BUDDHISM IN NEPAL

—NALINAKSHA DUTT

The dictum of Gautama Buddha, soon after his enlightenment, "Wander forth, Ye O Monks, for the good of many, for the happiness of many" (चरथ भिक्खवे चरिकं बहुजनहिताय बहुजनसुखाय) seems to have inspired his disciples to propagate the religion so much that they went to the furthest length to spread the teachings of Buddhism throughout its long career. The teaching of Sakyamuni was meant for all men irrespective of caste, creed, sex, social status or state of civilisation. Within India, Buddhism could not obtain full scope on account of the hold of the Brahmanas on the common people, hide-bound, as they were, by the caste (*varna*) and ritualistic system of the Brahmanas. There were several erudite Brahmanas, with a spiritual and philosophical bent of mind, who could see through the artificiality of *varna*-system and ritualism, eschewed their inherited faith and religion and joined the Buddhist Sangha in order to derive the full benefit of the deep teachings of Gautama Buddha. The lay-society appreciated the self-sacrificing spirit of the Buddhist monks, and satisfied themselves by just making donations as much as they could afford to the Sangha, with or without the hope of earning merits. The Buddhist monk-preachers, not finding a very fruitful field for conversion among the masses of India, directed their attention to the peoples living in, and outside the borders of India, where Brahmanic caste-system and ritualism could not cast its influence.

The tribal people had a culture of their own with animistic beliefs, spirit-worship, etc. To them the missionaries despatched during the reign of Asoka directed their attention and proceeded to the frontiers of India or the countries beyond. One of the missionaries was Majjhima, who went to the Himalayan region along with Kassapagotha, relics of both of whom have been discovered in a relic-urn at Sanchi with the inscription of the names on the lid and described as "Hemavata-cariya". In the Nagarjunikonda inscription, there is a reference to the attempt for spreading the religion in Cina-Cilate, of which Cilata is dentified with the Kiratas living in the eastern Himalayan region, that is the frontier of Nepal, the vasts forest adjoining Lumbini. Spread of Buddhism took place in its very early stage during the times of Asoka and Kanishka in Ceylon on the south and in the N.W. Frontiers of India, including Afghanistan, Balkh and Bamiyan, Central Asia and Nepal in the north. The ancient Kiratas were the earliest people of Nepal to receive the teachings of Buddhism, evidently in its elementary

form, which was mixed in with their animistic and other beliefs. They were followed by the Licchavis and Newars, both of which tribes, particularly the Newars, became Buddhist but they did not eschew altogether their ancient religion, *Saivism.*

Throughout the history of Nepal up to the modern times, the people in general adored both Saiva and Buddhist deities, and hence, the form of Buddhism prevailed here all along was neither pure Hinayana nor Mahayana nor Tantrayana. The latest rulers of Neplal, the Gurkhas, though staunch Sivaite, were tolerant of Buddhism. All the earlier ruling dynasties and the people in general, were either Sivaites or Buddhists but worshipped the deites of both the religions, and extended their patronage to both of them, sometimes, identifying Siva with Buddha, and Brahma with Adibuddha, the Svayambhu, i.e. the self-existent, unborn and undecaying, the deified form of Dharmakaya, the universe or Sunyata (see infra p.43).

Nepal, however, is the only country, which preserved the most valuable treasures of Indian Buddhism, that is, the original manuscripts of Mahayana and Tantrayana literature, which became known to Indian and European scholars through the efforts of a great scholar B. B. Hodgson. Quite a number of these manuscripts or their copies were taken to Sa-skya and other monasteries of Tibet, and formed the bases of Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur. The Banepa-kuti pass of Nepal leading to Tibet served as one of the routes for transmission of Indian Buddhism to Tibet, and the mutual contact of Indian and Tibetan savants. Both Indian and Nepalese monks of Odantapuri and Vikramasila, including the famous apostle Atisa, reached Tibet through Nepal.

The great Tibetan king Srong-btsan-sgam-po and his successors ruled not only over Tibet but also extended their dominion to some portions of Nepal and Central Asia. This political relation paved the way for the propagation of Buddhism in these two countries. The famous scholar Thon-mi-sambhota developed the Tibetan script out of the Gupta style of script prevailing in Kashmir and Nepal. Hence, Buddhism of Nepal was the product of both Indian and Tibetan missionaries. The contributions of Tibet to the Nepalese stupas of Svayambhunath and Budhnath were no less than tose of the Nepalese rulers (see infra p. 43). From the *stupas* and diviniteis worshipped in Nepal, it may be inferred that the latest phase of Buddhism, Tantrism, became popular in Nepal as also in Tibet. This was also due to the efforts of the missionaries of Odantaupri and Vikramasila. Further, in the eastern sub-Himalayan region of Nepal, the original inhabitants belonged

to the Tibetan stock and they are still living in this area, adhering to both Bon-po and Buddhist faith.

