

## Maha(yana) Buddhism: Theory and Practice of Non-Violence in Kashmir

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### Introduction:

At the time of Buddha's birth, Indian society was dichotomous in nature, self-centered (intellectual class) and ritualistic (masses). Brahmins, the then torch-bearers and representatives of spiritual wisdom in ancient times, had limited themselves to rites and rituals. In absence of any knowledgeable guides and spiritual leaders, society had become virtually directionless and as such was in search of an ethical and moral order. In the mean time, the Gangetic basin in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. witnessed the emergence of new social and economic classes, thereby adding to already segregated social classes and tensions. Nevertheless, many of those sects were of considerable appeal and prominence with their diverse philosophies beyond common man's understanding. In response to such a situation, Buddhism emerged as a socio-religious movement to serve the intellectual needs of different sections of society in India. It provided a new organized form of religious *Sangha*, a gospel of peace and non-violence, a way of life, devoid of all extremes of passion, anger, enmity, pleasure and pain. This ease and simplicity helped spread of Buddhism far and wide. The practice of non-violence in it was life-affirming and contributed to humanity, progress and peace.

### Rise of Buddhism:

Buddhism, which preached a simple message of compassion in *Pali*, the language of people, began at a time of religious excitement. There were many orthodox sects and unorthodox thinkers in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This was also the epoch when the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* including both republics and monarchies, emerged and the 2<sup>nd</sup> urbanization was taking place in the Ganga valley and compared to the orthodox rural people, mostly tradition bound, the new commercial classes in the cities were always ready for change. Both these factors were instrumental to provide a congenial ground for unorthodox thinking when Buddhism (and Jainism) rejected cast privileges and social monopolies, members of all classes found the doors open to join the new religion where everybody was treated at par, irrespective of caste, creed and sex. It was then not a mere accident that Buddhism (and Jainism) came from *Kshatriya* and republican backgrounds during this period. However, in monarchy, the Brahmins were well entrenched and as such it was very difficult to shake their authority but in republics there was tradition of free and collective thinking and free choice. Brahmanic orthodoxy and ritualism had turned religion into a very complex subject. Blood sacrifices prolonged and costly ceremonials and superstitions were taken by the Brahmins to the climax. The Brahmins had made learning a monopoly of their own class. Their influence had increased immensely. As a representative of the peoples will, Buddhism (and Jainism) reacted the Brahmanic notion of exclusiveness and supremacy depicted this Kshatriya reaction. Also the missionary tendencies led to direct communication with the people which broke the bonds of Brahmanic orthodoxy.

However, new converts to Buddhism were originally followers of Hindu religion and as such were not able to give up all their past traditions and rites and rituals. They continued a few of their age old practices but replaced their content with Buddhist teachings. This is the reason

that their remained a very narrow gap between Buddhism and Saivism and *Vedanta*. It's theory of *Void (Shunya)* was not much different from the version of '*Paramshiva*' for Buddha also multiplied in infinite refractions. Tantricism had both Hindi and Buddhist forms. Mystic experiences, meditational procedures and common heritage of chants, *Yoga* etc. were methods of mental purification and exaltation in both. In this way, at one stage, Buddhism and Brahmanism came very nearer to each other and sometimes even merged with each other. As many as 84 *Sidhas* in Tibetan list are also depicted in Hindu list of the great masters. It mingled with the *Tantric* and *Sakti* cults of Nepal and *Sahajiya* cult of Bengal.

