

Chapter II

The Historical Background and Thought of Buddhism

2.1 The Historical Background and Thought of Early Buddhism

In the days of the rise of Buddhism, Buddhism inherited many of the traditional elements of the Aryans.¹ It owed a great deal to Brahmanism, and also to non-Brahmanical religions. It absorbed various forms of popular beliefs. From very old times the view of there being deep affinities between the Upaniṣadic and the Buddhist gospels has persisted. Max Müller² Bloomfield, Rhys Davids, C.A.F. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg adhere to the view that the gospel of the Sākyamuni has been deeply influenced by the teachings of the Upaniṣads. Stcherbatsky who interprets the central conception of Buddhism as a radical pluralism traces the concept of Dharma, meaning vital essential super-subtle elements, in the Kathopaniṣad.³ Aristotle repudiates the Platonic doctrine

¹ Shōson Miyamoto, **Historical Studies upon Mahayana Buddhism**, (Tokyo : Sanseidō, 1954), p. 1 ff.

² According to Max Müller, **Ancient Sanskrit Literature**, (Edinburgh : Williams and Norgate, 1860), p. 134. Buddhism in its original form was only a modification of Brahmanism. It grew up slowly and imperceptibly and its very founder could hardly have been aware of the final results of his doctrines.

³ Th. Stcherbatsky, "The Dharmas of the Buddhists and the Gunas of the Sāmkhya", **The Indian Historical Quarterly**, Vol. X. pp. 737-60. According to Stcherbatsky the originality of Buddhism consists in its anātmavāda—dharmavāda—samskāravāda—pratityasamutpāda. But Stcherbatsky's interpretation of dharma in Kaṭha, IV. 14, even dharmāns-prithagpaśyan tānevānuvidhāvati, seems highly imaginative and fanciful. There is no validity for interpreting the word Dharma or Dhamma as occurring in the Pali literature as element.

of universals and Hegel repudiates the Fichtean doctrine of subjectivism. But their repudiation is at a philosophical level. On the other hand, Buddha's main and uppermost concern was with the elimination of pain and sorrow and as an ethical pragmatist he found metaphysics to be unnecessary for this purpose.

Early Buddhists took up the empirical facts which directly confront men. Everything changes (*anicca*). Nothing is permanent. Based upon this standpoint another very important teaching of Early Buddhism comes out, that is the one of 'non-self'. The ultimate purport of the teaching of 'non-self' was to get rid of selfish desires. It was nothing but enlightenment. Early Buddhists, believed that by the attitude of not assuming anything as 'self', one could get over suffering. Paradoxically speaking, Buddhism aimed at establishing the existential subjectivity or individuality by the negation of the ego. The realization of the true self was striven for. Buddhism did not deny the 'self' as such, contrary to the general assumption by many scholars who tend to regard the theory of 'non-self' as a sort of nihilism.⁴

In a stage of early Buddhism 'anicca', 'dukkha', 'anattā' came to be often mentioned as a set of principal ideas.⁵ Ātman is often referred to with the image of light or 'Atta-dipa' inheriting the teachings of earlier Upaniṣads.⁶ Ātman is compared to light. The practice of Buddhism can be interpreted as the formation of the true self. But all things are temporary existences which are changing always. Buddhists adopted the

⁴ Hajime Nakamura, **The Problem of Self in Buddhist Philosophy (Revelation in Indian Thought : A Festschrift in Honour of Professor T.R.V. Murti)**, ed. by Harold Coward and Krishna Sivaraman. Emeryville, (California : Dharma Publishing, 1977), pp. 99-118.

⁵ S. iv, p. 28

⁶ Shinkan Murakami, **IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, vol. XX, No. 1, Dec. 1971, 110-114.

notion of transmigration which was prevalent among common people in those days,⁷ taking it for granted, without examining it philosophically. In later days the teaching of ‘non-self’ came to be interpreted as the non-existence of the soul. The relationship between the theory of no-soul and the notion of karma was greatly discussed — how is it possible for the theory of no-soul to be basis for ethical practices? In order to establish the notion of karma,⁸ the existence of the subject of transmigration was presupposed, even in the scriptures of Early Buddhism. The problem of death was seriously discussed. But the fundamental standpoint by origin seems to have been that of not being affected by either the notion of ‘self’ or that of ‘non-self’.

In early Buddhism the concept of dharma was put forth to substitute the concept of Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The central conception of Buddhism must be that of dharma. Various systems of dharmas were set forth in Early Buddhism. The human existence was analyzed and divided into Five Groups. They are : corporeality (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), perception (saññā), mental formations (saṅkhāra), and consciousness (viññāna). The ego can be found in none of them.

Probably the first systematized teaching was the Four Noble Truths, and its practical implication was that of the Middle Way.⁹ The Four Noble Truths are : (1) the Noble Truth of Suffering ; (2) the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering; (3) the Noble Truth of the cessation of

⁷ Transmigration in early Buddhism was discussed by Junei Ueno in **IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, vol. 9, No. 1, 1961, p. 120 f.

⁸ G. Sasaki, **The concept of Kamma in Buddhist Philosophy**, (Jahrgang, England : Oriens Extremus, 1956), p. 195-204.

⁹ Shōson Miyamoto, **Historical Studies upon Mahayana Buddhism**, (Tokyo : Sanseidō, 1954), pp. 656-699.

Suffering (i.e. *nirvāṇa*); and (4) the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. This Path is called the Noble Eightfold Path or the Middle Way. The way of investigating as being found in the case of the Four Noble Truths can be found in investigating various phenomena (*dharma*s). The clear understanding of the truths is the clear understanding of the *dharma*s. The clear understanding of the Four Noble Truths was systematized in minute detail by later conservative Buddhists (*Hīnayānists*). The Eightfold Way begins with Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*), which means ‘seeing the *dharma*’. The teaching of the Middle Way is the basis of ethics of Early Buddhism. The concept of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) has been discussed by many scholars. Although various formulas of Dependent Origination are set forth in the scriptures of Early Buddhism, the best known and most representative formula of the theory is that of the Twelve Links. However, the Twelve Link theory must have been formulized later. The explanations of the theory have two aspects: i.e., one is relevant to living being; the other to all phenomena which appear. The central purport of the theory is *idam paccayatā*. Anyhow, Dependent Origination is strongly based on the law of karma. The purpose of teaching the theory is to explain in terms of facts, how we become elevated or degenerated, and its purport is not essentially different from that of The Four Noble Truths.¹⁰

Nirvāṇa is not only absolute nothingness, but ‘perfect peace’. There are various synonyms of *nirvāṇa* in the scripture of Early

¹⁰ The relation between Selflessness and Dependent Origination was discussed by Junei Ueno in **IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Jan. 1965, pp. 183-186.

Buddhism.¹¹ Nirvāṇa was later differentiated into two, that is the nirvāṇa in the present life, and the nirvāṇa after death.¹² The concept of ‘void’ (suñña) can be noticed in the scripture of Early Buddhism. It came to be a key-point for meditation. The deliverance can be interpreted as freedom in a way. Then, what is the ultimate reality? Early Buddhists refrained from giving any definition of what the ultimate reality is. They admitted that things are ‘provisional’.¹³

Over the investigation into the views regarding the Atman in the Upaniṣadic Literature, the Upaniṣadic texts regard the self as a spiritual principle which, although it energises the human body, being not a separate independent entity but being only a particularization or delimitation of the supreme spiritual real. Some of the schools of Indian philosophy like Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Jain-Mimāṃsa accept the multiplicity of selves but according to the Upaniṣadic spiritual monism, only the one supreme brahman is real and in its inmost essence the human being is identical with that. During the Upaniṣadic period, keen discussions were going on regarding the nature and destiny of the ātman. But in place of abstract metaphysical speculations, Buddha evinced a tremendously urgent concern for the elimination of the positive concrete fact of suffering. It is true that there are cosmological and eschatological discussions in the early Buddhist scriptures but the overwhelming burden of all these writings is sorrow and the end of

¹¹ Fumimaro Watanabe, **Nibbāna had many synonyms, IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, . vol. 11, No. 1, Jan. 1963, pp. 219-222.

