



POST-AMBEDKAR DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM

Dr. Adesh Gupta

Associate Professor of History
D.A.V. College
Kanpur U.P. India

Among Buddhist societies the Maha Bodhi Society of India (Calcutta), The Buddhist society of India (Bhartiya Baudh Maha Sabha, Bombay), Trailokya Baudha Maha Sangha Sahayaka Gana (Pune), Bengal Buddhist Association (Calcutta) are important one. There are other Buddhist societies in India who are also important. They are namely: (1) Lohit Bodhi Society (Arunachal Pradesh), (2) All Assam Buddhist Association (Assam), (3) International Brotherhood Mission (Assam) (4) Ladakh Buddhist Association Jammu & Kashmir) (5) Indian Buddhist Council (Maharashtra) (6) All Tripura Rajya Buddhist Association (Tripura) (7) Punjab Buddha Mahasabha Jalandhar) (8) Sikkim Buddhist Association (Sikkim) (9) All Mizoram Buddhist Association (Mizoram) (10) Meghalaya Buddhist Association (Meghalaya).

(I) The contribution of the Buddhist society of India to Modern Buddhism is worth to be discussed. The Buddhist society of India or Bhartiya Baudh Maha Sabha is located at Ambedkar Bhavan, Gokuldas Pasta Road, Dadar, Bombay - 400 014. It was founded by Ambedkar in 1955 to take care of the interests of Dalit Buddhists. Under the auspices of the Buddhist society of India, Ambedkar embraced Buddhism. Yashwant Ambedkar, son of Ambedkar was elected President of this society after the death of Ambedkar. He organised the first All India Buddhist conference in Bombay to coincide with the inauguration of the memorial stupa at Chaitya Bhoomi in November 1968. After the death of Yashwant Ambedkar his wife Mrs. Miratai Ambedkar was elected President of the Buddhist society of India. The second All India Buddhist conference was held by the society at Nagpur in October 1980. The third All India Buddhist Delegates conference of the Buddhist society of India



was held at Ambedkar Bhavan, New Delhi, on 18-19 March 1989. Some of the important branches of the Buddhist society of India are:

(1) Bhartiya Baudh Maha Sabha, Ambedkar Bhavan, Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 055.

(2) Bhartiya Baudh Maha Sabha, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

(3) Buddhist society of India, Siddharth Niwas, Hyderabad 4, Andhra Pradesh

(4) Buddhist society of India, Buddha Vihara, Siddharth.

(5) Bhartiya Baudh Maha Sabha, Babar Bhaika Pitha, Nagar, Jalandhar 144003, Punjab. Madan Jhampa Road, Baroda, Gujarat.

(II) The people's Education Society founded by Ambedkar on 8 July 1945 is also one of the important Buddhist organisations in Modern India. Its works are mainly in the field of education. It is situated in Anand Bhavan, near fountain, Dr. Dadabhai Naorji Road, Bombay –1 Ambedkar had established Siddharth College of Arts, Science and Commerce (1946), Siddharth College of Commerce and Economics (1953) and Siddharth College of Law (1956). The People's Education Society since has established two more colleges at Bombay namely Dr Ambedkar College of Commerce and Economics at Wadala (1972) and Dr. Ambedkar College of Law at Wadala (1977) Ambedkar also had established Siddharth Night High School at Buddha Bhavan, Bombay. People's Education Society since then established many institutions at Bombay, which are namely: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar memorial Research Centre, Rajgriha, Dadar; Siddarth College of Mass Communications, Anand Bhavan; Siddharth Institute of Industry and Administration, Anand Bhavan; Siddharth English Medium School, Wadala; and Siddharth Vihar Hostel, Wadala. The Institutions established at the New Mumbai campus are: Marathi Medium Secondary School and Junior College Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Public School; Junior College of Education; and Marathi Medium Primary School. At the Nagasenvana campus at Aurangabad, Ambedkar had established in 1951 the Milind Mahavidyalaya, a multifacultied college. In course of time it developed into three independent Colleges, namely Milind College of Science; Dr.



Babasaheb Ambedkar College of Arts and Commerce (1960); and Milind College of Arts (1963). Another College, Dr. Ambedkar College of Law, was established at Aurangabad in 1968. The other institutions at Aurangabad are: Milind Multi purpose High School (established by Ambedkar in 1955); People's Education Society's College of Physical Education; People's Education Society's English Medium Primary and Pre-primary School; Matoshri Ramabai Ambedkar High School, New Aurangabad; and Buddhist centre. The People's Education Society had also established the education institutions which are namely: Dr. Ambedkar College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Mahad; Dr. Ambedkar College of Arts and Commerce, Yerwada, Pune; Nagasen High School, Nanded; Nagasen Vidyalaya and Nagasen Junior College of Arts and Commerce; Gautam Vidyalaya, Pandherpur, Maharashtra; Nagasen Vidyalaya, Bangalore. The People's Education Society has also established hostels at Bombay, Mahad, Dapoli, Aurangabad, and Nanded for the benefit of Dalit Buddhists.