Nevertheless, there were some basic distinctions in Buddhism and Brahminism that remained there from the very beginning. The Buddhist morality sought its basis in the universal truths and Brahmanic morality was tied to divine ordinances incorporated in the legal codes of the nation. Buddhist ethics is linked to spiritual truths uttered by Buddha, to be realized in every one's wisdom. Such was not the case with Brahmanism which depended so much on scriptures and law givers. To Buddhists, Buddha was the great revealer of final truth, the guide of all beings, the savior and the ferryman, who took men to the shore of perfection. Buddha is the light of the world i.e. "*Atta-dipa*". The master is the revealer of the life and not an intruder from outside. One takes refuge in Buddha in order to refuge in himself, i.e. "*Atsarana*". The personal and liberal spirit is there as a very important feature of Buddhism. Unlike Brahmanism, ethical theories and moral practices were never separated in Buddhism. Buddhist morality was closely related to ideas of universal upliftment.

### Teachings:

1. There are five hindrances in the way of perfection:
  - (a) Sensual desire
  - (b) Ill-well
  - (c) Stolidity and torpor
  - (d) Excitement and vanity
  - (e) Perplexity
2. There are seven fetters (*Sannojana*):
  - (a) Fawning
  - (b) Repugnance
  - (c) Opinion
  - (d) Perplexity
  - (e) Pride
  - (f) Attachment to existence
  - (g) Ignorance (*Avijja*)
3. Virtues which bring perfection or *Nirvana (Paramita)*:
  - (a) Charity
  - (b) Morality
  - (c) Resignation
  - (d) Wisdom

- (e) Exertion
  - (f) Forbearance
  - (g) Truthfulness
  - (h) Persistency
  - (i) Love
  - (j) Equanimity
4. Individuals have three characteristics i.e. suffering (no eternal self), non-self and impermanence.
  5. There were certain cosmological and metaphysical questions which were deemed by Buddha as undetermined.
  6. Individuals were in a series of mental and physical states.
  7. In simple words, Lord Buddha talked about the four great truths, the central theme of which were suffering, cause of suffering, how suffering could be removed and how suffering could be removed by killing desire.
  8. Buddha believed that life did not begin with birth or end with death.
  9. *Karma* builds the world and *Dharma* did the organic part of all existence.
  10. Mental control, solitude, compassion and non-violence were important.
  11. Only *Nirvan* is eternal and unchangeable.

#### **Legacy of Buddhism in India:**

The most significant contribution of Buddhism was its emphasis on morality and ethics. The cryptic code of *Vedas* and the highly intellectual philosophy of *Upanishads* were carried to masses by Buddhism. It laid down clear-cut rules for right belief, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right mode of livelihood, right effort, right-mindedness, right rapture, etc. Buddhism proved that spirituality is not limited to any particular social class. One can attain *Nirvana* even without worshipping any deity or relying on any scriptures just by one's personal endeavor. It propagated spirituality all over Asia which was based on a very simple ethical and moral message. It pioneered the concept of organized *Sanghas* and *Viharas* which helped in reforming the prevalent religious life in India and rest of Asia.

Although Buddhism as a separate religion have almost vanished from India, many of its concepts and principles got merged with mainstream Hinduism and were carried forward directly or in modified form. The foremost example of this case is its protest against violent sacrifices (*Bali*) or *Yajnas*. Thus Buddhism downplayed the role of complex rituals prevalent in contemporary society.

#### **Peace Message in Buddhism:**

Gautam Buddha was born about 2500 years ago in Lumbini on Indian-Nepalese border. His teachings on peace and compassion are as relevant to us today as they were then. Buddha, meaning 'one who is awoken' in the sense of having 'woken up to reality', was the title first given to Lord Buddha. At the age of 30 prince Siddhartha Gautam left all the worldly pleasures to attain the reality of life and became the Buddha - the enlightened one.

When Siddhartha had grown into an intelligent young man, one fine morning he moved out of his palace and on the way saw certain scenes that changed the entire course of his life. He first saw a very old man who could barely walk; a sick man who was in severe pain, ..... and lastly a corpse. Since, he had never been exposed to such experiences, these sights affected him immensely and turned his life and heart and compelled him to evaluate his life completely.

