CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT (C)

BUDDHISM

I. GENERAL PROGRESS

We have seen in a previous chapter (Vol. II, Ch. XIII) that Buddhism had attained its apogee, both from doctrinal and ecclesiastic points of view, in the Kushāṇa period. The Kushāṇas in the North and the Sātavāhanas in the South were great patrons of the faith, and Mathurā, Gandhāra and Kashmir in the North and Dhānyakataśaka in the South had risen to be active centres of Buddhism.

With the advent of the Gupta dynasty Buddhism received a new impetus. The Gupta Emperors, we know, were Bhāgavatas, adherents of a Brahmanical faith, but they followed a policy of religious toleration, and were even sympathetic towards the cause of Buddhism. Although epigraphic evidence on Buddhist endowments under the Guptas is not abundant, we have a number of important inscriptions recording gifts of private donors in the regions of Kauśāṃbi, Sānchī, Bodhgaya and Mathurā from the beginning of the fifth century till the end of the sixth.¹ There are many records, written by the Chinese pilgrims who came to India in this period, which throw light on the condition of Buddhism in the country. Besides, Buddhist art itself, with its relics at Mathurā, Sārnāth, Nālandā, Araṃṭa, Bāgh and Dhānyakataśaka eloquently speaks of the prosperity of Buddhism in this period.

Samudra-gupta was in all probability the patron of a great Buddhist philosopher and was connected with a Buddhist endowment. That philosopher was Vasubandhu, the founder of the idealist school of Mahāyāna philosophy (Vijñānavāda) and the author of the Abhidharmakosā and a number of other works. There is some controversy about the date of Vasubandhu, but it is almost universally accepted that he lived in the fourth century and probably till the beginning of the fifth.¹ He was in Ayodhyā, the capital of the Guptas, and work-

¹ Fleet, III, Gupta Inscriptions, nos. 5, 11, 62 68-73; 76 etc.; MASI pp. 66, Nālandā and its Epigraphical Materials, pp. 64, 72 ff.

ed there. The tradition, however, is not quite clear on the name of his imperial patron. A biography of Vasubandhu, written by Paramārtha (546-69), says that this patron was king Vikramāditya of Ayodhyā. This Vikramāditya was so much influenced by Vasubandhu that he sent his queen and his son Bālāditya to study under the famous teacher. Bālāditya, on ascending the throne, continued to honour his former teacher who lived up to a ripe old age of 80 at Ayodhyā. The two kings are believed to have been Chandra-gupta I and Samudra-gupta. Their reigns covered a period of about 55 years from 320 to 375, the period during which Vasubandhu worked. Inscriptions, however, do not support the assumption that the titles of Vikramāditya and Bālāditya were ever borne by those two rulers. The attribution of the titles to them was probably due to a mistake of Paramārtha who thought that every Gupta emperor was a Vikramāditya and his Crown-prince a Bālāditya. When those titles became common with the later rulers of the dynasty the confusion became an easy one.

An epigraphic record seems to support the story of this association of Samudra-gupta with Vasubandhu. We know, on the evidence of the Chinese historians, that king Meghavarna of Ceylon established connections with Samudra-gupta and sent a Buddhist monk named Mahānāman to establish a monastery at Bodhgayā for the use of the Ceylonese monks with the permission of the Gupta Emperor (p. 27). Mahānāman has left an inscription at Bodhgayā recording this foundation. The inscription, by a double entendre, mentions the completion of the Abhidharmakosa as a recent event (sampūrṇo dharmakosāḥ). The name of Vasubandhu is suggested by the expression lokabhūtyai śāstuḥ Śākyaikabandho. The inscription is dated in the year 269, and this should probably be referred to the Saka era. That indicates approximately the period (A.D. 348/349) in which the Abhidharmakosā was completed.

Fa-hien was in India during the reign of Chandra-gupta II and visited the famous centres of Buddhist learning in Northern India. He testifies to the flourishing condition of Buddhism, especially in Uḍḍiyāna, Gandhāra, Mathūra, Kanauj, Kośala, Magadha and Tāmrālipti. Fa-hien stayed in Magadha for three years, and in Tāmrālipti for two years, studying the Buddhist texts, copying them, and drawing pictures of images. He mentions the number of monks in

2 Fleet, op. cit., p. 274; Lévi, 'Inscription de Mahānāman à Bodhgayā', Indian Studies in honour of Lanman, pp. 35-47, (reproduced in Memorial Sylvain Lévi, pp. 343 ff.)

3 Legge, Travels of Fa-hien
some of the centres. He found nearly 500 saṅghārāmas in Uḍḍiyāna, which accommodated several thousands of monks. In the neighbourhood of Mathurā there were more than 20 monasteries accommodating 3000 monks. From Mathurā downwards all along the bank of the Yamunā he passed a succession of Buddhist monasteries in which thousands of monks lived. These figures show that Buddhism was in the ascendency, and this condition went on improving for several centuries. Fa-hien was followed by a number of other Chinese pilgrims between A.D. 420 and 522, but most of them returned only after a sojourn in the Buddhist centres of learning in Kashmir and North-Western India.4

The foundation of the institutions in Nālandā was also due to the patronage of the Gupta rulers. Fa-hien stayed in Magadha for three years, but he does not speak of the famous monastery of Nālandā. It had not either come into existence or become important as a centre of learning at that time. But there is no doubt that it rose into prominence soon after his departure. Hiuan Tsang tells us that the monastery was built by Śakrāditya. His son and successor Buddhagupta continued the good work of his father and built another monastery near by. King Tathāgata-gupta built the third, King Bāḷāditya the fourth, and Bāḷāditya’s son Vajra, the fifth. Thus five kings in succession added to the structures.5 Other kings of Mid-India followed suit, and Nālandā soon became an imposing institution. Of the rulers mentioned, Bāḷāditya was probably Narasiṅhagupta Bāḷāditya (above, p. 90). Śakrāditya and his successors, who were the first builders of the institution, seem to have represented a collateral line of the Gupta dynasty.6 In all appearance the building of Nālandā started towards the middle of the fifth century and systematic additions were made to it up to the middle of the sixth century.