(III) Trailokya Bauddha Maha Sangha Sahayaka Gana situated in Dapodi, Pune is also working among Dalit Buddhists. It was founded in March 1979 by Sangharakshita an English Buddhist Monk. He was influenced by Ambedkar. He helped the new Buddhist movement in India to survive and grow. He was a Theravada Monk later converted to Mahayana and like Ambedkar believed that Buddhism is one irrespective of the presence of numerous sects and groups and all must work and grow together. Dhammachari Lokamitra another England born missionary took up the Dhamma work after Sangharakshita left for London. He started the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha in Pune in 1979 He attributed the spirit and inspiration behind the foundation of the Mahasangha to the Dhamma Diksha day celebrations at the Deeksha Bhoomi in Nagpur in October 1978 held by Dalit Buddhists. He witnessed the gathering of half a million Dalit Buddhists in one place at the Deeksha Bhoomi. The "Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana' is mostly active in Maharashtra. It also spread its activities in Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and



Andhra Pradesh. The Sahayaka Gana is primarily a lay Buddhist organisation. Members of Gana are much more than the ordinary upasakas and they are called Dhammacharis and Dhammacharinis. Trailokya Bauddha Maha Sangha Sahayaka Gana is not a monastic order. Most of its members are house holders while some are not. Those who take the Brahmacharya precept, lead the fully celibate life, even taking the yellow robes; are called as Angarikas. The Gana is not interested in converting others to Buddhism. However it works among Dalit Buddhists to follow the foot steps of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. It teaches Ambedkar and Buddhism. The centres of the Gana after intensive classes on Buddhism and meditation. It also undertakes social programmes under the name of the Bahujan Hitay. Its social work consist of two types namel (1) Wealth and education in urban and (2) hostels for village children. It also involved in publications of Buddhist literature There are number of Buddha Viharas contributing for popularising Buddhism in Modern India. Most of the Viharas have come up after Ambedkar conversion to Buddhism Maharashtra is studded with Buddha Viharas. Nagpur being the lace of Ambedkar's Dhamma Deeksha, it has the largest number of Buddha Viharas. Delhi has the second largest concentration of Buddha Viharas. Today in India thanks to growing popularity of Ambedkarism, in almost every state, a number of Viharas have come up. The rapid increase in the number of Viharas are due to cater the religious needs of the growing Buddhist population.

Important Buddhist Centres

(A) Buddha Gaya

Buddha Gaya in Bihar was the place where Siddhartha Gautama Buddha attained Sambodhi, Supreme Enlightenment and became a Buddha, the Enlightened one. Because of the place of Enlightenment, the Buddhist countries of South East Asia built many Buddhist temples and Viharas at Buddha Gaya. The important temples are: the Burmese Temple, the Tibetan Temple the Chinese Temple, Thai Buddhist Temple (wat Thai), Bhutanese Temple, Japanese Temple (Indosan Nipponi), Daijokyo Buddhist Temple,



Karmapa Tibetab Temple, Korean Temple, Twaiwanese Temple, Tai Bodhi kam monastery, Vietnamese Mona Bangladesh Buddhist Monastery, Sakyapa Monastery an Internation Meditation Centre near the Great Maha Bodhi Temple.

(B) Rajgir

During Rajgir in Bihar (Rajagriha, the capital of Bimbisara Shanti ti Stupa the time of the Buddha) is the place of Vishwa or of (world peace pagoda). It was built by Fuji Guruji, the dd pagoda the Japan Buddha Sangha. It is 160 feet high, gold Rajgir has also a Burmese Buddhist Temple.

(C) Nava Nalanda Mahavihara:-

Bhikku Jagdish Kashyap founded the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda in Bihar. There are also other Buddhist Temples at Nalanda namely: The Japanese Buddhist Temple, Chinese Buddhist Temple, Tibetan Buddhist Temple and Thai monastery.

(D) Sarnath

The ancient name of Sarnath was Isipatana. The holy Isipatana was the place where the Gautama Buddha had delivered His First Sermon. Angarika Dharmapala constructed the Mulagandhakuti Vihara and was inagurated in November 1931. Today, Sarnath consists of Buddhist Temples belonged to Burma, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Tibet.

(E) Sravasti

It was famous in ancient period for its Jetavana Monastery built by Anathapindika for the use of the Buddha and where the Buddha had spent about 19 Vassas (Retreats). In modern times it has Srilankan, Burmese, Thai and Chinese temples.

