

**HISTORICAL ASPECTS RELATED TO DECLINE OF BUDDHISM IN
INDIA****Anil Agrawal**

Research Scholar, Department of History, Sabarmati University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Dr. Ranjana

Research Supervisor, Department of History, Sabarmati University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

ABSTRACT

Buddhism as it is practised in the region traces its historical roots back to India. In the Indian Himalayan belt, it is practiced in Ladakh and the border regions of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. It has developed and inherited a rich culture as a result, and this culture is now a vital part of the Himalayas' living legacy. The Buddha's Dharma has a rich history and is often believed to have spread throughout the world. Nonetheless, the religion is still practiced in some cities along India's northern border, most notably in Leh-Ladakh, the former district of Jammu and Kashmir State. Evidence of this heritage may be found in places like monuments and monasteries, works of art and oral literature, fairs and festivals, and the time-honored custom of communal celebration of various occasions. Celebrations of life's most joyous moments—marriage, birth, farming, harvest, and the blooming of flora—are marked with feasts, dances, and the singing of traditional folk songs. This research highlights the role of the Buddhist priesthood in Buddhist society and religion. The impact that these concepts and rituals have had on 20th-century Buddhist society and belief has been investigated. There has been a discernible shift in the social and religious life of the Buddhists in Ladakh, and this article explores the factors that have led to this transformation. These factors include British policy, education and literature, tourism, urbanization, Ladakh's connection with neighboring societies, and the topic of identity. This article explores Buddhists' efforts to maintain their unique identities. Buddhist clergy and adherents have been investigated for their role in the preservation of Buddhist culture.

Keywords: - Buddhism, Rituals, Indian, School, Birth.**I. INTRODUCTION**

In Buddhism, having good intentions before doing any ritual or ritualistic act is of the utmost importance. My attempts at analyzing Buddhist rituals led me to conclude that their sole purpose is to help others. Buddhism is a nonviolent religion. Buddhism condemns such violence as counterproductive. The devotion for the benefit of all sentient beings continues even when the practice has ended. The concept of interdependence is central to its worldview. Scientists in the current era have given it the name "the theory of relativity." Sensitive beings care about the

feelings of others. Buddhism encourages a peaceful way of life. The objective external world is likewise generated at the same moment. There is a great need for more research on the history of the Drukpa Kagyud school of Buddhism in the Indian Himalayas. This branch of Tibetan Buddhism quickly gained popularity and moved beyond its 12th-century birthplace in Tibet. From the 13th century onward, it spread to the other Indian Himalayan regions and flourished there. At the turn of the 12th century, a Tibetan scholar and saint teacher established this Mahyna school. Furthermore, its lineage teachers



are all indigenous to India, the birthplace of the Buddha. They received the legacy and teachings from the Buddha Kyamuni in his emanation as Vajradhara Buddha without any breaks in transmission. The Vajrayana school of Mahayana Buddhism provides the foundation for this practice.

Vajrayana practitioners have a long history at this institution, and this thesis documents some of the many monasteries, nunneries, retreat centers, pilgrimage sites, etc., that can be found all over the world and especially in the Indian Himalayas. Those in the present should be aware of the cultural traditions and philosophies that have been preserved and disseminated in the Indian Himalayas and beyond. There are several locations in Ladakh and Paldar (Paddar) in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir where the Drukpa Kagyud School has been introduced. Similar distribution occurred in Himachal Pradesh's Lahoul (Garsha), Kinnaur, and Pangi (Chamba), as well as West Bengal's Darjeling. The Drukpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism and the Lhodruk lineage of Bhutanese Buddhism make up this school. India is home to both of these philosophies. Even in the most isolated parts of the nation, you may find lineage masters and their well-established monasteries from both traditions. Even now, regions like Zanskar, Paldar, etc., remain among the furthest from civilization. Yet, experts in this field have travelled great distances for the sake of humanity. They have strengthened local belief in Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha via their teachings and interactions with the community at large.

