

**Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar : A Study of
Discourse on Nirvana**

DISSERTATION

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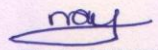
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar : A Study of Discourse on Nirvana**” submitted in fulfilment for the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is an authentic record of original work carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr. V.M. Ravi Kumar**, Assistant Professor, Department of History, School for Ambedkar Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University (A Central University) Lucknow. I further declare that this research work has not been previously submitted before for the award of any other degree or diploma to any University or Institution. In keeping with the ethical practice in reporting research information, due acknowledgement have been made wherever the findings of others have been cited. This is also declare that the M.Phil Dissertation is free from all kinds of plagiarism.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT


CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the M. Phil Dissertation titled “**Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar : A Study of Discourse on Nirvana**” submitted by **Mr. Nay Mein Da**, Enrollment No. 525/17 is an original research work and has not been previously submitted in part or full for the award of any other degree or diploma to this or any other university.

The M.Phil dissertation submitted to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University Lucknow satisfies all the requirements as stipulated in the *Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) Regulations, 2015* and it is fit for submission and evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of the University.

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CONTENT

S.No.	Chapter's Name	Page No.
1.	Chapter: I <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction	1-13
2.	Chapter: II <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Theravada Buddhism and its Canonical Doctrines	14-61
3.	Chapter: III <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Concept of Nirvana as a Doctrine in Theravada Buddhism	62-95
4.	Chapter: IV <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conclusion	96-101
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bibliography• Appendix	102-110

CHAPTER: I

TITLE OF CHAPTER: INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT OF CHAPTER:

This chapter proposes the schematic and thematic structure of the proposed study. This chapter has been organised into the following sections: introduction of study, context of the study, objective of study, hypothesis of study, methodology of study, review of literature and note on chapters of study. The main objective of this chapter is to propose a thematic skeleton of this study.

CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism is one of the important religious of world. The concept of Nirvana is one of the foundational doctrines of Buddhism. Generally it is considered as one of the ultimate goals of Buddhists. But the fact however that is there is no unanimous opinion exists among various sets of Buddhism on the concept of Nirvana. Another important issue with regards to Nirvana is that it has been a highly controversial doctrine subjected to multiple interpretations. This study entitled: “**Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar : A Study of Discourse on Nirvana**” attempts to capture the doctoral and theological representation of the concept of Nirvana in the Theravada Buddhism. In short, this study attempts to document discourse on the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism in general and Theravada Buddhism in particular.

Buddhism has been one of the oldest religions which had spread all over the world. Particularly, Theravada Buddhism claims to be the most authentic Buddhist tradition for it has preserved the teachings of the Buddha has spread to different parts of the world. This study attempts to explore the process of historical evolution of Buddhism as a religion in general and Theravada Buddhist tradition in particular with special reference to Myanmar. While so doing, particular attention has been devoted to the concept of Nirvana and spiritual, structural and functional aspects related to it. Historical and theological analysis of Nirvana helps us to understand the evolutionary trajectory of Nirvana over a period of time and its doctrinal importance for Buddhist monastic system and lay Buddhist society as well. The monumental importance of Nirvana is that it has been one of the centralities of the Buddhist thought and

spirituality. This study has thus been an attempt to explore the phenomenon of Nirvana from multiple perspectives.

CONTEXT OF STUDY

Undoubtedly, the relevance of Buddhism as religion and spiritual belief system has been gaining prominence in the contemporary world for several reasons. The consumerist society driven and encouraged by the capitalist economic system and the oppressive political systems wherein concentrations of power and wealth were promoted has brought about immense suffering to humanity across the globe. At the same time the competitive oriented human society is giving least priority to the ethical and humanist values as guiding principles of human behavior. On account of these serious changes, the relevance of Buddhism which gives priority to ethical and moral dimensions of human society acquired prominence all over world. Attention to the teachings of the Buddha has thus acquired prominence in the contemporary times.

Buddhist way of life emerged as one of the fascinating response to the consumerist or materialistic society. The ideas of non-violence, compassion for living forms, minimum needs for survival and minimizing the craving for more desires are some of the popular aspects of Buddhism. These concepts attracted the attention of academicians and general public as well. The fact however is the concept of Nirvana is one of the most controversial concepts in the history of Buddhism. While some sections claim that Nirvana is a pessimistic notion which kills the human spirit and makes them as lazy beings and other sections claims that Nirvana is not all about renouncing the world, rather a training to live in this world with peace and magnanimity. This study attempts to document multi-dimensionality of Nirvana expressed in Theravada Buddhism as a discourse and shows the deeper meaning and complexities of Nirvana as a concept and experience.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

While narrating the phenomenon of Nirvana as a doctrine, this study structured around the following objectives:

- (1) To document the historical evolution of Theravada Buddhism and its spiritual and philosophical doctrine by focusing on Buddhist councils those were held in different countries in the history of Buddhism.
- (2) To propose an analysis and explanation on the question of how and why Theravada Buddhism considered being an authentic version of Buddhism by examining the institutionalization process of Buddhism as a religion.
- (3) To document the importance of Nirvana as an important component of Buddhist philosophy and spiritual thought and practice.
- (4) To explore the concept of Nirvana as an important principle of Theravada Buddhism.
- (5) To propose a comparative study of Nirvana by focusing on Theravada and other forms of Buddhism.
- (6) To analyze the centrality of the concept of Nirvana.
- (7) To capture the changing nature of the ideas of Nirvana in Theravada Buddhism
- (8) To document the historical context in which the concept of Nirvana acquired different meanings.
- (9) To document Burmese popular perception of Nirvana.

HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

A study about Nirvana is indeed a complicated enterprise for it constitutes not only centrality of the Buddhist thoughts but also extremely controversial. While dealing with the complexity, this study proposes the following hypothesis which would be tested in our study:

(1). Theravada Buddhism is the authentic version of the Buddhism as it has preserved the teachings of the Buddha without distortion and deviation.

(2).The spiritual and philosophical teachings of the Buddha are carefully preserved and practiced by Theravada Buddhism.

(4).The concept of Nirvana has been of the core doctrines of Buddhism which has not been explored extensively by academic studies.

(5).Theravada Buddhism involves a distinctive form of Nirvana as a doctrine and concept which is very close to the original teachings of the Buddha.

(6).The concept of Nirvana evolved and acquired different meanings in the due course of time in the history of Buddhism.

(7). There exist multiple opinions on the nature of Nirvana among various schools of Buddhism.

(8). Burmese society defines its own version of Nirvana inspired by Theravada Buddhism.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As already mentioned, the study of Nirvana is a vast and complicated domain. The main reason for this is that Buddhist theology and philosophy mainly revolves around this concept. On account this reason delineation of scope and limitations of the topic is necessary. This study does not document the exclusive philosophical, theological and phenomenological account of Nirvana. Rather it focuses on the history of the idea of Nirvana in Buddhism with particular reference to Theravada Buddhism. Again we

would like to make it clear that this study does not offer a comprehensive historical account of the concept of Nirvana, instead it explores and document the multiple versions of Nirvana by focusing on the Nirvana in a comparative perspective. In short this study in a humble attempt to analysess and document the concept of Nirvana by focusing on historical-theological aspects of Buddhism.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to document the historical and evolutionary trajectory of Theravada Buddhism with particular reference to the concept of Nirvana. The phenomenon of Nirvana as an important component of Buddhist thought and practice has been the centrality of this topic. Since this study mainly deals with Nirvana as a theological concept the source material has obviously been drawn mainly from the Buddhist literature preserved in the form of teachings and commentaries by the Buddha himself and subsequent Buddhist teachers. To explore the doctrinal position of Nirvana the sources that are translated from Pali to English have been consulted. These sources throw light on various dimension of Nirvana. Besides this, Buddhist texts and commentaries translated from Burmese language to English are also used to document the version of Nirvana that the Buddhism in Myanmar has evolved and practiced. This study essentially aims at exploring and understanding the category of Nirvana evolved as a discourse in the writings and commentaries of Buddhist literature.

In order to evolve conceptual framework, attempt has been made to consult several books and articles not only to gain access to theoretical inputs but also for information on various aspects of Nirvana as a philosophical issue. By using both primary and secondary sources, this study attempts to explore and document the category of nirvana from various perspectives such as linguistic, philosophical,

sociological, theological and spiritual. In short this study is an attempt to evolve a framework to explore the multiple meanings of the concept of Nirvana and its changing relevance from historical perspective.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDY

This study aims to capture the multiple perceptions and meanings of Nirvana represented in the canon of Buddhism from the Buddha to subsequent Buddhist teachers. The concept of Nirvana has never been a static phenomenon. Originally propounded by the Buddha as one of the important component of his Dhamma, travelled a long way and acquired several meanings in the due course of time. The main thrust of this study is to track the theological and historical trajectory of the phenomenon of Nirvana however with particular reference to Theravada Buddhism.

Capturing the evolutionary trajectory of Nirvana is indeed a difficult task as it is a concept mainly discussed and dwelt at philosophical and theological level. On account of this fact, mention and engagement with the phenomenon of Nirvana was mainly by the celebrated Buddhist teachers. Hence, the study of Nirvana can effectively be conducted by the discourse analysis method which enables us to capture the evolutionary trajectory of Nirvana and its historical context.

The method of Buddhist Hermeneutic is used to explore the contextual and complicated meaning of Nirvana. Attempt has been made in this study to combined this method with the concept of discourse analysis which is mainly proposed by Mitchell Foucault in order to explore the how regimes of truths are constructed by multiple discourses emerges in historical contexts. The combination both Buddhist Hermeneutics and discourse analysis is combined by historical narrative method to construct a picture the Nirvana as a conceptual domain that evolved in the history of Theravada Buddhism

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Buddhism has been an enigmatic religion and thought which influenced human thoughts for several centuries. Even though it is an established religion, it is known for deep humanistic and philosophical insights. On account of these qualities, the famous Buddhist scholar and reformer Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pointed that Buddhism is a science of man which guide him on the question of what to do and what not do for making life of human beings happy and harmonious.¹ Buddhist philosophy and its humanist perspective thus attracted the attention of scholars.² In fact attempt has been made by Buddhist scholars to propagate the philosophical ideas of the Buddha and their potential for emancipation of humanity.³

Buddhism is one of the established religions of the world. Even though it originated in India, but mainly flourished in south East Asia. Particularly the Theravada form of Buddhism emerged as main religion in Sri Lanka and Myanmar.⁴ The fact however is that Buddhism with its rich religious heritage and formidable philosophical disposition remained as an enigma to academia and public life as well. Particularly Buddhist philosophy became a sought after domain in academic circles word over.

Buddhism as religion, philosophy and practice had attracted the attention of academia and general public. The fact is that Buddhism has been represented as one of the global religions which had rich philosophical tradition.⁵At the same time, the Theravada form of Buddhism gained prominence as one of authentic Buddhist

¹ B.R. Ambedkar, *Buddha and His Dhamma*, Siddhartha, New Delhi, 2004.

² NaradaMahathera *The Buddha and his Teachings*, Jaico, New Delhi, 2006

³ Thich Nhat Hanh, *the Heart of Buddha Teachings*, RHUK, New Delhi, 1999.

⁴ Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, (Ed), *Religions of South Asia: An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2006.

⁵ Gerald L. Berry, *Religions of the World*, Branes & Noble, New York, 1954.

traditions that still exist.⁶ This tradition considered to be not only authentic but also consist of rich philosophical legacy. This study mainly confine to exploration into doctrinal study with particular reference to the concept of Nirvana.

The area of Buddhist philosophy as an academic field broadly deals with doctrinal position of Buddhism as a religion and value system. Besides this, Buddhism has also been perceived as a science which liberates human beings with path of meditation and enlightenment.⁷ Buddhist Philosophy also represented as a spiritual domain that allowed rationalist thought to coexist with belief.⁸ At the same time the philosophy and belief system of Theravada Buddhism attracted the attention of scholars.⁹

While exploring spiritual and philosophical aspects of Buddhism, scholars mainly focused on the meditation as a means to follow the true Buddhist tradition.¹⁰ The concept of non-violence as a value advocated by the Buddha also explored by studies and represented it as great virtue inculcated by the Buddha.¹¹ The domain of morality is perceived as ultimate message of Buddhist teaching and philosophy.¹² The notion of compassion towards fellow human beings and all living beings as well has also been documented by studies.¹³ Among several aspects these are some of the aspects dwelt by studies on Buddhist philosophy. In spite constituting a core doctrinal position, the concept of Nirvana has not received adequate attention of scholars as a conceptual category.

⁶Tan Thu, *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma*, Edinburgh, 1988.

⁷ Robert Wright, *Why Buddhism is true: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2017.

⁸ Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as a Philosophy: An Introduction*, Hackett, London, 2007.

⁹ Kate Crosby, *Theravada Buddhism: Continuity, Diversity and Identity*, Welly Blackwell, London, 2013.

¹⁰ Lorry Rosenberg, *Breath by Breath: The liberating Practice of Insight Meditation*, Shambhala, 2004.

¹¹ Kenneth Kraft, *Inner Peace and World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Non-violence*, Sunny Press, 1992.

¹² Christopher W. Gowans, *Buddhist Moral Philosophy: An Introduction*, Ròutledge, London, 2014.

¹³ Jeffery Hopkins, *Cultivating Compassion: A Buddhist Perspective*, Broadway, 2001.

The concept of Nirvana has been an important domain of Buddhist spirituality and philosophy.¹⁴ Irrespective of differences among different Buddhist schools, Nirvana became an important goal to be achieved.¹⁵ Apparently we do have studies on the concept of Nirvana and various aspects of it. These studies can broadly be classified into two categories. Firstly the studies represent Nirvana as means to attain enlightenment by following the teachings of the Buddha and secondly, the studies documenting Theravada Buddhist perspective of Nirvana. Let us see the first category of studies on Nirvana. It has been proposed that Buddhism has immensely contributed for advancement of civilizations of several Asian countries and especially the concept of Nirvana exercised deep impact on the ethical life of Asian people.¹⁶ Among the teachings of Buddhism the path of Nirvana has occupied very special place. It has been proposed that the path of Nirvana laid down the foundations for moral life among the followed of Buddhism.¹⁷

The concept of Nirvana has deeply attracted the attention of western scholars. There have been several commentaries on the nature of Nirvana offered by western scholars. The broad agreement among them is that Nirvana is a path for complete liberation of human existence.¹⁸ Practicing Buddhism, it has been proposed that can only be possible by the path laid down by the way of Nirvana. Thus the doctrine of Nirvana has been perceived as a complicated path to be followed to realise the Buddha Dhamma.¹⁹

¹⁴ Steven Collins, *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery and Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.

¹⁵ Swati Chopra, *Buddhism: On the Path to Nirvana*, Mercury Books, London, 2005.

¹⁶ L.M. Joshi, *Aspects of Buddhism in Indian History*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, 1973.

¹⁷ Narada Mahathera, *The Buddha and his Teachings*,

¹⁸ Richard Welton, *the Buddhist Nirvana and its Western Interpreters*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963.

¹⁹ Radhika Abeysekera, *Practicing the Dhamma with a View to Nibbana*, New York Buddhist Vihara, New York, 1993.

The second category of studies deals with the concept of Nirvana by focusing on Theravada Buddhism. It has often been claimed that Theravada Buddhism represents the original and authentic version of teachings of Buddhism. Naturally the concept of Nirvana that was evolved by the Buddha also preserved in Theravada Buddhism. Central importance has been given in the doctrines of Theravada Buddhism to the concept of Nirvana.²⁰ It has been believed that the true Buddhist life is needed to be devoted to practicing Dhamma and prepare him/her for attaining the path of Nirvana.

As a country which has been practicing Theravada Buddhism, Myanmar has evolved its own version of the idea of Nirvana with strict adherence to the original teachings of the Buddha. The concept of Nirvana has received a serious attention in the circles of Buddhist sangha in Myanmar.²¹ Nirvana as an ideal and authentic way of preparation of human life for the ultimate liberation propagated among Buddhists in general and monks in particular. On account of this, the idea of Nirvana has occupied an important place in Buddhist society of Myanmar.²² The concept of Nirvana according to some studies constitutes the centrality of the teachings of the Buddha.²³ The occupation of Theravada Buddhism with the ideas of Nirvana and several aspects associated with it went to such an extent that a comprehensive manual has been prepared which is expected to be a guide for practitioners of Buddhism.²⁴

Apparently the concept Nirvana has been one of the important doctrinal aspects of Buddhism in general and Theravada Buddhism in particular. It has been perceived as a way to life and achieve ultimate object of Buddhist life i.e. liberation.

²⁰ Mahasi Sayadaw, *A Discourse to Nibbana via Noble Eightfold Path*, Rangoon, 1980.

²¹ Robert Lawson Slater, *Paradox and Nirvana: A Study of Religious Ultimates with Special Reference to Burmese Buddhism*, University of Chicago, Illinois, 1951.

²² E.J. Thomas, *The Road to Nirvana: A Selection of Buddhist Scriptures Translated from The Pali*, John Murray, London, 1950.

²³ Mahasi Sayadaw, *Nibbanapatisamyutta Kata or on the Nature of Nibbana*, Rangoon, 1981.

²⁴ Ledi Sayadaw, *a Manuel of Nibbana*, Government of Myanmar, Rangoon, 2004.

The area of Buddhology which is a study of Buddhist philosophy, history and religious practices mainly focus on doctrinal aspects such as ethical living, compassion, moral being, etc. The concept of Nirvana has received less attention in comparison with other doctrinal aspects. However, we do have several commentaries, discourse and manuals on Nirvana and various aspects related to it.

Having reviewed some of the important studies that are dealing with Nirvana as a phenomenon and important doctrinal aspect, this study attempts to highlight the following points which are not being adequately covered in the existing studies on the concept of Nirvana: a comparative analysis of the concept of Nirvana from various schools of Buddhism: to explore the changing nature of Nirvana as a concept and doctrine: to capture the concept of Nirvana in the theological history of Theravada Buddhism and essential features of it. The main ambition of this study is to document the multiple versions of Nirvana and its changing nature of meaning in the history of Myanmar.

A BRIEF NOTE ON CHAPTERS OF THE STUDY

In order to capture the discourse on Nirvana in Buddhism in general and Theravada Buddhism in particular, this study has been organized into four chapters. The following section narrates the brief note on chapters of the study.

The first chapter entitled 'Introduction' proposes the schematic and thematic structure of this study. This chapter has been organized into the following sections: introduction of study, context of the study, objective of study, hypothesis of study, methodology of study, review of literature and note on chapters of study. The main objective of this chapter is to propose a thematic picture of this study.

The second chapter entitled ‘Evolution of Buddhism with particular reference to Theravada Buddhism’ focus on the evolutionary trajectory of doctrinal position of Buddhism that has evolved with passage of history. In this process attention has been given to evolution of Theravada Buddhism and its doctrinal position. This exercise has been narrated with the help of Buddhist council popularly known as sangitis which were held in different parts of Asia in different time periods. It was with the help of these councils an attempt has been made in this chapter capture the evolution of Buddhist doctrines and its preservation and dissemination in India and Myanmar.

The third chapter entitled ‘The concept of Nirvana as a ‘doctrine’ in Theravada Buddhism’ designed to capture the meaning and essence of the phenomenon of Nirvana with particular reference to doctrine of Theravada Buddhism. The main objective of this chapter is to document the evolutionary trajectory of the concept of Nirvana from the Buddha to the recent times at one level and documentation of multiple meanings of Nirvana as concept at another level. This chapter also attempts to analyses the concept of Nirvana in Buddhist that has been believed and practiced in Buddhism in Myanmar.