(F) Kushinagar

It is a place of Buddha's Maha Parinirvana. Ven. U Chandramuni Dhamma - Guru of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar established Burmese Buddha Vihara. The Buddhists of Korea, Japan, Thailand and Tibet have recently established



Buddhist Temples and monasteries at Kushinagar. There are number of Buddhist centres in modern towns and cities in India: (1) **Deeksha Bhoomi:** Nagpur is the place of Deeksha Bhoomi, where great prophet Ambedkar performed the Great miracle on 14th October 1956 the holiest prophets day or Deek Diwas of Dalit Buddhists. It is believed that Pavithra (sacred) prophet Gautama Buddha from heavens came down to the Deeksha Bhoomi to bless Ambedkar and showed him the path of true Dhamma. It is to remind the readers that according to the belief of Dalit Buddhists the path to realise true God is the Path of Pavithra Dhamma (Madhyama Marga or Middle Path as a way of life to reach to the hights of satisfaction or bliss of life). The grand memorial Stupa (Pagoda) has been constructed at Deeksha Bhoomi. Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan, a Punjabi Buddhist monk had contributed greatly to make Deeksha Bhoomi a living religious centre of Dalit Buddhism. He established Buddha Vihara, Bhikku Niwas and sacred Bodhi Tree at Deeksha Bhoomi. It is a sacred shrine of Dalit Buddhists. Every year in October, on the Vijaya Dashmi Day millions of Dalit Buddhists from all over India gather at Deeksha Bhoomi for Great Prayer and to remember their liberator. Among more than 40 Buddha Viharas in Nagpur the most important Vihara apart from Deeksha Bhoomi is the Vihara in Indore established by Bhadant Surai Sasai, a Japanese monk settled in India, who almost liberated Great Maha Bodhi Temple, Buddha Gaya from the clutches of the Hindu dominated Management Committee Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan founded another famous Buddhist centre and called it 'Buddha Bhoomi', at Khairi near Nagpur. At Chicholi near Nagpur, there is another important Buddhist centre which includes a Buddha Vihara and Ambedkar Museum, established by Bharatiya Bauddha Parishad (Indian Buddhist Council) in 1975.

(2) **Chaitya Bhoomi:** Chaitya Bhoomi stupa at Shivani Park, Bombay (Mumbai) is another holy place of Dalit Buddhists. It was built on the site where Ambedkar was cremated on 7th December 1956 and it was unveiled on 24 November 1968. There are also many important Viharas in Mumbai



(Bombay) Babasaheb Ambedkar himself built Nalanda Vihara at Khar. The people's Education Society built Siddharth Vihara at Wadala. Bahujana Vihara is another important one was built by Dharmananda Kosambi at Parel and was later taken over by the Maha Bodhi Society in 1950. Japanese Buddha Vihara was built by Fuji Guruji at Worli. Indeed, Maharashtra is the state with a largest Dalit Buddhist population. In every town in Maharashtra there are number of Buddhist Viharas. Ambedkar had himself installed an image of the Buddha in the Buddha Vihara at Dehu road, Pune, which was consecrated on 25 December the day of Christmas in 1955. There is a remarkable edifice in Pune called as the 'Dhammachakra Pravartan Maha Vihar' at Dapodi. It was built by Trailokya Baudha Mahasangha. It is the most impressive Vihara built in Maharashtra in modern times. It has a large shrine room, a library with a good collection of books on Buddhism, Ambedkarism and social work. It also consists of Bahujana Hitay Trust, a residential training centre in Dhamma and social work.

(3) **Janma Bhoomi:** MHOW in Madhya Pradesh is the birth place of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. The Govt. of Madhya Pradesh has constructed a Buddhist stupa in memory of Ambedkar. Madhya Pradesh was the ancient land of Buddhism. The most important modern Buddha Vihara is the Cetiya Giri Vihara at Sanchi in which are preserved the sacred relics of Sariputta and Mahamoggallana, situated on the Chetiya Giri Hills (4) **Bangalore:** Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore was founded by Ven. Acharya Buddhakkhita in 1956. The society has built Maha Bodhi world peace Buddha Temple and was inaugurated on the Buddha Purnima day May 14, 1995. It is a replica of Maha Bodhi Temple at Bodhgaya. The temple has a huge Gopuram on the lines of Bodhgaya Temple with two smaller Gopurams in front. The main Gopuram is a nine storied structure on top of which rises the great Ashokan style stupa. It is a place of worship, meditation and pilgrimage for devotees from India and abroad and also it is a centre for educational, cultural, social and humanitarian service activities. (5) **Ambedkar Bhavan at Delhi:** The place where



Ambedkar lived and died and still it is regarded as a place for Dalit Buddhists to gather and remember Ambedkar.

(6) **Hyderabad:** A giant statue of Lord Buddha was erected by Government of Andhra Pradesh is a major land mark in the Buddhist history of Andhra Pradesh. The 60 feet high statue of the Buddha carved from a single rock has been installed on the Gibraltar Rock in the Hussainsagar Lake situated in the middle of the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

(7) **Jyotinagar:** It is a famous centre of Buddhist knowledge in Assam. International Brotherhood Mission, Jyotinagar Dibrugarh was founded by Ven. Acharya Bhikkhu Karma Shastri. The I.B. Mission founded Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Ideal Academy (Ashramic School) in Jyotinagar which works for the development of Buddhism. The sacred 'Bone-Relic' of Lord Gautama Buddha brought by Thai delegation was installed in the shrine room of the Maha Bodhi Vihara constructed by I.B. Mission. Bhikkhus who contributed to Buddhism in Modern India.