¹² Anupādisesa-nibbāna was discussed by Fumimaro Watanabe in **IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, Vol. 9, No.2, March 1961, p. 126 f.

¹³ Paññatti in early Buddhism was discussed by Keiryō Yamamoto, **Bulletin of Ishikawa Prefecture College of Agriculture**, 1972, 35-46.

sorrow. The realistic approach to the cessation of suffering through an austere and disciplined life is ascendant in Buddhist thought. But although on account of his ethical pragmatism and anti-transcendental positivism Buddha could dismiss enquiries into the nature of the Absolute, he could not remain silent on the problem of the human self because all questions of moral perfectibility and the extinction of suffering are concerned with the nature of the human personality and hence ethical discussions could not afford to ignore the problem of the human self.

By denying to the empirical phenomenal psychic-physical nāmarūpa the character of selfhood the Buddha was preparing the ground for the emergence of the absolutistic view of the self. Radhakrishnan ascribes such a role to the founder of Buddhism. He says : “Buddha clearly tells us what the self is not, though he does not give any clear account of what it is. It is however wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddha... Buddha is silent about the Ātman enunciated in the Upaniṣads. He neither affirms nor denies its existence...Buddha consistently refuses to deny the reality of the soul.”¹⁴ Radhakrishnan, at one place, even categorically ascribes to Gautam Buddha the role of a Upaniṣadic teacher and says : “The Upaniṣads arrive at the ground of all things by stripping the self of veil after veil of contingency. At the end of this process they find the universal self, which is none of these finite entities, though the ground of them all. Buddha holds the same view, though he does not state it definitely.”¹⁵

¹⁴ S. Radhakrishnan, **Indian Philosophy**, Vol. I (Indian edition), (New York : Macmillan Company, 1923), pp. 386-389.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 388.

There are three cardinal conceptions of early Buddhism—impermanence, non-soulism (anattā) and the gospel of sorrow. Since there is nothing permanent, it almost automatically follows that the soul or self as an abiding self-subsisting entity does not exist.¹⁶ Soon after the upasampadā of the Pancavargiya. Bhikkhus Buddha delivered a sermon to them on anātman and emphatically stated that rūpa, sanjñā, vedanā, saṃskāra and vijñāna do not constitute the self. The question, however, of anything besides this nāma-rūpa-skandha being the self is an open one. One school of interpreters would argue that Buddha only meant to deny that the phenomenal categories are the self but he silently meant to assert the selfhood of something super-phenomenal. This positivistic interpretation derives partial strength from the last sermon of Buddha in the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra where he exhorts his disciples to be ātmadīpa (a light unto oneself) and ātma-śaraṇa (a refuge unto oneself).

There are several references in the early Buddhist scriptures to the denial of the soul or self. In the Aṅguttara Nikāya it is stated : “Even so do men of true creed declare the gnosis they have won—they tell of their gain (artha) but they do not bring in the ego.”¹⁷ The Saṃyutta Nikāya contains similar repudiations of the ego :

When one says ‘I’, what he does is that he refers either to all the khandhas combined or any one of them and deludes himself that that was ‘I’. Just as one could not say that the fragrance of the lotus belonged to the petals, the colour or the pollen so one could not say that the rūpa was ‘I’ ; that the vedanā was ‘I’, or any of the other

¹⁶ A.iii, 359.

¹⁷ Vishwanath Prasad Varma, **Early Buddhism and Its Origins**, (New Delhi : Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973), p.146.

khandhas was ‘I’, There is nowhere to be found in the Khandhas ‘I am.’¹⁸

In the Simha Sutta¹⁹ of the Saṃyutta Nikāya it is stated that Buddha taught the doctrine of the recombination and dissolution of matter and he taught to Baka that even the brahmaloka was not eternal. In this same Saṃyutta Nikāya it is stated that the world “is empty of a self or of anything of the nature of a self.” When Ānanda asks Gautama Buddha the meaning and significance of the phrase ‘the world is empty’ the latter says :

That it is empty Ānanda, of a self, or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is it that is thus empty? The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind—all these are void of a self or of anything that is self-like.²⁰

In the Saṃyutta Nikaya it is said : “O ye mendicants! I am going to point out to you the burden as well as the bearer of the burden : the five states are the burden and the pudgala is the carrier of the burden ; he who holds that there is no soul is a man with false notions.”²¹ In this statement the duality of the pudgala (self) as the subject and the matter stuff as the object is posited.

There is a further passage in the Saṃyutta Nikāya. Which reads :

Then the wandering monk Vachchagotta spoke to the Exalted One, saying, “How does the matter stand, Venerable Gautama, is there the ego?” When he said this, the Exalted One was silent. “How then, venerable Gautama, is there not the ego?” And still the Exalted One

¹⁸ S. iii, 13.

¹⁹ S. iii, 85.

²⁰ S. iv, 54.

²¹ S. iii, 25.

maintained silence. Then the wandering monk Vachchagotta rose from his seat and went away. But the venerable Ananda said to the Exalted One : Wherefore sire has the Exalted One not given an answer to the questions put by the wandering monk Vachchagotta? If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vachchagotta asked me : “Is there the ego?” had answered, “The ego is, then that Ananda would have confirmed the doctrine of the Sramanas and Brahmanas who believe in permanence. If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vachchagotta asked me “Is there not the ego?” had answered “The ego is not,” then that Ananda would have confirmed the doctrine of the Sramanas and Brahmanas who believe in annihilation.”²²

Oldenberg draws a negativistic conclusion from this dialogue and says that this passage leads to the Buddhist teaching “the ego is not.”²³ But this means that Oldenberg is committing the same fallacy of annihilationism which Buddha was anxious to avoid. Buddha inculcates the middle path between eternalism and annihilationism and as in his conception of aniccāvāda so also in his conception of anattāvāda, he steers a middle path but Oldenberg puts an extreme view in his mouth.

Although a study of the Tipiṭaka literature is that Buddha did not believe in any self-subsistent human self or in any non-corporeal soul-entity, there are some literary references as well some indirect arguments to show that Buddha might have had belief in some kind of a spiritual entity that dwelt in the human body and which was an eternal immutable

²²Vishwanath Prasad Varma, **Early Buddhism and Its Origins**, p. 150.

²³ H. Oldenberg, **Buddha**, ed., by William Hoey, (London : n.p., 1982), pp. 272-273.

self.²⁴ In the Saṃyutta Nikāya occurs : “When one says ‘I’ what he does is that he refers either to all the skandhas combined or any one of them and deludes himself that that was ‘I’”²⁵ Here the empirical psychophysical complex (skandhas) is denied the character of a permanent spiritual self but some positivistic interpreters of Buddhism argue that by denying the character of self to empirical categories Buddha is indirectly arguing for a meta-empirical self. In the famous Dharma-cakra-pravartana Sūtra delivered at Sāranath, everything, subjective and objective, is denied the character of a self. Buddha says that what is evil and painful cannot be the ātman. With reference to this passage also, advocates of a spiritual self have put forward the interpretation that Buddha is only repudiating the character of selfhood to the empirical and phenomenal categories but is indirectly sponsoring his belief in a meta-empirical self. But the question is still problematic and it is difficult to argue categorically that the denial of selfhood to the phenomenal modes implies the indirect positing of the reality of a transcendent superior ‘I’.

The Buddhist monk is advised to view the objects of the world as “This is not mine. I am not this.” This statement may imply that the denial here refers only to the empirical elements and there is still a transcendent self which remains when the worldly entities pass away.