The Buddhist ideal of peace is illustrated in *Saddharmapundarikasutra* or the *Lotus of the True Law*, one of the most important of all Mahayana scriptures, setting forth the doctrine of the *One Vehicle* and the eternal Buddha. The *sutra's* teach an ethical path which is the way of *Bodhisattva* – a life of creative altruism, leading to the ultimate peace. Buddha's teaching of overcoming evil helped humanity in achieving peace. It had tremendous impact on the general and social being of the society thereby contributing to amity and social harmony. It revived the spirit of social solidarity by putting an end to social conflict. The noble mission of Buddha helped not only India but also other south-eastern and far-eastern countries to create conditions for justice, political and socio-economic stability, fraternity, peace and social harmony. Gautam Buddha travelled far and wide especially on the Gangetic plains and taught his principles from nobles to outcastes, mass murderers such as Angulimala and cannibals like Alavaka. This extended to many adherents of rival philosophies and religions. The main objective of Buddhism was to ascertain the cause of sorrow, its perspective on the causes of violence, ways to prevent violence and to realize peace. While believing that the root cause of violence is located within the mind, Buddhism has placed greater urgency upon inner reflection than outer.

When we analyze the *Four Noble Truths* as propounded by Lord Buddha, we find the ultimate goal of these teachings is the ascertainment of violence and the solution thereof. It stressed, life inevitably involves suffering / dissatisfaction (*Dukkha-satya*); suffering / dissatisfaction originates in desire/s (*Samudaya-satya*) and then prescribe the cure for this unpleasant way of living i.e. how to promote a peaceful way of living and ultimately live in peace.

Here are some excerpts of Lord Buddha's sayings reflecting the message of peace.

“All fear death. None are unafraid of sticks and knives. Seeing yourself in others, don't kill, don't harm...”

“Bad words blaming others. Arrogant words humiliating others. From these behaviors come hatred and resentment...”

“Better than a thousand hollow words, is one word that brings peace”.

“Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule”.

“Hence conflicts arise, rendering in people malicious thoughts... For the sake of greedy desire, kings and kings are in conflict,... So are monks and monks, people and people, regions and regions, states and states...”

“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned”.

“If we win, we incur resentment toward ourselves”.

“It is a man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways”.

“The one who dwells in compassion, would not have a conflictual volition; one who dwells in loving-kindness would always act most appropriately”.

“Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon and the truth”.

“Virtue is persecuted more by the wicked than it is loved by the good”.

“You should carefully guard your mind, maintaining the mindfulness all the time, in order to cease conflicts...”

A fundamental concept in Buddhist metaphysics (stipulated in “*Sarvastivada*”) is the assumption of existence of *dharma*’s cosmic factors and events that combine momentarily under the influence of a person’s past deeds to form a person’s life flux which he considers his personality and career. Differences arose among various early Buddhist schools concerning the ontological reality of these *dharma*s. While like all Buddhists, *Sarvastivadins* consider everything empirical to be impermanent, they maintain that the *dharma* factors are eternally existing realities. The *dharma*s are thought to function momentarily, producing the empirical phenomena of the world, which is illusory but to exist outside the empirical world. The elements of the *Sarvastivada* school influenced Mahayana thought to a great extent.

#### **Peace Reign of Buddhism in Kashmir:**

Kashmir was a part of Gandhara with its capital at Taxila. The *Nagas* inhabited it from the times immemorial and as such Buddhists had to face a strong opposition from them initially. Buddhism was originally introduced in Kashmir by Asoka in 250 BC and it attained zenith during the reign of Kanishka and other Kushan kings. He sent Majhantika as missionary to Kashmir who succeeded in winning over and converting about 80,000 of them and they gradually abandoned their traditional rites and ceremonies and adopted the doctrine of Buddhism. Since the age old rituals and traditions could not be given up altogether at once; they therefore continued a few of their rituals such mixed them up with the doctrine of Buddhism. The best example of this mix-up was when they continued their age old rites and rituals but started chanting Buddhist hymns and mantras.