(1) **Ven. U. Chandramani Maha Thera**

Saba U' was born in Burma in 1876 in a devout Buddhist family. In 1888, he was ordained as sramanera and was given the name Chanda' in place of his original name Saba U'. Ven. U Chandima sent two sramaneras namely Chanda and Surya to Calcutta in 1891 to assist Angarika Dharmapala, the founder of the Maha Bodhi Society. Chanda later became famous as U Chandramani. Chanda went back to Burma in 1899 and pursued Pali studies. He studied Pali Tripitaka and attained mastery in Pali and (Upasampada) at the Ramu grama Vihara on the full-moon day of Magha in 1903. Thereafter, he came back to India for missionary work Buddhist philosophy. He received higher ordination Ven. U Chandramani started his missionary work from Kushinagar. Under the guidance of Ven. Mahavira he tried to develop the sacred Nirvana Temple at Kushinagar. The Nirvana Temple was in the possession of the Archaeological Survey of India and was almost left without proper arrangements for Buddhists to worship in the temple. Ven. U Chandramani took up the matter with the



Government and managed to get its possession as well as permission to worship in the temple. In 1904 thus the glory was restored to the ancient Nirvana Temple. The 1500 year old Nirvana statue represents the Dying Buddha reclining on his right side with face turned towards the west. It is believed that the reclining Buddha image is on the very spot where Lord Gautama Buddha had his last breath (attained Maha Parinirvana). Ven. U. Chandramani translated Dhammapada and Pali Suttas into Hindi. He constructed a Buddha Vihara at Sravasti, Lumbini and Somnath. In 1924, for the first time he organised the Buddha Jayanti function at Kushinagar. In 1927, he repaired and restored the main stupa. The Matha-Kaur Temple at Kushinagar was also built and consecrated by Ven. Chandramani. It was built in 1928 out of the donations of two Burmese Buddhists namely U Pokyo and Upo Hlaing. Ven. U. Chandramani had made his contribution to the field of education also. In 1929, he established a free primary School at Kushinagar. In 1934, he started the Buddha High School. In 1936, he established the Maha parinirvana Sanskrit Paathshalá-which is now functioning at Kasia. He established the Mahavir Junior School at Kushinagar in 1944. As a whole he contributed for the development of Kushinagar as a centre of Buddhism. Ven. U. Chandramani had the proud privilege of being the Dhamma- Guru of Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar who embraced Buddhism at his hands on 14 October 1956 at Nagpur and brought millions of Dalits to the fold of Buddhism. Ven. U. Chandramani Maha Thera passed away at Kushinagar on 8 May 1972.

(2) Ven. K. Srinivasa Nayaka Thera

He was born in Sri Lanka in 1891. In 1900 he was ordained as Samanera. In 1920 he came to India on the invitation of Angarika Dharmapala and involved in the missionary work of the Maha Bodhi society. He concentrated his missionary activities in the Sravasti - Lumbini region and built Buddha Viharas. He travelled extensively in India, Nepal and Burma. He passed away at Sarnath in 1968.



(3) Ven. D. Sasanasiri Maha Nayaka Thera

He was born in 1899 in Sri Lanka. In 1914 he took Pabajja and in 1920 he received Upasampada (higher ordination). On the invitation of Angarika Dharmapala, founder of the Maha Bodhi Society, he came to India to train the Samaneras for spreading Buddhism in India. Ven. Sasanasiri Maha Nayaka Thera in 1930 became the head of International Buddhist Institute (Dhammaduta Training School). Later he became incharge of almost all the centres of the Maha Bodhi Society. In 1949 finally he settled at Sarnath. There were many famous disciples followed the foot steps of Ven. Sasanasiri namely Bhikkus Katayayana, Rashtupal, Vimalsheel, Sugatanand, Dharmakirti, Medhankar, Shobhit, Bodhanand, Vishudhanand Ven. Sasanasiri has translated Ashvaghosha's Sanskrit treatise 'Bodhichariyavatara' into Sinhalese. 'Buddh-Ki-Den' is his most important publication in Hindi. He had served as Professor of Pali in the Dharmapala Degree College, Sarnath. He died in 1966.