The forth chapter entitled ‘Conclusion and findings’ documents the observations and findings on the topics. In a way this chapter also proposes the summery version of this study by the way of highlighting the significant findings.

CHAPTER: II

TITLE OF CHAPTER:

THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND ITS CANONICAL DOCTRINES

ABSTRACT OF CHAPTER

This chapter documents the evolutionary trajectory of Buddhist doctrines from historical perspective. This chapter has been designed to analyze the institutionalization process of Buddhism by focusing on various Buddhist councils and also captures the attempts that were being made to preserve the teachings of the Buddha. The main objective of this chapter is to trace the evolutionary history of Buddhism in general and Theravada Buddhism in particular.

CHAPTER: II

INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to capture the doctrinal history of Buddhism with particular reference to Theravada Buddhism. The evolutionary process of doctrinal aspects of Buddhism has been captured with the help of different Buddhist councils that took place ever since the death of the Buddha. This attempt enables us to track the evolution and preservation of Buddhist doctrines and at the same time development of Buddhist thought and practices organized into the form of different sets in different countries. This chapter also demonstrate the evolution of the doctrinal principles of Theravada Buddhism.

The historical evolution Buddhism as an institutionalized religion represents interesting process. This process appears to be driven not by a blind faith but a democratic process wherein most of the Buddhist sanghas gathered six times in the form of Buddhist council and attempted to preserve the authentic version of the teachings of the Buddha.²⁵ The teachings of the Buddha preserved in a unique by the way of preventing serious distortions and misinterpretation.²⁶

Buddhist thought and philosophy is nothing but the essence of the teachings of the Buddha. The teachings of the Buddha are preserved and pass on to generations with unique method. The Buddhist sanghas used to assemble and after prolonged debate and discussion the teachings of the Buddha are codified and preserved in the form of Pali canon.²⁷ This chapter attempts to explore the different Buddhist councils

²⁵ Donald S. Lopez Jr, *the Story of Buddhism: A Concise Guide to its History and Teachings*, HarperOne, 2009.

²⁶ Rupert Gethin, *the Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

²⁷ Mukund Rao, *The Buddha: An Alternative Narrative of his Life and Teachings*, Element, New Delhi, 2017.

and document the way the teachings of the Buddha were institutionalized in the form of Pali canon. Attempt has also been made to trace the evolution of Theravada Buddhism and its core doctrines. This attempt is useful to trace the context of institutionalization of Buddhism in history.

Attempt has been made by some studies to document the history of Buddhist councils and supporters of such process.²⁸ Effort was made by some studies to document the attempt made by different Buddhist councils to preserve the genuine teachings of the Buddha by the way of preventing possible distortions.²⁹ This chapter extends this line of inquiry further and attempts to document the evolutionary trajectory of Buddhism by the way of giving attention to Theravada Buddhism.

THE FIRST BUDDHIST COUNCIL

It would be useful to trace the context for emergence of need for conveying Buddhist council in the history of Buddhism. The Buddhist tradition says that the Buddha, Vibhajjavadi, entered Parinirvana in the Ingini forest of Kusinara owned by king of Mallas on Tuesday in the early morning in Mahasakarit 148 in the full moon day of Kason. After having entered Nibbana on the seventh day, Subhadda, a monk shared the following opinion with fellow monks: "Oh! Monks, not to worry about the demise of the Buddha and no need to cry. Now, we are fully liberated from the monk, Gotama, who is repressive by telling us what we should do and what we should not do. Now, we could do what we can and we could not do the things which we have no desire to do."³⁰ The third savaka, Shinmahakassapa heard what Subbada has said. He thought the words dangerous for existence of Sangha and therefore wanted to convene a meeting to systematize the teachings of the Buddha. Hence he planned to hold

²⁸Jinah Kim, *Respectable of Sacred: Illustrated Manuscripts and the Buddhist Book Cult in South Asia*, University of California Press, 2013.

²⁹La Vallée Poussin, Louis de, *The Buddhist Councils*, K.P. Baagchi, Calcutta, 1976.

³⁰ *Culavagga-Pali, Vinaya-pitaka*. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1995.

Sangiti (recitals) or Councils to collectively recite, authenticate and inventory the entire corpus of Buddha's teachings. Brahmas, Devas and humans paid homage the mortal remains of the Buddha for seven days. It is believed that paying homage to the cremation of the mortal remains lasted for seven days with aromatic substances. Relics were distributed on the waxing day of Nayan on the 21st day of homage. On the distribution day of the relics, thousands and thousands of people gathered at the site.³¹

If we believe in the Buddhist tradition, about seven lakhs of sanghas were congregated, the third savaka, a disciple of the Buddha, Mahakassapa told the monks what Subada had told over the Buddha. The monk told them that Subhadda's words are detrimental for sustainable existence of Sanghas. It was felt that in order the sasana to exist in perpetuity, Buddhist Council was to be held. All the seven lakhs of sanghas agreed to hold sangiti. They urged Mahakassapa to select sanghas to take part in the sangiti. So, Shinmahakasapa selected 499 monks who were Tipitakadara patisambida tevijja etadagga. Later, with the desire of the sanghas, Ashin Annanda was selected. There were 500 monks who participated in the sangiti. King Ajatasatru made ample provision for food and lodging for (500) Tipitakadara patisambida tevijja arahats led by Ashin Mahakasapa.

The first Buddhist Council was thus held in the Saptaparni cave situated on the side of Mount Vebhara in 486 BC. A pandal was erected at the instance of King Ajatasatru outside of the cave. It lasted starting on the (5) waxing day of wagaung to (5) waning day of Tabaung totalled (7) months. The monks who participated in the Buddhist Council reached to a consensus on three important principles. The three

³¹ *Mahavagga Pali*, Suttanta-Pitaka. Digha-Nikaya. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1972.

essential principles are the core foundations of Theravada form of Buddhist. The first Buddhist Councils also resulted in the following compilation of Pali literature:

- The Vinaya Pitaka which mainly contains the rules of Buddhist order and it was recited by Upali.
- The Suttapitaka was recited by Ananda and it consisted of collections of Buddha's sermons on matters of doctrine and ethical beliefs.

THE THREE RULES OF THERAVADA

It was decided in the first Buddhist council that the following principles should strictly be followed by the followers of the Buddha:

- (1) The monks are not allowed to designate new designations.
- (2) The designations made by the Buddha are not allowed to remove.
- (3) All the sikkhapadas, rules concerning morality, are to be paid respect.

The above mentioned rules are followed and those who do not change the Pali texts of the Buddha; who do not remove the texts and who maintain the texts are called Theravada sect. After the demise of the Lord Buddha, there were no sects. There are monks who follow the original teachings of the Buddha.³² This was the historical process through which Theravada Buddhism came into existence.

THE SECOND BUDDHIST COUNCIL

The second Buddhist council was necessitated by several developments that took place after the departure of the Buddha and the need for preservation of his teachings in a systematic way. An attempt was made by several sets of monks to infuse their practices into the teachings of the Buddha. In order to address the chaotic conditions that prevailed over the teachings to be followed, the Second Buddhist Council was held at Vaisali a century after the passing of the Lord Buddha and to be precise it was held in 386 BC

³²*Culavagga-Pali, Vinaya-pitaka*. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1995.

under the support of king Kalasoka. It is recorded in the Cullavagga that the monks of the Vajji country were in the habit of practising the Ten Points (dasa vatthuni) which were regarded as unorthodox by Ashin Mahayasa, the son of Kakandaka. He declared these practices to be illegal and immoral in the extreme. In order to decide they were adhammavada, he went to Vaisali. With the encouragement of Mahayasa, twelve lakhs of sanghas congregated in Vaisali and the Ten Points (dasa vatthuni) invented by vajjian monks were declared to be illegal. Venerable Yasa openly declared these practices to be unlawful. Moreover, vajjian monks were expelled from the brotherhood. The Venerable Sabbakami was elected president of the Second Buddhist Council and held it with the help of King Kalasoka at Valikarama monastery.³³

THE CONTEMPORARY BUDDHIST COUNCIL

The contestations over the control on the scriptures, teachings and practices of the Buddha gradually acquired higher degree. The Vijjian monks, who were expelled from the brotherhood, left Vaisali and organized the unlawful monks. When the number of monks reached to (10000), they held another Council attended by ten thousand monks at Kosambi. It was called the Great Council (Mahasangiti). Some lords of territories in states encouraged the vajjian monks' Buddhist Council.³⁴

It was often claimed by the Buddhist tradition that the vajjian monks attempted to destroy and manipulate texts that are preserved by Ashinmahakasapa and Ashin Ananda. They attempted to change the content of Pali texts. These attempts, it was claimed that were not in accordance with the spirit and teachings of the Buddha. They did not take direct meanings but indirect meanings of the teachings of the Buddha. They were able to make some changes in Sutta and Vinaya by the way of

³³*Parajika-Atthakatha, Vinaya-pitaka*. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1995.

³⁴*Visuddhimagga-atthakatha*. Vols. 1 and II. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1993.

removing some content and inserting new content. They invented new Sutta and Vinaya which were in accordance with their wishes. Moreover, they removed Parajika Palitexts which are included in the five Vinaya treatises. The unlawful monks thus removed the whole Abhidhamma from the tipitaka. Furthermore, they rewrite new Abhidhamma treatises. They also removed Patisambhida Pali texts and Mahanide Casuanidesa Pali texts. They took out some jataka stories from the Pali texts and invented new jatakas.

It was also mentioned by the tradition that the Vajjian monks invented new style of wearing robes that was not in a proper manner. New prescribed articles for use by monks were invented. Moreover, they also invented new style of living, eating and going. In making robes, they invented a new form of shirts and pants. All what they had invented were against the original and genuine teachings of Lord Buddha.³⁵ Effort was made by monks gathered in the second Buddhist councils to prevent such attempt and preserve the original teaching of the Buddha.

THE ORIGIN OF MAHASANGIKA SECT

It is to be noted the divisions within the Buddhism began to appear after death of the Buddha. These differences arose on the nature of teachings to be adopted as authentic in practicing Buddhism. The Mahasangika sect emerged in the Buddhasasana originated from unlawful vajjian monks who held contemporary Buddhist Council at Kosambhi. Since the emergence of the Mahasangika sect who removed and added Pali texts, those who knew the records of sangayana held by Mahakasapa who adhered to the original teachings of the Buddha are called Theravada sects.

The Theravada Buddhist sect is not separate breach of Buddhist. In order not to be mixed with Mahasangika sect, it is called Theravada. Followers of the

³⁵*Visuddhimagga-atthakatha*. Vols. (1) and (II). Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1993.

Theravada Buddhist sect respected and adhered to the interpretations of Ashinmahakasapa and other elders. The Mahasangika Buddhist sect does not respect the interpretations of Ashinmahakasapa and other elders. Theravada means the original Buddhist texts convened by two Buddhist Councils. The original teachings of the Buddha which were guarded and protected by Ashinmahakasapa and other elders remained the foundation to Theravada Buddhism. Those who respect and follow the Theravada are called Theravada sect.³⁶

It is generally believed by Buddhists that among the trees, pipal tree is the holiest and Theravada is also the holiest because it was protected and committed to memory by Ashinmahakasapa and consecutive elders. The sect is like a big pipal tree. The remaining Mahasangika sect and others are like bulbous growth of pipal trees. This is the way Theravada Buddhism represents authentic version of Buddhist teachings and constant attempt was made to stick to the original teachings of Buddha

SECTS DESINTEGRATED IN TO BRANCHES OF BUDDHISM

In the due course of time, Buddhism has been divided into different sets having their own ideological and doctrinal structure. The Mahasangika, the pioneer sect, forked out two sects: Gokulika sect and Ekabwyaharika (Ekambawharika). The Gokulika sect was again disintegrated into Pannativada sect and Vahulika. Among the two sects, Vahuliya sect became Cetiya sect. There were five sects appeared after the Buddha passed away one hundred years ago. If Mahasangika sect is added, there would be of six sects. These sets came into existence on the question of authenticity if the teachings of the Buddha.

THE MAIN SECT BRANCHED OUT OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM

³⁶ Soliyakassapathera, *Vimativinodanitika*, vols, (I), Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1960. (See also) Sariputtathera, *Saratthadipanitika*, vols, (I), Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1960.

In the due course of time, two small sects branched out from Theravada Buddhist sect which are Mahisasaka sect and Vajjiputta sect.³⁷ These sects as follows:

- (1) Sarvastivadin sect and
- (2) Dharmaguptikas sect appeared.

Among the two sects, Kasyapiyas sects emerged from Sarvastivadin sects. Sautrantikas branched out from Kasyapiyas sects. Moreover, Sautrantikas sect branched out from Sankantika sect. From the Vajjiputtika sect, (1) Dharmagptika sect (2) Bahusrutiyas sect (3) Chandagarika sect and (4) Sammitiya sect were emerged in the due course of time.

Thus, there were 11 minor sects branched out from Theravada Buddhist sect. If Theravada is added, the total number of sects is twelve. At the end of the Second Buddhist Council and during the 200 years of sasana, there were 12 Theravada sects and 6 Mahasangika sects. So, the total number of sects that were emerged with the broad umbrella of Buddhism is eighteen.³⁸ Among these sects, main Theravada sect did not differ from Mulasangiti and Mulaniaya which was Abhinaka sect. The remaining seventh sects were different from Mulasangitivand Mulaniyama.³⁹

SETTING UP SEPARATE SECTS DURING THE THIRD BUDDHIST COUNCIL

After the Second Buddhist Council several problems in terms of following teachings of the Buddha and practices to be adopted have come about. This was lead to organization of another Buddhist council. The Patisambhidapatta Tipitakadara mentions that 1000 arahats led by Ashin Moggaliputta Tissa held the Third Buddhist Council in Pataliputra at Ashokarama monastery under the aegis of the celebrated

³⁷*Visuddhimagga-atthakatha*. Vols. 1 and II. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1993.

³⁸*Kathavutthu, pali, Abhidhammapitaka*, Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1972.

³⁹P.V.Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1971.

Buddhist monarch, Priyadarsi Asoka in 250 BC. The main objective of this council was to purify the canon which had been imperiled by the rise of different sects and their rival claims, teachings and practices. Moreover, dhamma and vinaya were convened that lasted nine months. The Mahasangiti sect branched out from the Theravada School convened the first Contemporary Buddhist Council while Shinmahayasa and sanghas were convening the Second Buddhist Council. When Ash-inmahamoggaliputta Tissa convened the third Buddhist Council, Sarvastivadins or Savasativadi sect rejected from the Third Buddhist Council congregated near Rajagriha at Nalanda convened the Contemporary Second Buddhist Council.

At the end of the third Buddhist Council, King Vahiradaratha was killed by his warrior Sungapuhsamitra, a Brhamana, and took the reign of the throne. The dynasty was called Sunga dynasty or Mitra Dynasty. He was not a Buddhist but a Bhramana and a strong follower of Brahmanism. Buddhism was thus begun to decline having lost royal patronage and Buddhist monks gradually left Majjiadesa and went to other regions.⁴⁰

The Buddhist monks gradually migrated to different regions on account of loss of royal patronage to Buddhism. The Centre of Theravada School was Cetiya Hill near Vedita town in the south of middle India. The Savasativadi sect moved to Urumonda Hill near Mathura town on the west bank of Upper Yamuna River. Other sects also migrated to the regions liberated from Sunga's power. In order to satisfy the Bhramanavadin Kings, Sarvastivadins and Mahasanghika sect members not only changed the meanings of Pali but they taught with Sanskrit language. So, the Pali texts of northern Buddhists were changed into Sanskrit which was prohibited by the Buddha. Although the centre of Theravada Buddhist School was shifted but it do not

⁴⁰U Po Kyar, *Mahayana*, pp. 26.(Burmese language)

change into Sanskrit as the Bhramanavadins wished. But they still keep it in Magadhi language and teach it with this language.

Even though the Buddhist community had a setback for several centuries having lost support from ruling dynasties, the ray of hope came in the form of the Kushana dynasty. Kings of Sakya or Kurushaka clans dominated Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Gandhara, and Kashmir beginning from north Indian to Mathura. The dynasty was called Sakya or Kushana dynasty. King Kanisha convened the pitakas of Sarvastivadin sect in about Buddhist Era 650. His intention was to unite the different sects in order to be united.⁴¹ Asaghosa the monk who participated in the King Kanisha's Buddhist Council wrote *Buddhavamsa* named *Buddhacarita*".

Asaghosa the scholarly monk was respected by Mahayana school for his contribution. His monumental text *Buddhacarita* was one of the important factors responsible for establishment of the Mahayana school. The seed of Mahayana planted by Ashin Asaghosa was nourished by Asin Nagajuna and it became a popular and well known religion within (300) years. Thus, Ashin Nagajuna was well known for the establishment of the school for the northern Mahayana Buddhism. The name of Nagajuna means the worshipper of snakes. A hood is covered on the head of Nagajuna image and the body of the cobra wound the image which is found on the wall of the Nalanda University. The meaning of Ajuna means Taunkkuan tree. And he was born under the shade of Taunkkuan tree so that he was called Ajuna. So, Nagajuna worshipped the snake and born under the shade of Taunkkuan tree.⁴²

It is mentioned by the Buddhist tradition and mythology that the coming of Nagajuna is foretold by the Buddha. The birthplace of Nagajuna was formerly called

⁴¹ P.V.Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p.84.

⁴² *Ibid*, p, 84.

Vidamma desa. Now, it is called Decan plains situated between Amarawady and Nagajunakonda. The Lord Buddha preached Savaka desana in this human abode. Bhodisatta or Sunnata which was more subtle and deep meaning desana was preached in Patala or Naga abode.

Nagajuna was invited to Patala Palace in Naga abode and had taught him Sunnata. So, this belief was brought by Nagajua from the Naga abode. Those who accepted Sunnata belief brought from Naga abode was formerly called Mijjamika sect. Saddhamapondayika and Paramita treatises were the Pali of Majjamika sect.

The core features of the Mijjamika sect as follows:

- (1) Alakhana-No owned lakhana was based and Sunnata was accepted.
- (2) Attha was too alike with Anatha.
- (3) Every being could be a Buddha.⁴³

It has generally been accepted the fact that Mahayana school was descended from Sunnata of Majjima sect's belief. It could be said that it is descended from Vinnana belief of Majjima sect established by Asanga and younger brother Vassonbhandu. Mahayana emerged from the two combined Sunnata and Yogacara sects of Mijjamika School. If the beginning of Mahayana school is looked at, (1) Savakayana (2) Pacceka Buddhayana (3) Samasambuddhayana were found and it was originated from Yana which was used by Assayosa who headed the Buddhist Council held by King Kanishaka. Actually, the word Yana is equivalent to Bodhi which is widely used in Theravada.

The three words Savakabodhi, Peccekabodhi and Sammasambodhi were changed into three yanas which were Savakayana, Peccekayana, and Sammasambuddhayana. Majjima sect members emerged during the Buddhist Era

⁴³Seintun,*Seeking for the Buddha by going around the world*, Panshwepyi Book publisher,Rangon,Myanmar,June,2009.

(700) presumed that only Savakayana and Peccabuddhayana could enter Nibbana that was selfish practice. It was not a practice which could not save the beings. Only Buddhayana practice could save the beings. So, Buddhayana was the noblest doctrine of Mahayana and it should be practiced. Savakayana and Peccekabuddhayana should not be practiced that is mentioned in Saddamapondayika Treatise. Buddhayana is the most noblest so that it must be practiced. Whether the controversial view that Savakayana and Peccekabuddhayana should not be practiced or not was the question reached to the highest when Yogacara sect emerged around Buddhist Era (900).