In this article, it is proposed to reconstruct a history of Nepalese Buddhism, on the basis of the tribes and rulers, who patronised, and devoted themselves to, the religion, preceded by a topographical and tribal sketch of Nepal, and concluded with an account of the two stupas, Svayam-bhunath and Budhnath.

TOPOGRAPHY

Nepal is situated on the southern slopes of the Himalayas extending up to the Indo-Gangetic plains. At the earliest period the country of Nepal denoted only the valley of Kathmandu with its length and breadth about 100 miles on each direction and was about 60 miles north of the Indo-Gangetic plain. The valley of Nepal was later extended to the south by the inclusion of the large forests of the Terai reaching up to the border of India. On the east, it extended over the mountainous region up to the borders of Tibet and Sikkim. On the west, it extended up to Kumaun. Its present area is about 50,000 square miles with a population of about 8 millions.

TRIBES

The original inhabitants of Nepal were many tribes of the Indo-Mongoloid stock. The main population consisted of the Kiratas, Licchavis and Newars, many of whom became intermingled and became known as Newars. They were surrounded by Magar, Gurungs, Son-wars, Kachars, Limbus, Lepchas, Kasundas and Murmis. The physiognomy of all these different tribal peoples shows a fairly close affinity. The ancient language was mainly that of the Newars who were the best cultured people of the country.

KIRATAS

The Kiratas were the earliest Himalayan tribe to come to Nepal and to settle down there. They included the clans of Khambus, Limbus, Tharus and a few others. The Kiratas are mentioned in as early as a Vedic Text: the White Yajurveda (Vajasaneyi samhita), in the two Epics, Manava-dharma-sastra, Bharavi's Kiratarjuniyam and Peri-plus.[1] In the Epics, they are mentioned along with Sakas, Yavanas and Pallavas. They fraternised with Cinas under Bhagadatta, the king of Kamarupa (Prag-jyotisa). In the Lalita-Vistara, one of the forms of writing mentioned is *Kirata-lipi*. In the Nagarjunikonda inscription referred to above, they are associated with Cina with the name Cilata. In the *Milindapanha* (p.322) is mentioned Cina-vilata of which "Vilata" seems to be a misreading for Cilata. Dr. Regmi says that the were

living in Balkh and Dardistan. Prof. Levi writes that Cilata was a part of Mahacina which included Nepal.[2]

There is the tradition that the Kiratas were originally Ksatriyas but for non-compliance with the prescribed duties—obligations of their caste, they were degraded to Sudras. Buddhism had already spread to Balkh and Dardistan[3] and so they must have known of Buddhism before they entered into Nepal. They took possession of the eastern valley of Nepal 5 or 6 days journey from Bhatgaon and ruled there for 29 generations i.e. for about 725 years.[4] While in the Buddhist territories they muttered Om Mani Padme Hum and gave presents to Lamas but while in Hindu area they worshipped Siva and Gauri and made gifts to Brahmanas.

LICCHAVIS

The Licchavis of Vaisali, situated in close proximity to Nepal, after losing their independence in India entered into Nepal, conquered the Kiratas and settled down in the country. They ruled for about six centuries from the 1st century A.D. Jayadeva was their first ruler.[5] These Licchavis were different from those, who live in the days of Sakyamuni, and perhaps belonged to the clan, with whom the Guptas rulers, Chandragupta I and Samudragupta had relations.[6] Like the Gupta rulers, the Licchavis were worshippers of Siva and Visnu. Among the Licchavi rulers, Narendradeva, Sivadeva and Puspadeva became ardent supporters of Buddhism. Narendradeva's regared for Buddhism is shown in some of his inscriptions by the representation of the symbol of the Buddhist wheel of law (*Dharmacakra*) flanked by two deer.[7] It is said that Narendradeva though Sivaite, always kept an image of Buddha with him as a magical charm.[8] In his old age, he retired to a Buddhist monastery, and at the time of his death he gave to his son, his crown along with a copy of the Prajnaparamita.

In the *Manjusrimulakalpa* (p.621), appears the following passage "There will be in Nepal in the north in the Himalayan region a king of the Licchavi dynasty. He will be very prosperous on account of his attaining perfection in Mantras known as Bhogavarti. He will reign for 80 years in a kingdom bereft of thieves." Very likely the king referred to in this passage is Narendradeva. "There will be many other kings of this dynasty who will worship the famous Taradevi clad in white who renders untiringly and at all times help to all". It may be mentioned here that Vajra-yogini, Ugra-Tara and Nila-Tara were and are being worshipped by the Nepalese Buddhists.