Bon, practiced by people who call themselves Bon-pos, is said to have been the original religion of Tibet and Ladakh until Buddhism was introduced there

during the third century BC. Most of the deities and religious practices of Bon, Tantrism, and Mahayana Buddhism (all of which are observed in the current form of Ladakhi Buddhism) were absorbed into Buddhism as it spread and developed in the country, and the term "Buddhist" or "Buddhism" came to be used interchangeably. If Buddhists have adopted many Bon customs, including many of its gods and goddesses, then Bon adherents have also borrowed extensively from Buddhism, adopting nearly all of Buddhist literature. Monasteries, shrines, sacred art, and icons with religious motifs are all examples of the ways in which Bon can be seen in the visual arts. Bon rituals can be seen in the employment of candles in worship, the making of figures out of butter and bread, and the performance of mask dances, among other things. In the monasteries, the monks celebrate the triumph of Buddhism over the rival Bon religion with a ritual mask dance. Since the seventh century, Bon and Buddhism have coexisted, each strengthening the other's religious philosophy and meditational resources.

II. WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

Buddhism (Pali/Sanskrit: बौद्ध धर्म Buddha Dharma) is not simply a religion the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, often known as the Buddha (from the Sanskrit and Pli for "the enlightened one"), and the resulting traditions, beliefs, and practices. Buddhism is a way of improving our way of existence in the context of the connections that shape us. It is the responsibility of the consummate practitioner to eliminate the aspects of themselves that sustain an erroneous way of thinking and being if they become tied to a certain idea of how these connections



should function. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was profoundly impacted by Buddha and came to believe that the "Faith of the Buddha" is the best religion for the "modern man who knows science" due to its unique teachings, strong leaders, scientific temperament, and logical reasoning. To him, "Buddhism was the only religion" that could preserve a world "awakened by science" and "without which the civilization would die." Dr. Ambedkar believed Buddhism might help lift the status of the lower castes. He explained, "I like Buddhism better than other religions because it combines three concepts into one." Prajna (understanding as opposed to superstition and supernaturalism), Karuna (love), and Samata (compassion) are three key tenets of Buddhism (equality). This is what every guy needs to live a full and satisfying life. Society can't be saved by God or the soul. 4 Former President Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan has been one of the most outspoken advocates for these ideas. "The religion of the future will be cosmic religion," says Albert Einstein in a 1956 preface to the Government of India Publication, "2500 years of Buddhism" (ed. P. V. Bapat). It has to go beyond the confines of religion and the concept of a personal God. The natural and the supernatural should both be included, and it should be founded on a feeling of transcendent oneness that comes from a religious perspective. To this end, Buddhism is a good fit. If any religion can adapt to the demands of modern science, it is Buddhism.

The Nobel laureate's optimistic view of Buddhism's capacity to transcend Western philosophy was shared by many. "Buddhism is the most enormous example in the history of applied metaphysics," said

British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. Another Nobel laureate of his day, Bertrand Russell, considered Buddhism the greatest religion in history because "it has had the fewest element of persecution." Russell saw a superior scientific technique in the teachings of the Buddha, one that brought together speculation and reason to probe the most fundamental problems of existence: "Buddhism is a synthesis of both speculative and scientific philosophy. It promotes a rationalistic approach to problem solving by stressing the importance of scientific method. Questions such, "What is thought and matter?" are addressed in it. Which of these two is more crucial? Is the cosmos advancing toward something? What does man stand for? Is there any use in trying to live? It goes where science can't due of the limitations of science's tools; its victories are mental rather than physical.

III. EARLY HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

Lumbini Park in Kapilavasthu, near the Indian border of modern-day Nepal, is where a prince was born to Queen Mah My and King Suddhodana of the noble Skya dynasty in the year 623 B.C. The prince was given the name Siddhartha, which means "wish realized," on the fifth day after his birth. The Gotama name was his surname. The naming ceremony was held in the palace, and only Brahmins were invited. There were eight guys of note among them. Seven of them looked at the kid's distinguishing features and held up two fingers, indicating two possible outcomes: either the child would become a Universal Monarch or a Buddha. The youngest, Kondaa, who also happened to be the wisest, saw that the prince's hair



was turning to the right on his forehead, and with a single finger raised, confidently predicted that the prince would become a Buddha and abandon the world forever. Seven days after his birth, his mother passed away, and the infant was adopted by the King's younger sister, Mah Pajpati Gotami. Asita (sometimes spelled Kaladevala) entrusted a nurse with her own son Nanda after telling the monarch that he would one day become the Buddha. It was written in the stars that this noble prince would become the world's foremost religious teacher.