The Majjima sect that accepted the view that Savakayana and Peccabuddhayana should not be practiced that was according to the Saddamapondayika treatise. So, Majjima set called Sarvastivadins, Yogacara and Sankrantivadins sect members were called downtrodden name, Theravada. Thus, Majjimavadins who accepted new view were automatically called Mahayana school.⁴⁴ Actually, Theravada school was not called Mahayana school. Mahayana is not called because they followed pure Buddhayana. If they accepted all three Yana, they were called Hinayana. The view that accepted Buddhayana was called Mahayana.

MAHAYANA AND HINAYANA SECTS OF BUDDHISM

The general meaning of Maha-Great; Yana-Vehicle Great vehicle is that a thing expected to carry all the beings to Nibbana. It is said that they became Mahayana school members only if Bodhisatta view (Sammasanbuddhayana) is accepted. The word Mahayana, Bodhisatta (the future Buddha or the Buddha to be) reached to the top around Buddha Era 900 when Yogacara sect appeared. Majjima sect members who accepted new views of Savastavadins, Suttantikans and Vinayavadins who did not accept Boddhisattavadins called them Hinayana. And at the same time, Mahayana

⁴⁴2500 Years of Buddhism, p. 8.126.

was appeared and this way Mahayana set emerged as one of the important set having its distinctive set of doctrines and practices within Buddhism.

The Mahasangika sect members, the contemporary sect of Theravada, calling themselves "Mahayana" and "Hinayana" became a usage related aspect. It is said that in light of the evidences, the use of Hinayana word was not intended to Theravadins. So, it also means that Theravada is not Hinayana. Those who did not want to accept Sammasambuddhayana or Buddhayana view was called Hinayana.

RULES OF MAHAYANA

Some of the basic rules of Mahayana which constitute core doctrines as follows:

- (1) Alayavinnana-- Alayavinnana or the seventh vinnana principle in which all the seeds of kuso and akuso were stored.
- (2) Tathata--The original cause of Tathata depended by Alayavinnana is called paramatta sacca. Nibbana means the stableness.
- (3) Tathagata-- Beings were the transformation of Tathata which means Tathagata. In other words beings transformed into Tathagata.
- (4) Tathagataganva--Tathata was the origin of the beings' womb so that it was called Tathataga or Tathagatagwmva.
- (5) Dhammadhatu-- If the universe's new form of Dhammadhatu was accepted, each movement was member of the Mahayana.⁴⁵

The reason of why Mahayana was widespread and prominent was, Bodhisatta became popular and it changed to suit the wishes of the people. The Mahayana school ignored the strict rules of conduct, the subtle Abhidhamma and the austere practices of vipassana and the insight meditation. They praised the Buddha's miraculous power, wisdom and the power of the Buddha. Basing the unparalleled attributes of the

⁴⁵2500 Years of Buddhism, pp. 132-135.

Buddha, they spoke and wrote their wishful ideas. Praising the Buddha to be, they gave the name of Avalokitesara and Pancasiri.⁴⁶

The meaning of Bodhisatta is the Buddha-to-be and the Buddha-to-be was called deva in Mahayana. The Buddha was placed in the haven which was not directly connected by humans so that Buddha-to-be connected humans and haven. If the Buddha entered Nibbana, the benefit of the human beings cannot be carried out. So, the Buddha-to-be must not enter Nibbana. Moreover, the Buddha-to-be should help all the beings--from humans to animals--to become Buddha. There will be no death. All must be in perpetuity.

THE SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERISTICS OF MAHAYANA SECT

The principles of Mahayana set as follows:

- (1) The three kayas of the Buddha
- (2) The Doctrine of Bodhisatta
- (3) Tathatar and Dhammadhatu
- (4) Alayavinnana
- (5) Buddhabava in animals and the dusts

THE SENDING OF BUDDHIST MISSIONARIES TO NINE DIVISIONS

After the Third Buddhist Council, Buddhism gradually acquired missionary character and attempted to expand itself. Venerable Moggliputta Tissa foresaw bright future for the teachings of the Buddha. Therefore, he selected the arahats who were able to perform missionary work, and consulted with King Asoka to send them to nine countries. The following missions were sent to expand Buddhism:

1. A mission led by Venerable Majjhantika was sent to Kashmira, Gandhara (odern Afghanistan) and Pakistan.

⁴⁶ U Po Kyar, *Mahayana*, pp. 42- 44. (in Burmese language)

2. A mission led by Verable Maharevata was sent to Mahimsaka Mandala District (Mysore Province), India.
3. A mission led by Verable Rakkhita was sent to Venavaci (Malaba) of South-Dakkhinapata, India.
4. A mission led by Venarable Yonaka Dhammarakkhita was sent to Aparanta (Gujarat State), India.
5. A mission led by Venerable Mahadhammarakhita was sent to Maharatha District (Maharashtra State), India.
6. A mission led by Venerable Maharakkhita was sent Yonaka Province (Greek, Turkey and Southern Russia)
7. A mission led by Venerable Majjhima was sent to Himavanta region (Khotan, Yareka, Tibet, Bhutan and China)
8. A mission led by Venerable Mahinda was sent to Tambapanni, Sri Lanka and
9. A mission led Venaral Sona and Uttara to Suvannabhumi (Ramanna Province)

Each mission comprised five bhikkhus in order to enable them to attend sangha affairs.

THE SENDING OF BUDDHIST MISSIONARIES TO SUVANNABHUMI

It would be pertinent to trace the history and context of expansion of Buddhism in Myanmar. Suvannabhumi, land of gold, as names of oversee countries, were familiar to the Indians from a very early period. They occur in old popular stories such have been preserved in the Jatakas, Kathakosa and Brahtakatha, as well as more serious literary works, namely Buddhist literature. The following passage in Milindapanha makes an interesting reference to a few centres of the overseas trade of India: ‘As a ship owner, who has become wealthy by constantly levying tax on freight in some seaport towns, will be able to traverse the high seas and go to. . . Takkola or Cina. . .

or Suvannabhumi or any other place where ships congregate'. The Niddesa, the Buddhist or canonical work, also refers to sea voyages to Suvannadvipa (Gold Island, and various countries).⁴⁷

The name and fame of Suvannabhumi and Suvannadvipa travelled far beyond the boundaries of India, and we find reference to both in Greek, Latin, Arabic and Chinese writings. Pomponius Mela was the first to refer to the island of Chryse (gold)--a literal translation of Suvannabhumi in his "De Chronographia" written during the reign of the emperor Claudius (41-45 A.D.). Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) does not refer to the island of Chryse Chora--a literal translation of Suvannabhumi--and Chryse Cherosonesus or Golden Peninsular.⁴⁸

Indian literature has faithfully preserved the traditions of the early days of their perilous voyage to unknown lands beyond the sea. The stories preserved in the Jatakas and other similar collections frequently refer to traders' voyage to Suvannabhumi, land of gold, which was general designation of several lands in the Far East. Traders returned with immense riches from the land whose very soil was supposed to be made of gold. On the other hand, many met with shipwreck and there were also sufferings and miseries of other kinds. Some stories represent young Khatria princes, disposed of their hereditary kingdoms, sailing to Suvannabhumi to restore their fortune.

In relation to Suvannabhumi, Bimala Churn Law, author of "Geography of Early Buddhism", mentions that: "The Theras Sona and Uttara are said to have propagated Buddhism in Suvannabhumi, which is identical with lower Burma (Pegu

⁴⁷Sein tun,U, *Seeking for the Buddha*,

⁴⁸ R.C. Majumdar, *Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, Vol.II, 1937, pp.37-39.

and Moulmein Districts).⁴⁹ According to Sasanavamsa Suvannabhumi is Sudhammanagore that is Thaton at the mouth of the Sittaung River.

Viewed from a historic perspective on Southeast Asian civilization, the concept of Golden Land, regardless of the term employed, is polysemic. On the other hand, gold is precious commodity, while on the other, it is a symbol highly charged with religious meaning. Although Southeast Asia is not a major source of gold, it is found in some quantity in Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. The Greek geographer Ptolemy mentioned Southeast Asia as a source of gold.

There are a number of indications that Indians' expansion in the first century A.D. was commercial in origin. In the wake of Alexander's campaign, contact was established between the Mediterranean world and the East. Gold, spices, aromatic woods (sandal wood), and fragrant resins (camphor, benzoin) were among the products of the countries and islands beyond the Ganges that were traded.

The names Takkola, (market of cardamon), Karpuradvipa (the island of camphor), Narikeladvipa (the island of coconut palms), and many other similar Sanskrit place names show what attracted the Indians to the regions. But perhaps the attraction of these countries would not have been so great if they had not also had the reputation of being endowed with richness in gold, a reputation that is echoed in the Greek and Latin geographic names.

Apparently it was gold that attracted India to the east. Moreover, gold played a key role in the Indian expansion in further India. India lost its principal source of the precious metal shortly before the beginning of the Christian era. Traditionally India appeared to have obtained gold from Siberia by way of caravans that crossed Bactria, the old Greek name for northern Afghanistan and the northeast corner of Central Iran.

⁴⁹*Burma Gazetteer*, Thaton District, Vol. A. Rangoon. Gov. Printing, 1931, pp. 8-9.

But the historical fact is that active presence of nomadic people of Central Asia in the last two centuries before the Christian era had cut their route and deprived India of gold it needed.

Throughout Southeast Asia, gold is the colour of loyalty and is used in religious ceremonies. The gilded pagodas of Myanmar and Thailand are the most obvious examples. Gold also plays a major part in the Islamic and Hindu iconography of Malaysia and Indonesia. It adorns wayang puppets, a classical Javanese puppet drama that is the shadows thrown by puppets, and all types of royal regalia. The golden umbrella which is an essential component of royal symbolism in Muslim Java, Hindu Bali, as well as in Buddhist Thailand and Myanmar reflects this process.⁵⁰

The description of nine regions in which the Dhammadutas were sent for the purpose of propagation of the Buddha's teachings is mentioned in the Parajika Commentary, book of discipline. It is stated that Sona and Uttara with three other junior monks went to Suvannabhumi and subdued the cannibals (Yakka=ogre) who used to come from the sea and forcefully take away to devour every new born baby, whenever the royal family gave birth to one.

Burmese folk tradition mentions that four manusihas on the Koktheinayon hill and one manusiha at Kelasa stupa overlooking the sea are the standing proves of Sona and Uttara's victory over the pisacas. The origin of these monsters is associated with the coming of Buddhist monks created to drive away the ogries were part human and part siha called manusiha.⁵¹

The myth associated with entry of Buddhism in Burma also mentioned by the Kalayani inscription engraved in 1476 A.D. It mentions the driving of the monsters

⁵⁰HlaThaung,"*In Search of Suvannabhumi*", dynasty, book publisher third reprint.Yangon, Myanmar.2017.

⁵¹ Coedes, George, "*The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*", Edited by Walter F.Vella Translated by Susan Brown Cowing, University of Hawii, Honolulu, 1975. p.19.

away from Suvannabhumi. It states that: "The city was situated close to the seashore; a rakkhasi (female ogre), who lived in the sea, was in the habit of seizing and devouring every child that was born in the king's palace. On the very night the two theros arrived (in the palace), the chief queen of the king gave birth to a child. The rakkhasi, knowing that a child has been in the king's palace, went, in order to devour the infant, towards the town; she was surrounded by 500 attendants. When the inhabitants saw them they were greatly alarmed. The two theros, seeing the ogress (with her attendants) had assumed the surpassingly frightful appearance of lions, of which each had one head and two bodies, created (by their magical power) monsters of the same but twice the number of those accompanying the ogress, and close in upon them, obstructing their further progress. When the Pisacas saw themselves confronted by double their own number of like monsters created by the theros they cried out 'Now we shall be their prey' (we shall become food to them), and fled frightened towards the sea. In order to prevent the return of the ogress, the theros placed guards about the place and then preached to the assembled inhabitants the Brahmajalasutta.

E. M. Forchhammer, the late archaeologist of British Burma, recorded the deep-rooted tradition in his book *Notes on the Early History and Geography of British Burma* mentioned that:

To shield all new born infants from danger of the ogress, bracelets or palm-leaves, on which were traced the supernatural appearances created by the theros, were placed on their heads. The stone, on which the same appearances were sculptured, was placed on the top of the hill upon which stood the north-eastern portion of the town: this stone may be seen to this day. Buddhism flourished for a long time in Ramannadesa from the day of

its introduction. The Parajika Commentary match with the Greek geographer Ptolemy's accounts. According to him, he found cannibals in the gulf of Muttama. There is a big island known as island of the demon--Bilu in Myanmar and Semang in Mon. Two stone inscriptions in old Mon of 11th century A.D. mention that the city was named demon city, Raksapura in the ancient times. According to this story, Suvannabhumi was lying on the coastal land. Furthermore, Thaton was once called "Yakkhapura" (a country which is disturbed by goblins or ogres). The word or "Yakha" or Pisaca in the Mahavamsa is likely used with reference to those tribes such as Selungs, sometimes called gypsies. A great island situated near Muttama, on the mouth of the river Thanlwin, is called Bilookyun (the island of demons). When Venerable Sona and Uttara drove away the ogress who used to come from the sea and forcefully take away to devour every new born baby, whenever the royal family gave birth to one, they recited thus: "Dipassa Samantato arakkham thapetva". According to the Parajika Commentary, that Pali phrase means guards have been placed around the island. "Dipa" also means a peninsular." For instance, a peninsular surrounded by western Arabian sea in the west, Bengal seavin the east and Lankadipa Channel in the south was known as Jambudipa. Nowadays, it is taken as the Indian peninsula. Similarly, being surrounded by the Gulf of Thailand in the east, Malacca channel in the south, the Gulf of Muttama in the west, Suvannabhumi was referred to as "Dipa" in the commentary. The residents of Majjhimadesa used to give names to the places they came to, in accordance with the major products of each place. They called an island

resembling a sail Lankadipa, an island which produced barley Yavadipa (Java) and Thaton, which yielded gold was called Suvannabhumi.⁵²

The Kalyani Mon inscription of the 15th century identifies Suvannabhumi with Ramannadesa, the present Mon state. This seems to have popular support even today. The inscription locates the capital Suvannabhumi somewhere in the north-west of Kelasa Mountain with one half of it on a hill and the other half on a plane. This town, up to the time of the recording of the Kalayani inscription, went by the name of Golamattikanagara, because it contained mud-and-wattle houses resembling those of the Gola people in India. This town was situated on the sea-shore. The ancient Golamattikanagara is rendered into the Myanmar Kalataik or Mon Taikkala. In this town are said to have landed the first Buddhist missionaries, led by Thera Sona and Thera Uttara. Moreover, Mahavamsa definitely stated that in the 2nd century B.C., when the great Buddhist king of Sri Lanka, Dutthagamani, held a great alms giving ceremony on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone of his great temple, a delegation of monks from Kelasa monastery was present. Mr. Luce, the former professor of History of Yangon University, himself seems to accept that Kelasa was the monastery founded by Thera Sona and Thera Uttara.⁵³ By tradition Suvannabhumi is Winka, Lat. 17° 13' N and Long 94° 4' E, at the foot of the Kelasa Range in Bilin Township, Mon state. The site lies on a flat land, adjoining the paddy fields on the west, which have been reclaimed from the Sittaung River some 12 miles to the west. Immediately on the west is the Kelasa Hill range whose peak at the Kelasa pagoda is 1,181 feet above sea level. The vestiges of brick and laterite structures are strewn all over in Winka village and the bolts and cables are left stranded by the foreign ships in Ayethema village, situated near Kelasa. They might

⁵²*The teachings of Buddha*, Published by the Department for the promotion and Propagation of Sasana, printed in the union of Myanmar, p.277.

⁵³ Htin Aung, *Burmese History before 1287: A Defence of the Chronicles*, p.121.

have favoured the growth of a human settlement and prosperous port in ancient times.⁵⁴

In the ancient times, the South-East Asian region remained under the influence of Indian culture. Trade was the driving force for India for the early contact with other nations. It led to settlements, which slowly developed into colonies. They had grown up in the states like Cambodia, Malayan Peninsular, Sumatra, Java, Bali, Thailand and Myanmar.⁵⁵

It is a well-known fact that in the early times, the ships normally kept within sight of the shore. Direct voyage between India and the eastern countries was out of the question until the discovery of monsoon, which comes from Arabic word for season, mausim. Hippalus, the Roman pilot discovered it about 45 A.D., the period change of monsoon winds. This hardly leaves any doubt that normally the voyage was all along the coast. A case in point is Fa-hien's return trip to China, who took direct voyage from India to Malay Peninsula. The road that Fa-hien, the celebrated Chinese monk, took to return home after his stay in India (412-413) A.D. is fully described by him. Leaving Tamalipiti, Orissa port, he took fourteen days to reach Sri Lanka. From there he embarked for Java and called at Nicobars (Nakkavaram), the island of the naked. Until that time, coastal voyage was the only means to the east.⁵⁶

The Indian connection with Burma in the domain of ethnicity mentions by K.C. Chakravarti, in the following words: "Unlike the Rakhine and the Burmese (Myanmar) who are Mongolians, the Mons were related racially with Mundas in central India and it seems that in some pre-historic times large scale Munda migration had taken place."⁵⁷

⁵⁴Burma Gazetteer, Thaton District, Vol.A Rangon Government Printing, 1931, pp.8- 9.

⁵⁵HlaThaung, "*In Search of Suvannabhumi*".

⁵⁶ibid.

⁵⁷ K.C. Chakravarti, *Ancient Indian Culture and Civilization*, p.314.

Migration of Mons took place in the prehistoric times and the voyage would have been kept within sight of the shore. According to their traditional nursery songs, handed down by generation by generation, they found and settled in Rammannadesa, connected with the Sanskrit word Rmania and Pali Ramaneyyaka meaning pleasant and lovely. So it was a magnet for the later settlers. In other words, the area might open the floodgate to more settlers. Of course the landscape is very pleasant and lovely, comprising very fertile deltas so that was why the Indian and Sri Lankans had referred to it as Suvannabhumi.

Taw Sein Ko visited the village of Ayetthema, thought to be the location of Suvannabhumi, situated in Kyaikhto township, Mon state, over a hundred years ago. Moreover, the village is the Taikkala and Golamattikanagara of Kalyani Inscription. At the time of his visit, the sites of many villages were under water. The villages, according to him, were seemed prosperous from the rise trade. He also found traces of a wall and moat still exist, and fragments of pottery and glazed tiles in the neighborhood.

THE FLOURISHING OF BUDDHISM AT SRIKSHETRA

Srikshetra, one of the ancient Pyu cities, is situated near Pyi, middle Myanmar. It is thoroughly explored sites in Myanmar and intermittent excavations having been conducted since 1907. Moreover, intensive diggings were carried out from 1967 onwards. Archaeological discoveries, however, indicate that the city attained its height of prosperity between the 5th and 9th centuries A.D. Gold plates found at Maung Kan field near Hmawza, Pyi, in 1897 is one of the greatest finds.⁵⁸

It was a momentous discovery. They contained Pali inscriptions in the Kadamba script. This new find shows the Pyu's knowledge of Pali Buddhism,

⁵⁸Dr. Nai Pan Hla, *the Significant Role of the Mon Language and Culture in Southeast Asia*, p. 46.