(4) Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan

Harnamdas was born in 1905 in a village near Chandigarh and later became Brahmachari Vishvanath under the influence of Arya Samaj. He became Buddhist and rechristened himself as Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan, when he found no satisfaction in the philosophy of Arya Samaj. He embraced Buddhism on 10 February, 1928 in Sri Lanka. He had known B.R. Ambedkar since 1944 and had met him a number of times. Indeed Ambedkar had even consulted him as to the modalities to be adopted at the historic conversion ceremony. Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan was very much involved with Ambedkarites to spread Dhamma. On 6 December 1956 when Babasaheb suddenly passed away in sleep at his Delhi residence, Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan immediately rushed to 26 Alipur Road and took charge of the arrangements for the great leader's funeral. He accompanied Babasaheb's body to Bombay, along with a dozen other persons. The plane landed at Bombay Airport at 02 a.m. on 7 December and the body was taken to Rajgriha, Ambedkar's residence in Dadar, where it lay in state for public veneration pending preparations for the funeral



procession. More than half a million people from all over Maharashtra participated in the funeral procession, the biggest such procession, ever seen in the city of Bombay and it took nearly four hours to cover a short distance from Rajgraha to the local cremation ground near Shivaji park.²⁵ When Babasaheb Ambedkar embraced Buddhism on 14 October 1956, along with half a million of his followers at Nagpur Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan was away in China leading the official Indian delegation to participate in the 2500th Buddha Jayanti celebrations in that country. However he participated conversion ceremony held at the cremation ground of Ambedkar. Indeed Babasaheb Ambedkar had planned a mass conversion ceremony in Bombay on 16 December 1956. To fulfil his wish an important conversion ceremony was organised at the cremation ground, more than one lakh people were administered the Tri Sarana and Panch Sila on the spot by Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan after under his guidance Babasaheb's Ambedkar's last rites were performed according to Buddhist tradition and his mortal remains were consigned to the flames in the midst of the chanting of Pali Suttas by the venerable monks.²⁶ Babasaheb Ambedkar had left behind him lakhs of Buddhist followers who were in need of a strong Buddhist (religious) leader particularly in Maharashtra. That is why Anand Kausalyayan decided to make Maharashtra his field of activity. He travelled and guided Maharashtra Dalit Buddhists. He also translated Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar's monumental work 'The Buddha and His Dhamma' into Hindi for the benefit of the masses. While doing so, he also laboriously traced all the original sources from the Pali Tripitaka, which Babasaheb had not done. This Hindi edition of 'The Buddha and His Dhamma' was published by the People's Education Society, Bombay in

²⁵ Anand Teltumbde in his scholarly work says that the Gautama Buddha gave complete freedom to people to amend the Dhamma as per the needs of time. (Ambedkar in and for the post-Ambedkar Dalit Movement, Sugawa Prakashan, Pune, 1997, p. 28). Accordingly Ambedkar has brought change in the traditional outlook of Buddhism and modernised it.

²⁶ Op. cit., Ahir, D.C., p 84



1960.²⁷ Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan had made Deeksha Bhoomi the sacred site where Babasaheb Ambedkar had converted himself to Buddhism. The Bhikkhu Niwas founded by him there soon became a popular centre of learning. His first book was on Ambedkar entitled as 'Yade Baba Na Hote a biography of Babasaheb Ambedkar in 1968. He also translated 'The Buddha and His Dhama' of Ambedkar into Punjabi. Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan continuously engaged himself in nourishing and sustaining Ambedkar's Buddhist movement. He left Deeksha Bhoomi in 1982 and founded another Buddhist centre at Kampte Road, Nagpur and named it Buddha Bhoomi. He was a close friend, guide, philosopher and Guru of Dalit Buddhists. He died at Nagpur in 1988.

(5) **Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap**

Jagdish Narain the earlier name of Jagdish Kashyap was born in Bihar in 1908. Former Arya Samaj activist and disenchanted with the Arya Samaj he embraced Buddhism. He met Rahul Sankrityayan at Patna and with his help he was able to go Sri Lanka in 1933 for studies in Buddhism and Pali literature. Later he joined with Rahul Sankrityayan and Anand Kausalyayan to spread the message of Dhamma. Indeed the trio played a major role in a variety of ways in the revival of Buddhism in India. Jagdish Kashyap moved to Sarnath in 1937. He became part of Maha Bodhi Society. Thus, the trio Rahul Sankrityayan, Anand Kausalyayan and Jagdish Kashyap translated Pali Tipitaka into Hindi. Jagdish Kashyap apart from literary activities was also involved in social work. He was instrumental to start the teaching of Pali in Banaras Hindu University. Later he got an inner call to spread Buddhism in Bihar. He popularised Pali (Magadhi) in Gaya and Nalanda. Nava Nalanda Mahavihara the brain child of Kashyap was started serving the purpose of Buddhism and Pali studies. He translated Tipitaka in Pali (Devanagari) Jagdish Kashyap had also involved in the Ambedkar and Dalit Buddhist movement. Apart from Maharashtra, he mainly spread Dhamma among Dalits in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. He

²⁷ Ibid



passed away in 1976 and was cremated at Nalanda in the vicinity of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, the Pali Research Institute created by him. .