He wed his gorgeous cousin Princess Yasodhara, who was the same age as he, when he was just sixteen. After his joyful marriage, he lived in opulence for over thirteen years, oblivious to the trials of the world beyond the palace walls. He reflects on his privileged upbringing as a prince, saying, "I was sensitive, excessively delicate. Three lotus ponds were built at my father's house especially for me. In one, blue lotuses blossomed; in another, crimson; and in still another, white lotuses emerged. Ksi sandalwood was the only kind I used. Ksi provided me with my hat, tunic, dress, and cloak. A white parasol was kept over me day and night so that I would not be exposed to the elements. During each season, a separate castle was constructed for me: winter, summer, and rainy. I spent the whole four-month rainy season inside the castle, where I was constantly serenaded by female musicians. When I was a child, my father told me, "Just as in other people's households, food is provided to the slaves and craftsmen made from the husks of rice together with sour gruel, so too at my father's home was food made with rice and meat. From behind the royal walls, he saw only the

bright side of life; the darker side, the common fate of men, was hidden from him. One day, however, he left the palace to experience the outside world for himself and was confronted by the harsh truths of existence. For the first time, he had a clear and vivid experience of what had before just been in his mind. On his journey to the park, he saw a decrepit old guy, an ill person, a corpse, and a dignified hermit, among other weird things. He was left with no doubt after seeing the first three images about the permanence of life and the commonality of human suffering. The fourth represented a way out of one's troubles and into a state of serenity and contentment. The unexpectedness of these four images only helped to heighten his desire to reject and abandon the world. He resolved to leave the world in quest of truth and eternal serenity after realizing that the physical pleasures so highly prized by mankind were ultimately meaningless. After a long trek, he stopped to rest on the banks of the river Anom after fording it. Now he shaved off his hair and beard, gave Channa his clothes and jewelry with instructions to return them to the palace, and began a life of austere yellow robes and voluntary poverty. As a result, Sakyamuni sought out Ira Klma, a renowned ascetic, who instructed him in the art of meditation and guided him on his quest to achieve nirvana. The ascetic Gotama (Siddhartha) was not content with a discipline and a theory that solely resulted in intense mental focus. Siddhartha was unsatisfied with his instruction and politely parted ways with him. He then sought out one Uddaka Rmaputta and told him he wanted to follow the holy life according to his tenets.



IV. DECLINE OF BUDDHISM

The demise of Buddhism in India was caused by a tangled web of socio-religious-historical forces both internal and foreign to India. The loss of royal backing due to political maneuvers and changes made monastic life more fragile and its leadership progressively disintegrated, although this was always a risk for Buddhist monastic institutions. Spreading Hindu devotional activities in the fourth century CE drove away Buddhist followers and eroded the religion's social backing. Furthermore, several Buddhist ideas were absorbed by Hindus, watering down Buddhism's uniqueness. Adopting Tantric ideas together with Hinduism progressively undermined Buddhism's originality. Furthermore, monks, nuns, images for worship, monastery complexes, and centers of Buddhist learning like the illustrious Nalanda University were all annihilated in a wave of destruction that began in the sixth century in the northwest region of India with the invasion of Huns and continued in the tenth century with the invasion of Muslim Turks. Although surviving in so India till the seventh century, Buddhism never truly recovered from this attack. Yet, in other South Asian and Far Eastern societies, it has been widely practiced for a very long period prior to this. The collapse of Buddhism in India was preceded by its exportation to other regions.

According to the Pali canon, the Buddha witnessed its demise during his lifetime and predicted its eventual extinction. Most schools of thought believe that there would be a deterioration in the quality of teachings over the course of around 500 years, as shown in certain Sutras; other Sutras talk of a period of real dharma and

false dharma. As a result, Buddhism as a distinct religion in India all but vanished, although it did survive in Buddhist strongholds. Yet Buddhism's influence on the religion and culture of the region was always clear.