From the middle of the seventh century, again, we get a number of records giving a clear picture of the condition of Buddhism in India. The most important record is the account of Hiuan Tsang. He was in India for nearly fourteen years (630-644), visiting practically all important centres of Buddhism, making contacts with great teachers and collecting Buddhist texts. In some of the places he stayed for a considerable time, studying Buddhist texts with competent teachers. He mentions about four thousand monasteries with

5 Watters, On Yuan Chüeang II, p. 165.
6 The identification of these kings is far from certain. Their identification by Dr. H. C. Raychaudhuri with the known Gupta Emperors is very doubtful cf. Political History of Ancient India (5th edition), pp. 570 ff.
nearly one hundred and fifty thousand monks residing in them. Many monasteries were in ruins, but many were still great centres of Buddhist activities. So far as the extent of Buddhism is concerned, it had reached its height in this period, but it also started showing symptoms of decay. The very large number of monks in India may lead to the suspicion that they had become monks because life was easy and care-free in the monasteries which were maintained by public charity. Nevertheless some of the great centres of Buddhist study like Nālandā and Valabhi were still keeping the light burning vigorously.

King Harsha-vardhana, who ascended the throne in A.D. 606, although an eclectic in regard to his religious profession, had great leanings towards Buddhism, his elder brother and sister were devout Buddhists, and he himself was a worshipper of Siva, Aditya and Buddha. In his later days he became a great follower of the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Hsuan Tsang, who had established close personal relations with the king, testifies to this transformation. He tells us that as a Buddhist the king caused the use of animal food to cease throughout the five Indias and he prohibited the taking of life under severe penalties. He erected thousands of topees on the banks of the Ganges, established travellers' rests through all his dominions and erected Buddhist monasteries at sacred places of the Buddhists. He regularly held the quinquennial Convocation and gave away in religious alms everything except the material of war. The pilgrim further tells us that Harsha used to summon all Buddhist monks once a year, feed them for twenty days, and arrange for religious discussions. The best of them would be placed on his own royal throne, and the king would take religious instruction from them. He was also responsible for making additions to the Nālandā monastery.

Harsha's leaning towards Buddhism seems to have been due to a reaction to the policy of persecution pursued by King Śaśānka of Bengal, who was also responsible for the murder of his elder brother (p. 295). Śaśānka, we are told, was not only hostile towards Buddhism, but also carried on works of vandalism against Buddhist institutions. Thus it is said that he burnt the Bodhi tree, destroyed the footprints of Buddha at Pātaliputra, burnt the monasteries, and drove away the monks. It is difficult to say how far the story of this persecution is true. The quarrel between the two families, that of Śaśānka and Harsha, might have led to certain incidents affecting the interests of

7 Watters, op. cit., I, p. 344.
8 Watters, op cit., II, p. 171.
9 Watters, op cit., II, p. 115.
the Buddhists, but so far as it can be judged from the state of Buddhism in eastern India in the time of Huan Tsang, the story of an extensive persecution shortly before the time of the pilgrim's visit cannot be implicitly believed.

In the west the rulers of the Maitraka dynasty at Valabhi had become great patrons of the Buddhist faith since the middle of the sixth century. The princess Duḍḍā, niece of Dhruvasena I, Dhruvasena himself, Silāditya I, Dharasena I etc. were all patrons of Buddhism, built monasteries in the city of Valabhi, and patronised scholars. This policy was continued by the rulers right up to the middle of the seventh century. Numerous Buddhist relics discovered at Valabhi testify to the existence of Buddhism in that area up to the tenth century.10

The century that followed Harsha's rule saw the dismemberment of the empire and the rise of dynastic rule in different parts of the country. It was a state of anarchy, unfavourable for the growth of a monastic religion like Buddhism which depended so much on the patronage of the rulers. Many of the early mediaeval dynasties like the Rāṣṭrakūtas, Pratihāras etc. do not seem to have been very friendly towards this religion; they patronised Hindu revivalist movements. Buddhism still lingered in Kashmir, Swat valley, Valabhi and other places in the north, as can be judged from the accounts of Chinese travellers like I-tsing (671-95) and Wu-kong (751-90), but its condition was not prosperous. It was only in Eastern India, specially in Nālandā, that Buddhism still flourished, most probably on account of the large endowments that had been made by the former rulers.

While Buddhism was slowly disappearing from other parts of India it had another great revival in Eastern India under the patronage of the Pāla dynasty. The Pāla dynasty came to power towards the middle of the eighth century and ruled over an extensive empire till the middle of the eleventh. The rulers of this dynasty were devout Buddhists and called themselves paramasangāta. They were responsible for new endowments to the Nālandā monastery and also for the foundation of new monasteries such as Vikramaśīla, Odantapuri and Somapura.

Gopāla, the first king of the dynasty, founded a Vihāra in Nālandā and established many religious schools. His son Dharmapāla founded the famous Vikramaśīla and also probably the Odantapuri mo-

10 Lévi, 'Les donations religieuses des rois de Valabhi', Études critique et d'histoire II, 1896, pp. 189-203 (Memorial Sylvain Lévi, pp. 218 ff.).
nasteries. Somapura was founded by king Devapāla. Dharmapāla is also said to have established fifty religious schools. He was, besides, the patron of the great Buddhist scholar Haribhadra, the author of noted works on Buddhist philosophy. A number of other institutions had grown, evidently out of private donations, in the Pāla period, both in Bihar and Bengal. Some of them like Devikoṭa, Traikūṭaka, Panḍita, Sannagara, Phullahari, Paṭṭikera, Vikramapuri and Jagaddala are mentioned in literature.¹¹

II. IMPORTANT CENTRES OF BUDDHISM

Although Mathurā and Purushapura had played a very important part in the dissemination and study of Buddhism in the earlier period, Kashmir outshone them in the Gupta period. Kashmir had become a centre of Buddhist studies in the Kushāṇa period, and continued to be so for several centuries even after the disappearance of the Kushāṇas. It was a great seat of Sanskrit learning since early times and this language soon came to be cultivated also as a vehicle of Buddhist literature in that country. Kashmir was responsible for shaping the canonical literature of the Sarvāstivāda and Mūla-Sarvāstivāda schools which was composed in pure Sanskrit.