To the investigation, western interpreters specially in the nineteenth century and the earlier part of the twentieth century put a negativistic interpretation on early Buddhism :

²⁴ Poussin, **The Ātman in the Pali Canon, Indian Culture**, Vol. II, 1935-36, pp. 821-824, does recognize that in the Pali literature there are many passages supporting anātman but few passages which support attā.

²⁵ S ii,13 : “It is no fit question to ask, who experiences contact? Who is it that feels? This is the right way to question : conditioned by what is there contact? Conditioned by what, is there feeling?”

Hegel regarded Buddhism as a doctrine of recoil upon the subjective entity and as a creed of final negation. Edward Coaird interpreted Buddhism as a doctrine of recoil upon the subjective entity and as a gospel of nirvāṇic extinction. Streeter in his *Buddha and Christ* and Melamed in his *Spinoza and Buddha* interpret Buddhism as a negative creed which denied the soul and the world. It is true that the Christian interpreters feel glory in contrasting the affirmative stress on the blessedness of the soul in Christianity from the nihilistic extinction of the soul which is all that Buddhism has to offer to man. But if this, rather extreme, interpretation has been put upon Buddhism, the early Buddhist scriptures, which are the sole sources for knowing what Gautama Buddha taught and which have been so regarded by Buddhists for over two thousand years, are themselves to blame for that.²⁶

Upon reflection, there is no clear linguistic evidence to indicate that Buddha ever adhered to the notion of a transcendent self as the inmost essence of a man. The attempt to attribute a positive belief in some kind of a spiritual self to Buddha, on logical and philosophical grounds of consistency, is always problematic. For making early Buddhism look like a positive creed of spiritual fulfillment, I would not sanction an interpretation which clearly goes against the letter of the Tipiṭakas. The Tipiṭaka, I would regard, as far more authentic for knowing the inner meaning of the gospel of Buddha.

In conclusion, Buddhism is unique among the religious systems of the world in having denied the substantial character of the soul. But although Buddhism denies the perpetually abiding character of any ego or

²⁶ Vishwanath Prasad Varma, **Early Buddhism and Its Origins**, p.155.

self, it cannot be regarded as being a materialistic creed. Its essential conception is the conditioned or dependent character of all phenomena. What was called the self or the ātman in pre-Buddhist literature is stated by Buddhism to consist of sensations and conformations. Buddha is an anātmavādi but not a materialist. If Buddhism were corporeal materialism, it would have repudiated an enduring soul and preached the reality of the body. But according to early Buddhism the body is no abiding reality.²⁷ It is a cluster of certain elements of physical phenomena and nothing more. Hence what exists is a mere process, a complex manifold interdependent phenomenal aggregation subject to origination, maturation and eventual extinction. It can be said that the aim of Buddhism is to teach the contingent character of all physical and mental phenomena and to repudiate any permanent, abiding, eternal self or substance. In place of the self-determined and self-sufficient character of simple entities, anātman is a registration of the flowing, relative and ‘devoid of any soul’ character of the physical-psychical complex.²⁸ The detailed categorization of matter, perception, feeling, conformation and consciousness in the nāmarupa-skandha has been done only with a view to preach the soullessness of any of the possible material and mental factors.

In the days of early Buddhism the Mahāyāna did not exist, but Mahāyānist ideas, such as suñña, viññāṇa and cittamātra are set forth in Pali scriptures also in their incipient stage. Various ideas were assimilated into systems of Buddhist thought, and this explains the reason why

²⁷ According to the Saṃyutta Nikāya iii,157, body and mind “are impermanent, are liable to suffering, and without soul.”

²⁸ Cf. The Saṃyutta Nikāya, V, 10, 6. The statement in the Saṃyutta has also been quoted in T.W. Rhys Davids, “The Questions of King Milinda”, **SBE**, II, 1, 11.

Buddhism has spread in many countries without much opposition by systems of indigenous thoughts in their respective country.

2.2 The Historical Background and Thought of Sarvāstivāda

The existence of Sarvāstivāda School can be seen in Indian history from the time of the Buddhist Council held during King Aśoka's reign (240 B.C.) down to the time of I-tsing's travel in India (671-695 A.D.).²⁹ In the Kathāvatthu Controversy compiled in the time of King Aśoka, Sarvāstivāda seems to have occupied a strong position among the disputing parties.³⁰ The principal seat of this school was in Kashmir where its doctrine was taught in its purity and it was finally developed into an elaborate system known as the Vaibhāṣika. This Sarvāstivāda School was getting a stronghold in the north, mostly in Kashmir and Gāndhāra while the orthodox Elders' School (Theravāda) was flourishing in the south, chiefly in Ceylon.

The Sarvāstivādin position came to dominate Buddhist philosophy in northern India for many centuries, perhaps because its inherent difficulties set combustible intellects on fire with the desire to resolve them. Most of the Sarvāstivādin treatises were written in Kashmir, and were further adopted by another monastic lineage—the Mūlasarvāstivādins—centered in Mathura.

²⁹ Junjirō Takakusu, **The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy**, (Hoolulu : University of Hawaii, 2002), p.56.

³⁰ See C. A. F. Rhys Davids and S. Z. Aung's translation, *Points of Controversy*, Pāli Text Society Translation Series, Vol. V. Prefatory notes.

The Sarvāstivādins also established a center in Gandhara in northwest India. This put them—together with their offshoots, the Dharmaguptakas and Mahīśāsakas—in a favorable position to spread their teachings to the cities on the northern branch of the Central Asian trade route and on into China. Traces of Sarvāstivādin traditions have also surfaced in Burma and northern Thailand. As for the Mūlasarvāstivādins, they maintained a strong presence in the Ganges Valley, from which their Vinaya spread into Tibet.

The Sarvāstivāda School was closely related to the orthodox Theravāda School, from which it was first separated probably before the Council of Aśoka. The idea that all things exist may go back even to the time of the Buddha himself, for the word ‘sabban atthi’ (all things exist) is found already in the Samyuttanikāya.³¹ Nevertheless, the theory of Sarvāstivāda, according to Vasubandhu, is not found in the genuine discourses of the Buddha, but it is an innovation of the Vibhāṣā (Exegetic) Literature of the Abhidhārmikas being against the Sautrāntic School which clings solely to the discourses (Sūtrānta) of the Buddha and maintains that only the present exists.³² Accordingly Vasubandhu in his Abhidharma-kośa adopts the opinion of the Sautrāntic School, although professedly he follows the tenets of the Kashmiri Abhidhārmikas in general.

The Sarvāstivāda comprised two subschools, the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika. According to A.K. Warder, the Sarvāstivādins held the same position as the Mahāsāṃghika branch regarding arhats, considering

³¹ English translation by C. A. F. Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward, **The Book of Kindred Sayings**, Pāli Text Society Translation Series, Vols. VII, X, XIII, XV, XVI, 1918-30. See Rhys Davids' Index to the Samyutta, p. 107.

³² Th. Stcherbatsky, **Buddhist Logic**, two volumes. Bibliotheca Buddhica Vol. XXVI, Leningrad, 1932, Vol. I, p. 111.

them to be imperfect and fallible. The pioneering work about the subject was undertaken by Ch.Willemsen ever since 1975, and more recently in 2006 (Abhidharmahr̥daya) and in 2008 in the Journal of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies(Tokyo).³³ The Vaibhāṣika was formed by adherents of the Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra, comprising the orthodox Kashmiri branch of the Sarvāstivāda school. The Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivāda, which had by far the most "comprehensive edifice of doctrinal systematics" of the early Buddhist schools, was widely influential in India and beyond. Regarding divisions of practice, the Vaibhāṣika Sarvāstivādins are known to have employed the outlook of Buddhist practice as consisting of the Three Vehicles: Śrāvakayāna, Pratyekabuddhayāna, and Bodhisattvayāna.³⁴ In contrast to the Vaibhāṣikas, the Sautrāntika Sarvāstivādins did not uphold the Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra, but rather emphasized the Buddhist sūtras. The name Sautrāntika means "those who uphold the sūtras." According to the Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya, the Sautrāntikas held the doctrine that there may be many contemporaneous buddhas.

