sup> However, this simple definition entails several layers of meaning and practice. The resolution to attain awakening can be seen as a state of mind or a mental process, but it is also the solemn promise (the vow as verbal act) embodied or expressed in particular ritual utterances, acts, and gestures (recitation of the vows, dedication of merit, etc.), because the thought of enlightenment arises not from theoretical considerations but from the conjunction with the spiritual life of the practice. In the work *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism*, Acharya defines: “*Bodhicitta* is the attitude that is based on the great compassion wishing to remove the suffering of all others, and the recognition that, to be of greatest benefit to both oneself and others, it is an ideal to attain enlightenment.”<sup>461</sup> While D. T. Suzuki considers *bodhicitta* as intelligence-mind, he says: “The *bodhicitta* or intelligence-mind, therefore, like the *Dharmakāya*, is essentially love and intelligence, or to use Sanskrit terms, *karuṇā* and *prajñā*.”<sup>462</sup>

In Early Buddhism, there was not the conception of ‘*bodhicitta*,’ but only the concept of ‘*citta*.’ And ‘right-view’ is regarded as a crucial doctrine. In the Theravāda tradition, most the practitioners begin with the concern of their self or individual enlightenment. Therefore, preliminary meditations are used to raise the aspiration of the practitioner for liberation from *saṃsāra* altogether, or the motivation of the *Arhant*. Though the

<sup>460</sup> R. E., Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Vol. I, New York, 2004, p. 54.

<sup>461</sup> Geshe Acharya Thubten Loden, *Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism*, Part V, Australia: Tushita Publications Melbourne, 1993, p. 491.

<sup>462</sup> D. T., Suzuki, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 296.

conception of ‘*bodhicitta*’ is not directly mentioned in Theravāda tradition, it is an important element of the practitioner.

In the Mahāyāna movement, due to the prominence of Bodhisattva ideal, the concept of *bodhicitta* developed along both ethical and metaphysical lines. Therefore, in the Mahāyāna tradition, *bodhicitta* is regarded as fundamental to the Bodhisattva path, namely, a state of mind in which a Bodhisattva carries out actions. Because, the Mahāyānists hold that, *bodhicitta* is latent in all sentient beings and it is merely a manifestation of the *Dharmakāya* (body of law) or *Bhūtatathatā* (suchness of existence, i.e., the Universal Spirit) in the human heart. Paul Williams point out the using of the term ‘*bodhicitta*’ in early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and holds that the arising of *bodhicitta* is not simply a static thing that occurs just at the beginning of the Bodhisattva path. Rather it is continuously retaken and evolves through practice.<sup>463</sup> In this matter, Śāntideva also says: “The moment you develop *bodhicitta*, even though you might be living in a lower realm of existence, but you will also be called a Bodhisattva or a child of the Buddhas. You should regard *bodhicitta* as the essence of your practice to attain *nirvāṇa*.”<sup>464</sup>

The most fundamental thing in Buddhism, in general, is mind (*citta*, *mana*) that Mahāyāna developed thoroughly so as to challenge all existing principles and conceptual constructs. The *Avatamsaka-sūtra* writes:<sup>465</sup>

The Buddhas have no doctrine.  
How could Buddha have any explanation?  
It is just in accord with one’s own mind.  
One thinks Buddha expounds such a doctrine.

The stanza thus promotes the important role of mind, based on which one can attain the final enlightenment, as this *sūtra* says: “Unexcelled,

<sup>463</sup> Paul, Williams, *op. cit.*, 1989.

<sup>464</sup> Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life of Shantideva*, a commentary by the Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, chapter I, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 2002.

<sup>465</sup> T. 278, see: Cleary, Thomas, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 453.

complete perfect enlightenment is based on the mind.”<sup>466</sup> Besides, the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra* proposes that Buddha nature is inherent in all sentient beings as is characterized by mind (*citta*): “Sentient beings all possess mind and whosoever possesses mind will decisively attain the utmost, complete perfect enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*).” The Mahāyānists believe that the original nature of the mind is pure, so the manifestation of that original nature is equivalent to the attainment of Buddhahood.<sup>467</sup> On account of this sense, the Mahāyānists have often stated that all sentient beings have Buddha nature.”<sup>468</sup> Thus, the universal doctrine embraces all different sorts of sentient beings by means of approaches to their mind. These thoughts of Mahāyāna are regarded as truthful and correct, even if, on occasions, they appear to be contrary to one another.