The importance of Kashmir as a centre of Buddhist studies in the Gupta period is clearly brought out by the Chinese accounts. Although Fa-hien did not go to Kashmir, many of his contemporary travellers preferred to go to Kashmir for their studies.¹² Che-mong, who came to India in 404, passed some time in Kashmir for his studies. Fa-yong, who came in 420, did the same. Biographies of Indian Buddhist scholars of the same period speak of the great role of Kashmir in the study and transmission of the Buddhist lore. Kumārajīva, who was born in Kucha in the last quarter of the fourth century of an Indian father and a Kuchean mother, was brought to Kashmir for his studies. Kashmir sent to China Saṅghabhūti (381), Gautama Saṅghadeva (384), Punyatīrata and Dharmayaśas (397-401), Buddhajīva (423). Buddhayaśas (about 400), Vimalākṣha (406), Gana-varṇan (413), Dharmamitra (424), Buddhahadra (421), Vimoksha-sena (541), etc. These scholars were responsible for translating a large part of the Sanskrit Buddhist canon into Chinese and building up the Chinese Buddhist literature.¹³

Kashmir continued to be a centre of Buddhist studies in the sixth and seventh centuries too, but Nālandā must have eclipsed her re-

¹² P. C. Bagchi, India and China (2nd ed.), pp. 85 ff.
¹³ Ibid., pp. 35 ff.
utation to a great extent. From the eighth century, again, Kashmir somewhat regained her prestige and took an active part in the study and propagation of Buddhism. In the eighth and ninth centuries Buddhism received patronage from the rulers and the nobility of the country. Hui-chao, who visited the country about A.D. 780, says that 'the kings, queens, the princes and the nobility were all in the habit of building monasteries according to their respective means.' Wu-k'ong, who was in India between 751 and 790 and spent several years in Kashmir in the study of Buddhist texts, also speaks of the prosperous condition of Buddhism in that period. Lalitāditya Mukta-pīḍa, who maintained diplomatic relations with China, was a great patron of Buddhism. He founded a number of monasteries and chaityas, and also set up images of Buddha. Jayāpīḍa continued the same pious acts. In spite of occasional persecution, Buddhism continued its precarious existence in Kashmir up to the twelfth century.

Kashmir had a hand in the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. We do not know exactly to which part of India Thonmi-sambhoṭa, the first emissary of Srong-tsan-Gampo, came for his studies, but according to one tradition, the Tibetan alphabet, which he invented, was modelled on the alphabet prevalent in Kashmir. The establishment of Buddhism on a firm footing in Tibet was due to Padmasambhava, who hailed from Uḍḍiyāna and most probably had gone from Kashmir. After the foundation of the monastery of Sam-ye by him, two Kashmirian scholars, Jinamitra and Dānaśila were invited to Tibet to establish the rules of monastic discipline. A number of Kashmir scholars—Ananta, Jñānaśrī, Buddhāśrījñāna etc.—went to Tibet to translate the Buddhist texts into Tibetan. The Tibetan canon contains the names of a host of translators and authors from Kashmir who were active in Tibet in the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. Kashmir played an important part in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet.

Other centres of Buddhism in the North-West continued their existence during this period, but none of them seems to have played any important part in Buddhist studies. Purushapura, which was so important in the Kushāṇa period, had now become a mere place

15 Lévi and Chavannes, 'L'itinéraire d' Ou-k'ong', J. As. 1895, pp. 341-84.
16 Rājārasaṅghī, iv, pp. 200 ff.
17 Obermiller, Bu-ston, p. 183.
18 Ibid., p. 191.
19 Ibid., p. 181, and pp. 201 ff.
of pilgrimage. The two famous Buddhist philosophers, Asanga and Vasubandhu, who were born in Purushapura towards the beginning of the Gupta period, apparently went to other places, the former to Ayodhyā and the latter to Kashmir, for their studies. Nagarāhāra (Jelalabad) also figures as the birth-place of some noted scholars, but it does not seem to have been a centre of any importance. Buddhaguhā, who went to China in the beginning of the fifth century, was from Nagarāhāra. Vimokshasena, who was in China in 541, was born in Uḍḍiyāna, and Jinagupta, who was almost a contemporary of the former and was in China in 559, was born at Purushapura. But amongst them Buddhaguhā and Vimokshasena at least had their education in Kashmir. With the conversion of Tibet, Jalandhara, which lay on the route to Tibet, served as a centre of Buddhist activities in the seventh century. Hiuan-chao, who was in India in the middle of that century, passed four years at Jalandhara in the study of Buddhist literature. Occasionally Buddhist scholars could be found in these centres; for example, as late as in the Pala period we hear of a great scholar of Purushapura, named Sarvajñadeva, who was the teacher of a Buddhist scholar named Viradeva, born at Nagarāhāra. Viradeva later on came to Nālandā for his studies. But as an organised seat of Buddhist learning no other place in North-Western India except Kashmir played any important part in the Gupta period and later.

Mathurā in this period was only a place of pilgrimage. Only three places in Northern India seem to have attained some importance as centres of Buddhist studies in the Gupta period, viz. Matipura, Kānyakubja and Ayodhyā. Matipura was a centre of Vaiśānavism in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., and Hiuan-Tsang stayed there for some time. Kānyakubja rose into importance under king Harsha who made it his capital. We find mention of the Kanmudi-saṅghārāma which was a seat of learning in Kanauj in the last quarter of the sixth century. Scholars from such distant parts as Lāta used to come there for study. We know from the account of Hiuan-Tsang that the place was full of Buddhist establishments, there being about 100 Buddhist monasteries in his time. Hiuan-Tsang passed some time in the Bhādravihāra of Kānyakubja, studying a Vaiśānavism work of Bhadadāsa with a Buddhist scholar named Vīryasena. Ayodhyā, according to Hiuan Tsang, was the

20 India and China, pp 44 ff.
21 Chavannes, Religieux Eminents, p. 15.
22 Goshrwan Inscription, MASI, no. 66, pp. 89 ff.
24 India and China, p. 47.
temporary residence of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and had also developed a tradition in Buddhist learning. Śrīlāta, the famous Sautrāntika teacher, was connected with the place.