Theravada. Each of the two plates contains three lines which are in perfect state of preservation. They begin each with the well-known Buddhist formula: "Ye dhamma hetuppa bhava Tesam hetum Tathagato aha Tesam ca yo nirodho Evamvadi Mahasamano". In this stanza we have the essence of Buddhism which had the power of converting Sariputta to Buddhism. Perhaps this is the reason why it is used in propagating the religion. It is a very important and profound teaching. By realization one can be released from the rounds of rebirth. It is somewhat difficult to ascertain for whom they were intended. But it is likely that these epigraphs, by way of very short essentials of the religion, served the purpose of a guide book. It is intended to help the memory for those preachers of the faith who early took upon themselves the task of evangelizing the land of Suvannahumi. It is also likely that these short epigraphs had been enshrined as sacred objects of the religion within the stupas and temples from the ruins of which they were eventually picked up. The scraps on the gold plates are in line with Pali Buddhism. Furthermore, a book of twelve leaves of gold, each inscribed on one side only, datable to 5th century, was discovered from Kinba Ba's mound in 1926. It consists of excerpts from Abhidhamma and Vinaya. Altogether the twenty leaves contain nine extracts from the different texts of the Pali Pitaka.⁵⁹ The main object of this section was to show the way Buddhism spread to Burma and various evidences ranging from myth to archaeological evidences. The next section of this chapter shows the contribution of some of the Buddhist monks for institutionalization of Buddhism in Myanmar.

⁵⁹Niharranjan, Ray. "Theravada Buddhism in Burma." 1946. P.36.

SHIN ARAHAM AND BAGAN

Development of Buddhism in Myanmar has closely linked with the life of Shin Arhnam and his contribution to Buddhism. Biography of Shin Araham can be found in history, particularly in introduction of Pariyatti and religious literature. According to Buddhist tradition, Buddhism was not flourished in Bagan. In order Buddhism to flourish in Bagan, arahantas planned, as foretold by the Buddha, and went to the Sakka. They formally requested him to offer them a missionary monk. The Sakka requested a net or celestial lords to be conceived in the womb of a wife of Brahmana. He was born and entered monkhood. He became Shin Araham and was famous.⁶⁰

Shin Araham, to propagate Buddhism throughout Myanmar, went to Bagan and dwell in a forest not near and not too far from the capital. And Sakra prevailed upon a certain hunter to see Shin Araham. And when the hunter saw him, he said, 'Here is a reverend man and an amiable. He must be eminent and noble. I'll take him to the capital and present him before the king'. So he took him, and Shin Araham followed with the eight things needful.

So they came before the king; and the hunter said, 'I found this man in the forest, and I have brought him here'. 'When the king beheld the great and glorious Shin Araham, he was glad like the young bud of a lotus that has found sunshine, and he thought, 'Verily this man is not of low degree, but noble. The noble law should be with him.' And he thought, 'If he be of high degree, he will take a high seat, if he be of low degree, he will take a low seat.' So he said: 'Sit where it is meet for you to sit.' And Shin Araham, wishing to show how truly great he was ascended the high royal throne and sat there.

⁶⁰Sirisobamathera. *Sasanavamsa Dipani*, Leitimandaing Press, Yangoon, 1336.

The king was highly appreciated and requested the monk to preach him part of the teachings of the Lord Buddha. So Shin Arahan preached the Law, beginning with the things not to be neglected, the sermon preached by the novice Nigrodha to King Asoka. Then the king's heart was full of faith, steadfast and immovable. At the end of the preaching, the king asked the monk where the Buddha was staying; how much the number of dhamma the Buddha had preached and any other disciples the monk had. The monk replied that the Buddha had entered nibbana and relics also remained. And there were 84000 dhammakhandha, article from the corpus of Lord Buddha's teachings, preached by him. There were thirty two sets of pitakas in Thaton. Moreover, there were paramatta and samuti sanghas except him. When the king heard the news, his volition was beyond words. The king told the monk that he did not have any other monk to be respected. And he would follow the admonitions of Shin Arahan. The king rejected the opinions of the Aris and false monks of Bagan. Moreover, all the people of Bagan forsook their opinions and were established in the good Laws of the Buddha.⁶¹

Gradually the Aris lost their gain and honour and bore great hatred against Shin Arahan. The king fearing that the Aris would practice ill against him, took good heed and appointed guards enough to defeat the thirty Ari lords and their sixty thousand disciples. And the king unfrocked the thirty Ari lords and their sixty thousand followers and enrolled them among his spearman and lancers and elephant dung-sweepers. And the king said: "Our grandsires and great-grandsires who ruled this kingdom in unbroken line, followed the doctrines of the Ari monks. If it were good to follow them again, I would fain follow them!" So fain was he, it is said.

⁶¹Sirisobanathera.*op.cit.* p.75.

BRINGING TIPITAKA FROM THATON

Among the three sasana--pariyatti sasana, patipatti sasana, pativeda sasana in the teaching of the Buddha, patiyatti sasana is important which could help to flourish patipatti sasana. If patipatti sasana flourish, pativeda sasana will also flourish. Patiyatti, one of the three pitakas, was not complete. Bagan did not have the scriptures and the three pitakas. Only Bagan obtained them by sending gifts and presents and entreating them of diverse countries which have relics of the Buddha's body and the books of the pitakas. If Bagan obtained them, the religion of the Buddha lasted long. King Anawratha asked Shin Arahan where the pitakas could be obtained. The monk replied that in the country of Thaton were thirty sets of pitakas and many sacred relics.⁶²

King Anawratha made ready store of gifts and presents sent a minister to Thaton to ask for them with seemly words. But the king of Thaton answered ill. In other words, King Manuha replied to the minister that the relics of the Buddha were incompatible with the rough people of Bagan with total disregard. So King Anawratha gathered all his mighty men of valour and marched to Thaton by land and water.

It was mentioned in Buddhist tradition that by water the king sent eight hundred thousand boats and four score million fighting men. His land force, it is said, contained eight hundred thousand elephants, eight million horses and eight million fighting men. It is said that when the vanguard of the naval force reached Bago, the whole armaments of boats had yet not acquitted Bagan. On the land forces, when the vanguard of the army reached the frontier of Thaton territory, the rear guard had yet not quitted Bagan.

⁶²Ibid. p.76.

When King Manuha of Thaton heard that Anawratha had marched forth with an innumerable host with his four generals, he was afraid and shut the city gates and prepared to meet him by fortifying the city. Though they made many assaults they were not victorious, because of the charms which had been devised. So king Anawratha destroyed the charms as advised by Kala foot runner. Not until all these preparations were made could the royal host of fighting men enter Thaton. They captured king Manuha with his family and ministers, presented to them to king Anawratha. He brought away the sacred relics which were kept in jewelled casket and worshipped by a line of kings in Thaton. And he placed the thirty sets of the pitakas on the king's thirty two white elephants and brought them away. All the relics were kept in a jewel studded casket and placed at the head of his bed. Moreover, he paid homage to the casket. The thirty sets of pitakas were kept in the many tiered, spire-like roofed building. The learned monks taught the learning monks. A thousand monks who were well versed in pitaka were also brought to Bagan. The propagation of Buddha sasana in Bagan was possible by defeating Thaton and bringing pitakas along with sanghas which is inscribed in Kalayani inscriptions in BE 1601, thakarit 419.⁶³

Punnagama was named because the three ratanas namely the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, were fulfilled. In the later years, Punnagama was corrupted into Bagan. It was also named "Punnapuruttame" in the Mahaaggamahapandita inscription. The four heroes were sent to Sri Lanka in order to bring pitakas and tooth relics at the time of king Anawratha. Shin Arahan edited by comparing the two sets of pitakas brought from Thaton and pitakas brought from Sri Lanka. According to the learned monk, the two pitakas were nearly the same. The edited pitaka was copied and placed in the repository of the Buddhist scriptures. Some were distributed throughout

⁶³Ibid. p.78.

Myanmar. Thus, king Anawratha paid homage to Shin Arahan and did missionary works and built pagodas.

It is said that Ashin Nyarna, Ashin Ananda and Ashin Silabuddhi did missionary work hand in hand with Shin Arahan. Four monks from Sri Lanka came to Bagan at the time of king Anawratha. Those as follows:

- (1) Ashin Mahakacci living on the north of Lay Gain Kyaung did missionary work.
- (2) Ashin Anuruda living on the east of Shwe Kyaung donated by King Moe Nyin did missionary work.
- (3) Ashin Buddhaghosa living on the north-west of Mamyaw yazar pagoda did missionary work.
- (4) Ashin Upali living in Kala monastery situated on the west of Upali sima.⁶⁴

The above mentioned monks are included in Yazawin Choke written at king Monyin. Shin Arahan lighted the dhamma of Bagan down to king Alaungsithu. There were four monks who guided the king. According to the Glass Palace Chronicle, Shin Arahan, Seinnyetminthardaw, Ashin Ananda, Mahagiri deva were included. Shin Arahan or Dhammadasi who not only helped to flourish Buddha sasana in Bagan but was depended by four classes of people died at the age of 81 at the time of Alaungsithu who reigned only two years. He entered anupadisesa nibbana. His mortal remains were poured with aromatic substance and placed in the coffin. His mortal remains kept in the coffin was placed on a seven tiered spire-like roofed building. All the people were allowed to pay respect the mortal remains of Shin Arahan for days. The body was cremated after seven days later. The ashes of the monk were collected in a long-necked pot studded with jewels. The long-necked pot was brought to the

⁶⁴Ibid, pp.68-70.

base of Tuyintaung situated on the east of near Bagan. The ground was cleared and consecrated. A tomb was made and the relic of Shin Arahan was entombed. All the people of Bagan paid homage to the tomb enshrined the relics of the monk.

The place of Shin Arahan was given to the elder, son of Seinnyekmin, who became primate and was borne in a golden palanquin wheresoever he went. Panthaku, the teacher of Seinnyekmin, was invited and taught Buddhist scriptures. Buddhism was flourished at the time of the king. Minshinsaw, son of the king, was expelled along with his troops from the capital city and lived in a province named Tun Tonepu. He brought learned monks who taught Buddhist scriptures. Bagan sasana was flourished and the king supported the monks with four things that the Buddha has permitted monks to accept as offerings.⁶⁵

THE BIOGRAPHY OF ASHIN MOGGALIPUTTATISSATHERA

The biographical details of Moggaliputtatissthera are necessary to capture the way Buddhism spread to different parts of Burma. The senior monks foresaw at the end of the Buddhist Council that there would be enemies in the sasana. There would be Siri Dhamma Asoka who would be a king of empire. The king deeply respected the sasana and supported to the monks with four things. As a staunch follower of Buddhism, he conferred large gifts upon the monastic establishment of the Buddhists. This attracted non-Buddhists to the Buddhist Sangha for an easier life with the result that the purity of the sangha suffered and consequently its periodical religious observances were interrupted.

Hence, it was decided to hold a religious synod at Pataliputra to determine the true nature of the dhamma. And to banish those who would not adhere to it. Moggaliputtatissa was the spiritual leader of the Mauryan Emperor Asoka, his son

⁶⁵Ibid, p.72.

Mahinda who brought Buddhism to Sri Lanka. Moggaliputtatissa also presided over the Third Buddhist Council.⁶⁶ According to the Mahavamsa, the 6th century chronical of Sri Lanka, Tissa who was thoroughly proficient at a young age became a Buddhist monk. He was taught Vinaya and Abhidhamma Pitaka. He later attained arahantship and became an acknowledged leader of the monks at Pataliputra. He became known as Moggaliputtatissa. In the 3th century BCE, there existed many schismatic monk-groups or schools. The following is an account of these schismatic schools according to the Commentary: "One hundred years after the demise of the Buddha, the so called Vajji-puttaka monks declared for laxer rules of the Order, and founded Maha Sangiti schools from which, in the 2nd, century after the Buddha's Great Disease, 5 other schools sprang up making six in all. From the original school of Buddhism, which by reason of its having been rehearsed by 500 Theras, or Elders three months after the Buddha's demise was called Theravada, there had already seceded 11 schools, the most important among them being Sabbatthi-vada school--making 12 in all. Thus, in the third century B.C., the number of schools rose up to eighteen."⁶⁷

The famous third Buddhist Council was held at Pataliputra under the sponsorship of King Asoka. A few years of his accession to the throne, Asoka became Buddhist monarch. The Council was held because the purity of the Canon was imperiled due to the rise of different sects and their rival claims, teachings and practice. Moggaliputtatissa was disappointed to observe the corrupt practices that had crept into the sangha order. He succeeded in suppressing the heresies and expelling the sectarians from the sangha order. The most important outcome of the Buddhist

⁶⁶*Buddhagosathera, parajika-atthakatha.*

⁶⁷*Kathawutthu-Atthakatha*, Abhidhammapitaka, Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1972.

Council was that the true faith and propounded the Abhidhamma treatise, the Kathavattu, during the session of the Council.

At a festival for the dedication of the Asokarama and the other viharas built by Asoka, Moggaliputtatissa informed Asoka that one becomes a kinsman of the Buddha's religion only by letting one's son or daughter enter the Sangha. In accordance with the advice of Moggaliputtatissa, Asoka had both his son Mahinda and daughter Sanghamitta ordained. They were sent to Sri Lanka to evangelize Buddhism. Moggaliputtatissa suppressed a number of heresies whose opponents were causing dissensions. In the order by their loose teaching and living, and also to recite, classify and arrange all the teachings of the Buddha, it was held expedient to convene the Third Buddhist Council.

THE FOURTH BUDDHIST COUNCIL

The quest of the Buddhist community for more systematic codification of the teachings of the Buddha continued. In order to have a uniform edition of the Tipitakas and proper preservation of them resulted in the Fourth Great Buddhist Council. It was held in Tambapanni, Sri Lanka, in 29 BC under the patronage of King Vattagamani. The main reason for its convening was the realization that it was not possible for the majority of monks to retain the entire Tipitaka in their memories as had been the case formerly for the Ven. Mahinda and those who followed him soon after. Therefore, as the art of writing had, by this time developed substantially it was thought expedient and necessary to have the entire body of the Buddha's teaching written down. It was thought that textualisation of tradition enable for better reach and preservation of the teachings of the Buddha.

King Vattagamani an enthusiastic supporter of Buddhism supported the idea of monks and thereby a council was held specifically to reduce the Tipitaka in its

entirety to writing. The main objective of this council was to preserve genuine Dhamma. Ven. Maharakkhita and five hundred monks recited the words of the Buddha and then wrote them down on palm leaves. This remarkable project took place in a cave called, Aloka Lena, situated in the cleft of an ancient landslip near what is now Matala. Thus, the aim of the Council was achieved and the preservation in writing of the authentic Dhamma was ensured. In the 18 century, King Vajayarajasiha had images of the Buddha created in the cave. After the Council, palms leaves books appeared, and were taken to the other countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. The Tipitaka and its commentaries were brought to SriLanka by Mahinda of the 3rd century BC.⁶⁸

THE FIFTH BUDDHIST COUNCIL

In order to have uniform edition of the Tipitaka and to record them on marble slabs this cannot be easily worn out. It was held necessary to convene the Fifth Great Buddhist Council. The leading Mahatheras and lay men were Jagarabhivamsa, Narindabhidaja, Sumingalasami and 7 officials of the court, who passed the highest examinations in the Tipitaka. The number of bhikkus who attended the Council was 2400. The venue of the Council was at Mandalay. The supporting king was King Mindon. It was held in 1871 C.E. (2414 B.E.). The marble recording took a considerable length of time, and the recitations of the Tipitakas lasted for five months. The bhikkhus recited the Tipitakas in the Royal Palace. The text was recorded on 729 marble slabs. Vinaya is recorded on 111 marble slabs; Suttas are recorded on 410 marble slabs; Abhidhamma is recorded on 208 marble slabs.⁶⁹ This was indeed a

⁶⁸Sein tun,u.Seeking for the Buddha by going around the world, Pan shwe pyi Book Publisher,Rangon,Myanmar,June,2009.

⁶⁹*Buddhagosathera, parajika-atthakatha-vinayapitaka.*

fantastic job done by the council for it able to preserve the teachings of the Buddha in a sustainable way.

ABHIDHAMMA EXAMINATIONS

Popularization of the teachings of the Buddha was undertaken in Burma in order to spread to gospel of the Buddha. Not the least important of the Union Buddha Sasana Council is the holding of religious examinations in the Abhidhamma throughout Union of Burma (Myanmar). In 1952, the examinations were held on the 8th, 9th and 10th November at 88 examination centres and there was an enrolment of more than twenty thousand candidates of whom 16,229 sat for the examination. There is no age limit for the examination and it is interesting, especially in view of the subject matter of the examination, that ages ranged from 9 years to 83 years old and that all from infants to octogenarians showed very great enthusiasm.

The main focus was devoted to the Abhidhamma in the examination conducted on the teachings of the Buddha. The Abhidhamma is one of the three "Tipitakas" of the Holy Scriptures and is a rather complex ethic-philosophical teaching. As the Venerable Nyanaponica thera points out in his English publication "Abhidhamma Studies"; "The Abhidhamma is not a speculative but a descript philosophy" and he also points out that "the thorough analysis of the phenomena undertaken in the Abhidhamma, leaves no doubt what Nibbana definitely is. It is true that these ontological results of the Abhidhamma are "merely negative" but they represent certainly more substantial and consequential contributions to the ontological problem than the "Positive" assertions of many metaphysical systems, indulging in improvable or fallacious conceptual speculations.⁷⁰

⁷⁰The chattha Sangayana souvenir Album, Union Buddha Sasana Council Press, Rangoon, Union of Burma.1954. See Also-Myat Myat Tun, *Sattha Sangayana Mahadhamm thabin*, Rangon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs. 2007.

The examination is divided into three parts and is open to all laymen and to Buddhist Nuns. A candidate must secure at least 50% of the total marks allotted in order to pass the prescribed exam. Those who pass the examinations are allotted money prizes and a candidate who passes in all the three parts in the same year and obtains the highest marks is awarded a special cash prize and a coveted gold medal as well. These examinations are expected to increase in numbers of candidates in future and generate interest in learning of Buddhist scriptures. The examinations are supervised by Government officers and stationary is supplied free by the Council which also makes arrangements for examination halls, seats and tables, etc. In quite a few places, with the help of local residents and religious associations, the candidates and supervisors were also given meals. It is really encouraging to such great co-operation in the deeper study of Buddhist religion in Myanmar.

THE SIX BUDDHIST COUNCIL (SCRUTINIZING AND EDITING GROUPS)

The five Great Buddhist Councils have already passed, each being convened under its own circumstances. Indeed all the five councils have made tremendous and commendable contribution to the preservation of the teachings of the Buddha. The sixth Great Buddhist Council was held in May 1954. At the Conference of the Ovada-Cariya Nayakas held on the 11th of February 1953, the following resolutions were passed in connection with the holding of the Six Buddhist Council:

(1) Resolved that there being plenty of errors and omissions made by the scribes in repeatedly copying the Nikayas and the teachings of the Buddha, it is expedient to hold the Sixth Great Buddhist Council with a view to purifying the Texts, scrutinizing, editing, reciting and arranging all the teachings of the Buddha.⁷¹

⁷¹The chattha Sangayana souvenir Album, Union Buddha Sasana Council.

(2) Resolved that in order to print these edited Tipitaka in books, to recite them in the Sixth Great Buddhist Council and to distribute these all over the world with the object of promoting the Buddha's Sasana, it is expedient to hold the Six Great Buddhist Council.

(3) resolved that in order to enable the Union of Myanmar, in collaboration with the other Buddhist countries of the world, to propagate Theravada Buddhism in foreign lands, and to promote the Buddha's Sasana as far as practicable, it is expedient to hold the Sixth Great Buddhist Council.

Among these three resolutions, action to implement has received great public attention. The Union Buddha Sasana Council is in possession of some of the Tipitakas, formerly scrutinized and edited by the learned Sayadaws of Mandalay under the auspices of the Young Men's Buddhist Association of Yangon. The remaining portions which were left unedited are being scrutinized and edited by eighty groups of learned Mahatheras who are entrusted with the responsibility of purifying the Texts, scrutinizing, comparing, editing, classifying and arranging all the teachings of the Buddha.