The Vaibhāṣikas devotes more attention to what it regards as the prime expression of ultimate truth: dependent co-arising. It delineates four ways of understanding the relationships among the factors in the causal chain: momentary, in which all twelve factors occur in a single moment of action; serial, in which the factors cause one another to arise in rapid succession as they themselves then pass away; static, in which

³³ See Sarvastivada from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Source : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarvastivada#Relationship_to_Mah.C4.81y.C4.81na, (March 17th, 2012).

³⁴ Nakamura, Hajime. **Indian Buddhism : A Survey With Bibliographical Notes**. 1999. p. 189.

the factors represent distinct stages in the relationships among the aggregates, which maintain continued existence before and after those relationships come and go; and prolonged, in which the whole sequence of causation occurs over three lifetimes. The Vaibhāṣikas maintain that only the static interpretation is valid, for unlike the first two it allows a mechanism for karmic consequences to last over time; unlike the last, it doesn't require that the ending of suffering take more than one lifetime.

According to the Pāli tradition, the Mahīśāsakas were the earliest sect to branch off from the Theravāda and that the Sarvāstivāda developed out of the Mahīśāsaka. But Vasumitra, on the contrary, stated that “The Sarvāstivāda seceded first from Theravāda and was followed by the Mahīśāsakas, Kāśyapīyas and Saṃkrāntivādins—one after the other and at long intervals.”³⁵ This sort of confusion happened due to the fact that the Mahīśāsaka had two phases—the Earlier and the Later one. As it now transpires, the Pāli tradition spoke of only the Earlier Mahīśāsaka, while Vasumitra spoke of only the later one at the time of enumeration of the sub-sects.³⁶

The great Buddhist monk Aśvaghōṣa, a contemporary of Kaniṣka, belonged to the Sarvāstivāda school; but it was he who gave the first notable expression to Mahāyānist teachings.

Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the two brothers born at Puruṣapura in Gandhāra in the fourth century A.D. were initially the followers of the Sarvāstivāda school, which was entrenched at their time in Kashmir and studied the Vibhāṣā-śāstra there. But Asaṅga became a prominent

³⁵ Sanghasen Singh, Prof., ed., **Sarvāstivāda and Its Traditions**, (Delhi : Delhi University, 1994), p. 13.

³⁶ Ibid., p.35.

Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda teacher and induced Vasubandhu to leave the Sarvāstivāda school at the last stage of his life. However, a celebrated and most eminent scholar of the Vaibhāṣika branch of the Sarvāstivāda school, Vasubandhu became famous for his most illustrious work, the *Abhidharmakośa*, a veritable encyclopedia of Buddhist philosophy.

The great philosopher Vasubandhu was born in Puruṣapura (Peshawar) in Gāndhāra and received his ordination in the Sarvāstivāda School. He went to Kashmir incognito to learn the Abhidharma philosophy. On his return home he wrote the *Abhidharma-kośa* which is preserved in sixty volumes of Chinese translation. The Sanskrit text is lost, but fortunately we have a commentary written by Yasomitra called the *Abhidharma-kośa-vyākhyā*.³⁷ Kumārajīva, a pupil of the Kashmirian monk Vimalākṣa was a renowned student of the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya. He did a good deal of translation work with his teacher and became famous for it.

Asaṅga was the father of systematic Mahāyāna philosophy, the first philosopher to take the disparate Mahāyāna Sūtras of his time and work out a coherent framework for encompassing them all. Little is known of his personal history. He is assumed to have lived in the fourth century, and Hsüan-tsang reports that he was a Mahīśāsaka monk converted to the Mahāyāna by a Maitreyanātha. There is debate as to whether this Maitreyanātha was a human being or the great bodhisattva himself. Hsüan-tsang assumes that it was the bodhisattva, and other legends tell of how Asaṅga encountered the great being.

Asaṅga was a prolific writer, compiling enormous, Abhidharma-like texts to absorb all of Buddhist thought, both Mainstream and

³⁷ Junjirō Takakusu, **The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy**, p.56.

Mahāyāna, into a Mahāyāna framework. Following Dharmaśrī's example, however, he also wrote shorter works to present his thought in outline form, the most compact being the Mahāyāna-saṃgraha, or Summary of the Great Vehicle. The structure of the Summary parallels that of the Abhidharmasāra, and a comparison of the two texts highlights the gulf that had come to separate Mahāyāna from Mainstream speculative thought by the fourth century.

Vasubandhu was a very important figure in the history of Indian Buddhism. Professor E. Frauwallner studied the records of this famous Buddhist philosopher to whom many works were ascribed. He asserted that there were two Vasubandhus, one of the Hīnayāna, the author of the Abhidharmakośa (A.D. 400-480), and the other of the Mahāyāna, two was Asaṅga's younger brother (A.D. 320-380). Prof. H. Sakurabe objects to this theory,³⁸ and on other grounds, Professor Hikata opines that Vasubandhu lived A.D. 400-480. Dr. P.S. Jaini asserts that we are not justified in limiting the activities of the younger Vasubandhu to Hīnayāna alone, and that the date of the Kośakāra Vasubandhu and his relation to Asaṅga still remain unsettled.³⁹

A large number of Buddhist sects and sub-sects grew out of some major or minor differences of opinion among the teachers and philosophers. Most of these sects or sub-sects merged with more dominant ones or simply disappeared in course of time. Only the more popular and dominating ones, like the Sarvāstivāda, survived. The history, chronology and sequence of the various Buddhist sects or sub-

³⁸H. Sakurabe, "On Frauwallner's dating of Vasubandhu", **IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, vol.1, 1951, p.202f.

³⁹ P.S. Jaini, **BSOAS : Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies**, University of London, Vol. XXI, part 1, 1958, pp. 48-53.

sects are often confused because of lack of evidence regarding the precise dates of their respective origins.

It is noteworthy in this respect that the Sarvāstivāda sect once enjoyed a great popularity all over Northern India and acquired perhaps the most dominant position among various Buddhist sects. An enormous amount of vitality enabled the Sarvāstivāda to withstand opposition, often stiff, from rival sects. The realistic thinking of the teachers and philosophers probably made the wide propagation of the Sarvāstivāda easy and free from much difficulty. The Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma provided the foundation of Buddhist scholastic philosophy in Tibet and East Asia while The Theravādin Abhidharma provided the foundation for Buddhist scholastic philosophy in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.⁴⁰

Over the investigation into the thought of Sarvāstivāda School, it is found the growth of the first systematic philosophy in the Buddhist tradition, which found its expression both in encyclopedic treatises and in more compact summaries meant to organize and clarify the vast body of literature that the Buddhist tradition had produced over the centuries. In many cases of Sarvāstivāda thought, the summaries were arranged around *kārikas*, shortened verses composed as memory aids, with prose commentaries to fill in their blanks. Some sets of *kārikas* proved so useful that many writers over the centuries offered their own, sometimes conflicting, commentaries and subcommentaries to them. In this way, different school of thought developed around particular *Sūtras* or philosophical texts.

⁴⁰Richard H. Robinson & Willard L. Johnson, **Buddhist Religions : A Historical Introduction**, Fifth Edition, (California : Thomson Learning,, n.d.), p. 62.