(6) Ven. Neluwe Jinaratana Nayaka Maha Thera

He was born in 1913 in Sri Lanka. In 1929, Ven. P. Vipulatissa Maha Thera ordained Jinaratana as Samanera at Pannagale Vihara and received Upasampada (the higher ordination) at Malwatta Maha Vihara, Kandy in 1933. He came to India in 1936. He joined the Maha Bodhi Society as a Dhammaduta worker. He became the Bhikkhu-in-charge of Sri Dharmarajika Vihara at Calcutta in the year 1938. In 1942 he became Managing Editor of the Maha Bodhi Journal. Finally in 1968 he became General Secretary of Maha Bodhi Society. Ven. Neluwe Jinaratana was not only involved in managerial affairs of society but he also involved in preaching Dhamma with missionary zeal and devotion and also in social work. He was a founder of the Asian Buddhist Council for peace and one of the Founder Vice Presidents of the International Buddhist Brotherhood Association of Japan. He became a member of the Buddha Gaya Temple Management Committee. He was conferred the title 'Sangha Nayaka of India' by the Sangha Council of Malwatta Chapter of the Siamese Sect of Sri Lanka in 1958 for recognition of his services rendered to Buddhism. In 1976, an honorary degree of D. Litt. was conferred on him by the Nava Nalanda Maha Vihara, Nalanda. To his credit, he successfully organised the International Conference and Seminar on the contribution of Buddhism to world culture and civilisation in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi in March 1977 in commemoration of the 2600th Birth Anniversary of the Buddha. Ven. Jinaratana indeed a true Buddhist missionary who died in 1983 at Kolkata.

(7) Ven. Lakhera Ariyawansa Nayaka Maha Thera

Apurva was born in 1915 in a Barua Buddhist family of the village Lakhera in Chittagong District of Bengal (now in Bangladesh). He was ordained as a Samanera by Ven. Pragyalankar Maha Thera in 1928 and became Ven. L. Ariyawansa. He joined Bhikkhu Training School at Sarnath in 1931 and had learnt Pali and Sinhalese from Ven. D. Sasanasiri Maha Thera. He also visited



Sri Lanka for higher studies in Pali and Buddhism. Ariyawansa joined the Maha Bodhi Society of India as a Dhammaduta worker in 1949, at Calcutta and Sarnath. He became Bhikkhu in-charge of the New Delhi Buddha vihara in 1950. He maintained contact with Babasaheb Ambedkar also. He was instrumental in having the Buddha Purnima (Thrice Sacred Day) declared as a public Holiday in 1953 by the Government of India He was associated with the 2500th Buddha Jayanti functions organised by the Government. It was also primarily at his instance that in 1964 Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka brought a Bosapling from the historic Bodhi Tree at Anuradhapura for being planted in the Buddha Jayanti Park in New Delhi to commemorate the Birth centenary of Angarika Dharmapala, the founder of the Maha Bodhi Society The Kotte Mangala Uposathagara Kalyani Samagri Dharma Maha Sangha Sabha, Sri Lanka honoured Ven. L. Ariyawansa in 1979 with the title of 'Chief Sangha Nayak of North India for his valuable services to Dhamma. Throughout his life he preached and propagated the Dhamma in whole of North India, particularly n Delhi. He was indeed first Indian to join the Bhikkhu Training Centre established by Angarika Dharmapala at Sarnath in 1913 He was also the first trained Indian Bhikkhu to join the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1949. He became elected President of Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1992 and died in 1994

(8) Ven. Dr. U. Dhammaratana

W.K. Jayasekara was born in Sri Lanka in 1917 and became U. Dhammaratana after ordination into Monk. He completed M.A., Ph.D, D.Litt He joined the Foster Buddhist Seminary in Kandy in 1928 started by Angarika Dharmapala. He was ordained as Samanera by Ven. M. Devananda Maha Thera and given the new name of Uruwala Dhammaratana. Dhammaratana came to India on the invitation of Angarika Dharmapala in 1931. After completing his studies from the Calcutta University and Banaras Hindu University, he made Sarnath the centre of his activities. He edited the Hindi Journal Dhammaduta published by the Maha Bodhi Society from Sarnath. In Hindi he wrote on Visuddhimagga.



He translated Theragatha, Suttanipata, Khuddakapatha into Hindi. His English works are: The Buddha and Caste System, A Study of Patisambhidamaga, An Introduction to Visuddhi-magga, The Buddha and His Message. He completed his Ph.D. from the University of Calcutta on A Comparative Study of the Anatta Doctrine in Pali Nikayas and that of the Madhyamika System of Nagarjuna. He also associated with the editorial team of the Maha Bodhi Journal, the English monthly published by the Maha Bodhi Society of India from Calcutta. Dhammaratana spread the message of the Buddha in India as well as in other countries like U.K., U.S.A., Canada and Japan where he conducted Vipasana meditation camps and delivered Dhamma discourses. He became elected General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1983 after the death of Ven. N Jinaratana Nayaka Maha Thera. He died in 1985.