The Pali Texts adopted by the Fifth Great Buddhist Council and inscribed on 729 marble slabs at Mandalay will form the basic Texts. The Pali Texts as extant in printed form in Sinhalese script in Sri Lanka, in Thai script in Thailand, in Cambodian script in Cambodia, together with the Texts published by the Pali Text Society, England, will form the basic Texts for collation. The Commentaries (Atthakathas) and Sub-Commentaries (Tikas, Anutikas and Yojanas) will be basic Texts for references.

Moreover, as the teachings of the Buddha will have to be recited at the Sangayana by some of the bhikkhus, those who have already nominated themselves

for this specific purpose are now laboriously learning the Tipitaks by heart. The Buddhist mission headed by the venerable Nyaungyan Sayadaw, with its members the Honourable U Win, Minister for Religious Affairs and other Religious Officers visited Sri Lanka on a goodwill mission in Januar. They took with them the Five Nikayas that have been compared with the Mandalay inscriptions and handed them over to the Mahatheras of Sri Lanka for scrutiny. It is also the intention of the Union Buddha Sasana Council to invite foreign Buddhist Mission to this country and seek their advice in regard to the Sangayana matters. The Sangha Raja of Cambodia visited Myanmar on a goodwill mission and has also given his advice in connection with the Sixth Great Buddhist Council.⁷²

THE SIXTH GREAT BUDDHIST COUNCIL

The Sixth Great Buddhist Council has had the collaboration of the learned bhikkhus of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Nepal etc. and thus had a much wider significant than any of the previous Great Councils. About 500 bhikkhus in Myanmar who were well versed in the study and practice of the teachings of the Buddha took the responsibility of re-examining the Text. For that purpose, they were organized into ten groups so that each group was responsible for a particular portion of the Tipitakas. A large corps of lay scholars edited the first draft of the Pali Texts and making original draft Myanmar translations for submission to the respective groups of bhikkhus. It was also intended that in each of the Buddhist countries as far as possible national groups of monks will be organized on similar lines.

The preparations were being made and the first meeting of the Great Buddhist Council was held on Visakha day (Full moon day of May) 1954. The Council continued till the completion of its work on the Visakha day (Full moon day of May)

⁷²The chattha Sangayana souvenir Album.

1956 which had also coincide with the completion of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's Great Disease. There is a common belief in all Buddhist countries that this anniversary will initiate a great revival of Buddhism throughout the world. The inaugural meeting of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council took place on the Visakha day of 2498 B.E. (Full moon day of May 1954).

Over 100 acres of garden land situated about two miles from Yangon have been acquired for the purpose of having the necessary building erected for holding the Sangayana. A pagoda known as "The World Peace Pagoda" has been constructed where the sacred relics of the two chief disciples of the Buddha (Sariputta and Moggalana) were enshrined with great pomp and ceremony attended by hundreds of thousands of people from all parts of Myanmar, including representatives from India and Sri Lanka. The new buildings are to centre on the pagoda. The Sangayana continued till the Visakha day of 2500 B.E. (the Full moon day of May 1956)

The Council was convened 83 years after the Fifth Great Buddhist Council was held in Mandalay ruled by King Mindon. The Council commenced proceedings on Visakha, 17 May 1954, in order to allow sufficient time to conclude its work on Visakha, 24 May 1956, the day marking the 2500 year celebration of Buddha's demise according to traditional Theravada dating.

The Sixth Council was sponsored by the Myanmar Government led by Prime Minister U Nu. He authorized the construction of the Kaba Aye Pagoda and Mahapasana Guha or "Great Cave" in which the work of the council took place. This venue was designed to be like the cave in which the first Buddhist Council was held.

As in the preceding councils, the Sixth Council's aim was to affirm and preserve the genuine Dhamma and Vinaya. The 2500 participating Theravada Elders came from eight different countries: Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal. A temple

in Japan also sent delegates. The only western monks to participate were German-born, Sri Lanka-residing Nyanatiloka and Nyanaponika Thera. Mahasi Sayadaw was appointed to ask the required questions about the Dhamma to Mingon Sayadaw, who answered them.⁷³

By the time this Council met all the participating countries had had the Pali Tipitaka rendered into their native scripts, with the exception of India. During the two years that the Council met, the Tipitaka and its allied literature in all scripts were painstakingly examined with their differences noted down, the necessary corrections made, collated. Not much difference was found in the content of any of the Texts. Finally, after the Council had officially approved the Texts, all of books of the Tipitaka and their commentaries were prepared for printing on modern presses. This notable achievement was made possible through the dedicated efforts of the 2500 monks and numerous lay people. Their work came to an end with the rise of the full moon on the evening of 24 May 1956, the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's parinibbana according to the Theravada dating. The Council's work was a unique achievement in Buddhist history. After the scriptures had been examined thoroughly several times, they were put into print, covering 52 treatises in 40 volumes. At the end of this Council, all the participating countries had the Tipitaka rendered into their native scripts except India.⁷⁴

REVIEW OF NIKAYA PITAKA OF SIX BUDDHIST COUNCIL

Teachings of the Buddha preached during the (45) vāsas or his disciples who followed the teachings of Buddha during the (45) vasa or after his demise are called Pali which is the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism. In other words, it is a series of

⁷³myat myat Tun, *Sattha Sangana Mahadhamm thabin*.

⁷⁴Thein maung, *History of Yangon*, zwe literary House, 33rd street, Yangon, 1966.

Buddha pāvacana. The words of Buddha are divided into groups. The subsequent section proposes a brief narrative on Buddhist texts.

FIVE NIKAYAS

The word "Nike" is derived from Pāli word named Nikāya. Its meaning is a collection of discourses arranged according to certain denominators. The teachings of the Lord Buddha are arranged into five such collections. The following are the five Nikāyas:

- (1) Dīgha Nikāya
- (2) Majjhima Nikāya
- (3) Samyutta Nikāya
- (4) Anguttara Nikāya
- (5) Khuddaka Nikāya

Thus, there are five collections of Nikāyas dealing with the teachings of the Buddha. They are Dīghanikāya, Majjhimanikāya, Samyuttanikāya, Anguttaranikāya and Khuddhakanikāya. It is a little bit necessary to explain how Nikāya and Pitaka are interrelated. If the teachings of the Buddha are divided according to Nikāya, there are five collections as mentioned above. If divided according to Pitaka, there will be three groups named Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma. There are 52 repositories of the Buddha's teachings. According to the printings of the Sixth Buddhist Council, there are 40 books. Some treatises are compiled in one book so that the numbers of treatises are 52 but there are 40 books only. If the treatises are classified, the books may be like this. The following are the brief accounts of each Nikāya included in five Nikāyas.⁷⁵

⁷⁵*Buddhagosathera, Parajika-atthakatha-vinayapitaka*, Rangon, Burma.

DIGHA NIKAYA

Dīganikāya, the collection of long discourses, has consisted of three tracts that are called vagga. The meaning of vagga is a group.

- (1) Silakkhandhavagga Pāli - The Division Concerning Morality.
- (2) Mahāvagga Pāli - The Large Division.
- (3) Pāthikavagga Pāli - The Division Beginning with the Pāthika, anicked ascetic.

1. There are 13 Suttas in the Silakhandavagga. Among the 13 Suttas, Brahmajala Sutta describes the sixty- two heretical speculative schools of the Brahmins and recluses and their doctrines. The sixty-two speculative philosophies are shown too false and rejected by the Buddha. All the heretical Brahmanas are entrapped in the net.

2. Samaññaphala Sutta mentions the doctrines by 6 heretical leaders who were contemporaries of the Buddha. Moreover, the elaborations of his perspective regarding the benefits of the contemplative life, moving from the material life to the spiritual, can be read. Ambattha Sutta that explains the nature of Bhramana's caste system.

The Buddha explains the bad practice of carrying out of the sacrifice in Kutadanta Sutta and sacrifice means the donation of seeds to the cultivators, not killing animals. The Buddha explains in Kūtadanta Sutta. The Sutta is modern and real statesman should read it because they can take valuable lessons from it. Mahāli Sutta that explains Sīla, Samādhi, and Paññā is included in the Sutta. And Tevijjapatta Sutta also mentions the fortune telling which not beneficial to humans is. The Sutta further explains genuine road to Brahma inhibiting the higher celestial regions.

3. Mahāvagga Sutta Pāli has (11) Suttas. Among them, the Parinibbāna and before Parinibbāna situations are included. And the conditions of Majjima Desa at the time of the Buddha, culture and the preaching's of lokia and lokuttara well-being are fully explained in this Sutta. Furthermore, Mahāparinibbana Sutta is included. Mahasatipatthāna Sutta, the fundamental of Buddhism for the Buddhist, could be read in the Sutta. Mahanidana Sutta fully explains Paticcacamuppāda, the chain or law of dependent origination. Pathia Sutta mentions life after- life.

Akkana Sutta which explained the theories of the begining and the end of the world could be read. It is included in Patika Vagga which is the last treatise of Dīganikaya. Lakkhana Sutta which is Mahapurisalakhana trease, explains the image of the Buddha. It also gives the thirty two special marks of the Buddha. Each special marks of the Buddha explain (1) Causes (2) Kamma and its effect.

MAJJHIMA NIKAYA

It is the collection of Medium Length Discourses of the Buddha. This collection of Medium length discourses is made up of one hundred and fifty-two suttas in three books known as Pannāsa. The first book, Mulapannāsa, deals with the first fifty suttas in five vaggas, the second book, Majjimapannāsa consists of the second fifty suttas in five vaggas too; and the last fifty-two suttas are dealt with in five vaggas of the third book, Uparipannāsa, which means more than fifty.

- (1) Mulapaññāsa Pāli - The first fifty Discourses.
- (2) Majjhimapaññāsa Pāli - The Middle fifty Discourse.
- (3) Uparipaññāsa Pāli - The upper fifty Discourse.

They are called Three Pannāsa Treatises. (Pannasa=Panyarsa= Ngasae) Mūlapariyāya Sutta, the begining of Mūlapannāsa, explains how to eradicate "Attha" basing with implements. It might be easy but the Sutta is difficult and the meaning is

too deep. Apart from this, the three Pannasa Treatises are very essential for the majority of Buddhists. The Sutta is an eye opener to obtain Sammāditthi, the right view. The Sutta explains the seven visuddhi.⁷⁶

SAMYUTTA NIKAYA

The Samyutta Nikaya, connected discourses, are grouped into five vaggas. Each vaggas is further divided into Samyuttas. Kosala Samyutta is a group of discourses concerning King Pasenadi of Kosala, and Devata Samyutta deals with devas like Sakka, Indra, Brahma, which are made up of individual suttas.

All the suttas connected with Mara are grouped and is called Mara Samyutta. Nidāna Vagga Samyutta contains ten Samyuttas, all dealing with fundamental aspects of the doctrine. The discourses are chiefly concerned with the principals of conditionality and interdependence which is called Patīccasamuppāda, Dependent Origination. The main thing of Khandha Vagga Samyutta implies khandhas, the five aggregates that constitute what is regarded as a being. Khandha vagga forms an important collection of doctrinal discussions on such topics as atta, anatta, eternity, and annihilation.

Salāyatana Vagga Samyutta deals mainly with the six sense organs or bases of contact named internal sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind).

Maha Vagga Samyutta is made up of twelve Samyuttas based on Magga Samyutta and Bozīnga Samyutta. In brief, there are five Samyuttas. They are:

- (1) Sagāthāvagga samyutta Pāli - Connected Discourse with Verse.
- (2) Nidānavagga samyutta Pāli - Connected Discourse of
Conditionality.

⁷⁶ Ko lay u, A Guide to Tipitaka. Buddhamma Education Association, 1984.p.96.

- (3) Khandhavagga samyutta Pāli - Connected Discourse of Aggregates.
- (4) Salātatana vagga samyutta Pāli - Connected Discourse of Senses and Sense-Base.
- (5) Mahā vagga Samyutta Pāli - Connected Discourse of Large Division.

There are 7762 suttas in the five Samyuttas. Samyutta Nikāya is the most satisfactory treatise because it is like a dictionary of dhamma in reviewing the teachings of the Buddha. Sagathavaggasamyutta is recorded in a simplified way which is like nitigathas. Relevant teachings of Nidana Samyutta are grouped under the relevant headings which is very easy to read.⁷⁷

ANGUTTARA NIKAYA

This collection of Discourses, Anguttara Nikāya, containing 9557 short suttas is divided into eleven divisions known as nipatas. Each nipāta is divided again into groups called vaggas which usually contain ten suttas. These discourses are arranged in progressive numerical order.

Anguttara Nikaya constitutes an important source book on Buddhist psychology and ethics, which provides an enumerated summary of all the essential features concerning the theory and practice of the Dhamma. It is a dictionary of knowledge. In other words, it is the root of Myanmar culture. There are ways how to confront the dangers with courage. And there are ways how to eliminate fear. Moreover, the ways to be rich, the ways to be a learned person, the ways to be a famous person, the ways how to withstand ups and downs of life, the ways how to achieve the fruits of present life and after life.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Ibid.p.120

⁷⁸Ibid.p.132.

KHUDDAKA NIKAYA

Among the five Nikayas, Khuddaka Nikāya contains the largest number of treatises and the most numerous categories of dhamma. Although the word "Khuddaka" literally means "minor" or "small", the actually content of this collection can by no means be regarded as minor. Moreover, it can be divided into the Vinaya Pitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka and Suttanta Pitaka according to one system of classification.⁷⁹

(a) Khuddakanikāya Vinaya Pitaka

- (1) Parājika Pāli - The Book of Defeat.
- (2) Pācittiya Pāli - The Book of Confession.
- (3) Mahā vagga Pāli - The Book of Great Chapter.
- (4) Cūlavagga Pāli - The Book of lesser Chapter.
- (5) Parivāra Pāli - The Book of Appendix.

The treatises are called Five Vinaya. All the Five Vinayas should be studied in order to observe Buddhist Culture.

(b) Khuddakanikaya Abhidhamma Pitaka

- (1) Dhammasangnī Pāli - The Book of Enumeration of Dhamma.
- (2) Vibanga Pāli - The Book of Analysis.
- (3) Dhātukathā Pāli - The Book of Discussion of Elements.
- (4) Puggala Paññti Pāli - The Book of Designation of Persons.
- (5) Kathāvatthu Pāli - The book of Subjects of Discussion.
- (6) Yamaka Pāli - The Book of Pair.
- (7) Patthāna Pāli - The Book of Conditionnal Relations.

⁷⁹ Ibid.pp.133-36.

Among the seven Abhidhammas, (1) Dhammasanganī (4) Puggalapaññatti (5) Katha Vatthu have been printed. The nature of Abhidhamma with the basic mātika could be read in Dhammasanganī. Furthermore, the classification of puggala in Puggalapaññatti, wrong views at times of Asoka and the explanation of genuine Buddhism and fake Buddhism could be read in Kathāvatthu.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (c) Khuddakanikāya | - Suttanta Pitaka |
| (1) Khuddakapātha Pāli | - The Minor Reading. |
| (2) Dhammapada Pāli | - Word of The Doctrine. |
| (3) Udāna Pāli | - Verse of Uplift. |
| (4) Itivuttaka Pāli | - As It Was Said. |
| (5) Suttanipāta Pāli | - Group of Discourse. |
| (6) Vimānavatthu Pāli | - Stories of the Mansions. |
| (7) Petavatthu | - Stories of the Departed. |
| (9) Theragāthā | - Elders' Verse. |
| (10) Therīgāthā | - Elders' Verse, Pslams of the Nuns. |
| (11) Therāpadāna Pāli | - The Biographies of the Elders. |
| (12) Therīpadāna Pāli | - The Biographies of the Nuns. |
| (13) Buddhavamsa Pāli | - The Chronicle of the Buddhas. |
| (14) Cariyāpitaka Pāli | - The Basket of Conduct. |
| (15) Jātaka Pāli | - Birth-Stories. |
| (16) Mahāniddeśa Pāli | - The Major Exposition. |
| (17) Cūlaniddeśa Pāli | - The Minor Exposition. |
| (18) Patisambhidāmagga Pāli | - The Path of Discrimination. |
| (19) Netti Pāli | - The Guide. |
| (20) Petako Padesa Pāli | - The Instruction on the pitaka. |

Khuddakapatha Pali is called Pali Text reader because it mentions the questions and answers of 32 kodasa and how to recite saranagamana. The teachings preached to relevant persons such as Dhammapatha Pāli, Udana Pali and Etivuttaka Pali are very knowledgeable treatises.⁸⁰

The main objective of this elaborate chapter is that to document the process of evolution of Buddhism as an organized religion by the way of focusing on six Buddhist councils. The focus was devoted to exploring the process of preserving the teachings of the Buddha from oral to texts. At the same time this chapter also explores the way Theravada Buddhism came into existence with its strict adherence to the original teachings of the Buddha and its spread to different countries. Finally this chapter is equally concern with the way Myanmar as a country that followed the teachings of the Buddha attempted to collect, codify and preserve the original teachings of the Buddha. At the same time, this chapter attempts to document the process of preservation of the teachings of the Buddha in a systematic way. It was this process that made Buddhism in Asia as a systematic religions based upon the teachings of the Buddha.

⁸⁰ Nyanavara, Ashin, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Buddhist Terms*, part(I)& II), fujiyama press, Pazundaung, Yangon, 2017.

CHAPTER: III

TITLE OF CHAPTER:

THE CONCEPT OF NIRVANA AS A DOCTRINE IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

ABSTRACT OF CHAPTER:

This chapter deals with phenomena of Nirvana in the teachings of the Buddha. The attempt has been made to document the doctrinal position and practice of Nirvana with particular reference to Theravada Buddhism. In short this chapter narrates the multiple meanings and practices around Nirvana.

CHAPTER: III

INTRODUCTION

Among the doctrinal principles of Buddhism, the idea of Nirvana occupied a significant position and constitutes a quintessential feature of Buddhism as a belief system. It is not only an idea but also experience which is difficult to capture in the form of systematic language. This chapter makes a humble attempt to capture the meaning and essence of the concept of Nirvana and its multiple meanings. Attempt has also been made to analyse the changing meanings of Nirvana from historical and spiritual perspective. This attempt is useful in capturing the trajectory of space that the idea of Nirvana occupied within the Buddhist thought.

As an important Pali text of Buddhism, the Abhidhamma constitutes one of the important sources of teachings of the Buddha. It teaches the values essential for being good human beings for making good society.⁸¹ The value of the Abhidhamma for modern man and modern thought lies in its being able to bring ethics into the field of science and in serving as a meeting ground for many different schools of psychology and philosophy past and present.⁸² The value of the Abhidhamma is very much relevant to the environment and modern-day ecological concerns and as a value system capable of promoting sustainable management of ecology.⁸³ This chapter takes this line of inquiry further and attempts to capture the idea of Nirvana reflected in the Ahidhamma.

⁸¹ Bhikku Bodhi, *a Comprehensive Manuel on Abhidhamma: A Palit Text, Translation & Explanatory Guide*, Pariyati, 2003.

⁸² Rahul Banerjee, *Abhidhamma Principle in Theory and Practice Meditation*, BMBA, 2002.

⁸³ Thich Nhat Hanh, *The World we have: Buddhist Perspective of Peace and Ecology*, Parallax, 2003.