In the Yagbahal inscription of Sivadeva II (8th Century A.D.) after mentioning the name of Licchavi-kulaketu Paramabhattaraka Maharaja-dhirala Narendradeva, is recorded that a grant was made to the fraternity of monks of the four quarters. A monastery was built by king Sivadeva who named it as "Sivadeva-vihara-catur-dig-bhikhu-sanghasya.[9]" During the reign of Lichavi-kula-ketu Puspadeva further grants were made to the monks of Sivadeva-vihara. In this inscription are mentioned incidentally a few other monasteries viz. Manadeva-vihara Gupta-vihara, Kharjurika-vihara Abhayakavi-vihara Raja-vihara and Saciva-vihara.[10] King Bhaskaradeva erected also a few monasteries viz., Hiranya vihara, Mahavihara and Pingala-vihara.[11] Besides the above, there were also many other monasteries, some of which were known as Varta-kalyana-vihara, Catur-bhalankasana-vihara and Sriraja-vihava.[12]

Most of these monasteries had extensive land-grants, known as Agraharas,[13] which the donees enjoyed free of all taxes and revenues payable to the State. The object of such grants, as is described in the inscriptions was to encourage learning and spiritual practices of monks by keeping them above cares and anxieties for the bare necessaries of life as also to see that the viharas grew into centres of education and cultural progress.

Inspite of their Saiva faith, the later Licchavi rulers not only made lavish grants to Buddhist monasteries but also had great regared for Buddhism and Buddhist monks, e.g. king Jayadeva and his queen worshipped Avalokitesvara.[14]

The kings also encouraged the propagation of Buddhist literature as is proved by their affixing signatures to many manuscripts. Mention may be made of the signatures of Narendradeva in a copy of the Prajnaparamita in Sri-vihara, of Baladeva in a copy of the Saddharmapundarika and of Sankara deva in Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita and Bodhicaryavatara.

It lies to the credit of Narendradeva, to establish closer contact with Tibet through the Banepa-kuti Pass (Bhotta in Tibetan) said to the shortest route from China and Tibet to India. Mahayana Buddhism was introduced into Tibet some time before Santiraksita and Padmasambhava by Buddhist missionaries resididing in Nepal, along with the Pagoda Style of architecture of temples. Both artists and missionaries of Nepal[15] contributed much to the cultural advancement of Tibet in the first half of the 7th Century A.D.

MALLAS

11th to 14th Century A.D.

The Mallas, according to Prof. Tucci,[16] were the Khasiyas of Simla and Garhwal. Their conquest and rulership of the area from Western Nepal to Western Tibet were discovered by Prof. Tucci in his latest expedition to Nepal, 1953. Nagadeva conquered Western Tibet in the 12th Century while Prthivi Malla was the last ruler of this dynasty, when Western Tibet regained its independence. These Malla rulers were perhaps tolerant of Buddhism, as one of its rulers bearing the name of Asoka made a donation to the temple of Bodh Gaya.[17] The Mallas were originally Hindus, but on the top of the steles, discovered by Prof. Tucci at Dullu and in the neighbouring villages containing the genealogy of the Malla rulers, appears a Buddhist symbol with the inscription "Om Mani Padme Hum" The Mallas, while in Tibet, became Buddhist and built the magnificent temples of Tsaparang and Toling, discovered by Prof. Tucci in his expedition in 1931-33. They used Tibetan language in the north and Sanskrit in the south of their dominion.[18] Prof. Petech utilising the colophons of Nepalese mss. in which the names of kings with their dates are usually given by the copyists, compiled a chronological history of the Malla rulers with Arimalla as the first to reign in Nepal in 1200 A.D. They were mainly Saivas and had no connection with Buddhism. There is no indication in this chronology how these Malla kings were related to the Malla rulers, whose genealogy was discovered by Prof. Tucci at Dullu. Prof. Tucci writes that the latest Malla rulers of Nepal were quite different from the Mallas whose genealogy, he had discovered at Dullu.

NEWARS

The Newars were a composite race of Indo-Mongoloid origin. Being the first settlers and the oldest inhabitants of the valley of Kathmandu, they absorbed many tribal peoples who came to live in the valley. They had close affinity to Magars, Gurungs, Lepchas, Sonwars, Kachars, Murmis, Limbus and Kiratas. Their language was Indo-Mongoloid and not Indo-Aryan, though they absorbed much of Indian culture. They might have some relations with the Vrji clan of Vaisali. They were the first people of Nepal among whom the Buddhist evangelists made their attempts to propagate the teachings of Buddhism. In Chines, there is a tradition that Bodhisattva Manjusri opened out a

passage for the water encompassed and locked in Nepal and converted it into a habitable country. His companions were the Newars, who first colonised the country. They ruled over the valley of Kathmandu for about 725 years up to the advent of the Gurkhas. They along with other tribes shared the territory with the changing ruling tribes including the Gurkhas who ruled over Nepal from 1768.

The Newars were excellent craftsmen, made beautiful bronze images and painted figures. They made graceful images of Buddha, Avalokitesvara or Padmapani, as also of the Divine Mercy but in various demonaic forms. They were not only artists but also architects. They introduced the Pagoda Style of architecture in temples of both Nepal and Tibet. There were among them learned men and the most learned among them were given the highest place in the caste distinction, which was later imposed on them by the Brahmanic influence.