At the beginning of the common era, Mahayana Buddhism spread to regions outside of India thanks to the insightful religious teachings of the Northern school, which included the concept of Buddha-nature and the bodhisattva ideal. Of the three great Mahayana schools, Kegon, Tendai, and Shingon, only the first is no longer practiced in Japan, while Nichiren, Pure Land, and Zen are thriving today. Another school of Mahayana made its way to Tibet and had a significant impact there; its legacy persists today in religious ritual and ceremonial practiced both inside and outside of Tibet, particularly in Tibetan monasteries. There is a ban on education and dissemination of information for Tibetan monks who are still active in their country.

The early Buddhist teachings were diametrically opposed to Vedic Brahmanism. It questioned the Vedas' sacrifice ritualism and the Vedas' legitimacy as a religious text. Buddhism rejected Vedic Brhmaism at its core by rejecting and disputing the Vedas as a source of religious authority. While the gods in Brahmanism are mighty and eternal, they are proclaimed to be mortal in Buddhism due to the rule of karma. Vedic Brahmanism was at odds with the teachings of the first Buddhist monks. The seers (rshis) and sages of the Vedic tradition led the lives of ordinary people, sacrificing to the gods and chanting hymns in the hopes of gaining the benefits of both worlds. To find transcendental calm and



spiritual emancipation (vimutti), Buddhist ascetics (munis, ramanas) abandoned the home life with its dangers and joys in favor of meditation (jhna) and introspective realization (pann). Liberation from the self-system (tmavda) was just part of what the Buddha taught; he also hoped to pave the path for the equal emancipation of men and women in society. Untouchability and social inequality were criticized for being unfair and unreasonable, and the Brahmanic doctrine of the four classes was called "stupid."

V. CONCLUSION

Prior to the Central Government's abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, Jammu and Kashmir State, of which Ladakh was a part, was reorganized and granted Union Territory status. Ladakh, which had been a part of Tibet until the fourteenth century, gained its independence and was ruled by a succession of Tibetan rulers until the nineteenth century. Since the loss of Tibet to the Chinese, the region of Leh-Ladakh in the Himalayas has taken on added significance as a stronghold of Buddhist religion and culture. According to data compiled in the Census Atlas National Volume 1981, Leh-Ladakh is home to 81.18 percent of the country's Buddhist population. In the third quarter of the twentieth century, it is widely held that only in Leh-Ladakh does Buddhism persist in its original, unaltered form.

Many missionaries, explorers, traders, and conquerors from neighboring areas like Kashmir, Tibet, and China have traversed Ladakh's windswept plateau and deep valleys throughout the ages, bringing with them a wide variety of ethnic, religious, and cultural influences. By this process, it

has developed and inherited a rich culture that continues to this day as a vital part of the Western Himalayas' cultural legacy. The region's monuments, monasteries, beliefs and practices, fairs and festivals, and the time-honored custom of collectively celebrating various occasions are all aspects of this legacy. Despite this, Buddhism has played and continues to play an important part in Ladakh's cultural exchange. Materially and spiritually, the many gonpas or monasteries in this area attest to the splendor of Ladakhi Buddhism.

REFERENCES

1. Verma, Vidhu. "Reinterpreting Buddhism: Ambedkar on the Politics of Social Action." *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 49 (2010): 56-65.
2. Verma, Vidhu. "Reinterpreting Buddhism: Ambedkar on the Politics of Social Action." *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 49 (2010)
3. Singh, Upinder. (2010). *Exile and Return: The Reinvention of Buddhism and Buddhist Sites in Modern India*. *South Asian Studies*. 26. 193-217. 10.1080/02666030.2010.514744.
4. Shah, Bipin. (2017). *Spread of Buddhism and Hinduism in southeast Asia and beyond*.
5. Oza, Preeti. (2021). *Buddhism and Spread of Religion through the Inner Nuances of Caves -A case study of Western India*
6. Oza, Preeti. (2019). *BUDDHISM IN MODERN INDIA: ASSERTION OF IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY FOR DALITS (SOCIAL CHANGES AND*



CULTURAL HISTORY). GAP
BODHI TARU - A GLOBAL
JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES. 2.
46-49. 10.47968/gapbodhi.230010.