As a Buddhist text, The Abhidhamma is both a scientific treatise and a metaphysical discourse, and was taught by the Buddha. It analyses the constituents of living beings and the workings of their organic process. It also explains how the external world relates to beings and provides a means of understanding the intricate relationship between the mental and material elements, and how the natural laws govern and operate in the Universe. This leads to the Abhidhamma definition of what is real in the fundamental sense. This is other than Paramattha. There are types of this reality, namely; Citta (Mind or Consciousness), Cetasika (Mental factor or mental concomitant), rupa (Matter or Form and Nibbana (Ultimate reality or Final liberation). Among these four types of feature, the first three are empirical and mundane, while the fourth alone is transcendental. The reality is to the first three consists in their capacity for change and evolution. The concept Paramattha in Buddhist thought means fundamental category. The four types of Paramatthas are based on a distinct theory of degree of truth and reality. Although all four types of reality are commonly called Paramattha, there is a vital difference in the levels of reality as between the first three and fourth. The former belong to the realm of empirical reality while the latter belongs to the transcendental realm of the unconditioned absolute. Mind (Citta) and its mental factor.⁸⁴

The aforementioned factors can be captured from human cognition expressed in the form of language. They have no underlying permanent nature, but the fourth Paramattha, namely, ultimate reality, being of a transcendental nature, does not lend itself to verbal prediction. The four types of ultimate comprise, according to the

⁸⁴Anuruddha-thera, *Abhidhammattha-sangaha-Pali*. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1993.

Theravada Abhidhamma a total of eighty-two categories. The mind is one ultimate, mental factor divided themselves into fifty-two ultimate forms, matter is analysed into twenty-eight distinct forms and reality (Nibbana) constitutes one ultimate from the transcendental point of view.

Most of the source material that has been used in this chapter is drawn from the text Abhidhamma, that section of the Buddhist Canon which consists of seven books and details with Science and Metaphysics from Theravada Buddhist point of view.

ANALYTICAL STUDIES ON CITTA (MIND): A BRIEF REVIEW

The Buddha perhaps one of the tallest figures who had extensively focused on human mind and its potential in understanding and findings to several problems faced by humanity. Citta as a concept in linguistic sense a generic term in Buddhist psychology which deals with ethics, epistemology, and metaphysic denoting the active element in mind and mutation and conscious element in the ultimate reality. Interestingly this term is common to all schools of Buddhism and consisted of wide variety of meanings varying according to textual contest and philosophic tradition. It occurs in all strata of Buddhist literature ranging from the earliest authenticated Pali texts down to the lasted Tantric works of Buddhist mysticism. The complexity of usage it has often defied all attempts of modern scholarship at determining the specificity of its signification. Scholar both medieval and modern, have rendered it variously to mean mind, though, hearth, conception, conscious, mood, emotion, spirit, idea and attitude. Judged by its general usage in the Pali Nikayas, Citta appears basically to refer to the centre of focus of man's emotional nature as well as to the seat and organ of though in

its active, dynamic aspect. Citta plays a more central and culture and essential role in Buddhism than in any Indian systems of philosophic thought and religious practice.⁸⁵

Citta is defined in the Abhidhamma from several points of view. The Abhidhamma speaks of three different ways of predication. Namely: predication by agency (Kattusadhana), predication by instrumentality (Karanasarana) and predication by simple flux (Bhavasarana). Each one of these predications has been used in the definition of Citta although the only way of predication by Abhidhammikas as yielding true knowledge is the predication by simple flux. The three definitions of Citta given by the Abhidhammatthasangaha are:

1. As an agent, Citta is that which cognizes the object (Arammanam cintetī ti cittam).⁸⁶
2. As instrument, Citta is that by means of which the accompanying mental factors cognizes the object (Etena cintetī ti cittam)
3. As nature, citta is itself nothing other than the process of cognizing the object (Cintanamattam cittam).⁸⁷

Among the three definitions, the last one is regarded as the most appropriate for it capture the true essence of the concept of citta. In this chapter, we systematically discuss more details under regarding the contents: Definition of Citta, the nature of Citta, the functions of Citta, causality of Citta, defilement of Citta, training and development of Citta, Citta in Nikayas and Citta in Abhidhamma etc according to Theravada Buddhist perspectives. The analysis of mind has significant relationship with the ideas or state of Nirvana.

ANALYTICAL STUDIES ON CETASIKA (MENTAL STATES)

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Patisambhidamagga- atthakatha. Yangon Burma, Department of Religious Affairs. 1992.

⁸⁷ Atthasalini atthakatha. Yangon Burma, Department of Religious Affairs. 1993.

Cetasika is generic term in psychological analysis denoting, in its widest sense, all aspects of mutation considered variously as psychic function-events, mental co-efficient, mental concomitants, mental constituents, mental factors, mental adjuncts, mental elements, mental faculties, mental stages, etc. In its more specific technical signification, the term denotes one of the classes of ultimate elements of existence into which the universe is objectively classified. Ven. Anuruddha, the author of *Abhidhammhatthasangaha* defined the cetasika by ways of four characteristics that are common them all:

1. Arising together with consciousness (Ekuppāda)
2. Ceasing together with consciousness (Ekanirodha)
3. Having the same object as consciousness (Ekalambana)
4. Having the same base as consciousness (Ekavatthuka)

There are altogether 54 Cetasikas are divided basically into

1. Seven universal factors (Sabbacittasāra)
2. Six occasional factors (Pakinnaka)
3. Fourteen unwholesome factors (Akusala) and
4. Twenty-five beautiful factors (Sobhana)⁸⁸

ANALYTICAL STUDIES ON RUPA (MATTER)

The Pali word for matter, Rupa, is explained by derivation from the verb Ruppati, which means: “to be deformed, disturbed, knocked about, appeared and broken.”⁸⁹

The commentators maintain “matter is so called because it undergoes and imposes alteration owing to adverse physical conditions such as cold and heat, etc.” The *Abhidhamm* enumerates twenty-eight types of material phenomena, which are

⁸⁸Anuruddha-thera, *Abhidhammattha-sangaha-Pali*.

⁸⁹Khandha salayatana vaggasanyutta Pāli. *Khajja vagga, khajjaniya, sutta*.

briefly comprised in two general categories; the four great essentials and twenty-four material phenomena derived from the four great essentials. All these twenty-eight types of material phenomena are distributed into eleven general classes. Seven of these are called concretely produced matter (Nippannarupa). The other four classes are called non-concretely produced matter (Anippannarupa). We will discuss the views found in the Pali texts and that of various Buddhist scholars like Buddhaghosa, Buddhadatta etc. These will be the core of this chapter.

ANALYTICAL STUDIES ON NIBBANA (ULTIMATE REALITY)

Buddhist philosophy narrated in the Abhidhamma text has thus intrinsic connection with Buddhist thought and had complex relationship with the ideas of Nibbana or Nirvana. Etymologically the word Nibbana is derived from a verb Nibbati meaning “to be blown out” or “to be extinguished.” It thus signified the extinguishing of the worldly “fires” of greed, hatred, and delusion.⁹⁰ But the Pali commentators prefer to treat it as the negation of, or “departure from” (Nikkhantatta) the entanglement of craving.⁹¹ For as long as one is entangled by craving, one remains bound in Samsara, the cycle of birth and death; but when all craving has been extirpated, one attains Nibbana deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. It is exclusively supramundane, and has one intrinsic nature, which is that of deathless. Nevertheless, by reference to a basis for distinction, Nibbana is said to be two fold; the element of Nibbana as experienced by Arahants is called “with the residue remaining” (Sapadisesa). The element of Nibbana attained with the Arahant's demise is called that “without the residues remaining” (Anupadisesa). In the commentaries, these two elements of Nibbana are also called the extinguishments of the defilements (Kilesa

⁹⁰Suttanipata Pali. Khuddaka-Nikaya. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1990.

⁹¹Patisambhidamagga-atthakatha, Digha-Nikaya, Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1986.

parinibbana) and the extinguishments of the aggregates (Khandha parinibbana). Further explanation would be offered in the subsequent section of this chapter.⁹²

THE INTERPRETATION OF NIBBANA FROM THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The idea of Nibbana which is the ultimate goal of a Buddhist is formed of the word Ni and Vana. Ni is a negative particle and Vana means lusting and craving. It departs from the craving that is called Vana, lusting.⁹³ According to the literary sense the word Nibbana means non-attachment. In another words, it may also be defined as the extinction of lust, hatred and ignorance, by the fire of birth, old age, death, pain, lamentation, sorrow, grief and despair it is kindled. The concept of Nibbaha thus represents a way of life perspective that was evolved and taught by the Buddha.

Another perspective of Nibbana in Buddhism is Parinibbana which can be classified into three types. One is dissolution, peace with freedom, of all defilements, kilesa, and so it is called Kilesaparinibbana. The second type is Khandhaporinibbana by virtue of the dissolution of rupa khanda, physical body. The third is Dhatuparinibbana by virtue of the dissolution of all dhatu, material, and relics.⁹⁴

KILESA PARINIBBANA

Buddhism proposes that Dukkha is root cause of sufferings of humanity. This essentially a result of mind generate the feelings of craving and desires. Defilement, kilesa, in all beings, such as lobha and moha are the source of burning heat in their minds. The flames of tanha, raga and loba are the cause for youngsters to disregard council of parents and teachers and carry on with what they might. Because of extreme dosa, anger, due to unfulfilled lobha, greed, there are people who try to

⁹²Uparipannasa Atthakatha, Majjhima Nikaya, Department for the promotion and propagation of the sasana, Yangon, Myanmar. 1957.

⁹³Khuddhakapatha Pāli, Khuddha-Nikaya, Rangoon, Burma. Department of Religious Affairs. 1972.

⁹⁴Uparipannasa Atthakatha, Majjhima Nikaya.

commit suicide. These examples show how hot the heats of lobha and dosa heats consume people is moha, ignorance of moral rights that hides true causes and effects. For example, a child not knowing it is hot, wants to touch a fire, some would touch it. When the Buddha attained arahanta magga-phala, all these fires, the defilements, kilesa, were completely extinguished. So, the Buddha had said, "The kilesaparinibbana of the Buddha has occurred at the Mahabodhi Pallanka, seat."⁹⁵

KHANDHA PARINIBBANA

It is being viewed in Buddhist perspective that this body-kaya, a restless lump of heat, is a combined effect of Rupa and Nāma. The eleven kinds of fires such as jati, birth, jara, age, marana, death, shown earlier, are burning this body, in one way after another. As quoted from Dhammacaka Pali, dukkha resulting from parting with a loved one, having to associate with a hateful one, and non-fulfilment of one's wishes are all burning fires inside. So, the bodies of all beings are burning with fires of these dukkhas.

Physical and mental craving is so strong that even the body of Lord Buddha did not escape the burns from these fires. The Lord was weak since the time he was struck with the debilitating diarrhea that made him rest too often in travelling on foot a distance 3 gavuttas, needing to drink some water often, very gravely tired due to the body heat. The Buddha rose from the fourth jhana, after repeated absorption time and again, and entered Parinibbana with the sub-conscious, bhavanga-citta, that is similar in kind to the consciousness-continuum at the time of conception, the first mahavipaka-citta. The Parinibbana was of the kind whereby the flaming rupa-nama

⁹⁵Nanavibanga atthakatha, p. 413.

khandha pwas extinguished to a state of peace and tranquilly that is called Khandha Parinibbana.⁹⁶

DHATU PARINIBBANA

When all the dhatu, material, relics of the Buddha are gathered and collected into a reunited dhatu-body, it would burn automatically, entering into Dhatu Parinibbana. It is prophesied that when the Buddha Mission comes near its end, that is where there is almost no one worshipping the Buddha, the dhatu relics that are now spread in places very widely apart would gather at the foot of the Mahabodi Tree to form into a lump like that of gold, radiating the Buddha's Rays of Light.

The Buddhist tradition says that when devas and Brahmas see the Buddha Rays, they would come down and gather at the foot of the Bodhi Tree to watch the golden lamp of the relic's burn. Then they would lament, sorrowfully saying, "Now, Lord Buddha enters Parinibbana. Today, Lord Buddha has entered into Parinibbana". Saying so again and again, they would weep. That devas and Brahmas who are sagadagamis, anagamis and arahantas would bear the weight of heavy bereavement by observing the Law of Impermanence as "whatever that comes into being must perish".⁹⁷

THE ONE KIND OF NIBBANA

The Buddha as a teachers expressed clear ideas about the idea of Nirvana and he in fact proposed the way to achieve it in the following words: "Oh monks, wish for the Nibbana that is free from all harm. For the purpose of Nibbana, carry out works of charity (Dāna), observe moral discipline (sila), and keep up insight meditation (bhāvana)". The two kinds of Nibbana, namely Kilesa Parinibbana and Khandha

⁹⁶ibid, p. 413.

⁹⁷Ibid.p.315.

Parinibbana that all arahantas can attain to are not yet the type of Nibbana that the Buddha had thus urged.⁹⁸

The two kinds of Nibbanas as already shown are not the Asankhatadhatu Nibbana that is desired and prayed for by the multitude as "the imperishable Nibbana, free from all dukkhas, and attainable in the shortest possible. "The two kinds of Nibbana cited above are not the type of Nibbana that makes the Buddha say, "My mind is very clear upon contemplation of entering into amata (immutable and noble) Nibbana before daybreak just as all other Buddhas before me done." The two kinds of Nibbana cited are not the kind of santisukha amata-Maha Nibbana in the way of the Lord had intended to mean, according to Asin Anuruddha when he said, "Anejo santimarubba, yam kala makarimuni=having been liberated from clinging to, and never would again be disturbed by, the five objects sensual pleasure."⁹⁹

The two kinds of Nibbana cited are not the type of Nibbana defined in the book of Abhimamattha Sangaha as, 'Nibbana is the object of magga-phala nana; or the type defined in Dhammapada Atthakatha, Sukha Vagga Ekapasana Vatthu as "Nibbana is the holiest suka"; or the type defined in Dhamma Ssangani, Rupa kanta, Uddesa as "asankata dhatu (immutable element)'. The two kinds of Nibbana cited are not the type of Nibbana sighted once and attained as a result of Sotapatti magga nana that is part of the nirodha sacca of the 4 Noble Truths. Young Visakha Savutthi gained this Sotapatti nana at the age of seven, on the foundation of secure observation of the five precepts with freedom from wrong views and doubts about the Buddhas, Dhamma and Sngaha. Therefore, now that casual kammass have been cut out, not only the Buddha, but also all arahantas are called "Asankhatadhatu".

⁹⁸Ashin Janakabhivamsa, kokyint Abhidhamma. Ministry of Commercial Press, Yangon, Burma. 1950.

⁹⁹*Maha-vagga Pali, Suttanta-Pitaka. Dighnikaya-Nikaya.* Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1972.p.129.

NIBBANA AS EXPLAINED BY ANCIENT SCHOLARS

Besides the teachings the Buddha, we do have explanations offered by scholars on the ideas of Nibbana after the death of the Buddha. It is generally believed that the elements of paramatta dhamma, namely citta, cetasika, rupa and Nibbana, with the exception of rupa, are the kinds of Dhamma features or characteristics that without any doubt cannot be seen with the eye. Although they cannot be seen, wise elders, the commentary writers, have explained them so as to make them clear and discernible to the mind's eye. By the way of demonstrating their characteristics (lakkhana), functional qualities (kicca rasa), or prepared qualities (sampatti rasa) attempt was made by them to explain the experience of Nirvana in the form of language which can be shared and reduce the pain of the samsaric ocean.¹⁰⁰

SANKHATA DHATU (ELEMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

The importance of Rupa and Nāma elements which play crucial role in making the consciousness of human mind had already shown earlier part of this chapter. The Buddha has taught that these elements are sankhata dhatus (changeable elements) subject to avijja, tanha, kamma, etc. The interplay of these elements resulted in appearance and disappears immediately happens simultaneously. To explain it further after disappearance, it appears again and after appearance, it perishes again. This continuum of appearing and disappearing takes place hundreds of hundred-thousand times in the flicker of a moment. (When citta-cetasika perishes seventeen times, only once rupa perishes) Since the rupa-nama elements perish that many times in such a short duration of time, how can they be restful, cool and happy? It is this process that is resulted in perennial harassment of human mind by appearing-disappearing phenomenon of rupa and Nāma resulted in dukkha at all times. Because of the

¹⁰⁰*Visuddhimagga-atthakatha*. Vols. I and II. Rangoon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1993.

harassment by their appearing-disappearing behaviour, all rupa-nama formations generally leads to dukkha. This predicament can be countered by Santi Lakkhana (Characteristic of Peacefulness) "lakkhana" is meant note-worthy sign or mark, a characteristic nature. Just as a man has some peculiar to him, a characteristic, so also each of the four paramattha truths has its own characteristic feature, distinctive and unlike others. The fundamental characteristic of Nibbana is thus santi lakkhana.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE SANTI

It has been accepted fact that identification of santi lakkhana is indeed a complex process. Rupa, citta, cetasika and Nāma are always popping up and popping out, restless at all times, always on fire, never cooling down. To escape from continuous harassment one needs to enter Nirvana. The asankhata dhatu Nibbana, however, is perfect and so not perishable. As there is no becoming and perishing, and no moving about, it is very peaceful. That peace is the characteristic of Nibbana, and called "santi".¹⁰¹

ICCUTARASA (THE CHARACTERISTIC OF NON-CHANGEABILITY)

The robbers of human happiness rupa-nama khandhas come into being first and foremost which are intrinsic to human nature. After coming into being, they perish, leaving no trace of their first becoming. The santi nature of Nibbana, however, is never lost or destroyed, possessing the characteristic rasa of non-changeability with time from its original status.¹⁰²

ANIMITTA PACCUPATTHANA (THE CHARACTERISTIC OF SEEING THE TRUTH)

The teachings of the Buddha mainly deal with having a correct perspective on issues that the human beings engaged with in day to day life. Whether it is a yogi in

¹⁰¹ *Visuddhimagga-atthakatha*. Vols. (I), (II).p.139.

¹⁰² Sammohavinodari (vibanga) Atthakatha. Department for the promotion and propagation of the sasana, Yangon, Myanmar. 1986. P.80.

meditation or a wise man of thought, when he looks into rupa-nama processes, he would see through the phenomena in true perspective. Such a vision as this is called "paccupatthana". When looking through the nature of Nibbana, it is seen in the mind's eye (nana) to "have no material body", unlike citta, cetasika and rupa that have material bodies.

PADATTHANA (IMMEDIATE CASUAL FACTOR)

In Buddhist literature an immediate casual factor is called "padatthana". Citta has cetasika as associates (influencing factors) and rupa as residence (conditioning factor). Unlike them, Nibbana has no immediate condition or cause. The amata Nibbana has the characteristic of equanimity and peace. It has the sampatti rasa that does not change from its original status. It is seen in the mind's eye (nana) to have no material body. And there is no immediate cause for Nibbana.¹⁰³ The concept of Nirvana is thus is mainly phenomenological rather empirical and a thing that can be experienced.

SOME ATTRIBUTES (GUNAS) OF NIBBANA

To capture the phenomenon of Nirvana in verbal form it is necessary for us to see the some of the characteristic features of it. If we perceive the idea of Nirvana as a transcendental or phenomenological, it is important for us to see some of the attributes that are associated with it. The following section concentrates upon the attributes of Nirvana.

KHAYA GUNA (DISSOLUTION)

The important and observable feature of Nirvana is the instant of Nibbana is sighted with sotapatti magga, some defilement of (kilesas) such as raga, etc. as well as rupa-nama dhatus of every such person for the seven existences to come are all dissolved.

¹⁰³This paragraph is a translation of paliverse; "santi lakkhanam iccuta Rasam nibbana amatam; animitta patthanam, padatthanam na labbhati," Visuddhi Magga Vol. (II), p.126.