The Mahābodhi and its neighbourhood had become an important centre of Buddhist activities, not only as the most important place of pilgrimage but also as a centre of Buddhist studies, especially for foreign students. Already in the time of Samudra-gupta, the emissaries of king Meghavāna of Ceylon had set up a monastery for the use of the Ceylonese monks. To the west of the Mahābodhi temple there was a monastery of the kingdom of Kapiśa named Gūṇāśrita, and it was the abode of the monks coming from the northern countries. Very near the temple of Mahābodhi was the monastery of the kingdom of K’iu-lu-kia (Kolkhai, Tāmraparnī?) built by the king of that country for the use of the monks coming from the South. We are told that although it was a monastery of very modest appearance, its monks observed the rules of discipline very strictly. King Ādityasena of Magadha, who lived in the third quarter of the seventh century, had built a temple there. The Chinese sources mention two other places, which cannot be exactly identified but which were within the zone of influence of the Mahābodhi temple. These were An-mo-lo-po (Āmrava ?), which is located to the north of the Gāṇgā (?), and Mrīgaśikāhāvana which is located about 40 yojanas to the east of Nālandā and down the Gāṇgā. There seems to be some confusion in these indications of geographical location, as the two places are mentioned in connection with the Mahābodhi. There was a monastery in An-mo-lo-po, called Gandhāra-chanda (?), founded by the Tukhāras for the use of the monks coming from their country. Not only the Tukhāras, but also other monks coming from the north, used to live there. Mrīgaśikāhāvana was the site of a monastery which had been built for the use of the Chinese monks by a king named Śrīgupta, who might have been one of the earlier members of the Gupta dynasty. The monastery was in ruins in the seventh century. Some of these monasteries built for the foreigners also served as educational institutions. We know that Hiuan-chao, who came in the seventh century, stayed at An-mo-lo-po for seven years for the purpose of study.

26 Chavannes, Religieux Eminents, p. 81.
27 Ibid., p. 81.
27a Cf. IHQ, XIV, pp. 532-35.
28 Ibid., pp. 18 n, 26, 29, 30, 80.
29 Ibid., p. 82. Cf. above, pp. 7-8.
Hui-lun, who came about the same time, studied the *Abhidhārma-
kośa-śāstra* there. Certain letters, which passed between Hui-an-Tsang
and the Indian scholars of Mahābodhi,\(^{30}\) clearly bring out that the
latter place was a centre of Buddhist literary activities.

Nālandā, as we have seen, had come into existence already in
the fifth century. It developed not so much as a place of pilgrimage
but as a centre of Buddhist studies. A number of kings with names
ending in *Gupta* (above, cf. p. 91), Harsha-vardhanā and other kings
of neighbouring areas all contributed to the growth and prosperity
of the institution. There is a period of darkness after Harsha, but
with the rise of the Pāla dynasty in Bengal, Nālandā again received
active royal patronage.

It is from the account of the Chinese travellers that we get a pic-
ture of the greatness of the institution. Hui-lun,\(^{31}\) who came to
India towards the middle of the seventh century, tells us that it con-
tained eight temples and brick-built houses for the residence of the
monks. The whole area was a sort of large quadrangle. The build-
ings were three-storied, each storey being more than 10 feet high.
The monastery could accommodate 3500 students. It is said that 201
villages had been endowed to the institution for its maintenance.
About its unique position in the field of Buddhist learning Hui-an-
Tsang says:\(^{32}\)

‘In the establishment there were some thousands of Brethren, all
men of great ability and learning, several hundreds, being highly
esteemed and famous; the Brethren were very strict in observing the
precepts and regulations of their Order; they were looked upon as
models by all India; learning and discussing they found the day too
short; day and night they admonished each other, juniors and seniors
mutually helping to perfection. If among them were any who did
not talk of the mysteries of the *Tripitāka*, such persons, being
ashamed, lived aloof. Hence foreign students came to the establish-
ment to put an end to their doubts, and then became celebrated,
and those who stole the name (of Nālandā brother) were well treated
with respect wherever they went.’

Some of the luminaries of Nālandā are also mentioned by the pil-
gim.\(^{33}\) They were Dharmapāla, Chandrapāla, Guṇamati, Sthiramati,
Prabhāmitra, Jinamitra, Jñānakachandra, and Śilabhadra. Sthiramati,
Dharmapāla and Guṇamati were all great scholars and commentators
of original treatises on the Yogācāra philosophy. Chandrapāla

\(^{30}\) *India and China*, p. 80.

\(^{31}\) Chavannes. *op. cit.*, pp. 84 ff.


\(^{33}\) *Ibid.*
and Jñānachandra do not seem to have authors of books. Prabhāmitra or Prabhākaramitra went to Eastern Turkestan and China towards the beginning of the seventh century. He was responsible for introducing Buddhism among the Western Turks. He went to China in 627 and translated a number of important texts into Chinese. He died in China in A.D. 633. Śilabhadra, who was a great scholar of the Viśnūavāda philosophy, was the abbot of the Nālandā monastery when Hiuan Tsang came there for his studies.

Nālandā attracted not only foreign scholars but also scholars from different parts of India in its palmy days. I-tsing and a number of his contemporaries—Huei-lun, Tao-hi, Hiuan-chao, etc.—all passed years in Nālandā for their studies. We know of Indian scholars going from Nalanda to China till the end of the tenth century—Dharmachandra (732-39), Subhākarasūkha (716-99), Dharmadeva (973-1001), etc. Vajrabodhi, who was in China from 720 to 732, was also educated at Nālandā. There was a monastery of Kashmir at Nālandā, evidently for the benefit of the students coming from Kashmir. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, who were responsible for establishing Buddhism in Tibet in the same period, were also connected with Nālandā.