Thus, *bodhicitta* is the foundation of all the Buddha’s teachings. Its profound meaning is depicted in all Buddhist *sūtras*, especially in Mahāyāna *sūtras*. The *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* depicted it as “a native land of Bodhisattvas, causing one to be born in the family of Bodhisattvas.”<sup>469</sup> The expression of *bodhicitta* is actions that are done by Bodhisattvas for the sake of all sentient beings. With the motivation of *bodhicitta*, all practices are likely to be approved, even sometimes seemingly contrary to the orthodox teachings, but in reality, no more than the heart of great compassion. It can say that, *bodhicitta* is able to bring out necessary guidelines on all practices of religion; and it may be rendered as right-view. Consequently, the new concept of *bodhicitta* in the Mahāyāna movement does not deviate from thought of Therevāda tradition, but it is a renovation of practitioner for the benefit of all sentient beings.

<sup>466</sup> *Avataṃsakasūtra*, Vol. II, p. 366.

<sup>467</sup> See: Akira, Hirakawa, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 297.

<sup>468</sup> T. 12: 524c7-10.

<sup>469</sup> *Avataṃsakasūtra*, Vol. III, pp. 375-376; cf. T. 10: 438b.

#### 4.4.3. The Concept of *Dharma-dhātu*

In order to explain structure and constituents of the world as well as the formation of all *dharma*s (things), the Mahāyānists constructed the metaphysical theories, namely, the theory of *Dharma-dhātu* (Universal Realm) and the theory of *Śūnyatā* (Emptiness). About the theory of *Śūnyatā* I have said enough in chapter 3, at the section “The Basic Doctrines of Mahāyāna Buddhism.” Now, I would like to discuss the theory of *Dharma-dhātu* in detail.

*Dharma-dhātu* may be defined as the “Dharma-realm” or “Universal Realm” or “Realm of Phenomena” or “Realm of Truth.” It is the relationship and the relativity concerning everything in the universe, where *Tathatā*, *Śūnyatā*, *Pratītya-samutpāda*, *Pāramitā* and the Buddha nature are considered as one. In other words, *Dharma-dhātu* is the realm of reality in which all *dharma*s or things in the universe arise simultaneously. It is the creation of the universe by the universe itself.

The theory of *Dharma-dhātu* is advocated in accordance with the principle of *Pratītya-samutpāda* to explain the universal realm (*rūpa* and *citta*). This theory also assumes that all things in the universe arise simultaneously, they are dependent on each other, and they mutually permeate to make a universal symphony of harmonious totality.<sup>470</sup>

In Theravāda Buddhism, *Dharma-dhātu* (*Dhammadhātu*) is the fundamental essence of *dharma*s or the nature of things. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, *Dharma-dhātu* is a matrix, totality, or limitless pervading all spaces, in which all phenomena arise, dwell, abide, and cease. Nāgārjuna holds: “The *Dharma-dhātu* is the ground for Buddhahood, *Nirvāṇa*, purity, and permanence. Therefore, *Dharma-dhātu* is a purified mind with its nature, free out of the obscurity rendered by dualism.” In fact, all *dharma*s

<sup>470</sup> See: J., Takakusu, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 35.

are mutually dependent on causes and conditions of their coexistence. All *dharma*s are equal and this equality transcends considerations of their differences in being real/unreal, superior/inferior, or abundant/deficient. In this sense of *dharma*, the word “*Dharma-dhātu*” literally means “realm of *dharma*s,” refers to the collection of all *dharma*s. Any limitations that are artificial concepts, subconscious activities, desires and feelings, attachment, time and space, etc., having regained the original state of *Dharma-dhātu* in harmonious oneness.

According to the *Hua-yen-ching kang-yao*, the *Dharma-dhātu* is classified into four categories with respect to phenomenon and noumenon, which were later propagated as philosophical concepts of the universe by Master Tu-shun (557 – 640 CE, the founder of Chinese Hua-yen School). The four categories are expressed as follows:<sup>471</sup>

- (1) The *Dharma-dhātu* of *Shih* (Chinese *shih fa-jie*). *Shih* is a rendering of the Chinese character 事, which means matter, phenomenon, or event. Thus, *Dharma-dhātu* of *shih* may be understood as ‘the world of all matter and phenomena’ or ‘the world of actual life.’
- (2) The *Dharma-dhātu* of *Li* (Chinese *li fa-jie*). *Li* is a rendering of the Chinese character 理, which means principle, law, or noumenon. Thus, *Dharma-dhātu* of *li* may be understood as ‘the world of the *śūnyatā*.’
- (3) The *Dharma-dhātu* of *Li-shih-wu-ai* (Chinese *li-shih-wu-ai fa-jie*). *Wu-ai* is a rendering of the Chinese characters 無礙, which mean non-obstruction. Thus, *Dharma-dhātu* of *li-shih-wu-ai* may be understood as ‘the world of non-obstruction between noumenon and phenomenon.’
- (4) The *Dharma-dhātu* of *Shih-shih-wu-ai* (Chinese *shih-shih-wu-ai fa-jie*) can be understood as ‘the world of non-obstruction between phenomena.’