Nibbana that is santi, therefore, has the attribute of khaya guna that means the dissolution of all defilements as well as rupas and Nāma that play a major role in making of human consciousness.¹⁰⁴

VIRAGA GUNA (NON-DESIRE)

In Pali literature sensual desire is called "raga". It arises out of rupa-nama khandha, and also designated terms and concepts (pannatti) connected with khandha. The state of Nibbana is the end of all rupa-nama entities, and so it has absolutely no connection with raga. So, the guna-attribute is "viraga (no raga) which also means end of all cravings and desires is essential condition to achieve the state of Nirvana.

AMATA GUNA (NON- DEATH)

Buddhist philosophy treats the "Death" as a last perishing point of rupa-nama formation in one span of life. The perishing takes place after arising. Going forward to be destroyed or preparing to dissolve is, in principal, called "getting old or decaying". "Jati, jara, marana in Pali, or birth (arising), growth (growing old), and death (perishing)" are the natural way of rupa and Nāma formation. Nibbana that has ended all rupa-nama dhamma has no "mata" or death. So, it is important to note that deathlessness is the guna attribute of amata.

PANITA GUNA (INSATIABLE JOY IN ABSORPTION)

It has been described in Buddhist literature that for arahantas, Nibbana, like food that is as tasty as not to be suitable in eating it, is the kind of joy whereby it is insatiable to be absorbed with one's attention on it. Lord Buddha often used to be absorbed in phala samapatti, with Nibbana in his mind. In delivering a sermon, the Buddha would be in phala samapatti while the audience was saying "Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu", and would continue his sermon after that chorus. Nibbana is thus a noble, unique joy for

¹⁰⁴The first stage of Magga (the first time sighting of Nibbana)

all those who have attained Nibbana. Hence, this attribute of this unique joy is called panitaguna.¹⁰⁵

NIRODA SACCA (THE TRUTH OF EXTINCTION)

As a founder of Buddhism and teacher the Buddha came to know in absolute clarity and thoroughness the Four Noble Truths of Dukkha Sacca, Samudaya Sacca, Magga Sacca, and Niridha Sacca. The Four Noble Truths constitutes core of Buddhist doctrine. In this doctrine, "Nirodha Sacca intrinsically related to the process that leads to Nibblana. Then, the Buddha in his magga nana (holy wisdom) the Nirodha Sacca, complete with all the attributes of khaya, viraga, amata and others.

SAMAMNATTHI (NOTHING LIKE NIBBANA)

It is generally been believed that there is no other dhamma entity that is on the same level as the phenomenon of Nibbana. Be it all the forty-eight thousand articles of dhammakhandas contained in the pariyatti literature, or be it jhana that can, its own way, discard defilements, or be it the abhinna psychic powers that enable travelling through earth and sky, or be it the magga-phala nana attainments that can discard all the kilesa defilements. Undoubtedly these dhamma entities may be great sources of various benefits, but none that is comparable with Nibbana if we talk in terms of its importance to salvation.

DITTHADHAMMIKA NIBBANA (THE IMMEDIATE NIBBANA)

The Buddhist tradition quite often explicitly says that while in phala samapatti before entering Parinibbana, the Buddha often had Nibbana in his mind. This is the kind of Nibbana known (experience) in the present life time and so, called "Ditthadhammika Nibbana" Vipaka citta (sense consciousness) and kammajja rupa (kamma produced

¹⁰⁵Ashin Janakabhivamsa, ko kyint Abhidhamma, p.214.

rupa) are called "upadi". Because Nibbana is the object in attention while in the presence of upadi, it is also called "Saupadisesa Nibbana).

SAMPARAYIKA NIBBANA (NIBBANA IN CONTINUM)

The Nibbana that remains after the Parinibbana of the Buddha is called "Samparayika Nibbana". Because there remains none of vipaka namakhandha (nama-groups capable of cyclic kamma) and kammaja rupa, it is also called "anupadisesa Nibbana". Therefore, it should be noted that although the Buddha had passed away, the immutable asankhata Nibbana dhatu is still extant today.¹⁰⁶

TWO KINDS OF SUKHA

It is pertinent to discuss about how human mind and body perceives happiness. There are two kinds of sukha (happiness), namely vedayita sukha and santi sukha. That happiness or joy that people feel in seeing, hearing, smelling, eating and touching, that is happiness of the mind and body, is called "vedayita sukha". The nature of joy, without such feeling, but with absolute bliss (or peace) resulting from extinction of all dukkhas is called "santi sukha".

VEDAYITA SUKHA (WORDLY HAPPINESS)

The feeling of vedayita sukha is consumptive and exhaustive, so that new materials and more consumptive goods and services have to be sought at the expense of dukkha. The sukha so gained is not worth the dukkha suffered in pursuit of that sukha. Besides, there is no contentment in the pursuit of this kind of happiness, thus needing to borrow sukhas here and there in terms of akusala kammass; the loan for such sukhas will have to be paid back in terms of more dukkha in the villages of apaya. The pursuit of the sukha thus leads more misery.

¹⁰⁶ Itivutta atthakatha, duka vagga, Nivvanadatusutta.p.157.

SANTI SUKHA (HAPPINESS IN NIBBANA)

Handling human misery has been one of the quintessential features of the Buddhism. The significance of santi sukha, unmixed with such feeling of vedayita sukha, is the nature of absolute peacefulness as a result of extinction of all rupa-nama sankhara Dhamma.¹⁰⁷ To explain it further, suppose a certain wealthy man who has all resources to pursue and gain happiness, complete with all sensual objects, is soundly asleep. If his servants wake him up in the middle of it, he would certainly be angry and rail at them vociferously. While asleep, there is evidently no feeling. And yet, he likes the sound sleep better than any feeling of sukha, saying in appreciation, "Oh, It was such a good sleep!" Free from all rupa-nama manifestations, it should very well be guesses "how santi sukha could be". Nirodha samapatti Samapatti (high absorption) that enables extinction of citta, cetasika and rupas of citta origin and stops them from arising anew is called "nirodha samapatti". Only those anagamis who have attained jhana can enter into this samapatti. Anagamis and arahantas take the rupa-nama khandha as heavy burden. So, to be as free from the rupa khandha as possible, they enter into nirodha sampatti. While in the sampatti, there is absolutely no feeling. In fact Nāma and rupas stop appearing anew. If such a stop is cause for happiness, then how wouldn't Nibbana, where all rupa-nama formations are no more, be a happy affair?

THE SELF- EVIDENT NIBBANA

The santisukha Nibbana dhatu is not nothingness (abhava) as can be meant in pannatti wisdom. It is not anything that is common to all. It is the Nibbana that is individualistic and absolutely independent. That is the reason why arahantas, while

¹⁰⁷All formation group of mind and matter.

alive, often have Nibbana as their object of attention in phala samapatti. It is said that to keep Nibbana as object of attention in samapatti is a very real sukha. So, all the theras and theris, at the approach of Parinibbana, finally throw away their rupa-nama khandas with a joyful utterance in praise of such rejection.

ORIGIN OF NIBBANA

Quite often the interpretation of Nibbāna is too daunting and difficult to understand. The complexity arose on account of the fact that Pāli commentators and Buddhist scholars have given their definition of Nibbāna to different audiences. They don't have one voice concerning the definitions and interpretations. However, the etymology of Nibbāna is not always in harmony with Buddhist traditions. To know more about the fundamental teachings of the Buddha and interpretations of Nibbāna, it is impossible to ignore the structure of Buddhist literature and its significance.

The Buddhist literature generally describes the concept of Nibbāna as one of the four paramattha-dhammas (ultimate realities). According to the Abhidhammattha-sangaha the word paramattha is consisted of two words: parama+attha. Parama literally means ultimate, highest, and final; attha means realty, and dhamma means quality, nature or thing. Thus, paramattha-dhama is things or nature that exists with their own intrinsic nature (sabhāva). According to the Abhidhammattha-sangha, paramattha-dhamma is combined with four components: citta (consciousness), cetasika (mental factors), rūpa (matter), and Nibbāna. The first three realities are conditioned and the fourth realty is unconditioned. In other words, Nibbāna does not include the conditioned existence, since it is the state of final deliverance from the suffering of existences.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Bhikhu Bodhi, A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma, pp.25-27.

The phenomenon of Nibbāna has only essence or only one intrinsic nature, according to the Buddhist Texts. This obviously means “tadetam sabhavato ekavidhampi” there is only one characteristic of Nibbana. What is the essential quality of Nibbāna? This is: Santi--lakkhanam Nibbanam, which means, "Nibbāna is absolute peace or unconditioned peace".¹⁰⁹ There are two Nibbana elements (Nibbāna-dhātu). They are: Sa-upadisesa Nibbana dhatu with residue left and (2) Anu-pādisesa Nibbāna-dhātu with no residue left.¹¹⁰ This means that Sa-upādisesa Nibbāna is a kind of experience of psychological liberation. It is the release from suffering due to defilement in the person's lifetime. An-upādisesa Nibbāna is another kind of experience of biological liberation. It is release from all sufferings that are linked to the five aggregates (corporeality, feeling, perception, mental-formation, and consciousness) after entering the state of Nibbāna.

Although Nibbāna as a concept is found in Pali canon frequently, its meaning related to Pali are varied. According to PTS (Pāli Text Society), the word Nirvana with its root words, 'nir+va' was already in use in the Vedic period. The meaning is "to blow" or "to put out" or "extinguish. However, the application to the extinguishing of fire, that is, worldly "fires" of greed, hatred, and delusion is the prevailing Buddhist conception of the term. The word Nibbana is a Pali form that is derived from a verb "Nibbanti". The word "Nibbanti" appears in the Ratana Sutta, Khuddaka-Nikaya; nibbanti dhira yathayam padipo (the wise go out, as if the lamp burns out). It means "to be distinguished" or "to be blown out". In this context, Nibbana signifies the extinguishing of the worldly "fires" of greed, hatred, and delusion.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹AshinJnakabhivamsasayadaw, *Abhidhammattha-Sangaha-bhasa--tika*, (Rangon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1979), p.545.

¹¹⁰ Itivuttaka Pali, Khuddaka-Nikaya (Rangon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1972), p. 221.

¹¹¹*Khuddakapatha Pali*, Khuddaka-Nikaya (Rangon, Burma: Department of Religious Affairs, 1981), p. 7.

However, in the doctrine of the "Four Noble Truths", the Buddha preached that niroda sacca (the Truth of Cessation of Sufferings) is the Third Noble Truth, which is considered to have the same meaning as Nibbana, recorded in the Mahāsatipatthana Sutta, Dīghanikāya. In this textual context, according to the commentary of the Mahāvagga Pāli, Dīghanikaya, the word niroda is synonymous with the word Nibbana. In the state of Nibbāna, tanhā (craving) has completely ceased. Thus, the word Nibbāna is understood to have the same meaning with niroda in this case.

No matter what means or synonyms are employed, the essence of Nibbāna is only one, that is, santi-lakkhana (absolute peace). As a matter of fact, the synonymous of Nibbāna are more than the above names. The aforementioned statement has not yet counted some common and useful: synonymous of Nibbāna, for instance, here are some of the words: suññata (void), abhūta (nothingness), santi (peace), khema (safe, tranquil or full of peace) in the Pāli literature. It would be interesting to study about synonymous for the word, Nibbāna. In fact, both the Pāli and Sanskrit languages are like English, rich in synonymous and autonyms, the Pāli and Sanskrit languages have similar kinds of works, lexicons. There is a book in Pāli language, named Abhidhappadipika that shows different words that have the same meaning.

In Buddhist literature, every now and then, the word asankhata has been also used to describe the meaning of Nibbana. Asankhata is also synonymous with the word Nibbāna. Etymologically, the word asankhata is a combination of the two words: a+sankhata in Pali language. A here means "negation of", and sankhata means "conditioned" This means: "paccayehi abhisankhatattā sankhatam; (Things, such as the five aggregates, are conditioned due to certain circumstances). The circumstances

include kamma (action), citta (mind), utu (temperature or weather), and āhara (food). In this regard, asankhata here means "non-conditioned" or "unconditioned".¹¹²

The word Nibbāna and the word asankata (the unconditioned) have the same meaning, just the words are different. With regard to the meaning of Nibbāna it is understood that if something is subject to be conditioned, then whatever is born (jāta), become (bhūta), and compounded (sankhata) is subject to decay; no one can wish that it cannot be, that it does not decay. However, Nibbāna is not subject to the conditional things, that is, decay, birth or becoming. The statement delivered by the Buddha reads: yam tam jatam bhutamsankhatam palokadhammam. Tam vata ma palujji-ti. Netan thanam vijjati (Whatever is born, become, compounded is subject to decay, it cannot be that it does not decay).¹¹³

It is to be noted clearly that Nibbana has many canonical contexts to define its meaning in Buddhist literature. The ostensible fact is that Nirvana as a doctrine and concept not a static, rather it kept on changing over a period of time. The subsequent section of this chapter attempts narrate the history of the concept of Nirvana.

EARLY BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF NIBBANA

The phenomenon of Moksha, that refers to various forms of emancipation, liberation, and release influenced on the early Indian traditions. It refers to freedom from samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth. At the time, the concept of Moksha was considered to be the highest goal of life for the Indian tradition. In Jainism, Moksha literally means release. This means that it is the liberation of the soul from evil and from further transmigration.¹¹⁴

¹¹²*Abhidhammattha sangaha bhasa-tika*, p.481

¹¹³*Mahavagga Pali*, Suttanta- Pitaka, Digha-Nikaya, p. 129.

¹¹⁴Baddanta Buddhaghosa thera, *Dhammapada-atthakatha* Rangon, Burma: Burma Pitaka Association, 1986, pp.52-73.

Since the Buddha began to give the very first talk to his audience, he emphasized the significance of Dukkha-nirodha-sacca (Truth of cessation of suffering). In this regard, the word dukkha-nirodha can be also interpreted as liberation. Buddhists attempt to seek the way of liberation in order to obtain absolute peace, that is, freedom from death and rebirth. Thus, Buddhists have a religious dream that is to attain the psychological and biological liberation.¹¹⁵

Regarding the interpretation of Nibbāna, there was a concept of early Buddhism that provided its Nibbanic view with the two chief disciples' statements. The two chief disciples: Venerable Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana interpreted Nibbāna as a deathless state. Once, while looking at a show, the two men named Upatissa and Kolita, who later became Ven. Sāriputta and Ven. Moggallāna respectively, deeply realized the insubstantiality of thing in life. Consequently, they decided to renounce household life and search for the way of liberation.¹¹⁶ However, before they renounced all things, they promised one another to inform each other, if one had attained the state of deathlessness.

INTERPRETATION OF NIBBANA RELATED TO COMMENTARIES

In order to capture the multiplicity of Nibbāna it is useful to understand the commentator's canonical interpretations. All the Buddha's teachings are very much based on theoretical applications to search for Nibbāna. However, practical approach is essential in order to realize the true essence of Nibbāna. If one wants to understand the significance of Nibbana, one has to learn theory first, and then one must apply the theories to the practice.

Pāli commentators made an important statement about realizing the nature of Nibbāna. In order to understand the canonical interpretation of Nibbana, proper

¹¹⁵Baddanta Nyanatiloka-thera, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1988, p. 20.

¹¹⁶Baddanta Buddhaghosa thera, *Dhammapada-atthakatha*. pp.52-73.

approach in practice is needed. Realizing the true nature of Nibbana or experience of enlightenment without the practice of meditation is impossible. According to Anuruddha-thera, 'Nibbāna is termed supramundane, and is to be realized by the knowledge of the four paths. It becomes an object to the paths and fruits, and is called Nibbāna because it is a departure from craving, which is an entanglement'.¹¹⁷

The above mentioned statement makes it very clear that lokuttara citta is the only way to realize Nibbana. In connection with the canonical context, enlightened beings can truly realize Nibbana. The most well-known commentator, Buddhaghosa (5th-6th century), wrote *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) and numerous commentaries. The concept of Nibbana is confusing in Buddhist the doctrine. So, he readjusted the interpretation of it. The most significant point of his work is that it is clear and concise. He set a clear outline for all the teachings of the Buddha. His outline is very clear: "In order to attain Nibbāna, one must fulfil the three training exercises--Sīla (Morality), Samādhi (Concentration) and Panna (Wisdom). This is the very strong foundation for everybody who really wants to attain enlightenment. Moreover, he showed the necessary prerequisite: pāramī (perfections), saddhā (faith in the Dhamma practice) and adhitthāna (resolution in the Dhamma practice). The conclusion of Buddhaghosa's interpretation is: "Only Nibbāna is permanent; and it is immaterial because it transcends the individual essence of matter. The Buddha's goal is one and has plurality."¹¹⁸

However, in this context of the interpretation of Nibbāna, the presumably contemporary commentator Arahant Upatissa briefly commented on Nibbana in his own way *Vimutta-magga* (The Path of Freedom). "Nibbāna is not something external to and altogether different from the Wheel of Birth and Death, nor is the reality of the

¹¹⁷Bhikku Bodhi, *a Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, p. 258.

¹¹⁸Translation of *Vimuttimaggā*, Vols. (I), (II).

Buddha-nature external to and altogether different from phenomenal world. Once one gains sudden enlightenment the latter is at once the former. The Enlightenment of Mahayana Buddhism is not to be sought outside the wheel of Birth and Death. Within it once is enlightened by the affairs of birth and death. It is clear both Buddhist traditions accord ignorance an important role as a hindrance to Nibbāna. Theravada Buddhists often say that the power of ignorance can hinder the way to the attainment of Nibbāna. In this context, Mahayana Buddhists say the same thing as well. "This is the meaning of common saying of Chinese Buddhism: "When ignorant, one is common man; when delighted, one is a sage".¹¹⁹

NIBBANA INTERPRETED BY NON-THERAVADA BUDDHIST

Non-Theravada Buddhists traditions mainly refers to Indian Mahayana Buddhism. Actually, the doctrines of the two schools are fundamentally based on the knowledge of the Buddha. Most of the interpretations agree each other but some are not. Their common goal is Nibbāna. Most the Theravadin Buddhists presumes that Nibbāna is a potential factor helps a person to attain through practice in this very life. On the other hand, most Mahayana followers presume that Nibbana already exists in everywhere so that one can attain it through practice. Yet, both schools emphasize Nibbana as freedom from illusion or ignorance (avijjā). For Theravada followers, liberation from avijjā (ignorance) and tanhā (craving) is the realization of ultimate reality and the attainment of Nibbāna. For most followers of the Mahayana traditions, by gaining freedom from illusion or by emptying mind of everything, one can return to the original or universal mind, that is, the Buddha nature.¹²⁰

The Mahayana tradition envisions an attainment beyond nirvana, namely Buddhahood. The Mahayana path only leads one's own liberation, either as disciple.

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Fung Yu-Lan, *a Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), p. 251.

The Mahayana path aims at a further realization, namely non-abiding nirvana. The Mahayana commentary the Abhisamayalākara presents the path of Bodhisattva as a progressive formula of five paths. In the Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra, the Buddha speak of four attributes which make up Nirvana.

This is saying that the absence of defilement is a key point in reaching Nibbana. As a matter of fact, in Mahayana tradition, the highest goal is no abiding in Nirvana, but a Buddha continues to take rebirths in the world to help liberate beings from samsara by teaching the Buddhist path. The circle of rebirth and suffering continues until being attains nirvana. One acquirement for ending this circle is to extinguish the fires of attachment (rāga), aversion (dvesha) and ignorance (moha or avidya).