Like Savism, Buddhism also developed a sacred pantheon; *Sarvajanamitras* devotional poems “*Srongdhara-Stotra*” in this regard are well-known. There were tendencies to bring it nearer to various Hindu cult. The *Yogachara* system of Asanga led to the growth of Tantricism within Buddhism. *Brha-Nila-Tantram*, Buddhist in origin, received a Saivite grab. Chankuna, Lalitaditya’s minister, got the image of *Braha-Buddha* from his master in return for two spells of magical charms, which, according to Kalhana, could check the flow of flooded rivers. Growth of Tantricism brought Buddhism nearer to Saivism as then prevalent in the valley and Buddhism which the Kashmiri monks thereafter gave to their northern neighbors came to be called as *Saiva-Buddhism*.

From 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to about 12<sup>th</sup> century AD i.e. for more than one thousand three hundred years, Kashmir was inhabited by Buddhists. Ruled by illustrious Buddhist kings (especially Kanishka), the Buddhist kingdom of Kashmir developed into a center of Buddhist art, sculpture and architecture of high aesthetic and spiritual appeal. The Buddhist monuments including magnificent Buddhist shrines, monasteries, stupa’s, Buddha and Bodhisattva statues.

Besides, it was a renowned place of Buddhist teaching, learning and practice. It is reported that there were more than five hundred Buddhist scholars in Kashmir during the reign of Kanishka. He was a great lover of education and many learned men received his patronage. Galaxies of great scholars adorned his court such as Asvaghosa – Buddhist writer, Nagarjuna – philosopher, Vasumitra – Buddhist scholar, Charaka – physician, Samgharaksha – chaplain, Mathara – politician and Agisala – engineer. Learning and literature greatly expanded due to patronage of the king Kanishka. Scholars and pilgrims came to Kashmir from many distant places to study Buddhist philosophy under the supervision of these renowned scholars. All the Mahayana scriptures during this period were written in Sanskrit language. The Sanskrit literature was highly developed and both religious and secular literatures were equally enriched under the congenial atmosphere of royal patronage.

Kashmir flourished under Buddhist kings such as Hushka and Jushka, the builders of two famous cities viz. *Hushkapur* (now Ushkar) and *Jushkapur* (now Zakura) respectively, followed by the great king, Kanishka who was drawn closer to Buddhism when he came in contact with Asvaghosa, the most renowned Buddhist scholar at Pataliputra. The king was so impressed with the teachings of Asvaghosa that he invited him to *Purusapura* or Peshawar as the capital city. Kanishka ruled the kingdom of Kashmir during the period 78 to 103 AD. He is known to have constantly sought advice and instructions of Buddhist scholars and monks to supervise the administration of his kingdom. Buddhist intellectual and cultural development reached a peak during this period. His empire extended outside the frontiers of India and included whole of the trans-Pamir region such as Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, the Oxus valley or Bactria and the territories between the Hindukush in Central Asia and Kabul. This glorious Buddhist period in Kashmir was known as the “Golden Age of Kashmir”. By the latter part of 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, during the reign of emperor Kanishka, Kashmir became the foremost centre of Mahayana Buddhism. Nagarjuna, the most influential philosopher of Mahayana Buddhism and the main Buddhist centre of learning in Kashmir at this time was the University of Taxila, were known far and wide.

Kanishka's reign was a landmark in the realm of Buddhist art, sculpture and architecture. Four prominent schools of art – *Sarnath*, *Mathura*, *Amaravati* and *Gandhara*- within the empire, received great impetus during his reign. Each had its own distinct characteristics. *Saranath*, *Mathura* and *Amaravati* were famous for the sculpture works. The *Gandhara* School of Art represents both Greek and Indian characteristics. This art was characterized by the depiction of human body in a realistic manner with greater physical accuracy, elaborate ornamentation and complex symbolism. This art tradition is called the *Greco-Indian School of Art*, which formed a significant feature of the cultural achievements of the reign of Kanisika. From Kashmir this art was carried it to far off places like Central Asia and China.