Nālandā probably started losing its importance with the rise of the Vikramāśīla monastery founded by Dharmapāla towards the end of the eighth century. Vikramāśīla was situated on a hill on the south (right) bank of the Ganges to the north of Magadha, and has been located at Patharhatna in the Bhagalpur district. It became a very large establishment with the help of the Pāla kings, possessed 107 temples, six colleges, and 117 professors in different subjects. A number of scholars of note and authors of books on mysticism, logic and philosophy, who lived at Vikramāśīla in the Pāla period between the eighth and tenth centuries, are mentioned in the Tibetan sources. The chief among them were Ratnakarasanti, Jēti, Jñānaśrīmitra, Abhayākaragupta, Divākarachandra and Dīpankara Srijñāna. From the ninth century till the twelfth, when it was destroyed, it played a very important part in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. Tibetan scholars used to come regularly to this

34 *India and China*, pp. 49 ff.
35 Chavannes, *op. cit.*, sections 1, 2, 41.
36 *India and China*, App. iii.
38 *HBR*, p. 383.
38a Recent view seeks to identify it with Antichak, about 13 km north to Kahalganj Railway Station. Bhagalpur district, *Comprehensive History of Bihar*, I, pt. 2, Patna, 1974, p. 535. *(KKDG)*
monastery for their studies, and we know that a good number of Tibetan translations of Indian texts, now included in the Tibetan canon, were prepared at Vikramaśīla.39

A number of other institutions also had come into being under the Pālas. Thus Odantapurī, which was built in the neighbourhood of Nālandā in the eight century, and served as a model for the first Buddhist monastery of Sam-ye, was an institution of considerable importance. Somapura-vihāra (Pāhārpur), built in the same period in North Bengal, was also an institution of some note for a period. A number of other institutions of lesser importance had come into existence in various parts of Bengal in the Pāla period, either through the patronage of the kings or that of the nobles. They served as active centres of study in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. A number of scholars belonging to these monasteries is mentioned in the Tibetan sources. Hariharācāra of the Traikūṭaka-vihāra compiled his famous Abhisamayālaṁkāra in the reign of Dharmapāla. Vibhūtichandra, Dānaśīla, Mokshākara-gupta and Subhākara lived in the Jagaddala-vihāra in the Pāla period. Tibetan scholars used to come there for their studies, and many texts were translated into Tibetan in that monastery.40

Tāmralipti and Samatāta also seem to have been centres of Buddhist studies for some time in this period. Fa-hien speaks of twenty-two monasteries at Tāmralipti, and these were all inhabited by monks. He stayed there for two years 'writing out his sūtras and drawing pictures of Buddhist images'. Hsiian Tsang found it a prosperous centre of Buddhism. Later in the same century I-tsing passed some time there, studying Sanskrit and Science of Grammar. Some of his contemporaries—Ta-Sheng-teng, Tao-lin etc.—also passed a number of years there for their studies. Tao-lin passed three years there studying Sanskrit and the Sarvāstivāda-vinaya.41

Samatāta rose into importance in the beginning of the sixth century. The ruler of the land, Vainya-gupta,42 played the part of a great patron. Two monasteries, Āśramavihāra and Rājavihāra, of Samatāta seem to have been very important in this period. They were in the hands of a sect of Mahāyānists called Avaivarttiaka-saṅgha founded by one Āchārya Śāntideva. Hsiian Tsang also mentions the place as an important centre of Buddhism. Silabhadra, the great abbot of the Nālandā monastery, was, according to Hsiian Tsang, original-

39 Ibid., p. 417.
40 Ibid., p. 457.
41 Legge, Travels of Fa-hien, p. 100, Watters, op. cit., II; pp. 187; 189; Takakusu: I-tsing, p. XXXI; Chavannes, Religieux Eminents, p. 100.
42 HBR pp. 413, 414 ff.
ly a prince of the royal family of Samataṭa. In the time of I-tsing the ruler of the country was Rājabhaṭa, also a great patron of the Buddhists.43

As noted above (pp. 492-93), some of the Kara kings of Orissa were Buddhists, and one of them sent a Buddhist text to the Emperor of China. But neither in Orissa nor in the Deccan do we hear of any important centre of Buddhist studies in this period. There were many monasteries here and there, and also pious monks living in them, but none of those institutions had attracted scholars for specialised studies in Buddhist literature or philosophy. The institutions at Dhānyakāṭaka seem to have been perpetuating the old tradition only in a very feeble way. Hiuan Tsang, who visited the place, tells us that most of the old monasteries were in ruins, only about twenty among them were habitable, and about 1000 monks occupied them. Two of them, Pūṟvasaila and Aparaśaila, were still held in respect by the Buddhist world, but probably only as places of pilgrimage.44

The city of Valabhi in Western India emerged as a centre of Buddhist studies in the Gupta period. A strong Buddhist community had come into existence under the patronage of the local rulers. In the sixth and seventh centuries a number of monasteries were founded, the most important among them being Duḍḍāvihāra, Guhakavihāra, Bhaṭṭārakavihāra, Guhasenavihāra, etc. Two Buddhist scholars of note, Buddhadāsa and Sthiramati belonged to Valabhi. Hiuan Tsang describes Valabhi as a very prosperous centre of Buddhism which possessed 170 monasteries inhabited by nearly 10,300 monks. Even in the eighth century we hear of scholars going to Valabhi for their studies. Vajrabodhi had his education first at Nālandā, and then proceeded to Western India, most probably to Valabhi, for his studies before going to the South.45

It is thus apparent that although some of the old centres of study had fallen into decay before the rise of the Guptas, new and more vigorous centres came into existence under them. These new centres were many but, during the early Gupta period, Kashmir was the most predominant centre of studies. Later, after the foundation of Nālandā, the centre of studies was gradually shifted to Eastern India. Nālandā dominated the whole Buddhist world for nearly three centuries from the sixth to the ninth. In spite of the patronage of the great Pāla rulers Nālandā was soon eclipsed by two other

43 Chavannes, Religieux Eminents, p. 94.
institutions, Vikramaśila and Odantapurī, which had been founded under the Pālas. Eastern India, with its new institutions, Vikramaśila, Odantapurī, Jagaddala, Vikramapurī etc. almost monopolised the preservation and transmission of Buddhist culture from the ninth up to the twelfth century.

III. IMPORTANT SCHOOLS OF BUDDHISM

The transformation which Buddhism had been undergoing during the Kushāṇa period became more marked in the Gupta period. Maḥāyāna decidedly became the most dominant form of Buddhism from the fourth century onwards. The eighteen schools of Hinayāna were forgotten. Only four or five of them are heard of in this period, and they are also subordinated to the Maḥāyāna.