(9) Ven. Motivala Sangharatana Maha Nayaka Thera

He was born in 1912 in Sri Lanka. He came to India in 1927. In 1937 he was appointed as one of the Joint Secretaries of the Maha Bodhi Society and Bhikkhu-in-charge of the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Sarnath. He was chiefly responsible for making Sarnath a living holy shrine. The Sangha Council of the Malwatta Chapter of Siamese Sect, Kandy, Sri Lanka conferred title Sangha Nayaka of India on Ven. Sangharatana in the year 1961 for his services to Buddhism. Sravasti, the sacred place where the Buddha had spent 25 rainy seasons, was the place chosen by Ven. Sangharatana after his retirement from Maha Bodhi Society in 1969 to spend his rest of life. He changed the face of Sravasti. Sahet - Mahet was given modern look. Due to the efforts of Ven. Sangharatana the old Jetavana Monastery and its surroundings were fenced by the Government of India. The construction of the Sri Lankaramaya Temple was his major contribution for the development of Sravasti. Under the aegis of the Bhartiya Baudha Shiksha Parishad he started a School in Sravasti. Ven. Sangharatana died in a Lucknow Hospital on 31 December 1984. His body was cremated in Sravasti.

(10) Venerable Nilwakke Somananda Nayaka Thera:



He was born in 1902 in Sri Lanka. He entered the monastic life in 1919 under the guidance of Ven. Elangipitiye Sri Ratanapala Nayaka Thera of Kumbaldiwela Vihara. He got higher ordination in 1923 at Asgiriya. Under the influence of Angarika Dharmapala, he came to India in 1929. He became 'dhammaduta' worker and started his activities in Madras. He became incharge of the Maha Bodhi Ashram in Perambur in Madras. He was supported in all his activities by well knowr educationist and Buddhist leader of Madras Prof. Lakshmi Narasu. As a part of his missionary work in Madras, Ven. N Somananda conducted weekly lectures on Buddhism and brought out Buddhist pamphlets in simple Tamil language so that commorn man could understand the Dhamma. He translated Dhammapada in Tamil. His other Tamil works are Buddha' and Buddha Dharma Shurrukkam Ven. N. Somananda purchased a piece of land at Egmore and constructed buildings for present Maha Bodhi Society and Vihara close to the famous Egmore Railway Station in Madras The most remarkable achievement was that he was appointed to the post of Chief Monk of the Buddha Gaya Temple in 1953, when it was brought under Buddhist dominated Management Committee by the Bihar Government. He attended the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Burma in 1954 and displayed there his remarkable knowledge of Pali. He also rendered his services for the benefit of Buddhists of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh. He was undoubtly erudite scholar of Buddhalogy. Ven. N. Somananda Nayaka Thera died in 1987 in Sri Lanka.

(11) Ven. Dharmarakshita:

He was an Indian Monk born in the year 1923 near Kushinagar the site of Lord Buddha's Maha Parinirvana. His Ph.D. thesis was on 'Buddha Yoga Sadhana'. He became a Samanera and renounced home in 1942. He received his Upasampada (higher ordination) in 1944 from Ven. Chandramani Maha Thera. He studied Tripitaka and the Pali Literature at the Maha Mahinda Oriental College in Sri Lanka under the guidance of venerable Dhammavasa Sanghanayaka Maha Thera and was awarded the degree of Triptakacharya. He



came back to India and joined the Maha Bodhi Society of India as a Dhammaduta worker. Sarnath (the ancient holy Isipatana) was his place of activity. He was Editor of Dharmadutta, the Hindi monthly organ of the Maha Bodhi Society published from Sarnath. He also worked as Lecturer of Pali at the Maha Bodhi College, Sarnath and later became principal of that college. The most important contribution of Ven. Dharmarakshita to popularise Buddhism was his whole hearted co-operation to the mass movement launched by Ambedkar for the revival of Buddhism. He met Ambedkar, when Ambedkar visited Sarnath in November 1956. It was Ven. Dharmarakshita who made arrangements for Babasaheb Ambedkar's stay at Sarnath for three days from 22-24 November 1956. Ven. Dharmarakshita compiled speeches of Ambedkar entitled: 'Baudh Dharm he Manav Dharm', which contains an interesting description of his three meetings with Ambedkar: (1) At Kushinagar in 1943; (2) In Burma in 1954; (3) At Sarnath in 1956. He wrote books in Pali, Hindi and Marathi. His missionary work came to an end with his death in 1977.

(12) Ven. Bulathasinhala Pannarama Mahathera

He was born in 1926 in Sri Lanka. He was ordained as a Samanera in his childhood itself. At the age of 20 he was given upasampada in the year 1946 by Ven.D. Saddhatissa in Sri Lanka. Ven. B. Pannarama came to India on 5th January 1961 and joined the Mahabodhi Society of India as a Dhammaduta Monk. Since 1969 he was Bhikkhu-in-charge of the Buddhagaya centre of the Mahabodhi Society of India. He became the Senior Vice-President of the Mahabodhi Society of India. He died in 1995 at Colombo, Sri Lanka.