Kanishka, though a dedicated Buddhist, was quite tolerant towards other faiths. This is well reflected in the coins of his reign carrying figures of various Hindu, Persian and Greek deities. Images in these coins show his respect not only for Buddha but also Zoroastrian, Greek and Brahmanic deities.

During the reign of Paravarsena, his uncle Jyendra built famous *Jayendravihara* and under Yudhisthira II, Paravarsena's son, several *Viharas* and *Chaitas* were erected by the king and his courtiers. Buddhism also flourished under the Karkotas and their successors. Whereas Hieun Tsang mentions 100 monasteries in Kashmir in 631 AD, his countryman Ou-kong who came a century later found 300 monasteries.

#### **The Fourth Buddhist Council:**

The reign of Kanishka (120-160 AD) is especially important in the history of Buddhism for he convened, with the permission of his teacher, Parshva, a council to settle the disputed doctrines. The representatives of no less than eighteen Buddhist sects attended the council. On the suggestion of Parshva and with the approval of the other assembled monks it was decided to hold the council in Kashmir.

The Council was attended by five hundred *arhats*, five hundred *bodhisattvas* and five hundred *pundits*. It sat for six months. The deliberations of the council were guided by Vasumitra and in his absence Asvaghosha acted as president. Their labours resulted in the compilation of the *Vibhava Shashtra* and other comprehensive commentaries on the Canon, which after being engraved on sheets of red copper, were sealed in stone chests and deposited in a *stupa* built specially for that purpose. These commentaries were prepared in Sanskrit language but have survived only in Chinese translations and adaptations. This conference also gave birth to the new school of Buddhism called the Mahayana Buddhism, which soon became widespread in Tibet, China, Burma, Japan and many other Far Eastern and Central Asian countries. As proposed in the council, Kanishka declared Mahayana Buddhism as the state religion of his empire.

In order to safeguard the original teachings of Buddhism which the Mahayana school refers as "*Sarvastivada*" or "*Vaibhashika*", reputed Buddhist scholars at that time came to Kashmir and compiled a detailed and authentic commentary of this philosophy. This monumental work is known as "*Abhidharma Mahavtbbhashashtra*".

Post *Mahanirvana* period of *Tathagata* led to the emergence of various schools of thought of Buddhism, particularly originating from different interpretations of "*Vinaya*" and "*Abhidharma*"; yet most of these theories consider "*Moksha*" to be the ultimate aim of life. Among these, *Sarvastivada* is seen as oldest, widely accepted and holiest philosophy of Buddhism.

Kashmir a conducive place to safeguard the original thinking of *Sarvastivada* and its growth, its purest form i.e. the monumental creation viz. "*Varvadi*", Abhidharma's basic scriptures supposedly in six volumes is said to have been completed in Kashmir by Katyayani's son Vasubanghu. Even Ashvaghosha, famous Sanskrit poet of *Saket* (now Ayodhya), came to Kashmir on the invitation of Vasubanghu for preparing the literary work of "*Vibasha*", known as "*Abhidharma Mahavtbbhashashtra*", which is believed to have been completed in ten lakh cantos within twelve years.

*Sarvastivadi* Buddhists thought that king Kanishka brought real breakthrough in the faith by organizing Fourth Buddhist Council at *Kundalvan vihara* in Kashmir. *Maha Vibhava*

*Shastra* (one of the three main treatise of *Sarvastivadi*), at present in existence in China, is said to have been written in Kashmir during this time. Moreover, Kanishka set up many *viharas* and *stupas*, besides building the town of “*Kanishkapur*”, today known as “*Kanispur*” in Baramula and donated entire Kashmir to the “*Sangha*”.