Buddhism as is well known deprecated strongly the caste-system which made an artificial distinction of high and low among human beings. The various tribes absorbed in Indian population were generally relegated to a lower caste. The Buddhist evangelists preferred to work among the hill-people who were not obsessed with caste-distinctions. There were divisions among them according to professions and tribal orgins. The Buddhist monks found the Newars of Nepal, a composite tribal people, suitable for propagating their religion and received good response from them. The Newars also adapted their habits, customs and practices to the teachings of Buddhism but with the advent of Brahmanic influence, particularly the Saivites, who became rulers of the land, the Newars had to submit themselves to a special caste-distinction on lines similar to those of the Brahmanic system. The Sivamargis were generally the ruling class, while the common people were Buddhamargis. The caste system in Nepal came into vogue both among the Hindus as well as the Buddhists in the reign of the Thakuris but was made more and more rigid during the reign of Jayasthiti Malla in the 14th century A.D. Intermarriage between different castes became restricted and two sets of caste-distinction were introduced in the two religious groups: Sivamargi and Buddhamargi.

The monks who formerly led a celibate life claimed that they were descendants of India Brahmanas and Ksatriyas and as such they were of the highest castes. They took advantage of the Brahmanic form of married priesthood and started marrying and having families and, at the same time, earning their livelihood by officiating as priests of the Buddhists

and enjoying the yield of the monastic properties. The caste system of the Newars or the common people in general was made thus:—

I Vajracarya or Gubhaju-learned monks

II Sakya-bhiksu (Bandya-Banra)-monks without much learning and many taking up profession of goldsmith:

III Sresthas: Kayastha (scribes), Nikhu (painter of images of deities), Lakhay (attendants)

IV (*a*) Lower castes, corresponding to Sudras. They are Uday or Urag (merchants) Carpenters, Metal workers

(*b*) Jyapu (cultivators)

(*c*) All sorts of manual workers engaged in various trades and professions and

V Untouchables.[19]

The above list indicates broadly the form of caste distinction of the Buddhamargis. Of these the Vajracarya-Sakyabhiksu replaced the Buddhist monks but retained the formalities of ordination in a strange manner.

ORDINATION OF A NEWARI BUDDHIST PRIEST

Prof. Levi [20] has given an account of the whole procedure of ordination of a Newari Buddhist priest. Buddhism underwent a revolutionery change in Nepal along with the ceremony of ordination retaining just a few formalities of the ancient ceremony. The Bandyas (Banras) are only entitled to ordination, which, however, was not given to one who married and became the father of a family and took the profession of an artisan. The Bandyas could be given ordination before their marriage, and only the ordained Bandyas could be the officiating priests. The procedure of ordination is as follows:—

A candidate seeking ordination with a view to qualify himself for becoming officiating priest, approaches a spiritual preceptor (*Guru*) and requests him to give him ordination.

The *Guru*, before commencing the actual ceremony, draws a magical diagram and utters spells for giving protection to the candidate from three dangers, viz,. from thunderbolt, iron and fire. The spells are known as Vajraraksa, Loharaksa and Agniraksa.

The candidate is then sprinkled with a jar of consecrated water. This ceremony is known as *Kalasa-abhiseka*.

Two days later the Guru who is usually the head (*Nayaka*) of a monastery and four senior priests of other monasteries, i.e. five priests in all, as was the ancient custom, confer the vow of renunciation from worldly life (*Pravrajya-vrata*) on the candidate along with the prescription for observance of five moral precepts (*Siksapadas*)viz., non-killing, non-stealing, celibacy, and abstention from falsehood and intoxicating drinks.

The next step is that the candidate is to get himself shaved of hair, moustache and beard. He is then given a religious name and is sprinkled with consecrated water. He is asked to observe five additional precepts i.e. ten *siksapadas* in all, viz, abstention from enjoying dances, from use of ornamental articles, from sleeping on high bed, from taking food beyond fixed time, and from touching gold and silver.

The candidate is then asked to put on the robes of a monk (*civare*) and under-garment (*nivasa*), and to take a begging bowl (*pindapatra*), a stick (*khikkhari*), a pair of wooden sandals, a jug or ewer, and an umbrella.

The orthodox form of ordination is thus completed. The candidate becomes a fully ordained monk.

This ceremony of ordination is supplemented by the worship of the deities: Bhairava, Mahakala, Vasundhara etc. with rituals and other parapharnelia, introduced later perhaps by the Tantric Buddhist monks.

The ordained monk observes the restrictions imposed on him for four days only, and then approaches his Guru again and tells him that he is unable to lead the life of a monk and requests him to relieve him of the *Pravrajyavrata* and the ten observances (*siksapadas*) and to permit him to take up the disciplinary practices of a Bodhisattva. The Guru readily assents to his request, admitting that it is difficult to observe the rules and restrictions of *Pravrajya-vrata*. Thereafter the ordained

monk becomes a house-holder but he gains the privilege of acting as officiating priests or Gubhajus.