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 123-4; & Garma C. C., Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*, University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1971, p. 208ff.

The foundation of the *Dharma-dhātu* doctrine was definitely laid in a short treatise, the *Fa-chieh-kuan-men* (The Gate of Insight into the *Dharma-dhātu*), by Tu-shun, the first patriarch of the Hua-yen school. In this fundamental text it is recommended that a person should have “threefold insight” the *Dharma-dhātu*, i.e., the insight into the ‘true emptiness’; the insight into the ‘non-obstruction of li and shih’ or noumenon and phenomena; and the insight into ‘nature of phenomena.’ This means that in our meditative insight we have to intuit not only the two aspects of *Dharma-dhātu* (*rūpa* and *Śūnyatā*) in their non-obstructive interrelationship, but we have also to see the *Dharma-dhātu* in terms of li and shih or the noumenal and the phenomenal in their “interfusion and dissolution, coexistence and annihilation, adversity and harmony” and their mutual identification. Even further, we are advised to realize ultimately that “shih, being identified with li, are inter-fusing, inter-pervading, mutually including, and inter-permeating without obstruction.” It is said here that all the phenomenal things, having been endowed with the quality of the noumenal, are now complete in themselves, and thus they are now interrelating with each other. In this relationship, it is further said, the universal and the particular, the broad and the narrow, and the like, have no impeding boundaries but are freely interpenetrating each other without obstruction or hindrance whatsoever.

All *dharma*s are based on the causes and conditions. For example, one *dharma* is based on the other; this *dharma* arises, so the other arises. Then, it is said that all the existence is dependent to arise. According to Hua-yen school, the *Dharma*-realm is, in totality, a world of dependent arising, which does not only come from the power of karma or the *ālaya-vijñāna* on the *Bhutatathatā*, but hundreds and thousands of *dharma*s are causes and conditions for others to come into being; they are dependent on one another, and mutually related to one another to the extent at the infinite. However,

the key factor of the dependent arising of them is *ālaya-vijñāna*, *karma* and the *Bhutatathatā*. The Hua-yen school covers all those three view points and perspective of existence is named as the *Dharma*-realm, interdependent origination.

According to Hua-yen school, one can explain the existence of the universe on the basis of interdependent origination. All *dharma*s are manifestations of the True-suchness (indivisible nature of all *dharma*s). In other words, each *dharma* consists of the complete and perfect nature of True-suchness. Thus all *dharma*s are mutually inter-penetrated and mutually identical. Each *dharma* is present in other *dharma*s indefinitely. *Dharma*s are universally inclusive of each other. You are part of me and I am part of you. Everything in the universe is related to each other, nothing has an existence of its own. Everything should be viewed with regard to all possible relationships with all possible things. Every possible level and every available dimension should be applied to a certain thing. In other words, any given object in the world is subject to infinitely numerous and different frames of reference. Nothing can have a fixed, intrinsic, or static value nor be judged by a determined standard. Everything in the phenomenal order is fluid, flexible, and relative.

In actual life, individualism is to predominates, competes, conflicts, disputes, and struggles are to disturb the harmony time and again. The usual philosophies regard these things as natural. However, this new concept of Mahāyāna sets up a world in which actual life attains an ideal harmony. This is because the theory of *Dharma-dhātu* shows us that no being will exist by itself and for itself, but the whole world will move and act in union as if the whole were under general organization. It makes up one's mind to construct an ideal world called 'the World One-and-True.'<sup>472</sup> It can be seen that, the

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<sup>472</sup> See: J., Takakusu, *op. cit.*, 2001, pp. 43-4.

ideal world is not only an idea of Mahāyāna but also the great aspiration of many thinkers.