The earliest extant systematic presentation of Buddhist philosophy dates from the third century, when the the Sarvāstivādin thinker, Dharmaśrī, composed all Abhidharmasāra, or Abhidharma Essence, in which he tried to encompass all Buddhist thought in a coherent framework. The framework is this :

Starting with the basic components arise, not in isolation, but in conjunction with one another. Here he touched on the mental properties, the theory of physical atoms, the doctrine of time, and causality : the six conditions recognized by the Sarvāstivādins and the four ways of conceiving dependent co-arising. Then came the doctrine of karma, to show how causality plays a role in human action, followed by a doctrine of release : an explanation of the tendencies (anuśaya) that entangle one in saṃsāra, the knowledge that brings release by putting an end to those tendencies, and the types of knowledge and concentration that enable one to develop that knowledge.⁴¹

Unfortunately, Dharmaśrī was unable to incorporate all the important Buddhist teachings into this framework, and so to incorporate all the important Buddhist teachings into this framework. For two centuries, however, his work served as the standard text on Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma, and inspired thinkers in other schools to compose compact, organized texts on their own doctrine. In the fifth century, a new set of Sarvāstivādin kārikas was composed, following Dharmaśrī basic framework, but incorporating the miscellaneous material throughout. The major changes involved a discussion of cosmology after the discussion of

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 118.

causation, and a concluding chapter on the ontological status of the ‘person’. This set of kārīkas was called the Abhidharmakośa (Abhidharma Sheath), or Kośa for short.⁴²

Its authorship of Abhidharmakośa is uncertain, but two important commentaries based on it are still extant. The first, composed by Vasubandhu in the fifth century, used the verses as a framework for discussing controversies among the various Buddhist schools, sometimes siding with the Sarvāstivādin doctrines on time and dependent co-arising – but he also took issue with earlier Sautrāntikan doctrines as well. He thus illustrates a trend toward more independent thinking among Buddhist thinkers.

Nevertheless, his treatment of the ‘person’ gives a fairly standard summary of the position held in common by the Sarvāstivādin, Sautrāntikas and other anti-Pudgalavādins on the doctrine of non-self. The ‘self’, he says, is simply a conventional designation for a series of skandhas, and does not exist in and of itself. Because there is no direct perception or inference of a ‘self’ independent of the skandhas, we can conclude that a real ‘self’ does not exist. In response to the observation that the Buddha, in the early Sūtras, refused to answer the question of whether a ‘self’ did or did not exist, Vasubandhu maintains that, had his listener understood dependent –co-arising, the Buddha would have told him that the conventional ‘self’ exists, but the real ‘self’ doesn’t. And in response to the objection that this doctrine is a form of annihilationism, Vasubandhu maintains, “Only two doctrines qualify as annihilationism :

⁴² Op.cit.

the doctrine that there is nothing there at all, and the doctrine that there is a permanent soul that can suffer annihilation.”⁴³

Vasubandhu’s attack on the Sarvāstivādin positions inspired a Sarvāstivādin philosopher, Saṅghabhadra, to write a much longer commentary on the Kośa in their defense; and apparently there were other, later thinkers who used the Kośa as a framework for advancing their own opinions as well. Of all the commentaries, however, Vasubandhu remained the most prominent, largely because of his student, Dignāga. In his revision of the ground rules for epistemology and dialectics, Dignāga incorporated material from Vasubandhu’s work, thus keeping it alive for several centuries.

The best-known compendium of the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins is Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra* (The Storehouse of Theology).⁴⁴ The main body of this work consists of *kārikās*, and Vasubandhu himself wrote a commentary in prose on the *kārikās*. In the original *Kārikā* text there were only 598 *kārikās*. From olden times there have been opinions that Vasubandhu wrote this work basing himself upon the standpoint of the Sautrāstivādins such as Saṅghabhadra.

All the passages in which the word *kila* (“it is reported that. . .”) is used in the *Abhidharmakośa* virtually represent Vasubandhu’s own opinion, dissenting from the orthodox theories of the Sarvāstivādins, and mostly agreeing with those of the Sautrāntikas.⁴⁵ It is likely that in composing the *Kośa* Vasubandhu was greatly influenced by Dharmaśrī

⁴³ Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁴ Aruna Haldar, “On Vasubandhu and *Abhidharmakośa*”, **JOI : Uournal of the Oriental Institue**, Baroda : The Oriental Institue, vol. XVII, No.3, March 1968, pp. 247-266.

⁴⁵ Junsho Kato, **The Philosophical Thought of India in Nakamura Commemoration Volume**, (Tokyo : Shunjūsha, 1973), pp. 323-343.

and Ghosaka.⁴⁶ Although it is problematic whether he faithfully represented the traditional doctrine of this school or not, this text has served as a good introduction to the doctrine in many Asiatic countries. The Sanskrit original has been found recently. Only one commentary by Yaśomitra in Sanskrit exists. But there exist several commentaries on it in the Tibetan Tipiṭaka. Those by Pūrṇavardhana, Śāntideva, Dignāga and Sthiramati also exist in Tibetan; those by Guṇamati and Vasumitra were lost.

2.3 The Historical Background and Thought of Mādhyamika

Nāgārjuna (CA. 150-250 C.E.), the founder of the Mādhyamika or Middle School, furnished the philosophical basis of Indian Mahayana Buddhism. The school stood for the middle way between such polarities as “the world exists or does not exist,” or “the world is permanent or impermanent.” Its history in India may be divided into three periods :

- (1) The period of its formation, (2) the period of systematization
- (3) the later period, in which Mādhyamika was synthesized with Yogācāra, and in which the Mādhyamika philosophy served as one of the most important theoretical bases of Buddhist Tantrism.⁴⁷

Although Nāgārjuna’s philosophy of emptiness (Śūnyatā) was obviously influenced by early Prajñāpāramitā literature, it is original in several important respects. Nāgārjuna adheres to the principles of formal logic, and never has recourse to the famous paradoxical slogan of the

⁴⁶ E. Frauwallner, **WZKSO : Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens**, Kōyasan University. Vol. 7, 1963, pp. 20-36.

⁴⁷ Tachikawa-Musashi, **Mahayana Philosophy** : The Mādhyamika Tradition, (Nagoya : Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture, 1993), p.188.

Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras : “Form is emptiness.” Some features of his argumentation appear to clash with the basic principles of logic, prompting some scholars to find in it the seeds of a special kind of “logic” which is to be distinguished from that of the Western tradition. But this view rests on a misunderstanding. If the philosophy of emptiness involves any illogical elements, they are to be found in later developments. Although his most important work, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* or the Middle Way of Nāgārjuna, is a religious text, and as such aims at the understanding of emptiness where verbalization ceases. Nāgārjuna consistently undertakes to articulate the notion of emptiness by means of logic. Nāgārjuna seems to have lived in Vaidarbha (present Benar) in South India and it is supposed that he was supported by a Śātavāhana king. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (MMK), consisting of about 450 verses in twenty-seven chapters, seems fragmentary because each chapter deals with a separate topic. A close examination of the arguments given in the MMK, however, will demonstrate that it deals with a single theme using a consistent method.

Mādhyamika philosophy expounded by the great Indian master Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka and Chandrakīrti who followed him. Mādhyamika is a philosophy of the middle way between two impossible extremes. The middle way is not in the sense of the middle path but the middle way things are. When Nāgārjuna identifies particular phenomena which are the bases of their own emptiness, he explicitly but secondarily indicates the paths, grounds, fruits, and so forth. Therefore, the word Mādhyamika when used in this sense is translated as Treatise on the Middle Way. The word madhyamaka itself is formed from the stem madhya meaning ‘middle’, with the affix ma yielding a

derivative noun that has the same meaning as its base. Madhyama means ‘the very middle’ or ‘the middlemost’ which proclaims the middle’, that is, either a person, a system of tenets, or treatise that propounds the middle.