Of the Hinayāna schools Fa-hien speaks of only three,—the Mahāsāṅghika, Sarvāstivāda and Mahasilasaka. He got copies of the Vinaya-piṭaka of the first two schools in Magadha. The Mahāsālasaka Vinaya-piṭaka was discovered by him in Ceylon. He did not see much of the other schools as he dismisses them summarily: 'As to the other eighteen schools each one has the views and decisions of its own masters. Those agree (with this) in the general meaning, but they have small and trivial differences'. Epigraphy of this period has not much to say about the schools. There is one solitary inscriptions—the Kura Buddhist Stone-slab inscription of the reign of Toramāna (about A.D. 500)—which records a donation to the monks of the Mahāsālasaka school.

Hsiian Tsang, who made a comprehensive survey of the condition of Buddhism in the middle of the seventh century, gives a fuller picture of the Hinayāna schools existing in his time. From his evidence it is clear that the vast majority of monks followed the Maḥāyāna, but some of the Hinayāna schools were still lingering. In Uḍḍīvāna (Swat valley) he saw that the Vinaya-piṭakas of the five schools, viz., Dharmagupta, Mahāsālasaka, Kāśyapiya, Sarvāstivāda, and Mahāsāṅghika, were still taught, but he remarks that the monks were clever in reciting the texts without penetrating their deep meaning. According to the pilgrim most of the Hinayānists in Northern India were adherents of the Sammatiya school, and only a few followed the Sarvāstivāda. In the west, specially in Mālava

46 Legge, Travels of Fa-hien, p. 98.
47 EL, I, pp. 28 ff; Lüders, List. no. 5.
49 From Hsiian Tsang's account we find that the Sammatīyas were flourishing at the following places: Ahichchhatra, Saṅkṣēya, Ayamukha, Viśoka, Srāvasti, Kapilavastu, Benares, Irapaparvata (?), Karnasuvrata, Mālava, Valabhi, Anandpur etc. The number of monks belonging to this sect is stated by the pilgrim as nearly 45,000—more than one-third of the total number of monks in India in his day.
and Valabhi, the Sammatiya school was followed. In Samataṭa and Drāviḍa he saw the Sthavira school, but in Kaliṅga and some other places he met with the followers of a special sect which he calls the Mahāyāna of the Sthavira school. In Dhānyakaṭaka there were still remnants of the two Mahāsāṅghika sects, the Pūrvaśaila and the Aparaśaila, but the days of their prosperity were long over. Sammatiya, as we have seen, was the most important Hinayāna school of the period, and the pilgrim tells us that the sister of Harsha, and probably Harsha himself in his earlier days, were adherents of this school.\footnote{Beal, \textit{Life of Hiuan Tsang}, p. 176, Watters, op. cit. I; p. 346.}

I-tsing mentions only four principal schools,\footnote{Takakusu, \textit{I-tsing}, pp. xxiii—xxiv.} viz., Mahāsāṅghika Sthavira, Mūla-Sarvāstivāda and Sammatiya. He does not speak of the older Sarvāstivāda. Mūla-Sarvāstivāda evidently supplanted the Sarvāstivāda soon after the time of Hiuan Tsang. Hiuan Tsang did not know the literature of this school. I-tsing was the first to take the Vinayapiṭaka of this school to China and translate it into Chinese. According to his evidence Mūla-Sarvāstivāda flourished mostly in Magadha and in the islands of the Southern Sea in his times. Sammatiya was confined to Lāṭa and Sindhu, and the Sthavira school to the South. Both Mahāsāṅghika and Mūla-Sarvāstivāda were followed in Northern India, and all the four schools were more or less known in Eastern India. But it seems that interest in the Hinayāna schools in this period was very limited. The monks were interested in them so far as their ordination was concerned. They had to follow, the disciplinary rules of some Hinayāna school in regard to their conduct, dress, food etc.

The principal philosophical schools of Hinayāna, viz. the Vaibhāshika and Sautrāntika, still held their ground before the powerful onslaught of the Mahāyāna, but they were losing their importance gradually. The Vaibhāshika philosophy was followed and studied in Kashmir and some places in North India even till the time of Hiuan Tsang. That Kashmir was a great centre of Vaibhāshika studies in the Gupta period is proved by the fact that a number of Viśhāśā works was translated by Kashmirian scholars like Buddhavarman, Saṅghabhūti etc. into Chinese towards the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries. Hiuan Tsang mentions also Matipura as a centre of Vaibhāshika studies. This was the place where a great Vaibhāshika teacher Guṇaprabha, who probably lived towards the end of the fifth century, worked and composed a number of treatises on Viśhāśā. Sanghabhadra, a great Vaibhāsika
teacher of Kashmir and a contemporary of Vasubandhu, also lived
in Matipura. His famous work Nyāyanusārasāstra, written for refut-
ing the Yogāchāra doctrines, was composed there. Vimalamitra, a
disciple of Saṅghabhadra, also lived in Matipura. Hsuan Tsang
studied the Tatvavasandesā-śāstra of Guṇaprabha with a Vaibhāṣika
scholar named Mitrasena at Matipura. Mitrasena was at that time
90 years old, and as he was a disciple of Guṇaprabha, we may pre-
sume that Guṇaprabha lived towards the end of the fifth and the
beginning of the sixth century. In fact, some sources consider him
to be a contemporary of Sthiramati, the famous disciple of Vasu-
bandhu. Kānyakubja was also a centre of Vaibhāṣika studies in the
time of Hsuan Tsang, as the pilgrim studied a Vaibhāṣika work of
Buddhadāsa with Vīryasena in the Bhadravihāra of that place. 52

Vaibhāṣika was in this period split into two main divisions. One
is called the Kashmir-Vaibhāṣika, and the other, Pāśchātya or Western
Vaibhāṣika. The Western Vaibhāṣika is again mentioned as of
two classes, Mridu (mild) and Madhya (those who followed a mid-
dle course). The first established a character of the pudgala, which
was neither permanent nor impermanent, by admitting the reality
of exterior objects. The Madhya class also maintained similar philo-
sophical views but held special views in the matter of dhyāna. The
Kashmir-Vaibhāṣikas, however, entertained an extreme (adhimātra)
philosophical view. They did not admit the reality of the exterior
objects which constituted the body, and maintained also the doctrine
of nairūtmya. According to them a complete knowledge of the four
Aryan truths leads to the knowledge of Śūnyatā of the pudgala. The
Kashmir-Vaibhāṣikas therefore seem to have been working under
the influence of the Sautrāntikas. 53