GUBHAJUS, VAJRACARYAS AND BHIKSUS

The Gubhajus are to take the training of officiating priests. They learn the method of the ignition of daily fire with melted butter (*homa*), which is generally carried along with a deity. If they neglect to perform *homas*, they along with their descendants are degraded to the rank of *Bhiksus* or junior priests, who can act only as assistants of Gubhajus in rituals and ceremonies.

The Gubhajus are usually learned men (Pandit) and wear the sacred cord like the Brahmins. If he cultivates his Knowledge of *homa* and devotes himself to further studies of religious texts, he is raised to the rank of Vajracarya-arhat-bhiksu-buddha.

After attaining the status of a Vajracarya, he enjoys the highest rank of a priest and becomes entitled to perform ceremonies in connection with birth, marriage and death.[21]

DRESS OF A VAJRACARYA AND A BHIKSU

The Vajracaryas and the Bhiksus put on a special dress. A Vajracarya puts on his head a bishop's mitre (tall cap) and a copper crown richly embossed with two rows of escutcheon (coat of arms) on which are embossed the images of Buddha and Tara. On the top is a Vajra horizontally placed on an escutcheon. In his hands he carries a Vajra and a Bell; from his neck up to the girdle hangs a rosary. He wears a yellow (*kasaya*) costume, consisting of a tight jacket with a thick-set skirt in pleats up to the girdle.

His assistant, the Bhiksu has a similar costume but with a different insignia. He puts on a coloured cap and a piece of wrapping cloth joined by gilt buttons . His rosary is of the simple type hanging from his neck and he carries in his hands a stick (*khikkhari*) and a begging bowl (*pindapatra*).

POSITION OF BUDDHISM

From the historical survey made above, it is apparent that Buddhist evangelists reached Nepal somtime before the Christian era but they could not impregnate the people with the spirit of Buddhism and the monastic system of life. They made a superficial impression on the Kiratas and Newars, the earliest inhabitants of Nepal, by acquainting them with the bare moral precepts. About the 7th/8th centuries A.D., the ruling dynasties became interested in the religion, made substantial donations for erecting stupas and monasteries, but both the rulers and the common people did not give up their earlier faith in Saivism. They found in both Hinduism and Buddhism some common features, and tried to place Siva and Buddha on the same level. The fact that the Newars gave preference to Buddhism shows that the Buddhist evangelists were partially successful in winning over this community to their faith although they could not completely wean them from their animistic beliefs and Brahmanic rituals. The existence of ancient *stupas* indicates that Buddhism had many adherents in ancient Nepal.

The Newars, however, could not rise up to the ideal of orthodox monasticism and produce self-sacrificing monks to take up spiritual practices for the attainment of the goal. It is for this reason, they readily succumbed to the caste distinction on lines parallel to that of the Brahmanas. Their monks lost no time to give up their celibacy and get married and to become fathers of families. They imitated the life of the Brahmanic priests with a view to lead an easy-going life.

As a matter of fact, the monasteries became denuded of celibate monks and novices, and were filled up by house holders engaged in secular business. In Kashmir also, there is an instance of a similar monastery built by Yukadevi, wife of King Meghavahana, who was a great patron of Buddhism. Yukadevi built a magnificent monastery in one half of which, she placed those Bhiksus whose conduct conformed to the precepts, and in the other half those who were married and had children, cattle and property. The latter were being looked down for their life asa householder (*Rajatarangini*, iii. 12). In the 17th century, a king of Kathmandu and Bhatgaon built 25 Viharas naming them as *Nairvanikos* meant exclusively for celibate monks. Thus, it seems that there were, in Nepal as also in Kashmir, kings and queens who desired for celibate monks and not married priests, although the latter could not be denied residence in monasteries.

The Newars, however, adhered primarily to the Buddhist faith and secondarily to Saiva. They worshipped first the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and then the Brahmanic deities, Siva and Visnu, while the Hindus reveresed this sequence of worship. It seems that the Nepalese maintained a balance between the two religions e.g. there is a Svayambhu Purana along with a Pasupati Purana. There is also anther Purana with the title Buddha Purana in which Buddha has been made an incarnation of Visnu. There were two magnificent temples, one of Svayambhunath dedicated to Adi Buddha and the other of Pasupatinath enshrining Siva. It may be observed in this connection, that the symbol of Svastika was adopted by both the religions, but the Buddhists made it right-handed while the Hindus left-handed. Both the cults prevailed in the country all along, the Buddhist cult among the common people while the Brahmanic cult among the ruling classes. In this connection the remarks of Hiuen Tsang may be quoted here. He writes that the Nepalese believed both in false and true religion. The Buddhist monasteries and Deva temples touched each other. There were above 2000 ecclesiasticcs who were attached to both vehicles[22]. The kings of Nepal were Ksatriya Licchavis, and they were eminent scholars, believing in Buddhism.