The Mādhyamika doctrine of emptiness brought about a change from the ideal of personal salvation to that of the universal salvation of all beings. The teaching of emptiness in Mādhyamika encourages everyone to transcend himself and thereby attain transcendental wisdom. The Mādhyamikas adopted the middle way approach and attempted to maintain a mean between extreme affirmation and extreme negation, as shown in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. The main message of Prajñāpāramitā literature is that all things are empty and supreme enlightenment is identified with the attainment of Śūnyatā. Nāgārjuna developed his teachings under the influence of Prajñāpāramitā philosophy. Later his philosophy paved the way for the development of Mahayana Buddhism not only in India but also in China, Japan, Tibet and other parts of Asia.

Āryadeva (ca. 170-270), said to have been a direct disciple of Nāgārjuna, lived in South India. Legend tells us that he attacked his opponents so vehemently that he was killed by them. Since his Catuḥśataka is extant only in fragments of the Sanskrit original and in a partial Chinese and an obscure Tibetan translation, its contents are not well known, though Candrakīrti’s commentary on it has been preserved in Tibetan. His Śataśāstra, extant in Chinese translation, has been much studied in China and Japan. Although Āryadeva’s thought differs from Nāgārjuna’s in some points, in general he follows the master closely. Rāhulabhadra is said to have been a disciple of Āryadeva. We

know little about his life. In the tradition of the panegyric genre of Nāgārjuna, he composed two hymns, the Prajñāpāramitāstotra and the Saddharmapundarīka. Two old commentaries composed in the early period of the Mādhyamika school have survived : the Akutobhayā and Pingala's commentary. The former, extant only in a Tibetan translation, was ascribed to Nāgārjuna himself in Tibet. The latter, preserved only in Kumārajīva's Chinese translation, was used as one of the most basic texts of the Mādhyamika philosophy in China and Japan. The arguments given in those two commentaries are often similar.⁴⁸

The middle period of the Mādhyamika school was marked by the conflicts between the Prāsaṅgika school founded by Buddhapālita and the Svāntantrika established by Bhāvaviveka. Sometime after the fifth century, the Mādhyamika school split into two sects, the Prāsaṅgika and the Svāntantrika. The Prāsaṅgika derives their name from "the methodology of reductio ad absurdum refutation (prāsaṅga)"⁴⁹ employed by Nāgārjuna in his Muulamadhyamakakaarika. This methodology claims the refutation of all views without offering any view of its own. The Prāsaṅgika claim that the utilization of the prāsaṅg methodology defines one as a Prāsaṅgika. Whereas the the Svāntantrika see the question differently. The Svaatantrika's name means "self-styled, or independent, argumentation, the meaning is as that although a system of argumentation (for example, the Prāsaṅgika) may be valid on one level, it does not necessarily follow that it is valid on all levels."⁵⁰ One must adapt his argumentation to correspond to a particular level of truth, which

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.197.

⁴⁹ Nathan Katz, An appraisal of the Svaatantrika-Prasangika debates, **Philosophy East and West**, Vol.26, No.3 (July 1976) : 254.

⁵⁰ Op.cit.

would seem to follow better Naagaarjuna's claim that he has no position of his own, but adopts his opponent's presuppositions and logic to point to their self-contradictory nature.

Buddhapālita (470-540) was a great master and exponent of the Prāsaṅgika system which one believes, is well within the lineage of the thought of Naagaarjuna. Of Buddhapālita we know almost nothing except that he wrote a commentary on the Mādhyamika-Śāstra, being considered the essence of the Mādhyamika system. The Maadhyamika, or 'man of the middle', with nothing to affirm, nothing to negate; he has neither thesis, nor argumentation, nor example. The only procedure available to him to destroy adversary doctrines, all doctrines, is the Prāsaṅgika. His position is pure criticism. In commenting on Nāgārjuna's Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way, Buddhapālita adopted an approach that did not add any logical methods that had not come directly from Nāgārjuna's philosophy. The main method he used for refuting those who asserted true existence was the absurd consequence: statements that reveal the inherent flaw in the logic of the Follower of the Middle Way's counterpart but do not commit the Follower of the Middle Way who voices the statements to a philosophical stance of his or her own. In essence, therefore, the aim of using "consequences" is to use philosophy to undermine and go beyond philosophy. For a practice tradition, this approach to logic is particularly harmonious. Buddhapālita's work is of great insight and a true Prāsaṅgika treatise since it extensively utilizes consequences to counter misconceptions about the ultimate nature of reality.

For the Svātantrika led by Bhāvaviveka, a contemporary of Buddhapālita, he wrote a commentary to Nāgārjuna's works that refuted

Buddhapālita's style of commentary. Bhāvaviveka disagreed with Buddhapālita's disinterest in adding more methods as a commentator to the logical repertoire of Nāgārjuna. This disagreement was partially founded in Bhāvaviveka's core views of what it was to comment upon a root text. Bhāvaviveka also composed a commentary to Nāgārjuna's work called *Lamp of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpradīpa*) which criticizes Buddhapālita's position. Bhāvaviveka adopted Asaṅga's analysis of discernment into three phases, as well as the analogy of the magician to describe them, but he differed sharply with Asaṅga on the nature of the first phase. Simply put, he proposed a different way of using the doctrine of dependent co-arising as a means of arriving at non-dual discernment. Rejecting the concepts of storehouse consciousness and the three *svabhāvas* as counterproductive, he advocated using Nāgārjuna's method of deconstructive analysis as presented in the *MMK*. Thus, for him, the work of preparatory discernment was less meditative and more analytical : destroying all viewpoints by exploring the implications of the lack of own-nature of dharmas. This would lead to the second phase or nondual awareness which, following the Mahāyāna writings attributed to Nāgārjuna, Bhāvaviveka identified with the discernment of the nonarising of dharmas. In the subsequent phase, one's discernment would embrace both levels of emptiness, so that one could continue the work of a bodhisattva. In order to make the method of analysis employed in the first phase more effective for his day and time—when the logical theories of Dignāga had been accepted—Bhāvaviveka emphasized the need to present Nāgārjuna's arguments in the newly accepted form. This required that each argument clearly state the logical assumptions on which it was based. Thus Bhāvaviveka wrote an extensive commentary on the *MMK*,

explicitly stating the logical assumptions underlying each of Nāgārjuna's arguments. To Bhāvaviveka, a commentator's responsibility was to offer something more in a commentary than what was made literally available by a root text. To defend Nāgārjuna's statements concerning the nature of things, one must employ further logic, otherwise one's commentary does not truly become illuminating. It seems that Bhāvaviveka has a reasonable argument.

In the seventh century, another Madhyamaka thinker, Chandrakīrti, rejected this approach, and his arguments highlight an interesting question in the issue of tactical skill : To what extent is it skillful to work within the presuppositions of the people one wants to draw to one's point of view; and to what extent must one embody one's position in one's actions to achieve the same end? Bhāvaviveka believed that to be logically persuasive, Nāgārjuna's arguments had to be cast in the form acceptable to one's audience. Chandrakīrti, however, felt that this was a betrayal of the Madhyamaka approach.