### **Mahayanism:**

There were various factors which resulted in the birth of Mahayanism at the Fourth Buddhist Council. The disappearance of Buddha from the scene, disintegration of Maurya state, anti-Buddhist *sungas*, foreign invasion of Parthians, Greeks, Bactrians and Scythians meant new challenges to Buddhism. Out of these challenges was born Mahayanism. Due to its great adaptability in all lands Buddhism developed local variations. Differences may be seen in Buddhist art, architecture, iconography, rituals and doctrinal emphasis. The early Buddhism (*Theravada*) spread in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Mahayana Buddhism spread in Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, etc.

The Buddhist monks were intellectuals of high repute; they were bound to be always in a process of new thinking. Even the very first council indicated differing theories. Those who subscribed to the teachings of elders were called as *Sthaviravadins* and those who advocated liberal views, came to be known as *Hinyanist* and *Mahayanist*. There was no open conflict between the two and flourished side by side. Even their respective monasteries existed side by side. Both had certain similar and basic concepts such as focus on salvation, changing and transient world, law of Karma and non-violence.

In course of time, there grew a generation who had heard about Buddha but had never seen him. They wanted to see Buddha in form and shape. At the same time Brahmins accepted Buddha as one of the incarnations. All these factors led to the growth of Mahayanism.

### **Religious Policy of Kanishka:**

The religious policy of Kanishka stated that *Bodhisattva* would work for the salvation of all beings. Hence during the reign of Kanishka people did not need to undergo hardship and penance to attain salvation. Kanishka replaced the worship of Buddhist symbols like Buddha's footprints, *Dharmachakra*, stupa or *Bodhi Tree* by initiating the worship of Buddha and *Bodhisattva*. The cult of *Bodhisattva* and the worship of Buddha images became widely prevalent in the Kushana period, especially during Kanishka's reign.

In order to spread Buddhism outside India Kanishka resorted to missionary activities. He undertook the policy of propagating Buddhism to distant countries like Tibet, China, Burma and Japan. Since Kanishka had commanded over the major parts of Central Asia, Buddhism (Mahayana) therefore spread to Central Asian countries during his lifetime. Contact between Kaniska and Chinese in Central Asia may have inspired the transmission of Indian ideas, particularly Buddhism to China. The Buddhist texts of China, Tibet, Mongolia and other Far Eastern countries also hail him as the greatest royal patron of Buddhism and his name was closely associated with the spread of Mahayana Buddhism.

**Basic Features of Mahayanism:**

1. To Mahayanists, Hinayana was inadequate, too individualistic, unfit for broader propagation, limited in scope and nature and pre-occupied with self-salvation. It was therefore egoistic.
2. It stood for compassion for all living creatures. Their way was the “Great Way”.
3. In Hinayana, *Arhathood* was the final goal. No one else could reach the state of Buddhahood. In Mahayana everyone can become a Buddha because everyone contained particles of the essence of Buddha.
4. In Mahayana, they regarded Buddha in three facets or three bodies of one Buddha i.e. *Dharmakaya* (body of *Dharma*), *Sambhog Kaya* (Body of divine manifestation) and *Nirman Kaya* (creative body).
5. Due to the above mentioned three bodies, Buddha brings salvation to all creatures in the cosmic, celestial and terrestrial world.
6. The Mahaysnist accepted the existence of several Buddhas of whom Gautama was one.
7. In Mahayana Buddhism, the concept of *Bodhisattvas* is very important. Rather Buddha and *Bodhisattvas* became objects of worship. Rituals became important as well as contemplation and intuition.
8. In Mahayanism, the focus was not so much on historical Buddha but on transcendental Buddha.
9. To Hinayanists, Buddha was a master, the path finder and the historical reality. But to Mahayanists, Buddha was the supreme, the absolute being, the special and specific phenomena.
10. Mahayanists felt ‘*Nirvana*’ was possible with the help of Bodhisttavas.
11. To Mahayanists, Buddhist scriptures are ‘Truth Body’ of Buddha. The sacredness of Buddhahood is transferred to the scriptures so that salvation can be assured by uttering (with faith) a single sentence of the *Lotus Sutra*.