#### 4.4.4. The Concept of Two Truths

The concept of Two truths, the ultimate and the conventional, is regarded as one of the new concepts in the Mahāyāna movement. This concept has been proposed in the *Abhidharma* as ‘worldly conventions’ (P. *sammuti-sacca*) and ‘elements or *dharma*s’ (P. *paramattha-sacca*) respectively. The Mahāyāna *sūtras* refer to these truths to be simply the reason for the *upāya-kauśalya*. The Mādhyamika, ontologically, focuses on the nature of emptiness as ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*), from which all existences or conventional truths (*saṃvṛti-satya*) originate. In other words, while *Abhidharma* strives to go into the nature of all *dharma*s, Mahāyāna Buddhism tends to carry out a combination of the nature and all manifestations. Namely, the *Mādhyamika-śāstra* tried to supplement the deficiency that the *Abhidharma* has left behind as to the early doctrine. In some places of the Pāli Nikāyas, we are likely to find enough evidences to prove the above view of the *Mādhyamika-śāstra*. All together on the subject of the *upāya-kauśalya*, the concept of Two truths should be investigated at the synthetically doctrinal level of the *Mādhyamika-sāstra*, that is, existence and emptiness, the role of which is to lead to the view of non-grasping.

The theory of Two truths in the Mahāyāna *sūtras* takes an important role for the thought of *upāya-kauśalya*. In the *Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, the Buddha says, “Owing to *skill in means* in accordance with sentient beings, the Two truths are taught” (T. 12: 443a12-13). The *Mahāratnakūta-sūtra* (Chapter 119) says, “As Great Bodhisattvas possess understanding of both the worldly (*saṃvṛti*) and the ultimate (*paramārtha*), they thereby accomplish the perfect understanding of *skill in means*” (T. 11: 627c13-16). The concept of *upāya-kauśalya* can thereby be understood and applied by means of the

Two truths, or rather identical with these two. The *upāya-kauśalya* hence is a process of adaptability of conventional truths to reach the ultimate truth.

Although Mahāyāna tries to make a combination of these two, it initially requires that one should know how to distinguish between the ultimate and the conventional. In the *Mūlamādhyamika-kārikā*, Nāgārjuna says, “The teachings of the *Dharma* by the Buddha are based on two truths: the ultimate truth and conventional truth. Those who do not understand the distinction between these two truths do not understand the profound nature of the Buddha’s teachings.”<sup>473</sup> By this way, one can possibly get the message that the Buddha really sought to get rid of suffering during his lifetime.

In the Pāli Nikāyas, the ultimate truth might be expressed via the Buddha’s silence right after his Enlightenment. Such silence is not mentioned in Mahāyāna doctrines. Instead, the Mahāyāna suggests the theory of the Two truths in the sense that any word the Buddha spoke to the world would be the conventional truth. Nevertheless, if one is able to comprehend the conventional truth, then the ultimate truth is simultaneously realized. According to Murti, “*paramārtha* is the end or goal that we seek to attain, and *saṃvṛti* is the means; it is the ladder or the jumping board which enables us to reach that objective. It is therefore stated that *saṃvṛti* is the means (*upāyabhūta*) and *paramārtha* is the end (*upeyabhūta*).”<sup>474</sup> The means and the end are two ends of the *upāya-kauśalya*, whose function is to reduce gradually the distance between these two until they are integration. This is the objective process of the *upāya-kauśalya* aiming at the nature of the reality. For instance, one can accept the truth of a particular thing as a reality, but he cannot be attached insistently to it and has to go further. In order to leave hold of it, one has to recognize it just as a relative or

<sup>473</sup> Quoted from, Mitchell, *Buddhism*, p. 135; also see, T. 30: 32c16-19.

<sup>474</sup> T. R. V., Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of Mādhyamika System*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2006, p. 253.

conventional truth, which is temporary and ephemeral. We can find out in the Mahāyāna texts the twofold truth taught as the theory of the reality, whereas the *upāya-kauśalya* mentioned as the functional characteristic of the *Dharma*.

According to the *Mādhyamika-śāstra*, the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) is what means the world. Things in the world can be seen and known. They are perceivable by means of one's sense organs. It is through sense organs that a word or conception has a meaning. The *Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom* says, "Whatever is stated belongs to worldly truth, which is not real. However, there is no ultimate truth without worldly truth" (T. 7: 939a5-6). The so-called 'worldly' or 'conventional' is because truths or facts exist within limits of space-time, in which living beings live and experience themselves (concerning their surroundings) and social relations so that conventional concepts and language-constructs are set up in connection with 'the continuous flux of experience.' Peter Harvey writes, "The language-constructs (*prajñapti*) which are labels for them are inter-related in many ways. They gain their meaning from how they are used, in relationship to other concepts, not by referring to objective referents existing outside language."<sup>475</sup>