The Sautrāntika school does not seem to have been so largely
followed. The most illustrious teacher of the school, who in all like-
lihood lived towards the very beginning of the Gupta period, was
Harivarman. His work Tatvaśiddhi was translated into Chinese by
Kumārajīva towards the beginning of the fifth century. 54 Sautrāntika
later on seems to have merged into the Mādhyamika on account of
the similarity of certain fundamental views, and we hear of a
Mādhyamika-Sautrāntika in the later period. 55

The Sammatiya school also had developed a philosophy of its own. 56

52 Watters, op. cit., I, pp. 276, 322-23, 353.
53 Tatvavatmācali of Advayavajra, Advayavajrasamgraha by H.P. Sastri, COS., pp
34 ff.
54 India and China, p. 136.
56 Masuda in, Asia Major, II, pp. 1-69, see under Vātsiputriya.
They believed in the existence of a certain ego, but this was not exactly the pudgala of the Sarvāstivāda school. They maintained that the ego (pudgala) was neither different from nor identical with the skandhas. This ego has no attributes. This definition of the pudgala laid the foundation of the Ālayavijñāna theory of the Yogāchāra Vijñānavāda, and that explains the great popularity of this Hīnayāna school in the seventh century when Mahāyāna was the dominant form of Buddhism in North India.

The two Mahāyāna schools of philosophy, the Mādhyamika and the Yogāchāra, attained their apogee in the Gupta period. The Mādhyamika of Nāgārjuna-Āryadeva gave rise to various schools of interpreters. One school was known as the Prāsaṅgika school and its main exponents were Buddhapālita and Chandrakīrti who lived in the fifth century. Another school was known as Mādhyamika-Sautrāntika (also Svētāntra), and its chief exponent was Bhāvyā or Bhāvaviveka. There was still a third school of interpretation which is called Yogāchāra-Mādhyamika. Its principal exponents were: Jñānagarbha, Śrīgupta, Sāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla and Haribhadra. We do not know the period when the first two teachers flourished, but it is certain that Sāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, who went to Tibet, lived in the eighth century. Haribhadra was a contemporary of Dharmapāla of the Pāla dynasty and lived also in the eighth century.

The Tibetan sources try to distinguish between the views of the various schools of interpretation. Buddhapālita composed a commentary on the Mūlamādhyamika and explained the philosophy of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva from the Prāsaṅgika point of view. Chandrakīrti, too, was a Prāsaṅgika; he composed commentaries on the Mūlamādhyamika of Nāgārjuna and also on the Chatuḥśataka of Āryadeva. His commentary of Mūlamādhyamika is known as Prasannapadā. Bhāvaviveka in his Prajñāpradīpa, a commentary of the Mūlamādhyamika, refuted many points in the commentary of Buddhapālita. Bhāvaviveka composed two other works, viz. Mādhyamikakahridaya and the Karatalaratna. preserved in Chinese translation. Jñānagarbha composed a work entitled the Mādhyamika-satyadvaya. Bhāvaviveka and his followers maintained the reality of external objects from the empirical standpoint and did not admit of the existence of introspective perception (sva-saṃvedana). The third school of interpreters led by Sāntarakṣita deny the empirical reality of the external world, admit of introspective perception, and al-

though they have Yogāchāra leaning, they do not admit that consciousness (vijñāna) has an ultimate reality.

The Yogāchāra school, as we have seen, had its beginning in the earlier period, probably in the third century, but its greatest development took place in the period under review. Asaṅga, the elder brother of Vasubandhu, if not the founder of the system, was certainly responsible for establishing the new philosophy on a solid and comprehensive basis. Both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were natives of Paurushapura (Peshawar), but worked in Ayodhyā. Asaṅga was at first a follower of Mahāsākā school and later adopted Mahāyāna. Vasubhandhu also preferred Hinayāna in his earlier age. It was as an adherent of the Sarvāstivāda school that he wrote his famous Abhidharmakośa. He, however, changed his creed under the influence of Asaṅga, and propounded a new system of Yogāchāra called Viśnunāvāda which carries the Yogāchāra Philosophy to perfection.

A large number of important works is attributed to Asaṅga, the principal among them being the Yogāchārabhūmiśāstra, Abhisamayālaṅkāra-sāstra, Abhidharmasamuchchaya, Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṅkāra, and Mahāyāna-saṃparigraha-sāstra. The principal works of Vasubandhu besides the Abhidharmakośa, were: Commentaries on Saṃparigraha-sāstra, Saṭṭha-sāstra, Daśabhūmika-sāstra, Madhyāntavihāṅga-sāstra, Viśnunāmatrata-siddhi, and Viṃśikā-Trimśikā. Yogāchāra, as the name indicates, emphasizes the religious aspect of the system, and gives an analysis of the psychological conditions of the mind with a view to delineating the way of approach towards the ultimate reality. Asaṅga does not fail to postulate the nature of this reality in his works. This reality is a form of consciousness (vijñāna) called Alaya-vijñāna, a sort of storehouse of the effects of all the experiences which alone is permanent and real in a world of impermanence. It is this aspect of the Yogāchāra which Vasubandhu develops in his works and his system thus came to be known as Viśnunāvāda.