The ideal of Hinayana (early Buddhism) is the balance of morals (*Sila*), meditation (*Dhyana*) and knowledge (*Prajana*). But, in Mahayanism, this balance was no more an important feature for Buddhists. Meditation came to have predominance over the other two factors, until in China and Japan there emerged a sect, the *Zen* (Japanese word for *Dhyana*), in which meditation was the most essential part of the entire teachings.

Even in India, in Mahayana school, the scope of *Dhyana* was progressively widened. One of Nagarjuna’s work (*Nanjio*, No. 1181), mentions sixteen kinds of *Dhyanas* only for the Bodhisattvas. Asanga’s *Yogacarabhumi* mentions nine *Dhyanas* and again subdivides them into thirty-nine. In *Lokavatara Sutra* *Dhyana* is divided into four types such as 1). *Balapicharika* (for ordinary persons), 2). *Arthapravichaya* (contemplating objects), 3). *Tathatalambana* (meditation on truth), 4). *Tathagata* (meditating on Buddha).

**Impact:**

Buddhism disappeared from its land of birth due to many factors such as assimilation with Hindu ideas and practices, fading of the *Arhathood* ideal, weakness of the Buddhist monasteries, Huna

and Muslim invasions, lack of royal support and the revival of Hinduism under Sankara. In spite of this, it left a profound impact particularly in the field of learning and literature and art and architecture. Nalanda, Vallabhi, Jagdala, Odantapur, Vikramshila, Mathura and Nagarjuni Konda emerged as the centres of knowledge. Buddhist art in Andhara and Mathura, Sravasti and Rajgir, Sarnath and Sanchi, Amravati and Bharhut, Ajanta and partly Ellora have received praised from one and all. It led to the invigoration of monastic life, logic, non-violence and ethical existence. Of course, it produced more idol worship as well as an attitude of escapism. It helped the growth of intellectual freedom by rejecting the authorities of *Vedas* and *Brahmanas*. Most of all it replaced the idea of *Digvijay* by *Dharmvijay*.

### **Decline of Buddhism in Kashmir:**

After the fall of Kushana dynasty, the Buddhist community of Kashmir faced numerous challenges and hardships. This was largely due to internal rivalries and turmoil within the royalty. Jalauka who came to throne after the death of Ashoka, has been mentioned as “the vanquisher of the Buddhists”. He was a rank communalist, who let loose a reign of terror on the Nagas and persecuted Buddhists en masse. While patronizing Saivism, he built Shiva temples on Buddhists sites. Jalauka could not even tolerate the sound of Buddhist hymns on the pretext that these disturbed his sleep and on this excuse he got demolished all the Buddhist *viharas* and *stupas* in the vicinity. Another king, Mihirakula (6<sup>th</sup> century AD) in whose reign Buddhists faced innumerable atrocities and destruction of their shrines. After the 7<sup>th</sup> AD century, Hinduism was receiving more attention of scholars in Kashmir and in the centuries that followed, Kashmir produced many poets, philosophers and artists who contributed to Hindu religion and Sanskrit literature. The most notable scholar of this period was Vasugupta (875–925 AD) who wrote the *Shiva Sutras* which laid the foundation for a monastic Saiva system called *Kashmiri Saivism*. Soon *Kashmiri Saivism* came to dominate lives of ordinary people in Kashmir largely at the expense of Buddhism.