(13) Ven. Aggmaha Pandita Bhadant Gyaneshwar

He was born in 1936 in Burma (Myanmar). He became Sramanera at the age of 13. In 1954 at the time of the inauguration of the Sixth Buddhist Council (Sangiti) Ven. Gyaneshwar came in contact with Ven. U Chandramani. On the invitation of Ven. U Chandramani, Ven. Gyaneshwar came to India in 1963. He studied Pali and Tibetan language. Ven. Gyaneshwar became active after the death of Ven. U. Chandramani in 1972. He expanded the activities of the



Burmese Buddhist Mission at Kushinagar. He had been associated with the All India Bhikkhu Sangha. After the demise of Bhadant Anand Kausalyayan in 1988, Ven. Gyaneshwar was elected as Vice- President of the All India Bhikkhu Sangha. Aggmaha Pandita is a title awarded to Ven. Gyaneshwar for his contribution to the spread of Dhamma and for his social and educational activities. He was also honoured by Miss Mayawati then Chief Minister of U.P for his contribution to the revival of Buddhism in Modern India. The most important contribution of Ven. Gyaneshwar to the Buddhism is his active participation in the Buddha Gaya Liberation Movement spearheaded by Ven. Surai Sassai, the great missionary from Japan. Government of Bihar reconstituted the Buddha Gaya Temple Management Committee in 1995, in which Ven. Gyaneshwar has been made as a member.

(14) Ven. Kushak Bakula

He was born in 1917 in Ladakh. He was recognised as the re- incarnation of the previous Head Lama, the 20th reincarnation of Arhat Bakul. He heads Spituk Gompa (monastery) near Delhi. He is a monk of Tibetan Buddhism. In other words he belonged to the Mahayana School of Thought. Ven. Kushak Bakula has made a lot of contribution to the propagation of Buddhism in Ladakh. Apart from religious activities he involved in social activities. He worked for the socio-economic development of Ladakh people. Later he became a political activist.

(15) Ven. Lama Lobzang

After Ven. Kushak Bakula, the most popular leader of Ladakh was Ven. Lama Lobzang. He was Bhikkhu-in-charge of the Ladakh Buddha Vihara, in Delhi, which was established by Ven. Kushak Bakula. In 1990, he was appointed by the Government of India a member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. He is also President of Asoka Mission Vihara established by Ven. Dhammavara, a Cambodian Monk in 1950. He is working in close association with the Maha Bodhi Society of India.

(16) Ven. Mahaguru Norbu Lama



The most remarkable contribution made by Ven. Mahaguru Norbu Lama for the propagation of Buddha Dhamma was that founding the Vishwa Mahayana Buddha Maha Sangha, Lekhapani, Dibrugarh District in Assam. Indeed his area of activities are not stricted only to North East, he also propagating the Buddha Dhamma in North India and Maharashtra. He is a Patron of the Maha Bodhi Society of India.

(17) Ven. Acharya Buddharakkhita Maha Thera

He was born in 1922 in Manipur. The most interesting fact of this Bauddha Guru is that he is a scholar of both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. He studied Mahayana Buddhism in Nepal and Theravada Buddhism in Ceylon. He was conferred the title Acharya' in 1952 Ven. Acharya Buddharakkhita had learnt Vipassan Meditation and Abhidhamma - Psychology in Myanmar. He was also appointed by Government of Burma as one of the Editors of Chatta Sanghayana Editorial Board of the Union Buddha Sasana Council. He came to Bangalore in 1956 and established the Maha Bodhi Society, which aimed to propagate Buddha Dhamma in Karnataka, a South Indian state. He also established the Buddha Vachana Trust for publishing the Buddhist literature. His famous work is 'Living Legacy of the Buddha'. He founded monthly magazine called 'Dhamma' in 1972. He was editor of the magazine He also established: (1) Mahabodhi Institute of Pali studies and Buddhology (2) Mahabodhi Maitri Mandala and (3) Arogya Foundation for the benefit of the people.

(18) Ven. Dr. Ellawala Nandissara Maha Thera

Ven. E. Nandissara served Buddhism in Southern part of India. In fact, on the invitation of Maha Bodhi Society, he came to India and joined the Madras branch of the society. During his tenure the New Vihara was erected at Kannet Lane, Egmore, Chennai (Madras) After the death of Ven.P.Gunaratana, he became General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society of India in 1984. In between he worked as a Buddhist Missionary in U.S.A. and finally he returned to Sri Lanka in 1995.



(19) Ven. Potuwila Gunaratana

Born in Sri Lanka and received Upa Sampada in 1943. He joined the Maha Bodhi Society of India and worked as a Dhammaduta. He was requested to take over the role of the General Secretary of Maha Bodhi Society of India. He passed away in 1984. There are also many other Buddhist monks, thinks who worked and are working for the propagating of Dhamma namely: Ven. Dr. S. Medhankar, Ven. Dharmapal, Ven. Anandamitra, Ven. Dr. Rashtrapal, Ven. Dhammaviryo, Ven. Saddhananda Thero, Ven. G. Prajnananda, Ven. Dr. D. Rewath, Ven. D. Wimala and Ven. Dr. Mapalagama Wipulasara.