Over the investigation into the development of Prāsaṅgika, it was brought to China by Kumārajīva who was regarded as the initial teacher of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika in China. Kumārajīva came to China about 401 A.D. and converted many Chinese to Buddhism. In China Mādhyamika Buddhism is called the San-lun Tsung (Three Treatise School) because it is based upon three main texts: (1) Nāgārjuna's Middle Treatise with commentary by Piṅgala in 445 verses. (2) his Twelve Gate Treatise translated from the now lost Dvādāsa-dvāra-śāstra, including verses and commentary by Nāgārjuna, and (3) the Hundred Treatise with main verses by Āryadeva and commentary by Vasu. The San-lun Tsung (Three Treatise School) was described by Wing-Tsit Chan as thus:

To this school, refutation of all erroneous views is essential for and indeed identical with the elucidation of right views. But when a right view is held in place of a wrong one, the right view itself becomes one-sided and has to be refuted. It is only through this dialectic process that emptiness can be arrived at, which alone is free from names and character and is 'inexplicable in speech an unrealizable in thought'. The specific method in this dialectic process is Naagaarjuna's Middle Path of Eightfold Negations.⁵¹

Some of Kumārajīva's disciples, such as Hui-yüan (334-416), Seng-jui (352-446) and Seng-chao (374-414), used Taoist and Confucian terms to expound Mādhyamika Buddhism so that Mādhyamika teaching could be understood by Chinese and consequently Mādhyamika thought flourished among Chinese intellectuals during six dynasties. However, the spread of the San-lun School in China after Kumārajīva was also due to the efforts of Seng-lang (494-512), Seng-chüan (d. 528), Fa-lang (507-581) and especially Chi-tsang (549-623). Perhaps Chi-tsang was the greatest San-lun master in the history of San-lun Buddhism in China, Korea and Japan.⁵² Besides his famous commentaries on the Middle Treatise, the Twelve Gate Treatise and the Hundred Treatise, Chi-tsang wrote many other important San-lun works such as the *Profound Meaning of Three Treatises* and the *Meaning of the Twofold Truth*. With Chi-tsang, San-lun philosophy was well established in China. According to Chinese San-lun masters, it is said in San-lun philosophy as follows :

⁵¹ Nathan Katz, "An appraisal of the Svaatantrika-Prasangika debates", **Philosophy East and West**, Vol.26, No.3 (1976) : 263.

⁵² Cheng, Hsueh-li, **Empty Logic : Madhyamika Buddhism from Chinese Sources**, (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), p.30.

The refutation of erroneous views is the illumination of right views; it is not necessary to present other views but simply to discard false views. The more wrong views one refutes, the closer one is to liberation. In other words, the absence of wrong views is itself the right view. Therefore, to say that all things are empty is not to argue for a new metaphysics. Once this is realized, one can discover that even truth should be discarded.⁵³

San-lun Buddhism as a sectarian school began to decline after Chi-tsang died. And when the Yogācāra (Fa-hsiang School) was introduced to China by Hsüan-tsang (600-664), the Mādhyamika as a sectarian school began to disappear. Yet Sam-non-jong (the Korean pronunciation of Chinese San-lun Tsung) continued in Korea until the fifteenth century. This Buddhist school of thought is called the Sanron Shū (Three Treatise School) in Japan. From Prince Shōtoku's time (574-622) to the Nara period (708-781), it was one of the major Buddhist schools in Japan, yet never existed as an entirely independent sect or institution. However, it has been required as an academic discipline. Today most non-Buddhist as well as Buddhist colleges in Japan offer courses in the study of Mādhyamika Buddhism.

Over the investigation into the development of Svāntantrika, the Svāntantrika contended that the Mādhyamika can and should hold a positive view. Some Svāntantrikas accepted the philosophical teachings of earlier Indian Sautrāntika Buddhism, and others those of Yogācāra Buddhism. So Svāntantrika Mādhyamika divided into two groups, the Sautrāntika Svāntantrika and the Yogācāra Svāntantrika. The Maadhyamika who maintains self-awareness while rejecting the external

⁵³ Ibid.,p.34.

object, has the character of the first. The Maadhyamika who rejects self-awareness but admits the external object has the latter characteristic. This is a further explanation of terms :

As far as the most basic points are concerned, by reasoning of maintaining agreement with the Vijnnaanavaadin, is called a Yogacaara-Maadhyamika. By reasoning of maintaining the external object as an aggregate of atoms, in the manner of the Sautraantikas, he is called a Sautraantikacara-Maadhyamika.⁵⁴

The differences between the two subschools of the Svaatantrika are not significant for the purposes of discussion, we find the conclusion that they differ only with regard to the status of self-awareness and of external objects. As Poussin rightly notes, "...the distinction is not carried to the conception of ultimate truth, but to their theories of relative truth."⁵⁵ Saantiraksita, the founder of the Yogaacaara-Svaatantrika-Maadhyamaka school, lived from 705-762 C.E. and played a great role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. He was one of the first Indian master to teach there, and he instructed Kamala'siila for this debate. It was at Saantiraksita's suggestion that Guru Padmasambhaava, the great Tantric master, was invited to Tibet, thus the link between the Svaatantrikas and the Tantrikas. One of the fundamental principles of the tantras is that one should use the means of samsāra for the attainment of nirvāna. As seen in Bhaavaviveka's contention, the language of the relative to denote the ultimate is used following MMK, XXIV, 10. It seems that the Prāsaṅgikas could not allow for this,

⁵⁴ Nathan Katz, An appraisal of the Svaatantrika-Prasangika debates, **Philosophy East and West** : 255.

⁵⁵ L.de la Vallee Poussin, **Bhaavaviveka**, (Brussels: Melanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, 1933), p.67.

contenting themselves with demonstrating that paramaārtha is beyond all logico-linguistic construction. Thus a Tantrika saying that “we can use the means of saṃsāra to attain nirvāṇa is but a jump from Bhāvaviveka saying that we can use the language of conventional truth to express ultimate truth.”⁵⁶

2.4 Conclusion

Upon the historical background and thought of early Buddhism, it is found that early Buddhists took up the empirical facts which directly confront men. Everything changes (anicca). Nothing is permanent. Based upon this standpoint another very important teaching of Early Buddhism comes out, that is the one of ‘non-self’. The ultimate purport of the teaching of ‘non-self’ was to get rid of selfish desires. It was nothing but enlightenment. Early Buddhists, believed that by the attitude of not assuming anything as ‘self’, one could get over suffering. Paradoxically speaking, Buddhism aimed at establishing the existential subjectivity or individuality by the negation of the ego. The realization of the true self was striven for. Buddhism did not deny the ‘self’ as such, contrary to the general assumption by many scholars who tend to regard the theory of ‘non-self’ as a sort of nihilism. In a stage of early Buddhism ‘anicca’, ‘dukkha’, ‘anattā’ came to be often mentioned as a set of principal ideas.

In early Buddhism the concept of dharma was put forth to substitute the concept of Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The central conception of Buddhism must be that of dharma. Various systems of dharmas were set forth in Early Buddhism. The human existence was

⁵⁶ Nathan Katz, An appraisal of the Svaatantrika-Prasangika debates, **Philosophy East and West** : 265.

analyzed and divided into Five Groups. They are : corporeality (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), perception (saññā), mental formations (saṅkhāra), and consciousness (viññāna). The ego can be found in none of them. Probably the first systematized teaching was the Four Noble Truths. The way of investigating as being found in the case of the Four Noble Truths can be found in investigating various phenomena (dharma). The clear understanding of the truths is the clear understanding of the dharmas. The clear understanding of the Four Noble Truths was systematized in minute detail by later conservative Buddhists (Hīnayānists). The Eightfold Way begins with Right View (sammādiṭṭhi), which means ‘seeing the dharma’. The teaching of the Middle Way is the basis of ethics of Early Buddhism. The concept of Dependent Origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) has been discussed by many scholars. Although various formulas of Dependent Origination are set forth in the scriptures of Early Buddhism, the best known and most representative formula of the theory is that of the Twelve Links. However, the Twelve Link theory must have been formulized later. The explanations of the theory have two aspects : i.e., one is relevant to living being ; the other to all phenomena which appear. Anyhow, Dependent Origination is strongly based on the law of karma. The purpose of teaching the theory is to explain in terms of facts, how we become elevated or degenerated, and its purport is not essentially different from that of The Four Noble Truths.