In the *Mūlapariyāya-sutta* (Root of All Things), *sutta* 1 of the MN., the Buddha reveals that all things and concepts of phenomena are viewed through the two truths. The world knows only phenomenal facts (conventional truths) whereas the wise is able to see both phenomena and nature. The concepts such as earth, water, fire, air, beings, gods, Pajāpati, Brahmā.... the seen, the heard, the sensed, the cognized, unity, diversity, all, and *nibbāna* are phenomenal and conceptual, so they are not real in nature. In eyes of the wise, these things exist as they really are (*paramattha-sacca*) and they are significant for human daily life (*saṃvuti-sacca*). Yet they are

<sup>475</sup> Peter, Harvey, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 99.

commonly characterized by egocentric attitudes of individuals, that is, common people (*puthujjana*) perceive them as ‘self’ or ‘mine.’ Such people, the Buddha says, do not accurately understand them.

Thus, the conventional truth or reality consists of two levels: one that ordinary people observe things through the veil of ignorance and the other that the wise ones observe things just as means. While the ordinary are obstructed by conventional truths, the wise dwell in the ultimate truth and at the same time make use of the conventional truth for the best. The Buddha in the *Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom* instructs, “Subhuti, rely on the conventional truth to establish distinction between causes and effects. Do not rely on the ultimate truth, in which distinction between causes and effects cannot be stated.”<sup>476</sup>

Since, the conventional truth as depicted by the Mahāyāna is considered as the characteristic of all things (*dharma*) and concepts. In fact, the *Dharma* taught by the Buddha includes both kinds of the truth, as the conventional is not different from the ultimate. The Buddha always relies on the worldly reality (truth) in order to show human beings the path in accordance with their knowledge and dispositions. The Buddha’s method of approach to people as a result is diverse and unpredictable. According to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*, attributed to Nāgārjuna, such method is classified into four categories, called four *siddhāntas* (established end, purpose or achievement). They are:<sup>477</sup>

- (1) Worldly *siddhānta*: Preaching in conformity to the conventional perception of the world,
- (2) *Siddhānta* for each individual: Preaching according to the abilities and levels of understanding of each individual hearer,

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<sup>476</sup> T. 6: 980a2-4.

<sup>477</sup> T. 25: 59b18-21.

- (3) Special application *siddhānta*: Preaching aimed at destroying strong defilement or evil karma of certain beings, and
- (4) *Siddhānta* of supreme truth: Preaching of reality as understood by the Buddha himself.

The Buddha is told to have well completed the four *siddhāntas* in the course of his propagation of the *Dharma*. Among these four, the first three belong to the conventional, and the last belongs to the ultimate. Based on them, the Buddha's teaching always becomes real and useful for his audience in order to tread strictly on the path from the reality of human beings (the conventional) to the end of suffering (the ultimate). Thus, the four *siddhāntas* are real in respect of conformity.

The existential principles of all things are the principle of Dependent Origination (*Pratītya-samutpāda*). The existence of everything or every living being is the compatible component of causes and conditions in which they arise and cease regarding the conditioned changing nature of the universe. This (relative) reality thus includes all of existing things (*dharmas*) as well as the Buddha's teachings. Likewise, the Buddha states in the SN. that, all existence (*sabba*) is characterized by the twelve sense bases. Apart from these, nothing else can be proclaimed.<sup>478</sup> The reality in Buddhism is the one in association with human beings' sense organs. Based on humanity thus, all the Buddha's statements are true, and they have adaptability to hearers' various abilities.

The Buddha's *Dharma* is always consistent with the truths that are qualified and characterized by human beings according to individual and social conventions. As "the starting point of Buddhism is the human

<sup>478</sup> The text says, "What, brethren, is the all? It is eye and object, ear and sound, nose and scent, tongue and savour, body and things tangible, mind and mind-states. That, brethren, is called 'the all.' Whoso, brethren, should say: 'Rejecting this all, I will proclaim another all,—it would be mere talk on his part, and when questioned he could not make good his boast, and further would come to an ill pass. Why so? Because, brethren, it would be beyond his scope to do so'". See: F.L., Woodward, 2005, p. 8.

heart,”<sup>479</sup> Buddhist approach to conventional truth is the initial step, based on which spiritual cultivation is required to go further on the path leading to the end of suffering through the realization about the nature of reality, i.e. the ultimate truth or emptiness.

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<sup>479</sup> I am known this from Prof. Stanley Weinstein’s words. It is the definitely remark in conformity with the orientation of the upāya-kausālya.