Vasubandhu was followed by a galaxy of teachers like Sthiramati, Diṇnāga, Guṇaprabha, Vimuktasena, Dharmakīrti, Dharmapāla, Śīlabhadra and others who brilliantly continued the traditions of the two great masters. The Tibetan tradition tells us that among the disciples of Vasubandhu four were great, each a specialist in his own subject; Sthiramati in the knowledge of the doctrines of 18 schools, Vimuktasena in the mystic philosophy of Prajñāpāramitā, Guṇaprabha in Vinaya, and Diṇnāga in logic (pramāṇa). Sthiramati

59 Stcherbatsky, Buddhist Logic, I, Introduction.
and Diṇnāga were direct disciples of Vasubandhu, and lived in the fifth century. Sthiramati is known for his commentaries on some of the Vijñānavāda works of Vasubandhu. Diṇnāga developed the logical aspect of the Vijñānavāda in a number of works, the most famous of which was the Pramāṇasamuchchaya. The line of Diṇnāga was continued through Iśvarasena, Dharmakīrti, Viniṭadeva, Dharmottara and others. Iśvarasena composed a sub-commentary on the Pramāṇasamuchchaya, whereas his disciple, Dharmakīrti (seventh century), wrote a commentary on the same work, besides a number of original works the most important of which was the Pramāṇavārttika. A number of disciples and grand-disciples of Dharmakīrti—Devendrabuddhi and Sākyabuddhi, Viniṭadeva and Dharmottara—wrote different treatises bearing on the Pramāṇavārttika. Guṇamati, Dharmapāla and Silabhadra represent another line of great interpreters of the Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda. Guṇamati and Dharmapāla must have lived in the sixth century and Dharmapāla’s disciple Silabhadra in the seventh. Silabhadra was a very old teacher about A.D. 637, when Hīuan Tsang came to study the Vijñānavāda philosophy under him. He died soon after the pilgrim’s departure from India, probably about A.D. 648. Silabhadra therefore was born in the sixth century. One of the works of Guṇamati was translated by Paramārtha into Chinese between 557 and 569. Dharmapāla is known for his important commentaries on the Vijñānavāda texts like Alambanapratyaya, Vijñānamātratā-siddhi etc., while Silabhadra, as can be judged from the report of Hīuan Tsang, was a great exponent of the same philosophy. Silabhadra did not write any original work, but the Vijñānamātratā-siddhi, as translated into Chinese by Hīuan Tsang, must have been enriched by the notes of lectures given by Silabhadra at Nālandā. In the eighth century both Mādhyamika and Yogācāra seem to have lost their original vigour and a synthesis of the two was attempted by various writers of note. This is represented in the works of Sāntarakshita, Kamalaśīla and Haribhadra who are also counted amongst the followers of both Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. The Tibetan tradition enumerates them under a different class of Mādhyamika called Yogācāra-Mādhyamika, which has been already mentioned.

IV. TANTRAYANA OR MYSTIC BUDDHISM

In the eighth century Buddhism underwent still another transfor-

61 Vassiliev, op. cit., p. 325.
mation and entered the last stage of its evolution in India, usually regarded as a stage of decadence. As a philosophy and as a system of ethics it was certainly dead, but by an inevitable process, it had developed a system of mysticism which continued to exercise a considerable influence on other Indian religions, even after its disappearance in the twelfth century. The origin of this mysticism may be old, as its roots lie deep in the Mahāyāna, but it asserted itself under its distinct form only in the eighth century. It flourished during the next three or four centuries, specially in Magadha and Bengal, to some extent in Kashmir and Uḍḍīyāna, and perhaps also in Sindh. The great teachers of this new form of Buddhism are mostly connected with Uḍḍīyāna, Bengal and Magadha.

This new form of Buddhism is generally known as Tantrayāna or Mystic Buddhism, but it had evolved three different ways of mystic practices called Vajrayāna, Sahajayāna and Kālachakrāyāna. The leaders of this new movement are called Siddhas or Siddhāchāryas ‘those who had attained spiritual perfection’. Their number is stated to be 84 in the old sources, both Tibetan and Indian. A very large majority of them were historical persons, and lived to all appearance in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. A number of these teachers come from different parts of India. Padmavajra or Padmasambhava, Indrabhūti and his sister Lakshmī are associated with Uḍḍīyāna, Bhusuku probably with Saurāśṭra, Nāgabodhi with the South, and the rest with Magadha and Bengal. The works of many of these Siddhas are still preserved in Tibetan translations, and only a small part of them has been discovered in the original. As these Siddhas belong to a period which is strictly beyond the scope of the present volume it is not intended to treat their history in detail here.

Their teachings, however, were based on a number of works which attained canonical importance. Amongst these may be mentioned the Guhyasamājatantra (published in the Gaekwad’s Oriental Series) and Hevajratantra, Samvaratantra and Kālachakratantra, the last three being available in manuscripts. These works were certainly extant in the eighth-ninth centuries. Another text, Jñānasiddhi by Indrabhūti (also published in the Gaekwad’s Oriental Series) may substantially go back to the same period. A host of other works of similar nature, which are preserved in Tibetan translation, might have belonged to this period, but it is extremely difficult to fix their dates in the present state of our knowledge. The works already

62 For the mystic schools, cf. my contribution in HBR., pp. 419 ff.
mentioned give an idea of the doctrines of the different mystic schools of Buddhism.

Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna were two aspects of the same mysticism. Vajrayāna laid stress on mystic ceremonials like the practice of mantra, mudrā and maṇḍala. Hence there is place in it for a large number of gods and goddesses who are supposed to be of help in the realisation of the ultimate goal. Vajra is defined as Prajñā and the Bodhicitta is its essence. Hence the cultivation of Bodhicitta is the sole means of spiritual realisation. The metaphysical background to the system is supplied by the Mādhyamika. The highest goal is śūnyatā, a knowledge of 'the relativity of the essence of existence'. Truth has two aspects—the śāntaritika, relative, and pāramārthika, the absolute. The first concerns the world of phenomena. From the ultimate point of view this is all illusion. The attainment of this ultimate knowledge leads to the cessation of the illusion and then the goal is reached. The world of phenomenality may be overcome in two ways: either by getting control over all forces of nature which contribute to its production with the help of magic powers, or by sheer force of psychic energy. The former is recommended by the Vajrayāna and the latter by the Sahajayāna. Hence Sahajayāna discards ceremonial and magic practices and lays stress on the Yogic aspect. The Kālachakrayāna, according to the Tibetan sources, originated outside India in a country called Sambhala, and was introduced in Eastern India under the Pālas. 63 Abhayākaragupta, who was a contemporary of Rāmapāla, was a great exponent of the system. It attached great importance to the time factor, the muhūrtas, tīthi, nakṣatras, etc. in the matter of the cultivation of the Bodhicitta. Hence astronomy and astrology came to have an important place in this system. So far as the ultimate goal is concerned the Kālachakra does not seem to have differed from the other mystic schools.

63 The Kālachakratantra, with the commentary called Vimalaprabhā, has been edited by Biswanath Banerjee. It will be published by the Asiatic Society shortly—(KKDG).
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