In Nepal-mahatmya, appears the line तंत्र बुद्धः प्रभावति (There the Buddha predominates) while in a Buddhist manuscript appear the following lines:—

यद् भवतां बुद्धप्रसादाद् अभीष्टम् ।
तन् मया पसुपति प्रसादात् लब्यम् ।।

(What you desire out of the favour of Buddha was obtained by me through the grace of Pasupati.)[23].

The Newars developed a language of their own. They became excellent scribes and calligraphists. Their script was a development of the Gupta script of the 5th/6th Century A.D. One of the important features of their culture was the love for cailigraphy and earnestness in copying the Buddhist manuscripts, which were taken to Nepal by the fugitive monks of Nalanda, Vikramasila and Odantapuri after the onslaught of the Moslems in Bihar.

Nepal came into a close contact with the monks of the three monasteries of Bihar in the 10th Century A.D. In these monasteries at that time, the study and practices of Tantrayana became predominant and so this form of Buddhism with its divinities was introduced in Nepal. It was also allied to Tantric Saivism.

Taranatha, the Tibetan historian, furnishes us with the names and particulars of few monks who went to Nepal. They are:

(i) Vasubandhu, the famous author of the Abhidharmakosa, after sending this work of his to Sanghabhadra, went to Nepal on his way from Kashmir to Nalanda.

(ii) Vajradeva, a great poet, a layman, went to Nepal and composed a poem criticising a heretical Yogini of Nepal, who cursed him with the disease of leprosy. For getting rid of the disease, he implored Avalokitesvara and composed in three months in Sragdhara metre 100 *stotras*, enlogising him. He then visualised him and got himself freed of leprosy. He *stotras* became famous all over India.

(iii) Vagisivarakirti of Varanasi was the western *dvarapandita* of Vikramasila. He was a sthavira of the Mahasanghika School. He mastered both the *Sutras* and the *Tantras*. In the second half of his life he went to Nepal with a large number of female disciples, for which his sanctity was doubted by the people of Nepal but the king of Santapuri erected a Cakrasambara temple and requested him to invite a Ganacakra [24] to inaugurate the temple.

In chapters 37, 38 and 39, Taranatha relates the advent of the Moslems and as a result of which, the monks of Vikramasila and Odantapuri went to the different parts of India, evidently with their manuscript treasures. Two of them came to Nepal. They are:

(i) Buddhasri, the head of Vikramasila after Sakyasri, was a native of Nepal. He returned to his homeland and taught the Paramitayana and the secret Mantrayana. He observed the Tantric form of conduct.

(ii) Ratnaraksita of Vikramasila was vastly learned like Sakyasri but he specialised in Mantrayana, and thereby he acquired immense magical powers. He visualised Kalacakra, Cakrasambara, Yamari etc. Two years ahead he foresaw the advance of Moslems, and so with a great number of his disciple, he left Vikramasila and reached Kashmir and Nepal. He went also for a short time to Tibet, where he wrote a commentary on *Samvarodaya* [25].

The eastern mountainous region of Nepal, touching the border of Tibet was inhabited mostly by Lepchas and other tribes using Tibetan dialects and having a close affinity to the Tibetans. They became the followers of the Bon-po religion and erected Bon-po temples, e.g. in Chakra village, and inherited some Buddhist articles of faith. King Srongbtsan-sgam-po and his successors (9th Century) made inroads into Nepal, conquered and ruled over the north-eastern region of Nepal. This Tibetan conquest, led to further extension of Mahayana and Tantrayana Buddhism in Nepal and introduced some Mahayanic and Tantrayanic principles and divinities as a veneer on Saivism. These could, however, neither supersede Sivaism not superimpose Buddhism on Saiva religion and divinities.

Both from Bihar and Tibet the Buddhist evangelists, imbued with Tantricism, propagated the Tantric phase of Buddhism in Nepal with its Mantras, Mandalas and other secret practices.

It is therefore not at all surprising that the form of Buddhism in Nepal was Mahayanic and Tantric, and the Nepalese worshipped their divinities, the Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, goddess Tara in her different forms as also the Yoginis, placing Sakyamuni in the background. Prof. Levi paid a visit to a Vihara, Tyekam-bahal, where he noticed in the chapel an image of Sakyamuni flanked by the images of Lokesvara and Maitreya. On the top of the image there was a superb wood-panel depicting Mahavairocana, having in his hands a rosary, a sword, a club and a book. There were in the courtyard images of Amoghasiddhi, Aksoobya, Ratnasambhava and Padmapani [26]. He came across also a copy of Sakyamuni-stotra composed by Indra with a local commentary [27].