Nirvāṇa is not only absolute nothingness, but ‘perfect peace’. There are various synonyms of nirvāṇa in the scripture of Early Buddhism.⁵⁷ Nirvāṇa was later differentiated into two, that is the nirvāṇa

⁵⁷ Fumimaro Watanabe, **Nibbāna had many synonyms, IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, . vol. 11, No. 1, Jan. 1963, pp. 219-222.

in the present life, and the nirvāṇa after death.⁵⁸ The concept of ‘void’ (suñña) can be noticed in the scripture of Early Buddhism. It came to be a key-point for meditation. In Saṃyutta Nikāya it is stated that the world “is empty of a self or of anything of the nature of a self.” When Ānanda asks Gautama Buddha the meaning and significance of the phrase ‘the world is empty’ the Buddha says to Ananda that it is empty Ānanda, of a self, or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is it that is thus empty? The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind—all these are void of a self or of anything that is self-like.

Upon the historical background and thought of Sarvāstivāda, the Sarvāstivāda School was closely related to the orthodox Theravāda School, from which it was first separated probably before the Council of Aśoka. The idea that all things exist may go back even to the time of the Buddha himself, for the word ‘sabban atthi’ (all things exist) is found already in the Samyuttanikāya.⁵⁹

The Sarvāstivāda comprised two subschools, the Vaibhāṣika and the Sautrāntika. The Vaibhāṣika was formed by adherents of the Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra, comprising the orthodox Kasmiri branch of the Sarvāstivāda school. In contrast to the Vaibhāṣikas, the Sautrāntika Sarvāstivādins did not uphold the Mahāvibhāṣa Śāstra, but rather emphasized the Buddhist sūtras. The name Sautrāntika means "those who uphold the sūtras."

⁵⁸ Anupādisesa-nibbāna was discussed by Fumimaro Watanabe in **IBK : Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū (Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies)**, Vol. 9, No.2, March 1961, p. 126 f.

⁵⁹ English translation by C. A. F. Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward : *The Book of Kindred Sayings*, Pāli Text Society Translation Series, Vols. VII, X, XIII, XV, XVI, 1918-30. See Rhys Davids’ Index to the Saṃyutta, p. 107.

In the fourth century A.D., Asanga and Vasubandhu, the two brothers initially the followers of the Sarvāstivāda school leave the Sarvāstivāda school at the last stage of his life. Asaṅga was the father of systematic Mahāyāna philosophy, the first philosopher to take the disparate Mahāyāna Sūtras of his time and Vasubandhu became famous for his most illustrious work, the *Abhidharmakośa*, a veritable encyclopedia of Buddhist philosophy. A large number of Buddhist sects and sub-sects grew out of some major or minor differences of opinion among the teachers and philosophers. Most of these sects or sub-sects merged with more dominant ones or simply disappeared in course of time. Only the more popular and dominating ones, like the Sarvāstivāda, survived.

The earliest extant systematic presentation of Buddhist philosophy dates from the third century, when the the Sarvāstivādin thinker, Dharmaśrī, composed all *Abhidharmasāra*, or *Abhidharma Essence*, in which he tried to encompass all Buddhist thought in a coherent framework. For two centuries, however, his work served as the standard text on Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharma*, and inspired thinkers in other schools to compose compact, organized texts on their own doctrine. In the fifth century, a new set of Sarvāstivādin *kārikas* was composed, following Dharmaśrī basic framework, but incorporating the miscellaneous material throughout. The major changes involved a discussion of cosmology after the discussion of causation, and a concluding chapter on the ontological status of the ‘person’. This set of *kārikas* was called the *Abhidharmakośa* (*Abhidharma Sheath*), or *Kośa* for short.

The Vaibhāṣikas devote more attention to what it regards as the prime expression of ultimate truth: dependent co-arising. It delineates four ways of understanding the relationships among the factors in the causal chain: momentary, in which all twelve factors occur in a single moment of action; serial, in which the factors cause one another to arise in rapid succession as they themselves then pass away; static, in which the factors represent distinct stages in the relationships among the aggregates, which maintain continued existence before and after those relationships come and go; and prolonged, in which the whole sequence of causation occurs over three lifetimes. The Vaibhāṣikas maintain that only the static interpretation is valid, for unlike the first two it allows a mechanism for karmic consequences to last over time; unlike the last, it doesn't require that the ending of suffering take more than one lifetime.

Vasubandhu's attack on the Sarvāstivādin positions inspired a Sarvāstivādin philosopher, Saṅghabhadra, to write a much longer commentary on the Kośa in their defense; and apparently there were other, later thinkers who used the Kośa as a framework for advancing their own opinions as well. Of all the commentaries, however, Vasubandhu remained the most prominent, largely because of his student, Dignāga. In his revision of the ground rules for epistemology and dialectics, Dignāga incorporated material from Vasubandhu's work, thus keeping it alive for several centuries. The best-known compendium of the doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kośa-śāstra* (The Storehouse of Theology) which he wrote this work basing himself upon the standpoint of the Sautrāstivādins. Although it is problematic whether he faithfully represented the traditional doctrine of this school or

not, this text has served as a good introduction to the doctrine in many Asiatic countries.

Upon the historical background and thought of Mādhyamika, Nāgārjuna (CA. 150-250 C.E.), the founder of the Mādhyamika or Middle School, furnished the philosophical basis of Indian Mahayana Buddhism. Mādhyamika philosophy expounded by the great Indian master Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Bhāvaviveka and Chandrakīrti who followed him. Mādhyamika is a philosophy of the middle way between two impossible extremes. The middle way is not in the sense of the middle path but the middle way things are. The teaching of emptiness in Mādhyamika encourages everyone to transcend himself and thereby attain transcendental wisdom. The Mādhyamikas adopted the middle way approach and attempted to maintain a mean between extreme affirmation and extreme negation, as shown in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. The main message of Prajñāpāramitā literature is that all things are empty and supreme enlightenment is identified with the attainment of Śūnyatā. Nāgārjuna developed his teachings under the influence of Prajñāpāramitā philosophy. Later his philosophy paved the way for the development of Mahayana Buddhism not only in India but also in China, Japan, Tibet and other parts of Asia.

The middle period of the Mādhyamika school was marked by the conflicts between the Prāsaṅgika school founded by Buddhapālita and the Svāntantrika established by Bhāvaviveka. Sometime after the fifth century, the Mādhyamika school split into two sects, the Prāsaṅgika and the Svāntantrika. The Prāsaṅgika claim that the utilization of the prāsaṅ methodology defines one as a Prāsaṅgika. Whereas the the Svāntantrika see the question differently. The Svaatantrika's name means self-styled, or

independent, argumentation, the meaning is as that although a system of argumentation (for example, the Prāsaṅgika) may be valid on one level, it does not necessarily follow that it is valid on all levels. One must adapt his argumentation to correspond to a particular level of truth, which would seem to follow better Naagaarjuna's claim that he has no position of his own, but adopts his opponent's presuppositions and logic to point to their self-contradictory nature.

In the seventh century, another Madhyamaka thinker, Chandrakīrti, rejected this approach, and his arguments highlight an interesting question in the issue of tactical skill : To what extent is it skillful to work within the presuppositions of the people one wants to draw to one's point of view; and to what extent must one embody one's position in one's actions to achieve the same end? Bhāvaviveka believed that to be logically persuasive, Nāgārjuna's arguments had to be cast in the form acceptable to one's audience. Chandrakīrti, however, felt that this was a betrayal of the Madhyamaka approach.

Prāsaṅgika was brought to China by Kumārajīva who was regarded as the initial teacher of Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika in China. Mādhyamika Buddhism In China is called the San-lun Tsung (Three Treatise School). However, the spread of the San-lun School in China after Kumārajīva was also due to the efforts of Seng-lang (494-512). Seng-chüan (d. 528), Fa-lang (507-581) and especially Chi-tsang (549-623). Perhaps Chi-tsang was the greatest San-lun master in the history of San-lun Buddhism in China, Korea and Japan.