From 1028 AD onwards until the end of first Lohara dynasty in 1101, the region underwent a steady decline in economic prosperity. Consequently, the Buddhist monasteries suffered from minimal financial support. Furthermore, cut off by Ghaznavid territory from easy access to the great Buddhist monastic universities of the central part of northern India, the standards at Kashmiri monasteries gradually declined. The last king of this dynasty, Harsha (r.1089-1101), a Hindu ruler, instituted yet another religious persecution; this time raising both Hindu temples as well as Buddhist monasteries to the ground. For most part of the second Lohara dynasty (1101-1171) both religions recovered once more with royal support. During the reign of Jayasimha (r.1128-1149) the two Buddha images, which hitherto had survived Harsha’s demolition campaigns, were demolished and Buddha *Vihara*’s near Srinagar were burnt down. The economic situation of the kingdom as a whole declined even further, continuing through the subsequent succession of Hindu rulers (1171-1320) as well. Although the monasteries were impoverished, Buddhist activity flourished until at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with teachers and translators periodically visiting Tibet.

Mongol invasions of Kashmir started during the early 14<sup>th</sup> century at a time when Kashmir was in the grip of political turmoil due to internal rivalries within its royalty. This period was marked by intrigue and treachery among kings and the lack of patronage for Buddhism as before. These conditions in Kashmir led to severe disruption of Buddhist activities and the general decline of Buddhism in Kashmir. Oppressive taxation, corruption, internecine fights and rise of feudal lords led the Buddhist community in disarray. It was at the time of Suhadeva, last king of Lohara dynasty, that the first Mongol invasion of Kashmir took place. A ruthless Mongol chief, Zulju, led a savage raid of Kashmir causing much destruction and killing of Buddhists and Hindus.

Mughals ruled Kashmir for 167 long years, with the help of 35 governors who looted and plundered Kashmir. Tyranny was order of the day and any whimper of rebellion was crushed mercilessly. Numerous Kashmiri Buddhists and Hindus were ruthlessly forced to convert to Islam. In the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Buddhists and Hindus of Kashmir revolted unsuccessfully against the Muslims and this led to further subjugation of Kashmiris and forced conversions becoming order of the day.

Mughal rule came to an end in 1753 AD when Afghans took over. This proved to be the worst nightmare for Kashmiris. They crossed all boundaries of civilization; killing, raping, plundering, looting, brutally torturing people was order of the day. Mass migration of Buddhists and Hindus out of their native Kashmir took place during this time.

In 1819, Afghans were defeated by Sikh forces led by Ranjit Singh and the Sikhs did not prove any better. Destruction and killing became rampant. The troubled situation continued until the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and the division of Kashmir into Indian administered Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

### **Conclusion:**

Kashmir has been aboard of so many peace loving and peaceful religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and Christianity. Amongst all hitherto prevalent religions of Kashmir valley. Buddhism in is an outstanding representation of our communally harmonious religious tradition. Humanism, which was a hallmark of Buddha's teachings crossed all racial, national and communal barriers to bring peace in the world. In its long history we hardly find any evidence of violence, killings or religious hatred in the erstwhile history of Kashmir. It rather wields wisdom and peace and stresses on the purification of mind, heart and ultimately soul by following the Eightfold Path, the Four Noble Truths and the Five Preceptions. Human society, therefore, will always be indebted to Buddha for his great contribution in the fields of peace and spirituality.

The history of Kashmir has witnessed quick rise and fall of ruling dynasties ever since the dawn of civilization. The proverb of "might is right" has been the main driving force of these political upheavals. Loot, plunder, murder and other kinds of inhuman practices were results of wars. The dynasties changed for the worst in quick succession and every next ruler or/and dynasty proved to be just another agency of tyranny. Since the Valley of Kashmir is devoid of other states in our country, owing to its geographical location the socio-economic and political

developments in this part of the globe had its own distinctiveness. Unlike other parts of the country, when Buddhism was introduced here in the Valley of Kashmir, the mankind has felt a sigh of relief. The Buddhist period in the history of Kashmir is distinguished as a period of peace and prosperity. No major wars were fought during this period owing to the concept of non-violence of Buddhism. Also that the resources hitherto used for war and destruction came to be utilized for the socio-economic and cultural developments of the Valley.

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