In the Buddha Purana, there is a fantastic account of the life of Sakyamuni. The Nepalese adore the footmarks of Sakyamuni Buddha. In the footmarks, there are carving or painting of the auspicious signs, viz. *Srivatsa*, *Padma*, *Dhvaja*, *Kalasa*, *Chattra*, *Matsya*, *Sankha* and *Cakra* [curl of hair on the breast, lotus, flag, jar, umbrella, whisk or fly-flap fish, conch-shell and concentric circles]. These auspicious signs are more Brhamanic than Buddhistic. Hence, it is apparent that worship of Sakyamuni did not form an integral part of Nepalese Buddhism.

The chief Buddhist divinity was Adi Buddha and the emanations out of Him.

STUPAS

There are five ancient Caityas attributed to Emperor Asoka. These are on the model of the stupas at Sanchi and Taxila, but these do not enshrine any relics. The five Caityas are in Patan, a suburb of Kathmandu on its south-east. Of these, one Caitya is in the centre of the town and four in the four corners around the twon. Caityas are just hemispherical mounds of bricks on a brick platform. Against the sides of the Caitya there are inset vaults enshrining in each of them one of the four Buddhas. [28]

There are several stupas of this type of a late date scattered over Kathmandu and its neighbourhood.

Usually at the top of a stupa, there is a chapel dedicated to Vairocana. On its four sides there are also chapels in the innermost recesses, containing images of the four Dhyani-Buddhas, viz. Amitabha, (or Padmapani), Ratna-sambhava, Aksobhya and Amoghasiddhi[29].

The glory of Nepalese Buddhsim, is the Caitya of Svayambhunath standing on a 400ft. high hillock on the western end of Kathmandu. The Caitya is of immense dimension and proportion. Its style of architecture is the same as that of the ancient stupas. Its decorative features, however, are Lamaistic. On each of its four sides are painted wide open eyes in red, white and black colour. On its eastern side at the end of the stairs is placed a gilt Vajra locally called Dorje guarded by two lions of stone placed on a stone disc called Vajradhatu-mandala. An oil lamp is always kept burning there.

The name Svayambhu is derived according to the tradition given in the Svayambhu Purana from Adi Buddha (རྒྱ་མཛེ་ཁང་ཐུང་) who manifested himself at the spot in the form of a flame of fire regarded as self-existent, eternal and undecaying.

The credit of creating a temple for its preservation is given to Manjusri Bodhisattva. Adi Buddha is self-born and so the Nepalese worship him as Svayambhu. He is always in Nirvana and is issued out of Sunyata. Through his meditation appeared the five Dhyani Buddhas representing Pravrtti (manifestation), viz. Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi, Symbolising the five elements (Skandhas) viz, Rupa, Vedana, Samjna, Sanskara and Vijnana. They in turn by their knowledge and contemplation brought into being five Dhyani Bodhisattvas, viz. Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Avalokitesvara of Padmapani and Visvapani respectively. The Bodhisattvas are believed to be creators of the Changing Universe. The present world is a creation of Avalokitesvara, who is protected by Buddha Amitabha. As his instructor appeared the human Buddha, Sakyamuni.

The appearance of Avalokitesvara out of Svaymbhu or the self-existent, the Adi Buddha (the Primordial Buddha), also called Adinatha, is related in the later metrical version of the *Karandavyuha*. In *Mahayana-Sutralankara* (ix, 77) Asanga denies the possibility of the conception of one beginingless (anaditah) Buddha or several Buddhas on account of the Mahayanic conception of Dharmakaya. Hence he comments saying "na can kascid adi-buddho'sti vina sambharena". On the basis of this comment of Asanga, Prof. Winternitz (*A History of India Literature*, II, p.306) inferred that Asanga referred to the Tantric conception of Adibuddha. The conception of Avalokitesvara, as found in the *Karandayuha* may be regarded as prior to that of Adibuddha. As a matter of fact the conception of Adibuddha was given currency in the *Kalacakratantra* at a much later date i.e. about the 10th Century.

According to the Svayambhu-purana, the Caitya of Svayambhunath of Kathmandu was erected first by Pracandadeva, king of Gauda, who abdicated his throne to enter into the order of monks and was given the religious name of Santikara-bhiksu. This however lacks corroboration by any inscription. The Caitya was repaired by Sivadeva Malla in 1593 and since then it was maintained by the Tibetans. About a century later, a Lama of Lhasa fixed gilt copper plates to the bell-tower and put up a gilt parasol. Lama Karmapa came to Nepal to bless the king and

the people in 1751, when he took up the repair work of the Caitya and spent a large amount of gold and copper for 7 years for completing the work of renovation. Thereafter, for over a century, repairs and additions were made and these altered the original structure by putting up in a chaotic order caityas, steles, images of Dhyani Buddhas and images of Vajrayana deities, colossal images of Buddha in black, white or red colour. These haphazard additions spoiled the grandeur of the Caitya. There are even steles on which is inscribed a *stotra* recounting the history of the Mallas, from Pratapamalla, and another containing a bilingual inscription in Sanskrit and Tibetan of the 18th century.