THE BLISS OF NIBBANA

The phenomenon of Nibbana remained to be centrality of Buddhist thought. This can be captured by the question of Venerable Udāyī to Venerable Sāriputta why Nibbāna is so blissful without sensation. Udāyī did not think that Nibbāna is blissful because there is no sensation in it. Sariputta replied that sense pleasures are the five. They are eye (visible objects cognizable by the eye), ear (sounds cognizable by the ear), nose (smells cognizable by the nose), taste (cognizable by the tongue), and touch sensation (cognizable by the body). All the five senses associated with sense pleasure are desirable, delightful, pleasing, alluring. Depending on these five sense pleasures, happiness and pleasure arises which is said to be pleasures of the senses.¹²¹

If someone is detached from sensuousness, attains to and abides in the jhāna, mental absorption would be in the path of Nirvana. So the Buddha teaches that affliction is suffering. For this reason Nibbāna is blissful and for this reason it should

¹²¹Anguttara Navaka Nipata Pali, Nivvanasukha Sutta. p.213.

be known that Nibbāna is blissful. The main issue of Nibbāna is whether it is entirely blissful or mixed with suffering. As a matter of fact, according to Buddhist tradition Nibbāna cannot be entirely blissful, but must be mixed with suffering of why he holds this position is due to the fact that there is some evidence of suffering in those who are seeking Nibbāna. It is obvious that when the meditators attempt to obtain the state of Nibbāna, they have to struggle in the field of senses to conquer and subjugate the domain of the sense fields. They attempt to destroy all kinds of sensual happiness and to get rid of the five strands of sense pleasure that worldly (Puthujjana) obviously cling to. For the attainment of Nibbāna, yogis are so much tortured by themselves that their bodies encounter many sufferings and their minds suffer intensely painful feelings as well. Therefore, Nibbāna cannot be entirely blissful, but must be mixed with suffering.

With respect to King Milinda's views, Nāgasena confirms that Nibbāna is entirely blissful, and is not mixed with suffering. His position is that the quest for Nibbāna is a kind of suffering, because it involves removing all kinds of pleasant things from meditators, such as pleasant visual objects, pleasant sounds, pleasant smells, pleasant tastes, and pleasant touches. However, he argues that this suffering is not called Nibbāna, indeed, this is just a preliminary stage for the realization of Nibbāna. As a matter of fact, Nibbāna itself is entirely blissful, because the blissful state of Nibbana has nothing to do with suffering due to desires.¹²²

Moreover, there is one more issue that is particularly with regard to the state of Nibbana. For instance, if the state of Nibbana has nothing to do with the six senses, then Nibbana does not deal with any kind of happiness. In this world, people think that the state of happiness is directly related to the senses or the desires of the senses,

¹²² Questions of King Milinda (Translations of Milinda-panna, Burmese Script edition of Pali Text (Burma), pp. 129-130.

such as happiness that is linked to visible objects or a beautiful sound and so on. Without the feeling or desire for sensual objects, there is no possibility to say that there is happiness under any circumstances. For that reason, the state of Nibbana cannot be considered to deal with happiness, since feeling and perception exist no longer in the state of Nibbana.

THE PLACE WHERE NIBBANA EXISTS

Theravada Buddhist tradition takes an interesting position with regards to the goal of Nibbana. Nibbāna can exist anywhere, according to Theravada Buddhism. But it cannot exist in the thirty-one planes of existence. It is said that it exists in any direction for the enlightened individuals after their death.¹²³ Nibbāna comes to exist only after enlightened beings enter the state of Nibbāna after death. The state of Nibbāna is different from the state of the thirty-one planes of existences that already exist before one comes to exist. In reality, Nibbāna has not existed beforehand. This means that Nibbāna hasn't occurred before enlightened beings attain enlightenment. Nibbāna doesn't exist as an empirical state.¹²⁴ Therefore, according to Theravada Buddhist view, it is difficult to point the specific place of Nibbāna as here or there. It is only possible to say that Nibbana can be everywhere for the enlightened beings after their death.

Regarding the presence of Nirvana, King Milinda asked Nāgasenathe following question: "Is there a spot to the east or the south or the west or the north, above or below or across, where Nibbana is stored up. Nagasena answered the King, "There is no spot, sir, to the east or the south or the west or the north, above or below or across, where Nibbana is stored up."¹²⁵ Then King Milinda argued that if there is no place for the storing up of Nibbana, then there is no Nibbana and that it is a false

¹²³Gambhiragambhira-Mahanibhuta-Dipani, p. 144.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵Questions of King Milinda (Translation of Milinda-panna, p. 136.

realization for those who have experienced Nibbana. Furthermore, King Milinda argued that if there are on the earth fields producing crops, trees producing fruits and mines producing gems, then there must be a place for producing things. Similarly, if there is Nibbana, there must be a place for producing Nibbana, but there is no place for producing Nibbana, and there is no Nibbana, which is realized.

To King Milianda's argument, Venerable Nāgasena has put forward the following response: 'There is no place for storing up of Nibbāna, Sir, but there is this Nibbāna, and one practicing rightly realizes Nibbāna by means of proper attention. It is, Sir, as there is fire, though there is no place for storing it up, and a man rubbing two sticks together obtains fire. Even so, Sir, there is Nibbāna, though there is no place for storing it up, and one practicing rightly realizes Nibbāna by means of proper attention'.¹²⁶

THE OBJECTIVE OF MEDITATION

Meditation as a concept and practice constitutes very important part of Buddhism. There are many objectives in meditation based on the different traditional backgrounds. Some meditate to develop a peaceful mind. On the other hand, some meditate to cure physical diseases through mind power. Since the traditions are different from each other, their objectives in meditation are different from one another. The core purpose of Buddhist meditation is to purify the mind and to attain Nibbāna. In addition, the meditation is undertaken through the practice of tranquility (Samatha) meditation in order to develop concentration and a peaceful state of mind; while the practice of insight (Vipassanā) meditation is undertaken to develop the intuitive insight into the impermanence of, the misery or the satisfactoriness of, and

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 137.

the impersonality of all mental and physical phenomena of existence. The components of existence are the five of aggregates.¹²⁷

To be more specific, Theravada Buddhist meditation emphasizes that vipassanā meditation, also called mindfulness meditation is the essential way to attain Nibbana, by purifying the mind. 268 Without purifying the mind, it is difficult to understand what Nibbāna is. Yet there is an issue which arises in Buddhist meditations. There is the connection between the state of purification of mind and the state of the realization of Nibbāna. To purify the mind is to help oneself understand things clearly, such as the process of phenomena including mind and body and ultimate realities including citta (consciousness), cetasika (mental factors), rūpa (matter), and Nibbāna. One sees that these things truly exist. Buddhism stresses how important concentration, also known as "Purification of Mind" is to develop insight wisdom (vipassanāñāna) which leads one to realize the nature of Nibbāna. Buddha preached that one needs to apply mindfulness meditation, using the method of the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness".¹²⁸

DOES NIBBANA EXIST INSIDE OR OUTSIDE BODY?

So far as nature of presence and existence is concern a constant question arises that is Nibbāna exists inside or outside the body. According to the Theravada Pitaka Texts, Nibbāna is bahiddha nature that is outside of the body. However, some Theravada Buddhist monks preached that Nibbāna is inside the body. So, Ministry of Religious Affairs Department of Burma announced that they are adhammavādins. Moreover they are forced to forsake their wrong ideology. The most salient case is Kyauk Thinbaw ideology. The monks of Kyauk Thinbaw referred Rohitassa sutta of

¹²⁷Buddhist Dictionary by Nyartiloka, p.36.

¹²⁸*Maha-vagga Pali*, Suttanta-Pitaka. Dighnikaya-Nikaya.p.319.

Anguttara Nikaya. According to the Rohitassa sutta, Dukkha saccā is situated in the body. The above mentioned preachings are presumed as an example by Kyauk Thinbaw monks. If one looks at it superficially, their ideology may be right concerning Nibblana. It is preached that all the four noble truths were inside the body. Moreover, it can be presumed that Nibbāna which is Niroda sacca, one of the four noble truths is inside the body.¹²⁹

With regard to the question of where Nibbāna exists, Shwe Kyin Sayadaw believes that Nibbāna relatively exists in the five aggregates, but the five aggregates are not Nibbana. The reason why he emphasizes this is that since Loka-nirodha (the cessation of the world) is considered to be Nibbāna, Nibbāna cannot arise out of nothing, but it arises from the five aggregates. This means that while an enlightened being is still alive, the state of Loka-niroda takes place in his or her individual form of the five aggregates. In reality, the state of Nibbāna doesn't come to exist in the enlightened individual from somewhere else.¹³⁰

Another Buddhist scholar, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa describes the position of Nibbana from a different standpoint. To get a clear picture of Nibbāna, he points out that Nibbāna exists in samsara.¹³¹ His position is that Nibbana exists in samsara, but he rejects the view that Nibbāna is samsara; samsara is Nibbana. The reason why he describes Nibbana in this way is that unenlightened beings continually wander in samsara, that the foolish (andha puthujjana) will never find it and that the wise (kalyāna-puthujjana) will find it without having to look outside themselves.¹³² As a matter of fact, both these eminent scholars proclaim their views, quoting the same Pali source in the Rohitassa-Sutta.

¹²⁹ *KyaukThinBawVadaVinicchaya*, Yangon, Burma, Department of Religious Affairs. 1981

¹³⁰ *Gambhiragambhira-Mahanibbata-Dipani*, p. 53

¹³¹ Bhikkhu Buddhadasa. *Nibbana Exists in Samsara, in Me and Mine* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989).

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 141.

According to the Buddhist source, without reaching the end of the world, there is no making an end to suffering. So, the fathom-high body endowed with perception, and mind that he made known the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world (Nibbāna), and the way leading to the cessation of the world.¹³³

However, it is necessary to differentiate whether the sermons are objective or figurative expressions. If someone could not deduce it, someone must depend on the *Atthakatha*, commentaries of Buddhist Pāli Texts. The commentator comments that *Nirodhasacca*, truth of extinction of suffering or *Nibbāna* has no place. However, the Buddha preached that *Nirodhasacca* or *Nibbāna* is in the body which is metaphorical expression. Furthermore, *Dukkha saccā*, *Samudaya saccā*, *Magga saccā* are precisely inside the body. But *nirodha sacca* cannot precisely exist inside the body. *Nirodha saccā* or *Nibbāna* is truth of extinction of suffering so that it cannot be inside the body. However, the Buddha preached that it is inside the body that is in order to relate *Nibbāna* with the body. As the commentator comments suggest that *Nibbāna* is not precisely inside the body. The Buddha preached it as a metaphorical expression.

It is understood that the cessation of the world (*dukkaha-nirodha*) means the cessation of craving. Craving of existence is theoretically considered to be the opposite of *Nibbāna*. There is a statement that is recorded in the *Netti Pali* reads that: dependent on the cessation of craving, the cessation of suffering takes place; dependent on the cessation of suffering, *Nibbana* arises. In this regard, *Shwe Kyin Sayadaw* emphasizes that because of the cessation of suffering (*dukkha*), *Nibbana* arises, but it is not because of *Nibbāna*, that suffering has gone.

So *Bhikkhu Buddhadasa* attempts to rephrase his original claim, *Nibbana* and *samsara* exists together in this fathom-long body of ours. If we have yet attained perfect

¹³³*A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*, Vols.1&2, Wisdom Publication, p.153.

Nibbana, we continually switch back and forth, sometimes in Nibbana, sometimes in samsara. Whenever we take our sensory perceptions and concoct the sense of me- and- mine, we are in samsara. When we overcome our addition to ignorance (avijja), we will experience a Nibbāna that is infinite, changeless and eternal.¹³⁴

For him, the statement: "Nibbana is permanent (nicca) and eternal (sassata)" means that after uprooting all defilement, one can reach Nibbana which always exists. This kind of absolute peace of Nibbana can never revert to samsara. Therefore, Nibbana is considered to permanent and eternal, absolutely peaceful.

Thus, the Buddha preached Rohitassa Sutta as an example that explains that Nibbana is in the body which is wrong. Actually, Nibbana, bahiddha doctrine, can be achieved only by doing vipassana meditation. Among the preachings of Buddha, there is no contradictory doctrine. According to Abhidhamma, Nibbana is bahiddha, external part, so that it is outside of the body.

The Rohitassa sutta is very informative in explaining Nibbāna. At one time the Buddha resided in Jetavana monastery in Savatthi. Rohitassa Devaputta said to the Buddha. He told the Buddha that he wanted to reach a place where there was no birth, aging, death, passing away and rebirth. The Buddha replied that he did not say for one to walk to the end of the world where there was no birth, aging, death, passing away or rebirth. According to the sutta, the Buddha did not say that it was possible for one to walk to the end of the world and knew or saw or reached the place where there was no birth, aging, death, passing away and rebirth. The Buddha did not say that one could put an end to the suffering (dukkha) without reaching the end of "the world" (sankhara-loka). He shows that 'the world', 'the origin of the world', 'the end of the world', and of 'the way to the end of the world' can be found in this sentient body

¹³⁴ Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, Nibbana Exists in Samsara, p.144.

which is just a fathom in length. The essence of the sutta preached by the Buddha is, in order to reach emancipation or Nibbāna, one cannot reach it by walking; one cannot liberate from suffering. Therefore, a wise man who has known the world and has followed the path leading to the end of the world (Nibbana), and who has fulfilled the noble practice and has allayed all evil, knows where the world ends, and has no longing for any world, here or hereafter.

CHAPTER: IV

TITLE OF CHAPTER: CONCLUSION

ABSTRACT OF CHAPTER

This chapter proposes conclusion and some of the brief findings of this study. The fundamental point is makes is that the category of Nirvana has been one of the foundational principle of Buddhism around which the teachings of the Buddha revolves around. At the same time as a doctrine Nirvana remained to be an issue which was regularly redefined in the history or Buddhism.

CHAPTER: IV

CONCLUSION

This study essentially aimed at capturing the trajectory of historical, philosophical, spiritual and theological dimension of the concept of Nirvana in Buddhism in general and Theravada Buddhism in particular. In other words this study attempted to capture the multiple discourses on Nirvana and its influence on the theological structure of Theravada Buddhism. This study does not document the history of Nirvana per se, rather attempted to capture the historical trajectory of the idea of Nirvana and its evolution throughout history of Buddhism in general and Theravada Buddhism in particular.

If we believe in the notion that history is a record of the past of human existence, experience and thoughts¹³⁵ it would be necessary to locate history of Buddhist thought in the context of existence and experience. Undoubtedly, Buddhism and other philosophical and theological movements' world over are response to the crisis generated by the expansion of urbanization, consolidation the institution of the state as a source of power which controls society and its members. The teaching of the Buddha in India was in fact philosophical and spiritual response to the ancient crisis and hence part of this larger global trajectory.

Positioning itself within the recluse philosophical and spiritual systems Buddhism propounded a unique way of dealing with the misery generated by the transition of society from tribe to class/caste in India. The Buddha proposed a simple

¹³⁵ Garden Child, *Man Makes Himself*, Cornet Books, 2003.

philosophical doctrines which expected to redeem human beings from the paradigm of sufferings and lead them to eternal peace. The notion of eternal peace has direct bearing on the notion of Nirvana in the teachings of the Buddha and subsequent commentaries.

This study attempts to trace the evolutionary trajectory of Buddhism as a spiritual and philosophical system from the time of the Buddha to present by focusing on the history of Buddhist councils. It has examined six Buddhist councils from ancient periods to modern in order to trace the evolution of Buddhist doctrines in general and Theravada Buddhist doctrines in particular. The main objective of this exercise is that to trace the historical process of preservation, codification and passing the authentic Buddhist tradition to its followers with great amount of labor and commitment. At the same time, this process also shows the nature of the process with which Theravada Buddhism got institutionalized by the way of preserving the authentic version of the teachings of the Buddha.

Having examined the history of Buddhist doctrines and the effort of the Buddhist community for preserving the teachings of the Buddha to be followed, this study also attempted to capture the complex terrain of discourse on Nirvana. This process was done by examining the teachings of the Buddha and several subsequent interpretations on Nirvana by great Buddhist scholars.

One of the important observations on the concept of Nirvana is that it has undoubtedly constitutes the centrality of the teachings of the Buddha. He refutes the Karma theory of Vedic Brahmanism which projects the cycle of birth is indispensable for all biological species as the atama or soul consistently take shelter in different bodies. The Buddha attempts to attack this theory by the way of evolving the concept of Nirvana which according him is end of the cycle of birth and eternal bliss or peace.

By so doing he refutes and theory of karma and rebirth of Brahmanism which for him as a source of eternal misery.

The Buddha has propounded a way for achieving nirvana. This way is not the way which tortures the body and mind rather a simple way of controlling senses and leading an ethical life as a means to achieve Nirvana which for him is eternal bliss. The phenomenon of Nirvana for the Buddha is thus a way to redeem ourselves from the eternal misery of the cycle of birth and death and ultimate liberating agency of human life or true enlightenment. The unique way of physical death of human body which was propounded by the Buddha needs to be seen from a historical and sociological perspective. The transition from subsistence village economy and society to urban based town life has indeed might have generated demographic, economic, social and spiritual crisis which had waited for a solution. Emergence of Buddhism and Jainism and their radical emphasis on minimum damage to nature and human society are thus response to the crisis of early urbanization in India. Nirvana thus for the Buddha is liberation from the crisis of physical world and liberating human entity from the perennial crisis of this world.

Another important observation and finding of this study is that the concept of nirvana has continuously been changed in the history of Buddhism. After demise of the Buddha, his teachings were preserved by monks. Gradually Buddhism underwent numerous divisions having their own doctrinal emphasis. In this process the concept of Nirvana also underwent change. For instance, Mahayana Buddhism even though believes in Nirvana it also believes in rebirth of humans including the Buddha. But Theravada Buddhism maintained a strict adherence to the teachings of the Buddha. Over a period of time, Theravada Buddhism evolved its systematic doctrinal position on Nirvana.

One of the great Buddhist scholars Buddhaghosa (5th-6th century), expressed a distinct way of achieving Nirvana. He mentions that "in order to attain Nibbāna, one must fulfil the three training exercises--Sīla (Morality), Samādhi (Concentration) and Panna (Wisdom). Besides these qualities Buddhaghosa also mentioned the following requisites for achieving Nirvana: pāramī (perfections), saddhā (faith in the Dhamma practice) and adhitthāna (resolution in the Dhamma practice). The conclusion of Buddhaghosa's interpretation of Nirvana is: "Only Nibbāna is permanent; and it is immaterial because it transcends the individual essence of matter". The observable fact is that the concept of Nirvana interpreted and reinterpreted by Buddhist scholars to cater to the needs of society and sangha.

The fact is that within Theravada Buddhism a debate aroused on the question of whether Nirvana exists inside or outside of body. The monks of Kyauk Thinbaw invoked the Rohitassa sutta of Anguttara Nikaya and proposed that Dukkha saccā is situated in the body. They also preached that all the four noble truths were inside the body and hence it can be presumed that Nibbāna which is Niroda sacca, one of the four noble truths is inside the body.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa takes a different position with regard to Nirvana. He mentions that Nibbāna exists in samsara. He describes Nibbana in this way is that unenlightened beings continually wander in samsara, that the foolish (andha puthujjana) will never find it and that the wise (kalyāna-puthujjana) will find it without having to look outside themselves. For him Nirvana thus exists outside of body.

The fact this study highlights is that the concept of Nirvana had undergone continuous changes from the Buddha to present. At the same time, it is to be noted

clearly that in spite of divergent positions scholars and commentators take on the concept of Nirvana, one would see a strong adherence to the teachings of the Buddha and also keeping the doctrine of Nirvana as centrality of the teachings of Buddhism. This study is a hummable attempt to understand the vast ocean of teachings of the Buddha with particular focus on the concept of Nirvana and its multiple dimensions.

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APPENDIX