BUDHNATH

The stupa of Budhnath is the second Buddhist stupa, next in importance to Svayambhunath. It stands on the river Bagmati between Gokarna and the temple of Pasupatinath. The Caitya is an edifice of unusual proportions, consisting of three symmetrical parts, the base, the hemisphere and the crown[30].

There are two traditions about its erection. One is that King Manadeva who committed parricide involuntarily prayed to Vajrayogini[31], the Trantric goddess of *Vajrayoga* for expiation of his sin. He was directed by the goddess to build the sanctuary of Budhnath, which he did in due course[32]. He composed also stotra., very popular in Nepal, eulogising the Triratna.

The other tradition current in Tibet is given by Waddell in his *Lamaism* (pp.315-7). According to this tradition, a girl of pig-herd's family of Magute village in Nepal after marriage had four sons. She took up the profession of herding and rearing geese for the wealthy. She amassed much wealth and begged of the king of Nepal for a piece of land. She with her four sons, a servant, an ass and an elephant collected earth and bricks and started the construction of the Stupa. She died four years after commencing the work and her sons carried on the construction and completed it in due course. After completion, the sons received miraculously from heaven the relics of Tathagata Kasyapa and enshrined them in the Stupa. This stupa is worshipped by the Newars and Murmis as also by the Tibetan pilgrims.

Apart from these two magnificent stupas, there are hundreds of small stupas in the towns and villages of Nepal. There are clusters of

stupas and temples in the cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon. The existence of these stupas and temples in Nepal from the ancient times proves beyond doubt that Buddhism had a firm footing there in the ancient and medieval periods of Nepalese history. The religion lost its hold upon the people after the reign of Thakuris and Gurkhas who revived Brahmanism. The Gurkhas, however, at first, divided their patronage between Hinduism and Buddhism. In a temple of Tundi Khal, the Gurkhas worshipped the deity as Mahakala while the Buddhists worshipped the same deity as Padmapani. The image, however, has in its tiara the figure of Amitabha. The Gurkhas allowed the Tibetan pilgrims freely to worship Svayambhunath and Budhnath[33]. In both these stupas appears the mantra "Om Mani Padma Hum" The revival of Brahmanism led to the degeneration of Buddhist monks, who became house-holders, engaging themselves in different vocations, leaving the superficial maintenance of the religious beliefs to the Newars of higher castes, the Vajracaryas and Bhiksus, who also led a family life and converted the monasteries into dwellings of families of the priesthood.

The Buddhist divinities worshipped in various temples are Manjusri, Avalokitesvara including his manifestation as Matsyendranath, Aksobhya, Amoghasiddhi, the Yoginis and the Taras in different colours. Sakyamuni Buddha is also worshipped in some temples but more importance is given to the worship of Manjusri and Avalokitesvara. In Nepal, Manjusri has in some cases been treated as a female deity while the Hindus looked upon it as Sarasvati, the goddess of learning. Much may be written on these divinities, but at present this account has been left out. In his *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Dr. B. Bhattacharyya has described in detail the images of many of these divinities of Nepal.

NOTES

1. Sylvain Levi, *Le Nepal*, I, p. 75. See for detailed references.
2. Ibid., I, p. 220.
3. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, p. 19.
4. Ibid, p. 62.
5. Ibid., pp. 65, 69.
6. Ibid., p. 71.
7. Ibid., pp. 100-1.

8. Levi., op. cit., II, p. 166.
9. Ibid., p. 169.
10. Ibid.,
11. Ibid., pp. 169, 174.
12. Levi., op. cit., III, pp. 139-145.
13. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, pp.184-5.
14. Levi, op. cit,. II, p. 171.
15. Regmi op. cit., pp.181-2.
16. G. Tucci, *Nepal* (The discovery of the Malla) translated from Italian into English by Lovett Edwards, 1962.
17. Ibid., p. 62.
18. Ibid., p. 64.
19. Petech, *Madiaeval History of Nepal*, p.184; Levi, op. cit., I, pp. 239-244.
20. Levi, op. cit., II p. 30-32.
21. Ibid., pp. 226, 228, 240.
22. Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, II. opp.83-84.
23. Levi, op. cit., I p. 318.
24. Taranatha (Schiefner) pp.125, 214, 238.
25. Ibid., pp. 253-54.
26. Levi, op. cit., II. p. 238.
27. Ibid., p. 342.
28. Ibid., p. lf.
29. Regmi, *Ancient Nepal*, p.43; Levi, op. cit., II, p. 328.
30. Levi, op cit., I. 69; II. 8-9 Cf. Bhattacharyya, *Buddhist Iconography*.
31. Levi II, p.6.
32. Levi I, p. 98.
33. Levi, I, p.329.